

The Immediate and Long-Term Effects of Namibia's Colonization Process

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Honors Capstone

Through Professor Taylor

Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa

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I. Author's Note

I learned such a great deal from this entire honors capstone project, that all the knowledge I have acquired can hardly be covered by what I wrote in these 50 pages. I learned so much more that I was not able to share both about Namibia and myself. I can now claim that I am knowledgeable about nearly all areas of Namibian history and life. I certainly am no expert, but after all of this research I can certainly consider myself reliable. I have never had such an extensive knowledge before of one academic area as a result of a school project. I also learned a lot about myself through this project. I learned how I can motivate myself to work, and I learned how I perform when I have to organize such a long and complicated paper, just to name a couple of things. The strange inability to be able to include everything I learned from doing this project is the reason for some of the more random appendices at the end, as I have a passion for both numbers and trivia. Perhaps the most educational part of this capstone process was drawing conclusions. My research question was not directly answered in almost any of my readings, but connections could be made between readings on colonization and readings on post-colonization, and that's where my conclusions came in. I hope that you can learn a tenth reading this paper as I did writing it.

II. Introduction

“This Solemn hour is the moment which our people have been waiting for, for more than a century. This is the day for which tens of thousands of Namibian patriots laid down their lives, shed their precious blood, suffered imprisonment and a difficult life in exile. Today, our hearts are filled with great joy and jubilation because our deepest and longest yearning has been realized.”¹

- Sam Nujoma, Windhoek, March 21, 1990

Inaugural Speech by the First President of the Republic of Namibia

Namibia has been free now for 20 years. That moment in 1990 when President Nujoma declared that the wait for independence was finally over symbolized the end of over 100 years of oppression, but it did not answer some pressing questions. What will the future of the country be? How will Namibia move forward into this modern age with the history of colonization fresh in its past? What exactly did the nation have to go through, and how has that affected them since independence? How will its colonial history affect it going forward?

Formally German South West Africa and South West Africa, Namibia has gone through many changes throughout its history. It went from the establishment of a local ethnically based system in pre-colonial times to the first Europeans settling in the country. It then went from colonization by Germany determined at the Berlin Conference to the transfer of power to the UK and South Africa during the Treaty of Versailles. And finally it went from independence struggles to modern democratization. To attain stability and prosperity in the future, Namibia must deal with its tumultuous past. This

¹ Sam Nujoma. *The Autobiography of Sam Nujoma*. Windhoek: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995, pg. 654.

paper will examine the effects that historical changes have had on the country and will conclude as to what role those effects will play in the future of the country. This will be achieved by examining the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history of Namibia, focusing on the changes resulting from transfers of power and political structure. These changes will be looked at on a cultural, economic, and political level. A thorough examination of history and societal changes in Namibia will yield hypotheses on the future of political stability, culture, international relations, and overall prosperity in the country. There are many questions when it comes to what Namibia's future will hold, but this paper aims to reduce the amount of uncertainty when looking at what lies ahead.

III. Pre-Colonization

As is true for nearly all countries in Africa, various native groups occupied the territory where Namibia now is for thousands of years before colonization. The first known group that was once Namibia's largest ethnic group is the San people, a hunting and gathering society that migrated from Central Africa between 8000 BCE and 1300 CE.² The San people functioned collectively, living in groups of 30-50 people that never strived for centralization of authority or domination over other groups. The political culture was based on the authority of a small group of elders. The San people have always been isolated while maintaining their culture and system of organization, and they still exist to this day. Namibia's largest ethnic group is the Ovambo. When the Ovambo

² Donald Sparks, and December Green. *Namibia: The Nation After Independence*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Inc, 1992, pg. 131.

originally settled in what is today southern Angola and northern Namibia, they split into groups with each group developing into a distinct society. Each group formed a kingdom and used their agriculture skills to gain relative prosperity. The Ovambo had a centralized authority system based on lineage. They were split into eight clans/kingdoms, and each one had a king and a group of advisors. The ultimate power lay with the king to make significant political, economic and religious decisions. The Ovambo trace descent matrilineally and occasionally have had female leaders. Today, the Ovambo comprise roughly half of the indigenous population of Namibia³ (see chart and map, Appendix A). The Okavango, though smaller than the Ovambo, also had a patrilineal and matrilineal society and they were divided up into four kingdoms. They had a tradition of accepting women in leadership roles, and the leader of each kingdom rarely used his/her power, with great personal freedoms present in society.⁴ The Caprivi people were divided into six clans and tended to live in homes of roughly 30 people. All land in the Caprivi society was communally held. They had a fairly democratic system of governance, with the tribe members electing a council and that council electing a leader.

Before colonization, the Hereros, the Damara, the Nama and the Rehoboth Basters primarily occupied central Namibia. The Herero were split into two major clans that had a very isolated existence. They lived patrilocally and had a complex system known as double descent that was both patrilineal and matrilineal. Land was communally owned, and the senior men of their “homestead” acted as political and religious leaders. The Damara and Nama people share many ties and speak the same language. Their history has not been well documented, though some historians suggest

³ Sparks, 131.

⁴ Ibid, 134.

that they are the original inhabitants of Namibia. The Damara were great hunters and had much economic success. They escaped into the mountains when European settlers arrived. They organized themselves into mini-states based on extended families governed by elders. There was no single source of authority, and little known exists regarding information about their legal and religious systems. The Nama are composed of several different groups, and were most likely the first group to have regular contact with Europeans. Their politics centered on a loose alliance of the groups, with each group having a leader and council of elders. The governance shifted from completely hands off during times of peace, to autocratic during times of war.⁵ The Basters are descendants of Afrikaner fathers and Nama mothers who moved from the northern Cape and settled in Windhoek, Namibia's current capital. The Baster republic was organized through elected councils and the people had their own constitution. They have historically been well armed and have taken over regions occupied by other ethnic groups.

The ethnic groups mentioned here are just the largest ones in Namibia, and the ones that have the most recorded history. The number of different tribes in Namibia before colonization is not known, though it is certain that power in Namibia was far from centralized. There was little to no communication between the different tribes, and it was impossible for them to form any sort of coalition against European forces. If one thing can be taken from researching the ethnic tribes of Namibia, it is the tremendous number of political differences between them. Each group, and sometimes even clans within the groups had a different political structure, and almost none of them looked like traditional European models. Their cultures, lifestyles and economic structures were also different

⁵ Ibid, 137.

from both the other groups and from the Europeans. These differences conflicted with the European goal of forming centralized states in Africa, and would make it extremely difficult to create a unified country. Even though the tribes had many political differences, they all had two things in common: communal land and undefined boundaries. Like most tribes in Africa, those in what is now Namibia did not see land as something that can be owned, and did not put a stress on creating boundaries between tribes. This inherent difference between ethnic group culture in Namibia and European culture created friction during colonization, and when colonization began. these differences would have to be settled.

IV. Colonization By Germany

The first Europeans in Namibia were the Portuguese in the late 15th century, trying to find a path to India. The first European settlements in Namibia were by the Dutch and the British in the late 18th century, but they only held ports on the coast, and most of Namibia went untouched by Europeans until the late 19th century. Throughout the 19th century missionaries from England worked throughout Namibia, building a church that is Namibia's oldest building today. German missionaries started arriving in the 1840s working with England. When the time came to divide up Africa, Germany and Great Britain were the two countries with principle interest. Britain claimed Walvis Bay in 1878, but in 1883 a German trader bought a large chunk of land from a Nama chief for 10,000 Reichmark and 260 guns. The deal, like all other deals with African leaders during the time period, was tainted. There is question as to whether or not the chief was

sober at the time, and there were language barriers in the definition of how much land was being taken. The overarching discrepancy that led the Germans to take advantage of the Nama chief was the difference in the concept of land. As Namibian historian Henning Melber pointed out, “Private property in the capitalist meaning had until then been an unknown phenomenon with regard to the use of land. Land had been the collective property of the local community, and granting conditional rights for use of natural resources was a familiar practice.”⁶ After the questionable deal with the Nama chief, the German trader advised German chancellor Otto von Bismarck to claim the land. Bismarck was, for the most part, against owning any colonies in Africa. However, due to a number of special interests and the German desire to have “a place in the sun,”⁷ he established German South West Africa as a German colony in 1884 amidst British claims to the land.

The increased German presence in Namibia caused many shifts in politics, culture and life within the ethnic groups. The changes were immediate and drastic when Namibia was suddenly faced with a European presence. The Namibians did not receive the arrival of the Germans kindly, as there were written requests to Britain for protection from the Germans from the Nama, Damaras and Basters.⁸ Germany’s colonization was by no means a peaceful process, as they made sure to gain control of the country through any means necessary, resorting to violence when Namibian leaders would not sign treaties. They focused on the more arable land in the South, taking over the land of the Herero, Nama, Basters and Rehoboth, while leaving the Ovamba largely alone. They set

⁶ Allan Cooper. *The Occupation of Namibia: Afrikanerdom's Attack on the British Empire*. Lanham, MD: United Press of America, 1991, pg. 15.

⁷ Cooper, 12.

⁸ Ibid, 16.

up a “Police Zone” in the southern region, with German settlers and businessmen taking over the vast amounts of farmland in the area.⁹ Introducing the idea of land possession to the ethnic groups in Namibia, much like much of the Americas and other parts of Africa, was a devastating change to the habits of the ethnic groups in the south. They could no longer survive on farming for themselves without trying to integrate themselves into the wage-based economy, which proved to be difficult with the white minority rule. By 1913, black Namibians had lost 90 percent of their cattle and 70 percent of small livestock to either disease or the Germans, and owned only 6 percent of the land.¹⁰ Most of that 6 percent was not arable, and nearly all black Namibians ended up being forced to work for wages, earning barely enough to buy food. Germany looked to the people in the North to recruit for labor operations, and was very successful because of how tough it was to farm in the northern part of the country. About 90 percent of adult male Africans living south of Ovamboland worked for Germans either farming, mining or working in government. This dramatically increased the profit of the colonizing German South West Africa Company while decreasing the freedom of native Namibians. By the end of German rule, nearly all previous inhabitants of Namibia were less well-off and more reliant on a European wage-based system for everyday goods.

In addition to a cultural shock due to the change in how land was owned and what people did to survive, there was a much more drastic effect of German colonization that occurred between 1904-1908. The largest ethnic groups in the “Police Zone” that the Germans were intent on controlling were the Herreros and the Namas. Not wanting to be

⁹ Susan Glover. "Diminishing Democracy? The Politics of Ethnic Accommodation in Namibia." *University of North Carolina: Chapel Hill* 2005, pg. 29.

¹⁰ Glover, 30.

stripped of their rights, the Herrero and Nama fought back in a few small instances of armed rebellion. In response, the Germans carried out a systematic mass murder, or genocide of the Herrero and Nama people. After sealing off groups of Herreros and conducting warfare with the Nama, the Germans confined whole ethnic groups to concentration camps, where most inmates were subjected to forced labor that proved to be fatal.

After the systematic murders, the Germans passed the Native Ordinances in 1907, which insisted that the Nama and Herrero people were not allowed to own land or large stock, and required that they all must be forced to do a certain amount of labor. The tribes in the "Police Zone" were essentially stripped of any means of independent existence outside of forced wage labor.¹¹ The estimates on how many people were killed in genocide range from 34,000 to 110,000, with most of those killed being Herrero. Many of the Herrero died when Germans forced them into the Namib Desert and systematically poisoned water wells, leaving thousands of Herreros to die in the desert.¹² Conditions were so harsh in the desert, that many Herrero people drank the blood from dying cattle in desperate attempts to stay alive.¹³ The Herero-Nama genocide is today seen as a model for the Holocaust carried out by Germany during World War II, and greatly changed ethnic group dynamics in the country. Instead of fairly even distribution between ethnic groups before colonization, the Ovambo suddenly formed a majority in

¹¹ Reinhart Kossler. "Entangled History and Politics: Negotiating the Past Between Namibia and Germany." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 26.3 (2008): 313-339, pg. 314.

¹² Richard Overy. *Interrogations: The Nazi Elite in Allied Hands*. 1945.

¹³ Jurgen Zimmerer, and Joachim Zeller. *Genocide in German South-West Africa: The Colonial War (1904-1908) and its Aftermath*. Berlin: Merlin Press, 2003, pg. 49

the country, as they were the only large group not to go through attempted genocide by the Germans.

The introduction of German culture also changed many aspects of life in Namibia. Secret police and militia were not the only Germans coming to Namibia, as many settlers looked to Namibia to start a new life. German-speaking communities arose in Namibia, and German immigration became fairly common. This created: distinctions between cultures, a racial hierarchy and racism in the lower levels of society. Immigrants would arrive from Germany with a sense of adventure, excited about exploring a new continent. German was quickly established as the national language, and many immigrants felt comfortable hearing their native tongue in a foreign country.¹⁴ To make it in the German-led Namibia, blacks had to learn to read and write German, and the few who did were able to make it up to higher-class positions of serving the wealthiest Germans. The German culture imposed was one that not only set up whites as the superior race, but also one that set up men as the superior gender. German culture is traditionally male-based and trace ancestry through the man, unlike many Namibian tribes who were matrilineal and traditionally gave power to women. One German woman who emigrated to Namibia claimed that the German gender culture was even more conservative in Namibia, and was irritated by the practices of gender within the white community.¹⁵ These immigrants lived together, not mixing at all with the black Namibians. This created an even greater rift between the two races, placing a wealthy white class separate from a poorer black class. Looking back today, many German immigrants have fond memories of their lives

¹⁴ Heidi Armbruster. "'With Hard Work and Determination You Can Make it Here': Narratives of Identity Among German Immigrants in Post-Colonial Namibia." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34.3 (2008): 611-628, pg. 618.

¹⁵ Armbruster, 620.

in Namibia, but many remark on a sense of moral discomfort that was ever-present during their time living in comfort surrounded by black Namibians who were not as well off.¹⁶ Logically, considering its geographical location in the south of Africa, this aspect of life was very similar to the apartheid in South Africa.

Germany set up an education system, known as the Südwester, a system of schools built for German children in Namibia.¹⁷ The schools became a symbol of separation between whites and blacks in Namibia, and set up an additional cultural barrier between Germans and black Namibians. They became the best schools in the country, and since they only allowed German to be spoken, German became the language of the upper-class. Though the general culture and the communities set up for German settlers were significant reasons for a shift in culture from pre-colonization days, the biggest factor was definitely the school systems. The German schools instilled German tradition as the superior culture from a young age, and the exclusive German-speaking schools sent a message to more native Namibians in the area that they had to adopt to German culture or be subjected to a worse life for them and their children. Even today in Namibia, there are lasting effects of the Südwester, with tension between black and white German speaking children in Namibia. The schools were eventually forced to segregate by the government after Namibia became independent, and the impact of German colonization was made even more apparent when black Namibians were not welcomed at the German schools.

¹⁶ Ibid, 621.

¹⁷ Jason Owens. "Blood Ties and Tongue Ties: The Role of Children in Shifting the Boundaries of Namibia's German-Speaking Community." *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1.2 (2008): 232-249, pg. 240.

In addition to general cultural and demographic changes under German rule, the political structure of Namibia went through some significant changes. Before colonization, each ethnic group was separate, with very minimal contact. Even within groups, power was rarely centralized. Germany largely ignored the political structures of the different groups and set up their own tyrannical rule when they took over. Their rule was based out of the south, from the “Police Zone,” where they subjugated black Namibians to forced labor and police brutality. At first the area Germans controlled was confined to Windhoek, located in the middle of the Herero settlements.¹⁸ Their political strategy over the Namibian people was known as “divide and rule.” This policy was based entirely off of making profit from colonization without regard for how the native people were affected. This philosophy seems to contradict with colonization, as colonizing powers often took economic advantage of African countries without taking over control of the government. Hence, there must have been an underlying factor in reasons for colonization, and one author points to racism as a reason, citing the outlawing of mixed marriage and distinguishing of classes by race in German Southwest Africa.¹⁹ In addition to the laws against mixed marriages, the German government focused on recruiting Ovambo workers, passing a law that regulated the movement of Africans within Namibia. The attempts at centralization by ruling Germans greatly contradicted with the political systems tribal groups were used to and could very well be a reason why Germany ended up violently establishing their rule. The Namibian people could not adjust to such a drastic change in political structure and they naturally resisted. Feeling

¹⁸ Cooper, 19.

¹⁹ Zimmer, 22.

the unexplained need to centralize power in Windhoek, Germany met this resistance with violence and set up an autocratic and unpopular governmental structure.

V. Colonization by South Africa

Despite the great resistance to German attempts at centralization, South Africa went about a similar means of holding power when they took over. After Germany lost World War I, they were forced to hand over all of their colonies in the Treaty of Versailles. Due to the increasing amount of South African involvement in Namibia, South Africa was granted an administrative mandate in the understanding that they would reform Germany's colonial practices to prepare South West Africa for independence.²⁰ What actually happened could not have been further from that understanding. The South African government's first act in South West Africa (the new name changed from German South West Africa) was to establish a hunting tax to encourage Namibians to give up hunting and join the wage labor market. Many Namibians resisted paying this tax, and in response South Africa became the first colonizing power to conduct an air strike against its own people. By the end of the air strike, South Africa had killed 100 Namibians and injured and captured 468.²¹ In addition to violence carried out by South African leaders, all of the race discriminatory laws developed for South Africa were extended in South West Africa. The German system of segregation was accelerated under South African rule. White control of politics and the economy was guaranteed, with laws restricting the political and socioeconomic rights of blacks while reinforcing

²⁰ Glover, 33.

²¹ Cooper, 39.

the roles of black Namibians being subservient to those of white Namibians.²² In general, the transition from German to South African rule can be described as a violent continuance of German policy.

South West Africa went through a number of cultural changes under South African rule. While segregation and class distinctions started under German rule, they were highly intensified after World War I. Reserves for black Namibians became increasingly overcrowded and poverty-stricken. These lands that countless black Namibians were forced onto were the least fertile lands and significantly separated from white communities.²³ Meanwhile immigration rose, and by 1936 there were more than twice as many European immigrants to South West Africa (31,200) than there were in 1913 (15,000).²⁴ The increase of white immigrants along with the increase of poverty and separation of black Namibians intensified racial discrimination and the destruction of black culture throughout South Africa's rule. Even mixed raced people were given more rights than blacks, with the Basters receiving high levels of schooling and access to better jobs.²⁵ Ethnic divisions in the country became clearer as South Africans continued the German policy of separating groups on an ethnic basis to assert indirect rule. Racism and sexism both played a prominent role on the reserves. It was not uncommon for black workers to get 1/10th the pay of a white worker for doing the same job. The work was for men only, and women were forbidden from doing any of the jobs on the reserves

²² Sparks, 16.

²³ Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silverster, Marion Wallace and Wolfram Hartmann. *Namibia: Under South African Rule*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1998., pg. 16.

²⁴ Sparks, 17.

²⁵ Glover, 34.

involving higher pay.²⁶ Sexism was certainly not a foreign concept to colonizing powers at the time, but in a society traditionally matrilineal, women experienced a significant shift in their role.

The politics in South West Africa were based in South Africa, unlike the previous German government based out of Windhoek. Due to their geographic proximity South Africa was able to govern Namibia without too much of a presence in the country. Especially in northern Namibia (Ovamboland), South Africa used indirect rule to keep the control that Germany formally held over the area.²⁷ However, they still continued many German policies. For example, the Land Ordinances of 1903 and 1912 were extended under South African rule, stating that blacks in what was formally known as the “police zone” were not allowed to own land.²⁸ Whites living in South West Africa were given citizenship in South Africa and could vote and be represented in Parliament. Black South West Africans had no representation in South African parliament, and had no choice in their leadership. Through a system known as “native reserves” South Africa gave blacks the power to run their own local affairs. However, they had little to no actual power and since South Africa could appoint and dismiss the leaders of these reserves, most black leaders lost legitimacy. These “native reserves” or “native administrations” had locally born Magistrates who controlled administrative and judicial responsibilities at a local level. It was common for Magistrates’ power to be taken away and “relieved” by policemen,²⁹ giving further evidence to the lack of ability to govern at a local level. South Africa established a harsh, rigid and extreme hierarchical power structure that put a

²⁶ Sparks, 18.

²⁷ Hayes, 18.

²⁸ Sparks, 17.

²⁹ Hayes, 60.

greater stress on ethnic identity.³⁰ The pre-colonially established groups became violently competitive as a result.

By the time South Africa had solidified their political changes in the land to their north, the pre-colonial African political systems were barely recognizable.³¹ The “native reserves” system eliminated traditions such as the Ovambo kingship and the seasonal migration of Herero communities.³² Even whites in South West Africa had little power, as South Africa controlled foreign policy, defense, “native affairs,” and all infrastructure.³³ South Africa took great steps to integrate many parts of South West Africa into the other British controlled areas of southern Africa. The South West African railway system became incorporated into the Union system, and all waterways and harbors were also controlled by South Africa.³⁴ South Africa turned South West Africa into a completely economic dependent country through policies they enacted making it a product, export-oriented, foreign-dominated economy that South Africa used for raw materials and one of their main exporters.³⁵ After making South West Africa completely dependent on them economically, it was easy for South Africa to maintain political control.

Since South Africa was a colony of Great Britain throughout much of its rule over South West Africa, Great Britain’s role in colonization should be briefly noted. Despite always having a presence in Walvis Bay, Britain never claimed South West Africa as an official territory. Even though they made an attempt to get South West Africa after the

³⁰ Glover, 34.

³¹ Sparks, 16.

³² Glover, 33.

³³ Sparks, 17.

³⁴ Cooper, 39.

³⁵ Sparks, 19.

Berlin Conference and again at the Treaty of Versailles, they never had official control. Great Britain still had a transitive affect through ruling South Africa. South African leaders insisted that South West Africans report to the leaders of South Africa and not to the crown. While Great Britain did include South West Africa in their British Empire Exhibition held in Wembley in 1925,³⁶ South Africa insisted on having primary control of the region, continuing to govern it separately of the British crown. This ended up being a significant step in South Africa's road to independence.

Overall, the time that South Africa was ruling what is today Namibia can be described as a power-limiting violent period in Namibian history. What was most distinctive about South Africa's style of colonization was how much they ruled from outside of the territory. Since they had the unusual advantage of being neighbors with South West Africa they ended up conducting most affairs from South Africa, giving even fewer rights to Namibians than Germany did. This is clearly a negative trait because of how individual freedoms were limited in Namibia, but in a way it can be seen as something positive because it put Namibians on a more level playing field. White Namibians had almost as few rights as black ones. And even though racism and segregation still existed under South African rule, South Africans discriminated against both groups, arguably limiting inequality. This argument however is almost pointless, because South Africa brought Namibia so far backwards culturally, economically and politically that it hardly matters what silver lining there was in their brutal policies. South Africa's long rule in South West Africa was marked by the institutionalization of racism and a new economic dependence on South Africa.

³⁶ Cooper, 40.

VI. The Struggle for Independence

The struggle for Namibian independence was by no means an easy or peaceful one, as Namibia was the last colony in Africa to become independent (with the exception of Western Sahara which remains today to be a colony of Morocco). Namibia broke free from South Africa in 1990 after 75 years of struggle and contested rule. In this time South Africa resisted many international pressures to grant Namibia independence. When the League of Nations was disbanded in 1946, the mandate that gave South Africa the authority to rule Namibia no longer stood, but South Africa continued to rule. The new United Nations called for all ruling powers to have a definite independence schedule, and despite many Herero tribes submitting petitions for independence, South Africa still ruled. In 1966 both Ethiopia and Liberia submitted complaints to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) about South Africa's presence in Namibia, but the complaints were dismissed. Later, the UN General Assembly revoked South Africa's mandate, having no effect. And in 1971, the ICJ issued an "advisory opinion" that declared South Africa's administration of South West Africa to be illegal. In 1978, the UN Security Council drew up an internationally-agreed decolonization plan for Namibia. None of these attempts ended South Africa's rule.

Meanwhile, numerous attempts at independence were being made inside the country, both politically and militarily. The Ovamboland People's Congress was formed in 1958 to protest the contract labor system. They changed their name the next year to

the Ovamboland People's Organization (OPO) and made their main goal independence.³⁷ Meanwhile, in Hereroland the South West African National Union (SWANU) sprang up to give the Herero people more political representation.³⁸ The OPO started to gain strength with contract workers in Windhoek, and before long a SWANU-OPO alliance formed, a significant step in bringing together the Ovambo and Herero people. The turning point in the Namibian struggle for independence, where political mobilization turned into violence was in December of 1959 when Sam Nujoma led an OPO peaceful protest march to the municipal offices where they were met with police resistance. When protesters began to throw stones at the police officers, the police opened fire, killing thirteen and wounding 54. Nujoma and others involved in the protest were arrested and jailed, but later freed by Herero supporters. The fact that this event was the beginning of violent resistance led many to call it the "Namibian Sharpeville."³⁹ The OPO then broke off from SWANU and changed their name to the South West African People's Organization, or SWAPO. SWAPO was proclaimed by UN Resolution 3111 in 1973 to be the sole voice of the Namibian people. Other independence groups that were less influential included the National Unity Democratic Organization (NUDO), the People's Liberation Party of Namibia (PLAN) and the Rehoboth Volksparty, who all aligned with SWAPO at various times. Due to conflict over who was the dominant party in Namibia in the view of the international community, these independence groups were not able to work together very often, and often split into factions, with numerous independence

³⁷ Glover, 45.

³⁸ Denis Herbstein, and John Evenson. *The Devils are Among Us: The War for Namibia*. London: Zed Books Ltd, 1989.

, pg. 6
³⁹ Glover, 47.

groups splitting off of SWAPO. This was an ironic misfortune, as international support created tension between different groups who all wanted the same things. If there had not been so much attention from the international community on who the ruling party should be in Namibia, perhaps the different independence movements could have been more united and Namibia could have gained independence much earlier.

South Africa was able to maintain rule despite internal and international pressures by way of a variety of political and military acts. The Odendaal Commission of 1964 divided South West Africa into 11 mini-states, 10 black and one white, with the 93% of the population that was black divided separately into reserves that took up a total of 40% of the land (see appendix b for more information).⁴⁰ This served to weaken black opposition by dividing black Namibians into smaller, more manageable ethnic groups and by focusing all political and economic decisions around ethnicity. This attempt to decrease resistance while other countries in Africa were gaining their independence worked despite great resistance and disapproval, as the system stayed in place for 27 more years, until Namibia was independent. While weakening black resistance with the Odendaal Commission, South Africa made efforts to make it look like they were helping Namibia gain independence when in reality they were just reinforcing South African rule. In 1975, South Africa invited Namibian political leaders to draft an interim constitution and set up an Interim Government. This created the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA), a white Namibian political party to provide an alternative to SWAPO. The DTA then won an election (where only whites could vote) with 82% of the vote⁴¹. The South African controlled media touted this election as the beginning of self-determination,

⁴⁰ Sparks, 20.

⁴¹ Glover, 53.

when in reality it was just an effort to suppress the rising independence parties such as SWAPO.

Some claim that the reason for South Africa's ignoring of international and internal pressures can be attributed to the Afrikaners' fear of losing the buffer they had between themselves and the rest of "black Africa." While this might have been a factor in South Africa's continued presence in Namibia, the main reason why South Africa ignored the orders of the UN is simply because the UN had no way of enforcing their orders. South Africa felt like they had the power to play with the UN, putting on the charade of having elections and self-determination in Namibia, knowing that the UN would not be able to interfere. This is a common problem in the international community, as the United Nations has no real power of enforcement, so there is not great incentive for countries to listen to their demands.

South Africa's control over Namibia could not last forever, and after much negotiation and warfare Namibia gained its independence. Surprisingly, the United States played a significant role in the process. The time of Namibia's independence struggle lined up with the Cold War between the US and USSR, as the United States made many questionable foreign policy decisions in an effort to prevent the spread of communism. In southern Africa, the US had a vested interest in South Africa maintaining control of Namibia because South Africa was a non-communist ally, and the US also had a strong interest in keeping the Cuban and Soviet forces from influencing the Angolan government.⁴² The US developed a policy in the region known as "linkage," where it tied two of its main interests in southern Africa into one issue. As a result,

⁴² Herbstein, 154.

President Reagan had a summit with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev where they decided that Cuban and Soviet presence in Angola would cease as soon as South Africa withdrew from Namibia, and would follow the UN Security Resolution that mapped out a plan for Namibian independence. This agreement was signed in December of 1988 in what was called the New York accords. Soon after, Cuba agreed to withdraw their troops from Angola and South Africa pulled out of Namibia.⁴³ Then, after an 11-month transition period, Namibia was declared independent on March 21, 1990. There have been books written on the details of the war for independence, and for the purposes of this study it will suffice to say that the war for independence was a violent one, being fought by many different groups in a disjointed effort against a much stronger enemy. Independence was a great victory for Namibia, but it was by no means the end of their struggle. The country was left in pieces after South Africa's long and violent rule, and finally had to adjust to being independent.

VII. The Decolonization Process

After gaining their independence Namibia still had to make the final transition to being internationally recognized as a free country. In November of 1989 they held their first elections in the country that were certified as free and fair by the UN, as the people voted for a Constituent Assembly. There were nearly 98 percent of registered voters who turned out in celebration of finally gaining independence. SWAPO took 57 percent of the vote, with the white Namibian-led Democratic Turnhalle Alliance receiving 29

⁴³ Laurent Kaela. *The Question of Namibia*. London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1996, pg. 105.

percent. SWAPO fell just short of the 67 percent necessary to have full control of the constitutional process, with the UN leading the efforts instead. Most of SWAPO's support came from Ovamboland, with 92 percent of the northern district voting for the Ovambo-based party.⁴⁴ It was reported at the time that the South African government paid more than 20 million pounds to opposition parties of SWAPO before the election, as they did not want SWAPO to gain control of the government.⁴⁵ This brings up the question of the actual fairness of these first free elections. A foreign government would not be allowed to play such a prominent role in campaigning for the President of the United States, and the case should be the same in Namibia. A true democratic movement should rise from the grassroots of a country, and when foreign countries are trying to exert their influence in politics it become much more difficult for a newly independent country to democratize. Even though later elections would be less corrupt, it is significant to note that the first "free" elections in Namibia were heavily funded by South Africa and had the white Namibian party (keep in mind that whites accounted for roughly 6 percent of the population) receiving 29 percent of the vote.

Nevertheless, the assembly drafted and adopted a constitution on February 9, 1990 and declared official independence the next month. The Namibian constitution was the first gender-neutral constitution passed,⁴⁶ a feat that will be addressed later when cultural changes are examined. The constituent assembly unanimously voted to elect Sam Nujoma as the first president. In regards to being elected as Namibia's first president, Nujoma wrote in his autobiography, "The chains of slavery and colonialism

⁴⁴ Nujoma, 423.

⁴⁵ *The Guardian*, July 26, 1991.

⁴⁶ Susan Glover, Personal Interview. 29 September 2010.

were at last broken, but for the future there were other chains to be wrenched apart.”⁴⁷

Nujoma could not have put it better. His country was free, but there were still lasting effects from the time that Namibia was a colony. Namibia must recognize the role that those effects play in the country today and how they will play a role in determining Namibia’s future stability and prosperity.

VIII. Political Changes: A Reaction to Colonization

The Namibian constitution was drafted with the effects of apartheid fresh in the decision makers’ memories. One aspect of the new constitution was a strong executive and unitary system of government. Some saw this as an act that was a result of being used to the apartheid divisions. However, President Nujoma saw it differently, saying that, “SWAPO wanted a strong, unitary central government to counter the damage done by apartheid.”⁴⁸ He was afraid that a federalist state would perpetuate divisiveness in the country, and the only way to move the country forward in a positive direction was to focus on national unity via a strong executive. In the meeting where the constitution was written, SWAPO pushed for a strong executive, while the DTA pushed for a weaker one. The only concession that SWAPO ended up making was to weaken the presidency by making term limits, saying Nujoma could not serve more than two terms.⁴⁹ Even though a strong executive branch can be seen as a hindrance to democracy because of the possibility it allows for corruption, the reason for it can be traced back to the harsh ethnic

⁴⁷ Nujoma, 431.

⁴⁸ Nujoma, 425.

⁴⁹ Lionel Cliffe. *Independence in Namibia*. Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, Inc, 1994, pg. 203.

divides created by colonization. The best way, according to SWAPO, to try to reverse the damage done by colonization and bring the different ethnic groups together after they were brutally divided by both Germany and South Africa, was to increase patriotism and a national identity. And they decided that the best way to do that was with a strong national figure who could be a rallying and unifying presence for the citizens.

There was much debate that occurred when deciding on the legislative system that should be adopted by the new government. In the end, it was agreed that a proportional representation system would be used for election of the National Assembly, and that a “first past the post” system would be used for the election of regional councilors.⁵⁰ A first past the post system is one that relies on multiple elections until someone can “pass the post,” or receive a set percentage of the votes. It is, unlike the system to decide the National Assembly, a winner-take-all system, where the first party to pass the post gets all votes from the region. As a trade-off for the powerful executive, SWAPO accepted the DTA’s proposal for a second legislative chamber who can review and delay legislation. Despite being SWAPO’s main opposition, the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance did not put up much opposition when forming the government.⁵¹ After nearly 50 years of submitting proposals and waging war for independence, it was clear in the constitutional assembly that opposition was not enough to prevent progress. One might even say that the length of Namibia’s colonization period can be pointed to as a reason why forming a government after independence was a relatively quick and easy process.

It is important to note that an end of political oppression in Namibia did not mean the end of political violence. During the first electoral elections, there were multiple

⁵⁰ Nujoma, 427.

⁵¹ Cliffe, 203.

cases of shootings, kidnapping, throwing of hand grenades, beatings and assassinations.⁵² Many black Namibians felt threatened to go to the polls, as nearly all voting places were in locations of former South African control and peppered with police. One large reason for the apprehension to voting in the new Namibia was the lasting effects of colonization. The fear present in people who had no real freedom under South African rule did not just disappear when Namibia was freed. The first “free and fair” election was not in reality completely free and fair, both because of the inability to completely rid intimidation and violence at the polls and because of the lingering fear from past “heavy-handed and biased electoral experiences.”⁵³ The fact that these elections were won by SWAPO and ended up being declared free and fair can largely be attributed to the increased security in Ovamboland, the place where SWAPO saw the most support. Needless to say, South Africa sent a bloody and intimidating message during the first elections that they still played a large role in Namibian politics and would not go away immediately. The reason for this can be traced back to a fear of SWAPO controlling the Namibian government and, as a historical enemy of South Africa, hurting South African safety and security. Another reason that can be pointed to is the fear of apartheid coming to an end with an anti-apartheid group taking control in a neighboring country with many ties to South Africa.

One political question that remained after independence was Namibia’s political role in the region and their relations with neighboring countries. Historically, all countries in southern Africa (with the exception of South Africa), have been against apartheid, but South Africa resisted the opposition to their policy by supporting rebel

⁵² Cliffe, 95.

⁵³ Cliffe, 96.

movements in neighboring countries. One threat to political stability in Namibia was its neighbor to the north, Angola. Since Angola played a large role in Namibia's independence, many scholars feared that the civil war going on in Angola at the time was a danger to Namibian political stability.⁵⁴ South Africa continued to play a role in Namibian politics after independence. There were also many territorial disputes with South Africa when it came to Walvis Bay, Penguin Island and the Orange River, some of which were not settled until 1994.⁵⁵ Members of the South African Military Intelligence team (SAMI), were pointed to as "whipping up of anti-SWAPO sentiment...and building up the credibility of the DTA (Democratic Turnhalle Alliance)."⁵⁶ After this was exposed, it became clear that South Africa was going to play a role in Namibia's electoral process, whether or not the international community approved. This represented a continuance of South African mentality from colonization. Not only did South Africa play a large role in campaigning, but also their economic interests initially controlled much of the Namibian media. Instead of defying the international pressure to liberate Namibia and stop apartheid, they switched to defying the international pressure to stay out of Namibia's internal affairs. Clearly, not too much changed in the behavior of South Africa, as they still seemed to be unfazed by international pressure.

SWAPO became closely aligned with the African National Congress (ANC) due to the fact that they both were nationalist liberation movements. This tie started when SWAPO was organized in the 1950s and continued when Namibia became independent. In the beginning, both groups used nonviolent resistance, then both developed military

⁵⁴ Sparke, 64.

⁵⁵ Kaela, 134.

⁵⁶ Cliffe, 83.

wings after turning points in the conflict (Sharpevilles), received little help from the international community, and, using grassroots support, they eventually took over their respective countries. The relationship continued between the new governments, as one of Nujoma's first trips as president was to Gaborone, Botswana to meet with leaders of the ANC and the Pan-Africanist Conference.⁵⁷ The new Namibia was faced with a dilemma when it came to how to deal with neighboring countries because they could not support apartheid but needed South Africa's support. As a result, Nujoma announced that Namibia in the beginning would keep all vital trade links with South Africa but would not have any diplomatic relations with the country until there was significant reform.

In addition to regional relations, there was also a question as to how Namibia would deal with international relations immediately after independence. Namibia's natural resources (in particular, large amounts of uranium), drew much attention from the international crowd. The United States, Germany, Great Britain, Japan and Canada were all countries that immediately become diplomatically involved with the new state⁵⁸. Besides the natural resources, world powers took an interest in Namibia because of the late Cold War mentality of creating as many democracies as possible. The United States, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden all showed support for SWAPO in the form of humanitarian and development assistance. However, Namibia did not receive much international support politically because most of the focus at the time was going towards countries in Eastern Europe, as the world feared that they were in danger of becoming communist. The Soviets also had a presence in the country, supporting SWAPO's independence movement to a small extent, but their focus lied primarily in

⁵⁷ Sparke, 66.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 67.

supporting the independence movements in neighboring countries. The United Nations played the largest role of any international organization in Namibia. After working to make sure Namibia was stable and independent, the UN maintained close ties with the state, making it the 160th member of the UN on April 23rd, 1990.⁵⁹ Namibia also initially received support from the Nonaligned Movement (NAM), an international organization that supported Namibia's liberation movement and continued to support the SWAPO-led government. The final major player in international relations was Great Britain, who Namibia saw as an ally based on their former loose inclusion in the British Commonwealth. The new government looked to Great Britain as a political ally in securing peace and stability in the newly independent country.

One major political issue in the newly independent Namibia was land reform and redistribution. Since the Germans and South Africans had stripped native Namibians of all plentiful land, many farmers were calling out for land redistribution. Initially, SWAPO showed no interest in land redistribution, as their focus was primarily on independence, stability, and prosperity. Since it was such a controversial and racially divisive issue, both parties initially ignored it for the most part. One SWAPO leader, Ben Amathila, commented at the constitutional transition meeting, "we do not intend to interfere with land ownership as set out at present,"⁶⁰ effectively summarizing his party's stance. There was a conference in 1991 about what to do regarding the uneven distribution of land, where the attendees decided neither to redistribute land nor pay reparations to black Namibians for the land they lost. SWAPO was afraid of hurting the economy and appearing to be communist in the spirit of maintaining support of Western

⁵⁹ Sparke, 68.

⁶⁰ Cliffe, 205.

powers. However, this is not to say that the government did nothing to compensate black Namibians for land lost. The process is one described as slow and gradual, to avoid a sudden danger to the economy. Reforms passed included targeting land owned by absentee landlords and by those with “too much of it” to be purchased by the government and redistributed to those with “too little of it.” Other reforms included giving out “soft loans” to black Namibians at low interest rates to allow them to purchase and develop land and eliminating the system of reserving land exclusively for racial and ethnic groups.⁶¹ The reason for hesitance in radically redistributing land can be pointed back to the effects of colonization. Clearly, white land ownership was so entrenched in Namibian culture that, even a radical independence group such as SWAPO was not willing to strip whites of their wealth. Though this was a questionable decision on the part of SWAPO because it upset many black Namibians, it was probably good for the country’s economy and ultimately diversity. One just has to look to Namibia’s neighbor to the east, Zimbabwe, to see an example of how land redistribution can hurt both the economy and racial relations a country.

There was a plethora of political effects immediately following independence, all of which can be traced in some way to Namibia’s colonial history. For the first time black Africans were in charge of Namibia, a clear political change, but there were still lasting impacts of colonization. Whites still controlled a disproportionate amount of the land and wealth, and many black Namibians were intimidated to vote. Despite the high turnout rate, it was only of registered voters, as many blacks remained unregistered (See Appendix C). All of this can be traced back to history of colonization, apartheid and

⁶¹ Kaela, 131.

oppression. The structure of the government is reflective of a divided country with hopes of becoming unified, and the land reforms reflect similar goals. International relations improved from colonial times, strengthening with the Western world at each sign of democracy or capitalism. The only exception was South Africa, where Namibia had to be careful to maintain relations without supporting the anti-SWAPO, pro-apartheid government. The positive international relations can also be seen as a result of Namibia's period of colonization, as they were forced to continually go to international organizations for support. The relationship of tense Namibian-South African relations with the colonial period needs no explanation.

IX. Immediate Economic Changes Brought on by Independence

Even after Namibia became free from South Africa there was still a large economic dependence on the country to the south. Namibia made some attempts to reduce its economic dependence by joining the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) in order to gain greater economic ties with other countries,⁶² but the work done by South Africa was so entrenched in the Namibian economy that President Nujoma recognized he had to maintain cordial relations with South Africa if his country were to financially survive. Luckily, the large amount of raw materials in the country drew attention from world powers, increasing the international economic presence in the country. There are about 50 minerals found in the country including uranium, diamonds, copper, zinc and lead, the sea waters provide many

⁶² Sparke, 65.

varieties of fish, and there is some good land for crop cultivation and ranching.⁶³

Namibia's biggest industry was the mining industry, and by 1992, South Africa accounted for two thirds of investment in that industry. This number alone shows how difficult it was for Namibia to separate itself from a former colonial power.

The main focus of SWAPO when it came to the economy was to make sure that no one exploited the country's natural resources like South Africa did. This was easier said than done because of all the foreign companies controlling Namibia's natural resources, but the government passed some laws to promote Namibia controlling their own economy. The government partnered with various companies in the area, levied a 5% tax on all mineral exports that went unprocessed, and declared a 200-mile exclusive zone along the coast where they regulated fishing. They also tried to increase foreign investment by passing the Investment Act in 1990, saying that it was not mandatory for foreign investors to have joint ventures with Namibian partners.⁶⁴ The government also made sure to have better rights for workers, mandating in their constitution that workers had the right to a living wage, a forty-hour week in safe and hygienic working conditions, the right to rest, leisure, paid holidays, maternity leave, family leave, sick leave, the right to proper training, the right to work, the right to water, the right to join trade unions, and the right to withhold labor without being exposed to criminal penalties.⁶⁵ All of these acts can be seen as a reaction to all of the years Namibia was exploited by both Germany and South Africa.

⁶³ Kaela, 127.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 129.

⁶⁵ Cliffe, 212.

An interesting economic aspect to note is that before independence, SWAPO's economic policy was largely seen as a socialist one that guaranteed to cut off all ties with South Africa. However, after independence they drastically changed to promoting a capitalist system, and went back on their promise to sever ties with their southern neighbor. After passing various socialist mission statements when it came to the economy throughout the 1970s, SWAPO released a different statement in February of 1991, saying, "The economic order of Namibia shall be based on the principle of a mixed economy with the objective of securing economic growth, prosperity and a life of human dignity for all Namibians."⁶⁶ SWAPO also went against their previous goal of nationalizing all land, guaranteeing that the government will be responsible for all mining activities and declaring that the state sector should become dominant in Namibian fisheries. In short, SWAPO switched from socialist economic policies to more capitalist economic policies. The ultimate reason for this was the need for stability. Once SWAPO took control they realized that they had to shift a little more to the middle ideologically if they wanted to maintain control and keep Namibia stable. After seeing the tumultuous fate of their neighboring countries after independence, SWAPO had a lot to learn. One thing they learned was the importance of support from Western powers. Ultimately, their economic policies had to mirror those of Western powers if they wanted significant international support. Due to the fact that Namibia's economy was nearly destroyed by colonizing powers, SWAPO knew that they could not revive the country internally. This sideways result of colonization led the country to become increasingly capitalistic and involved in foreign investment despite the socialistic group in power. In the short term,

⁶⁶ Sparke, 120.

Namibia's history of colonization led to an open market system where most aspects of the economy were not nationalized.

X. Long Term Political Effects (Of Colonization)

So far the only material covered has been research completed in books published (for the most part) in the early 1990s. However, effects of colonization clearly cannot be limited to the first two years after independence. To analyze long term effects recent journal articles and personal observations will be the main methods of dispersing information, as this subject is not commonly studied. The long-term political effects of colonization will be looked at in terms of democracy and stability. Did colonization in the long term lead to Namibia's government being more or less democratic, and more or less stable? The answer is both, and both the negative and the positive effects will be analyzed.

While SWAPO may have had the best intentions when rising to power, what happened when they had power was a slightly different story. One author wrote referring to Namibia that, "those who have been oppressed make the worst democrats,,when they come to power they hold the most undemocratic practices."⁶⁷ Perhaps the least democratic aspect of post-independence politics in Namibia is the single-party rule in the country. Since independence, SWAPO has maintained control over both the parliament and the presidency. In the 1994 elections for National Assembly, SWAPO received 73.33 percent of the vote, and continued to increase that percentage to 76.15 percent in

⁶⁷ Henning Melber. *Re-Examining Liberation in Namibia*. Stockholm: Elanders Gotab, 2003, pg. 11.

the 1999 election⁶⁸ (See appendix D). While SWAPO cannot be fully blamed for being too popular, one must question how democratic a government really is that turns out that high of percentages for a single party. Even though many democratic systems are put in place, such as the three-branch system and bicameral legislature, SWAPO has used their power to strengthen their control, thus limiting democracy. For example, in 1998 the two houses (the National Assembly and National Council) changed the Constitution for the first time with a two-thirds majority, increasing term limits to three instead of two; and President Nujoma decreed that the army get involved in the war in Congo without consulting the other branches of government.⁶⁹ The negative reaction to colonization created such a popular group in SWAPO, that when they took power it was tough to balance maintaining their support and being democratic.

Beyond being a one-sided representation of the people, SWAPO has ruled in some questionable ways that further the undemocratic actions from the pro-democratic party. One example is their questionable treatment of the Lubango spies, captured by SWAPO during the independence struggle. Despite the call for democracy and equal opportunity, SWAPO continued to imprison these spies and subjugate them brutal conditions without releasing any information about the status of these captives.⁷⁰ This questionable move reflected SWAPO's fear of losing the power they fought so long for, a result of the lasting impact of the fight for colonization. There have also been questions as to how efficiently President Nujoma was using money, with accusations of him using drought relief aid to purchase new presidential jets and VIP helicopters. It is easy for

⁶⁸ Oda Cranenburgh. "Namibia: Consensus Institutions and Majoritarian Politics." *Democratization* 13.4 (2006), pg. 590.

⁶⁹ Melber, 19.

⁷⁰ Isaacs.

power to get to one's head, and it is clear that when SWAPO took over, they fell into doing some of the same corrupt acts that they criticized their predeceasing colonial powers of doing.

Sadly, this treatment of international aid was not uncommon in Namibia, as many leaders often criticized the western world and have recently been wary of accepting aid from western powers. At the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg held in 2002, President Nujoma called out Great Britain on their lack of understanding of Africa saying, "We are equal to Europe and if you don't think that, then to hell with you. You can keep your money. We will develop our Africa without your money."⁷¹ This quote from the Namibian President reflects a leftover (understandable) distrust of Europe from colonial times, and gives insight into how Namibia's quest for a greater sense of nationality has impeded democratization. Looking back 20 years after independence, SWAPO still has not fulfilled some of their original promises. They failed to use their power to significantly help the socio-economic standing of the majority, instead mainly helping connected minorities, they failed to bring about social and economic justice through land reforms, they failed to significantly reform working conditions for the majority of those in agriculture, they have failed to develop sustainable diplomatic relationships with many western powers, they have failed to enact real family law reform, they failed to address the inequality of AIDS present in men and women, and they failed to increase human rights for people of various sexualities.⁷² This laundry list of charges is an opinion by one author, but the list is backed up with facts, and it is clear

⁷¹ Henning Melber (2). "From Controlled Change to Changed Control: The Case of Namibia." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 21.2 (2003), pg. 278.

⁷² Constantin Munhande. "Transitions in Namibia: Which Changes for Whom?." *Eastern Africa Social Science Research Review* 24.2 (2008), pg. 86.

that SWAPO's rule has not been as effective as the leaders originally claimed it would be. One large reason for this might be simply that colonization left SWAPO with so many problems to deal with that were so entrenched in society that it was impossible to fix most of them as quickly as SWAPO had planned. Of course this cannot be completely blamed on colonization, as SWAPO clearly has left out some promised reforms since taking control.

The most distinctive aspect of Namibian politics (that can perhaps be attributed to the colonial history) is one-party dominance. As previously mentioned, SWAPO has been in control of a large majority of the government since Namibia's independence. Part of this trend can be traced back to international support for SWAPO during their independence struggle, and part can be traced back to the general fear of things going back to the way they were before. People do not always vote on what is best for them, as their votes are sometimes controlled by fear of voting for the worst. As SWAPO has established themselves as the "anti-colonization" party, they have been able to gain support from all of those people living in fear that their lives will return to the way they were under South African rule. Once this fear subsides and the country becomes more stable, SWAPO will most likely start to lose support. They clearly have not been model leaders in their time at the top, and votes will eventually reflect that. There has much internal conflict within SWAPO as a result of claims of civil rights abuses and the adding of a third presidential term. As a result, new parties recently started to form from SWAPO such as the Congress of Democrats (CoD) and Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), who were in turn chastised by the ruling party.⁷³

⁷³ Cranenburg, 600.

XI. Long Term Cultural Effects

Namibia's Constitution was the first ever gender-neutral constitution written. However, this did not mean that there weren't issues with gender and sexual orientation under SWAPO's rule. SWAPO launched a quarterly magazine in 1984 titled *Namibian Woman*, recognizing that the struggle for independence was linked with the struggle for women's emancipation.⁷⁴ In a culture traditionally very respectful of women, their rights were stripped under colonial rule, and SWAPO stated that they wished to get women back these rights. Accordingly, the new constitution prohibits any discrimination on grounds of sex and provides stipulations for affirmative action programs for women at the local level.⁷⁵ There was a concern by many that allowing ethnic groups to go back to their traditional chief systems would keep a tradition of male leaders, leading to the added stipulations in the Constitution. However, the reality for many groups is that the traditional tribal systems see men as equals to women. It was only after colonization when tribes had exclusively male leaders, because of colonial requirements. Accordingly, when the first modern female leader was chosen as the senior headwoman of her district of Okalondo, she found that it was mainly the younger generation of men that objected to female leadership. Meme Martha pointed out that most traditional leaders in the community agreed that it was good to have women in chieftaincy positions

⁷⁴ Melber, 27.

⁷⁵ Heike Becker. "New Things After Independence": Gender and Traditional Authorities in Postcolonial Namibia." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32.1 (2006), pg. 32.

“because by nature people are equal.”⁷⁶ It is clear that the younger generations in Namibia who are used to colonial rule are very hesitant to see gender equality, representing an overall step backwards in that area since pre-colonization. Both Germany and South Africa established strict systems of male-only, military based leadership that, after over 100 years of colonization, made the relatively equal view of women in pre-colonial times almost disappear.

Despite attempts by SWAPO for gender equality at a local level through their constitution and various programs, SWAPO is completely male-dominated, and often seen as both masculinist and homophobic. SWAPO leaders claimed that homosexuality is “unnatural, evil, a threat to the nation, western, unchristian, unAfrican, colonial residue, and evidence of the ongoing need to decolonize Namibia.”⁷⁷ Political homophobia began during colonization, when both Germany and South Africa outlawed homosexuality. Even though SWAPO reversed many colonial policies, they ended up using homophobia in distinguishing themselves from the previous leaders, trying to paint themselves as a masculine and pure force where no homosexuality was present. SWAPO ultimately sought to “Africanize” Namibia, and as a result of the entrenched homophobia from colonization, associated homosexuality with western ideals and everything else that they opposed. Unfortunately, while SWAPO was promoting so many reforms in terms of gender equality they fell victim to acting in similar ways to the ways of the colonial rulers who they so violently opposed. This can largely be attributed to the sexist and homophobic culture established by colonial powers, but also to the need for SWAPO to

⁷⁶ Becker, 35.

⁷⁷ Ashley Currier. "Political Homophobia in Postcolonial Namibia." *Gender and Society* 24.110 (2010), pg. 112.

maintain control over their country through any means possible, even if it meant attacking their opponents' sexuality in some cases.⁷⁸

Under colonization, the different ethnic groups were all separated and subjected to racial discrimination. As previously mentioned, this increased the animosity between groups and decreased the political power each group had. A big question for SWAPO was how they would deal with this lasting effect of colonization, and how much of that would be affected by the colonization period. Namibia certainly didn't avoid this issue when drawing up their constitution, prohibiting ethnic and tribal discrimination, and discouraging the use of "ethnic" or "tribal" traditional identities. However, classifying people by their ethnic group was ingrained in Namibian culture that it was most convenient, and often was practiced by the government when redistributing wealth and natural resources out of the desire for political expedience and corporate greed.⁷⁹ This has led to an unfortunate situation where the rights of indigenous people are often sacrificed for political or corporate convenience, and the divide between ethnic groups in Namibia remains both between each other and between the rest of the population.

When dealing with tribal rights, one big question became how to effectively balance traditional chieftainships with the new democracy. Colonizing powers greatly restricted the tribal governments, so in the spirit of reversing colonial policies the natural desire of SWAPO was to encourage bringing back the chieftainships. At the same time they did not want this to interfere with their new democracy. In particular, the idea of chieftainships went against their constitutional promise to not identify people by ethnicity, an effort spurned by the apartheid forced separation of people into ethnic

⁷⁸ Currier, 123.

⁷⁹ Melber, 48.

groups. Ultimately, there is not an official role in national government for chiefs, but they still play an important role in it. Traditional leaders are significant today in national politics because they hold the key to a large block of party votes, and they remain administratively significant on a national level because they serve as the government's point of entry into their respective community.⁸⁰ There has been some opposition to the lack of formal national authority for these chiefs, but their power clearly remains, ultimately restoring the voice of the previously abused indigenous communities. The way SWAPO treats these local governments certainly is not a complete recognition of their authority, but it is a step in the right direction.

Besides the rights of women and ethnic groups, there are "lighter" cultural aspects that are interesting to examine in relation to colonization including music, technology and sports. One of the biggest struggles for a nation as young as Namibia is the search for a national identity, and these three aspects can help get there. Music can play a huge role in a new country, as one author puts it, "A government that sees music as 'mere entertainment' disregards the power of music to convey ideology and to affect change."⁸¹ Historically, as different ethnic groups were forced to live separately from one another with imposed divisions, different art and music developed within each group despite some suppression of arts by South African fear tactics. When SWAPO took power they promoted art that expresses both unity and diversity. Songs that used to define ethnic groups were no longer sung because of their linkage with the colonial past. Instead, they were replaced with the Namibian national anthem and the African anthem. Music has

⁸⁰ John Friedman. "Making Politics, Making History: Chiefship and the Post-Apartheid State in Namibia." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31.1 (2005), pg. 44.

⁸¹ Melber, 113.

been reduced to a minor role in the church, as it is used “more to create an atmosphere of formality, legitimizing power relations, than for real ritual purpose.”⁸² SWAPO praises art of all kinds by people who support the party, but traditional art has become taboo in Namibia. Overall, there is a tough balance between maintaining tradition and supporting democracy through the arts. Due to the divisive period of colonization, Namibia now puts a large stress on national unity. As a result of this stress, music and art are national ideas, and traditional music and art are starting to disappear. This is sad for the cultural buff, but may very well be a good step towards Namibian democracy.

Though sports are often seen as mere forms of entertainment and ways to pass the time, they play perhaps the largest role in unifying Namibia. Before independence, primarily white Namibians played organized sports, and there was no way the country could participate internationally when they were a part of South Africa. The ability to compete internationally in a variety of sports including track, rugby, soccer, cricket, swimming, field hockey, golf, squash, cycling, lawn bowling and fistball,⁸³ allows for a greater chance for the country to unify behind one common team. This helps increase democracy and stability by lessening the divides between each group inside of Namibia. Luckily, Namibia has done more than compete on the international stage; they have won on an international stage. They initially saw success through participation in the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games and World Championships of cricket, rugby and netball. SWAPO sought to gain control of sports in their country through the establishment of the Namibia Sports Commission and the National School Sports Union in 1995. The two

⁸² Melber, 125.

⁸³ Sparke, 153.

merged in 2003 due to conflict between the groups.⁸⁴ Though sports were a good way to increase national unity, whites still represented a disproportionate amount of successful athletes, with Namibia sending five white and four black participants to the 2004 Games in Athens. The multiracial national teams did a great deal to help setback the effects of apartheid, and SWAPO was proud to see a diverse group represent the country internationally. However, sports sometimes highlighted racial divide. Besides soccer, Namibia's main national sports are netball and cricket. Netball is dominated by lower-class black women, while cricket is dominated by upper-class white men⁸⁵. This created a clear divide between races and financial classes that became clear when national netball and cricket teams were racially imbalanced. Through physical education programs, SWAPO is attempting to eliminate this disparity. The period of colonization left Namibia with a greater need to increase nationality through sports, yet it also left them with a racial and economic gap on the playing field that made the introduction of national sports reflective of racial and economic divide in the country.

Modernization is often linked with moving on from a colonial past and creating national unity. According to scholars and many Namibians, in Namibia "tradition is equated with colonial and 'the past,' and democracy is equated with modernity."⁸⁶ Therefore, the transition to modernity and past traditionalism is key in ridding the lingering negative effects of colonization. Roads are being built, modern healthcare and education are being introduced, and railways and international aircraft are being used,

⁸⁴ Robert Chappell. "Sport in Namibia: Conflicts, Negotiations and Struggles Since Independence." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 40.241 (2005), pg. 245.

⁸⁵ Chappell, 248.

⁸⁶ Melber, 116.

leading to the movement into a new age⁸⁷. This movement into a new age often leaves behind memory of the past. In finding national unity, there must be some way of dealing with public memory. How does/should Namibia's violent past play a role in how people act and feel in the present? History is written by the victors, and children in Namibia are taught what SWAPO wants them to hear about the country's past, with events such as the genocide often being left out.⁸⁸ The colonization period was different for all the groups within the country. Different tribes had to go through varying struggles and blacks and whites were faced with opposing views of the colonization struggle. German communities tend to ignore the genocide committed by Germany, while South African communities ignore the acts of persecution committed by South Africa. The variance of public memory creates a tricky situation for the government, as SWAPO must determine how to recognize the events of the past. They have been careful to recognize all parts of the struggle, though it is inevitably biased to have history taught to a country by the victors of the struggle. In the quest of democracy and stability, an inconsistent public memory is an obstacle, but unfortunately also an inevitable result of Namibia's complicated colonization period. Creating a national identity is tough, but it will no doubt lead to a more stable and democratic Namibia.

XII. Long Term Economic Effects

⁸⁷ Keith Randall. "Namibia: From Ox-Wagon to Modernity." *Contemporary Review*, pg. 94.

⁸⁸ Reinhart Kossler. "Facing a Fragmented Past: Memory, Culture and Politics in Namibia." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33.2 (2007), pg. 370.

There is currently a high rate of unemployment in Namibia, as a result of a failing education system and gap in skill sets. Despite economic reforms made by SWAPO, the country is still slow to grow economically, with the currency linked to the South African rand. In general, people in Namibia have become reliant on the government for jobs and there is little self-sustainability⁸⁹. The stability of the economy is linked with the stability of the government, and until the government can become more stable and the education gap in the country can be lowered, little can be done at the highest level to fix the economy.

XIII. Prospects for the Future/ XIV. Conclusion

Both Namibia's actions to reverse and continue old policies can be seen as a reaction to how Namibia was treated under colonization. Land ownership was such an issue because of how Germany and South Africa unequally and ethnically divided up all the land. It became such a part of Namibian society, that SWAPO could not just get rid of it without causing a major backlash to the economy. Tribal groups no longer held onto as many traditions as a result of not wanting to go back to the time of colonialism. The economy became more nationalized to reverse the effects of separation under colonial rule, yet it was capitalistic so there could be international involvement from countries other than South Africa. There were more written rights as a reaction to all of the human rights violations under SWAPO, yet in practice people did not receive as many rights because of the difficulty for SWAPO to balance their quest for freedom and patriotism.

⁸⁹ Inocencio Verde. "A Mean-Reverting Economy is Cause of Unemployment in Namibia."

South Africa continues to be present in Namibian life through campaigning and owning significant parts of the economy, so their colonial presence can never completely be ridden. The media is still swayed by South Africa, and the SWAPO led media is so intent on reversing the censorship that occurred during colonization that they are turning into biased publications. The country is way more democratic as a result of reversing colonization policies, but still has many obstacles to democracy such as the one party rule that are in place because of how important it was to create a unified pro-independence front. Due to the separation under colonization, public memory differs for the various demographics inside the country, making it hard to nationalize. Women are slow to gain equality despite written laws because of how entrenched sexism is from colonial times. Racism has definitely not gone away, with SWAPO's rule arguably increasing it because of their association of white people with all that is bad in the country. Every issue in Namibia can be traced back to colonization, either as a rejection of colonial rule or as a lasting trend from colonial rule. SWAPO is attempting to move past this philosophy, but in the short time they have been ruling it has been tough to make people move on from their 100-year colonial past.

One large criticism of Namibian democracy is that it is majoritarian and not consensus based, leading to less democratic decisions. A majoritarian democracy has all of the aspects of a democracy, but is controlled by one party. According to one author, "in the presence of a dominant party; bicameralism does not produce a check on governmental power; and judicial review suffers from an overbearing executive and low prestige...and electoral systems seem to make little difference."⁹⁰ This makes sense,

⁹⁰ Cranenburg, 601.

seeing as SWAPO only must govern based on what the people who elected them wanted as long as they hold such a large majority. How much is one-party dominance really detrimental to democracy? Namibia's status as Africa's newest freed colony gives them the excuse of infancy. In reality, this is not a bad excuse. Many newly freed African countries are ranked highly democratic even though they had one party rule for the first few decades of their existence. This trend suggests that a new democracy might even need a single party to maintain rule so there is some stability before there is a shift in party politics. The way things are going, many political scientists predict that SWAPO will eventually lose control of the government, and this will be the true test of how democratic Namibia is.

The democratic flaws of Namibia today might not be as anti-democratic as they appear, for there are many similarities between them and aspects of life in the United States. After all, the US is seen as a haven for democracy, so if they have similar anti-democratic trends as Namibia it must not be too bad of a sign. For example, President Nujoma was criticized for his unilateral military involvement in the Congo, but the US saw the same thing with Bush in Iraq. SWAPO was criticized for the treatment of Lubango spies, but the US went through a similar practice in Guantanamo Bay. Namibia is criticized for having racially and economically divided national sports in netball and cricket, but the United States sees the same divide between sports for wealthy white people such as golf and tennis and sports more for poor black people such as basketball. Again, this reflects on a national level. So while Namibia sees many obstacles to democracy, they must keep in mind that a perfect democracy is impossible, and all stable democracies in the world still have undemocratic aspects.

It is tough to tell what the future of Namibia will be. In the last year there have been three notable developments in Namibia, two on an international level and one on a national level. The ICC reprimanded SWAPO for military practices, leading to a loss of support for the party, internationally more countries have become involved in the area to promote democracy, and locally more groups have recently split off SWAPO with the party losing votes for the first time in the most recent election. Even though SWAPO still has large control of the government, the control is slowly slipping with each mistake they make. Either SWAPO will have to reform and make the country more democratic, or they will lose power, which will also make the country more democratic. There is always the chance that the country takes a step in the other direction towards authoritarian rule, but that seems unlikely because of the way the country was set up and the international presence to make sure all elections are free and fair. As one of the newest countries in Africa it is too early to tell whether Namibia can serve as a beacon for democracy on the continent. The future looks promising as long as the country can find a way to move on from the past and create a present that is as free and fair as their constitution stipulates. All of the right tools for a democratic Namibia are there; they now must recognize those tools and be willing to change with the times.

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XVI. Appendices

Index of Appendices

A: Ethnic Groups in Namibia- map and chart

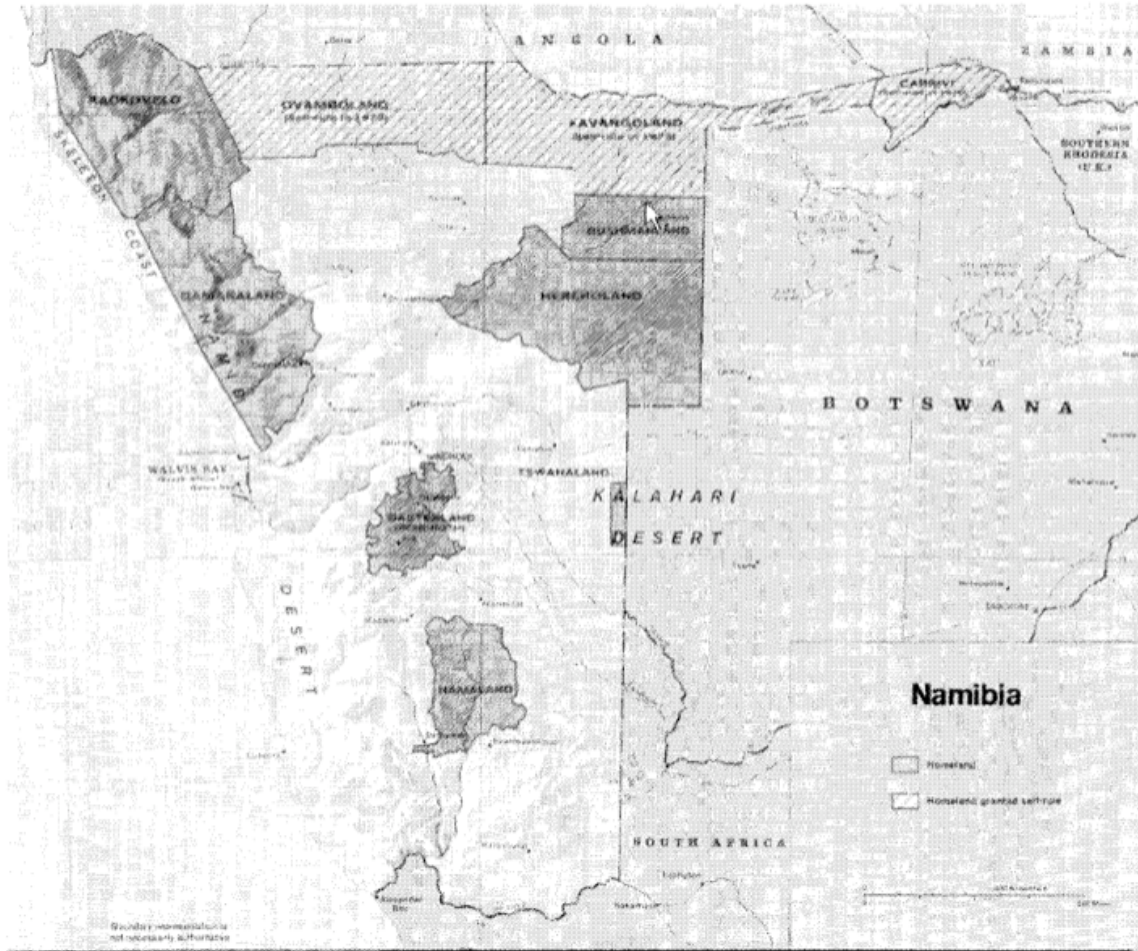
B: South West Africa by the Numbers- Under the Odendaal Commission

C: Voter Registration

D: Election results

E: FUN FACTS

Appendix A



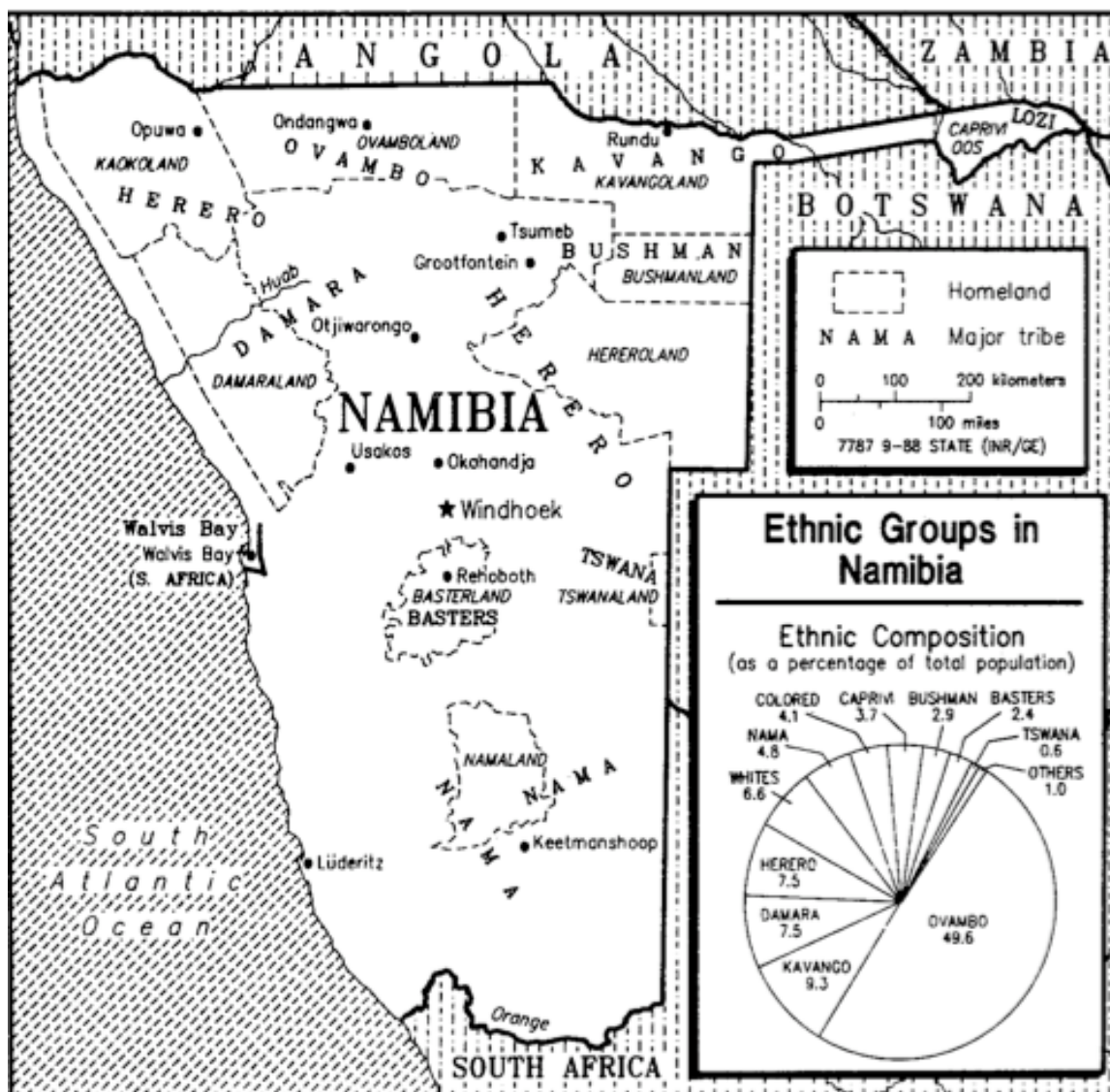


TABLE 4.1 Namibia's Population Groups

| Group | Population Size (percent of total population) | |
|----------|--|------|
| | 1983 | 1989 |
| Ovambo | 49 | 50 |
| Kavango | 8 | 9 |
| Herero | 8 | 7 |
| Damara | 7 | 7 |
| White | 7 | 5 |
| Nama | 5 | 5 |
| Coloured | 5 | 4 |
| Caprivi | 4 | 4 |
| Bushman | 3 | 3 |
| Baster | 2 | 3 |
| Tswana | 1 | 0.6 |
| Other | 1 | 2.4 |

Sources: J. H. van der Merwe, ed., *National Atlas of South West Africa (Namibia)* (Goodwood, Cape: National Book Printers, 1983); Robert S. Jaster, "The 1988 Peace Accords and the Future of South-western Africa," *Adelphi Papers* 253 (Autumn 1990), p. 6.

Appendix B

South West Africa By The Numbers- Under the Odendaal Commision

- 11 ministates- 1 white and 10 black
- 93% of the population was black
- Blacks lived on 40% of land
- 7% of the population controlled the richest 43% of the territory
- The remaining 17% was demarcated as diamond fields, game reserves, or “unallocated government lands”

(Glover): This plan didn't effectively split the ethnic groups based on where they were already living:

- 87% of the Damaras would have to be relocated
- 92% of the Tswanas would have to be relocated
- 71% of the Bushmen would have to be relocated
- 81% of the Namas would have to be relocated
- 56% of the Hereros would have to be relocated

Appendix C

Table B.1 Population and Estimated Voters per Electoral District

| Electoral Districts | Total Population 1981 Census | Total Population 1989 (Est.) | Estimated Population, Age 18+ ^a | Estimated Population 18% + 5% ^b |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| Bethanie | 2,808 | 3,502 | 1,975 | 2,074 |
| Caprivi | 40,376 | 50,349 | 21,994 | 23,093 |
| Damaraland | 24,214 | 30,195 | 14,818 | 15,559 |
| Gobabis | 22,079 | 27,533 | 14,228 | 14,939 |
| Grootfontein | 21,989 | 27,420 | 15,207 | 15,967 |
| Hereroland | 34,329 | 42,808 | 18,513 | 19,438 |
| Kaokoland | 16,637 | 20,746 | 11,622 | 12,203 |
| Karasburg | 9,502 | 11,849 | 6,611 | 6,942 |
| Karibib | 8,953 | 11,164 | 5,429 | 5,700 |
| Kavango | 105,690 | 131,795 | 58,214 | 61,125 |
| Koetmanshoop | 17,608 | 21,957 | 11,908 | 12,504 |
| Lüderitz | 14,314 | 17,850 | 13,254 | 13,917 |
| Maltahöhe | 4,751 | 5,924 | 3,442 | 3,615 |
| Mariental | 20,578 | 25,661 | 13,536 | 14,212 |
| Namaland ^c | 12,766 | 15,919 | 8,131 | 8,538 |
| Okahandja | 13,336 | 16,630 | 9,498 | 9,973 |
| Omaruru | 5,498 | 6,856 | 3,835 | 4,027 |
| Otjiwarongo | 16,126 | 20,109 | 11,996 | 12,595 |
| Outjo | 8,866 | 11,056 | 5,951 | 6,249 |
| Owambo | 452,036 | 563,689 | 267,082 | 280,436 |
| Rehoboth | 27,664 | 34,497 | 16,070 | 16,873 |
| Swakopmund | 15,473 | 19,295 | 13,330 | 13,996 |
| Tsumeb | 19,447 | 24,250 | 15,323 | 16,089 |
| Windhoek | 110,644 | 137,973 | 83,421 | 87,592 |
| Not allocated | 7,512 | 9,367 | 7,182 | 7,541 |
| Total | 1,033,196 | 1,288,394 | 652,645 | 685,192 |

Source: UNTAG

Notes: a. 1981 census statistics are multiplied by a factor of 1.247 to update figures for 1989.

b. Add 5% to allow for possible undercount in 1989 census.

c. Namaland became part of Koetmanshoop ED for election in 1989.

Table B.2 Registered Voters and Estimated Eligible Voters in Each Electoral District

| Electoral District ^a | Estimated Eligible Voters ^b | Registered Voters | % Registered ^c |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Ovamboland | 280,436 | 248,272 | 88.5 |
| Lüderitz | 13,917 | 10,740 | 77.2 |
| Swakopmund | 13,996 | 25,363 | 181.2 |
| Tsumeb | 16,089 | 14,651 | 91.1 |
| Karvango | 61,125 | 64,156 | 105.0 |
| EDs with SWAPO majority | 385,563 | 363,182 | 94.2 |
| Windhoek | 87,592 | 105,382 | 120.3 |
| Caprivi | 21,267 | 28,096 | 132.1 |
| Okavango | 9,973 | 11,233 | 112.6 |
| Karibib | 5,700 | 6,955 | 122.0 |
| Maltahöhe | 3,615 | 2,635 | 72.9 |
| Grootfontein | 17,793 | 20,510 | 115.3 |
| Otjiwarongo | 12,595 | 13,287 | 105.5 |
| Keetmanshoop | 21,042 | 20,039 | 95.2 |
| Damaraland | 15,559 | 15,127 | 97.2 |
| Omaruru | 4,027 | 6,008 | 149.2 |
| Mariental | 14,212 | 14,630 | 102.9 |
| Bethanie | 2,074 | 2,464 | 118.8 |
| Outjo | 6,249 | 7,219 | 115.5 |
| Rehoboth | 16,873 | 17,346 | 102.8 |
| Hereroland | 16,892 | 16,317 | 96.6 |
| Gobabis | 17,485 | 19,250 | 110.1 |
| Karasburg | 6,942 | 18,257 | 263.0 |
| Kaokoland | 12,203 | 13,546 | 111.0 |
| EDs SWAPO < 50% | 292,093 | 338,301 | 115.8 |
| Total | 677,656 ^d | 701,483 | 103.5 |

- Notes: a. The Electoral Districts are listed in descending order of % vote for SWAPO.
b. The higher estimate made by AG's office on basis of 2.9% annual growth on 1981 Census plus 5% (see last Column of Table B.1)
c. Column 3 represents Column 2 as % of Column 1.
d. The UNTAG estimates total (see Table B.1) includes 7,541 extra estimated people of voting age not allocated to an ED.

Appendix D

TABLE 1
POLITICAL PARTIES' SHARE OF THE VOTE (%) IN NAMIBIA'S NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY

| Party | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004* |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| SWAPO | 57.33 | 73.33 | 76.15 | 75.1 |
| DTA | 28.55 | 20.78 | 9.48 | 5.0 |
| CoD | — | — | 9.94 | 7.2 |
| UDF | 5.65 | 2.72 | 2.93 | 3.5 |
| Nudo | — | — | — | 4.1 |
| ACN | 3.54 | — | — | — |
| NPF/DCN | 1.59 | 0.83 | — | — |
| FCN | 1.56 | — | — | — |
| NNF | 0.80 | — | — | — |
| MAG | — | 0.82 | 0.70 | 0.8 |
| Republican P. | — | — | — | 1.9 |
| Other | 1.00 | 0.96 | 0.80 | — |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 97.6* |

Notes: SWAPO = South West African People's Organization; DTA = Democratic Turnhalle Alliance; CoD = Congress of Democrats; UDF = United Democratic Front; Nudo = National Unity Democratic Organization; ACN = Action Christian National; NPF = National Patriotic Front (after 1994: DCN = Democratic Coalition of Namibia); FCN = Federal Convention of Namibia; NNF = Namibia National Front; MAG = Monitor Action Group; Republican P. = Republican Party; Other = (1989) SWAPO-D, CDA, NNDP, (1994) SWANU, FCN, WRP, (1999) FCN, DCN (NPF/ACN), SWANU, (2004) NDMC and SWANU. Voter turnout is 98% in 1989, 76% in 1994, 62% in 1999 and 85% in 2004.

*Figures for 2004 do not add up to 100%; the sources do not account for the missing 2.4%.
Sources: Electoral Commission of Namibia; and Inter-Parliamentary Union, <www.i-pu.org>, and <www.electionworld.org>.

Appendix E

FUN FACTS

- Namibia has the First Gender Neutral Constitution.
- The First time a country has conducted sanctioned air strikes against own people was in Namibia (South Africa).
- Namibia was the last freed colony in Africa.
- Sam Nujoma's mother, Kuku Helvi-Mpingana Kondombombolo, died on 26 November 2008 at the age of 108. She was known as the "Grandmother of the Nation.
- First country in the world to include environmental protection and sustainable wildlife utilization in its constitution.
- Namibia is the second least densely populated country in the world to Mongolia, averaging 2.5 people per square kilometer, with a population of 2,102,000 in 2008 and an area of 824,268 square kilometers, twice the size of California.
- The world's oldest desert, the Namib, is in Namibia (hence the country name!)
- Namibia has the world's largest population of cheetahs, there are roughly 2,500-3,000 of them.
- Dragon's Breath Lake, the world's largest underground lake, is in Namibia.
- The world's largest known complete meteorite is in Namibia, the Hoba meteorite, which is about 50 tons and 3 million years old.
- English is the official language of Namibia, even though only 7% of people speak it. Ovambo, or Oshivambo, is the most commonly spoken language.