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“Communism may be the only alternative if America walks away”: The Reagan Administration and the Comprehensive Anti- Apartheid Act of 1986

Abby Townend
Bard College

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“Communism may be the only alternative if America walks away”:
The Reagan Administration and the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
of Bard College

by
Abby Townend

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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Introduction

My interest in apartheid South Africa opened up during my time studying abroad last year. I had learned a brief history in a high school class, in which apartheid was literally translated to us as “apart-hood,” and the nuanced ethnic histories of South Africa were attempted to be explained as the last country to be liberated from colonization. In my time abroad, I clearly had to learn about the history of South Africa on a much deeper level. I learned about the intricacies of colonization on the western Cape from both the Dutch and British, which hold to this day significantly different memories among South Africans; the laws of apartheid, and how they effected the populations of black South Africans; and I learned about the organizations and individuals who lived and died fighting against apartheid. Being in the physical spaces of these histories was one of the most powerful learning tools I had available to me.

Museums, monuments, memorials, cities, townships, mountains, houses and shacks, all acted as spaces of public history that gave me a physical connection to the history I was learning. Walking around Soweto, one of the most densely populated townships in the country, revealed the infrastructure of apartheid, and the systems that people still live in to this day. Though apartheid officially ended in 1994, the effects of it are withstanding through generations, into what many are now calling an “economic apartheid.”

The striking reality of apartheid was the similarity to American Jim Crow laws, which I seem to have learned even less about in my education. It was through this fact that I became interested in the United States involvement in the liberation movements of young African nations. There are ways in which America has benefited from the liberation, colonization, and even oppression of these young nations. Apartheid is a system which the United States ultimately

benefitted from. Conversely, and despite being an unrealistic expectation, many believed that the United States played an important role as a global superpower in standing against apartheid.

The United States while invested in its own civil rights movement, did not play a large role in apartheid, as American public interest did not pique until the mid-1980s. In the 1980s, apartheid in South Africa became a large issue in global politics. In 1985 there was a significant growth in American involvement against South African apartheid, as it saw a substantial rise in presidential, congressional, and public attention and discussion. The moral nature of the issue caused the deliberation around the subject to vary.

The Reagan administration is an especially interesting perspective in which to analyze American involvement in South Africa. As the face of modern conservatism, Reagan inherited a distanced role in South Africa, but as the president during a time of critical influence and participation in ending apartheid, he was forced to take a more comprehensive look. Throughout the early and mid 1980s, the Reagan administration held a relatively inactive role in addressing apartheid in South Africa, focusing their attention on the nation as a Western ally in the cold war, determined to prevent communist influence in southern Africa.

When the administration was faced with more pressure to take an active approach in ending apartheid, Reagan held his attitude on a nonconfrontational relationship with South Africa, ultimately deciding that the benefits of an ally in the cold war was more worthwhile than to risk losing the ally ship by trying to undermine apartheid. The work of the Reagan administration toward South Africa was largely influenced and enacted by Chester Crocker, the Assistant Secretary of African Affairs. His work focused on maintaining a diplomatic relationship with South Africa, but eventually the issue was swept up in the politics between the executive and legislative branches.

Chester Crocker is a relevant character in my first and second chapters. In my first chapter I lay out the historical setting of the cold war in the 1980s, focusing on the role of the United States, Soviet Union, and South Africa—which had fallen on the cusp of differing ideologies. Crocker plays an integral role in laying the foundation of the Reagan administrations relationship with the South African government. Aside from Reagan himself, the members of his administration held an influential role in foreign policy coming out of the White House. In my second chapter I focus on the role the members of the administration played, such as Walter Raymond Jr. and John Poindexter, who advocated against South African and American reliance on the Soviet Union if the U.S. did not hold strong diplomatic ties to the southern African region.

In my third and fourth chapter the focus of the paper turns specifically to 1985 and 1986 and the growing American attention on South Africa as its political climate deteriorated and violence grew. At this time, congressional actions became significantly harsher, imposing the strongest sanctions on South Africa of the decade. I focus specifically on the Reagan administration's deterrence toward sanctions and the documents and legislation coming out of the White House in response, which provide the rationale of the administration. In my fourth chapter I follow the same timeline of congressional acts, but focus more thoroughly on the life of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 and how its passing overtook the work being done by the Reagan administration. As I go through the debates surrounding the act, this chapter will also bring to light the reality that Reagan was unable to make realistic policies toward South Africa, and in turn Congress felt an obligation to step in.

In this paper I utilize different sources to analyze the role the Reagan administration took in foreign policy toward South Africa. Two major secondary sources I relied on for contextualization were Odd Arne Westad's *The Global Cold War*, which categorized the global

nature of the cold war and the relationship between American and African interests; and Pauline Baker's *The United States and South Africa: the Reagan Years*, which outlined much of the Reagan administration's relationship to South Africa. These books served as a basis for much of my background information and research. I also relied heavily on *The Reagan Diaries*, and Chester Crocker's memoir *High Noon in Southern Africa* as reflective first-hand accounts on the situation. I found many of my primary source documents in the Reagan Presidential Library in California. I primarily relied on the Walter Raymond and Dean McGrath files to find memorandums, collected documents and news articles, speeches, and addresses which fueled the arguments of this paper.

Through the process of writing this paper I have been able to explore a more nuanced historical connection between the United States and South Africa. Since my time abroad, I have developed a deeper understanding of the American political and diplomatic aspects which were fostered in American involvement with South Africa. I hope through this paper I have reflected the truly interesting dynamic of American politics when facing the moral dilemma of apartheid and a global communist threat, and the influences of a conservative administration.

Chapter One: South Africa on the Cusp in a Global Cold War

In order to fully understand the context of U.S. relations with South Africa, we must first consider the global historical context of the 1980s. The most important system in this global context to consider would be the cold war. For many, the cold war holds a very specific connotation as to the international relationships between ideologies. This is most commonly defined as the “period in which the global conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union dominated international affairs, roughly between 1945 and 1991,”¹ and is often referred to as an ideological split with the West in favor of a capitalistic economic system, and the East in favor of communism. Though based in ideology, this war was also based in fear, and for many in the United States that meant the fear of a communist global domination.

Though the very bipolar view of the cold war’s East versus West perspective persists, we must acknowledge the dominating global influence of this discord, one which escalated the existence of conflict around the world. The interventionist attitudes of the United States and the Soviet Union was a major component of the cold war that brought this ideological struggle to countries not officially part of the East or West. During the 1980s Ronald Reagan held a very resolute view toward the Soviet Union and the cold war. For him, the stakes were a moral obligation to uphold. The morality of the situation was not a choice, and in his eyes the strategic aim was as simple as “We win and they lose.”² And yet, despite the seeming nonchalance of this statement, the reality was an unshakeable underlying fear, both in the threat of a communist takeover, and of an American loss.

¹ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, 12th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 3

² Richard Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher: The Difficult Relationship* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), 60.

Though American fear is a highly persuasive factor in the context of U.S. involvement, there is also the understanding of the third world which had a strong influence in the maneuvering of American interactions. According to Odd Arne Westad, a leading cold war historian, the “‘third world’ means the former Colonial or semi-Colonial countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that were subject to European (or rather pan-European, including American and Russian) economic or political domination.”³ Ultimately, the third world refers to an exclusion, due partially to the historical background of these new nation-states, but also partially to the outlook of older, non-colonized nations.

This exclusion was from both the Eastern or Western camps, and categorized these new countries as vulnerable to the corruption of an unwanted ideology. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the obligation of intervention was placed onto those more powerful to steer them in the right direction. Westad argues that,

The anti-Communist argument was no longer that socialism did not fit the ‘African tribal mentality’ or the ‘languid and quiescent’ African Americans, but the fear that communism might seduce adolescent African Americans. In other words, moving Africans inside the realm of potential freedom increased the danger that they could move toward an ‘incorrect’ form of modernity. Freedom for Africans, both at home and abroad meant that the United States had to open up a new offensive in the Cold War.⁴

In the later years of the cold war, leftist thought was a stronger threat to American interests in third world countries as these countries became more active and independent from colonial influence.

For the countries coming out of colonial rule, specifically in Africa, there was a pendulum of thought going between the diametric systems, and as to which would fit best for their new governments. “But Marxism – especially in its Leninist form – had one great

³ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 3

⁴ Ibid. 134.

advantage in countries where the authorities increasingly used different forms of racist ethnic categories to split the population and perpetuate their own rule. By subdividing people into their productive roles, as peasants, workers, or intellectuals, rather than into Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, Shona, or Ovambo, Marxism helped create at least the perspective of a united front against the regimes.”⁵ Thus lied the attraction toward Marxism for many of these states where racial divisions had been the distinguishing factors for power.

In this light, the Soviet Union was the obvious choice of international support and held a growing importance in Africa throughout the 1970s and 1980s. “The increasingly important international role of the Soviet Union made many radical African leaders see Moscow as the global socialist counterweight to the United States, both providing a balance in international affairs that would help their revolutions and also assisting their movement with training, weapons, and supplies.” It was in this nature that made liberation movements in Southern Africa a threat to American ideals. Additionally, the obvious tension between the choice these new nations were facing made them a focal point to both U.S. and Soviet interests in Africa. “It was the Marxist orientation of many Southern African Liberation movements that made both Moscow and Washington take notice of their significance - to the United States, they threatened radical, Soviet-oriented regimes taking power in the Third World; to the Soviet Union, they hailed the beginning of a new stage of third world Social Development, in which African leaders acknowledged the superiority of ‘scientific Marxism.’”⁶

The situation of the cold war becomes increasingly more complex when viewed through the lens of South Africa—a nation on the border between the Western allies and the “third

⁵ Ibid. 207-208.

⁶ Ibid. 207.

world.” As a country whose government was based in colonial settlement, South Africa had strong ties to the British commonwealth and its allies. But as a territory whose population was largely black Africans, many citizens felt ties to the neighboring region. “During the Cold War South Africa was the only independent country – besides the United States itself – where racial segregation was a matter of law. It was also by far the most important African country to the United States, in part because of its strategic location and in part because of its natural wealth.”⁷ These factors were the basis for American cooperation with South Africa throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

The history of apartheid also played a divisive role in the influence of the cold war on South African citizens, essentially breaking the country between the East and West perspectives. Before the official implementation of the apartheid governmental system in 1948, there were systems in place to ensure racial separation among South Africans. Among this legislation was the Black Land Act of 1913, the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923, and pass laws.⁸ These were the laws that apartheid was built on, with the intention of creating a nation fully segregated. These laws, specifically, are important to note as they were often considered in American discussions surrounding apartheid.

The separation among races in South Africa was clear throughout apartheid, and even continued past the adoption of free elections. In the wake of this, the white and black populations

⁷ Ibid. 133.

⁸ “Apartheid Legislation 1850s-1970s,” South African History Online, last modified March 2011, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/apartheid-legislation-1850s-1970s>. The Black Land Act of 1913 inhibited black people from owning land outside of the designated reserves; the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923 allowed authorities to create and force Africans living in urban areas and to be moved to locations on the outskirts of white areas; and pass laws monitored the movement of people of color between racially separated spaces, and required black people to carry pass books which held information on their identity and where they were from as well as requiring them to get a permit before entering a white space.

inherited vastly different outlooks toward their role in South Africa, as well as the role of the nation in the rest of the world. With the white-majority government being based in colonial settlement, western nations were seen as closer allies than neighboring countries. For the black population, specifically those working to end apartheid, ally ship came from nations sympathetic of those being colonized, which consisted of other African nations seeking liberation as well as communist states. This detachment between politics in South Africa would ultimately lead to the situation of the 1980s. One in which, the South African government (SAG) was a defense against the role of communism in the eyes of the American government. Meanwhile, the African National Congress (ANC) one of the most prolific anti-apartheid organizations in South Africa, would be categorized as a terrorist organization in the 1980s due to its use of violence and backing by the Soviet Union.

The stakes of the cold war made the United States' relationship with South Africa increasingly more complicated and harder to maneuver. For the Reagan administration in the 1980s, no matter how vehemently they opposed apartheid, it could never outweigh the dangers faced in allowing communism to take root in southern Africa. This was twofold, as South Africa acted as the military and financial force for liberalism in Angola, Namibia, and Mozambique—acting as a bulwark against the spread of communism. Moreover, if the apartheid government were to be uprooted, there was an equal fear that a Marxist, black-majority government would take its place in South Africa.

During Chester Crocker's time as the Assistant Secretary of African Affairs the majority of his concern fell toward southern Africa. He is an interesting character to focus on in this situation because he reflects on Africa and the United States role there through a historical lens. In his memoir, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Creating Peace in a Rough Neighborhood*

Crocker reflects on the colonial legacy that existed in 1981 when he first joined the Reagan administration, as the highest-ranking member involved in African matters. From a further historical perspective, his writing shows a constant awareness of East-West tensions, and how much Africa had fallen between the two.⁹

Crocker is an important member of the Reagan administration to focus on. Through his writings it seems he is openly and actively supportive of the Reagan administration and the stance it takes toward South Africa and its neighboring countries. And yet, Crocker offers a lot of critical reflection on his time in post as well as for the missteps of the administration. In his first year in post, Crocker wrote a piece for the agenda-setting journal *Foreign Affairs* titled “South Africa: Strategy for Change” in which he calls to attention the United States need for engagement in order to uphold a consistent pressure for change while reinforcing positive movements made by the South African government.¹⁰

The doctrine of constructive engagement, best describes the Reagan administration’s activity regarding South Africa. It was created at the beginning of Reagan’s presidency, and was ultimately less concerned with apartheid than the threat of communism in Angola, Namibia, and South Africa. Constructive engagement did not refer to the imposition of “blueprints or timetables for change on the South Africans.” Instead, Crocker used the term as a vague explanation in order to acknowledge the realities of a “deeply troubled region,” and the lack of leverage the United States realistically held there.¹¹ This work was done in order to put a name to the beast, rather than to take a blind and risky stab at the situation. The change Crocker proposed

⁹ Chester A. Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa: Making Peace in a Rough Neighborhood* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 28, 31.

¹⁰ Chester Crocker, “South Africa: Strategy for Change,” *Foreign Affairs* 59, no. 2 (1980/81): 324-325.

¹¹ Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 75.

referred to specific small goals, which would mark South Africa moving away from apartheid, and included,

(1) measures to improve the living conditions and opportunities of the black communities; (2) steps that increase black bargaining power by strengthening the capacity to organize and to articulate common interests; (3) developing forums and procedures that expand the potential for intergroup bargaining and accommodation; (4) political-constitutional reform toward power-sharing; and (5) dismantling statutory social barriers and discriminatory access to public services and facilities.¹²

Despite having written strongly about the United States' interaction with South Africa, Crocker's influence on African affairs largely involved all of southern Africa, and less so with the Reagan administrations connection to the SAG. Though the issue of apartheid was apparent throughout Reagan's presidency, his first term was more widely focused on southern Africa, and the political situation between Angola, Namibia, and South Africa. Crocker referred to this situation as a linkage, whereas Namibian independence from South Africa was inherently linked to the removal of Cuban troops from Angola.¹³

In Crocker's perspective on the situation, he continuously seems to point to the precariousness of the United States role in southern Africa. This situation refers to U.S. interests in the ending of apartheid, the independence of Namibia, settlement in Angola as well as the removal of Cuban troops and Soviet influence, and the overall cold war interests of the United States. Seemingly, these interests are not contradictory to one another. The list above is one that many Americans working both in and outside of the United States government would reasonably support, and yet the situation was fraught with more tensions to work around.

The case of apartheid inherently held liberal and conservative attention in the United States; as an issue of foreign policy, political relationships, civil rights, and business endeavors.

¹² Crocker, "Strategy for Change," 347.

¹³ Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 67.

This generated apartheid as a bipartisan issue, eventually being a prevalent part of Congressional debates in both the House and the Senate—the House being controlled by Democrats, and the Senate by Republicans. In the case of the Reagan administration, however, apartheid was primarily a Republican matter debated between the moderate and conservative stances. Influence on the matter came from conservative voices, and compromises would be made between the Executive branch and the Senate as how to fully address the changing circumstances in southern Africa.

I want to start by briefly explaining what was happening in southern Africa, despite U.S. involvement. The first thing to note is the situation of Namibia—still referred to as South West Africa in the early 1980s—which was not yet an independent country. Namibia had been put under the rule of South Africa by the League of Nations after World War I, allowing apartheid laws to apply to Namibia as well as South Africa.¹⁴ Beginning in the 1960s, the Namibian War for Independence, also known as the South African Border War, was fought between the South African Defense Force (SADF), backed by the SAG; and the People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) which was backed by the South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO).¹⁵

At the same time, Angola was in the height of its civil war, which was being fought between two military groups. The first being the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) who were backed by Soviet approval, but more importantly supplied with Cuban troops. The other group was the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola

¹⁴ Christopher J. Lee, “Decolonizing of a Special Type: Rethinking Cold War History in Southern Africa,” *Kronos* 37 (November 2011): 6, JSTOR. Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 228.

¹⁵ Salih Abdul-Rahim and Randall Robinson, “New U.S. Policy on South Africa: State Department Documents Uncover Developing Alliance,” *TransAfrica* 1, no. 10 (August 1981), <http://kora.matrix.msu.edu/files/50/304/32-130-2B46-84-ta%20news%20aug%2081%20opt.pdf>. Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 227-231.

(UNITA), which was an anti-communist front openly supported by the United States and South African government.¹⁶ Both wars were largely intertwined as the different parties were connected by mutual allies and preferences in the cold war tensions. The SAG supported the SADF fighting against Namibia. SWAPO and the MPLA were connected through Marxist ties and backing from the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the U.S. supported UNITA and wanted to maintain diplomatic ties to the South Africa government.

The Reagan administration worked toward this linkage through supporting the United Nations Security Council Resolution 435, which proposed a ceasefire and UN-supervised elections in Namibia.¹⁷ In Crocker's words "the logic of linkage blended nicely the broad political appeal of ending South African colonialism and racist practices in Namibia (a 'motherhood' issue as well as wise diplomacy for global and regional reasons) with the 'strategic' prize of uprooting the Cubans, freeing Angola, and undercutting Moscow in Africa."¹⁸ In the eyes of the Reagan administration this was a strategic move in the larger scheme of the cold war, in which failure to come to a settlement in Namibia "was not necessarily the worst possible outcome,"¹⁹ but upheld a stronger message within Reagan's mission to win.

Though an anti-communist mentality was potent throughout American understanding of world affairs, the pressure seemed to appear strongest from conservative American sources. Such influences included the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank created in 1973, "dedicated to the principles of free competitive enterprise, limited government, individual liberty

¹⁶ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 227-228.

¹⁷ Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 37-38, 67.

¹⁸ Ibid. 69.

¹⁹ Ibid.

and a strong national defense.”²⁰ In 1981 the foundation released an in-depth manual called the *Mandate for Leadership*, which was to act as “a detailed road map to help the fledgling Reagan Administration steer the nation into a sound future guided by conservative principles.” Through which, “nearly two-thirds of the *Mandate*’s more than 2,000 specific recommendations has been or were being transformed into policy,”²¹ by the end of Reagan’s first term as president.²²

The success of Heritage during the Reagan administration was due largely in part to the *Mandate* consisting largely of pre-existing conservative ideals, as well as the successful marketing of such ideals through the publications.²³ At the beginning of Reagan’s second term Heritage released another *Mandate for Leadership II*, in which there were more specific proposals for the Department of State to enact in policy toward Africa. The entire section is relatively short, with only two paragraphs written on constructive engagement toward South Africa, stating: “The U.S. should encourage South Africa to repeal the Mixed Marriages and Group Areas Acts and all other aspects of apartheid; it should press for these changes through diplomacy. On the other hand, the U.S. should recognize that South Africa already has made changes that should be rewarded by loosened restrictions on the export to South Africa for such goods as surveillance aircraft and other non-lethal security equipment.”²⁴ This language closely resembles other works being published by the Reagan administration. The key similarity between Heritage and the Reagan administration is the importance of diplomacy in the work with

²⁰ Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher*, 26. Charles L. Heatherly, ed., *Mandate for Leadership: Policy Management in a Conservative Administration* (Washington D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 1981).

²¹ Stuart M. Butler, Michael Sanera, and W. Bruce Weinrod, *Mandate for Leadership II: Continuing the Conservative Revolution* (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 1984).

²² Ibid.

²³ John Stahl, “Think Tanks in the Age of Reagan,” in *Right Moves: The Conservative Think Tank in American Political Culture since 1945* (n.: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 112, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469627878_stahl.7.

²⁴ Butler, Sanera, and Weinrod, *Mandate for Leadership II*, 356-357.

South Africa. This echoes the notion in Crocker's argument that the United States barely has a leg to stand on in this issue, and that positive engagement is a better tactic for encouraging change rather than harsh punishments aimed at apartheid.

The *Mandate II* also emphasized the role of Marxism in Southern Africa, warning of the danger of "Marxist-oriented" regimes in Mozambique and Angola. Heritage was outwardly supportive of Jonas Savimbi, "the leader of the pro-Western UNITA forces," in Angola.²⁵ The Heritage Foundation also wrote on the need for U.S. involvement in Namibia in order to reach a settlement. It states, "SWAPO should be offered one last chance to agree to a Namibian settlement. During the same period in which Luanda can agree to plan for the withdrawal of Cuban and other foreign military forces in Angola, SWAPO could agree to a plan which includes the withdrawal of South African forces from Namibia."²⁶ In this statement the issues in Angola and Namibia, though separate countries with different political and colonial histories, are compared within the same political context. This statement leads the reader to understand that Heritage views the situation in Angola and Namibia as part of the same issue. One that is intertwined with an enemy larger than any individual African countries, and which stems from a larger ideological debate.

In the eyes of the Heritage Foundation as well as other conservative think tanks and political groups, the threat of right-leaning foreign political parties was more dangerous than any apartheid government. In keeping American interests in mind, taking a strong stance on apartheid was an unnecessary aspect of foreign involvement as compared to the independence and civil wars of the neighboring countries, those in which the U.S. relied on for natural

²⁵ Ibid. 357.

²⁶ Ibid. 358.

resources. Another of these Marxist regimes, though unofficial, was the African National Congress.

They stood as the largest threat to American interests by holding close ties to the Soviet Union, as well as being the next ranking political group to take control in South Africa if apartheid were to fall. By this logic, dismantling apartheid was in itself a threat to American interests. The Heritage Foundation was one group which spoke openly about the threat of the close ties between the ANC and communism. As a Marxist party with financial and military ties to the Soviet Union, the ANC was worth fearing. In one executive memorandum written by the Heritage Foundation they reveal the true nature behind the ANC and the South African Communist Party. Specifically, Heritage cites a document created by the politburo, and explains that, “The document not only reveals the close links between the ANC and the communists and the way in which the communists exploit the ANC to manipulate Western opinion, but it also echoes the success that Communist Parties have had in the past in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Vietnam, Nicaragua, and elsewhere in fooling the West by hiding behind the respectable front of ‘genuine’ reformist national liberation movements.”²⁷ Through the existence of this document, the Heritage Foundation suggests that sympathy for the ANC is a dangerous route for the United States, as it can lead to communist sympathies as well. They are also suggesting that though the ANC may be a group worthwhile to support for moral reasons, it will ultimately be more dangerous for national interests. In response, Heritage suggests, “including U.S. policy toward the best-known South African opposition group, the African National Congress (ANC),”²⁸ to accompany the harsh sanctions being created against the South African government.

²⁷ Memorandum by The Heritage Foundation, “A Secret Communist Document Reveals the Real Game Plan for South Africa,” July 10, 1986, Walter Raymond Files RAC Box 8, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

²⁸ Ibid.

Throughout the 1980s, apartheid in South Africa became more prevalent as an issue among the American public, as independent companies and venues took action. Those with a more liberal stance called for the U.S. to stand in opposition against apartheid through the use of sanctions, as well as supporting the black majority in South Africa to gain control and democratic rights. While Crocker pushed the Reagan administration to make a deliberate engagement through cooperation with the SAG and by leading through example in order to make a persuasive change for Namibian independence and the end of apartheid. This engagement, however, did not include the use of sanctions. In Crocker's words, the Reagan administration held the stance that "A corollary Western reluctance to address (at least in some channel) the question of short- or medium-term goals is rapidly becoming a form of escapism—playing into the hands of those who believe that only a bloody upheaval can do the job."²⁹

²⁹ Crocker, "Strategy for Change," 327.

Chapter Two: Soviet Fears within the Reagan Administration

In the beginning of Reagan's presidency any work being done toward Africa was largely headed by Chester Crocker as the Assistant Secretary of African Affairs, with his focus being on the need to be a positive influence for change. Crocker would evidently be a sincere voice in the Reagan administration's actions toward southern Africa. Despite his honest and well-meant efforts, Crocker was not the only opinion in the administration, and other members would ultimately play a role in the conceptualization of those actions, actors such as Patrick Buchanan, Donald Regan, and Ronald Reagan himself. The more removed outlook brought to the situation by these members would eventually be a downfall for the administration in South African matters.

Positive change was the first step in the Reagan administration's goals toward southern Africa. In 1981 Crocker wrote, "Consequently, a basic U.S. objective should be to foster and support such change, recognizing the need to minimize the damage to our interests in the process, but also recognizing that American interests will suffer inevitably if such change fails to occur."³⁰ His article "South Africa: Strategy for Change" was cognizant of the need for engagement with South Africa, but with little definitive plans to go about said work. In fact, his efforts seemed to focus much more on southern Africa as a whole at this time, wanting to procure peace in a "rough neighborhood."³¹

In the early work of the American policy toward South Africa created by the Reagan administration, Crocker kept close contact with Pik Botha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of

³⁰ Crocker, "Strategy for Change," 324.

³¹ Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 33.

South Africa, in order to maintain a source of influence and open communications.³² During April of 1981 Crocker met with Pik Botha as well as South African Defense Minister Magnus Malan, in which one of the objectives was,

to make it clear to Pik that we share the South African hope that, despite political differences among the states of southern Africa, the economic interdependence of the area and constructive internal change within South Africa can be the foundations for a new era of cooperation, stability, and security in the region. We also share their view that the chief threat to the realization of this hope is the presence and influence in the region of the Soviet Union and its allies.³³

It was made clear through this meeting that though the United States did not share South Africa's views on apartheid, above all they wanted to remain allies in order to act as a united face against Soviet presence in Africa. This situation largely followed the cold war mindset of international involvement that the United States took—viewing these small nations with relatively little significance.

This was seemingly the advantage to acting positively toward South Africa, in order to maintain a relationship with their practically European allies in Africa. In line with the tactics of the Reagan administration, Crocker did not support intense economic sanctions against South Africa. He argued that the United States walked a thin line between having an influence over South Africa and overstepping and antagonizing them, seeing as that the “United States has no troops, bases or alliances there, and no coercive influence over any party in the region.”³⁴ This view was met with criticism by those who saw constructive engagement as acting too friendly

³² I want to note here that Pik Botha and P. W. Botha are different acting members of the South African government during the 1980s. Pik Botha worked on South African foreign affairs, while P. W. Botha was the prime minister.

³³ Abdul-Rahim and Robinson, “New U.S. on South Africa.”

³⁴ Chester Crocker, “Southern Africa: Eight Years Later,” *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 4 (Fall 1989): 146.

toward the SAG and its apartheid regime.³⁵ But Crocker defended his stance, stating that the United States held less power in the situation than most believed, and that if the U.S. were to push South Africa too hard, they would break ties completely leaving the United States with no influence in the situation.³⁶

The United States had interests in all of southern Africa, but held the strongest relationship with the South African government. Throughout Reagan's presidency, it can be argued that his administration was on the side of the SAG, and to which affect many argued on the side of apartheid. Crocker argued that there was a strong need for western involvement in the region in order to support American interests as well as to withhold any exploitation from the Soviets.³⁷ At the same time, the U.S. relied on the presence of South Africa.³⁸ For the United States to appear as an ally to the SAG, however, they would have to be more lenient in their disapproval when it came to apartheid.

The action being taken by the Reagan administration's stance against apartheid faced a lot of backlash for the leniency toward South Africa. For example, as given by TransAfrica, "an African American lobby on Africa and the Caribbean,"³⁹ they urged their readers to,

call or send telegrams to President Reagan, Secretary of State Haig, and Assistant Secretary Crocker and tell them that: The U.S. is pursuing a racially oriented foreign policy toward South Africa that favors the continued dominance of the white minority regime there. The U.S. should oppose the racial oppression of South Africa by serving all diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties with Pretoria. The U.S. should also press for

³⁵ Alex Thomas, "Incomplete Engagement: Reagan's South Africa Policy Revisited," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 33, no. 1 (March 1995), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/161547>. Abdul-Rahim and Robinson, "New U.S. on South Africa."

³⁶ Crocker, "Strategy for Change." Crocker, "Eight Years Later."

³⁷ Crocker, "Strategy for Change," 346.

³⁸ Abdul-Rahim and Robinson, "New U.S. on South Africa."

³⁹ Michigan State University, "TransAfrica," African Activist Archive, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://africanactivist.msu.edu/organization.php?name=TransAfrica>.

immediate internationally supervised elections to be held in Namibia to achieve majority rule.⁴⁰

This is an example of the very liberal stance on American involvement in southern Africa.

Naturally, the Reagan administration did not share this viewpoint, and would continue down a path of minimal action in favor of persuasion.

Though Crocker was a key figure for the Reagan administration in the first term, his role was eventually pushed to the sidelines as he continued to work with the larger scope of southern Africa, and public attention shifted more heavily toward apartheid. In this time of transition, South Africa was moved off the back burner for the Reagan administration to center stage and more specific policy toward the country was created. Due to this, Reagan was forced to be more vocal on the U.S. involvement in South Africa. In September of 1985 President Reagan released an executive order in response to the “unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy and economy of the United States,” created by “the policies and actions of the Government of South Africa.”⁴¹ In this executive order Reagan outlines a list of actions prohibiting trade and other transactions between the United States and South Africa. These prohibitions refer more specifically to products and services which would be utilized by the South African government, military, or police force as a means of enforcing practices and laws of apartheid.⁴² The goals of the Reagan administration’s policy were not to remove all contact and business, but rather to remove the U.S. in all forms of the public or private sectors from the practices of apartheid in South Africa.

⁴⁰ Abdul-Rahim and Robinson, “New U.S. on South Africa.”

⁴¹ Exec. Order No. 12532 Fed. Reg. (Sept. 9, 1985). <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/90985b>.

⁴² Ibid.

This extended to the practices of U.S. businesses in South Africa, which under the executive order must subject themselves to principles of practice while conducting business in South Africa. Though not officially referenced in the document, the principles listed pertain to what are known as the Sullivan principles. These were a set of actions created by a U.S. reverend with the goal of limiting U.S. involvement in apartheid through firms conducting business. The majority of these practices rule that firms must uphold U.S. practices of legal racial equality in the workplace despite South African law.⁴³ Reagan's executive order was one of few legislative documents created by the administration regarding the policy they wished to take toward South Africa.

In the growing American attention for apartheid, congressional response also became more vocal. Legislation being pushed through congress quickly changed directions from constructive engagement, and instead focused more strongly on tangible actions, such as harsh sanctions. Despite this pressure to enforce sanctions against South Africa, the president took a more conservative approach and actively opposed strong economic sanctions. There were several arguments made against sanctions, which were referenced in many different platforms by both the presidential administration and other conservative sources. Most of the argument was simple, and was reasoned through the negative effects economic sanctions would have on black South African citizens, those already falling victim to apartheid.⁴⁴ In his veto message for the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 Reagan wrote, "The sweeping and punitive sanctions adopted by the Congress are targeted directly at the labor intensive industries upon

⁴³ Leon H. Sullivan, "The Sullivan Principles and Change in South Africa," *Africa Report*, May/June 1984.

⁴⁴ Ronald Reagan, *Veto of H.R. 4868* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986). Crocker, "Eight Years Later." Douglas J. Holladay, "Helping Blacks in South Africa," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 29, 1986, Walter Raymond Files RAC Box 8, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

which the victimized peoples of South Africa depend for their very survival. Black workers—the first victims of apartheid—would become the first victims of American sanctions.”⁴⁵ He also wrote on the black workers from the surrounding countries who were employed by South African businesses, and who would also be affected by U.S. sanctions.⁴⁶ In summary, the lives and livelihoods of black South Africans was the most articulated argument of the Reagan administration against the use of punitive sanctions.

In fact, the harm sanctions would bring black South African citizens, and Black Africans from surrounding countries was a controversial question throughout the Reagan administration. In a memo from Walter Raymond Jr.—President Reagan’s assistant and head of international communications—to other members of the administration on the regional effects of punitive economic sanctions, he wrote,

In retaliation to the imposition of broad punitive economic sanctions by the United States, South Africa could with comparative ease severely damage the economies of its struggling, black-ruled neighbors. Many of these countries are totally dependent upon South Africa’s transport infrastructure and have no choice but to do business with South Africa... The impact of sanctions on the regional neighbors depends on the degree they are individually dependent on South Africa and to what extent South Africa ‘shares’ the burden of sanctions and possible reduced economic growth.⁴⁷

Throughout the document he highlights the dependence of the surrounding countries on South Africa.

Additionally, the Reagan administration kept track of corporations and other groups which supported their view against harsh sanctions. In the Walter Raymond files at the Ronald Reagan library I found copies of advertisements distributed by The Steel and Engineering

⁴⁵ Reagan, *Veto of H.R. 4868*, 1.

⁴⁶ Reagan, *Veto of H.R. 4868*.

⁴⁷ Walter Raymond, Jr. to John M. Poindexter et al., memorandum, "Regional Effect of Punitive Sanctions Against South Africa," August 1, 1986, Walter Raymond Files RAC Box 8, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

Industries Federation of South Africa. In the advertisement an image of a nondescript smiling African girl in front of her homestead—a dirt hut with a thatched roof—is standing in the crosshairs, with the quote “You can be sure, sanctions against South Africa will find their mark.”⁴⁸ The pointed imagery again places black South Africans in the role of innocent victims not only to apartheid, but to all outside decisions being made on their behalf.

Pat Buchanan, the Assistant to the President, used similar rhetoric in a letter sent out by the Office of Public Liaison, writing: “it would inflict further suffering on the people of South Africa, black and white, who have only sought to be friends of the United States.”⁴⁹

Interestingly, this document, along with the others, pays close attention to the communist threat present in South Africa and the careful ground the United States must tread in order to support black South African leaders. In the same letter Buchanan wrote “Apartheid is abhorrent. It is not the wave of the future in southern Africa. Unfortunately, Communism may be the only alternative if America walks away from this vital subcontinent.”⁵⁰ Though this was a very black and white outlook toward the situation in South Africa, it was an honest fear for many in the United States. In the debate of who to support in South Africa, the African National Congress was always a contested topic. Many understood that they were responsible for much of the work being done to fight against apartheid, and that when the South African government would finally

⁴⁸ The Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of South Africa, "You can be sure, sanctions against South Africa will find their mark," Advertisement, 1986, Walter Raymond Files RAC Box 8, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

⁴⁹ Dean McGrath to Dianna G. Holland, memorandum, "Form Letter on Sanctions Against South Africa," November 18, 1986, Dean McGrath Files OA15539, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library. This memo contained the attached letter by Pat Buchan with the approval for it to be sent out.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

allow free democratic elections for all citizens, the ANC would be a strong contender for taking the role as leading party.⁵¹

Despite the different viewpoints of American politicians and their constituents, there was a realistic fear of only having the ANC to turn to as the next leading political force in South Africa when the group acted largely through terrorism and held strong ties to the South African Communist Party (SACP). In fact, “the most important Soviet ally in Southern Africa was the South African ANC.” This, according to the author Odd Arne Westad, occurred due to Oliver Tambo’s close relationship to the Soviet Union, rather than the connection between the South African Communist Party and any Euro-Communist affiliates.⁵² The affiliation would loosen throughout the 1980s, and as a younger generation took over leadership in the ANC, the party moved away from socialism with the hopes of introducing more “black capitalists” into a “market-oriented economy.”⁵³

The fear of a strong connection between the ANC and the SACP was withstanding, however, and in response precautions were put into the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. There was an amendment made to the CAAA stating that no assistance would be provided to the “African National Congress or any affiliated organization until the controlling body of the African National Congress no longer includes members of the South African Communist Party.”⁵⁴ Though the CAAA largely impeded on the South African government, with the

⁵¹ Alex Thomas, "Incomplete Engagement: Reagan's South Africa Policy Revisited," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 33, no. 1 (March 1995): 94, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/161547>.

⁵² Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 215-216.

⁵³ Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 393.

⁵⁴ Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, H.R. H.R.4868 (Oct. 2, 1986). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/99th-congress/house-bill/4868>. I am specifically referencing the amendment made to the act on June eighteenth before it was passed into law.

intention of reducing the hold of apartheid, there were still restrictions made on the ANC—the largest group in South Africa acting against apartheid.

An additional fear in the cold war realm was the loss of materials and goods provided to the United States from South Africa. Several documents collected and written by the Reagan administration cited the loss of goods such as chrome, industrial diamonds, platinum, and silver bullion.⁵⁵ In an interview with Robert Evans and Fred Barnes, Donald Regan, Reagan's Chief of Staff, stated "So if we go on the theory that we're not going to buy anything from South Africa, then we'd have to turn to the Soviet Union to buy chrome. Is that what the American people really want? I don't think so."⁵⁶ This interview occurred before the CAAA was passed, and the statement was made with the hopes of swaying public view against sanctions toward South Africa.

In an article released in the Journal *Barron's* in August of 1987, seven months after the CAAA was passed, the author Shirley Hobbs Scheibla wrote "While few lawmakers (and almost none of their constituents) seem to realize it, such provisions already have succeeded in sharply curtailing the flow of strategic and critical materials from South Africa. At the same time, they have made the U.S. increasingly—some say alarmingly—dependent for such imports on the Soviet Union and its satellites."⁵⁷ Those in favor of sanctions made the argument that reduced sanctions played into the hands of the Soviet Union. As the Reagan administration continued to make allies with the South African government, black radicals turned more toward other allies,

⁵⁵ Shirley Hobbs Scheibla, "Anti-Apartheid or Pro-Soviet?" *Barron's*, August 3, 1987, 9, Dean McGrath Files OA15539, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

⁵⁶ Donald Regan, Interview by Robert Novak and Fred Barnes, *Evans & Novak*, CNN, June 21, 1986, Produced by Elissa Free, Walter Raymond Files RAC Box 8, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

⁵⁷ Scheibla, "Anti-Apartheid or Pro-Soviet?."

including the Soviet Union.⁵⁸ These opposing viewpoints highlight the legitimate fears of communism were a present aspect of all U.S. international involvement. Despite how one might have looked at the role of the U.S. toward apartheid in South Africa, there were constant, albeit varying tactics of avoiding communist influence on America.

The seemingly obvious fear of relying on the Soviet Union was at an interesting turning point in the Reagan administration. Though the fears of the cold war and communism taking control as a global superpower were lasting and ever present in the United States, the situation had actually begun to change. In November of 1985 Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, met for the first time. The Geneva summit, allowed Reagan and Gorbachev to communicate and work on a constructive movement forward on the relationship between nations.⁵⁹ This would also be a lasting moment which marked Reagan's success as a U.S. leader in ending the cold war.

In hindsight, this marked a shift toward the ending in the cold war, but despite this the fear of a Soviet threat and communism endured. In Reagan's speech to the World Affairs Council and Foreign Policy Association in 1986 he stated:

Southern Africa and South Africa repository of many of the vital minerals—vanadium, manganese, chromium, platinum—for which the West has no other source of supply. The Soviet Union is not unaware of the stakes. A decade ago, using an army of Cuban mercenaries provided by Fidel Castro, Moscow installed a client regime in Angola. Today the Soviet Union is providing that regime with the weapons to attack UNITA... If this rising hostility in Southern Africa—between Pretoria and the frontline states—explodes, the Soviet Union will be the beneficiary.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Pauline H. Baker, *The United States and South Africa: The Reagan Years*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Ford Foundation, 1992), 40.

⁵⁹ Aldous, *Reagan and Thatcher*, 206.

⁶⁰ Ronald Reagan, "Ending Apartheid in South Africa" (address, East Room of the White House, Washington D.C., July 22, 1986), Walter Raymond Files RAC Box 8, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

This argument hinged on the question as to what extent the United States should be involved in South Africa. To which fact those listening understood that the balance of the cold war was on the line, and therefore this was a larger issue than simply African Affairs.

For the Reagan administration, this was the persistent argument in their actions against South Africa. Reagan was fully aware and sympathetic toward those who fell victim to apartheid. But in this administration, there were benefits and risks to carefully weigh, one in which the balance of freedom, in not only the United States, but throughout the world, was highly visible. Ultimately, the risks of jeopardizing democratic and free enterprise interests, as well as bringing further immediate harm on black South Africans outweighed the benefits of taking robust actions against apartheid.

Chapter Three: Reagan Decides Against the Act

Heightened congressional response to Apartheid in South Africa became very apparent in 1985. As unrest continued in South Africa, the South African government seemed to impose stronger rule and harsher push back with greater violence. This forced the United States government to take a closer look at how they should be responding to the situation. In these next two chapters I will analyze what happened in South Africa, and the American response to the situation through the analysis of two bills, the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985 and the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. In this chapter I will address how Reagan responded to the threat of harsh sanctions, and in the following chapter how congress ultimately decided to overrule Reagan's actions.

By the end of July, 1985, a state of emergency had been enacted over most of South Africa, "The power to detain was extended to every member of the police, railways police, prisons and army," as well as removed the right of detainees to have any visitors including a lawyer. Additionally, the state of emergency added the following amendments to the law,

No member of the force could be brought to account, by civil suit or criminal charge, for unlawful actions in carrying out emergency laws.

The Commissioner of Police was authorised to impose blanket censorship on press coverage of the emergency.

The Minister of Law and Order was empowered to ban organisations, individuals, or publications which were 'calculated to endanger the security of the State or the maintenance of public order.'⁶¹

These specifically removed any accountability from members of authority, giving the South African government further control over communities deemed "dangerous." The state of emergency would not be lifted until March of 1986. During this time violence due to political

⁶¹ "General South African History Timeline: 1980s," South African History Online, last modified March 31, 2011, <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/general-south-african-history-timeline-1980s>.

unrest skyrocketed, with nearly 600 deaths occurring in the first 6 months, and over half of those killed by the police.

In November of 1985 the SAG banned all television coverage of violence or unrest in townships, “in the thirty-eight magisterial districts where the State of Emergency is in force.”⁶² This signaled a large sign of deception to much of the world, and even those who had been quick to defend the SAG were wary. It was undeniable that the National Party would go to extreme lengths, and completely disband the notion of constitutional rights, in order to uphold power over the black population. More importantly, the ban on televised news was a signal to foreign powers that the SAG was knowingly violating human rights and wanted to keep such facts hidden. In a memorandum on July 17 for John Poindexter, Reagan’s National Security Advisor, statistics were shared in order to inform him of the U.S. public opinion toward South Africa since the ban on media coverage. At this time Poindexter was also involved in the controversial Iran-Contra affair, which would eventually send him to jail. The memo cited the effectivity and purpose of the ban, stating:

The number of deaths per month related to political violence in South Africa (Source: South African Institute of Race Relations) has remained in the 92-112 range since the ban, which is higher than the number of deaths in the two months immediately prior to the ban (69 in September and 86 in October).

The high level of deaths related to political violence suggests that the purpose of the media ban, to reduce the number and intensity of violent political demonstrations, has not been achieved.

The large number of deaths relates to political violence since the media ban may be indicative of the government’s greater use of force to combat opponents of apartheid in the absence of media coverage.⁶³

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ron St. Martin to John Poindexter, memorandum, "U.S. Public Opinion toward South Africa," June 17, 1986, Walter Raymond Files RAC Box 8, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

This information was an important aspect of consideration toward the South African government, and was a necessary fact to consider in American involvement. It demonstrated the lack of South African progress for significant or positive change, and even the Reagan administration needed to consider how to address such news.

Additionally, the memo cited a poll of the American public's view toward the actions of the U.S. government. The poll made in June wrote that "more Americans (49%) think the U.S. government's policy toward apartheid in South Africa is to either accept it to tolerate it than believe U.S. policy is to pressure South Africa to make changes (46%)."⁶⁴ It also noted that though "Liberals and blacks" were the most likely to believe these "mistaken" truths about U.S. policy, the difference in the view between these groups and others was not very large. The fact of unanimous and large American disapproval of U.S. policy—specifically that made by the Reagan administration—foreshadowed the bipartisan Congressional intervention that would overrule Reagan's veto of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 (CAAA). I will speak further on the CAAA through the lens of congressional action in the next chapter.

In response to a deteriorating situation in South Africa, congressional efforts increased, with the introduction of several bills into congress. Many were proposed by Republican senators such as Robert Dole (R-Kansas) and Richard Lugar (R-Indiana), who eventually became important actors in the debate for harsher sanctions against South Africa. In 1985 bills were being introduced in both the Senate and the House by Democratic and Republican representatives. The bipartisan view toward action grew and in July of 1985 a bill—the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985—calling for tougher sanctions was introduced in the House by William H. Gray III (D-Pa). The bill passed both the House and the Senate, and was scheduled to hold a

⁶⁴ Ibid.

House-Senate committee to resolve the differences.⁶⁵ The bill called for stronger sanctions than had ever been proposed before, banning new loans or investments, the sale of computers, as well as the import of Krugerrands. Additionally, the bill required that “if the President determines that significant progress has not been made, a recommendation on which of specified sanctions should be imposed.”⁶⁶ This requirement sat on a very specific timeline of one year, meaning that if South Africa did not show genuine changes to reverse the effects or all together remove the apartheid system, then President Reagan was required to create harsher sanctions.

The bill, however, did not live to be passed. Instead a compromise between Senators Dole and Lugar and the Reagan administration was made which resulted in the release of Executive Order No. 12532, outlining provisional sanctions targeted against South African military and police forces, as well as banning the import of Krugerrands (South African gold coins) and restricting bank loans and technology exports.⁶⁷ The executive order, however, did not include the crucial requirement of harsher sanctions to be imposed a year later if it was determined that South Africa had not made any significant progress.

Though this was a crucial part of the original bill, Reagan’s executive order was enough to appease the bipartisan push for an increased American involvement against apartheid. Senator Lugar pointed out that endorsing the executive order was the best strategy for the situation. “The President’s executive order would supplant the legislation we had worked long and hard to

⁶⁵ Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985, H.R. H.R. 1460, 99th. (as reported in House, Aug. 1, 1985). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/99th-congress/house-bill/1460/actions?q={%22search%22:%22Apartheid%22}&r=7&s=3&KWICView=false>. Baker, *The United States and South Africa*, 40.

⁶⁶ Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985, H.R. H.R. 1460, 99th. (as reported in House, Aug. 1, 1985). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/99th-congress/house-bill/1460/actions?q={%22search%22:%22Apartheid%22}&r=7&s=3&KWICView=false>.

⁶⁷ Exec. Order No. 12532 Fed. Reg. (Sept. 9, 1985). <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/90985b>. Baker, *The United States and South Africa*, 40.

create. We could accept it and not move ahead with our legislation at this time, or we could pass the legislation, have it vetoed, and risk losing a vote to override the veto.”⁶⁸ This action was unfavorable to congressional Democrats and right-wing conservatives. Author and academic Pauline H. Baker wrote, “The left was unhappy with Reagan’s move because it was seen as substitutive for more comprehensive sanctions. Calls for tougher measures continued from congressional Democrats. On the other hand, hard-line conservatives believed Reagan’s willingness to adopt limited sanctions would tilt the United States toward South African black radicals and play into the hands of the Soviet Union.”⁶⁹ In context, the Reagan administration was taking a relatively moderate stance through limited sanctions against South Africa, though in less than a year this stance would be tested.

Considering the moral nature of the issue, however, there was eventually more Democratic and Republican push back against the executive order. Both parties were disillusioned with the lack of influence Reagan’s sanctions seemed to hold. More intense changes in the situation came about between the summer of 1985 and the spring of 1986. Most crucially, during this time the South African government made it clear that pressure through constructive engagement was not effective. In May of 1986, as Chester Crocker explains, “Suddenly P. W. Botha abandoned any semblance of constructive interaction with Western capitals. Like a caged animal, he lashed out in all directions in angry frustration...the SADF [South African Defense Force] crashed across the borders of Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Botswana against ANC targets.”⁷⁰ In the eyes of almost all international viewers, these actions were

⁶⁸ Richard Lugar, *Letters to the Next President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 221.

⁶⁹ Baker, *The United States and South Africa*, 40.

⁷⁰ Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 305.

completely unjustified as Zimbabwe did not permit the use of their land for guerilla warfare by the ANC and Botswana had previously expelled any members of the party months earlier.⁷¹

At the same time, the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons (EPG), a group established by the Commonwealth Nations, was in South Africa investigating apartheid. Through their analysis of the situation in South Africa, the EGP released their report in June of 1986 concluding that the SAG was not pursuing genuine changes to end apartheid. In a letter to Reagan, Malcolm Fraser of Australia and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, two members of the EPG, wrote, "If substantive action is not forthcoming from the United Kingdom as a result of the meeting of Commonwealth leaders in August and also from the United States in the period immediately ahead of us, the Black leadership will determine that they are without significant support from the West. In these circumstances, they will conclude that political rights will only be achieved through greater violence."⁷² This was an immediate fear of many political parties, who cited violence among black communities as a consequence of apartheid. Additionally, the fear was that this violence would be brought to a bloody upheaval in the government.

In the same letter, Fraser and Obasanjo noted the fear of violence, and concluded with the need for American intervention:

Pressure through sanctions is the only means remaining to the West to bring about change in South Africa. We believe that it would provide a reasonable opportunity to achieve change without the resort to greater violence. It should at least delay decisions being taken by Black leaders towards greater violence because the more moderate leaders would be able to point, for the first time, to substantial and obvious support from the West.⁷³

⁷¹ Baker, *The United States and South Africa*, 42.

⁷² Malcolm Fraser and Olusegun Obasanjo to Ronald Reagan, July 21, 1986, Walter Raymond Files RAC Box 8, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

⁷³ Ibid.

This statement, at this point in time, was the strongest evidential report calling for an increase in sanctions against South Africa, and was ultimately the largest push for most members of congress to agree to harsher sanctions. Additionally, all the members of the Commonwealth agreed to intensified actions against South Africa, all except for Britain.⁷⁴ Despite the evidence brought forth by the EPG, the Reagan administration doubled down on its stance for mild sanctions and positive reinforcements.

The Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act was introduced in the House in May of 1986, and passed in both the House and the Senate by August. At this time the House was controlled by Democrats, and the Senate by Republicans, making this a bipartisan endeavor. The act itself details a list of guidelines and sanctions for the United States “to bring about the establishment of a nonracial democracy in South Africa.”⁷⁵ In order for the sanctions to be terminated, the South African government would have to uphold the following five requirements.

(1) releases political prisoners and Nelson Mandela from prison; (2) repeals the state of emergency and releases all detainees held under such state of emergency; (3) urbans [sic] political parties and permits political freedom for all races; (4) repeals the Group Areas Act and the Population Registration Act and institutes no other measures with the same purposes; and (5) agrees to enter into good faith negotiations with truly representative members of the black majority without preconditions.⁷⁶

The Act also largely called for presidential input, communication, and pressure on the South African government in order for these sanctions to be effective. In fact, from almost all perspectives, there was the understanding that the president needed to take a stance on this

⁷⁴ Interestingly, it seems there was a similar debate within the British government as well, with Margaret Thatcher seemingly taking a similar stance to Reagan, while parliament wanted to follow the advice of the EPG.

⁷⁵ Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, H.R. H.R.4868 (Oct. 2, 1986). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/99th-congress/house-bill/4868>.

⁷⁶ Ibid. I believe the word urbans after clause 3 is actually meant to be unbans.

debate, and “An immediate and forceful expression of presidential leadership on the issue was imperative.”⁷⁷

In his memoir *High Noon in Southern Africa*, Crocker discusses the shortcomings of the administration in July of 1986. In an attempt to take control, Reagan gave a speech to the World Affairs Council and Foreign Policy Association on July 22. The original goal of this speech was to “be a forceful assertion of presidential vision to clarify U.S. goals, supported by the adoption by the President of a range of political and mild economic sanctions.”⁷⁸ The speech, however, was criticized by many as failing to establish any concrete policies toward South Africa, while also sending a very polarizing message.

Crocker critiqued the administration's lack of unity when writing the speech, ultimately allowing Communications Director Pat Buchanan to take control over writing the draft. Crocker summarized the speech into a powerful short paragraph.

A presidential veto of economic sanctions was threatened up front. There were two or three lines about Pretoria's official violence and nearly a page of about the ANC terrorism and the 'necklacing' of blacks by township comrades. South Africa was compared favorable to the rest of Africa, and our interests in the region reduced essentially to an anti-Communist manifesto. The *real* bottom line was to keep South African's minerals and ports out of Soviet hands! There was no diplomatic game plan, no effort to reposition ourselves in the debate, no call for contact and negotiation with the ANC, no regional assistance programs in the Front Line States, and no real call to action or threat of action. This draft was not even equivocal; it was pro-Pretoria.⁷⁹

This speech ignored any tangible stance against South Africa and neglected the need for concrete plans of action. Instead, there was a heavy focus on black violence in South Africa.

⁷⁷ Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 317.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 321-322.

Reagan has since caught a lot of heat for his racist political stances, both in and out of the United States. Crocker had also expressed his regrets in Reagan's attitude toward Africa. He wrote,

Sadly, Reagan failed to convey a sense of outrage on racial issues. His comments regretting the violence and killings were linked to the argument that much of it was blacks killing blacks, a point which implied that the problem was 'tribal.'... When pressed on whether he would ever 'go beyond friendly persuasion,' Reagan fell into the trap of saying that Botha himself was trying to eliminate apartheid. While there was a kernel of reality in his argument, the President tended to discredit his case by sounding so much like the government from which he was so reluctant to distance himself.⁸⁰

Though the Reagan administration tried their best not to follow the racist leash so easily cast for them by supporting—even at a distance—the South African government, there were still many instances where the distance was not far enough.

In his diaries, Ronald Reagan referred to the tribal nature of South Africa's problems, which pre-existed apartheid. He also took strong stances on which South African leaders were fit to interact with the U.S. government. On December 6, 1984 Reagan wrote:

Bishop Tutu of S. Africa came in. I'm sure he is sincere in his belief that we should turn our back on S.A. & take action such as sanctions to bring about a change in race relations. He is naive. We've made considerable progress with quiet diplomacy. There are S. Africans who want an end to Apartheid & think they understand what we are doing. American owned firms in S.A. treat their employees as they would in Am. This has meant a tremendous improvement for thousands & thousands of S.A. Blacks. There have been other improvements but there is still a long way to go. The Bishop seems unaware, even though he himself is Black, that part of the problem is tribal not racial. If apartheid ended now there still would be civil strife between the Black tribes.⁸¹

Throughout Reagan's diaries, in fact, he never refers to the violence committed by the South African government on the black communities within South Africa. Instead, apartheid is referred to in the abstract.

⁸⁰ Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 319.

⁸¹ Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, ed. Douglas Brinkley (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2009), 404.

Additionally, the violent acts of the ANC were labeled as terrorist acts, while the acts of the SAG were labeled as defensive maneuvers by the Reagan administration. “In defending their society and people, the South African Government has a right and responsibility to maintain order in the face of terrorists,” Reagan explained in his speech on July 22. As well as explaining that though the SAG was partially to blame for the unrest and violence in the country, by going “beyond the law of necessity,” they are acting as “contributors” rather than the source or perpetrators of such acts.⁸²

In this speech, Reagan also brought up a very interesting point in the American view toward South Africa, citing the British historian Paul Johnson. He stated, “that South Africa is an African country as well as a Western country.”⁸³ This is an important notion when discussing the racial element of international interactions. In the case of the U.S. and South African relationship we have come to understand the circumstance as two majority white governments interacting with one another. Reagan’s statement on South Africa falling on the lines between an African and a Western nation points out a key viewpoint in the Reagan administration. It is essentially a code for South Africa being a white nation in a black continent, and inherently so an ally to other Western—or white—nations. This was an obvious fallacy seeing as South Africa had a population of over eighty percent people of color, and yet with a white led government, one based in a similar history as the United States, was seemingly less threatening. Additionally, many have argued that it is in this fact that the Reagan administration had appeared more forgiving toward the transgressions of the South African government.

⁸² Reagan, “Ending Apartheid.”

⁸³ Ibid.

Despite the very truthful outlook at the racial relationship between South Africa and other Western governments, Ronald Reagan's speech was still a very polarizing action among American politicians. The bipartisan agreement to act against apartheid was not enough to thwart Reagan's decision to veto the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in September of 1986. However, it passed in both the House and the Senate over Reagan's veto, which was one of the "most decisive defeats for Reagan's foreign policy during his eight years in the White House."⁸⁴ Of course, there were differences in outlooks toward how to approach apartheid in South Africa between Democrats and Republicans in Congress. Liberals thought any leniency in sanctions was an aid to the apartheid regime. Conversely, the more conservative viewpoint, such as that of Richard Lugar, was to enhance economic outreach through "educational assistance to black South Africans, a human rights fund for legal and humanitarian assistance to blacks, provision of Export-Import Bank loans to black-owned businesses, and direction to other U.S. agencies to assist blacks to expand their role in the South African economy."⁸⁵ Lugar, along with many other Republican representatives which supported the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 looked at United States business in South Africa as a means of leverage and assistance to those effected most in South Africa.

Of course, business was a major factor of the Reagan administration's argument against harsh sanctions throughout 1985 and 1986. Despite this, the rift between the congressional Republican viewpoint and that of the Republican administration came in May of 1986 with the findings of the Eminent Persons Group. With their findings urging for stronger Western action in order to produce a genuine change in the policies of the South African government, the

⁸⁴ Baker, *The United States and South Africa*, 44-45.

⁸⁵ Lugar, *Letters to the Next President*, 217.

congressional decision was made. This time there would be no compromise or executive order. The Reagan administration ultimately decided that communism and apartheid were mutually exclusive, with only one being worthwhile in strong American involvement. In the Reagan administration's failing to change its perspective, there was no choice but to push the CAAA of 1986 through both the House and the Senate over Reagan's veto.

Chapter Four: The Life of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986

Having looked at Reagan's response to the Anti-Apartheid Acts being released in 1985 and 1986, it is important to note how Congress responded. Returning to May of 1986, we can look more closely at the creation, debate, and passing of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 through the House and Senate. This bill would mark a major Congressional upheaval over a presidential veto, and exemplifies a rift between the Republican controlled Senate and the Executive Branch.

Though President Reagan's executive order was released in September of 1985, further bills were introduced into the House and Senate with the hopes of bringing about stronger actions against South Africa. By May of 1986 a new Anti-Apartheid Act had been introduced to the House, again by Pennsylvania representative William H. Gray III (D-PA). At the same time, in fact on the same day, Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) introduced a very similar bill into the Senate. Kennedy's bill was introduced as the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. The bill called for harsher sanctions, banning all exports and investments to South Africa, banning involvement in the computer industry, and increased assistance for South Africans, specifically those affected by apartheid. In the introduction of this bill, there were statements given by several American spokespeople and groups, such as the Reverend John T. Walker, the Episcopal Bishop of Washington, the National Education Association, TransAfrica, and the Washington Office on Africa. Each of which represented the American, albeit mostly liberal, view toward supporting sanctions in South Africa.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Congressional Record- Senate, S. Doc. No. 99-11627 (May 21, 1986).
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt8/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt8-7-2.pdf>.

Kennedy's bill however, did not last long in the Senate, as it was assigned to the subcommittee on International Finance, where it was decidedly superseded by H.R. 4868. Interestingly, H.R. 4868 was introduced into the House with little introduction, in the congressional records for the House on May 21, the bill was introduced simply as: "H.R. 4868. A bill to prohibit loans to, other investments in, and certain other activities with respect to, South Africa, and for other purposes; jointly, to the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs, Ways and Means, and Public Works and Transportation."⁸⁷ Despite its brevity, it would pass successfully through the House and the Senate, as well as over the President's veto.

The bill appeared in Congressional reports again on June 11, as Gray gave further testimony for the need to pass H.R. 4868. He cited the changes in South Africa since the previous year, pointing out the need for harsher sanctions since the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985 had been proposed. "Mr. Speaker and colleagues, the racist Government of South Africa is at it again. New emergency restrictions providing broad powers to arrest without trial, without hearing, and to detain without limitations have now been put into place. These are more extensive than last year's restrictions, which were condemned by all democracies in the Western World."⁸⁸

On June 18, H.R. 4868—the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 was voted on in the House. In which the bill was cited as:

H.R. 4868 prohibits new loans and investments to South Africa; bars the importation of South African uranium, coal, and steel; prohibits the use of United States technology or services to develop new energy sources in South Africa, denies landing rights to South

⁸⁷ Congressional Record- House, H.R. 4868-11483 (Pa. May 21, 1986). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt8/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt8-7-1.pdf>.

⁸⁸ Congressional Report- House, H.R. Doc. No. 99-13440 (June 12, 1986). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt10/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt10-2-1.pdf>.

African aircraft; and bars United States firms from mining and exporting natural resources from the South African-controlled territory of Namibia. The bill also requires the withdrawal of all United States investments in South African computer businesses and prohibits the export of computers to South Africa after 1 year... All of the sanctions imposed by this measure can be terminated only if the President reports to Congress that the South African Government has dismantled apartheid or has freed all political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, and has begun good faith negotiations with representative black leaders. The President's findings must then be approved by Congress through passage of a joint resolution.⁸⁹

This statement laid out the most important aspects of the bill. I am categorizing these requirements as the most important because, though it was hoped they would be the most effective and ultimately harmful against apartheid itself, these requirements were also the most restrictive for the United States.

This congressional meeting took place just days after the SADF raids into Zambia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. This was a large aspect of the argument among many of the representatives speaking on behalf of harsher sanctions. They pointed to the raids as evidence of the worsening situation in South Africa, specifically in the actions taken by the South African government and its Afrikaner defenders. Representative Wolpe (D-MI) noted “During the last 21 months, more than 1,700 people have been murdered in South Africa, most of them killed by security forces or Government-aided ‘vigilantes.’ In the last year, the South African Government has arrested more than 40,000 people on political charges.”⁹⁰ A major aspect of arguing for sanctions was the faith that sanctions would force the SAG to make a positive progress, rather than expecting persuasion to do the same.

Criticism of Reagan’s executive order was also noted in the congressional record. The creator of the Anti-Apartheid Act—of 1986 and 1985—William H. Gray III (D-PA), pointed out

⁸⁹ Congressional Report- House, H.R. Doc. No. 99-14222 (June 18, 1986).
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt10/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt10-6-1.pdf>.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

that reform was not always a viable system to defend apartheid. Gray pointed out that mixed race marriages no longer illegal was often cited to prove the repeal of apartheid. In response to which, Gray stated “I was in South Africa in January. I talked with many of the leaders of the majority population who are oppressed, and not one of them in any conversation said to me that mixed marriages were at the top of their agenda or a major goal. And, thus, to point to that as a reform is absolutely ludicrous; particularly when denied the right to vote.”⁹¹ His argument underlies the minimal reformations South Africa had made when left unburdened by the objections of other nations, and therefore his argument for once again presenting an anti-apartheid bill to the House.

In response to Gray’s statements, several congressmen who stood in opposition of the Anti-Apartheid Act and the sanctions it stood for, expressed disapproval for being labeled as “defenders of apartheid.” Representative Burton (R-IN) argued, “Conversely, if we impose the kind of sanctions that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are asking us to impose today, it is my feeling that chaos will evolve out of this; that the African National Congress and other Communist organizations will grow in strength and we are going to see a real bloodbath. Much worse than what we see right now. The benefactors of that will be the Communist Party and, of course, the Soviet Union.”⁹² This statement, similar to the arguments used by the Reagan administration, was the strongest argument against H.R. 4868.

Burton’s statements also reflected Reagan’s candor on race when discussing the impending end of apartheid. In his argument against the Anti-Apartheid Act, Burton often cited the loss of South Africa’s civilization as one of the negative effects of U.S. sanctions. In the congressional report he stated, “The question is not whether or not we are for apartheid but how

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

do you end it and how do you end it in such a way so that that entire nation does not go back into the dark ages?”⁹³

Over the hours on June 18, the different perspectives toward H.R. 4868 were shared, flipping between those that fully supported the bill, and those who disagreed with its power and proposed actions. A key factor of this debate was the question of doing whatever it took (short of military action) to inflict power to undermine apartheid. Representative Lantos (D-CA), a firm supporter of the Act, brought the debate of apartheid into an extreme comparison, as something that must be worked against no matter what. “Some pieces of legislation... are what I call ‘cannibalism issues.’ Cannibalism issues are like cannibalism. You are either for cannibalism or you are against cannibalism. There are no degrees of cannibalism. There is no phasing out of cannibalism. Cannibalism is to be rejected, and apartheid is to be rejected.”⁹⁴

Additionally, Lantos put the issue of an escalating communist front in South Africa into another black and white picture. “If we wish to facilitate the coming to power of a Communist regime, let us prolong apartheid. It will surely come. The one hope that we have of preserving a non-Communist society in South Africa is to provide the people of South Africa—all the people of South Africa—the fundamental freedoms and beliefs that we cherish and value.”⁹⁵ Trying his best to bend the threat of communism in favor of sanctions against apartheid, Lantos addressed a very serious concern.

On the other side of this debate fell the apprehension toward sanction and the unrelenting fear of its negative impacts. These arguments are what were utilized by the Reagan administration, often to convey the need to reduce sanctions rather than the need to reduce

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

apartheid. Reagan's vocalization on South Africa was often linked more strongly to the need to maintain an active image as a leader on the issue, rather than from a genuine interest in dismantling apartheid. Despite Reagan falling short on this front, many other Republicans, especially those who supported the more conservative view against sanctions, were careful and more thoughtful when discussing apartheid.

Many Republicans took the stance that the United States was obligated to maintain an active role against apartheid, though were careful to actively support sanctions. Others pointed out the need for adaptation to correct a further-deteriorating situation. Representative Bliley (R-VA) spoke on the need for H.R. 4868, as the next step beyond Reagan's executive order from the year before. "I was pleased when President Reagan removed the need for H.R. 1460 [the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985] last year by imposing virtually all of its provisions by Executive order. That method put those measures into effect more quickly than the legislative process allows and put the weight of the American Presidency as well as the American Congress behind those actions. Now, however, 9 more months have passed and progress in South Africa seems to be struck [sic] between very slow and backward." Bliley also took a role as a moderate supporter of the bill, as he was apprehensive of its form, but not its capabilities. "I have some misgivings about H.R. 4868... this bill has been hastily written and that it includes language and provisions that may have impacts far beyond the intent of the sponsors of the legislation. I have no doubt that these discrepancies and shortcomings in the bill can and will be corrected long before H.R. 4868 becomes law."⁹⁶

On the farthest side of the argument were those who opposed strong sanctions. Among those was Representative Siljander (R-MI), who despite this took an active role in the

⁹⁶ Ibid.

conversation and stance against apartheid. He had introduced his own bill into the House in 1985, which proposed using diplomatic means and fair employment principles in order to “be a positive influence in ending apartheid in South Africa.”⁹⁷ Though this bill did not get past being referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Siljander maintained an active role on his stance toward South Africa.

Siljander held an important role, both in a historical context and in congress at the time, pointing out the nuances in the situation between the U.S. and South Africa. In the congressional report for June 18, he stated, “We are truly a great nation. We are a great and powerful country that can send very pointed signals all over the world. Ronald Reagan's Executive order calling for four sanctions, the Sullivan Principles and aiding blacks and entrepreneurial and scholarship activities, have sent a clear message. The hours and hours of debates on the floor of the Congress and in the subcommittees and the full committees have sent messages.”⁹⁸ This point works well to summarize the nature of the Anti-Apartheid Act in Congress, but ultimately the debate around H.R. 4868 continued for nearly 80 pages, with many of the same arguments—both for and against sanctions—being made back and forth.

The hours of debates had perhaps sent many mixed messages to the government and people of South Africa. But the existence of this large debate has also sent a very clear message to historians—this was not a trivial situation. The question of how the United States should respond to apartheid in South Africa brings into focus issues of morality and American interests, many of which the United States had already struggled with in its history. The ultimate

⁹⁷ South Africa Act of 1985, H.R. H.R. 2288, 99th Cong. (as introduced, Apr. 30, 1985). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/99th-congress/house-bill/2288?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22apartheid%22%5D%7D&r=5&s=5>.

⁹⁸ Congressional Report- House, H.R. Doc. No. 99-14222 (June 18, 1986). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt10/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt10-6-1.pdf>.

understanding of the situation was not a question as to whether apartheid was something worth addressing. Despite the outlook of the members of Congress, the answer was unmistakable — apartheid was a very necessary and concerning matter for the United States to be involved in.

Ultimately, the bill passed in the House through a vote by voice, with two amendments. The first amendment was an action against the ANC designed, “to prevent any assistance to the African National Congress or any affiliated organization until the controlling body of the African National Congress no longer includes members of the South African Communist Party.”⁹⁹ The other amendment strengthened the language of the bill, replacing the statutes with the following expectations: “to prohibit any U.S. person or corporation from investing in, importing from, or exporting to South Africa; to require immediate withdrawal or disinvestment of all U.S. assets in South Africa; to prohibit imports of all articles grown and produced in South Africa except of goods, technology, or information; and to permanently ban the importation of gold Krugerrands.”¹⁰⁰ This call for more intense sanctions passed in the House with very little push back from more Republicans who assumed, “that it was so extreme that the Senate would either ignore it or President Reagan would veto anything remotely similar, and see his veto upheld,” according to Senator Lugar.¹⁰¹

Nearly two months later, in August, the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 was discussed in the Senate. This was a separate bill from H.R. 4868 introduced into the House by Gray. Instead this bill—S. 2701—was originally introduced by Senator Lugar (R-KA), the head of the Foreign Relations Committee. This bill

⁹⁹ Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, H.R. H.R.4868, 99th. (Oct. 2, 1986). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/99th-congress/house-bill/4868>.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Lugar, *Letters to the Next President*, 230.

would prohibit South Africa Airways from operating in the United States, prohibit importation of products from government-controlled industries, ban imports of coal and uranium, bar new U.S. loans to the government and any new from accepting deposits... If apartheid was ended, Nelson Mandela and other political leaders were freed, and talks between whites and blacks began, the President could lift all the sanctions immediately. If nothing happened for twelve months, the President would be obligated to impose additional sanctions from a long list provided in the bill.¹⁰²

Lugar was also an important figure in the actions against South Africa. As a strong supporter of Reagan, he worked closely with the administration to garner support for his bill, the goal of which was to outstand the obstacles created by the liberal Democrats in the House as well as to pass in the Senate over the objection of conservative Republican senators.¹⁰³

The challenge of passing the bill through the Senate—controlled by Republicans—was finding a comprehensive balance between pushing the limit in favor of sanctions, but not too far as to “turn off any hope of a Presidential signature, or, finally any hope of veto override.”¹⁰⁴ After hours of this debate, of push and pull towards the correct measures for sanctions that would be successful—both in being passed but as well as being effective against apartheid—a vote was made. Senator Lugar moved “to strike all after the enacting clause of H.R. 4868 and insert the text of S. 2701 as amended.”¹⁰⁵ To the astonishment of everyone involved, including Lugar, H.R. 4868 was passed in the Senate with an 84-14 vote.¹⁰⁶

In less than a month the House and Senate differences were resolved, and by late September H.R. 4868, now known as the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 (CAAA), was being presented to the president. Having surpassed the feat of resolving congressional

¹⁰² Ibid. 231.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 232.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Congressional Report- Senate, S. Rep. No. 99-21870 (Aug. 15, 1986).
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt15/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt15-4-1.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶ Lugar, *Letters to the Next President*, 233. Congressional Report- Senate, S. Rep. No. 99-21870 (Aug. 15, 1986).
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt15/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt15-4-1.pdf>.

differences on a highly contested topic, it was well known that the largest challenge facing the bill would now be a veto by Reagan. Luckily, Lugar was in good standing with the Reagan administration, working closely with George Shultz, John Poindexter, and Donald Regan in order to obtain Reagan's signature on the CAAA. But after Reagan's speech on the matter in July, it was clear that a veto was likely, and as Lugar worked further with Reagan between August and September, this fact became clear. As a strong supporter of Reagan, Lugar was hesitant to undermine his decisions.

I would not have persisted in opposing the president if after all these conversations, debates, and statements I had developed reasonable confidence in his comprehension of what the South African situation was all about. The administration's handling of African issues for six years have been a series of unfortunate failures. George Shultz and Don Regan we're attempting to keep foreign policy clearly in presidential hands with improvised executive orders, adopting much of the language that I had worked through the legislative process. But these last-minute 'saves' did not remove the impression that the president's normal passion for democracy and freedom seemed to diminish when Africa came into view.¹⁰⁷

Ultimately, Lugar made the decision to push for an override of the President's veto.

It is a very interesting point that Reagan was entirely unwilling to compromise on the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act. It ultimately did more harm to the image of the administration than it would have had they gone along with the plan of the Senate Republicans. Reagan himself held very little stakes in the outcome of South Africa, so he had little to lose. Why not compromise? Ultimately, according to Crocker, the failure of the Reagan administration came down to their inability to organize themselves around a common goal and produce a specific plan to counter the sanctions. "Admittedly, a self-destructive battle within the administration over how to handle the congressional politics of the issue contributed to this result

¹⁰⁷ Lugar, *Letters to the Next President*, 238.

by assuring substantial Republican defections.”¹⁰⁸ There was “no hope in sustaining a veto unless it were accompanied by a credible alternative—that is, by fresh evidence of administration initiatives, backed by another set of sanctions promulgated by executive order.”¹⁰⁹

The work fell seemingly entirely on George Shultz, the Secretary of State, who worked on developing initiatives in the short few weeks that would be effective, testing them in the waters of Congress to stimulate reactions. Meanwhile, members in the White House—Buchanan, Regan, and Poindexter—were busy interjecting with “politically irrelevant right-wing activist.”¹¹⁰ A goal was set a week before the deadline of the veto, and in which the veto message “would announce the Shultz mission, our assistance initiative for Southern Africa and black South Africans, and the ambassadorial appointment of Edward Perkins.” Additionally, it would “outline a new executive order, including the bill’s general statement of policy goals... and a number of sanctions drawn from the legislation.”¹¹¹ Despite Shultz’s best efforts, the work of the White House purposefully tripped up any pragmatic initiatives coming out of the Reagan administration in order to appease the far right. Crocker explains Buchanan’s “goal was to prevent any deal” between congressional Republicans and the administration so as to displace any sanctions, while “Poindexter and Regan appeared unwilling to tell Reagan the hard fact that he was headed for a political foreign policy disaster.”¹¹² What was finally signed as Reagan’s veto message of the CAAA was a less bitter version of Reagan’s July 22 speech. Both the speech

¹⁰⁸ Crocker, “Eight Years Later,” 160.

¹⁰⁹ Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 327.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* 328.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* 328-329.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

and veto message are a lasting testament to the effects of Buchanan's hand in the Reagan administration, and was not be enough to withstand the decisions of the Senate.

On September 29, the veto was deliberated in the House. Again, the same arguments appeared: What harm will this bring to South Africans? Is apartheid not akin to Nazism? What is most likely to lead to a communist take-over? After nearly two hours of debate a vote was made. The House passed the CAAA with a vote of 313-83. Three days later, the Senate took the same route, with a vote of 78-21, an incredible feat as it was "the first and only foreign policy veto of President Reagan which had not been sustained, and the first override of a presidential veto in a major foreign policy legislation since 1973."¹¹³ With this final passing of the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986, the bill was enacted into law.

U.S. involvement did not end with the passing of the CAAA, nor did apartheid. In fact, the CAAA would not be repealed, having found South Africa to have fulfilled the requirements, until George H. W. Bush started his first term as president. Apartheid was not considered officially over until the first Democratic election in South Africa occurred in 1994. Instead, the passing of the CAAA is a direct result of a lack of African policy made by the Reagan administration, where the lack of genuine investment was palpable, so much so that even strong supporters of Reagan felt obligated to act opposite of his interests. The Reagan administration was outnumbered by Congressional action in its stance toward South Africa and apartheid. This, however, still allowed for successes in African policy made by the Reagan administration. In the time after the passing of the CAAA, Crocker continued to work within the Reagan administration on African affairs. Though strong U.S. action toward apartheid can be credited to

¹¹³ Lugar, *Letters to the Next President*, 240. Congressional Report- House, H.R. Rep. No. 99-27101 (Sept. 29, 1986). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt19/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt19-2-2.pdf>. Congressional Report- Senate, S. Rep. No. 99-27826 (Oct. 2, 1986). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt19/pdf/GPO-CRECB-1986-pt19-5-1.pdf>.

Congress, the Reagan administration also established some defeats. In 1988 Angola, Cuba, and South Africa signed the Nations Security Council Resolution 435, “calling for Cuba to get its troops out of Angola.”¹¹⁴ Crocker credits this success to the increase in American attention on apartheid. “In the summer of 1985, we used the threat of mounting anti-apartheid fervor and the growth of pro-‘freedom-fighter’ sentiment in the United States to create a time pressure on both Pretoria and Luanda.”¹¹⁵

Evidently, Crocker would not have been successful in his work in southern Africa if the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 had not been a major aspect of congressional and executive attention. Throughout 1985 and 1986 a conflict rose between the Reagan administration and Congress as it became clear to actors passionate about ending apartheid in that Ronald Reagan did not hold the understanding needed to make a positive impact. The Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 stands as a case study for how the American Federal Government works in its truest form. While addressing a highly contested topic, we see the relationship between the presidential administration and Congress, the efforts between the two houses controlled by different parties, and a bill ultimately being passed into law on the matter despite considerable opposition. It was the successes of the Executive and Legislative branches of the U.S. government which both held an impactful role in the actions of one another, and in creating a positive influence in southern Africa.

¹¹⁴ Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 993.

¹¹⁵ Crocker, *High Noon in Southern Africa*, 452. Pretoria is the administrative capital of South Africa, and Luanda the capital of Angola.

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