

Botha, Chissano Talks on Renamo Pondered
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["Southern Africa: Panorama of Opinions" program, presented by Igor Potovski and Mikhail Dugin]

[Excerpts] [Potovski] The recent visit by the South African president to Mozambique has been described by many observers as a landmark in the region's history. During the talks with the Mozambique president, Pieter Botha renounced support for Renamo [Mozambique National Resistance]. According to Botha, the concrete outcome of his visit will also be translated into the development of economic cooperation between the two countries. All this is important, especially in the regional context, because of the quadripartite talks on normalizing the situation in Namibia.

[Dugin] Excuse me, Igor, but how can such parallels be made? And what does South Africa aim to do in the region?

[Potovski] I would say that the aim is to maintain its power. For this the economic dependence of the region's countries on South Africa is necessary. The independence of these countries inevitably leads to increased isolation and ultimately the crumbling of South Africa's economic and, naturally, political system. In this situation the policy of constant destabilization in the region has been the best policy for South Africa for over a year. But this is only one facet of the issue, since there are also the problems of the regime's internal security. South Africa's desire to create a buffer zone around it is much spoken of.

[Dugin] But it does not seem to protect it from foreign aggression.

[Potovskiy] No. There is the blockade of internal opposition from the ANC [African National Congress]. In reality South Africa's strategy is quite simple. The military's hard line is aimed at forcing the Frontline States to stop supporting the ANC through destabilization—that is, through direct aggression or support for the puppet groups UNITA [National Union for Total Independence of Angola] in Angola and Renamo in Mozambique. In this event, according to Pretoria's calculations, the politicians will be able to force a weakened ANC to accept the conditions of an internal political settlement imposed by the government. [passage omitted]

[Dugin] Despite South Africa not abiding by the Nkomati accord, it is seen as a turning point in South Africa's policy toward and relations with the countries of the region in general.

[Potovskiy] Yes, but I would like to answer this in an inverse order.

[Dugin] All right.

[Potovskiy] The West in general views Mozambique as the key country in the region. Several statements were made on this at various levels (?some time ago). At the time the West sought in general to make Mozambique a type of testing ground for its policy in Africa. I think that the time since the Nkomati accord gives grounds to say the same in relation to South Africa. It is now often said that South Africa is inclined to meet the pledges which—speaking figuratively—will take the wind out of the international companies' pressure campaign on Pretoria, and then delay their implementation or partial implementation, although not renouncing them. But this entire mechanism which can be seen so clearly in South Africa's stances at the quadripartite talks, for example, was patently shown for the first time in South Africa's attitude toward the Nkomati accord [words indistinct]. For South Africa the best outcome to the current talks would be an agreement forcing Angola to stop supporting the ANC. [passage omitted]

Relatively recently, you will recall, the former Renamo delegate to Western Europe, Paulo Oliveira, said that South Africa does not in any way resign itself to a united black state at its borders, whether it be a communist or capitalist state. Do you recall?

[Dugin] Yes, I read this in some newspaper.

[Potovskiy] It had Mozambique in mind. But just as the South African attitude toward Renamo is becoming more acute—as did the situation over the issue of independence to Namibia, which the South African military have no intention of leaving—Pretoria is beginning to show decreasing interest in the formation of a coalition government in Angola with UNITA participation. It is in this area that the struggle between the United States and South Africa over control of Renamo and UNITA has increased. But coming back to the first

part of your question; Mozambique is stressing the importance of the Nkomati accord. It must be pointed out that the present meeting between the Mozambique and South African presidents was not about an Nkomati II, but the implementation of the clauses of the treaty itself. The Mozambique leadership was always sure that sooner or later the real substance of the treaty would be guaranteed. As Botha's visit shows, this is possibly the case.

[Dugin] But what forced South Africa to change its positions so suddenly? Have Mozambique's positions changed? Can one speak of this on the basis of the fact that President Chissano declared that apartheid should not necessarily be an obstacle in relations between South Africa and Mozambique? Or is this due to the fact that Mozambique has entered the IMF and its economy has undergone considerable changes? Or is it that the policy of clemency toward Renamo members has played a role?

[Potovskiy] I would say that the answer lies not so much with Mozambique as with South Africa. It is impossible to guarantee the stability of the regime through exclusively military means. Obviously. The war in Angola, aid to UNITA, and troops in Namibia annually cost South Africa 2 billion Rand. Besides this, there is Renamo, which is incapable of existing on its own. It is also necessary to maintain the giant [word indistinct] national security apparatus. This requires an enormous sum of money. At the same time the economic situation in South Africa is far from ideal. [passage omitted]

President Botha speaks about a second step after the Nkomati accord, of a bright future in relations between the two countries. Literally on the eve of Botha's visit, the Mozambique news agency, AIM, pointed out that this meeting could help Botha to save South Africa from the political bankruptcy that the country's military adventurism is pushing it toward. This is why the president must take advantage of the possibility of completely renouncing aid to Renamo.

[Dugin] As a matter of fact, President Botha said this. But what about later? AIM points out, for example, that certain circles in South Africa would like to use these talks only so that world public opinion will get the impression that Pretoria is not isolated. [passage omitted]

[Potovskiy] [Words indistinct]. If the only outcome is that everything will be as before, with the only difference being that Renamo bases are transferred from South Africa to, let us say, Malawi, where Botha went soon after his meeting with President Chissano, confidence in South Africa as a partner in the talks will be completely undermined—including in the quadripartite talks. (?This turn) of events can only mean that the infamous line of the South African military has overcome realism. In this case it is very difficult to hope for real progress in finding a solution to the Namibian problem and in the process of a regional settlement in general.

[Dugin] As you know, the news agencies commenting on the talks between the South African and Mozambique presidents called attention to the details: President Botha presented President Chissano with a Krugerrand; during the meeting, South African Defense Minister Magnus Malan was always a few steps behind the presidents.

[Potovskiyy] The Krugerrand as a symbol of the new economic relations, and the South African defense minister being (?finally) on a secondary level is a symbolic concept. A lot in the region in general will depend on whether or not the defense minister was this time a few steps ahead.