



### The Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund

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# Major Current Issues on Southern Africa

## Question

Is South Africa changing?

## Answer

The move to legalize Black unions, give Blacks political rights in the "homelands" and extend the vote to Coloreds and Asians are all meant to change the image and at the same time strengthen the South African system of apartheid. Although some "petty apartheid" has ended allowing Blacks and white to share some international hotels and park benches, the fundamental character of apartheid has not changed. The South African Parliament will soon consider a bill which will further restrict the movement of Blacks in the urban areas. The legislation, called the Orderly Movement and Resettlement of Black Persons Bill, restricts the overnight stays by Blacks in the "white areas." Blacks still have no political rights and are being stripped of their citizenship through their removal to the desolate and barren homelands. The recent acclaimed constitutional "reforms" make no provision for Black political rights, and establish separate legislature chambers for Coloreds and Asians where they will have no political power to change any of the apartheid laws.

## Question

Are the South Africans trying to bring about a Namibian settlement and end their illegal occupation of that mineral rich country in accordance with U.N. Resolution 435?

## Answer

In 1976, the United Nations passed Resolution 435, calling for free and fair elections and a ceasefire in Namibia. The South Africans have delayed implementation since then, insisting on constitutional guarantees and an electoral system to their advantage. The Reagan Administration has now linked the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola to a Namibian settlement. This demand has now stalemated the talks. In the meantime, the South Africans are continuing their militarization of Northern Namibia where they have 100,000 troops and are considering the drafting of a new constitution and possibly effecting an internal settlement.

## Question

Is the Reagan Administration policy of constructive engagement in South Africa a viable policy?

## Answer

Constructive engagement argues that quiet diplomacy and dialogue is the best catalyst for change in South Africa. However, massive human rights violations inside of South Africa, an escalation of torture and deaths in detention, the loosening of export controls allowing for the sale of 2500 electric shock batons to South Africa, the repression of church organizations and trade unions all have been the result of this policy over the last three years. The Reagan Administration's willingness to openly embrace South African and its refusal to condemn its policies has not only increased destabilization attacks against the frontline states and continued intransigence on the Namibian negotiations. Constructive engagement has been condemned by African leaders, U.S. allies, congressional leaders (both democratic and republican) and human rights activists around the world.

## Question

What is South Africa's role in the military conflict in the Southern Africa region?

## Answer

Since the Reagan Administration assumed office and vetoed U.N. Security Council resolutions condemning South Africa for its invasion of neighboring Black countries, the South Africans have intensified their attacks against those countries. It's 1981 invasion and occupation of Southern Angola was to weaken the SWAPO forces engaged in trying to end South Africa's illegal occupation of their country, Namibia. South African attacks into Lesotho and Mozambique are to attack ANC members, whom the South Africans claim are trying to overthrow the apartheid government. It has used its military might and economic power to destabilize neighboring countries. Independent Southern African states

have paid and continue to pay a high price:

- South African air raid on Maputo, Mozambique in May 1983.  
Six people killed, 39 wounded
- South African invasion of Maseru, Lesotho in December 1982.  
42 Basotho and South African refugees killed
- South Africa's continued military occupation of Southern Angola,  
including numerous bombing forays deep into central Angola.
- South African attacks into Angola continue and have intensified  
in the last 3 years: since 1976, over 10,000 people have been  
killed and over 11 billion dollars of damage has been done.

## Question

What is the implication of the conflict for the overall economic development of the region?

South Africa's war in the region has served to undermine the Southern Africa Development Coordinating Committee (SADCC), which was established in 1980 to coordinate regional development to lessen South Africa's economic stranglehold over the region. Mozambican President Samora Machel stated at the recent SADCC summit that "we are aware that the fundamental objective of these acts of destabilization against our countries is to make SADCC no longer viable." The South Africans are arming and encouraging attacks against the frontline states by rebel groups. In Mozambique it is the MNR (Mozambique National Resistance) and in Angola it is UNITA. Both groups launch attacks against vital economic targets which weaken the country's economic infrastructure.

The second major impediment to SADCC's development efforts has been the drought affecting much of Southern Africa for the past two years. The drought is at its worst in Southern Africa, now facing its third successive year of bad harvests and where in some areas the rains have not fallen adequately since 1976. South Africa has sought to take advantage of this situation in the following ways:

- Lesotho, which normally expects to import over 40% of its food, almost entirely from South Africa, has been facing intensified border controls, imposed by Pretoria on the pretext of clamping down on the African National Congress guerillas. These have led to food shortages and petrol rationing in Maseru.
- South Africa's surrogate forces in Mozambique, the MNR, have made a particular point of attacking transport links and distribution networks as well as various productive enterprises.
- Natural climatic problems have been exacerbated by South African armed action and economic sabotage, aimed at forcing member states to divert a large part of their human, financial and material resources to defense spending.

## Question

What is the possibility of the war in Southern Africa emerging into a major world conflict, employing nuclear weapons?

The widening conflict in the region threatens to do just that. Mozambique might be forced to request Cuban troops to help against attacks from South Africa, as the Angolans have done. An increase in the conventional war could possibly erupt into a nuclear conflict. It is widely believed that South Africa has nuclear capacity which the U.S. has helped it develop for the last 20 years. U.S. corporations in particular have provided South Africa with the technology, equipment, materials and scientific training needed to create the nuclear bomb. They have constructed or provided technology/equipment/material for South Africa's Koeberg nuclear power plants and for its Valindaba uranium enrichment plant. The U.S. government has also helped train 88 South African nuclear scientists and technicians.

## Answer

In 1976, the president of the South African Atomic Energy Board stated "We can ascribe our degree of advancement today in large measure to the training and assistance so willingly provided by the United States."