

The Rhodesia/Zimbabwe Conflict

Professor Robert Matthews (University of Toronto)

The utility of regime theory in the Southern Africa context was questioned from the outset of Professor Matthew's presentation. In particular, it was suggested that the concept of regime may be more appropriately applied to an interstate, rather than intrastate, level of analysis because the objectives of parties in each situation are different. In the Rhodesian-Zimbabwe case, the internal conflict was painted in terms of the incompatible goals of the parties involved--the exclusive control over the state apparatus. At the regional level, the very desirability of a regime in Southern Africa was challenged. It was argued that there had been a "robust," but tacit, security regime in Southern Africa from 1965-74, (in which the Portuguese and Pretoria supported the White Rhodesian Government, economically, militarily and diplomatically); it was, however, a regime which Matthews did not support. In the case where a regime is undesirable, the guiding question asks not "how we might prevent the erosion of regimes" but rather "how we might destroy them." It was asserted that the language of regimes was not necessary to effectively describe regional relations.

Matthews explained that the Rhodesian-Zimbabwean experience is best understood in the context of the series of five initiatives intended to resolve the dispute, rather than to analyze it in terms of a regime framework. The five initiatives were: 1) the Vorster-Kaunda Talks leading to the Victoria Falls Talks (1975); 2) the Kissinger Initiatives (1976) leading to the Geneva Talks; 3) the Anglo-American Owan-Young Initiative (1977); 4) the domestic internal initiative between Smith and local black African leaders (excluding the Patriotic Front); and 5) the final settlement