

APPENDIX G

**MANAGING REGIONAL CONFLICT
REGIMES AND THIRD-PARTY MEDIATION**

NOTES ON SOUTH AFRICA

Dan O'Meara

Centre d'information et de documentation
sur le Mozambique et l'Afrique australe (CIDMAA)

Given the currently prevailing circumstances in Southern Africa, I am deeply skeptical about the applicability of the concept of "regime" to South African policy in the Southern African region. This has deep implications for the range of possible, and effective, actions/interventions by third parties.

The fundamental issue is one of profound imbalances at every level in Southern Africa. Three such imbalances stand out.

The first is that of prior beliefs. Without going into the complex ideological structure of Southern Africa, it is clear that the general system of beliefs underlying South Africa regional policy on the one hand, and those of the member states of firstly the Front Line States, and secondly the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), are profoundly contradictory and indeed mutually exclusive.

Under prevailing circumstances, there seems little that can reduce this incompatibility. The two or three miniscule countries in SADCC who occupy something of a middle position in the region (Malawi, Swaziland and Lesotho) lack both the vision and the influence to reduce this dissonance. Learning processes which might do so are blocked not only by the rigidity of prior beliefs, but also by other regional imbalances.

The second, and by far the most determinant of these imbalances, is a profound inequality of power. Politically, economically and militarily, the Republic of South Africa dominates the entire region to an extent that it has so far been able to resist any attempts to alter both its domestic and regional relations. The costs to the other states of Southern Africa have been little short of catastrophic. While this has also not been without cost to the South African state, South Africa remains able to absorb these costs in the short and medium term.