



SWAPO President Sam Nujoma

criteria cannot be automatically applied. The move to end the Gulf war, for example, stemmed mainly from local circumstances. The US had adhered to the military option despite the common international platform for a peaceful solution created by UN Security Council resolution 598. The Arab-Israeli conflict remains in a deadlock because the US and its strategic asset, 'Israel', refuse to acknowledge the national rights of the Palestinian people. Even under the impact of the Palestinian uprising, the USA continues to adhere to the Camp David course. In addition, the Palestinian question, which is at the core of the Middle East crisis, has a different character, stemming as it does from Zionist colonization, not from a regional conflict. This also applies to the struggle in South Africa, which is formally considered an internal question in one country, but in fact involves the question of colonization and the national rights of the African people.

Also in Central America which US imperialism considers as its 'backyard', the Reagan Administration has from the beginning sought to undermine the regional peace process which was outlined in the Esquipulas II agreement by five states one year ago, and the resulting peace process in Nicaragua. In general, where major US interests are involved, the US will do all to maintain bridgeheads of imperialist dominance. In such cases, Washington clings to its old power games, military interventionism and unilateral diplomacy, trying to keep both the Soviet Union and the UN out of these zones. Even here, though, some modifications have oc-

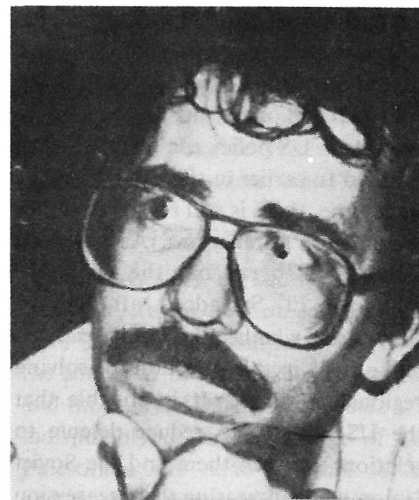
curred, such as the Reagan Administration's formal adoption of the idea of an international peace conference for the Middle East, with Soviet and UN involvement; still, the US idea of such a conference is a world apart from the conference advocated by the Soviet Union, the PLO and non-aligned countries.

The Reagan Administration's old, counterproductive policy has, moreover, brought loss of influence and even scandals, as with the failure of the contra-war against Nicaragua and the recent attempt to interfere in Panama's internal affairs. Thus, tactical changes in US foreign policy cannot be ruled out; nor can the possibility of more successful efforts to resolve regional conflicts.

The dynamics of the peace processes already underway will also influence the position of the various states involved in or adjacent to regional conflicts, creating new facts which US policy will have to deal with. On the other hand, a backlash against the partial change in the Reagan Administration's foreign policy is already underway among right-wing policymakers, and the outcome of the coming US elections will certainly impact on future prospects for resolving regional conflicts.

HAS US POLICY CHANGED?

Compared to the extreme anti-communism and militarism with which Reagan launched his presidency, and the concurrent US approach to regional conflicts, the administration's tone has become somewhat less primitive after the recent US-USSR summits. Until 1987, these conflicts were seen exclusively as manifestations of «Soviet expansionism» and used to block progress in disarmament. At the same time, the US refused the participation of the Soviet Union or its allies in any negotiations. This policy actually dated back to the confrontation course begun by the Carter Administration in response to the fall of the Shah in Iran and the Afghanistan crisis in 1979/80. At this time, NATO decided to station Pershing II and cruise missiles in Europe, while the US unilaterally escalated its military presence in the 'third world', particularly around the



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Middle East and Indian Ocean, and created the Rapid Deployment Force, justifying all this with the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan.

These moves were further escalated in practice by the Reagan Administration and given a more extreme ideological justification, resulting in the first-strike strategy against the Soviet Union and the concept of global interventionism against liberation movements. Based on the supposed «Soviet threat» but actually to protect imperialist dominance, the Reagan Administration developed the strategy of «low intensity warfare» to besiege progressive governments by funding counterrevolutionary sabotage of their achievements, meanwhile launching direct, but limited military intervention in Lebanon, Grenada and Libya; Nicaragua became the no. 1 testcase for «low intensity warfare.» The more the Reagan Administration promoted «low intensity warfare» and presented this as the southern dimension of East-West relations, the more events in the third world affected these relations. Thus, the danger of an escalation beyond regional boundaries increased. At the same time, the Reagan Administration worked to accumulate an unprecedented nuclear arsenal, dramatically escalating the threat to world peace. US military doctrine was that a confrontation with the Soviet Union or one of its allies in the 'third world' could call for a «horizontal escalation» whereby US forces would simultaneously attack on the central