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ALTERNATIVES

A Journal of World Policy

Aims and Scope

The purpose of *Alternatives* is to promote wide-ranging discussion of the future of the world from the perspective of a set of values, principal among which are the autonomy and dignity of all individuals and all peoples; equity and justice within and among societies; elimination of oppression and war in human affairs; restoration of harmony between humanity and nature, and enhancement of people's participation in the productive and decision-making processes at all levels of society.

Alternatives seeks an integrated view of the present human condition and of the changes needed to realize these values within the historical setting of the next two decades. Along with analysis of the structures underlying current problems, the journal presents alternative scenarios and policy prescriptions as a way of promoting discussion of the fundamentals of achieving a better future.

Alternatives is a journal of world policy as its subtitle makes explicit. It focuses on issues that are global and on local problems and policies that have global implications. It is thus concerned not only with official national policies but also with policies pursued by dissident groups and popular movements struggling to overcome war, poverty, and ecological decay.

Debate is the keystone of the journal's methodology—debate over analysis of issues facing a world in the process of transformation; debate over the means of mediating the transformation; debate over the theoretical, metaphysical, and epistemological issues as well as the political struggles that have a bearing on this process; and debate over the prevailing scientific and ideological paradigms that are increasingly incapable of preventing the global drift towards militarism, oppression, and eventual holocaust.

By providing a forum for the discussion of these and other issues, *Alternatives* considers itself part of the unfolding worldwide struggle for a just and peaceful world.

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PATTERNS OF ARMED CONFLICT IN THE THIRD WORLD

Soedjatmoko*

The urge to classify, to construct taxonomies, is a basic intellectual response to chaos. The record of armed conflict in the Third World since the end of World War II does, at first glance, give an impression of chaos. The vast majority of the more than 150 wars[1] fought over the last forty years have occured in the Third World, many with the direct or indirect participation of external powers.

There are at least three conclusions that might emerge out of an attempt to discern patterns in the apparent chaos. One is that armed conflicts in the Third World are a cluster of isolated instances, each unique in its causes, circumstances, and possible solutions. A second possible conclusion is that armed conflicts in the developing countries are expressions of a common condition and therefore require general approaches toward and on the part of the countries involved. The third possibility is that the interaction of Third World conditions with an unstable international environment implies a much more complex answer than either of the first two. The available evidence—and it is abundant—comes closest, in this writer's view, to supporting this third conclusion.

What do the diverse countries of the Third World have in common, apart from their location in Africa, Asia or Latin America, that makes "Third World armed conflicts" an interesting category for consideration? Most developing countries share the experience of colonial domination, though its nature and duration varies tremendously among them. Most of them are poor. And perhaps most importantly, most are engulfed in a process of very profound social and economic transformation that, though a necessary condition for development, is itself a source of instability. There is also a psychological sense of belonging to the Third World which arises from the recognition that the international system is dominated by and directed for the primary benefit of countries that exclude the Third World from decision-making and a fair share of the benefits of interaction. The resulting sense of vulnerability and exclusion—and the often angry sense of injustice that accompanies it—is another factor that gives the countries of the Third World some solidarity despite their great diversity and the considerable dissension among them.

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It is important to keep in mind, however, that the process of social transformation is by no means confined to the Third World. To some extent, all countries are caught up in sweeping value changes that respond to new technologies and modes of organization, and to a pace and scale of change unprecendented in human experience. It is not only in the Third World that the reexamination of old and newer values has led to challenges to the state. The function, purpose, character, and structure of the state encounter challenges from neo-conservatives and religious fundamentalists in the United States, from "green" parties in Europe, from minority nationalities in the Soviet Union, as well as from numerous social and political movements in the Third World.

This should not be surprising. After all, no region has quite mastered the dislocations of the 20th century, with its dizzying growth of populations and massive movements of people, its instant communications, alienating technologies, shrunken spaces, and horrifying destructive power—and so all remain vulnerable to conflict. The category "Third World" is therefore a fairly arbitrary one on any grounds except geography and psychology. It would be difficult, for example, to draw a clear distinction between the conflict in Northern Ireland and many of the ongoing conflicts in the Third World. Nonetheless, three of the widely shared qualities that have been mentioned—colonialism, poverty, and accelerated change—do give armed conflicts in the Third World some distinctive characteristics.

One further distinguishing characteristic should perhaps be mentioned: with the achievement of functional nuclear parity between the superpowers, and the virtually uncontested recognition of spheres of influence dominated by one or the other in the North, the Third World has become the only "safe" battleground for the contest between East and West. Neither side is yet willing to countenance the serious risk of direct nuclear confrontation that will arise from any armed conflict between them in the industrialized world. Thus the Third World has become a theatre, in both the military and dramatic senses, of East-West competition. Of course, such competition is not a factor in all armed conflicts in or among developing countries, but it has prolonged and intensified many of those in which it is not a prominent cause.

Sources of Conflict

Patterns of armed conflict in the Third World can be defined in a number of different ways—all of them, inevitably, somewhat arbitrarily. Few if any disputes that erupt into sustained violence fall easily into a single category, but a useful approach to discerning patterns is to identify the kinds of issues that have commonly given rise to armed conflict. Accordingly, five categories obtain here, all

of which overlap considerably in the real world: i) conflicts over national borders; ii) conflicts with or among minority groups; iii) conflicts involving self-determination; iv) distributive disputes within or among states or regions; and v) systemic conflicts.

National borders

The majority of boundary disputes in the Third World are the legacy of colonialism, and they are primarily of three kinds. The arbitrary drawing of lines on the map has balkanized some nationalities, leading to irredentist claims such as that of Somalia to the Somali-inhabited parts of Ethiopia and Kenya. It has artificially amalgamated others—often traditional enemies such as the Ndeles and the Shona in Zimbabwe, the Sara, the Arab clans, and the Toubou in Chad, the upland and lowland peoples of Burma, and parts of Indochina—whose long-standing enmities were suppressed but not resolved under colonial rule. Very often, such ethnic divisions were compounded by religious divisions, as for example between the Muslim Fulani and the largely Christian Ibo in Nigeria. In these and many other such cases, hostility resurfaced after independence and burst into armed conflict.

A third and particularly tragic result of the colonial division of territories is the attempt to create homogeneous states out of ethnically diverse regions, contributing to some of the worst humanitarian disasters in the context of armed conflict experienced in the post-war period—for example, the exchanges of population and blood between India and Pakistan at the time of partition, and the interminable and complex aftermath of the creation of the state of Israel. There are, of course, border conflicts in the Third World that go beyond the problems of colonial map-making. The Sino-Indian war, for example, seems to have had more to do with the (new) accessibility and strategic importance of remote border regions that previously were beyond control or concern.

Minority groups

Conflicts arising from tensions between minority and majority groups, or among minorities, are closely connected in many cases to the artificiality of boundaries. The minorities involved in disputes that lead to armed conflict may be one of four types. The first to come to the minds of most people is probably that of oppressed minorities who demand equal treatment or greater autonomy. In cases such as those of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Miskitos in Nicaragua, the Muslims in the southern islands of the Philippines, and many indigenous peoples in Asia and Latin America, inertia or outright resistance to their demands has prompted some

of these peoples to accept violence as the only way of breaking the impasse. And once violence is resorted to, an escalating spiral of repression, resistance, and reaction is engendered.

Armed conflict may also be the end result of disputes with successful minorities, as the current situation of the Sikh community in India graphically demonstrates. Resentment against a successful minority is particularly bitter in those cases where the group was preferred, or used and rewarded, by a former colonial ruler. The British philosophy of "divide and rule" left many minority groups vulnerable—notably Asian expatriates introduced into colonies as far-flung as British Guyana, Malaya, and Uganda to serve as commercial middlemen, minor bureaucrats, and in some cases, as professionals to service communities of laborers of the same stock. Similarly, the overseas Chinese communities throughout Southeast Asia were preferred to the native populations as commercial and financial collaborators with the colonizers. Unequal treatment gave indigenous or imported minority groups a toehold on the economic ladder which some of them managed to parlay into lasting achievements through hard work and community solidarity. But their success also entails a legacy of resentment that can easily become violent, especially in times of general economic difficulty.

Competing minorities, too, may generate violent confrontation. The illegal entry of Salvadorans into Honduras in the period leading to the 1969 war between those two countries is one example of competition for jobs, land, and resources giving rise to border tensions and finally to military engagement. Another is the repeated bloody clashes in the Indian state of Assam between the native Assamese and land-hungry immigrants from across the border in Bangladesh. Also, relations between Nigeria and Ghana have been severely strained by the recent forcible expulsion of Ghanian workers whose competition for jobs became increasingly unwelcome as the slipping price of oil depressed Nigeria's economy. Ghana and Nigeria, fortunately, have not shown any inclination to fight over this issue, but such episodes can clearly set the stage for armed conflict. Indeed, in the future, the pressure of rapidly growing labor forces on severely strained economic bases will likely exacerbate the risks associated with this source of tension.

Finally, there is the sort of armed conflict generated by an oppressor minority's attempt to defend its position of privilege against the demands for social justice of the majority. In this class, the most familiar example is that of the South African white minority. Another is the uprising of the Hutu majority against the dominant Tutsi minority in Rwanda in the 1960s, which ultimately reduced the Tutsi population of that country from 15 percent to only 9 percent of the total, through a combination of slaughter and mass exodus.[2]

Self-determination

It is often difficult to draw a clear distinction between minority issues and issues of self-determination and sovereignty, since minority demands so often develop into demands for self-determination in the form of regional autonomy or even independent statehood. The seperatist movements of the Moros, the Kurds, and the Sikhs grew out of their dissatisfaction with their position as minorities. Secessionist movements, however, often go beyond this dissatisfaction to the conviction that, even if fairly treated, a people such as the Eritreans want and have a right to an independent state of their own. The clearest illustrations of this sentiment are those arising from colonization, and from this clarity flows the almost universal sympathy for the struggles, for example, of the people of Namibia.

Using the same principle, cases of post-colonial (or non-European) imperialism should elicit opprobium for the empire-builders and sympathy for the victims of their ambitions, but these situations seldom generate such unanimity. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) has been deeply divided over the question of who should govern the Western Sahara, and controversy continues about the establishment of Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor. Libya has effectively annexed the Aouzou strip of northern Chad to the great consternation of its neighbors and the international community, and Vietnam's presence in Cambodia is entrenched though disapproved. In short, well past the supposed end of the colonial era, issues of self-determination remain one of the primary causes of armed conflict in the Third World.

Distribution of resources

Conflicts over the distribution of the wealth of a nation, or the fruits of development, are another of the major causes of conflict. While these, too, often follow ethnic, religious, or racial lines, they are commonly intertwined with class divisions, rural-urban divisions, or regional divisions. There may be inter-state dimensions as well, as when the disputed resources require regional management, or have special strategic significance. In early 1985, the Egyptian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Butros Ghali, was quoted as saying, "The next war in our region will be over the waters of the Nile, not politics."[3] His prediction may or may not come true, but it illustrates well the sensitivity attached to vital natural resources.

The distribution of land is one of the most ubiquitous and volatile issues generating violence between communities and nations. In most of Central America, land reform is a prerequisite for an end to the threat or the fact of civil war. Officially sponsored settlement programs have provoked armed conflicts between settlers and tribal peoples in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Brazil, among

other countries. And in the poorest coutries, the groundwork for conflict is being laid as rapidly as growing populations press upon an agricultural base whose potential is in some cases actually declining through neglect or abuse.

Conflicts over the distribution of resources between states encompass many of the more traditional forms of inter-state rivalry: some kinds of boundary disputes; land-grabs such as the Zairean attempt to annex the oil-rich Cabinda province from Angola; arguments over the distribution of river waters or aquifers; conflicts over fishing rights and other uses of territorial waters; and disputes concerning access to strategic minerals. Other more intangible resources might also be mentioned here, including navigational rights (e.g. the Suez and Panama Canals and the Shatt al Arab waterway) and access to strategic positions (the Golan Heights, for example). All these issues have contributed to the flare-up of armed conflicts, and will likely do so again under similar circumstances.

Systemic conflicts

Distributive disputes within and among states are often of a systemic nature. In the case of internal conflicts, the search for solutions to basic problems of distribution may itself lead to armed conflict, as ideological contention over economic strategies degenerates into violent confrontation. This is clearly one element of the disputes between the governments and the armed opposiiton movements in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Angola, and Mozambique.

Inter-state conflicts often take on a broader, systemic dimension when the disputed resource is seen as vital for the maintenance of one of the contending systems. The recent attempt by South African commandos to attack the oil refinery in Cabinda underscores how crucial that facility is seen to be for the economic viability of the Angolan state—a perception shared by both the supporters and the opponents of the socialist regime in Angola. Likewise, retaining the West Bank and the Golan Heights are seen by Israeli decision makers as vital to the continued existence of the state.

In general, systemic conflicts may be characterized as ideological (including religious) in character; as dedicated to the extension of certain regimes of force or of principle; or as defending of an existing balance of power, sphere of influence or alliance system. It is difficult to find examples of pure ideologically-based armed conflict, though ideology is a factor in many cases mentioned above, such as the ones in Central America and Africa. Similarly, religion is an important element in the Gulf war between Iran and Iraq, and in Iran's involvement in other armed conflicts throughout the region—though it is only one part of the struggle for leadership taking place against the complex background of Middle Eastern radical politics.

The use of armed force to further either a political project or a moral cause is a category that may seem to combine very disparate elements. Often, however, it is (only) a matter of judgement and perspective as to where a particular conflict fits more suitably. The Cuban presence in Angola is presented by the Angolan and Cuban governments as a contribution to the historical process of self-determination and the defense of Angola's national sovereignty. But it is portrayed by the U.S. government as a calculated extension of Soviet power in the region. Libya's various attempts at coalition and conquest in North Africa are seen by some as crude expressions of hegemonial amibitions, but presumably by Colonel Q'addafi as attempts to realize the dream of a greater and purer Islamic Maghreb. The Tanzanian invasion of Uganda, the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, and the Indian invasion of East Pakistan are three examples of military action that put an end to situations of grave injustice and violation of accepted humanitarian norms. Still, in all three cases, the regional political aspirations of the invading state were also served. In Southern Africa, however, the continuing conflicts of the black front-line states with South Africa are less ambiguous because all pay a severe military and economic price for their efforts to put an end to the system of apartheid.

The third form of systemic conflict is that in which armed force is used to maintain, at the regional or global level, a balance of power, sphere of influence, or alliance system. The wars of the last thirty years in Indochina, though containing elements from virtually every other category, are likely to be dominated by factors from this category: the effort to maintain the French colonial empire; the U.S. attempt to prevent the countries of the region from escaping the western sphere of influence; and Vietnam's domination over Laos and Kampuchea, leading it into confrontations with Thailand and China. The U.S. involvement in Central America is another example of system-maintenance as a motivation for armed conflict, as is the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan—though the two conflicts are quite different in scale, depth of involvement, and a number of other dimensions.

In general, systemic conflicts tend to be among the most bitter and intractable, since the parties involved often see themselves as fighting for their very existence—not only for their lives but for the continuation of the principles, beliefs and structures for which they have lived.

Complexities of conflict and restraint

The problem with classifications is that they are essentially static. The patterns of armed conflict in the Third World today are embedded in a historical process that exposes all developing countries to tremendous turmoil and fragmentation. In some cases, as was pointed out, this turmoil is part of the struggle to throw off

the remnants of colonial structures and power relationships. But in many others, the end of the colonial era has been followed in short order by a new period of violent contention as mechanisms for political representation and civic participation have failed to take hold.

In a number of countries, the state apparatus has been captured by a class or ethnic group, which then used it exclusively for its own advancement. But even without the wilful appropriation of state power, the development process itself generates tensions and inequalities that a representative government must mediate. Mediation, however, requires strong political, economic, and legal institutions, which are lacking in much of the developing world. All too often, therefore, states have failed in or abandoned their mediating roles and substituted repression for social management.

In many instances, Third World states have compounded the error by inviting external military assistance to help them deal with the violent reactions engendered by developmental and distributive failures. Their opponents responded in kind or perhaps initiated the process to begin with, so that in many cases Third World governments and opposition movements alike have lost control of the duration and intensity of their conflicts. The less successful they are in dealing with internal disputes through the exercise of persuasion, negotiation, and accomodation, the more vulnerable they become to external interference—often, ironically, by invitation.

The volatility of a world that is going through a period of fundamental transformation creates a tinderbox effect in which conflict cannot easily be avoided or contained. The range of combustible materials is vast. One of the flaws of modern political science is perhaps a tendency to reduce the causes of conflict to rather bloodless assessments of the interests or organizational imperatives of various actors. It is extremely difficult to capture in this kind of framework the very powerful forces that underlie many of the armed conflicts in the Third World. The passions that lead people to kill and die for often intangible attachments— to a mother tongue, to a religion, to recognition of certain rights, to recovery or establishment of identity—are not within the power of governments to control, though governments and opposition movements often attempt to manipulate them.

The frequency with which these passions are misread, misinterpreted or simply overlooked is such as to tempt one to define a sixth class of armed conflict: war by miscalculation or misperception. One can scarcely begin to count the number of armed conflicts that have arisen because of faulty perceptions of the monolithic nature of Communism, the power of independent nationalism, the depth of ethnic passions, the pacifying power of prosperity, or religion as a motivating force in politics.

Perhaps the most recent spectacular example of this sort of failure to ascertain the powerful passions that channel the course of history was the Islamic Revolu-

tion in Iran. The significance of its success is immense; already waves of Islamic activism, inspired by the Ayatollah Khomeini, have flowed from its successes to various parts of the world. In addition, two current instances of armed conflict in the Indian sub-continent will illustrate the ease with which deep currents of animosity can be overlooked. The Punjab has been cited repeatedly as one of the great success stories of the region for its great strides in agricultural productivity leading to remarkable economic growth. Sri Lanka has been similarly cited for its successes in achieving a high quality of life and a relatively egalitarian distribution of income even though it is a poor country. These successes have been widely supposed to innoculate an area against violent conflict, yet today both countries are in flames. For various reasons, neither the depth of Sikh and Tamil grievances nor the powerful backlash of majority communities were reckoned on.

These forces emanating from the Third World play themselves out on an unstable international system under pressure from several fronts. One is the progressive weakening or disintegrating of less viable states such as pre-1972 Pakistan, and perhaps today's Lebanon or Chad. A second is the consolidation or attempted consolidation of new power configurations under regional hegemonic powers such as Libya in North Africa or India in South Asia. A third and related trend is the emergence of new economic and political centers of power, such as the newly industrialized countries (NICs) of East Asia as well as, of course, China. A fourth is the interpenetration of traditional spheres of influence in a context of persistent and even heightened East-West polarization. In this setting, the demand for self-determination is sometimes an integrating and sometimes a disintegrating force.

East-West and North-South issues have become even more inextricably intertwined as the superpowers strongly commit themselves to a global projection of force. The mere fact that one of the superpowers is arming or otherwise supporting one party to an armed conflict has been reason enough for the other to back its opponent—albeit not without restraint. The Soviet Union, for example, has been extremely circumspect about its material support for Nicaragua; and in a similar way the United States has been careful about direct involvment with the Afghan resistance. In neither case is one power in any doubt about the desires of the other, but neither displays an appetite for direct confrontation in the other's backyard. While such caution is certainly comforting, in many cases it has the effect of injecting an element of proxyism on armed conflicts in the Third World that, as mentioned earlier, prolongs and intensifies the fighting. It has also made the position of former buffer states such as Kampuchea and Afghanistan untenable, and subjected them to a total loss of autonomy.

In projecting their force postures globally, the superpowers have drawn a number of Third World countries very closely into their strategic networks because of the importance of forward basing-areas for rapid deployment forces,

ports for blue-water navies, and air bases. Thus, in countries such as the Philippines and Afghanistan, it is all but impossible for armed conflicts over issues such as modernization, national integration, and political succession to be resolved according to (mainly) domestic considerations.

Such asymmetry is manifested in the volatility of alliances between Third World states and the major powers. In the Horn of Africa, for example, the Soviets and Americans have taken turns being Somalia's patron, while the reverse switch occured in Ethiopia. Consistently, the interests of the major powers are taken into account before those of their client states. Pressures from domestic and bureaucratic rivalries within the big powers may work for or against various parties to Third World conflicts, but the Third World's ability to influence the direction of such pressures is very limited in most cases. Indeed, while client states are presumably assured of security and aid, these benefits also bring with them constant risk of interference, of external support for internal dissenters, of destabilization.

According to Johan Galtung, there are four central elements to a more effective and independent security policy: that countries decouple their vital interests from the superpowers; arm themselves with defensive weapons only; cultivate friendly and productive relations with countries at all points on the political spectrum; and do everything in their power to build up their "internal strength."[4] The last component takes special cognizance of the opportunities that instability create for armed intervention by external powers. While this is not to suggest that countries that might fall prey to intervention always bring it on themselves by a failure to keep their own houses in order, it cannot be denied that injustice, lack of participation, and unresolved grievances are breeding grounds for violence and armed conflict.

These concepts may seem only too obvious, but they are necessary to respond to the common argument that the preservation of peace may require the acceptance of an unjust *status quo*.[5] According to this position, the evils of armed conflict are weighed against the evils of the less-than-perfect reality, and found heavier. For example, the member states of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) operate on the principle of respect for existing boundaries, though they individually condemn the manner in which carelessly drawn boundaries violate the ethnic geography of the continent. They support the *status quo*, reluctantly, because it is the only way to avoid bloodly struggles whose outcome is uncertain.

That a flawed peace is preferable to almost any war is compelling in many circumstances, but there are two characteristics of contemporary armed struggle that detract from the argument. One is the easy availability and vastly increased destructive power of modern weapons. The second, as discussed above, is the willingness of external powers to supply and support armed resistance within states, or armed conflict between states, in pursuit of their own political or strategic objectives.

The increased sophistication and portability of weapons, the ease of manufacture of explosives, the eagerness of arms manufacturers to sell their wares, all mean that even very small groups can inflict enormous damage—enough to throw a society into chaos and effectively derail its development efforts. For example, previously it would hardly have made sense to speak of the activities of fifteen people as "armed conflict." Yet a cell of only fifteen rightists uncovered by the Argentine authorities in May 1985 was found to be equipped not only with small arms and military uniforms but also with high-powered explosives, sophisticated transmitting equipment, and napalm-carrying warheads.[6] Indeed, the effectiveness of small groups in armed conflicts is illustrated by the history of mercenary involvement in successful and near-successful coups in Africa in the post-colonial period. The 1975 coup that installed Ali Solih as president of the Comoro Islands were accomplished by a total force of eight men. The coup that removed Solih from power in 1978 and reinstalled his predecessor was carried out by forty-five mercenaries under the same leader who directed the 1975 coup.[7] Very small states with weak military forces and highly centralized (often in one person) power structures are particularly susceptible to the small, mercenary strike-force. The number of tempting targets for mercenary action is likely to grow with the importance of small states in politically volatile and sensitive regions.

The ease with which serious, violent disruptions can be sustained by small groups if they are well armed, well financed, and well trained has reduced the cost of interference in the internal affairs of another country and raised its payoff. An adversary, or an adversary's client, can be kept off balance through prolonged armed conflicts of the hit-and-run variety. Usually referred to as terrorism, much of its sporadic nature is due more to limited means rather than a strategy of unpredictability. Still, in order to operate successfully even at a fairly low level of intensity, armed groups need some kind of local sympathy in order to conceal their activities and evade detection. Unresolved grievances and the persistence of an unjust *status quo* nurture the sympathy that the guerilla and, to a lesser extent, the terrorist rely upon. Even the Philippine armed forces have acknowledged that the communist New People's Army controls or at least have friendly access to 20 percent of the villages in the Philippines,[8] and is thus virtually indestructible by conventional military means. The spread of terrorism, and its growing sophistication as a means of political struggle, has also been encouraged by the failure to find solutions to protracted conflicts.

The function of the local base may also be filled by adjacent sanctuaries, if bordering states have populations or governments willing to harbor opposition forces. Anti-Sandinista guerillas based in Honduras and Costa Rica have used their sanctuaries to launch strikes on Nicaragua and build-up their strength. The ongoing negotiations between Sri Lanka and India is a recognition of the fact that unless Tamil separatists operating from bases in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu

could be prevented from crossing into Sri Lanka, no military solution to the conflict can be attained.

Since any group with a grievance and a domestic power base can find potent means – if necessary from the outside – to disturb if not destroy the peace, it follows that the acceptance of unjust situations is not an alternative to armed conflict but a recipe for it. The only real solution is political accomodation with the aggrieved groups. And this, obviously, is easier to achieve before the resort to arms, and not after violent confrontation has heightened and polarized sentiments and weakened the will to compromise.

With resort to violence so easy, the peaceful management of conflict requires a great capacity for political innovation. There is no formula that can be applied across the board, although there are many valuable examples. There is, for example, the peace treaty negotiated by the Government of Colombia with the main guerilla movements there in 1984, and the unilateral amnesty declared in 1980 by Thailand for local Communist insurgents who agreed to lay down their arms and re-enter Thai society.[9] Also, the regional conflict-resolution effort of the Contadora group is innovative both in its proposals and its methodology. The Contadora method involves all parties in a thorough exploration of the issues and discussion of negotiable positions before the process of formal negotiation begins.

Highly innovative and constructive proposals will not, however, change the pattern of armed conflict in the Third World or elsewhere without some commitment to their implementation. Virtually every failed proposal for constructive change has floundered on this question of political will. But changing the current destructive patterns of armed conflict in the Third World does not require any wholesale adoption of new policies or negotiating formulae. It requires something that is perhaps a little easier to achieve: restraint. This needed restraint has two major dimensions, one internal to the decision-making structures of parties to Third World conflicts, and one to be exercised by external powers.

The former applies chiefly to the ways in which actors in the developing countries express and pursue the very real disputes among themselves. All have a stake in the peaceful resolution of conflicts, limits on the production and importation of arms, and the vigorous application and extension of humanitarian law. Above all, it is in the interest of the developing countries to wean themselves from external military support and involvement, for two compelling reasons.

One is that external involvement almost always increases the scale and destructiveness of conflicts, by providing weapons that multiply the number of casualties (especially, in recent decades, civilian casualties) and do considerable damage to the social and economic infrastructure of the area of conflict. For example, U.S. military aid to El Salvador, which more than doubled from 1983 to 1984 to reach a level of $196.5 million, was invested partly in a dramatically increased capacity for aerial bombardment. Combat helicopters supplied by the United States increased from fifteen to as many as fifty from the one year to the

next; gunship helicopters and at least one C-47 "air-borne fire-support platform" were also supplied. As a result, according to the Institute for Strategic Studies, "this caused such an increase in civilian casualties that widespread concern forced President Duarte in September to promise a tightening of the rules for bombing."[10]

External support for one party to a dispute encourages and even compels its adversaries to do the same, thereby subjecting the country or region to the expression of rivalries and antagonisms in which it has no direct stake. External military aid is often the trigger for region-wide arms races which drain the resources and heighten the level of tension of the countries involved. In addition, the external patron may discourage client governments or factions from entering into negotiations or seriously pursuing negotiations that do get started. It may prefer to continue an armed conflict that costs it relatively little but is an effective source of discomfiture to its rivals. The current stalemate of the Contadora effort, for example, seems to owe much to the reluctance of the United States to see the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua come to terms with its challengers.

The second compelling reason to forego external assistance is that such assistance undermines the autonomy of the recipient to such an extent that even the victor of a battle for control of a state may end up with a Pyrrhic victory. Measured against the loss of political independence and the danger of resubjugation to the interests of external powers, the political or ideological goals of the combatants must be reassessed. Furthermore, the acceptance of external aid often entails a serious sacrifice of legitimacy, as the American-backed regimes in South Vietnam, the Soviet-backed regimes in Afghanistan, and the Vietnamese-backed regime in Kampuchea have discovered to their own and their patrons' frustration. Similarly, the legitimacy of UNITA in Angola and FROLINAT in Chad are respectively tainted by South African and Libyan patronage.

For the sake of limiting the destructiveness and the duration of armed conflicts, as well as to protect claims to legitimacy, restraint in seeking external military assistance is a serious consideration for all parties to armed conflict in the Third World. But such a regime of self-restraint is unlikely to hold up without a reciprocal restraint on the part of the external powers themselves. These external intervening powers are not necessarily the superpowers nor the former colonial powers. Rather, in more and more armed conflicts in the Third World, they are one of the more powerful Third World states—such as India, Libya, Vietnam, and Tanzania. Any code of conduct that might be devised to discourage interference in armed conflicts will have to be negotiated on an inclusive basis, though regional organizations are often promising venues for initiating such discussions.

Restraint on the part of potential interventionist states has a powerful potential for limiting the scope of armed conflict in the Third World, given that few developing countries have sophisticated arms industries of their own. Only Brazil, China, India, Israel, South Africa, and Taiwan have significant arms manufac-

turing capabilities. Few other developing countries even approach self-sufficiency, and although the arms imports of Third World countries as a whole have increased dramatically in the last twenty years, many of the non-oil exporting states are dependent upon military aid or credit.

Lest a regime of restraint in supplying Third World countries with the weapons to cripple each other be thought utterly utopian, it is worth recalling the considerable progress made during the late 1970s in one effort to negotiate such an agreement in a very strategic and sensitive part of the world. The Conventional Arms Transfer (CAT) negotiations involving the major countries of Latin America, in consultation with the United States, the Soviet Union, and other major arms-exporting countries did make substantial strides toward an agreement to lower the influx of weapons into that troubled region.[11] The deterioration of detente in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the advent of a more conservative U.S. administration with little predilection for arms control, were among the factors that derailed the CAT negotiations. But the progress made sets a valuable precedent that can be applied in other regions and, one hopes, revived in the region where it began.

A more demanding form of restraint on the part of external parties requires a narrow interpretation of the kinds of political developments that constitute threats to their national interests. While demanding, it does not insist that states subordinate their national interests to higher principles such as respect for self-determination. Restraint in defining one's legitimate national security interests requires making a distinction between developments that are threatening and those that are merely distasteful. The accession to power of a leftist regime in Nicaragua is certainly distasteful to the current U.S. administration, but it is difficult to convince most of the community of nations that Nicaragua poses a genuine threat to the security of the United States. Ironically, Nicaragua will become more of a threat the more it is forced to rely on the Soviet Union and its allies in order to protect its independence from U.S. intervention. To this extent, perhaps the most valuable immediate effect of the Contadora effort has been to prevent the isolation of Nicaragua and the stark clientism that would most certainly result.

According to this yardstick, the United States has shown a remarkable lack of restraint in defining threats in Central America—seeming almost to equate any degree of foreign policy independence or any social movement opposed to the social and economic *status quo* with a threat to U.S. interests. Yet the U.S. relationship with Mexico amply demonstrates that an independent foreign policy can be pursued even by a close neighbor without compromising security. In fact, a more plausible threat to U.S. national security is the persistence of the *status quo* in Central America. As Robert S. Leiken puts it, "Moscow's chief strategic asset in Central America is the United States' long backing of reactionary oligarchies and the legacy of anti-Yankeeism."[12] A similar lack of restraint in per-

ceiving threats may be seen in the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan. In this case, it is difficult to assess how well-grounded is the Soviet fear of domestic contagion from Islamic fundamentalism, but Soviet determination to consolidate a hold on a state it regards as belonging to its own sphere of influence definitely reveals a grave lack of restraint. One extremely important aspect of restraint that is negatively illustrated by both superpowers here concerns the role of buffer states. What is needed is a mutually acceptable definition of the internal power configurations and external policies that a buffer state can adopt and still be left alone by its more powerful neighbors.

Government and non-governmental actors are motivated to observe restraints either because they recognize a moral imperative shored up by the approbation of the international community, or because they have calculated the utilitarian value of reciprocal restraint on the part of adversaries. Any state that chooses to ignore restraints must calculate that its willingness to do so will inevitably encourage others to do the same; its calculations of self-interest must weigh the short-term advantages that might be gained in a particular conflict against the cost of achieving its objectives in an environment made more dangerous and difficult by a general lack of restraint.

The primary obstacle to restraint is desperation, and that abounds in the Third World. To reduce the sources of armed conflict there, as in the North, will call upon the deepest reserves of political innovation that governments and other political actors can command. The task is obviously not one for the Third World alone, given how closely its turbulence is tied to that of the international system as a whole. Just as the countries of the North have a stake in reducing the occurence of armed conflict in the South, so the South has a direct stake in the restoration of East-West detente. This stake goes beyond the obvious one of avoiding World War III and the probability of a dreadful nuclear winter to follow. Superpower competition threatens a virtual recolonization of the Third World; it also assures a diversion of their scarce resources into military confrontations beyond their power to control. To this extent, detente is almost a prerequisite for peaceful and autonomous development in the Third World. The Third World cannot, therefore, afford to remain passive but must actively involve itself in the struggle to restore detente and see that the concept extends beyond Europe and North America.

Conclusion

The patterns of armed conflict in the Third World are more like a kaleidoscope than a patchwork quilt: the patterns are constantly shifting. Unlike a kaleidoscope, the variations are not predictable, and the elements of change are not contained within a finite system. The volatility of the interactions between the Third World

and the international system and among the developing countries themselves cannot be over-estimated. The foreign policy priorities of the present superpowers are unpredictable; even more so the future course of Chinese foreign policy and that of other emerging powers. The stability of alliance systems, regional and global, cannot be taken for granted. Already, the precarious economic situation of many developing countries raises serious questions about their ability to achieve or maintain political stability.

In light of this extremely unsettling scenario, the prospect of nuclear proliferation in the Third World is terrifying. Yet it is very likely that new and existing tensions will lead countries, and possibly even some non-state actors, to an all-out effort to acquire nuclear weapons. The most powerful incentive for any nation to do so is the assumption that its opponents are planning to do the same, or have actually embarked upon the process. This vicious spiral is already underway: between India and Pakistan, Brazil and Argentina, South Africa and the black front-line states, Israel and Iraq.

The growth of the nuclear power industry raises the risk of proliferation in two ways. The diversion of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium from conventional reactors has been constrained in large part by suppliers' and manufacturers' safeguards. However the current economic crisis in the nuclear power industry has turned the reactor business into a buyers' market. There is a danger of a consequent bidding-down of safeguards by countries that are in a position to buy reactors. Second, the spread of nuclear power is beginning to put such quantities of plutonium into circulation that to prevent the diversion of the tiny amount needed to construct a small weapon begins to seem a Herculean task. The development of the breeder reactor, even if it operates only in the industrial countries, promises to aggravate this problem greatly.

In sum, if there has never before been a sufficiently compelling reason for nations to cooperate in managing conflicts and attempting to eradicate their causes, the prospect of one or two or half a dozen more Hiroshimas—to say nothing of the risk of larger conflagrations and the risk of general escalation—should be enough to prompt a reconsideration.

Notes

1. The difficulties of specifying what sort of conflict constitutes a war make this a very imprecise figure. Estimates range widely from about 100 upwards, including the count of 259 "wars or warfare incidents" made by the historian of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and the 307 "conflicts" counted by Dr. Nazli Choucri in *Population and Conflict: New Dimensions of Population Dynamics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1983).

2. John Paxton, ed., *The Statesman's Year-Book, 1977/78* (London: MacMillan Press, 1977).

3. Quoted in Lloyd Timberlake, *Africa in Crisis: The Causes, the Cures of Environmental Bankruptcy* (London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 1985).

4. Johan Galtung, *There Are Alternatives! Four Roads to Peace and Security* (Nottingham: Spokesman Press, 1984).

5. See, for example, Michael Howard, *The Causes of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

6. Jackson Diehl, "Argentina Takes Steps Against a Rightist Paramilitary Group," *International Herald Tribune*, June 3, 1985.

7. Gerry S. Thomas, *Mercenary Troops in Modern Africa* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984).

8. Anthony Short, review of Lim Joo-Hock and S. Vani, eds., *Armed Communist Movements in Southeast Asia: Issues in Southeast Asian Security* in *Survival*, XXVII, Number 2 (March-April 1985).

9. Maria Elena Hurtado, "Colombia: So Who Writes to the Colonels?" in *South*, Number 58 (August 1985); and "CPT No Longer Poses a Threat to Thailand," *Thailand Foreign Affairs Newsletter*, Number 15/84 (November 1984).

10. "Central America: Revolution and Counter-revolution," in *Strategic Survey 1984-85* (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1985).

11. Sergio Gonzaléz Gálvez, "The Arms Race as a Factor of Instability in Latin America," in *Security and Development* (Tokyo: United Nations University, forthcoming).

12. Robert S. Leiken, "Can the Cycle be Broken?" in Robert S. Leiken, ed., *Central America: Anatomy of Conflict* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984).

Review of International Studies

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