THE THIRD WORLD’S WAR

London School of Economics
November 24, 2010
45. The Third World's War: soldiers training in Guatemala to fight the Guerrilla Army of the Poor. Although notionally a war between capitalists and Communists, on close inspection the Guatemalan civil war was as much an ethnic conflict between Ladinos and Mayans.
A ‘Long Peace’?

• ‘... it is the case that the post-World War II system of international relations, which nobody designed or even thought could last for very long, which was based not upon the dictates of morality and justice but rather upon an arbitrary and strikingly artificial division of the world into spheres of influence, and which incorporated within it some of the most bitter and persistent antagonisms short of war in modern history ... survived twice as long as the far more carefully designed World War I settlement.’ – John Gaddis (1986)
Why no Third World War?

- Cold War as a ‘self-regulating system’
  1. Bipolarity: Reflects power realities, simple
  2. Dependence not interdependence: Less contact, less friction
  4. Deterrence: ‘paranoia and prudence can co-exist’ in a nuclear world
  5. ‘Reconnaissance revolution’: Greater certainty
  6. Ideological moderation: No unconditional surrender
  7. Rules of the game: Respect spheres of influence, avoid direct confrontation, avoid use of nuclear weapons, accept anomalies, do not undermine other side’s leadership
15 crises without wars

- Iran, 1946
- Greece, 1947
- Berlin and Czechoslovakia, 1948
- Korea, 1950
- East Berlin, 1953
- Hungarian uprising, 1956
- Berlin, 1958-59
- U-2 incident, 1960

- Berlin, 1961
- Cuban missile crisis, 1962
- Czechoslovakia, 1968
- Yom Kippur war, 1973
- Afghanistan, 1979
- Poland, 1981
- Korean airliner incident, 1983
Or the ‘Third World’s War’?

• ‘The Cold War was a continuation of colonialism through slightly different means. ... Superpower interventions ... helped put a number of Third World countries in a state of semipermanent civil war ... against the peasantry.’ – Westad, *Global Cold War* (2005)

• ‘The real and bloody Third World War was in fact fought ... in the Third World itself ... where the strategic stakes (though not the human costs) were lower.’ – Ferguson, *War of the World* (2009)
Guatemala, 1966-1984

Civil war between capitalists and communists but between Ladino latifundista and Mayan peasant tribes like the Ixil and Kekchiː When the civil war was finally brought to an end, the total death toll had reached around 200,000.
East Pakistan, 1971

Mohammad Ayub Khan waged an authentically genocidal campaign against the people of East Pakistan in a vain attempt to prevent their secession by ‘reducing this majority into a minority’
Cambodia, 1975-1979

Estimated number of victims of Khmer Rouge c. 1.5-2.0 million.
September 1987: Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, nr Namibian border: Angolan government forces were equipped with Soviet-made T-55 tanks and MiG fighters, but the tank crews and pilots were mainly Cuban. 8,000 UNITA troops were supported by around 3,000 South Africans including 61st Mechanized Battalion Group.
Kurdistan, 1988

Saddam Hussein launched the so-called Anfal (Spoils) campaign against the Kurds, using (among other weapons) poison gas to wipe out whole villages.
So how peaceful was the Cold War?
## The Third World’s War

### Biggest conflicts of the Cold War era

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Estimated deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean War</td>
<td>1950-1953</td>
<td>2,950,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda and Burundi Civil Wars</td>
<td>1959-1995</td>
<td>1,150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indochina</td>
<td>1960-1975</td>
<td>1,900,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethiopian (Ogaden and Eritrean)</td>
<td>1962-1992</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nigerian Civil War</td>
<td>1966-1970</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bangladesh War of Independence</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
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<td>Cambodia: Khmer Rouge</td>
<td>1975-1978</td>
<td>1,600,000</td>
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<td>Mozambique</td>
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<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>1979-2001</td>
<td>1,400,000</td>
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<td>Iran-Iraq War</td>
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<td>500,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>1983-2005</td>
<td>1,300,000</td>
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Correlates of War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Interstate</th>
<th>Extrastate</th>
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### Average duration of wars

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### Estimated battle deaths

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<td>28</td>
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<td>98</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>95</td>
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Would violence have happened anyway?

- How far were the Cold War conflicts post-colonial civil wars that would have happened anyway?
- How big a contribution did the superpowers actually make to fomenting and prolonging wars?
The Soviet contribution

- April 1950: Stalin authorized the North Korean leader Kim Il Sung to invade the Republic of Korea...
- Soviets assist Cubans, and seek to deploy nuclear weapons there
- Soviets assist North Vietnamese
- Also Cubans in Angola and Mozambique

- Also: The appearance of Soviet moves
- Guatemala 1952 (Arbenz)
- Chile 1970 (Allende)
- ‘The world was going our way.’
The American response

• U.S. had treaties of alliance with no fewer than 48 different countries
• 168 instances of American armed intervention overseas between 1946 and 1965
• Only around 2 out of 32 major interventions delivered growth and democratization (South Korea, Taiwan) – Westad
• But why so unsuccessful? Too much or too little intervention? – Ferguson (2004)
U.S. National Defense budget as percentage of GDP, 1947-1989

Average: 7.5%
U.S. Economic and Military Aid as % GDP, 1946-1989

Source: Statistical Abstract
The problem

[Pyle] was talking about the old colonial powers—England and France, and how you couldn’t expect to win the confidence of Asiatics. That was where American came in now with clean hands.

‘Hawaii, Puerto Rico,’ I said. ‘New Mexico.’

... He said ... there was always a Third Force to be found free from Communism and the taint of colonialism—national democracy he called it; you only had to find a leader and keep him safe from the old colonial powers ...
The problem

‘I’ve been in India, Pyle, and I know the harm liberals do. We haven’t a liberal party any more – liberalism’s infected all the other parties. We are all either liberal conservatives or liberal socialists: we all have a good conscience. ... We go and invade the country: the local tribes support us: we are victorious: but ... [in Burma] we made peace ... and left our allies to be crucified and sawn in two. They were innocent. They thought we’d stay. But we were liberals and we didn’t want a bad conscience.’

Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (1955)
Per capita income today and duration of U.S. occupation

Source: Ferguson, Colossus
When was the Cold War most hot?
The Vietnam War: Casualties and popularity

- **Percentage approval of war, mid-year polls**
- **Killed in action, end of year cumulative total**

Source: Gallup
Support for the Korean War, 1950-1953

Do you think the U.S. was right or wrong in sending American troops to stop the Communist invasion of S. Korea?

As things stand now, do you feel that the war in Korea has been worth fighting, or not?

Source: Gallup
Geopolitical crises

1. Expulsion of the Palestinians from Jordan, 1970
2. Secession of East Pakistan (Bangladesh), 1971
3. Killings of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, 1972
4. Military coup in Chile, 1973
5. The Middle Eastern crisis, 1973
6. Revolution in Ethiopia, 1974 (also Ogaden War, 1977)
7. Fall of South Vietnam, 1975
8. Khmer Rouge take Phnom Penh, 1975
9. Civil war in Lebanon, 1975
10. Angolan Civil War, 1975 (also Mozambique, 1977)
11. Invasion of East Timor, 1975
12. Iranian Revolution, 1979
Heads of state assassinated

1. Richard Ratsimandrava, President of Madagascar, Feb. 11, 1975
2. François Tombalbaye, President of Chad, April 17, 1975
3. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, President of Bangladesh, Aug. 15, 1975
5. Marien Ngouabi, Congo, March 18, 1977
7. Mohammed Daoud Khan, Afghanistan, April 28, 1978
9. Ahmad al-Ghashmi, Yemen, June 24, 1978
11. Hafizullah Amin, Afghanistan, Dec. 27, 1979
How much war per decade?

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<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interstate</td>
<td>Extrastate</td>
<td>Intrastate</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Extrastate</td>
<td>Intrastate</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>At mid-decade</td>
<td>War deaths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950s</td>
<td>917,056</td>
<td>68,000</td>
<td>98,900</td>
<td>1,083,956</td>
<td>2,757,399,000</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td>1,057,224</td>
<td>14,500</td>
<td>1,018,857</td>
<td>2,090,581</td>
<td>3,337,974,000</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>66,901</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>2,621,254</td>
<td>2,707,155</td>
<td>4,073,740,000</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>1,256,145</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,742,132</td>
<td>2,998,277</td>
<td>4,843,947,000</td>
<td>0.06%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
How much terror, how many coups?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Fatalities and injuries due to international terrorism</th>
<th>Coups d'etat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960s</td>
<td></td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>13,206</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>23,205</td>
<td>137</td>
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</table>
Why the Seventies looked so bad

• The wars within: A generational conflict within the two Blocs (and China)
August 20-21: ‘Prague Spring’ crushed by 200,000 Warsaw Pact troops and over 2,000 tanks
Chicago, 1968

The battles of Lincoln Park during the Democratic Party’s National Convention, August 16-29, 1968
University students as a percentage of the population, 1928 and 1968
University students as a percentage of the population, 1928 and 1968

[Bar chart showing the percentage of university students in various countries for 1928 and 1968. Each country is represented by two bars, one for each year.]
U.S. crime rates (1960=100)

Violent crimes

Property crimes
Was there a post-war peace dividend?

• Not everywhere ...
Percentage change in real defence spending, 1989-98

- Europe: -55%
- Americas: -31%
- Africa: -27%
- Middle East: 15%
- Asia: 25%

Source: SIPRI Yearbook (1998)
A conclusion

• The Cold War may have increased the amount and duration of conflict in some parts of the world (Africa and Latin America)
• But it is not clear that it can be blamed for violence in Asia and the Middle East
Next term

Détente Revisited