

Post-Colonial War, Cold War and After

n.b.) Since 1945 120 wars in which 25 million killed & 75 million injured

not much less than WWII

Contra John Lewis **Gaddis**, who sees cold war as “long peace”

This is **Eqbal Ahmed**'s critique of Gaddis

90% casualties civilians

CW and era of decolonization coincided – explosive interaction

Global processes of (a) CW bifurcation of countries --> 2 alliances

(b) decolonization

Created global war system with certain distinguishing features

1) Nature of post-colonial states

Many combined different ethnic groups which had never been in same state before

- Africa, e.g. (Rwanda)

Divisions exacerbated by colonial divide and rule policies – esp. by British

civil wars in Kenya, Zimbabwe, Sudan, India, Nigeria after decolonization

all former British colonies

Intense poverty --> conflict

Weak, poor central governments

what political scientists call “failed states”

2) Cold War Policies

Global rivalry of two superpowers

Pressured other countries to join alliances

Poured resources into local civil wars in search of advantage

by mid-80s global mil. spending = \$1 trillion/year, 83% by NATO & Warsaw Pact

fuelled wars in:

- Korea
- Vietnam
- Cambodia
- Israel v Arabs, 1967 & 1973
- Ethiopia
- Mozambique
- Angola
- Afghanistan

El Salvador

Nicaragua

Guatemala

Peru

2 superpowers usually present by proxy

But, “the whole concept of local wars is largely a fiction” (Carolyn **Nordstrom**)

On top of patchwork quilt of regional wars, superpowers laid arms race:

Nuclear weapons (30,000 each at height – describe characteristics)

Chemical weapons

Biological weapons

Conventional weapons

Legacies of CW:

Health & environmental problems:

Hanford

Rocky Flats

Tomsk

Chelyabinsk

Atomic veterans

In U.S. so far about \$2 billion spent on cleanup with no progress

Conventional proliferation

(superpowers wanted to decrease marginal costs of production, help allies, and test weapons)

led to situations like Taliban having Stinger missiles (what Chalmers **Johnson** calls “blowback”)

Nuclear proliferation

other countries followed superpowers’ example

NPT only partly successful. Nuclear countries included:

- US
- USSR
- UK
- France
- China
- Israel
- India
- Pakistan
- N. Korea
- S. Africa (since disarmed)

Dangers of current Russian nuke complex –

low security

impoverished scientists

Lab-to-lab program (Nunn-Lugar authorizing legislation)
inadequate to task

we know Bin Laden's been trying to get nuke

may make Reagan policy of bankrupting USSR look stupid
(“blowback”)

3) Sources of Conflict in post-CW World

POVERTY:

1960: richest 20% humanity owned 70%
poorest 20% has 2.3%

1991 richest 20% had 85%
poorest 20% had 1.7%

Poverty (esp. re land distribution) fuelled fighting in El Salvador, Guatemala, Angola, Mozambique

Helps communist guerillas

ENVIRONMENTAL SCARCITY

Thomas **Homer-Dixon**

Oil and Middle East: (provides 70% world's oil)

Gulf War

present war?

Western Sahara & rock phosphate

Israel & water (80% people get 20% water on West Bank)

Mekong Delta

global warming?

MIGRATION

Robert Kaplan and Coming Anarchy

Poverty, environmental crisis, and war --> migration

40 million refugees right now

Every war we've mentioned has created floods of refugees (Ethiopia, Vietnam, Afghanistan etc)

Palestinian refugees & Middle East instability

Current refugee crisis on Pakistan/Afghanistan border

perfect for recruiting future suicide bombers & guerillas

4) Distinguishing Characteristics of current fighting:

When U.S. involved, “asymmetric”

In third world “Low-intensity” – U.S. misnomer

guerillas & paramilitaries

(Kidnapped) child soldiers

200,000 children under 15

(UN Treaty on children blocked by U.S.)

terror

machetes, mines, and guns

100 million active landmines

\$1 to buy

\$300-\$1,000 to remove

10 million landmines in Cambodia alone; 10,000 more Afghanistan

women, children, clinics, schools etc often targeted

Aid workers increasingly targeted & debate about whether good to bring aid that may become resource (David **Rieff**, [A Bed for the Night](#))