

**Third World Instability
and International Order
After the Cold War**

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In recent literature on international relations, there has been much debate on the consequences of the end of the Cold War for war and peace in the international system. A major contributor to this debate, John Mearsheimer, has argued emphatically that “a Europe without the superpowers . . . would probably be substantially more prone to violence than the past 45 years,” despite the continent’s growing economic interdependence, the role of political and functional institutions such as the European Union and the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the pluralist domestic structure of European nations.¹ As he sees it, “with the end of the Cold War, Europe is reverting to a state system that created powerful incentives for aggression in the past.” Because of this, he concludes, “we are likely soon to regret the passing of the Cold War.”

Mearsheimer’s controversial thesis² focuses on the European theatre. Several commentators, although not necessarily sharing Mearsheimer’s avowedly Realist assumption, have nonetheless reached a similar pessimistic conclusion about stability in the post-Cold War Third World. Thus, Jose Cintra argues that the Cold War had suppressed “many potential third-world conflicts”; their geopolitical retrenchment will ensure that “other conflicts will very probably arise from decompression and from a loosening of the controls and self-controls” exercised by the superpowers.³ Stanley Hoffmann similarly envisages a ‘New World Disorder’ in the Third World, “a situation far more chaotic than the world of the Cold War, when the superpowers, knowing that they could blow themselves up, restrained themselves and their allies.”⁴ Testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, the Director of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency warned of “regional flashpoints” in the Middle East, East Asia and South Asia, which could become serious threats to U.S. security because the end of bipolarity

¹ John Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War”, *International Security* 15:1 (Summer 1990), 5-55.

² Critical responses to Mearsheimer can be found in three subsequent issues of *International Security*. Although no forceful and predictive commentary about Third World security has yet been made, Mearsheimer’s thesis appears to have found an echo in a number of recent scholarly writings on the subject.

³ Jose Thiago Cintra, “Regional Conflicts: Trends in a Period of Transition”, in *The Changing Strategic Landscape*, Adelphi Paper no. 237 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1989), 96-97.

⁴ Stanley Hoffmann, “Watch Out for a New World Disorder”, *International Herald Tribune*, 26 February 1991, 6.

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“has removed the tampering mechanism that often kept these situations under control.”⁵ In a more cautious vein, Robert Jervis argues that while the Cold War might have had a mixed impact on Third World conflicts, “In the net, however, it generally dampened conflict and we can therefore expect more rather than less of it in future.”⁶

If such views are to hold, it will have major ramifications for theorists and practitioners of international relations. The longstanding debate in international relations theory on the linkage between polarity and stability has remained unsettled; if the end of the Cold War is to engender greater instability in the greater part of the international system where the vast majority of the world’s population lives, then the debate has to be settled decisively in favour of those who view bipolarity as a more ‘stable’ international order than multipolarity. A more unstable Third World will also legitimize the rampant interventionism of the superpowers in the Third World during the Cold War period and silence critics of Great Power intervention as a tool of global order-maintenance. Academic analysts concerned with the future of war will need to pay more attention to systemic, as opposed to domestic/local, causes of international conflict.

This paper addresses the issue of whether the Third World will be more or less conflict-prone in the aftermath of the Cold War. At the outset, it examines the theoretical assumptions behind the polarity-stability debate with a view to assess their relevance in the context of the Third World. Subsequent sections examine the empirical validity of the pessimists’ claim (that the end of bipolarity may have a destabilising impact on Third World stability) by focussing on three sets of questions:

- C Can we regard bipolarity and the Cold War as a period of ‘stability’ in the Third World, especially when compared to the stability of Europe and the central strategic balance?
- C Has the end of the Cold War contributed to greater instability in the Third World? Can conflicts in the post-Cold War Third World be *causally* linked to the end of bipolarity?

⁵ Testimony by Lieutenant General James Clapper to the Senate Armed Services Committee, 22 January 1992, in “Regional Flashpoints Potential for Military Conflict” (Washington, D.C.: United States Information Service, 24 December 1992), 6.

⁶ Robert Jervis, “The Future of World Politics: Will it Resemble the Past?”, *International Security* 16:3 (Winter 1991-92), 59.

- C What is the capacity of, and constraints on, the emerging multipolar structure in so far as the regulation of conflict and intervention in the Third World is concerned, especially when viewed against the record of the bipolar system?

Polarity, Stability and Anarchy: The Third World and International Order

The relationship between polarity and stability has attracted much debate in international relations theory. An influential strand of Realist theory holds that bipolar systems are more stable than multipolar systems, an argument made most forcefully by Kenneth Waltz (although, as John Lewis Gaddis points out, Morton Kaplan also made similar arguments)⁷. Writing at the height of the Cold War, Waltz argued that bipolarity “encourage[s] the limitation of violence in the relations of states,”⁸ primarily by reducing the scope for misunderstanding, misperception and confusion. The fewer the number of actors, the greater the predictability of interaction between them. As Waltz put it, “In a bipolar world uncertainty lessens and calculations are easier to make.”⁹ Furthermore, bipolarity leads to an overall extension of the sphere of international stability because “with only two world powers, there are no peripheries.” The intensity of superpower competition during the Cold War, which Waltz accepted as the chief empirical model of bipolarity, produced a reluctance on their part to accept even small territorial losses anywhere in the world. This reduced the possibility of international conflict by extending “the geographic scope of both powers’ concern.” Waltz contrasts these attributes of bipolarity with the dangers inherent in a multipolar system. In a “multipolar world, who is a danger to whom is often unclear; the incentive to regard all disequilibrating changes with concern and respond to them with whatever effort may be required is consequently weakened.”¹⁰ Mearsheimer carries this argument further by pointing out that while “a bipolar system has only

⁷ John Lewis Gaddis, “International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War”, *International Security* 17:3 (Winter 1992/93), 30.

⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Stability of a Bipolar World”, *Daedalus* 93:3 (1964), 882. In this article, Waltz identified four factors: absence of peripheries, the range and intensity of competition, the persistence of pressure and crisis and the preponderant power of the two leading actors, as the reasons for the stability of bipolar systems.

⁹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 168.

¹⁰ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 171.

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one dyad across which war might break out,” a “multipolar system is much more fluid and has many such dyads,” thereby making war more likely.¹¹

A specific virtue of the Cold War bipolarity emphasized by Waltz and Gaddis relates to the restrained and regulatory role of the superpowers in dealing with major international conflicts. According to Waltz, “. . . the pressures of a bipolar world strongly encourage[d] them [the superpowers] to act internationally in ways better than their characters may lead one to expect.”¹² Gaddis speaks of the tendency of “self-regulation” in the bipolar relationship. Referring to the willingness and ability of the two superpowers to manage major international crises during the Cold War period, Gaddis concludes that this functioned like “the automatic pilot on an air plane or the governor on a steam engine” in counteracting threats to international stability. The critical elements of these “self-regulating mechanisms” include, among other things, a “fundamental agreement among major states within the system on the objectives they are seeking to uphold by participating in it” as well as “agreed-upon procedures for resolving differences among them.”¹³ Moreover, a bipolar structure is more likely than a multipolar system to ensure the stability of alliances, thereby helping the ability of the leading actors to regulate international conflict.

Realists (Waltz in particular) point to historical evidence to support their claim regarding the positive correlation between bipolarity and international stability. Thus, the experience of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry attests to the ability of a bipolar system to manage crises and maintain alliances without resort to war. These attributes of bipolarity compare favourably to the relationship among the pre-1945 Great Powers interacting in a multipolar international environment.

Waltz’s arguments concerning the positive linkage between bipolarity and international stability have not gone unchallenged in international relations theory. Gilpin, himself a Realist, rejects Waltz’s view that wars are caused by uncertainty and miscalculation that are characteristic features of multipolarity. Instead, “it is the perceived certainty of gain [associated

¹¹ John Mearsheimer, “Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War”, in Mark Charlton and Elizabeth Ridell-Dixon, eds., *Crosscurrents: International Relations in the Post-Cold War Era* (Toronto: Nelson Canada, 1993), 16

¹² Waltz, “The Stability of the Bipolar World”, 907.

¹³ John Lewis Gaddis, “The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Post-War International System”, *International Security* 10:4 (Spring 1986), 103-104.

with bipolarity] that most frequently causes nations to go to war.”¹⁴ Gilpin further argues that bipolarity creates the “conditions for relatively small causes to lead to disproportionately large effects.”¹⁵ Thus, under a bipolar order, minor crises in obscure countries could escalate into serious international confrontation as a result of superpower involvement. A similar argument concerning the conflict-escalating potential of bipolarity has been made by Rosecrance. Referring to the zero-sum nature of bipolar competition, Rosecrance points to the risk that even simple action by one principal actor is likely to provoke hostile countermeasures from the other side. Because a bipolar system ensures that antagonisms will be reciprocated, it “does not reduce motivations for expansion [in the geopolitical conduct of the two principal actors] and may even increase them.”¹⁶

While the above arguments cast doubt on the theoretical position concerning the stability of bipolar systems, other theorists have pointed to the positive effects of multipolarity on international stability. Deutsch and Singer argue that multipolarity, by increasing “the range and flexibility of interactions” among a larger number of powerful actors, inhibits recourse to war and facilitates cooperation. In their view, “as the number of possible exchanges increases, so does the probability that the ‘invisible hand’ of pluralistic interests will be effective.”¹⁷ Furthermore, in multipolarity, “the share of attention that any nation can devote to any other must of necessity diminish”; thus, conflicts in peripheral areas will have a limited potential for escalation.¹⁸ Multipolarity is also likely to have a “dampening effect upon arms races.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 92.

¹⁵ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 91.

¹⁶ Richard N. Rosecrance, “Bipolarity, Multipolarity, and the Future”, in James N. Rosenau, ed., *International Politics and Foreign Policy* (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 326-27.

¹⁷ Karl W. Deutsch and J. David Singer, “Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability”, in James N. Rosenau, ed., *International Politics and Foreign Policy* (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 318.

¹⁸ Deutsch and Singer, “Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability”, 320.

¹⁹ Rosecrance, “Bipolarity, Multipolarity and the Future”, 328.

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The theoretical debate on the linkage between polarity and stability has produced no clear winner.²⁰ But in this paper, I argue that the debate fails to capture key aspects of the security predicament of the Third World. It takes a virtually undifferentiated view of the international system, ignoring important dissimilarities between the North and the South. The fact that much of this debate took place before problems of conflict and security in the Third World became a subject of attention and serious scholarship among international relations theorists further underscores this point. Similarly, the historical evidence used to support the arguments of both the sides comes from the historical evolution of the European state system.²¹ These generalisations miss out on the consequences of the decolonisation process and the emergence of the Third World for the maintenance of international order.

Viewed from the perspective of the Third World, I note two major deficiencies of the polarity-stability debate. The first relates to an excessively narrow view of stability and a tendency to conflate stability and peace. Because of their tendency to generalise from Great Power behaviour, the polarity-stability debate equates stability with absence of system-threatening war among the Great Powers. For Waltz, stability meant, first and foremost, the capacity of a system to maintain itself, and not necessarily the frequency or intensity of conflicts within or between its constituent units. In other words, the stability of the system does not depend on the stability of all its constituents. Even his critics, including those who view multipolar systems as more stable, shared similar assumptions about the meaning of stability. Deutsch and Singer, for example, define stability as “the probability that the system retains all of its essential characteristics: that no single nation becomes dominant; that most of its members continue to survive; and that *large-scale war* does not occur” (emphasis added). For Gaddis, “the most convincing argument for ‘stability’ [of the bipolar world] is that so far at least, World War III has not occurred.”²²

If such a narrow view of ‘stability’ is accepted, then a ‘stable’ system should permit any number of limited or small-scale and internal wars, including conflicts in its peripheral areas, so long as such conflicts did not threaten the existence of the system structure. Thus, according to Waltz, the risk of miscalculation inherent in multipolarity is “more likely to permit the unfolding

²⁰ Gaddis, “International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War”, *International Security*; Jack S. Levy, “The Causes of Wars: A Review of Theories and Evidence”, in Philip E. Tetlock et al., *Behaviour, Society and Nuclear War*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 235.

²¹ This applies especially to Mearsheimer, whose arguments to the effect that bipolarity is more stable are specifically derived from the European experience.

²² Gaddis, “The Long Peace”, 104.

of a series of events that finally threatens a change in the balance and brings the [major] powers to war” while bipolarity “is the lesser evil because it costs only money and *the fighting of limited wars*” (emphasis added).²³ But the category of limited war can be very broad indeed. Under bipolarity, Rosecrance points out, “substantial territorial and/or political changes can take place in international relations without impinging on the overarching stability.”²⁴ Since the notion of system structure refers to the distribution of capabilities among the units, only those units who occupy the upper rungs of the power matrix could affect system structure by virtue of their conflictual or cooperative behaviour. Systemic instability could only result from major power or hegemonic wars. The weaker members of the system, such as the Third World countries, simply do not possess the capabilities needed to affect the system structure. Thus, if one accepts Waltz’s theoretical position, the high incidence of Cold War conflicts in the Third World does not challenge the essential stability of bipolar international systems, as long as the central balance and its European strategic core remained war-free.

A second problem with the polarity-stability debate should be noted. Because of their preoccupation with major power relationships and a consequent tendency to rely on the European state system for evidence, the protagonists in the debate ignored actual trends regarding conflict and order in the Third World. Neither Waltz nor his critics looked at the Third World to seek evidence for their theoretical arguments. In a similar vein, the current pessimistic predictions about post-Cold War instability in the Third World are based on a considerable amount of false alarm and exaggeration. If one examines trends in the Third World carefully, as this paper does, then a different picture of its stability will emerge.

Moreover, because both bipolarity and multipolarity are systemic attributes, to use them as central explanatory variables in assessing the likelihood of international conflict means ignoring the importance of domestic and regional factors in conflict formation. As this paper argues, these factors are often central to an understanding of the security problematic of the Third World.²⁵

²³ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 172.

²⁴ Rosecrance, “Bipolarity, Multipolarity and the Future”, 327.

²⁵ Major theoretical attempts to develop an understanding of Third World regional conflict and security issues in terms of their local, rather than systemic or structural, determinants during the Cold War period include Mohammed Ayoub’s work on regional security in the Third World, and Barry Buzan’s work on “regional security complexes.” Contending that “issues of regional security in the developed world are

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Furthermore, a system-centric view is likely to ignore the role of regionally-based security institutions and regimes which may significantly affect the probability and scale of conflict in the Third World. Finally, by focussing on the relationship among the Great Powers as the central determinant of international stability and order, the polarity-stability debate has ignored another crucial systemic factor affecting order-maintenance: the relationship between the North and the South.

The above reasons limit the relevance of the polarity-stability debate as a conceptual framework for assessing prospects for Third World stability in the post-Cold War era. To be useful for this purpose, the debate must go beyond its Euro-centric universe and its hitherto preoccupation with Great Power relationships. It must embrace a more differentiated view of the conditions of international order, one that reflects the distinctive security predicament of the Third World. To provide such a view is a key aim of this paper. But an important point of clarification regarding my conceptual framework needs to be made here. While my assessment is intended to highlight the limitations of the hitherto narrow and somewhat ethnocentric conceptual terrain of both sides of the polarity-stability debate, my critique is directed specifically against the position of Waltz, Mearsheimer and others who make grand claims about the essential stability of bipolar systems. My findings support the view that multipolarity may be more conducive to stability and peace, but I arrive at this conclusion by examining a broader and more complex range of determinants, with particular emphasis on the linkage between systemic structure and regional stability and the indigenous sources of conflict and order in the Third World.

defined primarily in Cold War terms (NATO versus Warsaw Pact, etc.) and are, therefore, largely indivisible from issues of systemic security,” Ayoob convincingly demonstrated that “the salient regional security issues in the Third World have a life of their own independent of superpower rivalry . . .” Buzan similarly urged greater attention to the “set of security dynamics at the regional level” in order to “develop the concepts and language for systematic comparative studies, still an area of conspicuous weakness in Third World studies.” His notion of “security complex,” defined as “local sets of states . . . whose major security perceptions and concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national security perceptions cannot realistically be considered apart from one another,” was designed to understand “how the regional level mediates the interplay between states and the international system as a whole.” It should be noted, however, that while both Ayoob and Buzan called for greater attention to the regional and local sources of conflict and cooperation, Ayoob’s was specifically focussed on the Third World. Buzan’s approach is also more structuralist, emphasizing the role of systemic determinants such as colonialism and superpower rivalry (which he called “overlays”) in shaping regional security trends. This seems to undercut his earlier call for “the relative autonomy of regional security relations.” See Mohammed Ayoob, “Regional Security and the Third World”, in Mohammed Ayoob, ed., *Regional Security in the Third World* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983), 186; and Barry Buzan, “Third World Regional Security in Structural and Historical Perspective”, in Brian L. Job, ed., *The Insecurity Dilemma: National Security of Third World States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992), 167-189.

Third World Instability and the Cold War “Order”

The Cold War period was marked by a large number of conflicts in the Third World. Third World conflicts — intra-state, inter-state and regional — vastly outnumbered those occurring in the developed segment of the international system.²⁶ Yet the view has prevailed that bipolarity and superpower rivalry contributed to order and stability. This view rests essentially on two features of the Cold War security relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union: (1) the two superpowers’ shared need to ensure that Third World regional conflicts did not escalate into a direct global confrontation between them; and (2) their consequent willingness to control their Third World regional clients whenever conflicts involving them threatened to get out of hand.²⁷ Both claims are consistent with the structural realists’ perspective associated with Waltz and Gaddis. Robert Jervis agrees: “The superpowers offered security to their [Third World] clients as well as enforcing a degree of restraint on them.”²⁸

But such claims must be weighed against a number of other factors related to the dynamic of superpower rivalry and its impact in generating conflict and disorder throughout the Third World. At least five deserve attention.

Firstly, an important feature of the Cold War order was the essential ‘permissibility’ of Third World conflicts. This is in marked contrast to the situation in Europe, where fear of the catastrophic escalation potential of any East-West confrontation prevented even the most minor form of warfare between the two power blocs. In the Third World, on the other hand, the danger of nuclear escalation was considerably more remote (though the nuclear option was contemplated by one or both the superpowers in Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East). In this context, Third World conflicts were not only more ‘permissible,’ but superpower intervention in them might have served as a necessary ‘safety valve’ not available in the European context. As Ayoob has forcefully argued, systemic stability or stability of the central strategic balance

²⁶ One study by Evan Luard estimates that between 1945 and 1986, there were some 127 “significant wars”. Out of these, only two occurred in Europe, while Latin America accounted for 26, Africa 31, the Middle East, 24, and Asia 44. According to this estimate, the Third World was the scene of more than 98% of all international conflicts. Evan Luard, *War in International Society*, Appendix 5.

²⁷ Both of these positions conforms to arguments made by Waltz regarding the “stability” of bipolar systems. See footnote 3.

²⁸ Jervis, “The Future of World Politics”, 31.

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rendered a great deal of Third World conflicts necessary, as the superpower viewed these conflicts “as a way of letting off steam which helps to cool the temperature around the core issues which are directly relevant and considered vital to the central balance and, therefore, to the international system.”²⁹

Secondly, the Cold War ‘order,’ instead of dampening conflicts in the Third World, actually contributed to their escalation. Although rarely a direct cause of Third World conflicts,³⁰ opportunism and influence-seeking by the superpowers contributed significantly to the ultimate severity of many cases of incipient and latent strife in the Third World. It led to the internationalization of civil war and internalization of superpower competition.³¹ It also contributed to the prolongation of regional wars by preventing decisive results in at least some theatres, including the major regional conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s: in Central America, Angola, Horn of Africa, Cambodia, Afghanistan, and the Iran-Iraq War.³²

Third, the Cold War directly contributed to the ineffectiveness of global and regional institutions created after World War II to promote pacific resolution of international conflicts. As Hoffmann argues, superpower rivalry was the principal factor depriving the post-Second

²⁹ Ayoob, “Regional Security and the Third World”, 14. A similar view had been offered by another Third World scholar, Sisir Gupta, who argued that for the superpowers “To fight out their battles in the Third World is one way of ensuring that their own worlds are not touched by their conflicts and that they retain a greater measure of option to escalate and de-escalate their conflicts according to the needs of their relationships.” Cited in Mohammed Ayoob, ed., *Conflict and Intervention in the Third World* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980), 242. According to another Indian scholar, K. Subrahmanyam, the tendency of the superpowers to play out their rivalry in the Third World was accentuated by detente: “Once detente came about, nuclear weapons could not be used as the stock currency of international transactions in Europe. The only way they could still be used was to test the efficiency of the deterrent effect of the nuclear arsenal in confrontations in the Third World . . .” “Regional Conflicts and their Linkage to Strategic Confrontation”, in Joseph Rotblat and Sven Hellman, eds., *Nuclear Strategy and World Security* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 325.

³⁰ Edward A. Kolodziej and Robert Harkavy, “Developing States and the International Security System”, *Journal of International Affairs* 34:1 (Spring/Summer 1980), 63.

³¹ Shahram Chubin, “The Super-powers, Regional Conflicts and World Order”, in *The Changing Strategic Landscape*, Adelphi Papers no. 237 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1989), 78.

³² In a comprehensive survey of 107 wars in the Third World between 1945 and 1990, Guy Arnold found that “. . . many would almost certainly have been far shorter in duration and less devastating in their effects had the big powers not intervened.” See: Arnold, *Wars in the Third World since 1945* (London: Cassell Publishers, 1991), xvi.

World War international system of the necessary degree of “moderation,”³³ which the founding fathers of the United Nations had assumed as a basic precondition for collective security. Ernst Haas’ study of the UN’s peace and security role found both bipolarity and the Cold War to be responsible for the organizations’ ineffectiveness. It shows that the poor conflict-control record of the UN and macro-regional bodies such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Arab League, was especially evident in the case of Cold War disputes, as opposed to disputes over decolonization. Moreover, the period of least effectiveness, between 1948 and 1955, were also the periods of tight and loose bipolarity.³⁴ Superpower rivalry also crippled the role of regional organisations in managing Third World conflict. While grouping such as the OAS, OAU and the Arab League were initially more effective in isolating Third World conflicts, an inability to avoid entanglement in superpower rivalry contributed significantly to their declining performance in subsequent periods.³⁵ Moreover, the limitation of conflict control through both global and regional frameworks both accounted for, and was reinforced by, the preference of the superpowers for regional security systems. These regional alliances, including the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), were short-lived experiments whose credibility in deterring regional conflict suffered from weak superpower commitment; neither did they provide for mechanisms for the pacific settlement of disputes within a region.³⁶ Indeed, their very existence might have indicated and aggravated regional polarisation and conflict in many parts of the Third World.

³³ Stanley Hoffmann, “International Organization and the International System”, in Leland M. Goodrich and David A. Kay, eds., *International Organization: Politics and Process* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 49-73.

³⁴ Ernst B. Haas, “Collective Security and the Future International System”, in Richard A. Falk and Cyril E. Black, eds., *The Future of the International Legal Order* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1969), 226-316.

³⁵ Ernst B. Haas, *Why We Still Need the United Nations* (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of International Relations, 1986); Leslie H. Brown, “Regional Collaboration in Resolving Third World Conflicts”, *Survival* 28:3 (May-June 1986), 208-220.

³⁶ Lynn H. Miller, “The Prospects for Order Through Regional Security”, in Richard A. Falk and Saul H. Mendlovitz, eds., *Regional Politics and World Order* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1973), 50-74; Amitav Acharya, “Regional Military-Security Cooperation in the Third World: A Conceptual Analysis of the Relevance and Limitations of ASEAN”, *Journal of Peace Research* 29:1 (February 1992), 7-21.

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Fourthly, the Cold War was a major, if not the only, factor in the North-South polarisation which in itself represented a formidable challenge to international order. The great majority of Third World states viewed the superpower competition and the entangling Cold War alliance systems as a major threat to international order in general and their own security in particular. This fear and the consequent rejection of superpower security guarantees were a principal motivating factor behind the emergence of Third World platforms such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). But the Third World's campaign for structural reforms to the global economic and political systems³⁷ was construed by the Northern powers as a key factor contributing to international disorder. Moreover, like the East-West rivalry, North-South conflict also contributed to the demise of hopes for a "moderate international system" conducive to the effectiveness of international institutions for conflict-control, including the UN and regional groupings with First World members (such as the OAS).

Fifth, contrary to periodic expectations, the Cold War did not produce any long-term and substantive understanding between the superpowers to regulate Third World conflicts by devising explicit and implicit norms or "ground rules of conduct."³⁸ In Europe, for all their differences, the two power blocs recognised a common interest in reducing the prospect of war through mutually acceptable measures on crisis prevention and arms control. No comparable willingness existed on the part of the superpowers to forge mutual understanding on Third World security issues, and devise stable frameworks for conflict control.³⁹

³⁷ Fen Osler Hampson and Brian S. Mandell, "Managing Regional Conflict", *International Journal* XIV:2 (Spring 1990), 194.

³⁸ Chubin has identified several rules relating to conflict-avoidance: (1) refraining from intervening unilaterally in the other's sphere; (2) seeking to avoid the confrontation of armed forces; (3) seeking to restrain allies and associates; (4) urging each other to restrain respective allies; (5) refraining from direct intervention in a number of conflicts outside the established sphere of influence of either, where clear intervention by one would only spark intervention by the other (e.g., Congo 1960; Nigeria 1967-70; India-Pakistan 1971). Chubin "The Super-powers, Regional Conflicts and World Order", 79. See also Joanne Gowa and Nils Wessell, *Ground Rules: Soviet and American Involvement in Regional Conflicts* (Philadelphia: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1982); Neil Matheson, *The 'Rules of the Game' of the Superpower Military Intervention in the Third World* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982); Alexander George, "Factors Influencing Security Co-operation", in Alexander George, Philip J. Farley and Alexander Dallin, eds., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation: Achievements, Failures and Lessons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 655-678.

³⁹ The major exception to this is their cooperation to control nuclear proliferation in the Third World. See: Joseph S. Nye, "U.S.-Soviet Cooperation in a Nonproliferation Regime", in Alexander George et al., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 336-352.

One may agree with Jerry Hough's assessment that the two Cold War classics, the Korean and Vietnam wars, were "fought by implicit rules that minimized the danger of Soviet-American confrontation."⁴⁰ In the Arab-Israeli wars, superpower action to diffuse escalation possibilities included steps to ensure avoidance of direct engagement of their armed forces, as well as to impose some degree of restraint on their own clients while urging the other side to do the same.⁴¹ The neutrality and neutralisation of Laos and Cambodia under the Geneva Accords of 1954 and 1962 respectively were the result of the superpowers' willingness to regulate their competition when both perceived very high stakes in a given conflict.⁴² Similarly, the superpowers showed a degree of restraint in conflicts "where truly important interests of the other was involved," as in the cases of Iran and Afghanistan conflicts.⁴³

Nonetheless, much of the superpowers' attempts to devise a code of conduct for Third World conflicts was ad hoc, prescriptive and limited.⁴⁴ For example, the principles embodied in the June 1973 agreement on the prevention of nuclear war signed by Nixon and Brezhnev "were framed so generally that they never came close to a definition of where their interests actually

⁴⁰ Jerry Hough, *The Struggle for the Third World: Soviet Debates and American Options* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1986), 227.

⁴¹ Harold Saunders found that although the superpowers "sensed some tacit rules for regulating their competition" in the Arab-Israeli conflict, it did not reduce "their level of competition to the point of moving to cooperation as the norm in their interaction." Harold H. Saunders, "Regulating Soviet-U.S. Competition and Cooperation in the Arab-Israeli Arena, 1967-1986", in Alexander George et al., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 574.

⁴² David K. Hall, "The Laos Neutralization Agreement, 1962", in Alexander George et al., *U.S.-Soviet Security Cooperation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 435-465.

⁴³ Hough, *The Struggle for the Third World*, 276.

⁴⁴ In analysing U.S.-Soviet security understanding, Alexander George distinguishes between "norms of restraint" and "rules of engagement". Norms of restraint are tacit and general understandings "regarding competitive behaviours that are and are not permissible in particular areas and under various conditions". Rules of engagement, on the other hand are much more specific and explicit guidelines indicating "the various types of involvement and intervention that would be 'permissible' to each superpower", and provide a common understanding of the conditions under which each type of intervention could be legitimately and safely resorted to." According to George, the latter provided a stronger basis for superpower cooperation. But both are prescriptive, rather than reflective of the actual situation. Alexander George acknowledges that neither the Basic Principles Agreement nor the Agreement on Prevention of Nuclear War fell into the category of rules of engagement. Alexander George et al., *Managing the U.S.-Soviet Rivalry: Problems of Crisis Prevention* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), 367-79.

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clashed.”⁴⁵ Those developed in relation to the Middle East conflict were so informal or tacit that they could not be applied effectively to other theatres.⁴⁶ Indeed, the record of superpower regional security cooperation in the Third World during the Cold War bears out Robert Jervis argument that the so-called “rules of conduct” evident in the superpowers’ behaviour toward regional conflicts were “too directly linked to immediate self-interest,” were “neither unambiguous nor binding,” and tended to change with changes in the “power and interests” of the superpowers in relation to a particular conflict.⁴⁷

Well-known differences between the superpowers over the meaning of detente⁴⁸ were themselves a key factor which accounted for their failure to build a durable code of conduct to manage Third World conflicts. The U.S. view of detente emphasised the principle of linkage, which posited a feedback relationship between U.S. interest in nuclear arms control and Soviet restraint on Third World regional security issues. But the Soviet Union vehemently resisted the inclusion of regional conflicts in the superpower arms control agenda; linkage to Moscow meant giving a “‘guarantee’ of the sociopolitical status quo in developing regions” — an obligation which “it could undertake neither on principle nor physically.”⁴⁹ Moscow adamantly distinguished issues of regional conflict from those of the central strategic balance (until the Reagan administration succeeded in linking the two), thereby preventing any long-term

⁴⁵ Richard Ullman, “Ending the Cold War”, *Foreign Policy* 72 (Fall 1988), 143.

⁴⁶ According to Shullman, “any across-the-board agreements in principle do not take into account the many kinds of problems that arise in particular cases — the differences in intensity of interest in one or another area, the kind of opportunities that may arise in unexpected ways, the particularities of local politics.” Marshall D. Shullman, “Overview”, in Marshall D. Shullman, ed., *East-West Tensions in the Third World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), 16.

⁴⁷ Robert Jervis, “Security Regimes”, *International Organization* 36:2 (Spring 1982), 371-373.

⁴⁸ In the particular case of the 1972 US-Soviet Basic Principles agreement, Jervis notes that the reason why it failed to regulate U.S.-Soviet competition in the Third World could be due to the fact that “the two sides brought very different expectations to the agreement. While the United States considered it relatively unimportant, the Soviets apparently saw it as ratifying their right as an equal superpower to engage in what the United States considered illegitimate adventures in the Third World”. Thus, while “Stylized and artificial restraints [were] deployed . . . there [was] a disproportion between the strength of the animal to be secured and the strength of the cage”. Robert Jervis, “Conclusion”, in Robert Jervis and Seweryn Bialer, eds., *Soviet-American Relations after the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 304-305. For an analysis of the various theories as to U.S. and Soviet views of detente as it affected their policies towards regional conflicts, see: George W. Braslauer, “Why Detente Failed: An Interpretation”, in Alexander George et al., *Managing the U.S.-Soviet Rivalry*, 319-340.

⁴⁹ Henry Trofimenko, “The Third World and the U.S.-Soviet Competition: A Soviet View”, *Foreign Affairs* 59:4 (Spring 1981), 1025.

understanding to promote mutual restraint in, and cooperative approaches to, management of Third World conflicts.⁵⁰

An additional barrier to a superpower code of conduct governing Third World conflicts was opposition from their Third World clients, including states and revolutionary movements averse to “solutions imposed from outside.”⁵¹ To the extent that many Third World regimes sought superpower patronage to gain leverage against their domestic opponents,⁵² they had a minimal interest in a general code of conduct that would facilitate a superpower-imposed solution. In this respect, while the superpowers might have had some degree of success in devising broad diplomatic formulas to govern their own ‘external’ involvement, they were much less able to settle internal matters involving power-sharing. The recent experience of regional conflicts in Afghanistan, Cambodia and El Salvador attests to this problem.

Two other closely-related factors explain why efforts by the superpowers to regulate their competition in the Third World bore limited results, especially when compared with Europe. The first is the futile attempt by the superpowers to duplicate their Europe-style alliances in the Third World, which might have facilitated collaborative management of regional conflicts. The reference here is to regional security alliances, such as SEATO and CENTO. These alliances proved extraordinarily ineffective and short-lived.

The absence of a European-style security order in the Third World could also be ascribed to another factor. In Europe, the essential bipolarity of the post-World War II security structure remained relatively undiminished, despite the assertive role of France. The Third World, on the other hand, was a much more complex arena where several states were able to pursue their own independent geopolitical ambitions, sometimes with the explicit backing of the superpowers suffering geopolitical fatigue (as in the case of the Shah of Iran under the Nixon Doctrine), or by a clever manoeuvring between superpower blocs (as in the case of India or China). This undermined the degree of superpower control over Third World regimes and their behaviour in regional conflicts.

⁵⁰ Although Soviet policy has been blamed for the failure of the “linkage” principle, it should be noted that the U.S.’s own commitment to linkage was also doubtful, given the uncertainty whether the Nixon-Kissinger duo would have risked confrontation with the Soviets over regional disputes.

⁵¹ Fred Halliday, *Cold War, Third World* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), 154-55.

⁵² Steven R. David brings out this aspect clearly in his study: *Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

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To sum up the argument made so far, if superpower rivalry created a framework of order in the Third World, it was very specific in its scope and objective. The purpose of this order was limited to avoiding direct superpower confrontation and preventing local conflicts among their clients from developing into global war. Such an order left considerable room for the escalation of local conflicts to regional war, actively aided and fuelled by superpowers. The Cold War order was neither interested in nor capable of addressing the indigenous roots of Third World conflicts. It might have contained certain Third World conflicts, especially the Arab-Israeli ones, but overall it did not provide an adequate framework for conflict resolution. It is therefore not surprising that the political settlement of the major regional conflicts of the Cold War period (such as Cambodia, Afghanistan, Namibia, etc.) had to await, rather than precede, the end of the Cold War — brought about by, among other things, domestic changes in the Soviet Union.

The above arguments concerning the effects of the Cold War on the Third World negate many of the arguments made by structural realists concerning the stabilising effects of bipolarity. The stability supposed to accrue from the simplicity and predictability of bipolar interactions was more true of Europe than of the Third World. The superpowers' capacity for self-regulation was in limited display and did not prevent a high incidence of conflict and violence in the Third World. Finally, security regimes in the Third World were short-lived and largely ineffectual.

A 'Decompression Effect?'

If the bipolar system structure during the Cold War was hardly a period of stability in the Third World, will its end prove even more destabilising? Surveying the vast literature on Third World security, one finds at least five ways in which the end of the Cold War could fuel greater instability and conflict in the Third World.⁵³ These factors are more or less a direct offshoot of

⁵³ Before concluding the assessment of whether a decompression is actually taking place, an important observation must be made about the physical extent of Third World or South. Traditionally, the term Third World included countries of Latin America, Africa, Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, South Pacific excluding Australia and New Zealand and Northeast Asia excluding Japan. But the collapse of the Soviet bloc and emergence of new states in Europe and Central Asia, it is important to ask whether these countries should be considered Third World. There is good reason to view these states as part of the Third World, since their security predicament closely resembles that of the original Third World. The insecurity of the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union is likely to centre on problems of internal stability, low levels of socio-political cohesion and regime legitimation.

If such an expanded definition of the Third World is accepted, then the decompression effect may seem to have lot of validity. The outbreak of serious ethnic strife, secessionism and territorial conflicts in the Balkans and Central Asia attest to this. But if one looks at the situation in the old Third World, the picture is very much mixed. Indeed, the following discussion will focus more specifically on the old Third World. The decompression effect in the New Third World is more pronounced, since it was this area which escaped

the end of bipolarity, although none had been directly predicted by structural realist theory (suggesting their general neglect of Third World issues). A brief examination of each is necessary in order to assess the possibility and scope of the alleged ‘decompression effect.’

Sources of Instability

The first of these is rooted in the effect of superpower withdrawal in altering regional balances of power in the Third World.⁵⁴ A common fear of Western strategists has been that superpower retrenchment might encourage locally-dominant actors (which may include regional powers,⁵⁵ such as India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Iran and Iraq) to step into the resulting geopolitical ‘vacuum.’ This fear is compounded by what George Bush called “a dangerous combination . . . [of] regimes armed with old and unappeasable animosities and modern weapons of mass destruction.”⁵⁶ Third

the violence that was inflicted upon the old Third World. A more appropriate test of decompression is whether the old Third World is experiencing greater instability after the Cold War.

For an argument concerning the definition of the Third World and the need to include the latter states in it, see: Mohammed Ayoob, “State Making, State Breaking and State Failure: Explaining the Roots of Third World Instability”, paper prepared for the Seminar on Conflict and Development: Causes, Effects and Remedies, The Hague: The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, 22-24 March 1994, 2-3.

⁵⁴ Geoffrey Kemp, “Regional Security, Arms Control, and the End of the Cold War”, *The Washington Quarterly* 13:4 (Autumn 1990), 33.

⁵⁵ The definition of what constitutes a Third World regional power has not been precise, despite the growing literature on the subject. A rough picture of the attributes regional power would include: (1) a relative lead in most indicators of political military and economic power among all actors within the region; (2) a supportive as well as coercive power projection capability within the region; (3) a capacity, whether exercised or not, to deny outside powers direct or indirect control over regional security arrangements. Ayoob argues that the aspirations by Third World regional powers to play a “managerial” role in the post-Cold War must be subject to approval by the U.S., the sole remaining superpower. But the converse could be true as well; outside power may not be able to impose regional security arrangements without the approval of regional powers. Mohammed Ayoob, “India as a Regional Hegemon: External Capabilities and Internal Constraints”, in “Regional Powers”, special issue of *International Journal* XLVI:3 (Summer 1991), 420.

On the rise and role of Third World regional powers see: Raimo Vayrynen, “Economic and Military Position of Regional Power Centers”, *Journal of Peace Research* 16:4 (1979), 349-69; Thomas Perry Thornton, “The Regional Influentials: Perception and Reality”, *SAIS Review* 9:2 (Summer/Fall 1989), 246-260; Rodney W. Jones and Steven A. Hildreth, eds., *Emerging Powers: Defense and Security in the Third World* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

⁵⁶ Cited in Paul Wolfowitz, “Regional Conflicts: New Thinking, Old Policy”, *Parameters* 20:1 (March 1990), 2.

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World proliferation, as the pessimists see it, not only makes regional wars more likely, but also raises their destructive potential by a significant margin.

A second and closely related concern regarding Third World instability is that superpower disengagement, including cuts in their military assistance programmes in the Third World, would force their former clients to seek greater military self-reliance, thereby fuelling new regional arms races.⁵⁷ In the words of one analyst, the withdrawal of the superpowers from Third World regions “entails merely that the Third World will do more of its own fighting.”⁵⁸ Reinforcing the possibility of greater militarism in the Third World is the availability of large quantities of surplus military hardware from the vast arsenals of the major powers at bargain prices. Indonesia’s recent acquisition of an entire East German fleet is a case in point. The same factor has helped Russia to establish itself as a major supplier to regional markets (such as in Southeast Asia) which had been previously closed to it for ideological reasons. Thus, the end of the Cold War has raised the possibility of a regional “arms race” in East Asia.⁵⁹

A third source of disorder in the Third World which may be linked to the end of the Cold War concerns the possibility of greater regime instability. The end of the Cold War has been a blow to many authoritarian regimes (such as those in Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Somalia, Ethiopia and North Korea), who had managed to remain in power thanks to massive amounts of superpower military and economic aid. The extent of their dependence is indicated by the fact that between the beginning of 1990 and mid-1992, as many as eleven African leaders fell from power.⁶⁰ That governments in Ethiopia, Liberia, Chad and Somalia, all major recipients of superpower aid, were overthrown during this period cannot simply be a coincidence. This trend is in sharp contrast to the fact that between 1957 and 1990, Africa had seen only one successful insurgency (in Uganda in 1986). Regime instability caused by the loss of superpower aid is compounded by new restrictions on aid imposed by the major Western donor nations as well as

⁵⁷ “When Cold Warriors Quit”, *The Economist*, 8 February 1992, 15; Gary Milholin and Jennifer Weeks, “Better to Block Nuclear and Chemical Weapons at the Source”, *International Herald Tribune*, 29 March 1990, 6.

⁵⁸ Christopher Carle, “The Third World Will Do More of Its Own Fighting”, *International Herald Tribune*, 15 March 1989.

⁵⁹ Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, “Globalization and Two Spheres of Security”, *The Washington Quarterly* 16:4 (Autumn 1993), 111.

⁶⁰ Keith Somerville, “Africa After the Cold War: Frozen Out or Frozen in Time?”, Paper Prepared for the Workshop on Developing States and the End of the Cold War, Oxford University, 30 Sept.-1 October 1994, 6.

international financial institutions controlled by them as part of the ‘New World Order.’ These restrictions have made economic assistance conditional on political reforms including the introduction of multiparty democracy.⁶¹ As an African scholar put it, “a new spectre is now haunting Africa: Western gospel to Africa, with its uncompromising moralism about the multiparty system.”⁶²

Thus, the end of superpower rivalry and patronage has been a major contributing factor to democratic transitions in the Third World, transitions which have raised the possibility of heightened political turmoil. In Latin America, the loss of Soviet support for leftist regimes, as well as the end of American backing for right-wing authoritarian regimes — both linked to Cold War geopolitics — was a major factor behind democratic transitions.⁶³ In Southeast Asia, authoritarian regimes, such as the member-states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), can no longer fend off demands for political liberalisation by invoking external dangers (including communist subversion) created by prolonged regional conflicts in their neighbourhood fuelled by superpower intervention.

A fourth source of post-Cold War instability in the Third World identified by the pessimists relates to ethnic conflict. A recent survey of the world’s conflicts found that of the 23 wars being fought in 1994, all but five are “based on communal rivalries and ethnic challenges to states.” According to this study, ethnic conflict accounts for about three quarters of the world’s refugees (some 27 million people), while of the 13 peacekeeping operations recently undertaken by the UN, eight involve situations of ethnopolitical conflict.⁶⁴ Such data has formed the basis of the view that ethnic conflicts are a major aspect of the so-called decompression effect (even if, as will be seen later, a closer look at the survey suggests a less dramatic conclusion). The end of

⁶¹ Julius O. Ihonvbere, “Political Conditionality and Prospects for Recovery in Sub-Saharan Africa”, in Larry A. Swatuk and Timothy M. Shaw, eds., *The South at the End of the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 116.

⁶² Ibrahim S.R. Msabaha, “The Implications of International Boundary Changes for African States”, in Francis M. Deng and I. William Zartman, eds., *Conflict Resolution in Africa* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1991), 83.

⁶³ “When Cold Warriors Quit”, *The Economist*, 8 February 1992, 15; Jorge G. Castaneda, “Latin America Still Awaits the New Peace”, *International Herald Tribune*, 24 November 1989, 4.

⁶⁴ Ted Robert Gurr, “Peoples Against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict”, Presidential Address to the International Studies Association Annual Meeting, 1 April 1994, Washington, D.C., 3 and 13.

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the Cold War has been linked to the outbreak of ethnic conflict, since in many parts of the Third World, it meant “the removal of ideological models that ha[d] offered uniting symbols of nation-building in countries that would otherwise be torn apart by ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic differences.”⁶⁵

Finally, the end of the Cold War has raised concerns about territorial conflicts in the Third World. In Europe and Central Asia, the collapse of the Soviet empire was accompanied by a proliferation of territorial claims, including an escalation of longstanding territorial disputes. This, some analysts fear, could have a ‘demonstration effect’ in other parts of the Third World. As Buzan argues, “If the territorial jigsaw can be extensively reshaped in the First and Second Worlds, it will become harder to resist the pressures to try to find more sensible and congenial territorial arrangements in the ex-Third World.”⁶⁶ The separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia, the escalation of Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan, recent border skirmishes between Ecuador and Peru, and flashpoints in the South China Sea over the Spratlys Islands dispute, can be taken as a confirmation of this possibility. Of particular concern here is the fate of Africa’s “successful boundary-maintenance regime” which had been the “great, though unheralded, accomplishment of African foreign policy.”⁶⁷

From the preceding discussion, certain aspects of the alleged decompression effect may be noted. An obvious point is that it involves domestic as well (or as much) as inter-state or regional conflicts. Moreover, much of the fear about a decompression effect relates to the possible *reemergence and/or aggravation* of longstanding conflicts, rather than the emergence of new forms of conflict. Both these aspects lead to the question: to what extent can the *origins* of recent Third World conflicts be attributed entirely and directly to the end of the Cold War?

Exaggerating the Risks

⁶⁵ Francis M. Deng and I. William Zartman, “Introduction”, in Deng and Zartman, eds., *Conflict Resolution in Africa, op. cit.*, 13.

⁶⁶ Barry Buzan, “New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century”, *International Affairs* 67:3 (1991), 441.

⁶⁷ Jeffrey Herbst, “Challenges to Africa’s Boundaries in the New World Order”, *Journal of International Affairs* 46:1 (Summer 1992), 18. See also Ali Mazrui, “The Bondage of Boundaries”, *The Economist*, 11 September 1993, 28-29 (Special edition on “150 Economist Years”). On the norms of territorial status in Africa see: Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Roseberg, “Why Africa’s Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood”, *World Politics* 35:1 (October 1982), 194-208.

that are usually associated with the decompression effect are in reality part of a larger and long-term historical process that cannot be appreciated if viewed within the confines of the Cold War geopolitical space or time-frame. Second, the seriousness of those causes which may be somehow linked to the end of the Cold War could be exaggerated.

Whether one includes the newly independent states of Europe and Central Asia in the Third World category or not, it is a reasonable assumption that the Third World is where the vast majority of the conflicts of the post-Cold War period will take place. A recent survey by *The Economist* shows that 28 out of 32 current wars (including, insurgency, civil strife and inter-state wars) are taking place in the Third World.⁶⁸ But such data should be put in proper perspective, as the Third World is a much larger arena than Europe. What is more important is the fact that many of these conflicts emerged well before the end of the Cold War. These include many of the current or potential inter-state conflict situations, including the India-Pakistan, Arab-Israel, and Korean conflicts. It is tempting to explain the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, billed to be the first Third World conflict of the post-Cold War era, as an act of opportunism in the face of declining superpower involvement in the region, but its roots can only be explained in terms of the nature and position of the Saddam Hussein regime within the Iraqi polity. The Iraqi aggression was at least partly an attempt by the regime to ensure its survival in the face of a growing economic burden imposed by the Iran-Iraq War and the consequent political challenges to its legitimacy.

Another important source of instability in the Third World is also not directly linked or attributable to the end of bipolarity or the Cold War. This is the closely interrelated problem of overpopulation, resource scarcity and environmental degradation, viewed by many as the chief source of what Kaplan has called the “coming anarchy.”⁶⁹ Homer-Dixon, in a particularly sophisticated analysis of such conflicts, identifies three categories: “simple scarcity conflicts” (conflict over natural resources such as rivers, water, fish, and agriculturally-productive land); “relative deprivation conflicts” (the impact of environmental degradation in limiting growth and thereby causing popular discontent and conflict); and “group-identity conflicts” (the problems of

⁶⁸ “The World’s Wars: Tribalism Revisited”, *The Economist*, 31 January 1992, 23-24.

⁶⁹ Robert D. Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy”, *The Atlantic Monthly* 273:2 (1994), 44-76.

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social assimilation of the migrant population) in the host countries.⁷⁰ These forms of conflict, Homer-Dixon's analysis

⁷⁰ Thomas F. Homer-Dixon, "On the Threshold: Environmental Change as Causes of Acute Conflict", *International Security* 16:2 (Fall 1991), 76-116.

suggests, are likely to be more acute in the Third World than in the developed states of the North. But even if such dire predictions are to prove accurate, the fact remains that the causes of such conflicts have little to do with the changing polarity in the system structure.

Instead, it can be safely argued that the fundamental causative factors behind many Third World conflicts predate the end of the Cold War and remain unchanged in its wake. As argued by Ayoob, Buzan, Azar and Moon, David and others,⁷¹ the causes of Third World conflict during the Cold War were rooted in essentially domestic and regional factors, including a combination of weak post-colonial state structures and political threats to the legitimacy of the regimes that preside over these structures. Moreover, these local factors often lead to the escalation of intra-state violence and strife into inter-state and regional conflict. During the Cold War, these factors not only explained the higher incidence of intra-state conflict in the Third World, but also enjoyed a great deal of autonomy from external factors, including the bipolar system structure and the attendant superpower rivalry.⁷² There is little reason to believe that the Third World's security problematic would be substantially different in the post-Cold War era.

Thus, it can be safely argued that in the post-Cold War era, essentially local factors related to weak national integration, economic underdevelopment and competition for political legitimacy and control, rather than the changing structure of the international system from bipolarity to multipolarity, would remain the major sources of Third World instability. The polarity-stability debate in international relations theory, which is rooted in a narrower and more

⁷¹ On the sources of Third World conflict and insecurity, see: Mohammed Ayoob, "Security in the Third World: The Worm About to Turn", *International Affairs* 60:1 (1984), 41-51; Udo Steinbach, "Sources of Third World Conflict", in *Third World Conflict and International Security*, Adelphi Papers no. 166 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981), 21-28; Soedjatmoko, "Patterns of Armed Conflict in the Third World", *Alternatives* 10:4 (1985), 477-493; Edward Azar and Chung-in Moon, "Third World National Security: Towards a New Conceptual Framework", *International Interactions* 11:2 (1984), 103-135; Barry Buzan, "People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in the Third World", in Edward Azar and Chung-in Moon, eds., *National Security in the Third World* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1988), 14-43; Yezid Sayigh, *Confronting the 1990s: Security in the Developing Countries*, Adelphi Papers no. 251 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1990); Mohammed Ayoob, "The Security Predicament of the Third World State", in Brian L. Job, ed., *The Insecurity Dilemma* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992); Steven R. David, "Explaining Third World Alignment", *World Politics* 43:2 (January 1991), 232-256.

⁷² This point is made forcefully by Mohammed Ayoob who argued that "... most of the salient regional security issues in the Third World have a life of their own independent of superpower rivalry, although ... the latter ... more often than not, exacerbates regional problems. This is as true of inter-state as of intra-state disputes and conflicts." Ayoob, "Regional Security and the Third World", 15.

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conventional notion of security, has simply ignored such conflicts (including the resource and environmental conflicts identified by Homer-Dixon). To quote Halliday: “since the causes of third world upheaval [were] to a considerable extent independent of Soviet-U.S. rivalry they will continue irrespective of relations between Washington and Moscow.”⁷³ The best that can be said for the alleged ‘decompression’ effect is that with the end of Cold War:

Many of the regional problems and/or conflicts that were essentially local expressions of the rivalry are now proving soluble. But there are many other conflicts rooted in other sources, among them historical, political, colonial, ethnic, religious, or socio-economic legacies, that continue to produce international tensions. Cutting across these local issues are the major disparities of wealth and opportunity that separate the industrialized nations and the developing world. These have existed for decades. The failure to deal effectively with this gap is a source of additional tension, which itself frustrates long-term efforts to provide wider prosperity. The end of the Cold War has been irrelevant for many such conflicts.⁷⁴

Apart from not being linked to the end of the Cold War, some of the sources of Third World instability are clearly exaggerated. Take for example, the phenomenon of ethnopolitical conflict, which is widely seen as a byproduct of the end of the Cold War. But data compiled by the *Minorities at Risk Project* suggests that “ethnopolitical conflicts were relatively common, and increased steadily, throughout the Cold War,” with the greatest absolute and proportional increase in number of groups involved in ethnopolitical conflicts occurring between the 1960s and 1970s (from 36 groups to 55). This contrasts with a rate of increase of only eight (from 62 to 70) from the 1980s to the early 1990s.⁷⁵ Thus, as the Project’s Director, Ted Robert Gurr, concludes, “the ‘explosion’ of ethnopolitical conflicts since the end of the Cold War is, in fact, a continuation of a trend that began as early as the 1960s.”⁷⁶ His Project’s findings also suggest that “ongoing ethnopolitical conflicts that began after 1987 are not appreciably more intense than those that began earlier,” although they might “have caused greater dislocation of populations.”⁷⁷ These empirical trends correspond to the theoretical explanation of the root causes of ethnic conflict, which focuses on the process of state-formation and economic development leading to

⁷³ Halliday, *Cold War, Third World*, 162.

⁷⁴ Roberto Garcia Moritan, “The Developing World and the New World Order”, *The Washington Quarterly* 15:4 (Autumn 1992), 151.

⁷⁵ Gurr, “Peoples Against States”, 4.

⁷⁶ Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics* (Westview, 1994), 13.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

an increased awareness of ethnic and cultural differences within Third World societies.⁷⁸ Moreover, these trends suggest that it was decolonisation (which reached a peak in the 1960s and 1970s), rather than any shift from bipolarity, which should be regarded as the chief catalyst of ethnopolitical conflict in the post-World War II international system. The Third World's ethnic problems not only predate the end of the Cold War, they were also not necessarily suppressed by superpower rivalry.

While it is commonplace to characterize many recent outbreaks of violence in the Third World as ethnic conflicts, the reality may be more complex. Rwanda is a case in point. Although the media views it as an apocalyptic symbol of ethnic bloodletting in the post-Cold War era, on closer and sober reflection, the origins of the conflict can be found in "an intra-class power struggle among Rwandan elites who have manipulated and politicised ethnicity and/or regionalism, in order to divide the masses of Rwandan population into personal or group power constituencies." Moreover, "there is nothing naturally innate or even historical about" the conflict; "the centuries-old history of pre-colonial Rwanda does not document a single ethnic war between the Hutu and the Tutsi."⁷⁹

As with ethnic conflict, fear that post-colonial boundaries in the Third World are being undermined by the end of the Cold War is, to say the least, premature. The separation of Eritrea from Ethiopia after three decades of struggle makes it the first African state to be created through secession since decolonisation. But in many respects, Eritrea is a special case.⁸⁰ As *The Economist* put it, while Eritrean independence breaks Africa's secession taboo, its claim for independence is "unusually strong" due to special historical circumstances in the sense that it never formed part of Ethiopia during the colonial era. Even if it encourages other movements, it "need not spell disaster for the continent."⁸¹ Similarly, the likelihood of serious territorial

⁷⁸ For analysis of sources of ethnic conflict, see: David Brown, "Ethnic Revival: Perspectives on State and Society", *Third World Quarterly* 11:4 (October 1989), 1-17; Walker Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying", *World Politics* 24 (1972), 319-355.

⁷⁹ Charles P. Gasarasi, "The Rwanda Conflict: Sources, Evolution and Implications for Refugee Repatriation, National Reconciliation and Reconstruction", Paper presented at the Workshop on "In Pursuit of Lasting Resolutions: Post-Conflict Peace-building and Societal Reconstruction", Dalhousie University and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, 3-5 March 1995, 1-2.

⁸⁰ "Next Test for Eritrea", *International Herald Tribune*, 29 April 1993, 8.

⁸¹ "Another Country", *The Economist*, 24 April 1993, 20.

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conflicts elsewhere in the Third World could be overstated. Even at the height of the decolonisation process during the Cold War, territorial conflicts were not a significant feature of the Third World's security dilemma. As research by Holsti suggests, "The traditional national security problematic of most states in Europe was defined as protecting specific pieces of real estate. This is not the premier security problem for most states in the Third World."⁸² There is as yet no concrete proof that we are about to see a major outbreak or escalation of territorial conflicts in the Third World. On the contrary, SIPRI data shows that the total number of major conflicts over territorial issues in the world remains constant at 16 from 1989 to 1992. In the Third World, territorial conflicts have actually declined from 15 in 1989 to 12 in 1992, while for Europe they increased from one to four. In Africa, where the vast majority of conflicts continue to be intra-state, rather than inter-state, the number of territorial conflicts has actually declined, from three in 1989 to one.⁸³

Similarly, it is an exaggeration to suggest that the end of the Cold War may be responsible for Africa's current political turmoil. Regime instability in Africa owes to a more fundamental process long predating the end of the Cold War: structural adjustment reforms carried out by African states "in the face of massive internal opposition from popular forces, the increasing delegitimization of the state and intensification of intra- and inter-class contradictions and conflicts." As a report issued by Africa's main regional organisation, the Organization of African Unity, put it, "in some African countries, the political consequences of . . . adjustment

⁸² Holsti significantly adds that "there have been remarkably few militarized boundary disputes between states in the Third World. And where they have arisen, (e.g., India and China, Libya and Chad) values other than territory drove the conflicts . . . Control of territory (excluding certain strategic areas such as the Bekka Valley) . . . is declining in importance as a major object of competitive claims and military actions . . . Protection of territory is less the main task of national security policy than is protection of the state apparatus from various domestic challenges." K.J. Holsti, "International Theory and War in the Third World", in Brian L. Job, ed., *The Insecurity Dilemma* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1992), 55-57. As Buzan himself concedes, no direct and clear link can be established between the Cold War and adherence to norms regarding territorial status quo, such as those adopted by the Organization of African Unity relating to the inviolability of colonial boundaries. In this respect, the situation in Europe is rather different. In Europe, the Cold War did play a part in freezing the territorial status quo once they were formally or tacitly agreed upon by the superpowers prior to the unravelling of their wartime alliance. But in the Third World, the only credible attempt to devise norms regarding territorial status quo — the OAU — was an indigenous attempt, rather than superpower-influenced. Finally, the major sources of territorial disputes today are not necessarily the legacies of colonial rule, but the relatively recent Law of the Sea which has contributed to a host of maritime boundary disputes. These disputes were not caused by end of superpower rivalry, but by disagreements regarding the Law of the Sea. Thus, fears that end of bipolarity could lead to the unravelling of territorial consensus could be overstated.

⁸³ Ramses Amer, et al., "Major Armed Conflicts", in *SIPRI Yearbook 1993: World Armaments and Disarmament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 87.

measures have been severe and have met with popular resistance in the form of riots on account of, for instance, the rising cost of food. Indeed, the social consequences of these programmes are threatening the very foundation and stability of the African social and cultural structures.”⁸⁴ Furthermore, the link between democratisation and conflict is a tenuous one. Contrary to the view of the pessimists, the process of democratisation does not necessarily generate greater instability. Throughout the Third World, including Africa itself, many cases of democratisation have been remarkably peaceful. Multi-party democratic elections led to the replacement of existing regimes in Zambia, Madagascar and Cape Verde. Internationally-monitored elections saw the peaceful return of the governments of Seychelles, Guinea Bissau and Kenya. In the Horn of Africa, the independent state of Eritrea embraced democracy and led to the ending of the revolutionary war in Ethiopia, and the latter itself has seen “a remarkable effort to negotiate the framework of a democratic federation.” These developments provide further confirmation that the appeal of violent methods of political change in the Third World may be diminishing. Falk points out: “The great struggles in the South during the 1980s, ranging from the overthrow of the Marcos regimes [sic] to the heroic challenges directed at oppressive rule in China and Burma, and on behalf of expanded democracy in South Korea, relied on non-violent mass mobilization, explicitly renouncing armed struggle.” Even the “intifada,” Falk adds, conformed to this trend, rested “upon an inner logic of confronting the military violence of the occupiers with an essential vulnerability of unarmed civilians.”⁸⁵

Moreover, while the downfall of repressive regimes leading to democratic transitions may contribute to increased Third World instability in the short-term, democratisation should also create more favourable conditions of stability and order in the long-term.⁸⁶ As Roberts contends, democratisation will “constrain” Third World anarchy by “compelling a search for common interests with erstwhile competitors.”⁸⁷ Democratisation addresses many causes of

⁸⁴ Cited in Julius O. Ihonvbere, “Political Conditionality and Prospects for Recovery in Sub-Saharan Africa”, in Swatuk and Shaw, eds., *The South at the End of the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 115.

⁸⁵ Richard Falk, “Recycling Interventionism”, *Journal of Peace Research* 29:2 (May 1992), 133.

⁸⁶ I am grateful to Sean M. Lynn Jones for raising and discussing this point.

⁸⁷ Brad Roberts, “Human Rights and International Security”, *The Washington Quarterly* 13:2 (Spring 1990), 72-73.

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internal instability in the Third World. This is not just the view of Western Liberals. A recent report by a panel sponsored by the OAU notes, “despite their apparently diverse causes, complex nature and manifold forms, internal conflicts in Africa were basically the result of denial of basic democratic rights and freedoms, broadly conceived; and that they tended to be triggered-off by acts of injustice, real or imagined, precisely in situations where recourse to democratic redress seemed hopeless.”⁸⁸ At a time when “the romance seems to have gone out of Third World revolutions,”⁸⁹ democratisation provides an alternative, and peaceful approach to desired political change. Whether democracies tend to live in peace with each other, may be a debatable proposition in the West.⁹⁰ But in the Third World, the co-relation (spillover effect) between internal strife and regional instability has always been strong, largely due to the tendency of weak states ruled by insecure regimes to “succumb to the temptation to consolidate their domestic position at the expense of their neighbours by cultivating external frictions or conflicts.”⁹¹ Thus, greater internal stability and regime legitimacy in Third World states enhances the prospects for regional security and lessen the scope for unwelcome external meddling in these countries.

Finally, fears that superpower retrenchment will lead to greater Third World militarisation are proving to be somewhat unfounded. Recent data shows that the military build-up in the Third World has substantially declined with the end of the Cold War. The reasons for this trend may be found in the fact that “The end of the East-West divide has . . . heralded the demise of ‘patron support’, ‘militarization by invitation’, and soft financing terms. Only the richest countries are now able to buy weapons on a large scale.”⁹² In Africa, there has been a marked reduction in the volume of arms transfers. As Thomas and Mazrui argue, this owes

⁸⁸ Cited in Francis M. Deng, “Anatomy of Conflicts in Africa”, Paper Presented to the Seminar on Conflict and Development: Causes, Effects and Remedies, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, The Hague, 22-24 March 1994, 7.

⁸⁹ John Mueller, *Retreat From Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 254-56.

⁹⁰ For an interesting debate on the link between war and democracy in the context of the post-Cold War era, see the response published in three subsequent issues of *International Security* to Mearsheimer’s article on “Back to the Future”, *International Security* 15:1 (Summer 1990), 5-55.

⁹¹ Buzan, “People, States and Fear”, 32. See also, Ayoob, *Conflict and Intervention in the Third World*; and Ayoob, “Regional Security and the Third World”.

⁹² L.L.P. van de Goor, “Conflict and Development: The Causes of Conflict in Developing Countries”, paper presented to the Conference on Conflict and Development: Causes, Effects and Remedies, The Netherlands Institute of International Relations, The Hague, 22-24 March 1994, 46.

primarily to the end of superpower competition and several of its related effects such as recent successes in settling African civil wars (which were escalated by the Cold War) and the rise of pro-democracy movements (other factors include the end of anti-colonial armed struggles, economic crisis and concerns expressed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank regarding high levels of military spending in countries undergoing structural adjustment). In the rich nations of East Asia, defence expenditures and arms imports have risen since the end of the Cold War. But this need not be viewed as an arms race signalling greater regional instability but rather a by-product of post-Cold War bargain-hunting and economic affluence.⁹³

International stability in the post-Cold War is, of course, threatened by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Third World. But this danger cannot be attributed to the end of the Cold War. If anything, the Cold War itself had aggravated the problem, especially in cases where the United States and the Soviet Union overlooked and tolerated proliferation efforts by their clients and allies in the Third World. For example, massive U.S. military and economic aid to Pakistan in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was meant to discourage the latter's nuclear programme by providing it with a conventional alternative. But its net effect was to ease the pressure on Pakistan's nuclear programme which reached a weapon capability during this very period. A number of Soviet allies acquired chemical and nuclear material, ostensibly with Moscow's knowledge and backing. On the other hand, the end of the Cold War has led to greater recognition of the danger posed by proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and international cooperation on counter-proliferation efforts has intensified, culminating in the indefinite extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Furthermore, while concerns about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have been central to fears of greater Third World anarchy, this view ignores some of its likely stabilising consequences. Roberts points out that: "States acquiring massively destructive military capabilities will be forced by the power inherent in those weapons to learn to possess them wisely . . . this requires of leaders in the developing world that they act like the rational

⁹³ Amitav Acharya, *An Arms Race in Post-Cold War Southeast Asia? Prospects for Control*, Pacific Strategic Papers no. 8 (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1994); Desmond J. Ball, "Arms and Affluence: Military Acquisitions in the Asia-Pacific Region", *International Security* 18:3 (Winter 1993/94), 78-112.

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actors assumed in all deterrence models.”⁹⁴ Given the demonstrated effect of nuclear weapons in inducing caution in the European theatre (as well as the central strategic balance in general) during the Cold War, there is no reason to believe, short of blind ethnocentrism, that the Third World leaders will behave like ‘madmen’ once in possession of such weapons.

⁹⁴ Roberts, “Human Rights and International Security”, 72-73.

Sources of Stability

In addition to the list of false alarms about increased Third World conflict, one could cite certain effects of the end of the Cold War which have contributed to more favourable conditions for stability. First, the end of the U.S.-Soviet strategic rivalry means an end to the general tendency of the Northern Great Powers to view Third World conflicts as permissible. Second, Great Powers have become far less interventionist. In a bipolar world, as Waltz argued, “with two powers capable of acting on a world scale, anything that happen[ed] anywhere [was] potentially of concern to both of them.”⁹⁵ In the emerging multipolar world not all Great Powers will wield a similar capacity, and the only power capable of global power projection, the United States, is likely to be quite selective in choosing its areas of engagement. One safe generalisation from the recent academic debate over the relative importance of the Third World *vis-a-vis* Europe is that apart from Europe, the Gulf, the Arab-Israeli zone, and the Korean Peninsula would surely attract the bulk of U.S. strategic attention and resources in the post-Cold War era.⁹⁶ Of course, individual Great Powers may have special interests and concerns in other parts of the Third World, a major example being France’s special ties with Africa and interests in South Pacific, China’s interests in Southeast Asia and Russia’s historic interests in its ‘near-abroad’ and the Middle East. But these powers are no longer capable of acting on a global scale (While China’s capacity for global intervention may grow, its quest for ideological expansion has ended, even in its regional neighbourhood). While selective global engagement by the Great Powers creates some potential risk that bloody conflicts in marginal areas of the Third World might go unnoticed by the international community (as happened in Liberia in 1990-92 and initially in Somalia in 1991 and Rwanda in 1994), it will also prevent the internationalisation of local wars and localisation of systemic tensions resulting from Great Power intervention.

⁹⁵ Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 171.

⁹⁶ Robert Art argues that “the United States should confine its war-prevention efforts to the Middle East, Europe and the Far East in a highly selective fashion.” Robert J. Art, “A Defensible Defense: America’s Grand Strategy after the Cold War”, *International Security* 15:4 (Spring 1991), 44. For a debate on the relative importance of the Third World to U.S. strategy in the post-Cold War era, see: Stephen R. David, “Why The Third World Matters”, *International Security* 14:1 (Summer 1989), 50-85; Michael C. Desch, “The Keys that Lock Up the World: Identifying America’s Interests in the Periphery”, *International Security* 14:1 (Summer 1989), 86-121; Stephen Van Evera, “Why Europe Matters, Why the Third World Doesn’t: American Grand Strategy After the Cold War”, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 13:2 (June 1990), 1-51; Valerie M. Hudson et al., “Why the Third World Matters, Why Europe Probably Won’t: The Geoeconomics of Circumscribed Engagement”, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 14:3 (September 1991), 255-298; See also: Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Selective Global Commitment”, *Foreign Affairs* 70:4 (Fall 1991), 1-20.

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To be sure, Great Power intervention in the Third World is not likely to disappear entirely. Despite the trend toward military cutbacks, no major Western Power has forsaken military

intervention as a policy option for dealing with Third World conflicts. On the contrary, some of the force structures previously deployed in Europe are being earmarked for Third World contingency missions.⁹⁷ In addition, there are moves toward greater cooperation and coordination of military assets for deployment in Third World contingencies within the framework of major Western alliances such as NATO and the Western European Union.⁹⁸ But Great Power intervention in the Third World is likely to become a highly selective affair. The political and military constraints on such intervention are growing.

The dampening of the Great Power interventionist impulse is partly explained by the rising costs of such interventions. Without a global Soviet threat to provide its justification, the U.S. and other Western countries are increasingly constrained by the weight of public opinion against foreign military action. Furthermore, although the end of bipolarity removed what Bull called the “balance among the interveners which has worked to the advantage of the intervened against,”⁹⁹ the growing military capabilities of Third World states ensures that the costs of regional intervention by Great Powers are much higher today than in the early days of

⁹⁷ Don Oberdorfer, “U.S. Military Strategy Shifts to Large-Scale Mobile Forces: Plan Emphasizes Regional Threats”, *International Herald Tribune*, 20 May 1991, 1. For the origin and evolution of U.S. rapid deployment forces see: Amitav Acharya, *U.S. Military Strategy in the Gulf: Origin and Evolution under the Carter and Reagan Administrations* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

⁹⁸ Admittedly, the record of such cooperation has been modest to date. On debates over possible Third World contingency role for NATO, see: Amitav Acharya, “NATO and ‘Out of Area’ Contingencies: The Persian Gulf Experience”, *International Defense Review* 20:5 (May 1985), 569-581; Marc Bentinck, *NATO’s Out-of-Area Problem*, Adelphi Paper no. 211 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1986); Jonathan T. Howe, “NATO and the Gulf Crisis”, *Survival* 33:3 (May/June 1991), 246-259. On West European cooperation on Third World conflicts, see: Ian Gambles, *Prospects for West European Security Cooperation*, Adelphi Paper no. 244 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1989), 35-41; For an assessment of the WEU’s role during the recent Gulf War, see: Willem Van Eekelen, “WEU and the Gulf Crisis”, *Survival* 32:6 (November/ December 1990), 519-532.

⁹⁹ Hedley Bull identified four major constraints on Western intervention in the Third World: (1) “a remarkable growth in Third World countries of the will and capacity to resist intervention”; (2) “a weakening in the Western world of the will to intervene, by comparison with earlier periods, or at least of the will to do so forcibly, directly and openly”; (3) the growing Soviet capacity to project power, which “facilitated Third World resistance to Western intervention”; and (4) “the emergence of a global equilibrium of power unfavourable to intervention” in the sense that “there has emerged a balance among the interveners which has worked to the advantage of the intervened against”. Hedley Bull, “Intervention in the Third World”, in Hedley Bull, ed., *Intervention in World Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 135-156.

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decolonisation.¹⁰⁰ As Joseph Nye argues, the “forces that many Third World states will be able to deploy in the 1990s will make regional superpower intervention more costly than was the case in the 1950s.”¹⁰¹

As with Great Power intervention, local intervention by Third World regional powers are also becoming more difficult. As noted earlier, the declining involvement of Great Powers in the Third World theoretically creates a greater scope for hegemonism by regional actors. But this prospect is offset by the diminished opportunity for potential Third World hegemons to secure external backing (especially from the Northern Powers) for their own power and security interests and ambitions. During the Cold War, regional powers derived a measure of autonomy from the superpower standoff while securing material assistance from them to further their regional ambitions. The end of the Cold War marks the end to the need for the superpowers to cultivate ‘regional policemen’ (such as Iran under the Nixon Doctrine), or regional proxies (such as Vietnam and Cuba for the Soviet Union) as part of their competitive search for influence. For their part, the regional powers, as Chubin argues, can no longer “count on foreign patrons to support them reflexively, supply them with arms, or salvage for them an honourable peace.”¹⁰² Without massive superpower backing, even the most powerful among Third World states may find it more difficult to sustain military adventures,¹⁰³ and may be deterred from seeking to fulfil their external ambitions through military means. The Iraqi experience during the Gulf War is illustrative of the predicament of regional powers deprived of an opportunity to exploit the superpower rivalry.¹⁰⁴

Arguably, these developments are conducive to greater stability and order in the Third World. They are also consistent with a recent survey of trends in international conflict which deny the existence of a decompression effect for the international system as a whole. A recent SIPRI survey noted: “The data on major armed conflicts do not support the expectation that the

¹⁰⁰ Joseph S. Nye, “Arms Control after the Cold War”, *Foreign Affairs* 68:5 (Winter 1989/90), 52.

¹⁰¹ Nye, “Arms Control after the Cold War”, 52.

¹⁰² Shahram Chubin, “Third World Conflicts: Trends and Prospects”, *International Social Science Journal*, no. 127 (February 1991), 157.

¹⁰³ Sayigh, *Confronting the 1990s: Security in the Developing Countries*, 64.

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence Freedman argues that the U.S. victory over Iraq would discourage Third World regional powers from mounting a frontal assault on Western interests. “The Gulf War and the New World Order”, *Survival* 33:3 (May/June 1991), 203.

end of the Cold War would result in increased global disorder but rather show a very gradual decrease in the annual total number of conflict locations since 1989.”¹⁰⁵

The following discussion suggests that just as some analysts have overstated the role of the Cold War in promoting order and stability in the Third World, those who fear a ‘decompression effect’ seem to exaggerate the destabilising consequences of the end of the Cold War. It also leads to another important point about the impact of the end of the Cold War: that it does not have a single or uniform effect on Third World instability. In some parts of the Third World, such as in sub-Saharan Africa, the end of the Cold War has led to greater domestic disorder, while in Southeast Asia it has led to increased domestic tranquillity and regional order (with the end of communist insurgencies and settlement of the Cambodia conflict)¹⁰⁶ and in the Middle East,¹⁰⁷ to greater inter-state cooperation (especially after the Israeli-Palestinian accords). In Africa, the end of the Cold War has contributed to a sharp decline in arms imports, while in East Asia, it has created fears of an all-out arms race. Furthermore, the impact of the end of the Cold War varies according to the type of conflict. The rise of domestic conflicts in Africa contrasts sharply with the settlement of its longstanding regional conflicts (especially in Southern Africa).¹⁰⁸ In Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Korean Peninsula, the end of the Cold War has led to greater inter-state conflict. Regional hegemonism is a marked trend in East Asia with China’s emergence, but elsewhere, it is the regional powers — India, Nigeria,

¹⁰⁵ Ramses Amer, et al., “Major Armed Conflicts”, in *SIPRI Yearbook 1993: World Armaments and Disarmament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 81.

¹⁰⁶ For an optimistic assessment of Southeast Asia’s security in the post-Cold War era, see: Muthiah Alagappa, “The Dynamics of International Security in Southeast Asia: Change and Continuity”, *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 45:1 (May 1991).

¹⁰⁷ As one observer notes, in the Middle East, “regional conflicts have been reduced . . . while cooperation is increasing . . . including former intruders into the Arab states system. This may legitimise the recent calls for the establishment of a Middle East Common Market which includes as members non-Arab countries such as Iran, Israel and Turkey. In this case, a shift from traditional stereotyped conflicts into new possibilities of cooperation is taking place.” Abdul-Monem Al-Mashat, “The Regional Dimension of the Causes of Conflict: the Middle East”, Paper presented at the Seminar on Conflict and Development, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, The Hague, The Netherlands, 22-24 March 1994, 5.

¹⁰⁸ In Southern Africa, the end of Apartheid in South Africa and the settlement of regional conflicts involving Mozambique, Zaire and Namibia are particularly noteworthy as a direct offshoot of the end of the Cold War. See Colin Legum, letter to *The Times* (London), 7 July 1993 cited in Deng, “Anatomy of Conflict in Africa”, 10.

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Vietnam, Iraq and Brazil — which have felt the squeeze by being denied privileged access to arms and aid from their superpower patrons. Thus, to talk of a uniform and Third World-wide ‘decompression’ effect sparked by the end of bipolarity is misleading and not supported by evidence. In general, the end of the Cold War is having a mixed and region-specific impact on Third World stability.

Finally, it should be noted that a great deal of instability in the Third World took place at the height of the decolonization process and were directly associated with it. These include anti-colonial wars (wars of national liberation), ethnic and nationalist conflicts resulting from the imposition of artificial national boundaries by the departing colonial powers, and threats to regime stability resulting from the implantation of alien political systems in relatively inhospitable local political and social settings. As the decolonization process fades into distant memory, many Third World states have been able to achieve greater socio-political cohesion and regime stability. They now have greater experience in state-making, managing political transitions and reducing ethnic tensions through peaceful means. Thus, there is some basis to think that the widespread instability of the Third World was a historically-specific phenomenon and that passage of time and more favourable domestic and external conditions will allow at least some of these states to experience greater stability and order.

To sum up, risks of conflict under conditions of multipolarity can be exaggerated, and prospects for stability understated. The post-Cold War situation supports a number of theoretical arguments concerning the stabilising effects of multipolarity. The end of bipolarity has reduced chances of conflict escalation, since, in multipolarity, the ‘share of attention’ that the two superpowers devoted has significantly diminished, leading to lesser probability of conflict escalation. Also, there is evidence that multipolarity may be having a ‘dampening effect upon arms races’ in much of the Third World.

Changing Conditions of Conflict-Management

In their discussion of polarity and stability, Deutsch and Singer imply that the “‘invisible hand’ of pluralistic interests” associated with multipolarity may be more conducive to international security cooperation than the zero-sum nature of bipolar interactions.¹⁰⁹ This argument has considerable relevance to prospects for conflict-management in the post-Cold War Third World. A world with several Great Powers sharing leadership in international security affairs is naturally

¹⁰⁹ Deutsch and Singer, “Multipolar Power Systems and International Stability”, 318.

different in its capacity for, and approach to, conflict-management.¹¹⁰ The bipolar international security order, despite the claims of Waltz and Gaddis regarding its capacity for self-regulation, permitted an abundance of conflicts in the Third World and had limited success in ensuring conflict-management. Now the question arises: how different will things be under conditions of multipolarity?

The first consequence of the demise of superpower rivalry is what Zartman has called a “regime change,” brought about by the changing “structures of world power.”¹¹¹ What Zartman referred to was a shift from East-West competition to East-West collaboration in resolving Third World conflicts.¹¹² To be sure, Moscow’s subsequent relegation from superpower status, its drastic disengagement from Third World theatres,¹¹³ and the merging signs of discord in the U.S.

¹¹⁰ A major assumption of this paper is that the post-Cold era will be multipolar although scholars are not in agreement over the structure of the post-Cold War international system. Kenneth Waltz has argued that “The emerging world will be one of three or four great powers whether the European one is called Germany or the United States of Europe”. See Waltz, “The Emerging Structure of International Politics”, Testimony before the Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, Hearings on *Relations in a Multipolar World*, Part 1, 26-30 November 1990 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991), 221. A similar view has been taken by Buzan and Rosecrance. See: Barry Buzan, “North-South Balance of Power”, *International Affairs* 67:3 (1991), 431-451; Richard Rosecrance, “Regionalism and the Post-Cold War Era”, *International Journal* XLVI:3 (Summer 1991), 373-393. On the other hand, Charles Krauthammer argued that the international system in the wake of the U.S. victory in the Gulf War had entered an “unipolar” phase. Krauthammer, “The Unipolar Moment”, *Foreign Affairs* 70:1 (1991), 23-33. But Krauthammer himself concedes that unipolarity would not last more than a few decades. For a counter to Krauthammer, see: William Pffaf, “Redefining World Power”, *Foreign Affairs* 70:1 (1991), 34-48.

¹¹¹ I. William Zartman, “Conflict and Resolution: Contest, Cost and Change” in “Resolving Regional Conflicts: International Perspectives”, special issue, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 518 (November 1991), 19.

¹¹² See the articles in I. William Zartman, ed., “Resolving Regional Conflicts: International Perspectives”, special issue of *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 518 (November 1991). For a background see: Jiri Valenta and Frank Cibulka, eds., *Gorbachev’s New Thinking and Third World Conflicts* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1990); Roger E. Kanet and Edward A. Kolodziej, *The Cold War as Cooperation: Superpower Cooperation in Regional Conflict Management* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

¹¹³ It should be noted that mere East-West collaboration is neither adequate nor durable basis for a more effective regime on Third World conflict-management. During the Gulf War, U.S.-Soviet collaboration proved fragile, especially the Soviet attempt to secure a last-minute reprieve for Saddam which invoked images of old superpower horse-trading. Thomas L. Friedman, “U.S.-Soviet Horse Trading”, *International Herald Tribune*, 1 February 1991, 4; Leslie H. Gelb, “The Soviet-American Honeymoon May be Ending”, *International Herald Tribune*, 10 January 1991, 4. Similar disagreements between Russia and the U.S. over

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and Russian perspectives on regional security, means that the idea of such a Great Power condominium in resolving Third World conflicts is no longer relevant. But East-West cooperation produced a renewed commitment to multilateralism and collective security. Unlike the Cold War order, which permitted only ad hoc and informal rules of the game¹¹⁴ as the basis for superpower conflict-management, the post-Cold War has been more conducive to collective and common security mechanisms.¹¹⁵ The end of the Cold War also raises hopes for more effective regional security arrangements.¹¹⁶

It is worth noting that the peacemaking role of the United Nations was more central in ending Cold War regional conflicts in the Third World, such as those in Southeast Asia (Cambodia), the Persian Gulf (the Iran-Iraq War), and Southern Africa (Namibia and Angola),¹¹⁷

future Third World conflicts cannot be ruled out. Also East-West agreement leaves out the prospect for a durable North-South consensus within the Security Council, with China remaining a major uncertain player. During the Gulf War, China, while going along with the UN consensus forged by the U.S., criticised Western countries “for using the current dramatically changing world situation to peddle their value concepts within the UN . . . [and] trying to interfere in other countries’ internal affairs”. “Beijing Seeks Stronger Voice in New World Order”, *The Straits Times*, 8 January 1991, 4.

¹¹⁴ In the post-Cold War era, balance of power mechanisms will not disappear, although their impact should be felt mostly at a regional, rather than global level. Balance of power mechanisms will be especially relevant to conflict management in regional theatres such as in South Asia involving the India-Pakistan nuclear rivalry, in the Korean Peninsula, in the Middle East in conflicts involving Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as well as that between Syria and Israel. For the relative merits of collective security and balance of power approaches to international order see: Inis L. Claude, *Power and International Relations* (New York: Random House, 1962).

¹¹⁵ Common security arrangements are based on the principle of “security with”, as opposed to “security against” (as in the case of an alliance), one’s opponents. On common security see: Olof Palme, chairman, *Common Security: A Blueprint for Survival* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982); The Palme Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, *A World at Peace: Common Security in the Twenty-first Century* (Stockholm: The Palme Commission, 1989); SIPRI, *Policies for Common Security* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1985).

¹¹⁶ A regional security arrangement may refer to a variety of things, including collective security systems, alliances or common security forums. Collective security systems should not be confused with alliance-type regional security arrangements such as the Bush administration’s idea of a “regional security structure” in the wake of Iraq’s expulsion from Kuwait. Collective security refers to the role of a global or regional system in protecting any member state from aggression by another member state. The inward-looking security role of a collective security system is to be contrasted with the outer-directed nature of an alliance which is geared to protect its members from a common external threat. See: Ernst B. Haas, *Tangle of Hopes* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1969), 94.

¹¹⁷ Roger A. Coate and Donald J. Puchala, “Global Policies and the United Nations System: A Current Assessment”, *Journal of Peace Research* 27 (1990), 127-140; Harvey Feldman, “The United Nations and Conflict-Resolution”, paper presented to the Symposium on “The Changing Role of the United Nations in

than in Europe, where indigenous regional security regimes like the CSCE (now OSCE) have had a major role in the easing of East-West tensions. In addition to the peacemaking role, the role of the UN in handling the first major conflict of the post-Cold War era outside Europe — the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait — attested to a revival of its collective security function for the first time since the Korean War.¹¹⁸ While the initial euphoria surrounding the ‘rebirth’ of the UN has been considerably dampened by its recent setbacks in Somalia and Bosnia, this should not detract from the significant role the UN has already played in facilitating the settlement of a number of conflicts.

The shortcoming of the United Nations in dealing with regional conflict has rekindled Realist critique of the role of international institutions in promoting peace.¹¹⁹ Such scepticism about institutions has been even more pronounced in the case of regional security institutions in the Third World.¹²⁰ Weiss and McFarlane question the ability of regional organizations to remain impartial and play an effective role in mediating and managing regional conflicts.¹²¹ In examining the prospects for order in the post-Cold War era, Goldgeier and McFaul contrast the “periphery” sector of Third World states, marked by fragile regional security systems and displaying a high degree of conflict and disorder, with the “core” sector of stable major powers within which interdependence and shared norms minimise the risk of armed conflict.¹²²

Conflict-Resolution and Peacekeeping”, Singapore, 13-15 March 1991. For an earlier study of the UN’s performance in international conflict resolution see: Haas, *Why We Still Need the United Nations*.

¹¹⁸ Analysts are divided on the real significance of the Gulf crisis for the future role of the UN. Russett and Sutterlin take an optimistic view, arguing that the Gulf episode demonstrated the Security Council’s “. . . capacity to initiate collective measures essential for the maintenance of peace in a new world order.” On the other hand, Robert Art warns that the UN action against Iraq took place under distinctive circumstances which are unlikely to be present in future crises. Bruce Russett and James S. Sutterlin, “The U.N. in a New World Order”, *Foreign Affairs* 70:2 (Spring 1990), 69-83; Art, “A Defensible Defense”, 44.

¹¹⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions”, *International Security* 19:3 (Winter 1994/95), 5-49.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ S. Neil MacFarlane and Thomas G. Weiss, “Regional Organizations and Regional Security”, *Security Studies* 2:1 (Autumn 1992).

¹²² James M. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, “Core and Periphery in the Post-Cold War Era”, *International Organization* 46:2 (Spring 1992), 467-492.

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Yet, such pessimism about Third World regional institutions may be unwarranted. At least three reasons for this view deserve notice.

First, the Cold War was marked by a competition between global and regional security frameworks.¹²³ Many Third World states accused the superpowers of ignoring, bypassing and manipulating indigenous security arrangements in the Third World geared to pacific settlement of disputes, and encouraging balance-of-power arrangements that often aggravated ideological polarisations within Third World regions. With the diminished engagement of the Great Powers in the Third World and the strain on the UN's resources caused by a dramatic expansion of peacekeeping operations, regional security organisations now have an opportunity to assume a great role in the security management in their respective areas. Here, existing regional security organisations, such as the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, that reflected regional competition and ideological polarisation during the Cold War are under pressure to accommodate former adversaries and promote regional reconciliation and order.¹²⁴

Second, not all Third World regional security arrangements have been ineffective in managing conflict. Three examples stand out. The Central American peace agreement was regionally-led. The contribution of the 'Contadora' and 'Esquipulus' groups in ending the bloody and prolonged Nicaragua-El Salvador conflict is a good example of the potential of regional common security arrangements to foster regional order and stability.¹²⁵ Likewise, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), while failing to deter a violent military threat from Iraq against a member state — Kuwait — was nonetheless successful in dealing with threats of internal subversion backed by Iran. Third, in the Asia Pacific region, ASEAN not only played

¹²³ On the competition between global and regional security frameworks, see: Miller, "The Prospects of Order through Regional Security", 50-74; Francis Wilcox, "Regionalism and the United Nations", *International Organization* 10 (1965), 789-811; Ernst B. Haas, "Regionalism, Functionalism and Universal Organization", *World Politics* 8 (January 1956), 238-236; Inis L. Claude, *Swords into Plowshares* (New York: Random House, 1964); Norman J. Padelford, "Regional Organizations and the United Nations", *International Organization* 8 (1954), 203-216.

¹²⁴ Barry James, "De Michelis Urges 'Helsinki' Talks on War's Aftermath", *International Herald Tribune*, 18 February 1991, 3; "Australia Proposes Security Forum for Asia-Pacific Area", *The Straits Times*, 28 July 1990; "Secretary of State For External Affairs Outlines Security Initiative", *Canada-ASEAN* 10:3 (September-October 1990), 1-2.

¹²⁵ Esperanza Duran, "Pacification, Security and Democracy: Contadora's Role in Central America", in Peter Calvert, ed., *The Central American Security System: North-South or East-West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 155-176; Kenneth Roberts, "Bullying and Bargaining: The United States, Nicaragua, and Conflict-Resolution in Central America", *International Security* 15 (Fall 1990), 67-102.

an instrumental role in facilitating the resolution of the Cambodia conflict, but has been exceptionally active in developing a regional security structure for the Asia Pacific region.¹²⁶

There are other examples of relative success of regional arrangements in conflict management. The role of the ECOWAS in the Liberian conflict, though far more controversial than ASEAN's record in Cambodia, has nonetheless resulted in a government of national unity. The South Pacific Forum has not been entirely ineffective either. Its role in creating a nuclear weapons-free-zone has received international support and raised the level of international condemnation of French nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

Third, one should not use unrealistic criteria in judging the effectiveness of Third World regional organizations. The latter cannot be expected to perform collective security or alliance functions because of the military weakness of their members. But they can develop norms, principles and habits of cooperation and reduce sources of tension through functional interaction. Thus, while regional security arrangements in the Third World may fall short of a full-fledged collective security apparatus with enforcement capacity, they can complement the preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacebuilding roles of the United Nations.¹²⁷

There are indications that the end of the Cold War has led to a revival of interest in such regional approaches to peace and security. The ECOWAS has created a Standing Mediation Committee to facilitate pacific settlement of disputes among its members.¹²⁸ Another notable

¹²⁶ Amitav Acharya, *A New Regional Order in Southeast Asia: ASEAN in the Post-Cold War Era*, Adelphi Papers no. 279 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1993).

¹²⁷ Thomas Perry Thornton, "Regional Organizations in Conflict-Management", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, no. 518 (November 1991), 132-142; Fen Osler Hampson, "Building a Stable Peace: Opportunities and Limits to Security Cooperation in Third World Regional Conflicts", *International Journal* XLV: 2 (Spring 1990), 454-459; Tom J. Farer, "The Role of Regional Collective Security Arrangements", in Thomas G. Weiss, ed., *Collective Security in a Changing World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993), 153-186; Amitav Acharya, "Regional Approaches to Security in the Third World: Lessons and Prospects", in Larry A. Swatuk and Timothy M. Shaw, eds., *The South at the End of the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 79-94; Paul F. Diehl, "Institutional Alternatives to Traditional U.N. Peacekeeping: An Assessment of Regional and Multinational Options", *Armed Forces and Society* 19:2 (Winter 1993); Benjamin Rivlin, "Regional Arrangements and the UN System for Collective Security and Conflict Resolution: A New Road Ahead", *International Relations* 11 (1992), 95-110.

¹²⁸ See Igezundia Abutudu, "Regime Change, Political Instability and Economic Integration in West Africa: The Experience of ECOWAS", *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs* 16:1 (1990), 90-107; See also the series of articles under the section on "Conflict Resolution, Crisis Prevention and Management and Confidence-Building in West Africa", *Disarmament: A Periodic Review by the United Nations* 12:1 (Winter

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African regional initiative is the 1991 Kampala Declaration for the Creation of a Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa (CSSDCA), jointly sponsored by the OAU, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Leadership Forum.¹²⁹ In June 1993, an OAU summit in Cairo agreed to create a mechanism for preventing, managing and resolving African conflicts.¹³⁰ Among other things, this mechanism is intended to organize African peacekeeping operations in close cooperation with the UN. In Latin America, the efforts of the OAS in promoting respect for human rights and democracy, as evident in the ‘Santiago Commitment to Democracy and the Renewal of the Inter-American System,’ are aimed at preventing future domestic and regional instability.¹³¹ Among other things, the OAS and the UN organized a joint effort to send a special envoy and an international human rights commission to Haiti. In Southeast Asia, ASEAN has taken the lead in creating a forum for dialogue on regional security issues among the principal Asia Pacific nations.

To be sure, the continued interventionism of the Western Powers in selected Third World theatres to protect their ‘vital interests’ could constrain the role of multilateral institutions in conflict-management. Conflicts in those areas deemed to be vitally important to the Western Powers are especially susceptible for their unilateral action. As Rosenfeld, notes, “By definition, vital interests are those that cannot be left to the discretion of others and which justify Washington in deciding how to assert them in its own way.”¹³² Thus, global as well as regional security arrangements in the post-Cold War era are likely to have limited autonomy in managing conflicts in areas of the Third World which lie within the strategic perimeters of the Western Great Powers. In these areas, the dependence of Third World states on Great Power security guarantees will continue.¹³³ In the Gulf, for example, Kuwaiti security agreements with the U.S.

1988/1989).

¹²⁹ O. Adeniji, “Regionalism in Africa”, *Security Dialogue* 24:2 (June 1993), 211-220.

¹³⁰ Gareth Evans, *Cooperating for Peace* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 31.

¹³¹ The OAS Foreign Ministers in a joint declaration at Santiago in June 1991 stressed their “uncompromising commitment to the defence of democracy” and to renew the OAS as “the political forum for dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among all countries in the hemisphere”. Robert B. Andersen, “Inter-IGO Dynamics in the Post-Cold War Era: The O.A.S. and the U.N.”, Paper prepared for the 1994 Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, Washington, D.C. 28 March-1 April 1994, 2.

¹³² Steven S. Rosenfeld, “America’s Bigger Load Frees its Hands”, *International Herald Tribune*, 24-25 December 1990, 6.

¹³³ See: Amitav Acharya, “Regional Military-Security Cooperation in the Third World: A Conceptual Analysis of the Relevance and Limitations of ASEAN”, *Journal of Peace Research* 29:1 (February 1992),

have come into conflict with post-War regional security arrangements involving the GCC. Similarly, many countries of the Asia Pacific prefer to see security arrangements with the U.S. as a more realistic security option in countering the influence of regional powers than common security arrangements. It is only in areas of marginal strategic significance to the Great Powers that the UN and regional groupings should manage greater autonomy in providing mechanisms for conflict-resolution.

But there still remains considerable scope for Great Power security cooperation in managing Third World conflicts. While both the UN and regional arrangements face major constraints in their peace and security role, most of these relate to a paucity of resources rather than to the kind of Great Power disagreement that was so common during the Cold War period. The post-Cold War relationship among the Great Powers points to greater cooperation, if not an outright Concert system, a far cry from the balance-of-power model envisaged in Realist thought.¹³⁴ Both Realist and Liberal Institutionalists agree that institutions matter when they serve the interest of the Great Powers. Without the framework of conflict regulation provided by superpower rivalry, the Great Powers have no real alternative to global and regional institutions in facilitating conflict-resolution in the post-Cold War era.

Perhaps a more serious problem for international security cooperation in the post-Cold War era is the persistence of the North-South disagreements over global 'order-building' mechanisms. Klare has predicted a heightened period of North-South (or rather West-South) tensions to follow the end of East-West rivalry.¹³⁵ It is arguable that this North-South divide is a more serious threat to international order than Huntington's thesis about a "clash of

7-21; Amitav Acharya, "The Gulf Cooperation Council and Security: Dilemmas of Dependence", *Middle East Strategic Studies Quarterly* 1:3 (1990), 88-136.

¹³⁴ While regional balances are possible, at the systemic level, balance of power is unlikely to be the chief framework of relations among the major powers. It is noteworthy that the arguments of leading Realist scholars about the structure of the post-Cold War system appear to support this view. Rosecrance believes that a concert of powers (an extended concert of Europe) is the most likely pattern; while Buzan envisages a "security community among the leading capitalist powers". Either outcome favours the functioning of collective security, as opposed to balance of power, mechanisms. Rosecrance, "Regionalism and the Post-Cold War Era", 379-385; Buzan, "New Patterns of Global Security", 436-437.

¹³⁵ Michael T. Klare, "Peace Studies in the 1990s: Assessing Change in the Global War/Peace System", in Michael T. Klare and Daniel C. Thomas, eds., *Peace and World Order Studies* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), 67.

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civilizations”¹³⁶ (which itself does have a North-South dimension, although it theoretically allows for intra-North [e.g., Japan versus the U.S.] and intra-South [e.g., Hindu versus Muslim] conflicts). At least three areas of North-South disagreement deserve notice. The first concerns the North’s commitment to genuine cooperative action. Bush’s vision of a New World Order promised a return to multilateralism and the revival of the United Nation’s collective security framework. But the first major test of this New World Order, the U.S.-led response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, prompted widespread misgivings in the South. Although the UN resolutions against Iraq were supported by most Third World states, this was accompanied by considerable resentment of the U.S. domination of the UN decision-making process. The U.S.’s military actions against Iraq were seen as having exceeded the mandate of UN resolutions,¹³⁷ and U.S. claims about collective security was greeted with scepticism. Many in the South would perhaps agree with largely an American decision and relied primarily on American military power.”¹³⁸ The Gulf War fed Southern apprehension that notwithstanding their protestations about collective action,¹³⁹ the U.S. and other Western powers (such as France in Africa) would surely retain their option for unilateral managerial and interventionist action in Third World conflicts in the post-Cold War era. A similar scepticism marks Southern attitudes toward armed intervention in support of humanitarian objectives. The concept of ‘humanitarian intervention’ professes to

¹³⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?” *Foreign Affairs* 72:3 (1993), 22-49. For critical responses to Huntington, see the series of articles: “Clash of Civilizations: Responses to Huntington”, *Foreign Affairs* 72:4 (September/October 1993), 1-26.

¹³⁷ During the Gulf War, the U.S. pressure on the UN gave the impression that the world body was being manipulated for the narrow strategic purpose of a superpower. Although the U.S. sought to inject a degree of legitimacy to its actions by seeking UN endorsement, in the final analysis, the U.S. would have pursued its strategic options irrespective of the UN mandate. Richard Falk observed that “. . . behind this formal mandate from the United Nations [to the U.S. approach to the Gulf crisis] lie extremely serious questions about whether the UN has been true to its own Charter, and to the larger purposes of peace and justice that it was established to serve. And beyond these concerns is the disturbing impression that the United Nations has been converted into a virtual tool of U.S. foreign policy, thus compromising its future credibility, regardless of how the Gulf crisis turns out”. Richard Falk, “UN being made a tool of US foreign policy”, *Guardian Weekly*, 27 January 1991, 12. See also, “The Use and Abuse of the UN in the Gulf Crisis”, *Middle East Report*, no. 169 (March-April 1991). For a more positive assessment of the UN’s role see: Sir Anthony Parsons, “The United Nations After the Gulf War”, *The Round Table*, no. 319 (July 1991), 265-274.

¹³⁸ “New World Order: An Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski”, *SAIS Review* 11:2 (Summer-Fall 1991), 2.

¹³⁹ It is noteworthy that the Bush administration’s concept of a New World Order envisions “An era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony”, cited in Lawrence Freedman, “The Gulf War and the New World Order”, *Survival* 33:3 (May/June 1991), 195.

be free of crude calculations of geopolitics and national interest, but the delayed response to humanitarian disasters in Somalia and Rwanda suggests a reluctance to intervene unless national interests are clearly threatened. The West's approach to humanitarian intervention is constrained by the principles of 'doability' as well as domestic public opinion trends, which are ultimately judged unilaterally by national decision-makers.

A second area of North-South tension concerns the Northern approach to arms control and non-proliferation in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and the Australia Group on chemical weapons. These are essentially supplier clubs that seek to control proliferation through restrictions on export of military or dual-use technology. Southern objections to these regimes focus on their selective application and discriminatory nature. As Chubin argues, in the case of nuclear weapons, the North's anti-proliferation campaign "frankly discriminates between friendly and unfriendly states, focussing on signatories (and potential cheats) like Iran but ignoring actual proliferators like Israel. It is perforce more intelligible in the North than in the South."¹⁴⁰ In a more blunt tone, the Indian scholar K. Subrahmanyam charges that non-proliferation regimes based on export controls "project a racist bias," because they "embody a fundamental double standard whereby nuclear weapons and missiles are deemed essential for the security of industrialised countries but dangerous in the hands of developing nations."¹⁴¹ While such views might reflect the special interest of countries like India, they are also widely shared in the Third World. Moreover, the handful of proliferators are also the most critical players in any multilateral approach to peace and security in their respective regions. Hence, their dissenting views cannot be ignored if the West is to devise a genuinely collective approach to conflict-management.

A third area of North-South tension in the post-Cold War era relates to the West's advocacy of human rights and democracy as the basis for a new global political order. The leaders of the West see the 'enlargement' of democracy as a logical corollary to the successful 'containment' and defeat of communism. The Western agenda on human rights is being promoted through a variety of means, including aid conditionality (linking development assistance with human rights records of aid recipients), support for self-determination of

¹⁴⁰ Shahram Chubin, "The South and the New World Disorder", *The Washington Quarterly* (Autumn, 1993), 98.

¹⁴¹ K. Subrahmanyam, "Export Controls and the North-South Controversy", *The Washington Quarterly* 16:2 (Spring 1993), 135.

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persecuted minorities and, as in the case of Haiti, direct military intervention. All these instruments affect the political and economic interests of Third World states, many of which see these as a threat to their sovereignty and economic well-being.¹⁴² Thus, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed sees the West's human rights campaign as a device to perpetuate the condition of dependency of the South. Citing the example of the former communist states of Eastern Europe, Mahathir contends that the campaign of human rights and democracy is a prescription for disruption and chaos in weaker countries, a campaign which makes the target ever more dependent on the donor nations of the West. Other critics of the South accuse the West of hypocrisy and selectivism in applying its human rights standards. The Foreign Minister of Singapore finds that "Concern for human rights [in the West] has always been balanced against other national interests."¹⁴³ To support this argument, Singapore's policy-makers contrast the U.S. support for absolutist regimes in the oil-rich Arabian Peninsula with its response to the recent crisis in Algeria in which Western governments acquiesced with a military coup which overthrew a duly elected government with a strongly Islamic orientation. There are a number of general areas in which the views of many Southern governments seem to converge. These include a belief that the issue of human rights must be related to the specific historical, political and cultural circumstances of each nation. Governments in East Asia have added their voice to this 'cultural relativist' position by rejecting the individualist conception of human rights in the West, arguing instead for a 'communitarian' perspective that recognises the priority of the "society over the self."¹⁴⁴ The developing countries in general have stressed that economic rights, especially the right to development, be given precedence over purely political ones in the global human rights agenda.¹⁴⁵

But the position of the South on the issue of human rights is marked by significant regional variations; the attitude of the Latin American nations contrasts sharply with those in East Asia, and even within the latter, differences exist between South Korea and Taiwan on the

¹⁴² "NAM Warns West to Stop Exploiting Human-Rights Issue", *The Straits Times* (Singapore), 13 August 1992, 16.

¹⁴³ "Take pragmatic line on human rights: Kan Seng", *The Straits Times*, 17 June 1993, 1.

¹⁴⁴ Christopher Tremewan, "Human Rights in Asia", *Pacific Review* 6:1 (1993), 17-30; "Cultural Divide", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 June 1993, 20-21.

¹⁴⁵ See: Adamantia Pollis, "Liberal, Socialist and Third World Perspectives of Human Rights", in Peter Schwab and Adamantia Pollis, eds., *Towards a Human Rights Framework* (New York: Praeger, 1982). The updated version of this article can be found in Richard Claude and Burns Weston, eds., *Human Rights in the World Community*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

one hand and the ASEAN countries and China on the other. Moreover, the projection of a North-South divide on human rights is a state-centric understanding, as there is little disagreement between Northern and Southern non-governmental organisations over the issue of human rights.

Thus, while there is a risk that the positive impact of the end of East-West rivalry on the working of the UN and regional security arrangements could be offset by prevailing suspicions and problems arising in the North-South security relationship, the scope of the latter can be overstated. While the above-mentioned issues of contention undermine the prospects for international cooperation in developing effective conflict-management mechanisms, they need not be crippling. This is not the least because the Third World is less united today in articulating its political and security concerns, with bipolarity and the Cold War no longer serving as a cementing factor for an otherwise diverse and unwieldy grouping.¹⁴⁶ The Third World's major political-security platform, the Non-Aligned Movement, is of diminishing relevance in a multipolar international system. Despite a growing membership (now at 108), the NAM's post-Cold War direction remains unclear. Some members, such as Malaysia, would like to use NAM to counter "this so-called New World Order propagated by a big power [U.S.]."¹⁴⁷ But others, perhaps the majority led by Indonesia (the current Chair of NAM), seek to shift the priorities of NAM from the political to the economic arena¹⁴⁸ and to strike a moderate and pragmatic tone for NAM in global North-South negotiations.¹⁴⁹ Such a shift is likely to engender greater cooperation between the North and the South in international security affairs, especially if such cooperation is facilitated by greater reliance of both on multilateral organisations. This trend is

¹⁴⁶ See Buzan, "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century"; John Ravenhill, "The North-South Balance of Power", *International Affairs* 66:4 (October 1990), 731-766; Peter Lyon, "Marginalization of the Third World?", *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations* 11:3 (September 1989), 64-73; Richard E. Bissell, "Who Killed the Third World?", *The Washington Quarterly* 13:4 (Autumn 1990), 23-32.

¹⁴⁷ "NAM Must Stay United Against Developed States", *The Straits Times*, 7 August 1992, 23; "NAM Needed to Balance North Bloc", *The Straits Times*, 4 August 1992, 21.

¹⁴⁸ "Jakarta Wants NAM to Focus on Pressing Economic and Human Problems", *The Straits Times*, 4 August 1992, 17.

¹⁴⁹ "Goodbye Nehru, Hello Suharto", *The Economist*, 119 September 1992, 32.

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reinforced by growing economic interdependence between the North and the South.¹⁵⁰ Faster growth rates in the Third World are already providing Northern countries with greater market opportunities. Moreover, greater productivity in the Third World is having beneficial effects for the North's standard of living, as for the latter, "cheaper imports mean lower prices and, hence, higher real incomes."¹⁵¹ At the same time, market-oriented economic reforms (including IMF-induced structural adjustment) are lessening the earlier distrust among Third World elites of Western multinationals and investments flows. The end of the Cold War has already ended the economic isolation of many former socialist economies, such as Vietnam and India. Their progressive integration into the global economy will have a moderating effect on the prospects for North-South economic cooperation in the post-Cold War era and help prevent their escalation of political, cultural and civilizational differences which would otherwise constrain conflict management.

To sum up, while the post-Cold War period is marked by greater East-West collaboration on regional conflicts, it is the state of North-South security relations which is likely to prove more decisive in prospects for conflict regulation in the Third World. But here, there are grounds for some optimism. The end of the Cold War has reduced the relevance of the South's radical platforms, such as the Non-Aligned Movement, although the more interventionist aspects of the North's current approach to non-proliferation and human rights are creating new tensions between the North and the South. While failure to manage and overcome these tensions will undermine the prospects for cooperation and collective action, the end of superpower rivalry has created favourable conditions for a more 'adaptive' role by Third World states in the making of a new international security order. In the Cold War era, Third World states generally distrusted the security frameworks of the superpowers, even while they had to rely on it for protection. In their present condition of vulnerability, as well as due to the mitigation of their fears of superpower rivalry, the majority of Third World states are likely to settle for a less confrontational role, and participate in collective and common security frameworks. While the end of the East-West conflict facilitates the working of global conflict-management mechanisms such as the UN, North-South security relations would be important to the working of regional

¹⁵⁰ A recent survey by *The Economist* reveals the extent of North-South economic interdependence. The Third World and the countries of the former Soviet bloc is the destination of 42% of America's, 20% of Western Europe's (47% if intra-European Union trade is excluded) and 48% of Japan's exports. On the import side, the magazine reports that America's imports of manufactured goods from the Third World rose from 5% of the value of its manufacturing output in 1978 to 11% in 1990. "A Survey of the Global Economy", *The Economist*, 1 September 1994, 13 and 16.

¹⁵¹ "Rich North, Hungry South", *The Economist*, 1 October 1994, 18.

security arrangements that are needed to compensate for deficiencies in the global collective security framework.

To this end, greater reliance on regional organizations will serve to decentralize the global collective security mechanism and address demands voiced in many parts of the Third World for a greater democratization of the UN's peace and security function. Many regional security organizations have failed not because of any inherent weakness, but because the larger powers of the international system, which control most of the resources required for peacemaking and collective security, have chosen to act through the UN Security Council system (where they can exercise greater control), rather than to allow a devolution of authority to regional institutions where developing countries may wield greater influence. A genuine willingness on the part of the Great Powers to empower regional bodies (it should be noted that where Great Powers have willingly let devoted resources to regional security arrangements, such as NATO, the latter have been quite effective) will go a long way in ensuring more effective conflict-control mechanisms in the Third World.

With these caveats in mind, one can argue that there now exists much improved conditions for international cooperation, both East-West and North-South, in promoting order and stability in the Third World. Moreover, considering the dismal record of the Cold War order in preventing Third World violence, a multipolar order may prove more successful in dampening Third World crises than the balance of power mechanisms devised by the superpowers.

Conclusion

The main conclusion of this paper is that for the Third World in general, multipolarity is likely to be less conflict-prone than the bipolar Cold War period. I arrive at this conclusion by looking at the conflict-escalating tendency of the Cold War, the sources and trends in Third World conflicts in the post-Cold War period, and the effectiveness of conflict-control mechanisms in the post-Cold War period. The impact of the end of the Cold War on the long-term outlook for Third World stability is positive, although it might have created short-term negative consequences. Thus, it is important that pessimism about a 'decompression effect' should not obscure or detract from the opportunities created by the end of superpower rivalry for a new global regime for conflict-prevention and regulation. Along with the benefits accruing from East-West reconciliation, improving the climate for North-South security relations should negate claims that the end of the Cold War might exacerbate instability and disorder in the Third World.

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While bipolarity might have been an era of structural stability, it was also a period of heightened regional instability in the Third World. Unless one takes a very narrow definition of stability to include system structure and interactions among the major powers only, as the polarity-stability debate has tended to, bipolarity cannot be considered as having been more conducive to international stability. The theoretical arguments concerning the simplicity, predictability and self-regulatory capacity of bipolar systems do not hold when seen in the context of the actual extent of violence in the Third World during the Cold War period.

In looking at the post-Cold War period, I find that many arguments concerning the sources of conflicts in the Third World have been exaggerated, while the effects of the end of the Cold War in reducing the probability of conflict-escalation understated. Moreover, prospects for conflict and disorder in the post-Cold War period may have less to do with changes to the system structure than to developments at the local and regional levels. In this respect, a major weakness of the polarity-stability debate is its failure to account for domestic and intra-regional sources of Third World conflict, as well as important variations in the pattern of conflict and order between regions, variations which are likely to be accentuated by the end of the Cold War.

While Waltz, Gaddis and Mearsheimer have stressed the superior capacity of bipolar systems to regulate international conflict, the preceding discussion suggests that multipolar systems may be no less effective in controlling Third World conflict. On balance, the end of the Cold War might have enhanced the prospects for pacific settlement of Third World conflicts, with a greater use of cooperative multilateral approaches. Although these approaches have their own limitations, these relate primarily to North-South tensions, which appear to be easing, rather than the relationship among the Great Powers, as the polarity-stability debate holds. An analysis of the prospects for international order that focus on Great Power relationships and ignore the North-South conflict are likely to be of limited value in addressing security problems of the post-Cold War period.

The overall findings of this paper suggest the need to rethink the relevance of the polarity-stability debate as a framework for analysing Third World conflict. But I single out structural realism for criticism because its claims about stability during the Cold War period are particularly tenuous when judged against the security experience of Third World states. The findings of this paper support those, such as Deutsch and Singer, who claim that multipolar systems are likely to be more stable than bipolar ones. But unlike the latter, I arrive at this conclusion by taking into account the specific security experience of the Third World and going beyond their essentially structuralist logic and Euro-centric evidence which does not relate to the complexities of the Third World security predicament.

My conclusion that multipolarity may prove to be substantially more peaceful for the Third World than the era of U.S.-Soviet rivalry has two major implications for international security studies. It was not until the 1980s that the latter began to appreciate the distinctive security predicament of Third World countries. Until then, problems of regional conflict in the Third World had received only secondary attention relative to the salience of the central strategic balance and European regional security issues.¹⁵² Incorporation of the Third World experience can only enrich major theoretical debates in security studies, such as that concerning the linkage between stability and polarity.

Secondly, although the primary aim of this paper is to highlight the *relative* stability of the Third World after the end of the Cold War, its conclusions do have some relevance for more general studies of war and peace. In his recent work, *Retreat From Doomsday*, Mueller has argued that war among the industrialized nations is becoming “obsolescent.” The end of the Cold War, according to Mueller, will accelerate this trend. But he is less certain about the fate of war in the Third World (although he sees some positive signs here as well).¹⁵³ Francis Fukuyama clearly excuses the Third World from the era of tranquillity that he expects to result from “The End of History.”¹⁵⁴ In this paper, I have sought to demonstrate that the Third World, or at least many parts of it, can expect to see a decline of conflict and violence as a result of the end of the Cold War. To be sure, peace will not become universal, but conflict will be rarer and more localised. The overarching geopolitical rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union magnified local conflicts in the remotest part of the Third World. The end of the Cold War will spare many parts of the Third World from this unhappy predicament.

¹⁵² Joseph S. Nye and Sean M. Lynn-Jones, “International Security Studies: Report of a Conference on the State of the Field”, *International Security* 12:4 (1988), 27. See also Amitav Acharya, “The Periphery as the Core: The Third World and Security Studies”, in Keith Krause and Michael Williams, eds., *Critical Security Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).

¹⁵³ Mueller, *Retreat From Doomsday*, 251-257.

¹⁵⁴ Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?”, *The National Interest*, 16 (Summer 1989), 18.

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