Klaus Jürgen Gantzel
Torsten Schwinghammer

WARFARE SINCE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

with an afterword by Dietrich Jung,
Klaus Schlichte, and Jens Siegelberg

Translated by Jonathan P.G. Bach

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Afterword: Warfare in 1995

Dietrich Jung, Klaus Schlichte, and Jens Siegelberg[1]

Fifty years after the end of World War II warfare continues unabated across most of the world. In 1995, wars were waged in 32 countries. Iraq, Colombia and the Philippines each saw two wars occurring simultaneously in their lands. In addition, there were fifteen armed conflicts whose intensity fell only narrowly below the threshold of war.

Africa bore the brunt of the 35 total wars with twelve wars, followed by Asia with eight, the Near and Middle East with seven, Latin America with six, and Europe with two. The total number of wars, however, has decreased compared with the previous years. The apex of wars since the Second World War was reached in 1992 with its 52 wars; the following three years show a steady decline. Twelve wars were removed from the war list in 1994/95 alone.

There are two reasons, however, why this positive development should be evaluated with cautious optimism. First, wars since 1945 have tended to fluctuate in number, so that the trend continues to show an overall increase. Second, the end of a war is not synonymous with the end of massive, politically motivated violence. The war in South Africa ended in 1994, yet that very year 17,000 people fell victim to violence, more than the total casualties of that sixteen-year-long war.

Furthermore, many conflicts which have fallen below the threshold of war exhibit no major structural changes in their respective situa-

tions. Many of these conflicts flame up again as war, as happened in Senegal and Pakistan during 1995. Four wars began in 1995, starting with the war in Uganda and the border war between Peru and Ecuador.

Figure 14
Wars Begun, Ended and Waged, 1945-1995
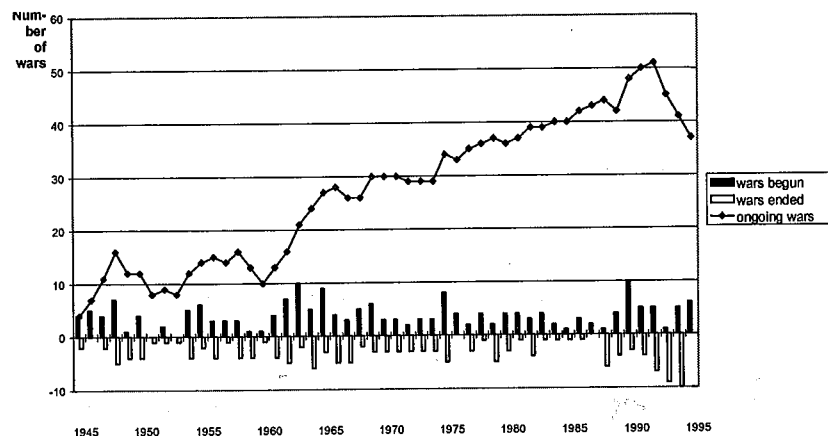
5.1   Main Trends in Warfare after 1945

Three primary tendencies characterize warfare since 1945, including the wars of the 1990s. These tendencies affect the number of wars as well as their typological classification and regional distribution.

The total number of wars has steadily increased since 1945. In the 1950s there were an average of twelve wars per year. In the 1960s and 1970s this average reached 22 and 32, respectively, and by the 1980s an average of 40 wars were fought yearly. The 1990s will exceed the average of the 1980s. The extremely high number of wars between 1990-92 alone, mostly related to the demise of the Soviet Union, insures that the average for the first half of the 1990s lies significantly higher than that of the 1980s.

In contrast to the interstate wars of the preceding one and a half centuries, internal wars have come to dominate the form of war in the second half of the twentieth century. Interstate wars have shrunk dramatically to only 17 percent of all wars between 1945 and mid-1995. The cause of wars can thus be connected to the global modernization process which is playing itself out through internal wars within the

transitional societies of the Second and Third Worlds. The dominant types of war are, accordingly, anti-regime, autonomy, and secessionist wars.

The regional distribution of war is also unambiguous: between 1945 and 1992 Asia was the most affected region with 54 wars, followed by Africa with 49, the Near and Middle East with 43, Latin America with 31, and Europe with 13. One can see clearly that there have been relatively few wars within and between the developed capitalist states during the last fifty years. Over ninety percent of the 194 wars between 1945 and mid-1995 occurred in the Third World. Additionally, the former Eastern Bloc states have emerged as a new center of crisis in world politics.

Twelve conflicts have escalated into war in this latter region, which had been nearly devoid of war until 1989. This change signifies the only really new development, for aside from the spate of wars to be found in the former Eastern Bloc and remains of the Soviet Union there have been no fundamentally new elements in warfare during the 1990s.

5.2   Causes of War Since 1945

The persistence of war in the 1990s demonstrates that warfare since the Second World War was by no means solely a byproduct of the bipolar conflict and its so-called proxy wars. The end of the East-West Conflict did not lead to the termination of numerous ongoing wars. To the contrary, instead of an increase in peaceful democratic states we find an escalation of the conflict potential latent in capitalist modernization. The former Eastern Bloc provides an example of this: before capitalism can create a civil society with the rule of law, democracy, human rights, high living standards and the peaceful resolution of social conflicts it first leads to tremendous upheavals in the social order, to conflicts and to wars. It is the rare exception when a society can successfully implement modernization without authoritarian or violent means. This observation remains valid for both historical Europe, the current Third World and the transitional societies in the former Soviet sphere of influence. The same sequence will doubtless repeat itself in the future collapse of China's sphere of influence.

The third great state-building process is now taking place on the territory of the former Soviet Union, similar to the often bloody state-building processes of decolonization from the 1940s to the 1960s, and

the European experience of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Following the territorial consolidation of these new states we will be confronted with a form of conflict recognizable from the Third World experience after its formal independence, namely, internal societal conflicts emerging from the pursuit of belated state consolidation.

A structural characteristic specific to transitional societies is discernible in all of these wars: the institutions of the modern state are insufficient to settle existing social conflicts. The borders of state and society are apparently incongruous. At the bottom of this gap between political and social integration lies a chronic deficit of legitimacy for Third World rulers. In Second and Third World countries the state fails to function as the locus for the crystallization of collective identity, but rather as the space for the pursuit of particular interests by actors who have wrested room for maneuver either during the colonial era or from the structure of international law and the state system. As a result, family, tribal or religious institutions become the focus of personal identity and political loyalties rather than the state.

When this occurs, the modern state—with its claim to a monopoly on the legitimate use of force—comes to exist solely as a territorial and legal shell awaiting the consolidation of its societal content. This consolidation, however, is anything but a straightforward linear development. The legitimacy of the existing political order is invariably and consistently challenged by regional, ethnic or religious groups, often by violent means. In many cases lengthy civil wars result destroying what internal consolidation may have been achieved.

5.3 The Fall of States and the Diffusion of Violence

Warfare in the 1990s indicates additional trends which pose cause for concern. The end of most wars in the 1990s did little to end politically motivated violence. Eleven of the nineteen wars technically terminated between 1992 and 1994 continued in the form of armed conflicts under the threshold of war. In three further cases—Pakistan, Uganda, and Senegal—ongoing societal conflicts escalated anew into war.

Only the greatest instances of political violence caused by the disintegration process in transitional societies are recorded as wars. Worldwide we observe a process whereby violence is becoming increasingly diffused. Examples include the activities of death squads in Latin

America and the semi-criminal activities accompanying the struggle for power in countries such as Pakistan or Sierra Leone.

A significant rise in violence is not always the result of a long-suffering war. It is true that former theaters of war provide easy access to weapons and leave behind a culture of violence. Yet beyond this disadvantage many societies show a tendency to dissolve into stateless spaces where emerging political structures compete in the gray zone of the global economy. This disintegration is spurred by the worldwide trade in drugs and weapons, as well as the exploitation of natural resources, which together form an economic basis which undermines attempts at state consolidation.

An increase in global interdependence is thus not advantageous for transition societies, since they find themselves unable to control the consequences. The "end of territoriality" (Badie 1995) has had devastating consequences for the state-building process: states fall apart before they achieve internal consolidation, because the development of national economies is no longer possible.

5.4 A Political and Social Dilemma

The expectations on these fragile political structures is nonetheless increasing from all sides. In the world of international politics the distribution of resources such as credits and security guarantees are bound more and more to the rapid development of democracy. Even the largest donor countries make their development aid dependent on the realization of democratic rights and formal institutions for free elections. A functioning democratic order rests, however, not in the form but in the content of modern statehood. Democratic political structures rest ultimately on the state's legitimate claim to the monopoly of force and the existence of an expert civil service. The division between political office and the state budget must be complete. This assumes that citizens and civil servants alike are not responsible to familial or religious instances but follow formal, legal rules which regulate social relations on the basis of formally equal contractual partners.

This is, however, rarely the case in transitional societies, a fact which leads to a paradox: the implementation of a state monopoly of force cannot keep pace with a demand for rapid democratization. Democratization requires a high level of social integration, which relies on the successful consolidation of the state, meaning in large part a state mo-

nopoly of the use of force. Exactly this monopoly, however, must first be established as a pre-condition for democracy. The desired result of the social transformation–democracy–is turned into a requirement for its realization.

The desire for democratization is not only a product of foreign interests, but also arises within the transitional societies. Here the reality of capitalist transformation runs up against the promises of its eventual rewards. Failed promises of wealth, better education and increased political participation become a gauge for dissatisfaction regarding worsening living conditions. Religious fundamentalism and national chauvinism both express nothing other than the growing contradiction between unmet expectations and lived experience.

For most Second and Third World states the crisis of the capitalist world system has led to a heightened opposition between political expectations and economic possibilities. Development becomes blocked, and tendencies toward integration and disintegration fail to balance each other. The end of the state socialist model has also removed the attractiveness of social revolutionary goals. Socialist utopia has been replaced by religious or nationalist communities and their troubled pasts.

The noble call for democratization also opens the path for fundamentalist groups to achieve state power. As a result, the much sought after stabilizing effect of democratization threatens to achieve exactly the opposite. The consequences can include internal conflicts and wars fought over the nature of the state and society.

The same observation applies for many states in regard to regional and irredentist movements. If two regionally separated population groups struggle over state power, the result can often be a movement for autonomy or secession. The existence of multiple language communities or different religions within the territory of a single state are common reasons for secession or autonomy movements. Economic motives, however, have played an equally important role in the development and intensity of such conflicts. These include control over resources with export potential and anger at the neglect of certain regions in development policies.

The increase in so-called ethnic or religious conflicts in the 1990s says much less about changes in the causes of war and more about the perception of the wars' observers. The end of the East-West conflict has allegedly ushered in a new era where the "clash of cultures" figures

as the new point of orientation and interpretation. This approach, however, is as wrong as the previously dominant interpretation of wars as "proxy wars" between the superpowers.

In reality little has changed. The very actors who sought international support by flying the banner of socialism or liberalism now indulge in the rhetoric of national self-determination and cultural identity to drum up solidarity at home and abroad. This is no epochal shift. The broad spectrum of international warfare is characterized by the goals of those social groups who seek international recognition as bearers of state power and their claims to present the sole "national" path to well-being, security and self-determination. At the same time these groups expect exclusive access not only to their own national resources but to the financial resources available from international creditors and development organizations. Yet sovereign statehood hardly ever stands alone as a solution to social problems and conflicts. An ethnically or culturally legitimated consolidation of power is doomed to failure as soon as the myth of homogeneity is challenged by the inevitable process of social differentiation. In violent conflicts, an actors' recourse to ethnicity, culture or religion as a base for solidarity is nothing more than a model for social organization and mobilization, even when they portray their respective cause as anchored in ancient rights or as the basis for a new society.

Despite the rhetoric, ethnic tension is not the cause but the result of social conflicts. It is the result of a process which destroys all those social mechanisms which allow people to live together peacefully. The destruction of these social mechanisms, rules and institutions in favor of a simple dualism based on ethnic categories is the real cause of the conflicts. The diffuse and overly broad term "ethnic conflict" works to hide precisely those complex processes which social scientific analysis must be concerned with.

The use of ethnic and religious symbols in warfare is by no means the sole province of the 1990s: it is a typical element accompanying all of modernity. A renewed reliance on cultural symbols always arises when the transition from traditional to modern modes of living are blocked, when the old crumbles and the new has yet to find its form. The process of social transformation remains at the core of any return to cultural symbols in violent conflict.

The majority of the Third World, now in its third decade since inde-

pendence, and the regions of the former Soviet Union since 1989 face a similar situation: traditional social structures are being wholly destroyed, yet integration into new structures is not occurring. Caught in this uncertain moment, the return to ancient symbols and the creation of new traditions appear as survival strategies, indispensable for the mobilization and organization of groups.

The structural causes of war have therefore remained the same through 1995. The fundamental transformation masked by the euphemism "development" has caused the successive displacement of traditional structures in the Third World. This crisis-prone process makes societal consensus nearly impossible, even at the most basic level of state integration. Precisely this consensus, however, is an essential cornerstone for a functioning political system.

5.5 On Ending Wars and Regulating Peace

Each war is doubtless unique in its details, which vary from region to region and case to case. It is nonetheless possible to observe common problems which arise as obstacles to instituting peace.

There is no patent prescription for ending war and restoring peaceful relations. Both the reasons for beginning and the methods used to end wars differ substantially in each case, as do their effects. Whereas international pressure on Rwanda to democratize more quickly led to an undesired escalation of the war there, the termination of the war in Mozambique and the subsequent peaceful consolidation of state power would have been unthinkable without international support.

Appearances aside, individual governments, and within them individual personalities, play a more substantial role in mediation than large international organizations. Regional organizations are only rarely the most appropriate institutional setting for ameliorating conflicts. This holds true even for the United Nations, whose duties fall primarily in the area of implementing peace accords. The U.N.'s engagement reflects the power politics of its member states. For this reason it is unlikely that much will change in the U.N.'s current practice of expending tremendous energy on selected conflicts while all but ignoring others.

The internal dynamic of wars also presents fundamental challenges to their termination and the peaceful settlement of conflict. The disintegration process in the Third World is accelerated through war. The

disruptive effects of the capitalist-induced transformation process and noncohesive rebel movements encourage the division of warring parties into competing factions, greatly reducing the possibility of ending the war. The development of wars in Afghanistan or in Southern Sudan show that supposedly united fronts collapse as soon as the constellation of the conflict changes. Rebel movements fall into fratricidal factions who turn on each other.

Frequently the very efforts to peacefully regulate the conflict can cause the disintegration of united fronts. This was the case in the rebellion in Mali and for the guerillas in Peru and Guatemala. These developments again show how the label of "ethnic group" is ultimately insufficient to mask differing interests. If political leadership cannot fulfill the material expectations of its fighters, then new rival groups form to pursue the original promises on their own.

For this very reason the leaders of many militant groups adopt policies of patronage not unlike the warlords of old. Social support services offered by the Hindu nationalist "Bharatiya Janata Party" in India, the construction of streets and hospitals by the drug kingpin Khun Sa in Burma or by the Islamic Hizb-Allah in Lebanon serve to build ties stronger than the existing loose connection of a common language or religious beliefs. In war zones such programs are only possible by wringing financial means out of the gray zone of the global market. For this very reason the trade in drugs, weapons, and natural resources has formed the spine of the economy in war-torn regions. Once established, this economy makes the peaceful regulation of conflict even more difficult, for its existence becomes dependent on a continued state of war. Drug production in Colombia, Somalia and Afghanistan thrives in the shadow of war, as does the rapid depletion of Liberia's and Burma's rain forests or the smuggling of diamonds out of Sierra Leone and Angola. Because these economic activities only flourish under conditions of war, they institutionalize interests which seek to prolong the conflict.

Military intervention alone is not an adequate means to stop a war; it requires the political will to pull together divergent interests and ideas present in a war's own dynamic. This political requirement cannot be forced with military means. Military intervention also faces a dilemma of the proper relation of its coercive means to its peace-seeking ends. If peace is restored by military might, then the interveners turn into warring parties, as happened with the United Nations in Somalia and with

France in Rwanda. Yet if intervention policy is restricted to humanitarian assistance, then the foreign forces risk becoming mere pawns of the warring parties.

Agreements between warring parties are less concerned with a final settlement of the issues and more with a temporary halt in the fighting. Peace talks all too often prove futile, and treaties are prone to being broken. This has been the experience of the United Nations, which has now undertaken peace missions across the globe after years of being tethered by the Cold War. It is partially for this reason that the U.N. remains unsuccessful as an effective instrument for securing peace. Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Somalia are examples of its failure.

There is no magic formula to end violence. Any realistic concept for addressing the sources of violence, however, must understand that the framework for global development needs to emerge above all from the Western power centers. While the political classes in these states are not directly responsible for the level of warfare in the world, they must face up to their failure to intervene when help is an imperative. Is it a crime of omission or commission when, for example, the German government allowed Germany in 1994 to join the ranks of the highest weapons exporters in the world and weakened the export prohibitions on dual-use products exported to those very states which appear in this book's register at a time when the German government sought to participate as peacekeepers in the war in former Yugoslavia?

Only when the Western centers create a politics of global responsibility and social reform will new spaces open to improve the development perspectives of the former Second and Third Worlds and will movement start down the difficult path to peace. The chances today for such a politics are slight, but one point remains clear: military intervention is no solution. Conflict regulation can only take place before battle lines are drawn. As necessary as the efforts to end war undoubtedly are, they remain a Sisyphean task as long as the conditions for war and violence grow faster than the means to counter them.

There is little reason to hope for substantive change in the near future. Not even increasing pressure on the Third World for democratization can, by itself, help the consolidation of political order. Just as the mere formal recognition of a state says nothing about its internal form of rule, so elections by themselves say nothing about actual democratization. The countries of the Third World and the former Soviet Union

confront a gigantic challenge in creating democracy, a market economy and consolidating state power all within a very short period of time. Their ability to contain the social conflicts inherent in such an undertaking, however, remains hindered by global recession, indebtedness and the structural weakness of their own economies. As long as these conditions persist, a high level of war-like conflicts will continue to accompany the process of transformation.

Note

1. A version of this chapter originally appeared in Klaus Schlichte, ed., *"Das Kriegsgeschehen 1995"* in *Interdependenz* (Bonn: Materialien und Studien der Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden, Nr. 20, 1996) pp. 11-19.