
Modern Weapons and Third World Powers

Rodney W. Jones
and Steven A. Hildreth



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About the Book

The possession of high-technology weapons, some capable of mass destruction, is no longer the exclusive prerogative of superpowers. This volume explores the international and security issues raised by the acquisition of modern weapons among emerging Third World powers and its implications for U.S. policy. Based on the findings of a year-long research project that culminated in a major CSIS conference, *Modern Weapons and Third World Powers* assesses the findings of over 150 specialists on the regional goals, ambitions, security perceptions, and defense policies of countries in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The authors analyze the defense performance and international impact of these regional powers by examining their experience in obtaining, producing, and distributing modern weapons. They give particular attention to expert judgments of the factors determining Third World combat effectiveness and explore the impact of conventional and unconventional high-technology weaponry on regional patterns of conflict and conflict management as well as on international stability. They also discuss policy challenges that may emerge from Third World conflicts that affect U.S. foreign policy objectives and go on to recommend innovative approaches the U.S. could take to ensure regional and international stability.

About the Authors

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He was recently project director for Modern Weapons in the Third World, the basis for this volume. Currently, he is working on the military uses of space. Jones was formerly associate professor of political science and an associate of the Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University. His government experience includes service in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs at the Department of State. Dr. Jones has published *Urban Politics in India* (1974), *Washington Paper #82*, *Nuclear Proliferation: Islam, the Bomb, and South Asia* (1981), contributed to several books including *The Future of Conflict in the 1980s* (1982), and authored numerous scholarly articles. Recently, he published a book entitled *Small Nuclear Forces and U.S. Security Policy* (1984).

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He has published *U.S. Security Assistance: The Political Process* (coeditor and contributor), contributed to *Strategic Requirements for the Army to the Year 2000* (1984), and authored in *Journal of Church and State*. In 1980 and 1981, he served as an executive officer in the International Studies Association, Washington, DC Region, and on the Advisory Council, 1982-1984.

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Preface

On October 6 and 7, 1983, the Center for Strategic and International Studies of Georgetown University held a conference on "Modern Weapons: Third World Motivations, Capabilities, and Performance," to focus on emerging regional powers and implications for U.S. policy. This conference concluded a year-long phase of research on Third World powers and completed a series of studies on the future of conflict, done in cooperation with Los Alamos National Laboratory. The conference brought together more than 150 specialists from government, academia, and industry.

Five panels dealt with various aspects of the defense capabilities and policies of key Third World countries and with the likely patterns of regional conflict and conflict management. Two keynote speakers also addressed these issues, one from a congressional and the other from an executive branch perspective. This volume is based on those proceedings.

The conference concluded a series of workshops on case studies of selected Third World regional powers organized by CSIS in 1983 and integrated these studies with related research on "The Future of Conflict in the 1980s." The Los Alamos National Laboratory provided valuable support for the Future of Conflict Project, carried out in successive phases over three years.

In its first year, the project concluded that, although American economic and military power has declined, U.S. interests abroad have not. Competition for global resources among the superpowers and developing nations continues, and the likely structure of future conflict will not be global warfare, but low-intensity conflict, primarily in the Third World.

The second year's work focused on strategic responses to conflict in the 1980s, concluding that strategic deterrence between East and West should remain credible through this decade and that the Soviets are unlikely to risk deliberate military confrontation with the West. Most conflicts will be of relative low-inten-

sity and geographically distant from either superpower. Responding effectively to such conflicts will require a renewed consensus policy, a grand strategy to define requirements and set priorities, the development of flexible military and foreign policy organizations, and the technical capabilities to address a variety of low-intensity threats.

In its final year, the project focused on the defense capabilities and policies of emerging Third World powers through country case studies. The authors were as follows:

William Perry, Brazil and Argentina
Georges Fauriol, Mexico
Pauline Baker, Nigeria
Joseph Malone and John Shaw, Egypt
Rodney W. Jones, India
John Blodgett, Vietnam
Donald E. Weatherbee, Indonesia
Edward A. Olsen, Republic of Korea
Gerrit W. Gong, People's Republic of China

These findings were to be compared with the broader regional generalizations developed over two previous years and used to assess U.S. security policy in the Third World regions. The conference agenda was arranged with these tasks in mind.

Panel 1, "Regional Power: Capabilities and Ambitions," chaired by Rodney W. Jones, brought together the authors of the country case studies (listed above) with regional political-military specialists who reacted to the findings of the case studies. These specialists were W. Scott Thompson, Thomas Robinson, Stanley Heginbotham, Adeed Dawisha, Margaret Hayes, Pauline Baker, and Gerald Funk. The panel focused on the regional powers' security perceptions, goals, and defense capabilities and the implications for regional conflict or conflict-resolution.

Panel 2, "Modern Weapons and Patterns of Third World Conflict," chaired by William J. Taylor, Jr., reflected on the research findings from previous phases of the project concerning future patterns of conflict and defense response in Third World regions. The panel also assessed the probable role of modern weapons in regional outcomes and offered forecasts of regional patterns of international behavior. The other panelists

were Thomas McNaugher, Robert Harkavy, I. William Zartman, Michael Vlahos, William H. Lewis, and John Finney.

Panel 3 on "Technology, Military Organization, Absorption, Performance (Conventional)" was chaired by Ernest Graves. The panelists reflected on the findings of the country case studies by offering fresh views on the changing patterns of conventional military technical assistance and weapons transfers, the character of local defense production, problems of absorption, and effectiveness measures of actual defense or combat capability. Members of this panel were Anthony Cordesman, Woolf P. Gross, Stephanie Neuman, Gerald Sullivan, James Katz, Alfred Prados, George Carver, and Peter Wilson.

Barry Blechman chaired panel 4 on "Weapons of Mass Destruction" on the second day of the conference. The panelists examined nuclear, bacteriological, and chemical warfare capabilities in the Third World and the likely impact these capabilities would have on regional politics and conflicts and on global competition. The other panel members were David Williamson, George Quester, Paul Jabber, Robert Kupperman, Tom Brophy, James Leonard, and Brad Roberts.

The final panel, on "Policy Implications—Regional Power and Conflict Management," chaired by Walter Laqueur also included Thomas Schelling, Alton Frye, Joseph Nye, Ray Cline, and Samuel Huntington. These panelists were invited to synthesize the issues opened up by the conference and to weigh long-term policy alternatives for the United States in dealing with modern weapons and emerging regional powers.

The first conference keynote speaker, Hans Binnendijk, deputy staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, discussed international security policy from a congressional perspective. He examined the recent history of U.S. arms transfer policy and the problems facing Congress in this area, as well as congressional views on specific regional security issues.

Robert W. Komer gave a keynote address on U.S. policy approaches toward emerging regional powers. He focused on U.S. capabilities to meet the challenges presented by future low-intensity conflicts and the problems posed by Third World powers.

This volume presents the most significant insights, issues, and conclusions of the conference and of the underlying research.

The results are summarized in the overview. Additional information about panelists and a list of conference participants may be found in Appendix II. Appendix III lists participants in the country study workshops that preceded the October conference.

A number of CSIS staff members worked under severe time constraints to ensure the success of the conference, and their contribution is gratefully acknowledged. Rodney W. Jones was the conference chairman and director of the third phase of the Future of Conflict project. Special thanks are due William J. Taylor, Jr., who directed the early phases of the project and chaired portions of the 1983 conference. Steven A. Hildreth served as conference director. Mary B. Park was the conference coordinator, with Wati Mamoer assisting with the many logistical arrangements. Stacy Ganas, Alicia Greenidge, and Peter Moore performed indispensable tasks in conference support and registration. The rapporteurs' reports were especially useful in writing this report; special thanks for these are owed to Jamie Bell, Peter Moore, Nicholaus Milona, Michelle Klein, James Townsend, Brian Dickson, Denis Lehane, Paul Ingholt, Steven Hildreth, and Debra van Opstal.

The success of the conference was due in large part also to the cooperation and support of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and in particular to the inspiration of Donald Kerr, the director of the laboratory, and to the counsel and assistance of Steven A. Maaranen, leader of the Strategic Analysis Group of the laboratory. For his excellent editorial skills in the production of this report, we are indebted to Michael McHenry of the publications staff at CSIS.

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Overview

The Regional Powers

Regional powers are those that by definition exercise more influence over their neighbors than vice versa. "Local leviathans," to use Samuel Huntington's term, usually are thought to be crucial to regional stability. What they do with modern weapons then may hold one of the keys to the future of conflict. Several of the countries in this Third World study are more unmistakably "local leviathans" than others; India, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and Brazil stand out from the rest in sheer size and potential. But each of the others—South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Egypt, Nigeria, Argentina, and Mexico—is relatively influential by regional standards.

Yet, a basic finding of the study is that all these regional powers are weaker than is commonly supposed, even by regional standards. Although for obvious reasons they usually do not broadcast their weaknesses, their own perceptions of threat and of their respective national capabilities add up to severe constraints and narrow choices in every case. Typically, these regional powers are more conscious of the limit of their role as regional powers than of their respective opportunities to assert regional influence. Perhaps this can be attributed to a growing self-consciousness and scaling back of grander ambitions, as postwar experience with the problems of modernization and development tempers unrealistic expectations—or as recognition of the intractability of local sources of conflict sinks in. Neither the PRC nor Vietnam has been able to escape this sort of retrenchment.

A shared concern of most of the countries in this study is that

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threats to internal security equal or outweigh external threats. Moreover, the perceived acuteness of external threats—these usually emanate mainly from within the surrounding region—is usually bound up with domestic vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities tend to be some combination of regime instability, social divisiveness along traditional group lines (e.g., religious, ethno-linguistic, or tribal), or potential for revolutionary political change. High sensitivity to internal threats is visible in Egypt, Nigeria, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Brazil, and Argentina; indeed in Mexico it is evidently so exclusive a preoccupation that it supplants in the official view discussion of external threats almost entirely. In several cases, external threat perceptions do matter. For South Korea, it is safe to say, the external threat is paramount. The experience of Brazil and Argentina with regional wars (the Falklands anomaly excepted) is distant historically, but has left its marks on defense perspectives; such experience is more recent and vivid for Egypt, India, the PRC, and Vietnam.

Thus, the Third World regional powers' military capabilities would seem to be dedicated primarily to domestic order and secondarily to external defense. As a result, the military forces of these countries are usually weaker than quantitative measures of forces and equipment ordinarily indicate. Examples of these weaknesses were supplied by the performance of Argentine forces in the Falklands conflict and by Egypt in its wars with Israel.

But a head-to-head confrontation between the main units of a regional power and the forces of a major military power is not a test that is likely to be applied very often. This study shows that most of the regional powers are more interested in providing internal security, warding off local threats, or extending their influence quite near by, and are disinclined to risk confrontations with major military powers. Judged by these standards, their military acquisitions and organizations look fairly practical. Few have been willing to accept the costs associated with the forcible extension of their influence over long distances within their regions. Constraints associated with the priorities of economic development and modernization go far to explain why these states are supplied with military forces primarily for internal security and local threats.

Development of defense industrial capabilities varies widely among the Third World regional powers. The two largest, India and China, have developed extensive production capabilities for basic ordnance and intermediate-quality equipment, most of which is absorbed internally. Neither has been particularly successful in marketing large quantities of indigenously produced arms to other Third World markets. Brazil, in contrast, has successfully profited from marketing intermediate-quality defense equipment. But most if not all of these countries remain largely dependent on the major arms suppliers for those sophisticated, high-performance defense systems they deem essential and can afford for their own modernization programs.

Problems associated with the cost and sophistication of advanced conventional weapons may cause some of these countries to consider the acquisition of chemical or biological weapons, or nuclear weapons as more potent (and in certain respects arguably cheaper) substitutes. The PRC, of course, already has acquired a nuclear force, India has demonstrated a nuclear explosive capability, and Argentina and Brazil appear to be developing nuclear options. Chemical and biological weapons can be developed on a small and more easily afforded technology base, even by very poor states such as Vietnam. Various political-military and technical factors, however, will slow the rate of weapons of mass destruction proliferation.

Modern Weapons and Third World Conflict

Earlier CSIS research on the future of conflict indicated that future conflicts are far more likely in the Third World than in Europe; Third World conflicts typically will be medium or low-intensity in character, but will threaten Western interests; the United States is ill-prepared to cope with low-intensity conflict; and, therefore, the United States needs to develop a low-cost, low-risk strategy that is effective in neutralizing such conflict or its worst effects.

In developing this strategy, a number of considerations are germane. Third World fragmentation and disorder will exceed U.S. resources available for those regions and thus require selective involvement and multilateral coordination. Although low-

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cost approaches imply some reliance on surrogates, these entail liabilities and should be analyzed with care. Most low-intensity conflict will not be strategically decisive, but in those cases that could be so because of escalation potential, U.S. deterrent and rapid-response capabilities will be required. Better U.S. understanding is required of the psychological and cultural roots of Third World conflicts, including the ramifications of xenophobia, vengeance, and pain thresholds in traditional settings.

Analysis of low-intensity conflict needs to be refined to take account of its diversity of forms, causes, and consequences. Regional conflict patterns and interregional variations need to be differentiated more effectively, and special attention must be paid to how transnational forces and national permeabilities affect local power balances and conflict propensities. Such analysis shows that simple policy solutions for low-intensity conflicts usually are unattainable. Though some conflicts may be ameliorated with various forms of security assistance, for example, such instruments by themselves rarely achieve permanent results. Most low-intensity threats originate from political, social, or economic deficiencies that are not amenable to military solutions, but rather require the integrated application of a variety of tools and approaches.

Trends in Third World military capabilities consist of efforts to acquire more advanced weapons and to modernize force structure. Options to increase the mobility and firepower of air and sea combat systems, to bolster air, sea, and ground defenses with guided missiles, and even, in some cases to develop nuclear capabilities, are becoming more available. Eventually, such options may increase the power projection of regional powers. But attempts to develop and deploy such capabilities require effective training, organization, coordination, and support. These requirements are usually difficult to establish under Third World conditions and therefore will be slow to materialize. They often run against the grain of traditional societies or tend to conflict with internal political requirements. Thus, although the selections of modern military options are made in quite different ways from region to region or country to country, domestic impediments to effective military absorption exist in almost every case.

The net result of these Third World military development trends seems to favor regional capacities to instigate as well as defend against low-intensity conflict, not to wage wars of high intensity nor to project military powers at some distance. These capabilities, therefore, are not now, nor for the foreseeable future, sufficient to threaten major military powers significantly. These military capabilities are relevant essentially to internal and localized threats. Often they are astutely used by their respective national governments for such purposes as national unity or regime survival. Seemingly confused military planning or ill-organized and poorly deployed military forces may make a great deal more sense when the imperatives of rule over a complex or traditional society are understood.

The internal logic of any such particular national arrangements does not, of course, neutralize the prospects for low-intensity conflict or the associated threats to Western interests. These arise not from modern military capabilities as such, but rather from a multiplicity of cross-cutting purposes embedded in intraregional rivalries and political instability. But a shrewder appreciation of the political underpinnings and rationale of Third World force structures and military procurement is a prerequisite for any sophisticated strategy for low-intensity conflict.

Conventional Military Technology and Performance

As a result, Third World military acquisitions may increase local capabilities to engage in low-intensity conflict, but the systems that are procured usually do not appear to have defense against low-intensity threats primarily in mind. Rather, there is a widespread propensity to procure highly sophisticated, expensive weapon systems and technologies, despite well-known absorption handicaps, and to reject equally serviceable but cheaper and perhaps less sophisticated options that are readily available. The explanation for this seems to be a combination largely of superficial Third World knowledge of particular military systems (in terms of their suitability for local combat conditions and indigenous support structure) and a political compulsion to deploy systems as modern or sophisticated as a neighbor has