

REVIEWS

KUSHI M. KHAN/VOLKER MATTHIES (eds.): *Regionalkonflikte in der Dritten Welt. Ursachen, Verlauf/Internationalisierung, Lösungsansätze.* (Weltwirtschaft und internationale Beziehungen, Studien 21). München/Köln/London: Weltforum Verlag, 1981. 712 pages, DM 79.-

Since the end of World War II more than 133 armed conflicts throughout the world posed increasing threats to international security, although the vast majority of these conflicts took place outside the political centers of the world. This suggests a continued proliferation of wars in the Third World. While some 12 million people died during World War I and almost 56 million during World War II, the death toll attributable to violent conflicts ever since runs to an appalling 25-30 million, let alone the 15-17 million people made refugees and the devastation of property, agricultural lands, infrastructure and industries. Regional conflicts (civil or internal wars confined to a certain region) constitute the most frequent type of war in the Third World, often involving the intervention of external powers (the super powers, their allies or proxies). It is this external involvement that "internationalizes" such conflicts and seriously threatens international security.

It is the goal of a recently published reader to broaden the base of information on Third World conflicts, still a widely unexplored but nevertheless important field of research. The editors (K.M. Khan/V. Matthies) attempt to fulfill this objective by investigating the historical roots, the dynamics and the costs and benefits of regional conflicts in the Third World, the extent to which external powers intervene and, finally, the opportunities for settlement of the conflict.

In the first chapter Khan and Matthies present a comprehensive review of existing approaches and theories in conflict research with particular emphasis on Third World countries. They conclude that research on regional conflicts in Third World countries is heavily biased by an indiscriminate imposition of theoretical concepts derived from the Western context. Consequently, a number of things are more or less neglected by most of the approaches, among them being the importance of pre-colonial social structures and traditions with regard to war and violence, the legacy of colonialism, the result of the present asymmetric relationships in the international order and of the process of decolonialization for actual regional conflicts.

A second introductory step (by Lock/Wulf) analyses the military basis of regional conflicts. It discloses that there is a trend for armaments expenditure to rapidly increase in many Third World countries and this has a highly negative impact (waste of social resources, brain drain etc.) on the socio-economic development of these countries.

Subsequently, in order to test their introductory assumptions, the editors present four case studies: i.e. the Muslim rebellion of Sulu and Mindanao in the southern Philippines (by H.U. Luther), the Pashtunistan conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan (K.M. Khan), the Lebanon conflict (W. Köhler) and finally the Eritrean conflict (V. Matthies) - all of them located within the crisis-ridden orbit of the Islamic Near and Middle East (Lebanon, Pashtunistan) or at the outer fringes thereof (Mindanao, Eritrea). From these case studies it can be concluded that, except for the Lebanon, political decisions made during the colonial past play a key role in the origin of these conflicts. Apart from that, socio-economic as well as ethnic and cultural cleavages are the other major determinants of regional conflicts. Favoring the analytical concept of internal colonialism, socio-economic factors are held by the authors to be more decisive than ethnic and cultural ones, with the ethnic and cultural factors serving only as mobilizers and facilitators of solidarization among the politically and economically marginalized ethnic groups. Another common feature of all four above-mentioned regional conflicts is the intervention of foreign powers.

Unquestionably, this reader on regional conflicts in the Third World is a major contribution to the subject answering many questions which, due to the neglect of this topic by political scientists, remained open until now. The introductory theoretical considerations are well supported by the case studies, which in themselves fill out gaps in research on the respective countries. This is particularly true for the Mindanao conflict which so far has not been covered by German publications. It is also worthwhile to mention that all contributors have adopted a "peripheral" viewpoint in their analysis, thus enabling them to be sensitive to the special socio-economic, political, cultural and ethnic contexts that produce regional conflicts in the Third World.

However, the best illustration of how intricate the analysis of Third World countries can be as a field of political research, particularly in predicting future political developments, is in the author's optimistic conclusion with regard to the Lebanon that, despite continuing tensions, another major outbreak of war and violence would be unlikely in the future. As shown by the latest events, this forecast is rendered irrelevant by the Israeli invasion in July 1982. Although Khan and Matthies concede that in the last decade a certain shift has taken place in the type of Third World wars, i.e. from internal wars to wars between Third World states (for instance territorial conflicts or border wars in order to get hold of newly discovered natural resources), the editors still fail to include a case study of this type of conflict. A number of such border conflicts have occurred very recently in Latin America and a case study of one of them would certainly have rounded off this otherwise highly instructive reader. Nevertheless, when taking into account even this deficiency, the main target of the reader, i.e. to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomena of conflicts in the Third World, has been fully achieved.

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