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Reviewed by Leo Lovelace (University of Southern California)

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Turbulent Peace or World War Threshold?

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Edited by Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall for the U. S. Institute of Peace, this book is a revised version of a 1996 collection entitled *Managing Global Chaos*. Global Chaos is a concept which the editors still considered relevant for purposes of identifying the basic conditions of international conflict at the time of publishing their new version in 2001.

In their introduction, Crocker, Hampson and Aall endorse the cautious optimism advanced by Ted Robert Gurr in his chapter on ethno-political conflict in the new century, “because both the frequency and the intensity of ethnic and intercommunal conflict declined during the past decade” (p. xvi). Though they warn against any assumption of an “easing of intergroup conflict and movement toward political settlement as trends”, their assertion is nevertheless puzzling, given the extent of atrocities and the millions of people killed and displaced during the 1990s.

In the first part of the volume, on the sources and changing global context of conflict, Levy’s essay, “Theo-

ries of Interstate and Intrastate War”, anchors his review on the “level-of-analysis framework,” which he proposes may also be useful for purposes of intrastate or internal war analysis. At system level, Levy sees the unipolar moment as a source of stability in relation to the likelihood of great power war, though he observes that the “eventual erosion of U.S. hegemony and the rise of new powers (China in particular) may create a source of great power crises and confrontation in the future” (p. 19). Levy however overlooks the potential systemic instability derived from global hegemonic management failure. A similar problem applies to his conclusion on the effects of globalization, which stimulated a “declining utility of military force.”

In his essay on “Empires and Geopolitical Competition,” Kupchan contends that American internationalism “will be dissipating in the years ahead,” because of the fading U.S. commitment to European security, its increasingly restrained international economic policy, its growing inability “to use force in the appropriate manner when necessary,” and the international desocialization of the new political elite generation of the country (pp. 43-

44). Besides Kupchan's geopolitics, the other four topics addressed from the system level of analysis are environmental change, security and conflict (Gleditsch); military technology and conflict (Kemp); impact of globalization on strategy (Guehenno); and transnational crime, conflict, and instability (Williams). Kemp and Guehenno assign some comments, in their respective essays, to aspects of international terrorism (pp. 78-79, 88-89), which probably should have been a topic of its own in this section on the system level.

Ayoob's essay, "State Making, State Breaking, and State Failure," departs from the observation that most of the conflict in the international system since 1945 has been a corollary of the formation of the post-colonial state (p. 128), to contend that the "short time at the disposal of state makers in the Third World leads to an accumulation of crises" and the erosion of legitimacy (p. 131), and that the post-WWII international law rules on the immutability of state boundaries, the protection of individual and collective human rights, the right of self-determination, and democratic governance (pp. 131-139), have made state formation extremely difficult if not simply impossible. Ayoob's hard and problematic claims run contrary to the basic tenets of most articles in this volume. Other issues examined in this section include democratic transitions and war (Mansfield and Snyder), the economic causes of civil conflict (Collier), and minorities and nationalists (Gurr).

Gross Stein's essay on image, identity, and the resolution of violent conflict is a powerful piece on the formation, persistence, and conditions for change of enemy images among peoples and leaders. He concludes with the piercing corollary that "if threatened identities facilitate the creation of hostile imagery and contribute to violent conflict, then securing these identities must be a fundamental component of conflict resolution" (p. 203). The essay by Michael Brown on "Ethnic and Internal Conflicts," which closes this section, is a rigorous work of conceptualization.

Part 2 of the volume, on intervention strategies and their consequences, is organized around the two conventional modalities of military and nonmilitary intervention. Introducing the overall subject with the intention of establishing a holistic view, Chester Crocker starts from the premise that "the majority of contemporary conflicts will require some form of third-party intervention if they are to be brought under control and settled" (p. 229). Though the prevalence of internal conflict makes third-party intervention, "especially direct military action ... so

often fraught with difficulty and controversy" (p. 230), he finds "that the much-advertised syndrome labeled 'ethnic conflict' has its roots in a mix of special situations and concrete local factors ... beyond the general notion of ethnicity" (p. 233), in the context of which well-designed intervention becomes feasible and decisive for steering and settling conflicts.

Richard Betts takes on the delusion of impartial intervention, arguing generally (on the basis of the experiences in Haiti, Bosnia, Somalia, Cambodia, and Kosovo) that external intervention becomes more effective when it is less impartial and much less limited. Unfortunately he does not directly answer his substantive underlying question, namely, "why did it take outside powers so long to get to that point" (p. 288)? In actuality, the main thrust of his analysis concerns the policy positions adopted by governments and the United Nations Security Council along the processes and sequences of the conflicts in question, instead of the international and national political conditions which interactively account for policy determinations, positioning, and intervention.

Haas's essay, "Using Force: Lessons and Choices for U.S. Foreign Policy," should have addressed many of Betts's concerns as to why it may take time for outside powers to make their decisions regarding intervention in a deadly crisis. According to Haas, any intervention must pass three basic tests: it must have "potential to succeed" ("it must be possible to see how military force can be employed in a way that will protect or promote the interest in question"), the benefits of intervention "should outweigh the likely costs," and the "ratio of benefits to costs should also compare favorably with that of other choices, including using other tools of policy ... or doing nothing at all." On the basis of these criteria, Haas infers that the United States "can sustain high-interest, high-cost interventions as well as low-interest, low-cost efforts," but "what it cannot sustain are interventions that promise to be (or turn out to be) low-interest but high-cost" (p. 296).

Hampson's essay on the role of third parties in ending violent conflict proposes several theoretical approaches to conflict management. He concludes that a third party's full and continued engagement is a must for peaceful settlement, and that "interventions that fail are typically associated with a lack of staying power or an inability to muster the resources needed to build a secure foundation for a settlement or some process of intercommunal reconciliation" (p. 401).

Kriesberg's "The Growth of the Conflict Resolution Field" is an excellent survey of the historical develop-

ment of the field of conflict resolution studies and practice, which he defines as “oriented toward changing conflicts so that they can be conducted constructively, even creatively, in the sense that violence is minimized, antagonism between adversaries is overcome, outcomes are mutually acceptable to the opponents, and settlements are enduring” (p. 407). Kriesberg undertakes significant conceptual stock taking, especially in the context of his discussion on the areas of consensus and disagreement within the field, and on the extent of convergence and complementarity between conflict resolution studies and international relations theory. His concept of conflict, taken from Burton’s *Conflict: Resolution and Prevention* (1990), designates “issues that involve deep-rooted human needs” (p. 416). This is a more expansive approach than Touval and Zartman’s, who more narrowly propose (in their essay on “International Mediation in the Post-Cold War Era”) that conflict “refers to politico-security issues” (p. 427). In principle, the broader the scope of the issues, the more difficult it should be to find a point of agreement. As conflict persisted and deepened in the Middle East, South Asia, the Balkans, and sub-Saharan Africa throughout the 1990s, a more holistic approach to negotiation has been emerging. Hopman traces this development to Rapoport’s 1960 pioneering work in *Fights, Games, and Debates*, where he observed that, for some types of conflicts, it was necessary to go beyond game theory for bargaining purposes, and adopt what he called debate, “a joint search for ‘empathetic understanding’ among individuals and for a ‘domain of validity’ in which their interests and understandings overlap” (p. 447). Hopman’s rigorous essay, “Bargaining and Problem-Solving: Two Perspectives on International Negotiation,” “seeks to compare and elucidate these two perspectives on negotiations”—which he redefines as bargaining and problem-solving—through the applied examination of four general criteria: agreement, efficiency, equity, and stability (pp. 448-449). His functional reconciliation of both approaches is based on the sound proposition that “the paradigm that will work best for negotiation depends largely on the nature of the parties, the issues being negotiated, and a wide range of contextual factors” (p. 448).

Cohen’s “Negotiating across Cultures” is a concise and very cogent piece at a time when the nerves of the international system are experiencing perhaps the gravest moment of breakdown danger since WWII. His basic premise is that the conditions for the practice of effective diplomacy have radically changed in the twentieth century: from a selective and largely homogeneous inter-

national diplomatic culture to a system which, in spite of the persistence of Western hegemony, is shaped by a universal or inclusive and structurally heterogeneous complexion. The new complexity of the inclusive and multicultural system is compounded by the fact that professional diplomacy has become but one of the intervening variables in the flow of global political communication across nations and cultures.

His conclusions, and the related lines of action he proposes are simple and strong: lingua franca, relative integration of professional skills, and common greater multicultural training. Descending to a micro level, which could add practicality to Cohen’s prescriptions, Harold Saunders identifies four arenas which are the moving interlocked contexts of the five critical phases of multilevel peace processes: the official process, the quasi-official process, the public peace process of sustained dialogue, and the civil society.

In the part on institutions and regimes, Rolf Ekeus and Michael Doyle discuss several aspects of the post-Cold War challenges, performance, and capabilities of the United Nations. They generally emphasize the positive, in a context extremely problematic, and the ultimate need for the Organization. Characteristically, the U.N. tends to be treated as an independent actor in world politics. As such, the international security policy decisions which appear to emerge from the U.N. are assessed as direct attributes of, and responsibilities derived from the processes and mechanisms of the Organization. Within the institutional side as well, Connie Peck, in a piece on the role of regional organizations in preventing and resolving conflict, and David Yost on NATO’s contributions to conflict management, generally concur that the stronger the regional international organized framework, the greater the chances to prevent, contain, and steer focal conflicts.

International law is the system which experienced by far the most positive impact from the end of the Cold War and the manner in which the East-West conflict was settled through largely peaceful democratic change of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries. The subsequent strengthening of the international institutions which followed remained, however, partial and conditional, and were undercut by the reluctance of the United States and the West to move decisively in establishing an effective structure for a global rule of law. William Schabas’s otherwise well-taken observations in his piece on international law and response to conflict—mainly that of the increasing judicialization of the instruments and policies for approaching international and international-

ized conflicts—belong probably in an era of expectations which seems to be fading with the crumbling architecture of world order.

Next in importance to the systemic crisis on the rules governing the use of force comes the crisis of the unique architecture established in the second half of the twentieth century for the control, reduction, and eventual elimination of armaments. “Arms Control Treaties and Confidence-Building Measures as Management Tools,” by Michael Krepon and Lawrence Scheinman, is an excellent piece. The four factors with which they propose to assess the strength of the arms control regimes—universality, implementation, verification, and compliance (pp. 627-630)—constitute a precise and valuable synthetic instrument. Their overall conclusion was that the “last decade of the twentieth century” offered “very divergent paths for the future: one ... defined by the continued unraveling of existing treaty regimes; the other involves adaptation and strengthening” (p. 632). It seems fairly clear that, as in the case of the rules concerning the use of force, or even worse, the path taken is the former. Unraveling, however, is a euphemistic way of stating that the prevailing ruling coalitions and elites in many nations, North and South, have decided that more is better, that controls are not really desirable, and that disarmament is an empty word.

In his contribution on the obstacles to peace settlements, Roy Licklider tackles two contradictory conditions of the process: on the one hand, the question of why combatants so recurrently seek settlement through “political rather than military means”; on the other, “why it is so difficult for these peace settlements to hold.” In reality, both conditions are coherent: the decision to resort to political rather than military means stems from the perceived material impossibility of achieving a meaningful and sustainable measure of victory, if not from a moral understanding that the consequences of a meaningful victory may largely amount to the destruction of the adversary, generally in these cases a whole people. Conversely, the success of peace settlements lie in an agreement which is often based upon such basic premises—the impossibility of achieving complete victory—rather than the rational and emotional recognition of the rights of the adversary. Licklider thus shifts responsibility for maintaining a peace based on negative premises onto the international community, a subject which is addressed in greater detail, and with many relevant insights, by Nicole Ball in her piece on the challenge of rebuilding war-torn societies, and by Stephen Stedman’s on international implementation of peace agreements in civil wars. Espe-

cially attractive may be Stedman’s analysis of the “determinants of successful implementation” (pp. 740-743), based on the joint research conducted by the Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), Stanford University, and the International Peace Academy. The more difficult the conflict, the project found, the stronger the need for assertive transnational authority and for “coercive strategies of implementation” (pp. 743-744). As suggested by Stedman there is a risk of substituting the roles of and overall intervening factors associated with third parties—whether as neighbors, as unilateral mediators, or as part of a larger coalition of the willing or of international institutional mechanisms and decision processes—by the actual conditions and disposition of the peoples which are actually the parties in a conflict. Barring the hypothetical situations of open-ended regimes of international intervention, which entail a substantive return to the conditions of trust and dependent territories, the conclusion that conflicts have been settled successfully, must be a historical conditional, until the related societies in question prove, to themselves and the international community, that they have found a structural peace of their own.

The post-conflict concept is largely an interpretive instrument for inducing a measure of assessment in the process of achieving peace by objectives in the context of the structures of war or violent rivalry among peoples. The instrument is particularly recurrent, because it is necessary, and likewise limited when such a process of achieving peace by objectives—to apply the strategic management analogy—is mainly induced by external, third-party actors, such as willing unilateral mediators or the organized international community. The basic contents of this observation is that conflict in torn societies, conflict which has become in fact the defining condition of the way of life as a consequence of those societies’ structures, and that therefore is a collective state of mind and a core identity parameter, does not really end with the conclusion of armed hostilities, neither when it is self-imposed nor much less so when it is externally imposed. The last contributions of this phenomenal production deal likewise with six critical dimensions of the comparative dynamics of post-conflict conditions: conflict resolution vs. democratic governance: divergent paths to peace? (Baker), the faulty assumptions of postconflict peacebuilding (Paris), democratization and peacebuilding (Sisk), the rule of law in post-conflict phase (Kritz), religion as agent of conflict transformation and peacebuilding (Appleby), and civil society and reconciliation (Led-erach). They are all commendable, enlightening readings,

deserving detailed comment which I cannot provide now.

Turbulent Peace may be one of the most comprehensive readings on the international security conditions of the post-Cold War era, excluding the area of arms control. This was also true of the 1996 edition, *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*. In the 2001 version, the authors confirm this when they declare in their introduction that their objective “was to present much of the best thinking on our past experience and current options and to give shape to the field of conflict analysis and management” (p. xvi). It was their misfortune that the 2001 edition appeared just before the terrorist attacks on September 11, and that its treatment of terrorism is minimal, especially since terrorism (as the precipitator of a global security crisis) is at the center of a critical regime change in the United States. Whereas most of the materials in this massive reading deal with the security problems associated with the crisis of the state in the Third World and in the context of democratization processes, the crisis and militarization of the political system and foreign policies of the super-states of the industrial world are generally overlooked here, even though they constitute defining aspects of the global terror crisis.

There are formidable questions of theory and

methodology at stake in the dialectics between events and analysis in situations which are perceived as bringing about qualitative change. My tentative conclusion is that the main tenets of the volume remain valid with these two qualifications. First, and somewhat quantitative, the protracted conflict complexion of the era of turbulent peace will become more intractable and unmanageable. In spite of favorable signs in Sri Lanka and sub-Saharan Africa, the situations of Palestine, central Asia, Kashmir, and South East Asia, provide strong evidence of this pattern, which is threatening to compound with latent and closely remergent armed interstate conflicts. Second, and potentially qualitative, if the present realignment of American politics (and of Western politics at large) becomes permanent and deepens, as the pattern of transnational terrorism pursues its spasmodic diffusion and escalation, the general characteristics of the era of turbulent peace, even with all its complexities and difficulties, will not hold: the system structures will disintegrate and the move toward a threshold or unconventional variation of world war three will become difficult to resist, like a sort of driving force of entropy dominating the process of global politics. Ultimate prevalence in such a context may mean little for purposes of preserving the fundamentals, values, and material conditions alike, of our civilization. We are not yet there, but we are getting closer.

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