Ramsbotham, Oliver, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 4th ed. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016.

The twenty-first century has no shortage of conflict. While violence has declined relative to earlier periods in human history,[1] recent conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and the Ukraine raise concerns about world order and the endurance of protracted civil war. Deep-rooted tensions in Asia over history and territory as well as North Korea's nuclear proliferation create the possibility for major conflict this century. Internally, many countries grapple with an insurgency of Islamist terrorism from the Middle East and Africa to Europe and Southeast Asia; the death toll continues to rise.

Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall's fourth edition of *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* is a compendium of such conflicts. The book surveys conflict-resolution theory and practice from the First Generation (1918-1945) to the present with an emphasis on case studies since the end of the Cold War. It provides an analysis of conflict resolution from multiple theoretical perspectives, but it does not shy away from declaring its own allegiance to the cosmopolitan framework. This makes the work refreshing in its combination of both descriptive and normative analysis, uncommon in textbooks of this sort, which typically sneak in an author's ideological sympathies rather than declaring them forthright with argument and substance.

The book is divided into two parts: The first part deals with conflict resolution broadly, introducing its history, classical ideas, models, and relevance to existing conflict around the globe. The second part is an exploration of cosmopolitan conflict resolution with an emphasis on its theory and application; this part grapples with criticism from the realist camp generally found on the political right as well as the critical theory and post-structuralist camps generally found on the political left. The authors also wrestle with alternate viewpoints deriving from non-Western theorists. Dividing the book into these two parts makes it more accessible for newcomers to the topic. It provides a

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[1] Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature* (New York: Viking, 2011).

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foundational perspective that immerses one in the subject's prominent ideas and follows up with a rich exploration and debate of those ideas.

Chapters 1-4 present the theoretical foundations of conflict resolution, including positions, interests and needs, third-party interventions, and symmetric versus asymmetric conflicts. These are concepts that anyone in the field—from family mediation to international diplomacy—would be familiar with. The authors navigate the history of the field by dividing it into four stages of inter-generational development. The first generation (1918-1945) emerged from the failure of "peace, socialist, and liberal internationalist movements to prevent the outbreak of the First World War," leading many intellectuals to pursue what they described at the time as the "science of peace" (p. 39). The interdisciplinary nature of conflict resolution develops in this period from fields such as psychology, politics, and international studies.

The second generation (1945-1965) is marked by further institutional development as a result of the catastrophes of World War II and the start of the Cold War's nuclear-arms race. In this period, a pressing debate emerges between European structuralists and American pragmatists that is similar to the debate in liberal politics between Isaiah Berlin's "positive" and "negative" liberty.[2] For the pragmatists, peace is negative, that is, the absence of war; in particular, it is the absence of nuclear war. For the structuralists, "negative" peace does not go far enough, since it does not engage critically with issues of social justice or structural and cultural violence (p. 47). Something "positive" would need to be done to create peace. Disagreements over the distinction between negative and positive peace caused a fault line in the field that exists to this day. Also worth noting is the theoretical division between theorists who view conflict as a pathology in need of a cure and those who view it as an intrinsic part of human relationships that needs to be managed indefinitely. These assumptions about human nature led thinkers down varied political paths during the twentieth century, from liberal incrementalism to Marxist utopianism.

The third generation (1965-1985) combined aspects of the prior generations by focusing on three "great projects": avoiding nuclear war, removing glaring inequalities and injustices in the global system, and achieving ecological balance and control (p. 53). These three projects required three levels of analysis: interstate politics, domestic politics, and “deep-rooted” conflicts. For the authors, “deep-rooted conflicts” was the most significant development of this period, as it elided the distinction between international, domestic, and applied problem-solving approaches to real-world scenarios (p. 53). The practice of interest-based negotiation derives from this analysis and has revolutionized the field across many levels.

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[2] Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in his *Four Essays on Liberty* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 118-72.

The fourth generation (1985-2005) took place at the end of the Cold War and provided a more integrative way of dealing with conflict than existed in previous decades. This change came from a context where inter-group conflict had regional and global impacts due to new technologies, mass immigration, and economic interdependence. This period also had more sophisticated qualitative and quantitative methodologies for conflict analysis, such as measurements for peace, state fragility, and conflict distribution. While indicators for negative peace have shown a decline over time—à la Steven Pinker’s thesis in *The Better Angels of Our Nature*—the authors advise that it is difficult to quantify positive peace (p. 78), thus placing some restraint on our optimism. These early chapters outline different ways that conflict and peace are calculated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Network on Conflict and Fragility, and the Human Security Report.

Chapters 5-10 deal with the specifics of preventing violent conflict from peacekeeping and peacemaking to postwar reconstruction and reconciliation. Conflict-resolution theory is ineffective if it cannot be applied practically to prevent the outbreak of violence, maintain peace, negotiate settlements, and bring about a transformation in the relations between parties in dispute. These chapters present numerous case studies for analysis on these points, such as conflicts in the Ukraine, Mali, Somalia, South Africa, and the attempts at resolutions such as the Oslo Accords and the El Salvador gangland truce, among others. In order to prevent conflict, one must have a strong understanding of its emergence. The authors go into the practical reasons for conflict, such as the pursuit of incompatible positions, ideology, economic grievance, and political or group exclusion (p. 150). They offer a solution by outlining the importance of communication between parties as well as a political system that gives incentives to cooperate on common values: “[T]he first element of the capacity to prevent conflict is the degree to which goals are coordinated or, at least have a capacity to complement the goals of others” (p. 146). The theory of liberal peace is explored as a mechanism of conflict prevention via common trade, democracy, and the international participation of countries which have integrated in this way (p. 154).

A significant portion of Chapters 5-10 go on to survey the generational development of U.N. peacekeeping, the theoretical debate in peace operations, and the debate over third-party intervention. Much of these debates in the field can be summed up this way: "From one direction came criticism of the ineffectiveness of impartial and non-forcible intervention in war zones . . . from the other direction came the criticism of the inappropriateness of what were seen to be attempts to impose western interests and western values on non-western countries" (p. 181). These two perspectives, between which the authors attempt to negotiate, can broadly be defined as realist and post-structuralist. Many important actors have taken a "neo-realist" position in their foreign policy that is entirely dismissive of international organizations. The neo-realist position holds state power and interests as the driving forces in resolving disputes and setting boundaries. It is skeptical or dismissive of international cooperation outside of a limited framework of balance of power, and it places states with significant military capabilities as the arbiters of intervention. The adoption of this position is prominent but not always consistent; countries may diverge from this position when it is politically expedient to do so. The United States, in particular, does this; it has a tradition of swaying under different administrations between more realist considerations and more liberal internationalist considerations. In the latter, universal humanitarian values outweigh state sovereignty.

Peacekeeping is also broken down by generations. It is in the fourth generation where cosmopolitanism has become the guiding basis for peace operations, as put forward by theorists such as Richard Falk, David Held, and Mary Kaldor (p. 192). This cosmopolitan framework, which relies upon universal principles and international norms in synergy with a U.N.-based process, also faces criticism from post-structuralists and critical theorists. Their criticism, unlike those raised by neo-realists, does not rely on the importance of sovereignty and the ineffectiveness of the U.N. They criticize, instead, universalism itself by holding that impartiality is a liberal fantasy. This post-structuralist critique, however, lacks concrete suggestions for improvement. Objections raised by critical theorists, similar to those of twentieth-century utopianism, are based on faith in a radical political agenda. That is to say, this perspective views conflict itself as a result of the current global political system rather than being an intrinsic feature of human interactions. A disheartening aspect of both criticisms is their dismissive view of mediation. The benefits of neutral third-party intervention are evident; for example, two-thirds of post-Cold War international crises have been mediated (p. 212). Third parties are "essential in contributing to issue transformations" (p. 213), because they put parties in contact, help build trust, keep parties on track, and clarify issues with diplomatic tact. Mediation is sometimes unsuccessful, but the fact that it is ever successful is worth pursuing.

Chapter 9 deserves special mention, for it surveys a distinction in the theory of peacebuilding between top-down versus bottom-up liberal peacebuilding (p. 266). Bottom-up peacebuilding relies upon civil society and privileges the local above the international. The main criticism of the top-down approach is its lack of legitimacy and nuance. Top-down intervention does not often consult broadly with local stakeholders and is built on lofty and low-resolution assumptions that do not take into consideration the social, economic, and political complexities of a given society. This can lead to a short-term rather than long-lasting peace—or even end in failure. Moreover, there are different conceptions of liberal peace which may focus on order over democratic reform or vice versa (p. 272). Alternatively, the main criticism of a bottom-up approach is that it may never come: civil society, due to a variety of factors, may be impotent at ending conflict or negotiating settlement. The bottom-up process is often imagined to be a more "natural" process than the alternative; however, this can result in one party dominating the other to the point of genocide. While bottom-up solutions are often deeply rooted, and therefore, more long-lasting, civil society is not guaranteed to be successful at ending a conflict; by consequence, conflict may continue for much longer periods of time, leading to more death and destruction. Rarely are situations of peace and war neatly categorized into one approach or the other. They typically involve the need for both domestic transformation and international intervention.

Part II of the book concentrates the focus of the analysis on cosmopolitanism itself. Chapter 11 begins by defining the term and examining it across multiple levels, including international law, institutions, and responding to international terrorism. The authors claim that "[c]osmopolitan conflict resolution transcends jurisdiction. It applies to global, regional, state, identity, and individual nexuses of conflict. It actively promotes a global agenda based on certain values. It has an overarching strategy" (p. 314). They go out of their way to emphasize that it is not a "covert name for imposing hegemonic interests under a subterfuge of unexamined 'universal values'," but rather, it is a “genuine and inclusive local-global effort” (p. 314). Cosmopolitanism is framed as an intermediary between traditional power and security issues and reforming international institutions along emancipatory lines (p. 316). It tries to straddle between the realist and post-structuralist camps by offering recognition of the need for common-sense power calculations, while also emphasizing international inclusion and reform of existing processes. Cosmopolitanism embraces Enlightenment values and rejects realist and Marxist determinism. It attempts to integrate new spaces and new actors into the international peace process. The authors’ starting point is “the observation that the international collectivity is not a homogeneous entity” (p. 317). However, many of the phrases used to define cosmopolitanism, such as “international justice,” “cultural pluralism,” and “global governance,” remain ambiguously defined. All three of these rely upon a foundation of values, such as democracy, liberalism, and human rights, which are associated with the West. In order to digest criticism from post-structuralists and non-Western thinkers, the authors argue in favor of cosmopolitan liberalism, while at times steering clear of terminology that they clearly support, but that would otherwise alienate these critics.

Chapters 12-18 apply conflict resolution to a number of specific problems concerning the environment, gender, religion, art and popular culture, media and communications, and linguistics. They demonstrate the innumerable ways in which conflict resolution can be theorized and used to solve real-world problems. For instance, the empowerment of women in peace processes around the world is transforming the ways in which societies and governments facilitate their peace efforts, national conflicts of interest over climate change represent new tensions that will continue to emerge over the coming decades and require wide engagement from the international community, and the new reality of cyber warfare is changing the definition of state conflict.

The changing geopolitical order serves as a backdrop to the entire book, which is part of what makes the fourth edition unique from its predecessors. The first edition marked the transition at the end of the Cold War from a bipolar world; the second edition captured the United States’ unipolar moment; the third edition highlighted the rapid movement into a multipolar world; the fourth edition grapples with a “highly complex and shifting balance of forces” (p. 492). In particular, the latest edition deals with the relative decline of the United States, the rise of China, an aggressive Russia, and a fractured, war-torn

Middle-East—all phenomena that have emerged or accelerated after 2010. The shift of power away from the United States in terms of both the capacity to control events and the will to intervene opens the way for a complex mix of regional, sub-state, and trans-state actors to play significant roles (p. 66). From a realist perspective, such a dramatic shift in power is accompanied by interstate war; many governments are imagining that possibility between the United States and China. The world has also seen an increased risk in confrontation between Russia and NATO due to Russian expansionist operations in states near her. The case study of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands is emblematic of this geopolitical transformation (p. 301). It involves the actions of a municipal actor forcing the hand of the Japanese government to nationalize the Senkaku Islands, thus stoking the flames of deep-rooted tensions between China and Japan that have not been conciliated since World War II. The rapid growth of China as a regional economic and military power has led it to be more aggressive in the East and South China seas. The relative decline of the United States has led the Japanese slowly to engage in ways to counterbalance China's rise. The economic interconnection of globalization means that those who control the sea lanes hold huge leverage over the surrounding countries whose economies rely upon the free flow of goods. This combination of factors demonstrates the complexity of modern conflict, which contains a combination of historical tensions, new technologies, non-state or sub-state actors, and economic global interconnectedness.

Contemporary Conflict Resolution's breadth of knowledge across different time periods, issues, and case studies is its blessing and curse. For a scholar, it is a wonderful conglomeration of interdisciplinary theory and practice. It should be on the shelf of every student of global politics. However, the density of the book can make it daunting. In fact, given the numerous theories and issues discussed in the book, I found it difficult to provide a more focused review. The book also serves as a tremendous reference guide to thinkers in the field; as noted throughout the review, it offers rich and interesting debates. The unique value of the book is that it engages in theoretical explanation and debate, while continually testing theory through feedback from real-world examples in an ever-evolving world.

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