CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Gabriella Blum: *Islands of Agreement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. Pp. 355. $49.95.)

One of the most pressing problems within the international system is that of recurring conflicts. A small subset of dyads – enduring rivalries – produces a disproportionate share of threats, uses of force, and wars in the international system. Not surprisingly, both political leaders and scholars have been drawn to understanding the conditions associated with the emergence of these conflicts and those that are most likely to end them. Yet, most of the emphasis within both the policy and scholarly communities has been in producing comprehensive settlements among rivals that not only end their fighting, but resolve the issues that give root to the violence. In this sense, the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel provide the model by which many policymakers and scholars envision efforts to improve relations between rival states. Despite this focus, such comprehensive settlements among enduring rivals have proven not only difficult to achieve, but also rare.

Gabriella Blum's insightful book *Islands of Agreement* reframes the way in which the most violent, recurring conflicts in the international system may be dealt with by both the international community and the belligerents themselves by encouraging a movement away from an emphasis upon *conflict resolution* toward a focus upon *conflict management*. Blum argues for a rethinking of priorities among those seeking to improve relations between enduring rivals, arguing for a shift away from such comprehensive notions of "conflict prevention" and "conflict resolution" to an emphasis upon efforts to manage the relationship between enduring rivals. In this sense, Blum challenges the idea that conflict management efforts – those efforts that restrain the violence between disputing parties or create opportunities for trust-building and cooperation between them – are necessarily "second-best efforts" to conflict resolution. Instead, she argues that such limited efforts at conflict management can provide two distinct benefits. First, where there is resistance to resolution by the conflicting parties, the narrower aims of conflict management can generate a greater willingness for participation. Second, conflict management can be incremental in nature, such that initial steps can gain momentum and encourage future efforts at conflict management.

Core to Blum's argument for conflict management in dealing with enduring rivalries are what she refers to as "islands of agreement." It is within this context that Blum makes her most noteworthy theoretical contribution. Rather than conceptualizing the relationship between enduring rivals narrowly as one simply of war and peace, she argues that the relationship between even the most bitter of adversaries exists across a broader continuum of conflict and cooperation. Across this spectrum of relations between enduring rivals there can exist opportunities for joint gain. These opportunities for

joint gain create the "islands of agreement" that Blum makes the centerpiece of her argument. These islands of agreement are areas of cooperation between enduring rivals that exist separate from their conflict but are created by the parties themselves. At their most modest, they include efforts to facilitate communication and confine the scope of conflict. More significantly, islands of agreement can promote cooperation in areas outside the scope of the conflict of the rivalry, providing benefits to the parties. Blum points to the Indus Waters Treaty that fostered interdependence and cooperation over water issues between India and Pakistan as an example of an island of agreement. Such an island of agreement, while tangential to the issues in conflict between India and Pakistan and not a specific part of a peace process, can ultimately foster greater trust between the parties, encourage further cooperation, and, ultimately, under the best of circumstances, begin to change their relationship away from one built around conflict to one of greater cooperation.

Of course, this is not to say that Blum is Pollyannaish with regard to the impact that islands of agreement exert upon the relationship between enduring rivals. She points specifically to the potential downsides a focus on producing these limited areas of cooperation between rivals might bring with them, suggesting, for example, that an explicit focus upon conflict management over conflict resolution might create a self-fulfilling prophecy as rivals only look to narrow means of limiting their conflict and never turn concretely toward resolving their conflict. Even more ominously, Blum also considers the idea that islands of agreement between enduring rivals might actually forestall the end of conflict by making the costs of continued fighting more bearable for the rivals. In effect, narrow engagement between rival states to limit the scope of conflict, expand opportunities for trade, or produce agreement on areas of common interest might prevent the emergence of the hurting stalemate that would ultimately cause the rivals to change course and look to resolve their conflict.

Despite Blum's frank assessment of her own argument, it is hard to ultimately conclude that these potential downsides constitute sufficient reason to avoid producing islands of agreement between rivals. First, the history of most enduring rivalries is a long one, marked by decades of conflict in which the rivalry either continues unabated or terminates only when one rival decisively defeats the other. Looking across the history of enduring rivalries, it is difficult to see many cases in which true conflict resolution ever takes place, suggesting narrower efforts such as what Blum encourages would be better advised. Second, the three case studies Blum develops in her book covering the India–Pakistan, Greece–Turkey, and Israel–Lebanon rivalries provide clear examples of how these islands of agreement can translate into broader changes in the relationship between rival states.

Islands of Agreement is an important addition to the literature on conflict management and conflict resolution. Its insight into the central importance of limited agreements between rival states is an important contribution to

our thinking about how best to deal with the most conflict-prone dyads in the international system. The rich case studies Blum develops in the book further her compelling argument and provide a useful means to trace the development of islands of agreement, the issues they cover, and their effects upon rival states in three important enduring rivalries. This book is a must read for both scholars and policymakers alike.

–J. Michael Greig

DRIVEN BY FEAR

Ioannis D. Evrigenis: *Fear of Enemies and Collective Action* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xix, 232. $85.00.)

Fear figures prominently in political theory and the theory and practice of international relations. This volume examines fear as a source of political order and fear of enemies as a building block of group identity. Thomas Hobbes is rightly seen as the principal theorist of fear, but the author extends his analysis back to Machiavelli, St. Augustine, Sallust, Thucydides, and Aristotle and forward through Kant and Hegel to Schmitt, Morgenthau, and post–September 11 America.

The author's starting point is "Sallust's theorem" that *metus hostilis*, the fear of enemies, promotes social unity and its absence discord. He purports to develop a theory of "negative association," whose fundamental assumption is that "differentiation from outsiders shapes the identities of political groups and their members in fundamental ways" (p. xii). In times of crisis, appeals to the differences between one's group and adversarial others "may be the only way of forestalling their dissolution" (p. xiii). As self-preservation is assumed to be the universal "bottom line" for individuals and social groups, fear of death, when successfully aroused, is the most effective means of building and maintaining group identity.

Of necessity, the readings of so many philosophers in fewer than 200 pages must be brief and somewhat superficial. Some of the interpretations are also questionable. Thucydides is treated as a run-of-the-mill realist and the author buttresses his argument with secondary sources that reflect this orientation. There is no recognition that fear is not a constant in Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War, but becomes increasingly prominent as reason loses control of appetite and spirit in Athens and spirit in Sparta. In the Melian Dialogue, fear is the dominant motive for Athens, although not for the Melian leadership, who are prepared to die in defense of their freedom, just as the Athenians were when they faced the Persian threat. I believe that Thucydides intends us to understand Athenian behavior at this point in the war as pathological. Thucydides and Herodotus alike treat self-