

(Book Review)

**Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., & Miall, H. (2016).**

***Contemporary Conflict Resolution,  
The Prevention, Management and Transformation  
of Deadly Conflicts. 4th Edition.***

**Polity Press, 624 pp. ISBN: 978-0-745-68721-6**

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Contemporary conflicts are multidimensional and becoming even more complicated, and addressing them necessitate comprehensive analyses of the underlying causes and fragility, coupled with corresponding, intangible and synchronized responses. For that, it is crucial to have a scholastic effort to define and guide on the essential and specific details of the concepts of conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. With such recent developments in the field of conflict resolution, the authors launched the fourth edition of '*Contemporary Conflict Resolution*' which incorporates fresh research findings and empirical data into a complete, flowing volume. This revised and updated version is a much needed gap-filler and really does make for eye-opening, extraordinary reading in the field of conflict resolution. This book explains in well-organized manner the key concepts, the development of the field, evaluates successes and failures, and assesses the key contemporary challenges and debates in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Equally, to previous editions, the authors have premeditated the same outline of the book structure. However, it included fresh research findings and the most up-to-date practicality as a consequence of current advancements in the field. In this edition, twenty chapters are equally distributed in two main parts and consist of a holistic overview of conflict resolution. The first part of the book provides a thorough examination of conflict resolution theory and practice. This part is organized as a synopsis of the evolution, and a theoretical survey of the subject matter. In particular, the first part provides, key introduction of essential concepts and definitions along with concrete through explanation of the origins, foundations and development of the contemporary conflict resolution. The second part, on the other hand, situates the discipline in the perspective of swift global transformation and discusses the debates that have encircled conflict resolution as it has become more popular.

In particular, the first part provides essential statistics of deadly wars, and analytical tools to identify underlying root causes of contemporary conflicts – direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence. Similarly to the previous versions, this version too, explained in a refined manner the historical evolution and categorized conflict resolution developments into four major periods ‘generations’ from 1918 to 2005, for instance; precursors, foundations, consolidation, and reconstruction. Authors described that a group of intellectuals from different disciplines initiated conflict resolution in the 1950s and they contributed strategically to the development of its theory and practice. For them, the value of studying conflict was a general phenomenon, with similar properties whether it occurs in international relations, domestic politics or between

individuals. The first three generations illustrate by reviewing the early roots of the field in peace research and non-violence movements. Particularly, the first and second generation covered a state-centric approach to conflict resolution, whereas the third generation dealt with civil society or less state-centric. Thus, the fourth generation emerged the civil society to the state and beyond to the regional and international levels.

The authors rationalize the significance of statistical analysis and datasets of deadly conflicts by articulating catastrophic human atrocities, conflict costs and so forth. For example, authors found that about 150 armed conflicts which outspread in the post-World War II period resulted roughly 40 million deaths. Likewise, forced migration, famine, and prevalent diseases, among other conflict-related implications have been drastically increased human sufferings. In other words, we can witness how fresh dynamic and real time data collection and analytic technologies are now being used to map not only the existence of conflicts but the dynamics of systemic peacemaking – the Global Peace Index, the Global Terrorism Index, and the Ushahidi Platform being examples. By that, this work fulfills its promise because it defines conflict resolution both as a scientific discipline and in more practical terms. Hence, the first part of this ground-breaking textbook, however, provides a fresh assessment of the contemporary conflict landscape in response to ongoing changes in the dynamics of global conflict, including the events and implications of the Arab revolutions, the rise of the Islamic State, a rising Russia, and heightened tensions in the South China Sea.

The second part of the book deviates from the traditional conflict resolution methods and investigates new aspects such as art and popular

culture, media and contemporary communications, public discourses, and linguistic intractability. This portion of the book includes chapters dedicated to delving into such topics in a unique and insightful way. The authors effectively demonstrate that conflicts are not based solely in a local or even regional level, instead, they may produce immediate, global aftershocks due to globalization. This supports their beliefs in '*Cosmopolitan Conflict Resolution (CCR)*', which indicates the need for a strategy that is not placed within any specific state, society, or founded site of power, but rather fosters positive and productive means of resolving conflicts at local through global levels in the interests of humanity. For that, the authors advocate their CCR analytical tools and frameworks along with providing apt case studies to systematically address international terrorism, global environmental issues, gender-gap matters and so forth.

Moreover, the authors highlight a wide range of ethical or policy options are in principle available for conflict prevention such as mediation, conciliation, fact-finding, good offices and so forth. In recent years, 'disruptive technologies' have exploded in popularity, wreaking havoc on social, economic, and political institutions in unexpected ways. However, technological advancements also have opened up new possibilities for managing, transforming, and resolving conflicts. The book thoroughly discusses the role of '*Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*' and other modern technology in both traditional conflict resolution and cyberwar, guiding practitioners and theorists through a range of techniques to investigate the causes and consequences of all kind of conflictual violence. The authors made a convincing case the idea that conflict resolution theory and practice must not only respond to the

communications revolution denoted by cyber technology and ICT in general, but that there are challenges and opportunities to foresightedly engage modern communication technologies and 'Big Data' to develop robust transformative architecture for cyber peace. The authors traces ways forward in building a cyberspace for practical conflict resolution under the principles and norms of CCR.

Like any great book, there are a few areas in which it could have been stronger and concise. Excluding the authors' complex elucidations, which requires numerous re-readings to obtain an essential understanding of the subjects involved, the book would have earned unexpected acclamation. Specifically the first part of the book, unnecessary lengthy explanations sometimes cause confusion and get the reader off the topic. On the other hand, amazingly, the ideas and notions coined by the authors have not yet been objected utterly; yet, it can be possibly objected since they do not provide any references nor do they fully acknowledge the role of social media as seen in the Arab spring, the emergence of Islamic State, and the Occupy Wall Street protest movement in September 2011.

In the second part of the book would have been still richer if the authors had taken account of the implication of cosmopolitan norms and values which looks abstract or illusory and can, for example, be criticized as '*illusory universalism*' and as '*unrealistic*'. Strictly speaking, CCR can be seen as rhetoric that may be used to camouflage intervention for other objectives, such as great power interests or new types of expansionism or neo-colonialism. It is consequently important to ask whose (e. g. Westerners or great powers or the UN Security Council) interests would be served and reinforced via CCR. Noticeably, the authors have not

addressed how religion-sensitive conflicts can be dealt under CCR. Possibly, CCR can be utilized to validate existing status quo and denying legitimate rights of minorities or weaker ones by enforcing so called '*Cosmopolitan*' the supremacy of the dominant political system, religion, culture and so forth. Moreover, the authors partially failed to bring attention to the need for responsible journalism, accountable private weblogging, and use of all other online social communication platforms with moral and ethical accountability. In the age of cyber technology, fabricated or forge information can possibly demolish efforts for peace or damaging impact on peace processes and may lead to unwanted consequences. Indeed, there is still a significant need to thoroughly address the technicalities and sensitivities of cyberwar to cyber peace. Apart from above noted potential criticism, the absence of conclusion of Chapters 3, 10-12, and 18-20 can be regarded as pertinent inconsistency of this edition.

In essence, this thoroughly updated work, guides its reader to learn about concepts, theories, and structures, that involved in conflict resolution. Indeed, the authors provide novel pattern of TNC illustrated with new case studies and argue for a response based on CCR, which is demarcated as the promotion of cosmopolitan values on which future generations' well-being and life hopes are grounded. In fact, they offers sufficiently in-depth conflict resolution assessments. Noticeably, this book is a precious contribution to academia and highly recommendable reading and a useful guidebook for students, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers as well as for those working in non-governmental organizations and think-tanks as guidance to understanding of an evolutionary process of conflict resolution and its dynamics.