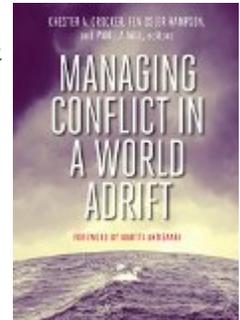


**Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, Pamela R. Aall, eds..** *Managing Conflict in a World Adrift*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2015. xvi + 629 pp. \$50.00, paper, ISBN 978-1-60127-222-5.



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**Commissioned by** Seth Offenbach (Bronx Community College, The City University of New York)

The last ten years have seen dramatic changes and major turmoil in global affairs, spanning revolutions and violent conflagrations in the Arab world to the rise and fall of piracy in the Horn of Africa and the rampant use of cyberspace in statecraft. *Managing Conflict in a World Adrift* offers a broad survey of the current international political landscape in a thick tome consisting of over three dozen concise chapters. For students and practitioners with interest in international politics, diplomacy, and conflict management, the book will be a go-to source for the state of the art on some of the most salient issues in these fields. The individual chapters by leading experts offer accessible analysis based on substantial scholarly research. Collectively, the volume provides a sense of the complexity of today's conflicts as well as the burgeoning scholarship and policy debate on appropriate responses. This book is part of a four-part series with the same editors, including *Leashing the Dogs of War* (2007), *Turbulent Peace* (2001), and *Managing Global Chaos* (1996). Jointly with the preceding volumes, the series of books

provides dynamic insight into what is new and what is passé in international affairs, at least as determined by predominantly (perhaps exclusively) Western-based observers.

Compared to the last volume in the series, *Leashing the Dogs of War*, the new volume seems to suggest we are now in a *post*-post-9/11 world where terrorism and fragile states continue to constitute a threat, but myriad other, no less pressing concerns also occupy the agendas of global politics. The scope is, for good reasons, vast. It includes chapters not only on terrorism and the causes of violent conflict, but also on climate change, the crime-war nexus, cyberspace, maritime security, conflict spillovers, gender politics, democracy promotion, and the effect of technology, including social media, on political developments.

The volume also surveys new and existing tools of conflict management and the debates surrounding them. These include coordinated security initiatives by Western powers, normative ap-

proaches such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), transitional justice mechanisms, statebuilding, conflict prevention, diplomatic negotiation, and deterrence. To the extent that the volume's aim is to provide a panoramic overview of current affairs, this panoply of topics usefully reflects foreign policy concerns of the day. Along the way, the chapters also examine the roles of a large cast of actors on the global scene, including the United Nations Security Council, regional bodies, non-governmental organizations, civil society, and the international community (with contested meanings of the last two terms deftly dissected in specific chapters).

Each chapter clearly earns its place in the volume and is an informative and worthwhile read. Rather than comment on any individual chapter at length, I lay out a few thoughts on the overall thrust of the volume with a view to urging consideration of the full offerings of existing scholarship on how to "manage conflict in a world adrift." I am sympathetic to the formidable task before the editors of selecting only the most pertinent topics for inclusion. Nevertheless, any reader who is not daily immersed in conflict scholarship or conflict management--likely the typical reader of this volume--may, having perused the chapters, remain unaware of what I think are some of the most exciting advances in this broad field of work over the last decade. I am struck by the omission of two important areas of inquiry in particular.

First, if in the first decade after the end of the Cold War structural analysis by international relations scholars did the bulk of the legwork to enhance our understanding of conflict, it has arguably been the more comparativist, micro-level research that has propelled us forward in more recent years. The volume unfortunately does not adequately capture this scholarly breakthrough. Whereas structural analysis examines states' per capita income, inequality, ethnic heterogeneity, population size, and regime type to explain the causes of internal conflict, comparativists focus

on individual and group incentives for starting and joining rebellions, organizing insurgency, creating social order in the midst of violence, and selecting the methods and targets of violence. Structural analysis tends to be state-centric, whereas micro-level analysis brings individual agency to the fore. Rather than adopt a birds-eye view of conflict, it zeroes in on the very local aspects of war and violence. It shows that a conflict's master cleavage, usually simplistically defined either in the capital city or by international interveners, is often misleading and wholly disconnected from conflict dynamics at the local level. It examines life in the conflict zone as experienced by ordinary people, holding the latter not as mere victims but as strategic actors who make choices in order to protect their families and livelihoods. It can tell us why levels of violence differ between armed groups, within conflict areas, and across periods of a conflict; why we find pockets of relatively peaceful order within states at war; and how and why insurgent movements often act as social service providers. It shows that much of the problem with international peacekeeping has to do with the ingrained mindsets and daily practices of peacekeepers rather than with troop size or political will.

Second, and related, the volume gives short shrift to the role of social forces in shaping conflict and conflict resolution. In a sense the volume still situates itself in the statist analysis that formerly dominated. If we have learned one lesson from the recent surge in popular uprisings, it is that collective action on the part of ordinary people, be it in the form of street-level activism, peaceful demonstrations, revolutions, or armed rebellion, profoundly affects the course of politics and state behavior. Many of the chapters certainly reference collective movements like the Arab uprisings. Nevertheless, a focused essay on the broader significance of bottom-up mobilization in all its peaceful and violent guises would have done much to diminish the image of the state as standing atop a hierarchy of political life and

urged instead an image in which states and social forces are in constant contention with one another, resulting in what we call politics. Such an image is in essence what the most productive research in the scholarship on both violent and non-violent politics has portrayed over the last decade.

Why do these two points matter, and why should these topics be incorporated more explicitly in a volume like *Managing Conflict in a World Adrift*? For one, both scholarly and policy interest in conflict management should be concerned with understanding not only the causes and resolution of violent conflict, but also with what actors do once conflict is underway. If human welfare is a concern, then the analysis ought to be brought to that level, rather than hovering at the international systemic or statist levels. It further behooves scholars and practitioners to better understand what goes on *in* conflict in order to devise better strategies to manage and resolve it.

More generally, this latest body of research has fully established conflict and conflict management as the shared province of international relations, comparative politics, political sociology, and political psychology scholarship. Research has both broadened and deepened to include the more individual, local, social, and “field-based” analysis, and very fruitfully so. These shifts in scholarship are inadequately reflected in the volume at hand. A conflict management novice becoming acquainted with the field ought to be able to note that scholarly expertise now spans all levels, from the village in the conflict zone to the global system, and engages ideas from across traditional boundaries in a multidisciplinary effort. He or she ought to be informed that states and social forces, and formal and informal politics, interact to generate both war and peace. In short, while the volume’s thematic coverage is broad and usefully so, its theoretical coverage could have more accurately and evenly captured the current state of knowledge on managing conflict.

The editors have made an important contribution with their latest volume, drawing on some of the most authoritative voices in the study of conflict and conflict management. I would hope that they will continue to inform students and practitioners with an eventual fifth volume, one that reflects these and other latest advancements in research.

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