



Polina Khmilevska

Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8434-8116>

Francisco Rojas Aravena (ed.), *The Difficult Task of Peace: Crisis, Fragility and Conflict in an Uncertain World*

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Admittedly, peace has been one of the key topics on the international agenda ever since we decided to alter our paradigm, acknowledging the fact that dealing with war and its consequences does not make sense without doing something to prevent it. This is why peacebuilding, the culture of peace and peace education should be our priority in order for humankind to take a major step to another level, rather than getting back to the old way of resolving disputes. As the issue of violence, war and peace are complex and require a holistic approach, the task is indeed strenuous – especially as the world that we live in is becoming more technologically advanced, globalised, and interdependent.

The book that has been subjected to the review was published in 2020 by Palgrave Macmillan, a respected academic publishing house based in London. The editor of the book is Francisco Rojas Aravena, affiliated with the University for Peace in San Jose, Costa Rica, an intergovernmental organisation with a university status established in 1980 under a treaty at the United Nations General Assembly. The book features several articles by faculty members of the University for Peace, which is known for its work in the field of education of leaders for peace and conflict transformation, preparation of agents for peacebuilding and international defence. It is mentioned that the faculty members who have contributed to this book are either

resident or visiting and come from different countries, cultures and backgrounds, which further enriches the monograph, adding a variety of cross-regional perspectives. The monograph has been written in English and has been divided into four parts, each of which is made up of a number of articles. The general parts are logical and offer a gradual and consistent elaboration of the main theme, starting from the introduction, a regional outlook, followed by an institutional outlook, to finally look at the common challenges and interventions. The book has 320 pages and touches upon the different aspects and perspectives of peace, as well as the different prospects and outlooks to this issue in the different regions and countries across the world. Despite the fact that it comprises the works of different authors, almost all the paragraphs have a distinct structure and rest on a clear narrative. They have an introduction, a body, a conclusive section, some notes, and references.

Overall, the resources used for this book include academic monographs, studies, journals, encyclopaedias and dictionaries, as well as internet resources, such as like official websites and news extracts. There are no charts, diagrams or tables in it, with the exception of a few pictures retrieved during the workshops described in the last article 'Using Participatory Action Research to Define Cultures of Peace.' In fact, some illustrations of statistical data in several paragraphs would be rather useful for the readers, allowing them to visualise some of the complex information discussed, especially when it comes to statistical comparison and analysis.

The Introduction part is made up of two papers. The opening section has been written by Francisco Rojas Aravena, the Editor and Vice-Chancellor of the University for Peace, an accomplished scholar with a PhD degree in Political Sciences. He is well-known for his academic research and active educational and teaching activities in Latin America. 'Introduction: Hazardous and Erratic Times – Greater and Deeper Conflicts' outlines the theoretical background needed to understand the complexity of the issue at stake, and it offers an alternative perspective onto the issues that are already known. The author admits that the world order is going through serious revisions, and that the liberal world order, established after the end of the Cold War, is in crisis. The global strategic restructuring concerns every region and continent of the globe, as we can see similar trends and tendencies appear there. A case in point can be the crisis of multilateral systems, and, as a result, the rise of nationalist views, also known as "populist visions." In the second paper 'The Complex Concept of Peace in an Uncertain World,' Fernando Blasco offers deeper insights into the concepts of violence and structural violence by Johan Galtung, and the connection between the formation of political elites and power. The interdependency of personal fulfilment of each individual and the way of governance and conflicts resolution is truly fascinating. Mr. Blasco reminds the readers that social structures and political powers are still being formed by people, which explains why it is impossible to solve macro-level issues without approaching the ones that pertain to the micro level.

The second part of the book, which concerns the regional outlook, opens with the article 'Peace, Governance and Security in Africa: Getting It Right.' Africa is deemed one of the most turbulent continents in the world in terms of security, and Samuel Kale Ewusi and Kingsley Lyonga Ngange, the authors, look at the lacking keystones for reducing violence in Africa. They elaborate on sustainable economic

development, the rule of law and good governance, freedom of press, human rights protection – the missing factors that underlie peace and stability in the region. The next article ‘Prospects of Peace and Conflict in the Middle East in the Twenty-First Century’ by Amr Abdalla, Lilya Akay and Zeynya Shikur discusses the contemporary challenges for the MENA region linked with the rise of the youth, the role of Islam in public, politics and society, and several other related issues. They highlight the ongoing dispute between Israel and Palestine, as well as the growing power of Iran and Turkey in the region. The next article, entitled ‘Latin America and the International Court of Justice’ by Juan Carlos Sainz-Borgo, looks at the growing cases of Latin American countries using the ICJ, which highlights the positive trend of democratisation and international law compliance in the region. Finally, ‘Securitising the South China Sea: ASEAN’s Response to Traditional and Non-traditional Maritime Security Conflicts’ by Alma Maria O. Salvador and Daisy C. See look at the specificity of the centre of geopolitical spotlight. The authors point to the notion of maritime security, offering a few prospects on the securitisation of the South China Sea dispute through cooperation in maritime safety, i.e. anti-piracy and anti-terrorism measures.

The third part of the book, which carries the name Institutional Outlook, starts from the article by Mihir Kanade, who holds a Ph.D. in International Law, and is entitled ‘The Role of International Adjudication in Conflict Resolution and Transformation.’ In it, the author challenges the popular opinion on the futility of adversarial system for conflict resolution and discusses the importance of adjudication in the settlement of international disputes. The next article ‘The European Union: A Sound Superpower in a Multipolar World’ by Enrique Barón Crespo and Pelayo Castro Zuzuárregui offers a thorough analysis of the significant role of the EU in international relations. The authors look at the EU as a perfect example of the politics of the future, which all the other players should aspire to. Having still vivid memories of the devastating wars and conflicts that have shaken Europe over the last centuries, European countries seem to understand the importance of multilateralism and joint action. Nowadays, due to the trend of populism inside and outside of the EU, we can see a rift in the international relations between multilateralism and the “me-first old-sovereignty” approach, epitomised by Russia and the US during Donald Trump’s presidency. As the main global contemporary challenges have to be addressed collectively and globally, there is less and less place for the selfish ambitions of individual states. The EU is a unique organisation which possesses economic might, the right of scrutiny of social security and application of soft power, scientific and innovative potential, as well as military and defence capabilities, which make this alliance solid even in the circumstances of somewhat ideological internal crisis.

The third part of the book contains a paper by Zhang Xiaoyu entitled ‘The Belt and Road: Building a Community of Shared Interests Together,’ where this initiative is discussed as a common aspiration of all the countries involved, not only of China. Despite the detailed and careful analysis of the framework, mission, principles and significance, the perspective of the *realpolitik* and China’s political ambitions have been left out. The closing chapter of the part named Institutional Outlook is ‘The African Union in the Present Context’ by Chinedu Thomas Ekwealor, which is a frank and fair review of the alliance of African countries. Resolution of global problems

requires an active participation of African states, but nowadays they are not able to do so given the number of internal issues, including the outrageous problem with violence and conflict resolution.

Common Challenges and Interventions, the final part of the book, thoroughly examines some of the particularly outstanding issues, such as 'Religious Fundamentalism and Violent Extremism' by Zahid Shahab Ahmed and Galib Bashirov; 'Achieving Food Security in the Face of Inequity, Climate Change, and Conflict' by Olivia Sylvester; 'Using Participatory Action Research to Define Cultures of Peace' by Heather Kertyzia. The article 'Terrorist Fighters, Mass Surveillance, and International Law' by Mariateresa Garrido V., featured in this chapter, focuses on the vital dilemma of human rights and mass surveillance for security purposes. Given the fast spread of information technologies, the topic is becoming more and more disputable. It is extremely difficult to define where intelligence agents and surveillance systems should stop intervening, since at any moment, their inaction could result in a terrorist attack, and a wave of mass suffering. While in the Western countries, organisations like Five Eyes still remain undercover, the Chinese government seems to prefer to use the awareness of being watched to control its population. Scholars agree that mass surveillance does not contribute to the fight against terrorism. This said, the world needs to come up with more sophisticated tools geared towards terrorism prevention, not to mention more adequate and up-to-date legislation.

Overall, the book offers an insight into the contemporary state of global affairs in terms of violence, security, and conflict. It is an informative source of knowledge for students of International Relations, and for anyone interested in the field. The topics have been covered from various angles, looking at diverse regions, institutions, cultures, and background, which makes the book a unique resource. However, some of the sections could have at least made an attempt to highlight a more independent and realistic perspective, considering the security issues of post-Soviet states, like Ukraine, or Belarus. Still, the monograph not only fulfils its educational goal, but also offers the readers food for thought, encouraging them to learn more, and to go beyond what has been discussed explicitly. In conclusion, the book truly adds value to the academic resources that are already available on the Polish publishing market.