Analytic Reflections from Conflict Zones

"Adams combines a lifetime of experience in some of the world's most troubled spots with academic rigor and a passion for peace to share this remarkable narrative. From Air Force jet mechanic in Vietnam to UN peacebuilder in Kosovo, and now as a concerned citizen in a divided and troubled USA, he provides informed perspective with astute analysis, and he puts the current complex challenges in context and offers pathways to resolution. I highly recommend it to my peacebuilding colleagues and to anyone who seeks solutions to the conflicts in a troubled world."
—Charles F. "Chic" Dambach
Former President and CEO, Alliance for Peacebuilding; Author of Exhaust the Limits: The Life and Times of a Global Peacebuilder.

"After arriving in Haiti in 1995 to research the UN Mission in Haiti, I was overwhelmed by the enormity of the challenges confronting the mission: predatory elites, a ruthless praetorian guard supplemented by a secretive paramilitary gang, unremitting poverty, and environmental devastation. Where to begin? How will it ever end? The author of this volume has assembled a sophisticated and comprehensive framework for answering these questions derived from his many years of experience as a field officer in Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Uganda, Kosovo, and Afghanistan followed by extensive field research in Bosnia. He deftly weaves together three books into one. The first is a penetrating and often witty description of the origins and evolution of each of the conflicts he has grappled with. The second is a tour de force of the concepts and theoretical constructs that have been developed to describe and explain the intricacies of international intervention into internal conflicts that threaten regional and international security. [...] The third book is the leitmotif that haunts the entire discussion: Having witnessed the consequences of purposeful polarization of societies by conflict entrepreneurs in Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Kosovo, he urgently implores: "...this is a cautionary tale for an increasingly polarized America—a hard-won model of democracy, now at risk.""
—Michael Dziedzic
Adjunct Professor, George Mason University; Co-Editor of The Quest for Viable Peace: International Intervention and Strategies for Conflict Transformation
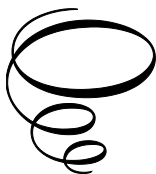
Analytic Reflections from Conflict Zones:

*A Cautionary Tale
for a Polarizing America
and World*

By

James R. Adams

I dedicate this book to the courageous souls in conflicted lands who press on to bring peace and dignity to their people.

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FOREWORD

Much academic writing on the sources of conflict and the search for peaceful solutions derives from the efforts of scholars who become specialists in a country, a region, or a species of conflict which they get to know initially from a distance and visit during annual vacations for fieldwork, returning to their campus to contemplate and write about what they have found.

Jim Adams's "career" has been rather different from this model, and in many ways his journey through life has been unique. Starting young with his participation in the ill-starred and divisive US intervention in Vietnam, he then switched to fieldwork in civil affairs, development, and peacebuilding with USAID, the UN, and other international nongovernment organizations, and undertook practical relief work in some of the worst and most violent situations around the globe. He has met and interacted with refugees and IDPs, warlords, local-government officials, military peacekeepers, traumatized civilians, overworked doctors, and other relief workers striving to make impossible situations a little less lethal. In places such as Somalia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan he witnessed firsthand some of the successes and frequent failures of various forms on international humanitarian intervention whereby the international community – that elusive entity – has tried to mitigate some of the worst effects of violent and intractable human conflicts.

From this forty years of practical experience, Jim Adams has now had the chance to reflect on all the various lessons that need to be learned – and passed on – from the numerous local-level situations of mistrust, hostility, and violence he has witnessed in environments where the aspirations of ethnopolitical groups and the ambitions of their leaders have clashed and led to widespread destruction and death. Enabled by his own experiences to understand some of the successes and shortcomings of actual interventions and relief efforts, he has put together a framework that might help to improve the future practice of humanitarian intervention in a world ever more in need of integrated approaches to durable peacebuilding. At the end of the book, Adams turns his gaze to the problems facing his own country as we enter a post-Covid world characterized by polarization, animosity, and increasing violence. He implicitly asks what lessons from Kosovo, Sudan, Rwanda, or Bosnia might be helpful in San Jose, Sandy Hook, or Boulder.

Analytical Reflections from Conflict Zones must therefore surely be helpful reading for policymakers, administrators, or field workers, whether they practice in the Balkans, Africa, or in communities east or west of the Mississippi.

<div align="right">

Christopher Mitchell,
Center for Peacemaking Practice,
Jimmy & Rosalynn Carter School for Peace & Conflict Resolution,
George Mason University, Virginia.

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PREFACE

I was working for the United Nations in Kosovo as a civil-affairs officer assigned to community-level minority issues and protection when a local citizen asked me why I worked in such places, meaning conflict zones. I replied, "It's a job … and because I don't want my country to have to need someone like me back home." Meaning, among other things, that I worked to address problems overseas so that they would remain overseas; so that my country would not need someone specializing in post-conflict reconstruction and civil-society building back home in the USA.

I have seen the consequences of caustic discourse, political polarization, deep societal division, and the dehumanization of others that, when taken to their logical extreme, slice through families, societies, and nations, leaving destruction and decades of tragedy. Bosnia and Kosovo come to mind. Rwanda and Somalia come to mind.

What I see happening now in America is the early-stage genesis of such a history in the making, if we continue on this course of increasing intolerance, violence, broken discourse, and polarization. The implications for the US – and the rest of the world – are profound. The United States, despite its historic place of democratic moral leadership and innovation, cannot claim exception to this destructive dynamic.

I have seen the destructive consequences suffered by conflict-torn societies that have taken this path before, on which ideological, nationalistic, and ethnic-racial passions are stirred to hatred and violence, and identities and circumstances are weaponized for political ends.

Such a path, if taken unrestrained, leads down the avenging-angel road to its logical extremes – civil strife, civil war, hundreds of thousands killed and maimed, and millions made internally displaced or refugees, plus the inevitable perpetuation of cycles of violence. Rule by mob is not a circumstance you want to find yourself in.

Generally, post-conflict reconstruction and humanitarian-relief operations are intended to help bring about the normalization of life in the aftermath of wars. This book was to be a simple reflection on my experience over the years in that line of work, and an opportunity to share my framework for better understanding and tracking conflict and peacebuilding dynamics. A retirement note-to-file, so to speak, that would give my perspective on

things, and convey some thoughts and opinions from others that I have encountered along the way.

So, silver haired, and having done my bit for humanity, I figured that that would do it. I would write a memoir of sorts, declare victory, and go home.

Home.

My home, America, however, has a problem. Humanity has a problem. This complicates things. More needs to be said. More needs to be done. The porch and rocking chair will have to wait.

This book is still about my time working in some of the world's most intractable conflict zones while making efforts to better understand conflict and peacebuilding. But it is now also a cautionary tale about the consequences of unchecked impulses toward prejudice, intolerance, hatred, authoritarianism and Fascism, extremism, and vengeance. Particularly, this is a cautionary tale for an increasingly polarized America – a hard-won model of democracy, now at risk.

Also, over time, it has become clear to me that my journey as a field officer (generically speaking) in conflict zones cannot be separated from humanity's journey. It is one and the same journey, really. A great stream of collective bits and pieces of experience, emotions, and observations, past and present, that eventually, unavoidably, merge and speak of ancient repetitions by individuals and nations, of acts of kindness and wisdom, and acts of arrogance and foolish destruction.

In this greater stream, it is the dynamics of hatred, polarization, and emerging extremism in present-day America and elsewhere that concern me most – particularly the impulse for self-righteous indignation, a sense of superiority, and its primal holdover vengeance, from which all manner of vile forces emerge, seeking release and justification.

The avenging-angel road can facilitate convenient blame and assuage the stings of perceived slights and wrongs, but it is laid with traps for the arrogant and overly prideful – even the innocent. At the end of that road lays the lonely ruin of individuals and the graveyard of empires. Nazi Germany took it to the bitter end. The global refugee movements and earnest efforts at genocide of the Second World War are evidence of this.

The world cannot afford to lose the hope and role model of democracy, of a free people, that the United States represents historically in the world, even with its numerous flaws. People living under the iron heel of authoritarian and Fascist regimes around the world need the kind of hope and encouragement toward a free society that the United States has promoted in the past, despite some notable lapses in judgment as to support for certain dictatorships and an ill-chosen war or two.

Still, the torch of freedom needs American leadership. The torch of freedom needs the continued American practice of democracy and active support for basic civil and human rights as envisioned by our founding fathers in our Constitution and Bill of Rights, despite the flaws of their own characters and time.

The struggle of American democracy for respect for the basic human dignity and support for the basic civil and human rights of all needs to be demonstrated. This effort that we have inherited from our forefathers and foremothers down to this day, despite their flaws and oversights, and despite our own very human flaws and clashes, must continue. It needs to be seen – for humanity's sake, and for America's sake.

I have argued in my conceptual work that a broader perspective in the discourse on conflict and peacebuilding is needed globally. I am compelled here to say that a broader perspective is needed now – in the US.

I believe that a shared basic awareness of key conflict and peacebuilding fundamentals is needed among citizens and leadership (civilian and military). I expect that a shared awareness (beyond conventional mediation and expedient political settlements) will result in fewer misunderstandings and less frustration during normalization or reconciliation efforts, and reconstruction, if needed. Or at least that a shared informed awareness will encourage more functional working relationships by virtue of there being fewer uninformed people groping around in the dark, scaring each other. Better awareness of citizens about conflict and peacebuilding fundamentals also offers some immunity to divisive, bombastic rhetoric, and agendas.

For these reasons, I write this book and lean toward a wider readership and a less technical presentation, and one that is more personal, conversational.

This book is about a field officer's journey and perspective, and it is a cautionary tale for an America at a crossroads in its own journey. But, in the end, it is about humanity's journey and search for balance – in freedoms, in dignity, in civility, in fairness.

I am writing about understanding conflict, war, and peace differently.

I am writing about changing our national discourse for the better.

I am writing about seeing ourselves differently, as humans.

Ultimately, I am writing about survival, evidence for hope, and what possible futures we are choosing for our children.

I hope that sharing my journey will be helpful to you in yours. In fact, I invite you to join me on my journey (our journey) to sort things out as to what is going on – to contribute toward a more helpful way of looking at conflict, and a more constructive way of communicating with each other in our personal, national, and global discourse.

They say "be the change you want to see." Speaking for myself, I have to say that I'm no more inclined now, in the name of world peace, to be more sociable than I ever have been. But the world is heading toward a bad place of late, so I write this book, and try to be more sociable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CAR	Conflict Analysis and Resolution
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIVPOL	United Nations Civilian Police Operation
CMF	Comprehensive Multilevel Framework
CSO	United States Department of State Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations.
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration
EU	European Union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
HQ	Headquarters
IC	International Community
ICFY	International Conference for the Former Yugoslavia
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICR	Interactive Conflict Resolution
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IFOR	NATO Implementation Force
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organizations
IO	International Organizations
IPTF	International Police Task Force
KFOR	NATO Kosovo Force
LNGO	Local NGO
MPICE	Measuring Progress in Conflict Environments
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental Organizations
OHR	European Union Office of the High Representative for BiH

OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RS	Republika Srpska
S/CRS	United States Department of State Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization
SFOR	NATO Stabilization Force
UN	United Nations
UNCRO	UN Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (formerly United Nations International Children's Fund)
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Kosovo
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia
UNPA	United Nations Protected Area ("Safe Area")
UNPREDEP	UN Preventative Deployment Force in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	United Nations World Food Program

PART ONE:

THE HUMAN PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

With bullets bouncing off the house and rocket-propelled grenades going off around town, I asked myself: "How the hell is anybody supposed to meditate around here with all this racket going on?"

Shortly thereafter, in exasperation I uttered, "How the hell is anybody supposed to read around here with all this racket going on?"

After an unsolicited moment of reflection, it occurred to me that maybe such questions were a little selfish; that maybe there's another way to do peacekeeping. Such were my contemplations while sitting in the United Nations Humanitarian Division compound in Mogadishu, Somalia on Christmas Day of 1994.

After further annoying moments of reflection, I determined to take a course of action to become better informed about conflict and peacebuilding, and so I sought out those who had been thinking about such things. The idea had occurred to me before, but it was now time to act. Thereafter, in between work in conflict zones, I acquired Masters and PhD degrees in conflict analysis and resolution at George Mason University, specializing in the analysis of stabilization and peacebuilding operation environments. I carried out my doctoral field research in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

But, probably, I should backup here and say a little more about myself and my qualifications to have such thoughts. Beyond my time in the US Air Force in Vietnam as an aircraft mechanic, I have served overseas in conflict zones in a civilian capacity as a humanitarian-aid worker, operations officer, and civil-affairs officer for non-profit organizations, the International Organization for Migration, and the United Nations in East and Central Africa (Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Uganda) and Kosovo. Generically speaking, I was a field officer.

Much of the time, I liaised with or advised embassy staff and civil-military operations units on the return and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons, minority-population issues and protection, and civil-society building/rebuilding at the municipal level. I was embedded with the US Army in Afghanistan as a crisis, stabilization, and governance officer for the US Agency for International Development.

Now, before marching off into the book, I want to introduce a few quick crucial points.

Despite political polarization being new, and fresh, and alarming to many Americans, it is nothing new in the world. It is a well-known stress. It is a repetitive historical and global phenomenon as constant as the rise and fall of empires and nations.

All is not lost, though. At the same time, I have also seen the resilience of people and nations that have come back from the gravest circumstances to find a kind of normalcy again. It takes dedication, the help of friends, and patience. It requires a change in the caustic tone of discourse between those of differing opinions. Wise leadership is helpful.

Also, there is widespread confusion about national, ethnic, and racial identity, which greatly exacerbates civil unrest and accommodates easy political manipulation. Fundamentally, race is the color of skin and physical traits; ethnicity is cultural tradition; and nationality is country of origin or naturalization. Race, ethnicity, and nationality are often aligned in the popular imagination, but it is less and less the case in reality.

There are many kinds of culture: ethnic culture, race culture, national culture, work culture, military culture, arts, music, criminal, political, academic, sports, religious, city, rural, Western, Eastern, realists, idealists, love cultures, and hate cultures, etc., etc. And there is a lot of mixing and matching of cultures. There is clashing of cultures. It can all get quite mixed up.

As I mentioned in the Preface, a broader perspective is needed – on war, when things have already gotten out of hand, and on peace, which is often misunderstood and mislabeled. There are different levels of conflict and different kinds of peace. I will make some distinctions.

After my human-perspective contemplations offered humbly and mercilessly in Parts One and Two, I lay out my conceptual framework and models in Part Three. My intent is to help fractured societies better see the elements and dynamics of their conflict and their peacebuilding efforts, thereby being better able to move on from destructive discourse and political polarization toward a functional working relationship with respective "enemies," and the eventual normalization of relationships and conditions.

During the years that I was focused on political and social dynamics in conflict zones overseas, I spent little time tracking current affairs back in the US. I voted by absentee ballot for general elections, listened to BBC news radio, and watched TV news broadcasts when satellite services and electricity were available. If we could get football and Oprah via satellite, that was a plus. I read old copies of the *International Herald Tribune* and *The Economist*.

Although I was in the US from time to time, I was focused internationally and on my studies. So, when I did eventually return from fulltime work overseas around 2012, I was struck by the dramatic increase of hostile and often belligerent voices shouting and lashing out in town halls, and on American TV, radio, streets, and social media.

A vein of coarse language, belligerent partisanship, strident nationalism, and barely concealed ethno-racism that had long been around but subdued had burst open into the mainstream discourse, seemingly nearing a point of normalization. It is not the just words but often a harsh, threatening tone that has found a new level of acceptability and channels of release.

Around 2015 I found that I had successfully aged beyond those years appealing to employers in my usual trade, and that I did not have the teaching experience to compete for an academic position paying more than minimum wage. I needed some cash, and a change of pace to clear my head.

Driving a semi on the open road perched high in the cab of an 18 wheeler and seeing America up close for a while seemed the thing to do. So, I went to truck-driving school, got a commercial driver's license, and hit the road in a semi-truck. Now, I did learn soon enough that operating a semi "over-the-road" is a tough way to make a living with the absurd number of hours involved, demanding requirements, every sort of foul weather and traffic condition, extreme deadlines, and, often as not, low pay in the post-union era.

However, traveling the highways and byways and truck stops of the country did, as it turns out, afford me a unique opportunity to listen in on conversations and get a feel for the national discourse, if not the heartbeat, of working America. Politics, the economy, immigration, and elections were favored topics for lamentations when trucking, law enforcement, and football were not enough.

When not otherwise distracted by responsible driving and navigation, I listened to the radio and the steady stream of commentary above rumbling motor and changing gears as counties and states passed underneath my wheels, of which at least one was at any given time plotting a slow loss of air for overnight-flat inconvenience or an immediate gunshot burst of tire-blowout drama.

Although the scenery constantly changed and local-radio stations offered varying shades of dialect and political or religious persuasion as I drove on, the tone of opinions shared on the airwaves seemed to get increasingly passionate, abrasive, and intolerant.

There was a diversity of opinion offered. Some of the sentiments that I heard have the true ring of authenticity matching that which eventually led to the kind of societal disintegration and destruction that I have seen

elsewhere. It's difficult to identify exactly the moment that it fully hit me that some of the rhetoric that I was hearing – that I am still hearing – here in the US is actually dangerous. But I am increasingly reminded of the divisive rhetoric utilized by some leaders in countries which eventually fell into open violence, war, ethnic cleansing, and sometimes earnest efforts at genocide – and the eventual need for someone like me. Bosnia and Kosovo again come to mind.

Examples of relevant sentiments expressed in earlier conflicted eras and places are most notably in association with the Fascist movements in the years leading up to and during the Second World War that led to massive loss of life, destruction, and displacement. Similarly, divisive ethnopolitical sentiments expressed during the breakup of the Yugoslav republics in the 1990s echo the hate and blame rhetoric used by Benito Mussolini.

Mussolini, an admired authoritarian and Fascist, pioneered modern Fascism in Italy in the years prior to the Second World War – practices that were later adopted by one of his most ardent admirers, Adolf Hitler. Sometimes, when I saw and heard President Trump, I saw and heard Mussolini and former President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia.

In other words, a style of leadership promoting blame, character assassination, exclusion, division, and coarser instincts, particularly toward immigrants, minority groups, intellectuals, activists, and a free press. Such a practice does not lead to a good end. Democracy is based on trust that truth is being held forth. There are differences in perceptions of truth, of course, but the deliberate purveyance of falsehoods for personal or political gain is reckless and dangerous at any level.

It has become clear to me that the elements and dynamics of conflict are similar whether at the individual, societal, or global level, given that human fundamentals are involved at all levels – emotions, perceptions, needs. Likewise, the elements and dynamics of peace are similar at different levels. The distinction is mostly a matter of scale and the use of force (negative peace), or positive peace, which is essentially constructive conflict, reconstruction, and dialogue-relationship improvement – the idea being to get at the underlying causes and conditions of a conflict, enabling citizens to coexist peacefully and meet their respective needs and potential.

After a time, it occurred to me that even road rage (the tiny wars) and courteous driving are examples of the passions of war and peace, albeit on a non-lethal (usually) personalized scale. Eventually, I began to see that I am a participant in the conflicts that I have witnessed, and part of the solution, if I choose, regardless of scale.

This book is also about that revelation and the ongoing process of understanding. It is a work in progress, as it seems we all are.

Conflict is pervasive. Like oxygen to the brain, it is necessary for clarifying things. Like fire, it can be used in constructive or destructive ways. Conflict is a fact of life. It is omnipresent nature – human, animal, and environmental. We need to aim for constructive conflict.

As I say, what is needed now is a broader perspective by which to assess and discuss circumstances from a more informed standpoint, a more civil standpoint, and to find a viable balance within constructive conflict. Not total apathy, and not total war, which at either extreme indicate abandoned hope.

War is the road rage of humanity. It is about parts of humanity enduring injury and, in turn, striding the avenging-angel road – a road to hell if taken to its logical extreme, and one paved with stones of arrogance and injury. It is also about magnificent moments of the human spirit and strong evidence for hope.

This book is about serving "in the field" (overseas, abroad, away from home). "Field officer" is a generic term for someone who carries out foreign-affairs tasks on behalf of an organization or government outside of headquarters or home country. Diplomats and specialized embassy or civilian staff work "in the field"; military officers and troops work in theaters of operation. This can be one and the same place and task depending on security levels and conflict circumstances.

Fieldwork covers a wide range of tasks in various sectors – governance, security, rule of law, the economy, and social welfare – requiring a wide range of skills, for example: political and civil affairs, security, finance, business, medicine, engineering, education, agriculture, logistics, and more.

Sometimes, embassy or government agency staff carry out the tasks; sometimes they oversee and contract out the work to international or local aid organizations such as Save the Children or the Oxfam, or commercial contractors. Some organizations prefer to remain independent of government or military affiliation or funding.

The work can take place anywhere along a continuum from emergency and disaster relief to post-conflict reconstruction and long-term development. The demobilization of former combatants and return and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons are included.

In complete failed-state circumstances, in which there is no national or local government to interact with, or there is a collection of warring or competing self-declared authorities and militias, intervention interactions can be venturesome and dubious. Legitimate representation becomes an interesting question.

Field staff serve in wide-ranging conflict circumstances: war, ethnic cleansing, natural disasters, and refugee crises. Add to this imperial-colonial

enterprises, territorial acquisitions and partitioning, an assortment of nation-building or nation reassignment projects, and human-security issues (a newer term for an ancient problem). Further, add provision for basic human needs: food, water, shelter, protection, dignity, jobs, healthcare, education, and so on.

Now one can begin to understand a different kind of journey, a different kind of perspective – that of the field officer or field staff. Over time, a broader perspective is gained on the realities of conflict and the human condition.

Deep societal fracturing and political polarization – military troops and civilian field staff have seen these stresses before. Things get out of hand somewhere, sometimes with a strong push from an emerging leader with authoritarian-Fascist impulses and associated disinformation campaigns. Sometimes, fracturing comes from multinational corporation mischief, sometimes from misguided geopolitical ambitions by rival nations, and, easily enough, the result is tragic – ethnic cleansing or worse.

The people of Bosnia and Kosovo know of this. The people of Somalia know of this. The people of Pakistan, India, Russia, China, Europe, Afghanistan, Rwanda, Latin America, and the Middle East know of this. Those who have real knowledge of the American Civil War and its aftermath have an understanding of its consequences. Nearly all native populations know of this.

I think it is time for some conflict-consequences insight and reality checking in the United States. The lessons to be learned are not new.

In the end, the journey of a humanitarian-aid worker, or soldier, or refugee, or migrant is humanity's journey – the constant flow of adjusting populations, forced or voluntary, internal or external. Perhaps population movement is humanity's most enduring trait.

There is a historical perspective involved here, and a human perspective, a meeting of realism and idealism – what I refer to as "human realism." It is a useful meeting place, I think, for engaging a common-ground discussion about changing things for the better in stressed times.

I have played a small part in this ongoing story of the ages – that is to say, international post-conflict intervention. But it is a revealing part. The story began long ago and courses through the history and lives of nations, families, and individuals. Naturally, it contains descriptions of virtues and vice. Humanity's journey is about desperate acts of cruelty and kindness, ambition, power, commerce, crime, and corruption; it is about hopes and dreams, nightmares, honest theft, greed, callousness, and the jostling of earnest convictions. This story is about the search for freedom, adventure, home, and security.

This rush of elements is ever present and relentless amid the gaming of empires and the forces of nature. Sometimes, it is not a happy result for human beings. But sometimes it is. It has always been this way. Often, it has been for the benefit of one at the expense of another.

There are broader implications to consider. Now that we, humanity, have attained technical global interconnectedness, we are experiencing periodic civilizational crises together, globally, in real time. Weapons of mass destruction are everyone's problem now; and there is no putting that genie back in the bottle without international collaboration – that requires leaders talking to each other.

There is no taming civilizational crises, or international terrorism, or riotous nature by going it alone. This can only be done through a basic display of respect at a human level, and collective effort.

This book aims to contribute toward that effort; toward a judicious balance of negative and positive-peace initiatives (I will explain), which is only possible through the development of common understandings. I believe that the insights and frameworks that I have acquired from others, and those of my own that I have developed and field tested, contribute to clarity.

Sometimes, the journey is humanity's search for redemption and happiness. Sometimes it is a reach for revenge. But it is always a search for balance.

Peace guaranteed by the hammer alone (negative peace), or by mutually assured destruction, or by futile isolation, is no longer a viable bet, domestically or internationally.

I hope, in my approach, that the mixing of down-to-earth commentary and scholarly explanation is sufficient to interest all concerned – and to alert all concerned about complexities and challenges that we all have in common, including dealing with rising societal divisions and polarized political discourse here in the USA and elsewhere.

Finally, along with an analysis of discord, this book conveys words of hope and encouragement from citizens in conflict zones; words that somehow, eventually, manifest in the human calculus on the kinder side of life, often as not by one individual at a time.

How do I explain my arrival at this point of view? How do I explain constructive conflict and finding common perspective in an era of polarization and broken discourse? It has not been a straightforward path – and so I explain it this way.

THE STRAIGHT PATH AND DITCHES

In the course of this book I will careen between the straight path of scholarly explanation and the miserable but comforting ditches of failure and redemption intended to capture those who stray – those who fall short in unemotional response to insult or threat.

I will do this while commenting on the dubious nature of humanity, international interventions, and myself by way of example.

I find the sampling of myself – the individual I'm most familiar with – useful for relating the one to the many in a larger tide of human experience, of which conflict and intervention, and expressions of realism and idealism, have, apparently, always been constants. This self-sampling enables me to stay grounded, and at the same time declare myself an author of some self-importance, should I have need of any.

First, I should clarify that, like most human beings, I am one thing, and then I am another – like the peaceful motorist who, in a split second, is rendered a raging cursing idiot by a vehicular affront to his or her sensitivities. Or, perhaps, like every other basic human unit, I am stamped with certain portions of virtue and vice.

What is important to remember is that I am both and that I need to focus on what I want my world to be. Whether in peace or war, or tranquil motoring and then the instinctive display of self-righteous indignation on the highway, each of me has anecdotes to make the case for respective opposing convictions. I argue with myself, state my cases, and draw a picture of worlds that are and worlds to be.

To rest, I must focus and choose one. If I do not, I will condemn myself to eternal drifting between impulses to war, tepid acceptance of boot-enforced negative peace, or doing nothing and settling for witless chaos with an occasional taunting glimpse of genuine peace in passing – a positive peace, as it is said.

This is not a textbook, and yet it is. It includes historical elements, citations, models, graphics, conflict and peacebuilding theory, analysis, recommendations, and a bibliography. At the same time, my intent is to convey the personal on-the-ground reality of conflict and intervention. The challenge of this book is to get a coherent blend of conceptual description and human-level expression. In other words, a mix of realities, which, after all, is the human condition.

This is not an autobiography, and yet it is to the extent that I describe my own immersion into conflict environments and evolving perspective on humanitarian, military, and political intervention. I convey scholarly and practical insights, stories, wisdom, and warnings of my own, and those of others in conflict zones who want to be heard. I reflect on other circumstances before and since that have relevance to a broader understanding of conflict and peacebuilding, applied to either international interventions or domestic troubles here at home.

All events, names, people, places, general timing, and attributed statements are real (some paraphrased, some exact in quotes). If protection discretion is called for, or I do not have permission to share names (for example, my field research interviewees), then I omit personal identification details. Or it might be that I simply do not recall a name or exact date from years gone by, in which case I just provide information as needed to make a point.

Also, I figure that if I am to legitimately comment on conflict, intervention, peacebuilding, and the human condition from a personal-experience perspective, including mention of other's failed projects, then I better declare myself human now and owner of mistakes of my own, lest someone point them out before I do, and undue excitement is generated in the Age of Twitter.

So, I do hereby confess retroactively and preemptively to all manner of fault, ill-word, judgmental glare, and misjudgment, so that from here on I can offer, with sufficient righteousness, tips on how humanity might proceed more constructively.

I'll expand on Johan Galtung's (1969) concepts of negative peace and positive peace, along with an explanation of how I operationalized the concepts for use in assessing the status of peace and stabilization environments. But, for the moment, I offer these following points about negative and positive peace.

Essentially (in my adapted version), negative peace is the result of the coerced suppression of hostilities and violence by political settlement and/or armed action or presence that establishes and maintains a "stable" political/security situation.

In other words, it is the use of force, or threat of force, to stop a war or keep a lid on violence and major civil disorder until other arrangements can be made. Positive peace is the successful establishment of ongoing mechanisms and relationships among conflict parties to address contentious issues and get at the underlying root causes and conditions of a conflict, while enabling the pursuit of individual and group potential and dignity (institutionally and relationship-wise).