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Special Issue:  
COVID19 and Redefining Human Security

*Edited by Nergis Canefe*

# Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security



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CENTRE FOR STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS - CESRAN



# Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security

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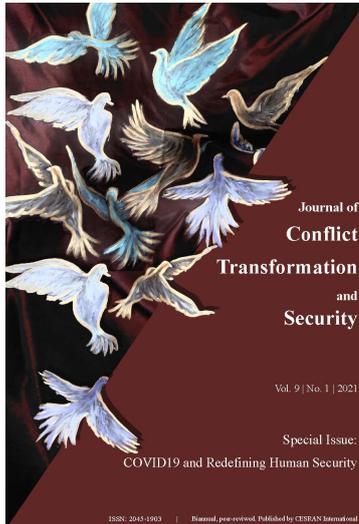
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## INDEXING & ABSTRACTING



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The Journal of Conflict Transformation and Security (JCTS) provides a platform to analyse conflict transformation and security as processes for managing change in non-violent ways to produce equitable outcomes for all parties that are sustainable. A wide range of human security concerns can be tackled by both hard and soft measures, therefore the Journal's scope not only covers such security sector reform issues as restructuring security apparatus, reintegration of ex-combatants, clearance of explosive remnants of war and cross-border management, but also the protection of human rights, justice, rule of law and governance. JCTS explores the view that by addressing conflict transformation and security holistically it is possible to achieve a high level of stability and human security, requiring interventions at both policy and practitioner level. These would include conflict management, negotiated peace agreements, peacekeeping, physical reconstruction, economic recovery, psycho-social support, rebuilding of primary services such as education and health, and enabling social cohesion. Other macro-level governance issues from constitution writing to state accountability and human resource management also need to be considered as part of this process of change.

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**CESRAN International** is a think-tank specialising on international relations in general, and global peace, conflict and development related issues and challenges.

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# **Editor's Introduction to the Special Issue on COVID 19 and Redefining Human Security**

Nergis Canefe - Co-editor

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a vast array of social, economic and legal implications, necessitating us to critically revisit the notion of human security. In addition to political and civil rights such as liberty and privacy being curtailed in relation to public health measures, social, economic and legal responses to the pandemic continue to have a far greater impact upon populations who are marginalized, who are on the move, as well as displaced communities and refugees, in radically unequal ways. The dimensions of specific populations' subjectification to unequal measures are related to their nationality, legal status, race, gender, disability, vulnerability and social class. In particular, interventions and resort to extreme measures cause further hardship in the plight of temporary and migrant workers, asylum seekers, internally displaced peoples under COVID-19 governance regimes.

In order to deepen the public understanding of the socio-political and economic dimensions of the current crisis related to the COVID 19 Pandemic in a global context, this special issue of JCTS addresses:

- Global differences in public access to healthcare;
- The situation in conflict zones, refugee camps, border areas, marginalized communities concerning the differential effects of the Pandemic;
- Exclusion of vulnerable communities, non-status peoples, minorities and precarious labour from the networks of protection put in place in relation to the Pandemic;
- Comparative analyses of social justice issues associated with COVID 19;
- Global forms of precarity that this Pandemic makes more visible;
- Regional and national effects of health care cuts or insufficient access to publicly funded medicine;
- Long-term implications of the Pandemic on our perception of human security.

The special issue includes three full articles, a commentary, and a lengthy interview. The proliferation of narratives on COVID 19 measures makes it much harder to make sense of the prevailing cacophony and to engage in critical reflections to such an unstable landscape of policy, politics and law, as pointed out by our authors. As an alternative to this chaotic and panic-ridden environment, the authors contributing to our special issue discuss how they see COVID affecting specific communities in relation to the larger society as well as developments in their area/region of research in relation to the global context. The contributions as a whole also identify potential transformative outcomes arising from the Pandemic, and share with us the ongoing work required to build those outcomes. As such, we invite our readers to think above and beyond the politics of exigency that continues to silence critical debate on uses and abuses of power in the name of redefining human security under pandemic conditions as part of the global response to COVID 19.

# Global Go to Think Tank Index Report 2020

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# BOOK REVIEW

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Ibrahim Fraihat

## **Iran and Saudi Arabia: Taming a Chaotic conflict**

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020) ISBN 978 14744 6619 6, 240 pp.

Given the nature of the conflict in the Middle East and contemporary events, this book is a timely and relevant analysis which informs and elucidates the problems of not only the drivers of conflict but also how conflict resolution might emerge in the landscape here. As the title suggests it is a chaotic conflict which extends beyond the boundaries of these nation states and strikes deep into the heart of Islamic practice and theology.

In the last decade since the beginning of the Arab Spring in 2011 there are clear signs that the conflict has escalated and particularly due to a proxy war being fought between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Yemen. In 2015 Abdrubbah Manosur Hadi, who had replaced the previous ruler of Yemen was forced to leave Yemen and now after 5 years of military stalemate in which Iran has supported the mainly Shia Houthi rebels and Saudi Arabi and its mainly Sunni Gulf allies have waged an intensive bombing campaign, there is a highly visible humanitarian disaster. By conservative estimates, at least 100, 000 people have died, 3.65 million have been displaced and the country appears in ruins. To describe the conflict as chaotic might be an understatement here. There is little end in sight and that is why such a book as Dr. Fraihat has written is a timely and important exercise in seeing how we can resolve the conflict.

The conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran has been a long standing rivalry between two states that have represented to some extent the schism in the Middle Eastern Islamic world, a schism between Sunni and Shia denominations

of Islam that has often proved intractable and irreconcilable.

The book is structured into four main components. A history of Iran-Saudi rivalry and efforts to make peace; secondly looking at issues involved in the conflict. Thirdly there is an emphasis on how to manage the conflict and lastly what tools can we use and how can we try and resolve the conflict.

The process for the research was deeply rooted in interviews involving over sixty scholars and practitioners (people involved in policy making and experts) which provides for a state of the art review of how Saudi-Iran relations have been shaped since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. This was of course an event that shaped the political, social and economic landscape of the Middle East and had ramifications well beyond the geographical region, problems that have not ended and show little sign of resolution in the near or long future of the region.

One of the many things I liked about the book, and a point the author makes succinctly, is that there are many good theoretical and content analyses of the conflict between the Saudi state and Iran, but few if any that go beyond to assess practical conflict resolution techniques and strategies. It goes deeper into the conflict resolution scenarios and ideas to prescribe how we can learn lessons from past efforts and move forward with integrated resolution and peacebuilding strategies.

Particularly interesting is Farhairs description of confidence building measures (CBM's) which

are actions involving attempts at building confidence without necessarily looking at the root causes of the conflict, a way of developing trust between the parties, thus making it easier in some ways to resolve conflicts. Trust of course is a huge difficulty between these two antagonists so these measures will prove important. Mutual assurances that regional hegemony is not on the cards from either party would be a great step forward but perhaps unrealistic in the present time. The idea as Farhah puts it is that CBM's are not an end in themselves but steps within the resolution process (pps. 100-106).

Dr. Fraihat is optimistic though that conflict can be resolved that tensions can be reduced and in the case of Saudi/Iran relations may not be as intractable as we assume. A strategic intervention he suggests could lay the groundwork for rapprochement and easing the conflict. The strategy for this is that peacebuilding can be effective if the countries involved adapt a three-prong strategy, which focuses on different levels: Government, track two diplomacy and grassroots efforts to procure peace and resolve the conflict

One of the things I like about the book is that its extremely clear and articulate in its goals and purpose. This book flows seamlessly from one argument/account to another. And to some extent it really is about taming what seems like a chaotic conflict by introducing conflict resolution terms and working in negotiations. If this book brings the two states closer to achieving this, then it will have been worth the effort. Peacebuilders and conflict resolution experts as well as the people of the region can learn much from the strategies that Dr. Farhah suggests.

Few conflicts in the Middle East have such potential for undermining the social and political stability found in the region than the Saudi-Iran conflict and the schisms found within Islam. This book has laid out the geopolitics of the conflict but also managed and successful to lay out a practical strategy for these states to overcome their differences. Such an ambitious goal is not only worthy but necessary if we are to see a long and enduring peace in the Middle East.

**Professor Kenneth Christie**

*Program Head for the Human Security and  
Peacebuilding Program at Royal Roads  
University.*

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