

Foreword

In *Conflicts and Wars: Why and How to End Them*, Hossein Askari provides fresh insight and a novel approach to reducing intrastate and interstate conflicts and wars. War and its consequences have been mankind's greatest failure since the dawn of time. His analysis and proposal will be invaluable to the peacemakers, who have all too often been overwhelmed by the forces on the other side.

Professor Askari begins by surveying the burden of military expenditures and of conflicts and wars. Their dollar expenditures, which are close to 15 percent of global GNP, exceed the cost of our financial crisis and of global warming and what would be required for worldwide poverty reduction. He examines the nature of modern conflicts and wars, which are increasingly intrastate and regional and overwhelmingly the offspring of earlier disputes. He looks into the recent conflicts in the Persian Gulf—the Iran-Iraq War and the two Gulf Wars—to extract how modern-day conflicts are bred in a region that has been a major importer of arms. He assesses the methodologies for measuring the fallout of conflicts and calculates their cost in the Persian Gulf. This sets the stage for Professor Askari to provide his roadmap for the prevention of conflicts. He bases his approach on three interrelated propositions: aggressors do not pay the full price of their aggression; governments will do nothing to change this state of affairs on their own; and, as a result, the process of reducing conflicts must originate in the private sector.

Ronald Reagan suggested: *“History teaches that war begins when governments believe the price of aggression is cheap.”* In other words, there is market failure in conflicts and wars—aggressors do not pay for the fallout of their aggression and may at times they even profit from it. To prevent conflicts and wars the market must force all aggressors to pay a price that approaches, or exceeds, the full cost of their misdeeds. But governments will not reconstitute a market where aggressors are forced to pay for their aggressions. The most powerful governments, whose cooperation is essential, are under the illusion that they benefit from selling arms and from using their power to shape the world. They espouse peace, but in reality use aggression to gain advantage over their adversaries. In the words of Thomas Jefferson, *“Governments constantly choose between telling lies and fighting wars, with the end result always being the same. One will always lead to the other.”* Professor Askari argues that the structure of the United Nations—and, specifically, the composition of the Security Council—prevents it from achieving peace. Thus prevention of conflicts must originate in the private sector with a coordinated approach of NGOs. Although NGOs have their own limitations, once they achieve some measure of success in raising the cost of aggression, weaker governments will join their effort and, in time, the powerful will be forced to embrace the idea of a world without conflicts as the best road forward for humankind.

Professor Askari proposes a framework to make the price of aggression its full cost—so that pain is borne by all the aggressors: be they leaders, their supporters, countries or companies. He acknowledges that for his proposal to succeed, a number of initiatives must be adopted simultaneously—including forced mediation, mandatory reparations, restricted arms exports, uniform prosecution of all aggressors at the International

Criminal Court, and extensive global exposure of all aggression. Hossein Askari is passionate about putting an end to conflicts. But he is also keenly aware of the landmines along the way. His proposal will require the support and resources of a significant foundation. Even then, it will take time and initial success to persuade weaker countries to embrace this framework as the best approach to bringing peace to their region of the world.

This provocative book is concise, focused, and well timed. The world is in need of resources and cannot afford the cost of continued military expenditures, much less the cost of prolonged regional conflicts. The message of *Conflicts and Wars: Their Fallout and Prevention* is clear: conflicts and wars are more costly than we imagine. We must find a path to reduce, and prevent them. The ways of the past have not succeeded. In 2012, the inability of the United Nations Security Council to put an end to intrastate bloodshed is all too evident, as is the record level of arms exports to favored dictators around the world. We need a new approach to prevent conflicts. Professor Askari provides us with a new and imaginative roadmap.

This book is essential reading for everyone who labors in the pursuit of peace. That especially includes policymakers and politicians who espouse peace while supplying and supporting aggressors around the globe.

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