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Introduction to the Special Edition

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Introduction to the Special Edition

Akanmu G. Adebayo

In the opening paragraphs of their book *Getting to Yes*, Roger Fisher and William Ury (1981) state that “Negotiation is a fact of life. . . Everyone negotiates something every day.” This statement is as valid today as it was when expressed a little over thirty year ago. Negotiations are taking place at all levels: at the domestic settings, in public affairs and corporate settings, and at national and international arenas. Put differently, negotiation is occurring at interpersonal, intergroup, intercultural, and international milieu. Our everyday conversation is a form of negotiation. Every dispute brings up the question whether to fight, talk, or walk away. How do minor disputes and major wars end? How is a peace treaty negotiated? How are major decisions taken within the family and among nations?

These and similar questions prompted the conflict management and peace studies faculty at Kennesaw State University (KSU) to select “negotiation” as the theme of the 4th annual international conference held on April 10-12, 2014 with the theme “Negotiation: Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management in a Changing World.” The papers in this special edition were selected from among over forty papers presented at that conference.

There is no doubt that the field variously referred to as conflict management, conflict resolution, or conflict transformation has been advanced since the publication of *Getting to Yes*. In the 1990s, for example, scores of studies were published that changed many assumptions about negotiation. Works like *Getting Past No* (1991), *Negotiating Rationally* (1993), and *Bargaining for Advantage* (1999) have popularized such important terms as win-win, win-lose, BATNA, ZOPA, etc. Published about a decade ago, while defining negotiation as “the means by which people deal with their differences,” the book *Negotiation*, which is part of the “Harvard Business Essentials” series, further asserts that “to negotiate is to seek mutual agreement through dialogue” (xi). In other words, the theory and practice of negotiation have seen changes. In general, negotiation is a preferred mode of handling international disputes, although war hawks may disagree. Even after a war, you still have to get the combatants to the proverbial table for peace talks. International policy has seen some of the most intractable talks in the past decades, from climate change negotiations to nuclear weapons talks. The frequency of appeals to negotiation has also increased in part because of the astronomical cost of war—in human and monetary terms. Thus, there has been a preference for plea bargaining, itself a form of negotiation, to all-out litigation; a preference for “national conference” within multi-ethnic nations as an alternative to all-out civil war; and an increasing interest in the concept of negotiating with terrorists, pirates, kidnappers, and hostage takers.

The papers published here address the theme of negotiation theoretically and in practice. Extensive case studies from Nigeria and Cameroon address negotiation within the context of history and contemporary politics. Individually, the papers explore the state of research in negotiation, question the premise of “principled negotiation,” and propose a multifaceted approach to understanding complex negotiations. The focus on West Africa

was serendipitous. There were more papers proposed at the conference on the Boko Haram insurgency than any other issue. Incidentally, only a few days after the conference, on the night of April 14-15 to be precise, that terrorist organization (Boko Haram) kidnapped over 200 girls from their boarding school in Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria. They have not been heard from since. Efforts to negotiate their release, even with the third party intervention of the Chadian president, have so far failed. Other issues that received attention at the conference included the persistence of ethnic and religious conflicts, regional sectarian discontents in Nigeria and Cameroon, the amnesty program given to Niger Delta militants, the role of women in peace and conflict, and the feasibility of a preference for dialogue rather than violence in addressing religious cleavages. The nine articles in this special edition represent several of the good papers presented at the conference on these various sub-themes.

All of us at the Center for Conflict Management (CCM) acknowledge the contribution of many people to the conference and to the publication of this special edition. First and foremost, our appreciation goes to the presenters, workshop facilitators, session chairs, and other participants for their roles which made the conference a huge success. Special thanks go to the keynote speakers, Ambassador Chudi Okafor and Dr. Mitch Hammer, for setting the tone with their thought-provoking addresses. We thank our undergraduate and graduate students for their graciousness as volunteers and hosts. Also, we thank our administrators, especially Dr. Robin Dorff, Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS), and Dr. Charlie Amlaner, Vice President for Research and Dean of the Graduate College, for their support. Members of the conference planning committee rose up to the occasion; they deserve special appreciation. They were Christina Edwards, Sherrill Hayes, Timothy Hedeem, Bryan Hutcheson, Melvin (Wim) Laven, Brandon D. Lundy, Natalia Meneses, Catherine Odera, Heather Pincock, Thomas Pynn, and Amanda Woomer. Finally, we thank our team of staff, graduate research assistants (GRAs), and undergraduate student assistant at the CCM: Rosezetta Bobo, Ellen Lahtinen, Muthoni Richards, Etsegenet “Mimi” Endale, and Chinonye Nwachukwu. Without them, none of these—conference, papers, journal—would have happened.

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