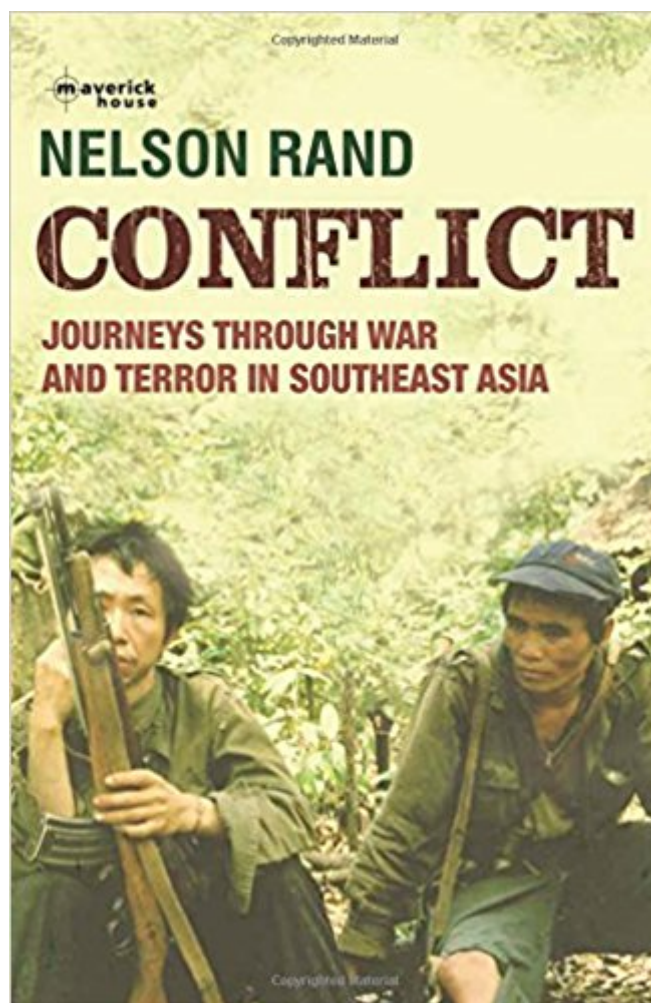


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# Conflict: Journeys Through War And Terror In Southeast Asia



## Synopsis

Nelson Rand is an intrepid adventurer. Despite the warnings and threats against his life, he journeyed into the most dangerous parts of Southeast Asia to witness the plight of the oppressed. He hiked through the jungles of Laos to interview Hmong guerillas, the remnants of the rebel army that refused to surrender to the communist government. In Vietnam, he ventured into the central highlands to document the civil rights abuses suffered by the Montagard people, persecuted by the communist government because they fought alongside American forces in the Vietnam War. He saw action in Burma where he joined forces with the Karen National Liberation Army and accompanied the insurgents as they mounted full scale attacks on Junta forces. Rand describes the Karen's plight as one of the worst humanitarian disasters of our time. He documented cases of rape, killings, torture and the forced relocation of Karen villages. His audacious journey also took him to southern Thailand in search of Islamic extremists, who have turned the region into a war zone. While travelling in Cambodia, he accompanied government soldiers on their final offensive against the Khmer Rouge. Rand's book is a highly informative but sobering portrait of Southeast Asia and its secret conflicts.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Nelson Rand has lived in Southeast Asia for over ten years working as a freelance journalist, which has taken him to some of the most remote and little known conflict areas of the region. A subeditor for The Nation newspaper, and a regular contributor to the Asia Times, he has also worked as a political contractor for the Embassy of Canada in Thailand. He currently resides in Bangkok. His first

book *Conflict: Journeys through war and terror in Southeast Asia* was published by Maverick House in 2009. *Conflict* documents time spent with the Hmong, the Karen, the Montagnards of Vietnam and the Muslim rebels in the south of Thailand. Reviewing the obscure histories behind each of these conflicts and the atrocities behind them, the book also focuses on time spent with the Cambodian government troops tracking down the last of the Khmer Rouge in northern Cambodia. *Conflict: Journeys through war and terror in Southeast Asia* was met with largely positive reviews. On May 14, 2010 Rand was shot in the leg, hand and abdomen whilst covering the Red-Shirt protests in Bangkok.

Nelson Rand's journeys into the jungles of Southeast Asia bring you into a world of intrigue and tragedy very few have ever experienced. The plight of the Hmong in the jungles of Laos are near and dear to our hearts. Rand's telling of their story and his desire to see the wrongs done to them put right has been instrumental in saving the lives of possibly hundreds of people. My wife Georgie and I will always be grateful to him.

I read this book in preparation for a long-term stint volunteering in Southeast Asia. It provides amazing anecdotes of him being embedded within rebel groups and refugee areas. The courage this guy has is truly inspiring. From the preface, he recounts meeting an unnamed Japanese photojournalist at a café somewhere in southeast Asia, perhaps Laos? Boom! An explosion went off nearby and everyone went fleeing. Before Rand knew it, that photojournalist went running towards where the explosion came. This kind of gumption set the tone for Rand's career of going into conflict areas and getting the true story. As an apparent representative of the West to embattled Hmong people, he was nearly held captive until the UN comes to rescue them from their miserable living conditions. These people are reduced to the most humble of human living conditions! Rand approaches the United Nations to appeal for recognize the plight of the Hmong guerillas. This however exposes the false promises and betrayal by Western institutions in these profound humanitarian crises. This book inspires me to go into troubled parts of the world and listen to those torn apart by conflict. A gripping read.

This is a very interesting and passionate book about lesser known internal conflicts in Southeast Asia. The author is a young Canadian journalist who has spent a lot of time in the region, learning its history and languages, and studying the conflicts which he is strongly drawn to. The book has

four main chapters each covering a different sub-region and conflict. The first gives an account of Cambodia and the 'death of the Khmer Rouge' as it is aptly subtitled. This was the first of the conflicts covered by Rand, in 1998, when he was just 23 years old. It is one of the best parts of the book, and contains an excellent and concise (just 13 pages) history of the Cambodian conflict. The second chapter of the book stems from 2000 when the author documented the conflict between the Burmese military government and ethnic Karen guerrillas. He made several trips to the Karen-held area across the border from Thailand and accompanied the guerrilla into battle. The description is lively and highly sympathetic to the cause of the guerrillas. The third chapter stems from 2004 and concerns with two unprivileged ethnic minorities that both sided with the Americans during the Vietnam War: the Hmong in northern Laos and the Montagnards in Vietnam. Both received ample support from CIA and played an important role as American allies against the communists. Both were later abandoned by the Americans and left to cope with the new regimes to the best of their ability--which has been an uphill struggle for both groups that have continued the war through all these years. Especially the Hmong's fight against the Laotian army has been quite pathetic. This 'betrayal' by the Americans outrages Nelson Rand who rails on behalf of the wretched guerrillas. The final chapter of the book is contemporary and describes events in 2008 in southern Thailand when the author was embedded with the Thai army battling the Islamic insurgents. Again, although this is the thinnest part of the book, the historical explanation and the description of the current situation are rather balanced, acknowledging the human rights violations by the Thai government while condemning the terrorist activities by the Islamic fundamentalists. The fact that Nelson Rand is so excited about his topic is what makes the book very engaging. He feels strongly about the subject and the often quixotic struggles of the people. He mixes his personal exploits and feelings with the travails of the victims of the conflicts in a way that can't leave the reader cold. He also makes an effort at putting each of the conflicts into a broader context. At the same time, one can't sometimes help feeling a bit queasy about his enthusiasm, for the particular struggles, the heroism of the guerrillas, and the thrill of jungle warfare in general. The text flows fast and well, but tends to be somewhat breathless and contain hyperbole and occasional repetitiveness as Rand raves about the injustices he encounters. His sympathy for the downtrodden is such that he even calls the hilltribes of northern Laos and Vietnam a 'race,' which obviously is not accurate. Despite these gripes, Nelson Rand has done us a favour by writing the book informing us of the long-running conflicts that are seldom remembered by the outside world.

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