Conflict, Change and Conflict Resolution

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1.
Introduction[1]

The literature dealing *systematically* with the connections between change and conflict is hardly extensive, and that directly dealing with precise relationships between change and conflict *resolution* is even sparser. In a way, this is surprising – for many writers make implicit, and in some cases explicit, connections between some form of change and the formation of conflicts, while others discuss conflict "dynamics" as well as those changes that are needed before any kind of resolution of a conflict can realistically be sought. A recent and completely unsystematic search of one university's modest library revealed over 420 entries combining the words "change" and "conflict" in their title, while a similar search of a data bank of dissertation abstracts produced over 3,500 such citations. Nonetheless, there seem to be few works that focus in general terms on connections between the two concepts, or on the process of conflict resolution as a phenomenon involving change from the relationship of enemies or adversaries into something else.[2]

This chapter endeavours to make some contribution to filling this gap in the literature by discussing the relationship between "change" and "conflict" in very general terms, rather than focusing on particular changes that have either created conflict between particular communities, societies and countries, or changes that have led towards a resolution of any specific conflict which has protracted and become violent. It can be considered, therefore, as a small contribution to the development of a general theory of change and conflict – or, more particularly, conflict resolution. An understanding of the dynamics of conflict formation and perpetuation should have implications for methods of resolving (or at least coping with) even the most intractable of conflict relationships. As such, the chapter may be a starting point for the development of a set of theories of conflict dynamics as well as a practical set of guidelines concerning modes and timing of "resolutionary" interventions.

2.
A Framework for Enquiry

An enquiry that starts off asking about the general nature of the relationship between change and (protracted) conflict seems doomed to irrelevance from the beginning, so an initial step must be to focus the discussion a little better. If we are trying to develop an understanding of a complex phenomenon such as protracted social conflict, and its relationship to change, then there are at least four aspects of the general enquiry that need to engage our attention:

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1   This chapter is an updated version of Mitchell 2006.
2   Exceptions to this generalisation include works by Appelbaum 1970; Rosenau 1990; Holsti et al. 1980; Bennis et al. 1989.

1. change that produces new conflicts (conflict *formation*);
2. change that exacerbates or intensifies an existing conflict (conflict *exacerbation* or, more commonly, *escalation*);
3. change that reduces conflict, or makes it less rather than more intense (conflict *mitigation*);
4. change that produces (or assists in the development of) settlements or solutions (conflict *resolution* or transformation).[3]

An extension of this focusing of the broader investigation can enable us to transform the whole exercise into a set of more specific, less ambiguous queries:

1. *What sorts of changes create conflict?*
2. *What changes exacerbate conflict?*
3. *What changes diminish the intensity of conflict?*
4. *What sorts of changes help to bring about the resolution or transformation of conflicts?*

Given that one of the final foci of this chapter is on the question of change and conflict resolution, then posing the last question raises another related issue that, paradoxically, involves a need to understand factors that act against change, particularly change in the direction of the de-escalation or resolution of a conflict. As the label "protracted conflicts" suggests, many complex and deep-rooted social conflicts seem, empirically, to reach some kind of "plateau" in their relationship, and become trapped into a pattern of interaction – usually involving the exchange of violent or coercive behaviours – that seems dynamic, yet stable. Dennis Sandole (1999) has pointed out that the reason for many conflicts continuing becomes less a matter of the original goal incompatibility and more a matter of becoming trapped in an extended action-reaction sequence, in which today's conflict behaviour by one side is a response to yesterday's by the adversary. The conflict continues today because the conflict was there yesterday, rather in the manner of a classical feud between Montagues and Capulets. Systems analysts are familiar with the concept of "dynamic stability", and there are enough examples of such a pattern of interaction in protracted social conflicts to justify an urgent need to understand the reasons for conflict *perpetuation* and to ask questions about the obstacles to change, once a conflict has reached the stage of a reactive exchange of blows, malevolences and other "bads". Some of the literature on "spoilers" (Stedman 1997) makes a start at answering fundamental questions about obstacles to change in the direction of conflict transformation, but the general problem remains: *What are some of the obstacles to change that themselves need changing before a protracted conflict can begin to move towards a resolution; who might be able to bring about needed changes, and how?*

The argument seems to have come round full circle, so that any examination of change appears also to necessitate at least some enquiry into the nature and impact of *obstacles to change*, particularly in their role of preventing those involved in a conflict from moving towards

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3   There is much current debate in the field about the inadequacy of the term "resolution" to include the fundamental changes deemed necessary to end a conflict once and for all. As I have argued elsewhere (Mitchell 2002), the original interpretation of the term "conflict resolution" certainly involved a process that recognised the possible need for far-reaching structural changes and changes in relationships as part of any durable solution, so I prefer to retain this term rather than the currently fashionable one of "conflict transformation".

Section I. Challenges and Concepts

a solution and a change in their relationship as adversaries. I will return to this issue of obstacles later in the chapter, but, initially, will discuss the question of changes that lead to conflict rather than those factors that prevent change leading to a conflict's end.

3.
Change and Conflict Formation

Most analysts who write about the causes or the sources of social conflict agree that change, particularly extensive and sudden change, has the capacity to create conflict, although whether the conflicts protract and turn violent depends upon a host of other variables within each type of community – international, intra-national or local.

3.1
Change, Deprivation and Instability

Writing in the 1960s, Mancur Olsen pointed out that economic development might actually produce instability and conflict rather than contentment and stability, partly because the "goods" from growth would almost certainly be mal-distributed, as would the "bads". Many individuals and groups, including some that had previously been salient and influential, would become marginalised through such change (Olsen 1963). Change would thus frequently be associated with discontent and rivalry, leading to conflict and sometimes to violence. It might well be the case that this last one could be avoided if the change were to be gradual and well managed (e.g. through arrangements made for redundant workers or newly landless peasants to find alternative roles and resources), but social "cushions" seemed rare in the 1960s and – with the sudden and extensive changes brought about through the globalisation of market capitalism – appear rarer today. It is noticeable, however, that even in the 1960s and 1970s analysts were linking change with conflict and arguing that conflict *avoidance* (an early precursor of long-term conflict prevention) was a matter of managing change effectively.[4]

Underlying Olsen's ideas, and those of many others who wrote about the formation or emergence of conflict situations, was the inescapable observation that change tends to create winners and losers and that the latter are hardly likely to be happy with this result. Olsen's extension of this argument involved pointing out that "winners", too, might be discontented if they did not feel that they had won enough, relative to others, or if the costs of winning on one dimension (economic prosperity) meant losing on others (personal security, social integration or cultural identity). It seems reasonable to extend this approach to the relationship between change and conflict formation a little further, by arguing that, while it is undoubtedly true that actual change creates winners and losers:

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4 A popular collection of papers dealing with conflict in organisation from this era was entitled *Management of Change and Conflict* (Thomas/Bennis 1972).

- past change might also create *restorers* who wish to return to the status quo or a some golden age (e.g. late 18th century French aristocrats wishing to turn back the clock on royal financial reforms) and *accelerators* who want even greater change, as soon as possible, to complete the reform or to catch up with some comparison group (French radical thinkers and activists bent on turning reform into revolution);

- anticipated change might create *supporters* calling for desired change immediately, and *resisters* seeking to block the changes threatening their resources, status or political influence.

It is possible to see many of these assumptions underpinning the ideas of more formal theorists of conflict formation. In much of Johan Galtung's early work (1964, 1971), for example, the ideas of status disequilibrium and of changing hierarchies of "top dogs" and "bottom dogs" as sources of conflict imply that rapid change on any one of the key dimensions of power, status and wealth "enjoyed" by different individuals and social groups could lead to further efforts to achieve a satisfactory balance among all three. Inevitably, this will lead to further efforts to change, thence to conflict with those resisting such change and perhaps to the beginnings of one of Dennis Sandole's self-perpetuating cycles (Sandole 1999). Similarly, in the conceptual writings that focus on the process of comparison, and on reference groups as both a source of social stability, but also of potential discontent and resultant violence, a change in those groups with whom one compares one's own lot seems more likely to involve some (much) more fortunate than ourselves, so that anger plus a sense of deprivation grow and (conflict) situations involving goal incompatibility arise.

Similar themes involving change leading to conflict formation can be seen in Ted Gurr's classic on civil strife and protracted, intra-state conflict, *Why Men Rebel* (Gurr 1970). Whichever version one espouses of Gurr's basic idea about deprivation, discontent and conflict arising from a growing gap between achievements and aspirations, a central feature of the theory involves a change in aspirations or in achievement or in both.[5] One of the best-known versions of this theory of relative deprivation follows Davies' J-Curve model (1962) in which key changes involve people's changing beliefs about future achievements and entitlements (aspirations) which are then simply dashed by an abrupt downturn in their actual achievements. Even more simply, the change involves recognition of the gap between dreams and reality. Other versions involve cases in which people's sense of their just entitlements remains the same but their actual level of "achievement" plunges (for example, impoverished aristocracy throughout history; the French middle class investors who were ruined by the failure of the Panama Canal venture in the 1890s; and the victims of Bernie Madoff's recent "Ponzi" scheme who similarly lost everything). A third version also involves change and a widening "revolutionary gap", this time involving people whose aspirations soar, perhaps through contact with visions of richer societies or because of the promises of political leaders, but whose achievements remain static. Whether situations of high discontent come about through improvements postponed or "revolutions of rising expectations", the central feature of all these models involves change and the contribution of various types of change to conflict formation. How rapidly the change has to take place to

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5   The dynamic underpinnings of Gurr's theories are best recognised by examining the coordinate geometric models he uses to describe the different forms that relative deprivation can take (Gurr 1970, 47-53).

escalate a situation of goal incompatibility into a process involving protest, adversaries and violence obviously will vary from situation to situation. However, the central fact remains that anyone seeking the sources of conflict formation would be well advised to look for prior change disturbing a social hierarchy as a driving force.

3.2
Changes in Scarcity and Abundance

Even if one adopts a relatively unsophisticated approach to the process of conflict formation, the centrality of change remains at the heart of many explanations. Much writing about the nature of protracted social conflicts revolves around the idea of scarcity. Parties indulge in conflict over some good that is in limited supply, which both perceive that they cannot simultaneously own, possess or enjoy – a piece of territory, a material resource such as oil, a dominating position which increases "security", roles that present the opportunity of making binding decisions for others. "Scarcity models" of conflict formation contain implicit or explicit assumptions about change producing further or more intense conflict, either through changes in demand for increasingly salient goods in dispute, or because of changes in availability, usually involving diminishing supply. Much conflict clearly arises because of what Kenneth Boulding (1962) termed "the Duchess's Law", which is derived from a remark by the Duchess to Alice in Wonderland – "The more there is of yours, the less there is of mine". One implication of this is that, if things change and become even scarcer, the greater the goal incompatibility and the more likely and the more protracted the conflict. This truism has been demonstrated yet again (and more recently than through the comments of Lewis Carroll's Duchess) by the work of scholars such as Thomas Homer-Dixon (1991, 1999) and others who have been examining the sources and effects of environmental scarcity in societies, especially in Africa. Their basic argument involves the impact of environmental degradation (deforestation, desertification via drought, water impurification, overgrazing caused by population increase) on resource scarcity and the resultant propensity for intra-clan, inter-tribal and intra-national conflict, often resulting in violence. Whatever critiques have been made of Homer-Dixon's original work (see Kahl/ Berejikian 1992), most analysts seem to have retained the original idea that changes in availability of resources and changes in demand arising from population pressures do create situations in which one response can be the formation of intense and protracted conflict that, once started, escalates into self-perpetuating spasms of violence and counter-violence.[6]

The role of increasing scarcity in conflict formation is normally taken to involve a decrease in availability, possibly accompanied by an increase in desire for that particular commodity. Warnings about "water wars" in the near future (Gleick 1993; Starr 1991) are examples of the intellectual use of scarcity models, while it may not be too cynical to argue that the current United States interest in bringing democracy to the Middle East via regime change is not

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6   A recent study of the ways in which resource management can influence the likelihood of (violent) conflict in the face of resource scarcity has been published by the Conservation Development Centre et al. (2009).

entirely unconnected with the forecast decline in world oil production and the growth of China as a major and growing oil consumer.[7] However, others have returned to Olsen's original idea and pointed out that changes in the direction of abundance can also bring problems that give rise to conflicts. For example, in the 1990s, the reforming government of President Ramos in the Philippines provided large amounts of funding for some small communities, by declaring seven of the local, grass-roots zones of peace to be "Special Development Areas". However, it proved very difficult for some of the seven communities to use these expanded and suddenly granted resources in an appropriate manner. Internal conflicts over the use of the resources broke out, factions formed and the sudden availability of funds became a source of conflict formation that seemed as disrupting as sudden scarcity might have been (Lee 2000). Clearly, the sudden introduction of an abundant supply of goods can lead to conflict over who gets what, when and how, although how similar the results of such a change are to those brought about by a sudden introduction of large numbers of "bads" remains a matter for speculation and systematic investigation.

3.3
Disaggregating "Change"

It would be possible to continue *ad infinitum* with an anecdotal discussion of the relationship between change and conflict formation, but this chapter is attempting to produce some general lessons rather than a stream of anecdotes. What seems to have emerged from the ideas discussed so far is that many of them suggest – indirectly at least – that there are three aspects of the general phenomenon of change that are important in its conflict generating effects:

a) the nature of the change,
b) the intensity of the change, and
c) the rapidity of the change.

Returning to the intellectual strategy of advancing by proposing questions that seem answerable (at least in principle), we thus confront the following queries:

1. *What is the nature of the change that gives rise to goal incompatibility?*
2. *How extensive is the change that confronts those affected?*
3. *How rapidly has the change come about?*

A typical social scientist's answer to such questions will inevitably be, "it depends". However, posing them and then avoiding them leads to a broader topic that arises from a desire to generalise about change and conflict. This is the question of what *kinds* of change might one be talking about in a

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7   Landon Hancock has made the interesting suggestion that a scarcity of (acceptable) identities may be a neglected source of conflict, while making other identities possible may be a process that contributes markedly to a resolution of some conflicts. In Northern Ireland during the 1960s, for example, limited identities were available for people living in the province. One could feel British and (usually) Protestant-Unionist or Irish and Catholic-Nationalist. This began to alter in the 1980s when people could identify themselves also as "European" as a consequence of British and Irish membership of the EU and the latter's growing impact on both the Irish Republic, the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland (Hancock 2003). One implication of this line of thought is to wonder about the dynamics by which people are forced into thinking of themselves (and being regarded by outsiders) solely as being members of one particular category from among the multiple (group) identities otherwise available to them ("Muslims", as opposed to Gujeratis or Javanese, Sunnis or Alawites, former Kashmiris as opposed to former Ugandans, shopkeepers as opposed to doctors). The dynamics of identity and identification need another full essay in order to be considered adequately.

particular case and what, therefore, might be a useful typology of change to help with general explanations about the relationship between conflict, change and conflict resolution.
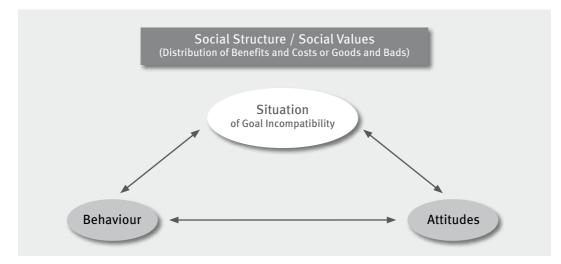
4.
Varieties and Impact of Change

A relatively easy way of answering the question would be to list examples of change that appear to have had some impact on the formation, escalation or resolution of protracted social conflicts: the death of key leaders, the collapse of political systems such as the Somali Republic, the discovery of large supplies of some valued and contested good, a sudden use of violence to attack another. Unfortunately, this inductive approach makes it hard to pick out commonalities that would help in the construction of a typology of change – as well as taking up a great deal of space – so an alternative, deductive approach seems to offer a way forward, at least at the start of any classification process.

4.1
Change in the Structure of a Conflict

One approach is to take up the basic model of a conflict's structure created by Johan Galtung, and use this to begin to illuminate the question of what can change in the basic *structure* of any or all conflicts. The model involves four components, linked in the following fashion:

Figure 1: A Four-Component Model of Change in Conflict Structure

The model suggests that conflict situations arise in societies because of some mismatch between social values and the social structure of that society, particularly the distribution of political, economic and social "goods". The formation of a situation of goal incompatibility (a conflict *situation*) gives rise to adversaries' *behaviour* in order to achieve their (apparently incompatible) goals, plus a related set of perceptions and *attitudes* about themselves, the Other(s) and "third" parties affected by or affecting the relationship of conflict. All four components interact over time and are changed through this interaction: behaviour affects attitudes (being the target of violence profoundly affects the psychological state of those attacked – and usually causes them to retaliate); attitudes change behaviour (de-humanisation of the Other produces willingness to escalate violence and thus intensifies efforts to harm); and both affect the situation and the underlying social structure (what is in dispute often gets harmed in some way, or even destroyed).

Using this model to help categorise types of change thus leads to the possibility of change in all four components of this structural model. Are we dealing with change in underlying structures or values? Is there a change in the goals producing the conflict situation in the first place? (Has one adversary's major goal, for example, shifted from gaining the desired good to punishing, permanently weakening or destroying the other for preventing such success?) Is the change simply one consisting of an increase in violence, a lessening of hostile rhetoric or the offer of some olive branch? Has there been a diminution of mistrust on both sides sufficient to allow some cautious "talks about talks" to take place? Such examples illuminate four types of change – in underlying structure, in situation, in behaviour, in attitudes – that are important for understanding the dynamics of protracted social conflicts. All are potential changes that will impact the formation, escalation, mitigation or resolution of protracted conflicts in a wide variety of (often dimly understood) ways and I will return to using this approach to understanding the effects of change later in this chapter.

4.2
Key Qualities of Change

In the discussion of change and conflict formation carried out above, there were several clues as to how one might begin to develop a useful typology of change itself to help in thinking about its impact. Many writers have talked about the different effects of sudden as opposed to gradual change, while many years ago Michael Handel wrote revealingly about the impact of un-anticipated change in his investigation of the politics and strategy of surprise (Handel 1981). Other scholars have tackled the issue of the size of the change – how intensive and how extensive – in general arguing that it is almost always more difficult to adjust to massive as opposed to minor changes, with the implication that intensive and extensive changes are more likely to be resisted than adjusted to.

At present, it is only possible to suggest a number of characteristics of change that seem likely to have an impact on either the formation of a deep-rooted conflict or on the continuation, or alternatively resolution, of one that is on-going and protracted – perhaps "protracted" because it has developed a resistance to change. It seems plausible to propose that changes

characterised by the following qualities are likely to have the most effect on generating or modifying protracted conflicts:

1. *major* changes – large in scope and intensity;
2. *sudden* changes – taking place abruptly;
3. *unexpected* changes – with no prior indication, warning or time to prepare;
4. *rapid* changes – taking place over a short time period;
5. *irreversible* changes – with no way of returning to the status quo.

Many propositions that have been unsystematically derived from ideas about types of change appear to have an initial plausibility, if nothing else. Major changes appear more likely to produce massive reactions than minor ones, although many years ago Karl Deutsch (1966) argued that systems in certain, unstable conditions could be pushed into a major change process by an input of information at a crucial point of that system. (This argument led John Burton (1969) to argue that infusing "relevant" knowledge through a problem-solving process could result in the initiation of a major, lasting conflict resolution process.) Much of the literature on crises and crisis behaviour produced in the 1970s started with the idea that a major, unexpected threat (change in the environment) to core values, appearing suddenly and with little time available for thoughtful reaction, produced recognisable and repetitive patterns of individual and organisational behaviour, as well as standard profiles of interaction between threatener and threatened (see for example McClelland 1961; Hermann 1972; Holsti et al. 1980).

In the case of the quality of irreversibility, there are studies that indicate that, at a number of social levels, a change from which there is no return can have a major and lasting impact compared with a change that can be rapidly reversed, at low cost. There are major differences between a temporary ceasefire in place and a truce that involves the stockpiling of weapons under third-party supervision. Historically, Caesar could not have pretended that he – and his armies – had not crossed the Rubicon. President Sadat's visit to Israel in 1977 could only have such a major effect on relations between Israel, Egypt and the Arab world precisely because there was no way of subsequently denying that the visit had (a) occurred and, thus, (b) publicly and formally acknowledged the existence of Israel as another member of the international community of states.

One of the weaknesses of this present argument is that, theoretically, there are an almost infinite number of ways in which "changes" can be described and characterised. The five key qualities suggested above are one plausible answer to the question of what kinds of change are important for understanding the formation, escalation, mitigation and resolution of conflicts. Until we have some unambiguous evidence that persistently links major, sudden, unexpected, rapid and irreversible changes with certain effects on protracted conflicts or conversely links minor, gradual, anticipated, long drawn-out and reversible changes with opposite effects, we will be no nearer a general theory of conflict and change. However, some generalisations and guidelines might be obtainable by examining commonly observed change processes in protracted conflicts, partly as a preliminary to asking why protracted conflicts actually fail to change but rather remain locked in a paradoxically stable, action-reaction dynamic.

5.
The Dynamics of "Perpetuation", "Exacerbation" and "Mitigation"

Leaving aside the question of what sorts of changes lead to conflict formation, a conflict analyst confronts queries about what alters within the conflict system itself, so that one can talk clearly about a conflict *intensifying* or *diminishing*. What is the nature of change that makes a conflict more – or less – intense and what contributes to a conflict's perpetuation?

5.1
"Escalation" as a Basic Dynamic

One way in which the topic of intensification has been discussed in the literature on conflict dynamics has been to use the very broad concept of *escalation* to try to deal with issues of change within a conflict system. Allied to ideas about escalation were others that dealt with de-escalation, in which the latter were often regarded as some kind of a mirror image of the former.

In the 1960s and 1970s, it was common for scholars to talk about an escalation "ladder" and to discuss the "rungs" or thresholds on that ladder, as though climbing upwards towards mutual destruction could be reversed simply by re-crossing the same thresholds in a "downwards" direction. (One stopped bombing Haiphong harbour, for example, as a de-escalatory move that was supposed to elicit a positive counter-move by the government that was the target of the bombing.) This whole approach ignored one of the basic types of change in the conflict structure that we discussed earlier, which linked the behaviour of one side to the perceptions and emotions of the other, thus implying that increasing coercion on the Other, or crossing some culturally significant threshold (e.g. "first blood"), often profoundly changed the attitudes of those Others and inevitably resulted in a counter-escalation on their part ("making them pay"). This "ladder" model's indiscriminate use also tended to obscure the fact that a wide variety of change processes could be involved in making the conflict more "intense", or taking it to "a higher level", and that some of these processes made it much more difficult to reverse direction and bring about change that could lead towards a resolution.

Disaggregating the various processual strands that make up this broad concept of escalation, six major types of change seem to occur frequently in protracted conflicts, making them more "intense" or *exacerbating* them, once they have emerged.[8] Clearly, one of the changes that always occur in conflicts at some stage is an intensification of each of the adversaries' conflict behaviour directed at the Others and intended to make them abandon their goals and allow the

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[8] The actual *emergence* of a conflict from a latent to a manifest condition is a fascinating process in and of itself, and forms a part of the phenomenon of conflict formation, whereby the parties come to recognise that there is a goal incompatibility and other factors that are preventing the achievement of desired goals, so it is necessary to organise themselves in a manner best calculated to "win".

first party to achieve its own objectives. Usually, this process involves an increase in coercive actions that impose costs on the adversary, and ultimately involves violence and physical harm. In this narrow sense, the use of the term escalation for this particular process seems more than justified. Moreover, the process often involves thresholds (use of threats, cost-imposing coercion, physical violence), which, once crossed, fundamentally change the nature of the conflict.

5.2
Other Intensifying Dynamics

If the label escalation is most usefully applied to changes in the intensity and frequency of coercive and violent behaviour directed at the other party, what other changes might be involved in the intensification of protracted conflicts? At least five other dynamics seem commonly to be involved in such intensification processes: *mobilisation, enlargement, polarisation, dissociation* and *entrapment*.

The first of these processes, *mobilisation*, refers to the process whereby intra-party changes take place once a group, community or nation finds itself in a relationship of protracted conflict with another, so that time, effort and resources are devoted to the conflict, and the various ways (frequently coercive) being employed to find "an acceptable solution" – defined, at least in the early stages, as one that enables all goals to be achieved and interests defended.

Too often, this process ultimately arrives at a point of deciding that the only way of attaining one's goals is "all out war" against the adversary. This can then involve a mobilisation of resources, the sacrifice of which in the course of the struggle often comes to outweigh the value of the goals originally sought. One other aspect of mobilisation, as Dean Pruitt and Sung Hee Kim (2004) point out in their own study of conflict dynamics, is the frequent change in the balance of decision-making power within embattled parties, which results in much more influence accruing to those in charge of the instruments of coercion at the expense of those in charge of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms. (Ministries of "defence" rather than foreign ministries make policy, and warriors replace diplomats in planning councils.)

An equally conflict intensifying process involves the – sometimes gradual, sometimes rapid – "widening" of the conflict in two distinct senses. Firstly, through a process of *enlargement*, many conflicts "pull in" other parties to the conflict who become embroiled via the practice of ally-seeking on the part of the main adversaries, or by deliberate intervention in order to support one side or the other, to pursue interests of one's own on another's territory or turf, to maintain a local position of advantage or to indulge in "proxy wars". Whatever the objectives or the means by which enlargement occurs, the end result is to make the conflict more complex (more, and often widely different, interests become involved) and – to anticipate a later argument – change in the direction of resolution becomes much more difficult.

Something similar can be said about the process of *polarisation*, a conflict exacerbating dynamic which involves a "widening" of the issues on which adversaries come to confront one another, beyond the initial goal clash that led to the formation of the conflict situation in the first place. There are both psychological and behavioural aspects of this dynamic, and they are

intertwined in complex fashion. However, the upshot is that, in many conflicts, adversaries come to perceive and believe that they are in opposition to one another over a wider and wider set of issues, which causes them to "line up" against one another on more and more issues. The crucial factor in this dynamic becomes one of countering positions that the Other takes, rather than any intrinsic merits of the reverse position. Inter-family feuds display elements of this dynamic at work, as do long-standing political rivalries and ideological divisions. In international conflicts, this dynamic can lead to the existence of massive and long-lasting "confrontations" or "cold wars" such as that involving the USA and USSR between 1945 and 1990, or between Athens and Sparta in the classical world. Again, the process adds further apparent goal incompatibilities to the conflict and tends to make more difficult any move towards a changed relationship.

Prospects for resolution are hardly helped by the fourth dynamic that appears in many protracted conflicts, whereby the conflict becomes characterised by a marked decrease of contact between the conflict parties as the conflict proceeds. As with polarisation, there are two aspects to the dynamic of *dissociation*. The first involves a declining frequency of physical contacts between the adversaries. In many cases they simply avoid one another and those meetings that do take place become formal and ritualised, often confined to the exchange of mutual accusations and protests. The opportunities for exploring the situation such adversaries find themselves in, the range of future scenarios likely to transpire and opportunities or alternatives that might be mutually beneficial become rare and disappear altogether, replaced by recriminations and a "dialogue of the deaf". This characterisation already implies the second aspect of dissociation, a narrowing and coarsening of communication that takes place as the conflict protracts. This dynamic includes the deliberate closing of communication channels, the avoidance of information that runs counter to the negative images and perceptions of the adversary that inevitably develop, and the reactive devaluation of any information that runs counter to what one "knows" about one's adversary, oneself and one's situation (Ross 1995).

The results of the dynamics of dissociation play a major role in accelerating the last common dynamic of protracted conflicts, that of *entrapment*, which can lead adversaries into a position where they have sacrificed time, effort, resources and lives well beyond what others might consider any possible value of "winning", yet persist in the continuation of the conflict on the grounds that "there is no alternative". Entrapment is a process by which parties in a conflict (and especially their leaders) become trapped into a course of action that involves continuing or intensifying the conflict with – apparently – no chance of changing policy or "backing away". There are many reasons for this entrapping dynamic, some of which have to do with "saving face", not losing intra-party influence or position or not admitting to an often very costly mistake in policy-making. Equally important are factors such as wishing to recover "sunk costs", or minimising losses by going on to "win", no matter what additional future costs might be involved, or simply not being able to see any alternative. The dynamic of entrapment is thus a complex one, but the end result of the changes that are involved in a party's becoming entrapped are usually the same: greater difficulty in changing from what William Zartman (1985) described as a "winning mentality" to a "negotiating mentality" and a likely perpetuation of the conflict.

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5.3
Diminishing Conflict Intensity

Logically speaking, the changes necessary for moving a conflict away from increasing intensity and towards mitigation and resolution should be clear, at least at an intellectual level. If there are six basic dynamics that change a conflict in the direction of greater intensity – exacerbate it, in other words – then the reversal of each of these dynamics, logically, should move the conflict at least some way towards a resolution – towards being "ripe for resolution" in Zartman's phrase (1985, 2000). Clearly, if the process of the escalation of coercion and violence increases the intensity of a conflict as well as its resistance to finding a solution, then a process of *de-escalation* – of substituting benefit-conferring actions for harmful and damaging ones – should bring about some change in the opposite direction. A similar argument can be made for each of the conflict exacerbating dynamics discussed above. In principle, to set the stage for a successful conflict resolution process, changes amounting to a reversal of each of the exacerbating dynamics need to be made. Other parties and interests that have become involved in the original conflict need to be disentangled (*disengagement*). Contacts (appropriately managed) need to be restored. Inter-party communication channels need to be reopened and the resultant communication made at least more nuanced and complicated than the simple exchange of accusations and justifications (*re-communication*). Each party's underlying needs and interests need to be revived and reviewed to see what crucial goal incompatibilities still lie at the heart of their conflict and the practice of opposing for the sake of opposition abandoned (*de-isolation*). Intra-party decision-making needs to be re-balanced to allow for the input of ideas from those whose immediate task is not tomorrow's defence against violence or the short-term implementation of counter-coercion measures (*de-mobilisation* or *demilitarisation*). Finally, ways have to be found to reverse entrapment processes and to enable policy decisions to be made with an eye to realistic future opportunities and limitations rather than past aims, promises, investments and sacrifices (*decommitment*).

Theoretically speaking, then, for each dynamic that exacerbates conflict there should be another that ameliorates or mitigates it:

Table 1: Conflict Exacerbation and Mitigation

Conflict Exacerbating Dynamics	Conflict Mitigating Dynamics
Escalation	De-escalation
Mobilisation	De-mobilisation / Demilitarisation
Polarisation	De-isolation
Enlargement	Disengagement
Dissociation	Re-communication
Entrapment	Decommitment

However, speaking theoretically usually allows one to ignore some of the practical problems of implementation, as well as some of the gaps in the theoretical formulations themselves. There may be good reasons for arguing that the conflict mitigating dynamics outlined above can move the conflict systems towards a solution and a changed relationship between the parties, but there will obviously be obstacles to making the change from one exacerbating dynamic to the other mitigating dynamic. This argument returns us to a question that was raised early on in this chapter: *What are the obstacles to change that impact the search for a resolution?*

6.
Obstacles to Change and Means of Overcoming Them

In the literature of conflict dynamics there are frequent references to "malign conflict spirals" (see, for an early example, Deutsch 1973) but very little that systematically deals with means of arresting or reversing them. Clearly there are dynamics and other phenomena that encourage conflict perpetuation and act as obstacles to change. There is a literature that suggests what these obstacles might be, but in a highly piecemeal fashion, ranging from suggestions that the greater the costs incurred in pursuing a goal, the more highly people value that goal – what Kenneth Boulding (1990, 63) calls "the sacrifice principle" – to Peter Marris' generalisation that almost everyone is psychologically resistant to change (Marris 1986) or Louise Diamond's interesting, but unexplored concept of a "conflict habituated" society (Diamond 1997).

6.1
Four Types of Obstacles to Change

One fruitful way of beginning to lay out a systematic framework for dealing with this general issue of obstacles to change in protracted and violent conflicts might be to adopt the standpoint of the leaders of adversary parties in such a conflict and to ask: *Confronting the option of continuing (or even escalating) the conflict, or changing to a more conciliatory stance that seeks a nonviolent resolution, but involves the abandonment of the previous strategy, what factors frequently militate against such a change?*

Adapting a framework first suggested by organisation theorists Barry Staw and Jerry Ross (1987), four categories of obstacles to change can be suggested:
1. policy determinants,
2. psychological determinants,
3. social determinants, and
4. political determinants.

Section I. Challenges and Concepts

The first cluster of factors militating against change involve the nature of the conflict itself, and focus mainly on the centrality of the issues involved and the value ascribed to gaining the goals in contention. In Staw and Ross's terms, we are talking about a project that involves a large pay-off and a perceived "infeasibility of alternatives", especially in the many cases in which conflicts become perceived as involving existential issues (e.g. the physical survival of the community, or the creation of a distinct national political system via separation); or core identity issues (e.g. freedom to practise a religion unencumbered, or the recognition of the existence of "a people", with their own culture and language). If protracted conflicts were not about such salient issues, then they would hardly protract in the first place. Furthermore, protracted and deep-rooted conflicts are also situations that have a high "long-term investment" characteristic, which helps to keep them going. Rewards only come at the very end of the struggle through "victory", so the investment nature of the process itself becomes a reason for not changing until ultimate success has been achieved. To employ an analogy, one does not gain the benefits from building a bridge until the structure is finally completed. There is no point to a half completed bridge. Likewise, investment in struggle to a half-way point seems sacrifice for nothing, especially when no alternatives to struggle seem feasible.

If factors to do with the nature of the conflict itself often militate against changing course, a number of common *psychological* factors reinforce a tendency not to change. These include a leadership group's personal responsibility for the "investment" in the struggle – the costs, the sacrifices, the lost resources, opportunities and lives – that cannot be lightly abandoned without feelings of responsibility and guilt for having advocated the course of action leading to such sacrifices in the first place.[9] They also include the ego-committing claims that leaders have made about achieving success in the conflict, and the number of occasions each leader has publicly endorsed the policy and called for the necessary sacrifices in order to achieve what are characterised as "shared, salient and – sometimes – sacred" goals. Another psychological factor is often the degree to which such individual leaders – and their followers – have had drummed into them positive models of "perseverance" and of persistence leading to successful "turn arounds" and ultimately to success.

Many of these ideas are usually subsumed under the title of "misperception and miscalculation", a blanket term that actually covers a wide variety of psychological and socio-psychological factors. These include the widespread tendency of people to link costs and sacrifices both with the value of the goals for which sacrifices have been made and the likelihood of achieving it, together with a number of factors to do with self justification, avoiding acknowledgement of responsibility, denial of the (possibly increasing) evidence for stalemate or failure, and the different ways *prospect theory* tells us that people evaluate gains, losses and resultant willingness to take further risks (Kahneman/Tversky 1979). All of them, however, seem to be factors making for continuation rather than change.

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9   One reason it seemed so difficult for British Prime Minister Tony Blair to admit – probably even to himself – that there is a causal connection between terrorist bombings in London and unequivocal British support for US policy on Iraq is that to make such a connection would lead to Blair himself – and his unpopular policies – bearing at least some of the responsibility for the death and destruction in London – let alone in Baghdad.

Again, another set of *social* factors can also act as obstacles to changing course once a party is thoroughly embroiled in a conflict, some of which link to and reinforce the effects of psychological influences. Many are subsumed under the blanket label of "face saving", and are particularly powerful when a leader or group of leaders become so thoroughly identified with a course of action in a conflict that abandonment becomes virtually unthinkable. Thus, further costly investments in, and commitment to a strategy becomes a symbol of the original correctness of that policy and a signal to followers and others of determination to "see it through" rather than admit error and responsibility by a change of course. This tendency to carry on can be, and often is, reinforced by social norms that support consistency rather than flexibility, steadfastness rather than learning from experience, and willingness to sacrifice for the cause rather than accepting that the time has come to cut losses. In many societies, honour is paid to "heroes" who then become models that have held fast in the face of adversity and sacrificed for the cause rather than compromise.[10] In many societies, withdrawal is generally viewed negatively as a sign of weakness, with unwillingness (or inability) to change course as a sign of strength.

Finally, there are a number of what might best be termed "political" factors arising from the internal structure of each adversary that can, and frequently do, present obstacles to changing course in the midst of a conflict. At the very least, the factor of internal rivalry and challenges to the existing leadership need to be taken into account. As Staw and Ross emphasise, "job insecurity" is frequently a factor militating against appearing to admit to mistakes by changing a policy long espoused, but even relatively secure leaderships need to be careful of alienating supporters, giving opportunities to rivals, and generally diminishing their internal support. Leaders of parties involved in protracted and violent conflicts have not infrequently "lost their jobs" by assassinations, coups and mass protests as well as through intra-governmental and electoral defections. Hence, anticipation of such possibilities can act as a major deterrent to considerations of major policy change. As Fred Ikle (1971) pointed out many years ago, nothing arouses contention and furious opposition as much as a decision to end a war, and the same appears true of many other protracted conflicts in which major sacrifices have been made in the light of promises of future success [see also Norbert Ropers in this volume].

Furthermore, nowhere are the political obstacles likely to be more immovable than in cases where the very purpose of the entity concerned has been the prosecution of and success in the struggle and where the possible ending of the conflict may involve the disappearance of an organisation or a movement, or at best a difficult transformation into something quite different, needing different skills and leadership qualities and, hence, a downgrading of the influence of existing leaders. The more the survival and even existence of the organisation is tied to success in the conflict, the greater will be the unwillingness to consider a major change in strategy and a conversion from a winning mind set to one featuring possible negotiation and an outcome that is less than "success".

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10 Thus Israelis view the suicides of Masada as heroes, rather than as negotiating incompetents.

6.2
Entrapment as a Barrier to Change

Apart from the Staw-Ross model, many of the obstacles above have been discussed at one time or another in the literature on entrapment, which also addresses *psychological* aspects of this dynamic (sacrifices changing the original goals in conflict to that of making the enemy pay, and the extent of existing sacrifices diminishing the evaluation of anticipated sacrifices); *economic* aspects (the wish and need to reclaim or justify "sunk costs"); and *political* aspects (a threatening intra-party opposition ready to point out and exploit shortcoming in leaders' repeated public commitments to carry on to "the bitter end"). The overall impression from historical cases and from existing theories is one of the existence of immense obstacles to changing strategies away from coercion and violence towards something more conciliatory.

However, it is undoubtedly also the case that such changes *do* take place, and obstacles *are* overcome or removed. Just as entrapment processes cross key intensifying thresholds – as when the need to reclaim past "investments" becomes a stronger motivation than that of achieving original goals – so parties and their leaders come to mitigating thresholds, and other factors or evaluations become psychologically dominant, as when past costs come to be seen as "unacceptable losses" rather than "investments", or likely future costs become more certain and hence insupportable. Conflict behaviours do change, interaction patterns alter and even the most protracted and intractable conflicts can be moved towards a resolution. How might such a change come about?

6.3
Overcoming Obstacles and Changing Direction

A number of basic methods for bringing about change that is likely to lead in the direction of conflict resolution or transformation suggest themselves:
1. changing leaders;
2. changing leaders' and followers' minds;
3. changing strategies, policies and behaviour;
4. changing parties' environments.

To suggest that one way of overcoming inherent obstacles to changing the course of a protracted conflict is to change leaders is not to be taken as advocating "regime change", which in any case seems to produce more conflicts that it resolves. Rather, it is simply to acknowledge that the change from one leadership group to another – however it is accomplished – can bring into positions of power and influence individuals or factions who are not as tied to past policies as their predecessors, who might have initiated and hence be seen as responsible for those policies. This is not to say that a new leadership inevitably will change and become more conciliatory – they might be committed by past statements to intensifying the conflict. However, at least the opportunity is there and it is reinforced by the fact that there are likely to be expectations, on the part of the adversaries and other third parties, that change could come about – which, in

itself, can bring about resultant behaviour that leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy: anticipated change brings about behaviours based on that very anticipation, in turn making the expected change easier to undertake.

Changing people's minds seems likely to be a more problematical and long drawn-out process, especially when the challenge is to change the minds of large numbers – the followers, mass public opinion, the "street" – although it is hardly an easy task to change the minds of key leaders or their advisers. However, the great thing to bear in mind when faced with apparently intractable belief systems or apparently closed minds (Rokeach 1960) is that people do learn and change, especially if placed in an appropriate setting that encourages alteration. The difficulty, of course, is that conflicts are quite the worst environment for bringing about significant changes in goals, interests and underlying beliefs. In such circumstances, the predominant ideas about learning and changing involve beliefs that it is the other side that has to learn; and that hurting them is the best way of bringing about such learning. The lesson that there may, indeed, be alternatives to coercion, violence and victory is one that is particularly difficult to absorb when one is oneself on the receiving end of the Other's effort to make one learn through coercive techniques. And yet people's evaluations of their situation, their goals, the costs they are suffering and might have to go on suffering, their futures, their alternatives, themselves and their adversaries can and do change. Goal priorities alter over time (Saaty/ Alexander 1989), costs become more salient, alternatives become more attractive, certainties become discredited. For an outsider interested in conflict resolution, the issue becomes how such changes might best be brought about and how the numerous obstacles in the path of change leading to resolution might best be overcome.

The whole issue of how to change the minds of key leaders and opinion-makers has recently become part of a general interest in narrative theory and ways in which adversaries' internal descriptions of the conflict – the issues, the stakeholders, the past, the options available – can be so different as to present major obstacles to any productive change. Clashing narratives or worldviews produce dialogues of the mutually deaf, resulting often in mutual incomprehension and sometimes in tragedies such as resulted from the siege at Waco (Docherty 2001) or – in an earlier era – the MOVE confrontation in Philadelphia (Assefa/Wahrhaftig 1990).

One hopeful strategy for dealing with adversaries that currently hold wholly contradictory views about their situation and about their relationship involves the careful use of "reframing", which Clem McCartney defines as "a learning process that involves a subject critically reflecting on and then adapting assumptions in the framework they currently espouse" (2007, 3). Introducing adversaries to such a process can involve what might be termed "strategic" or "tactical" reframing. The former might well consist of "subjects" re-examining their beliefs about fault or blame – something bad has happened and it *must* be someone's fault – in the light of their own life experiences of complexity or of non-linear and multiple causality. At a tactical level the reframing process could simply involve a reflection on the nature of "autonomous" political units, which had a set and definitely negative meaning for peoples from the former Soviet Union, but which is capable of being redefined in a variety of ways, not all of them simply a cover for continued dominance from the centre.

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Although this is not a particularly new idea – writers on conflict resolution and transformation from the 1970s onwards talked about redefining a conflict from a confrontation to be won to a problem to be solved – recent writings have fleshed out to a large degree both the central idea and the practicalities of the process (Docherty 2004; Miller 2005). Theoretically, one crucial change that reframing can bring about is by altering conception of the nature of "self interest", perhaps by introducing conceptions of time or by expanding the idea of who might become involved in "the self". On a practical policy level, several analysts of the process that led to the signing of the Treaty to Ban Land Mines in 1997 have stressed that at least one of the key factors that enabled this measure to obtain such widespread international support was its proponents' ability to successfully reframe the issue as one of humanitarian action and long-term protection of civilians, rather than one of disarmament or military security (De Larrinaga/Sjolander 1998; Borrie 2008, 274-275).

Changing people's minds is intimately linked to changing their behaviour, although which change comes first is something of a matter for debate among social psychologists. A common sense approach would hold that, until a change has taken place in the perceptions, evaluations or goals of people in conflict, behavioural change is highly unlikely, although some commitment theorists have argued that it is a change of behaviour that leads, through a process of habituation, to new attitudes and beliefs (Kiesler 1971). Whatever the direction of the causal arrow, or the nature of the causal loop, the salient and publicly obvious nature of the behavioural component of a protracted and violent conflict usually makes changing adversaries' behaviour the initial objective of any conflict resolution process. Conciliatory gestures are sought and – perhaps – conveyed, communication channels opened, ceasefires and truces suggested and negotiated, "talks about talks" are initiated. This kind of change often takes centre stage in initial resolution efforts, both bilateral and multilateral.

A more difficult issue is the whole question of whether it is possible to "change the minds" – and behaviour – of whole communities or societies and whether such change can be brought about from "top down" or whether it has to originate at the level of grass-roots. Interest in the "top down" approach to change during the 1990s and the 2000s took the form of widespread efforts to promote a "culture of peace" in many societies, particularly those that were suffering from protracted strife and violence. The movement actually began in the mid 1980s with the publication of the Seville Statement on Violence[11] and the 1986 Yamoussoukro Conference, which called for a new, more positive vision of peace throughout the world. It gathered strength throughout the 1990s, being adopted by UNESCO and by the UN General Assembly at the end of that decade. The core idea was to encourage change by promoting a culture that "consists of values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing, based upon the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and diversity".[12] In 2001, the movement launched a Decade of Peace under the auspices of UNESCO and by the decade's midpoint over 700 NGOs were reporting on peace-related

11   See http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=3247&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.
12   From the "Declaration and a Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace", UN resolution A/RES/53/243, 6 October 1999; available at http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/774/43/PDF/N9977443.pdf?OpenElement.

activities to do with education, democratic participation, sustainable development, tolerance, gender equality, human rights, disarmament and the free flow of information.

Local change towards conflict mitigation and transformation was also widespread during the last decade of the 20th and the first of the 21st centuries. In Colombia, for example, many of the local peace communities, attempting to become neutral in the struggle between guerrillas, paramilitaries and state security forces, adopted practices resembling Galtungian ideas of positive peace. While aiming to preserve security from external violence, many communities – Sonson, Samaniego, Mogotes, San Jose de Apartado – also aimed to create a peace culture within their community and to abolish violence against women and children, to control the use of alcohol, to pursue local development and educational work and to achieve a culture of justice and nonviolence overall (Rojas 2007). Maintenance of such a culture over time proved difficult here and in many other places, given the existence of long held and deep-rooted practices among traditionally patriarchal societies, which hardly provided an encouraging environment for the growth of new attitudes and behaviours.

However, these and other obstacles will undoubtedly be removed by major structural changes in the parties' environment, which make available more of a good in dispute, render that good irrelevant or provide alternatives for it, remove a threat or render other problems more pressing. Such changes are often slow and gradual, as when technological change makes a scarce resource of lesser value or a frontier defence system obsolete, but on occasions a major environmental change can be abrupt and far reaching. For example, the collapse of the Soviet Union transformed the environment of many conflicts from the Middle East to South Africa and provided opportunities for moving conflicts in those and many other regions towards a resolution.

This last type of change is undoubtedly the most difficult for third parties to bring about deliberately. While it might be possible – yet difficult – for outsiders to change leaders' and followers' minds, and possible – yet probably undesirable given the current shambles in Iraq – for outsiders to change leaders, it seems rare for most outsiders to be able to bring about structural changes in conflicting parties' environments. However, all four "resolutionary" changes – in leaders, in minds, in behaviours and in environments – need to be considered if our final question is to be even partially answered: *What can assist in making changes that help to move a conflict towards resolution?*

7.
Agents of Change?

Given the existence of a such complex variety of factors that help perpetuate conflicts and the large range of strategies that might be employed to overcome these obstacles that block moves towards a solution and help perpetuate a high level of destruction and damage, the final conundrum discussed in this chapter necessarily becomes a question of who can successfully initiate and oversee such strategies.

In one sense, the question deals with the nature of change "agents" (what have been referred to in some cases as "drivers" of change) but given its implications, that term seems somewhat misleading, in the light of our previous discussion about types of "resolutionary" change. "Agent" implies – in some sense – a prime mover, which seems somewhat unrealistic, at least when considering what is involved in bringing about structural or environmental change.

In many situations, it seems most likely that the best any "agents" can accomplish is to take advantage of the opportunities for resolutionary activities afforded by major alterations in the environment or structure of a conflict, rather than bringing about such changes themselves. It may be possible that, on some occasions, a potential change agent possesses enough resources to bring about, for example, alterations in the environment of the conflict sufficient to alter other important elements, but such occasions and such agents seem rare. In 1975, it might have been possible for the US Government to make available resources to replicate Israeli air bases inside Israel itself in order to replace those lost through a withdrawal from Sinai, but such possibilities were hardly open to many other interested "agents". Similarly, the provision of additional resources to change an underlying situation of scarcity is one way in which outsiders – acting in the role of an *enhancer* of resources – might be able to alter the environment of a conflict to help bring about a resolution, but this depends on the availability of enough of such needed resources. Such occasions seem rare, particularly in the light of the frequently late, inadequate or non-delivery of the necessary goods once the conflict has slipped from public gaze.

It seems more usual that major environmental changes happen for complex and sometimes distant reasons – the collapse of the Soviet Union for example – rather than through the actions of any conflict-related change agent, so that the most such potential agents can do is to *monitor* the conflict and *provide early warning* of the likely effects of such environmental changes on opportunities for removing or circumventing obstacles to resolutionary change. Part of this monitoring role obviously involves taking note of any opportunities for conflict resolutionary initiatives afforded by changes that can range from natural catastrophes (such as mutually suffered earthquakes), diversion of resources or the defection of key patrons to changes in leadership within the parties in conflict. Part of this monitoring role involves continuously maintaining informal channels of contact and communication with all factions within the elites on both sides, a strategy long practised with some success by intermediaries such as the Society of Friends. "The readiness is all," as Hamlet says – in somewhat different circumstances.

But readiness for what? I want to end by suggesting that the issue of change agents – perhaps best thought of as *enablers* rather than *drivers* – is best tackled by focusing attention on the question of what specific roles or functions change agents might need to fulfil in order to help bring about the kind of change that can move a conflict towards a resolution and overcome the tendency towards perpetuation displayed by many protracted, deep-rooted conflicts. Two have already been mentioned in connection with bringing about environmental change – that of enhancer of resources, and with preparing to take advantage of propitious circumstances brought about by fortuitous environmental change, that of monitor and provider of early warning that "ripe moments" may be imminent. Others mainly focus on methods for bringing

about changes in adversaries' behaviour and in the beliefs, attitudes and perceptions held by leaders and key followers within the parties.

The general principle underlying the list of suggested key functions and related roles open to change agents is the assumption that, in order to bring about changes that overcome the tendency towards conflict perpetuation, members of parties in conflict have to be placed in a position where they can contemplate alternatives. In turn, this involves the construction of some kind of learning environment (or at least a process) in which old positions, aims and strategies can be rationally reviewed, new ideas offered or generated, alternative futures (including their relative costs) considered coolly rather than immediately rejected, and "road maps" towards acceptable solutions and future relationships constructed. I would, therefore, suggest that the following be regarded as a tentative basic list of necessary tasks or functions that need to be carried out by appropriate change agents if obstacles to resolutionary change are to be overcome and a conflict is to change in the direction of finding a sustainable and nonviolent solution:

Table 2: Key Roles and Functions for Change Enablers

Stage	Role	Function
Pre-Negotiation	Monitor	Tracks developments in the conflict system and its environment
	Explorer	Determines adversaries' readiness for contacts; sketches range of possible solutions
	Reassurer	Convinces adversaries the other is not solely or wholly bent on victory
	Decoupler	Assists external patrons to withdraw from core conflict; enlists patrons in other positive tasks
	Unifier	Repairs intra-party cleavages and encourages consensus on core values, interests and concessions
	Enskiller	Develops skills and competencies to enable adversaries to achieve a durable solution
	Convener	Initiates talks, provides venues, legitimises contacts
During Talks or Negotiations	Facilitator	Within meetings enables a fruitful exchange of visions, aims and versions
	Envisioner	Provides new data, theories, ideas and options for adversaries to adapt; creates fresh thinking
	Enhancer	Provides new resources to assist in search for a positive sum solution
	Guarantor	Provides insurance against talks breaking down and offers to guarantee any durable solution
	Legitimiser	Adds prestige and legitimacy to any agreed solution
Post-Agreement	Verifier	Checks and reassures adversaries that terms of the agreement are being carried out
	Implementer	Imposes sanctions for non-performance of agreement
	Reconciler	Assists in actions to build new relationships between and within adversaries

Clearly this is an ambitious list of change agents, but it should be equally obvious that no one person or organisation can fulfil all, or even most, of these roles so that needed changes, in at least behaviour and attitudes, can take place. Enablers can come from a variety of backgrounds and do not have to be the diplomatic representatives of outside governments or international organisations.[13]

A number of such organisations or individuals, working in conjunction with one another, would be necessary if all these tasks are to be carried out with the minimum of success needed to overcome the obstacles to change present while protracted and intractable conflicts are at their height. This caveat once again (see Mitchell 2003) emphasises the need for a change agent that will play a final essential role in this whole process – that of a *coordinator* – to bring about a necessary level of order and what my colleague Susan Allen Nan (1999) calls *complementarity* to the whole conflict resolution process.

A final thought on change and conflict resolution must, therefore, be that to be successful in steering a protracted and violent conflict towards a resolution, a change process needs to be carefully thought through and managed – which returns the argument and this chapter to the old idea of the connections between the management of change in any search for the resolution of a conflict.

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13 Many of those contributing towards the finally successful peace process in Northern Ireland came from within the communities locked in conflict – for example Father Alec Reid and John Hume, the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party.

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