

CHAPTER 1.

CONFLICT AS A RESOLVABLE PROBLEM.

Well before talking about the practicalities of techniques and methods, there has to be a brief philosophical discussion about the nature of conflict "resolution", what exactly it means and whether talking about resolving a conflict makes any sense. This is particularly so because, over the last three decades, the concept of "conflict resolution" has become an increasingly familiar and fashionable one in discussions of long running, intractable conflicts such as those in Sri Lanka, Cyprus or Northern Ireland, or of [ostensibly] newer conflicts, such as those in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The concept's constant use by scholars, practitioners, journalists and decision makers justifies a rather careful examination, on the grounds that it is increasingly being misused by many who employ the term to stand simply for an ending of violence or a precarious compromise agreement supported by outside sanctions, either positive or negative. Conflict "resolution" must, surely, mean something more than this.

It is necessary to start by acknowledging that our rather loose, everyday employment of the term "conflict resolution" masks two rather different, if related conceptions:

[1] "Conflict resolution" as an outcome or an end state - as in the solution to a problem - when a conflict is ended by the removal of the goal incompatibility and the development of a new relationship [or pattern of interaction] between erstwhile adversaries at least over those issues previously in dispute; or

[2] "Conflict resolution" as a process, procedure or set of activities through which hostile and often warring adversaries are enabled to achieve a situation in which salient goal incompatibilities have, indeed, been removed and [perhaps] replaced by complementary goals.

This Chapter concentrates on the first of these conceptions of conflict resolution, while subsequent chapters take up the idea of conflict resolution as a process. Its main argument is that, if the term implies anything it is, surely, that at least in theory a conflict is a phenomenon for which some solution can be discovered or constructed, following which activity the conflict no longer exists - or, in a weaker argument, no longer exists in its original form. (1) If no solution to a conflict is possible, even in theory, then the practical search for a "resolution" of that conflict is doomed even before it begins and we are left with the alternatives of reducing the levels of violence via a [temporary] truce, or of seeking some compromise settlement. If this is, indeed the case, then we can only utilise procedures which, at best, lead to conflict reduction or mitigation and ultimately to a compromise solution whereby the conflict in question is settled, often temporarily but not resolved in any final sense.

The theme of the Chapter is, then, a simple one. Scholars talk about "conflict resolution" and contrast it with the reduction, amelioration, avoidance, management or settlement of conflict. In what sense is conflict a "resolvable" phenomenon ? What do scholars mean when talking about a conflict being "resolved" ? (2)

1. The Traditional View; Conflict as Irresolvable and Inevitable.

The idea that conflicts are, in principle, resolvable is one which contrasts sharply with a dominant set of assumptions in much of social science, and particularly in the study of International Relations, which has the analysis and understanding of major international and transnational conflicts as its central focus (3). This dominant "worldview" is one which has as its central themes;

[1] inherent scarcity of desired "goods", which may be temporarily alleviated;

[2] competition, leading to conflict and frequently to coercion and violence;

[3] compromise and negotiated agreement as the only principles for settling an inherently irresolvable situation.

1.1. Conflicts as Constant Sum Situations.

A fruitful way of illustrating this basic - and very widespread - model of society and its conflicts is to recall the biblical story of Solomon confronting the conflict between the two women both claiming a baby as their own and [in his "wisdom"] ostensibly deciding that the best way of dealing with the conflict lay in the compromise solution of dividing the baby physically between the two adversaries in equal halves. [See Kings I, 3:16-28] After all, there was only one baby [scarcity] and a compromise based upon equal shares of the "good" in dispute [equality] might have seemed a fair settlement [a "compromise"] of the conflict.

Solomonic wisdom, on this occasion, consisted in assuming that the true mother would not be able to accept this "solution" and would thus reveal herself by abandoning all claim to the "good" in dispute, while the imposter would accept the proffered compromise. With this additional information available to the royal decision maker, the baby could then be restored intact to its rightful parent - a win-lose solution based upon accepted rules of justice.

Leaving aside the story's inherent improbability, [to which I return below], it does illuminate some widespread assumptions about the nature of the political world, about conflicts and about the limited set of principles available to handle them.

Essentially, there is a widespread view that conflicts are, by their nature, zero- or constant-sum phenomena. On occasions they are over goods that are scarce and inherently indivisible [babies, cats or cities]; on others, they are over goods that are scarce but divisible [cheese, cash or land]. The world is, in Lester Thurow's term, a "zero-sum society". [Thurow 1971] It consists of scarce objects of conflict [cats or cheese] which differ in the extent to which they can be divided, exchanged or substituted for; and the ease of so doing.

1.2. The Constant Sum Paradigm and Types of "Solution".

If one accepts this dominant paradigm, with its constant-sum view of the nature of social conflict, then one is forced to the conclusion that only compromise settlements [what might be termed solutions of division] are logically possible outcomes for conflicts, with divisions in which a winner takes all and a loser gets nothing simply being extreme cases of this type of ending (4). What the Duchess says to Alice in Wonderland applies equally to the real world of intractable conflicts in which we live; "The more there is of yours, the less there is of mine !"

The importance and influence of this fundamental set of traditional assumptions about the nature of conflict cannot really be under-estimated. It dominates current efforts to deal with, bargain about, negotiate over or otherwise terminate many contemporary, protracted conflicts. It reveals itself very clearly in disputes which are defined as being "over sovereignty", an abstraction that is treated as though it had an indivisible reality. Hence, conflicts about - for example - sovereignty over the region of Ngomo Karabagh are treated as though the only outcomes could be the achievement of undisputed sovereignty over this territory by Armenia, by Azerbaijan, or by the current inhabitants of that territory; or by compromising and dividing the territory between the two countries in some proportions which might be acceptable to the parties to this intractable conflict (5).

Within this traditional constant sum framework, a number of variants of, and improvements on this basic "solutions of division" model have been developed and most extensively discussed under the label of integrative agreements. First mentioned in Mary Parker Follett's work in the 1920's [Follett; 1940] and extensively discussed in the 1960's in Walton & McKersie's pioneering work on industrial conflict [1965], these agreements are so called because they reconcile ["integrate"] the interests of the adversaries; Their chief characteristic is that they "yield higher joint benefit" for the parties involved in a negotiation. Pruitt [1986] and others contrast this type of agreement with simple "compromises" in which "...the parties concede along an obvious dimension to some middle ground..."[ibid. p.463] and argue that the discovery of such solutions involves creativity and the development of novel alternatives, although some cases may use already known alternatives "...whose joint value becomes apparent during the controversy..." [ibid.]

A word of caution regarding the use of the term "integrative solution" and the precise form such solutions can take is in order here, however. As Gerald Wetlauffer [1996] has perceptively pointed out, some versions of apparently integrative solution are merely more complex forms of distribution that fail to increase the benefit of the settlement to both or all the parties involved, even though they may increase the overall amount of benefit derived from that settlement. In this regard, it is important to make a distinction between increased individual benefit to one party [the Duchess gets more and Alice gets less]; an increase in the overall or aggregate benefit derived from the settlement [Alice gets more than the Duchess's original offer, and values that incremental gain more than the Duchess values the equivalent incremental loss]; and an increase in joint benefit [Alice and the Duchess - somehow - increase the level of benefit both derive from some new settlement] (6).

It seems reasonably clear that it is only this last type of benefit increase is meant by most analysts who write about "integrative" solutions. Leaving aside cases where one party simply gains individual benefit at the expense of the other, there are a variety of other opportunities for finding types of solution in which alternative arrangements increase the benefit to one party by far more than the equivalent loss to another, thereby "creating value" or "increasing the pie" in an aggregate sense. However, if the essential feature of an integrative solution is that both [or all] parties must have their level of benefit increased, then many solutions that increase aggregate benefit by exchanging low valued losses for highly valued gains turn out to be fundamentally distributive.

However, there remain a number of ways in which even solutions involving division can increase joint benefit and thus qualify as "integrative". The first of these variants on the basic model of division might be termed solutions of substitution.

In this model, one party gains its own objectives - sometimes in their entirety - at the expense of the other, but compensates the second with alternatives of a roughly equivalent value. As Pruitt argues [1983], there are three basic types of substitutions. In conflicts that are about a variety of issues, one way of producing a settlement that can increase joint gains over a simple process of division, is for one party to gain on one set of issues by yielding to its adversary on another which the latter values more highly than it does the first. This is known colloquially as log-rolling and in an ideal world, an integrative solution is reached by one Party, A, letting Party B have goods that B values but A does not, while B lets A have goods that A values but B does not. Wetlaufer talks about "...unbundling the parties' interests, identifying issues that might be valued differently, and then engaging in the appropriate form of integrative bargaining when multiple issues are differently valued..." [1996 p.393] In other words, the Queen and Alice gain things they value highly and allow the other to have things they value less, so that both increase their own level of benefit gained from the solution. Even though such strategies may work in theory, however, the real world being somewhat less than ideal and the most intractable conflicts usually being over goods that both sides value highly, log rolling to find an acceptable package that increases both sides' satisfaction as against some hypothetical, 50/50 split on all value dimensions is by no means easy.

A second version of "solutions of substitution" is one in which the party which gains most from an agreement provides compensatory goods or payments to the side which loses most. As the compensation in such cases is often in goods remote from those at the basis of the conflict, Pruitt refers to this type of agreement as involving nonspecific compensation - colloquially, as a party being "repaid in unrelated coin" [1986 p.466].

Wetlaufer points out that, even when dealing with apparently indivisible goods the strategy of non-specific compensation might be made possible by introducing non-material considerations, such as risk or time. These could be used to off-set material losses and increase the benefit of the solution to a party that might, for example, be risk averse [through the gainer offering a warranty or guarantee against some feared event] or pressed for time [through the gainer promising to deliver a good earlier than originally agreed]. Such actions could increase the benefit of the solution to the less successful party and thus ensure the creation of joint benefits that also increase the aggregate benefits arising from the solution. Unfortunately, in many intractable conflicts acceptable substitute goods, whether material, intangible or symbolic, are in short supply and frequently have to be supplied in the form of side payments by outside parties.

The last type of substitution involves the successful party minimising the loser's loss by compensating directly the losses suffered. Pruitt calls this form of direct compensation cost cutting, and defines it as a situation in which "...the party who concedes receives something in return that satisfies the precise values frustrated..." [ibid p.468] The costs are actually cancelled out rather than being offset by other types of benefit. A good example of this process might be the United States building two new air bases within pre-1967 Israeli borders to make up for the loss of the air bases in Sinai that Israel had returned to Egypt as a result of the Camp David Agreement - an example that again illustrates the fact that, in many intractable conflicts, direct as well as nonspecific compensatory payments often come from well endowed third parties (7).

The second major variant on simple division involves settlements that take the form of solutions of expansion, whereby the amount of the good in dispute is increased [by joint efforts over time] so that adversaries can fulfil their original goals via the increment. Fundamentally, of course, the settlement still involves a problem of dividing some newly expanded amount of the good between parties whose interests - presumably - remain maximising their "take" of that good, so that there continues to be room for competition over who gets the greater share of the increment, and on what grounds. However, the usual argument of those advocating such an outcome as a form of integrative solutions is that the cooperative relationships developed during the joint effort of producing more of the good, the practice of working as partners rather than as adversaries, the habit of joint problem solving as part of the overall endeavour and, finally, the greater availability of the good itself, will all make the process of deciding on final shares much easier. Pruitt argues that this and other forms of integrated agreement will prove more stable in the long run, more productive of successful conflict anticipation and management initiatives in future, and of greater benefit to the broader community. [ibid p.464] There is much evidence to support such conclusions as regards organisational and industrial conflicts, and even some from the local community level. Unfortunately, such an approach seems a little utopian in situations like Sri Lanka or former-Yugoslavia.

In spite of the possibility in principle of integrative solutions that, in some manner, compensate adversaries for goals left unattained or hold out the promise of even larger gains through cooperation at some time in the future, my general argument about dominant paradigms remains a powerful one. Moreover, from a practical viewpoint, even the theoretical possibility of such solutions usually appears utopian. Given the dominance of the "constant-sum" framework, it is almost universally assumed that only a narrow range of practical solutions to intractable conflicts are possible. Conflicts can, at best, be temporarily managed or [hopefully less temporarily] settled through the adversaries finally agreeing to accept less than they had originally desired, or agreeing that some additional goods will make up for the shortfall between their goals and aspirations and the benefits they actually achieve through the solution. If this acceptance becomes less final at some

stage in the future, when circumstances and opportunities change, then this is merely another regrettable concomitant of the world of conflict as it necessarily is. Solutions and settlements, being compromises or compensations, are necessarily temporary, and the range of solutions is limited to those summarised in Table 1.

TYPE OF SOLUTION.	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS.	TYPICAL EXAMPLE.
Solutions of Division	Compromise and sharing	Division of land: India 1947
Solutions of Substitution.	Compensation - Log-rolling - Non specific compensation - Cost cutting	"Land for Peace"
Solutions of Expansion.	Increase via collaborative effort	Industrial Productivity agreement

TABLE 1. CONVENTIONAL TYPES OF SOLUTION IN INTRACTABLE CONFLICTS

In this conventional framework of ideas, of course, the very possibility of resolving a conflict becomes questionable at best, and inherently impossible at worst, which helps to explain the frequent misinterpretation of what advocates of the idea of conflict resolution are saying when they talk about "resolutionary" outcomes being feasible.

2. What Conflict Resolution is Not.

If conflict researchers take a different view from the traditional one outlined above and argue that, at least in principle it is possible to resolve even the most intractable conflict, what do they mean by this statement ?

There is a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding about this position, [much of which is the fault of conflict researchers themselves] and it will be necessary to return to first principles to try to clarify the sense on which the term "conflict resolution" may properly be used. It might help to begin by emphasising what conflict researchers are not saying, when they claim that conflicts are "inherently resolvable", as they are often accused of making extravagant claims for conflict resolution when they are doing nothing of the sort.

2.1. Resolution of all Conflicts; A Conflict-Free Society ?

It should be clear that conflict researchers, when they talk about "the resolution of conflict", are not saying that all conflicts in a social system can be resolved, producing a wholly conflict free society. Apart from doubts about the desirability of such a situation [conflicts have clearly positive aspects, well outlined by Coser (1956), Burton (1969) and Augsburger (1992) among many others], conflicts are likely to remain inherent and frequent in any societies which contain diverse populations with different value systems, competing demands and inadequate procedures for coping with problems arising from a mismatch between demands and resources. Conflict will not disappear as a social phenomenon, although we may learn to cope with it better.

All that conflict researchers claim when they talk about "conflict resolution" is that particular examples of conflicts can be resolved, although it is not unlikely that they will be replaced by other, equally intractable examples. Conflict researchers do not expect to work themselves out of a job. (8)

2.2. Resolution as the Cessation of Violence.

A second but increasingly less common interpretation of the nature of "conflict resolution" is that it simply implies that people have stopped using violence against each other in pursuit of their goals. Conflict researchers have long argued that the absence of violence does not imply the absence of possibly intense levels of conflict, and that groups,

communities and even whole societies can be characterised by latent conflicts, which are either suppressed or deterred, or simply waiting to emerge into protest, overt coercion and later violence once groups wanting incompatible futures have been mobilised and organised. Similarly, peace researchers have drawn the distinction between "positive" peace, which denotes that a society is [relatively] harmonious and integrated; and "negative" peace where a society is divided by fundamental disputes and deep antagonisms, yet violence is held in check perhaps by the dominance of one party or perhaps through the fear of external sanctions.

Recent history is full of cases that illustrate the stubborn continuation of latent conflicts characterised - often for long periods of time - by the absence of widespread violent behaviour in pursuit of denied goals. All illustrate the point that the absence or cessation of violence does not mean that conflicts do not exist or have been finally resolved. "Peaceful" societies that have suddenly erupted into massive violence, like former Yugoslavia support the first argument. Numerous broken truces and negotiation processes that remain deadlocked reinforce the second. The failed "peace process" and return to violence in Angola show that UN efforts to resolve the MPLA and UNITA struggle have been unsuccessful, in spite of the cessation of violence between the adversaries during the late 1990's. The ten year peaceful "settlement" between the first and the second Sudanese civil wars from 1972 to 1982 clearly failed to deal adequately with underlying issues, tensions and suspicions between adversaries from the North and South of that country. Cyprus has been characterised by an almost complete absence of violence since 1974, but there are few who would argue that the conflict between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities on the island has even begun to be "resolved."

Clearly, then, changing the antagonists' behaviour from violence to something different is not the same as "resolving" the conflict, especially if the suspicion, mistrust and fear on both sides continue to exist and lay the groundwork for future violence. This is not to be taken as an argument that the cessation of violence makes no contribution to resolving a conflict, of course. For conflict researchers, ending violence is usually a necessary preliminary to the search for a solution to the issues in the conflict, and thus is usually regarded as an integral part of a "peace process". Keeping the peace and ending violence provides an opportunity for the parties to deal with their differences, disagreements and doubts and perhaps to remove some of the stereotypes and negative images which are another barrier to resolving the conflict in which they arise.

2.3. Resolution as Removing "Misperceptions" ?

However, again when talking about "conflict resolution", conflict researchers do not simply mean that all conflicts are based upon "misperceptions" - of the other party, its goals and intentions and of the opportunities for compromise. Quite often it is too easily assumed that all that conflict research is saying about "resolving conflicts" is that there are many misperceptions involved in all conflicts - particularly protracted conflicts - and if these can only be "corrected", then the conflict will be resolved, as those involved come to realise they have nothing to fear from, and much in common with, each other.

In fact, most conflict analysts would agree with the first part of this initial statement. In intense, protracted and violent conflicts, adversaries do become subjected to distorting psychological processes and consistently misperceive each other. The other side is demonised and distorted and all the evils which are regular concomitants of protracted, violent conflict ascribed to the other's planned and intentional malevolence. Negotiation, discussion, even contact with representatives of such an entity come to be out of the question. Coercion and victory become - at least during many stages of the conflict - the only strategies that can be contemplated. Even long after some compromise settlement is achieved, residues of hatred and fear remain to poison post-agreement relations.

Hence, part of the overall process of "conflict resolution" frequently involves the removal of some of the grosser perceptual distortions and over-simplifications that commonly affect parties in conflict, and the building up of reassurance and trust, at least to the level where some members of an adversary party recognise that it might be possible to discuss the conflict, and even to seek a settlement with some members of the enemy. This is often a long drawn out process [it took over 25 years for some Israelis to be ready to talk to some members of the PLO and vice versa]. My colleague Herbert Kelman refers to it as "seeking a valid negotiating partner". It can be the first stage of a slow and cautious reconciliation process, such as occurred between French and Germans after 1945, and might yet occur between Israelis and Palestinians following the signing of the formal peace agreements of the mid-1990's - although the prospects look increasingly dim at this time of writing.

Unfortunately, this process of "harmonising perceptions" is not enough, in and of itself, to constitute "conflict resolution", and might be better classified as another type of conflict amelioration. Even if perceptions can become less distorted, fears and mistrust lessened, and errors about an adversary's "hidden agenda" of long term goals removed, the conflict is hardly resolved in any final sense. The issues underlying the incompatible goals will remain, waiting to be dealt with.

3. Resolution and Mutually Incompatible Goals.

So far, I have argued that (1) none of the above interpretations captures what conflict analysts mean when they talk about the inherent resolvability of conflict, or about conflict being a resolvable problem; (2) minimising the level of inter-party violence and coercion is perhaps best regarded as conflict reduction; and (3) reducing the fear, hatred and mistrust between parties is also best regarded as ameliorating some of the worst psychological effects of a conflict.

In presenting these arguments I have tried to give some indication what conflict analysts do not mean when they talk about resolving a conflict. However, let us assume that we have arrived at a point in a particular protracted conflict [say a struggle for political power and office in an ethnically divided country] when we face a situation in which:

- [1] The level of violence and coercive behaviour has been reduced to bearable levels;
- [2] The leaders [at least] of the adversaries are no longer subject to massive perceptual distortions about themselves, their adversaries, the latter's goals, intentions and aspirations, or about the salience of these for the other side;
- [3] The goals of the adversaries remain clearly incompatible, so that both cannot have what each wants:
- [4] The two goal sets remain stable and salient for the two parties and the two sets of leaders enjoy the full support of the overwhelming majority of their followers for the continued pursuit of those goals.

Is this an inherently irresolvable situation consisting of a wholly intractable, zero sum conflict, which can only be dealt with through;

- [1] an outcome of unilateral abandonment in which one party gives up its goals thus enabling the other to attain what it desires;
- [2] a compromise settlement [a solution of division by splitting the country and creating two separate political systems]
- [3] institutionalising the conflict in some form [say through an electoral system and agreed power sharing]
- [4] "increasing the pie", in the hope that the extra goods gained by each side will compensate for not getting all they wanted ?

3.1. The Centrality of Goal Incompatibility.

To begin to answer that question, it will be helpful to return to a basic and relatively uncontentious definition of a social "conflict" as being:

A situation in which at least two separate parties possess goals that are - or appear to be - mutually incompatible.

This situation of conflict [or adversary relationship] customarily leads to behaviour by both in pursuit of their goals which, unchecked or unchannelled, often escalates into coercion and counter coercion, and ultimately into sustained violence. The existence of goal incompatibility and the inter-action in pursuit of the parties' goals is also frequently accompanied by emotional and perceptual changes on the part of those involved in the adversary relationship, involving heightened fear, hostility, mistrust, stereotyping and miscommunication. Such conflicts escalate, enlarge and protract into Somalias, Bosnias, Sri Lankas, Rwandas.

Given that I have argued above that stopping the parties' violent behaviour and removing some of the participants' fear and mistrust are important but peripheral aspects of the process of conflict resolution, the core of the concept of "conflict resolution" as an outcome must logically involve dealing in some satisfactory way with the situation of goal incompatibility. If it is possible to remove or transform the core goal incompatibility, then the problem will have been dealt with and the conflict finally resolved.

Again let me emphasise that this argument does not involve any underestimation of the difficulties caused by the behavioural and emotional dimensions of protracted conflict. A major part of the practical difficulties of coping with deep-rooted and [often] violent conflicts lies in simply stopping the violence and the coercion employed by parties in conflict to achieve their goals [one of which frequently becomes taking just vengeance on an apparently callous and inhuman adversary]. Peacekeeping, peace enforcement, tension reducing measures, truce observation, monitoring and policing, even the imposition of sanctions, are all ways of coping with the more appalling behavioural manifestations of protracted, deep-rooted conflicts. Normally, all need to be employed in conjunction with efforts to deal with the basic goal incompatibilities underlying the behaviour.

However, although it is becoming common practice to refer to such activities as "conflict resolution" it still seems more accurate to reserve that label procedurally for efforts to address basic goal incompatibilities and structurally as the removal of such incompatibilities, as it is the mutual exclusivity of adversaries' goals that lies at the heart of any conflict and

underpins the widespread belief that many conflicts are inherently irresolvable. If a persuasive counter argument is to be made to the effect that conflicts are, indeed, resolvable, it must deal with this dilemma of goals being mutually incompatible or mutually exclusive at the time the conflict becomes overt.

3.2. Change and Conflict Resolution.

Any argument to the effect that conflicts are resolvable must begin by admitting that goals may certainly be mutually incompatible or mutually exclusive, although in many cases goals that appear to be wholly incompatible may, on closer examination, be found not to exclude each other wholly. However, the point can then be raised as to whether genuinely incompatible goals and the circumstances that give rise to them are also immutable.

From Heraclitus and the Stoics, the acknowledgement of change has been a central feature of philosophers' view of the world and there seems no reason to exempt today's world of conflicts from that principle or to disagree with Marcus Aurelius that "...all things are continually being born of change..." (9) Situations and people change, human aspirations alter, essential or desirable goods can over time become peripheral luxuries, today's necessities can be transformed into tomorrow's irrelevancies. Given human propensity to change and particularly to learn, it may be that fundamental goal incompatibilities at one point in time can become non-conflicting or even complementary goals at others. Moreover, if goals can change "naturally" through the passage of time, through learning, through changing value sets, it may be that they can be influenced in such a way that they will change, and even change rapidly, given the possibility of engineered circumstances, accelerated learning processes or coming into contact with alternative views and values.

Whatever the means, this central point remains one key to arguing that conflicts can, in principle, be resolved, even if adversaries' goals are, at one point of time, truly irreconcilable. The most intractable conflict can be always resolved by changes in one or other party, leading to its abandoning the goals that created the conflict in the first place and adopting others that are complementary.(10) The ability of adversaries to change, even if the change takes place over the same length of time it took for the French and Germans to regard themselves as neighbours and then fellow EC citizens rather than traditional enemies, is at the centre of the "resolvable conflict" doctrine.

In fact, there are two rather different arguments about how a change of parties' goals can lead to a resolution of a conflict. One argument is that individuals as well as more complex groups, communities or parties can alter, learn and change goals over time and I return to this argument a little later.

The second arises from the fact that most parties in most intractable conflicts are tremendously complicated entities. Hence, to talk about "a party's" goals in a conflict is to oversimplify greatly usually by taking the publicly enunciated goals of that party's top decision makers as its goals and ignoring the fact that such complex parties are seldom homogenous, with uniform values or objectives, that they can contain within themselves a very different range of goals held by different factions/individuals and that the balance of influence on decision making processes can change, often drastically through change in the top leadership.

3.3. Change of Leadership and Resolution.

Given, then, that goal incompatibilities between parties lie at the core of any adversary relationship, but with this "party complexity" argument in mind, it is easy to see that there is one common way in which goal incompatibilities between parties can be transformed, although many conflict researchers, while acknowledging the practical importance of such a possibility, would not regard it as an example of resolving an intractable conflict. However, most would agree that it is theoretically possible [and not historically unknown] for some conflicts to be "ended" - in some sense - by the leaders who hold one set of goals being replaced by other leaders who hold wholly different goals, which no longer clash with those of the erstwhile adversary. In such a situation, the whole official goal set of one of the "parties" can change, so that both a new set of goals and the existing set espoused by the adversary can be mutually achieved without any need for a compromise "solution of division".

One historical example of such a resolution brought about the ending of the first war between Britain and the Boer Republic in 1881. Then the replacement of a Conservative Government in London by a new Liberal Government with a completely different set of goals and priorities led to the abandonment of a policy of British expansion in southern Africa, and an ending of the British Government/Boer Government conflict over the Transvaal. [Lehmann 1972] Other historical examples of such change of goal sets can be found. (11) However, the subsequent history of British/Boer relations in southern Africa indicate that a similar change can take place in the other direction, so that this type of "resolution" by change of leaders and goal sets can be volatile and temporary.

Furthermore, this argument merely asserts that it is possible for a change of leadership to involve the introduction of a new set of compatible goals into the conflict, so that the new leadership is involved in the kind of reversal of policy described in the case of the British Government in 1881. New leadership with different goals and values can merely present an opportunity for a reversal of strategy and a resolution provided the new goal set is compatible with that of the adversary. It may equally be that the new leadership's objectives lead to the continuation or even intensification of an existing policy of violence and coercion, depending upon whether the replacement process has occurred because old policies are seen as irrelevant to changed goals or old policies have simply not been pursued with sufficient vigour. 3.4. Mutable Goals.

While a change of leadership is one way in which new goals can enter a conflict so that a party's goals are mutable, a more interesting if less understood type of change arises from the fact that it is clearly the case that individual's goals are not immutable, but can change over time, often in quite complicated ways. This dynamic aspect of goal setting is different from the one discussed above, in which different individuals within the same party holding very different goal sets. It involves the observation that the same individuals can hold quite different goals at different points of time.

This changeable feature of the goals of people and parties in conflict is often neglected in arguments about conflict situations being "inherently zero-sum" or "inherently irresolvable". Given one salient goal set held by one of the adversaries, it may be quite true that the conflict is insoluble. Given another, this may cease to be the case.

Moreover, it is not necessary for a party's complete goal set to change for a conflict situation to stop involving mutually exclusive goals. People can also change the order of importance of their goals, so that what at one point in time appears to be a key goal for which others will willingly be sacrificed can become, over time, a peripheral issue of slight importance. Circumstances can change the relative evaluation of the goals held by individuals and shared by groups, communities and nations.

For example, new technologies can radically alter specific goals to do with security;

- [1] British abandonment of policies to control the Low Countries in Europe.
- [2] The irrelevance of territorial buffer zones in a missile age.
- [3] The replacement of once strategically vital supplies [oil fuel] by alternative [power] sources.

Similarly, ideological changes can render previously vital goals of lesser or no importance;

- [1] Maintenance of friendly regimes in distant places.
- [2] Systematic and global efforts to weaken an ideological rival.
- [3] Automatic supply of arms to allies involved in their own, local disputes.

Thirdly, diminution of resources can bring about a re-evaluation of priorities;

- [1] European withdrawal from colonial empires, post-1945.
- [2] White South Africans' decision to abandon apartheid and accept a multi-racial country
- [3] The P.L.O.s decision to negotiate with Israel as a result of diminished Arab support following the Iraq/Kuwait war.

All of the above are examples of situations in which goals that were highly salient - that is, salient enough to be fought over and sacrificed for - at one time, ceased to be regarded as important because of contextual changes for particular parties, and in some cases ceased to be goals worth pursuing by any means at all

4. Dynamics of Goal Changing.

At the moment, unfortunately, conflict researchers know little that is systematic about how quickly the goals sets of parties in conflict can change [and their reasons for changing]. How dynamic are goal sets ? There is a great deal of evidence to show that the very fact of being in conflict with other parties over particular goals has the effect of making those goals even more salient and unchangeable, and that these qualities increase with the level of sacrifices made to achieve the goals. The greater the costs incurred in the pursuit of particular goals, the more highly people evaluate the achievement of those goals and the more tenaciously people cling to them. (12) Kenneth Boulding [1962] refers to this as the "sacrifice principle", while much of the recent literature on the phenomenon of entrapment notes how the value of a particular course of action in pursuit of initial goals increases with the amount of time, effort and resources invested in achieving those goals. [Teger 1981; Brockner & Rubin 1985]

Furthermore, there are a number of reasons for believing that people in general - leaders as well as followers - do not change their goals either quickly or easily. Roger Marris, for example, in discussing people's resistance to change, mentions a general "...need for continuity of understanding..." - a particularly influential factor when sudden, significant

changes present a threat to people's established identity, involve a major loss, or disrupt their "...organised structure of understanding and emotional attachments..." [Marris 1974 p.4]

It does not seem unlikely that what Marris describes as "the conservative impulse" is at work in situations of protracted and deep-rooted conflict, in which the identities of members of rival parties become profoundly interconnected with the existence [and continuation] of the adversary relationship, so that "continuity of understanding" is largely dependent upon the stability of that relationship, rather than its disruption. People may never become "comfortable" with their conflicts, but [particularly if the latter are protracted] they do orientate their lives around them - especially when they involve salient and central goals. Protracted conflicts become part of a stable environment for those involved - almost a map with which to make sense of the world and their place within it. (13) Much affected by her work on Cyprus, Louise Diamond [1998] talks about "conflict habituated societies" and, at least in a psychological sense, deep-rooted conflicts can become "routinised", part of a settled "...need to conserve the structure of purpose that makes life meaningful..." [Marris 1974. p.104]

Altering one's long held goals, changing long term strategies, reversing relationships with an erstwhile adversary, can all threaten a "disintegration of a meaningful environment" of stable conflict [Marris 1974 p.22]. Although such an environment is likely to be dangerous, it can provide a stable framework of concepts [threats, enemies, allies] and purposes [worthy and worthwhile goals, objectives and sacrifices] that help parties in conflict make sense of their world and build a "construction of reality" that resists change and discontinuity and makes alteration of goals, objectives and strategies a long drawn out and difficult process.

On the other hand, there is considerable evidence that people can change goal sets or orderings very rapidly indeed, given circumstances which free them from the entrapping factors that lock parties [and their leaders] in a given strategy for pursuing particular goals. Marris argues that the "idea of prospective loss" is a factor that makes people willing to contemplate change and to innovate, and suggests that change which involves a continuation or extension of basic organising principles is likely to ease the attendant disruption.

More usually, however, change in goal sets takes a long time, as when a "war weariness" factor elevates the goals of peace, safety and - more problematically - a return to pre-war material standards above those of protecting Belgium, or defeating the militarism of Imperial Germany, or making the world safe for democracy. It took the United States Government over ten years, for example, to replace the goal of "containing communism" in Vietnam with that of achieving a face saving withdrawal of US forces from that country, but eventually enough Americans had altered their goal ordering to enable a settlement to be arranged.

The circumstances in which goals change appear to be very varied and the process by which new goals replace old as legitimate policy objectives is usually a long and difficult one, particularly for complex parties in a protracted conflict. [See Mitchell & Nicholson 1981] (14) Re-costing of goals does seem to be a major determinant of whether they will continue to be valued highly enough to warrant their continued pursuit in the face of determined opposition for an adversary. It often seems that a key aspect of this costing - and frequent downgrading - process involves parties considering future opportunity costs of particular goals in conflict with adversaries. If decision makers and their supporters become increasingly aware of the opportunity costs [in terms of other, valued goals sacrificed] they continue to incur in pursuing their goals in conflict; or if they can become aware of the likely future costs of continuing to pursue those goals in terms of further alternatives foregone, then they may undergo a process of re-evaluating their conflicting goals. (15)

From a practical conflict resolution point of view, however, it is usually the case that a "costing out" of pursuing the conflict in terms of goals sacrificed by so doing is not enough, in and of itself, to persuade parties to search for a resolution by non-coercive means - quite apart from its being difficult for leaders to find the time, opportunity or inclination to carry out such a "costing" exercise. The other element that must be present involves the possibility that some part of the original goals, or some acceptable alternative might be found in a less costly fashion by other [non-coercive] methods. How can this be, if it was the very incompatibility of those goals that underlay the original emergence of the conflict ?

5. Goals as Means and as Alternatives..

The main answer to this conundrum can be found in the suggestion that, frequently, the goals which lie at the centre of protracted conflicts, although obviously salient and important to the parties pursuing them, frequently are the practical and temporally specific manifestations of other interests and values shared by members of the embattled party - or by a majority [or a dominant minority] thereof. In most protracted conflicts, the expressed goals come to appear synonymous and co-terminous with the values and interests that they represent, although they usually remain the selected means for achieving those deeper values and interests. [Often it appears to those involved in a protracted conflict that there is not much "selection" involved, as they seem to have no alternative courses of action available - and this is often true in a practical sense at a given point of time.] (16)

5.1. Alternative Means and Underlying Interests.

If goals being pursued in a protracted conflict are means of fulfilling deeper values or achieving wider interests, it follows that at least in theory other means could be available, even if they might prove to be;

[1] less desirable, in that they involve more sacrifices or take more time or don't achieve the interest quite as fully; or
[2] currently unavailable, owing to the apparent intransigence, untrustworthiness or other shortcoming of the adversary or the environment.

Not surprisingly, this is not a possibility that occurs readily to adversaries in any deep-rooted conflict. Leaders of parties engaged in protracted struggle frequently justify costly strategies aimed at salient goals by announcing that "There is no alternative", or "Give me Liberty or give me Death", as if these were the only two logical or practical possibilities. The former assertion was a favourite slogan of Mrs. Thatcher, the British Prime Minister of the 1980s, and if it was blatantly untrue in her case, there is always reason to suspect it in others.

If there is any validity in the argument that the incompatible goals underlying conflicts are frequently means of achieving wider interests, then it follows that someone can always ask the question of whether some other goals might not achieve the interests at least equally well [and maybe better]; and whether these latter goals remain mutually incompatible with either the goals currently espoused by an adversary, or with alternative goals that might equally fulfil the underlying interests and values of that adversary.

At a purely analytical level, movement towards resolving an apparently intractable conflict involving goals which appear unquestionably mutually exclusive often begins with some simple questions:

[1] What do you hope to achieve in the long run by attaining the goals currently in conflict ?

[2] Why do you regard these goals as so important ?

[3] What fundamental interests will you fulfil by attaining the goals for which you are currently struggling ?

[4] What is preventing your using other methods of achieving these goals or fulfilling these underlying interests ?

[5] What are you trying to avoid happening by achieving this goal set ?

[6] What alternatives are you having to sacrifice in order to achieve your present set of goals ?

Underlying all of these questions is one central puzzle, solving which may unlock a door to another, alternative set of mutually compatible options, if not in the parties' present circumstances at least in some other situation involving - perhaps - a minimal change in their relationship or means of communicating: "Why this particular good, at this particular time, by this particular set of strategies ?"

5.2. Alternatives to a Solution of Division.

I can illustrate this by returning to our previous conflict over the parenthood - and hence possession - of a disputed baby, ostensibly settled by Solomon's decision to divide the good equally between the two adversaries. At one level, Solomon decided to "resolve" this conflict by a simple, positional bargaining, split the difference, third party choice process. In other words, he took the two rivals' public bargaining positions as their immutable goals, and divided the "good" in question into equal portions and awarded as equal amount to each party. Of course, underlying this process was a complex theoretical framework that Solomon had about the psychology of mothers and non-mothers claiming babies [I am less than sure that even a non-mother would have settled so easily for half the good in question as Solomon seems to have assumed. Possibly his was a wholly inaccurate, patriarchal theory.] But let us stay, for the moment, at the level of analysis provided by the biblical story.

What Solomon could have done as an alternative process might have involved asking why a non-mother could have wanted a baby, given the time, place and circumstances. Might the underlying interest have been in replacing her own lost child, or in obtaining the children she would be unable to have naturally in future ? Or of avoiding a future social stigma of being barren ? Or of obtaining some respectability and status through fulfilling what Solomon's society would probably have deemed an essential female role ? If the non-mother's interest underlying the goal of obtaining a baby - leaving aside for the moment her wanting this particular baby - then other options become possible, involving the availability of orphaned children or alternative ways of conferring status and respect on individuals in a social system (17).

Alternatively, there is the question of why a non-mother could have wanted this particular baby; what did it specifically represent ? In the absence of such a question being asked, it is possible to speculate that the non-mother might simply be seeking revenge or restitution for a previous wrong by the mother or by a close relative (18). Her underlying interest might have been the recovery of a debt or the settling of some old scores. The whole conflict might be symbolic of a long

standing feud between families or clans, involving numerous interlocking issues and disputes. If the two women came from different classes or different ethnic groups, then a whole series of other interests may have underlain the obviously incompatible goal of both wishing to possess the baby, and allowed alternative solutions to that of division of the good in question.

If any of these factors were part of the context for the conflict, then Solomon's strategy of discovering the natural mother and "settling" the conflict by awarding the whole baby to that woman might have resulted simply an exacerbation of underlying conflicts of which the dispute over the baby was merely symptomatic. His task as a genuine conflict resolver was not simply to detect a deceiver so was thus only beginning when he accepted the surface description of the conflict, its nature and its underlying causes.

Being critical of Solomon is easy - and unfair - but the story does illustrate the difference between simply accepting parties' enunciation of their own goals at face value, and trying to settle a conflict in which those goals - as defined - really are mutually incompatible; and attempting to investigate the interests and values underlying those goals and exploring whether alternative, compatible goals might fulfil those interests equally well - or perhaps even better. Are there alternatives ? Can one discover or devise means by which the parties can obtain what they themselves want ? How might one be able to do this in a situation where both parties are mutually coercing each other and are often unwilling to trust each other even to the point where they will meet face to face ? And, even if it is theoretically possible to answer such questions affirmatively and thus envisage the resolution of an intractable conflict, there remains a wide gap between a logical or theoretical possibility and a practical opportunity, although I would argue that the simple realisation that there may be alternative ways of getting what you want and that alternatives can [and probably do] exist, should give leaders of parties in conflict at least some incentive for asking the question; How might such a possibility be explored ? (19)

6. Solutions of Creation.

Recognition of another, rather different approach to the question of what sort of solution might justifiably be sought to an intractable conflict returns the argument briefly to the discussion of the range of types of solution theoretically available by casting further doubt on the universal validity of the constant sum paradigm discussed earlier in this paper. To our list of solutions of division, of substitution and of expansion a fourth and basically different type could be added, which might be entitled solutions of creation. These should not be confused with some of the other forms of "integrative agreement" already discussed, which are often mentioned in the literature as being solutions that "create value" in the sense that, by adding goods to the overall settlement, they "expand the pie" [to use Pruitt's expression] of goods to be shared out among the adversaries, thus easing what remains, fundamentally, a task of division.

In fact, it might be better to label this particular form of solution differently as one of "re-invention" or "re-conceptualisation", or to use Pruitt's term of "bridging". However, the core role played by genuinely creative thinking in this type of solution is so central that the term solutions of creation does seem more appropriate. Whatever the label, this type of solution depends initially on a rejection of a zero-sum approach even to intractable conflicts. Rather, it involves a re-interpretation of parties' goals and means as a first step towards fully achieving underlying interests, thus "bridging" the gap between the goals enunciated in the public bargaining positions of adversaries and the more crucial interests underlying those goals. The principle, in Pruitt's terms involves "...the reformulation of the issue(s) based on an analysis of the underlying interests of both sides..." [1986 p.469]. As I have argued above, it may be that the underlying interests of the adversaries may be found actually to be compatible, or other, non-exclusive means may be found of satisfying such interests. Alternatively - although whether this would also count as an "integrative solution" is open to question - Pruitt suggests that if some means might be found to elucidate the parties' priorities among their interests, then this might enable a solution to be discovered or created that satisfied the higher priorities of each, even if some of the less salient interests remain unsatisfied.

Whatever the nuances of this approach, its existence does enable a modification of our original Table to include a fourth type of possible solution:

TYPE OF SOLUTION	MAIN CHARACTERISTICS	TYPICAL EXAMPLE
Solutions of Division	Compromise and Sharing	Division of land: India 1947 West Bank partition
Solutions of Substitution	Compensation - Log-rolling - Non specific compensation - Cost cutting	"Land for Peace"
Solutions of Expansion	Increase via collaborative effort.	Industrial productivity agreement
Solutions of Creation	Reconceptualisation of nature of the issues in the conflict.	Fight into debate or game

TABLE 2. FULL RANGE OF TYPES OF SOLUTION IN INTRACTABLE CONFLICTS

Talk of "elucidation" of the bridge between goals and interests and of parties' hierarchies of interest returns the discussion once again to dilemmas of practice and to "conflict resolution" as procedure. The practical challenge for a procedure that might justifiably be termed one of "conflict resolution" thus becomes to set one in place whereby parties can examine the interests, values and needs underlying their currently incompatible goals, and jointly come up with alternative, compatible goals, which are, in fact, alternative means of achieving underlying interests, values and needs - if possible in a less costly fashion in terms of sacrificed alternatives.

7. Implications for Conflict Resolution as Process.

In this Chapter I have argued that many of the criticisms of conflict researchers' argument that almost all conflicts are inherently resolvable are based upon a misinterpretation of what that statement means. Fundamentally, that argument is that the goal incompatibilities that lie at the heart of all conflicts must be reconciled for a complete, successful, and long lasting resolution, and that it is theoretically possible to do this because, on the one hand, goals are not immutable but change and can be changed by circumstances and contexts; and on the other because enunciated goals are frequently means of achieving underlying interests or fulfilling fundamental values which may be achieved or fulfilled by other means.

In some situations there may, indeed, be no other way of fulfilling the underlying interests and aspirations of the parties to a conflict at that particular time. However, there may be - if thought and effort are devoted to analysing what such interests and aspirations actually are, and what the resultant goals truly represent. And there may be at a later time, if interests, goals or circumstances change. At base, this is what conflict researchers mean when they talk about conflicts being "resolvable problems" and I discuss the application of these possibilities to two types of particularly intractable conflicts in Chapter 2.

It may be that even the existence of the theoretical possibility of a resolution to an intractable and long drawn out conflict will bring some hope of a practical solution to the parties in conflict. However, the fact that mutually acceptable solution might exist in some realm of theory is only a first step -and not much of a first step - in the direction of finding such practical solutions to protracted conflicts.

What implications does all of the above have for the practical business of conflict resolution in the field, where the immediate problems are to stop people killing each other in large numbers, or to get negotiators round a table without hedging the bargaining process round with a crushing burden of mutually unacceptable conditions for talks ?

I will try to deal with the practical aspects of conflict resolution as a process in a later Chapter, but an outline of the principles on which such a process needs to be based should be discernible in this present work, even though it has approached the subject from the viewpoint of analysis and conflict resolution as outcome rather than practice and conflict resolution as procedure.

Implicitly, I have argued that to begin to move towards a resolution, parties in an intractable conflict [or at least some key members thereof];

[1] Have to be made aware of the theoretical possibility of a positive sum solution for their conflict - if they can go beyond their immediate bargaining positions and publicly repeated goals which are usually portrayed as non-negotiable;

[2] Have to become aware that the problem is not solely of their adversary's making and that while the adversary is certainly part of their problem, equally they are part of the adversary's problem - so they both have to be involved in the making of a solution.

[3] Have to be convinced that there is a potential negotiating partner on the other side - not just an implacably malevolent enemy whose only wish is for their harm and whose every move is calculated to cause maximum damage.

[4] Have to be placed in circumstances where it is possible to explore each others' underlying interests - the values and aims that underlie the goals being pursued and the positions publicly enunciated.

[5] Have to be put in a position where they can explore the costs of continuing to pursue their goals and interests by the strategies that have - so far - led to the protraction of the conflict, higher costs than anticipated, and the risks of further sacrifices to come.

[6] Have to be able to explore, jointly and without commitment, alternative means of achieving their underlying interests to see whether some of these might lead to means-goals that are mutually compatible.

[7] Have to be put in a position in which together, they can explore likely obstacles to pursuing new alternatives and options, and how these might be successfully dealt with, if a new relationship is to be established and solutions implemented.

Merely listing the requirements in principle of a successful process of conflict resolution is somewhat frightening, and all of these steps and stages need careful explanation and exploration. How can such unlikely circumstances arise? Who can play what role in bringing about such preliminary recognition of possibilities and how? Where is the role of the intermediary, the peacekeeping force, the regional intergovernmental organisation? Who assists adversaries with the costing of alternatives and what convincing metric can be devised for such costing?

The list of such questions appears endless, and with each question doubts about the practicality of achieving any resolution - however theoretically possible - grow stronger. However, the continuation of the Somalias, the Kosovos, the Belfasts and the Bieruts is still more daunting and frightening, and their contemplation should encourage everyone to persevere with the conception of conflict as a resolvable problem, even if the road to resolution is a complex and difficult one. I will suggest a sketch map of that road and some techniques for accessing and travelling it in subsequent Chapters.

ENDNOTES

(1) I say "in theory" because it seems to me that it may be the case that one could envisage a whole range of solutions for a particular conflict and yet none of them be of much practical value given the current state of the parties to the conflict. Leaders may, for example, have driven themselves into a political corner from which any non-coercive move towards the adversary may result in loss of power and replacement by even more dedicated "hawks".

(2) There are a whole series of other interesting and important questions attached to this central concern. Are there some conflicts which, by their nature, are irresolvable ? Are there certain types of conflict which can only be settled through compromise and never fully resolved [for example, conflicts over territory] ? Do conflicts arise from certain inherent and unchangeable features of human nature that render them resistant to resolution ? Are men - and women - inherently conflict prone ?

All of these are interesting and important, but they seem to me to be secondary to the core question posed above. If we cannot show that conflicts are resolvable in principle, at least, then it would be better for us to acknowledge the fact and start seeking better ways of managing and ameliorating something that cannot be resolved. And we had better stop using the term itself.

(3) In addition, one should note the indirect influence of economics ("The study of the allocation of scarce resources among competing ends") and the direct - and, some would say, baleful - influence of Game Theory on conflict research.

(4) Of course, it is always possible to argue as does Gerald Wetlaufer [1996], that even in this situation, such a solution may be an "improvement" for both adversaries, and thus represent an "overall" gain in value. If things are so bad for one side that getting an agreement - any agreement - will result in its not suffering the "costs of combat" any longer, then any agreement - even one that produces a clear loser and winner - will "create value" even for the loser and certainly create value for the winner. The result will be an "integrative solution" that increases the overall value gained from the outcome, at least compared with the value of continuing the conflict. I am not sure, however, that this is what proponents of "integrative solutions" have in mind, even though Wetlaufer argues that some reputational benefits could accrue to the loser through gains in its reputation for being reasonable.

(5) The dominance of this zero-sum "worldview" is ensured by the fact that it underpins leaders' policies towards conflicts, in either prosecuting them or trying to settle them. Hence the approach derives further legitimacy and confirmation through its constant use, much in the manner of other self-fulfilling prophecies. Its "realism" appears to be confirmed by use and experience, and its dominance ensures the marginalisation of other views about conflicts and their resolution.

(6) This is not to deny that such solutions improve upon a simple solution of division where no effort is made to improve anyone's sense of gain so that "...whatever the nature of the compromise outcome, it is likely to be far less than optimal, leaving the nations equally dissatisfied..." [Samuelson 1985 p.109] Perhaps equalising dissatisfaction is one way of achieving equity.

(7) In a way, both direct and nonspecific forms of compensation could also be regarded as other ways of "expanding the pie", with the additional goods being supplied by the party gaining most of the goods in dispute or by outside parties who wish to support a settlement. However, both seem clearly different from "solutions of expansion" which I discuss later in this paper.

(8) Similarly, when talking about the possibility of conflict resolution, conflict researchers are not saying that any conflict can be resolved [or magically transformed] at any stage of its development. Even the most optimistic conflict analyst will admit that there are stages in any conflict when little can be done to move towards a resolution, and that such stages can, in some conflicts, last a very long time during which all that can be done is to monitor the situation, attempt to ameliorate some of the worst effects of the coercion and violence being used against each other by the adversaries, and prepare for other, more promising circumstances to arise. We are only now, in the research on "timing" and "ripeness", beginning systematically to consider what such circumstances might be and how their appearance might best be accelerated. However, as a matter of practice rather than principle, analysts talking about the possibility of resolving a particular conflict do not mean to imply that a resolution is a realistic option in any and every time. As a practical process, conflict resolution can take quite as long as conflict emergence and escalation.

(9) Marcus Aurelius goes on to urge "...teach yourself to see that Nature's highest happiness lies in changing the things that are, and forming new things after their kind..." Meditations Book 4.36

(10) It is, of course, the objective of each party's coercive strategy to make the other party abandon its goals and much effort is bent to the end of "unilateral goal adjustment".

(11) One could also recall the manner in which Prussia [and Frederick the Great], were saved from defeat by the

accession of the Germanophile, Catherine the Great of Russia in the 17th Century.

(12) It frequently seems to be the case that parties in conflict often add other goals [such as denying the adversary their goals, or "punishing" that adversary] to their original goals set, thus making the conflict yet more intractable.

(13) The profound sense of disorientation among some western intellectuals following the closing of the Cold War and the ending of the "adversary partnership" may be an example of this "loss of continuity" once a conflict is over. The concomitant search - at least in the West - for a new adversary may represent a coping mechanism for this loss and disorientation - what Marris describes as "an impulse to restore the past". [Marris 1974 p.5] Note the sense of relief that pervades much recent American writing about the resurgence of Russian foreign policy ambitions in the "near abroad".

(14) However, it is clearly the case that individuals, decision making elites and parties in conflict do learn and change goals over time, although this is not necessarily a classical "rational" process in which the benefits from obtaining the goal[s] in question are periodically weighed against the likely costs of achieving them. At the very least, there are frequent cases where the chief determinant of continuing to value particular goals highly [and to pursue them by coercing an adversary] appears to be the level of resources already expended in their pursuit. Sunk costs as opposed to future costs play a major role in maintaining -sometimes even increasing - the value of the goal being sought. (Mitchell 1991)

(15) The practical, conflict resolution problem is how to involve parties in processes that enable them to "cost out", with some accuracy, the likely sacrifices they are going to have to make in order to achieve the incompatible goals underlying the conflict.

(16) The slogan of the Irish Unionists in the early years of this century is revealing both as a very specific political goal - one which set them in conflict with Irish Nationalists - and as an indication of the more general interests reaching that goal would maintain; "A Protestant state for a Protestant people..."

A similar statement was made in a recent [1994] problem solving workshop attended by the author which involved issues of attempted secession in the former Soviet Union, when one participant stated that his party had set up a new state "...in order to safeguard our interests and our security..."

(17) Steven Brams [1990 pp.17-25] has argued that the overriding interest of the non-mother was to curry favour with Solomon by acceding to his decision even if this meant dismembering the baby. However this analysis begs the question of what interests underlay the imposter's claim in the first place, which surely can have had little to do with winning the king's favour. Moreover, it does reinforce the argument that at least one party [the imposter] came to have underlying interests that could have been satisfied by other means, once the dispute had reached the level of royal arbitration.

(18) As Kim and Smith point out, conflicts often generate new goals in that parties involve themselves in "...an attempt to inflict harm in return for harm.." [p.38] However, they also argue that underlying such a goal is often the interest of either [1] restoring a sense of self-worth that has been damaged by the original injury; [2] obtaining justice for harm done and [3] deterring future injury. All of these interests could be achieved by means other than inflicting counter-injury as revenge.

(19) This question is likely to become more insistent as the costs of continuing coercive strategies increase and the prospects of achieving one's original goals do not appear to improve greatly.