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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Intractable Conflict

Peter T. Coleman

When destructive conflicts persist for long periods of time and resist every attempt to resolve them constructively, they can appear to take on a life of their own. We label them as *intractable conflicts*. They can occur between individuals (as in prolonged marital disputes) and within or between groups (as evidenced in the antiabortion-prochoice conflict) or nations (as seen in the tragic events in Northern Ireland, Cyprus, and the former Yugoslavia). Over time, they tend to attract the involvement of many parties, become increasingly complicated, and give rise to a threat to basic human needs or values. Typically, they result in negative outcomes for the parties involved, ranging from mutual alienation and contempt to atrocities such as murder, rape, and genocide.

Unfortunately, intractable conflicts are common. Globally, about 40 percent of recent intrastate conflicts persisted for ten years or more, with 25 percent of the wars waged lasting for more than twenty-five years (Smith, 1997). Some conflicts, such as the hostilities in Northern Ireland and Cyprus, have persisted for centuries. Domestically, nations face countless incidents of protracted intergroup conflict over racial, class, and gender inequities, as well as over issues such as abortion rights, the death penalty, and gun control. Similarly, the list of intractable interpersonal disputes, grudges, and feuds among family members, with former friends and personal enemies is substantial.

The objective of this chapter is to provide a practical overview of our current understanding of intractable conflict. It has four sections. It begins with a discussion of the characteristics of intractable conflict, which distinguish

intractable from more manageable conflict. The second section outlines five categories of approaches for addressing these types of conflicts. The third section offers some general guidelines for intervening in such conflicts, emphasizing intervention that is multimodal and multidisciplinary. The chapter concludes with a discussion of implications for training intervenors and disputants.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INTRACTABLE CONFLICTS

Intractable conflicts are essentially conflicts that persist because they appear impossible to resolve. Scholars have used labels such as *deeply rooted conflict* (Burton, 1987), *protracted social conflict* (Azar, 1990), *moral conflict* (Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997), and *enduring rivalries* (Goertz and Diehl, 1993) to depict similar phenomena. Kriesberg (2005) stresses three dimensions that differentiate intractable from tractable conflicts: their persistence, destructiveness, and resistance to resolution. Most intractable conflicts do not begin as such, but become so as escalation, hostile interactions, sentiment, and time change the quality of the conflict. They can be triggered and emerge from a wide variety of factors and events, but often involve important issues such as moral and identity differences, high-stakes resources, and/or struggles for power and self-determination (Burgess and Burgess, 1996). Intractable conflicts are typically associated with cycles of high and low intensity and destructiveness, are often costly in both social and economic terms, and can become pervasive, affecting even mundane aspects of disputants' lives (Kriesberg, 1998; Coleman, 2003).

Characteristics: Tractable Versus Intractable

But what makes intractable conflicts persist? Scholars have begun to identify a diverse and complex array of interrelated factors that can help us distinguish between tractable and intractable conflicts. Of course, all conflicts are unique and it may not always be useful to compare, say, moral conflicts with intractable conflicts over territory or water rights, or conflicts between a husband and wife in the United States with those between a powerful majority group and members of a low-power group in East Asia. However, despite the many differences that arise in such comparisons, I suggest that intractable conflicts, particularly if they have persisted for some time, share to some degree some or all of the following characteristics related to their context, core issues, relations, processes, and outcomes. (See Table 24.1.)

Context

Legacies of Dominance and Injustice. Intractable conflicts regularly occur in situations where there exists a severe imbalance of power between the parties in which the more powerful exploit, control, or abuse the less powerful. Often,

Table 24.1. Characteristic Differences Between Tractable and Intractable Conflicts.

| | Tractable Conflict | Intractable Conflict |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| I. Context | | |
| | A. Historical dominance and injustice | History of oppression; pervasive cultural and structural dominance, violence, injustice, and victimization; insulated elite |
| | B. Instability and anarchy | Periods of rapid, substantial change; compromised norms and institutions; changes in aspirations; power shifts and ambiguity; anarchy |
| II. Issues | A. Human and social polarities | Dialogic poles; paradoxical dilemmas; unresolved in traditional sense |
| | B. Symbolism and ideology | Intricate interconnections of issues; high centrality; truth; meaning embedded within basic assumptions, beliefs, and ideologies |
| III. Relationships | A. Inescapable, destructive relations | Exclusive structures; inescapable; destroyed; intense mixed motives with intractable core |
| | B. Oppositional group identities | Polarized collective identities; constructed around arbitrary dimensions of conflict; monolithic and exclusive, frozen |

(Continued)

Table 24.1. Characteristic Differences Between Tractable and Intractable Conflicts. (Continued)

| | Tractable Conflict | Intractable Conflict |
|---|--------------------|----------------------|
| C. Internal dynamics | | |
| Involves conscious needs and motives; groups are unified; agendas are covert and explicit | | |
| Emotions are mainly superficial or peripheral; passing; socially constructed constraint | | |
| Low to moderate intensity; minimal violence or nonviolent encounters; inclusive moral scope | | |
| Clear boundaries; low to moderate complexity; few levels and parties; stable | | |
| Unsettling and anxiety provoking; when traumatic, effectively addressed | | |
| Brief time span; sustainable resolutions; constructive norms; shifting commitments | | |
| IV. Processes | | |
| A. Intense emotionality | | |
| Humiliation, deprivation, loss, and rage, as well as loyalty and dignity are central; socially constructed volatility | | |
| B. Malignant social processes | | |
| High intensity; escalatory spirals; psychological and structural changes; moral exclusion; violent atrocities | | |
| C. Pervasiveness and complexity | | |
| Pervasive; high complexity; multilevel; multiparty; mercurial | | |
| V. Outcomes | | |
| A. Protracted trauma | | |
| Individual and community trauma; fractured trust; repressed or left unaddressed | | |
| B. Normalization of hostilities | | |
| Historical rivalries; enduring cycles of low-to-high-to-low intensity; destructive norms; intergenerational perpetuation; lasting commitments | | |

Source: Adapted from Coleman (2003). Characteristics of Protracted, Intractable Conflict: toward the Development of a Meta-framework—I. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 9(1), 1–37. Eribaum.

the power holders in such settings will use the existence of salient intergroup distinctions (such as ethnicity or class) as a means of maintaining or strengthening their power base (Staub, 2001). Many of these conflicts are rooted in a history of colonialism, ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, or human rights abuses in the relations between the disputants (Azar, 1990). These legacies manifest in ideologies and practices at the cultural, structural, and relational levels of these conflicts, which act to maintain hierarchical relations and injustices and thereby perpetuate conflict.

Instability. When circumstances bring about substantial changes, they can rupture a basic sense of stability and cause great disturbances within a system. This is true whether it is the divorce of two parents, the failure of a state, or the collapse of a superpower. Under these conditions, conflict may surface because of shifts in the balance (or imbalance) of power between disputants or because of increased ambiguity about relative power (Pruitt and Kim, 2004). It can also emerge when a sense of relative deprivation arises out of changes in aspirations, expectations, or achievable outcomes of the parties (Gurr, 1970). Such changes can bring into question the old rules, patterns, and institutions that have failed to meet basic needs, and can decrease the level of trust in fairness-creating and conflict-resolving procedures, laws, and institutions, adversely affecting their capacity to address problems and further destabilizing the situation. Anarchical situations, where there is a lack of an overarching political authority or of the necessary checks and balances that help manage systems, are an extreme example of power vacuums that can foster protracted conflict.

Issues

Human and Social Polarities. Tractable conflicts by definition involve resolvable problems that can be integrated, divided, or otherwise negotiated to the relative satisfaction of a majority of the parties involved. As such, they have a finite beginning, middle, and end. Intractable conflicts often revolve around some of the more central dilemmas of human and social existence that are not resolvable in the traditional sense. These are polarities (structured contradictions) based on opposing human needs, tendencies, principles, or processes, which have a paradoxical reaction to most attempts to “solve” them. These can include dilemmas over change and stability, interdependence and security, inclusive and efficient decision making, and individual and group rights (Coleman, 2003).

Symbolism and Ideology. Intractable conflicts tend to involve issues with a depth of meaning, centrality, and interconnectedness with other issues that give them a pervasive quality (Rouhana and Bar-Tal, 1998). The tangible issues

(land, money, water rights, and so on) that trigger hostilities in these settings are largely important because of the symbolic meaning that they carry or that is constructed and assigned to them. For instance, Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in 2000 was seen as a frivolous gesture to some and as a flagrant attack on Islam to others. Or, in Kashmir, much of the mountainous territory in dispute is frozen, uninhabitable wasteland, yet soldiers and civilians die each day to secure it. Such specific issues (resources, actions, and events) become symbols of great emotional importance through social interaction between people and through their connection to existing conflict narratives: stories that define the criteria for what is good, moral, and right in any given conflict setting (Bar-Tal, 2000).

Relationships

Exclusive and Inescapable. In many intractable conflicts, the relations between the parties develop in settings where exclusive social structures limit intergroup contact and isolate the in-group across family, work, and community domains. This lack of contact facilitates the development of abstract, stereotypical images of the other, autistic hostilities, and intergroup violence (Deutsch, 1973; Varshney, 2002). However, the relationships are also typically experienced as inescapable by the parties, where they see no way of extricating themselves without becoming vulnerable to an unacceptable loss. This may be due to a variety of constraints including geographical, financial, moral, or psychological factors. When destructive conflicts persist under these conditions, they tend to damage or destroy the trust, faith, and cooperative potential necessary for constructive or tolerant relations. In such relationships, the negative aspects remain salient, and any positive encounters are forgotten or viewed with suspicion and misconstrued as aberrations or attempts at deception.

Oppositional Group Identities. As group conflicts escalate, opposing groups become increasingly polarized through in-group discourse and out-group hostilities, resulting in the development of oppositional identities constructed around a negation and disparagement of the out-group (Kelman, 1999). This is particularly likely with collective identities of ascribed statuses (such as family, sex, racial, and national group membership) where there is a long-term emotional attachment to the group that is unalterable and significant. When such group identities are subject to discrimination or oppression (and such treatment is viewed as unjust), protracted conflicts are likely to manifest and persist. These group memberships can provide members with an important sense of mutual respect, a meaningful understanding of the social world, and a sense of collective efficacy and agency. However, deep investments in these polarized identities can become a primary obstacle to constructive forms of conflict engagement and sustainable peace.

Intense Internal Dynamics. Conflict is more likely to be resolvable when it concerns (1) conscious needs and motives, (2) between unified groups or between individuals with little ambivalence regarding resolution, (3) over overt issues which can be explicitly detailed and addressed. As such, the conflictual intrapsychic and intragroup dynamics and hidden agendas associated with intractable conflicts contribute to their difficult nature. They typically consist of both implicit and explicit issues, formal and informal agendas, and deliberate and unconscious processes. In addition, the high degree of threat, harm, and anxiety associated with them leads to a felt need for defensiveness and secrecy, which drives many motives, issues, and actions underground.

Processes

Strong Emotionality. Economically rational models of costs and benefits or positions and interests cannot begin to model the fabric of protracted social conflicts. Typically, these processes have a boiling emotional core, replete with humiliation, frustration, rage, threat, and resentment between groups and deep feelings of pride, esteem, dignity, and identification within groups. In fact, some scholars contend that extreme reactions in conflicts are primarily based in emotional responses (Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997). In effect, the overall distinction between emotionality and rationality may be rather dubious when it comes to intractable conflicts, where they are often inseparable. Here, indignation, rage, and righteousness are reasons enough for retributive action. However, it is not merely the type and depth of emotions that distinguishes tractable from intractable conflict, but rather differences in the normative structures and processes that imbue them with meaning. Our feelings of raw emotion (hate, rage, pride) are often labeled, understood, and acted on in ways shaped by rules and norms that define what certain emotions mean, whether they are good or bad, and how people should respond to them. Thus, similar emotions may be constructed and acted upon differently in dissimilar families, communities, and cultures. Communities entrenched in an intractable conflict may unwittingly encourage emotional experiences and expressions of the most extreme nature, thereby escalating and sustaining the conflict.

Malignant Social Processes. Over time, a variety of cognitive, moral, and behavioral processes combine to bring protracted conflicts to a level of high intensity and perceived intractability. They include such cognitive processes as stereotyping, ethnocentrism, selective perception (like the discovery of confirming evidence), self-fulfilling prophecies (when negative attitudes and perceptions impact the other's behavior), and cognitive rigidity. These can fuel processes of deindividuation and dehumanization of the enemy, leading to moral disengagement and moral exclusion (Opatow, 1990), that is, the development of rigid moral boundaries between groups, which exclude out-group

members from typical standards of moral treatment. This can result in a variety of antagonistic behaviors such as escalatory spirals (where each aggressive behavior is met with a more aggressive response), autistic hostilities (a cessation of direct communication), and violence. What is unique to intractable conflicts is the pervasiveness and persistence of psychological and physical violence, how it typically leads to counterviolence and some degree of normalization of violent acts, and the extreme level of destruction it typically inflicts. These escalatory processes culminate in the development of malignant social relations, which Deutsch (1985) described as "a stage (of escalation) which is increasingly dangerous and costly and from which the participants see no way of extricating themselves without becoming vulnerable to an unacceptable loss in a value central to their self-identities or self-esteem" (p. 263).

Pervasiveness, Complexity, and Flux. Tractable conflicts have relatively clear boundaries that delineate what they are and are not about, whom they concern and whom they do not, and when and where it is appropriate to engage in the conflict. In intractable situations, the experience of threat associated with the conflict is so basic that the effects of the conflict spread and become pervasive, affecting many aspects of a person's or a community's social and political life (Rouhana and Bar-Tal, 1998). The existential nature of these conflicts can impact everything from policy making, leadership, education, the arts, and scholarly inquiry down to the most mundane decisions such as whether to shop and eat in public places. The totality of such experiences feels impenetrable. Yet they are systems in a constant state of flux. Thus, the "hot" issues in the conflict, the levels where they manifest, the critical parties involved, the nature of the relationships in the network, the degree of intensity of the conflict, and the level of attention it attracts from bystander communities are all subject to change. This chaotic, mercurial character contributes to their resistance to resolution.

Outcomes

Protracted Trauma. The experience of prolonged trauma associated with many of these conflicts produces, perhaps, their most troubling consequences. Long-term exposure to atrocities and human suffering, the loss of loved ones, rape, bodily disfigurement, and chronic health problems can destroy people's spirit and impair their capacity to lead a healthy life. At its core, trauma is a loss of trust in a safe and predictable world. In response, individuals suffer from a variety of symptoms, including recurrent nightmares, suicidal thoughts, demoralization, helplessness, hopelessness, anxiety, depression, somatic illnesses, sleeplessness, and feelings of isolation and meaninglessness. Trauma adversely affects parenting, marriages, essential life choices, and the manner with which authority figures take up leadership roles. It also impairs communities and can hamper everything from the most mundane merchant-client interactions to voting and

governmental functioning (Parakrama, 2001). Thus, the links between trauma and intractability seem to lie in the degree of impairment of individuals and communities and, in particular, in the manner in which trauma is or is not addressed post-conflict.

Normalization of Hostility and Violence. In these settings, destructive processes gradually come to be experienced as normative by the parties involved. The biased construction of history, ongoing violent discourse, and intergenerational perpetuation of the conflict contribute to a sense of reality where the hostilities are as natural as the landscape. For example, Israeli and Palestinian youth in the Middle East were found to accept and justify the use of violence and war in conflict significantly more than youth from European settings of nonintractable conflict (Orr, Sagi, and Bar-On, 2000). In addition, they found Israeli and Palestinian youth more reluctant than Europeans to be willing to pay a price for peace. Again, what appeared to matter in this study was how the meaning of violence differed for the youth from these different settings. The violence/war discourse in the Middle East, passed down through the distinct parental and community ideologies of the Israeli and Palestinian communities, depicted violence as an act of self-defense and war as a noble cause. This type of ideology has been found to shield youth from the psychological harm typically associated with exposure to violence. Thus, increased levels of violence had become normalized for the Middle-Eastern youth, and were seen as necessary and useful particularly because of the perception that negotiations were impossibly costly (in terms of the nonnegotiable concessions that would need to be made).

To summarize, intractable conflicts are complex, mercurial, exhausting, and rife with misery. Their persistence can be the result of a wide variety of different causes and processes. Ultimately, however, I suggest that it is the complex interaction of many of these factors across different levels of the conflict (from personal to international) over long periods of time that brings them to an extreme state of hopelessness and intransigence.

APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING INTRACTABLE CONFLICT: FIVE PARADIGMS

Over the past several decades, the applied literature on social conflict has put forth a large array of approaches for prevention, intervention, and reconstruction work with protracted social conflicts. These perspectives have emerged from a variety of disciplines such as political science, social psychology, developmental psychology, law, education, communications, anthropology, linguistics,

public health, and economics. All of these approaches are derived from images and assumptions about conflict that frame this work in a manner that is both useful and consequential. For while our reading of any conflict will depend largely on the specifics of the situation (and thus is data based), it is also heavily influenced by the cognitive structures we bring to the analysis (and so is also frame based). This is particularly true when the situations we face are difficult to comprehend: vast, complex, volatile, and replete with contradictory information. These frames help to organize our thinking about our work, but also constrain our understanding of the full complexity of the situations with which we engage. I now outline five major paradigms employed currently in framing research and practice in this area: realism, human relations, pathology, postmodernism, and systems. These paradigms are, in effect, clusters of approaches that vary internally across a myriad of important dimensions and overlap to some degree with approaches from other paradigms. The five paradigms are presented in order from most to least influential in the field today.

The Realist Paradigm

Historically, this perspective has been the dominant paradigm for the study of war and peace in history, politics, and international affairs. Essentially a political metaphor, it views protracted conflicts as dangerous, high-stakes games that are won through strategies of domination, control, and countercontrol. (See Schelling, 1960.) Although they vary, approaches of this nature tend to assume that resources and power are always scarce, that human beings are basically flawed (always capable of producing evil) and have a will to dominate, and that one's opponents in conflict at any point may become aggressive. Consequently, they present an inherently conflictual world with uncertainties regarding the present and future intentions of one's adversary leading to risk-averse decision making. Thus, intractable conflicts are thought to result from rational, strategic choices made under the conditions of the "real politics" of hatred, manipulation, dominance, and violence in the world. These conflicts are seen as "real conflicts" of interest and power, which exist objectively due to scarcities in the world and are only exacerbated by such psychological phenomenon as fear, mistrust, and misperception. In this context, power is seen as both paramount and corrupting, and real change is believed to be brought about primarily through power-coercive, command and control strategies.

The realist approach highlights the need for strong actions to provide the protections necessary and requires that we find effective methods for minimizing acts of aggression and for bolstering a sense of social and institutional stability, while at the same time confronting the underlying patterns of intergroup dominance and oppression that are the bedrock of many conflicts. Examples of this approach include the use of direct force, Machiavellian approaches to statesmanship, game

theoretical strategies of collective security and deterrence, and "jujitsu" tactics of community organizing (Alinsky, 1971). They also include acts of stabilization to offset uncertainties, such as establishing clear and fair rules of law, a trustworthy government and judiciary, fair and safe voting practices, and a free press. In some settings they involve activism to offset power imbalances including raising awareness of specific types of injustice within both high-power and low-power communities; helping to organize, support, and empower marginalized groups; and bringing outside pressure to bear on the dominant groups for progressive reforms (Deutsch, 1985).

The Human Relations Paradigm

An alternative to the realist paradigm emerged primarily through the social-psychological study of conflict and stresses the vital role that human social interactions play in triggering, perpetuating, and resolving conflict. Based on a social metaphor, its most basic image of intractable conflict is of destructive relationships in which parties are locked in an increasingly hostile and vicious escalatory spiral and from which there appears to be no escape. With some variation, these approaches view human nature as mixed, with people having essentially equal capacities for good and evil, and stress the importance of different external conditions for eliciting either altruism and cooperation or aggression and violence. This orientation also identifies fear, distrust, misunderstanding, and hostile interactions between disputants and between their respective communities as primary obstacles to constructive engagement. Thus, subjective psychological processes are seen as central as well, significantly influencing disputants' perceptions, expectations, and behavioral responses and therefore largely determining the course of conflict (see Deutsch, 1973). From this perspective, change is thought to be brought about most effectively through the planful targeting of people, communities, and social conditions, and is best mobilized through normative re-educative processes of influence (Fisher, 1994).

The human relations approach promotes a sense of hope and possibility under difficult circumstances. It stresses that we recognize the central importance of human contact and interaction between members of the various communities for both maintaining and transforming protracted conflicts. Human relations procedures include various methods of integrative negotiation, mediation, constructive controversy, and models of alternative dispute resolution systems design. In addition, scholars have found that establishing integrated social structures—including ethnically integrated business associations, trade unions, professional groups, political parties, and sports clubs—are one of the most effective ways of making intergroup conflict manageable (Varshney, 2002). Other variations include interactive problem-solving workshops (Kelman, 1999), town meeting methodologies, focused social imaging (Boulding, 1986), and anti-bias education.

The Medical Paradigm

This view pictures intractable social conflicts as pathological diseases, as infections or cancers of the body politic that can spread and afflict the system and that therefore need to be correctly diagnosed, treated, and contained. A medical metaphor, it views its patient, the conflict system, as a complicated system made up of various interrelated parts, which exist as an objective reality and thus can be analyzed and understood directly and treated accordingly. These patients are thought to be treated most effectively by outside experts who have the knowledge, training, and distance from the patient necessary to accurately diagnose and address the problem. This perspective views humans and social systems as basically health-oriented entities that, due to certain predispositions, neglect, or exposure to toxins in the environment, can develop pathological illnesses or tendencies that are destructive. Treatment of these pathologies, particularly when severe, is seen as both an art and a science, with many courses of treatment bringing their own negative consequences to the system. Although not as common as the realist and human relations paradigms, the medical model is particularly popular with agencies, community-based organizations, and nongovernmental organizations working in settings of protracted conflict.

A classic example of the medical approach is Volkan's Tree Model (Volkan, 1998), which recommends working collectively with communities in conflict to unearth the "hidden transcripts" (hidden resistances), "hot" locations (symbolic sites), and the chosen traumas and glories that maintain oppositional group identities. This diagnostic phase is followed by a series of psychopolitical dialogues between influential representatives of relevant groups, who then work toward a "vaccination" campaign to reduce poisonous emotions at the local community, governmental, and societal levels. Other activities aimed at containing the spread of pathologies of violence in communities include strategies of nonviolence and many types of preventative diplomacy (such as early warning systems), crisis diplomacy, peace enforcement (conflict mitigation), and peacekeeping. In addition, this approach is associated with a wide variety of activities for post-conflict reconstruction, including rebuilding damaged infrastructure, currency stabilization, demining, creating legitimate and integrated governments, demilitarizing and demobilizing soldiers, resettling displaced peoples, and establishing awareness of and support for basic human rights (Wessells and Monteiro, 2001).

The Postmodern Paradigm

This perspective portrays intractable conflicts as rooted in the ways we make sense of the world. A communications metaphor, its most basic image is of conflict as a story, a narrative or myth that provides a context for interpretation of actions and events, both past and present, which largely shapes our experience

of ongoing conflicts. Thus, conflict comes from the way parties subjectively define a situation and interact with one another to construct a sense of meaning, responsibility, and value in that setting. Intractable conflicts, then, are less the result of scarce resources, incendiary actions of parties, or struggles for limited positions of power than they are a sense of reality, created and maintained through a long-term process of meaning making through social interaction (Lederach, 1997; Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997). This highlights a form of power as meaning control, an insidious, although primary form of power, which is often quietly embedded in the assumptions and beliefs that disputing parties take for granted. It suggests that it is primarily through assumptions about what is unquestionably "right" in a given context that different groups develop and maintain incommensurate worldviews and conflicts persist. Thus, change is believed to be brought about by dragging these assumptions into the light of day through critical reflection, dialogue, and direct confrontation, thus increasing disputant awareness of the complexity of reality, of our almost arbitrary understanding of it, and of the need for change.

The postmodern approach can be operationalized through a variety of channels, including targeting how conflicts are depicted in children's history texts, challenging the media's role in shaping and perpetuating conflict, and working at the intragroup level on renegotiating oppositional identities (Kelman, 1999). Many NGOs facilitate small dialogue groups of disputants who come together with the support of carefully structured facilitation to share their memories and experiences of conflicts in the presence of others who hold profoundly different views. These dialogues offer an experience that is distinct from problem solving, mediation, or negotiation in that they discourage persuasion and argumentation and encourage alternative forms of intergroup contact that emphasize learning, openness to sharing, and gathering new information about oneself, the issues, and the other. Other examples of this approach include the reframing of environmental conflicts (see Lewicki, Gray, and Elliot, 2003) and is evident in the work of groups such as the Public Conversations Project, the Public Dialogue Consortium, and the National Issues Forum (see Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997).

The Systems Paradigm

In essence, the system's perspective is based on an image of a simple living cell developing and surviving within its natural environment. A biological metaphor, it views conflicts as living entities made up of a variety of interdependent and interactive elements, nested within other, increasingly complex entities. Thus, a marital conflict is nested within a family, a community, a region, a culture, and so on. The elements of systems are not related to one another in a linear manner, but interact according to a nonlinear, recursive process so that each element influences the others. In other words, a change in any one element in a system does

not necessarily constitute a proportional change in others; such changes cannot be separated from the values of the various other elements that constitute the system. Thus, intractable conflicts are viewed as destructive patterns of social systems, which are the result of a multitude of different hostile elements interacting at different levels over time, culminating in an ongoing state of intractability. (See Coleman, Vallacher, Nowak, and Bui-Wrzosinska, forthcoming, Pruitt and Olczak, 1995.) Power and influence in these systems are multiply determined, and substantial change is thought to occur only through transformative shifts in the deep structure or pattern of organization of the system.

Ironically, the systems orientation is one of the most common, and yet least well-developed of the conflict paradigms. Its approach encourages us to see the whole. It presents the political, the relational, the pathological, and the epistemological as simply different elements of the living system of the conflict. Thus, it stresses the interdependent nature of the various objectives in intervention of mutual security, stability, equality, justice, cooperation, humanization of the other, reconciliation, tolerance of difference, containment of tension and violence, compatibility and complexity of meaning, healing, and reconstruction. It suggests that through the weaving and sequencing of such complementary approaches, it may be possible to trigger shifts in the deep structure of systems like Northern Ireland, Cyprus, and the Middle East, in a manner that may produce a sustained pattern of transformational change. However, a great deal of work must be done for this worldview to become useful at an operational level.

The five paradigms and various associated procedures outlined in this section provide us with an extensive menu of perspectives and options for addressing intractable social conflicts. Each approach is supported to some degree by empirical research, and each offers a unique *problematique*, or system of questioning, that governs the way we think about intervention in conflicts. Ideally, however, we must develop a capacity to conceptualize and address intractable conflicts that is mindful of the many factors and complex relationships inherent to the phenomenon and of the complementarities of these diverse approaches.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERVENTION IN INTRACTABLE CONFLICT

This section offers some general propositions or guidelines for intervention. The set of guidelines given here has been informed by the work of Morton Deutsch, Dean Pruitt, Paul Olczak, Heidi Burgess, Guy Burgess, John Paul Lederach, Herbert Kelman, and Michael Wessells. The guidelines are useful for resolving many types of conflict, but they have particular relevance for addressing intractable conflict. All should be considered important; however, they are presented here in a crude

chronological sequence to suggest that the initial guidelines be emphasized in the earlier stages of intervention.

Guideline 1: Conduct a Thorough Analysis of the Conflict System Prior to Intervention

Generally speaking, there are three phases in approaching such complex conflicts effectively: the problem-analysis phase, the problem-engagement phase, and the problem-resolution phase (Fisher, 1994). They are rarely sequential and are often cyclical in practice, but problem analysis should be carefully thought through so that the resulting initiatives directly address the dynamics of intractability relevant to the case. Given the complexity, character, and interrelatedness of the many causal factors of intractable conflict previously outlined in this chapter, it is paramount that the intervenor take the time to begin with a comprehensive analysis of the situation. Our tendency to act before fully comprehending the system of a conflict often exacerbates it. This type of error was depicted in the John Sayles film *Men with Guns*, in which a physician who desires to alleviate the suffering of mountain peasants victimized by civil war introduces a team of young medical doctors into their villages. This well-meaning act backfires by inciting the suspicion of the government's army that the doctors are aiding the peasant revolutionaries; the army retaliates, and the result is more harm inflicted on the peasants. Ideally, assessment of an intractable conflict situation should be systemic in scope (considering important elements of the history, context, and dynamics), informed and verified by those directly involved with the conflict, and reassessed over time as important changes occur.

There are an increasing number of analytical frameworks that are useful for analyzing conflict systems (see Coleman, Bui-Wrzosinska, Nowak, and Vallacher, forthcoming; Lederach, 1997). Pruitt and Olczak (1995) offered a simple yet comprehensive framework for use in analyzing and approaching intractable conflict. Their MACBE model is an eclectic, multimodal systems approach to addressing social conflict that traces the source and potential resolution of a conflict to changes in five distinct yet interdependent "subsystems" of the individuals involved: their motivation, affect, cognition, behavior, and surrounding environment. Highly escalated conflicts entail hostile elements in all five components. Motives are to harm or destroy the other; the affect is hostile and rage-filled; cognitions include negative stereotypes, perceptions, and a large measure of distrust; behaviors are violent and destructive; and the environment is usually polarized. The model views these five modes of experience as interactive and working with "circular causality," affecting and being affected by changes in the other modes. This feeds the escalation of the system through internal conflict spirals. The authors of the model argue that to address "seemingly intractable" conflicts most effectively,

one must understand the interrelationship of these experiences and look to produce changes in several, if not all, of these modes.

Take, for example, a seemingly intractable family dispute between a stepfather and a stepson. The conflict sprang from myriad identity and resource-based issues, persisted for several years, affected the entire family system, and eventually reached a stage where interactions between the disputants alternated between autistic hostility and violence. The family was referred to mediation by the police, and the mediator eventually involved a family therapist. This team of intervenors found it useful to separate those aspects of the conflict that were cognitively based (distrust and stereotypical misperceptions), feeling based (rage and fear), behaviorally based (lack of effective conflict-resolving skills), motivationally based (unwillingness to engage), and environmentally based (schisms among the broader family system). The intervenors found these distinctions, in light of the interrelatedness of these issues, useful in proposing a comprehensive strategy for intervention.

Guideline 2: Given the Complexity of Intractable Conflict, Analysis and Intervention Must Be Embedded in a Multidisciplinary Framework

Because of the multidimensionality of intractable conflicts, it is imperative that intervenors understand the system of the conflict from various perspectives and approach it comprehensively. Well-intentioned psychosocial interventions (as well as political or economic interventions) that are ignorant of political, economic, and cultural realities can be ineffective or have disastrous consequences. However, the narrow specialist training in disciplines, the difficulty of employing diverse methods, and the lack of incentive to work across disciplinary boundaries makes a multidisciplinary approach to these conflicts particularly difficult to realize.

A nuanced reading of ongoing conflicts can be facilitated by a process of reframing the conflict through multiple frames (such as systems, realism, human relations, pathology, and postmodernism), organized around the objective of specifying the particular systemic dynamics of a given conflict. Reframing is both schematic and evaluative, as analysts move back and forth through various perspectives to garner the most comprehensive and useful reading of the current situation. However, such a reading must be pragmatic; it must lead to insights for change. As Morgan (1997) writes, "Effective readings are generative. They produce insights and actions that were not there before. They open new action opportunities. They make a difference" (p. 372).

For example, take the conflict erupting on U.S. college campuses between pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli faculty and students. Employing a superordinate frame of systems to begin our analysis orients us to a view of the system as a whole and asks what is the nature of the general patterns emerging on these campuses? It shifts our analysis away from particular actions, encounters, and outcomes, toward an awareness of the internal dynamics and trends unfolding over time on campus and

beyond. Then, the realist frame asks what roles do politics and power play in establishing the state of intractability? Are external political groups instigating tensions to bring attention to their cause? Are internal groups playing up ethnic differences to mobilize altogether different agendas? Changing frames make other aspects salient. The human relations frame asks do particular social conditions contribute to malignant relations between people and groups that are maintaining the problem? Are there other aspects of these relationships, beyond ethnic or political differences, that contribute to attributions of hostility of the other? The postmodernist frame emphasizes meaning construction around the events, suggesting we pay special attention to the stories told of the conflict. It reminds us that each of the stories told are likely to be partial truths, not completely invalid, but biased in their representation of the causes, responsibilities, heroes, and heroines of the past and present. The medical frame might alternatively focus on the often overlooked role that individual and collective trauma play in the unfolding patterns of the conflict. It asks how do past (or recent) experiences of exposure to suffering, the loss of loved ones, and chronic health problems affect responses to the situation?

Multidisciplinary teams of scholar-practitioners are often best suited to operationalize this type of eclecticism, when informed by individuals with direct experience of the conflict and the setting. This allows us to benefit from the many insights of scholarship and practice in divergent areas, as they apply to the understanding of patterns of destructiveness within specific conflicts. However, such teams often require training and leadership to bring their individual perspectives in line with the objectives of a systemic approach. But, by broadening our understanding of the conflict, it becomes possible to increase our range of options for intervention.

Guideline 3: Initial Concern for the Intervenors Should Be to Foster an Authentic Experience of "Ripeness" Among Disputants or Among Key Representatives of Each of the Groups Involved in an Intractable Conflict

The MACBE model recommends a sequential method for intervening in intractable conflict that begins by addressing ripeness (a willingness to deescalate). In fact, there is a general sense among scholars and practitioners that one of the first and most critical challenges conflict resolvers face when working with malignant conflict systems is in helping disputants to cross their own social psychological barriers to making peace with their enemy (Pruitt and Olczak, 1995). When destructive and escalatory dynamics have become normalized, ripeness should be viewed as a commitment to a *change* in the nature of the relations of the parties from a destructive orientation toward a more constructive state of coexistence with potential for mutual gain (Coleman, 1997).

Lewin (1947) developed a model for conceptualizing change in systems that offers important insight into these processes (see also Chapter Twenty). He

wrote that "the study of the conditions for change begins appropriately with an analysis of the conditions for 'no change,' that is, for the state of equilibrium" (p. 208). Lewin indicated that a state of "no social change" refers to a state of "quasi-stationary social-equilibrium," that is, a relatively constant state. Therefore, to better locate and comprehend the various paths to ripeness in a conflict it is valuable to attempt to understand the dynamic forces that keep a conflict in a state of "unripeness." During the Cold War, for example, the combination of fear, misunderstanding, mutual distrust, propaganda, and investments in military industry between the United States and the USSR acted to contain the conflict at a costly level for a prolonged period of time.

Lewin offered two basic methods for bringing about change in the direction of the status quo of a system: by adding forces in the desired direction of the change or by diminishing the opposing forces that resist the change. Typically, the change forces that can be added to induce ripeness include threats and the use of physical force; the perception of a hurting stalemate (suffering losses in a conflict that cannot be won); the experience of a recent or near catastrophe; and the awareness of an impending catastrophe or deteriorating position (Zartman and Aurik, 1991). Adding change forces to the conflict system induces a state of increased tension that is accompanied by "greater fatigue, higher aggressiveness, higher emotionality, and lower constructiveness" (Lewin, 1947, p. 26). Obviously, this is risky in the already high-tension state of an escalated conflict process. Therefore, *it may be beneficial to initially consider the alternative method of removing the resistance forces opposing ripeness*, thereby facilitating it while lowering relative tension. As the MACBE model suggests, there are multiple avenues available to achieve this. In fact, even small (but vital) changes in any one of the modes can potentially have a large impact on the system. Thus, a shift in one's thinking (such as new insights or a change in attitude) can lead to new feelings and behaviors that subsequently change the context. Likewise, a unilateral conciliatory action might affect one's sense of possibility in an otherwise rigid situation, leading to an increased willingness to consider other risks.

Returning to the family conflict previously described, several key factors contributed to unfreezing both the adolescent's and the stepfather's resistance to ripeness and moving them toward resolution of their conflict. The mediation process (to a small degree) and the individual counseling sessions (to a larger degree) allowed both parties the cathartic experience they needed to ventilate their feelings and feel heard and respected by understanding third parties. This helped them both get over their intense blaming of the other and to begin taking some responsibility for their respective situations. These experiences also helped to establish some trust between the parties. The counselors and mediator also modeled and discussed the use of appropriate social skills for dealing with anger and when engaged in conflict. This helped the parties begin to see alternative methods of responding to each other. Finally, the adolescent's counselor involved other key members in family therapy as a means of educating them to their role

in the conflict and making them part of the solution. These interventions worked in combination to move the parties toward ripeness and resolution.

Through identifying and removing the obstacles (such as distrust, rage, and lack of skills) that act to resist ripeness, it becomes possible to create or enhance a disputant's commitment to peace without increasing the overall level of tension in the system. Resistance obstacles differ in their amenability to change and in the level of impact they have on the system. Intervenors would benefit from targeting the obstacles that are of high importance and most amenable to change.

Guideline 4: Initially, Orient Disputants Toward the Primary Objective of Defining a Fair, Constructive Process of Conflict Engagement, and Away from the Objective of Achieving Outcomes That Resolve the Conflict

The work of Burgess and Burgess (1996) on intractable conflict has identified a subtle but important reframing of the approach to these problems. They contend that, because of the zero-sum nature of most intractable conflicts, confrontation over the core issues at stake is inevitable and comprehensive resolution is unrealistic. However, they argue, the processes need not be destructive. Consequently, they advocate that conflict resolvers working in such a situation emphasize creating a process of confrontation that the disputants find to be both effective (in terms of minimizing the negative costs of the conflict and maximizing the benefits) and fair or just (in terms of broad moral concerns). They suggest that conflict resolvers see this as a shift to an incremental approach to resolving conflict, which has the potential of reducing the damage of the conflict process despite the lack of any ultimate resolution.

To a large extent, this is what emerged with the Good Friday peace agreement in Northern Ireland, where a political process was established (home rule and a power-sharing arrangement between the communities) whose agenda it was to tackle some of the substantive problems associated with the conflict (such as disarming the IRA). I suggest that this emphasis on establishing a constructive process might be a particularly useful strategy in the early phases of a conflict resolution process to create a sense of possibility, but that eventually, if the stakes are high, the disputants will demand a focus on the substance of their concerns.

Guideline 5: Elicitive Approaches to Conflict Intervention, Particularly When Working Across Cultures, Tend to Be More Respectful of Disputants, and More Empowering and Sustainable Than Prescriptive Approaches

There is a current concern among scholars and practitioners about whether the models in use in many conflict resolution interventions are implicitly oriented toward Western males and are therefore not sufficiently sensitive and respectful of "differences" (of gender, race, culture, class, and so on) in how conflict is

understood, approached, and ideally resolved. (For additional discussion of the relation between culture and conflict, see the next part of this volume.)

Responding to these concerns, some scholars have recommended an "elicitive" approach to conflict resolution across cultures (Lederach, 1995). They contend that "prescriptive" approaches to intervention, which view the intervenor as the expert and the participants as passive recipients of predetermined knowledge, models, and skills, are often inappropriate. They endorse another type of approach, where the local, cultural expertise of the participants is elicited and emphasized and where the intervenor and the participants together design interventions that are specifically suited to the problems, resources, and constraints of the specific cultural context. An elicitive approach not only corrects for the bias of a prescriptive approach but also is experienced as empowering by the participants in that it respects, embraces, and accommodates the voices of local people. It can also foster great commitment to the peace process by those involved and therefore lead to plans and initiatives with prolonged sustainability.

Guideline 6: Short-Term (Crisis-Management) Interventions Need to Be Coordinated and Mindful of Long-Term Objectives and Interventions

Intractable conflict sometimes brings on an extended period of crisis and intense human suffering. It is often these events that capture the attention of outside parties (such as the police, the media, and the international community). When this occurs, intervenors typically focus their efforts on containing the immediate crisis and stopping the violence. This form of crisis management is, of course, essential. However, it is often carried out with little thought for the implications for the larger conflict system and longer-term peace objectives.

Lederach (1997) describes the various time frames inherent in the aspects of peace work. Short-term crisis intervention work (such as emergency relief and humanitarian aid) orients intervenors to immediate, life-saving tasks that typically occur in a framework of two to six months. Short-range planning (such as preparation and training to reduce the likelihood of recurring violence) requires forward thinking, looking ahead one or two years. The longer-term perspective, which Lederach defines as "generational thinking" or thinking twenty-plus years out, is uncommon in peace work but used by some to visualize peace and social harmony between disputants and to identify the steps necessary to reach such an idealized state. Nested between short-range planning and generational thinking is what Lederach refers to as "decade thinking" (five to ten years), where fundamental social change can be designed and implemented.

Lederach encourages practitioners to see each time frame as nested in the longer-term schemas and to be mindful of the impact of crisis management and short-term planning on long-term objectives. He suggests that thinking in terms of decades can help coordinate peace work in a manner that links the immediate experience of crisis intervention with initiatives toward a better future where

such problems can be prevented. This broad time frame is more realistic when addressing protracted conflicts that have been in existence for several generations and may take that long to resolve effectively.

Guideline 7: Establish the Conditions, Initiate, and Sustain Constructive, Nonlinear Change

Change in complex systems of conflict is nonlinear. In other words, a change in any one element of the conflict (like attitudes) does not necessarily constitute a proportional change in others; such changes cannot be separated from the values of the various other elements that constitute the system (Coleman, forthcoming). So, changes in any one member of a distressed family (such as a commitment by the stepfather to remain nonviolent) may or may not impact the other elements of the system (such as the level of family dysfunction), depending on the different attributes of the members, the nature and the degree of the change, and the nature of the relationships between members. Accordingly, complex systems often exhibit spontaneous, novel, and creative activities that are not completely predictable from circumstances, interventions, or previous events. Thus, initiating change in complex systems requires that intervenors have humility, for such change is often unpredictable and uncontrollable. Nevertheless, Gersick (1991) suggests that fundamental change in patterns of systems can be brought about through three inter-related processes: establishing the conditions for radical change, initiating the change, and creating the conditions that sustain the change.

Figure 24.1 provides a schematic overview of nine categories of strategies for initiating constructive changes in situations of protracted conflict, organized

| | Episodic | Developmental | Radical |
|------------|----------|---------------|---------|
| Top-down | | | |
| Middle-out | | | |
| Bottom-up | | | |

Figure 24.1 Systemic Change Initiatives

Source: Author.

around two dimensions: type of change initiative and level of intervention. Change initiatives can have three types of effects in social systems: an *episodic* impact, which is direct and immediate but typically short term or superficial; a *developmental* impact, which takes time, perhaps years, to unfold in a system but can have substantial effects over time on the quality of the patterns of interaction; and a *radical* impact, which is often dramatic, altering the pattern of the system. Change initiatives can also differ categorically by the level of the agent of change. Three general levels are: *top-down*, involving leaders and elite decision makers; *middle-out*, involving key midlevel leaders and community networks and structures; and *bottom-up*, relating to grassroots organizations or the masses directly.

Episodic initiatives at all three levels are typically responses to crises associated with conflicts that attempt to quell outbreaks of violence or suffering. These initiatives, such as military or police intervention or direct humanitarian aid, can lessen the intensity of the destructiveness of the conflict but typically do little to interrupt the strong hostile patterns that characterize protracted conflicts. Developmental initiatives can have an eventual impact on the pattern of a conflict, but such effects are typically gradual, particularly when they are initiated at lower levels of the system. A popular midlevel, developmental approach to initiating change in societal conflicts involves working with middle-range leaders through interactive problem-solving workshops. (See Fisher, 1997.) Finally, radical initiatives attempt to trigger fundamental shifts in conflict patterns (from destructive to constructive) through small but important changes. For example, Gersick (1991) argues that such changes can be brought on by the attraction of influential newcomers to a system (typically young or unsocialized outsiders) who are often drawn by a crisis in a system and who are less obligated, constrained, and resistant to change, and thus better able to initiate *frame-breaking changes* in the mind-sets of stakeholders.

Guideline 8: The General Intervention Strategy Must Integrate Appropriate Approaches for Issues Rooted in the Past, the Present, and the Future

Intractable conflicts tend to revolve around concerns from the past, the present, and the future, but most interventions are oriented toward present concerns. In addition, anthropologists have found that members of distinct cultures often differ in the relative importance that they assign to events of the past, present, or future. For intractable conflict to be resolved effectively, the intervention approach must be respectful of these time orientations and capable of addressing the salient issues from different temporal dimensions.

Working with conflicts rooted in the past can be complicated by such factors as bias in memory recall, blocks in memory retrieval because of trauma,

and the fundamentally different experiences of the past that exist across cultures in terms of the role and importance of ancestors and the effects of the past on one's present life. There is great need for innovation in developing new (or perhaps embracing old) methods for addressing such problems. Developing expressive and symbolic processes such as truth and reconciliation commissions, town meetings, dialogue sessions, and family and couples counseling to support mediation processes are all attempts along these lines. These processes are often time-consuming, with the focus of such initiatives less on action and more on healing, forgiving, and reconciling. Ultimately, conflict practitioners need to develop enhanced capacity for understanding the power of the past, as well as the patience and tolerance that some of these approaches demand.

There are several methods recently developed for addressing future concerns (see Chapter Thirty-Three for a discussion of Future Search methods). One such practice developed by Elise Boulding (1986) is called *focused social imaging*. The approach is quite simple. The workshop actively involves participants who are parties to a dispute (such as Arab and Israeli youths). They begin by identifying some of the shared social concerns regarding the conflict (such as reducing community violence or improving community health services). The participants are then asked to temporarily disregard the current realities of the situation and to step into the future. They are asked to put themselves into a future approximately twenty to thirty years from the present, in which their concerns have been effectively dealt with. As the participants begin to develop some sense of the social arrangements and institutions in this idealized future, discussion ensues. Together, they begin to create a vision for a community that has the institutions and relationships necessary to effectively address their shared concerns. Then the participants are asked to move slowly backward in time and to begin identifying the steps that would precede establishment of such institutions and relationships. This is both a creative and a critical process of examining the achievement of their ideal future in the context of the circumstances that are likely to exist between the present and such a future. Ultimately, this process results in both a vision and a plan for making the vision reality. It also can serve to open up the participants' awareness of options and approaches to the current conflict that they previously found impossible to imagine.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING

Space does not allow detailed discussion of the needs for training in this area. However, the guidelines and processes I have described outline many of the objectives to be addressed in a comprehensive training program for practitioners working with intractable conflict. In summary, such training should address:

Systems thinking and analysis. An introduction to dynamical systems theory (see Nowak and Vallacher, 1998) offers a conceptual framework for understanding the interrelationships of various elements within systems and their interface with the external environment as they evolve over time. It can also be useful to learn to represent systems in the form of a conflict network through loop analysis. Loop analysis, developed by Maruyama (1963), is a methodology that can be applied for mapping positive and negative feedback processes that escalate, de-escalate, and stabilize destructive conflicts. Participants should also be trained in using a variety of system analytical frameworks for conflict intervention such as those developed by Lederach (1997), Pruitt and Olczak (1995), and Coleman, Bui-Wrozinska, Nowak, and Vallacher (forthcoming).

Coordination of complex activities. Training should develop skills in working with multitask, multimethod approaches that can integrate multidisciplinary perspectives and methodologies to address immediate, short-term, and long-term goals in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion. Training should also emphasize the importance of temporal distinctions of past, present, and future orientations in intervention.

Creating ripeness. Intervenors would benefit from training in understanding and developing strategies and tactics for assessing, fostering, and maintaining authentic commitment to a constructive conflict process among disputants or representatives from disputing groups. Such training should emphasize the distinct effects of introducing change forces in contrast to removing resistance obstacles when fostering ripeness.

Working with crisis and trauma. Conflict resolvers working with disputants in an intractable conflict need to be trained in working with individuals in emotional or physical crisis. Awareness of the symptoms of posttraumatic stress syndrome and of community-level manifestations of trauma and understanding of how to do crisis intervention when emergencies occur are critical for conducting work in this area.

Facilitating constructive conflict processes. Training in conflict process facilitation should include instruction in collaborative negotiation, mediation, and other forms of third-party intervention (arbitration, med-arb, and so on) as well as in facilitating dialogue sessions, town hall meetings, and problem-solving workshops. Intervenors should also be trained in the skills of working to elicit locally relevant information, in particular when working cross-culturally.

Creativity, innovation, and artistry. There is a substantial need for innovation in this area. Practitioners would benefit greatly from applying a creative problem-solving process to the methods for working with intractable conflict, particularly for working with identity conflict.

CONCLUSION

There are no simple solutions to intractability. Once conflict reaches this level of destructiveness, we can only hope to contain the violence and bloodshed and begin the considerable work of repairing the damage to people, places, and relationships. This is a daunting task, but there is hope. Hope in prevention. Intractable conflicts usually have a long history of escalation prior to reaching crisis and entrenchment. We must find ways to intervene earlier, when disputants can still see the humanity and the validity of the other's needs. Unfortunately, it is typically the squeaky wheel of crisis that grabs the attention of the media, the international community, and our systems of governance. Therefore, we must be proactive in establishing early warning systems at the community, regional, national, and international levels. Their charge would be to monitor emerging disputes and focus our attention on situations before they become impossible to address. Our greatest hope in working intractable conflicts is to find the means to avert them.

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