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Transitions from Violence to Peace

Revisiting Analysis and Intervention in Conflict Transformation

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Introduction

This paper examines the driving factors and transitional stages of conflict transformation in protracted social conflicts, from social dynamics that address difference through violence to a system for the peaceful management of diversity, in order to generate more accurately focused criteria for the design, timing and nature of peacemaking and peacebuilding interventions.

The Berghof Research Center (BRC) locates its research agenda at the intersection between theory and practice, by facilitating continuous interaction between the two. Likewise, this paper seeks both to provide a broad analytical framework for the conduct of empirical projects on specific actors (e.g. non-state armed groups, civil society organisations, etc.) and processes (e.g. the peace/ development nexus, reconciliation measures, etc.), and to "feed" academic theorising with practical examples from the field. Several audiences are likely to benefit from this study, including internal actors engaged in peacemaking activities in their own contexts, external actors within the international community (government agencies, IGOs, multilateral actors, international NGOs and other intervenors), and the peace and conflict research community. Internally, it also seeks to help refine the future BRC agenda by identifying priority research areas as well as potential blind spots, and to strengthen our intellectual collaboration with our sister organisation, the Berghof Foundation for Peace Support (BFPS), by exploring some conceptual interactions with the systemic approach to conflict analysis and transformation which it has been developing over the past two years (BFPS 2006b; BFPS 2006c).

The general context for this study is provided by the term *protracted social conflict* (Azar 1990) which, although it was first coined before the end of the Cold War, illustrates accurately the main characteristics of contemporary violent conflicts. First, most wars are now fought in the intra-state arena, escaping the earlier boundaries of army-to-army wars and broadening out to encompass civilian communities, and whole societies, within the vortex of violence. Second, they generally include a mixture of ideological, political or resources issues with elements of communal and ethnic identity: for this reason, they are often referred to as "ethnopolitical" conflicts.

Third, they are characterised by high levels of protractedness, often lasting for several generations with frequent fluctuations in nature and intensity: the staged model of transition will need to take such non-linear dynamics into account. Finally, it is in the nature of most intra-state conflicts that there is a significant degree of power asymmetry between the warring sides, and this has some strong implications for conflict transformation research, which will be explored in this study.

A number of other key terms are used in this paper, which need to be introduced here for clarification, due to their often contested or imprecise use in the literature. The subject-matter of *social change* is still relatively unexplored (at least explicitly) in peace and conflict studies; this paper, however, considers it central to our understanding of conflict transformation, and its discussion is informed principally by a recent Berghof Handbook article on the subject (Mitchell 2005). Although social change will be defined neutrally, as a process which might lead in either destructive or constructive directions, this paper is mainly concerned with the promotion of constructive, peaceful, or resolutionary change, both at the agency and structural levels. Indeed, potential *drivers of change* will be identified, which create behavioural change (in actions), but also deeper attitudinal change (to overcome persistent cultures of violence), and structural changes necessary to transform unequal power structures or war economies into non-violent systems based on the principles of democracy and human rights.

Among the plethora of terms used in the field to characterise the process, methods and outcome of constructive social change in protracted social conflicts, *conflict management* will be used here as an generic umbrella term, even though it includes approaches which go far beyond the "logic of management" (Reimann 2004: 42). *Conflict transformation* will be employed to designate a more specific approach to conflict dynamics and peacemaking intervention, alongside the complementary *conflict settlement* and *conflict resolution* approaches and "toolboxes". In short (these arguments will be developed further throughout the paper), the distinction (and, to our view, superiority) of the conflict transformation approach lies primarily in its more comprehensive focus on addressing not only direct and attitudinal manifestations of conflicts, but also their deeper structural sources. It also places a stronger emphasis on the empowerment of local peace constituencies. Finally, the term *transition* refers to the process of gradual and continuous changes which take place over the life time of a conflict. Our understanding of the stages of conflicts needs to go far beyond the restricted timeline of peace negotiations, because

structural violence most often precedes outright war and thus must be seen as part of the transition from unpeaceful to peaceful relationships (Curle 1971); and because structural and cultural peace do not proceed directly from the signature of an agreement (Lederach 2005).

The methodology used for this study arises both from a cross-disciplinary analysis of the academic literature on socio-political conflicts and theories of change, and some empirical data provided by the author's previous research in Israel-Palestine, as well as Berghof studies or practice in Bosnia, Sri Lanka, Georgia-Abkhazia, Aceh, Nepal and Sudan.

The following three sections will successively present the stages of transition from violence to peace (section 1), a systemic model of analysis of the drivers of escalatory and resolutionary change which govern the transition between stages (section 2), and the possible entry-points for peacemaking/peacebuilding intervention during each stage (section 3).

SECTION 1

Conflict Transformation Dynamics: a Staged Approach

In the past few decades, the field of conflict management has developed a number of models and diagrams which describe intra-state and international conflicts as passing through a series of linear or cyclic phases. While acknowledging the complex nature of protracted social conflicts, practitioners and academics have recognised the need for simplifying reality by "breaking [it] into pieces" (Lederach 2005: 43), for analytic purposes. This first section will review some of these models and present their limits, before elaborating a synthesis diagram summarising the main conflict transformation stages to be used for this paper.

1.1 Escalation and de-escalation in the wave model

The most common portrayal of the "ideal type" life history of violent conflicts, from their emergence to their successful transformation, is represented by a "wave-like timeline" (Lederach 2005: 43), or a "smoothly curving bell" (Lund 1996: 40) depicting the progression of conflict as it rises and falls in intensity over time (figure 1).

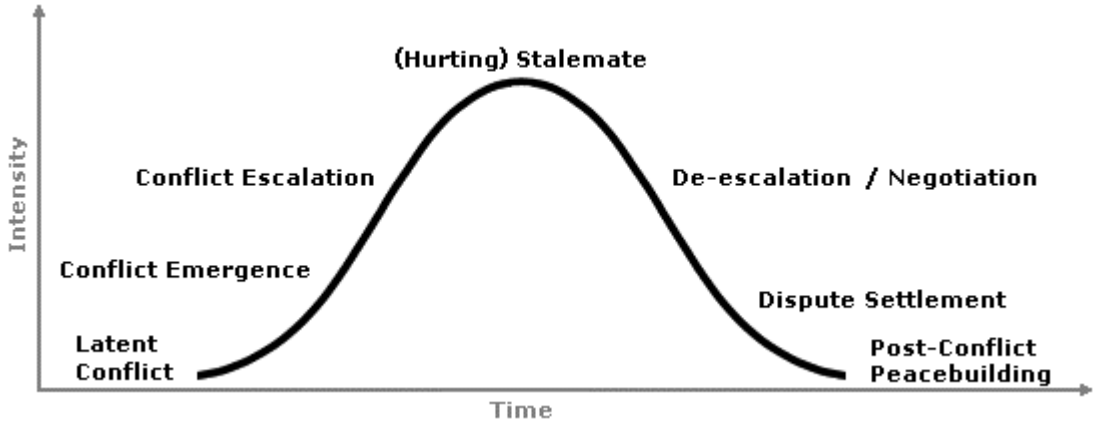

Figure 1: the conflict "wave" (Brahm 2003)

This type of diagram is based on several important assumptions. The vertical axis, for example, presupposes the measurability of the intensity of a given conflict along the continuum from "harmony" to outright warfare, or, to use Galtung's seminal definitions of peace and violence, from positive peace (social justice) to negative peace (structural violence) to direct (behavioural) violence (Galtung 1996). The common unit that is most frequently used to measure the levels of conflict intensity is the number of deaths per time unit (e.g. per year). For example, the Interdisciplinary Research Program on Causes of Human Rights Violations (PIOOM) at Leiden University distinguishes five stages of escalation: while the first two ("peaceful stable situations" and "political tension situations") are not included in its statistics, the other three ("violent political conflict", "low-intensity conflict", "high-intensity conflict") are quantified according to the intensity of physical violence (up to 99, 100 to 999 and over 1,000 people killed in any one calendar year) (Jongman and Schmid 1997).

If the emergence and intensification of conflict can be classified in stages equivalent to the "rungs" of a "ladder", it was common for scholars in the 1960s and 1970s to apply a similar logic to the process of conflict de-escalation, assuming that climbing upwards towards mutual destruction could be reversed simply by re-crossing the same thresholds in a "downwards" direction (Mitchell 2005: 10). Even the most recent conflict resolution manuals rely heavily on the "conflict wave" model, while simultaneously acknowledging the impossibility of applying such idealised diagrams mechanically to the history of most protracted social conflicts. For example, Ramsbotham et al (2005: 11) identify four stages of escalation (difference, contradiction, polarisation, violence), the highest peak of the curve (war), and four corresponding stages of de-escalation (ceasefire, agreement, normalisation, reconciliation).

The merits of such models are twofold. On the level of conflict analysis, they provide simplistic but operational tools for mapping the dynamics of conflict transformation processes. Even if actual violent conflicts do not usually follow a unidirectional linear path, most of them pass through similar stages at least once in their history. On the level of conflict transformation work, delineating different phases is also useful, because it helps participants and interveners to design and apply appropriate strategies and tactics for each stage of the conflict (see section 3). However, the depiction of conflict dynamics in linear sequences also presents a number of weaknesses, the first of which concerns their frequent over-reliance on

observable and quantifiable criteria for delimitating the stages. According to Lederach (2005: 46),

> "the conflict as escalation and deescalation line poses a certain way of looking at change and a particular level of conflict that is being addressed. To a large degree the image focuses on the rise of violence, an agreement that stops it, and the deescalation that follows the accord. This places the primary emphasis on negotiation of the symptomatic, or more visible and often destructive expressions of the conflict, but not on the relational context that lies at the epicentre of what generates the fighting".

For example, the representation of the highest peak of the "wave", the shift from escalation to de-escalation, as a curve in the level of violence does not reflect the complex nature of social and human change which includes shifts in public attitudes, new perceptions and visions among decision-makers and their constituencies (see section 2).

1.2 The "objective/subjective mix" in escalation and de-escalation patterns

In a seminal article drawing out the main elements of their contingency approach to conflict intervention, Fisher and Keashly (1991: 34) offered a definition of social conflicts as dynamic processes in which objective and subjective elements interact constantly over time: their approach aimed to overcome the traditional opposition between subjectivist theories on the one hand, where conflicts are caused by the greed of individual leaders and/or the destructive cycle of hatred and misperceptions, and on the other hand objectivist accounts explaining conflicts solely by the unfairness of oppressive structures or the incompatibility of material interests (Mitchell 1991). Building on an earlier study by Glasl (1982), they identified four stages of escalation through which any armed conflict is supposed to evolve, according to the level of overt violence (objective criteria) as well as the attitudes of the parties (subjective criteria): discussion, polarisation, segregation, and destruction. The stages are distinguished by significant changes in the nature of interaction between the parties, and in various aspects of their perceptions and images of each other and their relationship. It is implicit in their argument that the reverse order of these stages provides for the occurrence of de-escalation, but they do not set out themselves to describe the de-escalation stages in as much detail;

instead, they concentrate on designing approaches to conflict management appropriate for each of the four stages of the conflict escalation dynamics and adapted to their constitutive elements (see section 3).

This highlights a second weakness in most studies which try to delineate the phases of conflict transformation, which is their over-emphasis on the early stages of the model, up to the signature of peace agreements, at the expense of the crucial dynamics of the transition from negative, behavioural peace to positive, structural and cultural peace.[1] Prevalent in these lists of conflict stages is the notion of agreement as a solution, creating the expectation that the conflict has ended. But, as Lederach (2005: 46) reminds us,

> "agreements that end a conflict are hard to find. Most peace accords are not solutions in content but proposed negotiated processes which, if followed, will change the expression of the conflict and provide avenues for redefining relationships. [In fact, they usually mean that] a whole new range of negotiations, often more arduous and difficult, are just beginning. People must shift from a temporary effort to negotiate an agreement that ends the violent expression of conflict to a context-based, permanent, and dynamic platform capable of non-violently generating solutions to ongoing episodes of conflict."

As indicated by Kofi Annan, half of the countries that emerge from war lapse back into violence within five years, calling our attention to the long-term peacebuilding work which must follow the signature of peace accords in order to assure their sustainability (Fischer 2006: 442).

1.3 The long-term approach to de-escalation: stages of post-settlement peacebuilding

The term *peacebuilding* was first introduced by Galtung (1976), and later popularised by UN General Secretary Boutros-Ghali in *An Agenda for Peace* (1992), to characterise the procession towards positive peace following the end of war. Whereas peacekeeping is concerned with ending direct violence, and peacemaking focuses on changing adversarial attitudes through dialogue and mediated negotiations,

[1] For example, the Conflicts Early Warning System (CEWS) project (Alker et al 2001), analyses and compares the escalation and de-escalation of twenty successfully transformed conflicts along the stages of dispute, crisis, limited violence, massive violence, abatement and settlement. Their analysis thus stops at the signature of peace agreements.

peacebuilding encompasses the elements of structural transformation of the conflict's root causes in the political, economic, and social spheres. Ramsbotham et al (2005) have refined this de-escalation framework by dividing it into four main phases: ceasefire (through peacekeeping), agreement (through peacemaking), normalisation (through structural peacebuilding) and reconciliation (through cultural peacebuilding). Ball (2001) presents a somewhat similar approach to de-escalation in two main phases (cessation of conflict and peacebuilding) and four sub-phases: negotiations, cessation of hostilities, transition, and consolidation.

Such models reflect a general consensus within the peacebuilding field that in order to secure a self-sustainable peace, one needs first to prevent a relapse into violence, namely the *hawks* must be "boxed" before the *doves* are "released" (Llamazares 2005: 19). In other words, the transitional elements of negative peace (end of hostilities, demobilisation and social order) are a precondition to the attainment of positive (meaning structural and cultural) peace. For example, Fischer (2006: 453) argues that in immediate post-war Bosnia, the re-establishment of the rule of law should have been the first priority: without a functioning judiciary and police, democratisation and economic recovery cannot take root, and sporadic social unrest is likely to grow into chaos.

Peacebuilding can be described both as a process of change and an instrument of intervention in post-war societies. Athough this section is solely concerned with the first element, the vast majority of the contemporary studies on peacebuilding (e.g. Hampson 1996, Kumar 1997, Pugh 2000, Reychler and Paffenholz 2001, Paris 2001, Stedman 2002) focus on external interventions rather than on the transformation of the society during the implementation of peace processes. In this context, most of their timeframes are designed for international organisations, agencies and NGOs, and are not really adapted to indigenous post-war peacebuilding mechanisms and processes. For example, Ramsbotham et al (2005: 197-199) concentrate on "intervention, reconstruction and withdrawal" operations, either in the form of UN-assisted implementation of peace agreements (Cambodia, Bosnia, etc.), or as externally led operations to restore stable conditions after wars which have not ended in peace agreements (i.e. Kosovo, Afganistan post-2001, Irak post-2003). They review these operations according to four main phases: (1) the immediate post-war *intervention* phase, in which longer-term conflict resolution goals may be sacrificed for shorter-term security and emergency requirements; (2) a political *stabilisation* phase, when DDR (demobilisation, disarmament, reintegration)

and structural peacebuilding aspects (hand-over of central authority) predominate; (3) a *normalisation* phase, in which economic and socio-cultural development become increasingly important, until the country is seen to have attained "normal" levels of autonomy and viability sufficient to enable the final stage of intervention withdrawal; and (4) a final phase of *continuing transformation* towards the desired end-state in the post-intervention period, with increased emphasis on "cultural peacebuilding" and reconciliation.[2]

Besides these studies of high-profile, internationally-led reconstruction operations, there is a second type of peacebuilding manual offered by scholars who refute "reconstruction" as a "no go term – it implies that one reconstructs society to resemble what it was like before the conflict …[and] back to a past which exemplifies the very factors that create the conflict", and prefer to concentrate instead on "post-settlement peace work" (Fitzduff in Fischer 2004: 375). For Lederach, peacebuilding suggests "forging structures and processes that redefine violent relationships into constructive and cooperative patterns" (1997: 71). In that sense, it typifies what Ramsbotham et al have labelled cultural peacebuilding. Although such studies place a much bigger emphasis on "peacebuilding from below" and indigenous-led, self-generating mechanisms, the temporal frameworks that appear in such literature are still primarily designed for external intervenors. For example, to answer the question "how do we ["outsiders"] create and support the change from violent crisis to a desired shared future?", Lederach (1997: 115) suggests a temporal infrastructure that tackles first the crisis stage and issues for a period of 2-6 months; then the people and relationships for 1-2 years; then the design of institutions for 5-10 years; and finally a vision for peaceful communities that will need work for generations. However, according to him, a necessary linkage between immediate needs and a long-term vision ("decade thinking") does not mean that the peacebuilding process must be envisioned as linear, in the sense of being made up of successive sequential steps; he insists, on the contrary, on the simultaneity of multi-sector peacebuilding

[2] Similar incremental, gradualist approaches are discussed by authors who suggest that international organisations engaged in peacebuilding must think more strategically, and set up deadlines and time-frames in relation to the accomplishment of specific objectives over the short-term (crisis management), medium-term (institution building) and long-term (structural reforms and reconciliation). For instance, Forman, Patrick and Salomons (2000) divide "regeneration and recovery activities" into four phases: crisis, post-crisis, post-settlement, long-term reconstruction. Paris (2001) advises that peacebuilding missions should last longer than the average three years, possibly for as long as ten. According to Fischer (2006: 11), a decade is not even sufficient in the case of Bosnia, where ten years after the Dayton peace agreement, the time is still not ripe for the international community to withdraw: although it has contributed to maintaining a "negative peace", the stakeholders have not started to overcome the root causes of the conflict.

activities, carried out at multiple levels and by different sets of people at the same time (Lederach 2001: 843).

This brings us to an important set of critiques of the staged approach to conflict transformation, which can be applied to any of the models and diagrams presented so far. The reality of inter-group conflict situations, and especially protracted conflicts, is often characterised by chaos and confusion, which clashes with the linear vision of escalation and de-escalation. Most authors generally bring a note of caution to their idealised models by acknowledging the high probability that conflicts might "move backwards" or "jump stages" along the "wave-like" time-line, but more importantly, they neglect the fact that civil wars and inter-ethnic disputes are made up of a multiplicity of embedded conflicts, which might exhibit properties of several escalation or de-escalation stages simultaneously (Bloomfield 1997). Especially, the fractionalisation of conflicts into separate elements (e.g. intensity of direct violence, level of antagonism, degree of power asymmetry) makes it hard to determine, even retroactively, when a "peak" was reached in a given conflict, because there were in fact different dynamics and time lines for the various conflict components. For example, a strategic decision to start negotiations might happen at a time when the level of overt violence is still rising and the attitudes towards the other side have not evolved; or the signature of a peace agreement does not automatically signal the end of fighting, as many post-accord societies are still highly volatile and characterised by violence on the part of dissident groups. In South Africa, the greatest political violence occurred in the immediate aftermath of the peace agreement, as almost three times as many people were killed between 1990 and 1994 than during the previous four years (Darby and McGinty 2000: 230). Many peace and human rights activists in fact confess fearing more for their own lives during so-called peace processes than at the alleged height of the conflict.

Therefore, a more refined version of the ascending and descending conflict wave should view the distinct conflict stages as both time-specific, so that parties in a conflict go back and forth through these stages, and as non-linear, allowing for different levels of escalation in the conflict and within each of the parties (Fetherston 1993).

1.4 "Horizontal" approach to conflict exacerbating and mitigating dynamics

In an article on "Conflict, change and conflict resolution", Mitchell (2005: 11-12) analyses the dynamics of conflict exacerbation and mitigation by disaggregating the various processes that actually make up the broad concepts of escalation and de-escalation. He identifies six major types of change which occur frequently in protracted conflicts, making them more "intense" or exacerbating them once they have emerged; and six corresponding dynamics which should reverse the process in the opposite direction, towards conflict mitigation and resolution (figure 2).

Conflict Exacerbating Dynamics	Conflict Mitigating Dynamics
Escalation	De-Escalation
Mobilisation	De-Mobilisation / Demilitarisation
Polarisation	De-Isolation
Enlargement	Disengagement
Dissociation	Re-Communication
Entrapment	Decommitment

Figure 2: The dynamics of perpetuation, exacerbation and mitigation (Mitchell 2005: 13)

The dynamic of *escalation* refers to the intensification of coercive and violent behaviour directed at the others. The parallel process of *mobilisation* occurs at the intra-party level and is observed through changes in internal resources and the balance of forces, towards the growing influence of those in charge of instruments of coercion over those in charge of alternative conflict resolution mechanisms. *Polarisation* refers to the widening of divisive issues, and involves both behavioural and psychological changes. *Enlargement* occurs when more parties are pulled in and thus increase the complexity of the various interests involved. *Dissociation* is caused by a decrease in contact between the adversaries and the deliberate closing of communication channels. Finally, *entrapment* refers to the feeling that "there is no alternative", when parties become trapped into a course of action that involves continuing or intensifying the conflict with – apparently – no chance of changing policy or "backing away".

Mitchell then reviews the six corresponding dynamics which should logically set in motion the diminution of conflict intensity, starting with a process of coercion and violence *de-escalation* by substituting benefit-conferring actions for harmful and damaging ones. Concerning the other five dynamics,

> "other parties and interests that have become involved in the original conflict need to be disentangled *(disengagement)*. (…) Inter-party communication channels need to be reopened and the resultant communication made at least more nuanced and complicated than the simple exchange of accusations and justifications *(re-communication)*. Each party's underlying needs and interests need to be revived and reviewed to see what crucial goal incompatibilities still lie at the heart of their conflict and the practice of opposing for the sake of opposition abandoned (*de-isolation*). Intra-party decision-making needs to be re-balanced to allow for the input of ideas from those whose immediate task is not tomorrow's defence against violence or the short-term implementation of counter-coercion measures (*de-mobilisation* or demilitarisation). Finally, ways have to be found to reverse entrapment processes and to enable policy decisions to be made with an eye to realistic future opportunities and limitations rather than past aims, promises, investments and sacrifices (*decommitment*)."

The various elements which Mitchell touches upon will be further analysed in the next section. What is important to stress here is that in comparison with simplistic uni-dimensional models, such an approach to conflict transformation dynamics not only recognizes the complexity of protracted conflicts (i.e. the objective-subjective mix), but it also allows for the juxtaposition of different timeframes and "ripe moments" according to their various elements.

There is, however, an implicit assumption behind most representations of inter-group conflict dynamics, including this one, which is the negative connotation associated with the process of conflict escalation. While acknowledging that most conflict exacerbating dynamics are indeed destructive and participate in rendering conflicts more intractable, there are some cases in which conflict intensification (albeit by constructive means) is in fact a necessary step in the transition from unpeaceful to peaceful societies. In order to clarify this distinction, one needs to turn to the literature on asymmetric conflict transformation.

1.5 Asymmetric conflict transformation stages

In the past decade, the *conflict transformation* terminology has emerged in reaction to a dissatisfaction with the "growing use of the term [conflict] resolution to stand for almost anything short of outright victory, defeat and revenge as an outcome, as well as for many processes involving overt violence ("bombing for peace") or covert coercion (dictated settlement) as resolution methods" (Mitchell 2002: 1). If originally resolution used to be equated with a search for positive peace, critics have denounced the failure of most third party interventions associated with the conflict resolution tradition (such as the problem-solving approach) to "carry through [their] aim of integrative or transformational outcomes" (Rupesinghe 1995: 74). Because such conflict resolution approaches "do not use the language of justice" (Francis 2002: 25), they are ultimately settlement-oriented (Bush and Folger 1994: 12). One of the main distinctions between the resolution and transformation perspectives lies in the former's insistence on conflict de-escalation as the first priority, while the latter envisions conflict as an "ecology that is relationally dynamic with ebb (conflict de-escalation to pursue constructive change) and flow (conflict escalation to pursue constructive change)" (Lederach 2003: 33). In conflict transformation work, "violence, not conflict, is the problem" (Francis 2002: 54), and the goal is to pursue non-violent social change, or, in other words, to transform destructive conflicts into constructive ones (Kriesberg 2003). The following matrix (figure 3) illustrates the ebb and flow of conflict dynamics, according to the direction of social change (towards conflict exacerbation or mitigation), and its normative value (constructive versus destructive change).

	Destructive change	**Constructive change**
Conflict exacerbation	Warfare	Nonviolent conflict waging
Conflict mitigation	Peace by coercion	Conflict settlement, Peacebuilding, Reconciliation, etc

Figure 3: The ebb and flow of conflict transformation

Just like the models which have been mentioned so far, the conflict transformation literature also describes conflict as a natural and transformative dialectic process that moves through certain predictable phases, transforming relationships and social organisation (Lederach 1995: 17). But its originality lies in its strong focus on asymmetric conflicts, which do not follow the same sequential patterns as symmetrical ones. When conflicts are referred to as asymmetric, vertical (Galtung 1996) or unbalanced (Curle 1971), it usually means that they are not only about ideological, religious or ethnic cleavages, but also and most importantly about the objective, structural repartition of power between the different contentious groups. In fact, most contemporary conflicts are highly imbalanced, opposing state (or occupying) forces, powerful in military, economic and political capacities, against insurgent groupings representing communities with much lower power levels. The government has legitimacy, sovereignty, allies, armies, and access to resources. The insurgents have to fight for all of these (Zartman 1996: 8).

A diagram originally designed by Adam Curle (1971: 186) has later been reproduced or adapted by other researchers (Lederach 1995, 1997, Fisher et al 2000, Francis 2002, Ramsbotham et al 2005) studying the dynamics of conflicts caused by unbalanced relationships (figure 4).

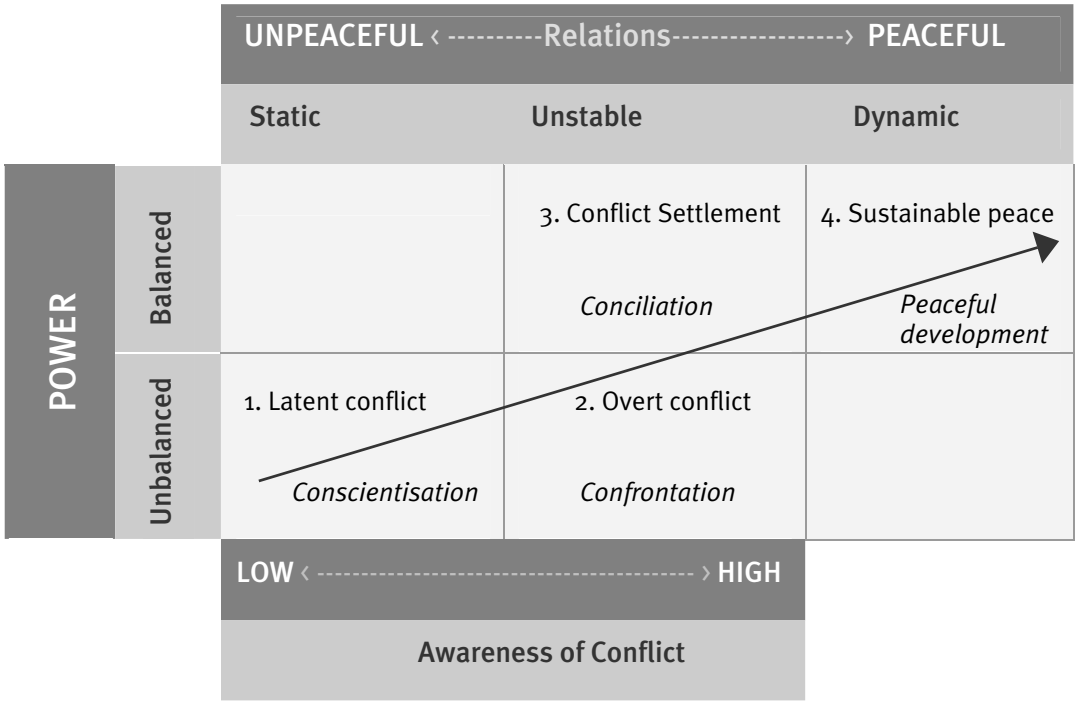

Figure 4: The progression of conflict in unbalanced relationships (adapted from Curle 1971)

It describes the dynamics of conflict transformation in a matrix comparing levels of power (unbalanced to balanced) with levels of awareness of conflicting interests and needs (low to high awareness, or latent to overt conflict). The four stages identified in this diagram are the following[3]:

1. **Latent conflict:** this can be defined as a situation of structural violence which has not yet been expressed on the behavioural level. In this initial stage, the relations between the parties are unbalanced and thus unpeaceful; they are also static, due to a lack of awareness of the situation of injustice or inequality by the actors. "If in a particular system, one group gains what another loses, there is – even if the loser does not understand what is happening – a structural conflict" (Curle 1971: 4).
2. **Overt conflict:** This second stage is still characterised by power imbalance, but combined with a high level of awareness of conflicting interests and needs by the parties. Because the tensions which were previously covered up (by the powerful) or ignored (by the powerless) have been perceived by the actors and brought to the surface, the relations between the parties have become unstable, and the conflict has become manifest. This is also the stage of empowerment when the underdogs raise their level of power by waging a liberation or equal rights struggle. A certain degree of *polarisation* between the adversaries is seen in "constructive conflicts" as a necessary step towards peaceful relations, facilitating the process towards their "ripening" for resolution (Schmid 1968: 227). Fisher et al also establish a distinction between conflict *intensification*, which they define as "making a hidden conflict more visible and open for purposive, nonviolent ends", and conflict *escalation*, a "situation in which levels of tension and violence are increasing" (2000: 5) .
3. **Settlement:** Once the conflict has reached a certain level of intensification, resulting in a shift in power relations (towards greater balance), the parties can reassess the costs of continuing hurting stalemate (Zartman 1985). The conflict is "ripe" for the stage of settlement, where behavioural and structural change can be negotiated; and for the stage of resolution, where their adversarial relationship can be transformed.
4. **Sustainable peace:** In this final phase, relations between the parties are both peaceful and dynamic, as they establish and maintain healthy power relations. It is important to note that without the first three stages, the conflict actors could not

[3] In the diagram, the words marked in italic refer to the methods of intervention most appropriate for each conflict stage; they will be reviewed in section 3.

have reached this situation of positive peace. A premature "pseudo-resolution" may mean in practice the suppression of just aspirations: "pacification" rather than peacemaking (Francis 2002: 54). This model stands in contrast with the traditional belief, exposed earlier, in negative peace as a precondition for positive peace. Here, the attainment of social and distributive justice (equal rights and fairness) is seen as a precondition for conflict settlement, as illustrated by the slogan "no peace without justice" heard in Palestine or South Africa (Baker 2001: 763).

In order to address the limits of uni-dimensional linear models, Francis (2002: 55) has designed a more complex asymmetric conflict transformation diagram which integrates a multiplicity of possible sequence patterns. A simplified version is presented below (figure 5), showing the conflict stages she has envisioned, but not the "actions or processes by which new stages are reached", as these will be explored in subsequent sections of this paper. In comparison with Curle's model, it does not visually integrate the variable of power balance (shifts of power relationships as a precondition for the successful resolution of asymmetric conflicts), but in compensation, it mentions explicitly the process of *nonviolent confrontation*, and it brings in two additional conflict phases which are crucial to the understanding of protracted conflicts: the stage of *stagnation*, and *unilaterally-imposed conflict settlements* (by third parties or the "victors"), which most peacemaking and peacebuilding scholars usually leave out of their scope of analysis.

Stagnation is characterised here as "endemic instability", and "a new political economy of war", meaning a self-perpetuating situation where people on each side have developed vested interests in continuing the struggle (these elements will be further addressed in section 2). One could also compare this phase with Mitchell's "entrapment" process mentioned earlier, which provides conflict parties with the feeling that "there is no alternative" to maintaining entrenched positions and continuing a struggle with no likely victory foreseeable for the near future. According to Kriesberg (2005: 66-68), this stage, which he labels "institutionalisation", is particularly crucial in *intractable conflicts*, defined as protracted (persisting for a long time), waged in ways that the adversaries or interested observers regard as destructive, and marked by a history of failed peacemaking efforts, resulting in hardened antagonistic positions.

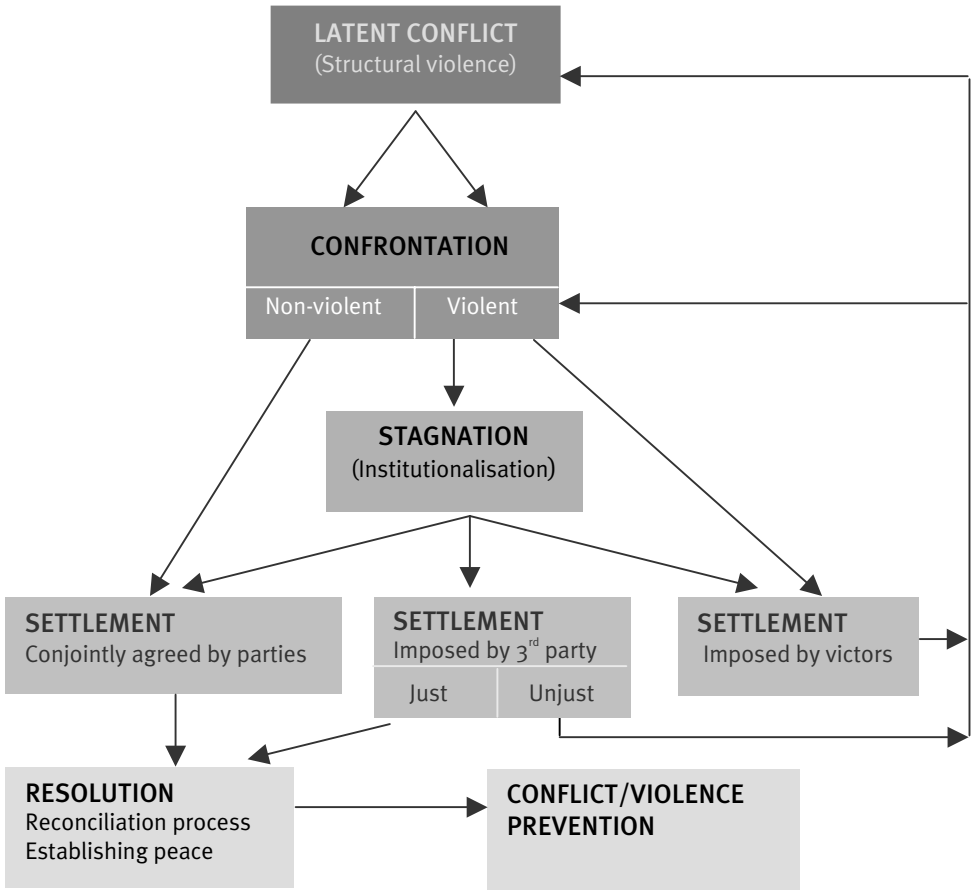

Figure 5: Complex asymmetric conflict stages diagram (adapted from Francis 2002: 55)

Finally, this diagram suggests that nonviolent conflicts are much easier to resolve than violent ones, since the latter might result in a variety of possible outcomes, including

> "victory to one side, and terms imposed by them (which, although in theory could include and address the needs of the vanquished, are in practice likely to exclude or deny them); the forceful intervention of a powerful third-party, leading to an imposed settlement (which could be wise and inclusive and pave the way for reconciliation, or could be unacceptable to one or more parties and lead to renewed violence or oppression); or exhaustion, a 'mutually hurting stalemate', or some other change in the course of violent confrontation – such as the emergence of a movement for peace – leading to a search for dialogue" (Francis 2002: 57).

Therefore, in contrast to the linear models reviewed above, such a model integrates the dynamics of "peace enforcement" and forcefully agreed settlements, which have taken on increased importance in the last decade (e.g. Bosnia, East Timor, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq). The transition from violence to peace in such contexts merits

examination just as much as conflicts transformed though internally and conjointly-agreed settlements.

1.6 Synthesis: the conflict transformation cycle

Combining the multiple stages and temporal models of conflict transformation discussed in this first section, it is now possible to draw a final representation of the dynamics of inter-group conflicts (figure 6), which will be used as a reference for the upcoming discussion in sections 2 and 3. Moving away from a linear perspective, the following diagram adopts a circular "time cosmology", where the advantages are twofold. First, according to Galtung, it helps to combine the Western, Christian notion of time as bounded (seeing conflicts as having a clear beginning, birth or genesis, and a clear ending, apocalypse or catharsis), with the Buddhist concept of time as infinite, according to which "there is no beginning and no end; the conflict is transformed, preferably to a higher (meaning less violent) level, but not extinguished" (1996: 81). This latter conception of time coincides with the conflict transformation school described earlier, which recognises that conflict remains, and dialogue is permanent (Lederach 2005: 49).

Secondly, it enables us to picture the process of conflict transformation as complex, multi-directional and to some degree unpredictable. Indeed, a schematic life cycle of conflict sees a "progression from peaceful social change to latent and overt conflict, to mitigation, settlement and resolution, and back to peaceful social change" (Ramsbotham et al 2005: 23). However, this is not the only path. In this diagram, the stages are sequential, but not unidirectional. The conflict can move back as well as forward, and can also "jump" stages altogether, evolving for example from conflict formation to conflict transformation and back to social change, avoiding violence (e.g. nonviolent independence or civil rights movements in India and the US, successful preventive diplomacy in the Baltic states or Macedonia). Or it can move immediately from violent conflict to post-war reconstruction via imposed settlements (without passing through a "mutually hurting stalemate", dialogue and negotiations), and back to the creation of fresh conflicts, if the conflict's root causes remain unaddressed (Ramsbotham et al 2005: 23).

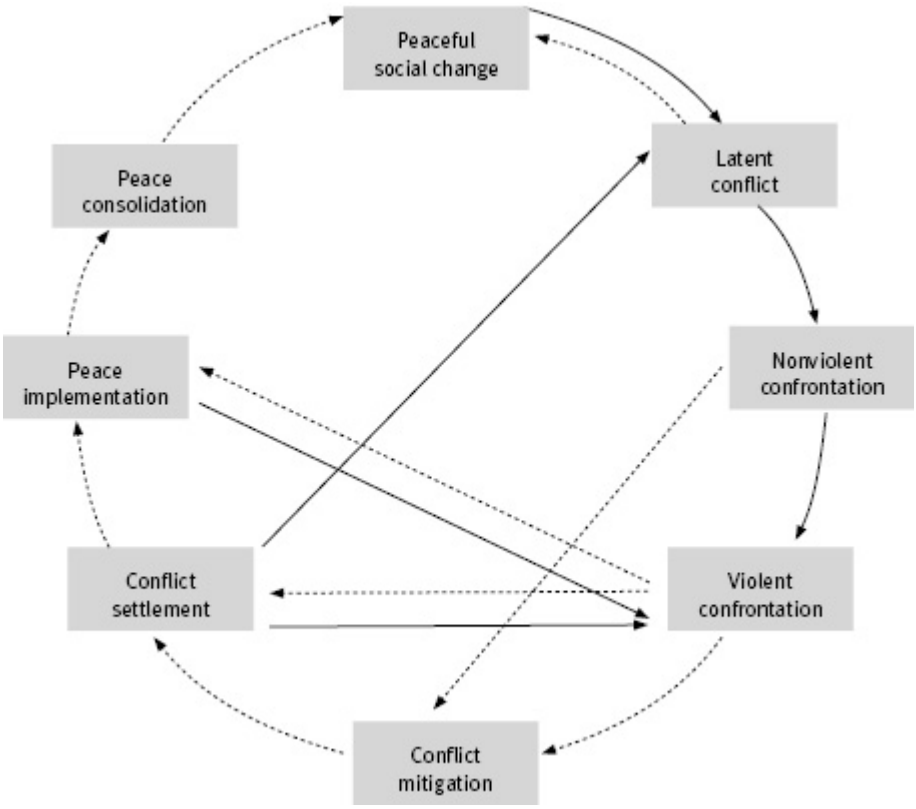

Figure 6: Conflict transformation cycle

Figure 6 lists eight conflict stages which have been reviewed and discussed in the course of this section: (1) peaceful social change, (2) latent conflict, (3) nonviolent confrontation, (4) violent confrontation, (5) conflict mitigation. (6) conflict settlement, (7) (negative) peace implementation, and (8) (positive) peace consolidation. The focus of this study, the transition from violence to peace, has been translated here as the transformation from 'latent and overt violence to structural and cultural peace', justifying a broad time-span which extends far beyond the dynamics of negotiations, ceasefires and peace accords. It should also be noted that the phase of conflict stagnation (or institutionalisation) has not been included into the list of conflict stages to be used for this study, because it will be integrated into the variable 'obstacles of resolutionary change'.

In the diagram, the arrows which form and cross the circle represent the conflict dynamics which enable the conflict to move from one stage to another. Illustrating the terminology and matrix introduced in figure 3, the full lines represent conflict exacerbating dynamics (some of which might be qualified as constructive, such as the move from latent to overt nonviolent conflict), while the dotted lines

represent conflict mitigating dynamics (albeit potentially destructive, such as in the case of unilaterally-imposed conflict settlements).

Having reviewed a number of approaches to the transitions from violence to peace and highlighted their advantages as well as weaknesses, I have argued in this first section that only models which draw out the complexity of protracted social conflicts, including both their objective and subjective aspects, their non-linear features and multiple escalation and de-escalation paths, provide truthful representations of the dynamics of conflict transformation. The following section will examine more closely the nature of these dynamics, by defining the factors of destructive and constructive change which originate from within the parties, their relationship and the outside environment.

SECTION 2

Drivers of Destructive and Constructive Change: A Systemic Approach

Moving away from the temporal, dynamic (linear or cyclical) perspective adopted in section 1, this second section reviews the different factors which enable (or prevent) changes within conflict systems, at any given developmental stage of the transition from latent or direct violence to sustainable peace. Breaking down the persistent boundaries between the fields of conflict analysis (which concentrates on conflict escalation dynamics) and conflict transformation (which addresses de-escalation), this study posits that it is possible to identify factors which can account for change in any direction, i.e. leading conflicts towards either destructive or constructive paths. Numerous references will also be made to broader theories of the social science, and more particularly the international relations literature, since they have explored some instruments for the analysis of social change which, despite their neglect by the conflict management literature, can be usefully adapted to the study of protracted conflicts and their transformation. In particular, this section engages with some of the terminology and concepts from *systems theory*, whose potential contribution for the field of conflict transformation (both in the arenas of theory and practice) is currently being investigated by the Berghof Foundation for Peace Support (BFPS 2006c), as exemplified in its current work in Sri Lanka as well as three empirical case studies in Sudan (BFPS 2006), Aceh (Aspinall 2005) and Nepal (Dahal 2005).

2.1 Multi-level systemic conflict analysis: inputs from social, political and international relations theory

In order to examine the factors, or "transformers" which shape the course of conflicts and influence their transition processes, it is necessary to start by identifying the various conflict components, or "stakeholders", meaning the set of actors affected by the conflict and/or affecting its course, as agents of constructive or destructive

change, or obstacles to change. But such a conflict mapping exercise should not restrict itself to the naming of conflict parties and other involved agents (individuals, groups and institutions); it must also identify the structural forces which shape the socio-politico-economical transitions within war-torn societies. Here a first reference can be made to international relations theory (e.g. Wendt 1999) and social theory (e.g. Giddens), which have produced valuable recommendations on the dialectical relationship between **structure and agency**. This study locates itself in the middle ground, or synthesis, between agency-centred (individualist) paradigms which reduce society and structures to passive recipients or outcomes of human agency, and the structuralist reification of the role of structures in determining human behaviours. Both of these extreme positions will be rejected here, assuming that human actions are always embedded in, and constrained by, the structural context within which they live and evolve and that, in turn, social actors help to reproduce and transform these structures through their actions (Hay 1995: 199-201). A transformative model of conflict and change should, therefore, be aware both of the constraints placed by structural forces, and of the margin of freedom open to social agents (including researchers) in promoting social change (Beckett 1997: 78). It implies that if a conflict is created by social structures that favour a dominant group, we cannot hope to transform it without altering those structures; but structural violence is conditioned and maintained, and can only be challenged, through the behaviours and attitudes of individual actors or communities, which therefore must also be transformed.

A closely related debate on the "scale of change" concerns the identification of the most appropriate **units (or levels) of analysis** of the social world and its transformations. In the sphere of international relations, Waltz (1959) introduced three levels of explanation for international phenomena: the individual, the state and the international system. In his wake, all subsequent scholars and paradigms were categorised according to the unit of analysis to which they placed the greatest attention. The same logic can be applied to the field of conflict management, which has identified factors of conflict or resolutionary change at multiple levels of the social world. However, the three units of analysis originally identified by Waltz must be further refined in order to account for the specificities of contemporary conflict transformation, which operates primarily at the intra-state level. For example, Ramsbotham et al (2005: 97) identify five relevant units of analysis from which to

locate the sources of international and national conflicts, but which can also be applied to "conflict transformers": the global, regional, state, conflict party, and elite/individual levels.

Whereas most international relations, comparative politics and political science scholars choose the state as their primary unit of analysis and then examine its interaction with other national units, the global system or its domestic environment, it makes more sense for the study of change and transition within protracted social conflicts to concentrate on the communal group (Azar 1990) as the primary unit of analysis, and then to examine its multiple interaction with its outside (inter-party, national, regional and global) and inside (intra-party) environment. This study will thus adopt a systemic approach to conflict transformation which places conflict parties at the centre of its gravity.

This **systemic approach** borrows some elements of systems theory, originating in cybernetics, organisational development and psychotherapy and later transferred to the spheres of international relations and political science via social theory (e.g. Deutsch 1973, Easton 1965, Rapoport 1986, Luhmann 1995), although it has so far very rarely been used to contribute to the understanding of organised violence (Schlichte 2003). It posits that the social world is made up of open systems engaged in constant interchange with their outside environment; within each system, the conduct and behaviour of independent units is preconditioned by their need to adjust internally to changes in their environment, and in turn, through their actions, they alter this environment. In this paper, a given conflict represents a system, made up of separate but interrelated sub-systems or units of analysis (the parties), and partly constrained by larger supra-systems (the regional and international political orders) which provide the context within which they operate. The conflict parties are seen as both results of the conflict system, and active agents for its transformation. Relationships, connectedness and interactions between the constituting units are at the heart of the systemic approach (Diamond and McDonald 1996: 7), which means that the primary factors of transformation of a conflict system lie in the inter-party interactions (struggle, competition, cooperation, power balance, etc.) between the constituting parties. One of the basic tenets of systemic thinking is that groups and individuals are embedded in a network of *feedback loops*, which can be defined as "lines of effect, such as when things happen at point A, events are triggered at point

B, and what happens at B comes back to affect A again" (Littlejohn and Domenici 2001: 219).

Moving down to a more micro-level of analysis, a conflict party is also made up of smaller units, and in this sense, represents simultaneously a subsystem of the larger whole (the conflict system), and a whole system in itself. The structure and conduct of each conflict-party system are shaped by internal social interactions and communication across (hierarchical, vertical relations) and within (horizontal relations) the levels of decision-making. Conflict transformation analysts have widely adopted Lederach's pyramidal model distinguishing three levels of leadership (referred to in figure 7 as 1, 2, 3, and in the rest of the paper as Track I, II, III) comprised respectively of the key political and military leaders; the middle-range leadership, made up of networks of individuals who are prominent within a particular setting (regional, ethnic, etc.) or institution (professional, academic, non-governmental, religious, etc.); and the grassroots leadership organising the day-to-day life at the base of the society (Lederach 1997: 38-42).

Combining all these systemic elements, the following diagram exposes the interplay between the intra-party, party, national and international levels of analysis of protracted conflicts.

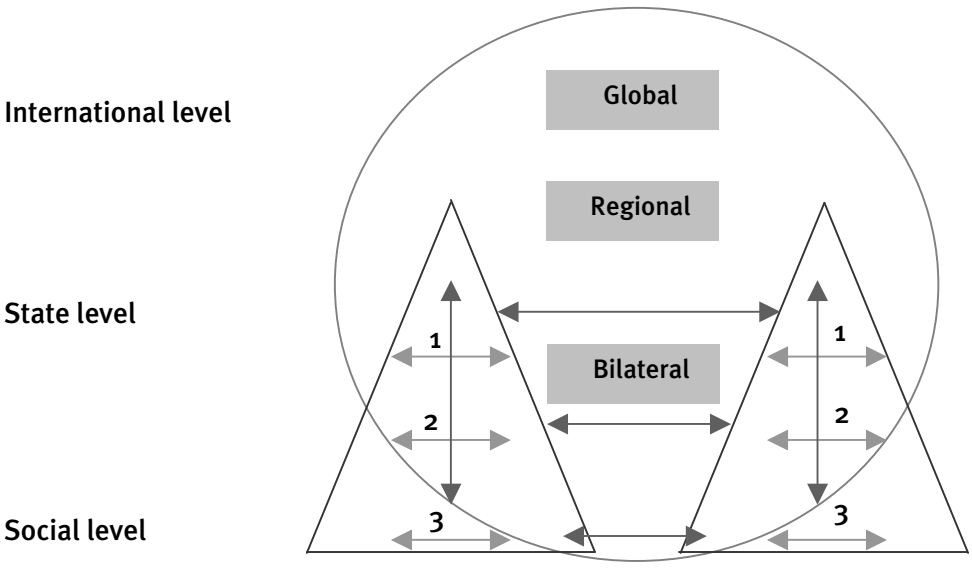

Figure 7: Conflict mapping model (adapted from Ramsbotham et al 2005: 28)

In contrast to the world of exact science, social systems are made up of shifting, complex webs of people and processes in constant evolution and this is especially true for intra-state conflicts: their boundaries are open, permeable and subject to continuous transformations during the escalation and de-escalation phases. Societies are in fact made up of a variety of overlapping systems: for example, in identity-based conflicts, one belongs to one conflict party system because of certain ascribed (racial, religious, regional, etc.) elements; but most people also belong to networks that cut across the lines of conflict within the society, such as professional, gender or class-based associations. Moreover, the borderlines between conflict parties in civil wars are not always as clear-cut as in inter-state wars, especially in cases where the main warring parties do not represent a clearly defined constituency, and where a great part of the civil society is made up of civilians (non-warring stakeholders) uncommitted to either side(s). In Nepal, for example, the local leadership in certain regions actively oppose human rights violations by both the rebel Maoists and the state security forces, and many villagers have the feeling of being trapped between two sides (Dahal 2005). In order to account for these overlapping identities or allegiances, one could present the diagram in figure 7 with the two party system triangles as slightly overlapping at the bottom. Moreover, although this diagram portrays the complex relations between two party systems only, most actual conflicts involve a multiplicity of parties, and their "mapping" needs to account for all concerned groups and communities.

Moving up one level, from conflict party units to the conflict system as a whole, similar remarks can be made concerning the relative permeability of its borderlines. This fact makes it difficult for the scientist to determine, for example, which actors and processes belong to a conflict system, and which ones arise from its external (regional, global) environment. Ethno-political conflicts, especially, are characterised by a high degree of transnational involvement (cross-border identity bonds, diaspora support): when should these activities be considered as an internal component of the conflict, rather than environmental influences on the conflict system? These questions indicate that all attempts to classify the components of a conflict and factors of change into systemic categories are open to different interpretations, and are thus a necessarily imperfect and subjective exercise. The rest of this section should be read with these considerations in mind.

2.2 Systemic analysis of the driving factors of destructive and constructive change

Systemic analysis helps us to comprehend the complexity of protracted conflicts and the web of intermeshed variables which contribute to their constant evolutions. What changes create conflicts, exacerbate conflicts, diminish their intensity, help to bring about their transformation (Mitchell 2005)? BFPS uses the terms *drivers of conflict/drivers of peace* (Bloomfield and Ropers 2005) to refer primarily to internal actors of change (or obstacles to change); in this paper, drivers might arise both from within or outside the conflict system, and from either agency and/or structural factors, in the same fashion as Ramsbotham et al's "conflict transformers" (2005: 163). The rest of this section is divided around three main clusters of drivers, following a model of analysis suggested by Kriesberg (2003, 2005): internal factors (situated within conflict party systems), relational factors (originating in the structural, behavioural and cultural interactions among the main warring parties), and environmental or external factors (located in the conditioning context – societal, regional and international – that structure the conflict). This will provide a framework accounting for all the spheres of conflict transformation, including vertical relations up and down the levels from the grassroots up to the international, and horizontal relations across and between all the social actors involved (see figure 7).

2.2.1 Internal drivers (and obstacles) of change

What intra-party processes influence the constructive and/or destructive transformation or conflicts, and what internal factors intervene as obstacles to change? In order to answer this question, it might be useful to start with a further reference to the field of international relations, which has produced some competing interpretations of the process of foreign policy decision-making. In contrast to the realist and structuralist paradigms which explain the formulation of policy choices by inter-state power relations or the structure of the international system, the so-called "decisional approach" first developed in the United States gives priority to internal processes which make up foreign policy (Cohen 2001). It argues that the state is not a homogeneous actor rationally governed by the sole notion of general interest, but rather a complex system of forces, each of which acts according to its own logic:

these include various bureaucratic, administrative and military units (Allison 1971), as well as other influential forces such as domestic public opinion (Page and Shapiro 1992). The choices and "non-choices" made by policy-makers, and their perception of the national interest, are also influenced by cognitive factors such as "belief systems" which act as a "road map" filtering the information which arises from the systemic environment (Holsti 1962, Jervis 1976).

In the realm of intra-state conflicts, such studies call for the identification of strategic, cognitive and organisational elements which influence the leaders of each warring side in their decisions (and "non-decisions") to intensify, mitigate or transform the conflict(s) in which they are engaged.

- **Strategic factors**

In a conflict, the warring parties always rely on an articulated political agenda and the vision of an ultimate goal. What I call here strategic factors of change refer to the identification, formulation and re-evaluation of objectives (ends) and methods (means) for the fulfilment of the group's grievances (i.e. resistance, liberation or secession movement), or for the preservation of an existing status-quo (e.g. government or pro-government forces in insurgency wars, or movements struggling for the protection of their land, environment, privileges, etc.).

One can assume that some types of goals are more prone to facilitate or hinder conflict transformation. For example, it is generally considered that the expansion of demands by the conflict parties have an escalating effect, while the limitation of grievances to concrete specific demands stimulates de-escalation (Reychler and Paffenholz 2000: 8). Although conflicts over existential issues of survival and the preservation of basic human needs for security, access and identity (Azar 1990) are more difficult to resolve than disputes over diplomatic, territorial or economic bargaining, the reframing of seemingly intractable issues on which the parties take positions into negotiable interests opens the way for a peaceful settlement. The strategic shifts which lead the adversaries to give up armed struggle for non-violent political processes may be reflecting an intra-party goal transformation, or they might simply be motivated by a new belief in the capacity of political reform (as opposed to violence) to achieve the original goals. In both cases, they proceed from the *realpolitik* calculations of internal and environmental constraints and opportunities.

The recent history of the Palestinian struggle for statehood provides a good illustration for these dynamics. The progressive limitations of territorial demands to sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza Strip (relinquishing the claim over the portion of land on which Israel declared independence in 1948), made official in Arafat's December 1988 Declaration, paved the way for the 1993 Oslo Accords. The strategy and tactics of action selected by the leaders and activists also had a strong impact on the direction of the conflict, and the deliberate reliance on overtly unarmed methods of struggle in the first intifada limited conflict escalation and made it easier to de-escalate the situation afterwards. However, the peacebuilding process was later interrupted when most Palestinians felt that their demand had not been granted and that instead, each negotiation round drove them further from attaining their goal of self-determination.

- **Psychological and idiosyncratic factors**

The "decisional approach" to decision-making introduced above encourages us to consider the non-rational forces which shape the enunciation of goals and strategies issued by party leaders, and thus influence the dynamics of conflict towards escalation or de-escalation patterns. The psychological factors which drive actors' decisions to engage in a struggle, negotiate, sign a ceasefire, then a peace agreement, and start a reconciliation process are rooted in their belief systems. For example, the phenomenon of ethnic-related collective violence (e.g. genocidal acts in Nazi Germany, Rwanda, Sudan, Bosnia, Kosovo) is rooted in the aspirations and ideology of a societal group claiming that they are inherently superior to their adversaries, on the grounds of religious faith, ideological beliefs, myths about the past, presumptions about race differences, etc.

There are also a number of psychological barriers to peaceful change which prevent adversaries from engaging in de-escalating processes, despite their strategic advantage in doing so. In addition to the phenomenon of *entrapment* cited earlier in section 1.4 (Mitchell 2005), Kriesberg mentions the process of "selective perception" when decision-makers tend to notice only phenomena that fit their expectations, so that "once a struggle has entered a stage of mutual recrimination and contentiousness, even conciliatory conduct by the adversary is likely not to be noticed or, if noticed, be discounted and considered deceptive" (2003: 162). Zartman (1995: 9) also argues that when commitment to continuing a rebellion exceeds

grievances as a motivation, it becomes an end in itself, inducing leaders to discard possible chances to negotiate and compromise, as illustrated in the conflicts in Sri Lanka, the Basque country, or Western Sahara.

If psychological factors often serve as conflict exacerbating dynamics or obstacles to change, they can also help to bring about a successful conflict transformation process. Mitchell calls *decommitment* the process of eye-opening through which decision-makers finally decide to leave behind past aims, promises and sacrifices, to concentrate on realistic future opportunities (see section 1.4). Bush and Folger (1994: 2) describe the two complementary processes of personal transformation as *empowerment* and *recognition*. Empowerment signifies the restoration of individuals' sense of their own value and strength and their capacity to handle life's problems, while recognition means the evocation in individuals of acknowledgement and empathy for the situation and problems of others. The logic behind this approach is that the transformation of society is an indirect result of individual transformation of the person, because external change never begins at all unless changes in the internal goals and perceptions have to some extent already occurred (Chupp 1991: 3). These elements will be further analysed later on, when concentrating on the relational factors of transformation, as they relate to inter-party dynamics.

Finally, many conflicts become institutionalised when individual decision-makers or rank-and-file soldiers acquire an individual self-interest in war perpetuation, in contrast with the strategic advantage of conflict de-escalation for the society at large. Recent research on war economies has demonstrated that violence spawns a host of groups who benefit directly from its continuation. Soldiers become dependent on warfare as a way of life, and warlords on the "spoils of war" (Berdal and Malone 2000). Thus, even though conflicts may have primarily ethno-political objectives, the mobilisation of rebellious populations on such claims is often instrumentalised by local leaders on all sides, who see in war an opportunity to enrich themselves in a "predator economy" (Collier 2001). On the other side of the conflict, heads of states often participate in war perpetuation when they place their personal benefits above the general interest, especially in "patrimonial regimes" or "shadow states" characterised by a private use of public state assets and prerogatives (Reno 2000: 46).

Nonetheless, opportunism can also become a driver of peaceful change, through the inducement of those who "do well out of war" to recognise the prospects of economic dividends that peace can offer. Moreover, war-profiteers only represent a small minority within conflict-torn societies, and statistically, wars mostly produce losers. They impose massive costs on the populations concerned, and so a large segment of the society will benefit from the conflict ending. This illustrates the need to extend the scope of intra-party factors of change beyond the sole role of central decision-makers, and to analyse how the relationships across and within each level of leadership influence pre- and post-war transitions.

- **The organisational approach to intra-party change**

The "decisional" approach to foreign policy reminds us that conflict parties, far from constituting homogeneous systems, are on the contrary composed of a variety of individuals and organisational structures who exert unequal degrees of influence on the production and implementation of internal and external policies. The composition of the system of command and the internal power balance among the constituent parts of each warring party are important variables which affect violence-to-peace transitions.

- ***Horizontal relationships: cohesion, rivalry and factionalism***

All conflict parties, whether a state apparatus or a resistance movement, usually pursue parallel military and political activities, carried out by political or administrative branches on the one hand, and a military wing (enjoying varying degrees of autonomy) on the other. The degree of cohesion or competition between these different internal structures influences the course of conflicts; especially, according to Kriesberg (2003: 201), the fluctuating balance between "hawks" and "doves", and the emergence to prominence of individuals interested in accommodation with the adversary represent important precursors of de-escalating transition. Civilian leaders (as opposed to army chiefs or guerrilla commanders) generally tend to be more pragmatic and thus more prone to opening the channels of communication when they see the conflict as "ripe" for negotiation. In Kosovo, for example, the absence of a political front for the ethnic Albanian armed group KLA in early 1998 was a serious obstacle to initiating peace talks with the Serbians.

But this is not always true. In many conflicts, more progress was achieved by hard-line than by moderate leaders, because the concessions by them are more convincing to their community. De Klerk and Mandela, Adams and Trimble, Rabin and Arafat, all had previous associations with intransigent positions but were able to lead their respective followers into peace agreements. In other words, actors who have made (for various personal reasons) the arduous journey from obstacle to peace to supporter of peace, or, to use Berghof terminology (see section 3), who have made the transition from "war constituency" to "peace constituency", often represent more powerful agents of change than figures of leadership renowned for their moderation and non-violence. They can be, in fact, highly dramatic circuit-breakers in the cycle of violence. Therefore, in recent years, peace builders have acknowledged the need to include the users of political violence in peace processes, instead of excluding them on the very basis of their violent methods (Ricigliano 2004).

This is all the more important as the involvement of armed groups in negotiations is usually accompanied by factionalism between "dealers" and "zealots" (Darby and McGinty 2000: 233). Peace processes are often subject to acts of defiance by rejectionist groups who consider negotiations a betrayal of their cause, and try to prevent or derail an eventual agreement (e.g. Real IRA and Continuity IRA in Northern Ireland, radical Islamic or settlers movement in Israel/Palestine). Dissident violence might also result from the marginalisation of some segments of the group in decision-making and in the negotiation process. For example, women fighters, whose needs and interests may vary from those of their male counterparts, are often sidelined within peace processes (Mazurana 2004). The identity of the negotiation team might also lead to a generational factionalism if older or younger members become excluded from the process. For example, the Oslo peace process was led on the Palestinian side by an external leadership in exile, composed of the "old guard" of the PLO who were not sufficiently connected to the younger generation of activists who led the intifada, many of whom later joined the ranks of rejectionists in performing acts of dissident violence (Dudouet 2005).

For their part, government forces are usually perceived as less vulnerable to internal splits than insurgent groups, but most contemporary civil wars involve paramilitary and militia groups which fight alongside the regular army (with various degrees of autonomy and distinct interests); their frequent sidelining in peace processes turns them into potential "spoilers" (Stedman 1997). The participation of the loyalist paramilitary groups and Christian militias in the peace agreements in

Northern Ireland and Lebanon respectively, constitute successful examples of inclusive peacemaking practices, while the continued disruption of negotiations between the government and rebel movements (e.g. FARC) by the violent campaigns of paramilitary groups in Colombia demonstrates their potential as obstacles to peaceful change. In Sudan, likewise, the South Sudan Defence Forces, a militia which emerged from the Southern rebel movement SPLA/M to form an alliance with the government in Khartoum, was not part of the recent peace process that culminated in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement; feeling excluded and dissatisfied, they now threaten to disrupt the peace process if they are not integrated into the Southern political and security institutions (BFPS 2006).

Indeed, in the post-settlement phases of peace implementation and consolidation, the intra-party strategic shift from military action to political dialogue needs to be consolidated by the replacement and/or integration of non-state armed groups into legal bodies (e.g. political party, national army). The incorporation of ex-militias into the state security system, especially, might be an effective way to convert potentially destabilising threats into support for new structures, as well as a demonstration of fair employment practice by the new administration. In South Africa, the 1996 constitution insisted that police and defence force "be broadly representative of the South African people", and by 1996, 16,000 former guerrillas had been absorbed into the army (Darby and McGinty 2000: 230).

- ***Internal hierarchy: top-down versus bottom-up transitions***

These examples emphasize the necessity to concentrate not only on horizontal intra-party communication and rivalries at the different levels of decision-making, but also on the vertical, hierarchical relationships between the "echelons" of the conflict party pyramid. I have described conflict parties as sub-systems of a society, within which the interactions between leaders and their constituency, or grievance group, are multi-directional. Although the cases described above demonstrate that violent conflicts cannot be sustained without the leadership of those in authority, they sometimes erupt at the local level, from which non-state armed groups emerge and capitalise their support. Conversely, the de-escalation, settlement and transformation of armed struggles may be conditioned both by the emergence of alternative leadership or new policy options at the top, and by the development of a constituency for peace at the grassroots levels of each partisan group.

In their comparative study of peace processes, Darby and McGinty (2000) ask whether it is possible to stimulate a peace initiative by groundswell pressure, and if a strong civil and democratic infrastructure helps to sustain it, or on the contrary if peace is managed by leadership from the political elites. In a statistical study on the effects of civic (bottom-up) versus power-holder (top-down) influence on political transitions from authoritarianism to democracy, Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005) cite a number of top-driven transitions, including El Salvador (1992-94) and Guatemala (1996).

However, their results also indicate that democratic transitions launched and led by elites have a relatively negative impact on the success of long-term peacebuilding. Darby and McGinty (2000: 234) also argue that when ceasefires between leaders do not immediately erase hatred in the communities (as is the case with top-down peace processes), they risk being undermined by a concurrent increase in conventional crime and sectional face-to-face street violence. Two BFPS-commissioned studies refer to the dangers of such dynamics in the recent peace processes in Nepal and Aceh, negotiated solely by the governments and insurgent leaders (respectively the revolutionary Maoists and the secessionist GAM), with very limited coordination with the vertical track II and III levels to fall back on, and thus no mechanisms developed for wider public participation and legitimacy (Aspinall 2005, Dahal 2005). As a result, negotiations are bound to focus on the sole political aspirations and economic co-optation of the combatants from both sides, rather than on the needs of ordinary community members, including the reduction of poverty, inequality and human rights abuses, which represent major root causes of the conflict. The imperatives of peace and security are clearly bypassing those of justice and accountability (Baker 2001).

On the other hand, there are many examples of mass-driven, or "bottom-up" transitions to peace and democracy. In the Basque country, the decline in popular support for the separatist armed group ETA provided the opportunity for the peace movements to mobilise public protest and ultimately to influence political initiatives (Darby and McGinty 2000: 240), such as the recently declared permanent ceasefire. A common feature in many societies suffering from ethnic violence is a popular desire for peace: the extent of mobilisation of the civil society is a factor determining the outcome of a peace process. In democratic countries especially, representatives try to stay attuned to their constituency and followers, and the "decisional" approach to foreign policy (highlighted above) has evidenced the influence of public opinion in

the formulation of policy choices. The field of nonviolent resistance, also, concentrates on the role played by domestic civil pressure on power-holding elites as a change agent, as illustrated by the recent wave of "people power" revolutions that included the Philippines in 1986, Chile and Poland in 1988, Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia in 1989, the Baltic States in 1991, Serbia in 2000, Georgia in 2003, Ukraine in 2004, Kyrgystan and Lebanon in 2005, and Nepal in 2006 (Sharp 2005). Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005: 6) found that the force of civil resistance (as opposed to top-down action) was a key factor in driving over 70% of democratic transitions from a dictatorial system in the past 40 years.

Such demonstrations of mass popular dissent setting the conditions for structural change leads to the debated notion of *critical mass,* which, transferred to the study of social change from the physical sciences, translates into the question: "can a reaction create a multiplier effect capable of reproducing subsequent reactions exponentially greater in number but generated on their own, independent of the original reaction?" (Lederach 2005: 89). Whereas nonviolent resistance experts tend to "measure" social change quantitatively, in terms of numbers of citizens who are ready to move to the level of action to protect or bring about democracy, Lederach considers that in order to transform conflict systems, "it is not necessarily the amount of participants that authenticates a social shift. It is the quality of the platform [or catalyst] that sustains the shifting process that matters" (2005: 89). He thus suggests replacing the label *critical mass* by *critical yeast* (or strategic yeast), to designate the small number of people who would have the capacity, if they were mixed and held together, to make other things grow exponentially, beyond their numbers.

More precisely, Lederach's *web approach* focuses on horizontal networking among key agents of change across the conflict divide, which he locates most decisively at the Track II level of decision-making, although he also recognises the need for vertical cooperation, or at least acquiescence, among different levels to allow major transitions from violent to peaceful conflict stages. Networking is indeed crucial to enable the organisation of dissent to conflict policies (through peace movements, civil rights or student organisations, peace churches, etc.). Civil societies also often produce mediators (such as clergy, academics, trade unionists, or the business community) helping to establish informal meetings between political opponents. For example, the New Sudan Council of Churches is one among many new organisations emerging from the recent development of an independent civil society

in Sudan, offering community peacemaking services to facilitate North-South reconciliation in parallel with top-level negotiations (BFPS 2006: 7). However, as argued earlier, agents of constructive change should not be restricted to such networks of like-minded people, but also extended to the "few strategically connected people [with the] potential for creating social growth" (Lederach 2005: 92), because of their involvement in the conflict and their influence over both key decision-makers and their community. These themes will be further developed in section 3.

- **Internal structural conflict transformers**

Although this sub-section has only presented agency-related factors of change so far, the comprehensive approach to the structure/agency debate adopted in this paper suggests that the policy choices made by conflict party leaders are also conditioned by the societal environment in which they evolve. Therefore, I will now conclude it by briefly mentioning examples of internal structural drivers of change, which can be found in the economic, geographical, social or cultural characteristics of the societies under scrutiny.

For instance, the phenomenon of war profiteers described earlier as an obstacle to change is strongly determined by the "feasibility of predation", or, in other words, by economic conditions such as a strong dependency upon primary commodity exports (the most lootable of all economic activities), a low national average income (making people desperate and angry, and preventing governments from supplying adequate public services), or a slow economic growth (Collier 2001: 145). In Sudan, access to and control over natural resources (oil, water, human labour, gold, timber and livestock) have been both a key motivational factor for actors on all levels to stay involved in the violent conflict, and a means to do so (BFPS 2006). The secessionist conflict in Aceh erupted in a region which had one of the highest poverty rates in Indonesia in the 1970s (Aspinall 2005). Conflict escalation can also be correlated with abrupt transitions in domestic economic structures: in Bosnia, the formation of a civil war economy coincided with the first stage of the country's market-economy transformation from the communist system, benefiting new elites which procured advantages for themselves through illegal markets and methods and became "entrepreneurs of violence" (Fischer 2006: 447-9).

Whereas the domestic state of economic development influences the emergence, escalation and institutionalisation of intra-state conflicts, Darby and McGinty argue that in de-escalation phases, "the correlation between background economic conditions and political progress is weak" (2000: 251). However, they admit that the inability of the South African administration to implement speedy economic improvements after the peace agreements had a negative impact on the ground, while in contrast, the sharp reduction in economic differentials in Northern Ireland partly explains the sustained enthusiasm for the Good Friday Agreement in the Catholic community.

The resources available for each conflict party also affect the selection of methods and strategies by adversaries, and thus the course of conflicts. According to Kriesberg (2003), the availability of weapons is an obvious criterion for the selection of conflict methods, as it represents both a consequence and a cause of wars. For example, in Nepal, the proliferation of small arms as a result of the conflict has led to a militarisation of the society in which the gun has become a tool to advance one's political agenda, thus creating a new obstacle to conflict resolution in the region (Dahal 2005).

The socio-cultural traditions and background respective to each warring group can also facilitate or hinder violence-to-peace transitions. For example, a long democratic experience can facilitate a smooth peacebuilding process, while a culture of corruption is likely to delay post-agreement development and peace consolidation (Aspinal 2005). Mitchell also cites a number of social norms which reinforce adversaries' psychological entrapment in a destructive course of action, such as those which "support consistency rather than flexibility, steadfastness rather than learning from experience, and willingness to sacrifice for the cause rather than accepting that the time has come to cut losses (…). In many societies, withdrawal is generally viewed negatively as a sign of weakness, while unwillingness (or inability) to change course is viewed as a sign of strength" (2005: 15).

Many structural variables, in fact, cannot be properly understood without reference to inter-party relationships, which represent, within the conflict transformation field, the dominant level of analysis of political transitions. For this reason, the next section concentrates on the relational factors of escalatory and resolutionary change.

2.2.2 Relational drivers (and obstacles) of change

The distinctiveness of conflict transformation as a discipline, which must be integrated into a systemic approach to conflict and change, lies in its predominant focus on *relationship*, which is described as "the basis of both the conflict and its long-term solution" (Lederach 1997: 26). One can find here some cross-disciplinary links with elements of behavioural sociology and social psychology, but some schools of international relations theory also place inter-state (transferred here into inter-party) relationships at the centre of their analysis, such as the neo-realist security dilemma, or the "English school" and "pluralist paradigm" which focus on cooperation and interactions among public and private actors in the global society. Burton (1972), for example, examined the superimposition of "cobwebs" (formed by social connections among communities, cultural exchanges, trade flows, population movements, etc.) which makes up world society. Incidentally, he was also a very influential early conflict management scholar, and such writings are strongly reminiscent of Lederach's web approach to conflict transformation (2005) described earlier.

Another key founder of this field, Galtung, has produced a widely cited model, the ABC conflict triangle, which provides an important clarifier of the linkages between psycho/perceptual (A for attitudes), behavioural (B), and structural (C for contradictions or causes) elements in the driving dynamics of conflict and peace processes. It will be used here to distinguish these three dimensions of inter-party relationships and their respective influences on violence-to-peace transitions. Considering that conflicts can begin at any of these three points, systemic conflict transformation envisions the triangle as a multi-directional circle where structures, attitudes and behaviours interact over time and reinforce each other to produce the dynamic spiral of destructive change (Bloomfield and Ropers 2005). Inversely, successful transitions towards positive peace require the complementary transformation of structural violence (political and economical reforms towards justice and empowerment), behavioural violence (from warfare to inter-party dialogue and military settlements), and cultural violence (change of perceptions and attitudes towards reconciliation and respect).

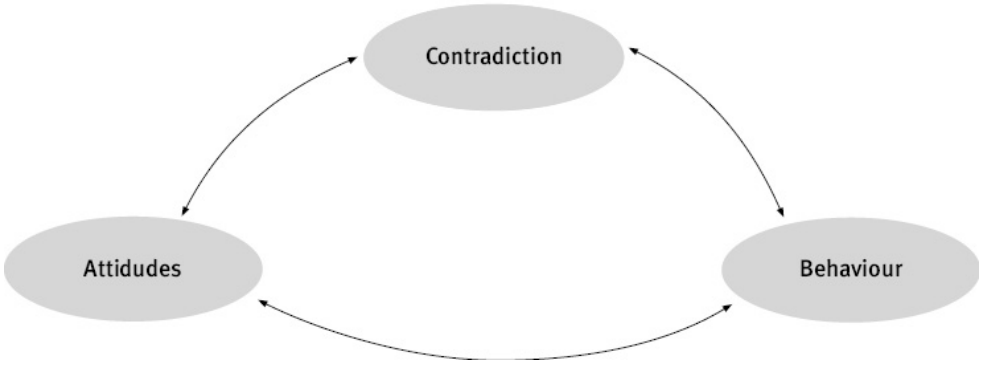

Figure 8: Galtung's conflict triangle, adapted by Bloomfield and Ropers (2005)

- **Transformation of structural relationships**

The contradiction, or incompatibility of goals, inherent in every conflict, manifests itself most significantly in the structural relationships between adversaries, and especially in the relational element of asymmetry between power seekers and power holders. As already argued in section 1, the great majority of state formation or intra-state conflicts are by definition asymmetric, setting national system maintenance (the state and its allies) against "system smashing" parties. According to this line of thought, the factors of conflict formation and escalation lie in the unjust or exploitative nature of existing systems, and the conditions for peaceful relationships to come about (or the drivers of resolutionary change) can be found in the creation of new structures promoting equity and justice.

In order to assess the degree of (im)balance in a given system, according to Curle, "we have to consider the extent to which (…) one party to a relationship is able to dominate another" (1971: 6). Indeed, while relations of symmetry are based on reciprocity (mutual influence), relations of asymmetry are based on subordination. Galtung's label of *structural violence* has become an authoritative term to describe institutional violence created by the system, and translating into political oppression, economic exploitation or cultural discrimination. In an empirical study on ethnopolitical conflicts, Gurr and Harff found that between 1945 and 1980, 80% of the 233 ethnic groups which took political action to promote or defend their interests were suffering from "a systematic and selective limitation of people's access to economic opportunities or political positions based on ascriptive characteristics" (1994: 6). If the root causes and escalating factors of conflicts lie in the structure of relationships within which the parties operate, then structural transformation

becomes a necessity. A shift towards power parity, in particular, is a crucial precondition for successful peacemaking processes, as argued by most negotiation or mediation analysts (e.g. Young 1967: 43, Bercovitch et al 1991: 11, Kleiboer 1996: 238). In situations of acute asymmetry, neither the stronger nor the weaker party have any interest in resolving their contentions through conciliation rather than on the battlefield; by contrast, peace talks most often occur after the adversaries have reached a "mutually hurting stalemate", that brief moment when the playing field is (un-)acceptably level for both sides, and talks become possible (Zartman 1985, 1996). For example, the social and economic relations between blacks and whites in South Africa had been undergoing a fundamental change in the 1980s, facilitating the negotiations on ending the apartheid regime (Kriesberg 2003: 205).

The power relationships between the signatory parties and their relative degree of control over the content of an agreement also condition the sustainability of post-settlement transitions. Only jointly and cooperatively-agreed accords (as opposed to those imposed by the stronger party or a third-party) are likely to guarantee institutional changes addressing the structural sources of violence. Such reforms might include, for instance, the establishment of a power-sharing democracy where all major ethnic groups are included in the government, and minorities are assured influence in policy-making on sensitive issues (e.g. Lebanon, Northern Ireland). The institution of a federal system of administration and the devolution of power from the centre to the peripheries (i.e. through regional assemblies and governments) is particularly relevant in ethnopolitical conflicts, to address the structural grievances of disenfranchised minorities. This measure was, for example, a cornerstone of the January 2005 North-South Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan.

Finally, in the peace implementation and consolidation phases, the success of structural transformation is contingent upon the respect of their agreed commitments and timeframe by the different agents (which demonstrates the impossibility of analysing structural factors in isolation from agency intervention, and the complex interactions between the two). State actors must dismantle former structures of oppression, and ensure the implementation of constitutional reforms and the formation of a transitional government, as well as long-term good governance, rule of law, civil society development and popular participation. Long-term stability is also conditioned by the juridical provision of instruments for dealing with the legacy of past violence. It is particularly important for conflict victims from all sides to feel that

justice has been done and that the repressive policies of state or non-state armed groups have been accounted for before they agree to support or join power-sharing institutions. These peacebuilding instruments will be further analysed in section 3.

- **Dynamics of inter-party behaviour**

The second component of the conflict triangle is concerned with behavioural patterns of inter-party interaction, expressed for instance in mutual coercion or cooperation, gestures signifying hostility (direct physical and verbal acts of aggression such as threats, intimidation, torture, killing) or conciliation (dialogue, ceasefire, disarmament, etc.). In conflict, the collective or individual actions performed by each side are conditioned by the behaviour of the other side, resulting in self-reinforcing spirals of escalation or de-escalation.

In early conflict phases for instance, such "feedback loops" contribute to explaining the shift from political, peaceful expressions of grievances towards violent forms of conflict behaviour. In Gurr and Harrf's empirical study cited earlier, only 80 out of 233 politically active ethnic groups escalated their means of action towards guerrilla and civil wars (Gurr/ Harrf 2004: 6). This transition from peaceful protest to violent struggle is in fact conditioned by the behaviour (modes of governance) of state (or pro- status quo) actors, determining the channels that are available to dissatisfied groups to protest within the limits of legality. For instance, when they resort to discriminatory practices, and are "unable to insulate the decision-making machinery from the political pressures of the dominant identity group" (Azar 1990: 11), they leave oppressed groups with no other resort but to escalate the level of conflict. The three BFPS reports on Nepal, Aceh and Sudan describe such dynamics, noting that in these three settings, a violent representation of interests took the place of dialogue in the absence of political space in which grievances could be addressed and negotiated. Human rights abuses committed by representatives of the state exacerbated the conflict, by deepening feelings of alienation with the central authorities and generating support for the insurgency. For example, many of GAM's guerrilla recruits in Aceh are reportedly young men whose family members were victims of human rights abuses.

Logically, the cycle of violence and counter-violence (one party starting to use violence to achieve its political objectives, triggering similar responses from the opponents) should be reversed and lead to an inverted de-escalation spiral once a

party initiates a measured, conciliatory gesture, calling for a similar response. Mitchell (2000) explores a variety of conciliatory behaviours "contributing to successful olive branches", including the exemplary Israeli visit by Egyptian President Sadat on 19 November 1977 which marked a turning point in de-escalating the Israeli-Arab conflict. Moreover, cross-party communication by Track II members of each side often helps to facilitate conflict mitigation, by developing ties between adversaries. Provided that they remain on the sidelines during the active conflict stage, they might even serve as quasi-mediators or "bridge-builders", conveying information and suggestions between the antagonistic parties (Francis 2002: 12). This role is often played by religious leaders, such as in the conflicts in the Philippines, Vietnam, South Africa (e.g. Desmond Tutu) or Burma (Sampson 1997).

Public dialogue among Track III civil society organisations across party lines is another driver of change which can facilitate the restoration of communication on a higher level, by articulating necessary reforms in governance, or advocating inter-party negotiations through peace forums and marches (Dahal 2005). The existence of such networks is also a precondition for successful post-settlement peacebuilding processes: the absence of dialogue between Northern and Southern civil society organisations in Sudan, for example, prevents the formulation of a common agenda and thus creates a handicap for a harmonious implementation of the new federal system (BFPS 2006).

- **Shifts in inter-party perceptions**

In order to provide a more comprehensive explanation of the motivations for behavioural conflict escalation or de-escalation, one needs to examine the mutual perceptions or attitudes that actors across the spectrum of conflict hold towards each other. The third component of the conflict triangle includes emotive (feeling), cognitive (belief) and conative (will) elements.

In the early stages of the conflict transformation model presented in section 1, and especially the transition from a situation of latent conflict to the phase of mobilisation, there needs to be a subjective recognition by the victims of structural violence that their basic human needs are unmet. Therefore, when analysing the escalation of protracted social conflicts, it is as important to look for subjective factors indicating a change in perceptions (through opinion surveys, etc.) as to observe indicators of socio-political grievances or deprivation. Cultural factors are all

the more important as in most intra-state conflicts, such grievances resulting from needs deprivation are expressed collectively on the basis of ethnicity or identity, which are themselves highly subjective notions. Processes of escalation are characterised by a polarisation of inter-party relations ("if you are not with us you are against us"), and the creation of stereotypes further de-humanising the enemy, reducing possibilities to communicate. Most conflicts also involve legal and symbolic issues of legitimacy: all actors, whether they challenge or seek to preserve the status quo, perceive their opponents as illegitimate negotiation partners. In particular, a relationship characterised by structural asymmetry also implies that one party is recognised as legitimate while the other one is perceived as illegitimate (Wallensteen 2002: 132-133).

Conversely, behavioural shifts which induce conflict de-escalation are also accompanied by shifts in attitudes, turning one's opponent from an enemy into a potential negotiating partner. The problem-solving approach to conflict management, which will be further described in section 3, focuses primarily on the psychological environment required to rebuild communal relations, by transforming mutual perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes. In most cases, the establishment of contacts does not mean that the negotiators have become friends: for the entire duration of the negotiations in Northern Ireland, Unionists refused even to speak directly to Sinn Fein representatives. But at any rate a certain degree of trust in the other party's sincerity is a relatively important variable for the success of peacemaking processes. For instance, the first rounds of negotiation between the Nepalese government and the Maoist rebels (2001, 2003) took place amidst growing mistrust between the two sides, who could not perceive the conflict situation from the other's point of view, interests and rationality. As a result, the talks focused more on differences than on commonalities, and did not result in a transformation of the mindsets of both sides towards reconciliation (Dahal 2005).

With the passing of time, the initial aim of overcoming distrust becomes replaced by new dilemmas such as managing conflicting priorities of peace and justice, healing psychological wounds, seeking long-term reconciliation and building a new inclusive social consensus. Reconciliation is indeed a central element of conflict transformation, described by Lederach as "dynamic, adaptive processes aimed at building and healing the torn fabric of interpersonal and community lives and relationships" (Lederach 2001: 842). Oriented toward the deeper psychological and subjective aspects of people's experiences, it requires them to reconsider their

understanding of self, community and enemy. Beyond these individual psychological ingredients, reconciliation also encompasses a society-wide "process of building working political and social relations within a post-war society" (Bloomfield 2006: 25). The term *coexistence* has been proposed as an alternative label which carries less interpersonal, subjective (or even religious) overtones, and might therefore appear more pragmatic and appealing for victims of past violence. "It minimally suggests acknowledging each other's right to inhabit the same space without violence", but also suggests more a positive process of building "shared values, positive relationships, interaction and interdependence, respect, trust and co-operation" (Bloomfield 2006: 14).

In summary, one can find some strong systemic elements in the dynamic conflict analysis instrument offered by the conflict triangle (figure 8), not only because of its focus on interaction and relationships between the units (parties) which constitute the conflict system, but also because of the mutually-reinforcing character of the three conflict components, acting as "feedback loops": changes in conflict structures automatically create further changes in actors' behaviours or attitudes, and vice versa. It should be noted, finally, that the factors of change which have been presented in this sub-section dealt with elements of reciprocity in interaction, accounting for mutually de-escalated conflicts, but not for conflict terminations imposed unilaterally, either by one party to the relationship, or by a third-party. In order to take this latter variable into consideration, one needs to examine external, environmental drivers of transformation originating from outside the conflict system.

2.2.3 External drivers (and obstacles) of change

Intra-state conflicts evolve within a broader environment, made up of supra-systems (i.e. transnational, regional, global) which influence their development. According to systems theory, every system takes *input* from the outside and discharges *output* into the environment (Littlejohn and Dominici 2001: 219). Only external inputs will be considered here, as they relate to the factors affecting the internal dynamics of conflict systems. All intra-state conflicts, even those which have been transformed mostly through internal forces (e.g. South Africa, Lebanon, Guatemala) are not exempt from outside influences, and were conditioned in various degrees by regional

and global conditions, as well as third-party involvement, at multiple stages of their transition process.

Environmental inputs can be both structural and agency-related. **External structural factors** deal with phenomena which are not subject to deliberate human control, such as climatic conditions: the December 2005 tsunami killed approximately ten times more people than the preceding 30 years of conflict in the Indonesian province of Aceh. This factor put significant moral pressure on both sides to resume negotiations, thus acting as a circuit breaker that allowed both sides to resume talks without loss of face (Aspinall 2005). The massive 2005 earthquake that decimated many communities in Kashmir was also reported as having similar effects (Mitchell 2005), although the humanitarian cooperation between India and Pakistan which it generated proved only ephemeral. Macro-political or economic changes in the regional and international systems in which intra-state conflicts are embedded represent another type of structural circuit breakers which Ramsbotham et al (2005: 163) label *context transformation*. For example, the contemporary process of global economic integration is affecting many domestic conflicts, especially by increasing the impact and burden of international economic sanctions (e.g. against South Africa, Iraq, Hamas-led Palestinian Authority). Geopolitical transitions such as the end of the Cold War have had a decisive impact on a number of conflicts, including South Africa, where it alleviated the white government's fear of a spread of communism if the ANC gained power, and enabled the United States to pressure President De Klerk into negotiations (Darby and McGinty 2000: 45).

Moving beyond the impersonal forces of global structures, **external agency intervention** on internal conflicts also represent supra-systemic drivers of change. Just like the pyramid of intra-party decision-making described earlier (figure 7), outside actors operate and intervene on corresponding Track I (i.e. international organisations and foreign governments), II (i.e. professional mediators, NGO agents, development and humanitarian agencies) and III (i.e. diasporas, transnational grassroots initiatives, criminal networks etc.) levels.

International linkages are cited by Azar (1990: 7, 12) as an important factor shaping the genesis of protracted social conflicts. He mentions the colonial legacy of many third-world countries which ensued, for example, in the artificial imposition of borders in regions where different ethnicities are intertwined, resulting in non-integrated nation-states, incapable of inspiring loyalty and a civic culture. Neo-colonial practices in developing countries, such as the informal organisation of

political-military clientage with strong states, also lead to a sacrifice of autonomy, and the formulation of policies disjointed from the needs of the state's own public. Neighbouring countries also have a vested interest in either encouraging or resolving internal conflicts, because these are often proxies for larger disputes, or at least a historical echo of them – between the Irish and the British, Israel and the Arab countries, Sri Lanka and India (Kriesberg 2003: 237). The presence of a strong diaspora community from one (or both) of the partisan groups is another factor which induces outside powers to get involved in civil conflicts outside their borders, illustrated for example by the impact of the Jewish domestic community on Washington's pro-Israeli stance in the conflict over the Palestinian occupied territories (Mearsheimer and Walt 2006). Many armed struggles depend heavily on financial and other support from transnational solidarity groups or diaspora populations.

The concept of *advocacy*, borrowed from a model of intervention in asymmetric community disputes by Laue and Cormick (1978: 213), can be used here to refer to initially uninvolved parties who are not members of a disputing group, but are brought into the conflict (either by pure "philanthropy" or when it infringes on their strategic or economic interests) to serve as consultants to that group, to support their goals, and promote their cause to the opponents and the wider (i.e. international) community. Such actors might represent conflict exacerbating factors, but they can also use their influence to create the conditions for conflict de-escalation. In the case of advocates for the "powerful" conflict party, their close ties and/or their control of resources can help persuade that party to negotiate with the "underdogs" (e.g. US mediation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts). Non-state armed groups might also attempt to counter-balance their strategic disadvantage (power asymmetry) through cross-border alliances, in order to force a reluctant government into talks. One could thus describe the UN sanctions against the pro-status quo South African regime as a case of advocacy for anti-apartheid activists, which represented a decisive turning point in their struggle by pressuring the power-holders to search for alternative ways out of the conflict. In such countries, political transition was not driven by a change of mind or heart on the part of the government or other actors (i.e. internal and relational variables examined above), but rather by enduring pressure or direct involvement from powerful international actors.

Peace negotiations, just like the conflict escalation stages, are also characterised by various degrees of influence from outside agency, through the

intervention of international, regional or non-governmental organisations, either to facilitate peacemaking (acting as third parties) or to support either side of the bargaining table, bringing in their own weight to influence the balance of the negotiations (e.g. Syria in Lebanon). The UN was directly involved in 16 of the 28 peace accords agreed between 1988 and 1998 (e.g. Cambodia, Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, El Salvador). But the most common forms of external peacemaking and peacebuilding now fall more heavily on individual states. For example, the role of Egypt in securing a North-South peace process in Sudan has been very influential, motivated by its opposition to the growing fundamentalist Islamic line of the government (BFPS 2006). In Nepal, however, the absence of consensus and the variance of approaches among external donors have harmed the recent negotiations. While Norway and Switzerland offered their good offices for mediation, India and China opposed third-party mediation, and the US administration felt that the time was not ripe for negotiation at all (Dahal 2005).

On the Track II level of intervention, mediation experts have served as catalysts for peaceful transformation in many civil wars, typically helping parties by putting them in contact with one another, gaining their trust and confidence, setting agendas, clarifying issues and formulating agreements. In the post-war peacebuilding phases, many civil society initiatives are supported or initiated by external donors, ranging from the financial, human or logistical support offered by the international community, to smaller-scale programmes initiated by foreign NGOs or foundations. Examples of such interventions will be provided in the next section.

Finally, transnational Track III grassroots factors of peaceful change can be illustrated by the role of diasporas, whose support for ethnic intransigence can be swung round to support peace initiatives. Having softened their own hard-line stance, Irish Americans played an important role in persuading the IRA to call a ceasefire and in bringing Sinn Fein into negotiations.

This very brief review of externally-assisted transformation in protracted conflicts provides a good transition for the last section of this paper. Indeed, after having argued in this second section that conflict systems are made up of multiple sub-systems in interaction and also conditioned by structural and agency interventions from the regional and global supra-systems, I will now examine in more details the most appropriate entry-points for the proactive facilitation of constructive change.

SECTION 3

Timing and Entry-points for Systemic Conflict Transformation: Options for Third-party Intervention

By combining the staged model and the systemic approach to conflict transformation, it becomes possible to explore criteria for the timing and entry-points of peacemaking and peacebuilding intervention into protracted social conflicts. Whereas the first two sections consisted in descriptive examinations of the transition from violence to peace and the various drivers of change which influence the course of conflicts, it is now time to move to a prescriptive analysis of their implications for a more effective design of intervention mechanisms. This section will focus more particularly on examining appropriate roles for "external peace support agencies", meaning the organisations within the INGO community which specialise in conflict transformation work, and ideally which combine the provision of research and reflective practice: the Berghof Center (both BRC and BFPS) represents one of these.

Systemic analysis has taught us that any intervention operates within a cascade of interlinked systems or supra- and subsystems. Lederach defines mediation as "the development of social capacity to constructively affect the strategic points of relationship within the weblike system" (2005: 95). How can conflict transformation organisations, intervening in complex conflict systems, help to trigger intra-party, inter-party and environmental transitions, and transform the drivers of destructive conflicts into drivers of peaceful change? Where and when are the best entry-points in order to facilitate the development of a critical mass (or yeast) necessary for disrupting negative patterns of causality and feedback loops, and for generating the reinforcement of constructive cycles and processes?

On the other hand, the staged model presented in section 1 helps us to soften the "conservative" tendency of systems theory, which has, indeed, been criticised (especially by critical theory scholars such as Habermas) for concentrating on the static reproduction of systems, or, in other words, the maintainence of the status-quo. By combining a systemic approach with a study of change and the violence-to-peace transition, it is possible to envisage the dynamic, emancipatory transformation of war systems into peace systems.

3.1 Principles of intervention

3.1.1 Whom to work with? Redefinition of peace constituencies

Peace support agencies need to identify the targets of their activities very carefully and strategically; in other words, on which drivers of transformation are they most likely to induce effective and long-lasting change? Having argued in section 2 that both the roots of protracted social conflicts and the keys to their transformation are located in the dialectical relationships between structures and agents, it should be recognised that very few organisations possess enough resources and power to bring about alterations in the structure and external environment of such conflicts. Therefore, most of the roles explored in this section are concerned with supporting agents of peaceful change, such as individuals, groups, or institutions, who, through their actions, contribute to the creation of just and peaceful sustainable structures.

From its inception, the Berghof Research Centre has been focusing its work on a group of actors commonly referred to as *peace constituencies*. This label was originally offered by Lederach to designate people who envision themselves as playing the role of peacemakers within their own society, and whose vision for peace often emerges from their experience of pain. Situated at the middle-range of the decision-making pyramid (see figure 7, section 2), these people are often overlooked and disempowered either because they do not represent "official" power (whether on the side of the government or the various militias), or because they are written off as biased and too personally affected by the conflict (Lederach 1997: 94). Their recognition by the international community as valid and pivotal actors for peace is thus necessary to legitimate the space they need to develop their potential. This definition is strongly correlated with BFPS's mandate to work primarily with *agents of peaceful change*, defined as small but strategic and influential groups or persons within the conflict parties, the civil society organisations or the functional elites who are willing to promote change within the society. They are key actors for systemic conflict transformation since they can operate as partners, multipliers and facilitators of processes of social and political change (BFPS 2006c). There has been, recently, a re-orientation of our original understanding of peace constituencies as strictly civil society-based agents who are committed to peaceful change but lack the strategic capacities to effect it, towards a broader target group of influential stakeholders who have been perpetuating or collaborating in the conflict and who become key players in managing the transition from political violence to more positive methods and

relationships. In practice, it means that our working partners should not only be restricted to leaders of youth, labour and student associations, women organisations, health workers, peace movements, tribal and religious leaders or academics, but should also include regional and national administrators, armed movement cadres, economic elites and diasporas, who have the capacities, explicit or implicit, to affect systemic change into constructive directions.

It has been argued in section 2 that conflict systems can be best transformed by a critical mass of sustainable multi-track interventions, and the expansion of sound peace alliances and "networks of effective action" (Ricigliano 2003). The "web architecture for peace" promoted by Lederach (2005), combined with the systemic approach, suggests that our field needs to go beyond a simple acknowledgment of the multiple levels of engagement in comprehensive peace processes, towards an understanding of their mutual spill over, interweaving and interdependence. The role of external intervention, in this framework, should be to empower peace constituencies by strengthening their capacity to form alliances horizontally, by building bridges to like-minded individuals across the lines of conflict, and vertically, by improving interaction between the official macro-political and unofficial societal levels. Concerning the debate over "critical mass" and "critical yeast" for change, also discussed in section 2 (paragraph 2.2.1), BFPS promotes a dual strategy which oscillates between networking with as many influential stakeholders as possible in order to prepare new windows of opportunity for peace, and a long-term engagement with key agents of change with whom the foundation establishes strategic partnerships (BFPS 2006b; BFPS 2006c).

Finally, the best way for external agencies to induce a vertical and horizontal cross-fertilisation among agents of peaceful change within conflict-ridden societies is to practice it first among themselves, by ensuring a coordination of ideas and expertise by organisations working in relief, development, peacekeeping, mediation, arms control, diplomacy, transitional justice and reconciliation. While this section will concentrate on the temporal dimension of complementarity, a few cross-sector meta-conflict transformation models have already been introduced (e.g. Fitzduff 2004), which would merit further exploration.

3.1.2 Outsiders-insiders relationships: promoting domestic ownership

Another area of necessary cooperation relates to the linkages between international and domestic agents of violence-to-peace transition. A number of studies have denounced the practice of many external peace or development agencies coming into conflict zones with preset ideas and pulling the energies of domestic actors away from promising indigenous initiatives and approaches. According to the Reflecting on Peace Practice project, such attitudes have strongly disempowering effects on internal organisations by carrying the implicit message that they cannot make peace without outside help. They often lack "exit strategies" and create internal dependencies on international assistance (CDA 2004: 22-25).

The concepts of domestic ownership and local empowerment are recognised as possible remedies against the domination of conflict transformation processes by outside (mostly Western) powers and interests. Translated into systemic terminology, they suggest that the target system possesses within itself significant resources for the alteration of chains of causality, and that the primary focus should therefore be not on external resources, but rather on how internal resources can be effectively mobilised. Lederach (1997: 94) has played a leading role in spelling out *elicitive* methods of conflict intervention which envisage internal protagonists not as the recipients, but as the primary drivers, of their own conflict transformation process.

Reich (2006), however, suggests that the consideration by international peace agencies of domestic ownership as an immediate primary objective is in fact unrealistic and counter-productive because it covers up unavoidable power asymmetries between externals and internal actors in conflict transformation work. Domestic ownership should mean literally the insiders' "control over project management and development, and not [simply] a commitment and a feeling of belonging to the project" (Reich 2006: 17-18), which in fact cannot be in the interests of external agencies. Moreover, local peace constituencies in protracted social conflicts might not be ready to assume this charge, as they often lack the skills and capacities to do so. She suggests that the concept of domestic ownership should instead be envisioned as a long-term policy ideal of practical and financial independence of internal actors. She puts forward one example of methodology for working towards that ultimate vision, through the development of *learning sites* where both local and external staff can achieve greater transparency and a deeper understanding (hence learning) of the underlying structural problems in the project

partnership, and slowly redefine their relationships towards genuine institutional power-sharing and local empowerment (Reich 2006: 26-28).

For its part, the Berghof approach to the relationship between externals and internals is based on the concepts of "partnership" and "respect" (Bloomfield and Ropers 2005: 6). While the Centre tries to devolve as many responsibilities as possible to its local partners, it is necessary to recognise that outsiders remain in the best position to perform activities such as international lobbying and awareness-raising, applying pressure on national political authorities, mobilising external resources, increasing security of insiders through on-site monitoring and reporting, providing comparative experience and new ideas and techniques from other settings, hosting a "safe space" where all sides can come together for dialogue, training, conferences, joint work etc. These functions will be reviewed in detail in the remainder of this section, according to the stages where they are most likely to contribute to systemic change.

3.1.3 Multi-partial dialogue facilitation and social justice advocacy: the ebb and flow of conflict transformation

One of the major elements of contention which came out of a seminar organised by Berghof in September 2005 rested on the distinction, and even confrontation, between rights-based versus dialogue-based approaches to conflict transformation (Dudouet et al 2006). The former promotes exclusive, pro-justice and partisan intervention and was for example applied by the international community, to some extent, in the conflicts in Rwanda, Burundi, Kosovo, or East-Timor. By contrast, the Berghof approach insists upon principles of inclusivity and multi-partiality in conflict transformation intervention. In its Sri Lanka project, for instance, *inclusivity* implies that all principal stakeholders must be accepted as legitimate and necessary participants in the peace process (including gender mainstreaming). *Multi-partiality* emphasises the need for empathising with all the principal parties, by building trust and personal relationships, and understanding their respective worldviews. It does not imply neutrality with respect to the issues at stake, and although the organisation does not officially prescribe a vision for the future of the island, its members adhere to certain values (e.g. power-sharing and federalism as a solution). It is particularly demanding for a foreign organisation with domestic staff personally linked to the stakeholders to see itself as part of the conflict system, without being driven by the

dynamics of this system. Moreover, internal actors' perceptions of the organisation as taking sides for one or the other party (the government or the LTTE), or their demands for exclusivity in Berghof's work are proving challenging for the organisation (Ropers 2004b).

These principles are severely challenged, especially, in asymmetric conflicts. When facing gross violation of human rights, "balanced" interventions which treat as equal the oppressor and the oppressed can not only be ineffective but also harmful, by implicitly siding with the powerful in reinforcing an unjust status quo (Dudouet 2005). Therefore, part of this section will be dedicated to exploring the temporal complementarity between cross-party dialogue facilitation and partisan advocacy work.

3.2 Timing of intervention

In line with the principles described above, the aim of third-party intervention in latent and overt violent situations should be to support the transformation of structures and frameworks that cause inequality and injustice, to improve long-term relationships, attitudes and behaviours among the conflicting parties, and to encourage processes and structures that sustain both empowerment and reconciliation. The methods for achieving such goals, in the conflict transformation tradition, encompass the facilitation of face-to-face activities in communication, capacity-building training, inter-group education, or unilateral consultation with members of conflict parties separately. To maximise their efficiency, these various instruments should be combined and used sequentially or concurrently, according to the specific stages and circumstances where they are most appropriate.

The *contingency approach* to conflict intervention examines the complementarity and necessary coordination of third-party activities, and locates their failures in their inappropriate application with regard to the stages of conflict escalation and de-escalation. Fisher and Keashly (1991), for example, claim that in a conflict stage when objective elements (e.g. resource scarcity, territorial dispute) are predominant, then third-party methods which facilitate a compromise or provide a judgement (such as powerful mediation) are appropriate; on the contrary, when subjective elements (e.g. misperception, lack of communication) are much in evidence, then third-party acts which improve the relationship and induce problem-

solving are indicated. They provide an indicative model of intervention where appropriate methods are matched to the stage of escalation, followed by other coordinated and sequenced interventions, designed to de-escalate the conflict back down through the stages to the point where the parties themselves manage their relationship through bilateral engagements.

Such models have been criticised for their oversimplification of the reality of complex conflicts dynamics, which are full of disjunctions and inconsistencies and cannot be captured by a simple ascending and descending line (see section 1). It has been suggested instead to employ various intervention techniques simultaneously rather than sequentially, to deal concurrently with the multiple dimensions and levels of conflicts (Bloomfield 1997, Fetherston 1993). Between these two versions of complementarity in conflict intervention methodology, this section will present a range of peacemaking and peacebuilding tools which can be employed to transform conflict systems, according to the stages where they are most appropriate, while also recognising that conflict stages usually overlap with each other, and that distinct third party activities can also be used in parallel, rather than following each other in an orderly sequence. Finally, for simplifying matters, the eight stages identified at the end of section 1 have been here narrowed down to four main intervention phases (supporting constructive conflict escalation, enhancing ripeness for de-escalation, accompanying peace processes, sustaining peace implementation and consolidation), which will now be thoroughly reviewed.

3.2.1 Supporting constructive conflict escalation

There is a tendency for the international community to intervene in conflict zones only once physical violence has erupted. This focus on overt manifestations of conflicts is quite restrictive and can be ethically dangerous as it may lead to the acceptance of highly inequitable relationships, when structural contradictions are not yet manifested in the actors' attitudes and behaviours (see section 1). In contrast, if conflict transformation scholars and practitioners aim to address the root causes of protracted social conflicts, they should be concerned "as much about unmasking the powerful and equalising unequal relationships as they are about solving present problems" (Clements 1997: 7). Which instruments can be used to trigger the transformation of "latent conflict" systems, and ultimately eliminate structural contradictions before they become manifest in violent confrontation?

The prevention of armed conflict is a major objective of many INGOs and intergovernmental agencies, and has become a field of study in itself, divided into two distinct approaches, structural (or deep) prevention versus operational (or light) preventive diplomacy (Ramsbotham et al 2005: Chap.5). The former aims to address the root causes of conflicts, including underlying interests and relationships, by engaging with comprehensive economic and political measures encouraging development, meeting the needs for identity, security and access of diverse groups, strengthening shared norms and institutions, and building domestic, regional and international capacity to manage conflict. The latter corresponds to "actions taken in vulnerable places and times to avoid the threat or use of armed forces" (Lund 1996: 37), both in the domain of official (mediation, fact-finding, peace conferences, envoys, hotlines, conflict prevention centres) and unofficial (private mediation, peace commissions, conflict resolution training) diplomacy. Together, all these forms of intervention target a multiplicity of entry-points into potentially violent conflicts, including the intra-party, inter-party, structural and international levels.

Rather than entering into a detailed discussion of the already well-covered field of conflict prevention, I would like, in this sub-section, to come back to Curle's matrix of the conflict transformation stages (see figure 4), which suggests a different approach to intervention in latent conflicts rooted in asymmetrical systems. This approach describes *education* (Curle 1971) or *awakening* (Francis 2002: 44) as the most appropriate forms of activity, leading to political awareness of the nature of unequal relationships and the need for addressing and restoring equity (Lederach 1995: 12). Bringing the question of injustice into the realm of public debate is a necessary condition for the mobilisation of the underdog, and the beginning of the process of empowerment. The second component of the model is the technique of *confrontation*, a term which Curle employs "to cover all the techniques by means of which the weaker groups in unbalanced relationships attempt to change the character of those relationships, specifically to make them more balanced" (Curle 1971: 176). Especially, "the greater the unbalance of the rulers and the ruled and the sharper the conflict of interest, the greater the need for confrontation" (Curle 1971: 207).

Coming back to the role of conflict transformation practitioners, one function that can be envisaged at this stage is the provision of advice and assistance to oppressed minorities in the mobilisation of constructive (meaning nonviolent) forms of empowerment.

The scholarly literature on nonviolent action has described and classified a very wide array of techniques of constructive confrontation to be used by social justice activists to wage nonviolent conflicts against oppression, exploitation or injustice (e.g. Sharp 1973). They range from persuasive methods such as demonstrations, to more confrontational and coercive tactics of civil disobedience, strikes, or the building of parallel structures and institutions. Supportive activities by third parties are also explored by civil resistance scholars, which can be performed "at home" or through their presence on the ground (Rigby 1996). Borrowes (2000) identified nine forms of cross-border nonviolent intervention by transnational movements, on behalf of low-power groups in conflicts that are national or international in scope. They include, for example, actions of mobilisation to draw attention to a grievance of international concern, and to generate financial and technical support for grassroots activism for social justice, witness and accompaniment for local nonviolent activists, or interposition between human rights defenders and the authorities. There are many examples of organisations employing these strategies, such as Peace Brigades International in Colombia, Mexico or Aceh, Nonviolent Peaceforce in Sri Lanka, the Balkan Peace Teams in Croatia and Kosovo, the International Solidarity Movement in the Palestinian territories, etc.

Third-party advocates for constructive social change can also function as an "eye opener" by expanding the repertoire of conflict methods that adversaries possess, to increase the likelihood that nonviolent means of struggle will be adopted (Kriesberg 2003). For example, Sharp (2005) envisages academic or professional forms of external support to civil societies in search of strategies of liberation from oppression, such as the supply of literature and handbooks about nonviolent struggle, offering generic advice on strategy planning, making available printing or radio broadcasting facilities and equipment, etc. Sharp himself and other experts in civil resistance strategy have been travelling across the world to offer their training capacities to local activists, most recently in Serbia, Ukraine and Belarus. Such forms of training would also have some relevance, across the conflict lines, for representatives of the pro-status quo or high-power group, in order to help them to better understand the dynamics of civil resistance and the counter-productivity of violent repressive policies, or to empower dissident groups who do not agree with the belligerent policies of their leadership to also take on the path of war resistance.

The forms of activities that have just been described belong to the scope of nonviolent intervention, and might not be appropriate for conflict transformation

practitioners. But they are necessary functions nevertheless, and their complementarity with multi-partial mediation or peacebuilding work must be enhanced. Within a contingency model of intervention, nonviolent advocacy for constructive confrontation should in fact be considered as a precursor or catalyst to conflict transformation, because it accomplishes certain tasks necessary for an effective peacemaking process. Through empowerment, the "underdog" increases its acceptability as a legitimate party in the conflict (Wehr 1979: 38), and also its range of bargaining options; the gains made during the conflict will then be legitimised at the negotiation table. In contrast, there are very few windows of opportunity for multi-partial third-party interventions in unbalanced (latent or overt) conflict systems, because they bear the risk of being treated by "the powerless" as "a tool for the oppressors to bring about limited change within the boundaries of the status-quo" (Dudouet et al 2006: 31). The Reflecting on Peace Practice Project has drawn similar conclusions from its evaluation of peace and development agencies, noting that they might be reinforcing prevailing asymmetries of power when they "assume that simply bringing people together in equal numbers will level the playing field", or when they "accept conditions placed by the more powerful side in a conflict [e.g. control over movement, participants selection, use of names and symbols that are politically sensitive, etc.] in order to conduct a program" (CDA 2004: 19).

Only a very limited number of conflict transformation scholars or practitioners, in fact, incorporate nonviolent advocacy techniques as part of their typologies of conflict intervention. These include Van der Merwe (1989), Chupp (1991), Lederach (1995) or Francis (2002), who consider that in conflicts characterised by the dual problems of polarisation and inequality, the complementary goals of peace and justice can only be achieved by the complementary tools of facilitation (peacemaking, reconciliation) and nonviolent advocacy (promotion of community empowerment). These models of intervention merit further conceptual elaboration and practical application, and a greater recognition and engagement by the conflict transformation community.

3.2.2 Enhancing ripeness for de-escalation

Here, I will present a range of activities aimed at supporting the proactive mitigation of violent behaviour, attitudes and structures when conflicts have attained a high level of escalation or protractedness. This stage might also be reached after failure or

stalemates in past peace initiatives, which shows once more that conflict transformation is not a unidirectional process.

Ramsbotham et al (2005: 12) compare the process of conflict transformation to an hour-glass: while in the early (latent conflict) and late (post-agreement peace consolidation) phases there are a multitude of entry-points for peacebuilding intervention, in the middle of the hour-glass, representing the height of the conflict, the freedom of action for triggering the drivers of peace are severely narrowed down. Several options for peacekeeping and peacemaking interventions will be presented here, following the three entry-points into conflict systems identified in section 2: the conflict's external environment, its inter-party relationships and intra-party dynamics.

- **Monitoring and influencing a favourable international environment**

As argued above, conflict transformation agencies rarely possess enough influence and resources to facilitate the de-escalation of protracted social conflicts by affecting their external (geopolitical or economic) environment; it is more likely that they take advantage of major alterations in the regional or international system rather than bring about such changes themselves. There are, however, some avenues of influence which are worth exploring: in his list of third-party agents of resolutionary change, Mitchell (2005) identifies the roles of *decoupler* and *monitor* which are specifically addressed towards conflicts' wider environment. Decouplers target their activities towards external forces which exert an influence on the conflict system, by assisting external patrons to withdraw from the core conflict, or eliciting pro-active peacemaking involvement by influential external actors. For example, for German peace organisations, the taking over of the EU Presidency by Germany in 2007 might represent a useful entry-point for enlisting international support for new peace initiatives in protracted conflicts such as Sri Lanka or Israel/Palestine. Concerning monitors, their role is to keep track of developments in the conflict system and its environment, and to identify the imminence of "ripe moments" for introducing constructive de-escalation measures.

- **Facilitating change in inter-party relationships**

The concept of conflict **ripeness**, mentioned previously, was introduced in the conflict management literature as a predictive tool (providing practitioners with

knowledge about when to initiate negotiations), or as a scientific theory explaining post-facto the success or failure of negotiations (Aggestam 2005). From a realist perspective, Zartman (1985) argued that parties are likely to consider outside intervention only after they have exhausted themselves to the point of a costly deadlock from which they see no exit. This concept has raised numerous controversies, especially due to its invalidity (many conflicts persist despite a "mutually-hurting stalemate", to the point of intractability), and its ethical assumptions: it suggests that third-parties should passively wait for hurting stalemates and impending catastrophes to happen in order to intervene, when in fact their priority should be to look for proactive ways to create, enhance and sustain ripeness. Paffenholz (2004: 10) suggests concentrating instead on the notion of *windows of opportunity*, which fits more closely with non-linear systemic conflict transformation. The complementary concept of peace constituencies presented earlier in this section also suggests that a conflict's ripeness for intervention should be measured as well by the availability of "connectors" and critical masses/yeasts in support of an agreement.

In section 2, the factors of change located in inter-party relationships were divided into three components, following Galtung's conflict triangle: behaviour, attitudes and structure. What windows of opportunities do third-parties have at their disposal in order to enhance ripeness for conflict de-escalation along these three dimensions?

When conflict escalation has reached the level of mutual (or, more rarely, unilateral) destruction through outright war, the first priority for promoters of conflict transformation is to facilitate a **mitigation of conflicting behaviour**. For this reason, in Fisher and Keashly's contingency model (1991) cited earlier, peacekeeping is the primary form of intervention to be used in this stage, to be followed by arbitration, and then consultation. A number of regional and international organisations, starting with the United Nations, have been sending foreign troops to conflict areas in order to provide "safe zones" along the lines of conflict demarcation, defuse tensions and put pressure on fighting groups to declare a mutual ceasefire. One limit to the application of this principle rests on the conditionality of internal consent by conflict parties: in many civil wars, fought between non-legally recognised entities and national forces unwilling to accept international infringement on their right of sovereignty, the conditions are not met for such forms of intervention. Consequently, in several instances (e.g. Iraq 1991, Serbia 1999), the use of peacekeeping forces has

shifted from its original purpose of creating the conditions for an internal conflict settlement process, towards coercive "peace enforcement" operations.

Although such types of intervention are not really relevant for NGOs willing to support violence-to-peace transitions in conflict zones, there is a whole range of other pre-negotiation mechanisms where they can play an active part. Mitchell (2005: 20) identifies the roles of *explorer, convener* and *reassurer,* who aim, respectively, to enhance the parties' readiness for contacts and sketch a range of possible solutions; initiate and provide venues for talks; convince adversaries that the other is not solely or wholly bent on victory. Both behavioural and attitudinal components of the conflict triangle are targeted, by **altering the adversaries' perceptions** and strategic options.

The best-known forms of third-party facilitation in the pre-negotiation phase are commonly described as interactive conflict resolution or problem-solving approaches. Pioneered by professionals such as Burton, Kelman or Fisher, they take the form of informal small group "discussions between unofficial representatives of identity groups or states engaged in destructive conflict that are facilitated by an impartial third-party panel of social scientist-practitioners" (Fisher 2005: 2). The main task of facilitators, in these confidential workshops, is to induce the participants to explore without any formal commitment different ideas about de-escalation, assess gains and losses more accurately, identify common ground, in the hope that this will later facilitate and give new life to official negotiations. Berghof's work, for example, has included similar workshops in Georgia-Abkhasia over the past few years (Wolleh 2006), and is currently planning comparable activities in Sri Lanka, where the resurgence of bilateral violence between the Tamil LTTE and the Singhalese government has brought the conflict back to a pre-negotiation phase.

In such approaches, the Track II level of decision-making is considered the most effective entry-point, with the most potential for generating "feedback loops" on other levels and components of the conflict or party system. When the time is not ripe for official Track I (direct or mediated) negotiations, Track II diplomacy targets politically influential individuals who are independent enough to play with new ideas and explore hypothetical scenarios, but who are also able to feed these insights into the political debate in each community. The question of *leverage*, or vertical transfer (both upwards, towards the leadership, and downwards, towards the constituencies) in problem-solving workshops is treated thoroughly in a recent book (Fisher 2005) reviewing the outcomes of such encounters in Israel-Palestine, Mozambique,

Tajikistan, South Africa, etc. For example, Kelman (2005: 55-7) claims that the workshops which he convened between Israeli and Palestinian influentials (a mixture of former officials, members of parliament, potential future leaders, prominent analysts and intellectuals from both sides) paved the way for the Oslo peace process, through the development of cadres experienced in communication with the other side and prepared to carry out productive negotiations; the formulation of new ideas that provided important substantive inputs into the negotiations; and the fostering of a political atmosphere that made the parties open to a new relationship. As a whole, although the book reaches an optimistic assessment of the impact of Track II work on subsequent negotiations, it does not go into much detail on the question of transfer towards the participants' community (i.e. through the media, political parties, interest groups, etc.). This reflects the general tendency for interactive conflict resolution specialists to concentrate more on the relationship between the conflicting parties than on the relationship between would-be peacemaker and their own communities.

In fact, it was argued in section 2 that leaders cannot impose peace processes on their constituencies without their consent, and so a shift in policy favouring negotiation needs to be accompanied by corresponding activities towards rapprochement at other levels of society. What is the best timing for introducing cross-community work? In highly polarised violent conflicts, and especially in those characterised by acute power asymmetry, it is extremely difficult to organise multi-party dialogue encounters on the civil society level, without being accused by members of the low-power group of preaching "pacification" at the expense of politico-structural transformation. In fact, the rules of multi-partiality in third-party engagement seriously impede the possibility for peace support agencies to **facilitate the transformation of structural relationships** in conflict systems, towards greater power parity. A few mediation experts have decided to move away from the exigency of impartiality, considering that "persuasion is best achieved not when mediators are unbiased, but when they possess resources and leverage" (Bercovitch et al 1991: 11). Power mediation, however, is not considered as a valid intervention tool here, because it runs counter to the principle of domestic ownership outlined above. Moreover, most cases of forceful international mediation in ethnopolitical conflict are likely to favour the pro-status quo party, because intermediaries, whether they represent the UN, regional governmental initiatives or powerful states, will rarely risk encouraging global disorder by supporting nationalistic motives and internal dissent

within other states. A number of scholars and practitioners have also been suggesting the introduction of empowerment practices in interactive problem-solving mediation, transforming the role of the intermediary from being an inter-party facilitator to acting as an advocate for the subordinate group (Avruch 1998: 50, Mayer 2005). These ideas have already been explored in the context of domestic disputes involving community groups against establishment entities (especially in the US and Britain). But the roles of mediator and advocate require such different approaches and techniques that any attempt to perform them simultaneously would be counter-productive. Instead, empowerment facilitation will be explored here as a separate component of intra-party work.

- **Supporting internal capacity-building**

Capacity-building can take place within bilateral dialogue programs, but it is mostly viewed as an entry-point to transforming conflict parties' sub-systems. Mitchell (2005: 20) suggests two intervention roles which address specifically intra-party work: *unifiers* attempt to repair intra-party cleavages and encourage consensus on core values, interests and concessions; *enskillers* develop skills and competencies to enable adversaries to achieve a durable solution. It is with this latter function that capacity-building training can most usefully identify. Diana Francis describes it as the "most vital means of supporting effective organisation and action, by multiplying the number of people with the awareness and skills required to act judiciously and have an impact" (2002: 19). This definition fits very closely, for example, with the work performed by Berghof's Resource Network for Conflict Studies and Transformation (RNCST) in Sri Lanka since 2003, which aims to strengthen existing peace constituencies and enhance their proactive and enlightened participation in the peace process, by offering them training in conflict management, effective network structures development, etc. Such activities are particularly important for low-power groups in asymmetric conflicts, since providing them with legal and technical resources can help them compensate for their relative resource imbalance when the time comes for inter-party negotiations. It should be noted, however, that for such negotiations to start, conflict parties need to have both the capacities and the will to engage non-violently with each other, and therefore, the mono-party capacity-building approach should not be seen as a replacement for dialogue facilitation, but as a useful complement.

Finally, one needs also to acknowledge the necessary inter-sector collaboration, in violent conflict areas, between conflict transformation NGOs and other external agencies active, for example, in human rights and relief work. Monitoring human rights violations or engaging in humanitarian action for upgrading human security might not be part of the mandate of peace organisations, but these activities also contribute to the empowerment of peace constituencies, and therefore should be better coordinated with all other conflict transformation initiatives.

3.2.3 Accompanying peace processes (between ceasefires and peace agreements)

This sub-section addresses the issues and roles relevant for interventions into conflict systems which are already in transition from violence to peace; it examines the entry-points for agencies seeking to assist the parties engaged in a peace process, in order to ensure its sustainability. A peace process will be understood here, following Darby and McGinty (2000: 7-8), as a process of direct or mediated engagement between adversaries which fulfils the following criteria: the protagonists are willing to negotiate in good faith, they do not use force to achieve their objectives, the key actors are included in the process, and the negotiations address the central issues in dispute. Peace processes usually officially begin with a public announcement and often with a ceasefire, and their progress is halted, at times, by periods of stalemate or "no-war-no-peace". It is much more difficult to judge when they end, but it will be considered here that they can be regarded as completed when a political and constitutional framework has been agreed. A return to outright violence by the main parties (as opposed to marginal dissident elements), on the other hand, also marks the end of a peace process.

This phase is characterised by a simultaneity of inter-track dialogue processes, from top-level official negotiations to cooperative civil society projects, and the most crucial intervention roles which will be explored here are concerned with supporting coordination and constructive "feedback loops" across these levels of activity.

Track I talks generally take the form of bi- or multilateral high-profile negotiations on substantive conflict issues, with or without the assistance of third-parties. When they do intervene, mediators can take on a number of different roles (according to their resources and status, professional skills, relationship to the parties, approach to peacemaking, degree of control over the process, etc.), which Mitchell (2005: 20) divides into five categories. *Facilitator*s intervene within meetings

to enable a fruitful exchange of visions, aims and versions. *Envisioners* help to create fresh thinking by providing new data, theories, ideas and options for adversaries to adapt. *Enhancers* provide new resources (e.g. economic incentives, carrots and sticks) to assist in the search for a positive-sum solution. *Guarantors* provide insurance against talks breaking down and offer to guarantee any durable solution. Finally, *legitimisers* add prestige and legitimacy to any agreed solution. Whereas such roles are most often taken on by representatives of powerful third-parties (e.g. EU or US diplomats), most conflict transformation NGOs locate their entry-points to macro-political work on another level of intervention, less official and more confidential.

The label **Track 1.5** has been introduced to capture the specificity of unofficial problem-solving workshops taking place in parallel with official peace negotiation processes. Susan Allen Nan (2005: 161) describes this approach as a unique opportunity to combine the engagement of senior official representatives from one or the other side of the conflict as core participants, with the relationship-building, informal exploration, and conflict analysis training components that quiet, unofficial workshops can bring. Using examples from the Georgian-South Ossetian peace process, she specifies three domains through which these meetings can contribute directly to official peacemaking: subjectively, by improving inter-personal relationships; analytically, by familiarising participants with new procedural tools which can be used to structure discussions at the negotiation table; objectively, by introducing fresh ideas on the substantive issues into the official dialogue. In sum, the individual participants who are part of both unofficial and official forums experience personal changes which they then carry directly back to the negotiation process. Berghof also locates its most useful potential contribution to peace processes at the Track 1.5 level, and has been hosting similar workshops in Sri Lanka simultaneously to the official peace negotiations between January 2002 and April 2003. Even though they were not strictly organised for high-ranking diplomats and politicians, but comprised also civil society actors and academics, they were used as an "intellectual sounding board" for a more effective and inclusive Track I peace process, by offering stakeholders the possibility to learn from international comparative experience, investigate ways of sustaining the ceasefire, and generate models and perspectives for political and economic reform, federalism, and power sharing (BFPS 2006c). Such activities promote the widening of peace constituencies, both horizontally and vertically: by improving the multilateral engagement of a

broader range of actors across the party lines, and by strengthening communication and mutual learning across the hierarchy of command within conflict party systems. It now needs to be assessed how they relate to civil society-based dialogue projects which also accompany and complement peace processes.

The experience of **Track III cross-cultural activities** in the early phases of violence-to-peace transitions is ambivalent. On the one hand, the Reflecting on Peace Practice project has identified the need for peace work affecting "more people" in complement to third-party engagement with "key people" (CDA 2005). External agencies should certainly be encouraging grassroots programs aiming to reduce cross-community polarisation and mistrust, even in the interim pre-agreement phase of peace processes. They help to create conditions favourable to the signature of peace accords by shaping a receptive public opinion, and thus support Track I negotiations. They can also be seen as initial and preparatory "co-existence" efforts to pave the way for subsequent and fuller reconciliation initiatives in the post-agreement phase. However, Aspinall (2005) notes an over-emphasis by many external peace support agencies on Track III peacebuilding work, which is very rarely fed vertically into the macro-political process; key policy-making elites tend to remain unaware of grassroots peace efforts in their constituencies. If bottom-up connections are often not articulated well enough, the opposite is also true: top-level discussions around necessary structural transformations and state reforms are rarely reflected upon in grassroots dialogue encounters, which remain dominated by psycho-social and inter-individual models of reconciliation. This problem is particularly acute in asymmetric conflicts, when power arrangements at the top have not yet reduced inequalities across communities. In Israel-Palestine, Track III bi-national "people-to-people projects" were an integral part of the Oslo II 1995 agreement, and dozens of nongovernmental cooperative projects were created to encourage Israelis and Palestinians to overcome their differences and put a human face on the "enemy". However, instead of accompanying political progress on the macro-level, they took place amidst an increasingly paralysed peace process, and turned out to be increasingly counter-productive. Most Palestinian participants criticised their tendencies to ignore basic conflict issues (land, water resources, national rights, boundaries) and emphasise instead their "superficial manifestation" (image, perception, outlook). They became increasingly reluctant to become involved in joint peacebuilding work for fear that it might be exploited by the Israeli leadership to prove how well the peace process was going (Dudouet 2005).

Intervention into conflict systems during peace processes, finally, needs to address the role of actors who benefit from the continuation of violence and who might act as obstacles to transformation (see paragraph 2.2.1, section 2). However, it is very unlikely that either problem-solving workshops or grassroots dialogue encounters will be able to address such obstacles for resolutionary change, because the former traditionally target moderate members of conflict parties and close to the centre of the political spectrum, while the latter are organised on a voluntary basis, and people antagonistic to accommodation with the opponent do not usually participate. It is very difficult to imagine members of extremist Islamic factions volunteering to take part to the type of projects cited above, and inversely, not a single workshop organised or sponsored by Kelman in the 1980s and 1990s had participants from Israeli right-wing parties (Babbit 1996: 522). This seriously reduces their effectiveness: people who need the experience most are often the ones most difficult to engage. Therefore, there is a need for more conceptual and practical elaboration on these issues, and searching for direct entry points to "reach beyond the converted" should become part of the conflict transformation agenda for widening the constituencies for peace in transitional societies.

3.2.4 Sustaining peace implementation and consolidation

As argued in section 1, transitions from violence to peace in protracted social conflicts stretch far beyond the signature of a peace accord between warring parties, and demand sustained third-party support for peacebuilding, development and reconciliation programs in post-settlement societies. The systemic and web approaches to intervention especially call our attention to the need for linking short, medium and long term visions and processes, enhancing cross-sector coordination among external and internal agents of peaceful change, and encouraging more coherent vertical linkages between macro-political, civil society and community-based initiatives.

Both the scholarly and policy-oriented literature on post-agreement peacebuilding tend to over-emphasise the role of the UN and other IGOs in this process (see section 1); although a sustained engagement by the international community is a crucial ingredient for successful institution-building and economic recovery in many post-war countries, one also needs to acknowledge the problems which they create in beneficiary countries. Fischer exposes in detail the widespread

"dependency syndrome" which deprives Bosnian society from the "ownership" of its peacebuilding process. The massive international aid and recovery programs put in place in the immediate post-war phase have led the locals to "take for granted that support from abroad will be provided indefinitely and people expect the international community to assume responsibility for improving conditions in Bosnia" (Fischer 2006: 446).

By contrast, this sub-section will investigate alternative forms of external support which seek to strengthen the participation of internal agents of peaceful change rather than undermine it, identifying the entry-points and target groups with the strongest potential for affecting "peace writ large" (CDA 2004) and building self-sustainable structures and cultures of peace. Coming back to the hour-glass model of conflict transformation mentioned earlier, the spectrum of possible domains of intervention widens in the post-settlement phase, along with the expansion of political space that characterises conflict de-escalation (Ramsbotham et al 2005: 12). Rather than attempting to draw a comprehensive review of the field, which is not the purpose of this paper, the following discussion will be organised around the suggestion of a few intervention roles appropriate for peace support agencies in three of the peacebuilding areas identified in section 1: political and institutional reforms and consolidation, economic and social reconstruction and development, and finally transitional justice and reconciliation.

- **Improving multi-track synergies in institution- and democracy-building**

As with the preceding phases, Mitchell (2005: 20) suggests possible roles for external "enablers" of change in the post-agreement phase of violence-to-peace transition. For example, *verifiers* check and reassure adversaries that terms of the agreement are being carried out, and *implementers* impose sanctions for the non-performance of agreements. Considering that only powerful actors of the international system are able to play such roles, the attention of conflict transformation agencies could more usefully be focused on helping civil society organisations to disseminate the implementation ownership of peace agreements at all levels of society, so that structural/political reforms do not limit themselves to a technocratic exercise. INGOs can assist power devolution and democratic participation in post-war societies, by cooperating with the administration in its

reform efforts, or by providing capacity-building to local communities on relevant issues.

Despite the recent signature of a peace agreement in Sudan, addressing the need for power devolution in the Southern part of the country (but ignoring grievances and conflicts in the West and East of Sudan), its provisions remain totally unknown by the great majority of Sudanese; domestic civil society organisations (CSOs), weakened by years of authoritarianism, are unable to generate a public ownership of the peace process. A constructive form of external intervention, in such conditions, could be the promotion of multi-Track discussion forums around key issues of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which would also enable a public monitoring of its implementation (BFPS 2006). Comparatively, in Bosnia, ten years into the post-Dayton peace consolidation phase, there has been a rapid growth of CSOs helping to establish a different political culture and a potential to support as well as control central state structures. Although assisting their activities represents a valuable form of intervention, Fischer (2006: 456-8) also argues that increasing the number of NGOs could actually impede institutional development by absorbing skills and manpower which are needed in the government sector. There is also a risk of increasing the divide, or confrontation, between state-building and civil-society building, two processes which should be seen on the contrary as intermeshed and mutually-reinforcing. External peace agencies can help foster such vertical cooperation by supporting a few selective CSOs (illustrating the "critical yeast" principle) which are most likely to develop a sense of responsibility to engage for the community, and by preventing CSO actors from replacing activities and tasks that should be the responsibility of the state.

- **Improving cross-fertilisation between post-settlement peacebuilding and development**

Moving from the political to the economic domain, there is a need for more cross-sector integration between the development and conflict transformation spheres of intervention in post-war phases. The transition from war economy to peace economy through reconstruction and regeneration should be seen as a crucial peacebuilding instrument, along more traditional conflict transformation strategies of community-building and inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation. Fischer (2006: 453) denounces the limitations of reconstruction work in post-Dayton Bosnia, because it

was largely understood as a mere technical question of rebuilding houses and repairing infrastructure, and thus proved inadequate to build the basis for functioning communities; this partly explained the relative failure of the refugee return process. By contrast, she cites an example of a youth pilot project implemented by the Bosnian NGO Ipak which successfully combines efforts to overcome youth poverty and create career prospects for the youth with conflict prevention and peace support. Whereas most internationally-supported youth projects in the region usually concentrate on healing and trauma work, peace education or international exchange, Ipak places a specific emphasis on vocational training and income generation; but it also simultaneously fosters intercultural learning and community-building (offering incentives to get involved in society), by integrating Bosnian returnees and youngsters from local Serb villages in its activities (Fischer 2006: 26).

Such cross-sector "feedback loops" from relief and development work to conflict transformation engagement, however, are impeded by the strictly non-political mandates imposed on most humanitarian NGOs by the recipient regimes. In Aceh, for example, the Indonesian government tolerates the presence of post-tsunami reconstruction agencies under the strict conditions of neutrality and non-engagement in the political realm, preventing them from integrating peacebuilding priorities within their programs. Aspinall (2005) thus suggests the need for more cross-boundary engagement, for example by integrating a rights-based approach into post-tsunami reconstruction work, by assisting community representatives (such as village chiefs, women or youth networks) in articulating their own needs independently from pressures from the warring parties.

- **Reconciliation: helping societies to move from a divided past to a shared future**

The final dimension of post-settlement intervention which will be explored here concerns the role of *reconciler* (Mitchell 2005), which consists in assisting the creation of new relationships between and within adversaries. Reconciliation will be identified here as a complex process which combines attitudinal, behavioural and structural dimensions, and is made up of four complementary instruments (Bloomfield 2006: 12):

- A justice process that punishes past violence and deters future repetition; and justice reform that is built on human rights principles, democratic practice, and international legal norms, and that promises fairness in the future
- A process of acknowledging experiences, uncovering unknown events, giving voice to the previously unheard, and addressing interpretations of history: often referred to as truth-seeking or truth-telling
- A process of healing, whereby victims repair their lives by coming to terms with their suffering, at communal and national levels
- A process of reparation, through real and/or symbolic compensation for loss.

The complexity of these various elements can be illustrated for instance by the apparent contradiction between retributive justice, which focuses on the patterns of violent behaviour generated during the conflict, and the multiple other forms of justice (e.g. social, economic, distributive, restorative), which address the conflicts' root causes. Offender-oriented mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court and the Tribunals for Rwanda and Yugoslavia punish wrong-doers for their human rights violations, but are not sufficient in themselves to change the political climate of mistrust and hatred. Victim-oriented mechanisms such as truth commissions are more likely to involve the whole society in a collective memory and truth-seeking effort. One possible role for external support agencies would be to research and develop culturally-sensitive models of reconciliation which would build on these complementary and interdependent approaches and draw their converging elements.

On the grassroots, local level, a host of interpersonal reconciliation efforts have been established in post-war societies, bringing together persons who share a similar or interdependent fate because of a violent past. Ropers (2004: 260) cites for example the movement "To Reflect and Trust" (TRT), which brings together children of victims and perpetrators of the holocaust to share and explore ways of addressing the past and moving on to a collaborative future. In Bosnia, the Center for Non-Violent Action has also been involved in transnational peacebuilding by working with war veterans across ex-Yugoslavia and promoting a social debate about their past (Fischer 2006: 32-3). This work focuses on the transformation of attitudes (including stereotypes and enemy images), but also documents human rights violations and raises awareness by performing some fact-finding about past war crimes and promoting their dissemination by other CSOs (such as the media). As argued throughout this paper, the effectiveness of such projects should be measured both

internally (did it transform the participants and their relationships?), and externally, by measuring their impact, beyond single encounters, on the creation of more permanent shared structures.

Interveners must acknowledge that justice and healing cannot be externally introduced through social engineering, but are tasks for the society itself. External assistance can merely provide a supportive framework and conditions within which such a process can happen (Fischer 2006: 465). Acknowledging the field of transitional justice and human rights protection as an area of expertise beyond the remit and capacity of conflict transformation agencies, relevant projects for our field concern for example the identification and support of indigenous (i.e. non-Western) reconciliation modes, or exploring the potential linkages between grass-roots (cultural or interpersonal) and national (structural and society-wide) reconciliation Tracks.

Conclusion

This paper relies on an original attempt to combine two models of change which might appear contradictory at first glance: a temporal, staged approach and a non-linear, systemic approach. What are the main elements and "lessons learnt" which have emerged from this exercise?

Despite its limits exposed in section 1, the staged model of violence-to-peace transitions remains a useful analysis and intervention tool, especially by highlighting the principle of contingency in peacemaking and peacebuilding work. In other words, there is a specific and appropriate timing for all conflict transformation activities, and peace support agencies need to examine carefully the stage of escalation or de-escalation of the (violent or latent) conflict zone in which they intervene, in order not to enter a setting with the wrong "instruments" at the wrong time. It might be wiser for such organisations to specialise in activities appropriate for one of the four stages reviewed in section 3, rather than attempting to cover the whole gamut of intervention tools in conflict emergence, intensification, mitigation and transformation phases.

However, the systemic approach to conflict transformation developed in section 2, and applied to the domain of conflict intervention in section 3, also calls our attention to the complexity of contemporary ethnopolitical conflicts, and impels us to move away from idealised and uni-directional staged models. Conflicts are made up of multiple and intermeshed layers of structure and agency-based processes with dissimilar timelines and "ripe" moments, which makes it very difficult to draw graphic representations of their dynamics. The cyclical model presented at the end of section 1, despite its complexity, is in fact still unable to picture appropriately the non-linearity of conflict dynamics, including the numerous positive and negative "feedback loops" and learning curves which affect its constructive and/or destructive development. By representing the conflict cycle as an eternal "closed circuit", it also fails to comprehend the dialectical nature of conflict transformation, which brings parties to a higher level of relationships where future (unavoidable) conflicts will be fought and managed more constructively. A possible

area of further research, therefore, consists in the further elaboration of this approach.

If systemic analysis helps us to comprehend the complexity of protracted social conflicts and their transformation, the identification of "doable" activities for practitioners requires a strategic exercise of prioritisation and simplification of conflict systems. The concepts of agents of peaceful change and peace constituencies are designed to facilitate interveners in these tasks, by drawing our attention to the local partners with the greatest potential for affecting systemic change. The Track II level of leadership should remain a priority target for peace support agencies, due to their vertical connections with both top-level conflict stakeholders and their wider community, and their horizontal affiliations across conflict boundaries. However, it has also been argued in this paper that besides traditional recipients of conflict transformation work (e.g. moderate or sympathetic audiences, influential individuals with access to decision-makers, civil society organisations, victims of past violence, etc.), a new set of actors needs to be considered as crucial connectors and mediators of resolutionary change, including the cadres of non-state armed groups, pro status-quo national elites, potential "spoilers" or "extremists", perpetrators and "entrepreneurs" of violence, external "patrons" and advocates.

The principle of complementarity, added to that of contingency, suggests the need for interventions into conflict systems to be coordinated with other domestic and third-party-facilitated activities taking place sequentially or simultaneously in the same setting. A number of fields of practice which share the same normative values as conflict transformation (namely, a search for peace and justice through non-violent means) have been mentioned in this paper, including those of human rights monitoring, advocacy and activism, empowerment and education, democracy and governance, peace support operations, relief and development, post-trauma counselling, transitional justice, reconciliation and truth commissions. It is not my intension here to suggest that our understanding of conflict transformation theory and practice should expand to encompass all of these areas; in fact, the boundaries of our field are defined by the rules of inclusiveness and multi-partiality (Fast 2002), which by definition exclude some of the above-mentioned activities. However, this study has also demonstrated that the transition from violent social dynamics to constructive social change requires the transformation of behaviours, structures and cultures of

violence, which can only be achieved through distinct and complementary methodologies: this cross-sector interdependence needs not only to be acknowledged, but also explicitly addressed and operationalised. This paper represents one attempt in this direction, which merits further conceptual and practical elaboration.

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1	*Ergebnisbericht: Interkulturelle Konfliktbearbeitung. Einführungsseminar in neue Konzepte der innergesellschaftlichen und internationalen Mediation und präventiven Diplomatie. 30. November – 2. Dezember 1994*	Norbert Ropers	July 1996 out of print

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Dialogue Series	Title	Author	Published
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