



Working Paper No. 15

**Ripe for Contribution?  
The Falklands-Malvinas War  
and the Utility of  
Problems-Solving Workshops**

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**George Mason University**



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## About the Author

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Christopher Mitchell is currently the Drucie French Cumbie Professor of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University where he teaches both Masters and Doctoral programs at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR).

He received his undergraduate and post-graduate education at University College, London, and his Ph.D. from the University of London in 1972 for a study of the Kenyan-Somali conflict in the Horn of Africa.

Since then, he has held research and teaching appointments at the Centre for the Analysis of Conflict, University College, London; at the London School of Economics; at the Universities of Surrey and Southampton; and at City University, London, where he became Professor of International Relations in 1985. He joined the faculty of ICAR in 1988 and was Director of the Institute between 1991 and 1994.

As a consultant and facilitator, he has worked on conflicts in Northern Ireland, Spain, Cyprus, Transcaucasia, the Middle East, and Africa.

His main fields of academic interest include international mediation and peacemaking processes, particularly the practical development of problem solving approaches to protracted conflicts; the causes, dynamics, and resolution of major ethno-nationalist conflicts, especially those that become "internationalized"; and the termination of protracted conflicts, with particular reference to those in Africa.

He has published numerous papers and articles on all these topics, and is the author of *The Structure of International Conflict* (Macmillan/St. Martins Press, 1981); *Peacemaking and the Consultant's Role* (Gower Press, 1981); (with Michael Banks) *A Handbook on the Analytical Problem Solving Approach* (Frances Pinter, 1996); and *Gestures of Conciliation* (Macmillan/St. Martins Press, 2000). In addition to these works, he has edited *International Relations Theory* (Frances Pinter, 1978) with A.J.R. Groom; *In the Aftermath: Anglo-Argentine Relations Since 1982* (University of Maryland, 1988) with Walter Little; and *New Approaches to International Mediation* (Greenwood Press, 1988) with Keith Webb.



# About the Institute

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The Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, has as its principal mission to advance the understanding and resolution of significant and persistent conflicts among individuals, communities, identity groups, and nations.

In the fulfillment of its mission, the Institute conducts a wide range of programs and outreach. Among these are its graduate programs offering the Doctoral and Master of Science in Conflict Analysis and Resolution, clinical consultancy services offered by individual members of the faculty, and public programs and education that include the annual Vernon M. and Minnie I. Lynch Lecture Series.

The Institute's major research interests include the study of conflict and its resolution, the exploration and analysis of conditions attracting parties in conflict to the negotiating table, the role of third parties in dispute resolution, and the application of conflict resolution methodologies in local, national, and international settings. The Institute's Applied Practice and Theory Program (APT) develops teams of faculty, students, and allied practitioners to analyze and address topics such as conflict in schools and other community institutions, crime and violence, jurisdictional conflicts between local agencies of government, and international conflicts.

The Northern Virginia Mediation Service (NVMS) is affiliated with the Institute and provides conflict resolution and mediation services and training to schools, courts, and local agencies and practitioners in communities across Northern Virginia and the Washington metropolitan area.

For more information, please call (703) 993-1300 or check the Institute's web page at [www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/](http://www.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/).



The Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution is pleased to publish Christopher Mitchell's Working Paper "Ripe for Contribution? The Falklands-Malvinas War and the Utility of Problem Solving Workshops." Mitchell is one of the originators of the problem solving approach to protracted conflicts and his reflections on their application to the Falklands-Malvinas case throws light on both the potential and the limits of the technique. The set of workshops that took place between 1983 and 1985 on the conflict in the South Atlantic between Great Britain and Argentina brought Mitchell together with Edward Azar and John Burton, two other early proponents of the problem solving approach. This paper includes a review of the technique, a narrative of an important but little known application, and a series of theoretical considerations.

Much of Mitchell's research and teaching at ICAR has revolved around the issue of developing new approaches to conflict resolution in protracted conflicts. ICAR believes that these methods represent an important tool in promoting conflict resolution not only in international conflicts in the South Atlantic but in local communities and organizations here at home as well.

Mitchell has written extensively on the process and theory of problem solving workshops, notably in his books *Peacemaking and the Consultant's Role* and *A Handbook on the Analytical Problem Solving Approach* (co-written with Michael Banks). His earlier contributions to the ICAR Working Paper series have been "Cutting Losses: Reflections on Appropriate Timing" (ICAR Working Paper No. 9, 1996) and "A Willingness to Talk" (ICAR Working Paper No. 4, 1990) consider similar themes. He has also published *In the Aftermath: Anglo Argentine Relations Since the Falklands-Malvinas War* (co-edited with Walter Little).

This Working Paper is a model of using an in-depth, hands-on account of a specific case to explore and expand a body of theories and to test the efficacy of specific practices. Among the questions Mitchell considers are when

is the timing appropriate for a problem solving approach and advances our understanding of when a conflict is "ripe" for involvement, if not final resolution.

In addition, the paper asks how we should regard the issue of "success." In particular, he analyzes how asymmetries shape the prospects for resolution along a number of different dimensions, including asymmetry of advantage, asymmetry of readiness, and asymmetry of representation and access. Mitchell argues persuasively that while the Falklands-Malvinas workshops did not produce a lasting solution, they may be regarded as a success in a number of other ways. He makes the case that asking whether a specific initiative can *contribute* to a resolution process is a more meaningful question than whether the workshop *resolved* the conflict. He concludes that "a large number of long-term contributions to peace building and conflict resolution did emerge from the series of meetings and their aftermath, even though the issue of the future of the Islands and the Islanders remains in dispute between Britain and Argentina." This broader, more nuanced framework recognizes that important contributions may be made by informal, Track 2 initiatives even when a mutually acceptable solution remains elusive.

This Working Paper therefore makes important contributions to our understanding of conflict resolution theory, the practice of analytical problem solving workshops, and the particular application to the Falklands-Malvinas conflict.

Sandra I. Cheldelin

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandra I. Cheldelin', written in a cursive style.

Director, ICAR

**T**his paper takes as its starting point the three problem solving workshops focused on the Falklands-Malvinas conflict held between 1983 and 1985 at the University of Maryland. Accounts and analyses of these three, week-long meetings have already been published elsewhere, and this present work will add only a little to the detailed history of these encounters between the adversaries.<sup>1</sup> However, revisiting the meetings will provide an opportunity to discuss a number of theoretical issues concerned with the use of such "Track 2" processes in helping to move intractable conflicts nearer to a solution.<sup>2</sup>

The Falklands-Malvinas workshops provide an interesting set of cases providing some illumination of the issue of appropriate timing for such informal initiatives, and of the changing circumstances in which unofficial discussions might provide a helpful input to a conflict resolution process. I will use these three workshops to advance the current debate on the issue of a conflict's "ripeness" for resolution. This debate so far has tended to concentrate upon rather broad, macro-level factors both as regards the relationship between the adversaries (a "hurting stalemate") and the micro process itself, discussed simply as either being likely to produce "a resolution"—or not.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, the workshops—which clearly did not produce a firm, lasting, and mutually acceptable solution to the conflict over the Islands—can also be used to throw some light on conditions that militate against "success" and, by definition, on some of the micro-level factors that need to be taken into account when launching this type of Track 2 initiative. In this regard, I will take up the issue of *asymmetry* between the parties to the conflict that is often held to be a major obstacle to the resolution of many types of conflict. I will argue that a number of major asymmetries, both within and outside the workshops themselves, worked against the possibility that the meetings would have any major impact on relations between the core adversaries or on the initiation of a successful resolution process.

## Collaborative and Analytical Problem Solving Workshops: The Classical Model

At the risk of being accused of caricature, I begin by presenting a sketch of what might be called the “classical” model of a “collaborative and analytical problem solving” (CAPS) process, mainly derived from the writings of those who pioneered the use of this approach to resolving protracted and deep-rooted conflicts.<sup>4</sup> It should be recalled that, quite early in the history of using such approaches, Foltz drew attention to the difference between problem solving and “process promoting” workshops, a distinction that has progressively become more and more blurred as the number and variety of Track 2 processes increased over the years.<sup>5</sup> However, an outline of the original structure and purposes of *problem solving* workshops will help to provide a baseline to compare recent initiatives, including the Falklands-Malvinas set of the mid-1980s.

Briefly, the original model of a problem solving workshop took the form of informal, small group discussions involving unofficial “representatives” of adversaries, together with a small facilitating panel of “outsider neutrals,” mainly experts in the general theory of conflict or in resolution processes, who steered the flow of the discussions during the time (usually one working week) the workshop took place. The participants in the workshop were invited as individuals but, while holding no official decision making position, were close to top decision makers and thus had access and influence on the latter. This proximity enables ideas and insights from the discussions to be taken back and, if deemed useful, acted upon at the official, Track 1 level. The basic purposes of the classical problem solving workshop were: to restore full and open communication between adversaries; to analyze jointly the sources of the conflict and the obstacles to its resolution; to devise mutually acceptable options or solutions; to pass on these ideas to the official level; and to assist in having these ideas considered, accepted and adopted.

Another important aspect of the “classical” model was that it was assumed to be most useful and effective in a protracted conflict wherein mutual distortions and misperceptions were rife; where the adversaries were stalemated (but had probably managed to establish a fragile truce); where communication continued to be difficult; when no successful negotiations had taken place; and when Track 1 activity was proving ineffective. Moreover, the



model usually assumed that there remained a very real potential for resumed violence, given that the rival leaderships were becoming frustrated with the lack of any progress towards a negotiated solution. Adopting a term from later years, these were “ripe” conditions in which problem solving processes would be effective.

This classical model of problem solving thus involved an elitist, top down approach, based upon the assumption that resolution proceeded from a changed view of costs, benefits, and options among key decision makers, who could involve themselves and their parties in a conflict resolution process—lessening tension, de-escalating, undertaking trust building actions, eventually engaging in negotiations—once they had decided that such an option offered the best chance of achieving major goals. Early experiences with the Cyprus conflict, with “Konfrontasi” between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, and with the Kashmir dispute seemed to confirm the utility of the approach and the validity of the assumptions built into the model. Hence, the basic assumptions carried forward into initiatives launched in the 1970s and 1980s.

## **Collaborative and Analytical Problem Solving Workshops: The Falklands-Malvinas Set**

The origins of the set of three, linked workshops, which took place over an 18-month period between September 1983 and February 1985, go back to the annual conference of the International Studies Association (ISA) of 1983, which took place in Mexico City. Opportunities for informal conversations between British and Argentine academics at the ISA gave rise to the suggestion that a problem solving initiative might well be helpful in seeking out a resolution of the conflict over the Falklands/Malvinas Islands, which had erupted into a short but vicious war between April and July 1982. Edward Azar, a Lebanese scholar working in the United States, and John Burton, an Australian, offered to host such an exercise at the Center for International Development in Maryland, where Azar was the Director.

At this stage of the conflict, both the major parties were facing a stalemate following the outbreak of war a year before. Diplomatic relations remained broken, sanctions were still in place, the British Government was fortifying

the Islands at not inconsiderable expense, and communication between the adversaries was virtually non-existent. Within Argentina itself, a discredited military junta was reluctantly making preparations to hand over to a new, civilian government after elections scheduled to be held in December 1983.

This situation had changed little by the start of the first meetings in Maryland, which were held in September 1983. In anticipation of the forthcoming elections in Argentina, the organizers had invited parliamentarians from both the main political parties in Buenos Aires (Radical and Peronista). This first Argentine team contained a high level retired diplomat and was closely connected with the Argentine foreign ministry's "think tank," the Consejo Argentino para las Relaciones Internacionales (CARI). The British participants were more varied and reflected a clear reluctance on the part of anyone even remotely associated with the Thatcher government to be seen consorting with Argentineans so soon after the ending of the 1982 war. Two Members of Parliament from the (pre-1983 election) House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, and two academics made up the British team. The panel of facilitators was led by Azar and Burton and consisted largely of American academics who, much to their surprise, found themselves under attack by Argentinean participants for US policies of aiding Britain during the war.

Aside from such occasional displays of indignation, the discussions were conducted productively, and a great deal of data—particularly concerning goals, expectations, images, and motivations—were exchanged during the five days of the workshop. At the end of the week, it was agreed that a useful channel had been opened between Buenos Aires and London and should be kept open; that discussions should continue at a further workshop to be held as soon after the Argentine elections as possible; that membership of that workshop should be expanded to include others close to key decision makers as well as representatives of the Islanders' views and aspirations; and that some of the insights gained at the talks should be conveyed to decision makers in the respective capitals.

In the event, it did not prove possible to reconvene a second workshop until April 1984, by which time a new, Radical Party government and president had been installed in Buenos Aires and the second Thatcher govern-

ment was well into its term of office, having won a resounding victory in the election held in mid-1983. Diplomatic relations remained broken, however, and Britain continued to station a substantial proportion of its armed forces in and around the Islands. Also by this time, the British participants at "Maryland I" had established an organization known as the South Atlantic Council (SAC) to push for a renewal of relations between the adversaries and, in the longer term, for a negotiated settlement. Thus, the participants who reconvened at Maryland in Spring 1984 could be said to have represented both CARI and the SAC, the major difference being that the Argentine team had been expanded to include two newly elected members of the House of Deputies, while the British team remained much as before, with one Labour Party M.P. substituting for another unable to attend the second Maryland meeting.

In the event, discussions at Maryland II concentrated very much on issues of tension reduction and confidence building, although some time was spent revisiting core issues discussed at Maryland I, such as the nature of "sovereignty" over the Islands and the re-establishment of "normal" relations. A number of ideas for possible confidence building measures, some involving fishing within the British maritime "Exclusion Zone" around the Islands, were discussed and, again, taken back to decision makers in both capitals for consideration. Participants also felt that, apart from keeping open channels of communication and pressing for creative thinking on the issues, an exchange of visits might be arranged in between Maryland II and the proposed Maryland III.<sup>6</sup>

When the participants met for the last of the three workshops in February 1985, the Argentine team included a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and, for the first time, the team from London was joined by an influential Falkland Islander, indicating that conversations with the Argentine adversary had become viewed as a legitimate activity three years after the war. During the time period between Maryland II and III, an official meeting between representatives of the two governments had been briefly held in Berne, sponsored and arranged by the Swiss and Brazilian Governments, who were the respective Protecting Powers in the continuing absence of diplomatic relations.

At Maryland III, much time was taken up exploring the reasons for the rapid collapse of these official level talks, but discussions soon turned to a review of a draft paper written by two of the British participants which outlined a range of options for a long-term solution of the conflict over the Falklands/Malvinas. At the urging of the facilitators, much of the final two days of the workshop were spent drafting a set of agreeable principles for a settlement, which it was hoped might form the basis for discussion during a renewal of the abortive official talks. At the end of the third workshop, participants returned to their respective capitals with a draft of agreed principles as the main workshop output. The paper surveying "options" was later published as an Occasional Paper by SAC.<sup>7</sup>

Maryland III saw the ending of this linked set of workshops. Participants seemed to feel that the format had been useful in restoring some contacts, in establishing linkages between two institutions within the main adversaries dedicated to the search for a long-term solution, and in producing some creative ideas. However, it was also felt that the format was no longer useful as the parties' isolated positions of 1983 had been much eroded. Full restoration of something like normal communication had been, or was about to be, achieved. There seemed to be clear signs that formal diplomatic contacts would shortly be re-established. In fact, an Argentine parliamentary group visited London in 1986. Sanctions between the two adversaries were gradually lifted. Formal diplomatic relations were restored in 1990. Two years later, Mrs. Thatcher was ousted as Prime Minister by her own Conservative Party, who by then had come to see her as a fatal electoral liability. For the next decade, the South Atlantic Council continued to publicize ideas and press for serious consideration of alternative solutions to the conflict, as did many of the Argentine participants at Maryland, both individually and institutionally, but to little effect. The dispute remains unresolved.

## **Ripeness—for Involvement?**

Even the brief account of the three workshops presented above should be enough to indicate that it would be hard to make a strong case that any of the set conformed closely to what was described earlier in this paper as "the classical model" of collaborative and analytical problem solving workshops. For one thing, the workshop set hardly started after a long period of

stalemate, given that the first took place only twelve months after the end of the war in the South Atlantic. More importantly, it is clear that the various participants—from London, Buenos Aires and (eventually) Port Stanley—either failed to produce radical but acceptable new options or failed in their efforts to have these adopted by their respective decision makers. Whatever the explanation, certainly no resolution, or even process leading towards a resolution, emerged from the workshops, although a number of ideas and initiatives did arise from Maryland.

There seem to be three possible explanations for the failure of the workshops to produce even the beginnings of a resolution. Firstly, the failure of the Falklands-Malvinas workshops to produce a full resolution of the conflict could be an indication that they occurred when conditions ensured that the conflict itself was not ready for the achievement of such an outcome—in Zartman's terms, it was not "ripe for resolution"—either in the sense that both parties faced a "hurting stalemate" or "imminent mutual catastrophe."<sup>8</sup>

A second possibility is that conditions at that time presented neither the need for holding a "classical" problem solving initiative (absence of contacts and communication, no on-going negotiations or intermediary activity) nor the requirement and opportunity for the successful generation of acceptable and innovative alternatives (failure of previous strategies, or decision makers' readiness to consider alternatives and freedom to change directions).

A third line of argument suggests the possibility that the processes necessary for a successful problem solving initiative were not properly observed. Hence the result was a flawed process, which failed to produce a full analysis, acceptable and innovative options, and a creative, lasting solution.

## Aftermath of War: A Ripe Moment?

I will return to this third argument in the final part of this paper. At this stage, I would like to examine the question of what light the three Falklands-Malvinas workshops can throw on the nature of appropriate conditions for this kind of initiative, starting with macro-level arguments

about "ripeness." At this level, it seems clear that neither the British nor the Argentine government faced an imminent mutual catastrophe that would have (theoretically) produced appropriately ripe conditions during the period from 1983 to 1985, when the three workshops took place. For Argentine leaders, the catastrophe had already occurred with their ejection from the Islands they had occupied in April 1982, and—at least for the military regime which was still in power in Buenos Aires when the first Maryland Workshop took place—the subsequent irresistible popular demand in Argentina for a return to a civilian government. For the British in 1983, the only possible future catastrophe of any magnitude was a renewed attempt by Argentina to re-take the Islands by military force, but that seemed such a remote possibility that it was hardly "imminent."<sup>9</sup>

Was there, on the other hand, a "hurting stalemate?" It was rapidly apparent that the British military success in 1982 had done little to produce a long-term solution of the protracted conflict over the Islands, which—according to some—had existed since the 1830s and become clearly manifest during the 17 years of fruitless negotiations between 1965 and 1982. Argentine claims to the Islands did not disappear with military defeat, and the issue was not, as Prime Minister Thatcher frequently claimed, finally settled. Clearly, there appeared to be a stalemate, but how much was it hurting the parties to the conflict? By 1983, the major hurt had been done to the Argentine junta, and the continuing loss of the Malvinas was apparently reverting to a significant foreign policy irritant for informed and attentive publics in Argentina. In Britain, however, the hurt which undoubtedly existed at an economic level (the costs of garrisoning the Islands and turning it into a major base, building a large airstrip and maintaining naval patrols around the "Exclusion Zone") was, in 1983, more than off-set by the admittedly intangible political benefits of having stood up to military dictators and fought a successful war that restored a just and defensible status quo. In London, the restoration of the Islands to British rule was hardly viewed as "a stalemate" by most people. The costs were acknowledged and, indeed, emphasized by some critics of British Government policies; however, they were felt to be more than justified by the Government and by the vast majority of the attentive and informed publics in Britain. Status quo parties seldom regard the restoration of their favored status quo as "a stalemate."

## Conditions Conducive to Informal Meetings

If it was the case that macro-conditions in the period from 1983 to 1985 made the Falklands-Malvinas dispute "unripe" for resolution, was it also the case that the micro-level structural factors implied in the "classical" model also militated against any progress towards a resolution? Here, the situation seems more ambiguous and it varied from workshop to workshop. It was clearly not the case that the first Maryland Workshop took place after a "long stalemate," but in the immediate aftermath of a short but vicious war in which well over 1,000 men died, many others were wounded and large numbers of others taken prisoners, if only temporarily. In classical military terms, one party had "won," while the other had "lost," even though such a conclusive military outcome had done little to deal with the underlying sources of the conflict. Such circumstances are not conducive to non-coercive efforts to resolve the conflict. In the flush of triumph and relief, the victors are unlikely to offer any but the harshest terms for a "settlement" (if, indeed, they acknowledge the need even to consider recognizing the continued existence of a conflict). They are "negotiating from strength." The vanquished, on the other hand, are likely to be in no fit state to do other than accept, at least temporarily, the solution imposed by their adversary, and to begin to make preparations to do better next time. Politically and psychologically, no party in such an immediate post-war stage of a conflict is likely to be ready to seek a long-term resolution of the conflict, self-supporting and acceptable to all.

On the other hand, all three of the Maryland Workshops did take place in circumstances where there was a lack of direct communications between both governments, and a situation of mutual isolation between the adversaries, circumstances regarded as being conducive to holding effective problem solving exercises. Moreover, this absence of Track 1 activity also involved there being almost no formal third party activity during the period from 1983 to 1985 and an almost complete absence of official contacts and negotiations for the same period.<sup>10</sup> There were exceptions to this general absence of official contacts and communications, although full diplomatic relations between the rival governments were not restored until 1990, fully five years after the last Falklands-Malvinas workshop had been held and eight years after the ending of the war in the South Atlantic. As already noted, in 1985, the Swiss and Brazilian Governments arranged direct talks between British

and Argentine delegations in Berne, only to see these break down after one abortive session.

Table 1 sets out some of the classical micro-conditions existing for each of the three Maryland Workshops. The information thus presented indicates that certainly some of the conditions held to be important in determining the success of a problem solving approach to conflict resolution were present even at the very start of the period during which the workshops took place; and that, increasingly, these conditions came to resemble those in the "classical model." Yet, by the criterion of producing a resolution of the conflict, the workshops can hardly be deemed a "success."

Yet again, while the workshops failed to produce a final resolution of the conflict over the Islands, they produced some results, even if these fell short of those achieved in other problem solving initiatives. Maryland I established a communications network involving members of the core adversaries, together with a new bipartisan institution in Britain, the South Atlantic Council, devoted to the search for a mutually acceptable resolution of the conflict. Maryland II produced a draft list of confidence building measures designed to enable two governments not formally in contact with one another to carry out moves to reduce both tensions and costs to themselves and one another. Maryland III produced a draft set of agreed principles that could serve as a basis for a future solution to the conflict, once formal contacts and discussions were renewed. While not constituting a resolution in any final sense, it could be argued that these "products" from the workshops might be seen as an important "contribution" to some future resolution, even if they were not the complete and final resolution promised by the classical problem solving model.

## **"Successful" Problem Solving Initiatives**

This last argument raises an important general point about the nature of conflict resolution itself, and hence of the meaning of "success" in using problem solving or any other approaches to find a solution to protracted conflicts. It is rare that a particular event, initiative, person, or process can be said to be an absolute "success" in the sense of producing a final "resolution" of any conflict. Rather, processes such as diplomacy, good offices,



**Table 1. Settings for the Three Maryland Workshops**

<b>Classical Model</b>	<b>Maryland I Sept. 1983</b>	<b>Maryland II April 1984</b>	<b>Maryland III Feb. 1985</b>
<b>Existence of long stalemate of fighting</b>	15 months after end of war	2 years after end of war	Almost 3 years after end of war
<b>Breakdown in communications</b>	No formal diplomatic relations: sanctions in place	Mutual isolation: continued sanctions	Signals of willingness to conciliate, but mainly rejected
<b>No direct negotiations</b>	No attempts at direct talks	No attempts at direct talks	Direct talks in Berne failed and not renewed
<b>No official 3rd party activity</b>	None	None made public	Efforts made by Swiss and Brazilians to broker talks
<b>Potential for renewed violence over issues</b>	Perceived to be a possibility	Lower since election of civilian gov't in Argentina	Continue to be seen as low

conciliation, or problem solving itself should more properly be conceived as making some positive contribution to a process of resolution, which leads towards some final outcome where the conflict is resolved, the issues are no longer in contention between the parties and there has been a transformation of the adversarial relationship.

Thus, while a problem solving initiative like the Maryland Workshops might not achieve a complete resolution of the conflict, it can, more modestly, *contribute* to a conflict resolution process, sometimes significantly by, for example, actually starting off a Track 1 process or removing some intellectual or substantive obstacles to the start of such a process. The contribution can be indirect and, in many cases, delayed. For example, another set of problem solving workshops held at the University of Maryland, this time focussed on the internal conflict in Lebanon, produced a set of agreed

principles for a long-term solution, some of which became incorporated, several years later, into the Taif Agreement of 1989.<sup>11</sup>

The upshot of this argument is that it seems to me to be far more useful to ask the question:

“What contribution (if any) did this CAPS initiative make to the resolution process in this particular case and what light does this throw on issues of appropriate timing of such exercises?”

rather than:

“Did the CAPS exercise resolve this conflict, and what can this case tell us about conditions that make a conflict ‘ripe for resolution’?”

My central argument is that, rather than seeking answers to questions dealing with the conditions that make conflicts “ripe” through alternative approaches, we should be making inquiries about what makes a conflict “ripe for contribution,” and investigating the question of how different types of input (CAPS workshops, dialogue groups, official negotiations, informal commissions of enquiry, etc.) can produce effects that move parties closer to a solution no matter how distant that solution might appear. Given that problem solving workshops can best be regarded as one input into a complex and dynamic process of conflict, the central conundrum focuses on what sorts of input are appropriate and effective to produce what result in which circumstances, a “contingency” issue that is beginning to be addressed by a number of scholars.<sup>12</sup>

In many ways, the point about a CAPS “contribution” to a conflict resolution process is an extension of an argument that I have developed elsewhere about the overall results of problem solving approaches and the advantages of distinguishing between the *impact* upon the participants, the *outputs* from the workshops and the *outcome* of the overall exercise.<sup>13</sup> The last, defined as the effects that the workshops had on the conflict itself and the relationship between the adversaries, is clearly the most

difficult to trace out, but the one usually in mind when questions are asked about "success." On the other hand, it is far easier to describe the outputs from a particular workshop or a workshop series, as these tend to be material, rather than conceptual or attitudinal—although new ideas or opportunities can be carried away in participants' heads rather than on paper. I have already mentioned that each of the three Maryland workshops produced a variety of interesting outputs. These ranged from an informal agreement concluded at Maryland I to establish a network of regular contacts between the South Atlantic Council in London and CARI in Buenos Aires, to a set of principles for a settlement agreed to and signed at Maryland III and subsequently passed on to participants' respective foreign ministries.

The outputs from the three Falklands-Malvinas workshops are, again, only a sample of the type of phenomena that can "contribute" to a conflict resolution process. Experience with these and other CAPS exercises suggests, however, that there is a range of possible contributions that have been made to a variety of conflict resolution processes, even if the exercises themselves have not brought about a thorough resolution of the conflict.<sup>14</sup> Such contributions include renewed communications networks, cross adversary coalitions seeking a solution, informal or draft suggestions for confidence building measures, draft agreements on negotiation procedures, or informal suggestions about the principles on which a solution might be sought.

Many practitioners will object that this list leaves out the most important results of many workshops, which involve new ideas about options and opportunities, changed images of many aspects of the conflict, different aspirations and expectations, more realistic costing of alternative futures, and a deeper analysis of the sources of the conflict and means of addressing these. I would be the last to disagree that these are important—perhaps *the* most important—results of CAPS workshops, and should be afforded a prominent place as hopefully transferable *impacts* on participants in the list of "contributions" to conflict resolution. However, these are often the most difficult aspects of any problem solving process to communicate to skeptical officials, chiefs and decision makers, so that such contributions are often lost or minimized during the re-entry stage of the workshop process.

## Asymmetry as an Obstacle to Success

In spite of the arguments about CAPS exercises making a contribution to a resolution process, the importance of evaluating outputs from workshops, and the relativity of "success," it still remains the case that the Falklands-Malvinas workshops of the mid-1980s do not appear to have contributed very much to any process to achieve a lasting resolution of the conflict. As far as one can tell, the workshops had little effect in starting up any official Track 1 discussions, even about tension reducing measures. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were restored in 1990, but it is difficult to trace any immediate connection between this and the three Maryland meetings. The principles for a settlement devised at Maryland III remain informal paper ideas, even though they may be taken up in future in some Anglo-Argentine equivalent of the Taif agreement in Lebanon. The problem of the Islands has become less salient in both countries, although Argentine officials occasionally raise the issue of the lost islands before the Argentine public to indicate that Argentine goals and aspirations have not fundamentally changed. Efforts to deal with the conflict now that it has re-entered a dormant stage are equally dormant. Far from "making a contribution" to an on-going resolution process, the workshops seem to have had so little effect that the resolution process itself is completely stagnant. While this might be explainable at the end of the 1990s, it is more difficult to explain in the context of the mid-1980s when the issues were still salient and the conflict manifest in both countries.

One explanation for the lack of contribution, let alone resolution, of the Maryland workshops might be sought by comparing them with the requirements for success of a CAPS workshop in the "classical" problem solving model, first at the strategic and then at the procedural level. At both levels, I will suggest that the key concept of *asymmetry* might help to explain why the contribution of the three workshops was less than it might have been in other circumstances and with other structures and processes. It seems clear in retrospect that there were major imbalances in a number of key factors that vitiated the efforts made at Maryland between 1983 and 1985, and rendered the workshops' contribution to a conflict resolution process less than anticipated at the time. Of the various imbalances, I will highlight asymmetries in *balance of advantage*, in *readiness for negotiation*, and in *representation and access*.

## Asymmetry of Advantage

Much recent theoretical attention has been concentrated upon the nature of conflict resolution processes when the parties have reached a point of stalemate, when neither party can see any prospect of gaining the upper hand and achieving its goals through coercive means. However, other conditions in protracted conflicts can be easily envisaged, in which one side or the other has gained a significant advantage so that the prospects of success (and hence "victory") seem far better for one adversary than the other. Naturally, as conflicts are usually highly dynamic phenomena, this "balance of advantage" can change over time. Coercive strategies can fail or achieve success. Allies can defect. Essential material resources can approach exhaustion. Symbolic thresholds can be crossed. Hence, while it is frequently difficult to discern precise turning points, except with hindsight, and while parties in conflict have a substantial capacity for self delusion about their chances of success, conflicts often reach a stage in which one side has a clear advantage over the other, so that it is theoretically possible to contrast "conditions of stalemate" with "conditions of imbalance." In the case of the Argentine-British conflict over the Falklands-Malvinas, it could be argued that the period from 1965 to 1981 saw that conflict at a stage of stalemate, with neither side gaining an advantage in a struggle carried out through diplomatic means, although Argentina's success in getting the issue onto the agenda of the United Nations and of maneuvering the British Government to the negotiating table may be taken as indications of their achievement of some increased advantage.<sup>15</sup>

In 1982, the situation changed rapidly, moving through a brief period from April to June, during which the balance of advantage lay with Argentina following its successful seizure of the Islands and the rallying of Latin American support to its cause, to the post re-invasion stage when the Islands were recaptured and heavily garrisoned by the British.

In the immediate aftermath of this successful re-invasion of the Islands, therefore, it seems safe to say that the balance of advantage lay, at least for the short term, with the British. In such circumstances, the advantaged party can be seen as confronting a number of alternative courses of action. These range from a readiness to negotiate with its defeated rival in order to take final advantage of its coercive success and set the seal on its victory

to, on the other hand, a complete unwillingness to do anything save enjoy success and assume that successful coercion has finally decided the issue, so that no further dealings with its adversary are required. If the former course of action is adopted, then the initiation of some form of conflict resolution process will largely depend upon the reactions of the loser and the willingness of its leaders to accept the failure of their coercive strategies and to take up negotiations in the aftermath of that failure. In this case, they must negotiate from a position of marked disadvantage, even if not complete weakness.<sup>16</sup> If the successful party adopts the latter course of action and refuses to accept the need for talks, then there seems to be little likelihood of success for any form of conflict resolution initiative either at the Track 1 or Track 2 level. In summary, then, the launching of any kind of conflict resolution initiative in an imbalanced situation will depend:

1. on the advantaged party's willingness to recognize that its advantage may not be permanent and to use the current imbalance to "negotiate from relative strength," even though this may result in a solution that surrenders some goods gained by successful coercion; and
2. on the disadvantaged party's willingness to accept its situation of (possible temporary) inferiority and to "negotiate from relative weakness," even though this may result in a sub-optimal solution.

Clearly, many factors influence the choice of strategy for both the dominant and dominated in the imbalanced stages of a protracted conflict, and there is no space to consider them here, beyond saying that, in the aftermath of the 1982 War in the South Atlantic, there were two key considerations that affected British and Argentine choices. For the British, the shortness of the war and the completeness of their victory produced a post conflict euphoria that led most of them (including their leaders) to neglect the fact that military victory had done nothing to remove the source of the conflict. For the Argentinians, a key determinant of their response was undoubtedly the fact that responsibility for the strategic debacle could be foisted onto the military junta, so that the latter's replacement could be seen as a disclaimer of responsibility for the tactics of invasion, while leaving the legitimacy of Argentina's goal (its claim to the Islands) unimpaired.<sup>17</sup>

Hence, the aftermath of the South Atlantic War produced a paradoxical situation in which the advantaged party was solely concerned with consolidating its victory and in no mood to consider re-opening an issue that many of its key leaders perceived as having been settled, once and for all; while the disadvantaged party was more than willing to re-open discussions on an issue that remained salient and undecided. In such a situation, the success of any conflict resolution initiative depends upon those undertaking it being able to convince the successful party that it was crucial to avoid intransigence and an unwillingness to re-open discussion of an issue that military success had apparently closed for good.

In the event, one failure of the Maryland meetings lay in their inability to convince a British leadership responsible for the "triumph" of the South Atlantic war that the conflict was not resolved and that it was necessary to use the post-success period to start examining the underlying sources of the conflict and to search for options that might lead to a long-term resolution rather than a temporary, coerced settlement. While convincing victors of the need for an examination of why their exertions were necessary is never an easy task, two other forms of asymmetry contributed to the relative failure of the Maryland meetings to make any major contribution to the start of a successful resolution process.

## Asymmetry of Readiness

In one of his early papers, Dean Pruitt writes briefly about adversaries' "readiness for negotiation," arguing that an imbalance in such readiness will clearly cause complications for insiders and outsiders seeking to move towards a solution for any dispute.<sup>18</sup> I have suggested a number of reasons why both advantaged and disadvantaged adversaries might, in any type of conflict, wish to avoid negotiations following a massive defeat for one side. Another structural factor diminishing at least one party's readiness to negotiate seems to be important in one familiar type of protracted conflict, namely that in which one side is defending an acceptable status quo, while its adversary is seeking some major change.<sup>19</sup> The conflict over the Falklands-Malvinas seems clearly to fall into this category of "status quo versus pro-change" conflicts, in which one party aims at altering some disadvantageous set of conditions which it finds costly or irksome, while the other

attempts to maintain the same conditions that, for them, confer major benefits.<sup>20</sup> During 1983–85 this took the form of the British defending what was to them a relatively satisfactory situation (continuing British sovereignty over the Islands and its British population) while successive Argentine governments were attempting to bring about a major alteration by restoring Argentine sovereignty over the Island and their settler population.

Two important perceptual and definitional factors arise from such a structure, both affecting the status quo party's "readiness for negotiation." The first is that any activity at any stage of the conflict by the pro change party is perceived as a form of aggression, whether diplomatic or coercive. As John Burton<sup>21</sup> pointed out many years ago, satisfied status quo parties have difficulty in even accepting either that they face a conflict or that the party seeking change is anything other than a trouble-making expansionist, seeking unjustifiable gains. For them, the only "proper" solution is for the other party to go away and stop making unjustified demands for change in its favor. In other words, there is always a strong tendency for status quo parties to see the situation in zero sum terms.<sup>22</sup>

Given such perceptions, it is easy to understand the outrage that develops within a status quo party should its adversary attempt to alter a wholly acceptable, long standing, and entirely just status quo by military force; and to observe that sense of outrage in Britain following Argentina's seizure of the Islands in April 1982. To status quo parties, such an action represents a clear case of aggression, and once this has been repelled suggestions that the defender of the status quo should then discuss the issues raised by such an aggressor are unlikely to receive much sympathy from that party. Such was the British attitude in 1983, and it was an attitude that understandably persisted for several years after that date and still persists in many quarters in Britain.

The second common factor affecting readiness to negotiate in status quo/pro-change conflicts is that the failure of coercive efforts to achieve change and the restoration of the defended status quo does not encourage a perception that some stalemate (hurting or not) exists. Rather, the feeling on the part of the status quo party is one of restoration. A proper and justifiable situation has been restored to what it rightfully should be. There is



hardly any feeling that the conflict has returned to a situation of stalemate, or indeed that a legitimate conflict exists, apart from the unreasonable demands of the other. Once again, this perception militates strongly against suggestions that dialogue is necessary, especially with recent military aggressors; against any arguments that there is a need to explore options, when the only acceptable option is the restored status quo; or against the very idea that there is anything to discuss. The whole stance of a status quo party is against any change in any form at any stage of the conflict. It is especially so following a failed coercive attempt by the adversary, when indignation mixes with rational policy making to create barriers in the path of anyone seeking to make a contribution to some resolution process.

Once again, this factor may help to explain the lack of effects from the Maryland meetings. While Argentine decision makers representing the pro-change party were more than willing to take up opportunities for talks and discussions that suggested even the possibility of a move away from continuing British rule in the Islands, the status quo British saw no reason even to contemplate such possibilities or to indulge in any processes that might hint at dissatisfaction with existing arrangements. Faced with such an asymmetry, the convenors of the Maryland workshops had two main tasks. First, they had to convince British decision makers that the meetings neither presented a threat to British goals and interests, nor were simply a way of furthering Argentine objectives, frustrated at such cost. Second, they had to suggest that they could make a contribution to a genuinely satisfactory, long-term solution to a situation that was likely to present major problems in the near future.

## **Asymmetry of Representation and Access**

Unfortunately, the way in which the Maryland initiative was started and then continued made it unlikely that a convincing case of this nature could be made to British decision makers. It was in this regard that a third asymmetry worked against the meetings having any major effect on Anglo-Argentine relations. The previous review of the "classical" model of problem solving focused on a variety of necessary conditions for "success," among which was the need for workshop participants to have access and influence upon key decision makers, even if the participants themselves were neither

political leaders nor high level officials. The essential concept underlying this guideline was that workshop participants should feel free enough to speculate, think creatively, and engage in the non-committing exploration of possible future options, and yet be close enough to and trusted enough by formal decision makers to be able to bring back creative ideas and suggestions. To be effective, it is argued, participants need credibility within their own party and the trust of elite decision makers. If this is lacking, then any effects of a workshop would need to be aimed at opinion leaders and attentive publics, and should, moreover, be regarded as longer term, preparatory inputs to a future resolution process—as in one of Foltz's *process promoting workshops*. However, the classical model has yet to make any clear suggestions about the likely effects upon the success of a problem solving workshop in which the participants from one party are, indeed, the very representatives outlined in the model (unofficial and informal but with good access and high credibility within their own party), while the participants from their adversary (while being well able to present their side's view of the conflict and to engage debate, discussion and then creative thinking) have very little direct access to key decision makers and less than optimal initial credibility. Access and credibility may be further diminished through attending the workshop and thereby "consorting with the enemy." The problem can be summarized as an *asymmetry of access* in which one group of participants has direct access to national decision making centers, while the other is peripheral and may become even more marginalized as a result of participation in the problem solving process.

This was precisely the problem faced in the Maryland workshops. From the start it was extremely difficult to persuade British participants with good access to top British decision making circles to attend Maryland I. A number of individuals with credibility and good access to elites within the government and the ruling Tory party were approached but declined invitations to participate. It rapidly became clear that the upper echelons of the British Government had set their faces firmly against even the most informal contacts with the erstwhile invaders of British territory in the South Atlantic. In the event, the British team assembled for Maryland I involved Members of Parliament who were part of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee which had been about to produce a critical report of pre-1982 British policy on the Falklands-Malvinas issue, when it had been dissolved

on the calling of the 1983 General Election. Other members of the British "team" were academics with some expertise in Latin American and South Atlantic affairs. This group continued to form the core of the British team that participated in later Maryland meetings.

By contrast, the initial group of Argentine participants included a former Ambassador to Washington and to the UN, and a close advisor of Raul Alfonsín, the leader of the Radical Party in Argentina and the man then held to be most likely to take over the Presidency once the elections to replace the military junta had taken place. (Alfonsín did, indeed, become Argentine President in December 1983.) In subsequent workshops, Argentine participants included the Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, as well as influential members of the opposition Partido Justicial.

This contrast is not to denigrate the British participants, later joined by a representative of the Islanders in order to prevent the discussions being too London-centric. Throughout the three workshops they proved well able to articulate the spectrum of British views and interests, to be realistic about what limits existed for British policy, and to be clear about which ideas and innovative suggestions might be feasible and which were simply wishful thinking. They were not simply a collection of British "doves," even though efforts were made to portray them as such in their own country and, particularly, on the Falkland Islands.

On the other hand, while Argentine participants were undoubtedly able to convey new ideas and options directly to top decision makers in Buenos Aires and to have these ideas treated seriously—at least as being within the realms of possibility—this was seldom the case with British participants. New ideas, insights and suggestions were greeted with skepticism and occasionally with outright hostility in national decision making circles (although some within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office took a longer view, probably because they knew they would have to deal seriously with both the issues and the Argentineans again in the future). While ideas and even words and phrases from Maryland discussions would sometime turn up in Argentine Presidential statements, in press briefings, and National Assembly debates, similar indications of effectiveness were lacking in Britain, apart from occasional comments from members of the Labour Party.

## **Implications for Problem Solving Strategies**

On reflection, I note I have fallen victim to a regrettable tendency throughout this present paper to treat the three Maryland CAPS workshops as though they were "failures" rather than "successes," and this is undoubtedly an inaccurate over-simplification. A large number of long-term contributions to peace building and conflict resolution did emerge from the series of meetings and their aftermath, even though the issue of the future of the Islands and the Islanders remains in dispute between Britain and Argentina.

Moreover, the workshops contributed a number of insights, about the nature of problem solving approaches to protracted inter-state conflicts, and suggested tentative lessons to be kept in mind by those conducting such exercises in future. The fact that such conceptual and practical issues can now be considered and our theoretical understanding of problem solving approaches advanced is yet another contribution from the three Maryland workshops on the Falklands-Malvinas. It also represents a debt the field of conflict analysis and resolution owes to those who convened the workshops and those who attended them and tried to use the ideas generated there to start a long-term conflict resolution process that might yet contribute to avoiding a repetition of the violence that took place in the South Atlantic for three long months in 1982.

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## Notes

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1. See Edward E. Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Co., 1990); Edward E. Azar and John W. Burton, *International Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1986); Walter Little and Christopher Mitchell, eds., *In the Aftermath: Anglo Argentine Relations Since the Falklands-Malvinas War* (College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 1989).
2. "Track 2" processes refer to intermediary initiatives undertaken informally by unofficial third parties—in contrast to official, government level "Track 1" activities.
3. For some views on the ripeness issue, see I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Stephen J. Stedman, *Peacemaking in Civil War: International Mediation in Zimbabwe, 1974-1980* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991); and Christopher Mitchell, "Cutting Losses: Reflections on Appropriate Timing," (Fairfax, VA: Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Working Paper No. 9, 1996).
4. See John W. Burton, *Conflict and Communication* (London: Macmillan, 1969); Herbert C. Kelman, "The Problem-Solving Workshop in Conflict Resolution," in R. L. Merritt, ed. *Communication in International Politics* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1972); and Christopher R. Mitchell, *Peacemaking and the Consultant's Role* (Aldershot: Gower Press, 1981).
5. See William J. Foltz, "The Conflict Resolving and the Process Promoting Workshop," in Maureen Berman and Joseph E. Johnson, eds., *Unofficial Diplomats* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).
6. In the event, an informal delegation of three British parliamentarians did visit Buenos Aires in June 1984, while a similar delegation from Buenos Aires visited London in 1985.

7. Bruce M. P. George and Walter Little, "Options in the Falklands-Malvinas Dispute" (London: South Atlantic Council Occasional Paper No. 1, 1985).
8. I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
9. There are those who would argue that Mrs. Thatcher's retention of political office as a result of the "Falklands Factor" was, indeed, a major domestic catastrophe for Britain.
10. If one regards the Islanders as a core party to this dispute, the war had simply reinforced the almost complete absence of communications between Port Stanley and Buenos Aires, although it had intensified interaction between Port Stanley and London.
11. Edward E. Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict*, pp. 55-56. This example suggests that one important function of problem solving workshops might well be the informal discussion of an agreed formula for a future settlement. If much of official level negotiations consists of two stages—the search for an agreed formula and then bargaining about its detailed application (see I. William Zartman and Berman Maureen, *The Practical Negotiator* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982])—then the structure and procedure of CAPS workshops appear to make them ideal for enabling participants from the even the most hostile parties to explore and try out various formulae on which a detailed solution might be based.
12. Ronald J. Fisher and Loreleigh Keashly, "The Potential Complementarity of Mediation and Consultation Within a Contingency Model of Third Party Consultation," *Journal of Peace Research* 28:1 (1991): 29-42.
13. Christopher R. Mitchell, "Problem Solving Exercises and Theories of Conflict Resolution," in Dennis J.D. Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe, eds., *Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).



14. The actual achievements of any particular CAPS exercise will depend upon the conditions existing at the time of the exercise, or the "stage" of the conflict. The analytical question thus becomes one of what appropriate contributions from a CAPS initiative can reasonably be expected under the existing circumstances. Once this question can be answered, reasonable goals can be set for the exercise and evaluations made about "success."
15. It might well be argued that the period from 1965 to 1981 was certainly one characterized by an increasing stalemate, although it was not one involving very high costs for either government, and hence could not really be characterized as "hurting."
16. However, even the completely defeated seldom are without some negotiating power, even if this is only a matter of nuisance value and the use of residual leverage to extract concessions from a successful adversary. See, for example, the discussion of this factor in Paul Kecskemeti, *Strategic Surrender: The Politics of Victory and Defeat* (New York: Athenium Press, 1964) and Christopher R. Mitchell, *Peacemaking and the Consultant's Role* (Aldershot: Gower Press, 1981).
17. Argentine long-term devotion to the goal of recovering the Islands emphasizes the existence of yet another crucial form of imbalance in protracted conflicts and this is an *asymmetry of salience* for parties. Clearly the issue of the Falkland Islands was not one of top priority for British foreign policy makers or the general public in Britain. Equally clearly, it was one of the major political issues for Argentine leaders and for Argentine publics. Conventional wisdom argues that such an imbalance of interest or salience, where issues of central concern to one party are relatively peripheral for another, should render the final resolution of their differences a relatively simple matter. This was not the case in the Falklands/Malvinas dispute and this does raise questions about the ease with which such conflicts can be resolved, and what factors other than the asymmetry itself, influence the search for solutions.

18. If there is no readiness on the part of anyone to start real as opposed to sham negotiations then efforts to start a resolution process are unlikely to get far. A different but equally unpromising situation exists where one party is ready to consider discussions while the other remains intransigent—which was the case following the South Atlantic War.
19. To most Argentines, the issue over the Islands involves their *restoration* to Argentine sovereign rule, from which they were illegally removed in 1833 by British imperial expansion.
20. See John W. Burton, *Peace Theory: Preconditions for Disarmament* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1962).
21. Ibid.
22. A reasonable hunch—that might be turned into a testable hypothesis—is that status quo parties have a stronger tendency to see conflicts as zero sum than do pro-change parties.

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