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***International experience with
citizen involvement in conflict resolution
may help solve national unity crisis,
suggest political scientists***

Canadians should apply other countries' experience with conflict resolution to solving the national unity crisis, concludes a *C.D. Howe Institute Commentary* released today. In particular, the authors of the study say, new approaches need to be found for resolving two of the most urgent and contentious current issues: the postreferendum escalation of linguistic tensions in Montreal, and the deep differences about the appropriate rules that should govern any new referendum in Quebec. In both cases, the authors argue, the stakes are high, all parties have a strong interest in finding a resolution, and existing processes are unable to do so.

The study, *Citizen Engagement in Conflict Resolution: Lessons for Canada in International Experience*, was written by University of Toronto political scientists Janice Gross Stein, David R. Cameron, and Richard Simeon, with Alan Alexandroff.

The authors note that the crisis of Canadian unity is rooted fundamentally in a conflict of identities. Such conflicts have occurred in many countries throughout the world and are especially difficult to resolve because they engage deep-seated questions of identity, recognition, respect, and representation, and because they are expressed in highly symbolic, zero-sum language.

In order to address their own conflicts of identity, the authors say, Canadians can learn from the experience of other countries that have developed unofficial processes of interactive conflict resolution. These approaches consist of deeper, more sustained citizen engagement in interactive conflict resolution at two levels: the involvement of influential leading citizens outside formal politics, but with close links both to the political leadership and to the wider society; and the engagement of "ordinary citizens" as individuals and through voluntary associations.

The authors note that Canadians have debated their country's future in a wide variety of public forums over the past decade. But such forums have failed to provide a full opportunity for effective, sustained deliberation because they have been *ad hoc*, sporadic, bound by tight deadlines, and government sponsored. An approach with greater chances of success, the authors argue, is one that would involve influential citizens and community leaders, on the

one hand, and ordinary citizens as individuals and in their community associations, on the other.

Influential citizens are those with strong roots and respect in the community, together with access to the political leadership. Through workshops and dialogues, they can analyze the sources of the conflict and the obstacles to its resolution, build confidence and trust, devise possible solutions outside the existing envelope, and communicate them both to political leaders and to the wider society. Other citizens, by participating in initiatives within their communities and associations, can seek to come to mutual understandings, to encourage citizen “ownership” of the issues, and to increase awareness of the compromises and tradeoffs that must be made.

The authors maintain that successful conflict resolution at either level requires high-quality, balanced information, the presence of nonpartisan facilitators, an open agenda, opportunities for sustained dialogue, and deliberative processes that are inclusive, fair, respectful, and not biased toward any particular outcome. They also require linkages that allow their results to be communicated to the political leadership and the wider society. The goal, the authors say, is not any particular outcome, but rather a process that will maximize the likelihood of peaceful resolution.

This publication continues the C.D. Howe Institute’s postreferendum research agenda, which comprises two *Commentary* series. The first series, “The Canadian Union Papers,” focuses on ways to enhance Canada’s political, economic, and social union. Papers already published in the series have examined some of Ottawa’s legal and constitutional options for strengthening the economic union, ways to enhance Canadians’ common economic citizenship rights, and a critique of decentralization and the incremental approach to constitutional reform.

Complementing this effort is another *Commentary* series called “The Secession Papers,” which examines issues relating to the following areas:

- the terms and conditions of a possible future referendum on Quebec sovereignty;
- the circumstances which the country might confront after a Yes vote, together with the processes by which the secession of Quebec might be addressed;
- the means by which a new Canada without Quebec might be established, should Quebec leave Confederation.

The papers are guided by the following principles: respect for democratic norms and the rule of law; the necessity for an authoritative decision and a stable outcome; and minimizing the social and economic costs of any transition. In the light of the results of the 1995 referendum in Quebec, “The Secession Papers” aim to assist Canadians to “think about the unthinkable.”

Both series are being published under the supervision of David Cameron, a political scientist at the University of Toronto.

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Citizen Engagement in Conflict Resolution: Lessons for Canada in International Experience

by

*Janice Gross Stein,
David R. Cameron, and Richard Simeon
with Alan Alexandroff*

Canadians are engaged in a conflict of identities that, if unsettled, will have enormously adverse consequences for the well-being of all. Successive attempts to resolve the national unity crisis have only deepened it. It is time to explore new approaches — drawing on the experience of other countries that have faced similar divisions.

The key techniques from which we can learn involve deeper, more sustained citizen engagement in interactive conflict resolution at two levels. First is the involvement of influential leading citizens outside formal politics, but with close links both to the political leadership and to the wider society. Using carefully prepared workshops, they could explore the dimensions of the conflict, the consequences of failure, and a range of outcomes outside the existing “envelope,” and then inject the resulting ideas

into the public and political process. The second level is the engagement of “ordinary citizens” as individuals and through voluntary associations, in processes designed to increase mutual understanding, encourage citizen “ownership” of the issues, and increase awareness of the compromises and tradeoffs that must be made.

In both cases, reconciliation can be encouraged by independent facilitation, high levels of information, and open, fair, and nonthreatening procedures. The goal is not any particular outcome, but rather a process that will maximize the likelihood of peaceful resolution. The debates over the future of Montreal and over the appropriate rules to govern any future sovereignty referendum are dimensions of the conflict where the need for resolution is urgent, and where the techniques described may offer a way out of the impasse.

Main Findings of the Commentary

- The crisis of Canadian unity is rooted fundamentally in a conflict of identities. Such conflicts have occurred in many countries throughout the world.
- These conflicts are especially difficult to resolve because they engage deep-seated questions of identity, recognition, respect, and representation, and because they are expressed in highly symbolic, zero-sum language.
- In order to address their own conflicts of identity, Canadians can learn from the experience of other countries that have developed unofficial processes of inter-active conflict resolution that bring the contending parties together to increase mutual understanding, underline common and competing interests, assess the costs of continuing the conflict, build mutual trust, and explore the possibilities for agreement.
- These examples suggest a model that has a high potential for improving the quality of the Canadian debate and, in particular, for resolving two of the most urgent and contentious current issues: the postreferendum escalation of linguistic tensions in Montreal, and the deep differences about the appropriate rules that should govern any new referendum in Quebec.
- In both cases, the stakes are high, all parties have a strong interest in finding a resolution, and existing processes are unable to do so.
- Interactive conflict resolution assigns a key role to *citizens* and to relationships within *civil society*, but they are not designed to displace the formal political process; rather, they open a broader public space within which solutions may be found and political leadership exercised.
- Canadians have debated their country's future in a wide variety of public forums over the past decade. But such forums have failed to provide a full opportunity for effective, sustained deliberation because they have been ad hoc, sporadic, bound by tight deadlines, and government sponsored.
- Successful citizen engagement takes two related forms: processes involving influential citizens and community leaders, and those involving ordinary citizens as individuals and in their community associations.
- Influential citizens are those with strong roots and respect in the community, together with access to the political leadership. Through workshops and dialogues, they can analyze the sources of the conflict and the obstacles to its resolution, build confidence and trust, devise possible solutions outside the existing envelope, and communicate them both to political leaders and to the wider society.
- Other citizens engage through deliberative polling and through interaction in the networks and associations of civil society in order to come to mutual understandings, to encourage citizen "ownership" of the issues, and to increase awareness of the compromises and tradeoffs that must be made.
- Successful conflict resolution at either level requires high-quality information, the presence of nonpartisan facilitators, an open agenda, opportunities for sustained dialogue, and deliberative processes that are inclusive, fair, respectful, and not biased toward any particular outcome. They also require linkages that allow their results to be communicated to the political leadership and the wider society.

A century and a half ago, Lord Durham wrote of British North America, “I expected to find a contest between a government and a people; I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state.” What he was reporting was, to use a modern phrase, an identity conflict between French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians.

This conflict, an enduring feature of Canadian history, has become particularly acute in the constitutional debates and referendums of the past two decades. Fundamental issues of identity are at the heart of the conflict. The hard-fought 1995 referendum campaign highlighted the deeply embedded conflict over identity, which now expresses itself in several ways.

Francophone and anglophone Canadians are at loggerheads over the status of their respective communities and whether a fuller representation of one will compromise the recognition of the other. Among themselves, Quebecers are deeply divided between those who seek a sovereign future in some form of partnership with Canada and those who want new federal arrangements *within* Canada. In the rest of the country, many Canadians are alarmed at the possible division of their federation, uncertain about the consequences of that prospect, and frustrated that they seem to have no direct voice on an issue of such overwhelming importance. They feel powerless to determine their own future.

The Canadian dilemma is distinctive but not unique. Serious ethnic and national conflicts threaten the fabric of many pluralistic societies and their peaceful relations with other states. In this Commentary, we examine attempts internationally to resolve some of these situations and ask what Canadians may learn from them.

Canada’s identity crisis is clearly of a lesser order of intensity than many that currently capture global attention. Canadians have generally conducted the debate within the framework of respect for democratic norms and due process; they have known only very limited violence. Yet Canada has some important features in common with societies that have suf-

fered bitterly from conflict over identity. In many of these states, citizens have participated in unofficial processes of conflict resolution, processes in which different identities and competing interests have been accommodated and the conflict then routinized through political institutions.

This international experience can speak to Canadians across the country if it is adapted to and rooted properly in the Canadian context. In particular, we have identified two important Canadian issues where the international experiences we discuss seem particularly applicable. The first is the future of Montreal, whose residents have become increasingly polarized since the 1995 referendum. That polarization obscures their shared interests. We suggest a way in which Montrealers — “ordinary” citizens, civic leaders, and politicians — might build stronger links across the language divide.

The second pressing issue concerns the rules that will govern any future Quebec referendum. We suggest a way in which leading nongovernmental actors, sovereignists and federalists, might develop a process to reach an agreement on those rules, which would be accepted as fair by all sides, and a set of principles to guide postreferendum conduct, faithful to the commitment of all Canadians to democratic values. Such an agreement could prove of real significance in helping to reduce the conflict and uncertainty that will otherwise prevail.

We do not argue that citizens can become decisionmakers and directly fashion solutions. We do argue that official processes are often not the best place to begin to address issues of identity. A more productive approach is to start with unofficial processes of interactive conflict resolution in which citizens can explore their identities and values, learn about the identities and values of others, and assume responsibility for opening common political space in which leaders can craft solutions that are responsive to better informed public judgment. In a polarized political context, where discussion across the fault lines of conflict can be politically risky, citizen engagement can help to create that political space.

The situation is urgent. We believe the process of unofficial but structured citizen engagement must begin now, starting with Montreal and with discussion of the rules for future referendums.

Outline of the *Commentary*

This *Commentary* is not for impatient readers. We are drawing on experiences and recommending processes that may be unfamiliar to many. We start therefore with a discussion of identity conflict: what it is, why it is generically so difficult to resolve, and why it has deepened in Canada. We also assess the value of complementing official negotiations with citizen engagement and distinguish among different types of citizen engagement in interactive conflict resolution.

In the next section, we examine and evaluate Canada's experience in citizen consultation. Despite some excellent attempts, none has truly been engagement in interactive conflict resolution.

The third and fourth sections outline the processes of interactive conflict resolution, with examples drawn from international experience. We first examine the role of groups of people political scientists call influential citizens — individuals who hold no official positions but are well connected within their own communities and to political leaders. We then turn to the engagement of “ordinary” citizens through community-based groups or functional associations.

In the last two sections, we examine ways in which an interactive process could be used to address the Canadian crisis, focusing particularly on Montreal and on a process that could help to create agreed-on rules for a future referendum.

Identity Conflict

Our argument rests on the thesis that fundamental issues of identity are at the heart of the Canadian crisis. Thus, we begin by exploring the nature of identity conflict, the difficulty of

resolving it, and some of the reasons it has become so intense in present-day Canada. Only then can we consider the roles citizen engagement might play in resolution.

Identity is the concept that individuals have of themselves and of the way in which they are (or wish to be) known by others; it is a conception both of oneself and of one's relationship to others. Individuals usually hold multiple identities and activate one or another in different situations.

Some of these identities are connected to larger collective identities. Social psychologists suggest that people satisfy their need for positive self-identity, status, or reduction of uncertainty by identifying with a group or collectivity.¹

Traditionally, collective identities have been regarded as the product of primordial attachments to language, ethnicity, common histories, and shared practices and myths.² Increasingly, however, analysts recognize that collective identities are not given. They can be chosen freely, imposed by others who have authority and resources, or socially constructed through interaction with others.³

Attachment to collective identities also varies in intensity over time and circumstance. Conflicts of identity escalate when group members consider that recognition of another group's identity can compromise their own, or when they perceive the granting of rights to the other as a challenge to their own identity.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, has been an acute identity conflict. Because both identities are tied to the same territory, leaders on both sides have long felt that acknowledgment of the other's identity would fundamentally compromise their own.⁴ Similarly, many Canadians outside Quebec fear that recognition of that province as a “distinct society” would compromise their identity; they equate distinctiveness with superiority and special treatment.

In many identity conflicts, divisions within communities exacerbate divisions between communities. Even when leaders begin to grow interested in negotiation, groups that fear the

consequences of an agreement may constrain the process in at least two important ways.

First, negotiators may shape their proposals to satisfy the demands of the most vocal and militant within their own societies, the people who are most deeply skeptical of the agreement but are nevertheless essential to ratification.⁵ Second, leaders' awareness of these divisions may inhibit anything but an uneasy coalition among those members of each society who are willing to join in a collaborative process of problem solving.⁶

The Difficulty of Resolution

Conflict that focuses primarily on identity, rather than on the distribution or redistribution of material goods, appears to be especially difficult to manage and resolve. Why?

Identity conflicts engage deeply felt images of the self within a community and in the larger political world. They often embody issues of recognition and respect, along with the fear of denial and exclusion. The sense of threat from competing identities may be especially acute. Often, it may seem that there is little room for differences to co-exist within the same political space, and the parties may find it difficult to understand that acknowledging the identity of others need be no threat to one's own. For all these reasons, identity conflicts tend to be expressed in zero-sum language and in the emotive discourse of powerful symbols. Such debates are not nearly as amenable to trade-offs, compromises, and the kinds of splitting the difference that are characteristic of the resolution of conflicts over the distribution of material goods.⁷

Political conflict over identity can become particularly acute during periods of social, economic, or political transition, when leaders create or reinterpret histories and traditions for partisan political purposes and people seek refuge from the threat and insecurity of change in the affirmation of traditional identities and values.⁸

Finally, conflicts over identity translate quickly into conflicts over representation and

hence engage fundamental political institutions and processes in ways quite different from conflicts over material issues. Domestic conflicts over representation frequently lead to constitutional questions. This can make them particularly difficult to resolve because adoption of a constitutional amendment is technically complex and requires a higher-than-usual level of public approval.

In brief, the acute sense of threat people feel when they fear their identities are in jeopardy, the inadequacy of the usual distributive practices to meet these concerns, and the added overlay of complex processes of constitutional change all make identity conflicts particularly intractable.

The Current Dilemma

The Canadian identity conflict has deepened over the past two or three decades, during which, paradoxically, Quebec and the rest of the country have grown more alike in attitudes, values, social preferences, and economic aspirations. Where the two have grown apart is in their individual and collective sense of self.

Francophone Quebecers have always had a strong sense of their collective identity as a distinctive people in Canada and North America, an identity they once expressed largely in religious and cultural terms. With modernization and secularization, they have increasingly expressed that identity in political terms, reflecting their desire to become *maîtres chez nous*. Hence the demand for constitutional recognition as a distinct society.

This construction of identity has diverged more and more from that of other Canadians. Indeed, the fuel that fires the current identity conflict is the perception on the part of growing numbers of Quebecers that their identity is ignored or denied by other Canadians.

Fanning the flames in the rest of Canada are two senses of identity that also flow from processes of modernization and secularization. The first, expressed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, is that all individuals, wherever

they live in Canada, are equal. Therefore, some people perceive constitutional acknowledgment of the distinctiveness of any particular community as dangerous and illegitimate.

Second (and partly in response to the convergence of Quebecers' identity with their provincial government) is the growing sense that what matters for political purposes is not individuals acting on their own or within language collectivities, but provinces, all of which are distinct in their special ways.⁹ It follows that all provinces, like individuals, must be equal in the Constitution. This provincialization of identity has moved in tandem with the shrinking federal state of the past several years.

In short, all across Canada, modernization and secularization have changed and sharpened the long-standing identity conflict. They have placed new emphasis on political and legal expressions of identity, elevated the importance of provincial governments as focal points of attachment, and shifted the contest to constitutional debate.

Citizen Engagement

Particularly in deeply embedded ethnic and national conflicts where issues of identity are at the core, constitutional compacts and political agreements are at risk, and their legitimacy challenged.

Until very recently, constitutionmaking and reform in Canada have been the preserve of political elites, but these rules no longer hold. Two broad trends shape the current political context, in Canada as in many other developed democracies. First is the decline of deference and a distrust of politicians, politics, and the political process.¹⁰ Second and closely related is the demand for greater citizen participation in the making of decisions that have important consequences.

In Canada, the rebellion against elites was sharply demonstrated by the mobilization of many citizens against the Meech Lake Accord and by the rejection of the Charlottetown Agreement in 1992. With this change in culture has come change in the institutional rules. The

experience of two referendums in Quebec and the national referendum on the Charlottetown Agreement, as well as legislation now in place in several provinces requiring formal citizen approval of constitutional change, all demonstrate unambiguously that no major constitutional change will occur in the future without public ratification. The imperative of engaging civil society is abundantly clear.

Two Perspectives

Analysts have two competing views of the appropriate relationship between citizens and elites in deeply divided societies. The first is that conflict in segmented societies can be managed only by elites who are committed to the system and understand the kind of compromises that must be made.¹¹ When citizens are directly involved in working out intercommunal relations, this argument suggests, they make conflict resolution more difficult because they work from a narrow and parochial perspective. Their engagement is neither neutral nor beneficial; it can be noxious in its effects as it overloads the agenda for political change or reveals and confirms the deep fissures that divide the country. It is only elites who can accommodate.

The second argument advances the reverse proposition. Conflict is exacerbated, if not created, by elites who seek to manipulate identity in order to advance their own interests and institutional positions. This approach suggests that, if citizens were given primary responsibility, they could find a solution. Particularly in the aftermath of the referendum in Quebec, many citizens in the rest of the country are angry at how badly their leaders underestimated the crisis. "Part of our problem," argues Marian Laberge of People to People Search for Canada, "is we've expected our politicians to save the country. We need to take back our responsibility as citizens."¹² (It is this kind of reasoning that has led to calls for a constituent assembly that would supplant elected political leaders in any process of constitutional renewal.)

We do not accept either argument. The kinds of consociational bargains the first model

requires are possible only in hierarchically organized societies where elites from different communities control their own constituencies and where those communities have few cross-cutting ties. Yet we argue that citizen engagement cannot replace official processes and political leaders. Accommodation among elites is inevitably an essential part of the resolution and routinization of the conflict, but it is not enough.

Yet, international experience in conflict resolution challenges the proposition that public involvement in identity conflict makes it more difficult to manage by overloading the system. Rather, it suggests that the right kind of citizen engagement, at the individual and community levels, and through associational networks, can make important contributions.

Focus

Citizen engagement has a wide focus and a broad agenda. It examines the fundamental issues of identity, values, and needs, which are often outside the scope of formal negotiations.¹³

Fears of threats to identity, values, and needs go to the heart of ethnic and national conflict. In Canada, the repeated failure in constitutional negotiations to find the proper language to describe the uniqueness of Quebecers' identity within the larger whole and the emotional quality of the debate testify to the limits of official processes.

Functions

Citizen engagement in conflict resolution, when conceived as a complement to official processes, can serve a variety of useful functions.¹⁴

It can help to build social trust by leading people to become better informed about identities and values — their own and others' — and about the common space in which they can coexist. Thus, the context of negotiation changes.

Citizen engagement can also help to develop solutions when official negotiations are recessed or stalemated, and a new phase requires novel ideas and innovative formulations.

Finally, it can increase the chances of public acceptance by creating a sense of citizen ownership of official agreements, building support for new relationships, and mobilizing the public resources necessary to ratify and implement the officially sanctioned solutions.

Citizen engagement in a process of conflict resolution is especially important when

- the conflict is protracted, and long-standing stalemate has hardened positions at the official table;
- communication is difficult or distorted across political boundaries;
- the costs of the stalemate are growing and apparent to the parties;
- frustration with official processes is high; and
- the parties feel that a problem is too dangerous to ignore but formal approaches may not succeed.¹⁵

At first glance, Canada may not seem an appropriate case for citizen engagement. It has not experienced the kind of violence and civil disorder that focus citizens' attention on the costs of conflict. It has rich and deep democratic traditions and processes, communication among political elites and publics is regular and open, and an active media help to inform public debate.

In brief, the kinds of obstacles to communication that exist in many societies experiencing intense identity conflict do not exist in Canada. Yet a deeper look suggests that many of the conditions we have identified are currently present.

Official positions have hardened, intermediate or compromise options are less and less frequently discussed in public debate, and leaders at many levels of government shy away from the negotiating table because of the political costs of failure. Although established channels of communication exist, contact across the fault lines of conflict is limited, and messages at variance with prevailing political symbolism often have difficulty penetrating political screens.

It is not clear whether Canadians across the country appreciate that the ongoing conflict is already inflicting real and unacceptable costs. Expert analyses underline the economic and political consequences of the ongoing conflict, but these costs are not visible and therefore difficult to appreciate. The shock of the narrow federalist victory in the referendum vote in Quebec brought home to many Canadians the precariousness of the future of their country, but its impact has quickly dissipated. Yet they are frustrated with official processes and exhibit little confidence that one more round of official negotiation will succeed in resolving the conflict.

The stalemate among governments, the absence of any promising new approaches that might break the impasse, and the frustration and anxiety of many Canadians create a favorable climate for citizen engagement. The decline of deference to elites and the new rules for popular ratification of change make it essential.

Forms of Citizen Engagement

Citizen engagement can operate at two levels. The first is the participation of citizens, either as individuals or as members of groups, in the political process linking the populace and its political leaders. In developed democracies, there are many ways in which citizens can become involved in public debate and inject their preferences and values into the political process.

The second level is the engagement of citizens with each other, in the multiple associations that constitute *civil society* — the relatively autonomous domains of social, economic, and religious life that exist in the space between citizens as individuals and mediate between them and their governing institutions.¹⁶

The two levels are related, and citizen involvement in both are important to an effective process of conflict resolution.

In addition, we can think of different kinds of citizens, playing different roles: citizens as leading members of the community; citizens as members of associations and networks; and

citizens as voters. Our focus is on the first two, deeper, forms of engaging citizens beyond the ballot box.

Leaders

Leadership approaches center on the people political scientists call influential citizens, a phrase we have already defined as referring to individuals who enjoy the confidence of the political leadership but themselves hold no official position. They are free, therefore, to engage in relatively unconstrained open-ended discussion and exploration of ideas and to communicate these ideas to the political leadership.

Since they are not constrained by partisan commitments and the need to seek election, such leaders are likely to be much freer than office holders to explore new ideas and alternatives, and to think “outside the envelope.” But at the same time, their stature in the community means that political leaders will, at the very least, pay attention to their views. Thus, influential citizens, from both sides of the divide, may be able to develop accommodations that are beyond the reach of politicians. Once such ideas are articulated, however, politicians may find it expedient to embrace them.

Such citizens are also opinion leaders. They can, therefore, help to shape attitudes and preferences in the wider public. Often, they may be more trusted in this role than political leaders.

Communities, Associations, and Networks

The involvement of citizens through communities and associations differs somewhat from leadership-based processes. At the community level, members participate in public dialogues and confront the conflict between their preferences and those of others. This will help to create the space political leaders need to seek solutions to conflict.

A particularly important dimension of associational life focuses on groups and net-

works that bridge linguistic, cultural, or ethnic divides and permit face-to-face engagement. In Canada, language and distance unfortunately make such linkages rare and difficult to sustain. Facilitating networks that do cross the fault lines is therefore of critical importance if there is to be an effective process of conflict management.

We believe that associations sharing common functional interests — whether social, religious, professional, business, or cultural — are particularly fruitful arenas for dialogue. The shared interests create a common base of trust, from which members may build understanding on the deeper questions of identity.

This kind of citizen engagement is especially important when pessimism about official processes is high and deference to established leaders is declining, as it is in Canada.

Stages of Conflict Resolution

These different types of citizen engagement are not alternatives to each other (or, we repeat, to an official negotiation process). It is therefore useful to ask at what stages in the policy process different kinds of citizen engagement are likely to be most effective.

At the first broad stage of deliberation, the prenegotiation stage, dialogue among citizens and with government is essential because it sets the context, the parameters, and constraints within which the negotiators will operate. Indeed, this stage is the most important, the one when it is easiest to engage in a wide-ranging exploration of a range of identities and values, since positions have not yet ossified.

Voluntary associations and communities that engage with each other before negotiations begin can multiply their effectiveness by informing one another's processes and shaping the broader context of public preferences that create space for official activity. Influential citizens also are most effective if they begin their work before official processes are under way, when they are freest to explore ideas, to reformulate problems, and to consider a wide

set of options. Their work can benefit from that of voluntary associations and communities.

The second stage is the negotiation itself. Negotiators usually work behind closed doors, but it is still possible and desirable for influential citizens to assist and support official processes, especially should they become deadlocked.

Citizens, too, can be engaged. The new South African constitution, for example, went through five drafts, each of which was presented to citizens in several languages, replete with the omissions, contradictions, unresolved questions, alternative formulations, and text in square brackets. At each iteration, a widely distributed and easy-to-read tabloid newspaper, *Constitutional Talk*, summarized the areas of agreement and disagreement, sketched the alternative viewpoints in each area, and invited citizens to suggest which option should be chosen. In effect, citizens were brought into the negotiating forum, even though the politicians led the process.

Finally, at the ratification stage, citizen participation is paramount: the negotiators must present their results for democratic approval and implementation. Communities and associations that have been involved early in the process are more likely to build support for ratification and implementation. Influential citizens can assist by informing the public debate. If the first two stages have been well done, citizens will be ratifying “their” decisions.

Citizen Consultation in Canada

Canadian citizens have a long history of involvement in efforts to address the country's protracted identity conflict. Yet none seems to have worked. In this section, we consider the problems (as well as the achievements) of some of the most recent experience and begin to suggest another approach that might yield better results.

The Record

As a mature democracy and long-established federation, Canada offers its citizens multiple opportunities and a range of established democratic processes for public participation (see Box 1).

The lengthy list of experiments in consulting citizens about the future of their country bears witness to the commitment and concern Canadians share. Yet the crisis has worsened. Why?

As already suggested, deference has declined in Canada, elites can no longer “deliver” their constituencies, and evolving constitutional practices and public expectations now require direct citizen approval of constitutional change, certainly for large packages of changes that affect citizenship and identity. Clearly, although political leaders retain a crucial role, a secret accommodation among political elites, without public participation, is no longer politically acceptable. Today, Canadians across the country are determined to have a voice in shaping their political future.

The critical task is the linking of the right kind of citizen processes to official processes under appropriate conditions and with appropriate goals. The efficacy of public participation depends on the purposes it seeks to achieve, the kinds of processes that are used, and the sequencing in a broader process of political discussion and negotiation. When citizens participate principally as advocates for their own interests and do not search for common political space, their participation can indeed overload the agenda.¹⁷

In other words, what matters is not whether citizens are engaged but how. Canadians have done a lot of “citizen work” in recent years, but much of it has not been of the right kind. Better conceived processes and sharply defined goals would yield significant benefits.

Many of the processes of citizen consultation identified in Box 1 were sporadic, partial, and, at times, confrontational. Participants had little opportunity to engage over time, to draw on what they had learned from others, and to reconsider their preferences. The proc-

esses were largely static, rather than dynamic. Most did not invite, still less require, citizens to take responsibility for their views, to explain their importance, or to adjust them in the light of evidence and information offered by the other participants. Participants were not given the opportunity to consider systematically the consequences of failing to agree. There were many opportunities to advocate preferred options, but there were remarkably few occasions to deliberate. There were few inhibitions against the expression of self-interest and very few incentives to seek common interest and accommodation.

Most of these processes were organized by one or more levels of government. Few resulted from citizen initiatives, rooted in a concomitant sense of responsibility and ownership of the issue. Most involved discussion of substantive policy alternatives and reaction to an already-formed menu of proposals; there was much less emphasis on the prior issues of the identities, values, and needs that supported or challenged these policy alternatives and proposals.

In brief, Canadians had little opportunity to engage in a cumulative process of working through their conflicts and disagreements together, learning from one another, adjusting their preliminary beliefs and preferences, and arriving at strong, stable judgments about matters of common concern. Existing forms of public participation are far more effective at defining difference than exploring accommodation.

Three Examples

From the long list of citizen consultations in Box 1, only three meet some of the criteria of effective citizen engagement that we consider critical: a discussion of identities, values, and needs; an inclusive, fair, and respectful process; an open agenda; and the opportunity to reconsider preferences in the light of learning about others.

Box 1: *Three Decades of Citizen Consultation*

During the past three decades, there have been countless forums in Canada in which members of the public were invited to participate in a process of public discussion. A highly selective list includes:

- *Commissions of Inquiry.* The federal government has established a rich variety of commissions of inquiry: the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, 1965; the Task Force on Canadian Unity (Pepin-Robarts), 1979; and the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future (Spicer Commission), 1991.
 - *Parliamentary Hearings.* Parliament has mandated various special committees, many of them from both houses: the Molgat-MacGuigan Special Joint Committee, 1972; the Lamontagne-MacGuigan Special Joint Committee, 1978; the Stanbury Special Committee of the Senate on the Constitution, 1978; the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution, 1981-82; the Special Joint Committee on a Renewed Canada (Beaudoin-Dobbie), 1992.
 - *Forums and Processes in Quebec.* Quebec has involved its population widely through referendums and the release of government position papers and through the development of positions by its political parties. For example, the Quebec Liberal Party over the years has released such documents as *A New Canadian Federation* (the beige paper), 1980; *Maîtriser l'avenir*, 1985; *A Quebec Free to Choose* (the Allaire Report), 1991; and, most recently, *Quebec's Identity and Canadian Federalism: Recognition and Interdependence*, 1996. The Parti Québécois has published a number of statements of policy, from *Prochain étape: quand nous serons vraiment chez nous*, 1972, to *Le Québec dans un monde nouveau*, 1993. And the National Assembly has led public discussion through such bodies as the Commission on the Political and Constitutional Future of Quebec (Bélanger-Campeau), 1991.
 - *Provinces.* Every province outside Quebec has at some point held legislative hearings, created advisory bodies, and issued white papers and reports. Examples from as far back as the 1970s include the reports of Ontario's Advisory Committee on Confederation; British Columbia's Constitutional Proposals; and Alberta's Position Paper on Constitutional Change. More recently, every province in the federation held public hearings of some kind during the course of the Charlottetown constitutional round.
- *Government-Sponsored Initiatives.* Federal, provincial, and territorial governments have organized various forums to provide opportunities for the public expression of views. The federal government, for example, organized a series of five conferences before the Charlottetown constitutional negotiations. Held across the country, these conferences brought together an unusually broad mix of experts, officials, and "ordinary" citizens to identify and discuss central constitutional priorities.
 - *Native Peoples.* Since 1980 and the Quebec referendum of that year, organizations representing aboriginal communities have actively participated in the debate about constitutional change by commissioning extensive research, releasing position papers, and participating in public forums. In addition to the five national conferences mentioned above, the aboriginal peoples of Canada conducted four consultations with their constituents and held a national conference.
 - *Think Tanks and Expert Analysis.* Private research and public policy organizations, such as the C.D. Howe Institute, the Canada West Foundation, the Institute for Research on Public Policy, and the Fraser Institute, have issued a stream of publications and policy discussions to support the evolving political process. Universities have organized public conferences to ensure broad public discussion of the issues, and academics have published extensively on all aspects of constitutional change. Some of Canada's chartered banks have released reports on the economic impact of political change.
 - *Professional Associations and Organized Interest Groups.* Organizations such as the Canadian Bar Association, the Business Council on National Issues, and the Conseil du Patronat, the Canadian and Quebec chambers of commerce, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and the Toronto Junior Board of Trade have all contributed to the ongoing discussion.
 - *Community Groups.* Church organizations, multicultural associations, and citizens' organizations have organized discussions and held information sessions.

The Spicer Commission

Four months after the failure of the Meech Lake Accord, the federal government established the Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future, popularly known by the name of its chairman, Keith Spicer.

Because of time pressures and personality conflicts, as well as a poorly designed process, the commission was riven with dissension and never won the respect and affection of most Canadians. Indeed, it is probably better remembered for the separate remarks the chairman made at the beginning of its final report — "There is fury in the land against the prime minister"¹⁸ — and the dissenting comments of two commissioners than for the body of the report itself or for the public discussion it fostered.

Yet the commission's mandate is worth recalling. The forum was called on to foster a dialogue among Canadians that would permit them to consider the values and characteristics fundamental to the well-being of the country. It was to obtain views from Canadians from all regions, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, and walks of life; and to ensure that groups of Canadians from different regions met and discussed common and divergent concerns.

To meet these requirements, the forum established a toll-free line to gather suggestions from telephone callers; it fostered group discussions, supported by information kits and moderators; it created a students' forum, to encourage young people to participate; and it held televised discussion groups linking people from a variety of regions.

From the point of view of citizen engagement and informed public judgment, its achievement, was modest. Despite the significant investment of funds, both dissenting commissioners complained about the process's superficiality and the forum's inability to "deepen the dialogue."¹⁹

These complaints are hardly surprising, given that the commission's work lasted just eight months. The process did not foster informed deliberation, nor did it encourage par-

ticipants to work collectively through the critical tradeoffs and consider the consequences of their choices.

Even though the process was limited and flawed, one can argue that the forum's mandate was targeted correctly. It attempted to engage Canadians within and across language, cultural, and regional divides in a dialogue about values. And it sought to identify a public space in which both citizens and their political leaders could find common ground on which subsequent negotiations could be undertaken. But its processes did not match its purposes.

Conferences on the Renewal of Canada

A different, more restricted, process occurred over six weeks in early 1992. Five conferences were held across the country, involving Canadians from coast to coast. They discussed possible changes in the way the country is governed, examining in particular the set of 28 proposals for constitutional change developed by the federal government and published as *Shaping Canada's Future Together*.²⁰

The government conceived the conference process when it appeared that the Beaudoin-Dobbie Committee (see Box 1), which was reviewing the same set of proposals, was close to collapse. During the six weeks, the process developed a significant momentum and degree of autonomy as the organizations mandated by the federal government shaped the process and the delegates asserted control. For example, the conferences flatly rejected some of the federal proposals, and significantly altered many others. The views expressed by participants had some impact on the recommendations of the Beaudoin-Dobbie committee and subsequently on the shape of the Charlottetown constitutional negotiations.

The conferences were designed to discuss broad alternative policy directions. Only a minority of conference participants, however, could be called "ordinary" Canadians; politicians, officials, experts, interest group representatives, and media far outnumbered people chosen at random.

The sessions did, however, create an opportunity for interested groups and individuals to engage in extended discussions and for negotiators to inform themselves before embarking on the negotiating process itself. Prior to formal negotiations, the participating governments could thus position themselves more intelligently in terms of both the constraints and preferences of an engaged group of Canadians and the aspirations of the other parties.

Nevertheless, the process was far removed from one in which citizens would take responsibility for their choices or could discuss the divergent values and identities that informed their preferences. Nor did they have the opportunity to revisit their preferences in light of what they had learned from others or to consult with their own communities and associations. Participants, in other words, had little opportunity to interact over time in a dynamic process of conflict resolution and to create informed public judgment.

The Bélanger-Campeau Commission

Quebecers have made parliamentary government, with the Quebec National Assembly as its core, the central institution for working through the issues their society confronts.²¹ At critical moments in the life of their society, Quebecers turn naturally to the National Assembly, whose televised proceedings are, at such times, the most heavily watched television in the province.

The Commission on the Political and Constitutional Future of Quebec was a body exemplifying the distinctive and often creative fashion in which the predominantly francophone political community of Quebec has adapted the parliamentary system to its needs.

Established in September 1990 in the wake of the demise of the Meech Lake Accord, the commission's mandate was to examine the political and constitutional future of Quebec. Its composition was remarkable. The co-chairs were prominent Quebec businessmen Michel Bélanger and Jean Campeau. Only half of the 36 members appointed by the National Assem-

bly were MNAs. There were representatives from the municipalities, from the business and trade union sectors, and from the cooperative, educational, and cultural sectors. In addition, there were three federal members of Parliament.

In the five months of its life, the commission received more than 600 briefs, heard 235 submissions, and invited 55 specialists in various fields to contribute information. It organized a forum on youth and the future of Quebec, visited 11 administrative regions of the province, and held hearings in 11 cities. It released a series of working papers on critical issues related to its mandate. And the attentive public in Quebec followed its work with intense interest.

The commission was an intriguing example of the way in which political leaders, in conjunction with influential citizens, can lead a broadly based process of public discussion engaging significant sectors of the larger political community. Its virtues were doubtless related to the circumstances of its creation and the society it served. Quebecers had just suffered the shock of the collapse of the highly popular Meech Lake Accord, a collapse widely believed within the province to have been the result of a broad rejection of Quebec by English-speaking Canada. Both leaders and "ordinary" citizens within the francophone community agreed that this body blow to their national community required a rethinking of Quebec's position.

The problem was that sovereignists and federalists were unable to agree, even in these extraordinary circumstances, on a common policy. While asserting francophone solidarity in reaction to the failure of Meech, the commission could do no more than paper over fundamentally different positions on the national question. The group could agree on: the validity of a two-nations view of Canada; the positive character of Quebec's development since the Quiet Revolution; the fact that Quebec had been ill treated by the rest of Canada; and the importance of maintaining economic ties with the rest of Canada, no matter what happened. Confronted at that point with inter-

nal dissension, it then agreed to set out the two options facing Quebecers: to make a further effort to redefine Quebec's status within Confederation, or to seek sovereignty.²²

The commission's legislative recommendations reflected this fragile consensus. But when the government of Robert Bourassa brought the legislation to the National Assembly, it significantly strengthened the federalist emphasis. The consensus, such as it was, dissolved.

The commission made no headway in bridging the cleavage within Quebec society between those who sought a new relationship with the rest of Canada and those who sought sovereignty. Still less did it explore ways in which the breach between Quebec and the rest of the country could be repaired. That was not its function. Indeed, its proposals encouraged Quebec to draw in on itself (as it had after the 1982 patriation setback). The report called for the establishment of two National assembly commissions: one to examine matters relating to the sovereignty of Quebec, and the other to await and assess any constitutional offer from the federal government and the other provinces. The Bourassa government agreed, serving notice that Quebec would no longer participate actively in the affairs of the federation. One result was its absence from the Charlottetown process until the final stages.

Time for a New Approach

With few exceptions, Canadians have had little opportunity for sustained, facilitated, interactive engagement in conflict resolution. They have been extensively consulted by their governments, but it is governments, rather than citizens, that have taken the principal responsibility to organize these processes. (It is no coincidence that the three experiments we have reviewed were all mandated and financed by governments, working within fairly short time lines.)

Surely it is time for a new approach.

The approach we recommend is a continuing dialogue of citizens — influential and “ordinary” — with one another and with their

political representatives. The specifics of that dialogue will vary with the situation. So will the processes, which we describe in the next two sections. But effective processes will always include:

- discussion of identities, values, and needs;
- procedures that are inclusive, fair, and respectful;
- an open agenda, with everything on the table; and
- opportunities to reconsider preferences in the light of learning about others, so that the dialogue is dynamic and occurs over time.

Engaging Influential Citizens: Some Experience

Interactive conflict resolution works on premises and through processes quite different from those used in traditional bargaining. The processes span a broad range of activities, but all share a commitment to facilitated, face-to-face activities that promote collaborative analysis of the sources of conflict and joint problem solving among the parties engaged in a protracted conflict.²³

This section examines the processes by which influential citizens can be engaged in resolving identity conflicts. The next section will discuss processes that reach out to “ordinary” citizens.

Workshops and Dialogues

The problem-solving workshop, one of the earliest forms of interactive conflict resolution, was pioneered more than two decades ago to assist in addressing deep-rooted identity conflict.²⁴ In the classical workshop, a small group of individuals from all the parties to the conflict, people who hold no official position but are closely connected to senior political leaders, are brought together in a neutral environment for an informal, private, and intensive session, which usually lasts several days.

The workshop is organized by a small facilitating panel of outside experts in conflict resolution, who choose the participants and the neutral site. The process is most frequently underwritten by private, nonprofit foundations, sometimes working directly with independent facilitators, at other times through facilitators in academic or research institutions.

Public dialogues are similar in concept, if not in design. They differ largely in their emphasis on reaching out to the wider community once sufficient progress has been made. Largely funded by private foundations, they engage representative citizens from the conflicting parties in designing steps to be taken in the political arena in order to change perceptions and stereotypes, to create a sense that a resolution of the conflict may be possible, and to broaden political engagement to promote a process of conflict resolution.²⁵

Pioneers of public dialogue, who benefited from the experience of problem-solving workshops, have paid particular attention to the process of transferring ideas developed within the dialogue to civil society and the larger body politic, not only to the political leadership.

Problem-solving workshops and dialogues have been used in a wide variety of community, national, and international disputes.²⁶ They have been held in racially divided communities, in urban communities deeply divided over policy issues, in societies riven by ethnic and identity conflicts, and with participants from countries engaged in long-standing international conflict.

Although the issues differ, the purpose is the same: to facilitate full and open communication among parties to the conflict in a protected environment that is far less risky than public official negotiations. Participants in workshops and dialogues are encouraged to

- work with facilitators;
- analyze jointly the sources of the conflict and the obstacles to its resolution;
- work together collaboratively to build confidence and trust;

- devise mutually acceptable options to reduce tensions and, if possible, generate solutions that reflect a shared vision of a desirable future; and
- transmit new ideas, approaches, and understandings to political leaders at the official level and to civil society.

Facilitating the Process

Facilitators are essential to accomplishing any of the group's tasks. Before the parties to a deeply embedded conflict can begin to work collaboratively, they must develop confidence in their shared interest in finding ways out of deadlock.

Facilitators help to create a respectful environment among parties who usually bring considerable grievances to the table. To insure that all parties have adequate time to address grievances and needs in a fair process, good facilitators manage the agenda, limit disruptive and insulting behavior, and help to keep the discussions focused on the task. They are the guardians of the fairness and integrity of the process.

Diagnosing the Conflict

Facilitators assist the parties in diagnosing the sources of the conflict by clarifying concepts and providing feedback to the parties. An important part of the process is helping the parties to recognize that they perceive and fear a threat to their identities, that each side systematically tends to underestimate the importance of identity to the other, that they remember history differently, and that perceptions are frequently distorted by long periods of conflict and poor communications across political boundaries.²⁷

Palestinians and Israelis, for example, have met for almost two decades in more than 20 problem-solving workshops. Many of the early sessions were spent examining the sources of the conflict and acknowledging each other's identities, needs, and fears. While participants from each group continued to assert their own

identities and needs, they gradually came to understand the legitimacy of the other's identity and needs and the depth of their fears. This understanding did not weaken participants' commitment to their own identity. It did change the context against which actions to resolve the conflict were considered. At the same time, some of the distortion across political boundaries was reduced.

Other creative techniques have also been used to facilitate joint diagnoses of the conflict and promote long-term change. In any enduring conflict, participants understand its history very differently. For example, Canadians frequently observe that Quebec high schools use history textbooks that differ dramatically from those used in other provinces. A team of historians from Quebec and other provinces is currently writing collectively, with the help of a facilitator, a common textbook.²⁸ A similar project was successfully completed by black and white historians working together in a large urban area in the southern United States. This kind of collaborative project is likely to have much more positive consequences than unilateral attempts to challenge the other side's "big lie."

Building Confidence

Before participants can begin any joint activity, they must overcome the deep distrust that has been built up by years of conflict. Thus, an important early task is testing the intentions of the others. Participants try to establish whether the members of the other party recognize their identity, basic rights, and needs, whether they are genuine in their commitment to a political solution, and whether they represent significant tendencies within their own communities.

This testing process is an essential component in the creation of confidence in a working relationship. The process is never complete and is always hostage to the changing political context outside the workshop process.²⁹ Once participants have reached an acceptable level of working trust, however, they can begin to

focus collaboratively on the measures necessary to build broader confidence.

One of the valuable outcomes of problem-solving workshops at this stage is often sensitizing participants to the different meanings of particular words and to the insults to identity (at times unintended) inherent in a particular vocabulary. For example, by the second day of a recent Turkish-Kurdish workshop, teams of participants began to develop a list of measures that political leaders on both sides could take to begin to build confidence in a political process of conflict resolution.³⁰ Many of these suggestions focused on changing the language each side used to describe the other.

Similarly, in Israeli-Palestinian workshops over the years, language has been an important part of the process of building confidence. Participants on both sides tend to explain their commitment to peaceful resolution in words that are authentic in their own communities but offensive to the identity of others. For example, Palestinians may call their acceptance of a two-state solution "unjust" but dictated by their situation; Israelis find this language a challenge to their legitimacy. Israelis explain their acceptance of two states by referring to the "demographic time bomb" of the Palestinian birthrate that will threaten the Jewish character of the state; Palestinian participants find this phrase insulting and demeaning.

In brief, an important part of the facilitator's role is to sensitize the participants to the multiple meanings and connotations of language.

Creating Options

Once the participants have built confidence in each other, they are better prepared for collaborative problem solving. Facilitators help the parties to develop options by emphasizing the context against which the conflict has unfolded and by calling attention to the costs of the ongoing stalemate, the likelihood of escalating costs in the future, and the benefits (as well as the obvious costs) of any solution.

As participants in the workshop begin to re-evaluate the costs of stalemate and the

likelihood of even further deterioration, new space for political solutions begins to open. The costs of concessions, although real in the broader political context, loom less large when considered against the costs of continuing the conflict.

Attitude change is enhanced by participating in the development of a new idea. If a proposal is jointly produced or a new idea emerges as the result of group discussion, members are more likely to take ownership of the idea and then to promote it in their own communities.³¹

Thus, Israeli-Palestinian workshops created a critical mass of informed participants who recognized the others' needs, acknowledged the others' identity, and worked together on confidence-building measures. By autumn 1992, for example, Israeli and Palestinian security experts from the academic community had met repeatedly for nine months under the auspices of the American Academy of Sciences. None were officials, but all were highly placed and well connected to their leaderships.³² Among the many ideas discussed had been a proposal for Israeli withdrawal from Gaza first. An amended version of "Gaza first" became an important component of the settlement subsequently reached by Israeli and Palestinian officials.³³

Transmitting Ideas

A fundamental component of interactive conflict resolution is the expectation that participants will take the ideas they have developed jointly back home. Participants are selected because they are considered representative of the political mainstream within their own communities and respected within their own societies. They are politically influential but not politically accountable, credible, well-liked individuals in their own community.³⁴ When the workshop finishes, they return to their own political constituencies and transmit the new ideas and proposals to leaders and members.

Re-entry is, however, a complex process. When participants leave the workshop or dialogue, they must engage with people from their

own communities who have not participated in the collaborative process and continue to hold stereotypical views of the other parties and rigid definitions of the problem.

When participants transmit new ideas for breaking stalemates, they can be greeted with skepticism and find themselves criticized, if not marginalized, in the political arena and in the broader community.

For example, on the eve of formal negotiations, participants from both sides of the Tajikistan Dialogue (see Box 2) were uncomfortable about how their colleagues would react to their "talking to the enemy" at that critical moment.³⁵

As time passes, participants who find little support in their local communities can find it difficult to sustain their new way of thinking. Over time, their commitment to a process of confidence building and a collaborative solution may erode, and their attitudes may regress.

Many participants from problem-solving workshops and dialogues have, however, managed to transmit proposals to their respective political leaders. Members of the Tajikistan Dialogue, for example, jointly developed a memorandum establishing the guidelines for negotiation between the government and opposition forces. Three drafters subsequently participated in the official negotiation, and opposition members acknowledge that the memorandum served as a guide for the opposition's approach.³⁶ Re-entry was effective in both the personal and political aspects: participants continued to participate in dialogue sessions and were able to transmit ideas to political leaders.

Similarly, during the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue under the auspices of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, participants encouraged leaders on both sides to begin thinking about security arrangements within the framework of an interim agreement.³⁷ Israeli participants distributed reports of the meetings to 30 of their senior military and political leaders. Some participants in the continuing workshop became involved directly in the official negotiating process and inserted

**Box 2: *The Tajikistan Dialogue:
Engaging Influential Citizens in a Problem-Solving Dialogue***

In the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Tajikistan, with a population of about 5.5 million, became an independent state. A struggle over identity erupted, and successive governments banned opposition parties, both secular and Islamicist, from participating in elections and in the political process. A brutal civil war soon killed thousands and created more than half a million refugees. No official process of negotiation existed between the government under attack and the fragmented opposition.

In March 1993, an interactive problem-solving dialogue began. Participants were closely connected to officials in the government and in the opposition forces but not responsible in any way to official bodies.* The participants required a protracted stage of diagnosis and confidence building. Then, at their sixth meeting, in March 1994, they began detailed discussion of two of the most important problems that would have to be dealt with in constitutional negotiation: defining its purposes and organizing and ordering the work of the negotiating teams. The participants explicitly addressed the identity issues involved: the government's fear that the opposition would use negotiations to delegitimize the government, and the opposition's need to overcome exclusion from the political process.

As the participants talked, the facilitators recorded what seemed to be areas of common approach. The first draft was quickly translated into Russian and Tajik and returned to the participants for oral and written comments after overnight study. Drawing on these comments, facilitators produced a second draft while the group continued to meet. A third draft became an agreed-on Memorandum on a Negotiating Process in Tajikistan.

It was given to the governments of Tajikistan, the United States, and Russia, as well as to the Opposition Coordinating Center, the United Nations envoy, and the Vienna and Warsaw offices of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The group continued to meet even after official negotiations began. When those negotiations deadlocked a year later, the group produced a working paper that outlined possible options to break the stalemate. When political leaders accepted one of the options, the group publicized a second report, which developed the option and suggested detailed procedures for its implementation.

For workshop participants, one of the facilitators comments, the experience of working together to produce a collaborative and mutually agreed-on document allowed them to move forward with confidence. Even when they subsequently disagreed on new subjects, they were capable of dealing with the issues in a collaborative process.**

* Convened under the auspices of the Dartmouth Conference Regional Task Force and chaired by Gennady I. Chufrin and Harold H. Saunders, the Tajikistan Dialogue had met 14 times by the end of 1995. See G.I. Chufrin and H.H. Saunders, "A Public Peace Process," *Negotiation Journal* 2 (April 1993): 155-177; H.H. Saunders, "Sustained Dialogue on Tajikistan," *Mind and Human Interaction* 6 (August 1995): 123-136; and idem, "Prenegotiation, Circum-negotiation, and the Peace Process," in Chester Crocker and Fen Hampson, eds., *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1996).

** See Saunders, "Sustained Dialogue on Tajikistan," p. 129.

ideas developed jointly in the workshop into the negotiation.

Evaluation

The effectiveness of problem-solving workshops and dialogues of influential citizens is often difficult to assess.³⁸ Long time lags and the array of other factors that contribute to a

process of conflict resolution can make it impossible to trace the genesis of ideas.³⁹

For example, a set of problem-solving workshops produced a set of agreed principles for a long-term solution to the internal conflict in Lebanon. Several years later, some of these principles were incorporated, into the Taif Agreement of 1989.⁴⁰ Although it is impossible to judge the extent to which the agreement was directly based on the results of the workshops,

it is clear that they had provided suitable language and agreed-on principles that could be — and, in some cases, were — adopted at the official level when the time was opportune.

Another difficulty is the complete confidentiality of the proceedings at problem-solving workshops and dialogues. This confidentiality is necessary to create a safe space for participants to explore ideas and to experiment with strategies. Especially in the earlier stages of a workshop, participants are often reluctant to make statements that differ from the official public positions of their own communities. Indeed, some participants say directly that they cannot become involved in a workshop unless confidentiality is guaranteed.⁴¹

Some effects of engagement of influential citizens are, however, obvious. Workshops have created or renewed channels of communication and produced agreements on confidence-building measures and templates for resolution of conflict. In many cases, participants have transmitted ideas to officials before and during an official negotiating process.

In Tajikistan, for example, a broad coalition of the middle has increasingly been able to isolate those at the extreme. In the Israeli-Palestinian case, some of the participants moved into official processes and produced the first formal agreement (see Box 3). Although many factors contributed to these outcomes, the engagement of unofficial influential citizens before and during the negotiations facilitated the result. Some analysts make the very strong claim that, without that engagement, agreements would not have been concluded.⁴²

Less visible and more difficult to document and evaluate are the important consequences that flow from the process's attention to identities, needs, and fears. In many protracted identity conflicts, repeated official attempts fail because the official negotiating process proves inadequate or inappropriate to deal with the fundamental questions of identity, values, and needs that fuel the conflict. In an official negotiation, representatives often feel it risky to discuss identity and reveal needs and vulnerabilities.⁴³

Generally, resolution is least likely when negotiating parties are pessimistic about success and accept the likelihood of failure.⁴⁴ Interactive problem solving can induce positive attitude change toward the other side and decrease divisive, pessimistic conceptions that the parties are fundamentally incompatible.⁴⁵

In summary, in a protracted identity conflict, interactive conflict resolution is most likely to induce the changes in attitudes and in expectations of others that are essential to move forward a process of conflict resolution. Evidence is cumulating that a two-track approach — citizen engagement in problem solving interacting with a process of official negotiation — is more likely to promote an effective process of conflict resolution than an official process used alone.⁴⁶ When engagement of influential citizens in problem solving precedes negotiation, places new ideas and new proposals on the public agenda, and feeds and reinforces the official process when it stumbles, the official process takes place against a background where substantive issues become significantly easier to mediate or negotiate.

Engaging Citizens

If conflict resolution is to progress and endure, it is essential to fully engage a broader array of citizens and the institutions of civil society. The primary reason is normative: a democratic society must be founded on consent.

Other reasons are more immediate and practical. Failure to engage citizens at early stages of the process can be fatal if their formal approval of agreements is necessary. Moreover, citizens who feel excluded are likely to rebel against deals they believe have been imposed on them by unresponsive, manipulative, and secretive elites. These are the lessons of the Canadian experience with the Meech Lake Accord and the Charlottetown Round, as well as of recent referendums on the expansion of the European Union in Norway, France, Denmark, and Sweden.⁴⁷

Box 3: *The Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue in Oslo*

Although the Oslo dialogue between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993 was not an unqualified process of citizen engagement (it involved Palestinian officials from the outset), it offers an interesting example of evolution from a partially private dialogue to official involvement.

The background was stalemate in the official bilateral negotiations being held in Washington between Israelis and Palestinians. Terje Larsen, a Norwegian sociologist, suggested to Yossi Beilin, then a member of the opposition Labor party in Israel's parliament, that direct talks with the PLO could be useful in breaking the deadlock. Israeli law at the time banned contact with PLO officials. Beilin suggested Larsen contact Yair Hirschfeld, an academic who had no official responsibilities.

Hirschfeld met secretly with Abu Alaa, a senior PLO official who was coordinating Palestinian representation in the official negotiations and agreed to secret talks in Oslo. The Labor government had now taken office, and Hirschfeld received approval from Beilin, who was attracted by discussions that would be "academic," rather than political, and permit the testing of intentions without requiring an official commitment.*

This dialogue functioned very differently from a traditional problem-solving workshop in the connection between participants and political leaders, the ground rules, and the role of the facilitator. Hirschfeld confronted deep skepticism from Israeli political leaders. Indeed, it was partly because they were so skeptical of the outcome that they approved the meetings and gave him only minimal instructions.

Hirschfeld, Abu Alaa, and their colleagues met in five exploratory rounds over five months. Discussion of identity and history played no part. Instead, the group concentrated on a blueprint for the future. The emphasis was not on collaborative problem solving, but on negotiated agreement.

The two facilitators stayed outside the meeting room, receiving separate briefings from each side before and after sessions. Nevertheless, they were critically important to the dialogue's success, creating a relaxed social atmosphere, encouraging the participants to eat together, passing messages to Jerusalem and Tunis when the group was not in session,** and encouraging both parties even when they faced serious disagreements.

Agreement on general principles came quickly. In the first round of talks, Hirschfeld and Abu Alaa agreed on withdrawal from Gaza, gradual devolution of economic power to Palestinians, and international economic assistance to the nascent Palestinian entity. (These were fundamental elements in the final Oslo accord.) By the second round, Beilin concluded that the best way to test PLO thinking was to draft a declaration of principles. Abu Alaa quickly agreed.

The draft declaration was completed in only two rounds of meetings. Some provisions went beyond what officials in Jerusalem were prepared to accept. Yet they still saw the dialogue as a useful channel for discussing ideas. They asked Hirschfeld to inform Palestinian participants that continuation was contingent on resumption of the stalemated official talks.

The lines between the official negotiations and the unofficial dialogue were beginning to blur. After the Palestinians made additional concessions, Abu Alaa told Larsen that the dialogue would end unless Israel agreed to upgrade the talks to an official level. Within two weeks, the Israeli foreign minister named his director-general as envoy.† The dialogue had become official, and from it came the Declaration of Principles, the first Israeli-PLO agreement and the first important step in resolving their bitter identity conflict.

The Oslo dialogue allowed participants to experiment freely with ideas and construct jointly a framework for moving the relationship forward. It provided distance and space for Israel to explore the *bona fides* of the PLO and accept it as a negotiating partner.

Yet, largely because the facilitator's role was so circumscribed, participants did not reach the usual level of understanding of the others' needs and fears. Nor did they plan for the broader political strategies in civil society that they needed to support the process they hoped to put in place.

* David Makovsky, *Making Peace with the PLO: The Rabin Government's Road to the Oslo Accord* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1996), p. 19.

**The Norwegians also briefed the United States on a regular basis, a function not normally performed by facilitators (*ibid.*, p. 27).

† *Ibid.*, pp. 18-43.

Engagement is equally necessary in the longer term: the legitimacy of any resolution

depends heavily on the extent to which citizens feel a sense of ownership, responsibility for,

and pride in the result. When they have such feelings, an agreement becomes not just words on a page but a reflection of deeply held commitments.

Finally, engagement of citizens is valuable because they may see options, possibilities, and alternatives that do not occur to leaders, who may be preoccupied with their own institutional interests or locked into the constraints of past experience.

A good example of wide citizen engagement is the process created by the South African Constitutional Assembly. It made enormous efforts to build citizens' sense of ownership of their new democratic constitution. In major cities, buses were emblazoned not with advertisements but with the slogan "We are writing South Africa's new constitution." The tabloid *Constitutional Talk* (published in 11 languages!) explained alternatives in easily understood words and even used cartoon strips to explain concepts such as individual rights. And, as already noted, successive drafts of the constitution were made public and comments invited.

Engagement with Citizens

Although it is easy to argue that citizen engagement is vital, it is difficult to know how to promote effective engagement. Not every attempt produces positive results. Consultation of citizens in Canadian constitutional debates during recent decades seems to have fostered — or at least coincided with — greater polarization. We conclude that Canada needs better processes to ensure genuine dialogue, both between citizens and leaders and between members of the major identity groups.

Traditional Techniques

Processes such as public opinion polling, election and referendum campaigns, and public hearings are the primary ways of engaging citizens in the political process.

Their limitations are well known. Polling, even though increasingly sophisticated, presents citizens with alternatives that they have

not chosen and about which they may have no information. Polls are also very poor at measuring the intensity of feeling people have about an issue. In election and referendum campaigns, the debate is often thin, uninformed, and adversarial. Referendums to legitimate decisions also occur far too late in the process; without engagement at an earlier period, proposals, however well crafted, are unlikely to win support. Consultations, such as parliamentary hearings, also have important weaknesses. They tend to be sporadic and to involve different individuals each time. More important, proponents of various alternatives usually parade to the microphone one by one, each pressing his or her preference with scant need to consider the views of others, much less make compromises and tradeoffs. That is left to the politicians while citizens escape responsibility for contributing to solutions.

Deliberative Techniques

Most existing processes of citizen engagement are, in other words, opportunities for the simple expression of opinion or the exercise of pressure. They are not deliberative. Yet deliberative democracy is what is required to come to public judgment on the profound issues of identity conflict in Canada as elsewhere.⁴⁸

Deliberation involves a number of elements. Participants must have a clear sense of their own interests and preferences and the best available information about the implications, costs, and consequences of those preferences. They must be informed about the interests and preferences of others and be able to delineate areas of agreement and disagreement. They must have ownership of the problem, such that they sense an obligation to search for solutions and accommodation. Above all, they must have an opportunity for dialogue and exchange, especially across the major dividing lines. Engagement must be a learning process, one in which exposure to other groups and new alternatives can lead to a modification of preferences or to the discovery of mutually beneficial outcomes not originally on the table.

These standards would be difficult to meet in any large mass democracy. They are perhaps especially difficult to meet in Canada, where the divisions are so deeply rooted in identity and where vast distances and language differences make it virtually impossible for all but a few to engage in face-to-face dialogue across regional and linguistic lines.

Nevertheless, some interesting experiments are being developed. In one, called deliberative polling, representative citizens are invited to spend several days debating issues. Only after facilitators provide high levels of information are participants invited to express their views. These results are communicated to policymakers. (The Kettering Institute in the United States devotes its work largely to fostering such public dialogues.)

In an approximation of such a process in 1995, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation brought together a small group of Canadians for three days of discussion about the remaking of Canada. Chaired by Thomas Berger, these men and women, who represented a wide range of views and experience, discussed their perceptions of the country and the dilemma it was facing. In the course of their work, they were advised by three experts and met almost a dozen former or active politicians of various political persuasions. At the end of the three days, the group was able to fashion a joint statement about the nature of Canada and a number of the values they had discovered they shared and to block out a general direction for reform. The televised version of the proceedings permitted viewers to participate vicariously in the process. Unfortunately, the participants did not have adequate time to consider identities and values, to engage in facilitated discussion, or to meet on an ongoing basis to reconsider their choices.

In other such experiments, the Canadian Policy Research Network has sponsored sessions in which interested citizens debate “the society we want” in preparation for making choices about social policy,⁴⁹ and the Canada West Foundation, in conjunction with the Council for Canadian Unity and the Atlantic

Provinces Economic Council, organized Reconfederation Assembly 96 to provide an opportunity for representative 18-to-29-year-olds, to discuss, assess, and propose solutions to Canada’s problems.⁵⁰

Deliberative polling presents major challenges, of course. It is costly and time consuming. It can be employed with only small numbers of people. It is difficult to sustain on a long-term basis, even though ongoing relationships are critical to building trust and understanding. Participants have little ability to communicate their newly achieved insights to members of their communities who were unable to share in the dynamics of the process. Nevertheless, deliberative polling can be a critical supplement to regular polling.

Other interesting experiments focus on building a stronger consultative process in which the participants themselves are led to take responsibility for the results. British Columbia, faced with profound conflict between environmentalists and timber interests, found a broad set of solutions through a process in which the contending groups were mandated to produce agreed solutions among themselves, (with the help of a trained facilitator). A similar process was used in developing the Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights.

Canada and other democracies have much room for further experimentation with such techniques without removing from elected leaders the responsibility for final decisions.

Engagement within Civil Society

A growing literature exploring civic engagement and social capital argues that the health and vitality of democratic regimes are to be found not so much in constitutional documents and institutional structures but in civil society. Indeed, the strength of community norms, networks, and associational life has been linked to phenomena as diverse as educational success, rates of poverty and crime, economic performance, and the quality of governance.⁵¹ It is within strong associations that citizens learn to trust and cooperate with each

other and to develop feelings of mutuality, reciprocity, and understanding.

Much less has been written about the role of civil society in reaching accommodations among groups deeply divided over questions of identity. In Canada, the capacity of civil society's associational networks to build bridges across language and regional groups may be declining.

Increasingly, the anecdotal evidence suggests, the civil societies of Quebec and the rest of Canada have been disengaging to form two (or more) distinct civil societies, each turned in on itself, with fewer and fewer ties of mutual benefit. Quebec has been pursuing its own *projet de société*, strengthening networks within the province; the rest of Canada is increasingly preoccupied with alternative bases of identity (gender, ethnic affiliations, environmental concerns) and, therefore, has less time and concern for cross-country linkages.

If this thesis is correct — and the evidence for it is still only impressionistic — its implications are worrying. Unless sustained by strong support within communities, any governmental resolution of a protracted identity conflict is likely to fail.

Among the international examples we considered earlier, the participants in the Tajikistan Dialogue explicitly recognized this need to engage local communities and to build institutions to facilitate communication and ownership of the process of conflict resolution. By contrast, the elite-driven Israeli-Palestinian workshops paid little attention to the need for such institutions — perhaps one reason why large segments of Israeli and Palestinian societies remain deeply fearful of the accommodations their leaders have reached.

Thus, the dynamics of civil society itself are important in the policymaking process. Civil society is not easily manipulated by governments; the impetus for strengthening its potential for accommodation must come from the bottom up.⁵² Governments could, however, play a facilitative role — through travel and translation grants, for example, or by insisting that the groups that come before it demon-

strate a commitment to working with both language groups.⁵³

The organizations of civil society that share common functional interests — professional associations, environmental advocates, humanitarian groups, and so on — are a potentially valuable resource. Private bodies could promote the development of opportunities for the members of such groups to discuss among themselves ways to manage the identity conflict. Shared functional interests would provide a common platform and greater potential for sympathetic engagement than would be present in groups brought together at random. Moreover, functional groups would facilitate the building and maintenance of relationships of ongoing trust and an easy opportunity for participants to report back to the constituencies from which they came.

Overall, functional groups are less likely than governments to be constrained by the increasingly sterile terms and categories that have come to dominate political debate in Canada. They might identify innovative patterns of accommodation that could then be injected into debate at the political level.

Conclusion

The engagement of governments and influential citizens in the resolution of deep-seated identity conflicts is vital but clearly not enough. In addition, the engagement of citizens and groups — in their interaction with the political process and in the dynamics of civil society itself — is critical if agreements are to be reached, and if they are to be sustainable. Citizens must invest in civil society.⁵⁴

The Lessons for Canada

The analysis of Canada's previous attempts at citizen consultation, as well as the premises and processes of interactive conflict resolution that we have examined, suggest the following guidelines for a new process. In contrast to what has been done in the past, the process should involve:

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- *An open agenda that deals with fundamental issues.* The emphasis should be on identities, values, and needs, rather than constitutional proposals.
 - *Continuing deliberation.* The process should be continuous and recurrent so participants can engage in informed deliberation over time.
 - *Facilitation.* What is needed is neutral, outside assistance from individuals who have no interest in any particular substantive outcome but are committed to assisting the participants to keep the process fair, focused, and on task. Facilitators are guardians of the fairness of the process.
 - *High-quality, balanced information.* This should include the most complete available evidence about the options, summaries of consensus about their meaning and consequences where it exists, and clear specification of disagreement among experts about the meaning and consequences of the identified choices.
 - *Intercommunal discussion.* That is, encounters across communities as well as *within them*.
 - *No predetermined outcome.* The only explicit preference should be a civil resolution of conflict, without violence, in which differing identities and competing interests can be accommodated.
 - *The creation of a space safe for negotiation.* This should occur even in a political context in which entering discussion can be politically risky.

Engaging Influential Citizens

Canadian experts have a long history of involvement in discussion of constitutional issues. Their analysis of alternative futures will continue to play a vital role in informing public debate and in helping people understand the different directions in which the country might move. It is, however, different from a process of interactive conflict resolution in which in-

fluential citizens, well connected to political leaders and from across the fault lines of conflict, come together, in confidence, over a sustained period of time to diagnose the conflict, consider new options, and, most important, face the difficult tradeoffs.

Such an engagement of influential citizens could make many of the contributions in Canada that it has made internationally. Under the aegis of institutions from the nonprofit sector (such as think tanks, universities, research institutions, and foundations), a small group of unofficial but highly placed individuals well connected to the government and opposition parties in Ottawa, the provinces, and the First Nations could begin a continuing problem-solving workshop with the assistance of a panel of facilitators. No such process has ever taken place in Canada.

Such a workshop could explore the sources of conflict and the obstacles to its resolution; the range of alternative futures and how these might meet important identities, values, and needs; the template for a negotiation; the rules governing another referendum in Quebec; and the framework for a process that might follow a referendum. (The last subject, while understandably taboo publicly in Ottawa and Quebec City under present circumstances, would have large consequences for postreferendum negotiations.)

A workshop need not and should not duplicate official processes. Rather, it should concentrate on deeper questions of identity, values, norms, and rules. The discussion should be wide ranging as participants across the fault lines speak in a private capacity, in confidence, exploring the kinds of frameworks that could accommodate the multiple identities Canadians hold. It could also identify some of the tradeoffs Canadians face.

Should sufficient progress allow the participants to make the results of their work public, they could help to set the context for renewed negotiations and create additional space for political leaders to engage in an official process of conflict resolution.

A workshop could also reinforce and support a process of formal negotiation as it de-

veloped, provide ideas and proposals, and assist in legitimating experimentation with a broader menu of options than is currently on a rapidly shrinking table. Finally, members of the workshop could actively assist in informing the public debate and in helping to inform and sustain the process of public dialogue at the community level and within associations.

The funding requirements for such a workshop would not be unmanageable. The costs would essentially be restricted to travel, subsistence, translation, and facilitation. Canadian experts and facilitators are plentiful. Collaboration among institutions in the private sector could easily make such an ongoing workshop possible.

Any of these subjects is a worthy focus for a problem-solving workshop. Our priority, as we explain later in this Commentary, is a workshop that concentrates on the rules that would govern another referendum in Quebec. Such a continuing problem-solving workshop could make an important contribution now, while official negotiations are largely frozen and public dialogue is increasingly sterile, endlessly repeating old shibboleths.

Engaging Communities and Associations

We also recommend that Canadian citizens in their communities and associations be engaged in public dialogue — but of the right kind, with the right focus.

It seems fair to say that much of the public participation of Canadians in the past has focused too narrowly on the specifics of constitutional change, rather than on the underlying issues of identity, values, and needs that have fueled the conflict. Consequently, the country faces the widely acknowledged and growing phenomenon of “national unity fatigue” — the increasing resistance of a broad band of the public to engage in serious discussion of alternative political futures or to permit their political leaders to do so.

On the other hand, in the wake of the 1995 Quebec referendum, more than a hundred new grassroots groups organized very quickly.

Not surprisingly, most of the larger groups are concentrated in and around Montreal, the epicenter of the conflict, but citizens’ groups range right across the country. Rough estimates suggest that approximately 15,000 Canadians remain engaged in groups that are concerned in some way with issues of national unity.⁵⁵ Public opinion polling suggests that concern about the political future remains ongoing, although its salience varies from month to month and with events.

The Locus of Connection

The reluctance of many Canadians to engage is not grounded in disinterest or a lack of patriotism. Rather, it seems related to a rational judgment on the part of many citizens about the limits of their political efficacy. If the problem is so intractable and if they fear that they can have little impact on the outcome, they have little incentive to become involved. Citizen participation in public affairs can be sustained only by a widespread sense that it matters, that it will have an impact on the future of the community.

Another challenge to active citizen engagement is the size and diversity of the country. Linguistic and cultural differences make it especially difficult to communicate across the fault lines of conflict.

Both these obstacles — the lack of a sense of efficacy and the size and diversity of the country — paradoxically point to communities and associations as the foundation of citizen engagement. Through them, individual Canadians share geographic proximity and interests respectively. The process must build up and out.

Within communities, local foundations, volunteer groups, school and hospital boards, and citizens’ groups could all serve as hosts for a process of public dialogue. With the assistance of facilitators, they could invite participants, organize continuing workshops, and share information about identities, values, and needs within and across groups in their communities.

Similarly, established functional associations, such as religious networks, professional associations, educational associations, chambers of commerce, manufacturers' associations, environmental associations, and labor unions, have the resources and the support in place to organize a series of facilitated workshops for interested members.

The Process

The process used internationally in problem-solving workshops of influential citizens is now "coming home" to address conflicts within society.⁵⁶ Its application to the Canadian context is easy to imagine; indeed, encouraging prototypes of public dialogue are already ongoing in the country.

The process should:

- *Begin with discussion of identities and values.* Discussion could then move to alternative futures and their relative advantages. Particularly in those associations whose members cross the fault lines of identity conflict in Canada, discussion could focus on the capacity of these identities to coexist and overlap, rather than compete. Members of associations would also tend to be sensitive to the costs of ongoing stalemate for their professional and occupational interests. Thus, the discussion would focus naturally on the costs of the status quo and the benefits of the obvious alternatives.

The Canadian Bar Association, for example, is currently exploring the creation of such a process with an explicit dispute-resolution mechanism whereby members can acknowledge competing values and interests and attempt to address the trade-offs with respect to Canada's future.⁵⁷

This kind of national association and many others should open dialogue among their members who cross divisions and who are prepared to engage systematically in the kind of deliberation that creates informed public judgment.

- *Provide access to balanced information.* The discussion should rest on the highest quality information about the range of futures participants face. Although the alternatives are generally known, communities and associations generally do not have access to balanced evidence about relative advantages and disadvantages. Yet if information is to break through political screens of deeply entrenched beliefs, the analysis must be balanced and be seen to be balanced, and differences in the assessment of likely costs and benefits need to be addressed explicitly, not glossed over.

One or more groups could commission a cross-section of experts, from across the fault lines of conflict, to prepare user-friendly kits, which could then be made available to other communities and national associations. (The Canadian Policy Research Network has used such kits effectively in cross-country dialogues with citizens who met to discuss options for social policy.)

- *Be facilitated.* Without facilitators and credible information, group discussion frequently reinforces strongly held beliefs and prejudices and further polarizes opinion. The process of discussion must be designed to encourage all participants to express their views and so should be tolerant of differences. To assure inclusion, fairness, and respect, a facilitator must be guardian of the process, encouraging the participation of those who otherwise might be reserved, ensuring that the discussion is civil, and helping participants to identify the choices they confront and measure these against their identities and values. Ideally, facilitators should be members of the local community or association.
- *Keep the agenda open.* Participants need to be free to discuss the range of identities across the country and the possible futures Canada and their community or association face. A deliberative dialogue helps

to create safe space for free experimentation with ideas, with new approaches, and with the politically taboo. This kind of foundational discussion about identities, values, and alternative futures is substantially different from the interest-based and positional consultations around the Charlottetown Agreement that ultimately overloaded the agenda.

- *Allow for continuing deliberation.* Participants should have the opportunity to revisit choices they made earlier. Problem-solving workshops and dialogues have evolved from a single meeting to, for example, a structured series of three or four meetings for the same participants. So, too, communities and associations should have the opportunity to deliberate over time. They could be informed of the identities, values, and choices other groups have made and be invited to reconsider their earlier discussion with that new information.

A process that has been under way in Canada for some months and that draws on many of the approaches outlined in this Commentary is a project called Scenarios for the Future. It is modeled on both The Meridian International Institute's long-running Changing Maps roundtable of senior Canadian government officials and private sector executives, which considers the implications of the information society on governance, and the South African Mont Fleur project of the early 1990s, which brought together leaders from all sectors of that society to develop a set of scenarios of the future to assist in the transition to democracy.

The central objective of the Scenarios for the Future project is to encourage a strategic conversation among all Canadians about the future. If Canadians are to be successful in this changed world, the convenors argue, they need to frame the issues and the possibilities in a new way, to construct a different basis on which to work together to thrive in today's world.

To encourage what was defined as a need for reframing among Canadians to get out of the trap they are in, the project has two phases. An extensive public engagement process will be announced and launched this fall. One of the starting points for this broad dialogue will be a set of scenarios about the future that are now being finalized, in the first phase of the project, by a group of 30 or so representative individuals — leaders in their own communities — who have been meeting since August 1996 in a series of professionally facilitated roundtables designed to promote learning and dialogue. The shared understandings, the common maps they have developed, will be reflected in the scenarios they are constructing.

The project was initiated by Michael Adams, head of the polling firm, Environics, who brought together a board of directors or convenors of 36 Canadian leaders from all sectors in the country. The project has been financed entirely by the private sector and managed by the principals of The Meridian International Institute. The convenors of the Scenarios for the Future project are concerned citizens who reflect a wide range of views and interests. They have joined together for one purpose alone: to create a new opportunity to further dialogue among Canadians about the future. They have different views. But they do share the conviction that such a serious conversation, and the development of shared understandings, is essential and urgent.

Organization

Many of the citizens' groups that formed across Canada after the October 1995 referendum in Quebec have since petered out.⁵⁸ One might speculate that this is in part owing to a feeling among many of the members that their efforts are not efficacious in affecting the course of events, that their work does not fit in anywhere and therefore does not seem to matter. Many of these groups suffer as well from a lack of resources and an absence of supportive skills to assist them in sustaining their activities. This suggests that the practical requirements

of creating a network of communities and associations engaged in conflict resolution are substantial. We do believe, however, that they are attainable.

The Canadian nonprofit sector — private foundations, educational institutions, independent research institutes, and think tanks — could take an essential first step by offering to supply interested communities and associations with the essential “public goods” of facilitators and information kits. Some government funding would be helpful, but only if it were supplied at arm’s length and devoid of any attempt to structure or control the process. Government could, for example, offer matching funds to citizens’ groups and associations to jump start the process. Local educational institutions could assist in creating electronic networks for the sharing and exchange of information.

The process need not be massive. It could begin, for example, with a few national associations or community groups that, with help from local institutions and facilitators, shared information and broadened the process of deliberation to other groups within their communities. A network could thus be created to link together groups first within and then across communities.

As the process grows, educational institutions and think tanks could join together to create a network that recorded, organized, and shared the growing data about Canadians’ identities, values, and preferences for the future of their country. Technologies of electronic information could be used to create a rolling data base and an interactive network.

The institutions that organized the collection and analysis of the data could share the results with dialogue participants across the country and, at regular intervals, directly with political leaders and officials at all levels and indirectly through the media. Groups and associations would then have the opportunity to revisit their discussion with an expanding knowledge base. At the same time, they would be broadening the political space in which

leaders could attempt to renew official processes of negotiation.

Two Immediate Proposals

The engagement of influential citizens, community groups, and voluntary associations in the kinds of processes we have described can be used in a wide variety of contexts. In our view, however, two projects require special and immediate attention: the first is the future of Montreal, and the second is agreement on basic rules should another referendum be held in Quebec.

The Special Case of Montreal

Montreal has been the crucible within which French-English relations in Canada have been played out in their most intense form. Today, divisions are widening within the metropolis. To a much greater extent than elsewhere in Quebec or the rest of Canada, the costs of the continuing conflict are palpable and inescapable. While residents of Halifax, Quebec City, Chicoutimi, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, or Vancouver can easily go for days without thinking about the conflict that is fracturing the country, Montrealers simply cannot do so. Every significant issue, whether it has to do with health, education, social services, business, culture, or community life, is filtered through the lens of French-English relations.

There is, in short, nothing abstract or distant about Canada’s identity conflict as it manifests itself on the streets of Montreal, a city to which residents have a legendary attachment. To protect themselves economically and emotionally, people on all sides of the issue in the city — and, indeed, in the country at large — have a common interest in reversing the downward spiral.

Thus, the Montreal community seems an ideal candidate for citizen engagement in a process of interactive conflict resolution that focuses on alternative futures for the city.

Background

Despite the acute linguistic, ethnic, and national tensions in Montreal following the Quiet Revolution, intercommunal relations remained generally good for about 35 years. Deterioration has been marked, however, since October 1995.

The razor-thin outcome of Quebec's second referendum on sovereignty appears to have profoundly affected Montrealers — francophone, anglophone, and allophone alike. The sharp increase in militancy within parts of the English-language community has met a reciprocal hardening within segments of the francophone population.

In other societies under similar circumstances, communal violence has erupted. But, in Montreal, large portions of the population surely wish, as they always have, to reach mutually acceptable compromises that will allow the city they all love to work. As the decibel level of conflict rises, however, it becomes more and more difficult to hear the voices seeking understanding and accommodation.

Most Montrealers, if asked, would acknowledge that acute intercommunal conflict diminishes the city's quality of life, limits its economic prospects, and weakens its capacity to take charge of its future. Most would also agree that sovereignists and federalists have a common interest in preserving the civility of metropolitan life, whatever the outcome of the debate about Quebec's relationship with the rest of Canada. This unarticulated consensus needs to be given active and powerful voice.

The Recommended Process

In this situation, community-based initiatives, supported by the leadership of influential citizens, could make a difference. All of the elements we have identified in this Commentary could play a role.

To begin, an informal group of concerned influential citizens from across the fault lines of the conflict, individuals well connected to the political leaderships of the several commu-

nities, could join in a problem-solving workshop with several objectives.

The first and most pressing goal would be to halt, then reverse, the deepening polarization that is taking such a toll — psychologically, economically, and politically. Consistent with international experience, participants would start by recognizing and confronting the causes of division and developing a sympathetic understanding of the fears — and hopes — on all sides. There would also need to be a clear-eyed recognition of the already-high costs of polarization and of the potentially explosive relationships that might follow another referendum. The discussions would also reveal to the participants the depth of their shared interests in the well-being of Montreal as a vibrant and dynamic urban community. Most important, if the workshop is well managed, participants would begin to rebuild some of the shattered trust across the fault lines of the conflict.

With this trust and shared understanding, further steps would be possible. These might include a collaboratively developed project — a *projet de cité* — of Montreal's strengths. This concept could include proposals for economic renewal, for invigorating the city's cultural life, and for improving its infrastructure and enhancing its public spaces.

Any of these projects, if successfully initiated, would markedly improve Montrealers' quality of life and expand the base from which workshop participants could continue to build in the future. Ideally, the group would move from "what divides us" to "what we can do together." Aside from the clear and tangible benefits that could flow to Montrealers from any of these projects, shared planning for the betterment of a common urban environment would help to put in place the level of trust that may be required to manage any future crisis.

Ideally, funding for this initiative would come from Montreal's private sector, whose future is so closely tied to the quality of life in the city, as well as to the larger outcome of the debate about political futures. The meetings

could be held under the auspices of an independent, Montreal-based institution.

After these leaders have accomplished enough to be able to delineate a set of options for Montreal's future, deliberative polling among a representative sample of the city's citizens could help to frame issues and questions and to define community leaders' informed sense of residents' preferences. The poll could be televised locally, in both English and French, and thus become a shared experience not only for the participants but also for the larger communities.

Community organizations and functional associations in the city could then engage in detailed discussion of the poll results, attempting to extend their reach to those who do not normally participate in this kind of process and to promote broadly based dialogue at the level of the communities themselves. Functional groups with shared interests across conflict lines — nurses, social workers, lawyers, the Chamber of Commerce, artists and other workers in the cultural industries — could come together in their associational context to deliberate among the options identified by the influential citizens and supported in the deliberative poll. The sponsoring institution would coordinate the exchange of information from one association or community organization to another, and participants would be free to add to the agenda as they seek to develop the best possible thinking about the future of their city.

If the process works properly, it should reveal the identities, values, interests, and aspirations Montrealers hold in common as citizens of the city, whatever their other differences in political identity. Once firmly established, this common ground might provide the community as a whole with a basis for credible policy directions that would earn the support of the broad majority of the urban population, who would feel ownership of the process.

Advantages

The advantages of success in such a process would extend far beyond the city. If Canadian

political leaders are unable to resolve their differences through a civil process, Montreal is widely recognized as the likely flashpoint of conflict. The demonstration effect of successful citizen engagement in Montreal would encourage and sustain people in the rest of Canada who currently feel little sense of political efficacy. Such a process would indeed build up and out.

Rules for Another Referendum

The processes of interactive conflict resolution might also play a constructive and valuable role on a second critical and pressing issue: agreement on the rules that should govern any future referendum on sovereignty. Few issues are more contested; few will be more important in determining whether the outcome will avoid economic and social disruption and perhaps even violence. Federalists and sovereignists share an overwhelming interest in ensuring that, in the event of another referendum, the rules are clear so that the result will be as unequivocal as possible, for two reasons.

First, clear rules that reflect the deep commitment of all Canadians to democratic values have the greatest likelihood of gaining acceptance. The second reason is more pragmatic: clear rules offer the best possible protection to citizens from the harm that could result from a bitterly contested outcome.

Background

In the period preceding the 1980 Quebec referendum, there was remarkably little debate about the legitimacy of the question or the rules governing the referendum process. These issues took on immense significance, however, after the razor-thin result of October 30, 1995. Outside Quebec, the sudden realization that the “yes” side could well win the next time around sparked consideration of what has come to be called Plan B. It is based on some or all of the following views:

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- The decision to dismantle a country cannot be made by one group alone; others across the country must be given the appropriate opportunity to express their views.
 - Minorities within Quebec — anglophones, allophones, aboriginal peoples — should not have the majority view imposed upon them.
 - The question put before voters should be clear and unambiguous. It should not include promises of partnership that no Quebec government can deliver unilaterally.
 - In a decision as momentous as the one to secede, a simple majority (50 percent plus one) is an inadequate measure of democratic legitimacy.
 - Whatever the outcome of the vote in any future referendum in Quebec, subsequent changes in the Canadian federation must be accomplished under the existing rules of constitutional amendments.

The overall implication of Plan B is that never again should a sovereigntist government in Quebec be permitted to set unilaterally the terms of the referendum or the interpretation of its result. These views have been expressed strongly by nongovernmental analysts⁵⁹ and advanced with varying degrees of precision by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and senior ministers such as Stéphane Dion and Alan Rock, whose government has referred to the Supreme Court of Canada three questions relating to the secession of Quebec.

The Parti Québécois and many sovereigntists, on the other hand, are clear in their insistence:

- that Quebecers themselves have the right to determine their future;
- that the Quebec government has the sole right to determine the question and establish the rules governing a referendum campaign;
- that the rules of international law, not the Canadian Constitution, govern any eventual secession; and

- that a simple majority of 50 percent plus one is decisive.

These two sets of arguments challenge each other at almost every point. Should another referendum be held in Quebec, Quebecers and citizens in the rest of the country will be deeply divided not only about the substance of the issue but also about the rules that govern the making of the decision. One can imagine a situation in which Quebec holds a referendum under its own rules, which conflict with rules that the federal government has established, perhaps in legislation.

The implications of this kind of impasse are extremely worrying. Quebec could proclaim victory and move immediately to the next steps, while the federal government denied any legitimacy to the result and refused to engage with Quebec on the matter. The very meaning of the vote — did Quebecers understand what they were voting for? was it really an endorsement of sovereignty? — would be contested.

The consequences of contestation would be to magnify enormously the potential for serious social unrest and economic chaos. Significant groups within Quebec would assert that the result did not apply to them and seek federal aid. The Quebec government, in the face of opposition, would be tempted to make a unilateral declaration of independence. The stability of Canadian currency, the status of federal and provincial laws, and the continuity of an orderly society would be in jeopardy. It is not difficult to imagine the way in which international financial markets would react to this level of uncertainty.

The crucial point is that the consequences of proceeding to another referendum in the absence of agreed rules of the game would be damaging to both the federal and Quebec governments and to other provincial governments as well. All have an overwhelming interest in avoiding these negative consequences. On the other hand, sovereigntists and federalists each have a huge investment in rules that maximize the chances of their own success and minimize the chances of the other.

Thus, the question is: How might it be possible to reach prior agreement on the rules? Beginning an open conversation about these rules would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, in the current political environment. For Prime Minister Chrétien and Premier Lucien Bouchard (or their ministers) to discuss the issue with each other would be political suicide; both would be labeled *vendus* or *sell-outs*.

Furthermore, any statement about Plan B emanating from Ottawa has little credibility in Quebec, where it is seen as a bargaining tactic or a self-serving threat. Federalists regard Quebec's assertions with equal skepticism. Even analyses of the rules of the game emanating from nongovernmental observers are likely tarred with the same brush. They are seen as *parti pris* and read as lawyers' briefs for one side or the other, rather than as disinterested attempts to seek mutually agreed procedures.

Our analysis suggests, then, that everyone has an interest in agreeing on rules that are as fair and neutral as possible, yet no mechanism is currently available to discuss such a set of rules. The impasse is similar to that in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: leaders on each side recognized that they had a vital stake in a peaceful settlement, yet neither could take the political risk of negotiating with the other side. It took an informal process to break the impasse and create the common political space for leaders from both sides. Such a process, we suggest, is necessary, indeed vital, for Canada.

Process

If governments, with all the constraints operating on them, cannot talk, maybe private citizens can. A group of influential citizens — individuals who are well connected and trusted by governments — should be able to work confidentially to build at least the broad outlines of a consensus.

This consensus on the framework could remain confidential unless and until the Quebec government decides in principle to proceed with another referendum. At that time, the

group of influential citizens could present to the Canadian people, Quebecers and non-Quebecers, a set of rules and procedures that citizens and governments would perceive as fair and legitimate. Each government would find it far easier politically to accept the recommendations of such a group, especially if its members were seen to be people of integrity, than they would to accept the proposals of another government.

Critical to the success of such an enterprise would be the convening of a group of people who shared just the one premise: that consensus on the rules of the game is essential if Quebec and the rest of Canada are to avoid unacceptable economic, political, and human costs. Beyond this single premise, the group could — indeed should — represent preferences across the range of political outcomes. Members of the group should have a stature and legitimacy that would ensure that, if they were able to agree on an approach, it would command a respectful hearing across the country.

The group should be sponsored and convened by private interests, preferably leading foundations with deep roots both inside and outside Quebec. Its work should be underpinned by a multi-authored resource document that reviews the lessons to be learned from democratic theory and from international experience respecting major constitutional change, restructuring, and secession. Facilitators — citizens of other countries or Canadians who have played no previous role and bring no political history with them — would be essential.

We believe it is urgent and in the interests of sovereignists and federalists alike that such a group begin work as soon as possible.

Governments need not endorse nor even acknowledge its work, much less commit themselves in advance to follow its advice. But if that advice is the product of an agreement among thoughtful people who are closely connected to one or the other government, it could well have an enormous impact on the conduct of the next referendum and, more important, on what follows.

In short, a properly established group of influential citizens working in a facilitated process to produce recommendations on the single issue of the rules of the game could well have a decisive impact on the well-being not only of Quebecers but also of all Canadians.

Conclusion

In this Commentary, we have argued in favor of engaging citizens with their governments and with each other in a sustained process of discussion about their political futures.

We do not underestimate the difficulties, nor do we overestimate the availability of refined social tools to accomplish the task. Neither do we anticipate that Canada will become a town hall of 30 million. Yet we see no alternative, at this stage, to citizen engagement.

Both the Meech Lake Accord and the Charlottetown Agreement, in very different ways, foundered on the rock of resistant public opinion. British Columbia and Alberta are legally required to hold referendums before approving any constitutional change. Quebec, Newfoundland, and the federal government provide for optional referendums, and Ontario is currently considering referendum legislation. Others will certainly hold public hearings. The engagement of citizens in forums where they discuss their political futures is a fundamental part of any process of political change.

Around the world, people are thinking about and experimenting with new forms of governance that give citizens greater voice early on in the political decisionmaking process. There is growing recognition internationally that a simple ratification vote comes too late to give citizens effective voice; they must play a role in defining the agenda and in facing the trade-offs that go to the heart of any political process. Citizens will no longer accept the role of passive receptors. With deference declining, they insist increasingly on becoming active agents.

And as citizens' involvement grows, so must their assumption of responsibility for difficult and, at times, painful choices. This kind of involvement can happen only if the right processes of engagement are in place.

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If Canadians are to reconcile their differences in a civil process, an accommodation among governing elites will be essential, but it will certainly not be enough. We urge that the two processes we have recommended — in Montreal and on rules for the next referendum — begin as quickly as possible. Canadians have only a limited time to learn from others and design processes that encourage informed public dialogue among both elites and “ordinary” citizens. In a country as large and diverse as Canada, the challenge is real, but the capacity to meet that challenge will shape Canadians' politics — and their future — in the next millennium.

Notes

- None of us assumes a predetermined substantive outcome from the processes of citizen engagement that we recommend. Of course, as citizens we have individual preferences. What drew us together, however, is our shared commitment to an open and civil process that engages citizens with each other and with their leaders, accommodates different identities, and peacefully resolves this conflict.
- 1 Michael Hogg and Dominic Abrams, "Toward a Single-Process Uncertainty-Reduction Model of Social Motivation in Groups," in Michael Hogg and Dominic Abrams, eds., *Group Motivation: Social Psychological Perspectives* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 173.
 - 2 Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in New States," in Clifford Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States* (New York: Free Press, 1963).
 - 3 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991); Ted Hopf, "Russian Identity and Foreign Policy in Estonia and Uzbekistan," *Ann Arbor, Mich.*, 1966.
 - 4 Herbert C. Kelman, "Creating the Conditions for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 26 (March 1982): 61.
 - 5 Peter Evans, Harold Jacobsen, and Robert Putnam, eds., *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1993).
 - 6 Herbert Kelman, "Coalitions across Conflict Lines: The Interplay of Conflicts within and between the Israeli and Palestinian Communities," in Stephen Worchel and Jeffrey A. Simpson, eds., *Conflict between People and Groups* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1993), pp. 243-244.
 - 7 J. Stephan Dupré, "Reflections on the Workability of Executive Federalism," in R.D. Olling and M.W. Westmacott, eds., *Perspectives on Canadian Federalism* (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1988), p. 247.
 - 8 T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
 - 9 David Elkins and Richard Simeon, eds., *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life* (Toronto: Methuen, 1980).
 - 10 Neil Nevitte, *The Decline of Deference* (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 1996). See also Peter C. Newman, *The Canadian Revolution, 1985-1995: From Deference to Defiance* (Toronto: Viking, 1995).
 - 11 This view is closely associated with the work of Arend Lijphart. See his *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1977); and *Democracies* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984).
 - 12 Cited in Ken MacQueen, "Fasten your seatbelts," *Ottawa Citizen*, March 8, 1996, p. B1.
 - 13 *Identity* means the collective self and its relationship to others. *Values* refers to the ideas, norms, and processes the collectivity holds to be most important, and *needs* to what the collectivity defines as necessary to fulfill the basic purposes that stem from its identity and values.
 - 14 Harold H. Saunders, "Prenegotiation, Circum-negotiation, and the Peace Process," in Chester Crocker and Fen Hampson, eds., *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1996).
 - 15 For a similar analysis of conditions that facilitate negotiated solutions, see I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Saunders, "Prenegotiation, Circum-negotiation, and the Peace Process."
 - 16 Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1984).
 - 17 Michael B. Stein, "Tensions in the Canadian Constitutional Process: Elite Negotiations, Referendums, and Interest Group Consultations, 1980-1992," in Ronald L. Watts and Douglas M. Brown, eds., *Canada: The State of the Federation, 1993* (Kingston, Ont.: Queen's University, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1993), pp. 97ff.
 - 18 Canada, Citizen's Forum on Canada's Future, *Report to the People and Government of Canada* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1991), pp. 6-7.
 - 19 Richard Cashin, "Comment," in *ibid.*, p. 141. For Robert Normand's echoing of these remarks, see *ibid.*, p. 144.
 - 20 Canada, *Shaping Canada's Future Together: Proposals* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1991).
 - 21 Quebec was, for example, the only province to review and approve in its legislature the draft of the Meech Lake Accord before the agreement was accepted by all governments in its final form at the Langevin meeting in spring 1987.
 - 22 The commission report and a number of the submissions may be found in Richard Fidler, ed., *Canada, Adieu? Quebec Debates Its Future* (Halifax, NS: Institute for Research on Public Policy/Oolichan Books, 1991).
 - 23 R.J. Fisher and L. Keashly, "Third Party Interventions in Intergroup Conflict: Consultation Is Not Mediation," *Negotiation Journal* 4 (1988): 381-393.
 - 24 John 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, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1972); and C.R. Mitchell, *Peacemaking and the Consultant's Role* (Aldershot, UK: Gower Press, 1981).
 - 25 Saunders, "Prenegotiation, Circum-Negotiation, and the Peace Process."
 - 26 R.J. Fisher, "A Third-Party Consultation Workshop on the India-Pakistan Conflict," *Journal of Social Psychol-*
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- ogy 112 (1980): 191–206; idem, *Interactive Conflict Resolution* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997); and R.J. Fisher and J.H. White, “Reducing Tensions between Neighborhood Housing Groups: A Pilot Study in Third Party Consultation,” *International Journal of Group Tensions* 6 (1976): 41–52.
- 27 Cynthia J. Chataway and Herbert C. Kelman, “Researching the Interactive Problem Solving Workshop: Convergent Insights from Action Research, an Evaluative Model, and Direct Research,” in Nadim Rouhana, ed., *Innovations in Unofficial Third Party Intervention in International Conflict* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, forthcoming).
- 28 Interview with Joseph Montville, Washington, DC, June 14, 1996.
- 29 Kelman, “Coalitions across Conflict Lines.”
- 30 J.V. Montville, “Highlights and Dynamics of a Turkish-Kurdish Workshop, March 22–24, 1996,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Preventive Diplomacy Program, Washington, DC.
- 31 R. Petty, J. Priester, and D. Wegener, “Cognitive Processes in Attitude Change,” in R. Wyer and T. Srull, eds, *Handbook of Social Cognition*, vol. 2 (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994).
- 32 Participating in these meetings were Nizar Amar, at one time a senior member of Force 17 Commando Group of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO); Ahmed Khalidi and Yazid Sayegh, two Palestinian academics in the United Kingdom with close affiliations to the PLO; Shlomo Gazit, former head of Israeli military intelligence; Joseph Alper, deputy head of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University; Aryeh Shalev, a senior research associate at the Jaffee Center; and the senior military correspondent for *Ze’ev Schiff*, one of Israel’s largest newspapers.
- 33 David Makovsky, *Making Peace with the PLO: The Rabin Government’s Road to the Oslo Accord* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1996), p. 17.
- 34 Individuals will be more successful in influencing opinion in their own community if they have previously developed a reputation as competent and contributing members of the group and present their message consistently while at the same time demonstrating flexibility. M. Bray, D. Johnson, and J. Chilstrom, “Social Influence by Group Members with Minority Opinions: A Comparison of Hollander and Moscovici,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 43 (1, 1982): 78–88.
- 35 H.H. Saunders, “Sustained Dialogue on Tajikistan,” *Mind and Human Infraction* 6 (August 1995): 130.
- 36 In analyzing the Tajikistan Dialogue, Saunders is very careful not to claim that the memorandum was the most important influence on the shape of the negotiations. “But exactly what influence it had on the approaches taken in the negotiations by the two teams cannot be determined because of the many different people and factors at play in a complex interaction” (ibid., p. 129).
- 37 Makovsky, *Making Peace with the PLO*, p. 18.
- 38 See Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution*, chap. 9, for an evaluation of the 70 problem-solving workshops that he has identified.
- 39 See ibid., chap. 9, for an assessment.
- 40 E.A. Azar, *The Management of Protracted Social Conflict* (Aldershot, UK: Dartmouth Publishing, 1990), pp. 55–56.
- 41 Chataway and Kelman, “Researching the Interactive Problem-Solving Workshop,” p. 13.
- 42 Telhami argues strongly that, even when structural conditions changed and created an opportunity for conflict resolution, without the active intervention of international nongovernmental organizations, with both influential citizens and experts, the process of conflict resolution between Israelis and Palestinians would not have moved forward. The minimal trust that was required to assess that an agreement had a better chance of success than the alternative was “largely” due to informal contacts over the years. Shibley Telhami, “Israeli Foreign Policy: A Realist Ideal Type or a Breed of Its Own?” in Michael N. Barnett, ed., *Israel and Comparative Perspectives: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996), p. 73.
- 43 Interviews with officials confirm that less formal settings are required for the kind of open communication that leads to a deeper understanding. See Cynthia J. Chataway, “How Policy Specialists Perceive Interactive Conflict Resolution” (paper prepared for the National Research Council, Committee on International Conflict Resolution, Washington, DC, June 14, 1996).
- 44 J. Rubin, S. Kim, and N. Peretz, “Expectancy Effects and Negotiation,” *Journal of Social Issues* 46 (1990): 125–139.
- 45 The most systematic analysis of the impact of problem-solving workshops on participants’ attitudes compared the process with processes of distributive and integrative bargaining. The study paired Israeli and Jewish-Americans with Arabs and Arab-Americans to discuss the highly contentious issue of Jerusalem. Participants were randomly assigned to work in one of three modes of conflict resolution: distributive bargaining, integrative bargaining, and interactive problem solving. Those in the group of distributive bargainers were told to clarify their positions and reach an agreement through negotiation. Those in the group of integrative bargainers were instructed to develop a definition of the problem, clarify their interests, try to expand the alternatives, and negotiate an agreement that would meet the interests of both sides. Those in the interactive problem-solving group were told to develop a definition of the problem, clarify their own needs and fears as well as those of the other side, and jointly generate ways to meet the needs and fears of both sides and to overcome the barriers to implementing solutions. For a summary
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- and analysis, see Chataway and Kelman, "Researching the Interactive Problem-Solving Workshop," pp. 46-47.
- 46 Loreleigh Keashly and Ronald J. Fisher, "A Contingency Perspective on Conflict Interventions: Theoretical and Practical Considerations," in Jacob Bercovitch, ed., *Resolving International Conflicts: The Theory and Practice of Mediation* (Boulder, Col.: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 1996), p. 257.
- 47 Peter H. Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?* 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).
- 48 James F. Fishkin, *Democracy and Deliberation: New Directions for Democratic Reform* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1991); idem, *The Voice of the People* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995); Daniel Yankelovich and I.M. Destler, *Beyond the Beltway: Engaging the Public in U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994).
- 49 *The Society We Want: A Public Dialogue* (Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Network, 1996).
- 50 *Reconfederation Assembly 96: A Report* (Calgary: Canada West Foundation, 1996).
- 51 The converging evidence across disciplines and in multi-policy areas is striking. See Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); idem, *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*, *Journal of Democracy* (January 1995): 65-78; idem, "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS: Political Science and Politics* (December 1995): 664-683; Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995); James C. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (Supplement, (1988): S95-S120; and idem, *The Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).
- 52 Although Alan Cairns, among others, argues that states and institutions can have powerful effects on civil society. See his "The Governments and Societies of Canadian Federalism," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 10 (4, 1977); and idem, *Disruptions: Constitutional Struggle from the Charter to Meech Lake* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991).
- 53 Jack Snyder makes the argument strongly that conditional funding can have important consequences when he examines the unintended externalities that the activities of nongovernmental organizations can have on conflict resolution. See Jack Snyder and Karen Ballentine, "Nationalism and the Marketplace of Ideas," *International Security* 21 (Fall 1996): 5-40. See also Janice Gross Stein, "The Resolution of Identity Conflict: The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations," in Jack Snyder and Shibley Telhami, eds., *Non-Governmental Organizations and Conflict Resolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, forthcoming).
- 54 Private foundations have been experimenting with programs to promote civic engagement. "Civil investing" (investment in communities) pays attention to the connective structures and informal groups below the official level and to processes that are not explicitly programmatic. The optic shifts from people as clients to citizens solving problems and the capacity of the community to act together. See *Foundation News & Commentary* (May/June 1996): 21-27.
- 55 John E. Trent, "Post-Referendum Citizen Group Activity," in Douglas M. Brown and Patrick Fafard, eds., *Canada: The State of the Federation, 1996* (Kingston, Ont.: Queen's University, Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1996).
- 56 In 1995, the Greater Baton Rouge Federation of Churches and Synagogues initiated a process of sustained dialogue within its community. Participants across the racial divide committed themselves to meeting every five to six weeks throughout the year. See H. Saunders, "Sustained Dialogue Comes Home," *Connections* 6 (December 1995): 5-6.
- 57 The Canada-for-Tomorrow Committee, "Proposal for a National Dispute Resolution Initiative" (Vancouver: Canadian Bar Association, 1996). See also Trent, "Post-Referendum Citizen Group Activity."
- 58 Trent ("Post-Referendum Citizen Group Activity," p. 46) notes "the seemingly transitory nature of this group activity and its shift from accommodation to opposition."
- 59 See Patrick J. Monahan and Michael J. Bryant with Nancy C. Coté, *Coming to Terms with Plan B: Ten Principles Governing Secession*, C.D. Howe Institute Commentary 83 (Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute, June 1996).
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