"Fast-Track Negotiation": A White Paper

A 21st Century Paradigm for Negotiating Peace and Stability

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Abstract

When seeking to prevent or end situations of large-scale violence, there is a dominant paradigm or accepted wisdom about the "correct" or "ideal" way to negotiate. Though laudable in intent, the paradigm's core principles and practices produce slow negotiation and rely on assumptions that likewise reduce pace. In aggregate, the paradigm's features make it an increasingly obsolete mismatch with the urgent local needs and speed of deterioration typical of most situations in today's highly fragmented conflict landscape. A new and different paradigm – "fast-track negotiation" – offers enlarged options for reaching agreements and surmounts the problematic overdependence on a single model. Fast-track negotiation relies on principles, practices and assumptions that promise greater speed and realism and thus help to restore the missing utility of negotiation in preventing and ending situations of large-scale violence. The model is built on the understanding that the primary goal of negotiation is "getting to yes" and that, in the absence of agreements, sustainability of implementation is a vacant ideal.

Introduction

In 2002, democracy scholar Thomas Carothers published a seminal article in the *Journal of Democracy* entitled **"The End of the Transition Paradigm"** that provoked debate across the field. Questioning the idealistic paradigm of "democratic transition" of the period, he wrote:

> The transition paradigm was a product of a certain time—the heady early days of the third wave—and that time has now passed. It is necessary for democracy activists to move on to new frameworks, new debates, and perhaps eventually a new paradigm of political change—one suited to the landscape of today, not the lingering hopes of an earlier era.

A very similar moment has arrived for the field of conflict resolution and its general aim of preventing and ending situations of large-scale violence. A negotiation paradigm, or accepted wisdom, has ensconced itself and is an increasingly obsolete and costly mismatch with 21st century reality that is not producing settlements.

Through most of recorded history, and on a seemingly universal scale in situations of war and despotism, the use of *negotiation* – meaning a process whereby two or more parties to a conflict attempt to reach an amicable settlement through direct or facilitated talks – was an elite, ad hoc affair run behind closed doors. However, starting around the end of the Cold War – a period overlapping with the "third wave" of democratic transition examined by Carothers – a rejection of the traditional approach arose, and a new paradigm came into view. The new approach was meant to be more inclusive, rigorous and transformational, and drew elements from celebrated outlier experiences like the negotiated agreements reached in South Africa (1993) and Northern Ireland (1998).

Though benign in its logic, the resulting paradigm's core principles and practices – in aggregate – produce slow negotiation and rely on assumptions that further reduce pace. As such, it has become disconnected from the urgent local needs and speed of deterioration typical of the large majority of situations in today's more fragmented conflict and crisis landscape, with its growing types of war (cyber wars, gang wars, climate wars and more), blurring of armed group categories (spanning cartels, jihadists, rebels, pirates, mafia, paramilitaries, self-defence groups and more), and increased varieties of autocracy.

This paper argues that the time has come to expand the toolbox of conflict resolution by introducing a new paradigm that offers more balance between process and outcome, idealism and realism, product and market: *fast-track negotiation*.

Fast-track negotiation is a model of conflict resolution broadly oriented toward the goal of "negative peace" (Johan Galtung's famous term to denote the **"absence of direct violence"**). That is because, in the context of an eroded liberal international order, the predominant choice is not between the heavenly ideal of "positive peace" and the practical need for "negative peace". It is between negative peace and no peace – a choice with an obvious answer when you are suffering the brunt of violence and disorder.

The arrival of fast-track negotiation adds new options without removing existing ones, as the prevailing model will remain relevant in special circumstances that occasionally may arise. In addition, as outlined in this paper, elements of the prevailing model can be combined with the fast-track model. Yet, for any of that to happen, there first needs to be a fast *model*: i.e., an organised set of principles, practices and assumptions purpose-built to facilitate greater

negotiation speed and pragmatism and thus help to produce more agreements and restore the missing utility of negotiation in preventing and ending situations of large-scale violence.

To that end, the first part of the paper breaks down the central problem, namely: overdependence on a single, slow negotiation paradigm for preventing and ending situations of large-scale violence. The second part offers the proposed response, namely: the addition of a new, fast model that matches the landscape and needs of today. The third part describes ways of applying the new model. The fourth part considers potential objections to the new model.

The discomforting truth for those of us doing conflict resolution work is that today's dominant but slow paradigm of negotiation rarely produces a settlement, thus eviscerating the very case for its core principles, practices and assumptions – namely, that legitimacy of process produces sustainability of implementation. It is time to return to first principles by introducing a paradigm that prioritises the reaching of settlements. It is time to acknowledge that sustainability is a vacant ideal in the absence of negotiated outcomes.

Part 1: **The Problem**

The most famous book on negotiation, Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In, contrasts two negotiation paradigms: a prevailing one, focused on position-based bargaining; and a proposed one, focused on interest-based bargaining.

In the context of negotiations aimed at preventing or ending situations of large-scale violence, there is likewise a prevailing and a proposed paradigm. The former – named Model 0 in this paper – is the focus of this section; the latter is the focus of the next.

What are the core principles, practices and assumptions of Model 0? And what are the indicators of their existence?

We can begin with the core principles and practices, which are expressed – with modest variations in wording – across a critical mass of prevailing global, regional and national guidelines, principles and training materials identified in this research, as well as in the public priorities of leading institutions, diplomats and scholars in the conflict resolution sector (in which the author's organisation, IFIT, is active).

The principles and practices are commendable and reflect an accepted wisdom about the optimal way to use negotiation in prospective or actual situations of large-scale violence. The problem is that, as an objective consequence of their application, they tend – in aggregate – to add intricacy, expense and slowness to a negotiation rather than ease, affordability and speed.

Below is a distillation of some of Model 0's key principles and practices:

1. **Tranformation mindset:** A negotiation to prevent or resolve situations of large-scale violence should contribute to a transformation in how the conflict parties relate to each other, moving them from a dynamic of distrust and confrontation to one of confidence and cooperation.

2. **Iterative discovery:** It is only when the negotiation begins, and when a basic rapport is established between the parties, that they can incrementally discuss and discover in any detail what may constitute a zone of possible agreement.

3. **Inclusive participation:** Key stakeholders in the eventual outcome of a negotiation should have a direct voice in the negotiation.

4. **Deferred implementation:** The rules and design of a negotiation should assist in generating a master agreement for future implementation, under the explicit or implicit rule that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed".

5. **In-person preference:** A negotiation to prevent or resolve a situation of large-scale violence requires an exclusive or predominant format of in-person interaction.

6. **Broad agendas:** The substantive scope of a negotiation cannot remain at the level of outward symptoms but must encompass dimensions of accountability and root causes as well.

7. **Detailed settlements:** Any final accord reached through negotiation must provide a high level of precision and specificity to enable effective implementation, monitoring and public support.

8. **Track 1 preference:** Sooner or later, negotiation should culminate in or involve state officials and their leadership-level counterparts on the other side.

9. **International imprimatur:** The structured accompaniment and involvement of influential outside actors (e.g., as observers, guarantors or special envoys) is a signal of a negotiation's importance.

10. **Auxiliary technical support:** Actors performing technical roles in a negotiation (e.g., any approved facilitators, lawyers or advisers) should be reactive rather than directive in their relationship with the negotiating parties.

Far from being arbitrary, these principles and practices of Model 0 are informed by a mix of accumulated experiences and peacebuilding ideals. They are also, however, informed by several assumptions that reinforce the overall logic and reality of slowness. These include:

1. **Ripeness:** Recourse to negotiation as a tool to prevent or resolve situations of large-scale violence should only occur when there are "ripe" conditions, ideally taking the form of a "mutually hurting stalemate" and mutually perceived way out.

2. **Orderliness:** The effective application of Model 0 standards can bring about a controlled and orderly process of negotiation.

3. **Alleviation:** Negotiation will have a moderating effect on the negotiating parties and a holding or calming effect on the larger conflict or crisis.

4. **Transition:** Application of Model 0 standards can raise the possibility of irreversible transition out of armed conflict or authoritarian rule.

In summary, with Model 0 we have a set of principles, practices and assumptions that together form an overall negotiation framework or accepted wisdom – one that is animated by a basic equation, namely, that negotiating peaceful change takes time and it is better to go slowly and "do things right" than expedite matters and reach an unsatisfactory agreement.

So where, one might ask, is the problem? At face value, Model 0's principles, practices and assumptions – which this author has often defended and advocated – likely sound sensible and wise.

The answer is straightforward: except in the rarest of cases, Model 0 isn't delivering settlements. Put less diplomatically: the prevailing negotiation paradigm is failing. The last comprehensive peace settlements, in Colombia and the Philippines, are nearly a decade old and serve as visible exceptions that prove the widespread rule of no-settlement.

To be sure, the fate of a negotiation is typically determined more by exogenous than endogenous factors. On this point there is no dispute. However, the generalised failure of Model 0 to produce settlements is also caused to some significant degree by Model 0 itself – in other words, by endogenous choices.

Firstly, Model 0's core principles and practices objectively encourage slow negotiation and are compounded by core assumptions that further undermine pace. These are features of design, not consequences of faulty implementation.

Secondly, the resulting slowness is an increasingly obsolete mismatch for the conflict landscape of today, which exhibits a far higher degree of fragmentation, urgency and speed of deterioration in threatened or actual situations of large-scale violence than was the case in the 1990s when the principles, practices and assumptions of Model 0 began to coalesce and a rules-based liberal international order seemed ascendant.

An additional but more subtle cause of the generalised failure of Model 0 to produce settlements isn't related to slowness per se, but rather to overdependence on a single paradigm. This is a very different type of problem – one that prompts those doing the work to "default", often unconsciously, to the mental model established by the paradigm and its core principles, practices and assumptions, such that alternative choices either aren't considered (due to the absence of a competing paradigm that expands the spectrum of perceived options) or are judged harshly (due to divergence from the accepted wisdom).

So much for the causes; what then of the consequences of the generalised failure of Model 0 to produce settlements? At least three consequences bear mention:

1. **Opportunity costs:** The lack of settlements under Model 0 translates into missed opportunities to shrink or reshape an impending or actual conflict via an alternative negotiation paradigm, and to do so before it escalates or entrenches.

2. **Inertia costs:** Model 0's sparse record of settlements leads key stakeholders away from rather than toward the use of negotiation to solve threatened or actual situations of large-scale violence.

3. **Human costs:** The absence of settlements under Model 0 means that individuals and groups bearing the biggest brunt of the harm or violence are made to suffer more and wait longer for basic relief.

For these many reasons, the field of conflict resolution is experiencing an internal and external crisis of confidence. Internally, many of us are carrying out our work with considerable cognitive dissonance, unable to align our mental model (i.e., Model 0) with its recurrent inability to deliver results, or even progress, in high-profile and low-profile cases alike – from Libya to Afghanistan, the Sahel, Sudan, Yemen, Israel/Palestine, Somalia, Venezuela, Haiti, Myanmar, Thailand and many more. Externally, the crisis of confidence manifests, among other things, in an expressed lack of confidence that actual or potential negotiating parties, as well as the public, have in obtaining results through Model 0.

Put simply, in a 21st century conflict landscape in which urgency is the rule and non-urgency the exception, the slow negotiation paradigm we have built is dangerously out of synch.

Part 2: The Fix

Having examined the prevailing paradigm, we now consider a new paradigm – *fast-track negotiation* – named Model 1 in this paper.

What are Model 1's core principles and practices and on what corresponding assumptions does it rely? We will begin with the former on the understanding that, as an intentional consequence of the application of a fast-track negotiation model, efficiency and speed should increase and, in doing so, facilitate the primary aim of negotiation in threatened or actual situations of large-scale violence: "getting to yes".

The below set of principles and practices, some of which will be familiar to practitioners, reflect this orientation but will be discomforting as they deviate from Model 0.

1. **Dealmaking mindset:** In a Model 1 negotiation, the primary focus is on securing an agreement, without expecting that the negotiation will or should transform how the conflict parties view each other.

2. **Advance visualisation:** In a Model 1 process, an early outline or zero draft of what may constitute zones of possible agreement should be presented and discussed early on.

3. **Pragmatic inclusion:** Participation in a Model 1 negotiation by key stakeholders other than the negotiating parties is justified when it expedites settlement.

4. **Early implementation:** The procedural rules of a Model 1 negotiation should be designed to reduce negotiation time and accelerate early implementation of full or partial settlements that are reached.

5. **Digital reliance:** In-person meetings should occur at key junctures when needed to accelerate or finalise settlement, with most communication otherwise occurring on a virtual and/or shuttle basis using advanced technologies and data tools.

6. **Settlement-oriented agendas:** The substantive scope of a Model 1 negotiation centres on issues that can plausibly be the subject of expeditious settlement.

7. **Short agreements:** Model 1 settlements can take the form of a single framework agreement or multiple partial agreements, in either case leaving the bulk of detail to implementation bodies and processes.

8. **Multitrack format:** Model 1 negotiation can operate through a Track 1 format, but equally through a combination of negotiations taking place on multiple tracks involving diverse categories of actors.

9. **Visible local ownership:** In line with the "local turn" in peacebuilding, Model 1 negotiation involves clear local leadership and local political economy alignment, with external observers, guarantors or envoys as the exception rather than the rule.

10. **Empowered support roles:** In a Model 1 process, the negotiating parties are encouraged to give any designated facilitators, lawyers or advisers the authority to actively propose options and ideas for reaching accords expeditiously.

Box A: Contrasting Principles and Practices of Model 0 and Model 1

Model 0		Model 1
Tranformation mindset	1	Dealmaking mindset
Iterative discovery	2	Advance visualisation
Inclusive participation	3	Pragmatic inclusion
Deferred implementation	4	Early implementation
In-person preference	5	Digital reliance
Broad agendas	6	Settlement-oriented agendas
Detailed settlements	7	Short agreements
Track 1 preference	8	Multitrack format
International imprimatur	9	Visible local ownership
Auxiliary technical support	10	Empowered support roles

As with the Model 0 paradigm, the principles and practices of the Model 1 fast-track paradigm are accompanied by numerous assumptions. However, these are animated by a very different logic, namely: that "getting to yes" in the 21st century requires negotiating with speed vis-à-vis threatened and actual situations of large-scale violence.

Below are some of the specific assumptions:

1. **Proactivity:** Instead of waiting for ripeness to show itself, Model 1 assumes there is no perfect moment to start a negotiation and that a counterpart's willingness can only be determined and developed by probing.

2. **Disorderliness:** In contrast to the prevailing paradigm, Model 1 presumes that, from the start, all facets of the negotiation will be highly difficult to control or manage.

3. **Exacerbation:** Rather than assuming calming effects, Model 1 presumes that the longer a negotiation continues, the more it will provoke conflict risks and destructive actions by spoilers and extremists on all sides.

4. **Shrinkage:** Instead of the prospect of irreversible transition, Model 1 assumes that threatened or actual situations of large-scale violence can be meaningfully shrunk and reshaped through negotiation.

Box B: Contrasting Assumptions of Model 0 and Model 1

Model 0	*Model 1*
Ripeness must exist	Active probing is needed
Orderliness is possible	Disorderliness is guaranteed
Conflict decreases as negotiation matures	Extended negotiation amplifies conflict
Full transition is possible	Conflict shrinkage is feasible

In summary, Model 1 negotiation is a model predicated on the reality that, when negotiating in threatened or actual situations of large-scale violence in the 21st century, time is not on your side. Time is short.

Part 3: Applications of Model 1

Fast-track negotiation signifies a new prototype for the field of conflict resolution; one tailored to the modern conflict landscape. But what criteria should guide decisions regarding the use of Model 0 versus Model 1 in threatened and actual situations of large-scale violence?

Firstly, as already noted, fast-track negotiation is not meant to replace the current negotiation paradigm. Instead, the aim is to overcome our overdependence on it, considering its mismatch to contemporary conflict and to urgent situations in general. With the introduction of fast-track negotiation, the toolbox is expanded: we now have a garden hose *and* a fire hose at our disposal.

Secondly, although obvious, it is worth recalling that the specific context and interests of the conflict parties – and *not* the negotiation model – must remain the analytic starting point. Negotiation models exist only to assist actors in crafting better responses to reality, on the understanding that negotiation processes are best understood as complex systems requiring continuous innovation and adjustment.

Thirdly, as outlined below, there will occasionally arise situations in which elements of both Model 0 and Model 1 can be used. Yet, the more urgent the situation on the ground – and the more the true choice is between negative peace and no peace (rather than between negative peace and positive peace) – the more one should rely on Model 1's fast-track principles, practices and assumptions.

As for specific applications of Model 1, four potential modes can be distinguished. The first is a fast-track negotiation in which, through a solitary process, the aim is to achieve a single framework agreement. A second potential mode consists of multiple fast-track negotiations involving multiple actors and generating multiple agreements through which, on a piecemeal basis, the aim is to shrink and eventually resolve a threatened or actual situation of large-scale violence. A third potential mode, more exceptional in nature, could involve a fast-track negotiation embedded within a larger Model 0 negotiation to address discrete issues that can be partially disaggregated from the larger agenda, either to build trust between the parties or deliver early benefits to affected populations. A fourth potential mode is not an application per se but important to note nevertheless, namely: a "mix and match" approach in which elements of the principles and practices of Models 0 and 1 are customised to a particular situation.

Box C: Ways of Applying Model 1

Approach	*Orientation*
A single fast-track agreement via Model 1	Framework agreements
Multiple fast-track agreements via Model 1	Piecemeal conflict reduction
Fast-track deals within a Model 0 process	Confidence-building
Mix and match	Ad hoc fusion

Naturally, there are prior cases of negotiation that hold value for the fast-track model. For instance, there are examples of framework agreements that have been reached quickly with the aim of preventing or ending situations of large-scale violence, including in the cases of Mexico (the 1996 San Andres Accords), Afghanistan (the 2001 Bonn Agreement), Kenya (the 2008 National Accord) and Ethiopia (the 2022 Pretoria Agreement), to name only a few. Likewise, there are scores of examples of the rapid negotiation of partial agreements on a diverse range of issues, from humanitarian protection to electoral conditions, ceasefires, institutional reforms, and more. Instances of quickly reached confidence-building side agreements within larger processes are also numerous.

However, when it comes to threatened or actual situations of large-scale violence, we only have *examples* of fast negotiation; we do not have an organised *model*. The circumstance up to now is akin to arriving at a restaurant with a two-page menu in which one side of the page is neatly organised based on established recipes, and the other a chaotic jumble of words and concepts derived from ad hoc cooking experiments. In this respect, by offering a new page of *organised choices*, the fast-track prototype resets and augments the range of options in ways that cannot be assessed retroactively but that can – and will – be tested, evaluated, adjusted and improved prospectively though application and experience.

Part 4: Objections to Model 1

As paradigms of negotiation, Models 0 and 1 each engender foreseeable risks, limitations, trade-offs and objections. Some of these are common to both models (e.g., how to handle major disparities in bargaining power or manage the risk of "false negotiations" wherein one or more parties lack the genuine intention to bargain), whilst others are specific to Model 1. This section focuses on the latter, with an emphasis on expected objections.

Objection 1: *Model 0 is a straw man. It doesn't really exist.*

A straw man is defined in the Oxford dictionary as "a weak imaginary opponent or argument that is set up in order to be defeated easily". Is Model 0 a straw man? For the following reasons, it is not.

Firstly, with fast-track negotiation, there is an explicit *absence* of intention to defeat Model 0. Expanding the toolbox of conflict resolution, not defeating Model 0, is the declared proposition.

Secondly, Model 0 is presented as a prevailing *paradigm*, not as an actual living and breathing reality. The Oxford dictionary defines paradigm as "a conceptual or methodological model underlying the theories and practices of a science or discipline at a particular time; (hence) a generally accepted world view". In that regard, the claim of this paper is not that one can expect to find Model 0 in the negotiation aisle of the equivalent of a negotiation store. Instead, the claim is that Model 0 fairly describes a set of "generally accepted" ideas in the field of conflict resolution that are both familiar to practitioners and verifiable across published guidelines, courses, policies and more.

Thirdly, the paradigmatic nature of Model 0 is also evident in the way that divergences from its key principles, practices and assumptions are met. Settled on a general ceasefire? That's a useful foundation for assembling a larger political process or settlement. Agreed on a prisoner exchange? That's a helpful basis for deeper relationship building. Organised a public consultation? That's a good first step in broadening and expanding participation in the talks. And so on.

Objection 2: *Fast-track negotiation already exists.*

This second expected objection is the flipside of the first. In this case, the objection is that there is no new model or paradigm being presented, but merely the rebranded version of an already-existing reality.

This is not so. Firstly, it is undisputed that there are scores of examples of negotiation that have been fast, both in the present and in the past. Likewise, there is a visible increase in ad hoc experimentation with different approaches to speed and other variables of negotiation in the search to find anything that will work. Yet, until now, there has not been any "conceptual or methodological model" (in the sense cited above) for negotiating quickly.

Secondly, for certain limited-focus negotiations (e.g., talks aimed at a hostage release, humanitarian corridor or temporary cessation in hostilities), there exist many helpful guidance materials in which speed is an acknowledged necessity. These are relevant to the ideas presented here. However, as explained in Part 2, fast-track negotiation aims higher and further than an isolated or limited-focus negotiation; and it is conceived as a process that moves quickly from start to end. In that sense, early or quick gains through limited-focus deals are not treated as a mere prelude to slowing down again in the way expressed, for example, in the Foreword of the UN's 2022 Guidance on Mediation of Ceasefires: "Ceasefires are a major opportunity to set the foundation for inclusive and comprehensive peace talks".

Objection 3: *Fast-track negotiation will produce unsustainable agreements.*

For some observers, fast-track negotiation may create the concern of reinforcing "bad old ways" of negotiation in which "dirty deals" occur between elites behind closed doors, oriented by realpolitik imperatives and little more. The concern can have both a normative dimension (i.e., negotiation should for ethical reasons be more inclusive, comprehensive and accountable) and a factual one (i.e., higher levels of sustainability are claimed to occur when the broad outline of Model 0 is followed; and, by corollary, higher risks of harm are claimed to occur when it is not).

The concern is questionable on multiple levels. Firstly, on its own, quickness has no inherent weakness or virtue. This point is eloquently expressed in the famous French proverb: "*il ne faut pas confondre vitesse et précipitation*" (one should not confuse speed with haste). Only haste is inherently flawed.

Secondly, key normative ideals of the prevailing negotiation paradigm, such as inclusivity, can be accommodated at a wide variety of paces before, during and after a negotiation. Indeed, it is perfectly plausible to be fast *and* inclusive, and thus achieve forms of participation that avoid what might be called "dirty delays" (i.e., situations in which basic forms of relief for the most vulnerable or conflict-affected populations are deferred or precluded in whole or in part by a slow, idealistic format).

Thirdly, even if evidentiary claims about the sustainability of Model 0 settlements were unambiguous and bankable, which they are not, today any purported advantage is moot: there aren't settlements being reached through Model 0 principles and practices. By contrast, Model 1, which is purposefully matched to the dominant realities of the 21st century conflict landscape, offers new opportunities for achieving the primary raison d'être of negotiation – namely, *reaching agreement and thus producing something to deliver and sustain* – knowing full well that the effort comes not only with the inevitable range of complications that accompany any implementation effort, but also an established suite of sustainability-enhancing tools (including commitment mechanisms, enforcement guarantees, incentives, threats and more).

Objection 4: *Fast-track negotiation misreads and undervalues negotiation's potential.*

Fast-track negotiation is presented as a new and ambitious paradigm for helping to shrink or resolve threatened or actual situations of large-scale violence. Nevertheless, some observers may view it as a model that merely promises to manage conflicts and crises, without changing anything.

The concern may take many forms. For example, a minimum span of time often is perceived as necessary to allow bad actors to make the internal mental shift away from reliance on illegal violence or repression. A critic might thus allege that fast-track will fail to capitalise on negotiation's capacity to serve as a process through which deep-seated individual and collective narratives and beliefs change and broader endgames and alternative futures come into view. Similarly, critics may be concerned that fast-track negotiation will preclude the time needed for winning over the hearts and minds of two key audiences: the general public, and the followership of each negotiating party.

These concerns are understandable but unwarranted. Firstly, Model 1 is focused on negotiation's sine qua non for fostering change, namely: the generation of an agreement, without which there is only the mirage of change. To that end, the model intentionally corrects a notable Model 0 flaw: overloaded expectations of what the theatre of negotiation can accomplish.

Secondly, fast-track negotiation flips the script. In line with the Model 1 assumptions presented earlier in this paper, fast-track's logic is that the theatre of negotiation is *not* the ideal cauldron for gradually raising the bar of expectations and constructing the variables of change, but instead a limited one in comparison to the wide spectrum of negotiation-adjacent spaces (including, not least, the early phase of any implementation). It is there that the desired strategic, tactical, narrative and psychological shifts should concentrate.

Ultimately, the majority of 21st century scenarios of threatened or actual large-scale violence are just too complicated, elusive and dynamic to handle in a single, comprehensive and slow negotiation. The recommended move, which can now be tested through Model 1, is to expand the negotiation toolbox. It is to prioritise a more disciplined and focused paradigm which, over time, can and will be refined through locally led applications, feedback loops, simulations, case studies and more. The alternative is to consign too many countries and communities to inexcusable violence and disorder.

Conclusion

This paper has examined a central problem affecting conflict prevention and resolution, namely: overdependence on a single, slow negotiation paradigm. The paper has also introduced a new negotiation model that is purpose-built for the modern conflict landscape: *fast-track negotiation*.

While it is too early to determine how often the new model will succeed, as it has yet to be applied as part of the expanded toolbox and organised paradigm described here, the performance of the existing model has hit rock bottom. Sometimes there is simply nowhere to go but up.

What is unclear is why the flaws of the existing model have hidden in plain sight for so long. Field observers and practitioners, including this author, have long been aware of the changed conflict and crisis landscape, with its more complex varieties of war, weaponry, armed groups and political regimes. Despite this, and despite our chronic inability to gen-

erate agreements through Model 0, we have failed to evolve our negotiation paradigm.

Fast-track negotiation thus allows for an overdue reset. It offers a structured framework of principles, practices and assumptions that better match the prevalent threats and disorder of this century and break with the largely obsolete postulates of the last.

There are naturally bound to be instances when fast-track negotiation will produce unintended harm or moral hazards. Yet, this is the eventuality of any negotiation, whether slow or fast, when used to prevent or resolve situations of large-scale violence. The simple promise of fast-track negotiation is to fail much less and get to yes more often.

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