

***Strategic Planning
for
Areas of Conflict***

**Northern Ireland The Way Forward
2003 - 2030
Stephen C Armstrong**

Executive Summary

- **Subject:** The current approach to developing the way forward for Northern Ireland is faltering if not failing. To deny this would be the definition of an ostrich. The political parties do not have a shared future state vision at the fundamental level - in fact they are diametrically opposed. Day to day politics can not be effective in the long term. A solution that is sustaining can not be achieved without a shared vision. A shared vision succeeds and sustains when a substantial majority of the people (stakeholders) from all sections of the community own the vision. The Good Friday agreement is fundamentally flawed. The evidence for this abounds. Devolved government hasn't worked. A fundamentally different vision is required, one that is inclusive and far reaching. And one that forces people to think in a different way breaking from past history and prejudice.
- **Need:** Demonstrate as a pilot project the creation of a shared vision. The vision will look 25 years into the future and could stretch 30 years. The key aspect of this initiative is the methodology. We will demonstrate how people from NI, ROI, GB who have made a life in Canada can thrive as one community by letting go of the past model of behaviour and beliefs. We believe this model will serve as a framework for conflict resolution world wide.
- **Idea:** Assemble a team of people (about 20) that have an interest in Northern Ireland's success within Ireland or within the UK or alternative constructs. Conduct a 2-3 day directional planning workshop at a university. The team will consist of people from diverse backgrounds of class, race, religion, and education. We are looking for forward thinking people who will make an effort to think "out of the box". Whether viewing NI as British or Irish or Ulster Scots we welcome the different opinions of all the people on the island of Ireland, the UK and external to the British Isles.

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- **Benefit:** Use the results as a catalyst for change. It would serve as a blue print of how creative thinking can evolve from people of diverse backgrounds and different political view points. By developing a compelling vision that moves beyond the “old” story and leaving behind outdated “solutions” we will demonstrate how to create new thinking
- **The value:** Based on many years experience in developing strategies for major corporations we know that a shared vision and realistic initiatives result in transformational improvement and success. We will demonstrate the mechanics of new thinking. Each individual will also gain personally from the experience. It will be a chance to express their frustrations in a structured way and contribute to personal healing. It can be viewed as a mini laboratory and will serve as a model for other open minded people. Participants will also gain a deeper understanding of other peoples perspective. We believe the fact that the group will consist of people who are living in Canada and have gained an external perspective of NI will bring additional perspective

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- **Conclusion:** We are not naive enough to believe that this initiative will have any immediate benefit to Northern Ireland's problems and its relationship with the ROI and the rest of the UK. It may even be mocked by the old school thinking. This is to be expected. The bars and dinner tables around Toronto and the world are buzzing with talk on Ulster/Ireland/the north/the 6 counties/the UK. We wish to channel the ideas generated at social events and package and disseminate them. We will bring focus using a proven methodology that fosters solutions, new thinking and above all a deep interest to see sustained peace and harmony to NI and the relationship with ROI and GB and the EU.
- **Action:** We seek approx 20 volunteers who bring a broad range of opinions on NI and diverse backgrounds. We welcome those with a Unionist, Nationalist, Loyalist, Republican, British, Irish, English, Scottish, Welsh, American, Canadian etc. The workshop will be held in February - April 2004 time frame at a local University in Toronto. They will be required to donate 2-3 days of their time. A reading package will be provided prior to the workshop to trigger thinking. Many good books on NI abound but we will use editorials and newspaper articles from the 6 years as background reading. The key ingredient is the experience and knowledge of NI that is person brings together with an open mind fostered by living & working in Canada and the USA

The challenge For NI - finding the right strategy

Many years of experience with strategic planning has shown that it is critical for a strategy to be successful is that their must be a **shared** future state vision. The basic underlying logic is that the future cannot be successful if the stakeholders have a vision that contradicts one another. This doesn't mean political parties should have the same goals & objectives but when those goals & objectives fundamentally contradict one another then no sustained harmony can be achieved.

Although many governments and political parties have strategic plans and stated visions, there are key weaknesses that are barriers to bringing long term sustained value to a very complex political situation. These weaknesses must be avoided

Typically the top 10 are:

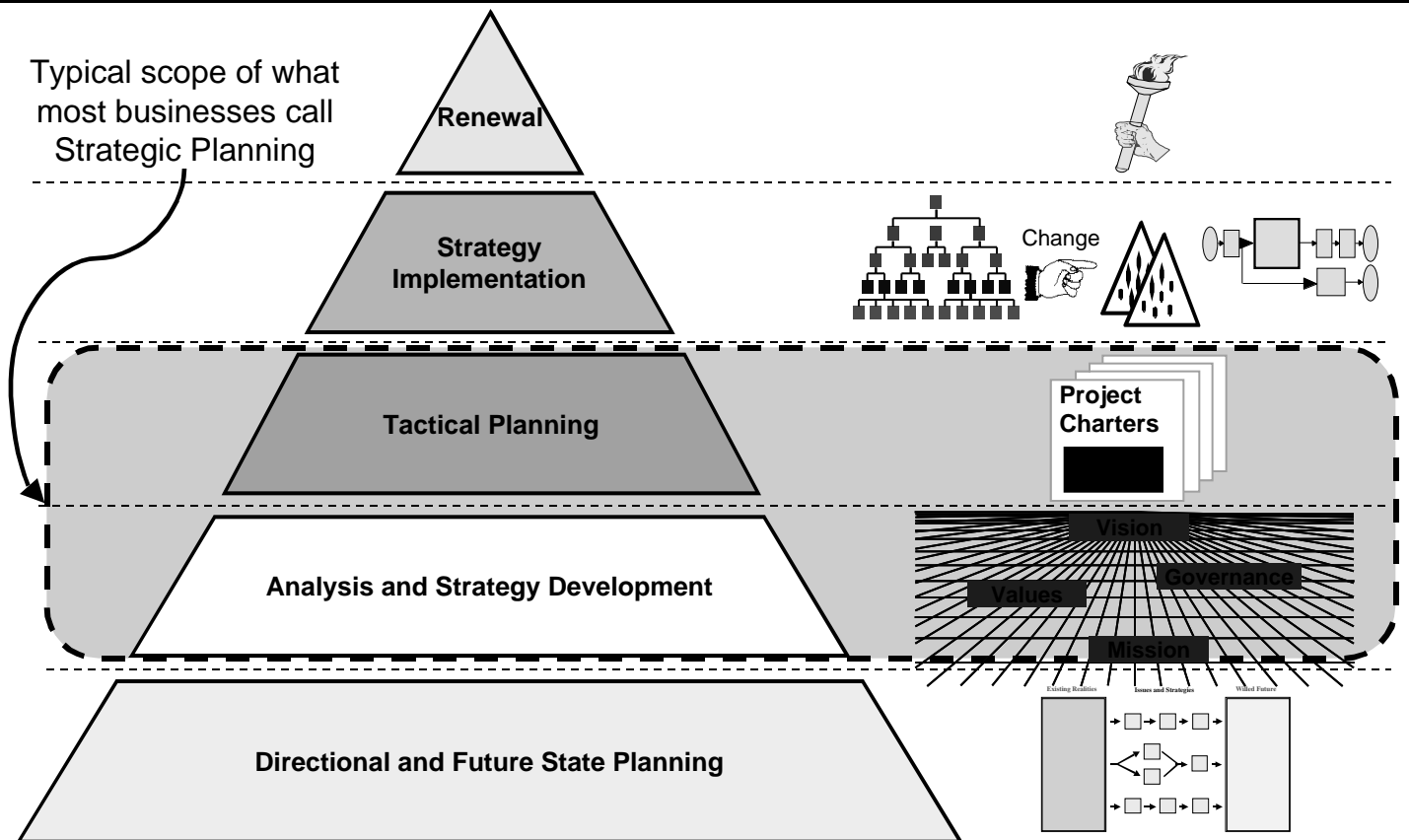
1. The Current State assessment (if one is completed) fails to recognize the key weaknesses.
2. Creation of a Future State Vision is missing, not ambitious enough or the Vision is too conceptual or vague or is not supported by a sizeable group of stakeholders or visions are a contradiction
3. Gaps between the Current and Future State are not properly identified.
4. Strategies are not aligned with these gaps and therefore allocate resources to the wrong things - strategies do not work.
5. Often good strategy ideas are discredited because people prejudice what they think the people want/do not want. They hang onto past concepts that are outdated in the changing world. Creativity innovation and change is stifled and the people are not encouraged to think in new ways
6. Strategies are not translated into practical plans that can be managed - nor are good project management practices used to implement them.
7. The impact of strategic plans is not incorporated into operating plans or budgets.
8. Responsibility for strategy is not clear - implementation leadership is therefore weak.
9. Responsibility is not aligned with reward and recognition.
10. During implementation, the process ensuring benefit delivery is weak or non-existent.

Why is it so difficult for areas of conflict to develop and execute good Strategic Plans?

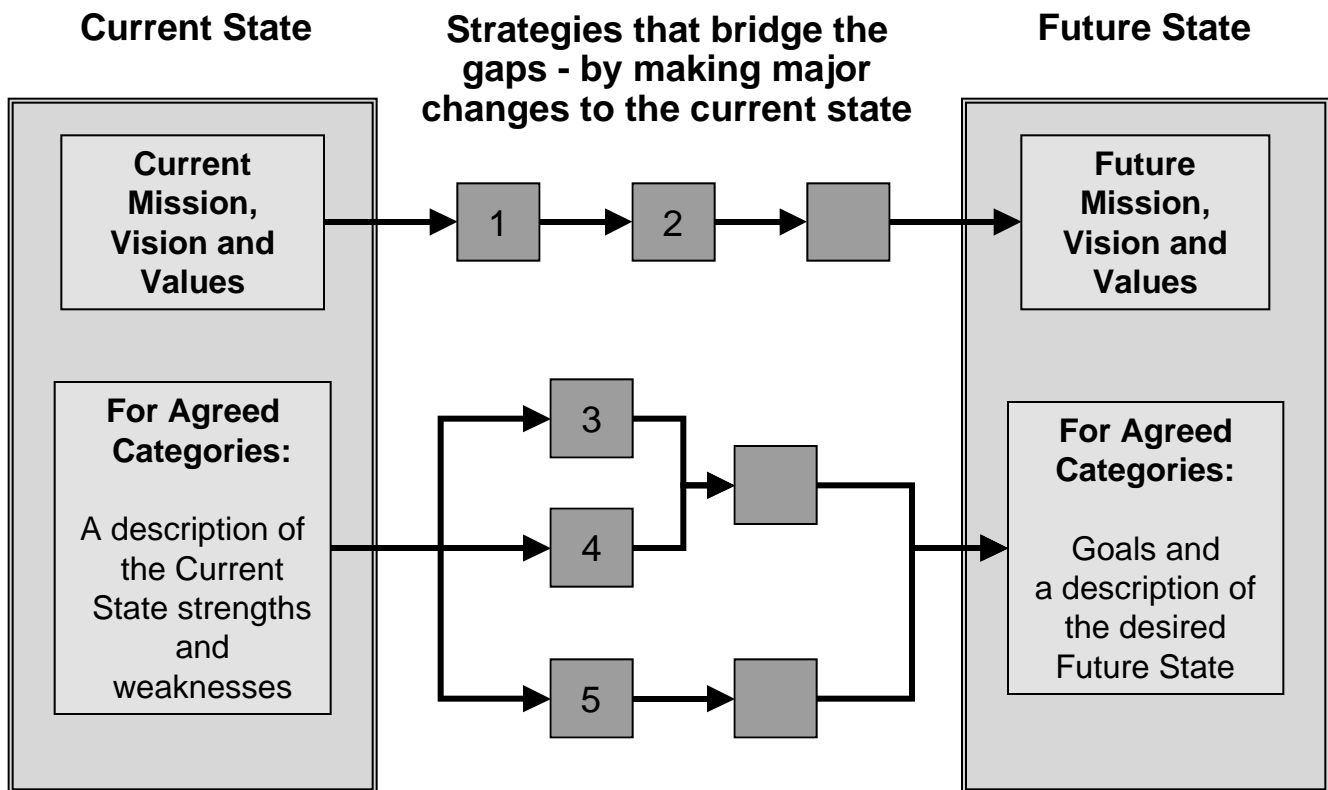
Typically, the following dilemmas are not resolved by political leaders:

- Politicians and government bureaucrats are not experts in Strategic or future state Planning processes. They have limited knowledge of the alternatives and spend a minority of time on it - they focus on rigid rhetoric that evolved from a past era that does not reflect the modern world (5th century, 1115, 1690, 1795, 1841, 1916, 1922, 1948, 1969, etc)
- There are often inaccurate, disparate and historical myths about the history of the peoples of the British Isles, their relative importance and the root causes of thinking that has passed from generation to generation.
- The toughest questions cannot be easily asked by political parties who are both biased and sensitive about their personal ratings and positioning.
- Without a breadth of experience in a variety of different environments civil servants are unaware of the performance improvement strategies that they might pursue.
- Management-of-Change practices are not understood, or used to address resistance to change - may even be used for “spin doctoring”
- Civil servants are unaware of how to organize themselves to effectively manage the execution of strategy - especially so if leaders do not have ownership

The potential scope of planning



Basis of the Analysis and Strategy Development element - The “Transformation Chart™” structure



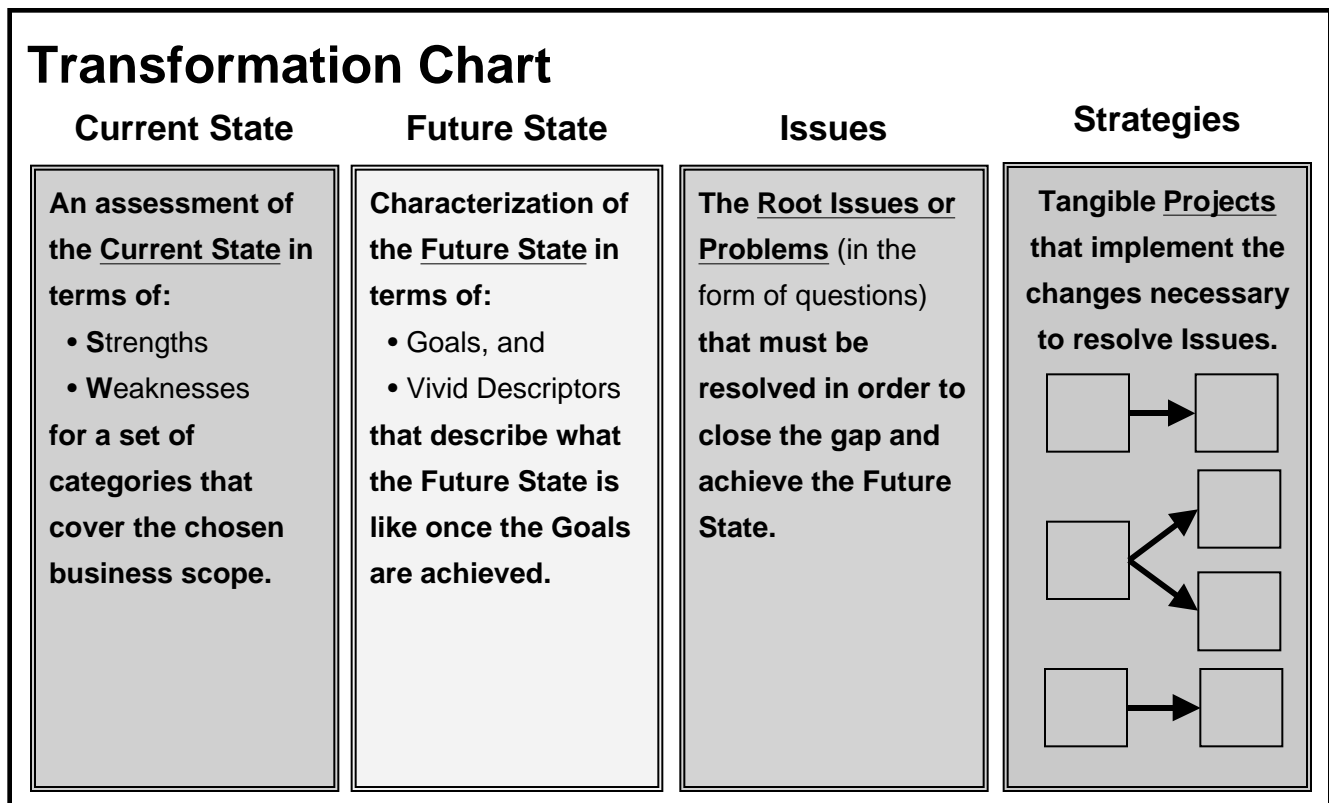
Critical Areas of Success

- Culture, Identity, and Nationality
 - Republicanism & Loyalism
 - Unionism and Nationalism
 - Ulster Scots (Scots Irish), Irish and British
 - Ulster Scots role in the USA (1700's - 1800's)
 - Ireland new brand in the world 1980 - 2003
- Governance and Constitution
 - Devolution
 - Relationship with the Republic of Ireland
 - Role and Perceptions in the UK and the British Isles
 - Role in the European Union
 - Role in the new world order and Globalization / Imperialism
- Education
 - Integrated education
 - Education and the Role of the Church
- History and Mythology (5th century - 21st century)
 - Republican Myths
 - Loyalist Myths
 - Irish American Myths

Critical Success Areas

- Industry, Technology and Competitiveness
 - Industrial history and identity
 - The role of the civil service
 - 21st century competitiveness
- Politics
 - Political Architecture
 - The role of class
 - Socialism and Capitalism
- Sport and Identity
 - Rugby
 - Football
 - Gaelic Football
 - Celtic and Rangers
- Music & Entertainment & Media
 - Irish versus Scots Irish
 - Popular Music and the influence of the Celts
 - Influence in world wide media
- The Good Friday Agreement and impact of the troubles (1969 - 2000)

How does Transformation Chart Logic work?



Transformation Chart logic develops strategy in a very disciplined way

