A System of Conflict Analysis for Aid Agencies

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This approach to conflict analysis is based on the Strategic Conflict Assessment method devised by Jonathan Goodhand for DFID.[1] The ultimate purpose of conflict analysis is to integrate an understanding and response to conflict into strategic planning. An understanding of conflict then becomes the basis on which all other activity is planned. But approaches to strategic planning vary and so conflict analysis is often used to generate a map of what a strategic response to conflict would look like. This 'strategic response map' can be used as an input to other planning processes. The first stage, conflict mapping, can be used to generate models of conflict dynamics, scenarios and conflict-sensitive principles which can be used as a basis for evaluation. The second stage maps out what is already being done, a 'response map', and the third stage identifies where there are gaps that need to be filled. This can be used to develop new peace-building initiatives and frameworks, or ideally as an input to strategic planning.

Stage One

The first stage is to **map** out the factors relating to conflict. The focus is not on the original causes of conflict but on what is important today. The main purpose of dividing the factors into separate boxes is to show what aspect is most important. The grid system also helps to draw attention to neglected aspects and also show the overall relationship of the elements-

Table 1: Conflict Map

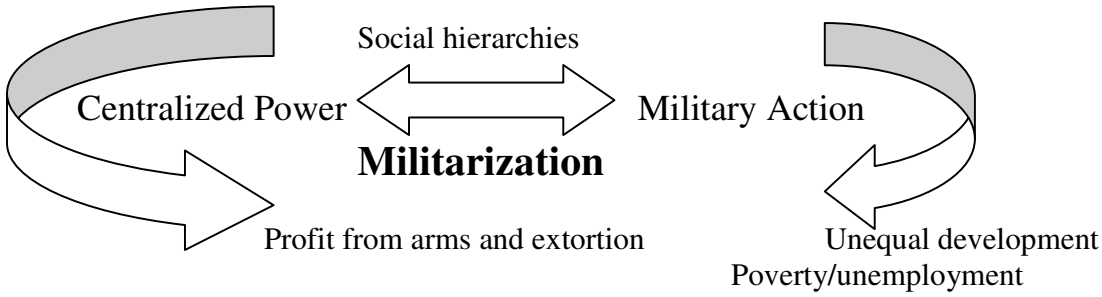
	Security	Political	Economic	Social
International	*Global security agenda* *Regional tensions*	*International pressure for peace;*	*Diaspora funding the war* *Lack of aid in north*	*Discourse of grievances*
National	*Propaganda for 'winnable war';* *Interests of Tamil leadership;* *All out war;*	***Militarization*** *Centralization* *Top-down approach* *Role of political extremists*	*Ransoms and extortion;* *Profit from arms sales;*	*Rumour as source of info;* *Social stratification;*
District	*Fracturing of LTTE* *Role of paramilitaries*	*Failure of joint control mechanisms*	*Land issues*	*Alienation of Muslims;* *Population movements*
Local	*Impunity re human rights*	*Manipulation of fears* *Lack of representation of women*	*Unemployed youth*	*High educational aspirations;* *Radicalised youth;*

[1] DFID (2002) *Conducting Conflict Assessments –Guidance Notes,* DFID London

Examples only -based on a Sri Lanka case study
In some cases there may need to be a regional level between national and international.

Draw lines to show some of the most important connections between different factors. Now identify the centre of the map –the place where the most important issues are gathered. This may still be an interaction of factors –but the most critical ones. Separate these out and make a focused **conflict model,** as in this example for Sri Lanka-

Figure: Conflict Model



Conflict Dynamics and Scenarios

In order to show what is driving the conflict, and also bring in a poverty focus, it may be useful to divide the elements of the model into two groups –those that represent Greed (predatory self-interest) and those that represent Grievance (resentments that could take a violent form)[2]. Note that the purpose is not to say whether the conflict is caused by Greed or Grievance but to model the conflict as an interaction of the two elements. Thus, in the Sri Lanka case-

Greed and Grievance dynamics

Greed	**Grievance**
Centralized Power	Unequal development
Profit from arms and extortion	Poverty/unemployment
Social Hierarchies	Unfair treatment

Conflict dynamics depend not only on the deep-seated interaction of Greed and Grievance but also on more 'proximate' dynamics within each group. Thus, the conflict in Sri Lanka is perpetuated by the short-term interests of each group-

<u>Greed:</u> **Centralized/Militarized power** ⇨ **Profit from arms and extortion**

<u>Grievance:</u> Poverty/unemployment ⇨ **Recruitment/militarization**

[2] See Berdal, M and D Malone (eds) (2000) *Greed and Grievance –economic agendas in civil wars,* Lynne Rienner

By introducing events at the end of each line of conflict dynamics, **scenarios** can be developed. These are normally used to show the outcome of likely external events such as elections and peace talks.[3] They can also be used to assess the result of deliberate interventions. For example, an arms embargo by donors would alter the dynamics of Greed but, in relation to Grievance, might exacerbate the problem of poverty because of lower recruitment in military forces -unless it was accompanied by other measures. But such short-term events will not usually affect the fundamental model or dynamic and so it is usually better to consider them in relation to specific conflict dynamics rather than the conflict map or model.

Conflict-sensitive principles

One of the most useful tools that can be devised from this first stage of conflict analysis is a set of principles relating to aid interventions. These describe the type of action that will be most likely to reduce the dynamic towards conflict. They provide an opportunity to introduce basic values. In the model above, principles could be developed around issues such as-

- Centralization (including the agency's own ways of working)
- Relations with military forces (asserting humanitarian space)
- Unequal development (reversing former trends)
- Social hierarchies (in recruitment, procedures etc)

Conflict-related evaluation

Conflict analysis is especially useful in relation to the OECD-DAC Evaluation Criterion of 'Relevance'[4]. A response will be relevant to conflict if it interacts with the elements of the conflict map, and especially relevant if it addresses key issues in the conflict model. A conflict analysis is therefore an essential part of evaluation in a conflict context but is often lacking in project documents and has to be devised by the evaluators –often with limited time.

There are two ways round this problem. Firstly, evaluators can generate a conflict map and model based on secondary sources, such as conflict studies. Secondly, they can use a consensus of the stakeholders. This can be done in a few hours by creating the map and model in a participatory workshop. The intervention can then be compared with the full conflict map (Table 1) to identify intersections. Then the focus of the intervention can be compared with the focus of the conflict model. This will test the relevance of the intervention to conflict at a strategic level. For a more tactical assessment, the conflict-sensitive principles may be applied. These will indicate whether the intervention has, or has not, acted in a 'conflict-sensitive' manner.

A more specific 'Do No Harm' test can be applied by considering whether the intervention in any way contributes to the 'Greed' dynamic. This principle may be appropriate in fragile states where normal state controls on 'Greed' are likely to be

[3] Such events are sometimes called conflict 'triggers' but the term is limiting.
[4] OECD-DAC (2000) *DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance*, OECD Paris

lacking.[5] However, it may not be an adequate test in more stable situations where governments and aid actors may be expected to 'Do Good'.

Stage Two

For purposes of strategic planning and for developing new programmes, the next stage is to map out what is being done in relation to the causes/factors identified in Stage One. Map out these 'responses' whether they are deliberate or not (they do not have to be called 'conflict' or 'peace-building' programmes but anything that addresses the underlying issues). Include potential responses such as mandates (e.g. a mandate for protection) and capacities (especially in civil society). Take special care to include any actions and capacities by local people and organisations. These may indicate the basis on which new programmes can build. Try to fill all the boxes-

Table 2: Response map

	Security	Political	Economic	Social
International	*Support for peace talks;*	*Pressure for governance reform;*	*Pressure on diaspora;*	*Welfare support to refugees;*
National	*Security sector reform programmes;*	*Support for accountable government;*	*Aid in neglected areas;*	*Support to civil society;*
District	*Protection activity;*	*Support for decentralization;*	*Equitable aid;*	*Peace-building;*
Local	*Human rights reports;*	*Pressure for accountability in aid;*	*Economic regeneration in war areas;*	*Women's movements;*

Examples in italics (from Sri Lanka case study)

It may be useful at this stage to focus on the role of aid. Identify the key aid actors such as donors and multilateral organizations. Make a list of them and consider whether they are working-

- **Around** conflict (avoiding conflict areas)
- **In** conflict (working in conflict areas but without any strategy relating to conflict)
- **On** conflict (working with deliberate intention on conflict)

This will show the strategic pattern of aid in relation to conflict. It will identify organizations that could do more. This may suggest the need for cooperation among donors and for influence/advocacy work. The third stage is to map out what your own organization should do –both directly and in order to influence others.

[5] 'Do No Harm' is included in the OECD-DAC (2005 draft) *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States.*

Stage Three

The third and final map should ideally include everything that needs to be done by all actors. Then underline the areas where your own organization can take action (adjusting programmes or developing new ones) and also where you should be able to exert an influence on others. All this can be mapped out as a strategic plan in relation to conflict, including both action and influence/advocacy-

Table 3: Conflict Strategy map

	Security	Political	Economic	Social
International	*Change focus of peace talks;*	*Form donor group for governance reform;*	*Persuade other donors to work 'on' conflict;*	*Challenge militarism among diaspora;*
National	*Focus SSR programmes on human rights;*	*Tighter focus for governance programmes*	*Link economic aid to governance reform;*	*Promote civil society link to governance;*
District	*Support UNHCR protection role;*	*New programme to support decentralization*	*Monitor aid distribution;*	*Involve civil society in local governance;*
Local	*Link aid to human rights;*	*Transparency in all projects;*	*Focus employment in critical areas;*	*Challenge ethnic perception in all projectss;*

A Conflict Strategy can also be called a 'Peace-Building Framework'. It should be legitimate to use the word 'peace' because the analysis has identified the basic elements of conflict and therefore implies a specific notion of peace. This is not just a matter of stopping the violence but of building a society with fewer propensities to violent conflict. But there is a danger that a 'peace-building framework' will be left isolated from strategic planning at country level. Ideally the conflict strategy should be fully integrated with overall strategy.

As a simple rule, conflict analysis should be undertaken whenever strategic plans are formed or revised. In some countries there may be no actual conflict and the risk may be considered low. Nevertheless, there is a case for conflict analysis in all cases as a way of identifying tensions and risk. The same mapping techniques can be applied. The method can then be called 'Conflict and Risk Analysis'.

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