RE-APPRAISING CONFLICT ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a human condition that cannot be eradicated. It has to be accepted and managed. But to manage conflict today there is a case for better analysis or analytical processes due to the increasing complexity of the global conflict environment. Arguably approaches to conflict analysis in all its phases should be more disciplined leading to better conclusions on how a conflict can be prevented, managed, or ultimately resolved. Historically conflict analysis has been an activity that has been reactive to events leading to, or during conflict. Indeed conflicts are events-driven and it is normally reaction on the part of actors, not pro-action, that determines how a conflict is managed towards resolution. But disciplined and continuous analysis may lead to better and more timely management and resolution.

Conflict management following a failure in prevention, has often been too slow a process to reduce successfully the consequences of violence, or it has been wrongly-motivated. Today international approaches to conflict prevention, management and resolution have advanced little from the days of the Cold War and mainly dwell on practices and old methods of analysis institutionalized in the UN and other international bodies from experiences of the second half of the 20th Century. These practices use such ideas as those incorporated in peace-keeping, humanitarian operations and UN Security Council resolutions amongst other methods used in attempts to bring a conflict to a peaceful conclusion. There is a place for these well-tried tools and mechanisms, but they should possibly be developed beyond the conflict management and analysis methodologies they are based on to take account of the changing conflict environment. There is no common approach to conflict analysis amongst diplomatic, political, military, or amongst civil society actors; but similar solutions are often reached through different methods of analysis because there is a lack of commonality in analytical method and a lack of discipline in current practice. Moreover, globalization, the increasing number of non-state actors and their activities; and climate change all make conflict analysis more complex; thus demanding even more disciplined and commonly understood approaches. Analytical approaches and training programmes such as those proposed and reviewed above have gone some way to addressing this issue. However, to progress further beyond currently published theory and practice there is more to be done to spread a common methodology of thinking about modern conflict and thus to promote realistic possibilities for the management, if not prevention, of conflict. Training a common method of thinking into individuals and groups involved in the management and resolution of active or dormant conflict is part of this approach. The concept of conflict analysis and training described here is based on the idea that conflict analysis needs a common discipline incorporating training. A training process can help to remove some of the emotion that confuses resolution initiatives by providing a structured and disciplined approach to the process of analysis.

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Definition of conflict analysis

The literature review shows a general common definition of conflict analysis as the systematic study of the profile, causes, actors and dynamics of conflict. Conflict mapping within conflict analysis appears as an essential tool for understanding conflict from different perspectives, although its visual feature only allows a "snapshot" of the situation omitting conflict causes and dynamics. There is agreement that it can be carried out at various levels, such as local, regional and national levels. Sandole (1998) mentions four main levels of conflict – individual, societal, international, and global/ecological.

Some researchers have approached conflict analysis by trying to find a generic theory in conflict and conflict resolution (Boulding, 1962; Sandole, 1998). Boulding (1962) thinks that a generic theory in conflict and conflict resolution is possible and that there is no difference between levels. Rapoport (1974; cited in Sandole, 1998), expresses his doubts over a general theory of conflict and a general theory of war. According to Vasquez (1993, p.306), a unified theory of conflict is possible, while a generic theory of war may not be (ibid., p. 49). According to Sandole (1998), a generic theory is useful not only for explaining, but also "for responding to conflict at all levels, including the violent ethnic conflicts and warfare of the post-Cold War era".

According to Mason and Rychard (2005), conflict analysis can be used either on a one to one basis or in a group. They highlight how conflict analysis is not an "objective art", but it is influenced by different views. There is no "objective understanding of the conflict"; instead "subjective perceptions" on the conflict become "transparent". As a result, there is more space for consideration and clearer communication of these 'perceptions'. ICRA's method suggests that more objectivity in analysis is possible.

The MethodFinder's Practitioner's Guide (2004) highlights the limitations of conflict analysis. As it is considered a "snapshot of a present situation", conflict analysis needs a "regular updating mechanism" to incorporate the ever changing and dynamic elements of a conflict situation. There is also a time limitation as conflict analysis can exacerbate an already tense situation.

Methodology – what has been developed?

Principles for analysis

Boulding (1962) presents general principles for analysis, while Deutsch (1973) uses a more detailed and analytical approach to conflict analysis. Blalock uses both approaches (1989). He examines the common processes of conflict, the roles of the participants in a conflict and describes features unique to specific types of conflict. His work focuses on theoretical analyses from sociology and economics. The Static-equilibrium models[2], the Richardson Process Model[3], the game theory[4], and the theory of Viability[5] are taken into consideration when exploring conflicts.

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[2] The Equilibrium theory aims at explaining the link between supply, demand and prices in an economy with interacting markets.

[3] The Richardson Process Model. Lewis Fry Richardson (1881-1953) was an English physicist who served in World War I. Amid concerns over the arms build-up in Europe following World War II, he developed an arms race model that could predict large-scale military conflicts. His model, which assumed that an arms race would

Deutsch (1973) relies on the theory of cooperation and competition. He describes the features of constructive and destructive conflicts. He then analyses the factors that influence the course of a conflict, whether it becomes constructive or destructive. According to Deutsch's "crude law of social relations", as he himself called the principle at the basis of his conflict theory, "the characteristic processes and effects elicited by a given type of social relationship (cooperative or competitive) tend also to elicit that type of social relationship" (p. 365). He believes that the resolution of a conflict situation depends on the type of conflict.

Blalock (1989) aims at creating a general theory of conflict through the unification of theory and method. He develops a model of the central strategies that affect conflicts. The model is based on a number of theories and empirical studies and on the assumption that power and conflict are interconnected.

International organizations

Mayer highlights the importance of a variety of frameworks that can help in different situations (Mayer in Furlong, 2002). International organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank rely on such frameworks and tools for conflict analysis.

The United Nations Development Group and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs Working Group on Transition (UNDG/ECHA, 2004) have developed a transitional strategy for countries emerging from violent conflict based on the various experiences of the UN system with conflict analysis. The result is the "*Interagency Framework for Conflict Analysis in Transition Situations*", which is based on "a standardized inter-agency methodology for conflict analysis, which will help understand and overcome the structures that lead to violent conflict in the first place and promote a coherent and integrated response". This provides a common framework for conflict analysis for all UN agencies regardless of each individual mandate.

The World Bank's *Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF)* aims at assessing causes and consequences of conflicts, defining a country's resilience to conflict, and at developing methodologies (Warm and Sardesai, 2005). The framework identifies six key variables that affect conflicts, such as social and ethnic relations, political; governance and political institutions; human rights and security; economic structure and performance; environment and natural resources. It also classifies external factors that affect conflicts the most. The link between these variables and poverty is also taken into consideration and examined. Factors and variables influence on conflicts vary from country to country.

Gap between theory and practice

There is awareness among researchers that a gap between theory and practice exists when it comes to conflict analysis and its application during field work. According to Furlong (2002), conflict analysis

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be the start of a conflict, looked at how an arms build-up of one country would affect the arms buildup of its opponent.

[4] The <u>Game theory</u> studies interactive decision-making. The actions of each participant depend on the actions of all the participants.

[5] The <u>theory of Viability</u> designs and develops mathematical methods aimed at investigating the adaptation to viability constraints of evolutions that are governed by complex systems under uncertain circumstances.

models "are the specific frameworks that guide the application of some of that theoretical knowledge in practice".

There has been an effort to outline a mapping process that connects theory to practice. Sandole (1998) acknowledges what he calls a "two-culture problem" between the academic and other researchers who theorize about conflicts and practitioners who intervene in them. He proposes an approach aimed at maximizing the effectiveness of the interventions: "unless we know what makes conflicts 'tick', we may, good intentions to the contrary, only make matters worse" (Sandole, 1998).

Courses in conflict analysis

A practical approach is often based on participation and experience. A number of courses in conflict analysis have been available over the past few years. "Developing capacity for conflict analysis and early response. A training manual", prepared with the support of the Conflict Management Capacity Building Project of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, is a five-day intensive training workshop. It introduces theories and practice of conflict analysis and early warning and aims at building capacity for conflict analysis and early response design and implementation.

Conceptual and academic tools are often applied to conflict analysis. The *Education and Training Center at the United States Institute of Peace* (2008) provides a self-study distance learning course in conflict analysis based on two conceptual tools, the curve of conflict (Lund) and the analytical framework International IDEA), 1998). The course aims at using the practitioners' perspective, which is "driven by specific, real-time goals, either to help prevent a given conflict, to help resolve it, or to contribute to rebuilding efforts in its aftermath". As a graphical illustration, the curve of conflict aims at illustrating the evolution of conflict over time; as a conceptual tool, the curve aims at showing the relation among terms and ideas in conflict analysis (Lund, 1996). This helps the practitioners to find the right intervention strategies applicable at the appropriate time.

The analytical framework is a verbal tool that aims at studying a conflict at a particular point in time and at providing information about the forces behind it. It includes five key themes: actors, root causes, issues/scope and stage, power/resources/relationships, history of the relationship. This framework consists of the basic questions; additional frameworks can be added according to specific types of conflicts.The curve and the framework are applied to the conflicts in Rwanda and in Kosovo. These tools show how these conflicts present common characteristics, although their contexts are diverse. "Awareness of common characteristics is a first step in attempting to apply lessons learned from one conflict to another."

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) has offered a web-based course in conflict analysis as part of its Peacekeeping Training Programme Courses (PTP). The course is designed to provide civilians, military and police personnel due to work in peace operations with tools for understanding a conflict situation before taking steps towards its resolution. The assessment and the understanding of the key elements of conflict analysis, which include causes, actors and dynamics, are considered as essential steps ahead of the mediation process within the peace efforts. Instructional design methods are used in order to emphasize the importance of learning through experience and cooperation. Training methods include case studies, group work and role play. The course is composed of five modules: Causes of conflict; Actors in conflict; Dynamics of conflict; integrating conflict analysis in the planning of a peace operation; good practice and evaluation in conflict analysis.

The *International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution* (ICCCR, 1986), founded on the scholarship of Kurt Lewin and Morton Deutsch, aims at filling the gap between theory and practice in conflict resolution through basic and applied research on conflict, justice, cooperation, and systematic change. The development of basic conceptual models is at the core of the ICCCR approach. The models are then tested empirically through a number of methodologies, such as qualitative, experimental, longitudinal survey, and computer simulations. The research is then linked to "current problems within a real world context."

As some conflicts often last extended periods of time, there has been a focus on long-lasting, difficult-to-resolve conflicts, otherwise known as "intractable" conflicts. The term "intractable" refers to conflicts that are hard to deal with and therefore "need a different, more multi-faceted, and more prolonged approach" (Burgess, 2003). The nexus between conflict and information systems represents the theoretical foundation of the "*Beyond intractability*" online resource centre[6]. Quality-learning opportunities through Internet access to conflict information and learning systems aim at limiting the destructive nature of conflict.

Conflict analysis vs. conflict mapping

Conflict mapping, which was first developed by Paul Wehr (1979), is often referred to as a visual technique of conflict analysis. It aims at showing the relationships between parties, therefore allowing a better understanding of the conflict.

According to a number of experts (Mason, Rychard 2005), conflict mapping can be considered the initial stage of conflict analysis. According to Mason and Rychard (2005), conflict mapping is a "good tool to start analyzing a conflict". It aims at clarifying relations between actors, and to give a first conflict overview from a specific point of view at a specific moment in time. Conflict mapping can therefore be compared to a photograph.

Conflict mapping is generally seen as a technique that allows analysis of a conflict from three different perspectives: Arena (the geographical area), Actors (the conflict parties and outsiders), and Agenda (topic and interests of the actors). The different angles are used to 'map' the conflict. Thanks to conflict mapping, which provides basic information such as parties involved, issues and the context of the dispute, a response to a conflict can be planned (Wehr, 2006). According to Wehr (1979, p.18), "Mapping is a first step in intervening to manage a particular conflict". Mapping in terms of categories – conflict, causes and conditions, intervention perspectives and processes – represents an essential step before planning and implementing an effective intervention (Sandole, 1998).

According to Wehr (1979, 2006), every conflict, "even the simplest interpersonal conflict" has basic elements that allow us to create a "roadmap by which a conflict opponent, a third party intervenor, [..] can find their way through a particular situation". Wehr's Conflict Map (1979) includes a

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[6] The "Beyond Intractability" website is one of the eight available websites operated by the Conflict Information Consortium (CIC). The CIC was founded in 1988 as a research and teaching centre about conflict and its transformation. It covers 600 conflict topics, and it includes online interviews and bibliographies.

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summary description; the conflict history; the conflict context; the conflict parties, which include primary participants, secondary stakeholders, and interested third parties; the conflict's issues, either fact-based, value-based, or interest-based; the conflict's dynamics, which include any change of the conflict context, any escalation and polarization, and any stereotyping with changes in perception within opposing sides; causes and consequences; goals and interests; regulation potential with conflict-limiting elements, including internal and external factors, third parties, and conflict management techniques, such as mediation and conciliation.

Others have built on Wehr's method: The Working in Conflict guide (Fisher et. al. 2000) focuses on a particular moment in a specific situation in the conflict. The scope is not supposed to be too wide and it is suggested that several mappings of the same situation from different points of view are created. The Three Pillar Approach (Sandole, 1998) aims at creating categories for all the information needed to understand the conflict. The Pillar 1 identifies "parties, issues, objectives, means, [..] and any historical, cultural, political, social, religious, institutional and other 'spaces' within which conflicts unfold". Pillar 2 identifies causes and conditions of conflicts. Pillar 3 identifies a strategy for conflict intervention, and includes third party objectives and approaches. The Conflict Chart (Bright,2004) is a combination of the Wehr Conflict Map (Wehr, 1979) and the Three Pillar Approach (Sandole, 1998). Bright believes that "determining political and economic structures is a crucial link in defining a conflict's context (p.2). The Conflict Chart includes six main components: conflict parties, conflict history, conflict context, party orientation, conflict dynamics and conflict intervention.

THE PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

This paper suggests a methodology for conflict analysis and training that goes beyond the all too frequent practice of reactive 'tracking and monitoring' that is often used. The aim of the methodology is to instruct a method of thinking about conflict which allows assessment and measurement of the effects of key aspects of a conflict in order to facilitate management, prepare reactions and to find solutions. The methodology described in this paper builds on and combines such ideas as those put forward by Sandole (1998) who highlighted the advantages of a generic theory of conflict analysis; MethodFinder Practitioner's Guide (2006) that recognised the need for updating analysis; Wehr's theory; and the training programme of UNITAR. The ICRA Conflict Analysis training course (CAT) is designed for civil society as well as policy and decision-makers. The training method is based on a concept of 'generic conflict' so that emotion which so often obstructs objective analysis is reduced. There is a deliberate policy of not talking about the conflict or conflicts that the participants are involved in.

The methodology provides a way of determining the anatomy of a conflict by grouping its characteristics into two distinct groups. *Elements* are those characteristics that are always present in a conflict. *Factors* are those that may be present, or may not be. The changing nature of both *Elements* and *Factors* is a key part of the method as is the way the relationship between characteristics changes as the conflict progresses.

Although conflict mapping is viewed as an important part of conflict analysis, its static limitations in terms of view and time show the need for an analysis tool that is able to analyse the constant changes in a conflict situation. Assessing the changes enable proper reaction. The ICRA methodology utilizes Wehr's conflict mapping as a starting point with a similar definition and analysis of elements

that are present in conflicts. However, ICRA's assessment of change that occurs throughout a conflict provides a new perspective on conflict analysis. The identification of basic elements such as culture, violence, politics and personalities; and of factors is considered as important as the identification of the changes that can occur during conflicts, as these are event-driven. Any change in an element or factor needs to be taken into consideration ahead of the analysis of a conflict situation. Change assessment during a conflict implies changes in resolution initiatives. In this context, analysis of other conflicts is a tool that can be used to draw lessons.

An advantage of the method described here is that it provides a discipline and commonality in conflict analysis which can aid understanding between actors involved in making analyses (Sandole 2008). Taking the advantage of commonality further; a common approach to thinking about the issues by parties in a conflict is important for more understanding of where one side or actor stands in relation to the conflict and what one factor or another means in the context of the conflict to all sides. In this way there are prospects for some confidence to be built between adversaries and those assisting in resolution.

The determination of factors present as well as those which are absent in a conflict is central to the methodology. The importance of each factor should be assessed in comparison to any other. The importance of a factor may change through the course of a conflict as different events occur. The effect of a change in factoral importance through the life of a conflict may lead to necessary changes in approaches to conflict prevention, management, and ultimately conflict resolution.

The methodology aims to determine the anatomy of a conflict. Each factor present in the conflict is identified and analysed. Those factors that are absent should also be identified as they can either be excluded or noted as factors that may become present in the conflict at some time in the future. The relationship of factors and elements to each other is a crucial component of the analytical process as is the relative importance of factors. Analysis done in this way allows policy responses to be constructed in order to enable better conflict management; and options for resolution to be found based on a thorough understanding of what is possible given the character of the conflict. Such analysis should avoid 'imported' solutions that do not suit the conflict environment in question. In Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban from power in 2001 there was an attempt by western powers to impose a democracy on the country as some kind of solution; but one that was counter to Afghan culture and tradition and so did not produce the solutions it was hoped would emerge. A deeper analysis of the importance of Culture as a factor would have led to the conclusion that a presidential-style democracy was is unsuited to Afghanistan.

The methodology also uses analysis of other conflicts and conflict themes; i.e. 'the gem trade in conflict', to draw lessons that can be learned and used in management and resolution initiatives in other conflicts. Whilst accepting that there are no precise analogies to be made between conflicts, this form of conflict analysis allows lessons to be drawn from one conflict, past or present that can be learned for on-going and imminent conflicts; allowing relevant solutions to be suggested.

This way of analysing conflict is important for assessing change and enabling proper reaction to change or for proactive measures to be taken. The methodology has three key components: identification of *elements* and *factors* and their inter-relationships; interrogation of the process and identification of nodal points; import of relevant lessons from other conflicts; and training

The identification of *elements* which are always present in conflict and their inter-relationship to each other is at the centre of the method of analysis. There is a two stage process; the first stage

looks at the *elements* and analyses their relative importance: in the second stage *factors* that vary from conflict to conflict and may also be present at one phase in a conflict, but not another, are selected and analysed as to their importance and connection to all other factors.

ELEMENTS **are constituents of conflict that are always present in some degree in all conflicts.**

History is an element in conflict that provides many reasons for its root causes and for its continuation. Often history is used by conflict actors to fuel violence and is mostly linked to the factor of 'culture'. History also complicates conflict resolution by fuelling emotional reactions in societies and groups involved in conflict. It gives fuel to propaganda and can be viewed generally as a negative influence. However, the lessons of history from one conflict when applied, where relevant, to another can be valuable in developing approaches to resolution. This methodology uses historical lessons from different conflicts to bring ideas into other conflicts where similar events may occur or the context may be similar at one point in time..

Culture is a central element of any conflict. It is not only causal in many cases but can be used as a way to promote resolution. In many conflicts the refusal of parties to compromise on linguistic differences is a cause for violence. The compromise and integration of these differences is a facilitator towards resolution. Often 'culture' is considered merely as an all-encompassing term for language, literature, and music. However, culture defines the root causes of many conflicts and includes other traditions such as 'gun culture'. The link between 'gun culture' and the *element* of violence is obvious; but its presence in a society or societies has to be taken account of as something that may not be dealt with as part of conflict resolution through conventional mechanisms such as 'demobilization, disarmament and re-integration' (DDR) programmes as it may be closely linked to the *factor* of 'economics' where weapons are used for trade or to provide traditional security at grass-roots level such as in Afghanistan.

The Element of **Violence** is the result of unresolved differences in other *elements* and is therefore central to the analytical process .It can be sub-divided into physical, psychological and economic violence. Changes in the level of violence in any of these categories of will be caused by conflict events. The use of excessive force by security forces in an internal conflict is likely to lead to more violence; political repression is also an accelerator of violence; and psychological manipulation by the state is also likely to result in violent reaction. Figure XX shows how the level of violence increased when the British Army used deadly force on a crowd of protesters and when the British government brought in internment without trial.

Actors in conflict are defined as personalities, groups, or international organisations. All categories of actor have to be identified and analysed according to their character and role. Secondly, analysis has to take account of the absence of particular actors also as the ability to manage the conflict will be impaired by there being no visible leader or organisation to communicate with. Another aspect is to consider change in actors at various stages of the conflict and whether this should mean a change in the approach to conflict management.

For example in the relationship between Russia and Georgia that eventually led to open hostilities breaking out in 2008 over the issue of the Georgia's separatist regions, the change in leaders in both countries was a key factor in the deterioration in the relationship. Yet the international community arguably did little to adjust its approach to the change in leaderships. Russian president, Boris Yeltsin and Georgian president, Eduard Sheverdnadze were leaders of their respective countries at the beginning of the period of conflict. They knew each other well as former Soviet leaders. But when

Yeltsin gave way to Vladimir Putin, and Sheverdnadze was overthrown by Mikhail Saakashvili the context of the conflict changed. The two new leaders were nationalists and diametrically opposed politically and in their personalities. The significance of this change in terms of managing and ultimately resolving the separatist conflicts was never seriously considered by the international community resulting in an inactivity that was a part of the failure in preventing a renewal of violence.

Politics are closely linked with personalities and organisations and consequently define many of the approaches adopted by actors.   Analysis of this factor has relevance to the behaviours of key individuals and leaders as well as the selection of resolution initiatives and those who may be selected as 'mediators' in a conflict. When 'Actors' in a conflict change so may their political and ideological approaches to that conflict leading to the conclusion that any approaches to conflict resolution should also change to take account of the personality shift.

Demography is an increasingly important *element* in conflict. Global demographic trends show a significant move towards urbanization; climate-induced migration challenges national boundaries and increases the pressure on urban communities; and within an on-going conflict analysis of the populations of the actors and parties to the conflict is essential to reach any concrete conclusions on management and resolution.

In Afghanistan for example, the increasing percentage of the population under the age of 25 years and continuing high levels of unemployment leads analysts to view the future course of the conflict in a different way to thinking of it simply as an insurgency or a civil war. A brief look at the changing demography of the country through the methodology shows growing linkages to the factor of economics.

Economics as an *element* in conflict has become increasingly important. Globalization has weakened national boundaries; created means of mass transportation which are beneficial to illicit trade as much as legal trade; opened opportunities for illegal trade in natural resources such as gems and other commodities. But also the spread of free trade areas has given more opportunities for conflict resolution by removing imbalances across borders and increasing employment opportunities.

FACTORS are constituent parts of conflict that, unlike Elements, **are not always present. The list of factors below is selective.**

Ideology as a factor will have close links to the elements of violence and politics. Nationalist ideology is reflected in nationalist politics and during conflict is a main cause of violence and the adherence to ideology by an actor or actors reduces the possibility for compromise making conflict management and resolution.

 Religion and 'belief systems' in general are often seen as a cause of conflict when in fact, when linked to the factor of history it may more accurately be described as an 'excuse' to fuel emotions. It can be argued that this was the case in Northern Ireland. On the other hand fundamentalism is a key factor in 21st Century conflicts but it may use the 'excuse' of a clash of religions to fuel and justify conflict.

In analysing religion in conflict its absence as a factor should be noted where appropriate as it may become a factor in the future. The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia which is territorial in nature is a case in point. The two adversarial states are diametrically opposed in religious terms –

one being a Sunni Muslim state and the other Orthodox Christian – yet religion, even at the height of international Islamic militancy following 9/11, remained absent from the conflict. Yet it must be considered as a possible factor in the future. This gives options for planning responses to be prepared and for religious leaders to become part of the mediation and resolution process.

Borders define a state in territorial terms and the territory of those seeking separatism solutions for example. In this way they are frequently, but not always a key factor. De-marcation of borders is frequently disputed and falsely drawn borders divide communities creating socio-economic problems.

Resources, natural and man-made, are increasingly becoming a source and facilitating factor in conflict. It is closely linked to the factor of economics and thus socio-economic problems and borders. In the future it is estimated that water will become a causal factor in conflict both as a consequence of climate change and to industrialization.

Analysis of the 'water factor' is likely to become a key part of any research into conflict in the future. Issues such as 'upstream damming' by states will increasingly cause negative economic effects which may lead to tension and conflict. Displacement of populations by increased flooding caused by climate change may impact on neighbouring states and urban areas leading to cultural as well as economic tension.

Socio-economic factors link to all previously listed factors in different ways. Analysis should discern the relative importance of those links in order to reach conclusions. Human security in conflict is an ever-present factor that is often ignored by protagonists both state and non-state; But viewed in economic terms for example the disadvantages as well as the advantages to all conflict parties can be quantified and in the resolution process.

Governance of territories in conflict is a factor that can have links to the factor of culture. If there is a feudal or other traditional culture this has to be factored in to analysis and ultimately resolution possibilities. Arguably in Afghanistan the international community's ignorance of traditional Afghan systems of governance exacerbated the conflict. The exercise of power by groups and governments bears scrutiny at the early stage of any conflict as does the degree of corruption and its effect on the economics of the conflict area.

Non-state and criminal activity is a growing factor in conflict. The ability of the international community to deal with non-state groups in conflict is generally limited; in particular its ability to communicate with non-state leaders without giving recognition to their politics.

To analyse the precise goals of a non-state group in conflict is critical and to quantify its economic power which is likely to be based on illicit trafficking is vital when working out the consequences of reducing that power on a population. When the Georgian government shut down the Ergnety market in South Ossetia in 2005 it effectively destroyed the only means to income of that separatist region with dire consequences on human security as well as an increase in the aspirations of the South Ossetians to gain independence from Georgia.

Illicit trafficking flourishes outside the writ of the state in separatist regions which then e become the locations of choice for criminal gangs which subvert the populations in the conflict areas which become dependent on them.

Emerging factors in conflict

One of the major areas of change in the future of armed conflict is likely to be characterised increasingly by new threats that emanate from changes in the global environment. Climate change is one trend that is likely to lead to population shifts across borders and into cities that in turn become the breeding grounds of new threats and conflicts. Urban populations are growing outside the authority of states without the means to cope. And non-state groups acting outside international law are likely to grow in type and number. Increasing urbanization is a result of demographic changes as much as climate change. State structures will find it harder to control these cities which contain 'mega-slums' that exist in many cases outside the authority of the state. In Latin America, Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro face challenges from within 'favelas' with increasing autonomous systems of illicit governance. In Africa Lagos and Nairobi as recipients of large numbers of climate-induced migrants face worse challenges with fewer resources. When faced with these conflict trends that are not the same as those of the 20th Century, analysis and analytical methods should change in order to provide the best basis for decision-making. An important part of analysis today is to look at 21st Century trends.

Fig 1.

FUTURE CONFLICT SCENARIO based on URBANIZATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE
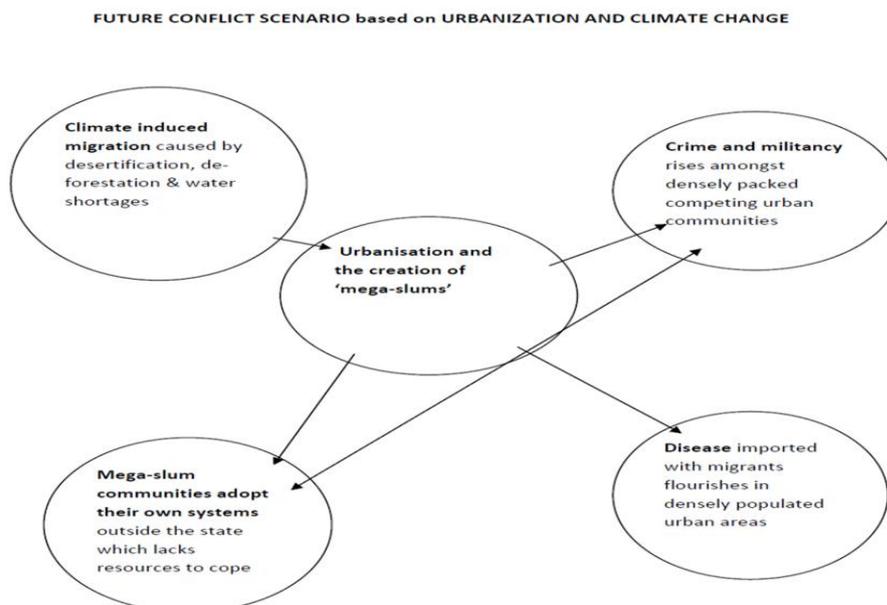
© International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS); Adelphi Book 414-414 2010; Europe and Global Security Chapter 3;The Effects of Global Demographics

For example; increasing urbanization in the poorest countries in the world is closely aligned to non-state activity of all types as well as some of the residual effects of climate change leading to increases in the spread of disease and other 'unintended consequences' of the creation of 'mega-slums.' But the importance of factors will change as the context of the conflict changes and different events occur.

Interrogating the process. The process of analysis can be interrogated to give it resilience. The interrogative process should be regarded as a basic tool to be employed at any stage of the conflict

and particularly at times of key change or in the context of the conflict. The basic questions to be asked are:
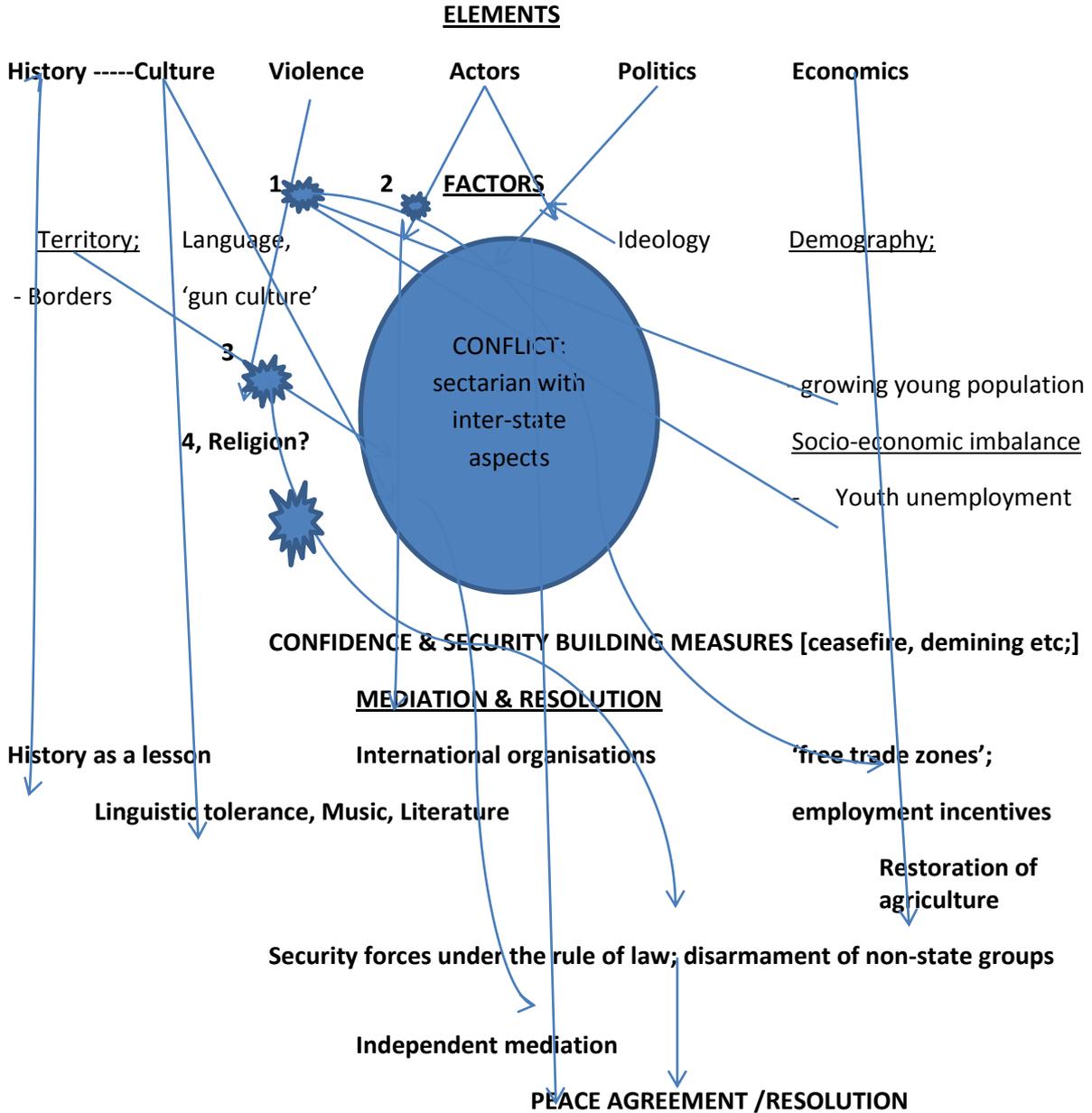
- How important is each *element* in relation to another? And how do *elements* relate to each other? Are the relationships likely to change?
- Which *factors* are present? What is their relative importance to each other? And how do these *factors* relate to the *elements* and to other *factors*? Is the relative importance and are relationships changing or likely to change? In which circumstances can this happen?
- Which *factors* are noticeably absent? Is it likely or possible that during the life of the conflict an 'absent' *factor* might become 'present'? And what impact could this have on the conflict?

Having established the links within and between the *elements* and *factors* the next stage in the methodology is to focus on the linkages and their influence on each other. With all components making up the conflict now visible and their linkages established a 'map' emerges showing nodal points where links intersect. These 'nodal points' are the intersections where *factors* and *elements* have particular influence.

Nodal points are identified through determination of the relationship between *factors* and *elements*. Once you can see those nodal points you can then decide on the relative importance of each and how possible it is to influence. In that way management initiatives which are unlikely to yield any positive result are avoided. It becomes possible to discern what possible. As a conflict progresses and 'nodal points' shift, other possibilities may emerge and past possibilities fade. In this way the identification of nodal points through the course of a conflict enables an ability to influence them and is an essential tool in management and also as a pointer to resolution.

Influence on a nodal point can only happen when there is change. This is why analysing the process of change is so important; so that the moment can be seized when it is possible to influence the change in a positive direction as part of conflict management. This is a window of opportunity. It has to be accepted though change is not always one which can be moved into a positive direction. We are talking about change which presents resolution opportunities and management opportunities leading to resolution or simply to a reduction in violence.

Fig 2: **Hypothetical example; the inter-relationship relationship of *Elements* and *Factors* showing nodal points for focused action**

ELEMENTS

History -----Culture   Violence   Actors   Politics   Economics

1   **2**   **FACTORS**

Territory;   Language,   Ideology   Demography;

- Borders   'gun culture'

3

CONFLICT: sectarian with inter-state aspects

growing young population

Socio-economic imbalance

4, Religion?

- Youth unemployment

CONFIDENCE & SECURITY BUILDING MEASURES [ceasefire, demining etc;]

MEDIATION & RESOLUTION

History as a lesson   **International organisations**   **'free trade zones';**

Linguistic tolerance, Music, Literature   **employment incentives**

Restoration of agriculture

Security forces under the rule of law; disarmament of non-state groups

Independent mediation

PEACE AGREEMENT /RESOLUTION

NODAL POINTS;

1. **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VIOLENCE, ECONOMICS AND DEMOGRAPHY leads to economic initiatives towards peace.**
2. **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VARIOUS ACTORS leads to the need for independent mediation**
3. **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AN ARMED CULTURE leads to a focus on how to achieve disarmament through confidence-building; and the link between arms and a young population leads to a focus on Economics as a solution to this problem**
4. **Religion has been noted as a factor that is absent in the hypothetical conflict; but might become present at some point and also having some potential in mediation and resolution**

The relationship of the *factors* to the *elements* is highlighted through this process, as well as their relative importance and relationships to each other. In this way 'nodal points' become visible and can be influenced as constituent parts, or causes, of conflict that can be given priority and used in the process to construct resolution initiatives. The process also allows the analyst to see what is possible and what is not realistic in terms of management or resolution initiatives. The 'art of the possible' is very important in this regard; but change caused by events can bring possibility to areas where there was none previously.

Once this stage has been reached the process of analysis becomes one of assessing change as events occur in order to construct initiatives within the 'art of the possible'. With conflicts being events-driven this is crucial to working out the best way of managing a conflict and the best paths towards resolution. An event in a conflict has to be assessed not so much for its result, but for what change needs to be made in conflict management terms as a result.

By assessing change and working out its meaning within the context of a conflict, which itself may change over time, there is a greater possibility of following the paths that have the best prospects for management and resolution, rather than sticking to one unchanging course as is so often the case. But this depends on the analytical process being reactive and flexible as events bring about change; and then pro-active in conflict management and in the construction of resolution initiatives.

Resolution evolves through determining the 'art of the possible'. Through the course of the conflict it is possible to resolve a part of a conflict without resolving the whole conflict – recognising the complexity in the make- up of a conflict that is normally made up of a collection of smaller conflicts within and between societies or groups. Each of these smaller conflicts can be dealt with in isolation in order to come to a final resolution of a whole conflict. By this means –dealing with sub conflicts it is possible to suggest that those dealing with conflict management and resolution initiatives can change the context of the overall conflict in a positive way.
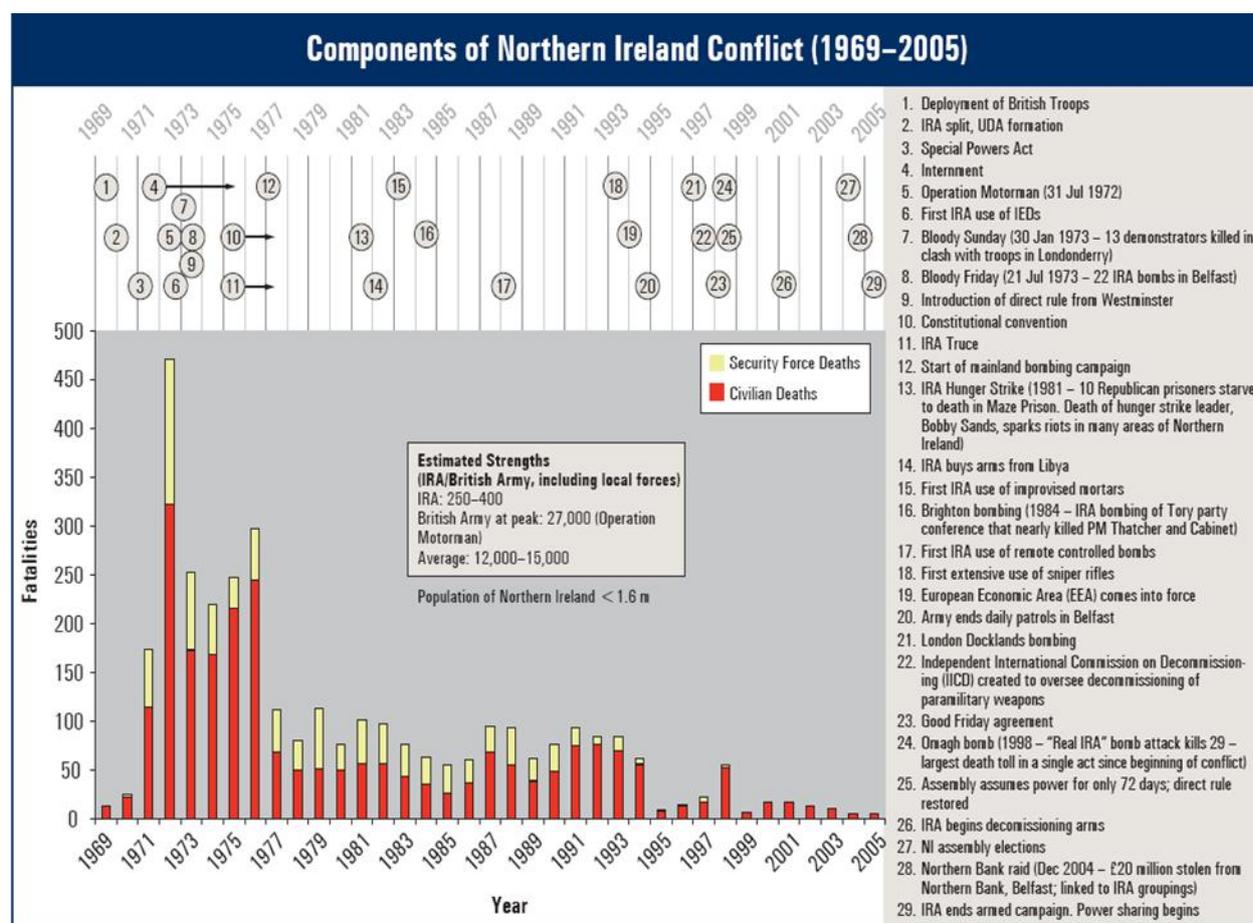
Lessons from other conflicts that can be applied to the analysis

The third stage of this Conflict Analysis methodology is the analysis of other conflicts; to see what lessons can be learned and used. In particular, to discover which factors were present and how they were managed or if they were not managed what the consequences were. This process gives the possibility for reactions to certain events to be prepared and preventive measures put in place. In on-going conflict effects are event-driven; therefore an examination of conflict events in a number of conflicts, past or present, can assist in avoiding certain consequences.

Analysis of the conflict in Northern Ireland provides a number of lessons that can be 'exported' to other conflicts. One **political lesson** from Northern Ireland can be seen in the effect on the rise in violence that followed the British use of political internment without trial (Figure xx: Event 4). The UK government in its haste to quell the *element* of violence over-reacted and undemocratically causing more anger in the part of the population most aligned with the goals of the insurgency. More violence was caused when security forces used excessive force and were poorly restrained by the Rule of Law in the early part of the conflict resulting in 'Bloody Sunday' which became a call to arms and more violence from militants . The lesson was learned and the Army was subordinated to the Police under powers drawn up by the government. [Figure xx : Event 8]. An **economic** observation from the conflict comes by analysing the effect on the conflict of the introduction of the relaxation of trade regulations across Europe that in the context of the conflict effectively removed a key source of revenue for insurgents and terrorists and increased inward investment into the conflict

area A key change occurred when violence fell to a manageable level and economic measures were improving the lives of the under-privileged section of the population. This change allowed active and independent mediation to start which eventually led to the disarmament of militant groups and a peace agreement.

Fig 3: **A snapshot of the conflict in Northern Ireland**

Components of Northern Ireland Conflict (1969–2005)

1. Deployment of British Troops
2. IRA split, UDA formation
3. Special Powers Act
4. Internment
5. Operation Motorman (31 Jul 1972)
6. First IRA use of IEDs
7. Bloody Sunday (30 Jan 1973 – 13 demonstrators killed in clash with troops in Londonderry)
8. Bloody Friday (21 Jul 1973 – 22 IRA bombs in Belfast)
9. Introduction of direct rule from Westminster
10. Constitutional convention
11. IRA Truce
12. Start of mainland bombing campaign
13. IRA Hunger Strike (1981 – 10 Republican prisoners starve to death in Maze Prison. Death of hunger strike leader, Bobby Sands, sparks riots in many areas of Northern Ireland)
14. IRA buys arms from Libya
15. First IRA use of improvised mortars
16. Brighton bombing (1984 – IRA bombing of Tory party conference that nearly killed PM Thatcher and Cabinet)
17. First IRA use of remote controlled bombs
18. First extensive use of sniper rifles
19. European Economic Area (EEA) comes into force
20. Army ends daily patrols in Belfast
21. London Docklands bombing
22. Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) created to oversee decommissioning of paramilitary weapons
23. Good Friday agreement
24. Omagh bomb (1998 – "Real IRA" bomb attack kills 29 – largest death toll in a single act since beginning of conflict)
25. Assembly assumes power for only 72 days; direct rule restored
26. IRA begins decommissioning arms
27. NI assembly elections
28. Northern Bank raid (Dec 2004 – £20 million stolen from Northern Bank, Belfast; linked to IRA groupings)
29. IRA ends armed campaign. Power sharing begins

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Training

The methodology that has been described is used by ICRA in training actors in conflict to think about the issues in an objective and less emotional way. The programme uses the principle that conflict analysis should be taught in an un-attributable and generic fashion rather than as a way of analysing someone else's conflict which is a sensitive issue. Too often those unfortunate enough to be parties to a conflict in some way, are given instruction from outside by foreign organisations on what they 'should' be doing to resolve their problems; rather than how to think about them dispassionately and realistically.

A training programme of this type carries the advantage of being applicable to different sides in a conflict. By teaching a common method, all parties will recognise what the basis of analysis used by adversaries and others for reaching conclusions which is seen as a confidence-building mechanism.

CONCLUSIONS

The 21st Century has shown us that the global conflict environment has become more chaotic, less predictable, and more complex. New and non-traditional threats have raised new challenges to those seeking to manage and resolve conflict. The increase in activity by non-state groups is a challenge aided by globalization that grows outside international laws and protocols that have governed attempts to manage armed conflict over time. In addition the unquantifiable effects of climate change threaten to cause more conflict in the coming decades.

Close analysis of the meaning and relative importance of the different components which make up a conflict and how they relate to each other is an essential part of conflict analysis. The establishment of 'nodal points' is a way of focusing on the 'art of the possible' or excluding what is not possible at a given moment.

It has always been the case that the context of a conflict can change through its course, so can key factors that make up that conflict. Factoral and contextual changes are inter-linked. The importance of one factor in comparison to another can change and new factors may appear that were not there at the beginning of a conflict. Each shift or change should be examined to see if the approach to management and resolution should also change. In this sense the analysis should be a process that is continuous. As part of this process, and recognising that no two conflicts are the same, lessons can be imported from other conflicts to help in constructing approaches to resolution.

It is suggested that a common methodology that is trained into organisations and groups or bodies involved in conflict analysis parts is overdue. And a common method of training for parties involved in conflict management can help to reduce the level of mistrust and so build confidence to provide a basis for negotiation which is a process proceeded by facilitation and mediation as separate processes that are taught in the training programme.

The methodology outlined in this paper which is manifest in an active training programme draws together a number of ideas and theories and takes them forward taking account of current and emerging trends in conflict. Objectivity in training is achieved by using a concept of 'generic conflict' to avoid unnecessary emotion in analysis whilst importing relevant lessons from other conflicts and conflict themes. There is an emphasis on the analysis of 'change' and reaction to it. The illumination of what are called here 'nodal points' is a way of focussing analysis and determining the 'art of the possible' in moving to mediation and, ultimately, resolution initiatives.