

**A Checklist for Post-Conflict
Political Assessment - Draft**

United States Agency for International
Development (USAID)

Tom Beck
Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination
Office of Development Partners
USAID
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20523 - USA
Tel: (202) 712 0262
Fax: (202) 216 3124
E-mail: tbeck@usaid.gov

A CHECKLIST FOR POST-CONFLICT POLITICAL ASSESSMENTS

(1) Analyze the issues which have driven conflict

What are the issues which started the conflict? Have the driving issues changed over time? It may be helpful to examine:

- unique historical legacies
- issues surrounding the distribution of economic, social and political resources. How is competition for resources managed? What inequities are involved?
- socio-economic and ethnic cleavages: if they are interrelated, how so? To what extent are ethnic differences manipulated for political gain?
- existing political processes and institutions: have they fueled the conflict, and if so, how? Important variables to consider include: whether former or current systems are proportional, majoritarian, or mixed; the level of citizen representation; degree of decentralization.
- existing legal procedures and institutions: what types of formal and informal mechanisms exist, including dispute resolution mechanisms? Have they played in the conflict?

(2) Analyze the actors who have driven the conflict

Who are the leading actors?

- Consider relevant government, military and civil society leaders as well as communities or groups, and latent actors. Have the key actors changed over time?
- How do they define themselves? What are the core features that make up their identity?
- What are the central interests and incentives of different actors?
- How are these interests manifest? in political action? through violence?

- Who are the real leaders of these groups? Are they politicians, soldiers, religious leaders, intellectuals? Are they representative? What authority do they have, and what pressures are they subject to from followers/constituents or opponents?
- What financial, human, and political resources are available to different actors, domestically and internationally?
- How do key actors mobilize (i.e. via political parties, armies)?
- What factions or reformist elements exist within identity groups? Are these groups homogenous or more complex? Are there spoilers opposed to the peace process? How great a threat do they represent?
- On balance, is there an opportunity to leverage change through existing political processes, or only the appearance of one?
- What are the principal political alignments among key actors?
- Are these alignments relatively stable, particularly in the post crisis environment, or are they shifting? On what are they based?
- Do alignments conform to major social cleavages, or are they diffuse?
- What pressures are relevant actors subject to? Have different “levers” been used successfully to influence their actions in the past?
- Are there any existing institutions through which actors can conduct a dialogue with one another to resolve disputes and/or address policy issues?

(3) Analyze the Country’s Immediate Social, Economic and Political Priorities

What are they key economic, social or political issues facing the nation, regions and localities? What are the priority needs of both citizens and government authorities (immediate, medium and longer-term)?

- Do they differ at different levels of government or between different socio-economic/ethnic groups?

- In general, how is the local population experiencing the transition?
- How secure do people feel?
- How do they assess the transition process? The behavior of civilian and military authorities?
- What are their expectations?
- What is the scope of the conflict's effect on the population? What regions or geographic areas suffer most, and why?
- Is there political space for actors other than the leadership of former warring parties or the ruling party to operate (e.g. local governments, media, civil society)?
- If these actors exist, what are their mandates? What are their goals?
- What are the limits (internal and external) on their activities?
- What level of support do they have from local populations?
- To what degree are they being respected by and included in the processes of decision-making of transition authorities?
- What is the overall trend? What factors have and will influence that trend?

(4) Analyze Potential Sources of Future Conflict or Crisis

Is there true demobilization and disarmament?

- Have both sides agreed to demobilize their forces? Are these plans likely to work?
- Have the parties to the conflict agreed to turn over arms? What is the state of this process?
- Is there a commitment to creating an integrated, disciplined, professional army that is subject to civilian oversight? What are their incentives and disincentives to do so?

To what degree is there a truly accepted and feasible agreement, temporary or permanent, which addresses the fundamental issues that have driven the crisis or conflict including:

- basic agreement on the balance of power in transition and future governments at the national level.
- basic agreement on decision-making processes, particularly with regard to distribution of resources.
- basic agreement on the degree of decentralization of power to regional, state, and local authorities.
- basic agreement on the nature and degree of citizen representation at the national and local levels.
- basic agreement on who has responsibility for determining and implementing next steps in the transition. What conditions, mandates and limitations apply to these processes?

Is there a demonstrated political commitment on the part of the major conflicting parties to implement the peace settlement?

- What are their incentives and disincentives to do so?
- Did central actors get what they wanted?
- How much of a threat to peace are those actors who did not get what they wanted?
- What would it take to placate these interests in the short, medium, and longer term?
- What degree of consensus exists among political parties? What is this consensus based upon?
- Did trends emerge during the process of negotiations? Do these trends have any predictive value? What processes were used, and what was their outcome?

Is the consensus that peace and the transition process are based upon being upheld, or undermined? By which parties? Why?

- What are the actual or perceived needs of relevant parties? What are their fears?
- What is the balance of power between relevant actors emerging from the peace settlement*? Is the current balance sustainable? Are there efforts underway to shift the balance*? Are these efforts being carried out within or outside agreed upon transitional processes and institutions?
- What issues were not resolved in the peace agreement which could reignite hostilities?
- Have new issues emerged since a settlement was reached? Are there latent sources of conflict that the war effort overshadowed, but could emerge and threaten a peaceful transition?
- Do effective communications exist for parties to resolve outstanding issues or differences?
- What is the role of regional actors in the conflict: how were they affected, or involved? What incentives exist to sustain a peace settlement, or to undermine it?

Were economic/distributional issues (e.g., distribution of land, access to natural resources or proceeds from natural resources) fundamental causes of the conflict?

- Were these distributional issues addressed in ending the conflict?
- What is the likely impact of addressing distributional issues on broader economic concerns, such as investor confidence and overall expansion of the economy? If the likely impact is negative, is this likely to fuel more conflict?

- What is the structure of economic opportunity? Is opportunity affected by remaining security concerns?
- What is the enabling environment for investment? What are the government*s budget priorities? Do international financial obligations remain? How will this affect economic growth?
- Is the economy growing? Is lack of economic opportunity a fundamental cause of conflict?
- What is the likely impact of economic reforms on social peace? Who will be hurt/helped if painful economic reforms are undertaken?
- Are any ethnic groups or geographic regions formally or informally excluded from private business opportunities or public sector employment?
- Are there mechanisms in place to address potential economic conflicts, such as between labor and management or government*?
- Is corruption a likely source of conflict?

(5) Analyze Potential Sources of Stability and Opportunities to Sustain the Transition

- What opportunities exist to mitigate potential sources of conflict or manage low-level conflict or crises as they emerge? Existing processes and institutions should both be examined, as well as potential reforms.
- What resources, domestic and international, could be brought to bear to sustain the peace and take advantage of existing opportunities?
- Is there a current “window” or opportunities that currently exist but will close if current social, political, and/or economic trends continue?
- What is the role of diplomacy? Can development assistance and diplomatic strategies be effectively coordinated to maximize support for a successful transition?