Office of
Conflict Management
and Mitigation

Conducting a Conflict Assessment:
A Framework for Strategy and
Program Development

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I. Introduction

The Development Challenge: Understanding what, if anything, the international community can do to stop a nation's slide to self-destruction is critical. Internal or 'civil' conflicts have become the dominant mode of violence in the post-Cold War era. In 2001, all but one of the world's wars were internal, and widespread, deadly violence now affects nearly 60 percent of the countries in which USAID operates. While conflict can be an inherent and legitimate part of social and political life, in many places the costs and consequences of violent conflict have become unacceptably high.

Internal conflict causes tremendous human suffering with a disproportionate share of the costs falling on civilian victims. In today's wars, civilians are nine times more likely to be killed than combatants. By the year 2000, internal conflict and repression had generated 14.5 million asylum seekers worldwide and nearly 25 million persons were displaced within their own countries. Child soldiers, gender-specific atrocities, and the targeting of aid workers are all part of "new war" scenarios.

Violent conflict also dramatically disrupts traditional development. It discourages investment, destroys human and physical capital, destroys the institutions needed for political and economic reform, redirects resources to non-productive uses, and causes a dramatic deterioration in the quality of life. In the past forty years the United States has spent billions of dollars on development programs, many of which will never come to fruition due to conflict.

The costs of civil conflict are not limited to the country where it is fought, but spill over borders and reduce growth and prosperity across entire regions. It also has a damaging effect on global stability. Transnational criminal organizations and terrorist networks have found refuge and profit in war torn societies and have used instability to directly target the interests and citizens of other countries, including the United States.

A peaceful, stable world order is a key foreign policy priority for the United States and foreign assistance has a critical role to play in achieving this goal. Many of the most important causes of violence such as a stagnant or deteriorating economy, weak or corrupt political institutions, or competition over natural resources already lie squarely at the heart of traditional assistance. However, although development and humanitarian assistance programs are increasingly implemented in situations of open or latent conflict, most still do not explicitly incorporate a sensitivity to conflict in their design or execution.

USAID is acutely aware of the fact that stability no longer characterizes our operating environment and that our assistance needs to adapt to that change. In recognition of this fact, conflict management and mitigation has been designated as an Agency priority and the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) was established to provide technical leadership to Missions, implementing partners, regional and pillar bureaus, and other USG agencies working in conflict-prone environments. A key part of CMM's mandate is to integrate or 'mainstream' best practices in conflict management into more traditional development sectors such as agriculture, natural resource management, economic growth, democracy, education, and health.

What is a Conflict Assessment? Conflict assessments are diagnostic tools that are designed to help Missions: 1) identify and prioritize the causes and consequences of violence that are most important in a given country context; 2) understand how existing development programs interact with factors linked to violence; and 3) determine where development and humanitarian assistance can most effectively support local efforts to manage conflict and build peace.

Conflict assessments are meant to provide a broad overview of destabilizing patterns and trends in a society. They sift through the many potential causes of conflict that exist and zero in on those that are most likely to lead to violence (or renewed violence) in a particular context. While they provide recommendations about how to make development and humanitarian assistance more responsive to conflict dynamics, they do not provide detailed guidance on how to design specific conflict activities.

To move from a diagnosis of the problem to a more detailed discussion of potential interventions, CMM is developing a series of program 'toolkits' that are companion pieces to the conflict assessment framework (CAF). These toolkits explore key risk factors in greater detail, such as youth unemployment, competition over land, or a lack of transparency and accountability at the local level. They provide an in-depth analysis of why a particular issue, land for example, is so often linked to violence, lay out key lessons learned, program options, monitoring and evaluation tools, and relevant USAID mechanisms and implementing partners.

Together, the assessment framework and toolkits are designed to help Missions gain a deeper understanding of the forces driving violence and to develop more strategic and focused interventions. It is important to emphasize that the assessment framework and toolkits do not typically suggest a whole series of stand-alone conflict activities, although these types of interventions are sometimes necessary. Rather, they are designed to help Missions think about how to use regular development assistance more strategically to address many of the most important causes of violence.

Who Needs to Conduct a Conflict Assessment? In general, it is recommended that most countries undertake a conflict assessment as they design or modify a country strategy. The emphasis that conflict assessments place on identifying causes and consequences of violence makes them equally relevant to pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict settings.

Even if a country has not experienced violent conflict in the past, conflict assessments can highlight potential areas of concern and can help development programs begin to address destabilizing trends before they reach a critical stage. Similarly, the factors that lead to the initial outbreak of violence do not disappear once a peace-agreement has been signed and the risk of renewed violence in post-conflict countries is extremely high. Development and humanitarian assistance in post-conflict societies needs to be sensitive to both the initial causes that lead to the outbreak of conflict and to destabilizing forces and vested interests that violence creates.

While all Mission's are encouraged to undertake conflict assessments, for some countries the risk of violence is sufficiently low that it may not be necessary. To help Missions determine whether or not they need to undertake a conflict assessment CMM is using an early warning list developed by the University of Maryland that divides countries into different categories of conflict risk based on a number of indicators that

are linked to violence. For countries that fall into the high (red) or medium (yellow) risk categories, it is strongly recommended that the Mission conduct a conflict assessment. Countries that are low risk (green) have the option of requesting a waiver from their regional bureau.

II. Conflict Assessment Framework

The conflict assessment framework (CAF) presented below draws together the best current research on the causes of widespread, deadly violence and develops a conceptual framework that can help Missions design more effective assistance programs in high risk environments.

The CAF has three main parts. The first is a discussion of factors linked to violence. This is a synthesis of over a decade of recent research on the causes of internal violence. It presents the main causal arguments for why certain factors, such as ethnicity or natural resources, are linked to violence and explores interaction effects between variables. Appendix A is a check list of questions that complement the text. This section is intended to help the conflict assessment team diagnose the conflict 'problem' in particular country context.

The importance of the factors identified in this framework will vary across countries. An issue that has great relevance in one country, for example ethnic tension, may have little or no relevance in another. By presenting all of the possible factors, the framework attempts to be both comprehensive and flexible in its design and is intended to serve as a general guide for analysis in very different country situations. The team conducting the assessment should therefore should adapt the generic variables presented here to the specific situation, and should add or delete variables as necessary.

The assessment framework also places strong emphasis on identifying interaction effects among different factors linked to violence. Conflict is extremely complex. Even if many individual causes of conflict are present in a given country, the risk of violence will remain fairly low if they exist in relative isolation from each other. It is only when multiple causes come together and reinforce each other that conflict will emerge. Therefore a key challenge for the assessment team will be to identify places – regions, demographic groups, or moments in time – where this has occurred or is likely to occur.

The second section looks at how development assistance is linked to the causes of conflict identified in the first section. It provides an example of how to 'map' existing programs against identified causes and a discussion about possible interventions. Since assessments are primarily intended to be diagnostic, the second section of this framework should be complemented with information contained in the program toolkits if greater detail is needed on program options.

Causes of Conflict: An Overview

While there are many different causes of conflict, there is an emerging consensus that certain broad clusters or categories of causes need to be in place for conflict to emerge. These are: 1) causes that fuel incentives or motives for participation in violence; 2) causes that facilitate the mobilization and expansion of violence; 3) causes found at the level of state capacity to manage and respond to violence; and 4) regional or international causes. If all of these are in place, there are also likely to be windows of

vulnerability – moments when events such as highly contested elections, natural disasters, economic shocks, or riots – can trigger the outbreak of full-scale violence.

The schematic on the following page presents an overview of the different categories of causes. It is useful to think about the three boxes in the middle of the diagram in terms of motive, means, and opportunity. These are the essential building blocks of conflict. Each forms a single step in a causal chain that can ultimately lead to widespread violence. Remove any one and conflict becomes less likely. Put all of these categories into place in a region, country, or sub-region, and the risk of widespread violence increases dramatically.
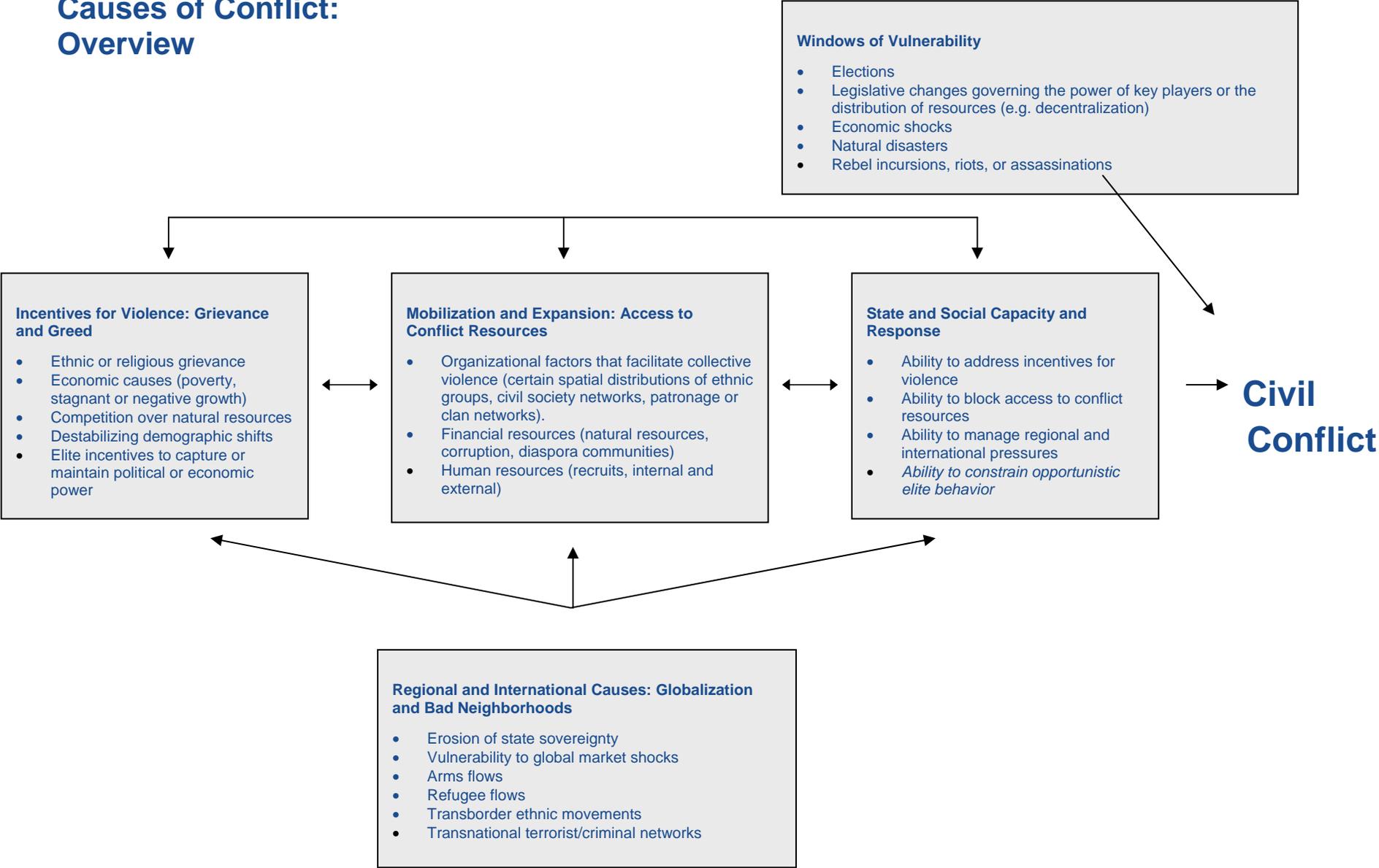
Root causes shape *motives* or *incentives* for participating in violence. Ethnic or religious tensions, population pressures, poverty, and competition over access to valuable natural resources all fit into this category. Many of these factors feed into a strong sense of grievance, and without a widespread sense of anger it will be difficult to move large numbers of people to fight. However greed, for lack of a better term, is another very powerful reason for turning to violence. Some groups and individuals, loosely termed 'conflict entrepreneurs', stand to gain a great deal of power and wealth from instability and conflict. These are a particularly pernicious and difficult set of incentives to address, and they require a very different set of solutions than those that have traditionally focused on redressing grievance.

The second category looks at whether individuals or groups with an incentive for violence have the *means* at their disposal to organize and execute conflict on a wide scale. Do they have the organizational capacity necessary to sustain violence? Do they have access to money and weapons, and on what scale? Are there pools of recruits they can draw on? Without these resources, no matter how deeply felt a grievance or overwhelming the desire for economic or political gain, widespread violence cannot be sustained. Causes in this category are critical for determining whether violence will remain at a relatively low, sporadic level or whether violence will scale-up to more dangerous levels.

The third category looks at whether the *opportunity* exists in a given society for conflict dynamics to find expression. Essentially, political and social institutions are the filter through which all other causes have to pass. They can either work to address grievances and be responsive to the needs of their citizens, or they can fuel discontent through repression, poor governance, corruption, and inefficiency. They can block access to conflict resources by crafting policies that limit the flow of arms or find economic alternatives for potential recruits, they can fail to do so, or they can actively contribute to conflict by providing these resources to different factions. Perhaps most important, institutions can either constrain the behavior of opportunistic elites who see violence as an effective strategy for gaining power and wealth, or they can create the conditions that foster their emergence, appeal, and room for maneuver.

While these categories are at the heart of internal conflict, forces at the regional and international have become increasingly important. National borders in most parts of the world are extremely porous and many of the networks that sustain conflict – economic, ethnic, religious, and criminal – are transnational in scope. The ease with which rebel movements can now sell diamonds or timber on global markets, arms flows, refugee flows, and transboundary extremist groups have all had a significant impact on violence occurring within a country. And if all of these causes are in place, there will be certain

Causes of Conflict: Overview

Windows of Vulnerability

- Elections
- Legislative changes governing the power of key players or the distribution of resources (e.g. decentralization)
- Economic shocks
- Natural disasters
- Rebel incursions, riots, or assassinations

Incentives for Violence: Grievance and Greed

- Ethnic or religious grievance
- Economic causes (poverty, stagnant or negative growth)
- Competition over natural resources
- Destabilizing demographic shifts
- Elite incentives to capture or maintain political or economic power

Mobilization and Expansion: Access to Conflict Resources

- Organizational factors that facilitate collective violence (certain spatial distributions of ethnic groups, civil society networks, patronage or clan networks).
- Financial resources (natural resources, corruption, diaspora communities)
- Human resources (recruits, internal and external)

State and Social Capacity and Response

- Ability to address incentives for violence
- Ability to block access to conflict resources
- Ability to manage regional and international pressures
- *Ability to constrain opportunistic elite behavior*

Civil Conflict

Regional and International Causes: Globalization and Bad Neighborhoods

- Erosion of state sovereignty
- Vulnerability to global market shocks
- Arms flows
- Refugee flows
- Transborder ethnic movements
- Transnational terrorist/criminal networks

events, such as elections or natural disasters, where all of the forces that can lead to conflict crystallize and become concentrated in a relatively brief window. It is at these moments when simmering or latent conflict tends to erupt and take on explicit form.

Conflict becomes more likely when causes operate at all these levels. Clearly, the simple existence of poverty is not enough, nor are ethnic divisions, nor is competition over natural resources. These tensions are likely to remain dormant unless they are activated by opportunistic elites, and this is only likely to happen when institutional constraints on this type of behavior are weak. Similarly, without a serious base of grievance to tap into, and without human, material, and military resources to draw on, ambitious elites will not be able to mobilize and sustain a mass following. Regional or international causes often reinforce internal causes by fueling discontent, providing a ready source of money, weapons, and recruits, and eroding the authority and legitimacy of state institutions.

The following sections discuss the different categories in greater detail. As previously mentioned, program toolkits are hyper-linked to the following text and are intended to be used as companion pieces to the assessment framework to provide more in-depth analysis and program options. Similarly, Appendix A contains a check-list of questions that complement the text and Appendix B provides key resources if greater detail is needed.

Incentives for Violence: Grievance and Greed

Incentives or motives are the raw material of conflict: they operate at a very deep level, are highly resistant to change, and, although widespread in the developing world, are usually latent. Obviously, violence does not emerge everywhere people have a reason to fight. Nor do underlying incentives necessarily need to be deep or enduring in order to produce conflict. But they do need to exist. Understanding a society's fault lines and the pressures that drive people to consider violence as a means for advancing their interests is a necessary first step in assessing a country's level of risk.

Ethnic and Religious Divisions

Ethnic or religious hatred is one of the most commonly offered explanations for violent conflict in the post-Cold War era. One view, the primordialist view, holds that conflict between ethnic or religious groups is inevitable because of deep-seated cultural practices and antipathies. It argues that the explosion of conflict after the Cold War occurred because the lid was taken off ancient hatreds when authoritarian regimes in the developing world lost the backing of their superpower patrons.

A more widely accepted approach, known as the constructivist or modernist view, argues that ethnic and religious identities are created: they are shaped by leaders and vary in response to social, economic and political change. This approach argues that even categories that seem as permanent as "Islamic" or "Serb" have taken on different meanings in different times, and have adopted different definitions of enemies and threats. This view suggests that there is nothing inherently conflictual about ethnicity or religion, but rather, under certain conditions identity can turn from a relatively neutral organizing principle into a powerful tool for mobilizing mass violence.

Certain ethnic settlement patterns – where groups live and in what numbers – appear to be more conducive to violence than others. For example, one study has found that if the largest ethno-linguistic group in a multi-ethnic society forms an absolute majority, the risk of violence increases by approximately 50 percent. Similarly, if a distinct group is concentrated in one region of a country, and if it makes up the majority of the population living in that region, conflict is more likely than if a group is widely dispersed (Toft 200?). Conversely, a number of studies show that high levels of ethnic or religious fragmentation are *negatively* correlated with violent conflict.

The reasons are fairly straightforward. If politics are conducted along ethnic lines, as they are in many parts of the world, then the potential for one group to dominate the others implies permanent exclusion for minority groups. The opposite is true for highly fragmented societies where it will be difficult for any one group to achieve dominance. Also, the larger the number of groups, even with shared grievances, the more difficult it will be to coordinate across differences to sustain widespread violence.

In addition to certain settlement patterns being more conducive to violence, there also appears to be general consensus that the greater the competition, inequality, and discrimination among groups in a given society, the greater the salience of ethnic or religious identities and the greater the potential for conflict. For example, if ethnicity overlaps with other forms of grievance such as political exclusion or economic dissatisfaction, this is a more destabilizing and volatile mix than if it does not.

However, if there is one dominant view about how ethnicity becomes polarized and leads to widespread conflict, it is that *elites foment ethnic or religious violence in an attempt to gain, maintain, or increase their hold on political or economic power*. While competition between groups can lead to this type of behavior, in many recent conflicts 'playing the ethnic card' has often been the result of political competition between members of same group.

For example, in Yugoslavia Slobodan Milosevic exploited anti-Albanian sentiment and Serbian nationalism in his efforts to topple his former mentor and leader of the Serbian League of Communists, Ivan Stambolic. Similarly, in Rwanda, the use of anti-Tutsi hate propaganda was a formidable weapon in the hands of Northern Hutu extremists who sought to discredit and eliminate more moderate Southern Hutu opposition leaders, many of whom were among the first victims of the genocide.

While the constructivist approach sees identity as flexible and looks for conditions – such as inequality, exclusion, or elite manipulation – under which it can turn violent, most do not suggest that it is a purely artificial construct or is infinitely subject to manipulation. Rather, this approach questions the extent to which antagonism is an enduring property of inter-group relations. Also, this view also recognizes that once ethnicity is activated and people are targeted because they belong to a particular group, identity becomes more rigid and antagonistic, leaving little room for moderation or compromise.

Economic Causes of Conflict

A growing number of researchers have started to explore how economic forces shape conflict, looking not only at how factors such as poverty, negative economic growth, unemployment, and corruption fuel societal discontent, but also at how violence and instability are used to gain access to scarce economic resources.

Poverty and stagnant or negative economic growth are highly correlated with the emergence of civil conflict. This is one of the strongest findings in recent research on conflict. Overwhelmingly, internal conflict is concentrated in low-income countries, particularly countries that have remained dependent of primary commodities and that have stagnant or negative economic growth. For example, one study shows that a society in which the economy is growing by 5 percent is roughly 40 percent less likely to see conflict than one that is declining by 5 percent (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002).

There are a number of reasons why countries mired in poverty or suffering from stagnant or negative economic growth are more prone to conflict. First, limited economic capacity is likely to generate straightforward grievance effects; governments will be unable to provide access to critical services such as education and health care or access to economic opportunity and employment. Systemic poverty also implies limited state capacity to make economic concessions that can buy off potential opposition groups, and, on the coercive side, to exert military or police control over violent contenders to power.

The relationship between socio-economic inequality and conflict is more ambiguous. Quantitative studies have been unable to find a strong statistical relationship between various measures of inequality and conflict (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002). However, case study evidence clearly points to socio-economic disparities as a strong incentive for violence, particularly when the inequality is between distinct groups, for example if a particular ethnic group is systematically excluded from an equitable share of economic opportunity. (Ballentine and Sherman 2003).

If corruption or patronage is added to the mix, particularly if corruption flows along ethnic or other group lines, deep poverty or economic decline also implies that competition over political and economic power will tend to be seen in zero-sum terms. If access to state power is the *only* route to wealth, and exclusion from these institutions implies abject poverty, then competition for control of these institutions is likely to be intense, protracted, and deadly. An extreme form of corruption, as exemplified by the kleptocracies in Abacha's Nigeria or Mobutu's Zaire, has also clearly led to a strong sense of societal grievance in addition to contributing to the erosion of state institutions.

Finally, attention has recently begun to focus on 'greed' as an incentive for violence. There are many examples of leaders and their followers doing extremely well out of war. In Liberia, between 1992 and 1996, Charles Taylor is estimated to have made more than U.S. $400 million per year from the war. Since the early 1990s, UNITA and its network of local traders, middlemen, and regional commanders has controlled roughly 70 percent of Angola's diamond trade, generating as much as an estimated U.S. $3.7 billion in revenue (Berdal and Malone, 2000).

Using a nation's endowment of primary commodity exports as a proxy measure for 'lootable' natural resources, such as diamonds, coltan, or timber, Collier and Hoeffler (2002) found a strong, positive correlation between primary commodity exports and an increased risk of civil conflict. In fact, nations with a quarter of their national income deriving from this source had a risk of conflict roughly five times greater than nations without this level of dependence (Collier et al 2003).

Apart from the high stakes world associated with controlling valuable natural commodities, micro-level economic incentives also contribute to conflict. In separate studies of the Balkans, Susan Woodward (1995) and John Mueller (2000) point a

common theme in many conflicts; that is, the participation of young men who view the theft, smuggling, and banditry that accompany violence as a route to status and personal enrichment.

'War economies' or the cluster of economic activities that feed into and flow out of conflict, require an extremely high level of instability to function and have a corrosive effect on state institutions. In many countries where state control over territory or economic activity is weak, autonomous power centers have emerged and have challenged the authority of the state. The more informal the nature of pre-existing local political and economic transactions, the easier it is for these actors to capture them and use them to pursue their own economic agendas, as has happened, for example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

While it is difficult to disentangle whether greed-based incentives *cause* conflict or merely *sustain* it once it is underway, many analysts recognize their importance, particularly in the context of weak or eroding state institutions.

Natural Resources and Conflict

The idea that natural resource degradation and competition is linked to deadly conflict has received a great deal of attention over the past decade. In addition to the inherent plausibility of the idea, a number of well-respected authors have painted a devastating picture of future conflict based on increased competition over a dwindling pool of natural resources.

There are three broad causal stories that link natural resources to conflict. The first, advanced by Thomas Homer Dixon, argues that environmental scarcity leads to a host of political and social ills that fuel conflict, including population transfers, weakened state institutions, and a heightened sense of grievance. For example, under conditions of scarcity, he argues that elites will "capture" valuable resources, marginalizing powerless groups in the process. Denied access to the resources they need, these groups are then forced to migrate to other ecologically sensitive areas.

In addition, scarcity can reduce a state's ability to respond to the needs of its population, by draining resources away from sectors such as education and creating situations where innovative responses to environmental crises are overwhelmed by the need to simply survive. Taken together, these effects of scarcity deepen poverty, lead to significant declines in agricultural production, generate destabilizing population transfers, and aggravate tensions along ethnic, racial, or religious lines.

After nearly a decade of research, however, systematic evidence for a direct connection between environment scarcity and widespread conflict is limited. There is evidence to suggest a fairly strong connection between environmental scarcity and *low* levels of violence (Hauge and Ellingson, 2001). However the bulk of the evidence shows that while resource degradation is sometimes linked to widespread conflict, it is generally a function of state capacity to respond effectively to environmental crisis.

For example, in the early 1990s El Nino-driven droughts were projected for Brazil and Zimbabwe. Expected declines in agricultural production were also estimated to be about the same for both countries. However, Brazil suffered relatively insignificant losses while Zimbabwe lost 80 percent of its maize crop. The difference can be attributed to state

response. Acting quickly on the knowledge, officials in Brazil implemented strategies designed to minimize the damage. Officials in Zimbabwe never acted on the information.

The second broad approach focuses on the political economy of natural resource control. It begins with the assumption that natural resources – renewable or not, degraded or not, scarce or not – represent an important source of wealth and power in developing countries. It then examines patterns of competition over the control and management of critical resources such as land, water, timber, oil and valuable minerals.

For example, Jack Goldstone (2001) argues that political competition between elite factions lies at the heart of violent conflict over natural resources, rather than scarcity. In Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa, for example, he argues that land simply represents one particularly lucrative prize in an elite competition that is driven by political factors. In these and other cases, land represented an important tool in the hands of elites, either as a reward for support (as in Zimbabwe) or as a powerful psychological weapon, as it was in the hands of Milosevic who gained strong support among the Serb population for his stance on 'sacred' Serbian spaces in Kosovo.

The third focuses on the negative political and economic effects of over-dependence on natural resources, what is know as the 'resource curse'. Numerous studies show that, paradoxically, most natural resource-rich countries consistently under perform relative to countries with fewer natural resources. Abundant revenues from natural resources can destabilize exchange rates and weaken other sectors of the economy through currency appreciation. While revenues are high, these types of economic ventures rarely produce large scale employment.

Perhaps the most destabilizing effects are political. Political leaders sitting on top of massive oil revenues, for example, have little incentive to share power. They are able to buy loyalty rather than having to earn it through transparent and accountable governance and competitive elections. The exclusion of distinct groups from sharing in the benefits, such as the Ogoni and Ijaw in the Niger Delta, or the Papuans and Achenese in Indonesia, often prompts violent resistance.

Demographic Shifts

There are several specific types of demographic shifts that are linked to internal violence. These are:

1. An expanding agrarian population where arable land is scarce or controlled by large landholders;

2. An expanding urban population in the context of economic stagnation or decline;

3. Rapid increases in young, educated professionals who have no opportunities for political or economic advancement;

4. The presence of a 'youth bulge', or a disproportionate share of 15 to 25 year-olds relative to the total population;

5. The migration of distinct groups into regions already settled by groups with a strong sense of identity, or demographic shifts between these groups.

What is common to all of these, and what makes them so destabilizing, is the fact that population growth or demographic change is not matched by an increase in the absorptive capacity of state or society.

There is a strong correlation between large youth cohorts (a high number of 15 to 29 year olds relative to the total population) and political violence. A large pool of young people does not need to be destabilizing, however if young people – particularly young men – are uprooted, jobless, intolerant, alienated and with few opportunities for positive engagement, they represent a ready pool of recruits for ethnic, religious, and political extremists seeking to mobilize violence. The Political Instability Task Force found that the presence of large youth cohorts (an unusually high proportion of youths age fifteen to twenty-five relative to the total population) was a major factor in ethnic conflict. (Esty et al 2002)

Another particularly salient demographic shift is the rapid transfer of rural populations to urban areas. The growth of urban centers over the last several decades has been unprecedented. The quality of life in many of the world's cities is becoming worse: polluted air, filthy water, and inadequate sanitation affect hundreds of millions of the world's urban inhabitants. Whether or not rapid rates of urbanization are linked to conflict depend on a state's ability or willingness to implement municipal policies that improve public welfare and rates of economic growth. Where urban growth is not matched by an increase in economic growth, the risk of conflict increases. For example, Sub-Saharan African countries with high rates of urbanization but below average GDP growth are at twice the risk of political conflict as African countries with above average per capita GDP growth.

Without economic opportunity, and in combination with appalling living conditions, the vast slums that grow up around major urban centers are a fertile recruiting ground for extremist nationalist or religious ideologues. One of the factors leading to the 1975-6 civil war in Lebanon, for example, was the presence of a large, young, unemployed Shiite population living in sprawling slums around Lebanon's major cities, including Beirut and Tripoli. These young people represented a ready pool of recruits for radical political parties including the Shiite Movement of the Deprived and the Islamic Liberation Party. Similarly, in Haiti, rural farmers driven off their land by environmental degradation migrated to cities such as Port-au-Prince. During his first election campaign, Jean Bertrand Aristide reportedly encouraged slum dwellers to attack Haiti's elite, leading to a violent backlash by Haiti's military.

Incentives for Violence: Interaction Effects

All of the causes discussed in this section have the potential to interact and multiply up. Environmental degradation can deepen poverty and fuel ethnic tensions. Ethnic tensions can overlay economic and political marginalization. Rapid population growth can lead to large pools of young people, and slow or negative economic growth can leave this demographic group highly vulnerable to political elites who promise them financial gain for participation in violence.

Understanding the mix of incentives for violence in a country can yield important information about the potential for conflict, and what conflict might look like if it emerges. Incentives for violence can tell us something about which types of groups might mobilize, along what lines of division, and in what numbers. It can also tell us something about the location, scope, and character of violence. Attempts to capture and control pockets

of valuable natural resources will look very different from attempts to capture and control a state, which will in turn look quite different from attempts by an ethnic group to secede. Incentives for violence can therefore provide information about the goal of violence, which can also provide information about the level of resources that will be necessary to achieve that goal.

The assessment team should use the preceding section to identify actors and groups who might face an incentive to turn to violence. However, incentives for violence are not enough. As long as those who are motivated by either grievance or greed do not organize and mobilize along pertinent lines of division, incentives for conflict are likely to remain localized or dormant. To move to violence, groups and individuals must be able to organize and acquire the resources they need to sustain violence. The following section turns to the next step in the chain – the ability to mobilize and sustain violence over the long haul.

Mobilization and Expansion: Access to Conflict Resources

While certain groups may have an incentive for violence, the question remains as to whether or not they have the *means* to do so. Do these groups have the organizational capacity necessary to sustain violence? Do they have access to money and weapons, and on what scale? Do they have international backers? Are there pools of recruits they can draw on? Without these resources, no matter how deeply felt a grievance or overwhelming the desire for economic or political gain, incentives for violence cannot find expression. The second major category therefore focuses on whether people with incentives for violence have access to the resources they need to turn that incentive into sustained violence.

Organizations and Collective Action

Certain types of organizational structures are critical to sustaining widespread violence. Their importance turns not only on their ability to forge a sense of solidarity and articulate group goals, but also on their ability to monitor the behavior of individuals who are part of the group. Participation in violence carries heavy physical and emotional costs. No matter how strong the incentive, most people would rather see others do the dirty work and share in whatever rewards violence will bring. The difficulty from the perspective of those who are seeking to change the existing political or economic order is finding out how to overcome this problem, often referred to as a *coordination* or *collective action problem*.

One reason why ethnically or regionally based violence is so common is that these types of groups are able to overcome barriers to collective action. People in the same ethnic, religious, or regional group know each other; they are embedded in dense social networks where behavior can be easily monitored, information quickly gathered and shared, and sanctions for not participating put into place. While ethnic communities may be ideally suited to performing this role, patronage networks, clan structures, and even civil society groups can fill the same role.

For example, one factor that appears to have facilitated the genocide in Rwanda was the dense, hierarchical network of associations that organized virtually every aspect of life from the highest government levels down to hillside villages. When Hutu extremists decided to launch the genocide, these groups made it easy to get the message out

about what was to be done, who was to be killed, and most importantly, who was or was not participating in the 'work' of killing. When the price for not participating was the threat of punishment by roving bands of *Interahamwe*, many were left with little real choice. This is not to excuse what happened, merely to point out the importance of the ability to monitor and sanction behavior at the micro-level.

Another characteristic that appears to make these types of organizational structures particularly effective in mobilizing violence is that in places where the state is weak, they provide critical social services such as paying for weddings and funerals and helping to secure employment. They therefore engender strong loyalty.

This points to the importance of determining whether groups in a society reinforce or bridge lines of division. In a study of urban violence in India, Ashutosh Varshney (2002) found that multi-ethnic local associations, such as trade unions, professional organizations, and political parties, played an active role in countering damaging rumors, improving communication, and exerting pressure on violent elements at the local level. These communities were more peaceful than communities in which Hindus and Muslims interacted together in daily life but where associations bridging ethnic divides did not exist or were weak. The most vulnerable communities were those where Hindus and Muslims had little interaction, either on a neighborhood or associational level.

Financial Resources

Sustained violence also requires access to significant financial resources. The section on 'war economies' suggested that the desire to capture and control valuable natural resources or engage in other forms of illegal economic activity may provide an incentive to *initiate* violence, but the resources that derive from these activities may also *sustain* violence once underway.

In many recent conflicts, the income deriving from the capture and control of valuable primary commodities has played a critical role in purchasing weapons, paying recruits, and buying the compliance of corrupt government officials. International attention has recently focused on a number of high-value, low weight commodities such as diamonds, coltan and drugs. For example, the Armed Revolutionary Forces of Columbia (FARC) has been able to collect substantial revenues by imposing taxes on coca producers operating in areas under their control, revenues then used to prosecute the war effort. It is also apparent that diamonds not only helped finance the Revolutionary United Front's (RUF) bloody reign of terror in Sierra Leone, but have also been a major source of income for the al Qaeda network and other terrorist groups.

Another important source of financing appears to come from diaspora communities, particularly those located in the west who are relatively better off than their counterparts in the developing world. The Tamil separatists in Sri Lanka, for example, sustained nearly 20 years of civil war in a resource poor country by tapping into an extensive network of Tamil communities in North America, Europe, and Asia who provide funds to procure weapons, communications, and other equipment and supplies.

Straight-forward looting, smuggling, kidnapping and banditry have also made violence more profitable. In Nepal, the Maoist insurgency has primarily been financed through bank-robberies and extortion. A disturbing new trend is the use of kidnapping – of both tourists and employees of major multinational corporations – to gain large ransom

payments. Finally, the control of international borders can lead to lucrative smuggling opportunities.

It is important to keep in mind that motivated groups are likely to be extremely creative in their search for financing. If it natural resources are not available or if resources from diaspora communities are blocked through international sanctions, for example, highly committed groups are likely to turn to other avenues. It is also important to keep in mind the role that state actors play in providing financing for violence.

Human Resources

Another important resource, touched on briefly in the preceding section, concerns the availability of recruits, particularly young people. Understanding why young people choose to participate in violence is a critical part of conducting a conflict assessment and suggesting appropriate interventions. Most analyses have focused on economic incentives. It is certainly true that a lack of economic opportunity is a strong motivation for this group to engage in violence. Young people often join extremist organizations because they provides immediate economic benefits, because violence itself offers opportunities for economic gain (through direct payment or looting), or because conflict promises to open up longer term economic options (for example, through patronage if 'their' ethnic or religious group captures power).

Another reason is that there are often very few opportunities for political engagement open to young people, particularly for those with little education or few personal connections. In the absence of constructive opportunities, young people are often used by political parties and other social movements to intimidate rivals and destabilize opponents. While sometimes these young people are paid, often they participate because doing so gives them some measure of voice in a system that offers no other opportunities. For example, some of the most ardent supporters of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal are young women who have been given a level of authority and respect that traditional political and social structures simply do not allow.

Many militant opposition groups have also reached out to young people by providing a safety in the form of access to key services. Education has received a great deal of attention. Another example is in Sri Lanka, where the LTTE has been successful in recruiting young women who have no means of supporting themselves once their husbands have been killed or conscripted into the military.

Finally, it is critical to remember that many young people who are part of militant movements are not there through choice but have either been kidnapped or forced through other means. The Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda provides one of the most egregious cases, but virtually every conflict has some element of coerced participation.

Institutional Capacity and Response

The third major causal layer concerns the extent to which institutions – political, social, and economic – either address or exacerbate causes found at other levels. Institutions are a critical filter and the opportunity structure for violence is deeply influenced by the relative strength and health of institutions. They can work to address grievances or they can fuel discontent through repression, poor governance, corruption, and inefficiency. They can block access to conflict resources by crafting policies that limit the flow of arms

or that constructively engage potential recruits, they can fail to do so, or they can actively contribute to the problem. Finally, institutions can either constrain the behavior of opportunistic elites or they can create the conditions that foster their emergence, appeal, and room for maneuver.

Democracy and Autocracy

A growing body of evidence shows that both well-established democracies and entrenched authoritarian regimes are relatively successful at managing the factors that lead to conflict, albeit through very different methods. In both democracies and autocracies, longevity implies a certain basic acceptance of the rules of the game or at least acquiescence to those rules. In entrenched authoritarian regimes, while there may be many grievances, there are a host of mechanisms in place from patronage networks to the coercive apparatus of the state that are able to contain, buy-off, or destroy incipient political challenges.

Similarly, in well-established democracies, institutions are able to engage with many causes of violence, whether or not they are always able to find solutions to these problems. A healthy civil society can articulate group goals, monitor abuses of power, and propose effective solutions social problems. In a democracy, political inclusion and effective participation guarantee that groups with competing interests can engage in a political search for solutions. Finally a strong and accountable security sector and an equitable and impartial rule of law can guarantee personal security and property rights, leaving little room for the opportunistic political and economic behavior discussed earlier.

In a statistical study of over 160 cases of internal conflict, Ibrahim Elbadawi and Nicholas Sambanis (2002) find a significant negative correlation between democracy and civil war. Similarly, Ted Gurr (1994) shows that in democracies, ethno-political groups are far more likely to express dissatisfaction through peaceful protest rather than through violence. Finally, using World Bank measures of good governance Hugh Miall (2001) finds that 70% of countries that score well experience no violence, whereas only 37% of countries with bad governance remain free from conflict.

Partial Democracies, Political Transitions, and State Failure

Partial democracies, newly independent states, and transitional regimes, on the other hand, are highly vulnerable to conflict. For example, newly independent states are five times more prone to violence than comparable but older countries. Similarly, partial democracies (regimes sharing a mix of authoritarian and democratic features) were four times more prone to civil war than full democracies and their vulnerability was even greater in Sub-Saharan Africa where they were on average eleven times more likely to fail than autocracies (Esty et al, 1998).

Even if consolidated democratic institutions are the best, most just way to manage conflict, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the path between autocracy and democracy can be a dangerous one. Fundamental political change is a highly contested process. Any change in the existing distribution of power opens up new channels for competition, draws in new actors, creates new threats, opens up new possibilities for resource allocation and patronage, and often leads, at least in the short term, to the erosion of institutional constraints governing the behavior of powerful actors. *In this fluid environment, elites will often attempt to use violence to advance their own narrow political or economic agendas.*

A special category of political change is the case of institutional erosion or collapse that manifests in 'shadow' states or state failure. The weakening of institutions that safeguard property rights, collect taxes, provide security, mobilize in response to natural disasters, and ensure economic growth not only feeds societal grievance, but also leaves room for the emergence of autonomous centers of power that can further erode the state and open up opportunities for conflict entrepreneurs to operate unhindered.

In examining how institutions shape the potential for violence, the assessment team should start with incentives and conflict resources and then look at how institutional structures either reinforce or manage identified causes. For example, if competition over access to land is an important incentive for violence, the team should examine how institutions are addressing the issue (or fueling the problem). However, there are several key institutional features that deserve close attention.

Inclusion/Exclusion: The deliberate and systematic exclusion of certain groups from participation in governmental and non-governmental arenas is one critical institutional pathology that feeds into the potential for violence, particularly in transitional regimes or regimes that share mixed political features. This also applies to the ability of groups to enjoy equal access to the benefits and services provided by the state.

The Provision of Security: One critical factor underpinning instability is the state's ability to maintain a monopoly of violence throughout the country or in certain regions. Security – at the individual, community, and national level – is widely viewed as a critical precondition for economic growth and democratic development. A weak or unaccountable security sector will often fail to prevent and will sometimes directly cause violent conflict. Excessive or inefficient spending on security also takes away resources that could be better used for other important development goals.

Local Governance: The decentralization of authority from national to local government authorities can bring a number of significant benefits. By devolving significant fiscal and political authority to regions, it can block domination of one ethnic or religious group by another at the national level. By providing a measure of autonomy over cultural, religious, political, and economic practices, it also can defuse a major source of tension. However, decentralization in the context of a weak or transitional state can also carry significant risks.

Instability and conflict bring a difficult set of issues to the fore, such as competition over access to land, ethnic and religious tensions, youth unemployment, the redrawing of political boundaries along ethnic lines, high levels of personal insecurity, or a history of mistrust between the police and local communities. Many of these sources of conflict are best addressed at the local level, yet often local governments lack the resources and skills needed to identify and address these issues, even where the political will and mandate for action exist.

Regional and Global Forces

Even when dealing with 'internal conflict' it is important to look at the regional and global context. National borders in most parts of the world are extremely porous, and many of the networks that sustain conflict – economic, ethnic, religious, and military – are transnational. The ease with which rebel leaders can now sell diamonds or timber on global markets, arms flows, refugee flows, ethnic brethren living across borders, and

guerilla movements all have had a significant impact on violence occurring within a country.

Financing for violence, for example, needs to be understood in a global context. Globalization did not cause conflicts in places like Sierra Leone, but it has made it easier for warring parties to establish the transborder economic networks they need to survive. While international attention has tended to focus on illegal trade, the trade in legal commodities bears equal responsibility for sustaining conflict. In the early 1990s, for example, the Liberian warlord Charles Taylor was supplying a third of France's tropical hardwood requirements through French companies.

Another critical external factor fueling many internal conflicts is the easy availability of arms, particularly small arms and light weapons. The end of the Cold War freed up massive surplus arsenals in many states, and the black-market trade in weapons is thriving (Boutwell and Klare, 1999). There are virtually no reliable estimates of how many weapons are circulating in any one region. However, it is clear that 'bad neighborhoods' such as the Balkans, the Great Lakes Region, Central Asia, and parts of West Africa are awash in weapons. The easy availability of arms not only makes ongoing conflict more deadly, it also has the potential to trigger conflict and undermine positive moves toward peace.

Finally, refugee or exile populations fleeing instability at home can also bring political, ethnic, or religious ideas with them that threaten the governments of their host nations. At a minimum, refugees pose heavy economic burdens on host countries. At the extreme, refugees can generate serious security problems, for example by radicalizing populations in the host country who share the same ethnicity or religion.

Windows of Vulnerability

If all of these causes are in place, there will be windows of vulnerability, moments when particular types of events – elections, natural disasters, riots, or assassinations – can trigger the outbreak of full-scale violence

Many of the more predictable windows of vulnerability or 'triggers' concern events, or anticipated events, that threaten to rapidly and fundamentally change the balance of political or economic power between key players. Elections are the most obvious example, but any type of change that threatens to alter established patterns of political or economic control in high-risk environments could lead elites to mobilize violence. The devolution of authority to local government is one such example, as are legislative changes that govern the power of key players such as the military, or anti-corruption programs that that threaten to strip incumbent elites of their main source of income. Economic shocks can serve much the same role, as the events leading to Suharto's overthrow in Indonesia make abundantly clear.

Another class of events that are less predictable but equally destabilizing are those that point out, in a particularly dramatic fashion, the weakness, inefficiency, or corruption of an existing regime. For example, a number of studies have shown how political unrest often sharply increases following a large scale natural or man-made disaster, such as hurricanes, droughts, floods, or earthquakes (Goldstone, 2001).

Summary of Key Areas for a Conflict Assessment

The preceding section lays out five broad areas that the assessment team needs to consider:

1. Incentives for violence
2. Access to conflict resources
3. Institutional and social capacity for managing violence
4. Regional dynamics
5. Windows of vulnerability

As mentioned previously, not all of the trends and variables listed above will be relevant to every country and the assessment team should use its best judgment about adding or deleting variables and adapting the generic arguments presented here to fit the specific context.

Since conflict only occurs when multiple factors come together and reinforce each other, the team also needs to pay careful attention to interaction effects between variables in each category and between categories. Essentially, the team should 'layer' the different categories on top of each other to see if actors with incentives for violence have the necessary resources and the institutional opportunity to mobilize violence on a broader scale.

III. Strategies and Options

Mapping Existing Programs

The next step in an assessment is to 'map' existing development programs against identified causes of conflict, and particularly against causes that are converging, in order to identify gaps and potential areas of intervention. The table presented on the next page is an example of one such mapping for institutional risk factors.

This type of mapping can identify where USAID programs are already attempting to deal with the causes of violence and where new initiatives might be warranted. In conducting the mapping, it is also important to include a discussion of whether the programs are appropriately targeted. For example, a youth employment program in a region that is not at high risk for violence is a good development program, but unless it is geared toward youth who have an incentive to participate in violence it is not a conflict management program.

Suggesting New Interventions

The final step is to suggest new areas of intervention or new configurations of development assistance. In making recommendations, it is important to keep in mind that conflict is extremely complex. It doesn't occur simply because people are unhappy or greedy or because a country happens to have the resources in place that might sustain violence. Nor does it happen everywhere state and social institutions are weak or perverse. It happens when causes found at multiple levels come together and reinforce each other. It is ultimately the product of deep grievance, political and

economic competition, irresponsible political leadership, weak and unaccountable institutions, and global and regional forces.

Effective interventions cannot, therefore, be based on activities that focus on a single dimension of conflict, such as ethnic tension or political exclusion. Nor can they be based at a single level, for example at the community level or the national level, since gains in one area may be so easily undermined by setbacks in another. It is important to think about how problems manifest themselves at all of these levels, and how solutions can be strengthened or built at each.

Mapping Development Programs

Conflict Risk Factor (Institutional)	USAID Program
Executive branch domination - Compliant judiciary - Weak independent media - Divided, ineffective political parties	- ABA/CEELI judicial development - Internews media strengthening - NDI parliamentary program
Limited minority representation	• None
Corruption and lack of accountability at local and national levels	- Fiscal Reform Project (KPMG/Barents) - Local Governance Initiative (Urban Institute) - KPMG/Barents Tax/fiscal reform and decentralization - ARD/Checci Regulatory Reform - Pragma SME Regulatory Reform Project
Weak, ethnically segmented civil society	- Counterpart Civil Society Support Centers - NDI Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society - Grants program (Eurasia foundation)
Corrupt, ineffective police force	• None

Every major USAID program funds projects that have at least some bearing on the causes of conflict discussed above, and it is important to apply a conflict prevention lens to *each* active area in high-risk countries, rather than assuming that some areas are more relevant to conflict than others. This is probably the most important principle to keep in mind when designing a country specific program. In fact, unless all of the different sectors in a country work together, they can often pursue programs that work at cross-purposes to each other.

In making recommendations, the assessment team is encouraged to fold as many as possible into a Mission's existing strategic objectives. While some countries may need (or be willing to consider) a stand-alone special objective for conflict, the central goal of

conducting conflict assessments is to demonstrate how traditional development and humanitarian assistance can be used to address the causes of conflict.

The following sections briefly sketch out possible ways USAID programs might begin to break into the chain of events that fuel conflict. The examples presented below are not exhaustive, nor do they include many important areas of intervention. They are meant only to illustrate some of the ways programs might be modified in environments of conflict and some of the issues that need to be considered. The following discussion should also be supplemented with a careful reading of the program toolkits being developed for different sectors.

Ethnic, Religious, and Regional Identity: If the boundaries of group identity are flexible, particularly before acute violence erupts, then how these issues are taught in schools, portrayed by the media, and talked about by political elites will shape how people view identity. In the area of media, for example, there are model legal frameworks that deal with the issue of 'hate campaigns' in the press. While having a legal framework may do little to constrain elites who are using ethnic hatred to pursue their own agenda, it can provide room for targeted groups, moderate political leaders, and international actors to oppose the actions on legal as well as ethical grounds.

Recent events have brought home in a particularly dramatic way how schools may be used to instill a culture of hate and violence as well. In many developing societies where the state simply does not have the resources to provide comprehensive primary education, the role that religious groups and charitable institutions play in providing education is praiseworthy. But there do need to be national level institutions in place that can develop and monitor curricula. Civic education programs geared to primary and secondary education can make an important contribution in this regard. USAID has funded a number of very innovative programs that teach values such as tolerance and participation by helping students identify pressing community problems, develop possible solutions, and then take these solutions to local government officials. Other programs bring parents directly into the process of educating their children. These programs, while still quite limited in scope, have shown impressive results by stressing 'learning by doing', rather than using more passive methods.

Another possible area for intervention is sponsoring dialogue, both within and between groups. If conflict in a society appears likely, international attention often tends to focus on programs that encourage inter-group dialogue. However research suggests that *within* group competition, and elite attempts to consolidate their hold on power through ethnic outbidding, may be a more important cause of conflict than ethnic grievance alone. Therefore intra-elite dialogue may be a more important factor to consider in *preventing* the emergence of widespread violence.

For example, a USAID program in Indonesia brings together a broad cross section of the Muslim elite in a discussion about the relationship between Islam and democracy. External partners have a critical role to play in facilitating this type of dialogue, for example by providing acceptable platforms, space for dialogue, and funding for balanced media coverage.

Intra-elite dialogue – among civilian members of the government and opposition, civil society, and the military – is a longer-term strategy that may be most effective before the emergence of acute violence. However once open conflict is imminent or has already

broken out, inter-group dialogue is essential in order to try to forestall the hardening of ethnic, religious, or regional divisions that often accompany violence.

Economic Causes: Even if negative economic growth is related to the emergence of conflict, it is important not to subscribe to the simplistic notion that economic development by itself will reduce the potential for violence. It can help manage conflict if the costs and benefits of growth are relatively equally distributed. But if growth exacerbates pre-existing divisions, if benefits are unequally distributed across politically relevant fault lines, or if corruption siphons off most of the gains, then it may fuel conflict.

It is also important for policy makers to identify the economic agendas that sustain violence and work to raise the costs of pursuing them. For example, if one central cause of conflict in many parts of the developing world is elite capture of valuable natural resources, there are several ways to tackle the problem.   First, most international markets for primary commodity exports are highly centralized, with a small number of key intermediaries. Working with these intermediaries to prevent illegitimate actors from gaining access to legitimate market channels increases the difficulty that conflict entrepreneurs will face in financing their activities.

A number of major multinational corporations, de Beers for example, have already begun to put into place mechanisms that attempt to track and curtail the sale of 'conflict commodities.' An important set of partnerships that might be encouraged is between these international companies and local civil society groups, particularly environmental groups that are positioned to monitor and report on these types of activities at the local level.

A second way in which the international community might help is to assist in the diversification of national economies that are heavily reliant on one or two easily 'lootable' commodities. If the only source of wealth in a country is access to diamonds, for example, then whoever controls access has the ability to buy the loyalty of virtually anyone they chose. Working to remove this monopoly on economic opportunity through diversification not only reduces the zero sum nature of competition between elites over access to these resources, it also leaves people at the mass level with more choices about where to turn for economic survival.

It is particularly important to increase the number of economic options high-risk populations have in these types of environments. High risk in this context refers primarily to unemployed or underemployed young men who stand on either side of ethnic, regional, or religious fault lines in a society. Programs that place emphasis on keeping this group in school, or assisting with skills training and job placement in vulnerable or marginal areas such as urban centers or along the borders of ethnic enclaves may help undercut the appeal of elites who depend on this pool for executing violence.

Finally, engaging the private sector and economic associations in conflict management is an important area to consider. The private sector and economic associations have a number of unique qualities that have not been sufficiently harnessed for the purposes of conflict management. Their interest in stability is self-evident, they can often bring more pressure to bear on local and national government officials to adopt constructive policies than traditional peace-building NGOs, and in areas where other civil society groups are divided along ethnic lines economic associations are often multi-ethnic.

For example, in Sri Lanka the local business community played a critical role in getting the government and the LTTE back to the negotiating table after 20 years of fighting. After their interests took a direct hit because of an LTTE attack on the Colombo airport, the business community rallied and sponsored a very effective pro-peace media campaign that spelled out in very concrete dollar terms what the country was losing in terms of economic growth and investment because of the instability. Similarly, several chambers of commerce in Sri Lanka are working with local universities, schools and businesses to match at risk young people with job opportunities.

Security Sector Reform, Civil Military Relations, and Police Training: To date, most explicit work in this area has focused on post-conflict issues such as demobilization, de-mining, child soldiers, and the reintegration of ex-combatants. In pre-conflict settings, the emphasis will need to shift and focus more directly on issues such as increasing civilian oversight, community policing, and civil military relations.

USAID already has a number of programs that provide assistance to help improve the capacity of relevant civilian bodies in government to manage the security forces more effectively. These programs stress the need to use the same principles of good public sector management in the security sector as in all other public sectors, principles such as transparency, accountability, respect for human rights, and informed debate and participation on military expenditures and threat assessment.

For example, in Indonesia, a USAID funded civil-military program helped reinforce legislative oversight of the military by raising awareness of issues such as military-owned businesses, corruption, territorial affairs, and control of natural resources. The program also addressed the military's involvement in inter-ethnic conflict. Another area where USAID might want to consider focusing its efforts is in strengthening the broader institutional and legal framework in which public spending and security decision-making occurs, ensuring due transparency and attention to corruption.

While working to encourage civilian oversight is a key part of security sector reform, it is also important to remember that civilian elites can be among the worst offenders in terms of using the military in dangerous ways. In these cases, a highly professional military can be an important bulwark against conflict. Clearly, important aspects of security sector reform such as enhancing the military's ability to deal effectively with internal or external threats are outside the scope of USAID's mandate. However any engagement in this area by USAID will require continued and close collaboration with other U.S. government agencies to ensure that those who have the authority and skill to implement programs are covering the most important aspects of security sector reform.

Working with governments and civil society groups to reducing excessive or inappropriate security sector expenditure is an important goal, particularly since it can free up resources for other development purposes. However in accepting the need for well-functioning security systems, a single-minded focus on down-sizing the security sector as a whole may not be consistent with the need to enhance security as a precondition for development. Redistributing spending away from the military and toward civilian police forces may be one important area to explore, particularly given the blurring of boundaries between conflict and organized crime in many developing countries. A disproportionate military response to what is essentially criminal activity may in fact account in large part for the escalation of conflict.

Police training and community policing is still a relatively new area for USAID, but expanding these efforts in pre-conflict settings needs to be given serious consideration. Even with legislative prohibitions on working with the police, there are programs that deal

Civil Society Initiatives: A central component of conflict management and peace building through development should be strengthening civil society's role in all of the areas discussed above. From many of the examples presented above it is clear that civil society groups have an important role to play in monitoring abuses and working in partnership with other actors to devise appropriate and sustainable solutions.

However, it is important to recognize that civil society is a reflection of society rather than something entirely distinct, and while many groups can represent a positive force for change, many others can mirror the social ills and tensions that exist in a particular context. Before engaging with civil society, donors need to conduct a careful analysis of how civil society groups line up along a society's fault lines. For example, as mentioned before, prior to the genocide Rwandan associational life was extraordinarily vibrant and dense. Yet it did little to stop the killing, and in fact the organizational density may have facilitated it.

In working with civil society groups in deeply divided societies, donors need to be attentive to how civil society is either reinforcing or bridging lines of division. This will often entail looking beyond civil society actors who are "approved" by the state to those who represent voiceless sectors. Donors should give particular consideration to locating and supporting organizations that cross ethnic, economic, or political fault lines such as women's groups or community development associations that explicitly engage members of different communities in order to address common problems.

Appendix A: Checklist of Questions

I. Incentives for Violence: Grievance and Greed	
1. Ethnic and Religious Divisions	• Is the relationship between ethnic/religious groups characterized by dominance, potential dominance, or high levels of fragmentation? • Where do these groups live and in what numbers? Are they concentrated in regional pockets or dispersed? If they are concentrated, do they form a majority or a minority in the area? • What is the history of relations between groups? Is there a pattern of systematic discrimination or have relations been relatively peaceful and inclusive? • Do other divides, for example political exclusion or economic inequality, reinforce ethnic divisions? • Are there elites who face an economic or political incentive to mobilize violence along ethnic lines? • Is extremist ethnic or religious rhetoric increasing? Are elites beginning to create or promote ethnic 'myths'?
2. Economic Causes	• Is the economy (of the country/region) growing, stagnant, or declining? By what percent? • Is the country (or region) low income? • Are there large socio-economic disparities? Do these reinforce other lines of division, such as ethnicity? • Is the economy heavily dependent on primary commodities? Are these commodities easily 'lootable'? • Is economic power tied to political power? • How pervasive is corruption or patronage? Does it flow along ethnic or other lines of division? • If there is a large informal economy, is it legal or illegal (i.e. based on drugs, trafficking in humans)? • What is the capacity of the formal/informal economy to absorb new entrants? • What is the unemployment rate, particularly for young men in urban areas? • Is there a match between the skills of new entrants and the needs of the economy? • Are these economies heavily dependent on access to global

	markets? How susceptible are they to economic shocks?
3. Environmental Causes	• Are there major resource scarcities?
	• What are the primary causes of scarcity?
	• Has scarcity led to resource capture?
	• Has scarcity led to population transfers?
	• Do the effects of scarcity (resource capture, population transfers) reinforce other divides (ethnic, religious, economic) and/or generate competition between groups?
	• Do elites compete over the control of valuable natural resources (both renewable and non-renewable), scarce or not?
	• Are certain resources (such as land) used as a tool in political competition?
4. Demographic Trends	• Do population growth rates differ across distinct, adjacent communities?
	• Are there other factors (e.g. economic migration) that are tipping the demographic balance toward one group?
	• Is the rural population expanding? If so, is there access to land or are there other safety valves for population pressures (e.g. migration to adjacent states/economic opportunity in urban centers)?
	• What are rates of urbanization? Is the urban population expanding in a period of economic growth or decline?
	• What is the size of the youth cohort relative to the total population?
	• Are there particular areas (urban centers, distinct regions) where the youth cohort is disproportionately large?
	• Are young people radicalizing? If so, around what issues? If not, what is keeping this from happening?
	• Are there rapid increases in young, educated professionals who have no opportunities for political or economic advancement?
5. Interaction Effects	• Are there many incentives for violence (both greed and grievance) or only a few?
	• Are they longstanding and chronic or of fairly recent origin?
	• Do incentives for violence overlap and reinforce each other or cut across lines of division? For example, does access to

	economic opportunity overlap with ethnic difference or cut across ethnic difference?
	• Is there an alignment between grievance and greed? Are elites with a political or economic incentive to mobilize violence well-positioned to tap into a strong grievance?

II. Mobilization: Access to Conflict Resources	
1. Organizational Resources	• Do organizational structures bridge or reinforce differences in a society? For example, are civil society groups mono-ethnic or multi-ethnic?
	• Are there well-established ethnic or religious associations that could be used to mobilize violence?
	• Have these structures stepped in to provide important services, such as access to employment or education, in the context of a weak state?
	• How closely do organizational resources (e.g. ethnic groups or patronage networks) align with incentives for violence?
	• If incentives and organizations are aligned, are these organizations capable of monitoring group behavior and punishing 'defectors' from group goals?
2. Financial Resources	• Are groups with an incentive to mobilize violence affiliated with foreign support groups (e.g. diaspora, foreign governments, transnational religious or ethnic groups) that could provide funding?
	• Can those motivated to engage in violence obtain control of "lootable" primary commodities?
	• Are resources available through government corruption or patronage networks?
	• Can sufficient resources be gained through smuggling, kidnapping, banditry or other activities on the black or gray market?
3. Human Resources	• Is there a population of ready recruits (e.g. unemployed young men in urban or semi-urban areas) available to actors motivated to engage in violence?
4. General Questions	• Do groups with incentives for violence have access to all conflict resources – organizational, financial, and human – or only a few?
	• What level of resources do groups have and what level do

| | they need to achieve their goals? Is there a match? |
| | • Where do these resources come from (e.g. natural resources, corruption/patronage networks, diasporas, foreign recruits, local/international sources) and what does this imply about ease of access and sustainability? |

III. Institutional Capacity and Response	
1. Regime Type and Legitimacy	• Is the regime democratic, authoritarian, or mixed?
	• How long has it existed in its current form?
	• Is it in a period of transition or erosion?
	• Are there generally accepted rules for political competition?
	• What is the overall level of respect for national authorities?
2. Inclusion/Exclusion	• Do government policies favor one group over another? For example, are government services provided equally across different ethnic or religious groups, are exclusive language policies in place?
	• Has the collapse or erosion of state institutions led groups to turn to more immediate forms of identity for survival?
	• Do civil society groups reinforce or bridge lines of division?
	• How robust are multi-ethnic or multi-religious organizations? Do they have a mass base (e.g. trade unions, business associations) or are they limited to a narrow elite layer?
	• How are issues of ethnicity/religion taught in schools?
	• Does the press promote ethnic or religious intolerance?
3. Rule of Law/Provision of Security	• How strong is the judicial system?
	• Are civil and political freedoms respected?
	• Are other basic human rights respected?
	• Does unlawful state violence exist?
	• Does civilian power control the security sector?
	• Is the government able to exercise effective control over its territory
	• Does the security sector (police/ justice sector) effectively and impartially settle disputes between groups or is there a perception of bias?
	• To what extent is the security sector involved in 'shadow' economic activity?
	• Do government institutions effectively regulate legal arms

	trade and prevent illegal arms trades or do they participate in it?
4. Economic Governance	• Does economic policy encourage economic growth or impose obstacles? • Is policy conducive to macro-economic stability? • How pervasive is corruption in state institutions? • Do government institutions/civil society groups effectively monitor and enforce financial transparency and accountability? • Is the government able to exert economic control over the territory of the state or are there large pockets of autonomous economic activity? • Does government policy encourage a good match between available skills and the demands of the market? • Do state economic policies favor one group at the expense of another? • Are local governments able to encourage local economic growth and investment and respond to local economic problems? • Do grassroots and/or national institutions constructively engage underrepresented and marginalized groups in economic development activities? • Do government programs constructively engage potential recruits, such as unemployed youth?
5. Natural Resource Management	• Does government policy seek to improve the sustainable management of natural resources? • Are there institutions in place that effectively mediate competing claims to natural resources such as land or water? • Do local/national elites earn significant off-budget income from the exploitation of natural resources? • Do government institutions effectively regulate trade in "lootable" commodities? • Are natural resources viewed by state elites as a useful tool or prize in a larger political competition? • Are state institutions able to respond to environmental shocks or natural disasters?
6. Demographic Factors	• Are government policies causing demographic shifts, for

	example through government-sponsored transmigration or agricultural programs?
	• Are government institutions able to respond to new demands created by demographic change? For example, are voting rights tied to place of residence or birth (meaning will uprooted populations be able to voice demands through political channels)?

IV. Regional and International Factors

	• Are ethnic and/or religious divisions reinforced by parallel relations in neighboring countries?
	• Does environmental degradation have cross-border causes or effects?
	• Is economic activity (both legal and illegal) closely tied to regional or global dynamics?
	• Is the economy highly vulnerable to global economic shocks?
	• Are demographic shifts tied to regional events?
	• Is mobilization facilitated by support from other governments or ethnic and religious groups outside the country?

V. Windows of Vulnerability

1. Predictable	• Are major government reforms planned that could result in shifts in political or economic power (e.g. decentralization, anti-corruption, security sector reform)?
	• Are contentious elections approaching?
2. Unpredictable	• Is the country vulnerable to natural disasters?
	• Does the government effectively respond to mitigate the damage done by natural disasters?
	• Is the economy highly vulnerable to global economic shocks?
	• Do government institutions have a history of effectively responding to political and economic crises?
	• Do local governments effectively and constructively respond to local instability?

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