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Conflict Mapping Guide: Our Analysis Tool

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Vasileios P. Karakasis

Introduction

In the [previous piece](#) we elaborated on the *conflict transformation* approach that this project intends to adopt in dealing with the Cyprus question. Aim of this part now, is to present the methodological tool we will employ in "operationalizing" this approach. In doing so and drawing upon Wehr's work (1979) the attention will be paid to the "Conflict Mapping Guide".

The diagnosis stage

Conflict as a social phenomenon is not solely about rights, interests or power. Although these things are incorporated in its notion, conflict, in the "transformational" light, is mostly about people's interaction with one another. Having stressed the relationship-oriented character of conflict transformation, special reference should be given to the

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interactional crisis (Baruch Bush and Folger 2005; 22) that is inherent in the conflict. According to conflict resolution theories, addressing their concerns is what disputants anticipate from any mediator. The rationale behind our approach is quite different. Given the negative spiral of the interactional crisis, the mediator is expected to reverse certain elements of the conflict in order to transform it into -what Zartman (2009; 329) calls- a Mutually Enticing Opportunity. For this sake, the mediator is strongly encouraged to identify and fully comprehend these specific elements that flare up the conflict.

Bearing this in mind, the proper *diagnosis* of the conflict is more than fundamental. Stemming out from the ancient Greek word *διά-γνωσις*, this notion entails a critical analysis on the nature of the conflict. At this *diagnosis stage*, a simple preliminary list involves nine basic queries, often summarized by the concept of SPITCEROW. Inspired by Mitchell's work (2002; 54), Figure 1 sets forth these questions that should be carefully addressed:

Figure 1 SPITCEROW

S	What do the parties see as the Sources of the Conflict?
P	Who are the core Parties to this conflict?

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I	What are the main Issues in this conflict, according to those parties? What are the underlying Issues ?
T	What are the Tactics that the adversaries have so far employed against each other?
C	What have been the important Changes (thresholds) in this conflict?
E	What have been the ways in which the conflict has Enlarged over time (new parties-new issues)?
R	What are the Roles that the third parties have played so far?
O	What range of possible Outcomes from the conflict has been envisaged so far by those involved in this conflict?
W	How do the adversaries envisage Winning the conflict and has this changed markedly since the conflict began?

Source: Mitchell (2002); 54

The significance of "Conflict Mapping Guide"

In order to answer to these questions and grasp all relevant facets of a specific conflict situation, the mediator needs a map as a framework for analysis. He needs a GPS that could

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navigate the conflict. Stressing Wehr's (1979) work as our point of reference, this project will employ the "Conflict Mapping Guide" (CMG) as the methodological tool in dealing with the Cyprus issue. CMG is designed to identify active and potential adversary individuals, groups and intermediaries, along with their interactions, interests and positions. It can unveil the underlying and proximate issues that are causing tensions among the disputant parties. Besides this, CMG can help us visualize the development of a strategy that could constructively transform the conflict.

The structure of our "Conflict Mapping Guide"

For the sake of our own project, the CMG will be structured in a way that involves the following parameters:

- A. Historical Background: In this framework, we address the origins and major events in the evolution of the conflict and its context. This will help us understand the dynamics of the conflict. The elaboration on the historical background of the conflict, might help us predict the *precipitating events* (Wehr 1979; 21) that signal the surfacing of a dispute. Adding to the historical interactive conflict relationship among the parties, it is

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important to delineate, also, the geographical milieu within which the problematic relationship (or the interactional crisis) unfolds (Wehr 1979; 19)

B. Conflict setting: it is essential to fully grasp the setting upon which the conflict occurs. By setting we do not mean the geographical boundaries within which the conflicting parties operate¹. Emphasis is laid on the nexus of ideational, institutional and structural constraints within which the decision-makers of the disputants are operating. The project draws the readers' attention to the ideational constraints operative at three different levels:

i) Individual level: it is important to understand how personalized traumas, in the aftermath of unfortunate events, have shaped the mindsets of the constituents on the ground towards "the opponent". Elaborating on the psychological trails that the conflict has imprinted on the people's memories is a prerequisite in this respect.

ii) Societal level: in this context we try to comprehend how the above mentioned personalized traumas have been uploaded onto different segments of the society among the disputant parties. We have to underline the meaning that a significant number of constituents place on historical events as well as the way they have interpreted them.

¹ Something that will be addressed at the Historical Background

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February 2, 2014

iii) National level: Having described the beliefs that the grassroots constituents hold towards “their opponents”, we gain a general insight on the policy sphere within which the decision-makers have to operate. The next step is to examine the “policy paradigm” that the policy-makers embrace in dealing with the conflict. The term “policy paradigm”, inspired by Hall (1990), constitutes a set of cognitive and moral maps that orients the decision-makers within a specific policy sphere². Policy paradigm is the tool for the decision units involved in a conflict to identify problems, specify and prioritize their interests and goals (Bleich 2002).

- C. Conflict parties: here we cast light on decisional units, directly or indirectly involved in the conflict, having some important stake in the outcome of the conflict (Wehr 1979; 19). Based on their degree of involvement, the parties are categorized into:
- i) primary: their goals are, or are perceived to be, incompatible and they interact directly in pursuit of these goals.
 - ii) the secondary-intervening parties: these are parties that have an interest in successfully addressing the conflict

² To a significant degree, the respective policy sphere might have been influenced by the interaction of i) and ii).

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iii) interested third parties: parties that have an indirect (generally economic) stake in the outcome or the development of the dispute but who do not feel themselves to be directly involved.

D. Issues: through the CMG, the readers should understand the aspects the disputants are fighting about. This dimension sets forth the following questions that should be addressed:

- i) What is this conflict like (Zartman 2009; 330)? Is it about territory, military concerns or distribution of resources (fact-based)?
- ii) What are the adversaries' real interests³ in this conflict, as opposed to stated positions (interest-based)?
- iii) What is the adversaries' security point (value-based, *ibid*)?⁴
- iv) What is the border line between the core aspects of the conflict and its overlays?⁵

³ Interests are identified here as any party's desired share of scarce resources (meaning power, money, prestige, survival respect, Wehr 1979; 20)

⁴ Security point or BATNA/WATNA is the best/worst alternative to a negotiated agreement. It is the most important reference point in understanding and conducting a negotiation. It determines whether a party can play it soft or tough during the negotiations (Zartman 2009; 322-325)

⁵ Conflict overlays constitute extraneous problems in the conflict process that get "laid over" the core ones, making the latter harder to see and consequently address (Burgess and Burgess 1996; 308). To clarify, stereotyping, intense feelings of frustration- sometimes transformed into passionate crusades for particular positions-, anger-induced misunderstandings, problems of perceptions and communication belong to this "overlay" repertoire.

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E. Recorded third-party initiatives and the potential of the EU involvement:

The objective of this dimension is twofold. On the one hand, it records all related initiatives that have been undertaken by third parties since 1964 in order to handle the conflict. The focus will be on the UN and the EU. With respect to the role of the first one, the resolutions of the Security Council, the papers of the Good Offices Missions, public statements of the Secretary General and the Special Envoys and other relevant documents compose the data-platform upon which the analysis will be structured. As far as the EU is concerned, the project will assess the ability of its “post-modern and pluralist framework” to enhance the potential for win-win agreements between the conflicting parties. According to the developed literature (Diez et al 2008), this can be done through the “fundamentally transformed application of statehood, sovereignty and secession”. The initiatives undertaken by relevant NGOs will not be neglected. This parameter will convey the positive outcomes attributed to these interventions as well as the respective results that have fallen short of the disputants’ expectations.

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On the other hand, the project will examine the possibility of applying a differentiated “conflict transformation” approach on the conflict. More specifically, it will estimate the extent to which the EU has developed the proper capacities to engage itself with this approach in order to induce a constructive change on the island.

Figure 2 summarizes the content and the significance of the parameters embedded in the conflict analysis tool that we are going to adopt.

Figure 2 The Structure of the Conflict Mapping Guide

Parameters composing the CMG	Content	The rationale behind the parameter(s)
1. Historical background	a. Origins, major events in the evolution of the conflict b. Geographical context of the context	Understanding the dynamics of the conflict Predicting the <i>precipitating events</i> signaling the surfacing of dispute(s)
2. Conflict setting	Ideational, institutional and	Prediction of the

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	structural constraints within which the decision-units operate-Analysis on a. individual level b. societal level c. (inter-)national level	adversaries' policies
3. Conflict parties	Assessing the degree of involvement	Understanding the identity of stakeholders
4. Issues	Categorization issues into fact-based, interest-based and value based aspects.	Distinction of the core aspects of the conflict from the "conflict overlays"
5. Third parties' initiatives	Assess the contribution of the third parties	Examine the role that third parties could play in transforming the conflict

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Conclusion

This part described the importance, the substance and the structure of the analysis tool that we are going to adopt in our project, the CMG. This tool, as explained above, will help us operationalize the conflict transformation approach we have adopted as regards the Cyprus conflict and visualize the development of a strategy to transformation of the conflict. The next step of the project is to initiate the “operationalization” of CMG. The next part will outline the historical events that have made the Cyprus question seem as a jigsaw puzzle.

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