



Resource Guide on EXIT STRATEGIES

The Resource Guides constitute a continuously evolving project initiated by the Institutional Learning and Research Division (ILR) to enable SFCG staff to quickly and easily access and review a selection of practical and useful resources. Therefore, it is not meant to be a comprehensive bibliography. We welcome contributions of resources to ILR (ilr@sfcg.org).

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Introduction

Exit strategies have recently come to the forefront within SFCG due to a number of recent external evaluations raising them as an issue requiring further thinking. As a strategic issue that pertains to all of the SFCG offices to some degree, it seems warranted to have an organization-wide conversation.

Discussion Point: Should SFCG have one strategy or different office-specific strategies? Or should there be an overarching policy that outlines key components that guides office-specific strategy development?

This document provides an overview of the concept as portrayed in existing literature as well as a set of discussion points specific to SFCG's reflection on this topic. The guide begins with a review of the definition, common approaches and critiques of exit strategies, followed by some resources to better acquaint readers with the existing thinking in this area.

What is an Exit Strategy?

Despite the phrase becoming increasingly prevalent in peacebuilding discussions, there does not appear to be a common definition for the term in the literature, nor material addressing the specifics of exit strategies and conflict transformation. Our hypothesis is that the generally held perception of an exit strategy includes the agency removing itself from the context where it was working. It seems to have originated in business terminology, moved to the military and has more recently been applied to humanitarian and development-related third-party interventions, specifically.

Discussion Point: Does SFCG adhere to the common perception of exit strategies? If not, what does an exit strategy mean for SFCG? How does the SFCG principle of making long-term commitments fit within this discussion? Might other language better frame what is appropriate to SFCG such as 'transition strategies'?

Approaches

The four most common approaches to exit strategy discussions, are illustrated below.

Deadlines: Not surprisingly considering the origins, the most common exit strategy is dependent upon a timeline or the creation of a specific deadline. The deadline strategy is often assumed to imply the absolute end of contact between the parties and is generally perceived to be arbitrarily created. Practitioners and commentators, alike, often denounce the deadline approach as detrimental to a peace process.

Success is another element on which an exit strategy might be based, whereby the programme determines the specific situation necessary to warrant leaving the country. A program may gauge success based on project outputs, outcomes or impacts or a combination of all results. The program must then consider

what constitutes success and then how it will be known that success has been reached. Evaluations are commonly seen as a tool within this process.

Funding: Another approach to exit strategies is based upon funding. Programme designers can plan to use a specific sum of money for a program and to end the program when the money has been completely distributed. In this case, an exit strategy would be part of the initial design.

Sustainability: Among the ILR team, it was expected that literature on exit strategies would highlight sustainability of the conflict transformation skill-base as another element by which exit strategies could be based. This could be closely linked to the ‘success’ approach, whereby when a target quantity and quality of conflict transformation skills locally based are reached the agency would consider leaving. Surprisingly, that association did not commonly appear in the research. The document that most directly connected exit strategies to sustainability is *When Is It Time to Say Goodbye? Exit Strategies and Venture Philanthropy Funds* (see annotated bibliography).

Discussion Points:

- What other components might SFCG want to base their exit strategy(ies) upon? Is a combination of the 4 mentioned a viable approach?
- When is it viable to define the exit strategy for a programme? During the assessment, after accord has been signed or is it more important to be continuously asking ourselves those questions?
- How does funding relate to the SFCG approach to exit strategies?

Pitfalls & Common Critiques

Negative characteristics commonly attributed to exit strategies include:

- that they are developed out of context of the conflict or program,
- they have no regard for the quality of the situation left behind,
- they infer that programmers are not in it for the “long haul,”
- they reveal a bias against engaging in regions experiencing protracted conflicts,
- it is not possible to predict what the landscape of a region will look like so far in the future,

In addition the four points commonly used to discredit exit strategies as summarized by Stambaugh include: (Found on pg 4 of Res. Guide):

1. Exit Strategies play into the hands of opponents of the peace process
2. Exit Strategies are too simplistic
3. Exit Strategies run counter to the way diplomacy is conducted
4. Exit Strategies are just plain wrong in principle

Stambaugh provided an interesting response to such critiques: “The true choice is between having a well conceived exit strategy or allowing fatigue and politics to define your exit. The preferable choice is obvious” (pg 28).

Discussion Point: What precautions are necessary to ensure that SFCG exit strategies do not suffer from the above-mentioned pitfalls?

This guide is intended to contribute to the SFCG thinking on exit strategies for peacebuilding programs. To date, the literature that has been discovered does not address this concept directly. The following are documents from other fields, primarily military and development, containing information or analysis of these issues that may be applicable to the peacebuilding field.

*****MUST READS*****

1. **Title:** *The Exit Strategy Delusion*

By: Rose, Gideon; *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, Iss. 1; pg. 56
Language: English
Description: 12 pages. This article is an excellent critique of the exit strategy from the perspective of the U.S. military intervention. It offers insight into the history of the concept then looks at the detrimental consequences, both realized and potential, of imposing exit strategies on all missions. The article then goes on to suggest possible alternatives, founded on the rejection of the “exit” strategy in favor of the “transition” strategy.

2. **Title:** *Exit Strategies (working document)*
By: Corporate Engagement Project, Collaboration for Development Action (2003)
Language: English
Description: 6 pages. This issue paper discusses the impact of companies’ departure on their host communities. It discusses common pitfalls surrounding departure and the negative effects that can result within both the company and the society it leaves. The essay proposes several options and alternatives to relieve these potential consequences.
Location: <http://www.cdainc.com/publications/cep/issuepapers/cepIssuePaperExitStrategies.pdf>

Developing Exit Strategies

1. **Title:** *When Is It Time to Say Goodbye? Exit Strategies and Venture Philanthropy Funds*
By: Alter, Kim and Paul Shoemaker, et. al REDF (Sept. 2001)
Language: English
Description: 17 pages. This article addresses the implications of venture philanthropy on NGOs supported by their grants. It examines the ideal relationship between VPs and the NGOs they fund and explores the methods of ending that support which will promote the NGOs sustainability. Contains transferable lessons for NGOs to consider to their host community.
Location: <http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/fellows/papers/2000-01/stambaugh.pdf>
2. **Title:** *Peacekeeping Exit Strategy: A Renaissance for the Deadline?*
By: Stambaugh, Colonel Jeffrey. Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.
Language: English
Description: 90 pages. This document looks at past uses, successes and failures, of exit strategies from a military intervention perspective. Analyzes the “deadline strategy” and its place among the varieties of exit strategies. Contains an especially helpful section explaining and countering the four lines of criticism (p.23-28):
1. They play into the hands of opponents of the peace process
2. They are too simplistic
3. They run counter to the way diplomacy is conducted
4. They are just plain wrong in principle
This section is useful for clarifying what to avoid when creating an exit strategy. The crux of this work is “The true choice is between having well conceived exit strategy or allowing fatigue and politics to define your exit. The preferable choice is obvious.”
Location: <http://www.wcfia.harvard.edu/fellows/papers/2000-01/stambaugh.pdf>
3. **Title:** *Exit Strategy for Humanitarian Actors in the Context of Complex Emergencies*
By: Inter-Agency Standing Committee (1997)
Language: English

- Description:** 6 pages. This paper addresses exit strategy in the context of an emergency that necessitates humanitarian response. It considers the general policy, specific conditions, operational principles, and impact on coordination that are necessary for a successful strategy.
- Location:** <http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/iasc/exitstrategy.doc>
4. **Title:** *No Exit Without Strategy: Security Council decision-making and the closure or transition of United Nations peacekeeping operations*
- By:** United Nations Security Council (2001)
- Language:** English
- Description:** 12 pages. This document focuses on the factors the Security Council should consider in deciding to launch, significantly alter, or terminate a peacekeeping operation. A second portion of the report examines the particular roles of the UNSC and other UN agencies in formulating good exit and entrance strategies. The annex of this publication lays out key questions for mandate formation, periodic or episodic review, and consideration of withdrawal within a peacekeeping operation.
- Location:** <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/343/62/PDF/N0134362.pdf?OpenElement>
5. **Title:** *Evaluation's Role in Supporting Initiative Sustainability*
- By:** Weiss, Heather and Julia Coffman and Marielle Bohan-Baker. Harvard Family Research Project (2003).
- Language:** English
- Description:** 40 pages. This paper suggests roles that evaluation can play in promoting sustainability of initiatives. The first role it suggests is supporting sustainability through strategy by advising foundations to deliberately focus on sustainability. The second suggestion is for evaluations to treat sustainability as an intended outcome, suggesting means by which it can stay on course.
- Location:** <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/pubs/onlinepubs/sustainability/evalrole.html>
6. **Title:** *Conditions of Successful Third-Party Intervention in Intrastate Conflicts*
- By:** Regan, Patrick M; *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Jun., 1996), 336-359.
- Language:** English
- Description:** 23 pages. This article uses data on all third-party interventions into intrastate conflict since 1944 to assess historical pattern of intervention strategies and their relative success rates. Building on this, it uses a logic analysis to develop prescriptive outlines for future intervention attempts. From his results the author argues that it is the characteristics of the conflict that largely determine the success of the intervention.
7. **Title:** *Peacekeeping: Defining Success*. *Peace Colloquy*. Iss. 1, Spring 2002. Kroc Institute.
- By:** Lake, Anthony
- Language:** English
- Description:** 3 pages. This document asserts the necessity of understanding goals before launching military interventions. In the context of Kosovo aftermath, it asks of the international community: What is the scope of the humanitarian crisis? What kind of deadlines should we set? Is reconciliation still possible or practical? What options should we explore if not? It predicts future problems the UN and

American leadership will face if they stay the current course of becoming involved in countless peacekeeping garrisons without preplanned exits.

Location: http://www.nd.edu/~krocinst/colloquy/issue1/feature_lake.html

8. Title: *Results, Not Timetables, Matter in Iraq* Washington Post: Tuesday, 25 Jan 2005; Page A 15.

By: Kissinger, Henry and George P. Schultz

Language: English

Description: 4 pages. This document asserts that the definition of an exit strategy ought to be sustainable stability. It denounces the imposition of an arbitrary time limit on the intervention. It is framed within the Iraqi conflict, but contains principles and follows through to consequences that could be applied in broad contexts.

Location: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A33959-2005Jan24?language=printer>

9. Title: *Designing Transformation and Intervention Processes*

By: Paffenholz, Thania

Language: English

Description: 17 pages. This chapter presents a variety of approaches and instruments used in external planning of civilian peace interventions. On macro, meso, and micro levels, the author discusses ten issues: the need for vision, goals and commitment, methods of analyzing conflicts and actors, strategies and rolls of intervening actors, the ongoing search for right partners and entry points, timing interventions, thinking in processes and building structures, criteria for the recruitment of field staff, coordination and cooperation, the inclusion of goals of sustainability, and building learning into the process of interventions.

Location: http://www.berghof-handbook.net/articles/paffenholz_handbook.pdf

Examples of Exit Strategies

1. Title: *Office of Transition Initiatives: Results Review FY 1999*

By: USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Response 2000

Language: English

Description: 96 pages. This document describes OTI's activity in 18 countries in 1999 and offers sections on lessons learned, future prospects and exit strategies for each region. Suggested use: open electronically as PDF and search for "exit strategy" to find each country's

Location: http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/PDABS233.pdf

2. Title: *Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal 2002: Uganda*

By: UN-OCHA

Language: English

Description: 1 page. Executive Summary explains conditions of exit strategy. This section outlines the determinants that will enable the phase-out of relief assistance. 1 page. Section 3.12 outlines the determinants that will enable a phase-out of relief assistance.

Location: <http://www.reliefweb.int/appeals/2002/files/uga02.pdf>

Institutional Learning and Research Division, Search for Common Ground (February 2005).