

Designing Strategic Initiatives to Impact Conflict Systems:

# ***Systems Approaches to Peacebuilding***

A Resource Manual



PRACTICAL  
LEARNING  
*for*  
INTERNATIONAL  
ACTION

## About CDA

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects (CDA) is a non-profit organization committed to improving the effectiveness of those who work internationally to provide humanitarian assistance, engage in peace practice, support sustainable development, and conduct corporate operations in a socially responsible manner.

CDA combines rigorous analysis with pragmatic field-level work to deliver practical lessons and tools to field staff and policymakers alike.

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## About This Manual

This resource manual is designed for participants in CDA Collaborative Learning Project's Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) training course *Designing Strategic Initiatives to Impact Conflict Systems - Systems Approaches to Peacebuilding*, and for program and policy advisers, program planners and implementers, technical experts engaged in working with teams and partners towards change in fragile and conflict-affected context, as well as monitoring and evaluation experts.

Best results applying the content of this Manual will be achieved by working in teams including program staff, local partners, donors, and other partners and stakeholders.

This manual focuses on systems approaches to conflict analysis and to the development of peace program strategies. The tools and concepts explored in this manual are intended to be used in conjunction with those in the *Reflecting on Peace Practice Basics – Resource Manual*.

While familiarity with the basic RPP approaches is not a pre-condition to be able to use this systems resource, it will be useful if teams and partners have experience with conflict analysis and peacebuilding strategy design processes.

This manual builds upon material from the book *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners* (2003), which summarizes the lessons and insights from the first phase of CDA's RPP program, and from more recent lessons gained through field applications and work with practitioners and organizations in various countries over the past decade.

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# Background

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## Systems Approaches to Conflict Analysis

After winning independence in the 1960's, an East African country had achieved significant gains in peace and prosperity. While not without its challenges and setbacks, it was hailed as one of the most peaceful and well-developed countries on the continent. While new, the nation's democracy was also stable and seemed to be moving in a positive direction. Then, one hotly contested election called all of this apparent peace and stability into question. Amidst accusations of electoral fraud by the ruling party, the country exploded in violence and rioting. The ensuing chaos was considered one of the worst crises since its independence.

Why did things go so terribly wrong, and how did this catastrophe take so many by surprise? How can peace be restored, improved and consolidated to prevent further violence?

***How can peacebuilders design interventions for maximal, durable, positive change?***

CDA has spent nearly thirty years gathering evidence to answer questions like this. In fact, much of CDA's pioneering work focused on illuminating the need for more peace and development efforts to treat the underlying sources of violence and instability – that, when unaddressed, can erupt with stunning speed and violence – rather than merely their symptoms.

Building upon this belief and looking to the future of the field, CDA's Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) team began asking a related question: How can peacebuilders design interventions for maximal, durable, positive change?

Significant collaborative learning processes<sup>1</sup> and extensive field work made clear that much of peacebuilding's impacts depends on *how the conflict is understood in the first place*. Yet, when we looked to the field, we found more questions than clarity. How can conflicts be situated in their broader contexts without losing programmatic focus? What underlying drivers of conflict should be prioritized? Why are conflicts so stubbornly resilient? For RPP, systems analysis has been a critical tool toward arriving at answers.

***Much of the possible impact of peacebuilding work depends on how the conflict is understood in the first place***

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<sup>1</sup> CDA's learning method based on field experience that enables partners to learn with and from each other, supports them to learn from past experience and improve their effectiveness. The resulting lessons, tools and approaches are geared towards practical application and are broadly relevant across many contexts. To find out more about CDA's collaborative learning approach, please visit: <http://cdacollaborative.org/about-cda/collaborative-learning/>



# Module One: Introduction



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# Module One: Introduction

## Objective

This module introduces systems thinking as it relates to conflict analysis, including what systems thinking is and how it can support a more robust and accurate understanding of how conflicts take shape, persist, escalate, and can be addressed.

The module clarifies what is gained by taking a systems thinking perspective as well as when it is helpful to apply systems approaches to conflict analysis.

## Glossary

Conflict analysis	A diagnosis tool to understand conflicts.
Systems thinking	A way of seeing interconnectedness of structures, behaviors and relationships in conflicts to help us identify the underlying causes and uncover opportunities for change.
Systems map	An analytical tool and a visual representation of conflict dynamics in action.

## Systems Thinking: What is it?

Systems thinking is a mental model. It is a way of seeing *interconnections among structures, behaviors and relationships* that can help us identify the underlying causes and uncover opportunities for creating positive change. This is immediately useful for those who wish to intervene in and affect *conflict systems*, whose persistence and resistance to positive change can inspire despair in even the most sanguine of peacemakers.

As we shall see, systems are, for better and worse, perfectly designed to achieve the results they currently achieve. *Conflict systems*, in short, serve a negative purpose for most people caught up in them. The East African country referenced in the [Background](#) contained a political system very effective at meeting the needs (and greed) of some citizens and groups at the expense of many others.

Peacebuilders see the urgent need to change such dynamics. Systems thinking is “the ability to understand [a system’s] interconnections in such a way as to achieve a *desired* purpose.”<sup>2</sup> This shifting

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<sup>2</sup> Stroh, *Systems Thinking for Social Change*, 16. Stroh’s italics.

of conflict systems toward more positive outcomes for the greatest number of people is at the core of what peacebuilders aim to achieve.

*We can use the example* of electoral violence in East Africa we introduced as a prelude to this module to understand what outcomes a 'standard' analytical approach would produce, compared to a systems analysis.

In response to the unexpected outbreak of electoral violence, conventional analysis most likely would have led to "fixes" that should by now sound quite familiar to peace and development workers. Contesting candidates would be publicly admonished not to whip-up support through provocations to hatred or violence. Security forces would be strategically deployed to each region of the country. Extra security personnel would be assigned to known hot-spots. Election monitors would be recruited from around the world to bear witness.

All are reasonable measures to reduce violence within a single election cycle, but are also arguably classic "Band-Aid" or "quick fix" approaches that do not address any of the underlying causes of violence.

However, here is what happened instead. The election violence galvanized actors from across political, business, media and civil society sectors to take action together. With ***Deliberately or not, the actors involved took a systemic approach to supporting change*** financial support from national and international donors, elites and average citizens collaborated to promote peaceful participation in the next general election via a sweeping, coordinated campaign. Considerable joint analysis was undertaken. Some of it uncovered the deeper sources of political dysfunction as well as the many proximate triggers that, together, had resulted in such violence. Some explored the broadly shared interest in peaceful governance. Based on this analysis, individuals and teams were deployed to work with political aspirants, citizens' groups, media outlets, businesses, legislative bodies, and security actors to gain buy-in to the campaign's goals and support anti-violence coordination efforts across the country. Teams remained nimble, able to change tactics as the campaign unfolded, and encouraged conflict-sensitive practices at every level of work to maximize positive impacts and minimize inadvertent damage.

Despite some polling irregularities and political disputes, the subsequent elections were the most peaceful in the country's history.

Deliberately or not, the actors involved took a systemic approach to supporting change. They forged new partnerships across economic and social divides to change prevailing attitudes and norms, inspiring broad agreement that peaceful political transitions are everyone's responsibility; altered and amplified information and messaging transmitted to citizenry; advocated for policy-level change; built up 'connectors' and emphasized shared interests; and, broke behavioral linkages on a national scale, such that social and political provocations would not result in violence.

Nonetheless, the work was not over. Consolidating this success would take continuing efforts, and many of the intractable governance problems needed ongoing attention. But the campaign made significant progress by acting on the **causal links** (more on that shortly), understanding that electoral violence was

the end result of many interrelated factors acting in concert. Approaching electoral violence systemically and working to produce meaningful shifts from within the socio-political system helped lay the groundwork for more durable change.

One of the clearest ways to explain systems thinking is by comparison, which highlights the distinctiveness of the systems thinking perspective:

<b>A Conventional Perspective</b>	<b>A Systems Perspective</b>
The world is full of problems. Adopt a problem-solving approach and fix them.	The world is full of systems. Adopt a learning approach. Understanding informs action.
Problems should be broken down into parts. Each part should be addressed individually.	Issues exist within complex contexts. Change requires understanding this interconnectedness.
Following a series of pre-determined actions, executed in order, solves problems.	Influencing complex systems requires careful planning but also adaptive action: monitor the system for its feedback (response), adjust actions accordingly. Support positive change nascent in the system.
Work is assessed based on its intentions. Unintended consequences are no one's fault, and we cannot anticipate them. .	Work is assessed based on its effects. We are responsible for all of our results, including unintended consequences, which we should and can anticipate and mitigate.
Events and issues should be monitored and addressed as they arise.	Underlying social structures and dynamics produce discrete events. Change requires addressing underlying issues that drive events.
Outsiders can affect, but are not part of, the problems being addressed.	If you interact with a system, you become a part of it.
With the proper understanding, outsiders are just as capable of creating change as insiders.	Insiders intuitively understand social systems in ways few outsiders can master.
Work that targets certain constituencies can have an impact beyond those constituencies.	'Work the RPP Matrix <sup>3</sup> ' for greatest effect: impacts are important at both individual and socio-political levels of change, and with both key and more people in a context.

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the RPP matrix, a strategy program design and review tool, please see CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, "Reflecting on Peace Practice Training Manual."

## When is a Systems Approach Helpful?

Systems thinking – this ‘way of seeing’ - that enables you to understand how systems behave and its related tools are not always necessary. You do not need them to mend a broken fence or design and build a car<sup>4</sup>. These simple or technically complicated problems can be approached using methods and instructions, tested and perfected to produce the desired results.

Fixing a dysfunctional health care system; feeding a nation; re-designing a city’s road infrastructure to ease traffic flow;<sup>5</sup> building lasting peace – are complex problems. They are unique, adaptive, multifactorial, and messy. Systems approaches were pioneered in response to complex ecological and social problems, just like these, that cannot be solved by consulting a road map or a set of instructions.

The following indicators can tell you if systems analysis may be particularly helpful to your work<sup>6</sup>:

- The problem you face is chronic and has resisted repeated efforts to resolve it.
- The problem has produced multiple, and often contrasting, analyses regarding its sources (and ‘solutions’).
- Many actors are involved in addressing the issue but struggle to coordinate efforts.
- Short term and ‘quick fix’ solutions have failed.
- A variety of stakeholders are applying different approaches simultaneously, without considering impacts on the situation as a whole.

Peacebuilding is not a linear process where you can follow a set of instructions. Nevertheless, peacebuilders can engage in a step-by-step *analytical process* that will consistently reveal information that helps peacebuilders act effectively and more responsibly.



Top: Workers on the first moving assembly line put together magnetos and flywheels for 1913 Ford autos.  
Bottom: Traffic jam in Maputo, Mozambique July 13, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Photo: Highland Park, Michigan, 1913 National Archives, Records of the U.S. Information Agency (306-PSE-73-1534)

<sup>5</sup> Photo: A Verdade, retrieved 2016 from: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/averdade/9717216968>

<sup>6</sup> List excerpted and adapted in part from Stroh, *Systems Thinking for Social Change*, 23-24.

## What is the Added Value of a Systems Approach?

Systems analysis takes a 'bird's eye view,' looking at patterns over time, revealing the dynamic relationships among various factors and actors that produce the negative impacts that peace practitioners aim to mitigate.

Systems thinking tools can:

- Refine theories about how positive social change can actually happen.
- Clarify why certain conflict dynamics are so resilient (i.e. how positive change fails to happen) and what can be done to disrupt these persistent dynamics.
- Enhance the relevance of peacebuilding interventions by revealing what really needs to be addressed (which issues, which people), contributing to efficient, well prioritized and effective programs.
- Help anticipate and inform effective responses to unexpected developments.

In other words, by using these tools practitioners can improve their impacts as well as their accountability.

*"getting a systems view is unavoidable if one hopes to be effective in dealing with complex and messy realities."<sup>7</sup>*

Systems mapping for conflict analysis is a particularly useful analytical tool that provides a new perspective, a visual representation of conflict dynamics in action – demonstrating how conflict factors, cause, affect, and 'communicate' with each other. What's more, the production of the map brings people together in invaluable ways.

*"the process of dialogue and learning that goes into producing a [systems] map...requires participants to discuss their perceptions, assumptions, and beliefs...It is a check on each person's unconscious filters and theories of change."<sup>8</sup>*

In other words, the mapping process itself helps to reduce unconscious bias and reveal a more nuanced and accurate analysis of the conflict. Better understanding leads to more effective action, which is what peace programming is all about.

Note that systems thinking tools *do not replace* traditional frameworks and methods of conflict analysis. Rather, systems thinking adds new insights and analytical perspectives. Moreover, systems approaches work well when used in conjunction with other models, supplementing the information they typically provide.

Systems analysis can address some of the gaps and shortfalls of traditional analytical frameworks because systems thinking emphasizes the dynamic relationships among the parts of a conflict system, rather than focusing on the parts themselves.

Using systems thinking you can:

- Move beyond static lists to depict dynamic relationships, helping to prioritize problems far more easily than by using the lists of conflict issues that many analysis frameworks produce. *Systems*

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<sup>7</sup> Ricigliano, *Making Peace Last*, Chapter 6, Paragraph 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ricigliano, *Making Peace Last*, Chapter 6, Paragraph 5.

*analysis adds insights that are truly useful for programming decisions – whom to work with, what to work on, where to start, and when.*

- Gain insight into potential unintended consequences of peace programming that conflict analysis frameworks commonly fail to identify. *The most important trap to avoid is the well-meaning program that fails...or makes things worse.*
- Test your theories of change by “mapping” them into your analysis rather than merely stating them. *You can avoid the well-intended solution that fails if you can anticipate how the conflict system will react to your intervention by pushing back against your work, distorting your efforts, or absorbing and amplifying your program in unintended ways that actually help the system achieve its original (negative) purpose.*
- Enhance the relevance of your program by ensuring it is focused on what is truly driving the conflict.

Finally, many mainstream conflict analysis frameworks produce large quantities of information about the broader context within which a conflict is situated. But too much raw data also leads to confusion, indecision and lack of focus about what issues to address and missing factors that truly drive a conflict.

CDA has observed this particular problem frequently among peacebuilding teams. One of our European partners spent years investing in gender programming in South Asia, having identified gender disparities and discrimination as a critical conflict issue. However, when CDA led this partner through a systems analysis, gender dynamics did not emerge as a key driver of the conflict. Using this new understanding, and the strong network of partners and allies they had built over the years, the agency improved its effectiveness by modifying its programming to address economic and political drivers of the conflict through gender-inclusive initiatives.

In short, by adding a systems analysis to their assessment of the conflict, they corrected a case of “mistaken identity,” where aspects of their context analysis had mixed with their conflict analysis, leading them to mistake an important feature of the context for a driver of the conflict.

## **Systems Thinking and Systems Behavior: Cautions and prospects**

We do not suggest that systems thinking is a panacea. It does not provide “The Answer.” Rather, it helps us understand reality in a way that incorporates complexity without being overwhelming. Systems are unpredictable, reflecting highly complex interactions. It is one thing to understand how a system works, or even how to theoretically alter it, and another to actually achieve positive changes.

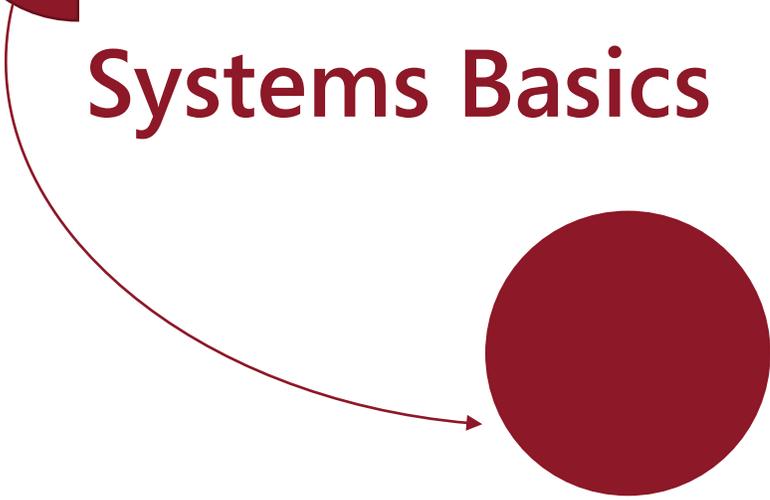
It is important to approach complex systems with humility. The goal is to maximize change – to affect a system’s behavior in positive ways – not to assume that we can “fix” the whole thing.

CDA has found that systems approaches to conflict analysis can provide the basis for a strategic discussion regarding leverage points for change (discussed in detail in [Module Four](#)), potential areas for intervention, program theories of change, and methods for addressing conflict dynamics that are invaluable to peace efforts. In this regard, systems thinking also provides a valuable addition to developing strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks to capture positive movements towards change in complex environments.





# Module Two: Systems Basics



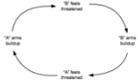
# Module Two: Systems Basics

## Objectives

Building upon the previous module’s introduction to the unique perspectives and benefits of a systems thinking approach to conflict analysis, Module Two clarifies the definition and basic traits of a system that you should be familiar with before intervening in one.

The remainder of the module introduces systems mapping, including the way systems maps are constructed and the terminology used to describe these maps and the dynamics they depict. Systems mapping is a crucial systems thinking tool that supports conflict analysis, and the focus of most of this resource manual.

## Glossary and Symbols

Term	Definition/Explanation	Symbol or Graphic
System	A set of interconnected elements working together to fulfill a “purpose” towards a goal.	
Factors	Elements of a system, usually expressed as things that can increase or decrease.	Text
Dynamic Causality	A cause and effect relationship that is not always visible or straightforward.	
Feedback Loops	A chain of causal connections where one factor causes other factors to occur which in turn affect the original factor.	
Time Delay	Indication that effects take time to play out.	//
Mental Models	Mindsets or the ways people think about and perceive their situation in the conflict context.	
Reinforcing Loops	Factors in a loop that build on and strengthen one another often leading to escalating vicious/virtuous cycle.	R
Balancing Loop	Factors that serve to return the situation to a steady state or to offset the escalation of a reinforcing loop.	B
Cause-Effect Relationships	Shows one factor influencing another by weakening or strengthening it.	
	Two factors directly influence each other.	
	A factor getting stronger causing another factor to strengthen as well.	
	A factor getting increasing causing another factor to decrease or reduce in strength.	

## What is a System?

A system is “an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something.”<sup>9</sup> Open systems, such as social systems, do not simply interact with their own elements or parts. Outside forces can interact with these open systems, and these systems will respond, or even adapt, depending on the nature of the system.

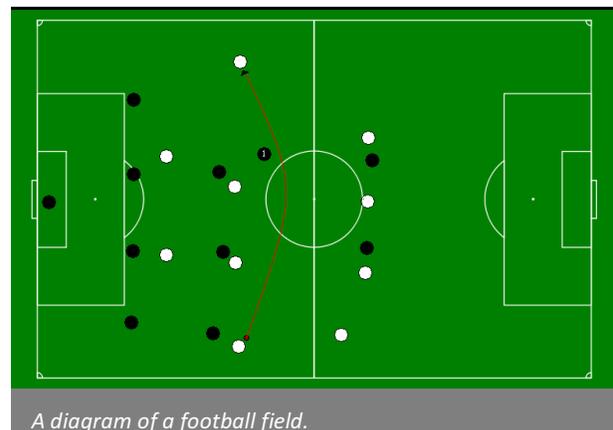
The three essential aspects of a system are: **Elements**, **interconnectedness**<sup>10</sup> and, a **purpose** or **goal**.

We are surrounded by systems all the time, whether we think of them this way or not. In fact, the human body itself is a system. So is the car you drive, or the sports team on which you play. Using the car as an example, we can identify its elements, types of interconnectedness, and its purpose. A car’s many elements include its engine, body, suspension, carburetor, and so on. Its interconnectedness includes electricity and information generated by the car’s internal computer. Its purpose is transportation.

A school system also has many component elements, including its students, faculty, administrators, and classrooms. Similarly, there are many types of interconnectedness among these elements, including the school’s graduation requirements, and all of the knowledge and other types of information shared among students, faculty, administrators, and so on. The school system’s purpose – the ultimate outcome of the system – is to produce educated citizens ready to engage in economic and civic life. (A system can have many purposes, though one is usually dominant. What other purposes might a school system have?)

## Important Systems Characteristics

***A defining characteristic of a system is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.*** The parts together produce an effect that is different from what is produced by the parts separately. The way parts align, interact and affect each other determines how the system as a whole behaves. Rearrange the parts, or remove some, and the system will behave differently.



***A System in Practice: Football.***<sup>11</sup> For example, take a game of football where the players are the elements, the rules of the game are the interconnectedness and the purpose is to score or win. Achieving this purpose – to win – will be affected for better or for worse by changing the players (elements) or by changing the rules of the game (interconnectedness), for example by allowing the use of your hands

<sup>9</sup> Meadows, *Thinking in Systems*.

<sup>10</sup> Meaning, ways in which the elements affect each other.

<sup>11</sup> Image: Association football tactics and skills: Switching the attack. The players & Tactics: Author: Tom Scrivener, 2006. Retrieved 2016 from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:780px-Switchingsides.PNG#/media/File:780px-Switchingsides.PNG>

to play for one team, thus changing the game all together. Similarly, you can change the purpose, from winning to losing and the game fundamentally changes. Or maybe the real purpose is to make money by providing entertainment!

As we will see shortly, a key aim when using systems analysis is to examine how relationships and interactions among factors (between parts of the system) work together to produce patterns of behavior over time. Understanding how it works *now* is the first step toward understanding how to influence its behavior in the future.

The most important characteristics of a system include:

- **Interconnectedness.** A system consists of elements—things, tangible or intangible—and the relationships or connections that hold them together. It is important to analyze not only the elements of a system (more easily noticed because they can usually be seen, felt or heard) but also the interconnections among them. These interconnections include relationships among the elements, or the “rules” that govern the interaction of the elements.
- **Purpose.** The purpose(s) or goal(s) of a system are not necessarily those intended by any single actor in the system. They are the often implicit goals that the system is set out to achieve intentionally or unintentionally, and can only be understood by looking at how the system behaves.

*A System in Practice: School.* The apparent primary goal of a private University is to educate its students. However, if upon closer inspection it becomes clear that a university routinely admits less-qualified students who must repeat courses before passing them – an expensive proposition for the students, and a lucrative outcome for the school. We might conclude that one purpose of the University is also to earn as much revenue as possible, even if faulty admissions policies are to blame and no single administrator or faculty member actually intends to do this. Note that *small parts of a larger system (sub-systems) can also have goals*, as in students’ desires for high grades to secure better employment, professors’ opportunities to get tenures, and the University alumni relations office, whose goal is to maintain close, positive relationships with university graduates.

- **Dynamic causality.** An essential insight of systems thinking is that cause and effect relationships are not straightforward or even always easy to see. It isn’t just that A causes or affects B in a mono-directional chain reaction. Any element or part of a system can act as a cause or an effect in relation to other parts of the system. One factor may cause another, but that second factor will have impacts that echo around the system and return to impact the factor that first produced it. Cause and effect are multi-directional, and non-linear.
- **Feedback loops.** A feedback loop is a chain of causal connections wherein one factor or element causes many others which in turn have impacts that “loop back” to affect the original factor. Feedback loops can also be thought of as a way that factors within a system “communicate,” causing each other to increase (escalate), decrease (de-escalate) or remain steady (equilibrium). Feedback loops come in two forms:
  - *Reinforcing loops*, which can have negative or positive outcomes and are commonly termed vicious cycles or virtuous cycles; and,

- *Balancing loops*, which as the name implies, are comprised of factors that work together to maintain a steady state or equilibrium or to counteract the effects of a reinforcing loop.

Other common characteristics include:

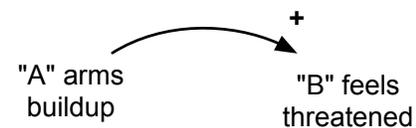
- **Time Delays.** Systems are characterized by time delays—that is, the effects of various causes or elements often take time to play out and therefore the effects may seem invisible in the short term.
- **Mental Models.** A systemic conflict analysis should always account for the mindsets of relevant parties, that is, the ways that people think about and perceive their situation. These are called “mental models” in the systems thinking world. They are a powerful yet invisible aspect of a system. For example, a mental model within a university system might be “we must recruit the best and brightest students in order to maintain our reputation for excellence.” In order to achieve shifts in perspective or behavior, we must first understand how actors currently think, because these mental models are a key part of what is driving their actions.

## How to Develop Systems Map: The basics and vocabulary

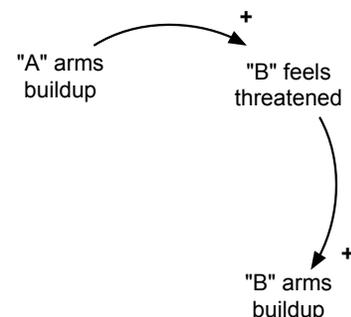
Let’s look at what the above essential aspects of a system look like when visualized. Conflict “systems maps” shows the relationships among factors that cause conflict. Each factor (or **element**) is described in words. Generally, the convention is to express them as things that can increase or decrease, as much as possible. Factors are **interconnected** with each other in cause-and-effect dynamics, which in a map are indicated by arrows drawn between factors. **Arrows** indicate how one factor influences another by weakening or strengthening it. The direction of the arrow indicates the direction of the causal relationship. Arrows with arrowheads on both ends indicate two-way causal relationships where two factors directly influence each other in a back-and-forth fashion.

If as *Factor A* grows or gets stronger it causes *Factor B* strengthen as well, this is considered a “same direction” relationship and can be indicated by a “+” sign over the directional arrow. If as *Factor A* increases it causes *Factor B* to decrease or reduce in strength, this would be considered an “opposite direction” relationship and can be indicated by a “-” sign over the directional arrow.

For example, in an arms race between unfriendly groups, a buildup of arms and munitions by group A will trigger group B to feel increasingly threatened, which would be depicted as follows:

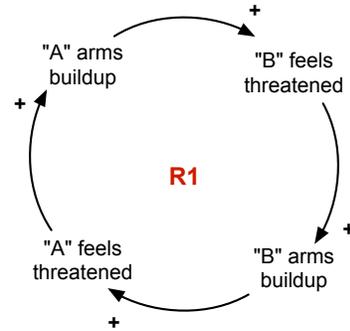


Because factors are interdependent – as indicated by the arrows – a change in one factor has a “ripple effect” leading to changes in other factors. These ripple effects can radiate outward and affect yet other factors that the original factor (“A” arms buildup’) is not directly linked to (“B” arms buildup’), as depicted on the right:



Such ripple effects can, and often do, even rebound and affect the factor that originally initiated a change. When this happens, it's called a dynamic feedback loop. There are two types of dynamic feedback loops; **reinforcing loop** labeled with an **R** and **balancing loop** labeled with **B**.

**Reinforcing loops (R)**, such as the simple arms race dynamic depicted in full below, are distinguished by the fact that all of the factors in the loop tend to build on and strengthen one another in the classic, escalating pattern of a self-perpetuating vicious cycle:



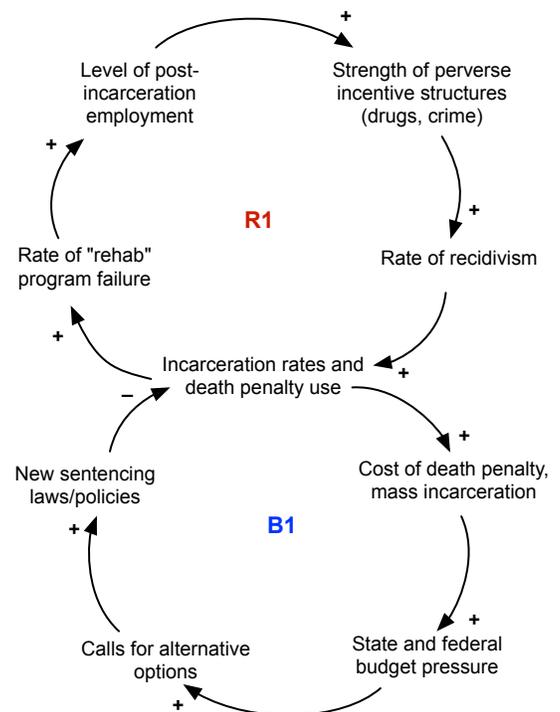
This loop demonstrates what simple **dynamic causality** looks like. Each factor or element produces an effect but is also ultimately affected by impacts that reverberate around the loop and return to influence the original factor, hence the escalation of the vicious cycle.

*A System in Practice: The Cold War.* Take the example of one of the most infamous arms races that played out between the United States, the former Soviet Union, and their allies during the Cold War. First developed by the US during World War II, nuclear weapons possession soon became the ultimate goal of both countries as each aimed to achieve military supremacy over the other. Fear and animosity continued to escalate as well, engulfing both nations in a kind of mass paranoia for a time.

In a **balancing loop (B)**, on the other hand, the dynamic relationship among the factors either serves to return the situation to a state of equilibrium, or, as in the example shown below, serves to offset the escalation of a reinforcing loop. Balancing loops can also demonstrate **purpose** well, because rather than spiraling out of control this type of loop creates a goal-seeking dynamic, i.e. the achievement of stability, that is, neither escalation nor de-escalation).

*A System in Practice: U.S. Prisons.* To see an example of a balancing loop, let's look at some of the dynamics in play in the U.S. criminal justice system. Not long ago, CDA worked with a local partner agency in order to create systems maps from the analysis that the agency had produced about the criminal justice system and communities most affected by it. [see the figure to the right]

The agency had concluded that the justice system is failing to rehabilitate offenders, and that social and economic challenges facing many released prisoners only worsened the problem (reinforcing loop **R1**). Yet, their analysis had also uncovered an issue the agency could take advantage of in their work to reform the criminal justice system: the high cost of mass incarceration rates and death penalty sentences. They noted that, over time, this had a tendency



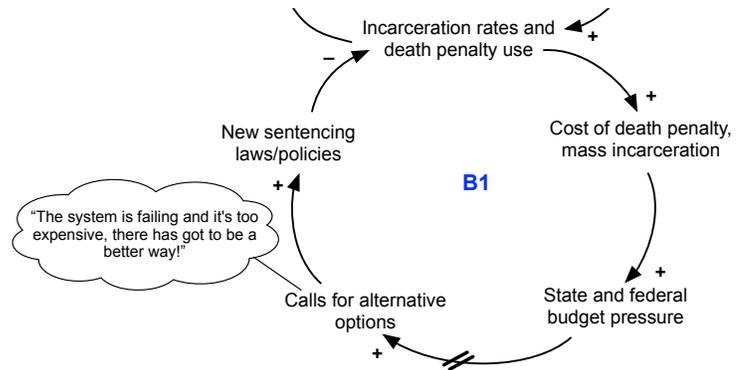
### Tip! Reinforcing v. Balancing Loops

Notice that the set of balancing loops depicted above contains both reinforcing, or same direction relationships (indicated by the "+" signs) as well as a countervailing, or opposite direction relationship (as indicated by the "-" signs). Recall that in an opposite direction relationship, an increase in one factor causes a *decrease* in the next factor. If a loop is not labeled and you wonder whether it is a balancing or a reinforcing loop, one quick trick is to count the number of opposite direction relationships. An **odd** number of opposite relationships ("-") typically indicates a balancing dynamic. In the diagram above, there is an odd number, just one.

to result in calls by governing authorities for alternative measures to be taken in terms of punishments and sentencing. When those demands resulted in changes to laws and policies, they tended to have a mitigating effect (depicted in balancing loop **B1**).

While this type of balancing loop will not immediately eliminate the reinforcing loop (**R1**) that it affects, it can slow the rate of escalation. It could, eventually, bring **R1** to a halt, depending on the evolution of state and federal sentencing laws and guidelines.

Of course, there were **time delays** involved, and calls for new policies and laws were supported by important **mental models**. Hence, a better depiction is rendered to the side, with time delays indicated by a double line or cross-hatch mark on the arrow [//], mental models shown as thought bubbles:



## Systems Maps: Pointers for keeping them clear and useful

Both experienced and inexperienced systems mappers find it difficult to resist the temptation to over-populate their systems maps. A single systems map need not, indeed, should not, be exhaustive or detailed beyond what is truly helpful for: 1. Understanding the conflict situation, and 2. Making informed programmatic decisions about how to intervene.

Maps that include every imaginable factor from the context or conflict, with arrows darting between as many of them as possible, capture rich detail but overwhelm the user, to daunting effect. Too much 'clutter' also distracts from the **Key Driving Factors** of the conflict – those factors without which the conflict would not exist or would be radically different.<sup>12</sup>

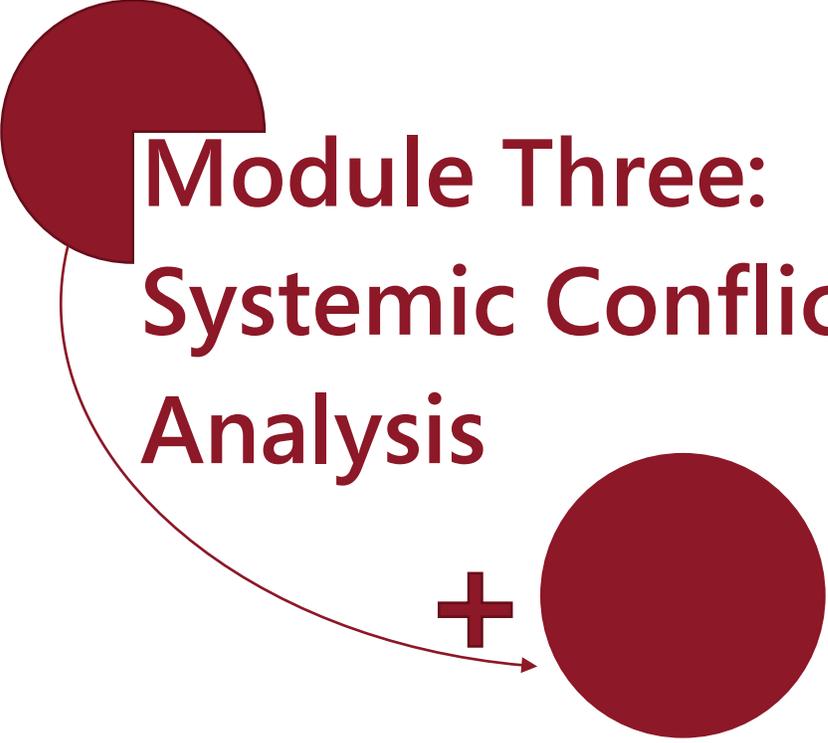
<sup>12</sup> See *Reflecting on Peace Practice Basics – Resource Manual*, and Anderson and Olson, *Confronting War*.

Instead, we encourage peacebuilders to capture the most important dynamics of a conflict in their maps, focusing on the most influential factors driving the conflict and portraying how they relate to each other.

Other important pointers include:

- **Map narratives.** Maps should always be accompanied by a map narrative, or description of the map in text form. These map narratives “tell the story” of the conflict as portrayed by the systems maps. It is critical to write up the narrative and include it alongside presentations of the map.
- **Map boundaries and levels.** A systems map is a tool and the scope of any systems map can be adjusted based on what will be useful for the tool user. This includes what the map contains or excludes – its boundaries – and whether a map is used to examine one segment of a larger conflict system, such as very local conflict dynamics, or is used to examine the national-level, “big picture” dynamics. Your own conflict analysis and program planning needs may require two or more related maps at various levels in order to effectively display your understanding of larger issues in play as well as the most relevant and key driving factors *at the level at which you plan to intervene*.

Your maps should serve to help you design and implement peacebuilding programs. Only create the ones that will help you work smarter and more effectively.



# Module Three: Systemic Conflict Analysis

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## MODULE THREE: Systemic Conflict Analysis

### Objectives

This module supports the production of a systems map based on conflict analysis regarding the situation you are working with.

The basic steps of a systemic conflict analysis are listed below, and then each step is fleshed out in greater detail, using examples from a case study based on the fictional country of Morania.

The steps outlined in this module should serve you well regardless of the level at which you are working – local, national, regional – or whether your focus is on the larger conflict or a sub-component (such as land disputes, weak governance, etc.).

### Glossary

Key actors	Key actors are those who can say “yes or no” to peace or conflict <i>right now</i> as the situation currently exists.
Systems archetypes	Common patterns of systems behavior observed across many different contexts.

### Basic Steps for Systemic Conflict Analysis: Overview

Steps outlined briefly here are followed by more detailed instructions:

**STEP ONE Identify factors and actors for both conflict and peace.** There are many ways to generate a list of conflict factors and key actors, using any of the standard analysis tools available.<sup>13</sup> In order to organize and sort the information, use the RPP *Three-Box analysis tool* shown below.

**STEP TWO Identify the Key Driving Factors of conflict (KDFs).** Among all of the factors and actors listed in Step 1, identify the most important ones, five-seven maximum. The challenge here is to identify which of these are KDFs. Ask yourself, *which of these are dynamics or elements without which the conflict would not exist, or would be completely different?*

**STEP THREE Identify the Key Actors for Conflict and for Peace.** Key Actors should not to be confused with individuals or groups whom you would like to help become positive “change agents” for peace, and they may not be the same as your planned program participants. Ask yourself, *which of these actors can say “yes or no” to peace or conflict right now as the situation currently exists?*

**STEP FOUR Use the cause and effect chart to identify causal relationships among KDFs for conflict and other conflict forces in play.** This cause and effect chart is particularly useful as it can serve as the

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<sup>13</sup> For one list of such tools, see OECD, *Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*, 68.

basis for linking factors and demonstrating causal relationships (tool is shown below). OR if you prefer, start grouping factors for conflict thematically or categorically based on which seem most closely linked to each other, and begin to draw links (arrows) among them based on which ones directly affect one another.

**STEP FIVE** *Begin to develop causal loops among the key drivers for conflict. Include key actors for conflict who influence the system.* Analyze how the KDFs relate to each other and show how causes and effects and KDFs are linked. Link these causal loops where you can begin to develop your larger systems map.

**STEP SIX** *Use the Systems Archetypes to get unstuck, generate discussion, or do partial analysis of a system.* These archetypes describe common system dynamics that produce similar patterns of behavior in a variety of contexts. Use them to spark ideas and discussion for the purpose of contrasting and comparing them against the context you are working in, in order to:

1. Just get the mapping process started if you feel stuck;
2. Shortcut analysis if there isn't time for full analysis or if you don't wish to produce a full map; or
3. To generate ideas for the map you're working on.

Never wholesale 'copy and paste' these archetypes into your map! If you do, you risk producing analysis that does not accurately capture the unique complexity of the conflict you are analyzing.

**STEP SEVEN** *Put causal loops for the key driving factors of conflict together.* Putting causal loops together is a bit like constructing a puzzle: sometimes one or two missing pieces help it all fit together, other times factors already in the map link up in ways that you did not anticipate when you first looked at them.

**STEP EIGHT** *Identify Key Driving Factors for peace. Add causal loops or indicate system inputs based on Key Driving Factors for peace as well as Key Actors for peace.* We list this step separately as most people find it much less confusing to focus on what's going wrong first. Conflict factors dominate conflict systems, after all. Now you will need to map the key factors for peace. After selecting the most important factors for peace (five-seven maximum), map them *as they currently exist in dynamic relation to other factors*. (Later, we will turn to how peacebuilders might strengthen them to disrupt or counter negative conflict dynamics.)

**STEP NINE** *Refine the analysis and seek validation.* Depending on how/where you obtained information regarding the causes of conflict, you will likely need to seek further confirmation that the analysis is correct, from a variety of perspectives, always being sure to include local people who know the conflict best. This can be accomplished, to name one example, by holding individual or small group consultations with people representing a range of views and interests.

## STEP ONE: Analysis of Causes of Conflict and Drivers of Peace

**Why this step?** Step 1 entails reviewing the raw data collected in the conflict analysis process and pulling out the most important elements needed in order to narrow the analysis down to its most essential components: the factors and actors that matter most to a context’s prospects for further conflict or greater peace. These pieces of information are the basis for your refined understanding of the conflict, and the information you will draw upon when creating your systems map.

The goal of this step is to identify the major factors and actors that are at play in the system. This can be done using the analysis methodology, tool or framework of your choice, provided that it generates:

- Factors supporting conflict;
- Factors supporting peace; and
- Key actors: Their behavior, motivations, interests, and constituencies of influence.

CDA uses the below **Three-Box Tool** to generate this information.

Factors for Peace→	P E A C E	← Factors against Peace/for Conflict	Key Actors <i>Main actors and stakeholders.</i>
<p>What are the forces in the situation that exist now that can be built upon to promote movement towards peace?</p> <p>What currently connects people across conflict lines? How do people cooperate?</p> <p>Who exercises leadership for peace and how?</p> <p><i>Note: these are not things you want to exist or that you would like to see—they must be true now.</i></p>		<p>What are factors are working against peace or for conflict?</p> <p>What factors, issues or elements are causing conflict and/or dividing people, and how?</p>	<p>Which individuals or groups in the situation are in a position to strongly influence the conflict negatively? Who can decide against peace?</p> <p>Which individuals or groups in the situation are in a position to strongly influence the conflict positively? Who can decide for peace?</p> <p><i>Note: these are not necessarily people who may be program targets/participants, such as women, youth, or religious leaders. We may be interested in engaging with those groups, but they are not always “key” in the situation.</i></p>

### **Tip! What if ‘peace’ isn’t the goal?**

In some instances, the context is not seen as one of “war,” “conflict,” or “peace.” For instance, in postaccord or post-election situations, people may think that the country is at peace, relatively speaking. In those situations, it may be necessary to reframe the discussion. One possibility is to start the analysis process by developing **a vision for the kind of society people want**, in as specific terms as possible, and do a three-box analysis of factors moving toward the vision and holding it back. In one instance, we used the concept of **“consolidating the peace,”** asking what it would take to ensure a lasting peace, and in another the challenge was defined as **“unity and reconciliation.”** The three-box analysis was then performed in relation to that vision.

A few definitional notes:

- **Factors for Conflict:** We often find that factors for conflict are the most intuitively obvious and easy to identify. They are elements or forces in a society that divide people or promote strife, be it tension and social discord or violent struggle.
- **Factors for Peace:** These, by contrast, are forces *that exist now* that promote movement toward a more peaceful society. Relationships that connect people across difference or lines of conflict, inter-group cooperation on certain issues, influential social movements or large-scale normative shifts, broadly shared interests – these could all be factors for peace.
- **Key Actors:** These are individual groups who are necessary for the establishment of peace or perpetuate violence. They might be key power brokers of a peace agreement, lynchpin policy makers, or figures who command significant influence with important constituencies. Another way to think of them is as key for the sustainability of peace – either because they are currently working *against* peace or because their *support* for peace will make a critical difference. Whether their influence over constituencies is positive or negative, the participation of their constituencies is essential for moving the situation toward peace or toward conflict.

### **Tip! Identifying and Framing Factors and Actors**

Key Factors should be things (nouns) that can increase or decrease, either observable items (water, shelter, heat, armed forces) or intangibles, such as feelings, attitudes, and relationships.

*Hint:* avoid disguising your favorite “solution” as a factor. “Rule of Law” is not a factor, but “crime rate” might be. Dig beneath big categories to more specific issues. If “governance” is a factor, explore what about governance is of concern. Is the conflict factor about exclusion from decision making, human rights abuses, arbitrary use of power, or corrupt practices?

Key Actors are those who, right now, can significantly push the situation toward more conflict or more peace. They are not necessarily the same as your chosen “target” group or selected “beneficiaries” or “participants.” They are not the change agents of tomorrow; they are the influential actors of *today*.

Focus on a Key Actor’s *behavior in the system*: the role they play; the factors or groups they influence. This isn’t about their identity as such. This is about what they do or can make happen, for better or worse.

A good conflict analysis will also look at different dimensions of conflict (or peace):

- Structural dimensions (such as social or political systems and institutions);
- Attitudinal dimensions (perceptions, culture, psychological dimensions, etc.); and
- Behavioral dimensions (actions taken and by whom).

What systems analysis can do is reveal the *connections and linkages* between these different dimensions of conflict and peace. And in turn, this can help you identify new options for change, as well as the potential unintended consequences of your actions. For the purpose of explaining these steps we will use the example of a fictional country Morania, in [Appendix Two](#).

→ Turn to [Appendix 2.1](#) to see how this step plays out in Morania.

## STEP TWO: Refining the Analysis by Identifying Key Driving Factors of the Conflict

**Why this step?** In Step 2, we focus on narrowing the long list of factors for conflict. These factors are often easiest for analysts to see and articulate than factors for peace. It may be more challenging to agree with your team about which are most consequential, but doing so is critical to ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of peace programming that will be based on this analytical process.

Based on the initial listing of factors/actors, identify the **Key Driving Factors** of the conflict. What are the most significant driving factors, both negative and positive, in the conflict? ***A key driving factor is “a dynamic or element, without which the conflict would not exist, or would be completely different.”***

There should not be more than five to seven Key Driving Factors—otherwise, there is a risk of falling into the “analysis trap” of being too comprehensive without adequately prioritizing or identifying factors that have the greatest influence on the system because they affect so many other parts of it. In a system, all factors play a part, and everything is connected to everything else in some way. The purpose at this stage is to identify those factors that actually *drive the system’s behavior*.

Return to the list you have generated in [Step One](#), and for each factor listed, ask whether the current conflict would be unrecognizably different without that factor.

So for example, answer the following questions in reference to these factors from [Appendix 2.1](#): “Access to quality education by all ethnic groups,” “Inter-group tensions caused by IDPs,” and “Low access to adequate health care.”

1. Would this conflict be significantly different if access to good health care radically improved?
2. Would this conflict cease to exist if there were no internally displaced persons, or no tensions caused by the existence of IDPs?
3. Would this conflict end if access to quality educational opportunities were available to all citizens?

In all three cases, the answer is a definite “no.” While these issues may make life, even inter-ethnic relations, more difficult at present, they clearly do not rise to the level of Key Driving Factors that compel the conflict forward.

Sometimes the issue is even thornier than an educational system that serves only some groups due to limited access, however. Returning to our three-box tool, note that we also identified the “degree to which militias remain armed and active” as a factor promoting conflict. This would strike many as a clear driver of conflict. Without these active militias – including the weaponry, violence and other predatory behavior that they entail – surely things would be significantly better? Indeed, they would. But unless the

### **Tip! Selecting Which Factors Are Key**

You will probably find that, in your own work, deciding which conflict factors are key is neither easy nor quick. In fact, that may not be such a bad thing! Identifying which factors are KDFs is one of the single most important steps in the conflict analysis process. Most subsequent decisions about what to focus analytical attention on, or what to do with limited peacebuilding program resources, arise in part out of the selection of KDFs. Disagreements among team members, uncertainty, rigorous scrutiny... all will play important roles in identifying KDFs. Don’t rush the process.

removal of militias would spell the end of the conflict or would significantly change the fundamental problems Morania faces, such as authoritarian governance or the inequitable distributions of benefits and resources, the existence of these militias is not a Key Driving Factor. In fact, militias may be more of a troublesome symptom than a cause.

→ Turn to [Appendix 2.2](#) for a sample list of KDFs for and against peace in Morania using these guiding questions and criteria. Some of them have been reframed to be more precise.

## STEP THREE: Identifying Key Actors

**Why this step?** Identifying Key Actors for peace and conflict in Step Three distills what might otherwise be a basic stakeholder analysis, or even a simple list of interested parties, into a targeted group of actors who currently push the conflict toward or away from peace. These are the few capable of saying ‘yes or no’ to conflict. Mitigating (or supporting) their roles and efforts will be essential to achieving peace. Who they are and how they wield influence is vital information.

Based on the initial listing of important actors within the context, identify the **Key Actors** of the conflict. Which individuals or groups, both negative and positive, are the most influential in terms of the way this conflict will evolve? ***A key actor is someone essential to the peace process. Peace cannot be achieved without either their support, or the cessation of their work against peace.***

Simply put, these are actors who can say “yes” or “no” to peace...or conflict. As with KDFs, there should not be more than five-seven Key Actors either for or against peace. This is a deliberate narrowing down to the most powerful people in relation to the achievement of peace.

As noted earlier, these are not the change agents of the future. These are today’s powerbrokers, movement leaders, conflict profiteers, luminaries, or combatants. They have influence over significant populations or other groups necessary for the peace process. They may do this by commanding respect and loyalty, or by means of control and force. While systems and people who are part of systems are unpredictable, an actor analysis is nevertheless an opportunity to anticipate how stakeholders are likely to respond so that your peace program or intervention can plan for, mitigate, or even take advantage of these responses.

### **Tip! Why don’t we focus on a Key Actor’s identity? Isn’t that important?**

With actors, it is essential to focus on their *behavior*, that is, the role they play or function they perform. The behavior and influence of actors upon a system are potentially malleable. Their identities are much less so. We focus on what we can influence through our work. There are at least two other reasons this focus is important: (1) identity per se does not usually illuminate cause and effect within a system and focusing on identity promotes unproductive blame-games; and, (2) specific actors come and go, but the *functions* they play often remain intact (e.g., when they are replaced by the next leader). Therefore, it is the function that we target, because we want to disrupt (or strengthen) that influence.

Return to the list of actors you have generated, and for each actor listed, ask whether the current conflict would continue (or could be resolved) without the role they currently play. If you have not been particularly specific this is an opportunity to refine your assessment of key players. For instance, you might have listed “military leadership” instead of those individuals within that group who are the most influential, which you can do now.

So, for example, in our *three-box tool* ([Step One](#)), we identified “reform-minded military leaders,” and “political opposition leaders,” as significant actors supporting a move toward peace. We have already established that the power struggle between the military and the civilian government is key in this context, and that neither group is constructively constrained by checks on their power from other governing bodies or by true accountability to citizens. An influential, reform-minded military leader

would be a crucial asset in the fight both for military reform and a healthy balance of powers. As it happens, retired General Arkani Abda, revered in many quarters, fits this bill nicely. Influential opposition leaders would also seem to be essential to establishing political machinery and processes that are more likely to be equitable and accountable. Here, the outspoken and very popular opposition leader Rudolfo Atari comes to mind. The roles that both of these men play will be essential to moving Morania forward in a positive direction.

Several of the other actors listed are very important without rising to the level of key. Take local NGOs and labor union leaders, both listed under Actors for Peace in [Step One](#). The conflict in Morania would doubtless grind on without the roles they play. Peace does not hinge on the functions they currently play either. Again, they continue to be important, and may prove to be strong allies in the push for peace, but based on their current roles and levels of influence, they are not Key Actors.

***Tip! Are 'rising stars' Key Actors?***

CDA tends to field a lot of questions about Key Actors. Peacebuilders are often very tempted to list 'rising star' actors for peace as Key Actors. (They are not...yet!) The more important question with regards to 'rising star' actors is: should your agency find ways to strengthen the role these actors have in the conflict system so that they can become Key Actors? In other words, while these actors are not yet Key, they do raise important questions about the work we can, perhaps even should, be doing to support their ability to eventually wield significant influence. Assisting these actors to become positive agents of change may well be an important element of your program's strategy.

For those wishing to go through a more detailed analysis process regarding actors, we can recommend performing a stakeholder analysis with one of the many tools available.<sup>14</sup> Stakeholder analysis processes can be quite detailed. We suggest using a focused enquiry that identifies: actors, their positions, their interests, the conflict or peace factors they currently influence and how they do this, and their likely response to your planned peace program.

→ Turn to [Appendix 2.3](#) for a sample list of Key Actors for and against peace in Morania, based on the guiding questions and criteria above. Again, several of them have been refined to clarify who the influential individuals are and what specific issues over which they hold sway, if any.

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<sup>14</sup> See GPPAC, "Conflict Analysis Framework: Field Guidelines and Procedures," which includes a stakeholder analysis tool.

## STEP FOUR: Use the Cause and Effect Chart to Reveal Causal Relationships

**Why this step?** The cause and effect chart introduced in Step Four supports analysts in thinking through the way factors interact in a conflict context: how they instigate, accelerate or undermine one another, for example. This way of *thinking* about factors supports the ultimate construction of an *illustration* about how factors interact, that is, a basic systems map.

In order to get your systems map started, use the **cause-and-effect chart** (shown below) to jumpstart your analysis of how conflict factors interact. The main factor(s) you are working with go in the center column, then brainstorm a few related factors in the “cause” and “effect” columns. Create one of these charts for each KDF. To help you fill in the chart you can ask:

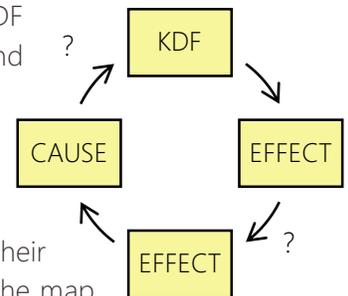
- What impact does this factor have? Why is this factor important? (Effects)
- What led to this factor? Where does this factor come from? (Causes)

Causes	Key driving factors of conflict	Effects

Keep in mind that some KDFs will directly cause or influence another KDF. When you analyze one KDF by placing it in the center column, other KDFs may appear in the cause or effect columns. You may also notice other factors for and against peace surfacing from your three-box analysis ([Step One](#)) as either a cause or effect. Or, factors you had not previously noted may also come to light at this stage.

→ See [Appendix 2.4](#) for a preview of what a cause-and-effect chart might look like for Morania, based on the KDF “Ferocity of inter-ethnic competition for resource.” As mentioned above, in this chart, you will notice other KDFs also appearing. This suggests that this chart may actually support the creation of multiple causal loops.

Once you have produced a chart for *each* KDF, you may find it helpful to put the KDF along with its causes and effects on small notecards or sticky notes. We recommend using one color marker for KDFs and another color for all other conflict factors, in order to keep track of how KDFs seem to be interacting with each other and with other factors. Remember, KDFs are the most powerful factors. The dynamics and relationships they drive are the ones peacebuilding must address. Keeping close visual track of them not only reminds us of their prominence, but also helps to highlight their impacts. It also gives users an opportunity to challenge or improve the accuracy of the map with particular focus on its most powerful elements.



Working on a tabletop (walls and white boards work well if you use sticky notes), begin to experiment with creating causal chains and basic loops with the factors. The benefit of notecards is that they can easily be moved around to accommodate ideas, differences of opinion, and the experimentation necessary in order for your team to determine the most faithful representation of real-world dynamics.

Some people find it helpful to begin depicting causal relationships on the Cause and Effect Chart itself instead of on a wall or tabletop (as seen in [Appendix 2.4](#), marked in blue arrows).

## STEP FIVE: Mapping Key Drivers of Conflict

**Why this step?** Step Five is the first transition to basic mapping. No Need to think in terms of a full map at this stage, however. This step encourages you to experiment with how factors might be “linked up.” Even linking two or three in a causal chain is a great start. Play around with factors freely for now, without worrying about getting it right the first time. Work directly with your partners, or work solo and then compare what you come up with afterward.

Continue to arrange the key driving factors, causes, effects and key actors into loops, pushing forward and backward along the causal chains in order to get them arranged in the right order. For now, focus on factors and actors who work *against peace* and *for conflict*.

If a link between two factors is not clear, see if inserting an intermediate factor clarifies the connection.

In the example of the Morania systems map taking shape it seemed clear that the zero-sum political mentality was connected to the level of authoritarian governance imposed on citizenry, but in the context of Morania, that did not make sense as a direct connection. When we asked what the direct result of zero-sum politics was, our group realized that this factor causes power struggles between the strong state governors and the federal government, and that in turn causes the ruling party to consolidate its grip on power. The ultimate result is a tendency toward authoritarian governance by the ruling party.

→ See [Appendix 2.5](#) for the emerging map of Morania

Note that Actors and Factors are not treated the same in systems maps. Actors are usually associated with factors, and rarely become elements of the map directly, although their **behavior** or **actions** could be.

## STEP SIX: Using Systems Archetypes to Get Unstuck and Spark Discussion

**Why this step?** Systems archetypes tend to generate ideas and discussion, either because they look similar to what analysts see reflected in the conflict they are working on, or because they offer a contrast that sparks a helpful conversation about what is actually going on in the context being analyzed. They are well worth a review here in Step Six, however you choose to use them.

**Systems archetypes** are common patterns of systems behavior observed across many different contexts. (To see a full description and illustration of these archetypes<sup>15</sup>, refer to [Appendix Four](#)) They are recurring patterns of behavior (or structure) that repeatedly show up in otherwise disparate systems, including conflict systems. Reviewing these systems archetypes can spark moments of recognition as peacebuilders see in a systems archetype a simplified version of a dynamic that they also see playing out in the conflict zone where they work.

In short, many conflicts are not entirely unique in their underlying structure and dynamics, even if the context and the circumstances are very different, so archetypes can be quite helpful in sparking ideas, shortcutting the analytical process when time is tight, and generating important conversation about the conflict you are analyzing.

Conflict system archetypes are useful tools. They can be used for constructing hypotheses about the governing forces of a system and for identifying key dynamics. These key systems dynamics will help pinpoint leverage points that interventions can use to shift a conflict system's behavior.

→ More on both leverage points and using systems archetypes in [Module Four](#).

### *How are Archetypes Helpful During Conflict Analysis*

As an alternative to developing a systems analysis 'from scratch,' one can, for example, use archetypal patterns of conflict dynamics as a point of departure or for brainstorming. The archetypes provide a template for analyzing a situation that can help focus attention on the heart of the problem. **These archetypes are not sufficient in themselves for analysis.** They are generic story lines, and therefore need to be adjusted and tailored to fit the particular factors and dynamics in play within a specific context. In other words, they provide insights into the underlying nature of many conflict dynamics, and serve a basis for *testing hypotheses, augmenting analysis, and refining analytical theories about the conflict.*

### *How to Use Archetypes in Systems Maps*

Archetypes capture important conflict dynamics and common areas of dysfunction in social relations. As such, they can be a powerful tool for prompting discussion about the situation and can create insights that might otherwise be missed. They act as lenses through which to view the conflict and gain insights into the underlying dynamics or use as a way to "fast forward" the conflict analysis process by selecting an archetype that is relatively close to the situation and simply adapting it to fit. You can

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<sup>15</sup> Notable systems thinkers Peter Senge and David Peter Stroh respectively refer to these archetypes as simple stories or basic plot lines.

explore which archetype(s) fit your situation and then engage in discussion of the implications and potential ways to intervene to change the dynamic. This involves a few simple steps:

**Step One:** Select two to four archetypes that you think might have some relevance to the context under discussion. Avoid any that are clearly not applicable, but include some that might not immediately come to mind and see if they might prompt interesting discussion nonetheless.

**Step Two:** Choose one archetype (or two) you think best matches the situation in question—and identify how/why it fits. Engage in dialogue about the archetypes, and their applicability.

**Step Three:** Adjust, revise and add to the archetype to fit the situation you are analyzing. The archetype can be a basis (and a short cut) for developing a full conflict analysis. *What insights might be gained from the revised archetype about the conflict situation and possible ways to intervene to promote positive change?*

**Step Four:** Identify possible points of leverage and approaches for shifting the system.

→ See [Appendix 2.6](#) for an example of one archetype - the *Struggle for Power*, that seems relevant in the case of Morania.

## STEP SEVEN: Put Causal Loops for KDFs of Conflict Together

**Why this step?** As you work with separate causal loops, you may notice that they fit together readily. Otherwise, you can use this step to help you figure out how the individual loops all connect in a big picture sense. This step helps you develop the larger systems “map”—which we are aiming for.

You may already have some interconnected loops, but it’s just as likely that you have several disconnected loops developed separately.

Referring to the *cause-and-effect chart* developed in [Step Four](#), as well as the partial loop constructed for Morania with sticky notes begun in [Step Five](#), we know that KDF “Zero sum politics based on identity” and KDF “Interethnic competition for resources” link up. But how?

The discussion about the *Struggle for Power* archetype has helped the Morania team realize that the dominant (zero-sum) mentalities playing out in the political realm will have a direct negative impact on socio-economic aspects of everyday life for Moranian citizens.

→ See [Appendix 2.7.A](#) for how experimenting with the factors might lead to a link like this between the causal loop we began developing in [Step Five](#) and a new loop.

### **Tip! Where Simple Meets Sophisticated**

This is a good time to remember that the purpose of creating a systems map is to develop an understanding that will help develop an effective strategy for shifting the most conflict dynamics, or KDFs. Therefore, you do not need to include every connection that could possibly exist between the variables. Similarly, don’t try to include every single detail or variable from the context, as noted in [Module Two](#). You will want to balance the amount of detail you include (the number of factors and linkages) with the need to understand the nature of the core relationships between the key parts of the system, that is, those that really drive the conflict.

As you continue to develop a basic causal loop(s) diagram as our Morania team is doing, remember to ask: *Where are there delays in the system? Where will there be a delay before one factor influences or affects the other?*

*What important mental models drive behavior? What implicit assumptions, reasoning, perceptions, images and stories do people have that inform the decisions and actions that cause one factor to link to another?*

→ See [Appendix 2.6.B](#) for what the map for Morania might look like at this point.

As you consider bringing in other loops that are under construction, remember to also ask: *Where do the key actors we have identified come into play? Which factors do they currently influence, and how?*

→ Refer to the [Appendix 2.7.C](#) to see what our systems map for Morania looks like by the end of the exercise.

## STEP EIGHT: Drawing Causal Loops for Key Drivers of Peace

**Why this step?** Now that you have a sense of how conflict dynamics interact, it's very important to determine the Key Driving Factors for peace, and map how they currently function in the conflict, alongside the Key Actors for peace. While only supporting the "good" without working to stop the "bad" within a context usually won't get us much closer to sustainable peace, it will be important to know what dynamics and actors can be our allies, and how we might support them as we work to stop destructive conflict.

**It is important to depict *both* factors related to conflict *and* factors for peace.** Consider and map where and how both types of key driving factors interact or connect. While it is true that in a conflict situation, most factors for peace are not strong enough to counteract those driving conflict at that point in time, it is important to map them. Even if a feedback loop of factors for peace is not powerful or highly visible, it is still there. Failing to identify and map these peace factors risks missing opportunities to reinforce their positive influence. Systems can shift and evolve over time; the key drivers for peace may become more dominant. (We will also revisit these peace factors in [Module Four](#), in which we move from analysis to action and explore shifting conflict systems toward peace.)

Return to the *three-box analysis tool* and review the driving factors for peace that you identified, with special attention to the list of no more than five-seven *key* peace factors.

Are there peace factors that currently slow down or mitigate any of the vicious cycles portrayed in the map? Are there factors for peace that create a balancing dynamic, however currently weak? Understanding the peace factors in relation to the conflict dynamics helps us understand how positive change is already happening, or beginning to happen, in the system.

Remember also to revisit your *key actors for peace* during this discussion. Which actors support a move towards peace in this system, and how do they do this specifically? If helpful, include these actors in your diagram as well based on which peace factors you feel they support, or which conflict factors you see them working to weaken or disrupt. You could do this by writing the actors on sticky notes and placing them next to the relevant peace and conflict factors in the map.

For example, see [Appendix 2.8](#) for how, in loops **R1** and **R4** regarding governance and security, we can see how peace factors currently influence the conflict system in Morania. It will be important to pay attention to these pro-peace dynamics when you start using the conflict analysis to develop program plans, as one way to support positive change is to reinforce positive dynamics already happening within the system. (Also, see [Module Four](#))

## STEP NINE: Validate and Refine the Analysis

**Why this step?** The more diverse the perspectives you can bring to bear in reviewing the map the more accurate it is likely to be, hence the more relevant your response to the conflict. Step Nine is one of the most important you will undertake in the completion of your systems map. Skipping a validation process for a systems map intended as the basis for decision-making could lead to significant (and costly!) mistakes.

Once the map feels fairly complete, refine, verify and augment the analysis. Be sure to undertake this process with new people who can offer fresh perspectives and challenge the assumptions that underlie a draft or provisional map. Mapping should always be done in teams, and the same holds for the refining and verifying processes.

Questions to ask during this stage include:

1. What is the “story” of the conflict told by the systems map? Start anywhere on the map. This is a way of seeing if the chart works well as an accurate depiction of the conflict dynamics.
2. Are the central dynamics the right ones? Is something else more important or central?
3. Are there any **important** elements missing that must be added? Try not to add unnecessary elements, as the analysis is usually quite complex already.
4. Can anything be eliminated, as less important?
5. Is anything incorrect, distorted, or stated wrongly?
6. Has any “wishful thinking” crept into the map? Keep in mind that the map should portray current dynamics, not those we hope will prevail!
7. Is the map too “negative”? It’s very easy to fall into the trap of cynical or hopeless portrayals of conflict dynamics. The refinement stage can be used to add accurate portrayals of positive trends and dynamics happening in the system (even if they are currently overwhelmed by conflict dynamics.)

Note that it is not important (or possible) to develop the perfect conflict map. The purpose is to identify the major factors and how they interact, in order to develop appropriate program strategies and/or policies.

While it is important to strive for general consensus, it is also fine to leave the analysis as a draft only. More refinements can be made later—we don’t have to make it perfect or totally comprehensive on the first attempt.

On the other hand, if the discussion centers on important disagreements about the nature of the conflict, it is important to continue until there is some resolution—some way to illustrate the tension among the elements under discussion, or some agreement about language and dynamics that can be reflected in the systems map. It is also fine for the group to assert competing analyses of the conflict—but both (all) of the different perspectives should be included in the map.

## Conclusion of the Conflict Analysis Exercise

The systems analysis of the conflict can be used as a basis for developing several important elements of an effective strategy, including the following:

- To identify important points for program intervention—ways to change the conflict system;
- To map who is doing what in relation to the factors indicated on the map. This will allow you to see areas of concentration (or overlap) of peace work and gaps left by peace workers; and
- To assess and monitor the validity and robustness of a theory of change, and anticipate potential roadblocks. (We will pick up the discussion of theories of change in [\*Module Four\*](#)).

Note: this broad analysis is good for figuring out priorities, points of intervention, and where various groups are working. In order to develop a program to address a specific area on the larger map, (work with youth, addressing natural resource conflicts...) it is usually necessary to do a sub-analysis of the factor you intend to address or the point of intervention where you intend to work. That is, you can “zoom in” on a specific set of factors or dynamic, to identify important details important to your program.





# Module Four: Toward Positive Change in a Conflict System

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## Module Four: Toward Positive Change in a Conflict System

### Objectives

As we have emphasized throughout this manual, systems maps are meant to be useful to understand complexity. This module is designed to support moving from conflict analysis to strategic program planning.

After a brief discussion of general principles regarding systems and change, the module explains how systems maps support the revelation of:

- Points of leverage in a conflict system.

The second half of the module addresses other important steps to consider in moving from conflict analysis to program strategy and planning, including:

- Programming entry points;
- Scenario planning; and
- Using systems archetypes to anticipate and avoid classic program “traps.”

### Systems and Change: Helpful principles and reminders

Systems are very resilient. As previously noted, when stressed or pressured, most systems will adjust or adapt in order to continue serving their original purpose. In short, systems tend to resist change.

**Programs or interventions targeting only individual pieces of a system are unlikely to lead to sustained change in the system as a whole.** Sending a small group of staff to a training may be a necessary step toward organizational change, but will typically not be sufficient by itself to change the whole organization. Complementary efforts to address organizational practices, incentive structures and workplace culture would be needed as well.

Here are some other cautionary notes regarding change in systems based on what we have covered so far:

- *Systems can change in unpredictable ways.* Controlling a complex system is not realistic or possible.
- *Systems dynamics can undermine, amplify, or otherwise distort the impact of a peace program.* It will be important to test your theory of change, during planning and on an ongoing basis. Otherwise, you risk enacting a “fix that fails.” (See the *Fixes that Fail* archetype in [Appendix Three](#))
- *Cause and effect relationships flow in many directions at the same time.* Impacts reverberate dynamically to other parts of a system, like a ripple effect. This kind of change is not linear. One factor can affect a second, and the second factor can cause changes that rebound to affect the factor originally influencing it.

- *Impacts can be slow to become visible.* We have already seen that some systems dynamics are characterized by delays. Just because we are not seeing or measuring the effects of our program efforts, does not mean that change is not occurring; changes may unfold over an extended period of time.
- *Systems have "goals" in so far as they fulfill certain purposes.* They are very well designed to meet these goals. Systems tend to resist efforts to change them by adapting or compensating in order to continue meeting their original goals (i.e., systems are resilient). Systems of corruption are a good example; efforts to choke-off corruption in one area will usually result in new and creative techniques of extracting resources. In corrupt systems, money and others resources flow like water; blocked in one pathway, it seeks another.

It's not all bad news! Some of the more positive principles come in the form of helpful guidance:

- Keep programs flexible and adaptable, especially as the program responds to the system's "response" to its efforts.
- Systems change best when systems change themselves:
  - Support change driven by internal actors who know the system best.
  - Take advantage of positive change (latent or already happening) in the system. *Work with* the system rather than against it. Identify "bright spots" or "positive deviance" in the system and build on those.<sup>16</sup>
  - Support balancing loops that already exist in the system to counteract negative dynamics.
- If we identify points of *leverage* in a system, we can design programs for greater impact.

## Points of Leverage

Before returning to Morania, let's first clarify what a point of leverage is from a systems perspective. We will then take a look at some common approaches to change based on this concept.

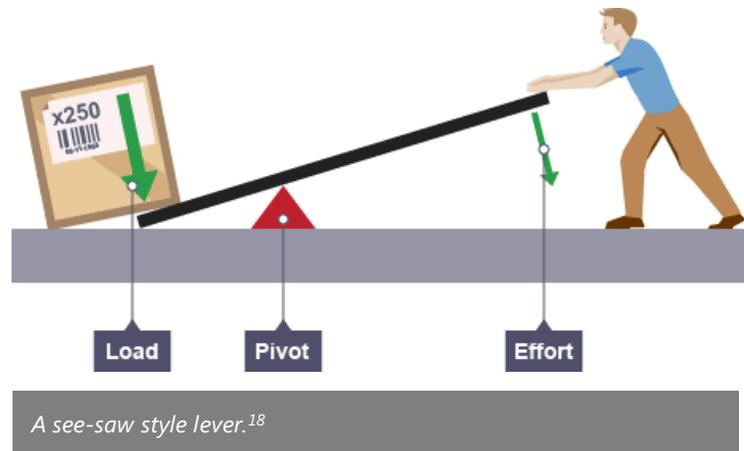
**Points of leverage** are "*places in the system where a small change could lead to a large shift in [the system's] behavior.*"<sup>17</sup> Leverage, of course, refers to the advantage you gain when using a lever, a tool that reduces the amount of effort needed to move something heavy. In other words, it is a place in the system where relatively small engagement or intervention can have much larger impacts, immediately or over time, on the change we seek to achieve. The rationale for identifying and using points of leverage is that the system and the feedback loops within it have goal(s) that propel things to happen (or keep things from happening). We want to work with or disrupt these loops, in order to make the existing energy in the system work for us, to create the outcome we want.

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<sup>16</sup> Positive Deviance Initiative

<sup>17</sup> Meadows, *Thinking in Systems*, Part 3, Chapter 6.

Systems maps are likely to present multiple leverage points thus it will be crucial to identify, refine and, more importantly, choose the leverage we want to capitalize on to develop an effective strategy. In engaging with leverage in a system there are three broad areas to bear in mind:



1. Use combined organizational and systems lenses to take a holistic view of the system to identify points of leverage;
2. Identify the various dynamics within the system to find one or more opportunities for leverage; and
3. Decide *how* to engage with the different dynamics to develop this leverage.

Now let's look in detail at how to deal with these three areas, as you make the transition from systemic conflict analysis and mapping to strategic program design and implementation.

Firstly, it is important to look for leverage from the ***system's perspectives and the organization's perspective***. For example:

*Leverage from the system's perspective:* What opportunities for leverage is the system offering? (for example, is there desire and attempt by some for constitutional reform?) Which of those opportunities are most promising? Which of these attempts are inclusive, instigated by key people within the system and have the most potential for success?

*Leverage from the organization's perspective:* (the organization that is seeking to interact with the system) Which of the most promising opportunities are we best positioned to exploit? (for instance, which of the attempts for constitutional reform are we best positioned to influence based on our expertise and resource?) How might we best exploit that opportunity?

With a system-wide and organizational lens, **identify the dynamics within the system** towards finding possible **opportunities for leverage**. Asking the following five questions helps uncover useful insights regarding how the various factors and dynamics that are playing out at present can be engaged with, or built on, in our favor:

1. What parts of the system (factor, casual relationships, loops) appear static or unchanging?
2. Where is there positive energy that is or could drive change in the system?
3. Are there "bright spots" or dynamics that are supporting positive change in the system? (also known as "positive deviants")
4. Are there factors/loops that have paradoxical impacts? (for instance, factors/loops that have both positive and negative impacts)

<sup>18</sup> Image: BBC (2014), retrieved 2016 from: [http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/science/triple\\_aqa/using\\_physics\\_make\\_things\\_work/moments/revision/3](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/science/triple_aqa/using_physics_make_things_work/moments/revision/3)

5. Are there factors/loops, which, if changed, would create ripple effects on the broader system? (In a system, "a ripple effect refers to all the subsequent changes that result from a change to one particular factor."<sup>19</sup>)

One way to identify factors that will set off significant ripple effects is to look to your map: notice which factors have the most, or the most powerful, arrows emanating from them. Changes in these factors are likely to produce a high ripple effect, because influencing one of them has a cascading effect on so many other factors.<sup>20</sup> This may well be a point of leverage.

Another important way to both identify points of leverage and use the system to your advantage is to *identify areas where positive change is already taking place within the current system*, as noted above. This might include reform efforts, leaders working toward a new vision for the future, large-scale shifts in public opinion or social norms, and so on. When these areas of change have potential ramifications for Key Driving Factors for conflict or peace, a point of leverage may exist.

Once the opportunities are identified, the next step will be to determine **how these dynamics can be further tweaked, manipulated or built upon** to develop a robust strategy for positive change in the conflict system. Consider the following ways of influencing the system:

1. **Strengthen** a positive dynamic. *Can we strengthen a dynamic that contains a "bright spot" that is already supporting positive change?*
2. **Weaken** a negative dynamic. *Can we lessen the times an impact contributes to a negative dynamic?*
3. **Flip** a dynamic, by changing a causal relationship (look upstream as well as downstream from factors of interest). *Can we unlock the power of a bright spot by flipping a vicious to a stabilizing cycle?*
4. **Create** a new dynamic by increasing/creating connections and ensuring better information flows, especially feedback. *Can we unlock energy for change by adding in a connection lessening a time delay, or ensuring that actors receive better information from the system?*

The key question at this stage of uncovering leverage points is, if any of the above changes occurred, what would happen to the conflict system as a result; what ripple effects would they cause?

In fictional Morania the process of uncovering leverage points looked as below.

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<sup>19</sup> Ricigliano, *Making Peace Last*, 148.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.



By way of guidance, consider just a few of these points of leverage that peacebuilders have generally found to be effective:<sup>21</sup>

<b>Point of Leverage</b>	<b>Method and Examples</b>
<i>The vision, goal or paradigm of the conflict system.</i>	Challenge the dominant mentality, shift the system's goals.
<i>Linkages that create destructive dynamics.</i>	Break or disrupt these chain reactions. For example, conflict factor A does not necessarily result in conflict factor B.
<i>Information flows and access.</i>	Develop new channels of communication or expand current ones, ensure the timeliness of data dissemination, improve the accuracy and conflict sensitivity of information available, or increase access to information by citizenry.
<i>Key processes, institutions, and mechanisms that address a conflict driver.</i>	Develop new processes, institutions and mechanisms or resolve bottlenecks in existing ones. For example, create a citizen's budget review board, or support a special unit that adjudicates land dispute cases.

Note that the methods and examples listed above are indicative of what peacebuilders can do to create change regarding that point, but these examples may or may not suit your own agency's capacities, mandate or ability.

Up until this point, we have been identifying the peacebuilding needs of a conflict system. From here on, it will be necessary to identify work that is feasible for your organization, based on these needs. For that, let's look at programming entry points.

## Strategy Part I: Programming entry points

From a peacebuilding perspective, each organization must address the strategic question: What is the most effective point of intervention that our organization is well positioned to utilize, in order to influence the dynamics of the conflict system? Now that we better understand the dynamics of the system, we can determine how to use our particular resources, talents, networks and knowledge to generate as big an effect as possible. ***In other words, programming entry points and points of leverage are not the same thing, though at times they can overlap.***

**Points of leverage** refer to places in the system where change will likely provoke the greatest impacts (and/or ripple effects). Apart from our favorite constituencies (youth, women, religious leaders...) and methodologies or approaches (dialog, reconciliation, training, media work...), what most needs to be done to shift the system? **Programming entry points** refer to actions that can reasonably be

<sup>21</sup> Inspired by a list developed by Meadows and adapted by CDA. See Meadows, *Leverage Points*, and also *Changing the Conflict System: The Eight-Approaches Chart* in [Appendix One](#) for CDA's adapted list of Meadows' suggested leverage points.

undertaken within a conflict system by a specific organization or program. Regardless of what needs to be done, most organizations are constrained by resources, mandates, skills, and access, among other factors.

Some fortunate organizations are well-funded, possess broad or flexible mandates, have powerful networks of influential people, and command exceptional access to affected communities. These agencies may well be able to work on the issue, conflict driver, or point of leverage of their choosing.

The rest of us face real-world constraints that will directly and significantly affect which programming entry points are realistically available. For your agency, these constraints might include:

- Limited budgets and material resources,
- A narrowly defined mandate,
- Incomplete professional networks, with limited or no direct access to key players,
- Tight timelines, in particular for interventions or programs,
- Small staff size,
- In-depth, but limited, areas of expertise,
- Travel or security constraints,
- Pre-existing expectations regarding agency responsibilities or deliverables, and
- The need to sustain existing programs that may not allow for the addition of peacebuilding elements or may be incompatible with peacebuilding objectives.

Addressing the most urgent conflict drivers, or for that matter taking advantage of the most powerful points of leverage within a conflict system, won't be an option for every peacebuilding organization.

However, there are many ways to maximize the use of scarce resources and to trigger significant effects. Your organization can make the most of its human and financial resources by discussing programming entry points as part of a planning process that is honest, reflective, and open to creative ideas.<sup>22</sup>

Our fictional Morania team needs to decide what intervention it will plan based on its own parameters. During the last five years, the team has primarily worked to support the burgeoning peace process between Morania and neighboring Hardan, but inconsistent progress has led to donor attrition and the team is now being asked to refocus its efforts. UK headquarters can promise the Morania team up to three years of funding for a new program, beyond which the team will need to fundraise. Currently, the team comprises two UK nationals and five Moranian staff, with collective staff expertise in the areas of good governance, rule of law, and anti-corruption.

Recall that the team identified "Level of interethnic competition for resources," "Zero sum politics based on ethnicity," "Political elites control of land," "Budget and focus diverted to security/military," and "Pervasiveness of ethnic existential threat mentality" as potential points of leverage, along with General Garza, General Abda, and Mr. Tsonga as particularly relevant Key Actors, either for or against peace.

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<sup>22</sup> For more on RPP program planning processes and tools, refer to the final section of [Module Five](#).

The team quickly agrees that, if possible, they should build upon the work they have already done in Morania.

As it happens, past work on the Morania-Hardan peace process had brought members of the team into regular contact with General Abda, whose main interests since retirement are military reform, addressing the fear-based insecurity narrative propagated by the military establishment regarding neighboring Hardan, and improving the civilian government's autonomy and performance as a result. Further discussion reveals that this connection to Abda is the best link the team has, not only to a Key Actor but to a point of leverage, thus focusing on "Budget and focus diverted to security/military" as the most promising leverage point identified.

The team soon agrees that it should plan a program around affecting this factor and partnering with General Abda (or at least supporting his efforts in parallel).

## Scenario Planning

Once a point (or points) of leverage to work on and Key Actors to work with have been identified, it will be critical to consider how the context where you work is likely to evolve, as this will affect conflict factors within the context as well as the success of your program. This exercise is called scenario planning.

**Scenario planning** in the context of peacebuilding is, at its heart, an effort to:

- Take into account the many **variables** inherent in a conflict context, be they internal or external to that context
- Anticipate how these variables could plausibly interact with and affect one another, or interact with and affect key drivers of conflict, and
- Consider how they might affect your peace program

It encourages risk mitigation and advanced planning by pushing program officers to think creatively about situations that might arise and what steps they can take now and/or during future scenarios to ensure ongoing **program success**.

At its most expansive, scenario planning offers a detailed look at possible situations that might arise, thereby offering program planners a chance to consider potential responses and the resources they would need in order to respond effectively. Each scenario is packaged as a prediction, a story about what might happen.

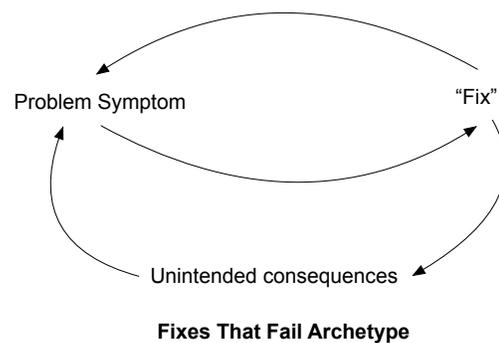
*For your own work, there are many tools and types of scenario planning available, including those used or recommended by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) in its Conflict Analysis Framework: Field Guidelines and Procedures (December 2015) compiled with support by CDA, and by Lisa Schirch in her 2013 book, Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning: Toward a Participatory Approach to Human Security. You can also refer to Adam Kahane, Solving Tough Problems: An Open Way of Talking, Listening, and Creating New Realities, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2007.*

## Strategy Part II: Anticipating and avoiding classic program “traps”

The program planning phase is a great time to revisit some of the **systems archetypes** referenced earlier, and detailed in [Appendix Four](#). (Note: these are also helpful during mid-term evaluations, or during any reflection process regarding how an ongoing program is progressing.) You may have noticed by now that many of those archetypes represent “traps” that your peace program could either contribute to or get mired in, or even vicious cycles that your intervention could inadvertently stimulate or reinforce in a conflict system. Revisiting archetypes and thinking through their relevance to your program helps you to anticipate problems before they occur and, ideally, to avoid them.

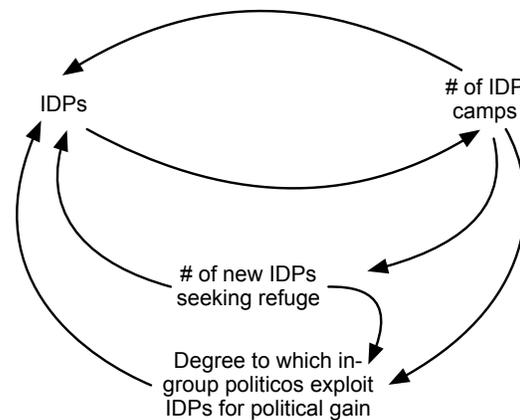
Let’s take a closer look at two common archetypes that programs frequently get caught up in: *Fixes that Fail*, and *Success to the Successful*.

You will recall that the *Fixes that Fail* archetype essentially depicts a scenario wherein interveners identify a problem and design a “fix,” only to find that this “solution” backfires by contributing to the problem it was designed to address. This archetype depicts the thorny problem of unintended consequences, and is illustrated as follows:



To demonstrate what this archetype could look like in our fictional country of Morania, recall that a consequence of the vicious cycle in relation to social issues (R3 in the larger systems map) and militia activities in the country results in internally displaced people (IDPs). If our hypothetical Morania-based team of peacebuilders wishes to address this problem, they may decide to build IDP camps to accommodate the significant number of people rendered homeless by conflict and to reduce tensions among large IDP groups and their host communities.

However, the team might also find that IDP camps may constitute a “quick fix” rather than a real solution in the context of a protracted social conflict. First, once built, they may actually attract more IDPs, thereby expanding rather than decreasing the camps and further straining relations with the host communities. Second, they may find that politicians representing the IDP ethnic communities are eager to exploit these camps as symbolic of their group’s suffering, making the camps a tool in the partisan struggle and reducing the political will to find a more permanent resolution to the suffering caused by displacement. Also, various groups will benefit from the funding provided to IDP camps, establishing an incentive for perpetuating them. Some IDP camps exist for many decades!



The result might look something like this:

There are three potential options available to interveners stuck in (or anticipating getting stuck in) a *Fixes That Fail* trap can avail themselves:<sup>23</sup>

1. Consider the negative long-term unintended consequences of alternative quick fixes, and choose a fix that appears to have none or at least fewer such consequences than the current one.
2. Continue to use the quick fix if you must, but consider ways to mitigate its negative consequences.
3. Uncover the root cause of the problem symptom that a fix is intended to address, and solve the underlying problem, if possible.

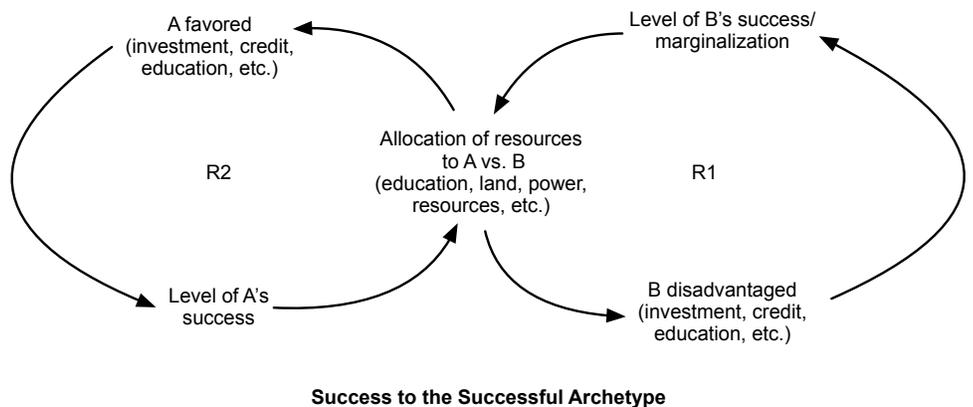
The Morania team, which considers the construction of IDP camps unavoidable in the near-term, might discuss mitigating negative consequences and promoting longer-term options, including:

- Leasing options for homes in the host communities for those who can afford it;
- Working with local community and faith-based agencies to place refugees with host families;
- Collaborating with local officials to build positive relations between host communities and refugees, while ensuring that refugee children have access to local schools and parents have access to employment opportunities; and so on.

Another common vicious cycle that interveners can inadvertently support is the *Success to the Successful* archetype, which essentially depicts how privilege creates success, which creates more privilege, while disadvantage causes marginalization, which only promotes greater disadvantage.

It looks like this:

This dynamic is alive and well in Morania. Recall that in the economic loop of the Morania systems map, **R2a**, the factor “Inequitable income/job prospects in the private sector” references this exact problem. The dominant ethnic group’s stranglehold on the political



system means that this ethnic group is also favored in terms of critical resources, such as jobs.

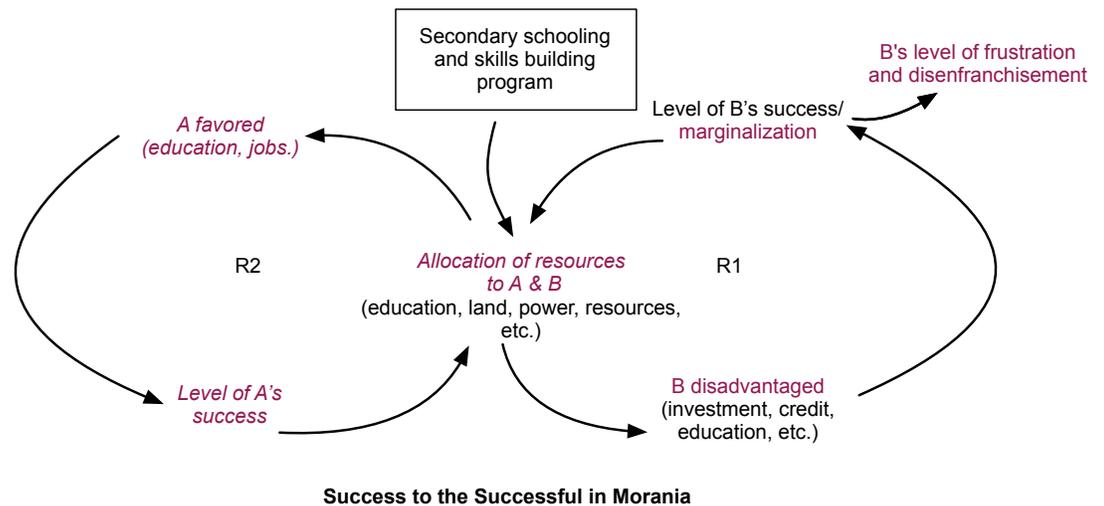
If our Morania team were focused on livelihoods, they might aim to reduce the long-standing community tensions fueled by the favored status and stronger job prospects that only one ethnic group possesses. For example, they might work to *improve secondary schooling and implement a skills building program for recent secondary school graduates that includes employer outreach efforts*. Wishing to be conflict sensitive and to improve inter-ethnic relations, the team would serve *all* of the community’s young people in an ethnically integrated program, including youth from both the dominant/privileged group and the marginalized groups.

<sup>23</sup> Stroh, *Systems Thinking for Social Change*, 150.

This makes good sense from a **conflict sensitivity** standpoint. Aid offered to only one group, even a disadvantaged one, can produce resentment from other groups and worsen inter-group relations. The team's aspiration is clearly to level the playing field among young job seekers.

Their real *impact*, however, may be to add advantages to the already privileged ethnic group (see archetype loop **R2** above), while increasing the frustration of disadvantaged groups by enhancing their job qualifications without enhancing their actual job prospects, which are low due to discrimination in the job market that a skills building program does not change.

The accidental result could look something like this (factors on the rise are noted in **purple**):



Helpful advice here regarding options for interveners who anticipate, or find themselves in, this problem are (excerpted):<sup>24</sup>

- Develop an overarching goal that links the achievements of A and B.
- Support party B to cultivate neglected sources of power such as tight-knit family and social traditions, numbers and hence votes, and moral rightness.
- Create systems that promote equity of opportunity and access.

For the Morania team, alternatives might include:

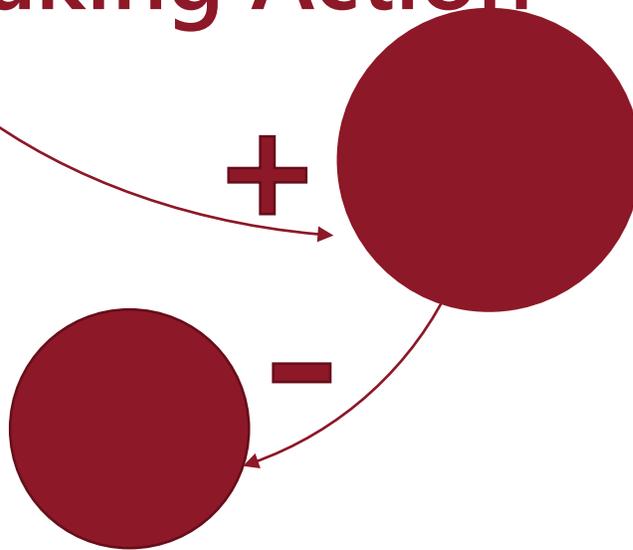
- Partnering with local politicians or business leaders who support anti-discriminatory practices;
- Appealing to successful members of underprivileged groups to sponsor up-and-coming entrepreneurs; or,
- Partnering with local businesses to improve non-discriminatory hiring and advancement policies and practices.

As we hope to have briefly demonstrated here, these archetypes are useful tools during the conflict analysis phase (see [Module Three](#)), but they can be profoundly helpful toward preventing problems before they occur, when used during the planning and program review processes as well.

<sup>24</sup> David Peter Stroh, *Systems Thinking for Social Change*, 152.



# Module Five: Next Steps - Toward Taking Action



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## Module Five: Next Steps – Toward Taking Action

### Objectives

As your program cycle moves from analysis to action, the strategies you develop based on your conflict analysis will quickly lead to solidifying program plans and ultimately implementing the program. Program planning and implementation are not the focus of this manual, but it is important to note that systems thinking tools remain useful to some steps in this next phase.

Specifically, this module briefly demonstrates how you can ‘map’ a program-level theory of change.

The module concludes with references to other RPP tools available for undertaking a comprehensive program planning process, as well as RPP tools to consider during program review and evaluation exercises.<sup>25</sup>

### Systems Mapping: Theories of Change

One of the many advantages to using systems thinking tools such as systems mapping to analyze conflicts is that these tools also allow you to actually “map” your program’s **theories of change**. Mapping gives you the opportunity to see a theory of change, if not in action, then at least in dynamic relation to the issues on which you are working.

#### Theory of Change

A theory of change is an explanation of how and why an action is believed to bring about its planned objectives, i.e. the changes it hopes to create through its activities, thereby revealing underlying assumptions. A clear theory of change helps to articulate the logical flow from the starting point (analysis) to the goal of the initiative to the broader change the organization plans to achieve.

For more information on peacebuilding theories of change, please visit the Peacebuilding Evaluation online field Guide (<http://dmeforpeace.org/evaluation-planning>), Woodrow/Oatley, CCVRI 2013; Babbitt, Eileen, Diana Chigas, and Robert Wilkinson, USAID, 2013; and CDA’s *Reflecting on Peace Practice Basics – Resource Manual*.

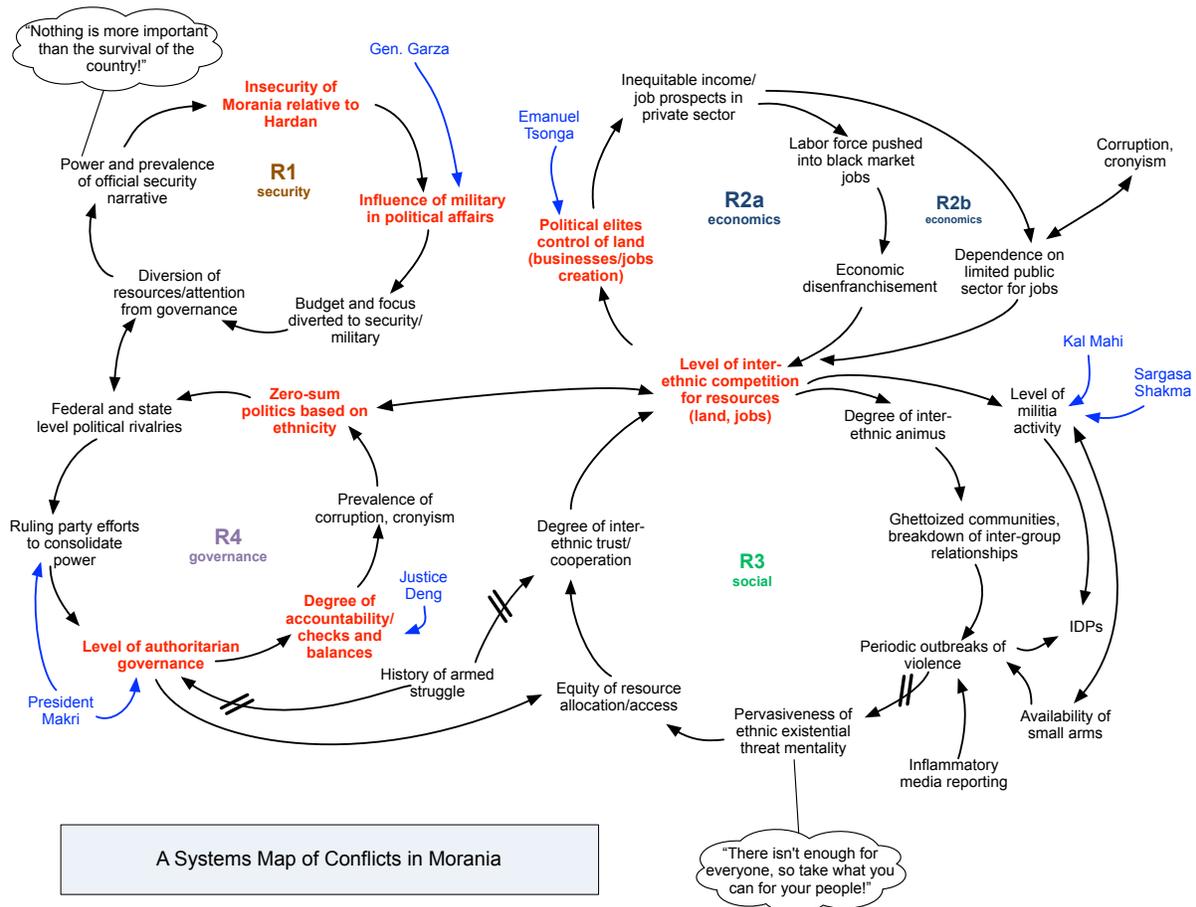
By way of a brief mapping demonstration here, consider where we left the fictional Morania team and how they might progress from where we left them in *Module Four*. Recall that they had determined that their best option was to link to General Abda’s efforts to:

- Disentangle the role of the military from governance by addressing resource diversions to the military that result in its bloated budget; and/or
- Reduce national anxieties about insecurity relative to neighboring Hardan, which render the public more amenable to these resource diversions.

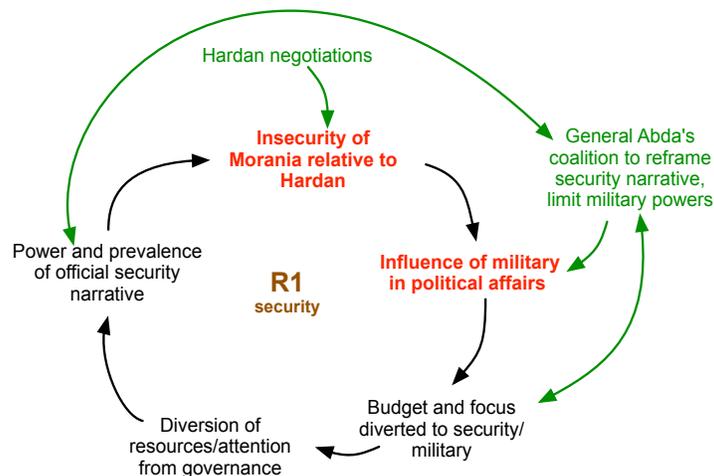
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<sup>25</sup> For more RPP tools see CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, *Reflecting on Peace Practice Basics – Resource Manual*.

These issues were of course illustrated in the Morania conflict systems analysis:



If we zoom in on the **R1** security-related loop, we can show the KDFs for conflict in **red** and relevant KDFs for peace in **green** and how program interventions might reinforce position factors or interrupt negative dynamics:



The team acknowledges that direct involvement in budget negotiations between the military and the civilian government is an unlikely role for a small, foreign non-profit. Reducing public acquiescence to this practice fueled by security fears strikes the team as a more realistic option, and a means of reducing the military's ability to use public fear to justify its budget and its meddling in governance.

In other words, shifting the dominant mentality about security to sway public opinion away from tolerating excessive military spending turns out to be a promising **programming entry point** toward influencing the previously identified **leverage point**, "Budget and focus diverted to security/military."

Interestingly, this approach reveals that the **Morania** team has hit upon a second, arguably an even more powerful **leverage point** that this approach would also potentially affect. This is a leverage point that has been implied by the systems map all along. As highlighted in *Module Four* and in the *Changing the Conflict System: The Eight-Approaches Chart (Appendix One)* "Change the vision, goal or paradigm; challenge the dominant mentality," is considered one of the most effective types of leverage. Difficult to accomplish, but highly effective if achieved.

Shifting the prevailing security paradigm could include promoting an alternative understanding of actual security issues and what could be done about them, as well as exposing the damage done to social and political life (reflected in **R4** and **R3**, the governance and social loops, of the broader systems map above) when resources and attention are diverted to military rather than to governance, civic life and social services. *The ambitious aspiration, of course, is for a ripple effect set off by changes in **R1**, that brings a cascade of shifts throughout the system.*

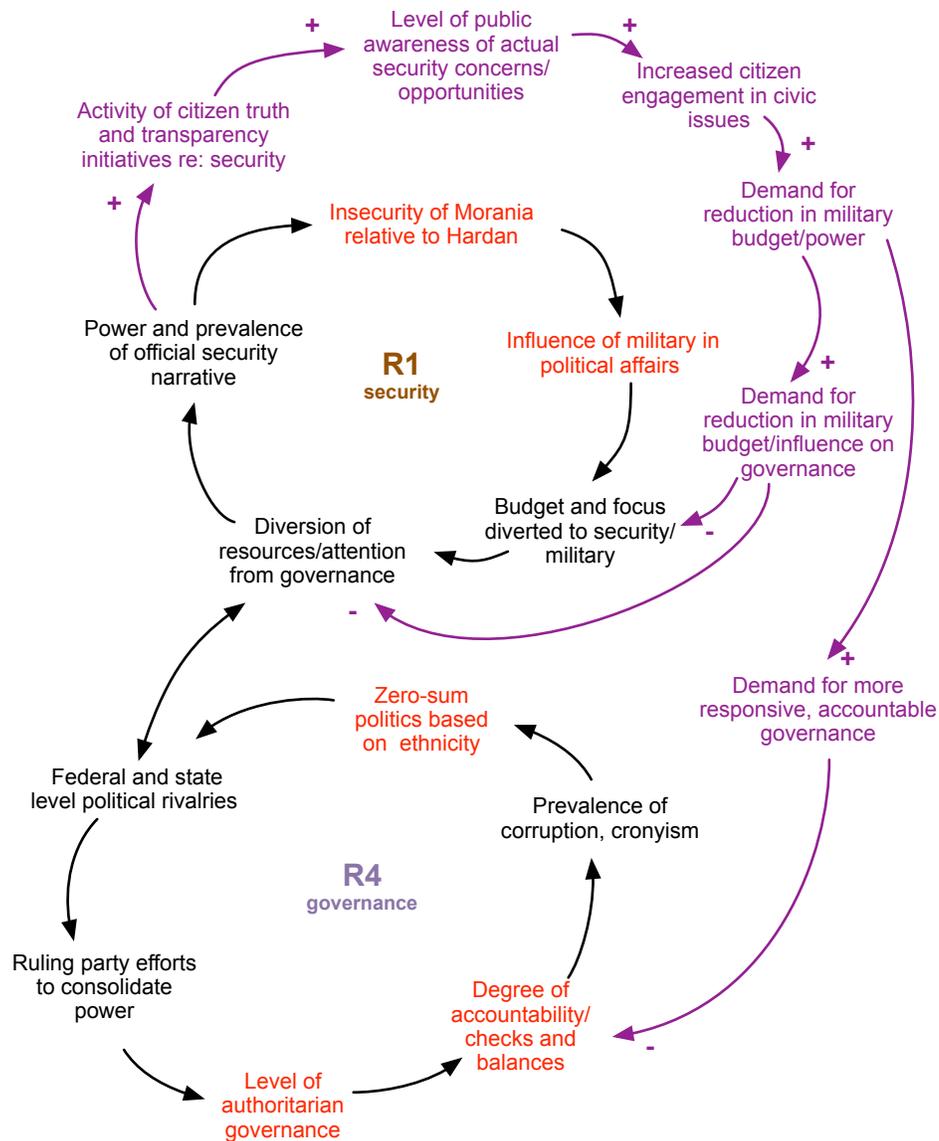
After much consideration, the Morania team drafts the following **program-level theory of change**:

**If we achieve a significant change in public opinion regarding Morania's position relative to Hardan by supporting citizens in interrogating and discrediting exaggerated elements of the official security narrative, then the Moranian public will support the elimination of excessive military spending power and call for a more accountable and effective government instead, because relief from the current climate of national insecurity combined with increased citizen engagement will enable citizens to petition for more reasonable balance of powers and ultimately more responsive, responsible, and participatory governance.**

Whatever the specifics of their work, the team also agrees that it will be important to link their program's objectives to other ongoing efforts in Morania, such as with:

- Programs that aim to reduce inter-ethnic tensions and insecurity in the country, to disentangle these internal issues from security concerns about Hardan, as well as support more equitable access to social services and application of the rule of law.
- Programs that are focused on good governance generally, as budget reform enables but does not by itself ensure the practice of good governance.

Let's consider what this program's theory of change might actually look like mapped onto the Morania conflict system. Here, KDFs for conflict are as always marked in **red**, while the program's theory of change is depicted in **purple**:



A visual representation of a program's theory of change affords an excellent opportunity to share the theory with trusted advisors and to interrogate whether or not change is actually likely to happen as it is mapped. This is a good time to consider:

- Where are the expectations of change overly optimistic?
- Return to the results of the scenario planning exercise. What internal or external forces that exist or could arise will affect the program and/or the way change happens in the conflict system?
- What isn't yet being taken into account, i.e., where and how will the system 'resist' the program's hoped-for changes?
- Could this change process fall into any of the classic program "traps," detailed in [Appendix Two](#) and discussed in part in [Module Four](#)?

As the program progresses, the team can also map what is *actually happening* as a result of the program, which is the very best test of a theory's accuracy, and an important means of monitoring interim- or post-program developments, in order to modify activities for improved outcomes (or design better programs in future).

## Program Planning and Review: Additional RPP tools and resources

CDA's Reflecting on Peace Practice program's findings and guidance based on two collaborative learning phases, entailing field work carried out in forty-two case studies since 1999. RPP was designed to improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding practice, which it has worked to do in partnership with peacebuilders, donors, policy makers and government bodies.

Applicable from initial analysis all the way to evaluation, RPP offers methods for creating effective programs and for evaluating that effectiveness at the level of impact. The core lessons and tools offered by the RPP program – some of which are referenced in this resource manual – are largely available online and free of charge, including all of the references listed below. ([Appendix Five](#))

For those less familiar with RPP who wish to start 'at the beginning,' we particularly recommend the following resource:

- *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*, by Mary Anderson and Lara Olson, was RPP's first major publication and lays the groundwork for the program's philosophy and orientation.

CDA subsequently distilled the lessons and findings that produced this work into trainings and workshops, supported by the first RPP manual. These introductory RPP materials support peace program planning and implementation, from the essentials of a good conflict analysis process to the development of robust program goals and sound theories of change, and introduce classic RPP tools, including the three-cell program planning RPP Matrix.

Complementary resources that focus on program reflection, review and evaluation – some of which can also be used during the program inception and launch phases as well – include four resources in particular:

1. The "Application of the RPP Programme Reflection Exercise: Addressing Land-Related Violence in Tierra Firma," written by Koenraad van Brabant and CDA's Peter Woodrow, takes the reader through a start to finish program reflection exercise by a fictional organization in order to demonstrate use of RPP's tools and guidance regarding conflict analysis as well as program planning, design, and adaptation.
2. Two CDA Working Papers by Mark Rogers enlarge upon the concepts of Relevance and Impact, two of the criteria for evaluation set forth by the OECD DAC in their guidance: *Evaluating Peacebuilding Activities in Settings of Conflict and Fragility—Improving Learning for Results*. These Working Papers - "Evaluating Impact in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Programs," and "Evaluating Relevance in Peacebuilding Programs" – discuss the sub-dimensions of these two important concepts, and how peacebuilding evaluations can address them.

3. Two CDA Working Papers, by Cordula Reimann and CDA's Diana Chigas and Peter Woodrow, address forms of program review that are well known in the evaluation world but neglected in the peacebuilding field: evaluability assessments and program quality assessments. Evaluability Assessments – adapted to RPP in the paper “Evaluability Assessments in Peacebuilding Programming” – explore whether a peacebuilding program is ready for a formal evaluation. Program Quality Assessments – adapted to RPP in the paper “An Alternative to Formal Evaluation of Peacebuilding: Program Quality Assessment” – focus on strengthening program design, in order to ensure that standards for peacebuilding programs are met regarding conflict analysis, program goals, program logic, theories of change, and M&E systems, among other things.
4. Findings from application of RPP infused Program Quality Assessments, Evaluability Assessments, and Strategy and Program Reflection Processes have been summarized in the evaluative options guide that CDA produced in partnership with the Peacebuilding Evaluation consortium: “Thinking Evaluatively in Peacebuilding Design, Implementation, and Monitoring. Three Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) and Do No Harm (DNH) infused options to strengthen the effectiveness of peacebuilding strategies and programs.”

Citations for these resources are detailed in [Appendix Five](#). For many other resources and publications produced by RPP and CDA's other programs, please visit [www.cdacollaborative.org](http://www.cdacollaborative.org) and explore our many articles, books, tools, and guidance materials.



# APPENDICES

## Appendix One

### A Menu of Approaches for Shifting Systems

*Based on Donella Meadows' Work*

#### **1. Change the vision, goal, or paradigm; challenge the dominant mentality**

- Create a compelling alternative vision that challenges the dominant paradigm.
- Expose the destructive consequences of the prevailing approach to conflict.

#### **2. Add new elements/factors that challenge the dynamics**

- Citizens demand to know where “disappeared” relatives are.
- Citizens group meet across the divides, against laws/policies.

#### **3. Break the linkages to stop destructive dynamics (A does not have to result in B)**

- Disgruntled veterans are recruited into development programs instead of clandestine militia.
- Two ethnic groups develop mutual protection agreements.

#### **4. Create a new process/procedure/mechanism**

- “Citizens’ budget review” created.
- Elders, women and youth set up a local emergency response mechanism.
- Procedures for settling local conflicts over land reinforced/renewed.

#### **5. Develop and implement an important new policy**

- In response to demands from women’s groups, the army sets a firm policy against rape and punishes soldiers who violate it.
- Government hires people based on merit, monitored by a citizen’s commission.

#### **6. Change information flows and access, empower people to act**

- Citizens gain information regarding funds allocated for health, education, roads, and other services.
- Radio reports regularly on the peace process and holds on-air debates on key issues.

#### **7. Reinforce positive factors/elements (build on “connectors”)**

- Ethnic groups B and C reduce inter-group violence and tension—and then work to extend the process to group D.
- Church and community groups revive cultural festivals that brought people together.

#### **8. Change the structure of incentives, punishments, interests**

- Civil society presents an award to an official who implements plans effectively.
- Citizens’ groups ask for a report of local government expenditures for the year and expose diverted funds.

## Appendix Two

### Conflict in Morania

Since independence from colonial rule, Morania has struggled to achieve stability – politically, economically and socially. The early post-colonial period was defined by armed struggle between the two largest ethnic groups, which eventually resulted in an uneasy truce. One group has come to dominate the military and the other dominates the civilian government. The ongoing power struggle between them plays out at every level of society, including access to jobs and land by average citizens, while the remaining ethnic groups are left to ‘fight over the scraps.’ Internally, corruption is endemic, unemployment is high, and access to public services is low. Externally, Morania is locked in a tense, perennial military standoff with its neighbor, Hardan, holdover hostilities from when colonial interests ineptly carved the two nations out of a once unified region. This

external insecurity is frequently used to justify significant investment in the military as well as a tendency toward authoritarian governance.

During the last five years, the team from a small international NGO with headquarters in the U.K has primarily worked to support the burgeoning peace process between Morania and neighboring Hardan, but inconsistent progress has led to donor attrition and the team is now being asked to refocus its efforts. UK headquarters can promise the Morania team up to three years of funding for a new program, beyond which the team will need to fundraise. Currently, the team comprises two UK nationals and five Moranian staff, with collective staff expertise in the areas of good governance, rule of law, and anti-corruption.

In the subsequent sections we will look at what the steps outlined in [Module Three](#) might look like for a systemic conflict analysis for the fictional country of Morania.

## Appendix Two

### [2.1] STEP ONE: Analysis of Causes of Conflict and Drivers of Peace

First, the RPP *three-box* analysis tool<sup>26</sup> can be used to sort factors for and against peace, and the key actors. In your own work, use of this tool follows your rigorous data collection and analysis process, as noted above. For the purposes of demonstrating the tool, we presume that data collection and analysis has taken place, and have therefore filled one the analysis tool for the fictional country, Morania.

Note that in the chart below we chose to use four boxes rather than three in order to separate out the actors against and for peace more clearly.

In the example of the fictional country of Morania, the first attempt to generate and categorize the information produced a long list of factors and actors, as shown below.

Actors against Peace	Factors against Peace	Factors for Peace	Actors for Peace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ruling party and party leadership</li> <li>▪ Ambitious military leaders</li> <li>▪ Elements of police forces beholden to elite political interests</li> <li>▪ Inflammatory media outlets</li> <li>▪ Ethnicity-based gangs</li> <li>▪ Intolerant religious leaders</li> <li>▪ Former militias and militia leaders</li> <li>▪ Powerful businessman linked to ruling elite</li> <li>▪ Key Supreme Court justices</li> <li>▪ Rumor mongers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insecurity of Morania relative to Hardan</li> <li>▪ Degree of zero-sum politics based on ethnicity</li> <li>▪ Level of authoritarian governance</li> <li>▪ Level of inter-ethnic competition for resources (land, jobs)</li> <li>▪ Degree of inter-ethnic trust/cooperation</li> <li>▪ Equity of resources distribution</li> <li>▪ Widespread distrust of government</li> <li>▪ Domination by single political party</li> <li>▪ Low/zero access to adequate health care</li> <li>▪ Access to quality educational by all ethnic groups</li> <li>▪ Minimal/zero social services</li> <li>▪ Inter-group tensions caused by IDPs</li> <li>▪ Degree to which militias remain armed and active</li> <li>▪ Levels of insecurity, lawlessness, violence</li> <li>▪ Levels of corruption</li> <li>▪ Judicial system controlled by ruling party</li> <li>▪ Level of unemployment</li> <li>▪ Access to jobs across ethnic lines</li> <li>▪ Degree of economic development</li> <li>▪ Importance of post-colonial armed conflict</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of calls for new constitution committee</li> <li>▪ Efforts to professionalize military/circumscribe its powers and shift the national security narrative (General Abda)</li> <li>▪ Prevalence of land adjudication and land reform efforts</li> <li>▪ Likelihood that vote to move nation's capital to ethnically 'neutral' region will pass</li> <li>▪ Degree of multi-lateral support of high level negotiations with Hardan</li> <li>▪ Degree of political engagement by electorate (e.g. voter turnout)</li> <li>▪ National-level anti-corruption campaign (Former First Lady Ankra)</li> <li>▪ National culture of strong family ties/responsibility</li> <li>▪ Number of local community policing efforts in key regions</li> <li>▪ 'Culture' of ambitious entrepreneurship</li> <li>▪ Strength of civil society</li> <li>▪ Degree of media independence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Select journalists and media outlets</li> <li>▪ Local, independent NGOs</li> <li>▪ Labor union leaders</li> <li>▪ Reform-minded military leaders</li> <li>▪ Political opposition leaders</li> <li>▪ Select members of the High Court and Supreme Court</li> <li>▪ INGOs e.g. PeaceNow</li> <li>▪ UNDP presence</li> <li>▪ Key foreign ambassadors</li> <li>▪ Former First Lady Liza Ankra</li> </ul>

<sup>26</sup> Also referred to as the RPP three-box analysis tool when actors for/against peace are combined into one column. This particular tool is inspired by Force Field Analysis, developed by acclaimed social psychologist Kurt Lewin. For a refresher on this and other RPP tools, see CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, *Reflecting on Peace Practice Basics – Resource Manual*.

## Appendix Two

### [2.2] STEP TWO: Refining the Analysis by Identifying Key Driving Factors of the Conflict

Below is a sample list of KDFs for and against peace in Morania.

Key Driving Factors against Peace	Key Driving Factors for Peace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insecurity of Morania relative to Hardan.</li> <li>▪ Degree of military involvement in civilian governance/military-civilian power struggle.</li> <li>▪ Zero-sum politics based on ethnicity.</li> <li>▪ Degree of authoritarian governance.</li> <li>▪ Extent of checks and balances/accountability on executive branch and military.</li> <li>▪ Ferocity of inter-ethnic competition for resources (land, jobs).</li> <li>▪ Degree to which elites control land (and therefore major businesses, jobs, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Success of efforts to professionalize military/circumscribe its powers, and reframe security narrative. (Gen. Abda)</li> <li>▪ Degree of popularity of campaign for new constitution.</li> <li>▪ Public perception of fairness in successfully resolved land dispute cases.</li> <li>▪ Level of uptake/support for national anti-corruption campaign. (Fmr. First Lady Ankra)</li> <li>▪ Degree of perceived progress in on-going high level peace talks with Hardan.</li> <li>▪ Level of election participation/political engagement of citizenship.</li> </ul>

### [2.3] STEP THREE: Identifying Key Actors

Based on the guiding questions and criteria of step three, here is a sample list of Key Actors for and against peace in Morania. Again, several of them have been refined to clarify who the influential individuals are and what specific issues, if any, over which they hold sway.

Key Actors against Peace	Key Actors for Peace
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ruling party, party leadership: President Makri, Snator Tusa, Governor Tong.</li> <li>▪ Former opposing militia leaders: Kal Mahi, Sargasa Shakma.</li> <li>▪ Businessman Emanuel Tsonga.</li> <li>▪ Supreme Court Justice Joseph Deng.</li> <li>▪ General Lawrence Garza and close Lieutenants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Military reform: General Abda. (retired)</li> <li>▪ Constitutional/political reform: opposition leaders Rudolfo Atari.</li> <li>▪ Land reform and adjudication: select members of the High and Supreme Court.</li> <li>▪ Hardan peace talks: INGO PeaceNow; UN; French and UK Ambassadors.</li> <li>▪ Anti-corruption: Former First Lady Liza Ankra.</li> </ul>

## Appendix Two

### [2.4] STEP FOUR: Use the Cause and Effect Chart to Reveal Causal Relationships

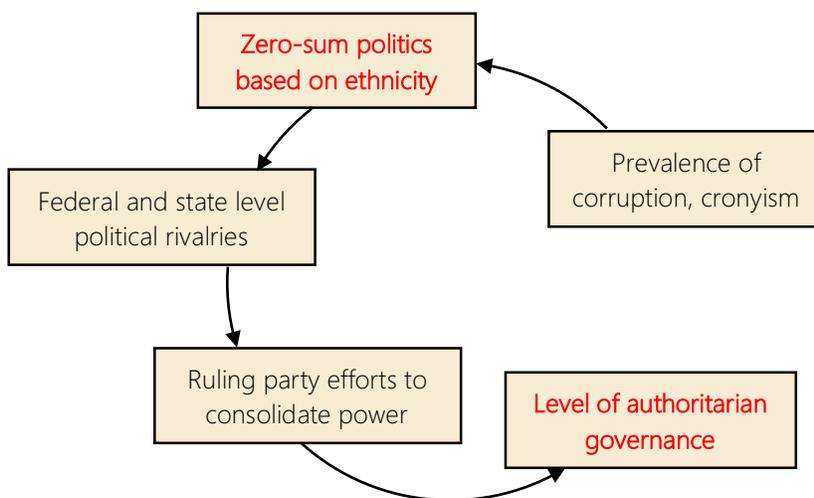
Using the list of KDFs identified in *Step Two*, below is a preview of what a *cause-and-effect* chart might look like for Morania for the KDF “Ferocity of inter-ethnic competition for resources.” Note the linkages appearing to exist between three KDFs – the others being “Zero-sum politics based on identity” and “Degree of authoritarian governance”. This chart may actually support the creation of multiple causal loops.

Some people find it helpful to begin depicting causal relationships right on the chart itself, shown in the diagram with blue arrows.

Causes	Major Factor	Effects
Economic underdevelopment High unemployment Minimal access to social services <b>Zero-sum identity politics</b> Domination of single policy party Judicial system controlled by ruling party	<b>Inter-ethnic competition for resources</b>	Degree to which militias stay active IDPs Inflammatory rhetoric in media High levels of insecurity, lawlessness, violence <b>Authoritarian governance</b> Equity of resource distribution

### [2.5] STEP FIVE: Mapping Key Drivers of Conflict

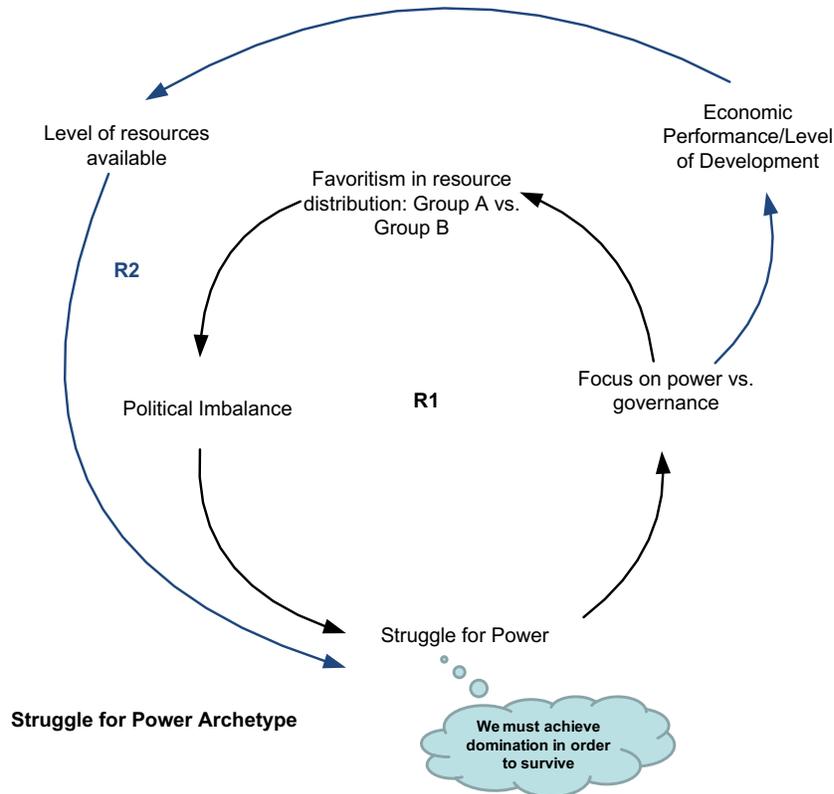
Based on the *cause-and-effect* chart above, for example, one portion of the Morania conflict map is beginning to take shape as below. KDFs are marked in **red**.



## Appendix Two

### [2.6] STEP SIX: Using Systems Archetypes to Get Unstuck and Spark Discussion

One archetype that seems particularly relevant is the *Struggle for Power* as demonstrated below in the emerging map of Morania.



This archetype touches on a number of conflict issues flagged in our analysis of Morania thus far: resource competition, an emphasis on authoritarian power over good governance, economic underdevelopment, the zero-sum/existential crisis mentality, and so on. This archetype helpfully demonstrates how political, economic, and social dynamics arising from an essential struggle for power can become so dreadfully entangled, and seems to echo dynamics already taking shape in our first loop depicted in [Step Five](#) above.

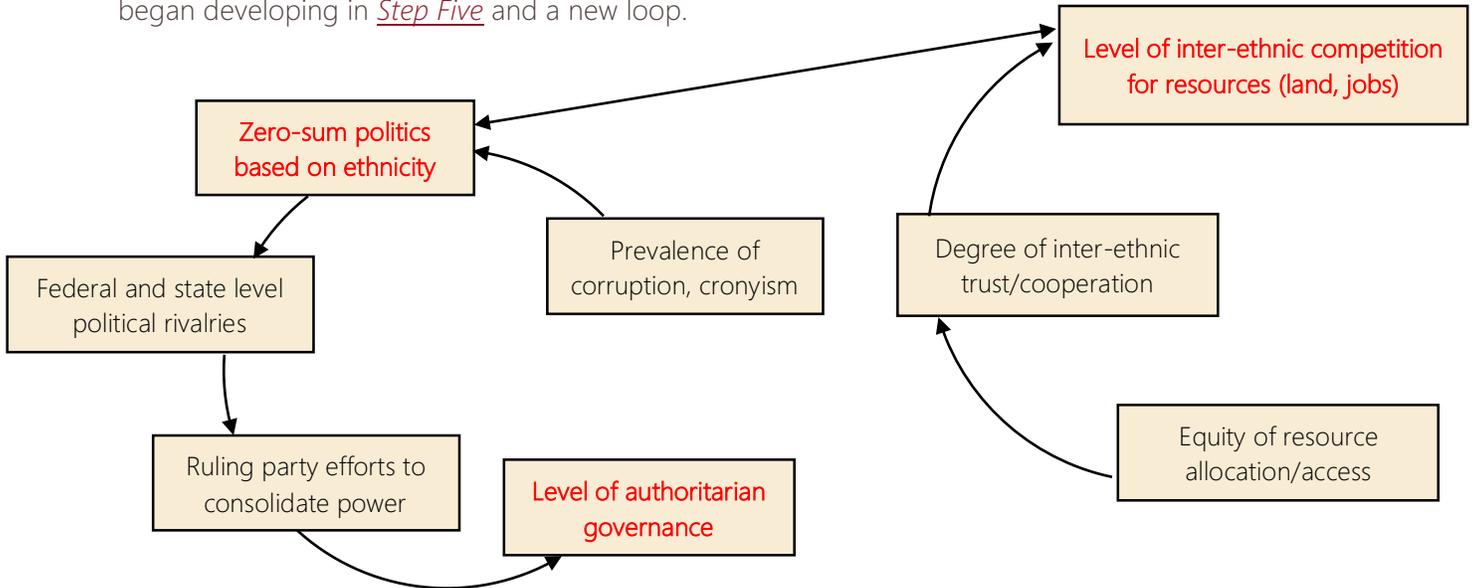
Two elements seem particularly important. The mental model shown as a “thought bubble” demonstrates the level of distrust and fear prevalent in a Struggle for Power system (this is about our very survival!). Secondly, the *Struggle for Power* archetype clearly produces zero sum dynamics on multiple fronts that sound quite similar to dynamics in Morania: the emphasis on consolidating political power *comes at the expense of* a focus on governance; favoritism in resource distribution *comes at the expense of* one group over another; the dominant mentality is *it’s us or them but there is no room for both*.

## Appendix Two

### [2.7] STEP SEVEN: Put Causal Loops for KDFs of Conflict Together

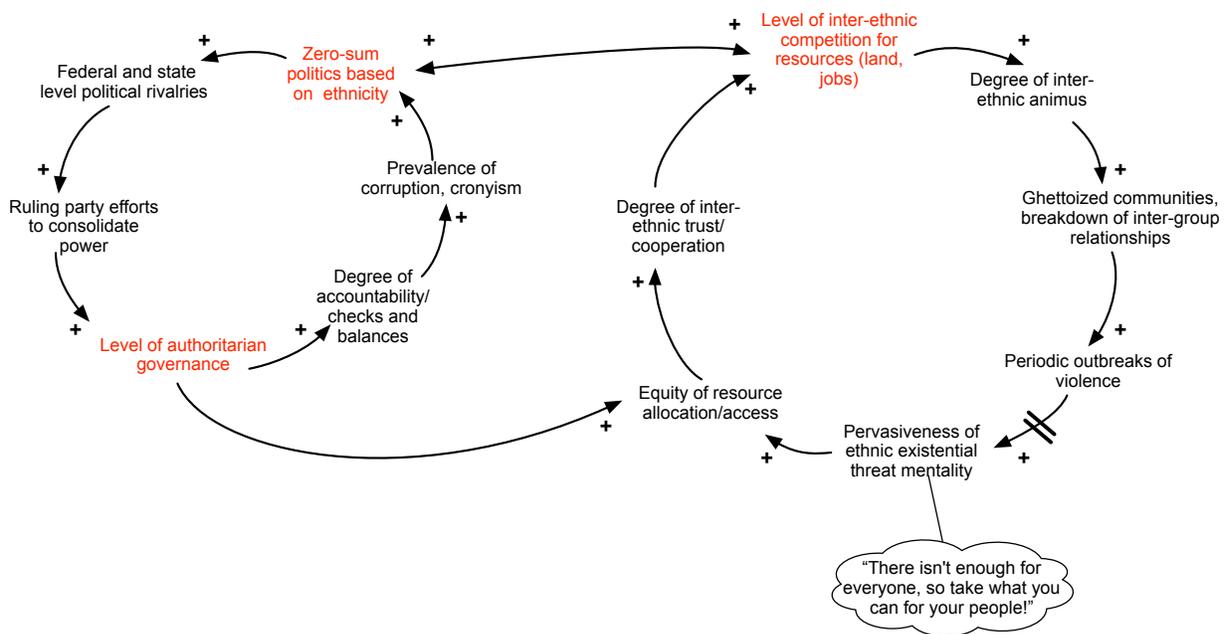
#### 2.7.A

Here is how playing around with the factors might lead to a link like this between the causal loop we began developing in *Step Five* and a new loop.



#### 2.7.B

Building on what we have so far, and bearing the questions of *Where are the delays in the system* and *What important mental models drive behavior*, in mind, two resulting causal loops for Morania might look something like the following.

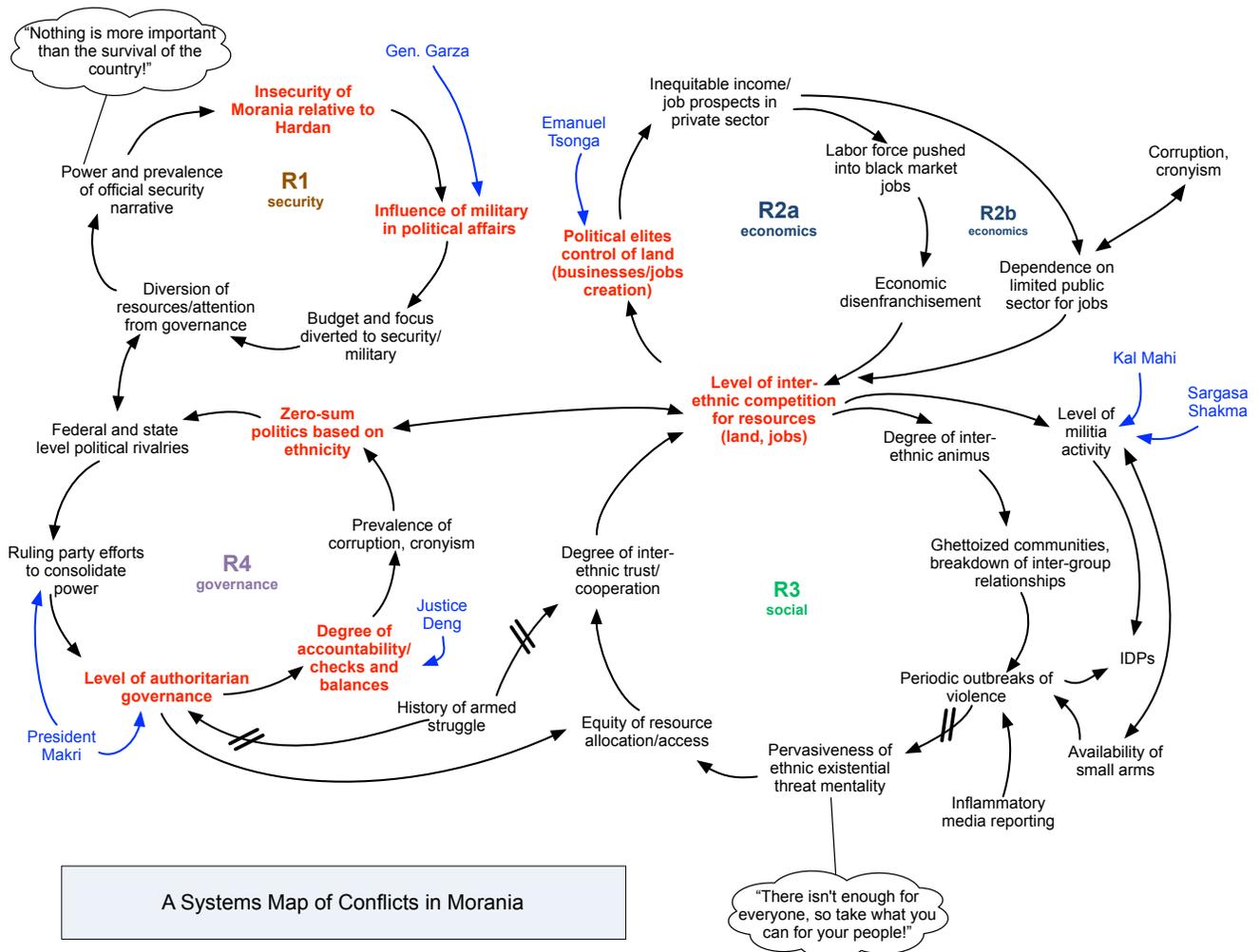


## Appendix Two

### 2.7.C

With the question of *where do the key actors we have identified come into play and Which factors do they currently influence, and how*, below is what our systems map for Morania looks like by the end of the exercise.

Note that because core conflict dynamics represented here entail only reinforcing loops (vicious cycles in this case), we have eliminated all of the "+" signs to avoid visual clutter. As before, KDFs are depicted in **red**. Key Actors for conflict/against peace are depicted in blue:

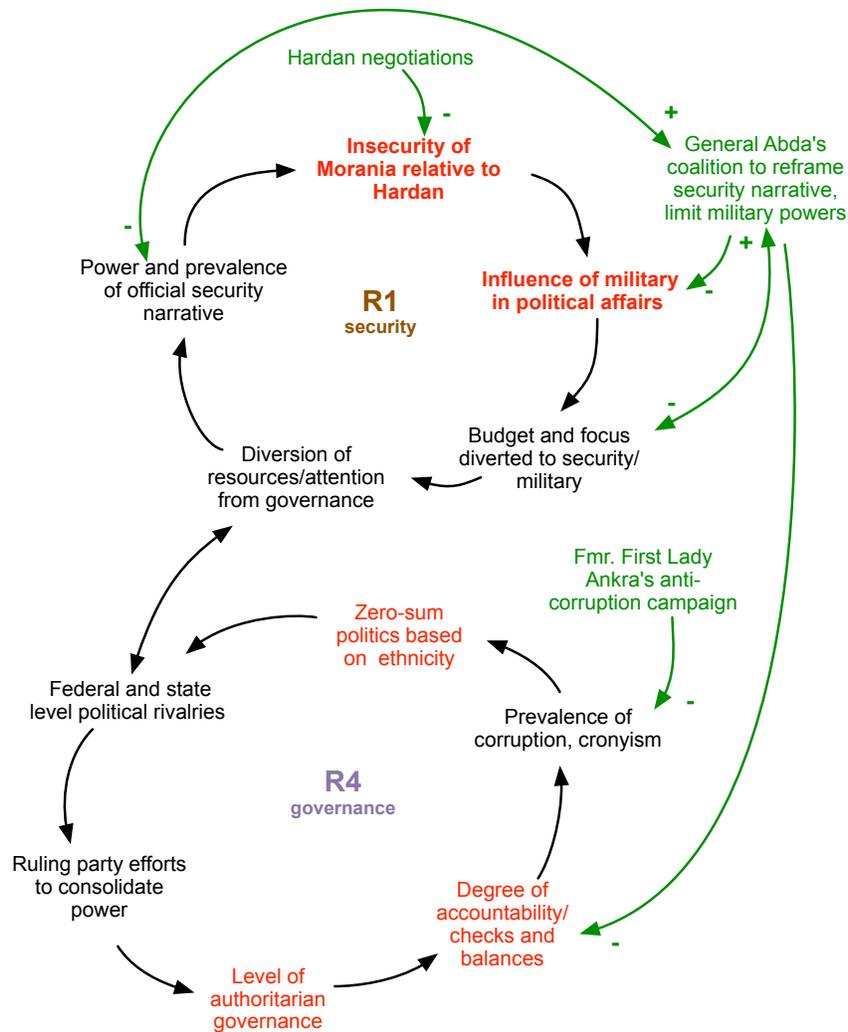


## Appendix Two

### [2.8] STEP EIGHT: Drawing Causal Loops for Key Drivers of Peace

Below is a depiction of how by zooming in on loops **R1** and **R4** – governance and security – we can take a closer look at how peace factors and actors (depicted in **green**) currently influence the conflict system in Morania (KDFs are depicted in **red**).

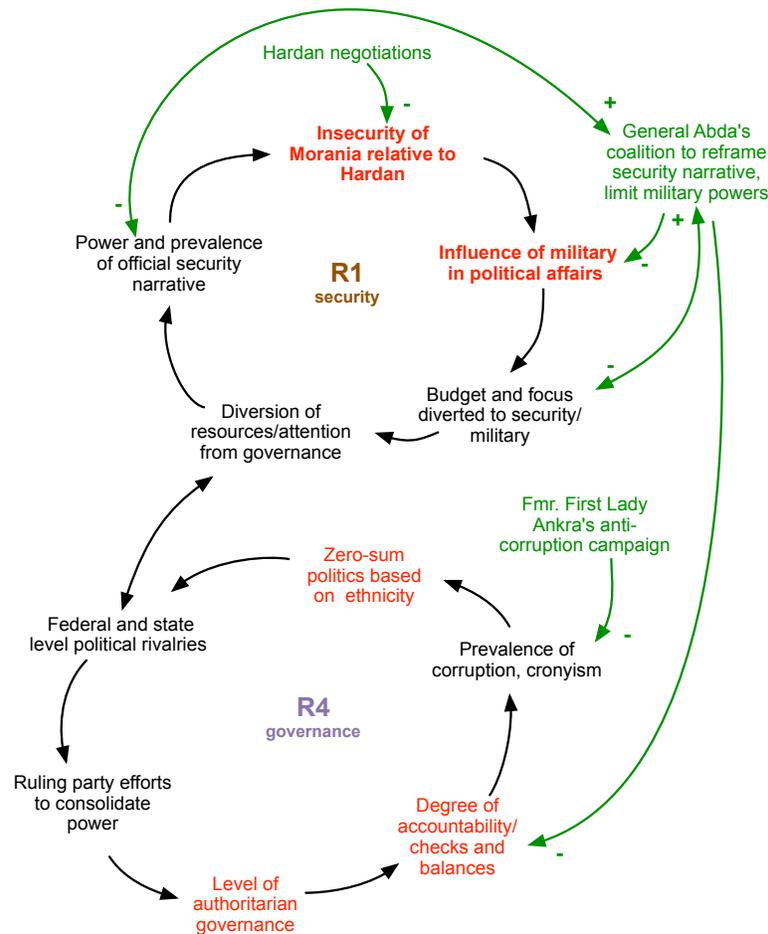
These pro-peace dynamics are particularly important once conflict analysis turns to program planning and ways to support positive change already happening within the system:





## Appendix Three

Let's also take another look at the loops **R1** and **R4** into which we have also mapped key drivers and actors for peace:



To see what determining points of leverage might look like for our fictional Morania program team, imagine that they are planning a new program. Here, it's worth noting that the team works at a large INGO headquartered in the United Kingdom. The INGO has been working out of Morania's capital city for about five years. Having created and refined this systems map as part of its updated conflict analysis process, the team must now consider where the points of greatest pay-off might be in terms of shifting the conflict system.

With reference to the larger map above and after much discussion, the team agrees that three points of leverage exist around the KDFs "Level of interethnic competition for resources," "Zero sum politics based on ethnicity," and "Political elites control of land" which results in the means of production residing in so few hands. Among these, "Level of interethnic competition for resources" strikes the team as being the factor with the greatest ripple effect, directly connected as it is to four of the main feedback loops identified by the map (**R2a**, **R2b**, **R3** and **R4**).

The team also identifies potential points of leverage around "Budget and focus diverted to security/military" in **R1** and "Pervasiveness of ethnic existential threat mentality" (**R3**). Both were identified due to the significant pressure that they place on the system, and because their pernicious

## Appendix Three

impacts can be traced throughout the system as a whole. Budgetary diversions magnify the anxiety, competition and even greed regarding remaining state resources, particularly among the elites and between state and federal administrations. This pressure ultimately starves the political and economic sub-systems, causing problems for the majority of Moranians. Meanwhile, the sheer power and omnipresence of the ethnic existential threat mentality strikes the team as the kind of attitudinal problem that fundamentally damages intergroup relations and readily contributes to violence when combined with other systemic stressors, such as those depicted in **R3**. Changes in either of these factors, the team reasoned, has the potential to reduce stress on the whole system and “expand the pie” in terms of both fiscal and human (social, emotional) resources within the country.

In revisiting the Key Actors during discussions about points of leverage, the team notes that two of the leverage points identified are closely linked to Key Actors, namely General Abda (whose influence is noted in **green** in the smaller sub-map of **R1** and **R4**), General Garza, and businessman Emanuel Tsonga (noted in blue in the larger map). These actors’ interconnectedness with pivotal points of leverage will make them especially important to any change process that the Morania team plans, and the team’s links to these actors must be revisited as the team transitions from conflict analysis to program strategizing and planning.

## Appendix Four

### Systems Archetypes: A Brief Guide to Using the Emerging Archetypes

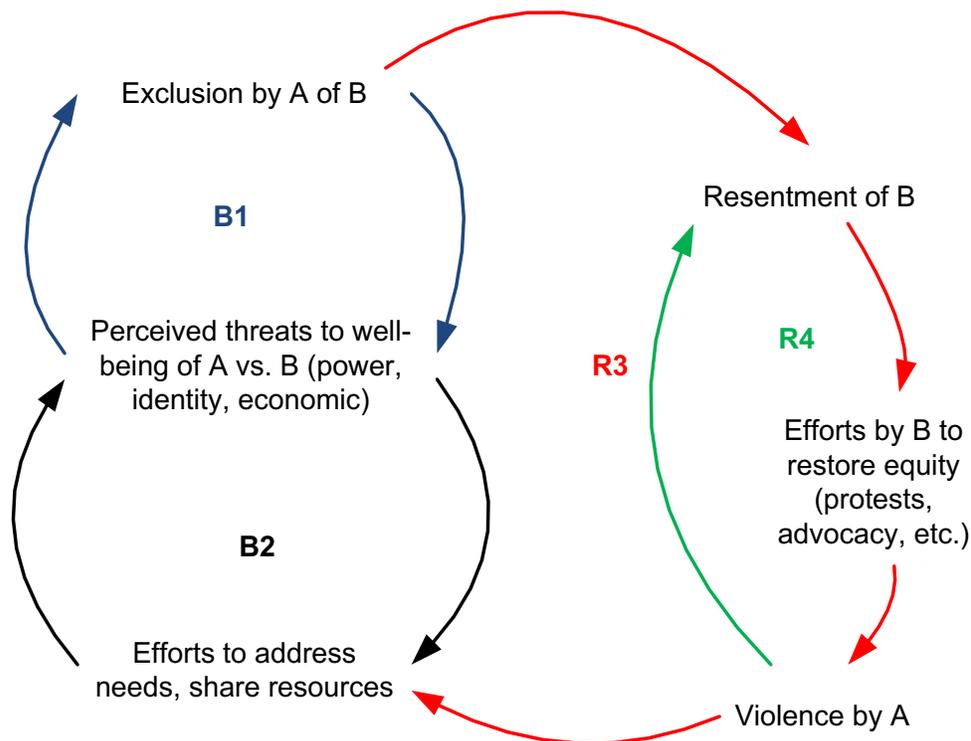
#### ARCHETYPE-APPLICATION *Exclusion*

Quick fixes undermine the system's ability to implement lasting solutions. This archetype helps explain why dominant groups/ governments become "addicted" to exclusion. It also helps explain why it is so difficult in the long term to agree on or implement a real long-term resolution.

#### INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

1. Can we shift attention from the "quick fix" of exclusion to the fundamental solution? Is there a societal vision that could motivate a sustained effort to achieve that resolution?
2. Can we reduce dependence on exclusion as an answer to perceived threats? Change the reward structure for exclusion? Mental models?
3. Are there other "quick fixes" with fewer negative side effects on the ability of the parties to address needs in the long term?

#### ILLUSTRATION OF ARCHETYPE



## Appendix Four

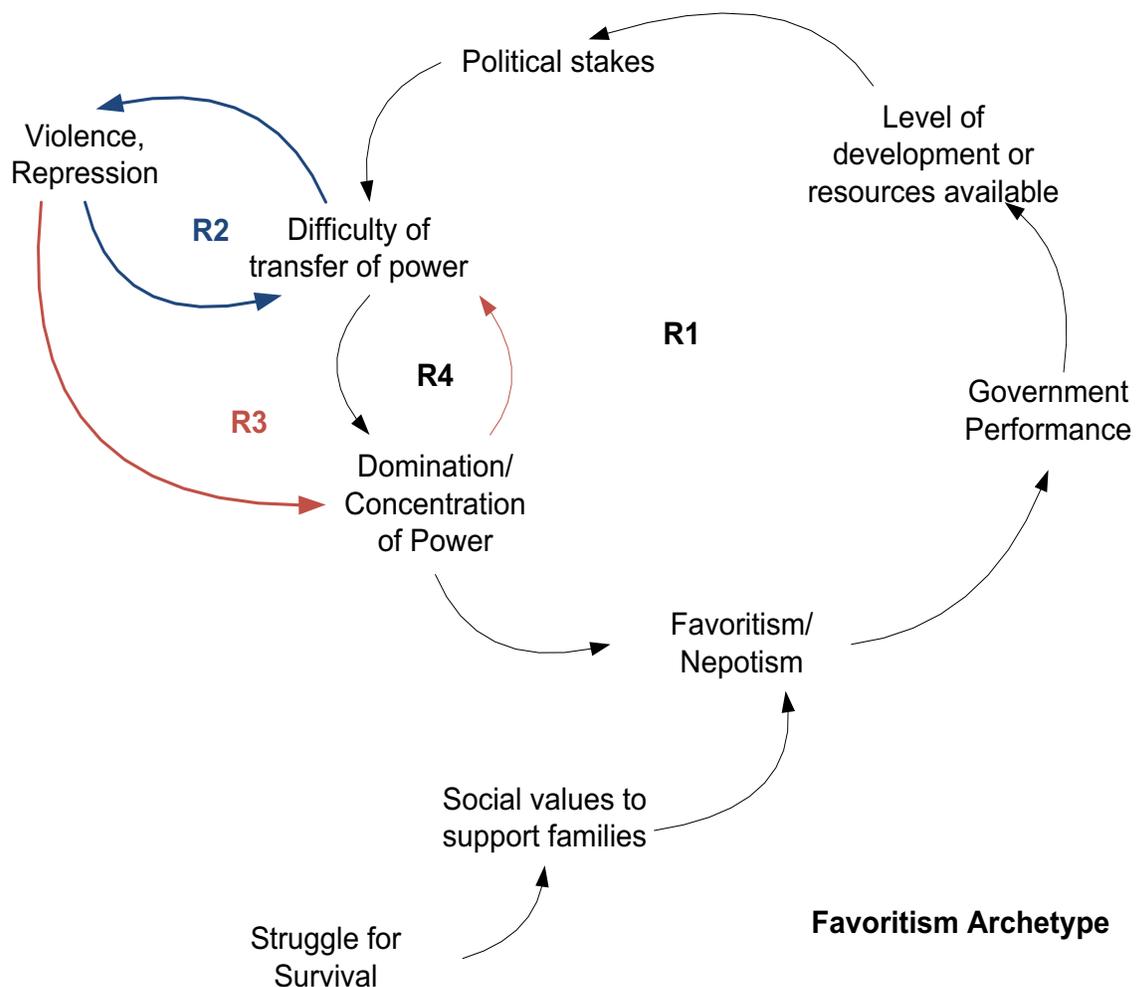
### ARCHETYPE-APPLICATION *Favoritism*

Not all corruption and patronage leads to conflict, but sometimes it does. In this archetype, favoritism leads to or exacerbates concentration of power. Worsening government performance due to favoritism depletes resources available to share and increases political stakes to control government (to claim ever diminishing resources) increase. The dominant try to stay in power to protect those privileges, resulting in resistance (eventually violent) by those excluded.

### INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

1. Are there "weak links" that can be broken in the vicious cycle (e.g., if government performance did not necessarily have to lead to depletion of resources)?
2. Is there a different goal one could set for a factor that could lead the dynamic in a different direction?
3. Is there a balancing loop that could mitigate favoritism?

### ILLUSTRATION OF ARCHETYPE



## Appendix Four

### ARCHETYPE-APPLICATION *Struggle for Power*

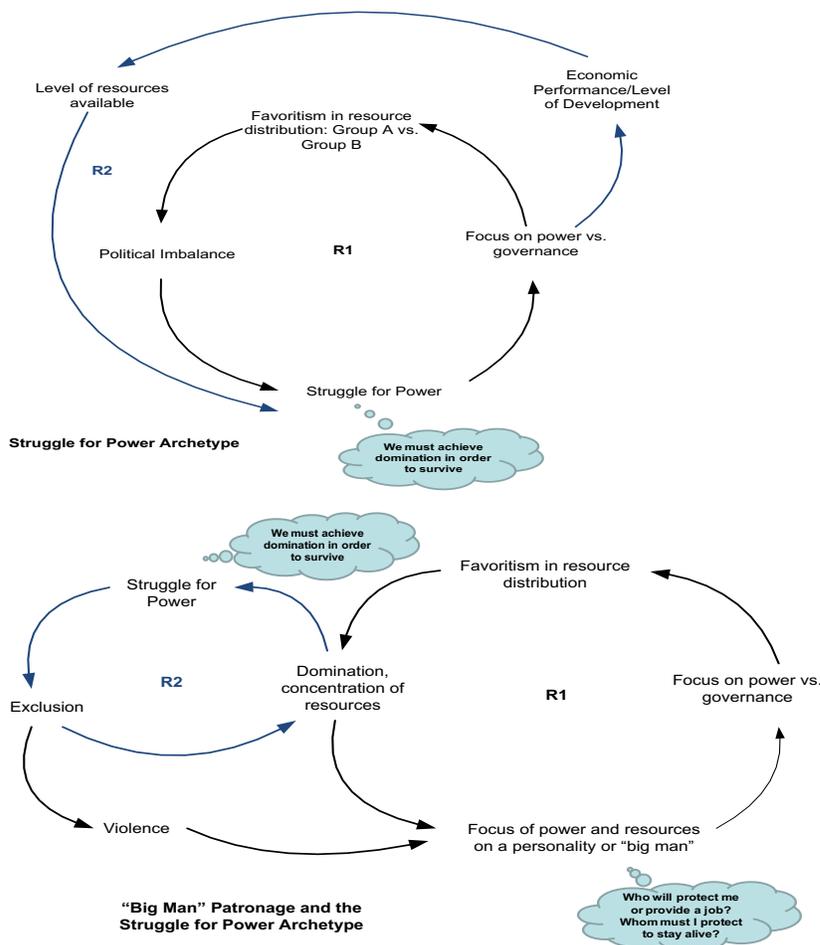
This archetype describes a situation in which elite power struggles dominate the political context and result in violence. It is essentially a variation on the previous one. Here the power struggle is driven by political imbalance; favoritism is a tool to maintain political domination. The struggle for power is reinforced by favoritism and by diminishing economic performance/ increased scarcity of resources.

A variation is the *"Big man" Patronage* archetype. Here there is not merely a struggle amongst elites, but "big man" control of power and resources unleashes competition for favor with (or replacement of) the "big man" as the only way of survival and access to resources.

### INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

1. Are there leaders within the "big man" or elite group interested in governance?
2. Are there accountability mechanisms (for example, new flows of information or feedback) that can make it more difficult to use power for favoritism?
3. Are there ways to change the rewards or the stakes in the system? Are there ways to create other means of survival than the public sector or "big man" favoritism?

### ILLUSTRATION OF ARCHETYPE



## Appendix Four

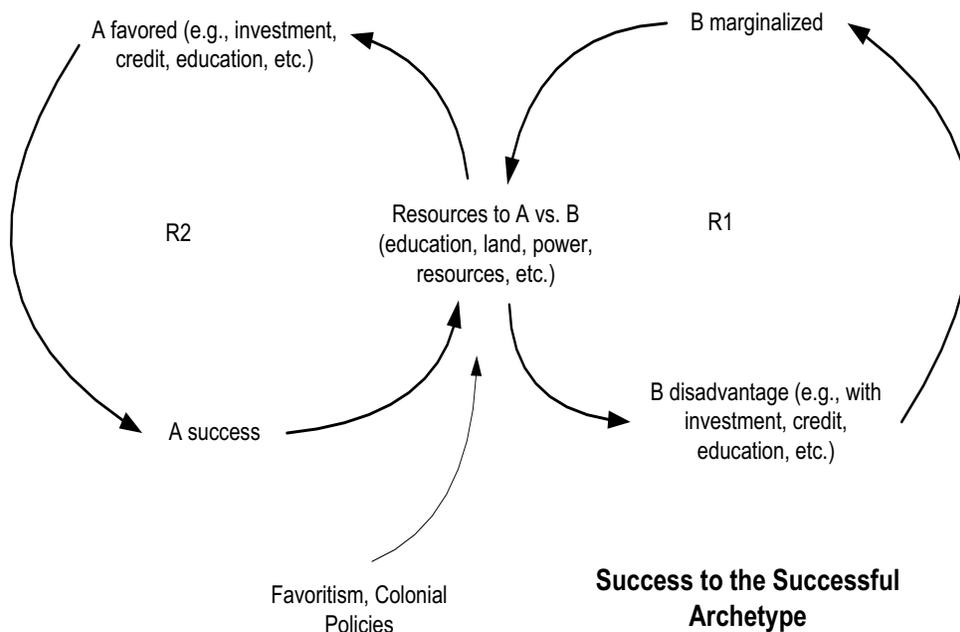
### ARCHETYPE-APPLICATION *Success to the Successful*

The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. This archetype suggests that success or failure may be due more to initial conditions (e.g., distribution of resources) than intrinsic merits. It can help explain the perpetuation of marginalization (or of domination) even when efforts are made to address it.

#### INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

1. Are measurement systems and criteria for rewards set up to favor the current system?
2. What can be done to level the playing field? Redefine standards for rewards? For defining success?
3. What feedback loops can be put into place to prevent one group or party from dominating completely (e.g., like antitrust laws in the economic realm)?
4. Are there ways the disadvantaged can diversify and not compete directly with the "successful?"

#### ILLUSTRATION OF ARCHETYPE



## Appendix Four

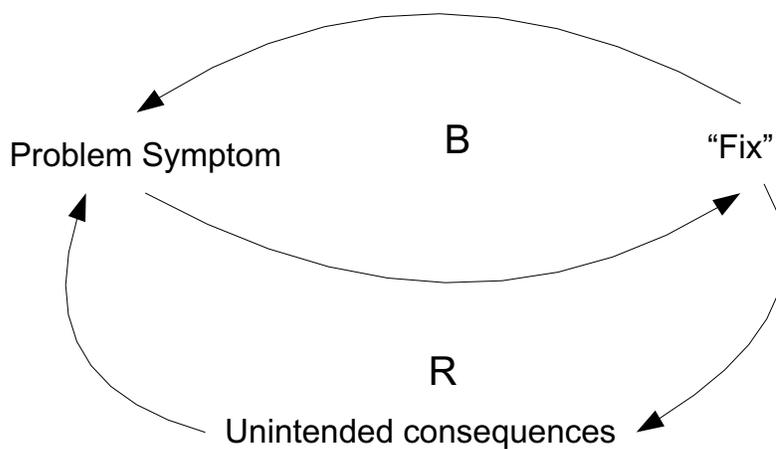
### ARCHETYPE-APPLICATION *Fixes that Fail*

A party takes action to “fix” a problem symptom, and temporarily it does. But the “fix” worsens the problem in the long term. This archetype may be at play when a problem a party (or intervenor) thought they were addressing is getting worse than before.

#### INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

1. Can we map out potential side-effects of an action before we act?
2. Can we identify underlying causes of the problem symptom and work to transform those?
3. Can we cut or add links in the causal map?

#### ILLUSTRATION OF ARCHETYPE



#### **Fixes That Fail Archetype**

## Appendix Four

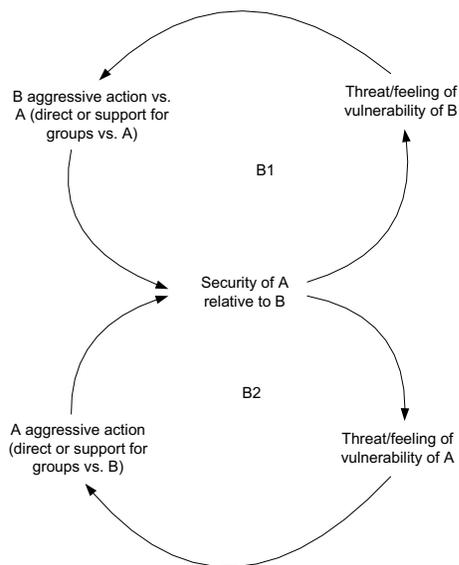
### ARCHETYPE-APPLICATION *Mutual Threat and Vulnerability (Escalation)*

When two parties are trying to protect and restore tolerable levels of security through coercion or power-based means, they can create a vicious cycle that of escalation that ultimately makes them less secure. This archetype explains how rational (in the shorter-term) actions by each party, based on “zero-sum” measures of security, lead to escalation and negative outcomes in the longer term.

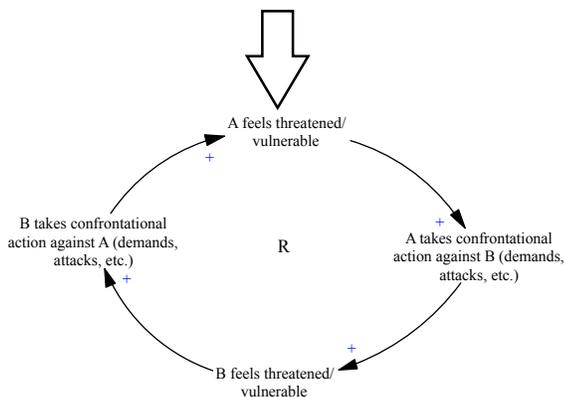
#### INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

1. Can we identify the relative measure that is pitting the parties against each other?
2. Are there ways of negotiating a “disarmament” or a way out of the action-reaction dynamic?
3. Are there ways to help the parties respond differently to the perceived threat?
4. Are there larger goals that can encompass both parties’ goals?
5. Can the parties become more away of delays that may be distorting the nature of the threat?

#### ILLUSTRATION OF ARCHETYPE



**Mutual Threat and Vulnerability Archetype**



## Appendix Four

### ARCHETYPE-APPLICATION *Ethnic Outbidding and Escalation*

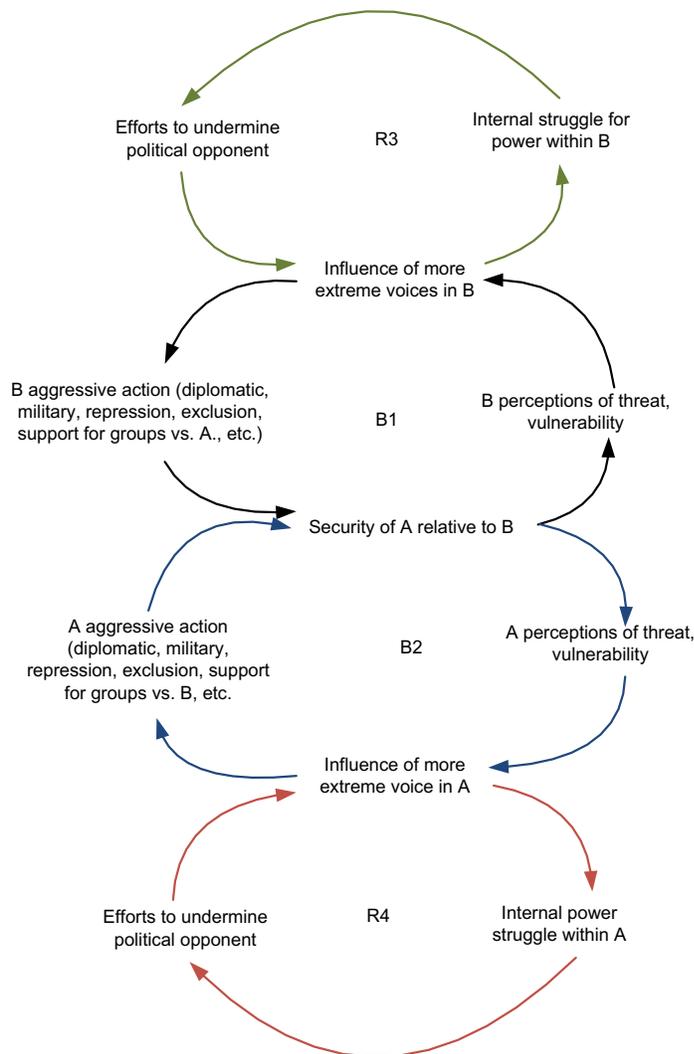
This archetype describes how the mutual threat and vulnerability escalatory dynamic can be driven by *internal* political competition within one or both parties, rather than issues between the parties.

#### INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

In addition to the questions for the Mutual Threat/Vulnerability archetype, consider:

1. Are there internal leaders who are interested in transforming the conflict?
2. Are there ways a balancing loop (information, mobilization, etc.) can mitigate the influence of the more extreme voices?

#### ILLUSTRATION OF ARCHETYPE



## Appendix Four

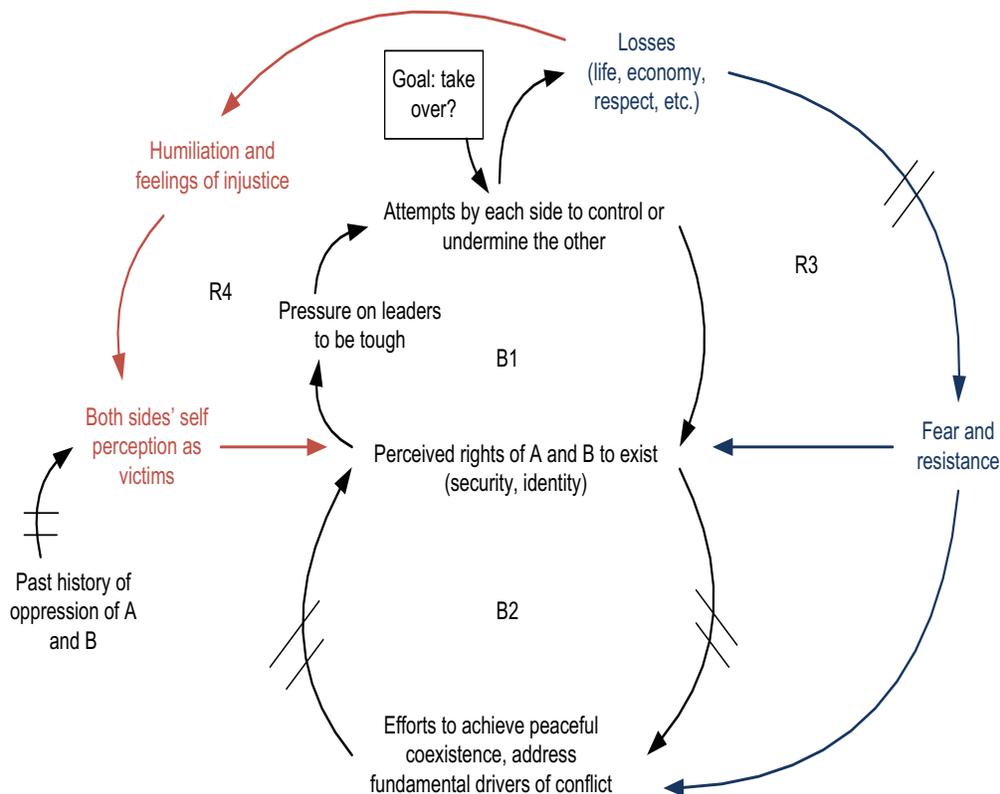
### ARCHETYPE-APPLICATION *Protracted identity-based conflicts*

This archetype has the same structure as the Exclusion archetype. A shorter-term “fixes” to security threats lead to side effects (e.g., hatred, mistrust, etc.) that undermine the parties’ ability to address the fundamental issues in conflict. The parties become “addicted” to confrontation. The “exclusion” dynamic could easily evolve into this.

#### INTERVENTION QUESTIONS

1. Can we shift attention from the “quick fix” of retaliation and containment to the fundamental solution? Is there a different vision or goal that could motivate a sustained effort to achieve that resolution?
2. Can we change the short-term reward structure for exclusion? Change mental models?
3. Are there other ways to respond to perceived threats in the short term that have fewer negative side effects on the ability of the parties to address needs in the long term?
4. Can one party reduce threats (or actions that are experienced as threats) to the other side? Can the international community hold parties accountable for their contributions to the conflict?

#### ILLUSTRATION OF ARCHETYPE



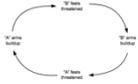
## Appendix Five

### Some Principles of a Systems Way of Thinking and Acting

1. Systems thinkers want to understand the dynamic (changing!) relationships among factors, actors, and *your programming*.
2. Systems thinking is way of seeing structures, behaviors and relationships that can help us identify root causes and uncover opportunities for creating positive change.
3. Systemic thinking takes a bird's eye view of *patterns of behavior*. (Systems thinking is much less concerned with single, discrete events.)
4. Systems are resilient; programs targeting only individual pieces are unlikely to lead to sustained change. (Remember: one program does not need to do it all. Strategic partnerships can help us tackle multiple issues/factors simultaneously.)
5. Systems can change in unpredictable ways and control of a complex system is elusive.
6. Nurturing changes already happening in a system is more effective than imposing totally new change.
7. Systems dynamics can undermine or amplify the impact of a program.
8. Change in a system is not linear – 'ripple effects' are often delayed (hence difficult to observe).
9. If we identify points of leverage in a system, we can design programs for greater impact.
10. Impacts "interact out" in dynamic relation to other parts of a system.
11. Programming needs to be flexible and responsive to developments in a system.
12. Systems are not problems to be solved. (This one is counterintuitive for change makers!)
13. Systems change best when systems change themselves:
  - a. External actors should support change driven by internal actors.
  - b. All actors should take advantage of change (latent or already happening) within a system.

## Appendix Six

### Glossary and Symbols

Conflict analysis	A diagnosis tool to understand conflicts.	
Systems thinking	A way of seeing interconnectedness of structures, behaviors and relationships in conflicts to help us identify the underlying causes and uncover opportunities for change.	
Systems map	An analytical tool and a visual representation of conflict dynamics in action.	
System	A set of interconnected elements working together towards a goal.	
Dynamic causality	A cause and effect relationship that are not always visible or straightforward.	
Feedback loops	A chain of causal connections where one factor causes other factors to occur which in turn affect the original factor.	
Factors	Elements of a system, usually expressed as things that can increase or decrease.	Text
Time delay	Effects taking time to play out.	//
Mental Models	Mindsets or the ways people think about and perceive their situation in the conflict context.	
Reinforcing loops	Factors in a loop that build on and strengthen one another often leading to escalating vicious cycle.	R
Balancing loop	Factors that serve to return the situation to a steady state or to offset the escalation of a reinforcing loop.	B
Causal relationships	Shows one factor influencing another by weakening or strengthening it.	
	Two factors directly influence each other.	
	A factor getting stronger causing another factor to strengthen as well. (A <i>parallel</i> causal relationship)	
	A factor increasing causing another factor to decrease or reduce in strength. (An <i>opposite</i> causal relationship)	
Key actors	Key actors are those who can say "yes or no" to peace or conflict <i>right now</i> as the situation currently exists.	
Systems archetypes	Common patterns of systems behavior observed across many different contexts.	
Inputs/outputs	Convention to show something as external (only acting on the system) or as a net result of the system. They are not part of loops in the map.	

## Appendix Seven

### Tips on Interrogating Your Map

The below tips are based on practical tips and recommendation by Karen Grattan, shared with CDA.

All the time we've spent grappling to build the systems map has been with the ultimate purpose of supporting more robust, creative, and thoughtful strategies and to build the scaffolding for effective learning and adaptation. Now that you have a working map, it is time to step back and appreciate what the overall system is telling you. Observing the systems through your map, and asking questions of it, is part of listening to the system.

As your team heads into this phase of work, you will bring to the table all your knowledge, beliefs, instincts, and experiences, as well as what you have read and what your colleagues and stakeholders have said about the system. At the same time, you will want to remain "humble before the system" and let the process push your thinking further. As you move toward developing strategy, it is especially important to unpack and look much more closely at these beliefs and values and test them against what you have learned through your systems mapping. It is important to come in with a mindset that juxtaposes both rigor and playfulness, as you will want to test all of your ideas and allow ample space to develop new ones as well.

Here are some question to consider both individually and as a team as you look to build your skills to interpret your map and its key lessons.

First, it is important to be clear (and develop concise ways of communicating) your beliefs about how the system works now, and how you hope it might work in some future time when your initiatives have been successful. *This exercise helps you uncover what you believe to be the key dynamics that are driving the current behavior of the system.*

Write a tweet (140 characters) that characterizes how the current system functions.	
Now, write the tweet you would send at some point in the future that describes a wonderfully healthy and functioning system.	

Here are some questions that will help you explore the map, as well as your beliefs and assumptions about the system and what is important in it.

## Appendix Seven

Are there any loops/dynamics in the current map that you think need to be strengthened to create that healthy future you described above? Why?

Are there any loops/dynamics in the current map that you think need to be weakened (to create that healthy future)? Why?

List any relationships between two individual factors that you would really like to see flipped (signs changed, ex: -/- changes to +/+) Why?

## Appendix Seven

Are there any factors that you would like to see “more of”, or “less of” in the system? Why?

Are there any factors or relationships in your map where you see a lot of activity (i.e. multiple arrows going in and out, or through)? What is going on there? How would you explain it? What is the overall result on the system?

Spend some time assessing the level of confidence or evidence you have for dynamics present in your map.

What parts of your systems would you especially like to know more about? How might you monitor that part of the system? What kinds of things would you be listening for?

## Appendix Eight

### Bibliography and Selected Resources

The following are a few select resources regarding systems thinking and peace program planning, design and review that are helpful supplements to the explanations in this manual. This is by no means a comprehensive bibliography. Rather, it is meant to offer a few ideas as you endeavor to learn more about the subjects discussed in this manual.

Anderson, Mary B., and Lara Olson. *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2003.

Anderson, Virginia and Lauren Johnson. *Systems Thinking Basics: From Concepts to Causal Loops*. The Pegasus Workbook Series. Acton, MA: Pegasus Communications, 1997.

ARK Group DMCC. "The Syrian Conflict: A Systems Conflict Analysis." ARK, 2016.

Babbitt, Eileen, Diana Chigas, and Robert Wilkinson, with AMEX International. "Theories and Indicators of Change: Concepts and Primers for Conflict Management and Mitigation." USAID, 2013.

Ernstorfer, Anita, Isabella Jean, and Peter Woodrow, with Diana Chigas. "Thinking Evaluatively in Peacebuilding Design, Implementation and Monitoring: Three Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) and Do No Harm (DNH) -infused options to strengthen the effectiveness of peacebuilding strategies and programs." *A Resource Guide*. Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects for the Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium, 2016.

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Chigas, Diana, and Peter Woodrow. "Systems Thinking in Peacebuilding Evaluations: Applications in Ghana, Guinea-Bissau and Kosovo," in *Evaluation Methodologies for Aid in Conflict* Ole Winckler Andersen, Beate Bull and Megan Kennedy-Chouane, eds. Routledge, 2014.

Ernstorfer, Anita, Diana Chigas, and Hannah Vaughn-Lee. "From little to Large: When does Peacebuilding Add Up?" *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 10, no. 1 (2015): 72-77.

Goodman, Michael *et al.* *Designing a Systems Thinking Intervention: A Strategy for Leveraging Change*. Waltham, MA: Pegasus Communications, 1997.

Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). "Conflict Analysis Framework: Field Guidelines and Procedures." The Hague: GPPAC, 2015.

Kim, Daniel. *Systems Archetypes II: Using Systems Archetypes to Take Effective Action*. Waltham, MA: Pegasus Communications, 1994.

Körppen, Daniela, Beatrix Schmelzle, and Oliver Wils (eds.) *A Systemic Approach to Conflict Transformation: Exploring Strengths and Limitations*. Berghof Dialogue Series, no. 6, Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2008.

Meadows, Donella. *Thinking in Systems: A Primer*. Diana Wright (ed.) White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 2009.

--- "Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System." Hartland, VT: Sustainability Institute, 1999.

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- OECD. *Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*. Paris: OECD Publishing, 2008.
- Ricigliano, Robert. *Making Peace Last: A Toolbox for Sustainable Peacebuilding*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2012.
- Reimann, Cordula. "Evaluability Assessments in Peacebuilding Programming." Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2012.
- Reimann, Cordula, et. al. "An Alternative to Formal Evaluation of Peacebuilding." Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2012.
- Rogers, Mark. "Evaluating Impact in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Programs." Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2012.
- "Evaluating Relevance in Peacebuilding Programs." Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2012.
- Senge, Peter. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1990.
- and Art Kleiner, Charlotte Roberts, Richard Ross, and Bryan Smith. *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook: Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1994.
- Stroh, David Peter. *Systems Thinking for Social Change: A Practical Guide to Solving Complex Problems, Avoiding Unintended Consequences, and Achieving Lasting Change*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2015.
- "Leveraging Grantmaking: Understanding the Dynamics of Complex Social Systems." *Foundation Review* 1, no. 3 (2009): 109-122.
- "A Systemic View of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." *The Systems Thinker* 13, no. 5 (2002): 2-7.
- Sweeney, Linda Booth, and Dennis Meadows. *The Systems Thinking Playbook: Exercises to Stretch and Build Learning and Systems Thinking Capabilities*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2012.
- Woodrow, Peter, and Diana Chigas. "Connecting the Dots: Evaluating Whether and How Programs Address Conflict Systems," in *The Non-Linearity of Peace Processes: Theory and Practice of Systemic Conflict Transformation* Ropers, Norbert et al. (eds.) Leverkusen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2011.
- Woodrow, Peter, and Koenraad van Brabant. "Application of the RPP Program Reflection Exercise: Addressing Land Related Conflicts in Tierra Firma." Cambridge, MA: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2012.
- Woodrow, Peter, with Nick Oatley. "Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security and Justice Programmes. Part I: What they are, different types, how to develop and use them." *A Conflict, Crime, and Violence Results Initiative (CCVRI) product*. London: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and DFID, 2013.

### **Helpful systems thinking website resources:**

- Donella Meadows Institute, <http://www.donellameadows.org/systems-thinking-resources/>
- Human Systems Dynamics Institute, <http://www.hsdinstitute.org/>
- Mental Model Musings, Archetypes <http://www.systems-thinking.org/arch/arch.htm>
- Positive Deviance Initiative, [www.positivedeviance.org](http://www.positivedeviance.org)

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