Systemic Approaches to Conflict Transformation and Management

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Outline

1. Introduction
2. Conflicts
3. Systems
4. Decisions

3 areas of study

Peace Studies

3 areas of study

Peace Studies	Conflict Transformation and Management

3 areas of study

Peace Studies	Conflict Transformation and Management	Formal Tools of Decision Support

First questions

- What is Peace?
- How do we compare Peace to War?
- Is Peace absence of War?
- What type of Peace are we talking about?

More questions

- What is a conflict?
- Who is involved in a conflict and why?
- What type of conflicts are we concerned about?
- What does it mean transforming a conflict?

Even more questions

- What does it mean aiding to decide?
- What does it mean managing a conflict or a crisis?
- What type of tools are we talking about?

History of Peace Studies

1948 University of Manchester, Indiana, USA

1957 University of Michigan, E. and K. Boulding, Journal of Conflict Resolution.

1959 PRIO (Oslo), J. Galtung, Journal of Peace Research, Peace Studies.

- Cold War, Armaments' race, Nuclear Threat.

History of Peace Studies

- Bradford University, Bergof Foundation, Many University training courses.
- Systemic Approach to Conflict Transformation and Management. Conflict Resolution.
- Negotiation, Mediation, Humanitarian Action, Crisis Management ...
- End of Cold war, new conflicts, new forms of conflict ...

Criticisms

- Are peace studies a scientific (interdisciplinary) field or just an ideological (religious) standing?
- If yes, what is exactly the subject of scientific investigation?
- Are peace studies useful (practically used) or just a ideology and pacifism?
- If they are useful, are they efficient? Did they improve something?

Scientific Neighbourhood

- Political Science, International Relations, Geopolitics.
- Economy, Political Economy and the Social Sciences.
- International law and Human Rights.
- Psychology, Interpersonal Conflicts and Cognitive Studies.
- Decision Sciences and Technologies.

Example 1: South Africa

- African kingdoms;
- Dutch and Protestants colonisation, Boers war and the British empire;
- Independence and Apartheid;
- The Rainbow Nation.

Example 2: Zimbabwe

- Cecil Rhodes and the British Empire;
- Independence of Rhodesia and Civil War;
- The “reign” of R. Mugabe;
- The Zimbabwe tragedy.

General Overview

- Conflicts are natural and occur regularly.
- A conflict van be source of creation, innovation and progress.
- Violent conflicts are destructive both for the participants and the neighbours.
- Violence is not only physical action, but also absence of justice, of freedom, of means for life, it can be structural and considered as “normal”.

Typologies

- Violent conflicts can have different territorial extension (national, regional, local), but can also extend beyond the notion of territory;
- Violent conflicts can be of different intensity;
- Violent conflicts can be justified with different motivations (religious, nationalism, access to natural resources, history, defence to ... etc.);
- Violent conflicts can be asymmetric.

Our perspective

- Conflicts can be transformed;
- Conflicts can be managed and conducted constructively;
- Conflicts can be studies and modelled;
- Beyond any ethical, ideological or moral stand, a constructive issue of a conflict is “rational” and “beneficial”.

Some consequences

- There is a subject of scientific investigation and this is interdisciplinary.
- We are going to adapt a formal approach in approaching this subject of study;
- We are going to privilege a pragmatic approach in exploring how to manage and transform conflicts.

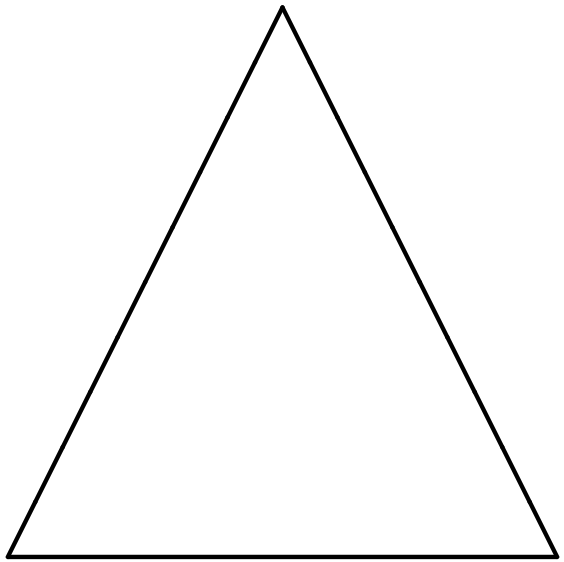
What does it mean formal?

- Use of formal languages (minimising ambiguity).
- Abstract languages and instantiation.
- Scientifically critical.
- Pretending to introduce a dimension of rationality.

What does it mean pragmatic?

- Think before acting.
- Think rationally before implying emotions.
- Take care of the time horizon even at long term.
- Implement second order changes.

Galtung's Triangle



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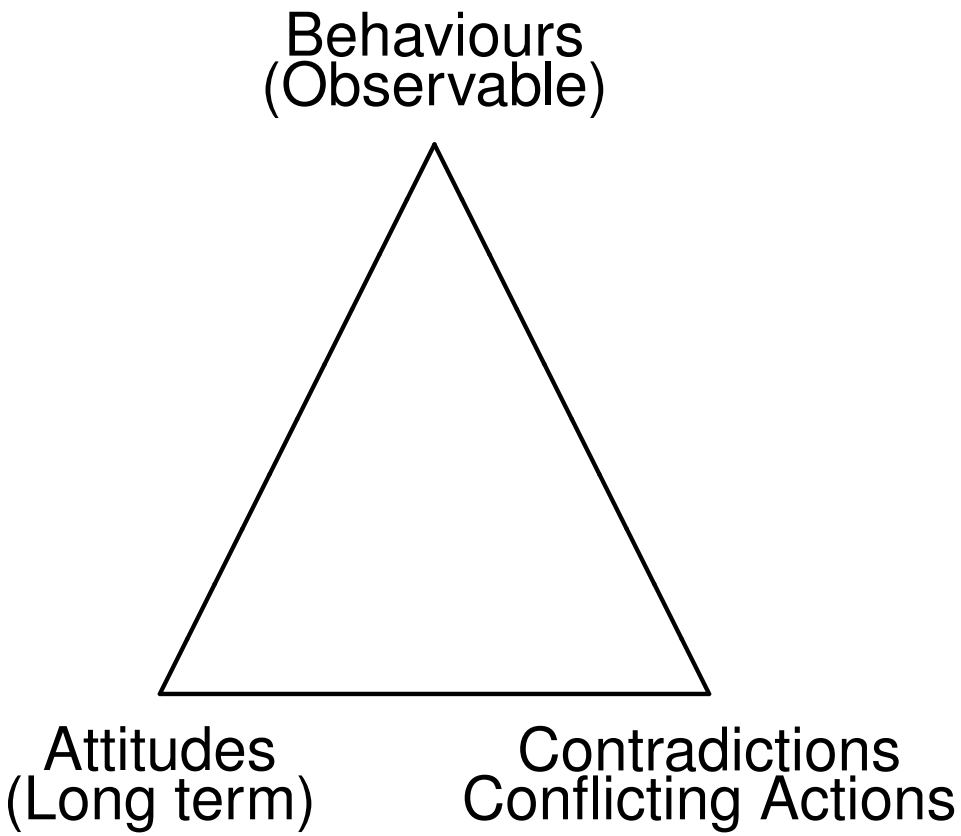
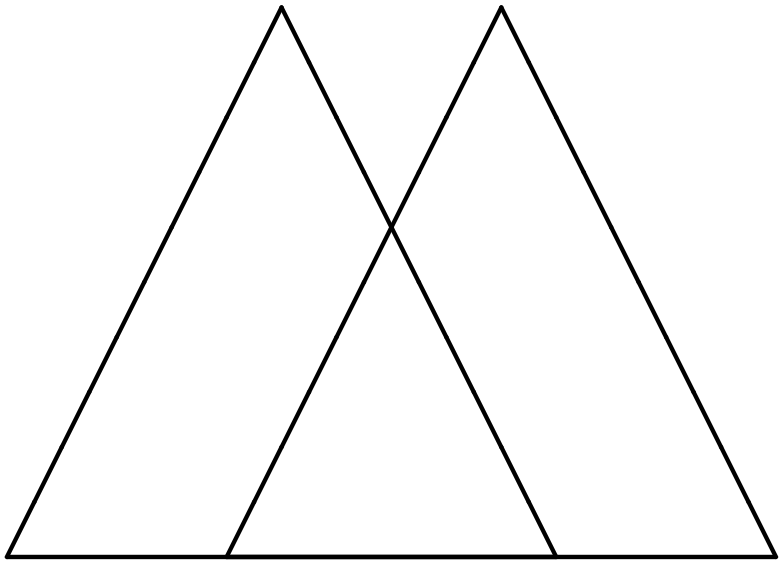


Ramsbotham's Model



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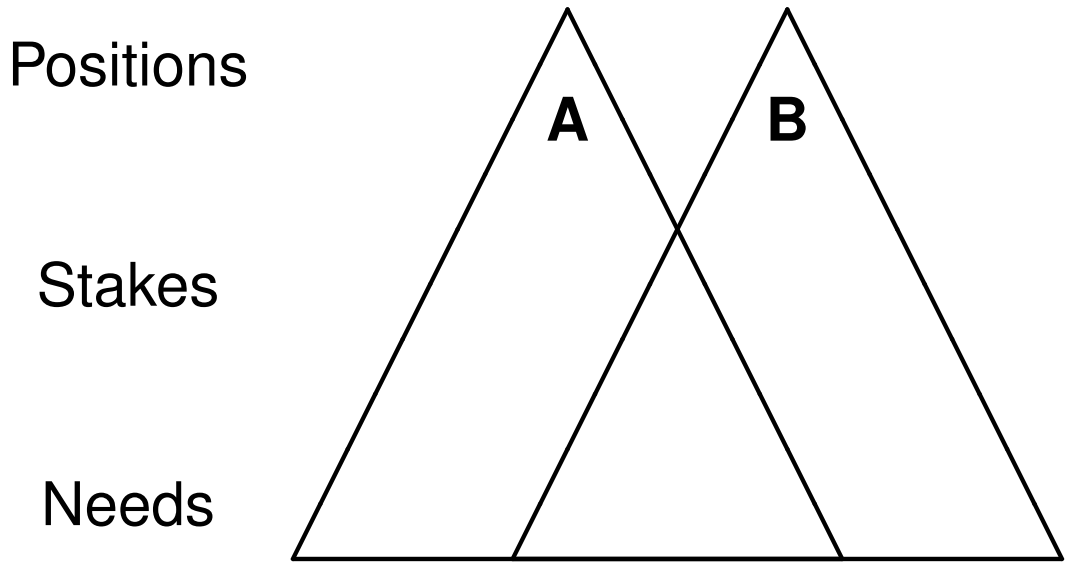
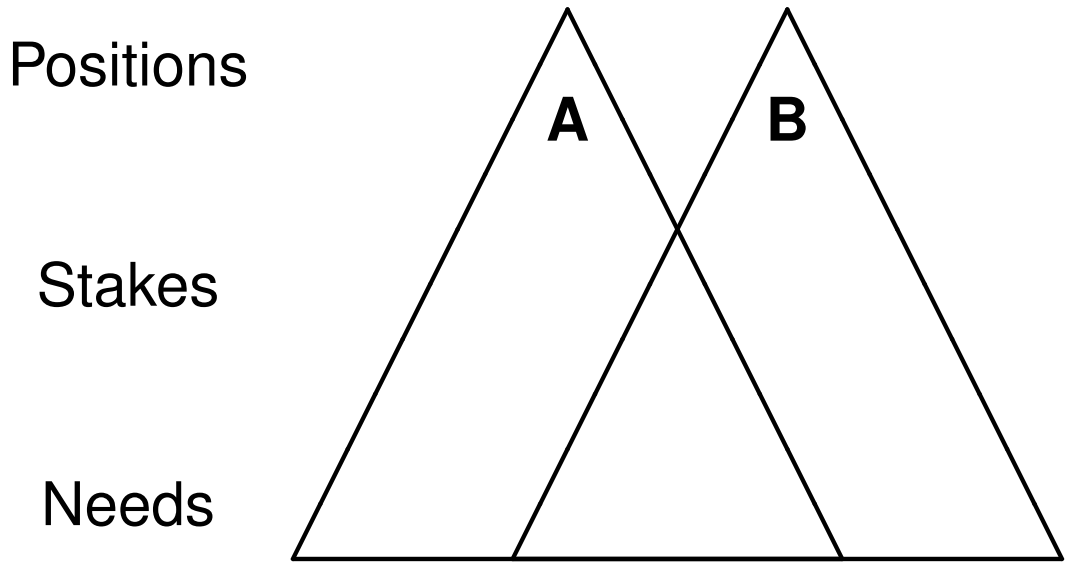


Ramsbotham's Model

If **A** and **B** have different positions, does not mean they do not share needs and stakes.



Our questions

- Where is the conflict coming from?
- Who is involved in the conflict?
- Why these entities are involved in the conflict?
- What really matters for the participants in this conflict?
- What can and should change?

Our objectives

- Absence of violence and destruction (negative peace).
- Establishment of justice, freedom, prosperity, personal and collective accomplishment (positive peace).
- Sustainable peace (long term and for all the parts involved).

What is a system?

A collection (set) of items such that:

- they interact between them;
- the behaviour of the systems is different from the items within it considered alone;
- there is a boundary separating the systems from the rest of the world;
- there exist feedback loops to the system itself;

Different types of systems

- Open and closed systems.
- Controllable, unpredictable and chaotic systems.
- Natural and Artificial systems.
- Allopoietic, autopoietic and evolutionary systems.

A useful concept

Systems modelling and management

Using the concept of system we are able to show how different parts interact between them allowing the emergence of a behaviour (of the system) otherwise inexplicable.

Examples of systems

- A car
- A city
- A family/group
- A market
- A team/production unit/administration
- A conflict ...

What do we need?

- Identify the parts;
- Identify the interactions;
- Characterise the interactions;
- Trace the boundary;
- Identify the external world and the feedback loops (if any).

Example, (Richardson model)

A and B are two countries

$G(A)$ and $G(B)$ being the two governments and $P(A)$ and $P(B)$ the two populations, the stakes being the security $S(A)$ and $S(B)$ and the welfare $W(A)$ and $W(B)$ of them.

Graphical representation

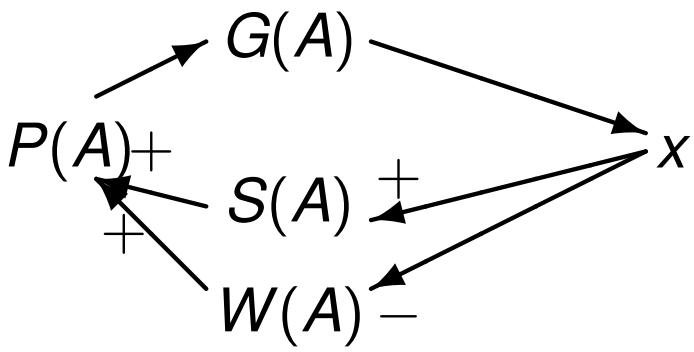
$$G(A)$$

$$P(A) \qquad x$$

$$S(A)$$

$$W(A)$$

Graphical representation



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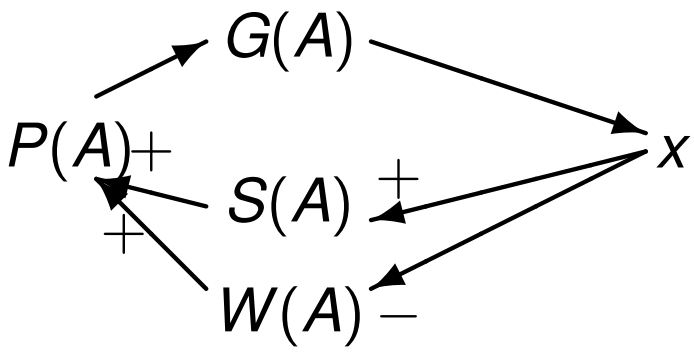

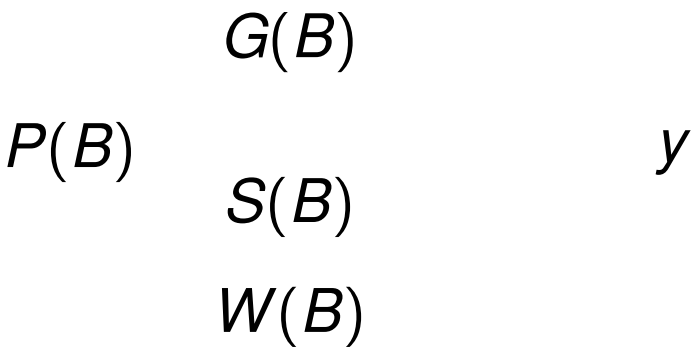

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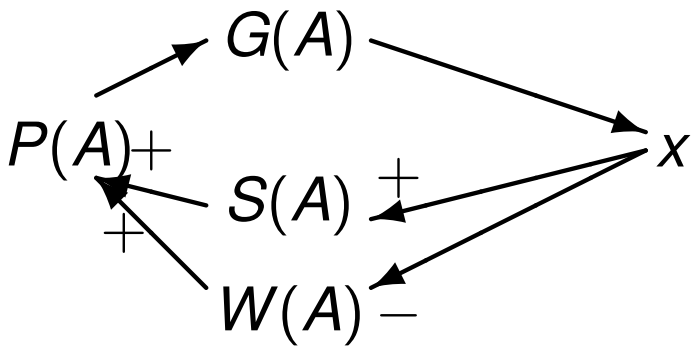

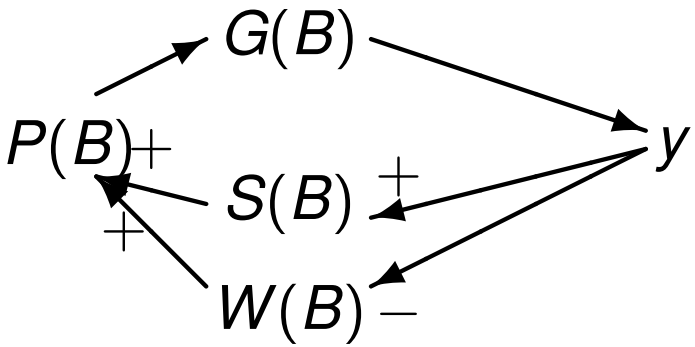

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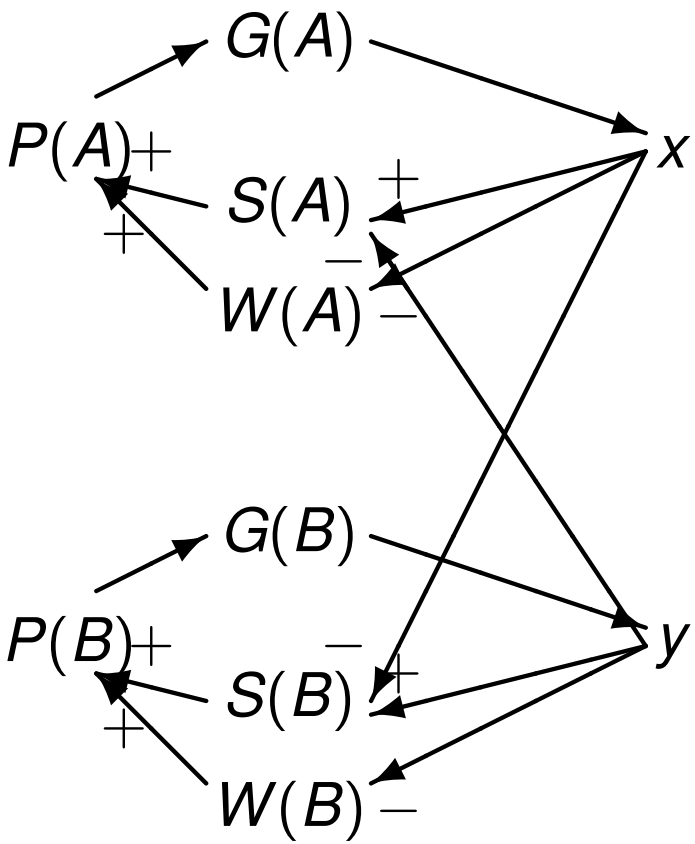


Some equations

$$\frac{dx}{dt} = ky - \alpha x + p$$

$$\frac{dy}{dt} = kx - \beta y + q$$

Where

k, l are security coefficients
α, β are welfare coefficients
p, q are constants of “animosity”

Some first considerations

- If “animosity” is positive it contributes to increase investing in “arms”. It it is negative it contributes in diminishing arms race.
- The higher the feeling of insecurity and the more the population will accept arms spending despite welfare reduction.
- Countries with a high welfare and strong democratic institutions will be less keen to accept high spending in arms.

Things missing

- International context.
- Internal conflicts.
- Network of relationships.
- Communications patterns.
- Bounded options of changing

More about systems

- When we observe a system we become part of the system.
- When we model a system we need to fix where the observer/modeller stands.
- When we model a system we need to know for which purpose we do it.
- When we model a system we need to acknowledge that we only model part of the reality and not the reality.
- We need to know how communication designs the system.

Pragmatics of human communication

- You cannot not communicate.
- Each communication carries a content and a relationship.
- The nature of the relationship depends on the punctuation of the communication pattern.
- Communication follows “analogies” and ”information”.
- Communication can be symmetric (between peers) or complementary.

What is a decision?

A decision is

an irreversible allocation of resources to a set of potential actions

- Resources.
- Actions.
- Responsibility.

What is a problem?

A problem is

an existing allocation of resources which is “unsatisfactory” for somebody, this insatisfaction being expressed.

Not everybody has the same problem

Satisfaction, perception of (in)satisfation and expression of (in)satisfaction are subjective.

What is a decision process?

A decision process is

the activities of a “decision maker” in order to establish a new allocation of resources satisfying her.

- Intelligence.
- Design.
- Choice.

What is a decision aiding process?

A decision aiding process is

the activities occurring between a “client” (asking) and an analyst (offering) an advice about a decision process (where the client is implied).

Consensual construction of cognitive artifacts

- Representing the problem situation.
- Formulating a decision problem.
- Formulating a recommendation legitimating action.

What is a problem situation?

A model where we emphasise:

- Participants/Stakeholders.
- Objects/Stakes.
- Resources/Commitments.

What is decision power?

Decision power is

the ability of an entity, involved in a decision process, to conduct the process towards a certain outcome.

Decision power implies responsibility

An analyst is part of a decision process, it influences the outcome, but has no decision power, because has no responsibility. The same applies to many other actors of the decision process.

What is a collective decision process?

A collective decision process

is a decision process where decision power (and responsibility) is distributed among several participants.

To be noted:

- Collective does not mean cooperative.
- Collective does not mean sharing information.
- Collective does not mean communicative.

What is a conflict?

A problem situation within a Collective Decision Process about:

- Sensing and perceiving a problem.
- Formulating a problem.
- Modelling a problem.
- Solving a problem.
- Integrating the feedback after a problem is handled.

Professional remarks

As analysts implied with conflicts transformation and management

- We are not interested in interpersonal conflicts.
- We are not interested about conflicts constructively conducted.
- We are not conducting conflicts but aiding to do so.
- We are involved in the process, but not in the conflict.
- We should always remember that we pursue a constructive outcome of the conflict.

Problem situation

A conflict is a system for which we need to identify:

- The stakeholders.
- Their stakes.
- Their commitments.
- Their interactions and relationships.
- The impact of time.

Problem formulation

If the problem situation is validated with the client then we need to formulate a decision problem

- Potential actions to undertake.
- Attributes describing or assessing the actions.
- A precise problem statement.

Critical points

- How do we construct the potential actions?
- How to make out of such actions a policy?
- How these actions make a global sense and why are they going to contribute transforming the conflict?
- Will this be a change 1 or a change 2?

What is a cognitive map?

- A graph where nodes are actors/objects/resources;
- where “positive arcs” (denoted with a $+$) represent a positive/proportional impact/relation;
- where “negative arcs” (denoted with a $-$) represent a negative/inverse impact/relation.
- Cognitive maps are models of how we do perceive reality.

More about cognitive maps

- Arcs are not inferences.
- Arcs are not necessarily causal relations.
- Nodes can be of several different types.
- Cognitive maps are a model of how one or more stakeholders perceive the problem situation.

Violence cycles

Armed Groups

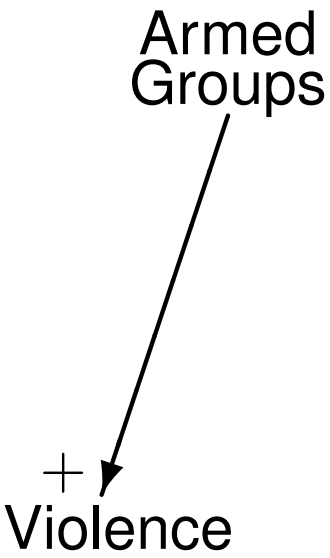
Productive Population

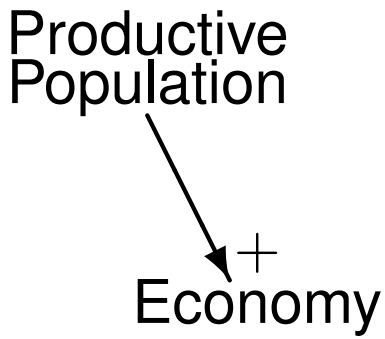
Economy

Violence

Bartolucci and Gallo, 2017

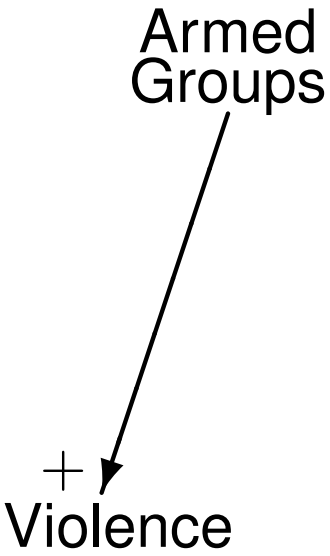
Violence cycles

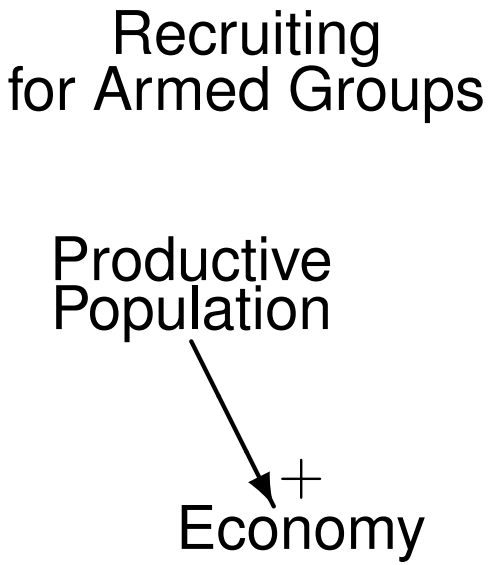




Bartolucci and Gallo, 2017

Violence cycles





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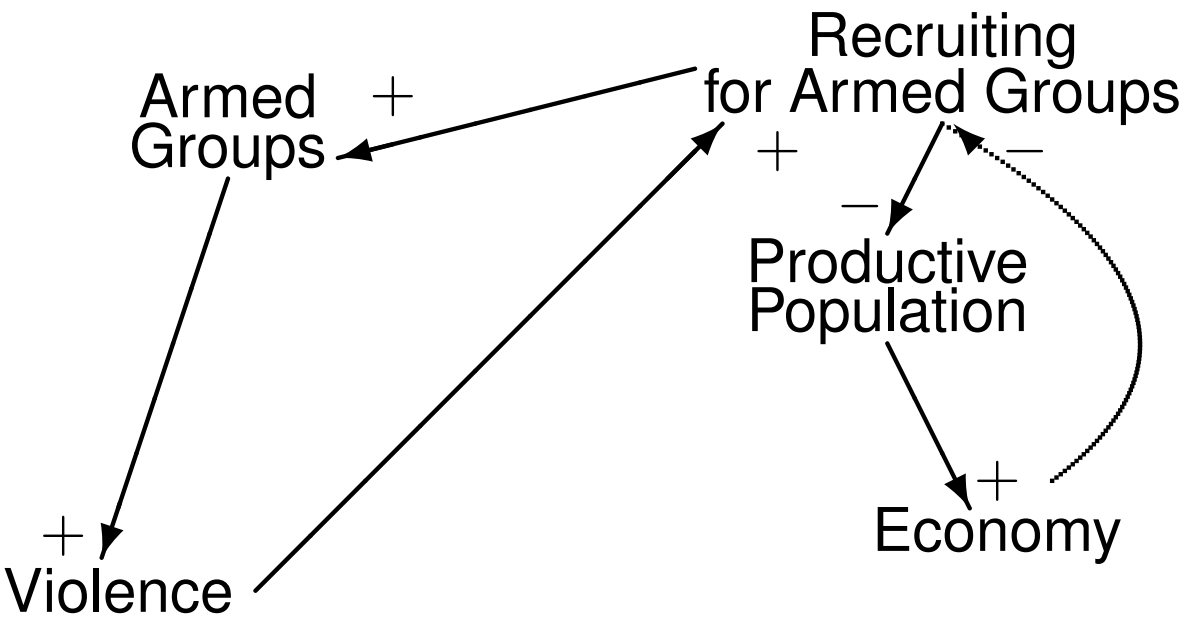

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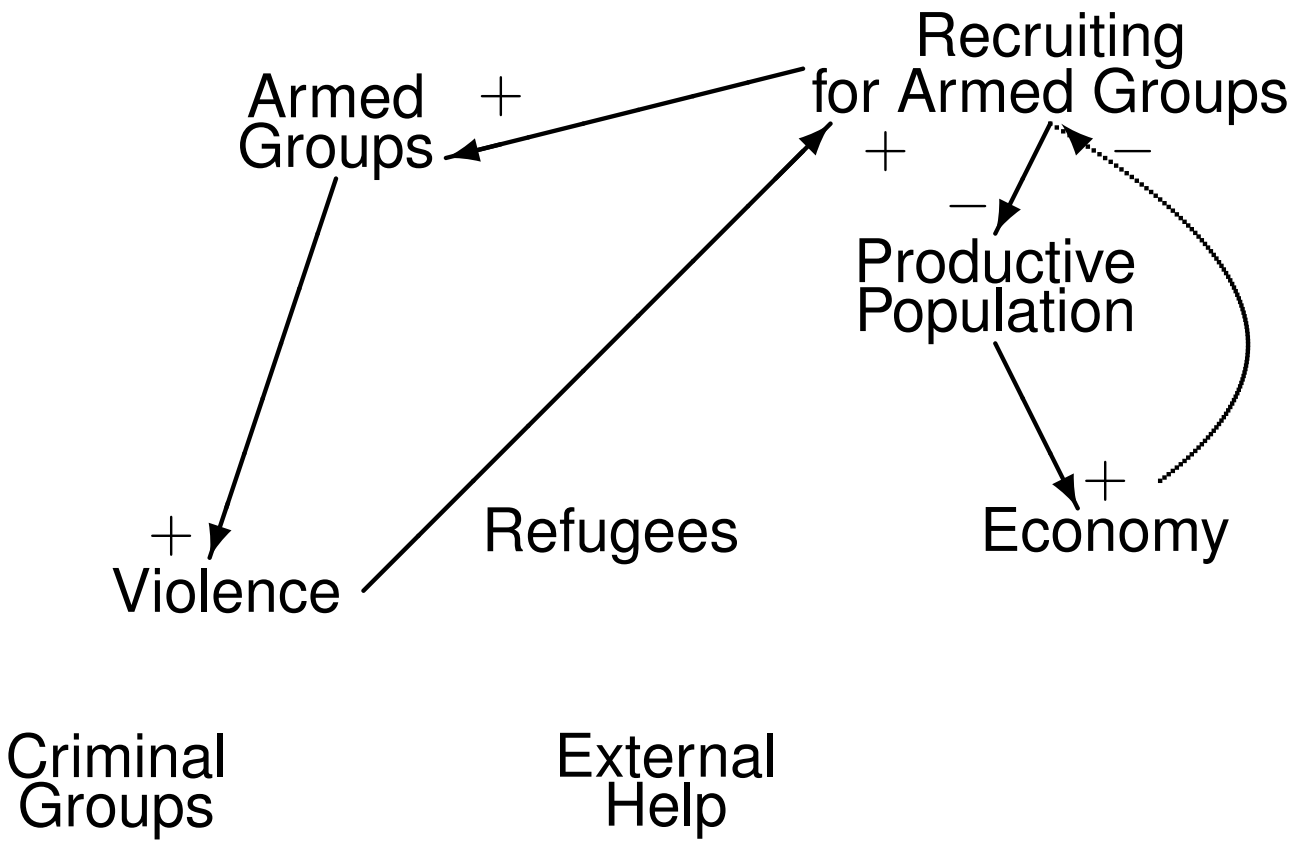

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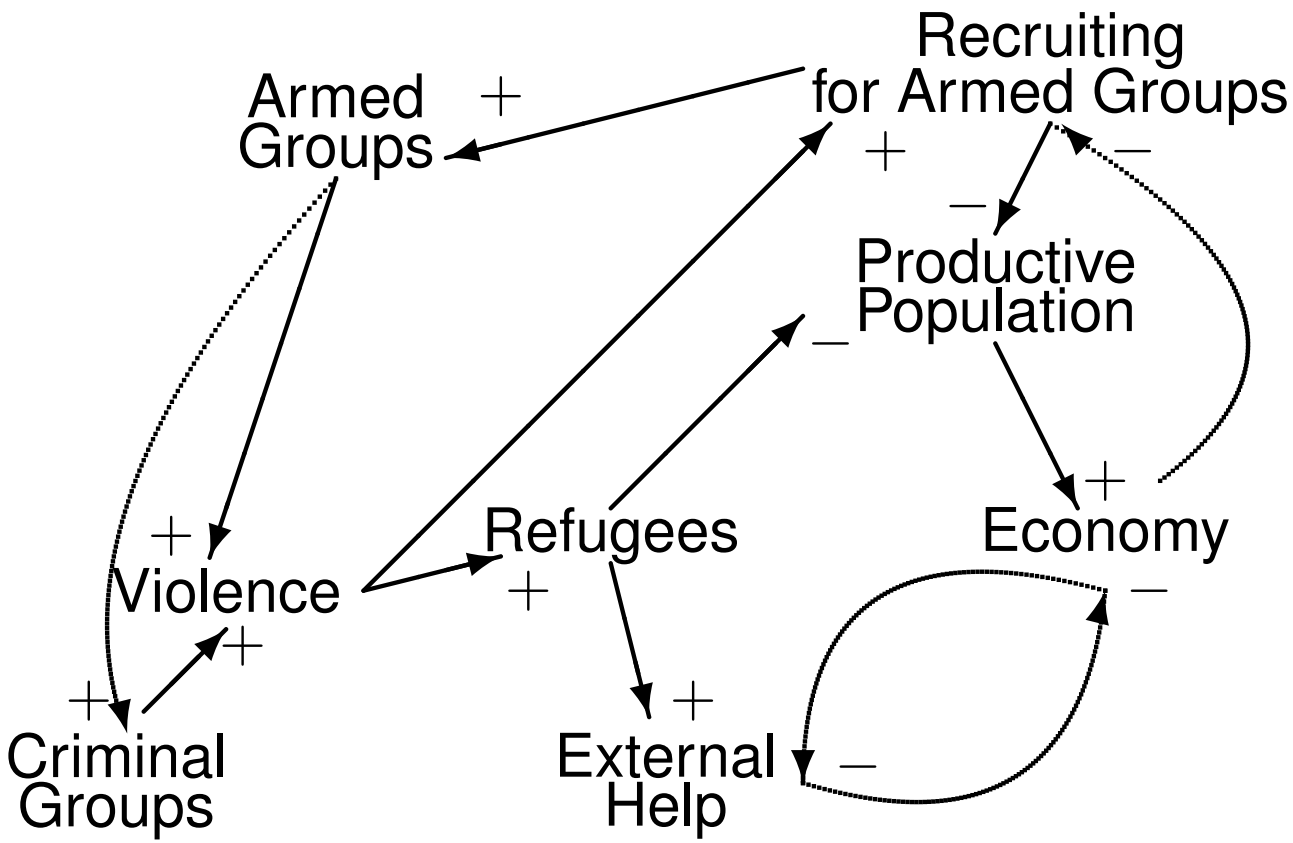


Bartolucci and Gallo, 2017

Ethnic Rebellion Cycles

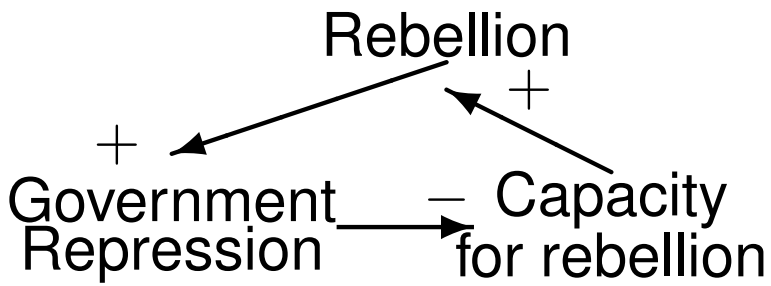
Rebellion

Government Repression

Capacity for rebellion

Akcam and Asal, 2005

Ethnic Rebellion Cycles



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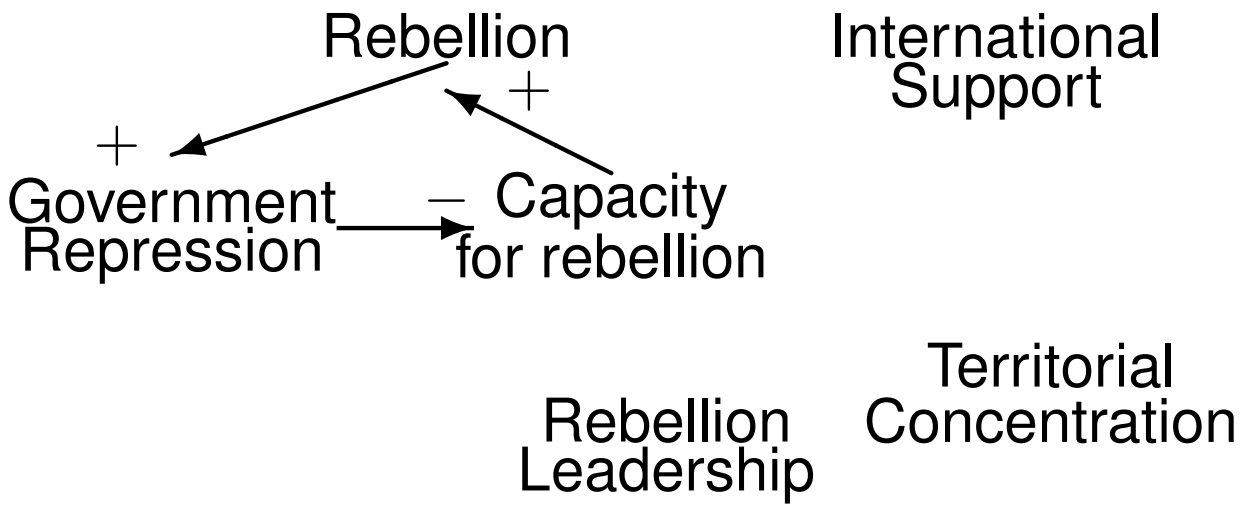

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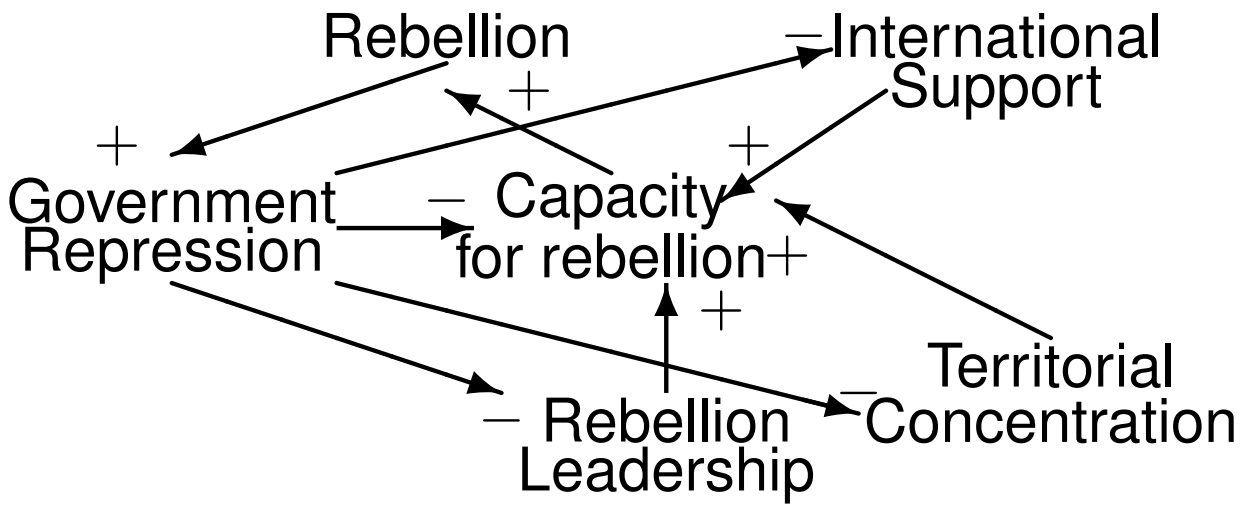

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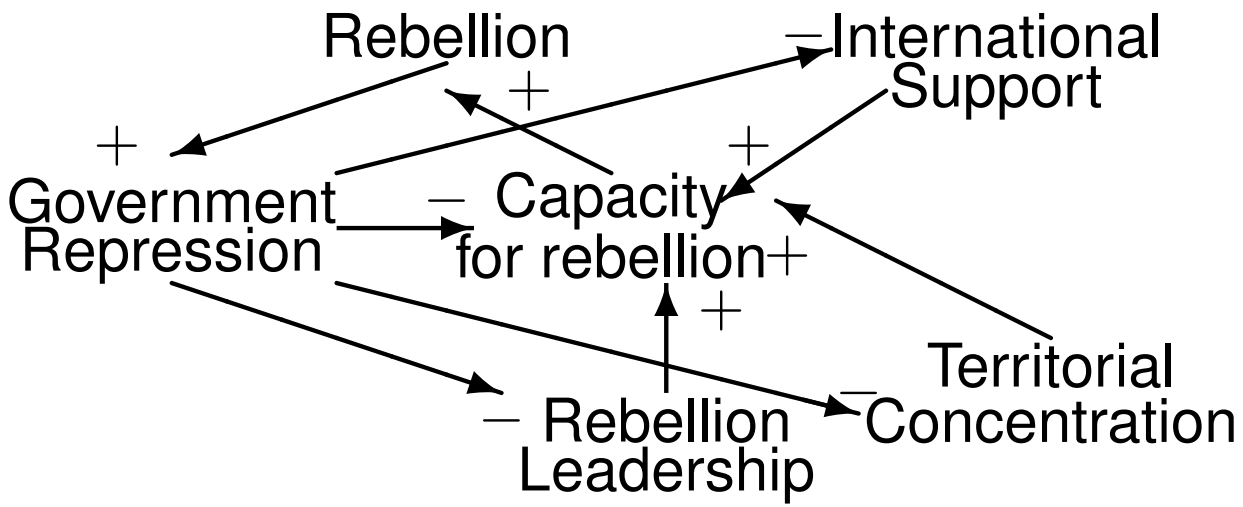

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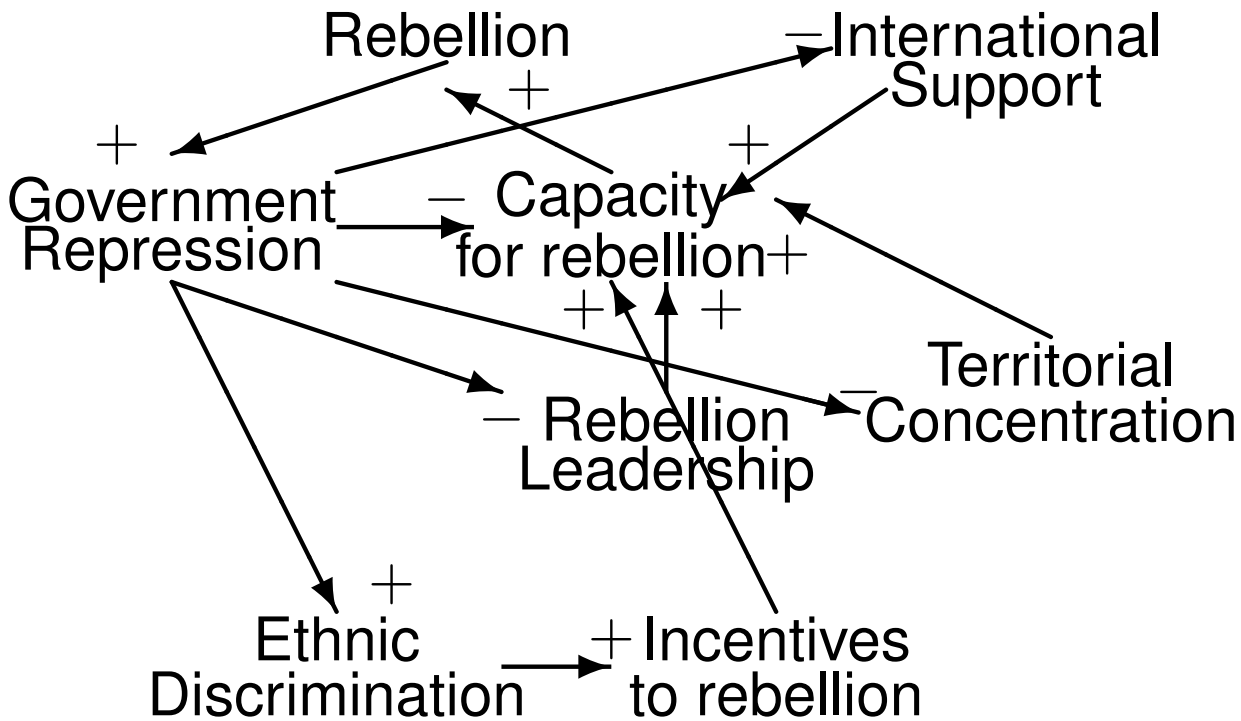

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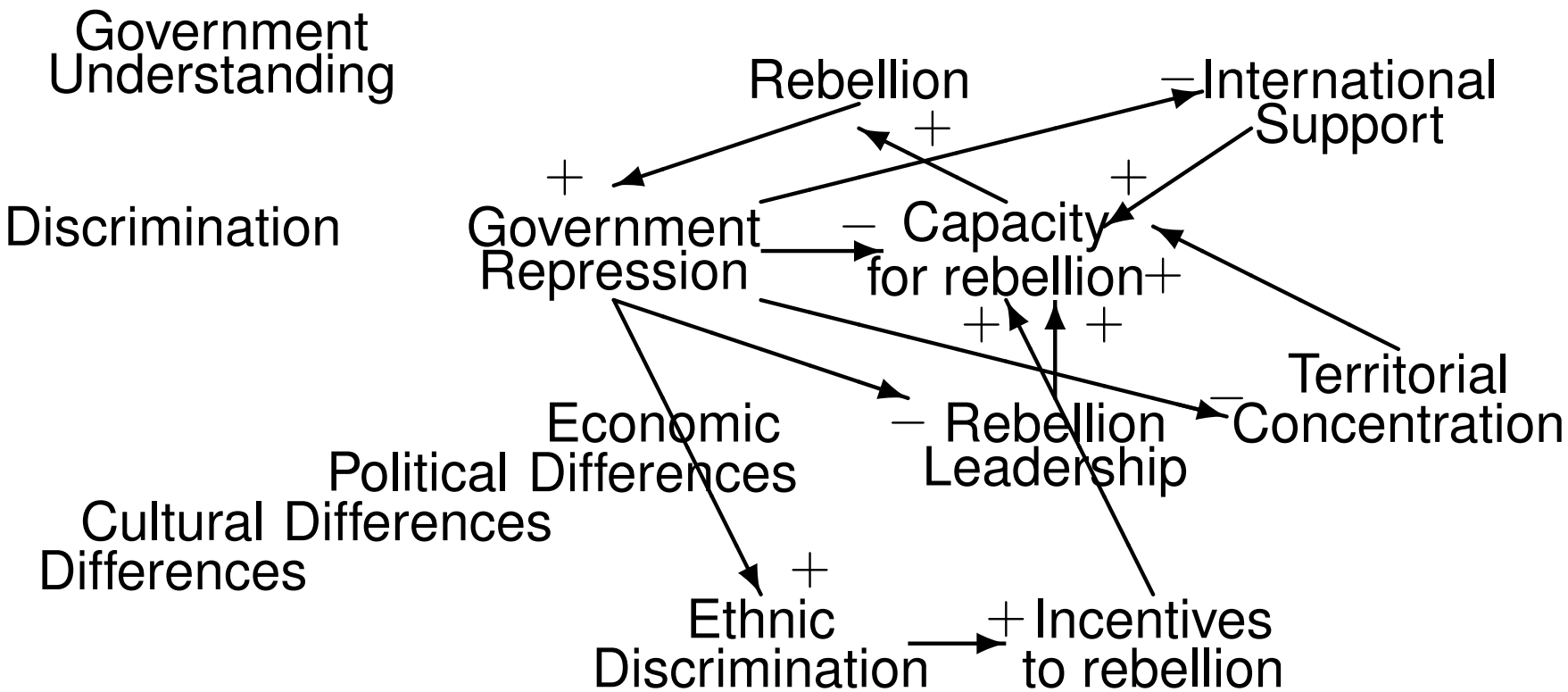

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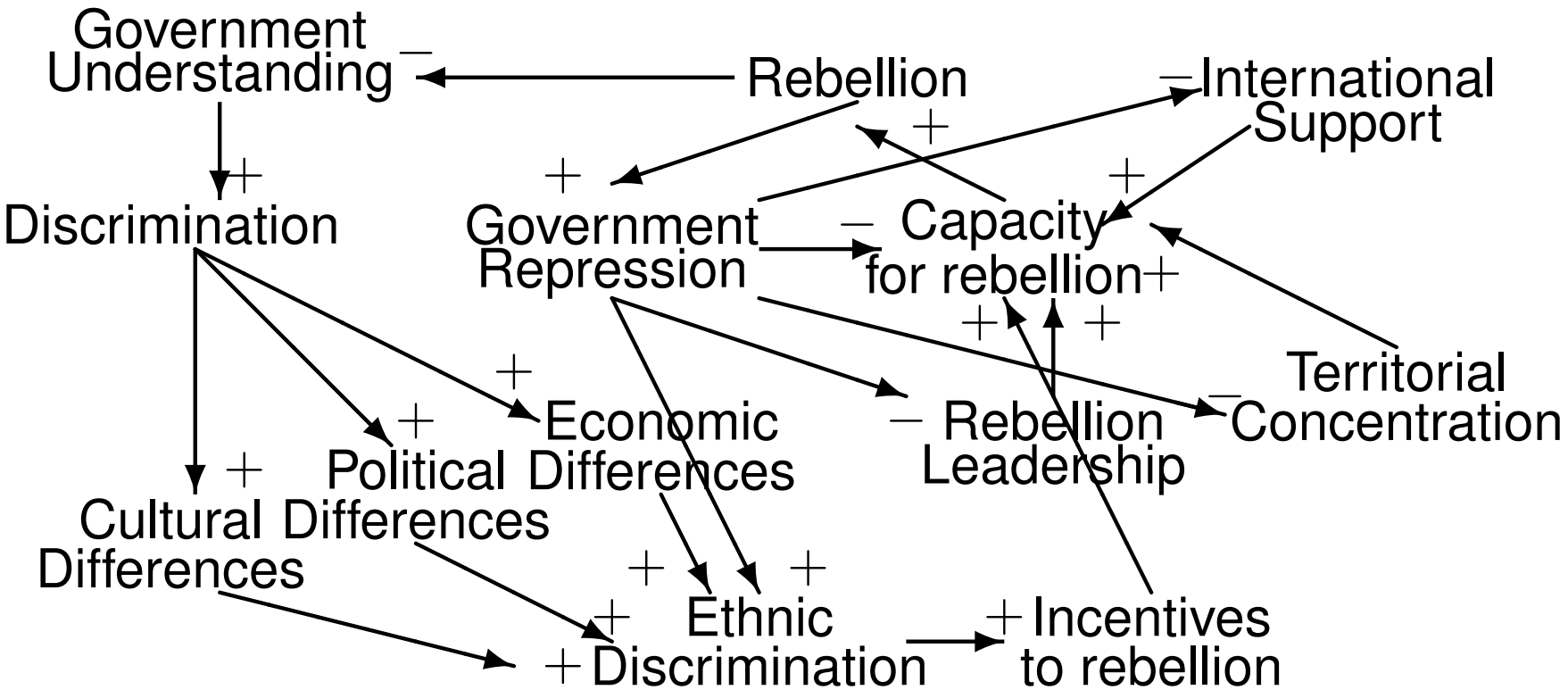

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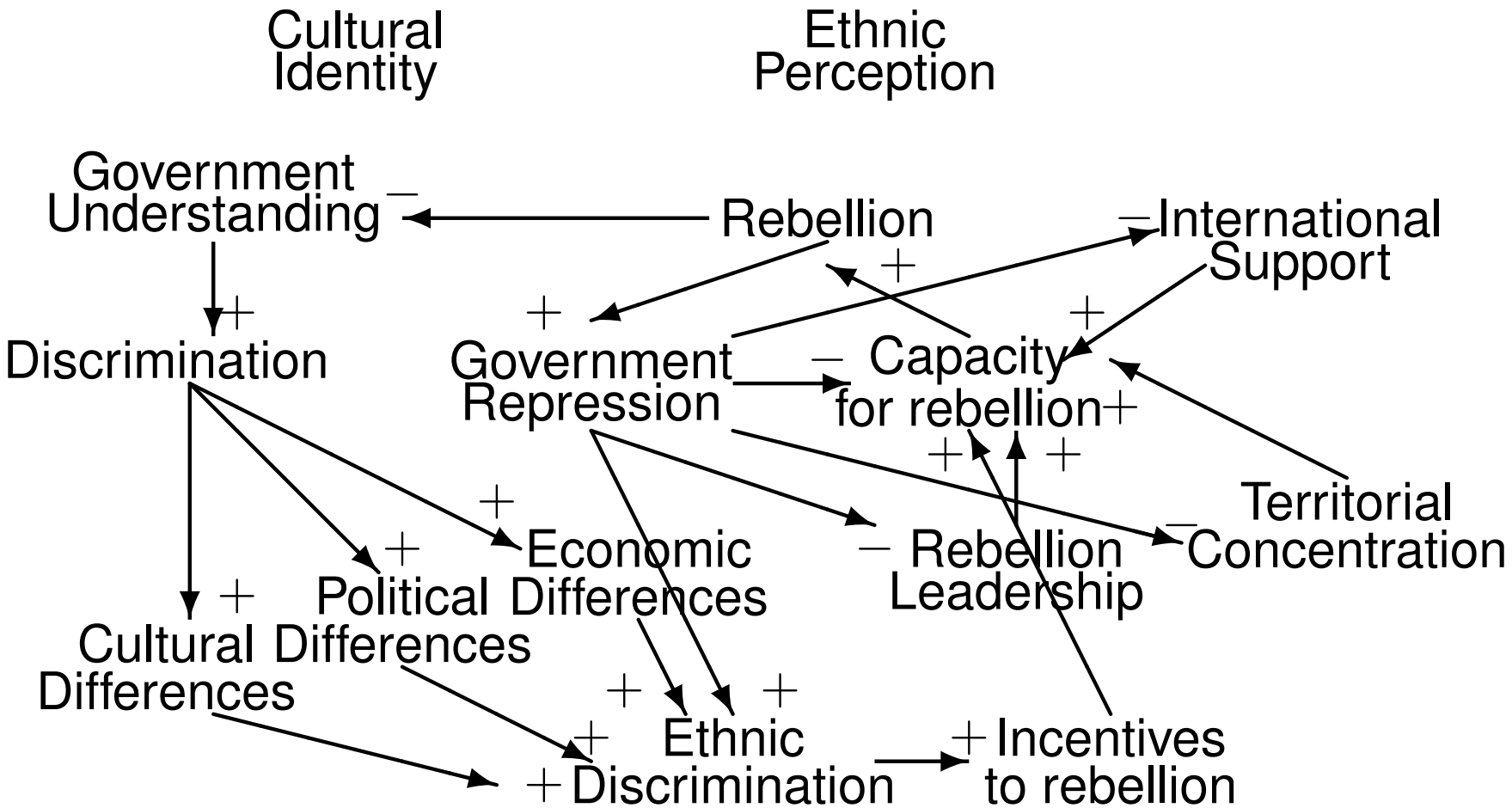

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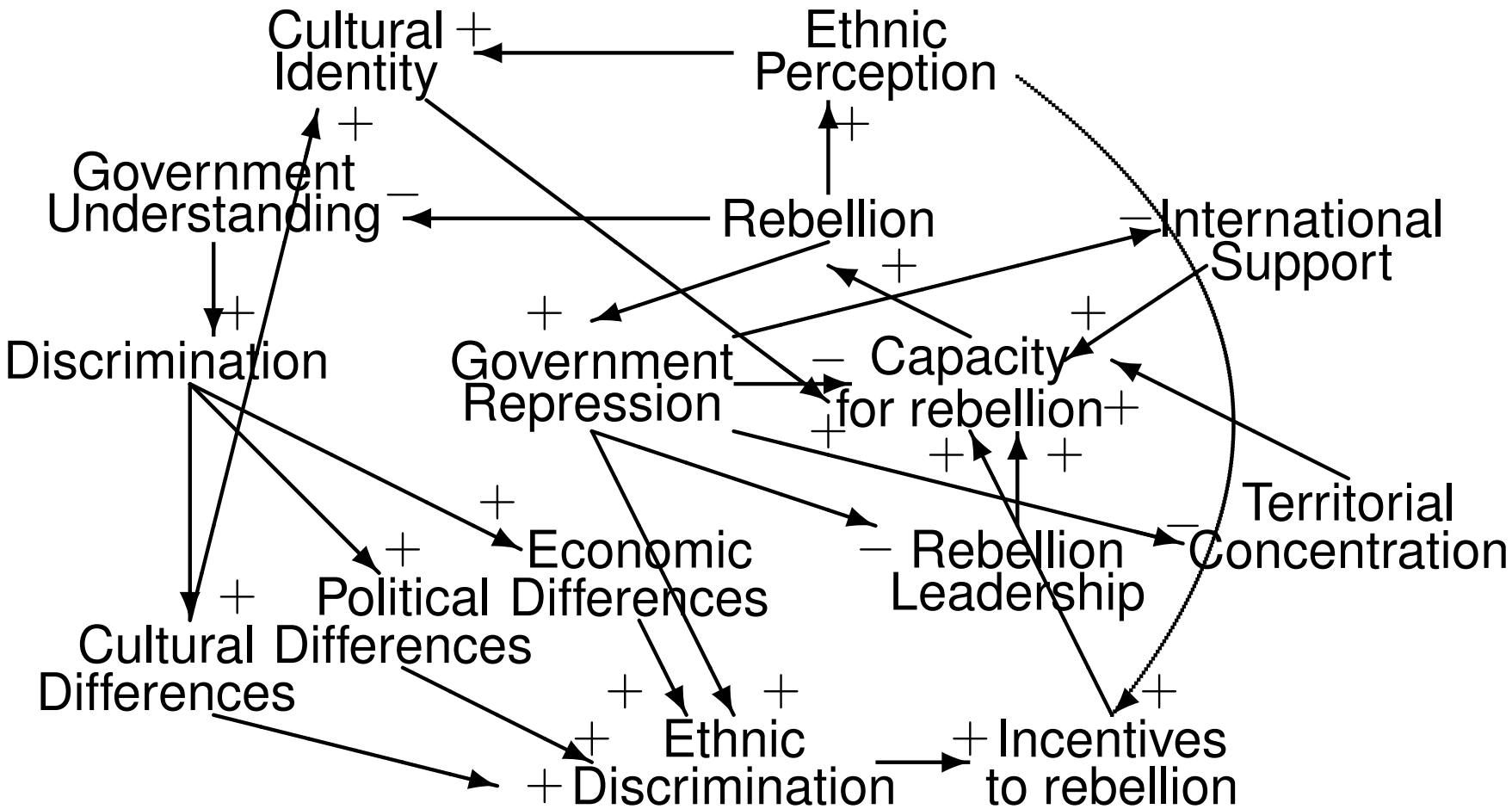

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