



Conflict Analysis and Mediation Entry Points

Peace Mediation and Mediation Support Fact Sheet

The importance of conflict analysis

Conflict analysis is of crucial importance in planning and designing mediation processes for conflict prevention, management, resolution and transformation. Both researchers and practitioners confirm that inadequate analyses are one of the most common reasons why mediation interventions are not effective enough or even fail.

There are many reasons why conflict analyses may be inadequate, for example if they are not constantly updated in line with the process or if the focus is only on one's own intervention, thus possibly ignoring key aspects of the overall dynamic and the conflict environment. The non-inclusion of analysis findings in the strategic planning of a mediation process can also lead to suboptimal results¹.

International collaboration on producing conflict analyses, the inclusion of regional perspectives and the sharing of key findings among the organisations and institutions involved can and should be improved, as also stated in the UN Secretary-General's report, "The Future of United Nations Peace Operations", published in September 2015².

This fact sheet is part of a series of fact sheets on peace mediation. It provides a structured overview of methods, actors, challenges and options in the field of peace mediation.

This fact sheet addresses the importance of conflict analysis for identifying mediation entry points and devising mediation interventions.

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Conflict analysis: Fields of application

The term “conflict analysis” encompasses a very wide range of formats and approaches, whose respective features result both from the contexts in which they are produced and from the different objectives involved. In each case, the purpose of the analysis defines the most effective approach.

– Context analysis: generating knowledge as the basis for policy action

The aim of comprehensive context analyses is to establish a sound basis for policy decisions. To this end, standard scientific information-gathering procedures (research, interviews with stakeholders, press reviews) are used and the findings are presented in the form of reports and recommendations for policymakers (e.g. by the International Crisis Group or Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik – German Institute for International and Security Affairs).

– Process guidance: intervention planning by or with third parties

On the basis of the policy analyses described above, certain aspects of the conflict are examined in a methodologically structured way, with the aim of identifying or weighing up options for bringing in third parties or further work to be carried out by them. This also involves identifying mediation entry points, i.e. concrete starting points for mediation activities. This type of guidance can be based both on specific aspects (such as preparing talks with a conflict party) and on the overall process. The analytical models and instruments used generally focus on individual aspects of the conflict, such as the power and influence of conflict parties as well as relations between them, the parties’ interests and needs, the interaction between the various factors influencing the conflict or on methodological process-oriented questions.

– Analysing the conflict jointly with the actors involved: a component of dialogue and mediation work by NGOs

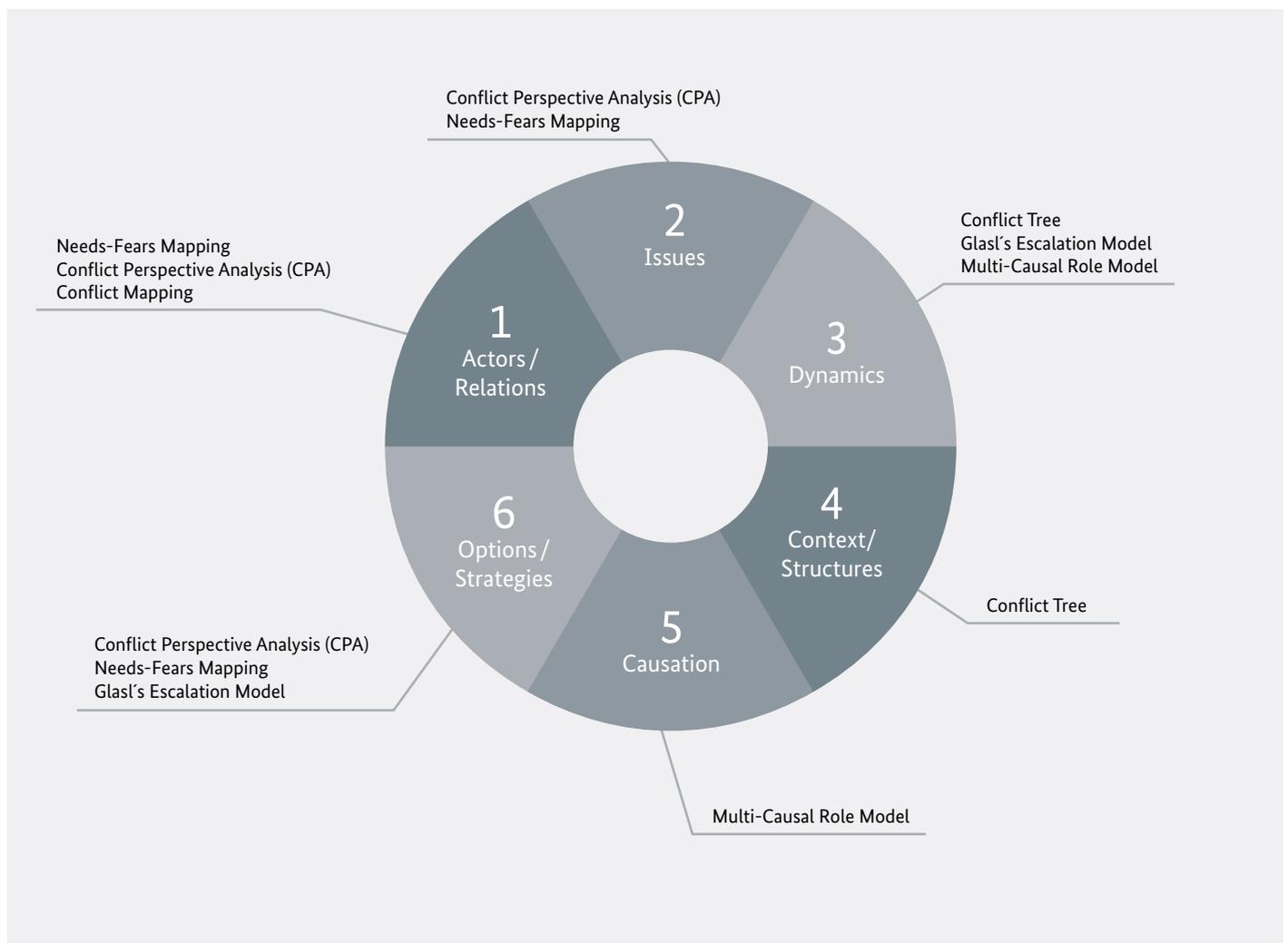
Joint conflict analyses, produced during workshops with the parties, can even form part of an intervention in the conflict. The aims here can be to create greater understanding of the situation and for the actors involved, to explore backgrounds to the conflict and/or to research the effects of the conflict dynamics. Analysing the conflict together with the conflict actors helps to build trust and is a first step in dealing constructively with other actors’ viewpoints. In this way, the analysis can become an integral part of the conflict transformation process.

Various institutions have developed their own preferred types of conflict analysis in line with the specific application field and goal³. For example, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH use Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCA)⁴ in order to ensure conflict-sensitive programme planning. The OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre and the European External Action Service’s Mediation Support Team hold internal workshops on conflict analysis for particular crisis regions. Local stakeholders are sometimes involved in these workshops and/or the analyses are carried out in cooperation with partner organisations.

Conflict analysis: Foci and instruments

The analysis instrument is chosen on the basis of the desired added value and intervention goals. The Conflict Wheel (Fig. 1) developed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs provides a useful overview of the instruments available for various situations. It should be seen as a meta-analytical tool that presents a selection of standard analytical instruments and can also be used to sum up the various aspects of a conflict coherently. The individual instruments in the Conflict Wheel are explained in greater detail in the SDC's Conflict Analysis Tools Tip Sheet⁵.

Conflict Wheel



In the following pages, you will find a selection of the analytical instruments most commonly used in peace mediation, as well as aspects that may be of relevance with regard to mediation interventions in particular.

→ Actor-Relationship Mapping

Actor-Relationship Mapping⁶ is a method that presents the main actors, their power relations and the various relationships among them (alliances, conflicts, dominances, dependencies) in visual form. Mediators and their teams use this instrument at the start of a mediation process with the aim of acquiring a better understanding of the conflict scenario and of identifying mediation entry points. Actor-Relationship Mapping provides information on which actors could be radicalised by certain interventions and should be included to a greater extent; who has contacts to these actors and thus scope to influence them; which actors can be seen as neutral or partisan; and which actors from civil society and other spheres might support official peace processes. Apart from mediators, conflict parties also use this instrument in order to refine their own strategies and to identify blind spots.

Afghanistan, October 1999

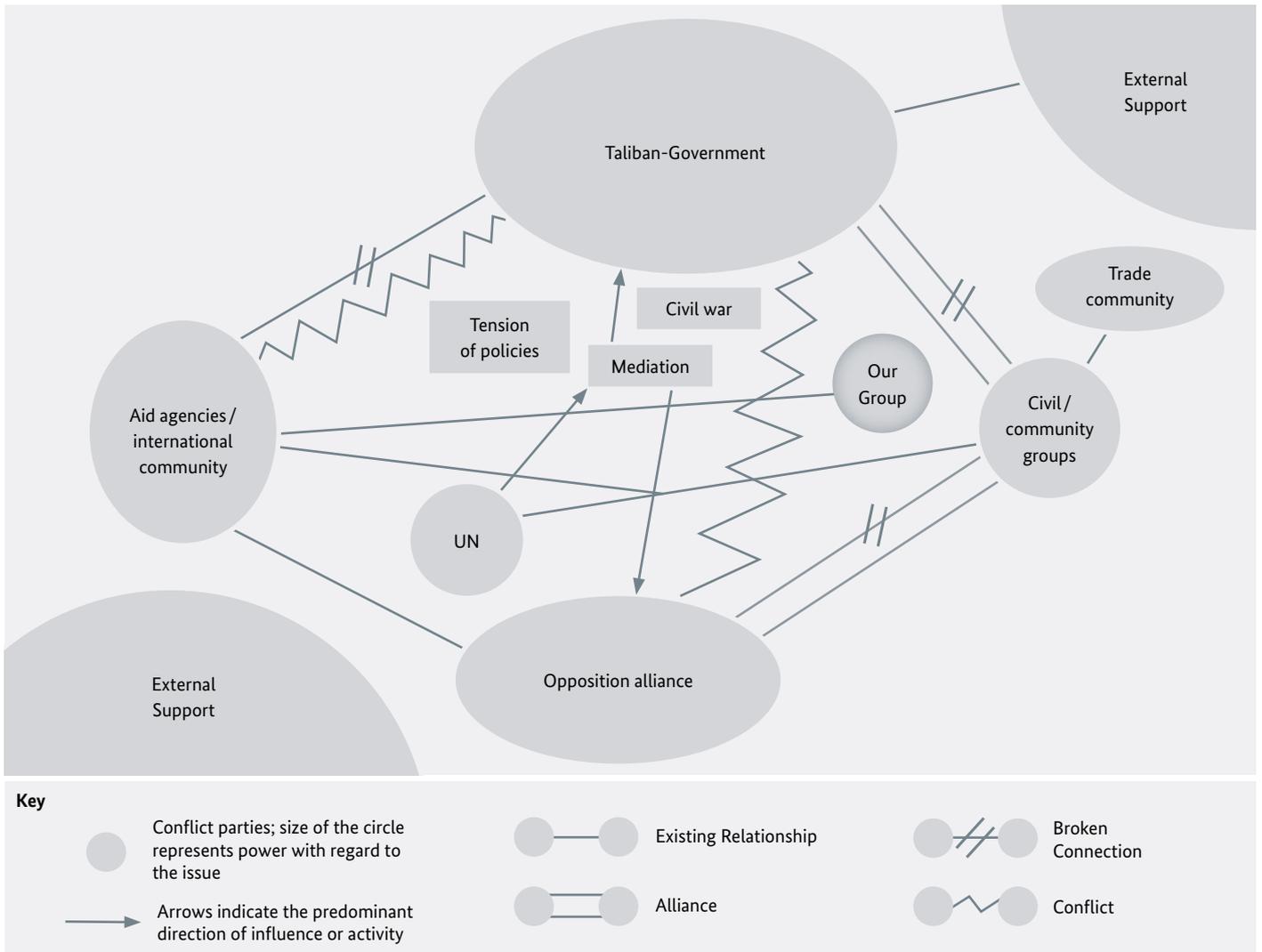


Fig. 2: Actor-Relationship Mapping, Afghanistan, 1999⁷

→ Interest Analysis

In an Interest Analysis⁸, the interest profiles of all relevant parties to the conflict (including parties that may be excluded, actors affected geopolitically and (potential) third parties) are drawn up. The aim is to elicit the interests that may also lie behind the officially stated positions. Interests should be clearly distinguished from positions on the one hand and basic needs of the conflict actors on the other. Clearly defining the various interests in a conflict is particularly useful as regards preparing mediation-based negotiation processes. This approach makes it possible to develop new, value-creating options for solutions and discover areas of mutual gain and common ground between the parties. At the same time, it becomes evident for further negotiations where zero-sum games and non-negotiable identity aspects are shaping the dynamic. This knowledge is often of great importance for the negotiating conduct displayed by the conflict parties. For example, in a territorial conflict it is only possible to assess to what extent and to what ends economic, religious, ethnic or geopolitical motives explain the various demands by the conflict parties by carefully analysing their respective interests. The practical uses for the mediation process range from defining the most effective order in which topics should be negotiated to gaining insight into the amount and scope of regulations that will be needed in future agreements.

As in the example of Southern Thailand below, interest profiles are often drawn up taking into account the actors' positions, needs and fears. The need category describes the more profound aims and motives underlying the interests. Fears designate lines that would deter the parties from rapprochement if they were crossed.

| Category | Thai State | Liberation Movement | CSO Sector |
|----------|--|--|---|
| Position | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sovereignty and territorial integrity: Thailand is one indivisible Kingdom | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Independence from the Thai state, own Nation state | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Peace and justice ○ People's empowerment and self-determination |
| Interest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure law and order through necessary measures to prevent and suppress violence ○ Centralisation and upholding "Nation, Religion and Monarchy" that constitute national security | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safeguarding autonomy, political freedom ○ Personal autonomy with regard to way of life and distribution of resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sending a signal for equality; against discrimination ○ Creating harmony within a pluralistic society ○ Increasing decision-making authority in local affairs |
| Need | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protection of Thai identity and dignity of Thai state ○ Political stability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Freedom to conduct one's life in accordance with one's own faith and culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Political participation and recognition |
| Fear | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Losing authority and territory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Being assimilated, ethnically, religiously and culturally to the extent of losing Malay-Patani identity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Losing life or physical integrity |

Fig. 3: Example of an Interest Analysis on Southern Thailand⁹

→ Mediation-based Process Analysis

Mediation-based Process Analysis¹¹ is an instrument that uses the key phases and the essential methodology of mediation to analyse mediation processes. In this approach, information on conflicts and on past or potential interventions in the course of a conflict is analysed so that action options for an ongoing or upcoming mediation process can be defined. The findings may serve as a basis for deciding whether or not it makes sense to launch a mediation process in the first place, as a list of methodologically promising future steps within a current process or as a means of exploring what elements of the (interim) result of a completed mediation process might require adjustment.

Mediation-based Process Analysis highlights other aspects than a purely descriptive and analytical depiction of a conflict, and should be seen as complementary to the classic types of conflict analysis. It does not focus on the conflict as a whole or its causes, nor does it deal with the conflict dynamics or specific characteristics of the actors involved. Instead, it concentrates on the appropriate mediation approach, the tasks and limitations of the mediation mandate, ways and means of including the actors, and the use of mediation methods to define and merge interests into solutions on which consensus can be reached.

Mediation-based Process Analysis: examples of questions based on the different stages of mediation

| Phases of the mediation process | Examples of questions in mediation-based process analysis | Examples: practical relevance of the findings |
|--|---|--|
| Mandate, format and actors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is there already a viable (partial) mandate for a mediation process? What are its limitations? ○ Have the decision-making processes and possible agreement formats and scope been agreed by everyone involved and communicated clearly? ○ Are all significant interests represented? If not, how can they be included (at a later stage)? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adjusting and issuing mandates; excluding topics ○ Decision on agreement formats; consensus on decision-making processes ○ Producing a participation design for the entire process |
| Conflict issues and agenda-setting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Which (conflicting) positions exist? Which claims are made by the parties? Can these claims be fed into an agenda of issues on which consensus can be reached and for which regulations can be drawn up? If so, how? ○ How can entrenched positions, preconditions and taboos be addressed so that they do not block the negotiations? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Practical work on conflict narratives ○ Rephrasing in non-confrontational language, while maintaining content |
| Managing conflicts and exploring interests | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have the respective interests of the parties to the conflict been fully elicited? ○ Which links, dependencies and/or points in common exist with regard to these interests? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Eliciting and integrating hidden interests; rephrasing biased demands ○ Recognising and/or explicitly stating non-competing common interests |
| Generating and evaluating options | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have all options been explored in an unlimited fashion? ○ Which of the listed options are not possible for normative reasons? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feeding in value-creating methods and options ○ Exploring normative limits, but also scope/flexibility (possibly with actors such as the UN or courts) |
| Agreements and conclusion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is the planned agreement format appropriate? Do all sides accept and respect it? ○ Can the agreements be fully implemented by the institutions, bodies or persons involved? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Detecting methodologically indicated adjustments in the agreement format ○ Detailed layering and monitoring of timescales, responsibilities and roles in the implementation |

This instrument, which is primarily based on negotiation methods, thus serves both to explore mediation entry points and to plan the overall design of mediation processes. It is a particularly productive approach in frozen or protracted conflicts (such as the situation in Transnistria and Georgia), in which extensive experience and data on the established conflict dynamics are already available.

References

- 1 Anderson, Mary B. and Lara Olson, with Kristin Doughty (2003). *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. CDA: Cambridge, MA.
- 2 UN General Assembly and UN Security Council (2015). *The Future of United Nations Peace Operations: Implementation of the Recommendations of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations* | Report of the Secretary-General (A /70/357-S /2015/682).
- 3 Conflict Sensitivity Consortium. *Conflict Analysis Tools*, <http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/conflict-analysis-tools/>, Last download: 8 June 2017.
- 4 GIZ on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). *Factsheet on the "Peace and Conflict Assessment (PCA)" methodological framework*, https://www.bmz.de/en/zentrales_downloadarchiv/themen_und_schwerpunkte/frieden/Peace_and_Conflict_Assessment_Factsheet.pdf, Last download: 8 June 2017.
- 5 Adapted Conflict Wheel. Original: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (2005). *Conflict Analysis Tools, Tip Sheet* <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/Conflict-Analysis-Tools.pdf>. Last download: 18 April 2017.
- 6 Please note that the SDC tip sheet refers to this instrument as "Conflict Mapping".
- 7 Adapted from the original. Original: Fisher, Simon et al. (2000). *Working with Conflict. Skills and Strategies for Action*: London and New York, p. 23 et seq. The Actor-Relationship Mapping is drawn from the perspective of a small locally based NGO, mentioned as "our Group" in the map. Key has been added.
- 8 This instrument is also known as Interest-Needs or Needs-Fears Mapping (see SDC's Conflict Analysis Tools Tip Sheet).
- 9 Adapted from the original. Original: Ropers, Norbert and Anuvatudom, Mathus (2014). *A Joint Learning Process for Stakeholders and Insider Peacebuilders: A Case Study from Southern Thailand*, in *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (2014), p. 286.
- 10 Slightly modified chart. Original: Woodrow, Peter, et al. (2011). *Connecting the Dots: Evaluating Whether and How Programmes Address Conflict Systems*, in *The Non-Linearity of Peace Processes: Theory and Practice of Systemic Conflict Transformation*, edited by Ropers, Norbert et al. Barbara Budrich Verlag, p. 217.
- 11 This instrument is currently being developed by the Center for Peace Mediation at European University Viadrina: www.peacemediation.de.
- 12 For a definition of mediation, mediation support and mediation-based dialogue processes, please see Fact Sheet 'Basics of Mediation: Concepts and Definitions'.
- 13 Please see Fact Sheet 'The Roles and Contributions of Multilateral and Non-State Actors in Peace Mediation'.

From analysis to the identification of mediation entry points

The common objective of the various conflict analysis instruments is to identify mediation entry points for mediation interventions.¹² A multi-step approach is advisable here. Conflict analysis can be used to define at which point mediation-based interventions make sense as a means of reducing tensions or helping to resolve a conflict. The findings help to decide with which actors, with regard to which issues, and against the background of which conflict dynamics the mediation could take place. A review of the international intervention environment shows at which levels and with which actors other third parties are already working, and thus where efforts by one's own country could serve to complement existing endeavours.¹³ In a further step, it should be decided at the political level if, when and how an existing mediation entry point should in fact be used. This requires comparison with the aims and strategic interests of the intervening third party and with its role in the system of multilateral organisations (political consistency). It also requires an assessment of whether sufficient specific expertise and infrastructure resources can be provided in order to become involved in mediating in the conflict (feasibility).

Summary of the Fact Sheet

In order to address conflicts, it is advisable to include people who are familiar with the specific conflict context on the ground, as well as people who have experience of using conflict analysis methods and the mediation entry points arising from them. The inclusion of different viewpoints, ranging from local actors to government officials, enriches the analysis and creates the potential to reveal new action options. In addition, it is essential to integrate conflict analyses even more consciously into existing decision-making processes and to update them on a regular basis.

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