



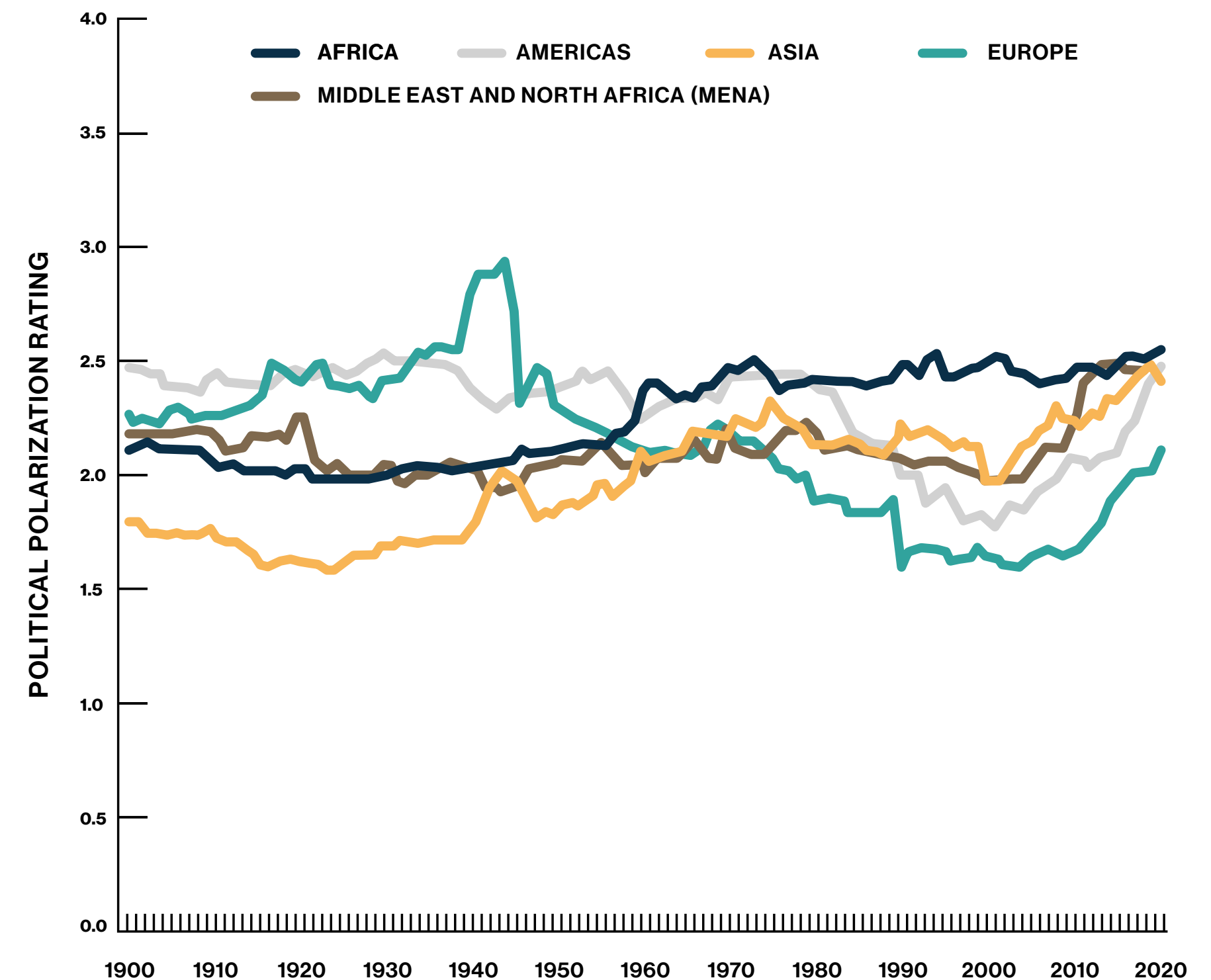
Peace *and* Justice through Collaborative Action

Turning Conflict into Progress

We live in an age of extreme polarization.



Political Polarization by World Region Since 1900



SOURCE: Michael Coppedge, John Gerring, Carl Hebrink Knutsen, Staffan I. Lindberg, and Jan Teorell et al., "V-Dem Dataset Version 11.1," V-Dem, March 2021, <https://www.v-dem.net/en/data/archive/previous-data/v-dem-dataset/>.

Excluding Europe during WWI and WWII, every region is experiencing record or near-record levels of polarization — with dramatic increases in the last 20 years.

Living amidst conflict is hard, but it is also an opportunity — because conflict is exactly like fire:

Harnessed well, it can generate creative solutions that unlock a better future for all.

Left unchecked, it rages and destroys all progress in its path.



This toolkit **is about** **how to get the best** **out of conflict.**

It will teach you how to hold onto your values and turn conflict into cooperation for a safe, healthy, happy, and dignified future.

This toolkit **is for** **anyone who is**

- Struggling to drive the change they want in the face of division
- Frustrated by how they feel forced to choose sides on issues that aren't so black-and-white
- Hopeful that there is a better way to solve our problems and live together despite our differences

There are many ways to drive change. This toolkit presents an approach particularly suited to driving change in conflict contexts, which is where it has been tested and developed. It is offered with humility and respect for those who choose other approaches.

Five Key Concepts

Multipartiality

The Trust Cycle

The 5 Vital Signs of a Healthy Society

Change that Sustains at Scale

Aikido Politics

This approach draws from over **40 years of experience** on the frontlines of conflict.

- 800+ staff and partnerships with 650+ community organizations in 35+ countries
- Largest non-governmental peacebuilding organization in the world
- Nominated by the Quakers for the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize



 **Multipartiality**

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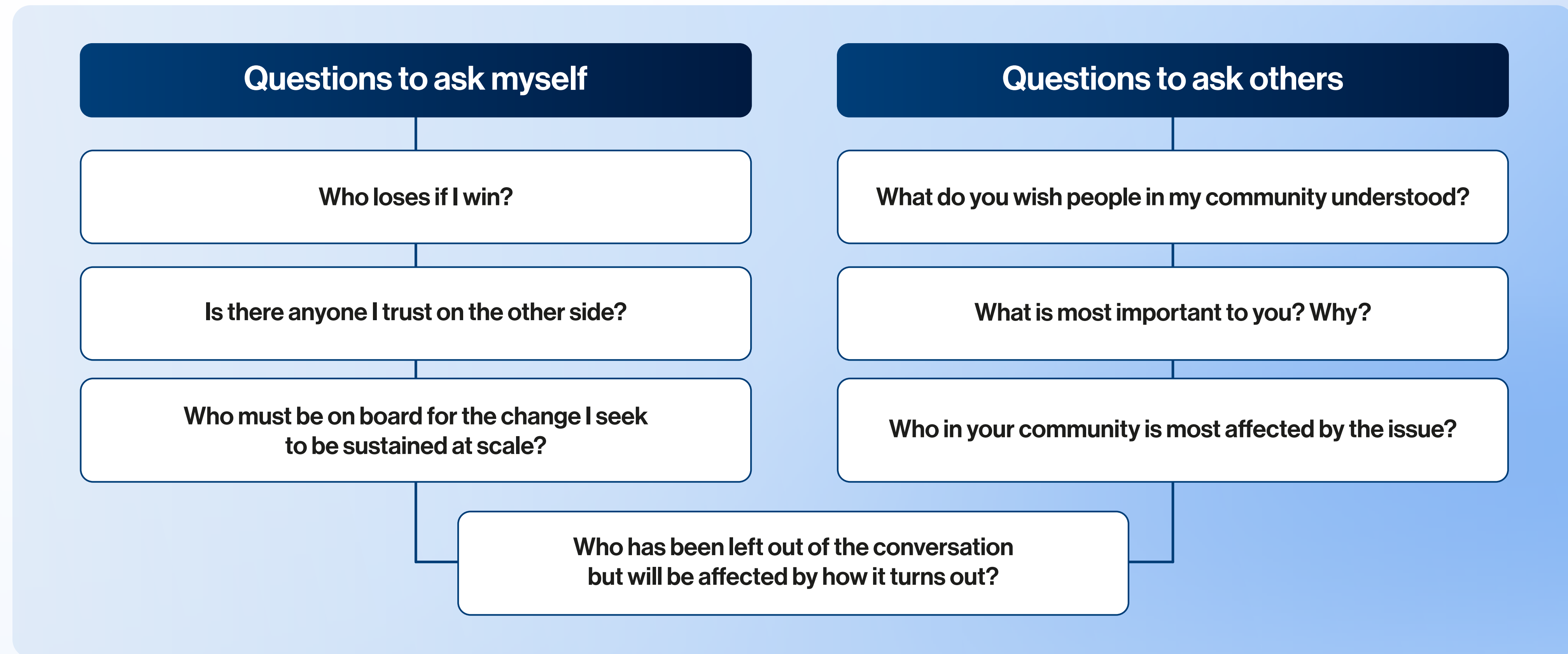
Multipartiality

Multipartial Coalitions:

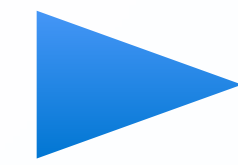
- Gather people from across divides to collaborate on a shared issue
- Involve all people affected by the issue, not just those who agree
- Take stances that promote the dignity of all people affected



Building a multipartial coalition



Multipartiality



The Trust Cycle

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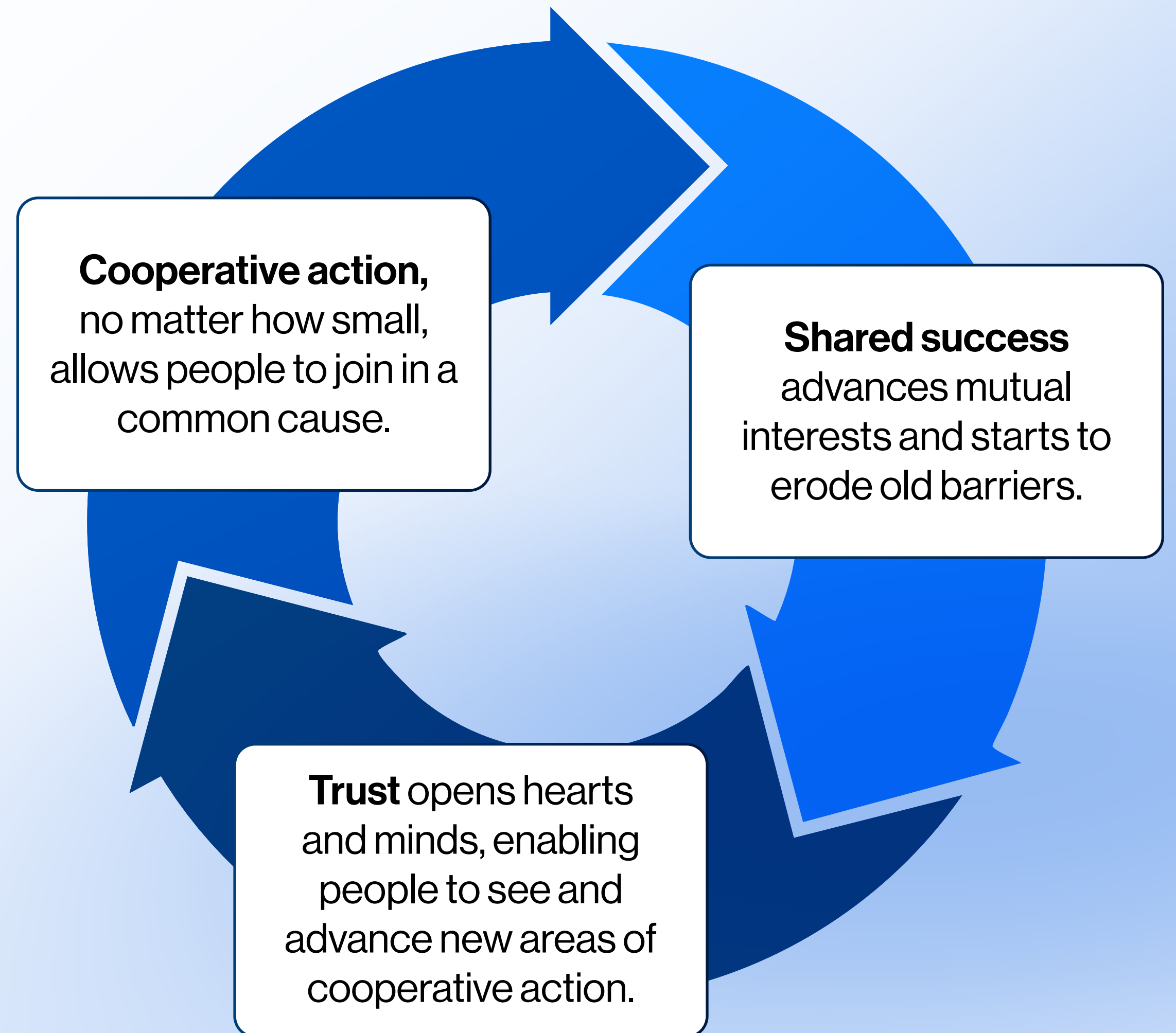
Change that Sustains at Scale

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The Trust Cycle

Multipartial coalitions make change through **a rewarding cycle of cooperative action, shared success, and trust.**

As the cycle continues, trust, cooperation, and shared success fuel each other — **until people are collaborating on the core drivers of conflict.**



The Trust Cycle

Starting the trust cycle

Set boundaries to protect dignity and safety

Some multipartial coalitions agree to keep confidential, avoid inflammatory topics, or meet only in certain locations.

What steps can we each take to limit risk for one another and begin to establish trust?

Understand differences, act on commonalities

By acknowledging differences, we keep these differences from overwhelming the relationship and blocking joint action.

Which topics should we note but set aside, and which topics open the possibility of something that we could accomplish only together?

Start where you can, as long as all are on board

From a soccer game to a meal, even small-scale cooperation can yield bigger openings.

What is the most meaningful joint step we could take, even if it feels small or irrelevant?

Multipartiality

The Trust Cycle



The 5 Vital Signs of a Healthy Society

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Aikido Politics

5 Vital Signs of a Healthy Society

5 Vital Signs of a Healthy Society

By taking vital signs, doctors measure the health of the human body. **The same holds for healthy societies.**

Whatever approach we take to our advocacy either boosts or depletes these vital signs.



TRUST

Whether people trust that others will respect their humanity



INSTITUTIONAL LEGITIMACY

Whether people trust the media, government, and other structures that govern or serve them



SAFETY

Whether people have personal and direct experience with violence



AGENCY

Whether people think they have the power to positively influence their society



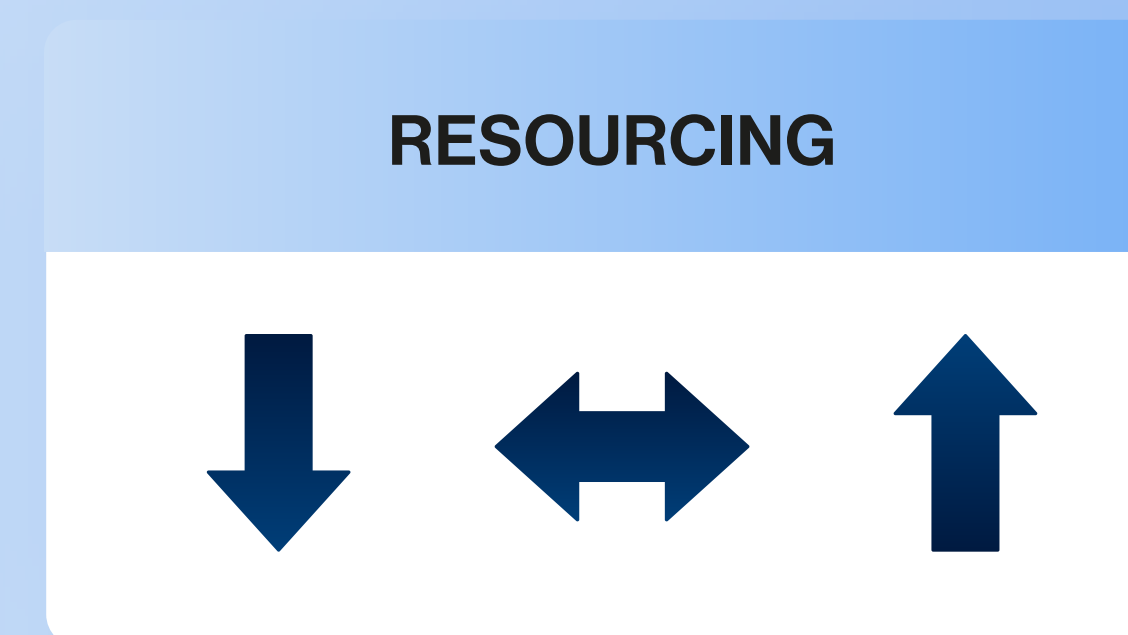
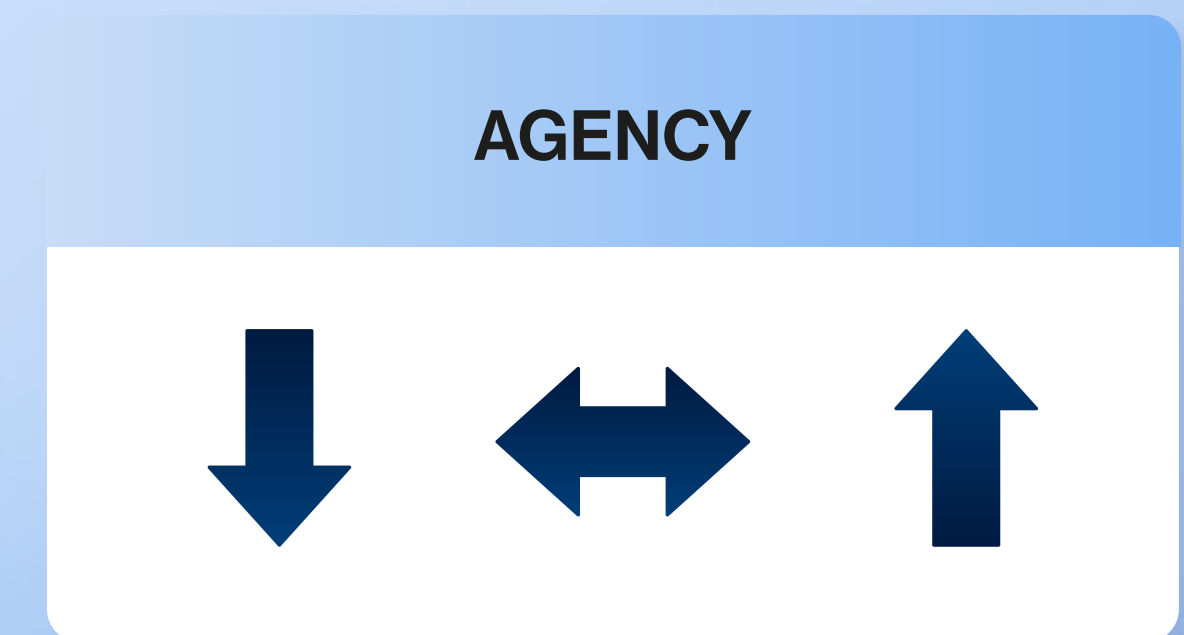
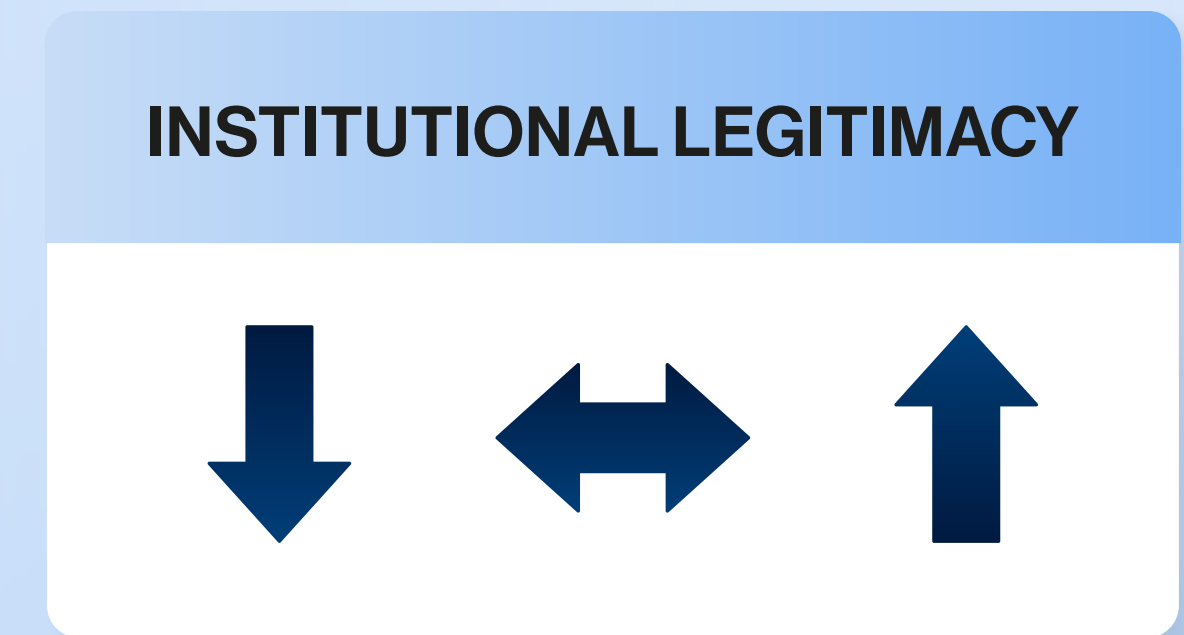
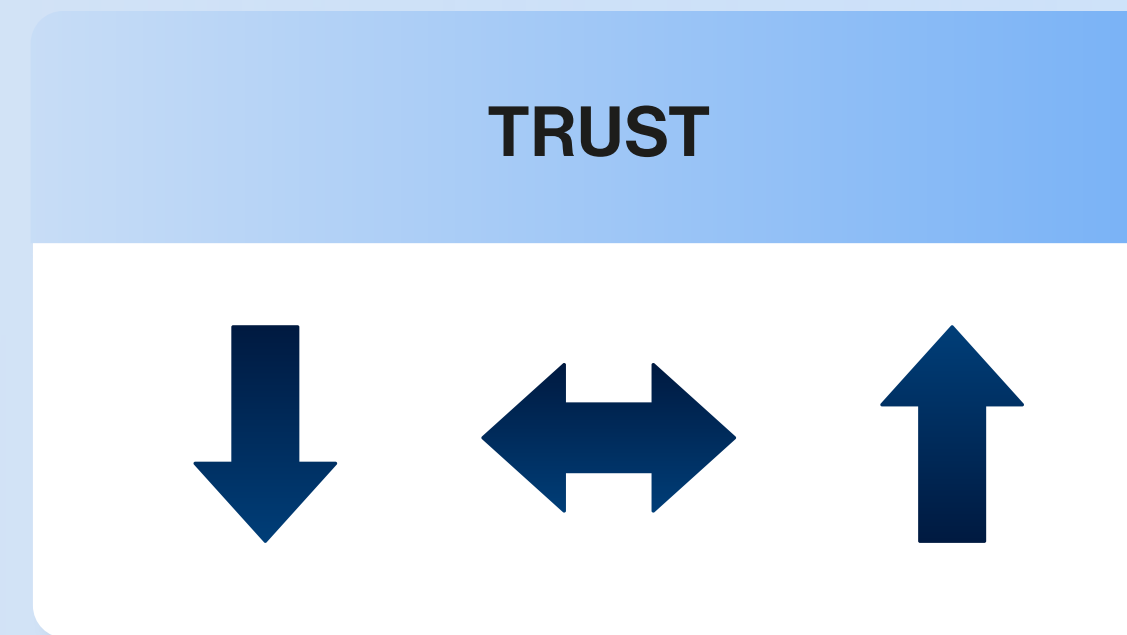
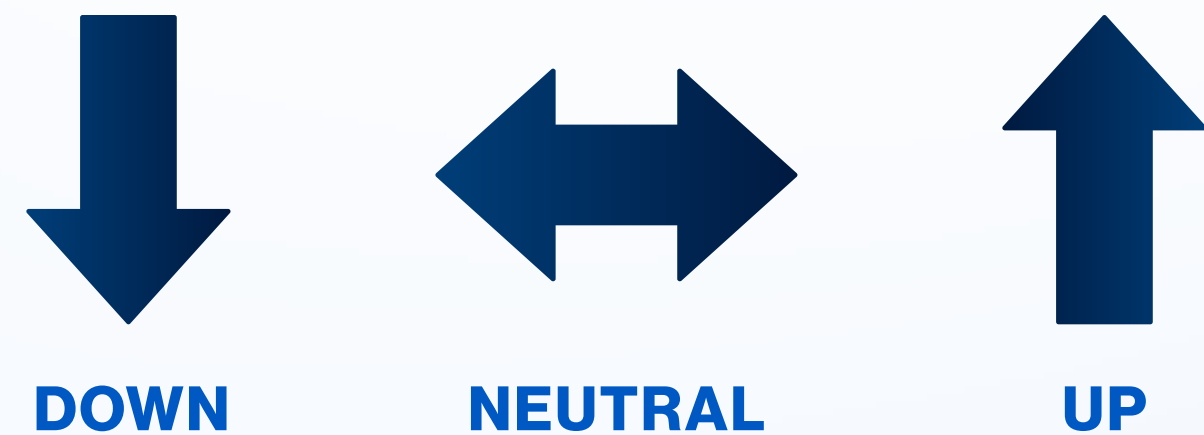
RESOURCING

Whether a society invests in approaches that foster healthy relations and conflict resolution

5 Vital Signs of a Healthy Society

Strengthening the vital signs

Consider your own advocacy approach. **How does it either contribute to or detract from the 5 vital signs?**



Multipartiality

The Trust Cycle

The 5 Vital Signs of a Healthy Society

Change that Sustains at Scale

Aikido Politics

Change that Sustains at Scale

Change that sustains at scale

The magic moment is when the trust cycle generates lasting change. Backed by widespread support, success endures in one or more ways: changed institutions, healthier social norms, or market forces that positively reinforce each other.



Kenya: A ban on night fishing — intended to target criminals — devastated the coastal economy until a coalition of community activists, fishermen, and police devised electronic “Mvuvi” IDs, enabling the lifting of the ban after 6 years.



Pennsylvania, USA: A multi-faith, politically diverse group mobilized after the assassination attempt against Donald Trump to prevent further violence and reconsecrate the site of the attempt as a place for communal gathering.



Nigeria: With farmer-herder violence causing devastation, a cycle of collaboration between activists, security forces, and government officials yielded the establishment of State-level community-relations bureaus to prevent violence.

Multipartiality

The Trust Cycle

The 5 Vital Signs of a Healthy Society

Change that Sustains at Scale



Aikido Politics

What good is collaboration in the face of powerful opposition?

The two standard responses to aggression — fight or flight — both cede power to our adversaries: their actions determine what we do in response.

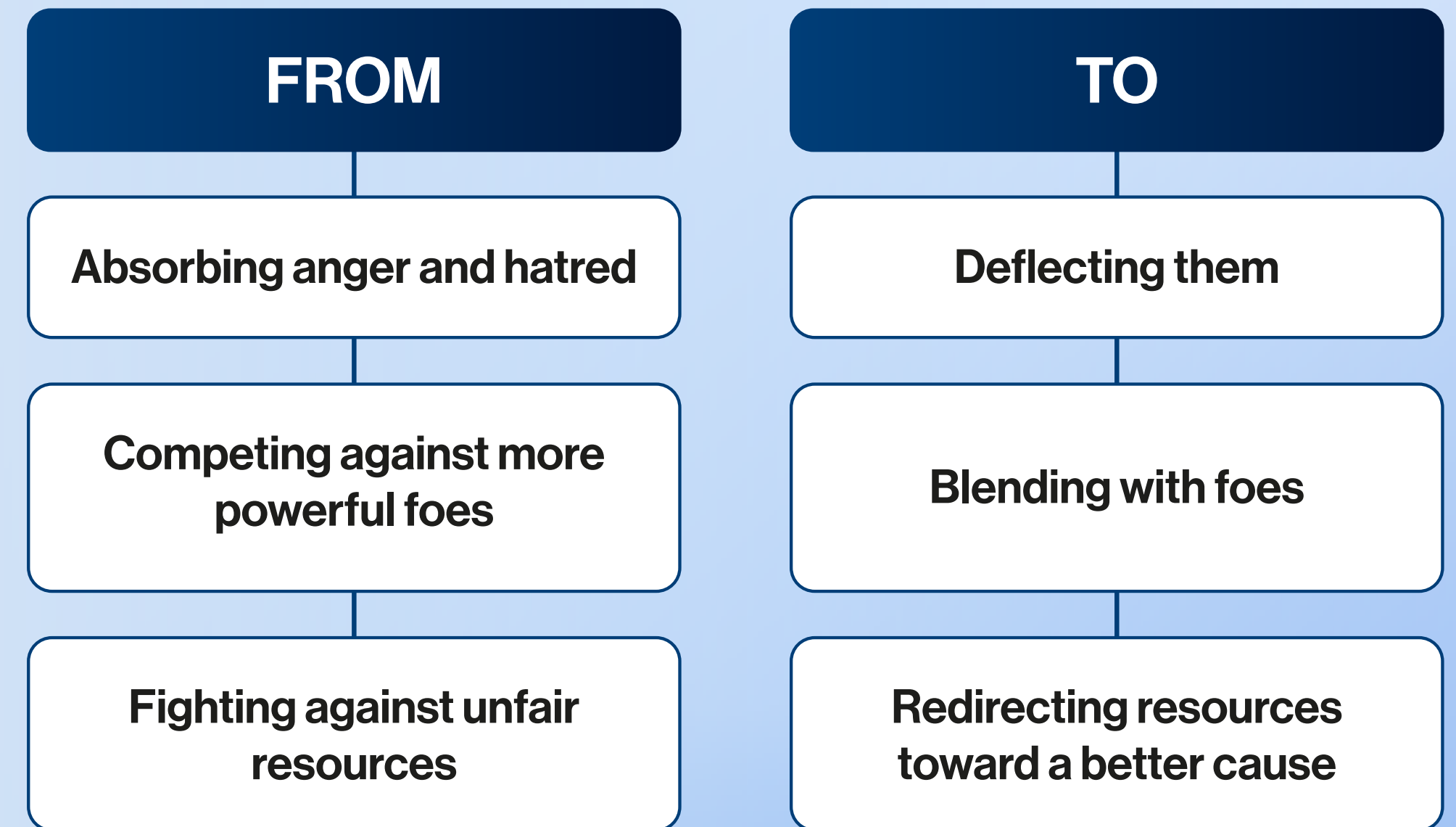
There is a third option that retains our power, protects everyone's dignity, and lays the foundation for a better future for all.

Akido Politics

Aikido politics allows us to stand our ground while redirecting the energy of our opponents to a safe place for both of us.

Aikido is the martial art of the unarmed. It is a Japanese practice for people to harness the movement and momentum of their opponent.

Aikido politics is a principled way to drive change even in the face of powerful opposition.



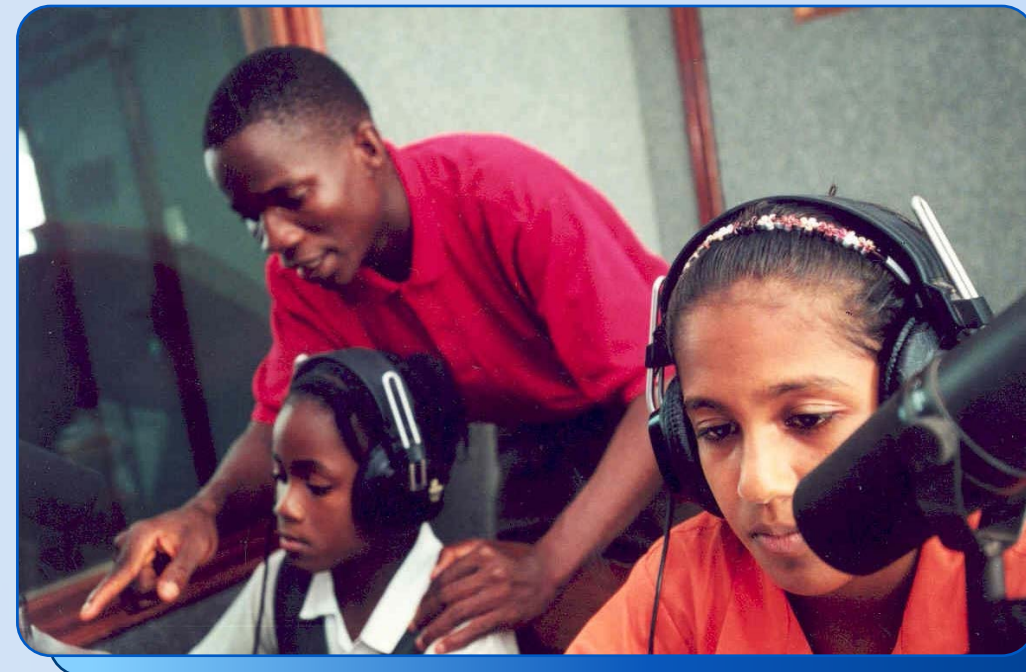
Aikido politics is principled but non-adversarial, channeling the opposition to the change that you're seeking.

Akido Politics

Aikido politics can help activists succeed even in the face of great odds.



Afghanistan: Women activists are engaging with Taliban authorities to protect access to humanitarian aid, secure exceptions to draconian restrictions, and benefit their communities far from the spotlight that would draw unhelpful attention.



Liberia: When censorship chilled news reporting under Charles Taylor's regime, a team of 12-year old cub journalists created Golden Kids News, broadcasting stories that informed and inspired a nation and facilitated the end of Taylor's rule. Today Golden Kids alumni are Liberia's most respected investigative journalists.



Democratic Republic of Congo: A coalition of human rights activists, women's associations, and security agencies — built gradually over 12 years — created national media programs and police trainings that substantially decreased sexual assaults by police and increased community trust.

Once you've decided to do this, what's next?

You can go big or small — plan next steps to convene people across the divides in your society that are meaningful and concerning to you.

What can you do?

- Joint community service
- Meals and food festivals
- Art or entertainment
- Community-led initiatives for change
- Sports matches
- Spaces for healing
- History or memorial projects

Conflict is inevitable.
It can rage out of control and ruin everything.
But we are not at its mercy.

We can use conflict to build a
better future for us all.

So use it well.

Further Resources

High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out
[Amanda Ripley](#)

The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters
[Priya Parker](#)

The Way Out: How to Overcome Toxic Polarization
[Peter Coleman](#)

Peace Impact Framework
[Adrienne Lemon](#)

