

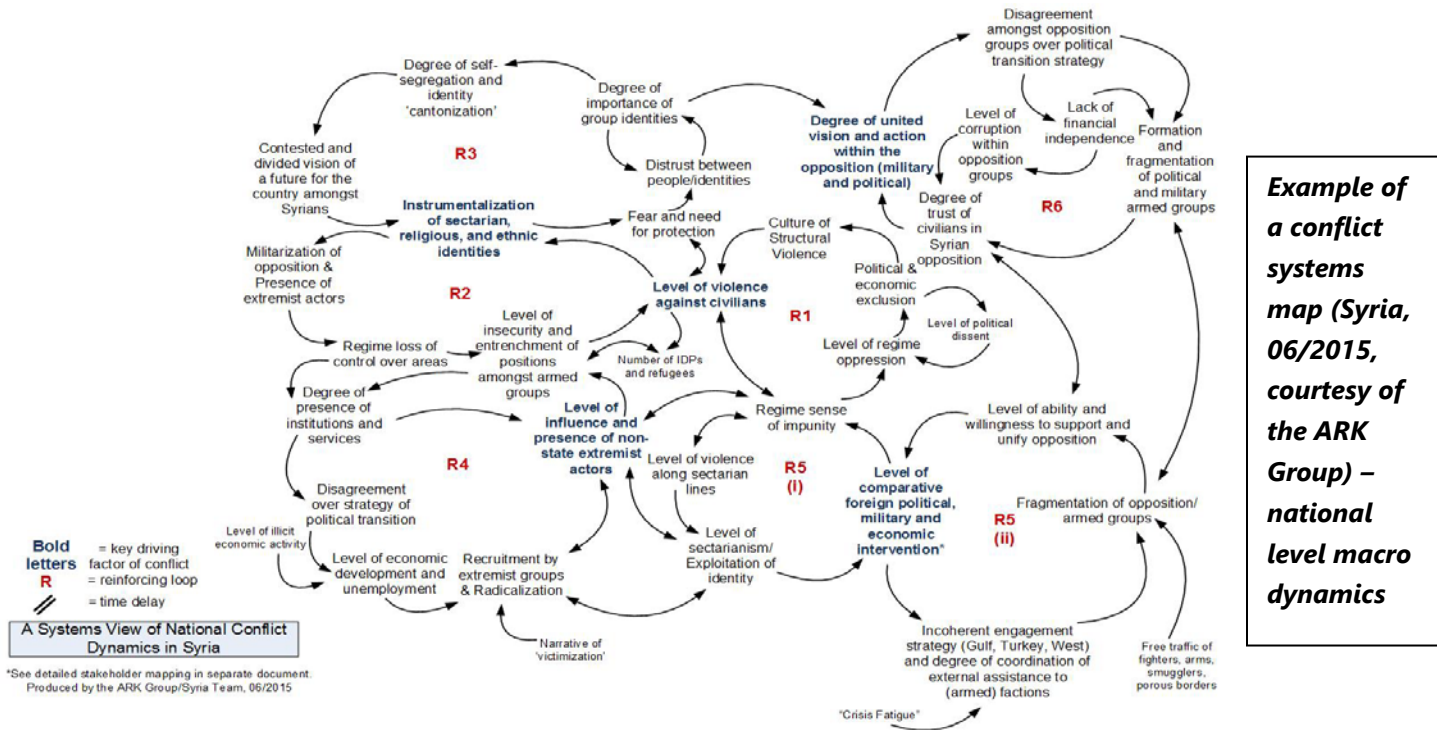
## Conflict Systems Analysis: Benefits and Practical Application

### What are the benefits and purposes of a systems approach?

Conflict analysis from a systems perspective is a complementary approach to other types of conflict analysis. **Systems analysis** helps to understand the **dynamic relationships** and **causalities** between different conflict factors, and the **interconnectedness** between conflict factors and stakeholders. It operates based on an understanding of “feedback” (causal connections) between conflict factors and helps to understand **reinforcing** and **balancing dynamics** in conflict systems. Systems analysis has the potential to help bridge the gap between analysis and programming by including analysis of **points of leverage** and approaches for changing the system. Applying a systems approach is particularly helpful for understanding overall conflict dynamics for the purposes of planning **strategies and programs at macro-levels with diverse teams** of policy makers and practitioners, also striving for greater **collective impact** beyond project levels.

### What does a systems analysis look like?

The below illustrates ONE example of what a systems map can look like (Syria example from June 2016). Systems analyses can be done at multiple levels – national level, local level, in specific areas and sectors, depicting regional influences and global dynamics etc. – depending on the need of specific groups. Like for other types of conflict analyses, the inclusion of local partners and stakeholders in the development of systemic analyses is critical.

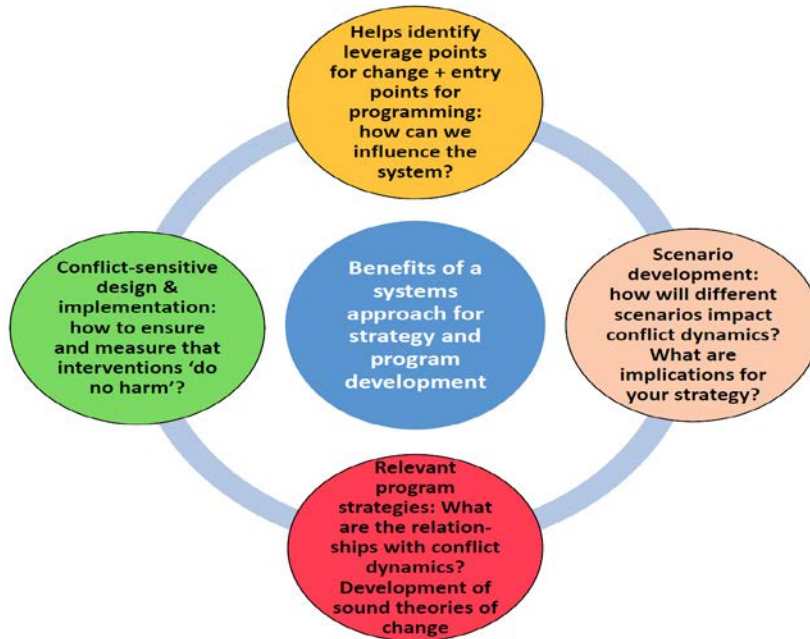


**Example of a conflict systems map (Syria, 06/2015, courtesy of the ARK Group) – national level macro dynamics**

### **When might a systems analysis be particularly helpful for you?**

- The 'problems' you face are chronic and have resisted repeated efforts to resolve it;
- The 'problems' have produced multiple, and often contrasting, analyses regarding its sources - and 'solutions';
- Many actors are involved in addressing the issue but struggle to coordinate efforts and/or to achieve greater collective impact;
- Short term and 'quick fix' solutions, for example in relation to specific sectors, have failed.

### **How does a systems analysis help to develop strategic programming?**



**CDA, 2016**

### **CDA's experience and the relationship between systems analysis and other forms of analysis**

Building on the lessons from its Reflecting on Peace Practice Program, as well as ongoing learning working and accompanying policy makers and practitioners, CDA has become a leader in the field of systems thinking in conflict analysis, and its application to design and/or review of strategies. CDA's approach builds on **other forms of analysis**, rather than a whole separate procedure. At the same time, CDA's approach to systems analysis avoids some of the 'traps' and shortcomings of traditional conflict analysis models (e.g. producing long list of conflict factors without understanding the dynamics and relationships between them, or very comprehensive documents that do not help to prioritize and/or identify leverage points in a conflict system, and are not very user-friendly).

CDA has facilitated conflict systems analyses processes and related strategy design and/or review processes on Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, the Western Balkans, Pakistan, South Sudan, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Burundi, Rwanda, Guinea-Bissau, Mindanao, and the Democratic Republic of Congo – and other types of conflict analyses, conflict-sensitivity assessments, and peacebuilding strategy processes in various other countries. CDA has worked with various organizations, facilitated multi-stakeholder workshops, conducted desk research, and designed tailored processes for the needs of various audiences.