Chapter 6: Addressing transnational threats in stabilisation contexts

- Stabilisation interventions increasingly take place in contexts where the UK is also seeking to address cross-border threats, transnational crime, and violent extremism.

- Efforts to understand and affect violent non-state groups should not rely on externally driven technical solutions. Conflict-sensitive approaches focusing on undermining support bases, freedom of movement and resources are likely to be more effective.

- Interventions that seek to tackle serious and organised crime in conflict contexts must also recognise the criticality of political and economic factors, including the specific interests and involvement of those involved in the political process.

- Both counter-organised crime and counter-terrorism interventions carry risks within the context of stabilisation campaigns. Heavy-handed or discriminatory responses can exacerbate existing grievances or create new ones as well as undermine fragile political deals.

Introduction

1. The term 'transnational threats' covers the range of cross-border, non-state and security challenges that have become a consistent feature of modern stabilisation contexts. Chief among these are organised crime, terrorism, insurgency, irregular migration, and elements of 'hybrid' warfare.

2. Such threats are seldom confined to a particular geographic area. They are instead connected to wider supply chains, networks, ideological movements and even state sponsors.[93] In turn, the growing interconnectivity between different regions, events and movements has narrowed the divide between in-situ security issues in countries affected by conflict and instability, and domestic national security issues in the UK.

3. Migrants leaving as a result of conflict and instability may ultimately travel to Europe, employing the services of professional smugglers at different stages of their journey. Radical ideas emanating from conflict-affected countries can galvanise international support for a cause and lead to the recruitment of fighters much further afield. In recent years, groups such as Daesh and Boko Haram have blurred the lines between state and non-state actors, developing their own cross-border governance structures and global recruitment campaigns and declaring their own states.

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93 Sebastian von Einsiedel et al. (2017) *Civil War Trends and the Changing Nature of Armed Conflict* (United Nations University Centre for Policy Research)

4. **As a result, contemporary stabilisation strategies typically include a number of interventions aimed at mitigating threats to the UK's national security alongside wider stabilisation objectives.** This means that objectives relating to issues such as terrorism, organised crime, illicit finance and human trafficking will become a prominent feature of most strategies, often bringing with them dedicated resources, capabilities and even specialist military or law enforcement assets. Clearly, issues such as terrorism and organised crime are not just of domestic security concern. **They also carry very real risks to both in-country stabilisation efforts and long-term stability**, including through escalating violence (including sectarian or ethnic-based conflict), fuelling widespread corruption and undermining governance.

5. The **multi-faceted, overlapping and constantly evolving character of these threats complicates the task of defining and conceptualising adequate responses**. The terms 'counter-terrorism', 'counter-violent extremism' and 'counter-insurgency' are all used by different communities of practice to describe sometimes similar interventions against the same armed non-state actor groups.

6. This chapter seeks to provide guidance so that those engaged in or seeking to understand and engage with how stabilisation interventions and national security issues interrelate. It is divided into three sections:

    *   The first considers the various forms of **violent non-state actors** (terrorist groups, insurgents and violent extremist organisations) that are likely to be encountered in stabilisation operations.
    *   The second covers the key **serious and organised crime actors and issues** as they relate to stabilisation, including commodity and human trafficking, migrant and weapons smuggling and illicit finance. Wider mass-migration and migration management is beyond the current scope of this chapter.
    *   The final section looks at **cross-cutting trends, dilemmas and trade-offs, risks and overall considerations** for stabilisation campaign planners.

Violent non-state actors

7. Recent conflicts have been characterised by the **proliferation of armed non-state actors**. In Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Somalia and Mali a broad range of insurgent, terrorist, tribal groups and militias co-exist, compete or operate. As highlighted above, defining the precise character of any given violent organisation can be difficult, and potentially lead to flawed planning assumptions.

8. There is **generally a lack of a clear conceptual distinction between domestic forms of terrorism in the West (usually consisting of individuals or cells) and terrorist activity in conflict-affected states**, which instead tends to consist more of established and capable armed groups using terrorism alongside other asymmetric or insurgent tactics. This in turn carries the risk of conflating different types of responses and/or assuming that approaches that are successful within western domestic contexts can automatically be applied in stabilisation operations. To complicate things further, such groups may, at any given time, renounce or escalate violence, including through the use of terrorist tactics, based on their overarching strategic calculations and political aim.

History acts as a reminder that political decisions have time and again catalysed movements of all kinds, whether violent or criminal. The cases of Daesh, Boko Haram, the Tuareg in the Sahel and even hashish-trafficking networks in northern Morocco highlight the potential consequences of exclusionary policies aimed at specific constituencies, tribes, minorities exacerbating social cleavages. Marginalisation and a lack of access to – and representation in – the prevailing elite bargain, accompanying social contract and accommodations of political power has provided the basis for ideological grievance narratives and a fertile ground for recruitment and for groups to get a foothold. The case of the Arab Spring movement also demonstrates the extent to which local political dynamics and politics of exclusion can galvanise a transnational sentiment and movements.

Understanding the dynamic nature of violent non-state actors

9. Groups **continuously evolve and adapt to the operational and strategic context**. While some organisations form and immediately become violent, others emerge in the first instance as non-violent organisations with legitimate and peaceful political aspirations. As a result of factors such as ideological aversions to violence, a perception of insurmountable asymmetry in military power, or simply because they lack the resources (manpower, equipment and facilities) they may then feel required to wage an armed campaign.

10. However, unstable and enabling environments such as civil wars can lead to the erosion and breakdown of ideological and social restraints relating to the use of violence. This can also bring a change in the perception of the relative risks and potential rewards using violence entails. A group's position may also change as a result of violent or offensive activity or provocation by the government and/or security forces or following the acquisition of resources (e.g. through external state support). Therefore, planning processes and stabilisation activities aimed at either influencing such groups to enter into a political process or to neutralise them need to be sufficiently agile to account for rapid and at-times-unforeseen developments and evolutions.

The need to focus on the (political) actors, rather than national structures

11. The UK's experience in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere highlights the inherent risks involved in focusing solely on security sector reform, capacity and institution-building. It also highlights the risks of 'train and equip' programmes as a means of countering the influence of insurgent and terrorist threats that directly or indirectly pose a threat to UK national security (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of this issue). These approaches require long-term political and financial commitment, are prone to elite capture and corruption, cannot easily react to the dynamic evolutions outlined above and usually assume that strong central structures will be able to address localised grievances.

12. A more pragmatic approach consists of working with the political and social grain. This requires identifying the main groups or networks that pose a threat within any given context and understanding the key components that enable them to operate and recruit. These components consist of the support base, leadership resources and the (physical) operating environment. Each of these is described below.

Identifying and addressing violent non-state group's support base

13. A group's support base consists primarily of its key social and political constituency. While **armed groups operating in today's world are increasingly engaged with international audiences,** their ability to retain currency and challenge state structures is still primarily dependent on their local support base. Such support will typically rest on a group's ideological and physical 'offer' and, more specifically, on the extent to which this offer addresses the basic human needs (security, social, existential, gender-specific) of individuals.

14. A growing body of evidence suggests that one of the most effective (but by no means simple) ways of achieving this aim is through recognising the overriding influence of local elite bargains and political deals in shaping these processes (see Chapter 4). Critically, these can undermine one of the core vulnerabilities exploited by violent extremist movements – that of political marginalisation – thereby offering an important preventative function.

> **Violent extremism can be seen as a process**, consisting of up to four overlapping components. The decision to join a group or commit violence may take place at any of these stages:
>
> - the existence of **core vulnerabilities**;
> - the creation of a legitimising **narrative**;
> - **group or social interaction**;
> - the experience of **'being' a violent extremist**.
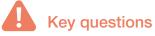>
> **Core vulnerabilities** usually arise as a result of structural drivers such as political marginalisation or injustice which, in turn, are linked to (unmet) basic human needs including safety, belonging and status. These are 'exploited' by extremist **narratives**, many of which offer a means of addressing those human needs (such as employment, security, status, belonging, brotherhood/sisterhood and marriage) and which may legitimise violence. Narratives are then socialised and communicated via a process of **group or collective interaction**, which can result in individuals becoming **violent extremists**. Clearly however, individuals may support violent extremist groups for many reasons, including out of opportunistic or pragmatic calculations or under duress.

15. Therefore, the degrees of **inclusion of violent political groups and their constituencies within the overarching political deal can affect whether a de-escalation in hostilities or even the decision to abandon violence will occur**. Groups may conclude that they are more likely to achieve their aims through political, rather than violent, means (e.g. the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone). At a local level, complex deal making and bargaining processes can lead sub-groups or factions to 'turn' against or defect from wider, irreconcilable extremist elements.This especially happens in those instances where there is already distrust towards those groups, such as in the case of the Sunni 'Awakening' movement in Iraq. The exclusion of violent political groups, and/or their constituencies, from political deal making may in the short term exacerbate the political marginalisation which violent groups feed off.

> *At a local level, complex deal making and bargaining processes can lead sub-groups or factions to 'turn' against or defect from wider, irreconcilable extremist elements*

16. Stabilisation Unit research on violent extremism, terrorism and insurgency suggests that approaches aimed at reducing support for a violent group at the very least requires an understanding of the key 'push' and 'pull' factors that underpin that same group's 'offer'. This process can also help to identify related planning options (as outlined below).[94] Gender and other differences should be considered in both posing and seeking to answer these questions. Likewise, the analysis should be highly context-specific, noting that the particular confluence of push and pull factors may differ between different localities and population segments. This analysis should not however detract from (wherever possible) developing a fuller conflict analysis of violent movements, including with respect to the war economy and the impact of past interventions.

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94 Stabilisation Unit (2017) *Countering Violent Extremism in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States*

⚠️ Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Analysis: 'push' factors	• What are the core vulnerabilities (and related needs) being exploited by violent extremist groups? Who is most exposed to these core vulnerabilities? Do groups have sources of legitimacy within communities? • Which parts of society are 'conscious' and aggrieved? Has change been sought, but not fulfilled? • What options and approaches can be employed to address these vulnerabilities? Improving access to justice and services, expanding political representation within the elite bargain or reducing impunity and corruption within the security institutions? • What sources of resilience exist?	
Analysis: 'push' factors	• What is the (violent extremist) groups recruitment strategy, including their manifesto and 'offer'? • How are violent extremist groups operating and interacting with communities? Where do they derive their legitimacy? • How (e.g. in which collective environments and through which social networks) are messages being socialised? • By whom are these being socialised? • Can the 'offer' or manifesto be challenged or 'matched'? • What mechanisms and options are available to (credibly) challenge key messages and themes? • Can key opinion leaders be challenged? Are there other credible voices that can be engaged in the community? • Can certain environments be made safe or safer from extremist exposure? • How can sources of disillusionment or disengagement be exploited? What are the associated risks?	*Countering Violent Extremism in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States* Stabilisation Unit, 2018 *Guidance on how to conduct a Serious and Organised Crime Joint Analysis*. Contact Stabilisation Unit for details *Extremism, Violent Extremism and Terrorism (EVET) Conceptual Framework*. DFID, 2018

Identify and (if possible) constrain a group's freedom of movement

17. Effecting and potentially reducing the freedom of movement of armed groups that pose a threat either to the UK or wider stabilisation intervention is likely to be an important aspect of any intervention in a conflict context. Increasingly, the operating environment within which a violent non-state actor group exists can be significantly complicated by the degree to which groups are transnational, operating across borders and regions.

18. Nonetheless, denying groups the ability to control territory, population centres and strategic infrastructure can undermine narratives of statehood, where these are central to a group's identity and appeal. It can erode the perception that a group is capable of challenging the authority of the state. The experience of countering Daesh demonstrates the role of kinetic and military levers in supporting such objectives.

19. In many instances, however, the UK's use of direct force will be unfeasible and potentially counter-productive. In such instances, the UK may rely on the use of local forces, which in itself poses trade-offs and dilemmas. Consideration must be given to the inherent trade-offs and conflict sensitivity risks involved. Supporting local militias may result in outcomes that are not compatible with the overall stabilisation objectives, or end up threatening the authority of the central government.

20. Moreover, the use of force may further inflame local and potentially regional tensions and enhance support for the group. In some circumstances, such as the case of Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria, violent groups may actually grow out of overly securitised responses.[95] Here the group adopted armed and, later, suicide tactics following the extra-judicial killing of their then leader, Muhammed Yousuf during an uprising in 2009.

Identify and (where possible) deplete a group's operating resources

21. The ability of a group to contest the authority of the state will typically be dependent on its core resources such as manpower, funding and capabilities. **Many non-state armed groups will derive revenue from illicit activities.** Counter-organised crime interventions (see below) may well be applicable within the context of wider efforts to tackle non-state armed groups. The nexus between armed political movements and serious and organised crime is becoming increasingly blurred. Groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia or Somali pirates will use fuel or cigarette smuggling, extortion and the forced taxation of population centres and transportation routes, crowdsourced donations, and even legitimate business ventures to generate revenue. Approaches will need to consider and mitigate risks, including potential harm done to the civilian population, arising from the second-order effects of cutting off specific funding routes.

22. In conflict contexts, **identifying and 'following the money' is likely to prove very difficult.** This is particularly the case when money is transferred through unregulated or alternative mechanisms such as informal value transfer systems (such as hawala banks) or in small quantities. However, the constraint of sources of finance can yield strategic dividends.

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95 UNDP (2017) *Journey to extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives and the tipping point for recruitment* (New York) and Mercy Corps (2018) How to Reduce Violent Extremism: Putting Peacebuilding and Development First

23. **Further complicating efforts to tackle non-state armed groups is the fact that they may also be used as proxies by state actors** (such as within the context of deniable or 'hybrid' warfare campaigns). In such instances – Hezbollah being a case in point – groups may benefit from material and financial support from internal or external backers. Here, stabilisation responses will inevitably require a regional or international dimension aimed at dissuading or at least addressing such support. As in the case of understanding violent non-state actor financing, planners will usually benefit from understanding the organisational and social make-up of networks, including with respect to logistics and supply chains, lines of communication and, where applicable, command and control role and responsibilities.

Gender and violent extremism

When analysing violent extremism in a given context, gender analysis should be applied. Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by violent extremism. Women and girls, and their rights and freedoms, are often **specifically targeted** by violent extremist groups. This has been seen recently in the kidnapping of women and girls as a deliberate tactic used by Boko Haram. **'Push' and 'pull' factors are highly gendered**. Although context specific, there is some evidence that experiences of gender injustice has be a primary politicising factor for women joining jihadi groups. Daesh has used notions of masculinity and femininity in its propaganda, offering men a path to achieving manhood and positioning rigid roles for women as desirable and in their interest. The diverse roles women and girls play in violent extremist groups has historically been less visible and can be overlooked. Stabilisation activities which target violent extremism should ensure alignment with **Strategic Outcome 6 of the UK's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security**: "ensure the participation and leadership of women in developing strategies to prevent and counter violent extremism". All strategies should ensure that they avoid the 'instrumentalisation' of women and girls and consider and avoid risks they may face when designing and implementing strategies.

Serious and organised crime

24. As is the case with non-state armed groups, serious and organised crime in stabilisation contexts can be best understood through **a political and economic, rather than criminal, lens**. Rather than being adversarial, the relationship between the 'state' and organised crime consists more of an interconnected network where different actors – state and criminal – interact as they negotiate their political and economic interests. Political actors in conflict-affected or unstable contexts frequently exploit opportunities that arise from illicit economies, both as a means of generating personal financial profit and as part of wider political strategy. In this dynamic, politically-motivated environment, actors often grant immunities and access to – or at least tolerate involvement in – illicit economies in exchange for political, economic or social support.

> "Organised criminality, corruption and kleptocracy are also increasingly severe impediments to the UK's overseas policy and development objectives. They distort and impede inclusive and sustainable economic growth, corrupt the democratic process, threaten legitimate, sustainable livelihoods, damage social cohesion and exacerbate exclusion. All of these factors challenge the UK's ability to help the world's poorest people, reduce poverty and promote global prosperity."
>
> UK government *Serious and Organised Crime Strategy* 2018

25. The proceeds from organised crime therefore offer financial and political leverage, and (as far as organised crime groups are concerned) a means of co-opting and undermining state structures in order to create an advantageous operating environment. It follows that the underlying question should not be whether political actors in fragile and conflict-affected states are involved in illicit economies but **to what extent, and in what ways, they are involved or connected**.

26. In some contexts, political **deal-making and bargaining around access to the illicit economy may form the very core of the elite bargain and ensuing arrangements of political power and, as such, may actually provide the basis for reductions in violence**. Moreover, a criminal enterprise may adopt distinct political positions, advocate for policy choices, fund campaigns and provide public goods and services (much as a government might) as a means of increasing its legitimacy.

27. Given these dynamics, law enforcement and criminal justice support can be best understood as a discrete tool within a wider stabilisation approach where **political and economic responses should be paramount**. Law enforcement activity can negate a criminal network's leadership, interdict its transport arrangements and increase operating costs. However in doing so it will almost certainly not address the key political and social enablers and breeding grounds for organised crime and may very well act to destabilise the existing political settlement.

28. Tackling organised crime in conflict-affected and unstable contexts therefore requires a better **understanding of how criminal networks operate and how they relate to the broader political and socio-economic context**. There is a need to understand what factors it thrives on, whose interests it serves and who will stand to gain and lose from effective responses to organised crime. It is likely to be the case that those whose collaboration our efforts rely on (such as border agencies or key security departments) stand to lose the most by our endeavours being successful, either because they are themselves involved or because being part of an effective response puts them at excessive risk of retribution. Although delicate (and often difficult), **mapping the actors and their political, social and economic relationships** should therefore be the first step to designing an effective response to organised crime.

29. Organised **crime groups usually consist of a fluid, 'network of networks'** where different players interact and conduct business with one another at different points along the supply chain. As with most business models, each player within any given network brings different functional skills, expertise or 'value added' such as logistics, finance, political and/ or physical protection and local transport knowledge. The functions that any one individual or group of actors fulfils within a given network will also be closely related to that individual or group's wider societal position and roles. Furthermore, any one individual may play different and mutually reinforcing roles (political, economic, business, and criminal), further highlighting the importance of politics and power in organised crime.

30. It follows that any analysis requires an understanding of how the livelihoods of many communities are either linked to or dependent on illicit economies. Mapping the flow of money and power through networks also provides a means of revealing the core **social, political and economic conditions and vulnerabilities that are being exploited** by organised crime networks. In doing so, it offers insights into potential entry points for addressing those same conditions and vulnerabilities.

Gender and serious and organised crime

Considering gender throughout any analysis of serious and organised crime ensures that the UK has a comprehensive analysis from which to identify critical enablers and factors and the planning implications of this. This includes the consideration of the **diverse roles of women**, not only as victims but also as actors, for example as recruiters, drug mules and traffickers, smugglers and those in charge. This may involve challenging assumptions. In several cases of child trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa, older women were critical to the recruitment and transfer process as they were seen as less likely to obtain attention from law enforcement agents from travelling with children. Understanding the **use of gender norms** by criminal networks can help understand the dynamics and vulnerabilities of groups, for example the use of 'respectable femininity' as a strategy by female crack cocaine dealers to stay hidden. It is also important to understand and recognise **gendered differences in impacts** of serious organised crime, both in relation to the direct victims, such as of human trafficking, and wider societal impact, such as upon communities of origin, and the implications of this for service provision.

Serious and Organised Crime Joint Analysis

31. The UK uses the Serious and Organised Crime Joint Analysis (SOCJA) tool for mapping serious and organised crime. This sets out a five-step analytical process for identifying interventions aimed at countering organised crime threats.[96] These are:

Step 1: Defining the scope of the analysis, specifically with respect to geographic boundaries and the particular threat emanating from that area. A 'follow the threat' approach can provide a clear starting point (e.g. the cultivation or production stages of a commodity) and a means of mapping subsequent roles and services (the 'what' and the 'who' of the market) along the supply chain.

Step 2: A strategic analysis of the political, social, historic and economic factors that have shaped an illicit economy. Key factors that ought to be considered are outlined below.

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96 Full guidance on how to conduct a Serious and Organised Crime Joint Analysis (SOCJA) process has been produced by the Stabilisation Unit (2018).

⚠️ **Key questions**

Category	Strategic analysis: factors to look for
Political context and will	Organised crime often originates within constituencies that are excluded from the elite bargain. Over time (and precisely because it is a means of funding political influence and altering the previous balance of power) organised crime interests can become interwoven within the fabric of the state and elite bargain. Political relationships may be adversarial, complicit or co-dependent.
Socio-economic environment	Often closely linked to political exclusion, this category includes measures of state fragility, the existence of poorly-governed spaces and a lack of access to economic opportunities. Also relevant here are variations in the commodity price, as these affect the profit related to (and therefore the potential appeal of) organised crime.
Civil society and media	The extent to which civil society organisations and media outlets are independent as well as free from government control (e.g. whether investigative journalism exists).
Existence of cross-border diaspora	Cross-border trafficking and smuggling is often aided by long-standing relationships between different ethnic and tribal diasporas. Examples include Pashtun and Baluch communities in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran and ethnic Albanians.
State capacity and intent	This category accounts for the ability of state institutions to deal with organised crime (although this will always be subordinate to political will). Key factors include legislative, regulatory and (law) enforcement frameworks and capabilities.
Recent history	Important structural changes, which alter the balance of power or the 'rules of the game' within a country, region or the international system (e.g. the end of the Cold War, or regime change).
Physical environment and trade routes	Remote spaces such as mountain and jungle areas are often a key enabler for certain services within the economy such as drug processing laboratories. Transport and smuggling routes also offer key insights into the interlinkages between the different components of the supply chain.
Regional issues	The political, socio-economic and conflict context of the wider region that the area under analysis exists within.

Step 3: A market analysis of the different sectors and services involved in the criminal market. Examples of key sectors and roles include the following:

⚠️ **Key questions**

Category	Market analysis: typical roles and services
Commodity related	Production (e.g. cultivators), processing (e.g. chemists, laboratory owners, precursor chemical suppliers), transport and logistics (e.g. cross-border maritime, air and land smugglers), commodity brokers (e.g. connecting local producers with customers), recruiters (e.g. in the case of migrant smuggling and human trafficking).
Financial and legal enablers	Banks and financial transfer services (e.g. bureau de change and informal value transfer services), financial advisers (e.g. on money laundering as well as asset placement and layering), accountants, specialist lawyers, judges, counterfeit document manufacturers. This category is unlikely to ever come into contact with the commodity but will nevertheless be central to the viability of the business model.
Political patronage and protection	This sector accounts for the political elite at different levels (e.g. presidential, ministerial, local governors etc.). Typical relationships between the political elite and more 'hands-on' sectors include appointments in exchange for 'rent' payments (e.g. where senior appointments – such as border commanders – are granted on the condition of future return payments). In some cases, these can also include granting actors access to the illicit economy in exchange for their political support.
State security	Roles within this sector include police and customs officers, border guards (e.g. checkpoint commanders), the military and other security actors who, in many contexts, play either a direct or indirect role in facilitating commodity trafficking.
Physical protection and violence	(Violent) non-state actors including insurgents, terrorist or guerrilla groups offering protection services in return for payment. These actors may also levy taxes on organised crime groups (e.g. in return for safe-passage or impunity) and/or become more directly involved in the illicit business.

Step 4: Identifying the critical factors within the analysis. This can include opportunities, vulnerabilities, enablers and pressure points. This step is about determining the critical factors relating to the market, including tangible opportunities, vulnerabilities and pressure points, from the above analysis. In practice, this will require taking stock of the analysis with a view to drawing out a prioritised list of the critical enablers and factors that allow illicit businesses to operate at profit. An example of this step is set out below:

⚠ **Key questions**

Critical factor	Planning implications and entry points
Political elite and state security actors implicated in the organised crime market at all levels	Security and justice capacity-building and technical interventions (such as train and equip programmes) are unlikely to succeed in isolating or undermining the criminal market. Initiatives focused solely on introducing new legislation or regulation are also unlikely to change the 'rules of the game'.
Civil society and media able to operate relatively freely and independently	Opportunities may exist to enable a 'naming and shaming' campaign or increase public accountability via the media and/or advocacy organisations.

Step 5: Developing planning options on the basis of critical factors, spanning across the full spectrum of interventions. These interventions will typically be aimed at **isolating the criminal market or addressing impunity and increase exposure**. Applying to both of these categories, the other variable is the extent to which the interventions are designed to tackle issues directly – **as opposed to taking a more indirect approach**. Examples of both these approaches are given in the diagram below.

Targeted anti-corruption activities:
– Tackling corrupt officials
– Streamlining bureaucracy
– Reducing commodity subsidies

Applying commercial leverage: targeting those at the interface of licit/illicit economies

Changing incentives: 'buying off' actors within the protection market

Providing alternatives: addressing economic and social exclusion which supports key criminal markets

Direct Isolating criminal markets **Indirect**

Maximising arrests and seizures

Direct Addressing impunity, increasing exposure **Indirect**

Symbolic arrests and prosecutions

Improving criminal justice capability

Increasing public exposure of OC through journalism and civil society

Increasing taxation and state-citizen accountability

Devising a response to serious and organised crime

32. Analysts and practitioners concede that there has been a notable lack of success in tackling organised crime in fragile and conflict-affected states and that there are few clear examples of 'what works'. Moreover, as with most stabilisation activities, a counter-organised crime intervention that works in one context may not be effective in another. However, the developing evidence base, and the Stabilisation Unit's growing engagement in this area, point towards a number of broad guidelines that should inform policy and programmes:

- **Develop (politically) realistic and pragmatic aims and objectives.** Because politics, economic and criminal enterprises are interwoven in fragile and conflict-affected states, the basic assumption should be that government partners are likely to be implicated in or, at the very least, associated with organised crime. This means that objectives aimed at countering organised crime may be met with a degree of resistance, despite possible commitments and reassurances to the contrary. In addition, the tendency for organised crime to extend across societal and geographical boundaries means that countering the threat can realistically only ever be a long-term aim, even when a seemingly prominent champion or cohort of change emerges.

> " *the basic assumption should be that government partners are likely to be implicated in or, at the very least, associated with organised crime* "

- **Promote more inclusive political processes in the long run.** Initiatives aimed at addressing the social, political and economic marginalisation of the many large ethnic, religious and demographic groups which, in the absence of other opportunities, are drawn to illicit economies is an important component of counter-organised crime strategies in stabilisation contexts. Such an approach may, among other things, help to reduce the dependency of marginalised groups on the revenue from organised crime for key functions ordinarily provided by the state, like protection, governance and public services.

- **Adopt an integrated approach to countering organised crime.** The number of different functions and actors involved in illicit economies implies that multiple levers will need to be coordinated and sequenced as part of any given counter-organised crime campaign. As the basic nature of organised crime is multi-dimensional – political, economic and legal – the response must be calibrated accordingly. For example, law enforcement activity and disruption operations can increase the operating costs of illicit activity and act as effective deterrent, but this approach will typically need to be coordinated alongside political efforts (such as those aimed at tackling marginalisation and disfranchisement), regulatory and accountability measures (such as those focusing on curbing criminal finances) and the strengthening of civil society organisations.

- **Consider innovative approaches and programmes.** Research, for example, suggests the potential impact of interventions such as:
    — altering existing subsidised commodity arrangements;
    — supporting tax administration and collection systems (given that an inverse correlation exists between tax collection and corruption and organised crime);
    — supporting the establishment of autonomous electoral commissions;
    — promoting citizens' ability to pursue legal claims against governments;
    — increasing the availability of small business loans;
    — encouraging independent media outlets and investigative journalism.

Transnational threats and stabilisation: recognising risks and trade-offs

33. Activities which either support or rely on 'host' state agencies and institutions may be entirely undermined by those same institutions' criminal interests or, in the case of counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency campaigns, by heavy-handed, discriminatory responses that violate human rights. Such risks are particularly acute in contexts where delivery is reliant upon local partners and infrastructure, ranging from detention facilities and prison staff to specialised military and paramilitary action arms. **If left unchecked, this kind of support may in fact create the conditions required for recruitment into insurgent or extremist groups, or provide the very means of engaging in organised forms of criminality such as complex cross-border smuggling operations.**

34. Criminal networks tend to prefer (relatively) stable as well as predictable states to failed or violent contexts. This is despite there being those characterised by weak institutions and governance systems which can be either co-opted or circumvented. As such, **stabilisation activities run the risk of solidifying organised crime interests and cementing political actors' long-term access to illicit rents.**

35. Extremist groups, for their part, prefer fragile environments with polarised constituencies, whose support can be mobilised into an insurgency. While bringing armed groups within a political deal or bargain may quell some of their root grievances (such as with respect to marginalisation), it may also cause splintering and factionalism within those same organisations as well as the birth of even more radical offshoots. This in turn can bring about a new kind of armed campaign within a country or region (as the case following an amnesty in Algeria in the late 1990s).

36. In some circumstances, the overriding priority of **developing a stabilising elite bargain as a necessary precursor for building long-term stability may not be reconcilable with, for example, legislation and activities to counter serious organised crime objectives or terrorism.** These often preclude dialogue with powerful elites and may even actively target them. Such contradictions can also arise in the immediate aftermath of external military interventions, where external forces seeking to ensure their own force protection find themselves – often unintentionally – entering into security compacts with warlords and powerful criminal actors. Alternately, arrests of key political actors, in the name of countering organised crime, as in Afghanistan, can undermine political engagement. Such tensions can prolong violent conflict.

37. As important as acknowledging the political nature of addressing transnational threats is, the need to recognise that in many instances organised crime may underpin stability. Deals around immunity from prosecution and the use of political offices to facilitate organised crime are frequently essential components of the elite bargains which underpin local arrangements of power. The use of coercive means or even support to local security actors to target extremist and organised criminal groups must be understood as a political activity. By doing so, international forces are making political choices and being seen to support one group over another, even if their motivations are primarily driven by a desire to address criminality or extremism. Consideration should also be given to anticipate how efforts to address organised crime will be perceived. Again, Afghanistan provides a salutary warning. Efforts to address criminal groups associated with the insurgency left those aligned with the government relatively untouched. In doing so, this increased popular perceptions of corruption within the Afghan government being aided and abetted by International Security Assistance Force, something which materially worked to undermine the legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people. External actors need to assess the relative trade-offs posed by targeting criminal groups and the benefits in doings so against the risk of provoking further political instability and uncertainty.

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38. Organised crime and terrorist groups may also provide valuable functions to the local population, including the provision of security and justice, services and livelihoods. Strategies and interventions which aim to isolate and undermine these groups must be aware of the costs this may impose on the civilian population and identify means to mitigate these. This should be in line with the principle of 'do no harm' and because failure to do so is likely to lead to a lack of support or resistance from local communities.