



Stabilisation Unit

# The UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation

A guide for policy makers and practitioners







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# Foreword by the Right Hon Alistair Burt MP

**Minister of State for International Development  
Minister of State for the Middle East at the  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

I have seen first-hand the terrible effects the conflicts in countries such as Syria, Yemen and Iraq have had. The suffering cannot be left to continue unabated. The UK government rejects the notion that we can step away and leave these problems for others. We must stand firm, work with our local and international partners, so we can help to reduce violence, build peace and turn today's conflicts around.

The UK government's goal in conflict-affected contexts is to support the development of lasting peace and stability, which is built with the consent of the population, is resilient and flexible in the face of shocks, and can evolve over time. This goal runs through our National Security Strategy and our Foreign Office priorities, and it guides how the Department for International Development spends fifty per cent of its aid budget in conflict affected countries. It also explains why we have led international efforts to build peace by empowering women through our National Action Plan.



The UK is a world leader in helping tackle the root causes of conflict and instability. The National Security Council sets priorities and ensures there is an integrated policy response using the capabilities and expertise across HMG. We back this up with funding from departments and the cross-government Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. These efforts have helped support political processes and conflict de-escalation across the world, including in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and Colombia.

We continue to develop our analysis, policy and programmes in pursuit of our objectives. I am, therefore, very pleased to endorse the UK government's new Stabilisation Guide, written by the Stabilisation Unit. It sets out our latest thinking on how the UK sees the role of stabilisation in conflict-affected contexts.

The Guide sets out just how challenging it can be to bring protracted violent conflict to an end. It emphasises the importance of engaging and investing sensibly and pragmatically, recognising the difficult trade-offs and dilemmas that policy makers face. It calls on us to get better at recognising that good things do not always come together, outlining how if we force state building and institutional reform before a political platform has been established, then there is a high risk of a return to violence. Crucially, it also describes how our initial stabilisation responses relate to and support building peace and long-term stability, so we can help prevent violence reoccurring.

As we constantly strive to improve and refine our approach, we have not shied away from honest self-reflection. This guide draws heavily on the lessons identified by the Iraq Inquiry, around the need to better understand the consequences of our interventions, the need to work more effectively across government as a single team and be realistic about our timescales and ambition.

So, we need to ruthlessly prioritise our efforts, make the best use of all our available resources and have an appropriate, sequenced strategy of engagement, whilst keeping the goal of long term peace and stability in clear sight. This guide sets out how we can best work with our local and international partners to reduce the terrible consequences of violent conflict and address the threats to the United Kingdom that are generated by instability overseas.

*Alita S.S.*

# Introduction from the Director of the Stabilisation Unit

*‘Stabilisation seeks to support local and regional partners in conflict affected countries to reduce violence, ensure basic security and facilitate peaceful political deal-making, all of which should aim to provide a foundation for building long term stability.’*

It is increasingly important that we challenge ourselves and our approaches to conflict. 60% of armed conflicts resolved in the early 2000s relapsed into violence within five years.<sup>1</sup> We are witnessing more and more protracted humanitarian crises and more man-made famine. By 2030, 80% of those in extreme poverty will be living in fragile and conflict-affected states.<sup>2</sup> Armed conflict has become more intractable and less conducive to resolution through traditional internationally mediated formal peace agreements. It has become more internationalised and interlinked with criminal enterprises and extremist groups. We need to acknowledge these changes and in turn adapt our approach, and stabilisation has a part to play in that.

Stabilisation has been a contested and ambiguous term, and the rapid evolution of how it is applied has added to the confusion. Earlier efforts were focused on ‘hot stabilisation’, primarily using military force to combat insurgent or ‘illegitimate’ political groups combined with the building of local governance institutions and service delivery capacity. Our approach has developed and, while stabilisation may require the application of force or the threat of its use, it is not a prerequisite. The emphasis is on a politically-led approach which privileges the primacy of local politics and can be applied before, during and after violent conflict.

Political deals, forged between local elites, are based on their common understanding about how power and resources are organised and executed reflecting the realities of political power on the ground. In pursuing them, we are confronted with the inherent tensions and trade-offs with wider national security objectives: promotion of a rules based international order, human rights; gender equality, good governance, a desire for justice, and more. The goals are not contradictory but do require sequencing with a clear understanding of our relative priorities.

This guide reinforces an essential point that ‘not all good things come together’. When working to address national security challenges and promote the conditions for long-term stability there will be a requirement for effective prioritisation and sequencing to manage competing demands. While the humanitarian imperative to first ‘do no harm’ is laudable it is arguably unachievable in stabilisation activity, not least as we recognise that non-intervention is itself a decision that can cause harm. The goal should therefore be to identify and minimise harm within a broader framework of understanding the potential trade-offs and dilemmas. Part of the purpose of the guide is to aid policy makers and practitioners in identifying and managing these dilemmas.

To understand both what contemporary stabilisation is – and equally is not – it is useful to trace its origins and evolution. The end of the Cold War saw a shift towards intra-state conflicts and a more permissive environment for internationally-led interventions premised on protecting civilian populations and ending internecine conflicts. For the UK, hard-won lessons from the experience of peacebuilding in Bosnia suggested a coordinated civil-military approach was necessary to end conflicts and to implement post-conflict reconstruction. The perceived limitations of the United Nations-led interventions in the 1990s, most notably in the aftermath of failures in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia, saw greater emphasis placed on state building and post-conflict reconstruction to develop the capacity of the state to both consolidate formal peace agreements and prevent any recurrence of conflict.

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

2 HM Government (2018) *National Security Capability Review*, para. 3, p. 41

The eventual focus of large-scale military-led operations in Iraq and Afghanistan were underpinned by the same approach. Wholesale state-building and stabilisation activity addressing the drivers of political violence were deemed essential to combating the insurgency in both Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the scale, intensity and enduring nature of the conflicts meant that a 'post-conflict' phase was not clearly reached as violence transitioned and evolved, making the concept of stabilisation, state-building and a phased approach largely redundant. This led to a focus on a 'Comprehensive Approach' across government and the establishment in 2004 of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (renamed the Stabilisation Unit in 2007).

Together with a largely technocratic approach to state building, primarily situated as a response to state 'failure', these largely military-led operations struggled to address local politics, instead prioritising the military defeat of the insurgencies through counterinsurgency campaigns. Even where campaigns made clear there was no military solution, the emphasis remained on military progress to provide a suitable platform for subsequent political progress. 'Hot stabilisation' was a conflation of former approaches to stabilisation with counterinsurgency techniques and was primarily a military-led activity with development programmes being used to win consent both for the governments being supported and the presence of international military personnel.

With military-led stabilisation in both Iraq and Afghanistan making little or no progress, further conceptual changes were evident in stabilisation practice. The UK Approach to Stabilisation, initially published in 2008, firmly stated the political nature of stabilisation and stressed the need to end or prevent the re-emergence of violent conflict; buy time for or actively support the emergence of a sustainable and more inclusive peace settlement; and demonstrate a peace 'dividend'. Creating the conditions for non-violent politics and more 'normal' forms of economic activity, and establishing the legitimacy of the government became the central tenets of stabilisation. Above all this was a civilian-led, integrated approach.

The publication of the Department for International Development's (DFID) 2010 paper, 'Building Peaceful States and Societies' and the tri-departmentally authored 'Building Stability Overseas Strategy' (BSOS) in 2011 recognised the absolute centrality of politics to stabilisation interventions and the necessity of an integrated approach to delivery. This realisation had been informed by UK activities outside Iraq and Afghanistan, notably in Kenya, Nepal, South Sudan and Somalia, as well as through ongoing engagement in the Balkans and Sierra Leone.

The UK Approach to Stabilisation was updated in 2014 based on this wider range of experience beyond Afghanistan. It highlighted the need to support or initiate an inclusive political deal as the core function of any stabilisation intervention, and also recognised that stabilisation is one of many activities to support the goal of achieving stability – rather than an activity and a goal in its own right. This not only marked a departure from earlier iterations which saw stabilisation as a goal but also, in the context of BSOS, set the primary aim of stabilisation as establishing the necessary conditions for developing long term structural stability.<sup>3</sup>

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3 FCO, DFID and MOD (2011) *Building Stability Overseas Strategy*, p.6. BSOS describes structural stability as "political systems which are representative and legitimate, capable of managing conflict and change peacefully, and societies in which human rights and rule of law are respected, basic needs are met, security established and opportunities for social and economic development are open to all"

The evidence review underpinning DFID's 2016 Building Stability Framework, the findings of the Stabilisation Unit's 2018 Elite Bargains and Political Deals research project and the Political Settlements Research Project established by DFID's Research and Evidence Division have all clearly demonstrated the limitations of large-scale international stabilisation interventions, especially those which were military-led and took an externally-driven state-building approach. The research clearly highlighted the policy dilemmas and trade-offs in stabilisation, not least refuting the notion that all activities undertaken would be mutually supporting and lead to a positive outcome. Most importantly, in addition to reinforcing the centrality of supporting political resolution to violent conflict, they also stressed that political processes should be locally-led and reflect the reality of local arrangements of power and the elite bargains which underpinned them.

In this guide, we have sought to consolidate existing Stabilisation Unit guidance making it more accessible to policy makers and practitioners. Some new elements have been added to address gaps identified and the UK Approach to Stabilisation has once again been updated. This guide is not policy, doctrine or a comprehensive survey of all matters relating to stabilisation. It will hopefully act as a handrail for those tasked to develop policy and deliver programmatic activities, providing guidance on the political, security and justice, and service delivery aspects of stabilisation. It examines how we address transnational threats (counter-terrorism, serious organised crime etc.) within stabilisation contexts. It is not focused on providing answers but hopefully provides frameworks and poses questions to help the reader structure and interrogate the specific context in which they find themselves. Furthermore, this guide should be of value when considering how stabilisation relates to other activities, such as long-term development or peacebuilding, which may also be taking place in that space as set out in DFID's 2016 Building Stability Framework.

The guide has been informed by and is in part a response to the findings of the Iraq Inquiry. In addition to integrated working and the application of the Fusion Doctrine, as set out in the 2018 National Security Capability Review, the guide demands realism, empathy, humility and pragmatism particularly in recognising the limits of international interventions and the primacy of local ownership.

While the guide has been developed by the Stabilisation Unit, it has incorporated expertise and advice from across government and has benefited from external challenge from academia, policy think tanks, independent international organisations and our international partners. The consultation has helped remove some of the ambiguity around the term and we are encouraged by the degree to which it closely resembles the definitions used by some of our key international partners.

Our approach will continue to evolve. As such, it is our intention over time to augment the guide with new material and to incorporate any advice, feedback and learning from future operations and partners working on these issues. Please do share your thoughts.

**Mark Bryson-Richardson**  
**Director, UK Stabilisation Unit**  
**December 2018**

# The UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation

# Executive Summary

Stabilisation activity is undertaken as an **initial response to violence or the immediate threat of violence**, where the capacity of local political structures and processes to manage conflict have broken down.

The **UK government's objective** in undertaking stabilisation interventions is to support local and regional partners in conflict-affected countries to **reduce violence, ensure basic security and facilitate peaceful political deal-making**, all of which should aim to **provide a foundation for building long-term stability**.

In supporting stabilisation, the UK adheres to three central **stabilisation principles**:

- **Protecting the means of survival:** Address any immediate security deficit to build space for peaceful political processes and – in time – support the restoration of long-term security, the rule of law and access to justice. The direct provision of security by external actors alone will not in itself achieve stabilisation. Stabilisation activities should focus on addressing key obstacles to the emergence of a stabilising political deal. Essential service delivery is a vital part of protecting the means of survival and forms an inherent part of stabilisation activities. Such engagement must be coordinated with other actors, including humanitarians.
- **Promoting and supporting a political process to reduce violence:** Stabilisation must work to support and foster political deals and bargains among key conflict elites and actors. These are vital to securing reductions in violent conflict, building support for more formal peace agreements and facilitating stable transitions out of conflict. Stabilisation activity must always be locally owned and requires the buy-in of local elites to be effective. Who we choose to support, however, carries risks, in that it may empower some warring parties to 'capture the state' and exclude wider political, social and economic participation in the post-conflict state.
- **Preparing a foundation for longer term stability:** There is no set period for stabilisation – it can range from months to years – but it is always a transitory activity contributing to the wider goal of creating the conditions for long-term stability. Shorter-term stabilisation interventions and other activities to build longer-term stability will often run simultaneously and overlap with other approaches, such as DFID'S Building Stability Framework.

A **conflict-sensitive approach** is vital in any stabilisation intervention, ensuring that interventions do not inadvertently fuel or exacerbate conflict, or sow the seeds for future conflict. A **gender-sensitive approach** is of equal importance, considering how gender norms and roles shape the effects, causes and drivers of conflict.

Stabilisation **activities are likely to involve local military actors possibly augmented by UK and/or allied forces**. An integrated civilian-military approach, underpinned by the UK's Fusion Doctrine, is vital to effective delivery. Activity undertaken with bilateral or multilateral partners requires broad agreement on the parameters and objectives.

It is **vital to identify and acknowledge difficult policy trade-offs**. There are considerable tensions between stabilisation actions to secure immediate security and reduce violent conflict and those activities designed to generate longer-term stability and resilience or respond to humanitarian needs. Setting up early mechanisms to manage risks and potential trade-offs should therefore be a priority.



# Chapter 1: The UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation

1. The UK government's objective in undertaking stabilisation interventions is to support local and regional partners in conflict-affected countries to reduce violence, ensure basic security and facilitate peaceful political deal-making, all of which should aim to provide a foundation for building long-term stability.
2. This document sets out the key elements of the UK's Approach to Stabilisation interventions ('the UK approach'), summarising the key themes from the UK Stabilisation Guide.<sup>4</sup> It establishes why and when the UK will engage in stabilisation and how this approach links to other conflict resolution tools and policy priorities. It describes the central principles of the UK's approach and sets out some of the policy dilemmas stabilisation interventions present.
3. The **UK Approach supports wider UK government strategic and policy frameworks**, including those articulated in the UK government's National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review (2015),<sup>5</sup> which incorporates and develops the Building Stability Overseas Strategy (2011).<sup>6</sup> It complements DFID's Building Stability Framework (2016),<sup>7</sup> which provides guidance on how to develop long-term stability. The UK Approach and the wider Stabilisation Guide are informed by the lessons identified by the Iraq Inquiry, and from recent interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Libya, South Sudan and elsewhere. The UK uses the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) as its main financial instrument to fund stabilisation.

## What is stabilisation?

4. **Stabilisation is an activity undertaken as an initial response to violence or the immediate threat of violence.** All stabilisation interventions will be different and shaped by context specific factors. But there are circumstances common to all conflict contexts in which the UK may wish to undertake stabilisation activities. Insecurity is likely to threaten the viability of the state and/or the wellbeing of its civilian population. The capacity of local political structures and processes to manage conflict is likely to have broken down. Violent conflict will have thrown the political settlement into turmoil, and national, local and regional actors will be competing to further their interests and authority. Security, justice and services will be absent or degraded, and threats to UK national security may be emerging.



**Stabilisation is an activity undertaken as an initial response to violence or the immediate threat of violence**



4 This document updates the UK's Approach to Stabilisation, last revised in 2014. For further information please see [www.gov.uk/stabilisation-unit](http://www.gov.uk/stabilisation-unit)

5 HM Government (2015) *National Security Strategy*, revised and updated in HM Government (2018) op. cit.

6 FCO, DFID and MOD (2011) op. cit.

7 DFID (2016) *Building Stability Framework*

5. Therefore, when undertaking stabilisation interventions, the UK seeks to **protect** the means of survival and restore basic security, **promote** and support a political process to reduce violence as well as **prepare** a foundation for longer term stability. These stabilisation principles are set out in more detail below. In doing so, the UK aims to help establish necessary foundations where – over time – structural stability is able to take hold through “political systems which are representative and legitimate, capable of managing conflict and change peacefully, and societies in which human rights and rule of law are respected, basic needs are met, security established and opportunities for social and economic development are open to all”.<sup>8</sup>
6. The **UK puts engagement with the politics of conflict at the heart of its stabilisation activity**. The UK seeks to help local partners restore security and create political opportunities and openings, such that a locally-determined path out of conflict can be found. Stabilisation should be seen as a process designed to facilitate this political objective, which needs to be managed flexibly with the understanding that any progress can easily be reversed.



### Case study: Sierra Leone 2000–02, a stabilisation success

Sierra Leone provides a positive example of how stabilisation can work in practice. The period between 2000 and 2002 saw the resolution to Sierra Leone's eleven-year conflict, largely due to an effective stabilisation intervention involving local, regional and international actors.

The British military intervention in May 2000 acted to restore and provide a guarantee of security trusted by all the warring parties and protected the population from further depredation. The development of a sustainable peace, in place since 2002, was only possible once both physical security and trust had been re-established. Previous peace agreements between the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the government failed to reflect the arrangements of power in the country. Mutual distrust, expedient deals between armed groups, and the failure of international peacekeepers to restrain the warring parties and enforce disarmament had allowed the conflict to continue.

Additionally, the British along with the United Nations peacekeeping force (UNAMSIL) and regional forces from Guinea were able to apply decisive military force in a way that convinced the RUF to enter into political negotiations. These negotiations brought the RUF leadership into a political process which provided reassurances about their post-conflict security as well as confirming their participation in future elections. This allowed for all armed groups to disarm and set in place the conditions for longer-term reform of the security sector and greater political inclusivity.

7. The **UK's engagement in stabilisation may take place alongside local military actors possibly augmented by UK and/or allied forces**. This requires an integrated approach, with civilian leads having access to military support that can provide security and – if necessary – reduce the threat posed by those unwilling to enter into a political process to end violence. This does not imply military forces will always be involved but that they can be called on if deemed necessary.

8 FCO, DFID and MOD (2011) op. cit.

8. The **parameters for stabilisation, with the option to use force, will be determined by the political and legal underpinning of the operation.** The UK may be involved on the basis of host-state consent. It may be involved on the basis of a United Nations Security Council mandate. In exceptional circumstances the UK reserves the right to act with neither host-state consent nor Security Council authorisation.<sup>9</sup>
9. Any **use of force as part of a stabilisation intervention must be directly linked to achieving the desired political end state.** UK forces may be involved directly in providing immediate physical security, through a bilateral or multilateral mission, through to support and training for local or regional military forces. UK military engagement may be to encourage conflict parties to enter into negotiations and to pursue their grievances through a peaceful political process. The use of force will change the balance of power and shift incentives, which will shape the broader political context. When undertaking stabilisation activity conscious political choices will have to be made and sides taken, which makes working politically a contested and difficult process.
10. The **UK Approach requires the conscious identification and acknowledgement of policy trade-offs.** This necessitates the recognition that while some stabilisation actions will secure immediate security and reduce violent conflict, they may be at odds with other activities designed to generate longer-term stability. In some cases they may even serve to undermine them. For example, while stabilisation activities may facilitate a political deal between elites which ends fighting, they may also entrench some of the political conditions under which the conflict started in the first place.
11. It is worth noting that the UK Approach sets out an idealised model of stabilisation. In reality delivery of stabilisation activities will be messier, contingent on the local contextual circumstances and defined by the required level of support to local authorities.

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*In reality delivery of stabilisation activities will be messier, contingent on the local contextual circumstances and defined by the required level of support to local authorities*  
 ”

### **Stabilisation's relationship to other approaches to tackling conflict**

12. There is a need to **differentiate stabilisation from other responses to violent conflict and instability**, some of which may be conducted in the same physical and temporal space. Understanding the different approaches and objectives allows for proper consideration of the dilemmas and trade-offs involved. In the past there has been a conflation of stabilisation and other concepts such as peacebuilding, early recovery, state-building and counterinsurgency. This confusion is compounded by the degree to which many of these approaches are pursued simultaneously in conflict contexts, and the absence of agreed definitions of stabilisation: the UN, for example, does not have one.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The legal and political context determines the extent to which the use of force, where necessary and appropriate, can be used to: constrain the behaviour of aggressors and deter further violence against the population of a conflict-affected state, contain the conflict, and limit violence being used as a political tool. In all instances the UK's use of force will also be constrained by applicable international laws.

<sup>10</sup> See Cedric de Conig, Chiyuki Aoi and John Karlsrud eds. (2017) *UN Peacekeeping Doctrine for a New Era: Adapting to Stabilisation, Protection and New Threats* (London: Routledge)

**13. While stabilisation should be seen as closely related to peacebuilding, there are differences.** Unlike stabilisation, peacebuilding situates itself as a transformative activity designed to address the underlying drivers of conflict, whether it be to prevent conflict, resolve conflict or to consolidate post-conflict peace. In some contexts, stabilisation activities may support and create the foundations for achieving peacebuilding outcomes. UN peacebuilding, however, requires relatively permissive environments where state capacity already exists, in contrast to stabilisation. DFID's Building Stability Framework sets out a similar approach to peacebuilding, seeking to help countries and communities manage change peacefully.<sup>11</sup>

**14. State-building, along with peacebuilding, has also been a central component of many external interventions in conflict-affected countries.** In using developmental tools to improve state capacity, state-building also seeks transformative change. But

it risks being destabilising in conflict contexts, where the division of power and resources is being violently contested. State-building, as practiced in many contexts, has often involved the imposition of inappropriate templates and unrealistic timeframes. In contrast to stabilisation, both peacebuilding and state-building are long-term activities, going well beyond restoring security and establishing political processes to reduce violent conflict.

**15. Counterinsurgency (COIN) has frequently been confused and conflated with stabilisation,** especially during the implementation of military-led 'hot stabilisation', most obviously during the international interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. This has compounded the tendency to see stabilisation as a form of state-building designed to win over popular support as part of a COIN campaign. COIN, like stabilisation, acknowledges the primacy of politics in addressing instability, but there are several significant differences, most notably that there is a heavy emphasis on supporting a state and its government against insurgents, whereas in some instances stabilisation might work against the state if that is deemed to be the source of instability and violent conflict.

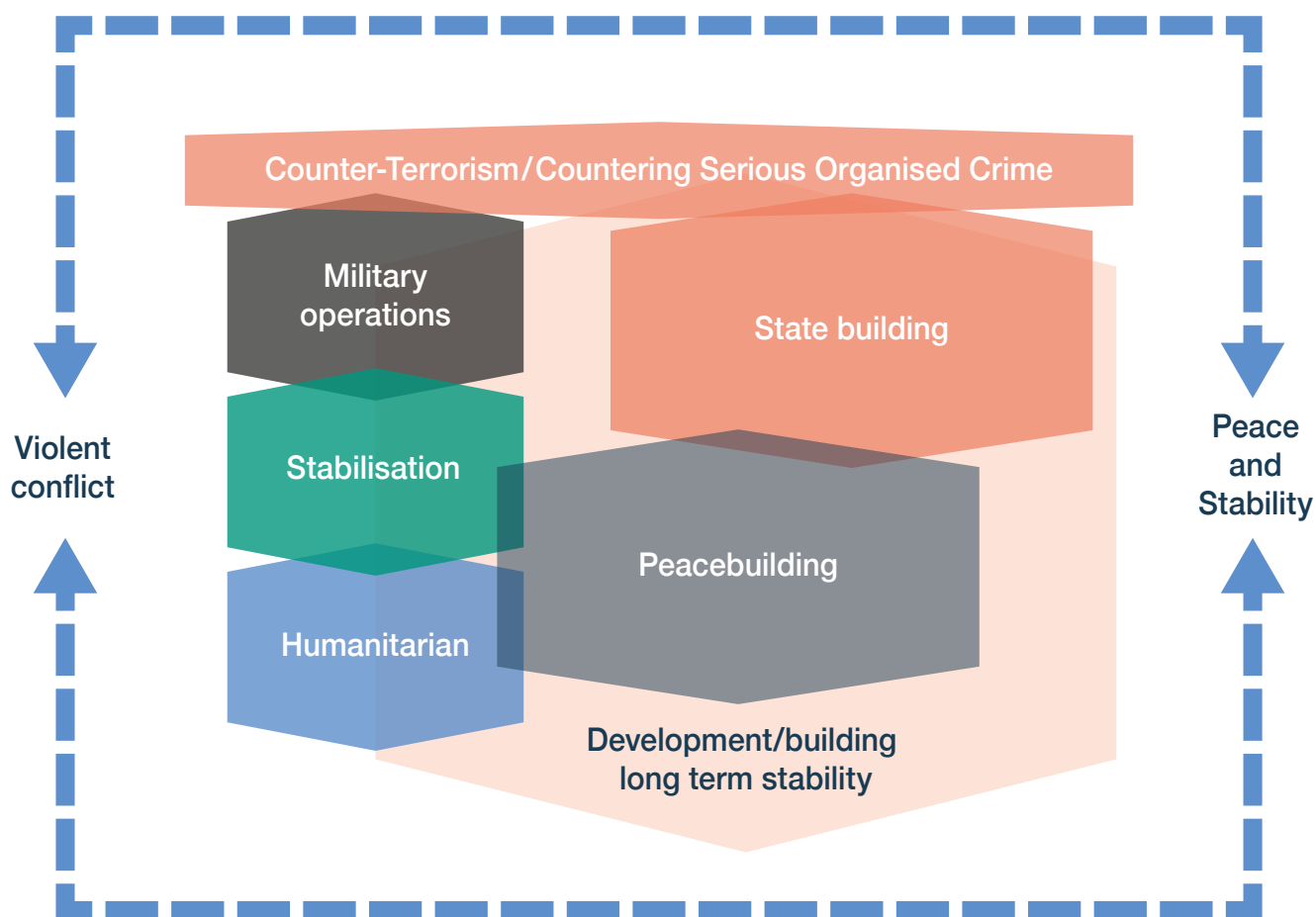
**Peacebuilding** is defined by the United Nations as 'a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.'

*UN Resolution on Review of United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture (2016); see also UN Secretary-General Report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, 18 January 2018*

**State-building** is defined by the OECD as 'action to develop the capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state in relation to effective political processes for negotiating the mutual demands between state and societal groups.'

11 DFID (2016) op. cit., executive summary para. 3

## The relationship between stabilisation and other responses to violent conflict and instability\*



"Stabilisation is distinct from concepts such as peacebuilding, state-building, and counter-terrorism. However, these approaches are often pursued simultaneously in conflict contexts. This diagram indicates roughly how they overlap, but is only intended as an accessible visual representation of a complex inter-relationship." \*Diagram adapted from S.Collinson, S. Elhawary and R Muggah (2010), *States of fragility: stabilisation and its implications for humanitarian action* (Humanitarian Policy Group/ Overseas Development Institute), p.11.

**16. Stabilisation efforts will often take place alongside other interventions, such as humanitarian engagement.** In particular, it is important to acknowledge that humanitarian aid is often delivered in the same space, on the basis of assessed needs and according to the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.<sup>12</sup> Agreeing coordination mechanisms should be a priority to manage any potential tensions with humanitarian and other interventions. Stabilisation actors should also refrain from any action that could contribute to the politicisation and securitisation of humanitarian aid.

<sup>12</sup> International commitments in this field are detailed in the UK's humanitarian policy paper.

- DFID (2017) *Saving lives, building resilience, reforming the system: the UK Government's Humanitarian Reform Policy*
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2015) *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery*
- DFID (2017) Delivering differently in Protracted Conflict and Refugee Crises. Unpublished

## Stabilisation principles

### Protecting the means of survival and restoring basic security

17. A **priority in any stabilisation intervention must be to address any immediate security deficit to build space for peaceful political processes** and – in time – support the restoration of long-term security, the rule of law and access to justice.
18. The **direct provision of security by external actors alone will not in itself achieve stabilisation**. Such interventions are simply ways of restoring security and creating space for political processes. Security and justice issues **are at the heart of questions about who holds power and how that power is managed**, and usually form part of both formal peace negotiations and more informal political deals.
19. **External actors must be careful not to import assumptions about what form the security and justice sectors should take**, providing templates based on Western security and justice models. This can lead us to misunderstand who is currently either providing or undermining security and justice and develop overambitious or misaligned interventions. We risk assuming that the main reason that there is violent conflict is because the state has been unable to suppress it, and thus that if external actors help to strengthen state security institutions, it will be possible to end the conflict.
20. Engagement must be underpinned by a consideration of the livelihoods and dignity of civilian populations caught up in violent conflict. Immediate interventions should focus on **addressing key obstacles to the emergence of a stabilising political deal**. In doing so it is important to consider the nature of violence predating, during and after conflict. While stabilisation needs to reduce violent conflict as much as possible, it may also be the case that addressing all forms of structural violence in a society will not be possible during stabilisation.<sup>13</sup>
21. Security and justice interventions in stabilisation contexts also **set the foundations for longer-term stability**. While the early stages of stabilisation may require robust action to establish security, as the situation begins to stabilise it will necessary to transition towards more civilian-led and ideally more democratic forms of maintaining security.
22. It is advantageous not to think of programmatic activities in the security and justice sphere as one-off initiatives aimed at single issues but rather to take a wider perspective, considering how all state and non-state actors interact with each other. This will also assist in addressing short-term needs preparing for the longer longer-term development of security and justice.



*The direct provision of security by external actors alone will not in itself achieve stabilisation. Such interventions are simply ways of restoring security and creating space for political processes*



13 See Stabilisation Unit (2013) *Security Sector Stabilisation*

- 23. Evidence has shown that the delivery, or non-delivery, of services in a violent conflict context can have a considerable impact, both positive and negative, on the extent and trajectory of conflict.**<sup>14</sup> Effective service delivery interventions must be founded on a clear understanding of the context. This includes an appreciation of what came before the armed conflict, notably the way that services form part of the distribution of power and resources, the nature of violence, and, critically, beneficiary expectations.
- 24. There is a role for essential service delivery (i.e. health, education, power and fuel, communications, water and sanitation) to operate in support of stabilisation and to pave the way for broader stability.** During stabilisation, service delivery interventions should focus on protecting the means of survival, allowing the population to resume their livelihoods and access to markets and services without fear of predation, exclusion or denial of essential resources.
- 25. Protecting a population adversely affected by conflict will not solely be a stabilisation activity.** The UK's humanitarian policy commits the UK to a principled, non-political approach to humanitarian aid, autonomous from political, military, security or economic objectives. Stabilisation actors should exercise caution to avoid politicising and or securitising humanitarian action, which could risk making humanitarian activities and assisted populations a target for violence.
- 26. Service delivery interventions must be coordinated with humanitarian and development actors.** Stabilisation actors should take deliberate and systematic steps to establish mechanisms to identify and manage the opportunities, risks and tensions associated with coexistence of stabilisation, humanitarian and development approaches. Stabilisation efforts in support of service delivery can be considered where they have a comparative advantage and address a critical gap. They should be avoided where longer-term development initiatives can fill the gap, or where critical needs are addressed through humanitarian assistance.
- 27. Service delivery interventions do not automatically increase the legitimacy of those providing them.** Failure to deliver services will however disadvantage an already vulnerable population affected by conflict, and deepen further political disaffection and existing grievances. Although the delivery of services will not elicit popular consent, it may act as a vehicle for local authorities to re-engage with communities as to what they want and how it should best be delivered.
- 28. Service delivery interventions as part of stabilisation should not seek to be transformative and should have appropriate levels of ambition.** They should prioritise giving the population access to essential services in a broad-based, non-exclusionary manner, while working to maintain national systems for delivery and accountability where they already exist. They need to be sensitive to the fact that how a service is delivered (in terms of accountability and responsiveness) can be as important as what is delivered.

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*Failure to deliver services will however disadvantage an already vulnerable population affected by conflict, and deepen further political disaffection and existing grievances*

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14 Jonathan Di John, Simon Carl O'Meally, Richard Spencer Hogg (2017) *Social service delivery in violent contexts: achieving results against the odds – a report from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal* (Washington DC: World Bank Group)

29. **UK actors should be aware that delivering services can have the effect of generating revenues (rents) for local political elites** that can often underpin the local post-conflict status quo. While rents can act as a 'peace dividend' for local elites, in other situations they can act to distort and jeopardise post-conflict developmental outcomes. Political and military actors may seek to manipulate patterns of service delivery and perceptions around them to their advantage. Uneven access to services across societal groups or regions is also likely to create grievances and should be avoided wherever possible.

### Promoting and supporting a political process to reduce violence

30. **Stabilisation interventions must work to support and foster political deals and bargains among key conflict elites and actors.**<sup>15</sup> These are vital to securing reductions in major conflict violence, building support for more formal peace agreements and facilitating more stable transitions out of conflict. External interveners must minimise actions and interventions that harm, distort or prevent these vital local political processes while still seizing viable opportunities to improve their inclusivity.
31. **External actors must undertake a careful analysis of the key conflict elites and the deals and bargains that exist between them,** the underlying division of power and resources, as well as an understanding of how any intervention may affect these dynamics. These dynamics must be looked at in the broadest terms, factoring in local, national, regional and transnational actors and their interconnections.
32. **External political interventions can build trust and confidence and support the emergence of stabilising political deals between conflict elites.** Issues around privileged access to power and resources and degrees of inclusivity are likely to be central to such interventions. External actors can help these tentative political processes stick and hold through the judicious use of resources. Geographic and thematic expertise and resources can provide important support. But external actors should avoid trying to control these highly 'local' processes from afar.
33. **Externally-backed peace processes and agreements that are significantly misaligned or out of sync with the underlying distribution of power and resources are likely to fail.** If one is already in place, policy makers should consider which activities will help foster local support for an agreement, or reassess its scope and ambition, advocating an iterative, sequenced approach to political engagement that enhances opportunities for political and economic inclusion where possible.

15 C Cheng, J Goodhand and P Meehan (2018) *Supporting Elite Bargains to Reduce Violent Conflict Synthesis Paper* (Stabilisation Unit)

**34. Engagement in these political processes brings considerable trade-offs.** Bargains and deals between conflict elites can de-escalate major conflict, but can limit the possibility of more inclusive change, and themselves result in elite capture, other less visible forms of violence (such as domestic violence) and continued fragility. When planning interventions, policy makers and practitioners must recognise that the transition from war to peace is never linear. The emergence of informal political deals rarely lead to a formal peace process which culminates neatly in an inclusive political outcome.



*When planning interventions, policy makers and practitioners must recognise that the transition from war to peace is never linear. The emergence of informal political deals rarely lead to a formal peace process which culminates neatly in an inclusive political outcome*



**35. There are greater opportunities for more inclusive and equitable outcomes when the post-war transition entails a significant break from pre-war structures.** These outcomes are, in turn, more likely to contribute to structural stability which proves to be resilient and sustainable. At the same time, where there is misalignment between the formal peace agreement (and the new institutions and structures it is likely to generate) and the actual division of power and resources on the ground, there is a greater risk of a return to conflict.

### Preparing a foundation for longer-term stability

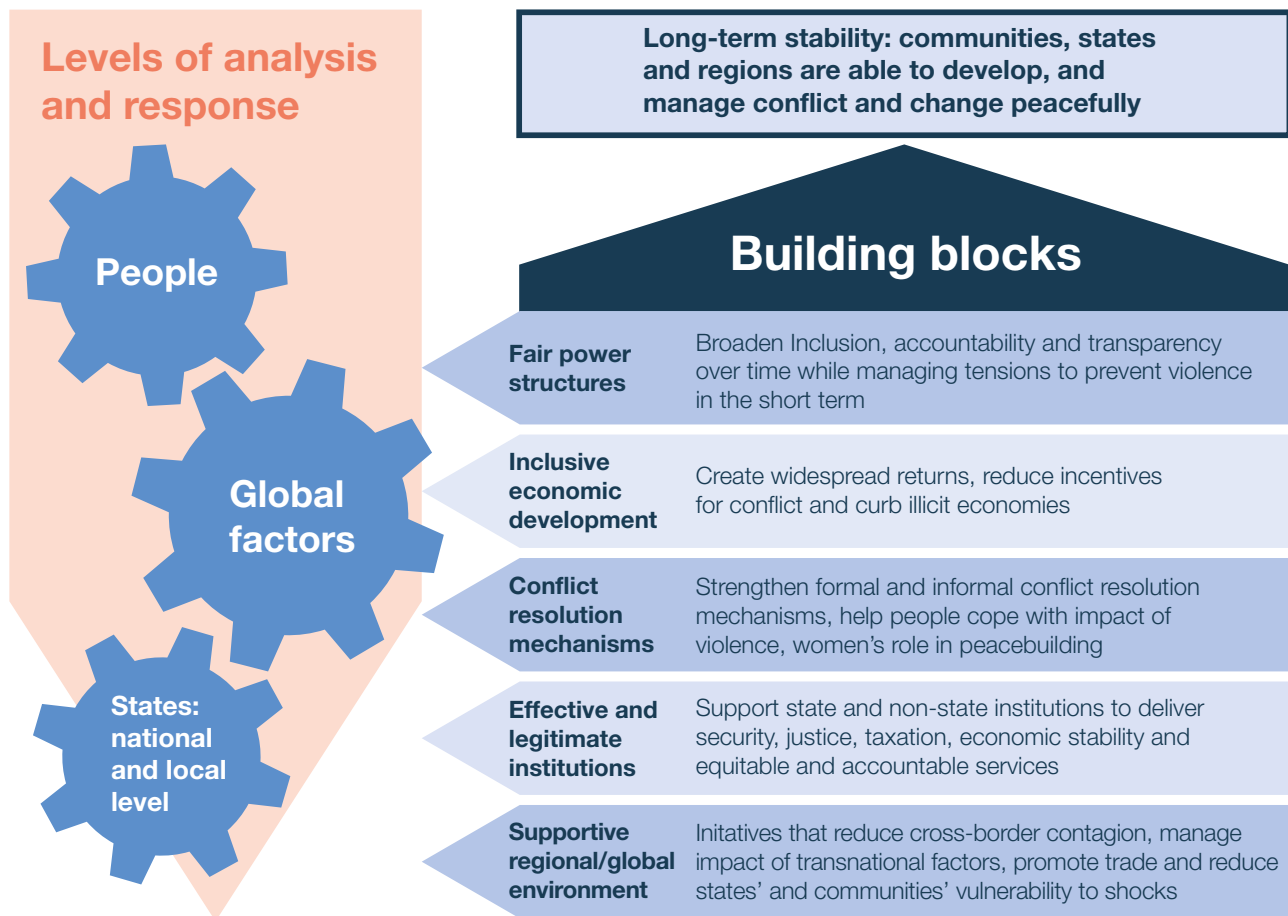
**36. Stabilisation interventions must help build a foundation for transitions out of conflict and longer-term stability.** Even when stabilisation activities successfully end immediate violence, provide security and facilitate deal-making, the risk of a return to violence in the future may still remain high if the underlying causes of the conflict remain unaddressed. As such, preparing for long-term stability is a fundamental component of stabilisation.

**37.** The 2011 cross-government Building Stability Overseas Strategy discusses 'structural stability', "which is built on the consent of the population, is resilient and flexible in the face of shocks and can evolve over time as the context changes".<sup>16</sup> DFID's Building Stability Framework describes long-term stability as a condition where "communities, states and regions are able to develop, and manage conflict and change peacefully".<sup>17</sup> Stability allows communities, societies and states, in the context of a supportive regional environment, to enact transformative change through state building, peace building, and development processes which enable the peaceful contestation of power and start to address grievances. In particular, it requires the consolidation of political arrangements which cannot be imposed from the outside.

<sup>16</sup> FCO, DFID and MOD (2011) op. cit.

<sup>17</sup> DFID (2016) op. cit.

## The Building Stability Framework



38. **DFID's Building Stability Framework sets out five key building blocks for longer-term stability** in states emerging from, affected by or at risk of conflict:

- fair power structures which broaden inclusion, accountability and transparency over time while managing tensions to prevent violence in the short term;
- inclusive economic development that creates widespread returns across society and reduces incentives for conflict and illicit economies;
- conflict resolution mechanisms, both formal and informal, that help manage conflict, help people cope with the legacies of violent conflict and strengthen the role of women;
- effective and legitimate institutions, both state and non-state that build trust with those they govern and grow in effectiveness over time;
- supportive regional environment and resilience to transnational stresses and shocks (see the Building Stability Framework diagram).

39. **Shorter-term stabilisation interventions and longer-term efforts to build stability will often run simultaneously and overlap.** For example, conflict resolution mechanisms, such as inter-group peacebuilding initiatives between social groups, will often exist parallel to stabilisation efforts, as well as efforts to create a supportive regional environment. In addition to these temporal differences in approach there may also be spatial variation, as different localities in a country may also be in different stages requiring either short-term stabilisation activity or will be sufficiently secure and politically stable for longer efforts to build stability.

40. **Stabilisation activities influence transitions towards the outcomes envisioned in the Building Stability Framework.** The nature of a political deal between elites to end violence will shape the extent to which power structures are inclusive. This, in turn, will shape institution-building and how inclusive future economic development is. For those directing or delivering stabilisation activities, this makes considering how they can contribute to the building blocks for lasting stability critical. While in some cases outcomes will be complimentary, in others there may be trade-offs that need to be honestly assessed against broader UK objectives.
41. There is **no set period for stabilisation – it can range from months to years – but it is always a transitory activity.** The timing of efforts to shift the balance of effort between stabilisation objectives and those of building of longer-term stability is ultimately a matter of judgement. It is not a question of absolute standards but rather what can be said to be 'good enough'. A key consideration is whether a collapse in basic security is still likely and whether early recovery work has been achieved ensuring sufficient popular access to essential services. Above all, it requires a sufficiently durable political agreement, which can become more inclusive over time, to prevent a re-occurrence of violent conflict.
42. Any move to **a longer-term 'stability'-focused intervention needs to be owned by the host government.** This will be a particular issue where the transition involves the withdrawal of foreign forces that have been supporting security. This must be carefully negotiated to avoid counter-productive approaches. Downstream actions should take place within an agreed multinational and inter-agency framework.

### Countering threats to the UK

43. **Stabilisation interventions increasingly take place in contexts where the UK is also seeking to address cross-border threats, transnational crime and violent extremism.** In these dynamic and multi-faceted environments, an adaptive approach is required. The interconnectivity between different regions, events and movements, and the inter-relationship between non-state armed groups and organised crime networks has narrowed the divide between 'upstream' security issues in countries affected by conflict and instability and domestic national security issues.
44. **Constraining insurgent or criminal groups' activity can yield dividends when integrated within a wider stabilisation campaign.** But this is a long-term endeavour. Countering violent non-state groups and transnational organised crime is inherently difficult, especially in contexts where such groups have either captured state structures or where they benefit from considerable support.
45. **Interventions should be informed by analysis that accounts for political and economic drivers of support for such groups and the role of inclusion and exclusion.** This will help avoid the risk that overly technical solutions fail to address the key drivers of conflict and crime.

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*Countering violent non-state groups and transnational organised crime is inherently difficult, especially in contexts where such groups have either captured state structures or where they benefit from considerable support*

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46. In some circumstances, **the overriding priority of a stabilisation intervention may generate real trade-offs with apparent national security threats.** For example, counter terrorism objectives may rule out dialogue with powerful elites and even commit the UK to use force against them. Their exclusion from political deal-making may mean that these deals do not reflect the reality of the arrangements of political power. 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) making security deals with warlords and powerful criminal actors.

### Conflict sensitivity and stabilisation

47. **An adoption of a conflict-sensitive approach is vital in any stabilisation intervention.** This entails understanding conflict dynamics in any given context, and taking deliberate actions to minimise the potentially negative effects and maximise the benefits of any intervention.
48. **In stabilisation contexts, this means ensuring that interventions do not inadvertently fuel or exacerbate conflict, or sow the seeds for future conflict.** Stabilisation contexts are by their very nature highly volatile and dynamic. They are situations where rapid change makes understanding the political context, and how external intervention might interact with that context, both challenging and time-consuming. However, conflict sensitivity demands that our actions be determined not only by an ongoing and regularly-refreshed understanding of the rapidly changing conflict dynamics, but of the pre-existing power structures underlying them.
49. A conflict-sensitive approach to stabilisation acknowledges that ‘not all good things come together’. When working to restore security and facilitate a peaceful political process to reduce violent conflict, there will be a requirement for effective prioritisation and sequencing to manage competing demands. While the concept of ‘first do no harm’ is laudable it is arguably unachievable in stabilisation contexts, not least because non-intervention can cause harm. The goal should therefore be to identify and minimise harm within a broader framework of understanding the required priorities along with potential trade-offs and dilemmas.
50. **Stabilisation interventions will impact the context they take place in, both in positive and sometimes negative ways.** Like other interventions, they may unintentionally exacerbate human suffering and humanitarian need. Stabilisation actors should therefore be sensitive to the context they operate in, and the level and drivers of humanitarian need, and local coping mechanisms and resilience. Stabilisation interventions should work with others where appropriate, to build the evidence of their impact. They should adopt adequate measures to minimise any negative impact they have on disaster resilience,<sup>18</sup> and refrain where possible from actions that will exacerbate humanitarian needs.

18 DFID defines disaster resilience as “the ability of countries, communities and households to manage change, by maintaining or transforming living standards in the face of shocks or stresses – such as earthquakes, drought or violent conflict – without compromising their long-term prospects.” DFID (2011) *Defining Disaster Resilience: A DFID Approach Paper*, para. 2.1, p. 8



### Case study: Afghanistan, a conflict-insensitive approach

The illicit cultivation and trade in opium has been a central conflict driver in Afghanistan. There is significant evidence that the Taliban has, since 2002, raised millions of dollars in revenue by taxing farmers and smugglers involved in the opium trade. Consequently, counter-narcotics became a key pillar of coalition stabilisation objectives.

Alternative livelihood programming was central to coalition efforts to diminish and eradicate poppy cultivation. While such programmes did successfully lead some farmers to diversify away from poppy production, such gains were short-lived and offset by increases elsewhere. In many cases such programmes contributed to increased poppy production and in turn Taliban revenues by, for example, improving infrastructure such as roads and irrigation systems.

Sources: 'Counternarcotics: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan', Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), June 2018; Christopher J. Coyne, Abigail R. Hall Blanco and Scott Burns, 'The War on Drugs in Afghanistan: Another Failed Experiment with Interdiction', *The Independent Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2016.

## Gender and stabilisation

51. **Violent conflict is experienced differently by women, men, boys and girls.** As in peacetime, gender defines the expectations on women and men in conflict.<sup>19</sup> In conflict, the type of harm women and men face is also influenced by gender-specific vulnerabilities. In many contexts men and boys are at increased risk of forced recruitment by armed actors, detention and torture, including the use of sexual violence.
52. **Women and girls bear a specific burden of harm in conflict,** and are at increased risk of different forms of gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence and practices such as child, early and forced marriage, which may ostensibly be aimed at protection. Conflict exacerbates gender inequality. In and after conflict, maternal mortality increases, girls' education decreases, and the space for women's exercise of public voice and participation shrinks.
53. A **gender-sensitive conflict analysis** helps to understand how gender norms<sup>20</sup> and roles shape the effects, causes and drivers of conflict (see case study). Stabilisation interventions will be more effective when based on an understanding of the gendered differences in experiences of the conflict.

19 Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men.

20 Gender norms refer to the standards and expectations to which women and men generally conform, within a range defined by a particular society, culture or community at a point in time. See [European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

54. In all UK government activity, gender equality is a priority in its own right.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, gender equality correlates strongly with peace and stability. Societies that are more equal experience less inter- and intra-state conflict, and less intense conflict when it does occur.<sup>22</sup> Stabilisation activities should therefore promote gender equality and be gender-sensitive by:
- **supporting** women's meaningful participation in peace processes, helping increase the likelihood of an agreement being reached, implemented and sustained;
  - **addressing** the context specific harm women and men have suffered in the conflict;
  - **avoiding** entrenching harmful norms, particularly when these norms have been altered or made more extreme by the conflict;
  - **promoting** gender equality where possible in a locally relevant and owned way, recognising the trade-offs that will occur between support for equality and efforts to support other stabilisation activities.



### Case study: Gender norms as contributing drivers of conflict in South Sudan

Cattle raiding in **South Sudan** has taken place for centuries. It has become increasingly violent due to the proliferation of small arms. Gender norms are a contributing factor to the ongoing practice. Research suggests that for adolescent boys owning a gun and participating in cattle raids are a rite of passage, and for men a symbol of manhood which confers social status. Similarly, marriage is a means to attain manhood. However, in pastoralist communities this requires the payment of bride price in the form of cattle to a prospective bride's family. Increases in bride price since 2005 have fuelled cattle raiding and therefore wider conflict, as men seek to obtain sufficient cattle to pay the bride price.

Source: Saferworld (2014). 'Masculinities, Conflict and Peacebuilding: Perspectives on men through a gender lens'

## How do we do stabilisation: an integrated approach to applying the Fusion Doctrine

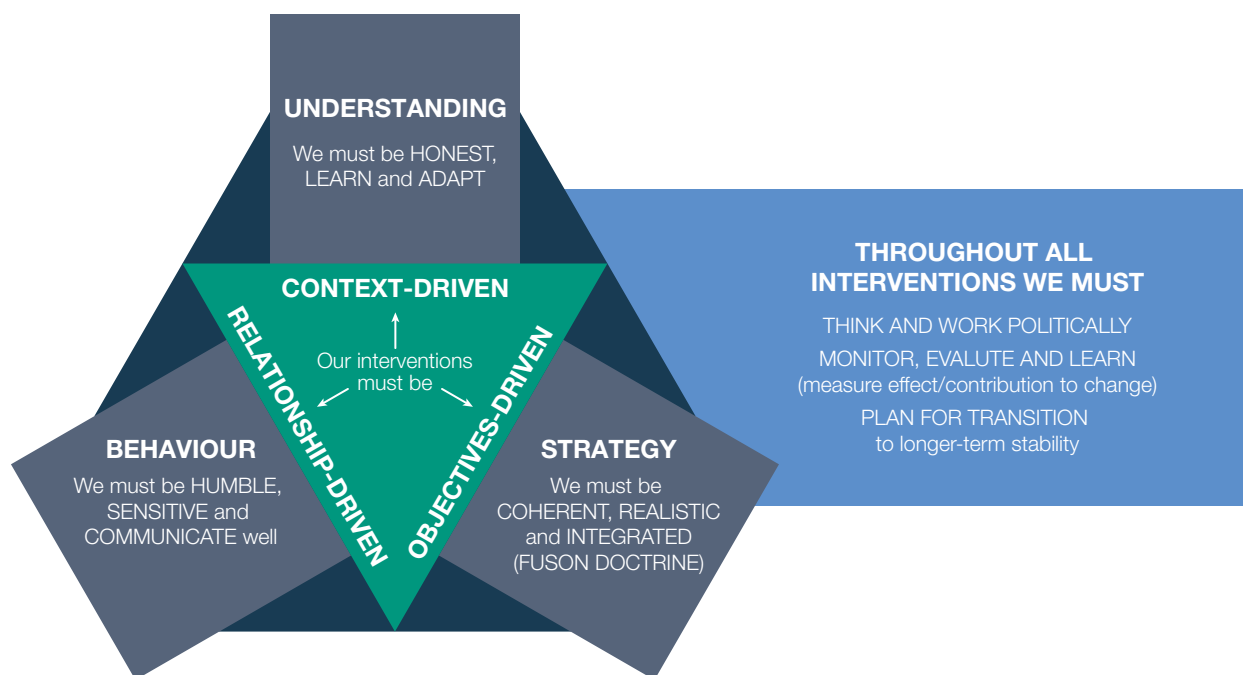
55. The UK government uses the Fusion Doctrine "to deploy security, economic and influence capabilities to protect, promote and project our national security, economic and influence goals".<sup>23</sup> The Fusion Doctrine calls for better use of all of the UK's capabilities, from economic levers, through military resources to wider diplomatic and cultural influence, to provide the National Security Council with better choices. Stabilisation, given its inherent complexity, requires such an approach in order to deliver a coherent and effective cross-government response, coordinated effectively with our international partners.

21 UK Government (2018) *UK national action plan on women, peace and security 2018 to 2022*

22 See Sian Herbert (2014) *Links between women's empowerment (or lack of) and outbreaks of violent conflict*, GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report

23 HM Government (2018) op. cit.

## Essential elements for effective delivery



56. The **UK's approach to delivering a stabilisation intervention should embody an integrated civil-military approach**, with clear civilian direction and leadership. An integrated approach is undertaken within the Fusion Doctrine through forming a single multi-disciplinary and multi-departmental team (virtual or real), improving the flow of information, and contributing to a shared understanding to ensure greater effect.
57. **Approaches to stabilisation should self-evidentially be tailored to address the specific characteristics of the conflict.** This approach should balance past experience (in the form of lessons and good practice tested against the specifics of the current conflict) with appropriate stabilisation methodology.
58. The next chapter sets out the seven key issues that will allow those engaging in or planning for stabilisation-related policy and programming to develop a response tailored to the context, rather than applying ill-fitting, templated approaches developed from elsewhere.

## Working multilaterally

59. This paper describes the UK approach to stabilisation. However, the **UK government usually seeks to work in partnership with its allies and with multilateral organisations.** Stabilisation approaches which are based on broad international ownership benefit from greater legitimacy, as well as being able to draw on a greater range of resources and expertise.

60. How the UK government engages multilaterally is dependent upon a range of factors, including the extent and nature of UK national interests, the UK government's comparative advantage, physical presence, and the activities of other stakeholders. The UK government attaches high importance to reinforcing and strengthening the rules-based international system, including using our role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to try to identify, prevent and resolve conflicts.



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61. **Working multilaterally demands that we achieve broad agreement on the parameters and objectives of the intervention**, which can be taxing, not least because mandates for multilateral missions can be subject to a variety of interpretations. This can present challenges to the stabilisation approach because it has an intensely political orientation and focus.
62. Currently there is no internationally recognised definition for stabilisation and no accepted standards or best practices. Reaching a working definition and accommodation with international and multilateral partners will always be challenging but is absolutely necessary.



### Case study: Iraq 2015–17 and contemporary stabilisation

The campaign to remove Daesh from northern Iraq and restore the authority of the Government of Iraq between 2015 and 2017 usefully illustrates contemporary stabilisation operations. The operation was led, planned and executed by the Government of Iraq with international coalition forces and the UNDP acting in a supporting role.

The immediate priority was to restore security and protect both the Iraqi population and state from further Daesh aggression. In a series of operations, the Iraqi security forces, supported by largely Shia militias, regained control of the urban centres in the north east culminating in the liberation of Mosul in 2017. Coalition forces acted to advise and support the Iraqi security forces.

Coordinated with this military activity, the UNDP, using a multi-donor Funding Facility for Stabilisation, addressed both the immediate humanitarian crisis and the large number of internally displaced persons while also implementing relatively simple projects designed to restore essential services to the population.

Given Daesh's extreme political ideology, direct dialogue with the group has played a much less prominent role in this stabilisation operation. Nonetheless, deal-making between national and local Iraqi elites has determined the post conflict redistribution of formal and informal power. The long-term process of building sustainable stability has begun, but major issues such as the grievances between the dominant Shia and marginalised Sunni and minority communities remain unresolved.

## Stabilisation tensions and trade-offs: what lessons have we learnt?

- 63. There is a need to recognise the significant trade-offs and tensions between stabilisation actions to secure short-term stability and activities designed to generate longer-term stability and resilience.** External interveners are often forced to focus on preventing the worst outcomes, such as major human rights violations and mass atrocities.
- 64. More transformative agendas that are not underpinned by supporting political deals and bargains will not prove sustainable.** External interventions that are significantly misaligned with the underlying division of power and resources will fail. These challenges are compounded by the fact that at the point of intervention, when there is with the greatest potential to affect change and cause harm, understanding of the specific context and its political dynamics will be at its lowest.
- “at the point of intervention, when there is with the greatest potential to affect change and cause harm, understanding of the specific context and its political dynamics will be at its lowest”*
- 65. External interveners must act iteratively and prioritise.** The rushed and uncoordinated pursuit of transformative policies designed to (for example) counter criminal activities, target violent extremism and promote inclusive economic development all risk undermining the consent of local actors for the very deal that has led to a reduction in violence.
- 66. The need for the consent of local parties gives them a significant advantage.** Conditionality and carefully calibrated support will be necessary to prevent dominant elites from ‘capturing the state’ and excluding wider political and social participation. In keeping as many key actors within a particular political process as possible, external interveners may jeopardise the inclusion of marginalised groups. Often, not all local parties will consent to an external intervention. Even when in support of a state, consent must be constantly negotiated.
- 67. External interventions will always distort local politics.** External interventions provide new economic inputs, generating additional opportunities for corrupt officials, warlords and conflict entrepreneurs. Equally, there is a danger that, in trying to use local forces to provide security, interveners shift power dynamics in the short term and may considerably reduce the possibility of conducting longer-term security sector reform.
- 68. These lessons highlight the need for prioritisation, pragmatism, empathy, humility and the recognition of the impact and limits of external interventions.**



## Chapter 2: Stabilisation in practice – essential elements for effective delivery

**There are seven essential elements that apply to all stabilisation activities at both operational and strategic levels. They are not sequential but work in combination.**

1. **Driving factors – context, objectives and relationships:** Our actions must be driven by the context, core stabilisation objectives, and by our relationships with others operating in that context.
2. **Thinking and working politically:** We cannot separate ‘political’ from ‘technical’ stabilisation activity. All actions have political ramifications. We will be judged for how we operate as much as for what we do.
3. **Understanding – learning, honesty and adaptability:** We must improve our understanding constantly and adapt our activities as we learn. We must be honest about our influence, institutional strengths and weaknesses.
4. **Strategy – coherence, realism and integration:** We must continuously reinforce our strategic intent by pushing for the maximum possible strategic coherence, being realistic in our objectives, and facilitating internal integration and coordination with partners.
5. **Behaviour – humility, sensitivity and communication:** We must act with humility, consider conflict sensitivity and gender norms, and communicate our actions clearly and consistently.
6. **Monitoring evaluation and learning:** We must dedicate resources to this and integrate it throughout all activity.
7. **Planning for transition:** We must plan the transition from stabilisation towards longer-term peace and stability building from the start as decisions made during stabilisation will affect longer-term dynamics.

## Introduction

1. The UK Approach to Stabilisation sets out how the UK government understands stabilisation and explains the distinction between stabilisation and other responses to violent conflict and instability. It defines stabilisation in terms of its overall objectives: supporting local and regional partners in conflict-affected countries to reduce violence, ensuring basic human security, and facilitating peaceful political deal-making, which all provide a foundation for building long-term stability. These are fleshed out in three key objectives:
  - the need to **protect** the means of survival and restoring basic security;
  - the need to **promote** and support a political process to reduce violence;
  - the need to **prepare** a foundation for longer-term stability.
2. The rest of this guide looks at how to translate these objectives into the implementation of stabilisation activities on the ground. The following chapters consider how a range of key thematic activities (security and justice, political deal-making, service delivery, and combatting transnational security threats) contribute towards stabilisation and how the scope and objectives of thematic activities differ during stabilisation compared to other environments.

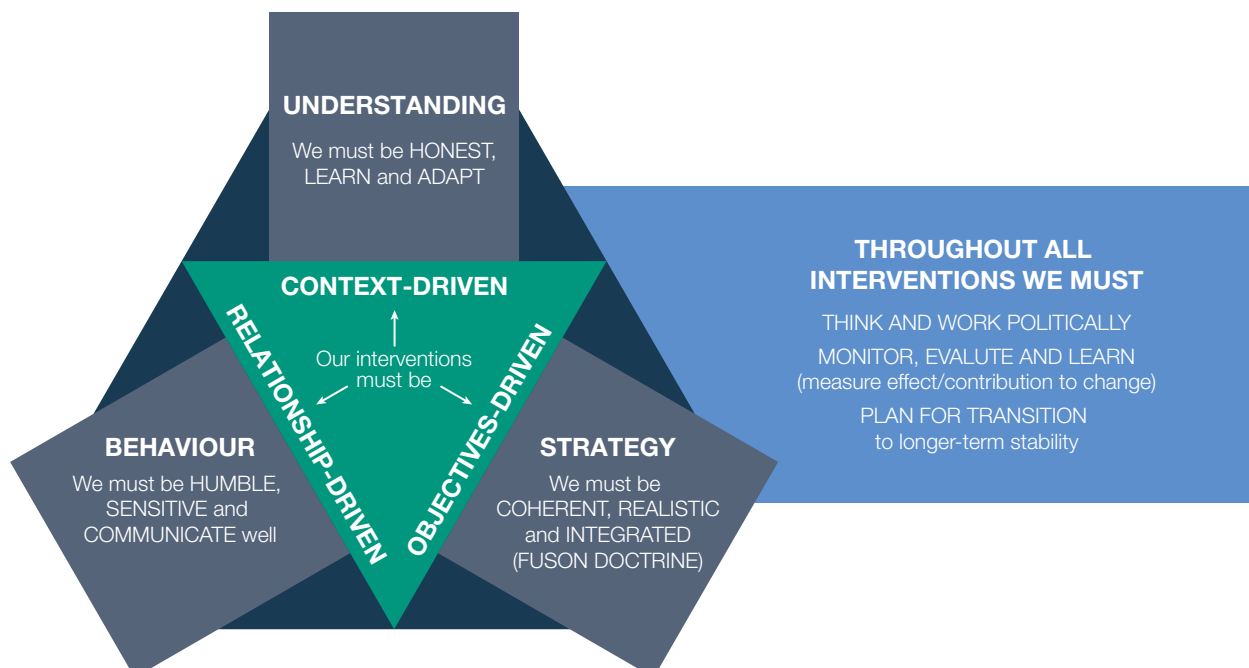
3. While each thematic area has its own issues and challenges, experience has shown that certain overarching considerations apply to all stabilisation activities. Common themes emerge from debriefing interviews, lessons-learning exercises, formal reviews and evaluations which can be considered as **seven essential elements** that apply equally at operational and strategic levels and are necessary for successful action:
- driving factors – context, objectives and relationships;
  - thinking and working politically;
  - understanding – learning, honesty and adaptability;
  - strategy – coherence, realism and integration;
  - behaviour – humility, sensitivity and communication;
  - monitoring evaluation and learning;
  - planning for transition.
4. These are not abstract principles to which we commit rhetorically while getting on with the job as usual. Stabilisation involves working on complex and challenging issues in relation to state-society relations (who has power, who can use force, who provides or threatens security) in the most insecure and challenging contexts. It is difficult and uncertain work, and we must implement existing learning about how to operate. This does not mean following a 'best practice' template or implementing an idealised programme but does mean tailoring activities to match the situation. This chapter is not a set of instructions but a 'handrail' which aims to ensure that we regularly ask ourselves the right questions. The answers will depend on the context, available resources and the objectives of our activities.

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*Stabilisation involves working on complex and challenging issues in relation to state-society relations (who has power, who can use force, who provides or threatens security) in the most insecure and challenging contexts*

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### Essential elements for effective delivery



## Essential element 1: Driving factors – context, objectives and relationships

5. The Armed Forces have a maxim: “Don’t try to make the ground fit the map”. Stabilisation activities **must understand and accept the situation on the ground** and address the reality of the specific context. Our actions must be driven by the context, the core stabilisation objectives, and by our relationships with others operating in that context (local actors, both state and non-state, but also other international actors). This contrasts with actions that are overly supply-driven, i.e. activities based on what it is easiest for us to deliver, rather than what is most needed. It also contrasts with actions that are overly shaped by the domestic politics of external actors.

### Conflict, Stability and Security Fund

The **Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF)** works to build peace and stability in countries and regions suffering from some of the world’s most difficult and long-running conflicts. From the top down the CSSF takes a cross-government approach to support and deliver programmes that build stability and tackle fragility. It takes direction from the National Security Council, which includes secretaries of state from across government. Decisions on funding are determined at every level by cross-government boards which incentivise departments to work together to deliver government objectives. Programmes blend Official Development Assistance (ODA) and non-ODA funding which allows departments to deliver a broader range of interventions.

The model builds on lessons from the Iraq Inquiry, which highlighted the importance of departments working together in an integrated way, both in London and on the ground, towards common objectives. The CSSF complements departmental activity by providing resources to deliver programmes across a wider geographic and thematic reach. The CSSF’s overall direction is guided by the priorities set out in the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review and the UK Aid Strategy. It delivers against two national security objectives: 1) Protect Our People; 2) Project Our Global Influence; and three UK Aid objectives (strengthening global peace, security and governance, and strengthening resilience).

Source: *Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: annual report 2017 to 2018*

## Context-driven

6. We must not be distracted by what we are expecting, prepared for or wish to see, or be misled by what we think we know: the context will not bend to suit us. Many challenges in stabilisation contexts have stemmed from a lack of realism about the context and about our capacity as external actors to quickly make substantial positive changes. If we do not understand who has power (formally and informally), who is in conflict with whom, cultural traditions, gender norms, historical sensitivities, local specificities, physical and geographic factors and much else, we are more likely to have unrealistic or false expectations about what will work. It means we are more likely to take actions that inadvertently cause harm and undermine our objectives.
- We must not be distracted by what we are expecting, prepared for or wish to see, or be misled by what we think we know: the context will not bend to suit us*
7. This is critical in the earliest phases of an activities, when we know less about the context (and have limited capacity to collate or absorb existing analysis) but are under domestic political pressure to act quickly and decisively. This can be exacerbated by a natural optimism bias about the likely outcome of events and/or the political undesirability of acknowledging the limits of our knowledge. This is the **intervention paradox**: the point at which we first intervene is often the point when we have the most potential to affect change but it is also the point at which we have the least knowledge and understanding of the context and its political dynamics.<sup>24</sup>
  8. This is not to argue that activities cannot be delivered until we have full knowledge of the context. It is never possible to know everything, and waiting too long for deeper information can lead to indecisiveness (sometimes nicknamed 'analysis paralysis'). Quick responses are often, but not always, imperative – we need to act while accepting the risks. We must **invest consistently in improving our contextual understanding** while admitting the limits to our knowledge and challenging our assumptions and we must adapt our activities as our understanding evolves.

## Objectives-driven

9. Activities must begin from an understanding of what is truly needed in the given context to achieve stabilisation objectives, and only later consider who is best placed to deliver those activities. This approach also encourages more effective burden-sharing between actors. This can only be established through a process of analysis which consults at various levels: on the ground with local and national authorities, local populations, and other international actors, but also at the senior level in the relevant international headquarters.
10. The **analysis must focus on what is most required in order to achieve stabilisation objectives**. This will not be the same as humanitarian or development needs, though there is likely to be some overlap. Rather, it is about identifying the key factors that will contribute towards the achievement of the three overarching stabilisation objectives (protecting the means of survival and restoring basic security, promoting and supporting a political process to reduce violence, and preparing a foundation for longer-term stability).

<sup>24</sup> Stabilisation Unit (2015) Stabilisation Interventions: Key Lessons. Unpublished

11. Once core requirements have been analysed, our responses must be planned in a context- and objectives-specific manner. While there are key thematic areas which are almost always relevant in stabilisation contexts (such as political deals, security and justice, service delivery, and transnational threats) **there is no identikit set of stabilisation activities that will guarantee success**. It is important to ask the right questions about who we are working with and what we are trying to achieve, and then develop our support on that basis.
12. Objectives-driven approaches must also consider **prioritisation and sequencing**. Which issues are preconditions for stabilisation, and which issues, however important, can wait until the basic conditions are in place for longer-term approaches to building stability? This reflects the reality that our resources, time and staff will always be finite and that we must therefore focus on the most important matters, informed by a clear theory of change.
 

*Which issues are preconditions for stabilisation, and which issues, however important, can wait until the basic conditions are in place for longer-term approaches to building stability*
13. Lastly, objectives-driven approaches must consider how they might unintentionally interact with local dynamics, such as disaster resilience and humanitarian need. Where they are likely to negatively impact on any of those dimensions, adequate corrective measures need to be taken, and plans developed to minimise the risk of negative impact.

## Relationship-driven

14. Questions of **ownership, agency and consent** need to be at the forefront of our actions. It is imperative to recognise that local actors will always have primacy. Thus, without the right relationships on the ground, the technical quality of our activities is largely irrelevant. Experience in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan has shown that external actors can fall into a spiral where they increasingly lose not just active support but even the consent of the population, and sometimes local authorities can too because of their association with foreigners.
15. Although we have some influence, **external actors have limited control over events on the ground**. Things will rarely happen just because we want them to and push hard. We therefore need to think in terms of supporting, facilitating, and catalysing changes, rather than deciding and implementing the changes ourselves. Moreover, we have often been over-optimistic about how far local partners will accept our advice and support. We need to be much more realistic about their motivations and incentives, and also about their individual and institutional capacities. They will often see external actors as a source of power and resources which they wish to harness for their own battles, and will message us accordingly.

16. We must **commit to local ownership but think carefully about what that entails**. In a stabilisation context it is not always clear which locals are legitimate 'owners'. There are significant risks of processes being captured in the name of local ownership, by local individuals or groups who are not motivated by the best interests of the broader population. For example, early measures in Afghanistan (2001–04) to ensure consent led to elite capture of stabilisation activities by the United Alliance. The risks of elite capture are particularly high when there is a weak or non-existent central authority or a stronger authority that has little local legitimacy. Rather than blindly delivering local ownership, the emphasis should be on regular two-way dialogue and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, formal and informal power-holders but also as far as possible civil society, business, religious leaders and other non-state actors. We should also be conscious that governments emerging out of conflict will have their own capacity constraints, they need to own activity but that does not mean the international community should not assist them in identifying requirements and formulating requests.
17. Similarly, we must be realistic that **consent** for stabilisation activities by external actors **will only ever be partial, conditional and contingent on events**. There are likely to be local actors who oppose the stabilisation process, whether on ideological grounds or because it threatens their (vested) interests. Unlike in classic peacekeeping, consent is not a pre-requisite, but it must be built and maintained. Often, this is about recognising the risks of potential spoilers and engaging with them proactively. Marginalising or alienating local authorities and local elites, even if inadvertently, is likely to provoke resistance and competing narratives about our activities.
18. All this is complicated by **operating as part of a coalition**: one external actor among many bilateral and multilateral institutions, each with their own perspectives and priorities. It can be difficult for external actors to accept this apparent loss of control, but working with others and recognising that the host nation will have primacy is the only way to achieve our strategic objectives.

“

*Unlike in classic peacekeeping, consent is not a pre-requisite, but it must be built and maintained*

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## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Contextual analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are UK senior officials emphasising the importance of context-specific, context-driven action?</li> <li>Do we (have plans to) consistently refresh our understanding and adapt our activities as the context changes?</li> </ul>	<a href="#"><i>Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability Guidance Note</i></a> Stabilisation Unit, 2017
Identification of priority issues to achieve stabilisation objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there agreement between operational actors, senior and political leaders and local populations which issues will make the biggest contribution to stabilisation?</li> <li>Is this fully in line with our contextual analysis, including our understanding of what local people perceive to be required?</li> <li>Do we have a clear and shared understanding of what factors are most important to achieve stabilisation?</li> <li>Do we have a clear understanding of how this might negatively impact local resilience and humanitarian need?</li> <li>Who have we consulted in order to develop that understanding? Have we received feedback from people on the ground, particularly marginalised and conflict-affected groups?</li> </ul>	<a href="#"><i>The Beginners Guide to Political Economy Analysis</i></a> NSGI, 2017  <a href="#"><i>Conflict Sensitivity Tools and Guidance</i></a> Stabilisation Unit, 2016
Addressing consent and ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have we got the right balance between high-level partner government contacts and wider engagement with non-state actors and the public?</li> <li>Do we understand who will support our activities and who is likely to be cautious or hostile and why?</li> <li>What have we done to build support and consent? How are we engaging with (potential) spoilers? How are we engaging with marginalised groups, women and youth?</li> <li>Have we analysed how our support might be manipulated or instrumentalised?</li> </ul>	

## Essential element 2: Thinking and working politically

19. External actors often focus on **what** they are doing rather than why and how they are intervening, particularly when under pressure to 'do something'. Yet the evidence demonstrates that **how** we operate matters as much as what we do. There is no point doing the right things if we do them in the wrong way, i.e. in a non-context-specific, conflict- or gender-sensitive manner (see Element 5 – behaviour). Most of all, we must start by recognising that **everything** we do in stabilisation contexts is political so we must **think and work politically in all our actions**.
20. Stabilisation is not simply about the primacy of politics or the need for political deals. It is both these things, but it is much more. It is about recognising that we cannot separate 'political' from 'technical' activities, because in stabilisation contexts, all aspects of any action have political ramifications, regardless of what is involved. We will be judged by local (and international) stakeholders for how we operate, as much as for what we do. This means external actors must have an incentive structure whereby teams are judged on how well, rather than how much, they deliver.
21. Many previous stabilisation activities have been relatively unsuccessful because they have been treated as primarily or exclusively technical matters, e.g. building infrastructure, providing basic services, building the capacity of government agencies (including security and justice actors) through training and equipment. Even where issues such as a lack of a political deal or large inequality were identified, they were treated as 'sectoral' issues to address, for example in service delivery, rather than fundamental political issues which run throughout stabilisation. Key contextual and political factors were overlooked, and activities affected the power balance in unforeseen ways. It is naïve to assume that we have the same objectives as local actors, and local elites often instrumentalise external interventions for their own benefit.<sup>25</sup>



*Stabilisation is not simply about the primacy of politics or the need for political deals. It is both these things, but it is much more ... in stabilisation contexts, all aspects of any action have political ramifications, regardless of what is involved*



### Case study: Technical vs. political stabilisation activity

In the years immediately following the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan, it was assumed that stability would be achieved through development support to the Transitional Administration. This led to large, technocratic, capacity-building projects which were largely divorced from the political realities. By contrast, during planning for the recovery of Mosul after the defeat of Daesh, the UK consciously focused on the importance of thinking politically. The UK worked hard with international partners to ensure a broader concept of stabilisation which went beyond the restoration of basic services and ensured that all support was informed by political analysis and considerations of longer-term political stability.

<sup>25</sup> See A Rocha Menocal (2014) *Getting real about politics: From thinking politically to working differently* (London: Overseas Development Institute)

## Essential element 3: Understanding – learning, honesty and adaptability

22. We cannot think and work politically, be driven by the context, stabilisation objectives and our relationships on the ground if we do not **understand the context** well enough. This point was made bluntly in the Iraq Inquiry: “In any undertaking of this kind, certain fundamental elements are of vital importance, [starting with] the best possible appreciation of the theatre of operations, including the political, cultural and ethnic background, and the state of society, the economy and infrastructure”.<sup>26</sup> We must therefore constantly be **learning and improving our understanding** of the issues and actors that most affect the prospects for stabilisation, and using this knowledge.

### Learning

23. We must invest in research and monitoring and evaluation (see Element 6) from the outset and throughout our activities. Daily political reporting, media monitoring and situational updates are all important, but they need to be backed with more robust data and analysis from multiple sources and with a perspective that enables trends to be identified and decisions taken strategically rather than tactically. There are many tools and products which can be used, including conflict analysis, political economy analysis, gender analysis, internal analytical papers (e.g. from research analysts, defence analysts, etc.) and intelligence papers. Some of this information will be internal but we should also draw upon as many external sources as possible: academic and policy papers, interviews with local and international experts and NGOs (not least as they may well say more in discussion than on paper), analysis by other bilateral and multilateral international actors and so on. Investing in monitoring, evaluation and learning demands we continually measure our intended and unintended impacts on local resilience and on humanitarian need, and use the evidence to inform future decisions.

### Commissioning research

Stabilisation actors on the ground do not need to lead substantial research and analysis processes themselves, but they do need to bring in additional expertise to deliver research and engage with the process to ensure it meets their needs. Guidance on research tools is provided under further resources, but it can also be helpful to discuss the tools and the commissioning process in person. As a first port of call, Stabilisation Unit regional coordinators should be able to advise on who to speak to about particular tools and how to commission them. DFID conflict and governance advisers both in-country and in Whitehall (CHASE) can also be helpful.

26 J Chilcot (2016) *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry. Executive Summary* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office) para. 859, p. 134.

24. Improving our understanding is not simply about generating more data and analysis but about interpreting it well enough to act upon it. Despite the perception that stabilisation contexts are data-poor, considerable research and analysis is often available. The challenge is to condense data into formats which are accessible to policy-makers and practitioners and to ensure that this knowledge is used, particularly as we move beyond immediate crisis response (when decision-makers' capacity to absorb complex analysis is inevitably limited). **Synthesis and presentation of analysis** can therefore be as important as generating it in the first place.
25. We must also ensure **shared understanding**, which goes beyond simply sharing information with all relevant stakeholders. Access to the same information is not on its own enough to build shared understanding. Processes to consider this information and analysis – such as Joint Analyses of Conflict and Stability – are required.
26. One other factor to consider is **recruitment** policy. Although it is not always possible, as far as possible we should aim to employ people who already have some understanding of the context or can acquire it more quickly. This means individuals who have the experience, networks, mindset and language skills to provide a deeper understanding of the realities on the ground. This applies both to local and international staff, whether in policy, programmatic or communications roles (including within implementing partners).

## Honesty

27. Generating data is not enough if uncomfortable findings are not truly accepted and acted upon. This is another core lesson from the Iraq Inquiry:

'Ground truth is vital. Over-optimistic assessments lead to bad decisions. Senior decision-makers – ministers, chiefs of staff, senior officials – must have a flow of accurate and frank reporting ... At times in Iraq, the bearers of bad tidings were not heard ... Effective audit mechanisms need to be used to counter optimism bias, whether through changes in the culture of reporting, use of multiple channels of information – internal and external – or use of visits.'<sup>27</sup>

28. Similarly, we must be **honest not only about the context but also about our own institutional strengths and weaknesses and the nature of our influence, positive and negative**:
  - Incentivising honesty: Honest analysis requires a safe space. Senior officials must lead by example in encouraging honesty, alternative viewpoints and constructive challenge to plans and received wisdom. We need to challenge our assumptions throughout. For example, we must not assume that power structures and decision-making operate in a fashion we are familiar with. We need to understand what approaches are considered most legitimate and locally appropriate by key stakeholders. Similarly, we must avoid gender analysis that relies on stereotypes rather than research and evidence.
  - Acknowledging the limits to our knowledge: If we cannot acknowledge what we do not know, we have little chance either of making good decisions or targeting information gathering and analysis to address these gaps.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., para. 863, p. 135

- Acknowledging that we are not neutral: External actors are never neutral and will not be perceived as neutral. They are always trying to influence the situation, even when they believe they are acting altruistically and in the best interests of local populations. In previous stabilisation activities, we have not always sufficiently understood the political economy of our own intervention, and have been surprised to meet indifference, subversion or outright hostility.<sup>28</sup> We need to act with greater humility and ensure that we are conflict-sensitive. We should consider working with or through others who have different and potentially more effective relationships with local actors.
- Acknowledging risk and the likelihood of setbacks: Large institutions are often risk-averse, resulting in a tendency, reinforced by optimism biases, to downplay the high chance that at least some actions will not succeed and to over-estimate the capacity to mitigate risks. This in turn can rapidly create a culture in which it is not possible to discuss the gaps in our knowledge and the weaknesses in our actions, which only increases the longer-term risks to our stabilisation activities and our reputation.



*External actors are never neutral and will not be perceived as neutral*



## Adaptability

29. We must constantly learn as we go and keep **adapting our activities**, ensuring we are achieving our objectives in a conflict-sensitive manner. It should be a warning sign if we do not adapt our activities as our understanding evolves. This requires internal monitoring and evaluation processes that promote honest acknowledgement of failures and challenges and a culture of flexibility and adaptation at all levels of management. Activities must be designed **from the start** to be flexible so that they can be readily adapted to changing circumstances and new insights.
30. In some cases, particularly in early stages of an activity, our limited knowledge of complex challenges may mean that we do not possess enough information to know what responses are likely to be effective. In such circumstances, we need to be even more iterative and adaptive, testing and probing to identify what forms of activity in which areas are likely to be more effective. This might be characterised not only as 'learning while doing' but **'doing to learn'**.

28 The Elite Bargains and Political Deals study referenced above describes several such cases: "There are also instances where elites played a role in derailing bargaining processes. In some cases, such as in Mozambique, this resulted from the challenges (or transition costs) that leaders faced in making the transition from fighters to negotiators. In other cases, incumbent elites actively resisted the implementation of peace agreements that diluted their powers – as for example in Nepal, in which central state elites reasserted their control during a prolonged period of transition, reversing many of the gains made as a result of the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Accord. In other cases, negotiations were derailed as a result of how elites used negotiations to shore up support or shift the balance of power within a conflict, especially in highly unstable contexts." C Cheng et al. (2018) op. cit., p. 25



## Key questions

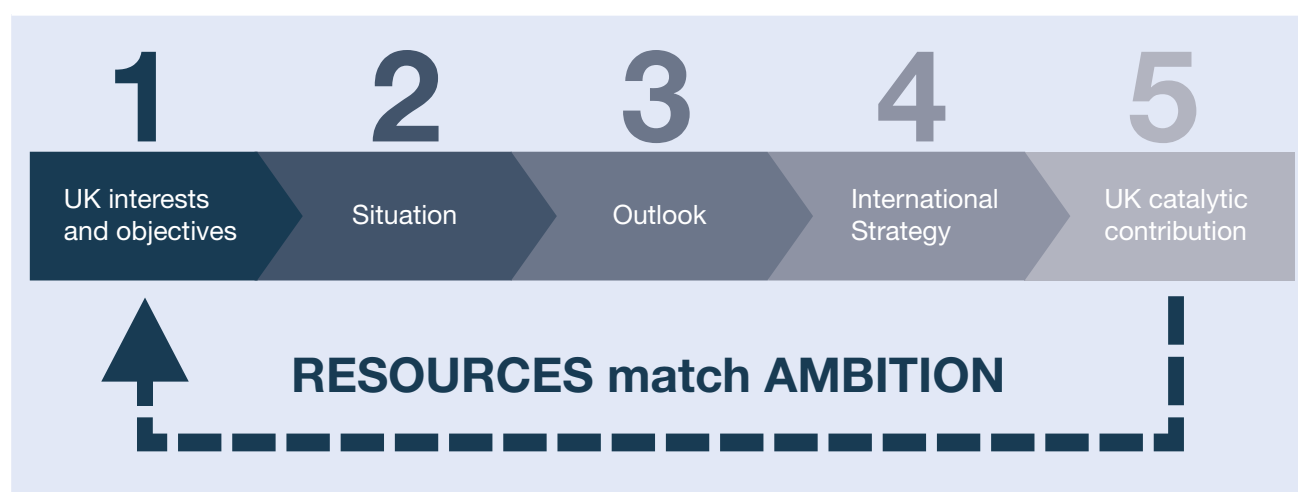
Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Synthesis and sharing of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do all staff have a shared understanding of the context?</li> <li>Who within government has relevant data and contextual analysis?</li> <li>Have we shared useful data and analysis with others, internally and externally as appropriate?</li> <li>Have we incorporated external scrutiny and challenge to avoid groupthink and optimism bias?</li> <li>Do we understand the major data gaps, and have a resourced plan in place for how to address them?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability Guidance Note</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2017</p> <p>Serious and Organised Crime Joint Analysis (SOJCA): contact Stabilisation Unit for details</p>
Honest analysis of institutional strengths and weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a culture of honesty and acknowledging institutional blind spots?</li> <li>What are the (dis)incentives for honesty?</li> <li>How can we challenge our assumptions and the conventional wisdom, and how can we reduce the risk of groupthink?</li> <li>Where do we have limited knowledge? What do we think we know, and can we back this up?</li> <li>How much influence do we genuinely have over key actors, institutions and processes?</li> <li>Which actors will support or oppose our activities?</li> <li>How likely are certain activities to succeed in this context?</li> <li>What are the key risks and challenges?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Analysis for Conflict and Stabilisation Interventions</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2014</p> <p><i>The Beginner's Guide to Political Economy Analysis</i> National School of Government International, 2017</p>
Invest in data generation, collection and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which issues and actors will most affect stabilisation? Which will be most affected by stabilisation activities?</li> <li>What issues, actors, locations must be better understood?</li> <li>What resources have been committed and what plans are in place to guarantee that useful monitoring data will be provided?</li> <li>Are we ensuring we have disaggregated data to understand differences between groups (e.g. gender, age, disability)?</li> <li>Are we spending enough resources (including time) on data and analysis?</li> <li>How well do we use our analysis and understanding to inform delivery?</li> </ul>	<p>Andrews M, Pritchett L, Samji S and Woolcock M, <i>Building capability by delivering results: Putting Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA) principles into practice</i> OECD, 2015</p>

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Learn as we go	<p>What has been done to incentivise honesty (including honest reporting of challenges and failures), learning and adaptability?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does senior management encourage and prioritise regular lesson learning exercises?</li> <li>• Are we getting the right information and analysis, at the right time, about both the context and the activities?</li> <li>• Has the context changed (or not changed as expected)?</li> <li>• Has our understanding of the context changed?</li> <li>• Have we invested in evidence and MEL to strengthen our understanding of our intended and unintended impact?</li> <li>• What are we learning from existing or previous activities about what does and doesn't work and why?</li> <li>• How is learning shared internally and externally?</li> </ul>	
Keep adapting our activities	<p>How rapidly does new information and analysis feed through to changes in activities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are senior leaders receptive to changes, even when this requires reversing previous decisions?</li> <li>• Have we built in flexibility to adapt as necessary?</li> <li>• Who needs to act on any contextual changes or lessons identified?</li> </ul>	

## Essential element 4: Strategy – coherence, realism and integration

31. The 2018 National Security Capability Review (NSCR) launched the **Fusion Doctrine**, setting out how the UK will blend its resources and “deploy security, economic and influence capabilities to protect, promote and project our national security, economic and influence goals”. The Fusion Doctrine is a cross-government approach to develop joint understanding, facilitate joint planning and enable integrated delivery.

### Fusion doctrine and Chilcot compliance



### Strategic coherence and realism

32. Strategic coherence depends on being clear about what we are trying to achieve, ensuring that we have the right resources to achieve these objectives, and ensuring that all activities, both the UK's and those of our partners, will combine to achieve these objectives. This requires:
- Setting objectives which provide a clear direction of travel but avoid overly precise or over-ambitious targets. The Iraq Inquiry calls for “objectives which are realistic within that context, and if necessary limited – rather than idealistic and based on optimistic assumption” as a “fundamental element ... of vital importance”.<sup>29</sup> We must **avoid binary narratives that imply 100% success or failure**. Stabilisation objectives should be framed in terms of positive outcomes and a clear direction of travel, rather than predicting what can be achieved in (for example) 18 to 24 months which risks other results, no matter how significant, being portrayed as ‘failure’ if the precise target is not met. Precise targets can also provide perverse incentives for implementers putting the focus on those targets rather than stabilisation outcomes (e.g. restoring basic security and establishing the political foundations for longer-term stability).

29 J Chilcot (2016) op. cit., para. 859, p. 134

- Ensuring objectives are commensurate with resources. We should not be afraid to **set manageable objectives**. Working in difficult circumstances, what might appear from the outside to be relatively modest impacts may be critical steps that prepare the transition towards longer-term stability. In this regard, 'success' in stabilisation contexts can rarely be measured through considerable and rapid improvements. Rather, stabilisation activities may aim to halt a cycle of decline, preventing something worse from happening. The Iraq Inquiry is blunt in its conclusions: The gap between the ambitious objectives with which the UK entered Iraq and the resources that the government was prepared to commit to the task was substantial from the start. Even with more resources it would have been difficult to achieve those objectives ... despite the considerable efforts made by UK civilian and military personnel over this period, the results were meagre.<sup>30</sup>
- Objectives that could be achieved relatively easily in more stable contexts may require much greater resources in stabilisation contexts, not least because operating costs are usually much higher. **It is necessary to rigorously and honestly interrogate whether individual activities combine to achieve higher-order objectives**. Imprecise or poorly-articulated objectives allow any action to be presented as a contribution towards the stabilisation goal, resulting in disparate activities that are less, not more, than the sum of their parts. It is akin to claiming that if our goal is to complete a jigsaw, as long as we have a few jigsaw pieces, we are on our way to achieving the goal, even if we cannot see how they fit together and no patterns are emerging. We must have a plausible, coherent pathway towards achieving these objectives (see 'theories of change' box). Are our assumptions of how change happens correct in this context? Do our approaches and activity support this change in pursuit of our strategic objectives?
- **Acknowledging and addressing trade-offs**. We need to avoid the assumption that "all good things come together", i.e. that all activities are mutually supportive. There will be tensions between short-term exigencies and longer-term objectives, between the priorities of different political groups and security actors, and between local and international actors. We must acknowledge these trade-offs, discuss them, and consciously decide which we are making and why. These decisions should be documented to demonstrate that trade-offs were made legitimately considering the available evidence at the time. Acknowledging trade-offs is not the same as 'relaxing controls', which can cause problems down the line (for example if aid is diverted to prohibited groups who have taken advantage of crisis operations).

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30 Ibid., para. 797, p. 110

## Theories of change

A theory of change (ToC) describes how change is assumed to come about as a result of intervention in a prevailing situation.

ToCs are often set out as a diagram and supporting narrative showing the causal pathway, i.e. the links between activities, outputs, outcomes, and the contribution to impact. It makes clear that these pathways rest on a set of assumptions, and that these assumptions are supported by varying degrees of evidence. The process of developing or updating a ToC can help to highlight evidence gaps, make explicit and interrogate our assumptions, and develop shared understanding.

It is important to emphasise that theories of change do not need to be linear and usually should not be in stabilisation contexts. Theories of change are often presented as simple diagrams (x will lead to y which leads to z). Yet we often don't know exactly what will get the best results and the context is constantly changing. In this regard, a central tenet of stabilisation theories of change is that we are always learning and adapting. A good analogy is that stabilisation activities are like sailing a boat: we know roughly where we need to go, and we know roughly how to get there, but we will need to tack according to the winds.

## Internal integration and external coordination

33. The need for **cross-government working** or joined-up government is well recognised. Governments are at risk of siloed working, where different government bodies and departments are comfortable planning and sharing information within their own hierarchies but find it difficult to jointly analyse, plan and deliver activity. Moreover, many career incentives are departmental-based and cross-government working is seen as an additional task. In stabilisation, this is compounded by differences between civilian and military planning and decision-making structures and traditions, which can lead to mutual misunderstanding and frustration. Tensions between the centre and embassies and/or bases on the ground are also inevitably given different perspectives and priorities.
34. The Fusion Doctrine aims to overcome these challenges. It builds on the UK's experiences of driving an **integrated approach** to stabilisation which emphasises the need for civilian-military cooperation and cross-departmental coordination. Frictions can be alleviated through joint training, joint units (such as the Stabilisation Unit), joint analysis (such as a Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability), joint strategies (National Security Council country strategies and meetings), joint funding (the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund), and ultimately by building a shared culture of mutual interest and understanding. Integrated approaches also require mechanisms to coordinate and share information, analysis and decision-making between those on the ground and those at the centre. It also means avoiding jargon and using words which everyone understands in the same way.

35. Just as we must be integrated internally, we must aim for the maximum realistic degree of **coordination with external actors, both national partners and other international donors or actors**. These interactions are likely to be complicated. Despite commitments to 'coordination', donor and coalition partner relationships are subject to the same strains as internal integration but without the same sense of a shared institutional identity, and full coordination is unobtainable. Nevertheless, we must work with others as best we can. Uncoordinated activity is not only inefficient but reduces the chances of achieving higher-order objectives, especially if there are contradictions between the positions of key international partners. At the same time, a strategic plan that is dependent on high levels of donor coordination is almost certainly doomed to failure. Where effective cooperation is not possible, we should look at more modest engagement, including de-confliction, consultation or at times just co-existence.

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*Uncoordinated activity is not only inefficient but reduces the chances of achieving higher-order objectives, especially if there are contradictions between the positions of key international partners*

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## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Establishment of objectives in line with need (not supply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are our objectives responding to the most important stabilisation issues in the best way?</li> <li>• What issues are not being addressed? Are others doing this?</li> <li>• Do our stabilisation objectives flow from our identification of the key issues? If not, why not?</li> </ul>	<p><i>The Good Operation: A Handbook for those Involved in Operational Policy and Its Implementation</i></p> <p>Ministry of Defence, 2018</p> <p>Woodrow P and Oatley N, <i>Practical Approaches to Theories of Change in Conflict, Security and Justice Programmes – Part 1</i>. DFID, 2013</p>
Set objectives which provide a clear direction of travel, but avoid precise and over-ambitious targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can all involved explain, simply and clearly, what the overarching objectives are and how they contribute towards them? If not, why not?</li> <li>• Are the objectives (still) realistic? Over what time frame could they be achieved, and what would prevent them from being achieved?</li> <li>• Are objectives expressed so that they give a clear direction of travel but are not too prescriptive or inflexible?</li> </ul>	
Rigorously and honestly interrogate whether individual activities combine to achieve higher-order objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do our activities add up towards genuine achievement of our strategic stabilisation objectives?</li> <li>• Have we reviewed this recently and regularly?</li> <li>• Is there a clear link between individual activities and other activities in the same thematic or geographic area (including by other local and international actors)?</li> <li>• How does the individual activity make a genuine and substantial contribution towards higher-order objectives, in line with the overall theory of change?</li> </ul>	
Ensure objectives are commensurate with resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the resources committed commensurate with the overarching strategic objectives?</li> <li>• Are we confident that the available resources are sufficient to achieve the activity's objectives and deliver it in the right way?</li> <li>• What are the risks of injecting further resources into the local political economy and how will we manage them?</li> </ul>	

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Acknowledge and address trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have we acknowledged, weighed up and documented decisions regarding trade-offs?</li> <li>• Have we flagged any trade-offs and either dealt with them ourselves or escalated them to seniors as appropriate?</li> </ul>	
Promote internal integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are teams adequately incentivised to work together?</li> <li>• Do systems and structures facilitate efficient integrated working and decision making?</li> <li>• Is it clear how and by whom decisions are made when interests do not naturally coincide?</li> <li>• How are we sharing information, analysis, and planning with partners across government?</li> <li>• Do we plan jointly with other departments? At what stages do we consult with other departments?</li> </ul>	
Aim for the maximum realistic level of external coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are teams encouraged and supported to strengthen coordination with external partners (local and international)?</li> <li>• How do our activities fit (combine but not duplicate or clash) with the actions of other national and international actors?</li> <li>• What, if anything, prevents us from working more closely with external partners, including at the design and implementation phases? What can we do to improve coordination?</li> </ul>	

## Essential element 5: Behaviour – humility, sensitivity and communication

36. As discussed above, how we deliver our activities (our behaviour) is as important as what we deliver. A fundamental aspect of this is to recognise that the way we engage with others will affect how we, as external actors, are perceived both locally and internationally. This in turn affects our capacity to positively influence stability, as everything that we do will be interpreted and misinterpreted through these perceptions of our roles and motivations. This means that it is essential to act with humility and to consider how our actions will affect the local conflict dynamics (conflict sensitivity) and gender norms (gender sensitivity). It also means explaining our activities clearly and consistently, particularly through our communications with local and international audiences, but also through all our actions and approaches.

### Humility

37. In most circumstances we will be playing a supporting and facilitating role in stabilisation. Unless we are humble in the way in which we provide this support, we are unlikely to be effective. This underlines the need for **respectful and open engagement with local partners**, both state and non-state. We must not be naïve about how we are perceived by local actors. If we intervene in a way that demonstrates our ignorance of the local context or an unwillingness to learn, we will not only lose the trust of potential allies but also open ourselves up to manipulation by unscrupulous actors. This also includes the protection of cultural property: the failure of external actors to respect and protect a nation's cultural heritage in times of conflict can have very negative impacts. By contrast, if we demonstrate a genuine commitment to engagement with local stakeholders (including careful engagement with potential spoilers) and to operating in a conflict- and gender-sensitive manner,<sup>31</sup> this can build good will and improve our understanding of the context. However, as discussed above, this is not as simple as simply promoting 'local ownership'.

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31 When engaging with local actors, and particularly with potential spoilers, we need to think carefully about how this will be perceived by other locals. How should such contacts be explained to local audiences? Are proactive communications needed to explain why we are engaging with certain actors? Or should they be 'below the radar', with a communications strategy prepared in case the meetings become public knowledge?

## Sensitivity

38. Conflict sensitivity and gender sensitivity are also critical. **Conflict sensitivity** is often confused with 'do no harm', yet stabilisation practitioners understand that there are always trade-offs and that it may be impossible to entirely avoid doing harm (even though protection of civilians will always be a primary objective). At its simplest, conflict sensitivity is about considering how to minimise (but not necessarily eliminate) the risks of negatively affecting conflict dynamics and, wherever possible, contribute towards improvements in conflict dynamics. This could perhaps be summarised as 'doing minimal conscious harm'. So, conflict sensitivity is essential to stabilisation. If a core goal of stabilisation is to move towards a political settlement that reduces violence and instability, it is obvious that this cannot be achieved without understanding how our activities impact on immediate conflict dynamics. And while the risk of harm cannot be entirely eliminated, stabilisation interventions should seek to **minimise any negative impact** they have on humanitarian need and resilience.
39. Similarly, **gender sensitivity** is not an optional extra but a cornerstone of long-term stabilisation. In all UK government action, gender equality is a priority in its own right, as outlined in the UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The National Action Plan is the UK's strategy for how it will meet its commitment to UNSCR1325.

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*At its simplest, conflict sensitivity is about considering how to minimise (but not necessarily eliminate) the risks of negatively affecting conflict dynamics and, wherever possible, contribute towards improvements in conflict dynamics*

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### The four pillars of the WPS agenda are:

**Prevention:** prevention of conflict and all forms of violence against women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

**Participation:** women participate equally with men and gender equality is promoted in peace and security decision-making processes at national, local, regional and international levels.

**Protection:** women and girls' rights are protected and promoted in conflict-affected situations.

**Relief and Recovery:** women and girls' specific relief needs are met and women's capacities to act as agents in relief and recovery are reinforced in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The UK National Action Plan (2018–22) outlines how the UK will contribute to these four pillars through seven strategic outcomes: decision-making, peacekeeping, gender-based violence, humanitarian response, security and justice, preventing and countering violent extremism, UK capabilities.

40. Moreover, it is also a legal requirement for all UK activity which involves the use of development funding, as per the 2014 International Development (Gender Equality) Act. This stipulates a duty to consider how the UK government's development assistance will contribute to reducing gender inequality before assistance is provided, and to take gendered differences in needs fully into account before providing humanitarian assistance.

41. Like conflict sensitivity, the concept of gender sensitivity is often confused with direct action to promote gender equality. It is recognised that activities that explicitly aim to promote gender equality are inherently long-term and limited progress may be possible in highly insecure environments. It is also acknowledged that issues around gender equality are often politically and socially charged issues and may well have been instrumentalised within the current conflict or instability. This underlines the importance of conceiving actions with knowledge of the local context, including learning from local actors such as women's rights organisations, and underpinning all action with risk analysis. At the same time, conflict can also act as a catalyst for more positive change, opening space to challenge existing norms and promote equality.
42. Gender sensitivity requires an ability to recognise:
- the different ways that women and men's roles are understood;
  - the impacts of gender-inequitable norms and behaviours (e.g. participation rates, access to resources, control of assets, decision-making powers, etc.);
  - how women, men, girls and boys can have different perceptions and experiences of stability and security, including the fact that women are much more likely to be victims of sexual and gender-based violence both in conflict and at other times.

Secondly, gender sensitivity requires us to act upon this knowledge by ensuring that, as with conflict sensitivity, our actions minimise any risks of worsening gender inequalities and gender relations and wherever possible seek to improve gender equality. A gender-sensitive stabilisation approach will recognise that the conflict may have differently affected the roles and opportunities of women and men, and that post-conflict periods often see a backlash against improvements in gender equality. Stabilisation activities should be mindful of their impact on individuals and groups, but also on gender norms, the system of relations among men and women in each context. In this way, evidence-based gender analysis is a fundamental part of understanding a conflict and a context, as well as understanding the roles, motivations and limitation of partners and other actors.

## Communications

43. We need to be able to explain what we are doing and why if we wish to maintain and build support and consent for our actions, and more broadly for our role as an external actor in the stabilisation context. This emphasises the importance of **strategic communications**: communications conducted to achieve specified, agreed and measurable objectives and effects at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. Strategic communications need to be fully integrated into policy-making from the earliest stages and aligned with wider policy (including by ensuring that communicators are including in decision-making at all levels).

44. The communications landscape has become ever more complicated in recent years, with a need to communicate in multiple directions and to multiple audiences, all of which are able to (over)hear what is communicated to others. It is far from simple to find the right language, methods and platforms to communicate with so many different groups (local populations, powerful local stakeholders including antagonists, regional and international actors, the media, parliament and public of the UK and other donor countries) in ways that are acceptable to all of these actors. Many of these actors are politically and media-savvy and will easily spot and expose any communications which do not ring true or offend their core values. Moreover, we should not forget that other actors are just as good if not better at using communications to promote their interests.
45. For all these reasons, strategic communications need to be based on a thorough understanding of the local context, audience and the environment in which they are taking place (see Element 1) and build upon a close working relationship with local counterparts whose knowledge and credibility is essential. Our understanding of the communications landscape (including segmented and gender-disaggregated audience analysis) and of our core messages needs constant updating through monitoring and research, enabling us to learn and adapt.



### Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Engage local partners in a respectful and open manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How frequently and how openly do we engage with local partners, both state and non-state, formal and informally?</li> </ul>	<i>Conflict Sensitivity Tools and Guidance</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2016
Think politically in all our actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are all staff suitably aware of the political nature of stabilisation as it relates both to overarching objectives and their own contributions?</li> <li>Have we considered who stands to benefit and who stands to gain or lose from our actions?</li> <li>How can we minimise the risks of our actions being manipulated or instrumentalised?</li> </ul>	
Apply conflict sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is conflict sensitivity monitored and how is it incentivised?</li> <li>How will our activity interact with the conflict and affect conflict and security dynamics?</li> <li>Have we identified any short- and long-term risks to conflict dynamics from the activity?</li> <li>How can we minimise these risks?</li> </ul>	

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Minimise harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have we identified any short or longer-term risk of negative consequences of our actions?</li> <li>• How are identifying and tracking any unintended consequences of our programmes?</li> <li>• What plans have we in place to minimise and mitigate negative impacts?</li> </ul>	
Apply gender sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How is gender sensitivity monitored and incentivised?</li> <li>• Do we have enough knowledge of current gender roles, norms and behaviours, and any gender inequalities in the host environment?</li> <li>• Have we identified any short- and long-term risks or opportunities relating to gender roles or gender equality from the activity?</li> <li>• How can we minimise these risks and maximise these opportunities?</li> </ul>	
Communicate effectively and carefully with all audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What role should senior decision-makers play in coordinating communications activities so that our communications fully support our strategic objectives?</li> <li>• Have we considered how our actions will be perceived by other audiences, including local populations, powerful local stakeholders (including antagonists), regional and international actors, and UK audiences?</li> <li>• How will our communications build understanding and consent for ongoing stabilisation activities among all these audiences?</li> </ul>	

## Essential element 6: Monitoring, evaluation and learning

46. Although monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) processes are discussed towards the end of this chapter, they must be considered throughout, from the early stages of planning through to post-implementation reflection. This short section is not guidance on how to improve MEL, as this is covered in separate guidance notes (see 'further resources'). It focuses on why MEL systems and processes are so important and why they must be integrated through stabilisation.
47. Different departments use different **terminology**: the Armed Forces have established procedures for 'measuring effect', DFID and the CSSF refer to 'MEL', and other departments use different terminology and tools. However, all deal with the same fundamental ideas:
  - clarifying what counts as success and monitoring progress towards this;
  - assessing and understanding how our actions are contributing to change;
  - using this information to improve the design, delivery and management of our activities.
48. Monitoring is the continuous assessment of progress through the regular collection of data about the activities (and the wider context). Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed activity, its design, implementation and results. Annual reviews are less detailed than independent evaluations but are a crucial opportunity to step back and take stock.
49. **MEL links to all the other essential elements.** It will inform our understanding of context, objectives and relationships (Element 1), allowing us to think and work politically (Element 2). It helps our understanding and is a critical part of learning and adapting (Element 3). The relationship between strategic coherence and objective setting at both the top strategic level and at more operational levels (Element 4) MEL is particularly important. Simply put, MEL is not only about measuring progress and success. We cannot measure progress effectively if we do not have a clear idea of what we are trying to achieve, i.e. if we do not have well-stated objectives. MEL must also track and inform our behaviour, conflict- and gender-sensitivity and strategic communications (Element 5). And it will provide the evidence that should inform decisions about transition (Element 7).
50. To deliver on this commitment, **dedicated MEL resources** are required (e.g. 5% of overall budgets), including management capacity within the UK government. It is critically important that delivery and use of MEL data is a senior management responsibility, as otherwise MEL quickly becomes divorced from quickly changing operations and the data it generates is not used to inform decision-making.



### Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Dedication of MEL resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have enough (financial and human) resources been committed to MEL?</li> <li>• Who has senior responsibility for MEL?</li> <li>• Is there a MEL plan or system in place that covers the full scope of our activity? If not, why not?</li> <li>• Do we have detailed plans in place for MEL data collection and analysis?</li> </ul>	<i>Monitoring and Evaluation of Conflict and Stabilisation Interventions</i> Stabilisation Unit, October 2014.
Integration of MEL across all areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is MEL thoroughly integrated into strategic planning? If not, why not?</li> <li>• Are we collecting the right data at the right time to make informed decisions on progress towards transition?</li> <li>• How is MEL data being used to inform our activities? How are we learning and adapting in response to MEL data and analysis?</li> </ul>	

## Essential element 7: Planning for transition

51. Like MEL, the fact that transition is presented at the end should not imply any form of sequencing: we must be **planning right from the start to transition** away from stabilisation towards longer-term efforts to build peace and stability. This is far from easy, however, since these phases do not have clear boundaries and overlap with other forms of longer-term engagement in multiple ways.

### Transition in theory and practice

52. The idea of transition is simple enough. Stabilisation is the first phase of a response to violent conflict, but as the situation does stabilise, we should move towards longer-term, less crisis-focused engagement akin to how we operate in environments which are fragile but not entirely violent or hostile. At this stage, DFID's Building Stability Framework becomes the most appropriate framework for our activity.

*Stabilisation is the first phase of a response to violent conflict, but as the situation does stabilise, we should move towards longer-term, less crisis-focused engagement akin to how we operate in environments which are fragile but not entirely violent or hostile*

53. In practice, however, it is near impossible to define where stabilisation ends and the 'building stability' phase begins. This does not mean that we cannot measure progress towards stability. On the contrary, good monitoring and evaluation (Element 6) is vital so that decisions on transition are based on a realistic assessment of conditions on the ground. This is not a question of absolute standards but rather **whether the situation is good enough and moving in the right direction**. In line with the overarching objectives of stabilisation, key factors to consider include:
- Political deals: has enough progress has been made on establishing a political deal which can be backed by a broadly representative government (see 'facilitating political deals')?
  - Political stability: is there now enough political stability to manage the inevitable pressures of daily politics without recourse to violence?
  - Security: is the security sector sufficiently effective and governable to deliver basic security? Does a minimal level of accountability exist?
  - Capacity to govern: does the partner government have enough capacity to debate policy and take and implement critical decisions?
54. Senior decision-makers often search for a way of defining exactly when and how transition should take place, not least under political pressure from domestic audiences to guarantee that the stabilisation activity has a defined endpoint. However, **both time-bound and conditions-bound approaches to establishing transition points can come unstuck**. Time-bound approaches create perverse incentives for both local and international actors to play along and run the clock down. Conditions-bound approaches can become a straitjacket if the conditions were never realistically achievable, or have become unachievable due to contextual changes, but there are political obstacles to moving the goalposts.

55. Moreover, transitions rarely take place under ideal circumstances. The political pressure to end stabilisation activities tends to grow over time, both on the ground (e.g. political or violent opposition to foreign forces, demands from the partner government to treat them as a 'normal' country) and at home (e.g. pressure to end an action that has become unpopular). In such cases, the demands for 'transition' may become overwhelming even if expert assessment suggests that the country is not fully ready to transition away from stabilisation.
56. Ultimately, therefore, the **formal decision to transition** away from stabilisation towards longer-term engagement **is a matter of political judgement and negotiation** between external and local actors. Officials should highlight the implications of transition so that this is an informed decision.

### Integrating transition planning into all stabilisation activity

57. Transition is closely linked to strategy (Element 4). On one level, this is obvious. The ultimate objective of all stabilisation activity is to achieve conditions which allow us to transition away from stabilisation. However, planners and implementers often do not appreciate how deeply intertwined stabilisation and longer-term engagement are, or the implications this has for our planning.
58. Even if stabilisation is a shorter-term activity, **decisions made during stabilisation can have a very significant effect on longer-term dynamics**. For example, any elite deal or political settlement made to end or reduce violence will have huge implications for the chances of improving governance. Similarly, when we support local security actors as part of efforts to establish a basic level of security, our decisions about who we support and affect the prospects for security sector reform for years to come.
59. Even decisions born from short-term necessity must be conscious that there will be implications: the fact that some issues are long-term does not mean they can be ignored until they can be 'handed over'. At the same time, short-term decisions do have to be taken, but they must be taken consciously. We should be open and honest about the inevitable trade-offs between short-term and long-term stability. We should also recognise that the most obvious short-term solution should sometimes be avoided as it will have the most negative long-term consequences.

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*any elite deal or political settlement made to end or reduce violence will have huge implications for the chances of improving governance. Similarly, when we support local security actors as part of efforts to establish a basic level of security, our decisions about who we support and affect the prospects for security sector reform for years to come*

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### Preparing the ground for a transition away from stabilisation

60. Once it has been politically agreed that a transition will take place, we must work to ensure that it takes place as smoothly as possible. Although there will often be a political requirement for a specific date on which transition formally takes place, transition should in fact be a **gradual process**. The key challenge is to ensure that the handover does not result in significant gaps or ruptures, or on the other hand, confusion about why different actors are running similar but distinct activities that appear to overlap. Transition relates not only to transference of authorities and drawdown of assets, but also to issues such as maintaining and transferring institutional knowledge.

61. As well as being a gradual process, **transition is unlikely to be entirely linear**. There will be shocks and set-backs and some violence may be ongoing. There are numerous examples, where conflicts have re-started or flared up even after significant national and international stabilisation support, including Kosovo, DRC and South Sudan. Flexibility and adaptability are vital, and the stabilisation approach may on occasion need to be re-applied in areas which have previously transitioned out of stabilisation. Therefore, even after the transition we must maintain some capacity for stabilisation responses to be implemented should the situation require them.



### Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Plan towards a transition out of stabilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do our stabilisation efforts contribute to longer-term stability and what are the trade-offs?</li> <li>• Can we articulate, in broad terms, where the boundaries or transition lie between stabilisation and longer-term engagement?</li> <li>• Are our actions collectively moving in the direction of transition?</li> <li>• What preparation is required? Has been done to ensure a smooth transition process at the appropriate time?</li> <li>• How do our stabilisation activities link with longer-term engagement?</li> <li>• What can we do now to prepare for transition and ensure a smooth handover (of knowledge, data, contacts and relationships, etc.)?</li> </ul>	



## Chapter 3: Stabilisation, security and justice

- Security and justice issues lie at the heart of stabilisation. They usually form part of both formal peace negotiations and more informal political deals.
- External actors can deliberately take a major role in security provision. But this alone will not achieve stabilisation, and large-scale, overly-securitised interventions can distort the local balance of power.
- Direct and immediate support to security institutions within the formal state sector is the wrong starting point for stabilisation. Instead there should be a focus on security sector stabilisation directed by political oversight to ensure it works to support a stabilising political deal.
- It is important to establish local needs and maintain a pragmatic focus on addressing key obstacles to the emergence of a stabilising political deal.
- In supporting the transition from military to civilian security, a balance between the development of forces able to offer robust security support and an element of civilian police capacity must be found.
- Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) interventions must be timed to avoid upsetting wider political stabilisation objectives, with a focus on integrating individuals rather than units.

## Introduction

1. This chapter considers the relationship between security and justice and stabilisation. It explains how security and justice interventions can protect the means of survival, restore basic stability, promote and support a political process to reduce violence, and prepare foundations for longer-term stability. It looks both at direct provision of security by external actors and at indirect external support for security and justice provision. It also discusses particular security and justice interventions which are likely to be relevant during the stabilisation phase, such as transitional justice and DDR. It also identifies many of the challenges and trade-offs involved in this work. Indeed, it should be recognised from the start that addressing security and justice issues is often the most difficult element of stabilisation. Security and justice interventions will inevitably involve engagement with institutions who are parties to the conflict and who may have a poor human rights record. External actors must nonetheless engage with them in order to establish basic security and promote political processes.
2. The chapter is divided into three sections. Each section has prompt questions to inform planning, programme design and implementation and:
  - explore key concepts around security and justice and stabilisation;
  - look at how security and justice provision contributes to stabilisation objectives;
  - consider key issues around sequencing and transition.

## Addressing security and justice issues as an essential component of stabilisation

3. Security and justice issues lie at the heart of stabilisation in several ways. Violent conflict generates deep insecurity. It creates an environment in which horrific crimes and other injustices are more likely, and where it can be especially hard to gather evidence to bring perpetrators to justice or provide any sense of redress or resolution. This can fuel vicious cycles of conflict, where **individual experiences of insecurity and injustice drive anger which can erupt into further violence, deepening insecurity and injustice**. The inability of states to protect their citizens from violence (security), or to ensure suitable mechanisms of redress and protection of rights (justice) is characteristic of fragile and conflict-affected contexts.
4. Furthermore, without a basic level of security it is much harder to meet humanitarian needs and it can be nearly impossible to deliver the services that re-establish the foundations of daily life (see Chapter 6, Service Delivery and Stabilisation). Improving security conditions and providing citizens with (at least some hope of) an avenue towards justice are key elements of stabilisation.
5. It should be emphasised from the start that **state security and justice actors are deeply woven into conflict dynamics**. They are usually simultaneously a party to the conflict (i.e. directly involved in the violence), a driver of conflict (through their behaviour), and a necessary part of the solution (because it is highly unlikely that insecurity can be reduced without them playing a constructive role). Violent conflict and extremism are often fuelled by public anger with security and justice provision, whether because the state has failed to ensure adequate security and justice, because security sector institutions are predatory and oppressive, or because those without the right connections have limited access to justice.
6. **Security and justice issues** are also central to stabilisation because they **are at the heart of questions about who holds power and how that power is managed**. Elite bargains are usually underpinned by formal or informal agreements about how security and justice actors will operate. In some circumstances, power sharing extends to these structures or is underpinned by their neutrality, offering a foundation to broaden their inclusivity and accountability, adherence to the rule of law and respect for human rights. More often, security and justice institutions are used to maintain the stability of a more negative status quo, including through misuse of these institutions for political purposes, widespread corruption, and presumed immunity for powerful actors.
7. **Security and justice issues usually form part of both formal peace negotiations and more informal elite bargains and political deals**, whether overtly or not. External actors also influence this process, particularly on the security side, whether by getting directly involved in security provision, offering some form of security guarantees, or by supporting local actors to provide security more effectively. External actors can also play a role on justice, for example by gathering evidence which can be used to prosecute cases of sexual violence in conflict, or by helping to lay the foundations for a transitional justice process. However, such external interventions on security and justice have a mixed record in stabilisation contexts, as discussed later in this chapter.



**Security and justice issues ... are at the heart of questions about who holds power and how that power is managed**



8. Security and justice interventions in stabilisation contexts also **set the foundations for longer-term stability**. While the early stages of stabilisation may require robust action to establish security (such as direct military operations), as the situation begins to stabilise it will be necessary to transition towards more civilian-led, and ideally more democratic forms of maintaining security. Another part of that transition is often a DDR process, usually aimed at non-state ex-combatants but sometimes also at state security actors. Both processes may extend over a period of years but are likely to begin during stabilisation. Similarly, although full security sector reform (SSR) may not begin until there is greater stability, support provided during stabilisation interventions will influence the longer-term development of the security and justice sectors.<sup>32</sup>
9. In summary, security and justice issues and interventions are closely related to all three stabilisation principles:
  - **Protecting the means of survival and restoring basic security.** A basic level of security is crucial to protect citizens and to break cycles of violent conflict. It is also a precondition for effective service delivery. Similarly, improving access to justice can reassure vulnerable, traumatised populations that a peaceful future is possible.
  - **Promote and support a political process to reduce violence.** A basic level of security is also critical to provide space for political processes to occur. External actors may help to provide security, or support others to provide security. Questions about control and behaviour of security and justice actors are often pivotal elements both of formal peace negotiations and less formal elite deals and political bargains, not least because these actors often are the dominant local political elites.
  - **Prepare a foundation for longer-term stability.** The move towards civilian-led, more democratic security and justice provision is a key element of the transition out of stabilisation towards longer-term building of stability and socio-economic development. Decisions made during stabilisation interventions will have consequences for longer-term reform processes.

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32 See OECD DAC (2007) *Handbook on Security System Reform – Supporting Security and Justice* and Second Report of the UN Secretary General (S/2013/480) *Securing States and societies: strengthening the United Nations comprehensive support to security sector reform* for further reading and guidance in relation to SSR.

## Direct security provision in stabilisation contexts

- 10.** During stabilisation interventions, there are **two interrelated security objectives**. The first is to provide basic security in a way that reduces short-term violence and increases the protection of civilians. The second is to create enough space for political dialogue that a political deal, whether formal or informal, can take shape. External actors may become directly involved in security provision (e.g. through military or police deployments), or they may seek to provide indirect support that helps other actors to provide security. Stabilisation Unit guidance on 'security sector stabilisation' emphasises that security interventions must be fully coordinated with wider political dialogue, and must itself be informed by a political, rather than a technical, mindset.<sup>33</sup> It is important to acknowledge who controls security and political power on the ground. Long-term SSR programmes are likely to challenge the power of non-state armed groups and destabilise political processes. In the absence of a political settlement that reassures them their constituencies interest will be protected, they are likely to at least reject SSR proposals and at worst seek to demonstrate their power by returning to violence or challenging state authority. Before engaging in SSR it is therefore necessary to engage in security sector stabilisation, de-conflicting security actors on the ground and embarking on a process that will give security actors the confidence to engage in an SSR process in due course.
- 11. In some cases, external actors deliberately take a major role in security provision.** This happens particularly when their analysis suggests that local actors are unable or unwilling to provide basic security, especially where these externals have their own counter-terrorism interests.<sup>34</sup> NATO and the UK military use the following terms to describe direct military and policing interventions:<sup>35</sup>
- Security Force Assistance ("an activity to develop or directly support the development of the sustainable capability and capacity of indigenous military security forces and their associated institutions");
  - Stability Policing ("a set of police related activities intended to reinforce or temporarily replace indigenous police in order to contribute to the restoration and/or upholding of the public order and security, rule of law, and the protection of human rights").

33 Stabilisation Unit (2014) op. cit.

34 See David Keen with Larry Attree (2015) *Dilemmas of counter-terror, stabilisation and statebuilding* (Saferworld) and Larry Attree, Jordan Street and Luca Venchiarutti (2018) *United Nations peace operations in complex environments: Charting the right course* (Saferworld)

35 NATO Standard, AJP-3.16 (2016) *Allied Joint Doctrine For Security Force Assistance (SFA)* Edition A Version 1, p. IX

12. This chapter does not provide guidance on how to deliver security force assistance or stability policing, as this can be found elsewhere in existing doctrine.<sup>36</sup> From a stabilisation perspective, however, it is important to emphasise that such interventions are not an end in themselves. The **direct provision of security will not in itself achieve stabilisation**. Such interventions are simply ways of restoring security and creating space for political processes. For example, external actors can help elites to address their security dilemmas. In Iraq and Afghanistan, both civilian and military external actors were provided security guarantees as part of political negotiations to facilitate and encourage bargaining between sub-national elites, leading to temporary reductions in violence. At times, external actors may support bargaining processes by forcing violent actors to the negotiating table and/or suppressing actors that aim to use insecurity to prevent a stabilising political deal from emerging. In Sierra Leone, for instance, the UK used its military capacity to bring Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leaders and state-sponsored security elites towards peace negotiations and a political solution (including RUF participation in the national electoral process).
13. However, the Stabilisation Unit's Elite Bargains and Political Deals research project shows that external actors must be wary of **large-scale, overly-securitised interventions** which **can distort the balance of power** and disincentivise national and local elites from engaging in stabilising political processes. This is because elites focus more on securing the support and resources of external actors than on reaching political accommodation among themselves.<sup>37</sup> Such interventions can also create new security elites who profit from the current situation (the 'war economy'). Their ability to operate without the support of the wider population can lead to predatory behaviours. Moreover, while some local actors may see international forces as a guarantor of stability, others may see them more negatively, and this can drive further armed violence against both the external forces themselves and the local actors that work with them.
14. Overall, however, indirect support to security and justice actors is a higher priority than direct security provision. This is not only because there are a limited number of circumstances in which the UK and its partners are likely to back direct military action, but also because, even where external actors are directly providing security, support must be provided to national and local security and justice actors so that they can gradually take over responsibility and international support can be drawn down. The remainder of this chapter looks in more depth at how external actors can support security and justice provision in stabilisation contexts.



*In Iraq and Afghanistan, both civilian and military external actors were provided security guarantees as part of political negotiations to facilitate and encourage bargaining between sub-national elites, leading to temporary reductions in violence*



36 NATO Standard AJP-3.22(A) (2016) *Allied Joint Doctrine for Stability Policing* NATO AJP-3.16

37 C Cheng et al. (2018) op. cit.

## Understanding and analysing security and justice in stabilisation contexts

15. We must be **careful not to import our assumptions about what the security and justice sectors should look like**. We should identify who is actually providing security and justice on the ground and the implications of that for the underlying division of power and resources. It is therefore essential to undertake as much analysis as possible right from the start, while recognising that there are likely to be practical and time constraints. This chapter offers some lessons about security and justice in stabilisation contexts. Although these are generalisations, they should provide a useful reference point to external actors, who might otherwise be expecting a more 'classic' constellation of security and justice actors.
16. External actors often start by looking at key institutions within the formal state security sector – police, military, security services, judiciary, courts systems, and the prison and correction systems – and assessing their capacity. This assumes that the main reason that there is violent conflict is because the state has been unable to suppress it, and so if external actors help to strengthen state security institutions it will be possible to end the conflict. Not only does this ignore the many other factors which will be driving conflict (which should be analysed through conflict analysis), but it also tends to downplay or overlook the degree to which state security institutions are themselves parties to the conflict. Furthermore, it pays little attention to the institutions that (should) provide policy direction and accountability, both within and outside the state: line ministries, legislative bodies, the media, academia, civil society organisations and so on.
17. **Instead of focusing on capacity**, we need to start by asking **three key questions**:
  - Who, whether formal (state), traditional/customary or non-state groups, plays a role in providing, or undermining, security and justice?
  - What are the main threats and issues regarding security and justice, not only from the state's perspective, but also from the perspective of different communities (disaggregated by location, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexuality, etc.)?
  - What do these communities think about existing security and justice providers? Are they effective? Do they trust them?
18. In stabilisation contexts, there is unlikely to be a neat distinction between the roles of the military and civilian policing, and nor is there likely to be a clear state monopoly over the legitimated use of physical force. The provision of security is likely to be highly militarised. It may well involve armed forces, paramilitary groups, multiple 'policing' actors, and a mix of non-state actors, some of which are sympathetic to or maintain links with the state and others which are in direct conflict with the state. Security actors are also likely to play a quasi-judicial role in many circumstances. It is also important to look beyond conflict hotspots and assess wider security management, particularly who is responsible for wider policing tasks. There are usually actors beyond the police who are involved in policing tasks such as public order maintenance, protecting life and property, crime prevention, and bringing offenders to justice.

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*In stabilisation contexts, there is unlikely to be a neat distinction between the roles of the military and civilian policing, and nor is there likely to be a clear state monopoly over the legitimated use of physical force*

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19. We also need to understand **how security sector actors have historically operated** and the implications this has for future security provision. Particular attention must be paid to the traditional role of the police. In many contexts, they will not have previously managed security and justice needs effectively, often acting as a repressive rather than a protective force: “unaccountable and abusive police forces are major perpetrators of human rights violations; they fail to protect communities from crime and violence; and they are associated with corruption”.<sup>38</sup>
20. Similarly, **the judiciary is unlikely to be fully independent**. It is more likely that there has historically been limited separation between the judiciary and the ruling elite, and that relationships between them are fuelled by political and financial corruption. In conflict contexts, justice becomes an arena of significant contestation, reinforcing the desire of those in power to control the judiciary. So the justice sector, to the extent it is functioning, is likely to be staffed on the basis of connections and loyalty rather than merit. The grand corruption practiced by major powerbrokers will be replicated at lower levels, compromising judicial independence, impartiality, integrity and accountability and eroding public confidence. Any move, however, to strengthen the judiciary ahead of the more immediate necessity of securing a political agreement to reduce violent conflict may be perceived to be highly partisan and could jeopardise the political process.<sup>39</sup>
21. It is important to **look beyond the state**. For citizens, security and justice is also provided by family, religious, ethnic and group networks (such as traditional or customary courts, elders, and community security groups). These are often more accessible and have greater legitimacy than the formal security and justice system, as they are seen to be rooted in communities and are more reflective of their normative values. State and non-state systems are not necessarily in opposition. They can sit alongside each other and interact in various ways, particularly since the state will usually lack the resources to deliver everything through formal systems alone. It should be noted, however, that while non-state institutions, particularly traditional justice mechanisms, may be quicker to deliver and hold greater local legitimacy, they also have weaknesses. Non-state mechanisms are at least as likely to reinforce discriminatory norms which enable impunity and undermine the transition away from violence. Girls and women may be much more vulnerable to ‘negative’ decisions, and human rights concerns are less likely to be addressed.
22. **Non-state armed groups** (NSAGs) must also be considered (see Chapter 6 for a further discussion of NSAGs). NSAGs can position themselves in various ways. They could be pro-state militias (with or without the state’s informal backing), insurgent groups which are fighting against state authority, or militias which are fighting both the state and other insurgents. External actors need to look carefully at their motivations and support base, rather than simply labelling them as a threat. Local communities (and sometimes local elites) may prefer such groups to a state in which they have little trust. Ignoring the political motivations for non-state armed violence risks overlooking critical conflict drivers and potentially tackling NSAGs in ways that further aggravate the conflict.

38 OECD DAC (2007) op. cit., p163

39 Stabilisation Unit (2013) op. cit., see pp.8–9 and 16–18

23. As the questions above make clear, it is not enough to look only at the supply of security and justice provision, but also the demand, in terms of both security and justice challenges and attitudes towards security and justice actors. We must **take account of differences in needs, expectations, barriers and vulnerabilities**, recognising that these are not identical or distributed evenly throughout populations. Women, girls, boys and men play different roles and experience different risks and vulnerabilities in and after conflict. Vulnerable groups, including women and marginalised men, suffer disproportionately in conflict and often face additional risks or barriers when interacting with security and justice actors. Although armed clashes may subside, individuals may continue to experience conflict-related violence and exploitation disproportionately because of gendered vulnerability, including sexual violence or abuse perpetrated by incoming security forces. Young people's attitudes towards and involvement in violence (for example as child soldiers) can be equally complex and resist easy categorisation such as victims and perpetrators.

## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Analysing security and justice provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who plays a role in providing, or undermining, security and justice?</li> <li>What role do formal (state) actors, traditional/customary bodies and non-state groups play in security and justice provision? What role do they play in any violence and conflict, past and present?</li> <li>How well do we understand how institutions work, and the motivations of their members (political and administrative officials, military, police, justice, etc.)? How are decisions made? Is there a difference between procedure and practice?</li> <li>What prevents the effective use of existing capacity?</li> <li>What is already working? Could this be supported or scaled up?</li> <li>How do different security and justice providers interact? Do they coordinate, cooperate, or compete?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability Guidance Note</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2017</p> <p><i>The Beginners Guide to Political Economy Analysis</i> NSGI, 2017</p> <p><i>Conflict Sensitivity Tools and Guidance</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2016</p>
Analysing security and justice threats and issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the main threats and issues regarding security and justice, not only from the state's perspective, but also from the perspective of different communities?</li> <li>Have the different perspectives of men, women and marginalised groups been considered?</li> <li>Have we considered the needs of different communities, disaggregated by location, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexuality, etc.?</li> </ul>	<p><i>The Good Operation: a handbook for those involved in operational policy and its implementation</i> Ministry of Defence, 2018</p>
Analysing public attitudes towards security and justice providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which providers do different communities consider to be more or less effective?</li> <li>Which providers (state and non-state) do they trust, and why?</li> <li>Do people believe that state/non-state security and justice providers operate fairly/in accordance with the law?</li> </ul>	
Be realistic about the limits of our knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well do we understand the context?</li> <li>Have we spoken to a wide enough range of interlocutors to get a good picture of the situation?</li> <li>Have we shared data and analysis with others, internally and externally as appropriate?</li> </ul>	

## Thinking and working politically when delivering security and justice interventions

24. The previous section stresses that our analysis must go far beyond looking at capacity gaps. **Dysfunction often stems not only from weak capacity:** weak or distorted security and justice provision may well be in the political or financial interests of powerful local (and sometimes international) actors. Despite this, external actors have still overwhelmingly focused on capacity building, often through a very technical lens. This leads to an over-emphasis on training and the provision of equipment at the expense of many other issues such as political leadership, accountability, human resource management, budget transparency, and sustainability.<sup>40</sup> The Ministry of Defence's Good Operation handbook provides comprehensive guidance in relation to delivering best practice in these areas.<sup>41</sup>
25. While 'train and equip' programmes – particularly of security forces but also to a lesser extent the formal justice sector – can lead to a short-term reduction in armed conflict,<sup>42</sup> there is considerable evidence that when they are treated as technical rather than political interventions, they are not only likely to fail but may even be counter-productive.
26. One major challenge is that in the early days of an intervention, it can be hard to assess the long-term consequences for conflict dynamics and political stability which arise from favouring certain security actors. The risk is that **external capacity-building support** for these actors **may in fact have created a situation which is superficially stable but which will collapse as soon as support is reduced**, since these actors do not have broader political legitimacy. At times, external support for these actors may even be obstructing the emergence of a credible political deal which could then be underpinned by external security and justice assistance.



### Case study: The political constraints imposed by military alliances with local security forces

In Afghanistan in 2001, US Special Forces entered into partnership with the United Alliance (the Tajik-dominated coalition fighting the Taliban) as a means of generating sufficient military forces to remove the Taliban from power. While this alliance delivered a degree of immediate military success, the long-term consequence was to preclude inclusive political processes involving all local elites necessary to consolidate peace. The necessity of retaining the consent and cooperation of these local security providers locked in an approach that constrained making further substantive political progress, as their cooperation was contingent on the exclusion of their Pashtun opponents from any political agreement.

40 Lisa Denney and Craig Valters (2015) *Evidence Synthesis: Security Sector Reform and Organisational Capacity Building* (London: Department for International Development)

41 Ministry of Defence (2018) *The Good Operation: a handbook for those involved in operational policy and its implementation*

42 DFID (2016) Framework on Building Stability Synthesis Paper Effective and Legitimate Institutions. Unpublished

27. Another challenge is that **apolitical approaches tend to deliver the same outputs regardless of context**, meaning that support that may once have been appropriate continues to be provided even when the situation is changing rapidly. For example, US Special Forces were delivering support to the Malian Defence Forces immediately prior to the coup in 2012 while the environment was changing around them. This can be a particular vulnerability for programmes which are delivered by technical security personnel from donor countries and private firms, who are usually not best placed to consider and address the political aspects of security and justice support.
28. At worst, apolitically delivered programmes to train and equip military and police personnel can unwittingly facilitate the criminalisation and factional infiltration of the security sector. In Iraq after 2003, the UK tried to develop police capacity in Basra but did not pay enough attention to the rising political dominance of Shia militias, supported by Iran, so these militias were able to infiltrate the Iraqi police.



### **Case study: Libya post-Gaddafi – Capacity-building instead of responding politically**

In the aftermath of the Libyan civil war of 2011 (in which an international coalition undertook air strikes and maintained a no-fly zone), there was a major breakdown in security as a result of inter-militia and inter-tribal warfare. The nascent Libyan government funded militias with local rather than national loyalties and Libyan state capacity broke down completely. Militia groups proliferated and demanded patronage from the state. External actors struggled to respond adequately to the emergence of the armed groups. The UK response in Libya focused on building up weak formal institutions. As Lord Hague described it afterwards, “there was a lot of planning, but lack of ability to implement it because of the condition of Libya and the lack of stable institutions and capabilities there afterwards”. Plans were not sufficiently adapted in response to the developing political and conflict dynamics and there was arguably too little engagement with the armed groups, who had become major political actors. A House of Commons inquiry found that while the UK government conducted ample planning for the post-conflict period, “it did not plan effectively in that it relied on plans that were incapable of implementation”.

House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Select Committee, Libya: Examination of intervention and collapse and the UK’s future policy options, 26 September 2016, HC 119

29. Since security and justice provision is inherently political, and never more so than in stabilisation contexts, we must think and work politically (see Chapter 2, Stabilisation in practice – essential elements for effective delivery). The centrality of politics – local, national and regional – must be recognised. The time and resources required to understand what works locally is frequently underestimated. The following paragraphs identify some key issues.

30. **Consider winners and losers.** Security and justice interventions always create winners and losers. Sometimes this is conscious (for example a long-term reform process aimed at broadening inclusivity) but there are also risks of inadvertently creating winners and losers, particularly in early phases of stabilisation. Providing major security and justice support to certain actors will increase their power relative to others, possibly in ways that will be very hard to reverse later. We must be constantly aware of these dynamics and address any emerging imbalances which could undermine longer-term stability.
31. **Consider how interventions will affect elite bargains and political deals.** Linked to the previous point, we must also be conscious of how any support might interact with ongoing formal or informal negotiations and bargaining processes. Used carefully, security and justice support can contribute towards establishing or shoring up a deal, but it can undermine such deals if such support is not suitably politically sensitive. This can include pushing too quickly for deep reform. However desirable they might be, major reforms may challenge the existing balance of power, risking further violence. We may also have to decide whether and how to deal with 'undesirable' individuals, non-state armed groups or predatory security structures in order to facilitate political deals and reduce violence.
32. **Recognise the risks of further entrenching unjust power structures.** A key challenge is to develop operational mechanisms which will not reinforce governance and rule of law problems that contributed to the causes of the original conflict. For example, security and justice interventions in Iraq after 2003 had failed to address the politicisation and sectarian dominance of state justice and security institutions. These grievances, alongside wider public dissatisfaction with justice and accountability measures, first led to public protests and were later part of the narrative utilised by Daesh as it rose to prominence.
33. **Recognise the risk of external support being instrumentalised.** It is highly likely that powerful actors will attempt to instrumentalise external support so that it reinforces their own power and undermines their rivals. For example, ruling elites may manipulate assistance programmes so that the benefits flow predominantly to their supporters and patronage networks. Similarly, transitional justice programmes, anti-corruption initiatives and other such activities may be manipulated so that they are largely targeted against the opponents of ruling elites.
34. **Build political support for longer-term reform.** While we should not rush into long-term reforms, stabilisation interventions can be used both directly and indirectly to build political support for longer-term reform efforts. This may partly be about using programming and other resources to start to create incentives for change. However, it is also about engaging with the political dialogue around security and justice issues and institutions. Wherever possible, external actors should aim to persuade local actors of the benefits for long-term reform. Equally, they should outline the longer-term risks to deals that freeze an unsatisfactory status quo.

- 35. Focus on problems, not institutions.** With the above points in mind, it is most useful to maintain a pragmatic focus on addressing key short-to-medium term problems which are obstacles to the emergence of a stabilising political deal, rather than trying to build the capacity and effectiveness of individual providers of security and justice. External actors should assess immediate local security and justice needs and assess how to work with existing security and justice providers (state and/or non-state), given that they are already politically enmeshed within local society and adapted to local realities.

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*maintain a pragmatic focus on addressing key short-to-medium term problems which are obstacles to the emergence of a stabilising political deal, rather than trying to build the capacity*

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## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Consider winners and losers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whose security and justice are we supporting? Who gains and who loses from any (planned) intervention?</li> <li>Are some groups or constituencies likely to be excluded from security and justice interventions? How might they react?</li> <li>How will we engage with potential losers or spoilers to mitigate any risks that arise?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Evidence synthesis: security sector reform and organisational capacity building</i> ODI, 2016</p> <p><i>JDP05 Shaping a Stable World: The Military Contribution</i> Ministry of Defence, 2016</p>
Consider how interventions will affect elite bargains and political deals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How will security and justice interventions support or undermine political deal-making processes?</li> <li>What is the potential impact of failure on political processes?</li> </ul>	
Recognise the risks of further entrenching unjust power structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What injustices are fuelling conflict and violence? Will the (planned) intervention address such injustices?</li> <li>What are the risks of inadvertently contributing to a further entrenchment of unjust power structures?</li> </ul>	
Recognise the risk of external support being instrumentalised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How could unscrupulous local actors use external support to reinforce their power and undermine rivals?</li> <li>What can we do to reduce the risks of our support being instrumentalised?</li> </ul>	
Build political support for longer-term reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are we relying on pre-existing 'political will', or do we have a political engagement strategy that will maintain and broaden political support for reform?</li> </ul>	
Focus on problems, not institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What specific security and/or justice challenges are we seeking to address? What would progress look like?</li> <li>Does our support help to address the most important security and justice problems that are inhibiting the emergence of a political deal? Or have we become drawn into long-term capacity building?</li> </ul>	

## Specific types of security and justice interventions in stabilisation contexts

36. Although every situation is different, there are certain types of security and justice interventions which are very likely to be considered in stabilisation contexts. These include transitional justice, transitioning from military to civilian-led security provision, and DDR.

### Transitional justice

37. During external interventions in conflict or immediate post conflict contexts, it is likely that external actors will seek to address transitional justice issues. Transitional justice is defined by the UN system as the “full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation”.<sup>43</sup>
38. **Mechanisms for promoting transitional justice** can include truth-telling initiatives, traditional justice systems, reconciliation, reparations processes, memorialisation and institutional reforms. However, there are no blueprints for what works in undertaking transitional justice interventions, since they must be culturally appropriate, based on local needs, and consider language and outreach strategies.
39. **Transitional justice is of course a highly political process** and does not occur in a political vacuum. Rushed transitional justice interventions can jeopardise the buy-in of key elites to an initial deal or bargain that may reduce levels of conflict and violence. At the same time, a failure to acknowledge and address legacies of mass violence will leave key drivers of conflict unaddressed, risking a return to conflict in future.
40. Criminal prosecutions or truth commissions are often proposed as measures for ‘dealing with the past’. However, they are unlikely to be successful if they ignore the local context. Crucially, it must be recognised that **local actors will be involved in framing the issue as part of political bargaining dynamics**. Such informal processes are likely to take place before formal peace talks but will be an integral (but often unspoken) part of deal-making between key elites, as they negotiate the extent to which ‘the past’ will be dealt with as part of any peace agreement. This poses difficult trade-offs for external actors, who must choose between working with the grain of what is being proposed or pushing harder for a more robust transitional justice process that fully holds those responsible for abuses committed during the conflict to account. In this regard, it should be noted that societies’ attitudes towards justice sometimes shift over the long term. In Chile and Argentina, members of military juntas who had originally been granted amnesties were later indicted. Similarly, criminal prosecutions of senior members of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia only truly began more than two decades after the fall of Pol Pot’s regime.

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43 UN Security Council. See S/2004/616

## Preparing for a transition from military security to civilian security

41. As noted above, security provision during 'hot' conflict is usually primarily delivered by military and paramilitary actors. The military may also perform internal security functions which might normally be the responsibility of the police. As the situation stabilises, therefore, policy makers often seek to **transfer security or policing tasks away from the military and onto the police**. This can free up (expensive) military resources and provide a tangible sign that the situation is gradually improving. It also allows for greater engagement with communities in identifying their justice priorities.
42. In practice, however, this transition can be very difficult to manage. For a start, the police may have limited capacity and little history of acting as a positive security actor rather than an oppressive force, so may have limited capacity to step into this role. Secondly, policing in recently 'stabilised' areas is still likely to require a more muscular approach than would be expected under democratic civilian policing (not presuming that the UK's community policing is the sole or best way of delivering this, European gendarmerie-based models of policing may offer equally useful insights). Genuinely civilian police may be fearful of putting themselves in harm's way. Policy makers must therefore find a way of delivering policing in a way which both offers robust policing in still somewhat insecure areas and instils elements of civilian-led policing, ideally as the first step towards longer-term police reform.
43. Externally-backed **efforts to restructure police services in fragile, post-conflict or war-affected contexts have a mixed record**. Significant efforts by UNMIL to rebuild the Liberian National Police led to a reduction in predatory behaviour, but had less effect on the local police capacity for crime prevention and follow up.<sup>44</sup> In Afghanistan, the generation of the Afghan National Police faced major challenges in a country with no real history of a formal police force, especially as they were drawn into a counter-insurgency role. External engagement focused mainly on recruiting, training and equipping the force to fight, and the building of a professional force, responsive to communities, was neglected.

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policing in recently 'stabilised' areas is still likely to require a more muscular approach than would be expected under democratic civilian policing  
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## Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration

44. While DDR is often a long process which may stretch well beyond the stabilisation phase, it is likely to begin during stabilisation. There is a risk, however, that enacting DDR prematurely in the absence of a political agreement may prove highly destabilising. Instead, it is better to privilege a security sector stabilisation approach and consider what interim steps might be taken to support the wider political process to reduce violent conflict. These may include weapons caching, the commitment not to use heavy weapons and combatants entering into cantonments. It is therefore important to understand the purpose of DDR programmes and how these relate to stabilisation principles and objectives.

44 M Malan (2008) *Security sector reform in Liberia: Mixed results from humble beginnings*

45. According to the UN: **Disarmament** is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population ... **Demobilization** is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups ... **Reintegration** is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income.<sup>45</sup>
46. DDR is often seen as a way of taking NSAGs out of the equation. However, like other security interventions, it must be recognised that DDR is a highly political process and it must be treated as such. It is vital to understand and possibly tailor approaches to the interests of various security actors.
47. DDR is sometimes linked to an agreement to **integrate NSAGs into the state military forces**. This can work if the political deal that underpins it is robust enough and truly reflects a compromise between different actors. In the absence of such conditions, however, bringing militias into formal state security organs can upset the balance of power within the armed forces. It can also lead to a situation where former 'rebels' have two masters, formally following their commanding officer within state forces, but in fact retaining loyalty to their NSAG. In situations where there has been no real resolution of the conflict, physically or psychologically, bringing NSAGs into state forces also risks fuelling tensions between groups who are supposedly on the same side but were fighting each other mere months ago.
48. To reduce these risks, it is often **recommended that any such integration happens at the level of individuals, rather than units**, to reduce the likelihood of militia members retaining their previous loyalties and organisational structures. External actors can provide support so that individual former combatants can secure opportunities to transition to civilian work or further education. This was the model adopted successfully in Sierra Leone following the 2002 peace agreement. Individual members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) were given choices about integration or demobilisation, while the RUF as a whole was offered the opportunity to transform into a political body and contest nationwide elections.
49. Recently, external actors have also prioritised '**defector programmes**' which aim to entice individuals to defect from NSAGs, in theory laying out a stark choice between defecting 'peacefully' or facing military defeat. When launching such programmes, there are many factors to consider. These can include sustainable offers to integrate combatants into communities, transitional justice requirements, the impact on communities, the legal basis of any offer for defectors, and the impact on any longer-term peace agreement. To avoid the image of rewarding those who joined armed groups, defector programmes should take account of community needs as well as the needs of defectors themselves. Joint UK and US guidance on processing defectors and disengaged fighters has more detail.<sup>46</sup>

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*To avoid the image of rewarding those who joined armed groups, defector programmes should take account of community needs as well as the needs of defectors themselves*

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45 United Nations (2014) *Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards*

46 Joint analysis of the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization; US Department of State and the UK Government Stabilisation Unit (2018) *A Pathway to Defections: An Assessment Framework for Processing Defectors and Disengaged Fighters*



## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Transitional justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What mechanisms might help society to come to terms with conflict-related abuses, including conflict-related sexual violence? Is there a role for justice providers (including customary, statutory and religious)?</li> <li>How will any transitional justice process affect elite deals and political bargaining processes? How will they affect security and justice institutions?</li> <li>If there is an emerging, locally-owned proposal for transitional justice, how far should external actors work with the grain or push harder for a more robust process?</li> </ul>	<p><i>FCO toolkit on transitional justice programming</i> FCO, 2015</p> <p><i>Operational Guide to the Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards</i> UN, 2014</p> <p><i>A Pathway to Defections: An Assessment Framework for Processing Defectors and Disengaged Fighters.</i> Stabilisation Unit, forthcoming</p>
Preparing for a transition from military security to civilian security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the police, or any other policing or paramilitary body, have the capacity to take over security provision from the military?</li> <li>How can policing in recently 'stabilised' areas maintain security while instilling elements of civilian-led policing?</li> <li>What kind of training do the police require in order to prepare for any handover?</li> </ul>	
Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which groups are (not) being targeted by DDR processes? What are the implications of this for political deal-making processes and for longer-term stability? What rents will conflict actors and elites accrue from DDR and is this being taken into account?</li> <li>Can ex-combatants be integrated into state security institutions without generating internal tensions? (How) can DDR processes ensure that they do not maintain their previous loyalties?</li> <li>How can DDR programmes provide wider benefits to communities as well as to former combatants? Are communities and community leaders being consulted? Are the particular needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups being catered for and is the process and design gender and conflict sensitive?</li> <li>Is there a role for defector programmes? How can they be designed to be conflict-sensitive, particularly to avoid the image of rewarding those who joined armed groups?</li> </ul>	

## Delivering effective security and justice interventions in stabilisation contexts

50. This chapter concludes with a series of observations on how to deliver effective security and justice interventions in stabilisation contexts, drawing on lessons and experiences from the past 20 years. These are consistent with the essential elements of effective delivery described in Chapter 2. This chapter relates these elements more specifically to security and justice interventions.
51. **Understand and adapt to the context.** The section above on ‘understanding and analysing security and justice in stabilisation contexts’ explains the importance of looking beyond capacity at wider security and justice issues, needs and perceptions. Interventions must be politically sensitive and contextually relevant, which cannot be achieved unless we invest in continuously improving our understanding and adapting interventions as we learn.
52. **Be flexible and iterative.** It will only be possible to adapt our interventions if we have designed them to be flexible and iterative. Moreover, we often do not have enough knowledge of exactly what will work in the early stages of a stabilisation intervention, and so an “iterative, stepping stone approach” to achieving specific security and political objectives is essential so that we can test ‘what works’ and adapt as the intervention progresses.<sup>47</sup> This fits naturally with an approach that focuses on problems, not institutions.
53. **Coordinate across sectors.** There are many areas of overlap and interdependency across the security and justice sector. Most obviously, problems in one part of the criminal justice chain (investigation, charging, prosecution, sentencing, through to prisons and corrections) will affect other parts of the chain. There will be grey areas in the relationships between military and policing actors in stabilisation contexts. And there will likely be other, non-state, informal and quasi-state actors who will also affect security and justice in various ways. Because of the interdependencies, security and justice challenges cannot be treated as standalone issues or addressed in separate silos. This does not mean that we must undertake complex, ‘holistic’ programmes that work on multiple issues simultaneously, but it does mean that we must coordinate well enough that we understand how specific interventions fit within the wider context and with other local and external interventions.
54. Similarly, internal coordination, and ideally coordination with other externals, is crucial to situate our security and justice support within a wider political strategy and to identify potential risks. There will likely be several UK government departments with security and justice interests in-country, possibly even working independently with the same actors. Sharing information, perspectives and analyses will help to develop more robust programmes and adapt them around a changing situation. Aligning UK government support can be difficult but is essential if security and justice programming is to generate strategic effect.<sup>48</sup>

47 Stabilisation Unit (2013) op. cit. p6

48 ICAI (2015) *Development Assistance for Security and Justice*

- 55. Think carefully about local ownership.** ‘Local ownership’ of security and justice interventions is often held up as the ideal, and indeed it is essential that local actors feel ownership, and responsibility for the success, of such interventions. Otherwise, they will be seen as externally imposed interventions which are unlikely to take root and may become a lightning rod for local discontent. Yet local ownership is not a fix-all solution and it must be carefully calibrated. It can be difficult to determine who does or should ‘own’ the security and justice process. In many cases, external actors are drawn into working with Western-oriented elites (or those best able to ‘speak our language’, irrespective of their real affinities), producing results that match their preferences and interests but do not represent local concerns. At the same, we should not be naïve about local actors and their motivations. In post-conflict situations, local actors may have objectives which stand in opposition to any longer-term goals around democratic security and justice sectors and accountability for past actions. Rather than viewing ownership of security and justice sector reform in either/or terms, it should be an essential ingredient for negotiation resulting in political agreements which explicitly determine how force can be employed and who controls it. External actors may have to back initiatives that are less than ideal but have local traction.
- 56. Think carefully about sustainability.** In the early phases of stabilisation interventions, externally-backed security and justice interventions have often been ramped up without any serious consideration of their longer-term sustainability. Capacity-building programmes often create capacities which cannot feasibly be maintained by the host nation state, given financial, management and human resources limitations. This means the original problems and threat of further conflict will resurface as soon as external support is reduced. Much greater thought needs to be given to sustainability and eventual exit strategies, right from the very start of any intervention.
- “Capacity-building programmes often create capacities which cannot feasibly be maintained by the host nation state, given financial, management and human resources limitations”*
- 57. Consider conflict sensitivity and human rights.** Security and justice assistance can negatively affect conflict dynamics and can carry human rights risks, particularly if donor countries are also providing training or material assistance to tackle security threats which reach back to their homeland. Given the nature of security and justice assistance, ‘do no harm’ might not be a feasible outcome. This only increases the importance of conflict-sensitive approaches which identify and mitigate such risks as far as possible and consider how security and justice can play a positive role in building peace. Similarly, policy makers must proactively assess potential human rights risks and mitigate them wherever possible, but also engage in frank conversation, internally and with partner governments, about the potential consequences of any serious human rights abuses linked to the security and justice sectors. This includes undertaking a Human Rights and Overseas Security and Justice Assessment.

## Human rights and Overseas Security and Justice Assessments (OSJAs)

Security and justice interventions in stabilisation contexts very often involves working with actors and institutions that have a poor human rights record. Indeed, part of the rationale for engagement is often to reduce the frequency and severity of human rights violations. At the same time, however, we must be very careful that our support does not inadvertently facilitate human rights violations, which could have legal, policy or reputational risks. Therefore, an OSJA is mandatory for all UK government programmes involving security and justice. The tool helps policy makers to identify human rights risks and consider options for mitigation. Keeping these risks under active review, investing in information collection, and implementing mitigation measures are essential aspects of security and justice interventions.

*Overseas Security and Justice Assessment Guidance*. HMG. 2017.

**58. Consider gender sensitivity.** All security and justice interventions must account for the different needs, opportunities, and vulnerabilities of women and men. Conflict may substantially shift gender roles, and international interventions must be aware of the local history of gender to avoid retrenching additional discriminations which may have been driven by instability or occupying forces, including increased restriction on mobility. Accountability to civilian populations is also increased when actors are required to pay attention to the specific vulnerabilities of different groups. This includes a recognition of the additional burden of harm that conflict imposes on girls and women, such as the risk of sexual and gender-based violence, the existence of gendered barriers to services, and the risk of secondary victimisation by security and justice actors.

**59. Consider how short-term interventions will affect the longer term.** Decisions made in early stages of stabilisation interventions can have a significant impact on the long-term trajectory. This is particularly important for security and justice interventions as there can be fundamental tensions between immediate stabilisation priorities and longer-term reform objectives. As discussed above, external actors may believe that they have little choice but to work with existing security and justice actors to address critical security problems, even though they are aware of their weaknesses (such as a lack of accountability). There is often no easy solution to this dilemma, but the trade-offs between short-term responses and longer-term approaches must be consciously acknowledged and debated. Linked to the question of sustainability, stabilisation planners must also consider how to ensure a gradual transition from short-term engagement in support of stabilisation objectives towards longer-term engagement around building stability and more fundamental reforms. This is rarely a linear process. In reality, stabilisation interventions and longer-term security and justice programmes tend to overlap, which only reinforces the need to consider their compatibility and how to transition from one to the other.



*This is particularly important for security and justice interventions as there can be fundamental tensions between immediate stabilisation priorities and longer-term reform objectives*



**60. Monitor, evaluate and learn.** Monitoring evaluation and learning (MEL) processes must be integrated into the design and delivery of interventions from the start. Without appropriate and proportionate attention to ongoing data collection, collation and analysis, there is little chance of getting the right information at the right time to shape decision-making and adapt to changing circumstances. This starts by thinking carefully about the theory of change which underpins the intervention. It also gathering the right types of data. Since security and justice interventions are highly political, our MEL processes must be attuned to collect useful data about what is really changing (or not), rather than simply reporting on activities and their immediate outputs. For example, rather than simply measuring the number of troops or police trained, we need to assess the extent to which trained individuals are or are not doing things differently or better in their everyday practice, why this is the case, the effects of this, and any unintended or unexpected effects. Where our interventions also have clear political goals, these also need to be monitored in an appropriate fashion, rather than simply being assumed. A 2018 review of the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund by the Independent Commission on Aid Impact stated that where interventions are implicitly intended to support political access and influence host governments, we should monitor this more explicitly.<sup>49</sup>

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49 ICAI (2018) *Performance review of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund's aid spending*, p. iv

## ! Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Understand and adapt to the context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See the prompt questions in 'Understanding and analysing security and justice in stabilisation contexts' above.</li> </ul>	<a href="#"><i>What works in international security and justice programming?</i></a> ISSAT, 2015
Be flexible and iterative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How flexible are (planned) interventions? How easily can they adapt to changing circumstances?</li> <li>• Can interventions be scaled up or down as required?</li> <li>• What delivery mechanisms will the intervention use (state-to-state support, multilateral engagement, private sector contracting, deliver through international or local civil society organisations, etc.) and how can we ensure that these mechanisms are flexible?</li> </ul>	<a href="#"><i>Building Stability Framework</i></a> DFID, 2016  <a href="#"><i>OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform</i></a> OECD, 2007
Coordinate across sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do interventions in one part of the security and justice system influence the wider situation, and how do they interact with other security and justice interventions?</li> <li>• Are all UK government actors working to the same plan? What mechanisms are there for review, challenge and deconfliction?</li> <li>• How do UK interventions link with those of other external actors? What is the role of international, regional actors and bodies in this context (including the ICC and UN)? How does external support link with processes led by the host nation itself?</li> <li>• What sequencing is needed to ensure that interventions are coherent and build upon each other?</li> <li>• How is political engagement being coordinated? Who takes the lead politically, both within the UK government and across the international community? What support do they need?</li> </ul>	<a href="#"><i>Safety, security and access to justice: Topic guide</i></a> GSDRC University of Birmingham, 2016  <a href="#"><i>Conflict Sensitivity Tools and Guidance</i></a> Stabilisation Unit, 2016  <a href="#"><i>Overseas Security and Justice Assessment Guidance</i></a> UK government, 2017

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Think carefully about local ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of support do the host nation government and local communities want or expect? What demand is there for external interventions?</li> <li>• How far does an intervention represent local interests, and how far does it correspond to international agendas (recognising that these points need not be mutually exclusive)?</li> <li>• How likely are external interventions to deliver the outcomes most sought by local communities?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Gender and Security Sector Reform Toolkit</i> DCAF, 2008</p> <p><i>UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, 2018 – 2022</i> UK government, 2018</p>
Think carefully about sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is what we are trying to achieve clear and realistic? How big is the anticipated scale of change? How long would it need to take root and become sustainable?</li> <li>• What resources would the host nation require to sustain changes brought about through our interventions? Are they likely to have such resources in the near future?</li> <li>• Have we considered sustainability and exit strategies from the very start of designing our interventions?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Monitoring and Evaluation of Conflict and Stabilisation Interventions</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2014</p>
Consider conflict sensitivity and human rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have we assessed how our interventions will interact with conflict dynamics, and vice versa?</li> <li>• How will we mitigate any potential negative impacts of our interventions on conflict dynamics? How will we maximise potential impact on peace and stability?</li> <li>• How well is the human rights environment understood?</li> <li>• How will human rights risks be managed? Are there robust processes for review and mitigation? Has an OSJA been undertaken?</li> <li>• Do external and local actors have the same understanding of the scale, importance and impact of violations on different groups? Are some violations 'hidden' or seen as socially acceptable?</li> <li>• How can human rights situations be monitored without endangering ourselves and those we work with?</li> </ul>	

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Consider gender sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have we consistently considered the different needs and perspectives of men, women, boys and girls?</li> <li>• Have we assessed how our interventions will affect men, women, boys and girls? Have we considered the opportunities and challenges around promoting gender equality through security and justice institutions?</li> <li>• Have gender sensitivity and inclusion been sufficiently integrated throughout all elements of our analysis, planning and delivery?</li> </ul>	
Consider how short-term interventions affect the longer term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have immediate decisions been made in a way that aligns them as far as possible with longer-term trajectories for security and justice reform?</li> <li>• What are the potential trade-offs and long-term impacts of decisions made during the stabilisation phase? Have these trade-offs been debated and documented?</li> <li>• For example, are interim actions to tackle armed groups creating future imbalances in the security sector? What might be the long-term effect of specific justice approaches, such as amnesties, prosecutions, or reconciliation measures?</li> </ul>	
Monitor, evaluate and learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will the programme learn – is there a MEL plan in place? Is this plan appropriately resourced?</li> <li>• What are the theories of change and the assumptions underpinning our interventions? How well have they been documented? Are we testing and learning as we go along?</li> <li>• Is there a baseline in place? Can one be constructed?</li> <li>• What are we doing to strengthen the evidence base? What data and analysis are we generating? How are we sharing this information?</li> </ul>	



## Chapter 4: The centrality of political deal making

- Political deal-making and bargaining processes among elites are key to building local support for reductions in armed conflict, formal peace processes and more stable transitions out of conflict.
- External actors can build trust and confidence and support the emergence of stabilising deals and bargains, providing resources to help them 'stick'.
- Externally-driven peace agreements and transformative reform agendas are likely to fail if they are significantly misaligned with the underlying division of power and resources.
- Policy makers face difficult trade-offs. Near-terms deals can de-escalate major conflict, but can impose limits on more inclusive change, and can result in other less visible forms of violence.

## Introduction

1. The UK has considerable recent experience of interventions aimed at ending conflict and reducing security threats to the UK. These 'external'<sup>50</sup> interventions have emphasised formal peace processes and state- and institution-building as a way to reduce and manage violence. Yet attempts at transformative change,<sup>51</sup> for example in Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq, have faced considerable challenges. Those excluded from the political and security arrangements have often used violence to challenge and undermine them and strengthen their position. This has often resulted in continued conflict, failed institution-building efforts and the collapse of peace agreements.
2. This chapter sets out how the UK government, working alongside local and international partners, can take a more iterative approach to reducing the impact of armed conflict by understanding and engaging in the political processes that occur in conflict contexts. In particular, it looks at how we can more effectively understand and potentially support political deal-making and bargaining processes. These are key to building local support for reductions in violence, formal peace processes and more stable transitions out of conflict. Activity in this regard accords with the UK Stabilisation Principles set out in Chapter 1, most clearly the need to **'promote and support a political process to reduce violence'** and **'prepare a foundation for longer-term stability'**.

50 References in this chapter to 'external' interventions refer to those of any state or multilateral organisation engaged directly or indirectly in the conflict, albeit that the emphasis is on the UK's role. The word 'external' is used for clarity: clearly no intervention can be considered truly 'external', given the degree to which intervening actors are part of the wider regional or international political economy of the conflict in question.

51 An attempt to fundamentally reengineer the underlying division of power and resources and existing political structures in order to generate some or all of the following: greater social and political inclusivity; gender equality, reductions in poverty, sustainable economic growth. See United Nations (2015) *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

3. The issues discussed below are inextricably linked with other thematic areas and the approaches and issues presented in other chapters. Elite bargains and political deals usually happen in political grey areas, between the negotiation of formal peace agreements on one hand, and grassroots, bottom-up peacebuilding on the other hand. This chapter should therefore not be read in isolation and the overlaps and intersections with other issues must be recognised.
4. This chapter is in three sections, each ending with some key questions that policy and programme staff should ask as they develop their analysis, policy and plans. The sections:
  - introduce the key terms, concepts and frameworks that help to understand political deal-making processes in conflict contexts;
  - outline steps the UK and other external actors can take to promote and support a political process to reduce violence, and explores the factors which affect whether such deals and bargains are likely to hold;
  - set out how external actors can potentially help to prepare foundations to build longer-term stability.

## Key terms and concepts

**Elites:** those that hold a disproportionate amount of political power, who are able to influence decisions, mobilise popular support and implement policies at national, sub-national and transnational levels.

**Elite bargains:** a discrete deal or bargain, or series of bargains that explicitly re-negotiates the distribution of power and resources between elites. Elite bargains are fluid and evolve constantly.

**Peace agreements:** Formal or semi-formal agreements entered into by warring parties, often but not exclusively brokered by external actors.

5. A 2018 Stabilisation Unit research project, the Elite Bargains and Political Deals (EBPD) project, provides a framework for understanding these complex, highly political conflict dynamics.<sup>52</sup> It focuses on understanding who the key conflict elites are, how they operate and the nature of the political deals and bargains they do among themselves. It assesses how these factors interact with the underlying division of power and resources and with more formal peace agreements (where one is in place).
6. Elites' authority often goes beyond formal state structures and institutions, and this is especially true of conflict contexts. In exercising and seeking to maximise their authority, elites constantly 'bargain' over the formal and actual distribution and allocation of power and resources. In conflict, those bargaining processes are in constant flux as the distribution of power and resources is contested.
7. Elite bargains and deals play a critical role in influencing the trajectory of conflict. They are points at which support can be generated (or not) for reductions in violence, and which can set the foundations for formal or semi-formal peace agreements. So, they play an especially important role as a first step away from large-scale violent conflict.

<sup>52</sup> C Cheng et al. (2018) op. cit., The references to specific cases in this chapter are almost all drawn from the case studies undertaken for this project.

## Understanding elites

8. External actors who wish to engage on political processes in conflict and post-conflict settings can only set appropriate and realistic policy objectives if they **start with an agreed analytical picture**. The EBPDP synthesis paper and the Joint Analysis of Conflict and Security guidance are helpful analytical frameworks for analysts and policy makers looking to understand the forces affecting elites operating in conflict contexts.<sup>53</sup> They set out the many factors that interact to shape the complex political processes discussed here, such as demography, resource endowments, regional dynamics and the legacies of conflict, as well as the nature of the state, identity, ideology and belief systems. They describe the different ways that relationships between elites and their constituencies can develop and be affected by conflict. They emphasise the importance of understanding the relative strength and importance of different elites in each context. While military elites predominate in some contexts, crowding out non-security actors, in other situations power may be more diffuse with traditional leaders, commercial or religious figures retaining significant influence.
9. It is also important to **view** these political actors and their (often only partially visible) **interactions at multiple levels**. The factors affecting elites, the bargains and deals they do among themselves and their relationships with their constituencies must be assessed at the local, national, regional and transnational levels. Looking at any of these in isolation will fail to recognise the extent to which they inevitably interconnect.
10. With regard to **female elites**, the World Bank's 2017 World Development Report (WDR2017) sets out how, although gender gaps are narrowing, females remain underrepresented within elites. Where they do hold positions of power, they tend to be in roles considered appropriate by male-dominated political cultures. This results in fewer inclusive policies being driven forward. WDR2017 shows that including female elites in elite bargaining processes increases inclusivity and that women in such contexts tend to be less hierarchical and less corrupt and are less likely to be engaged in patronage politics.<sup>54</sup> Of course it is imperative that as external actors work to support the emergence of the sorts of political processes described below, they are mindful of the risk of entrenching harmful gender norms that will serve to further undermine gender equality.

## Elite bargains, peace agreements and the division of power and resources

11. Once elites have been analysed, policy makers must give adequate attention to the political deals and bargains into which elites enter during conflict. External interveners have tended to underplay or ignore these more informal, partially hidden processes while pursuing externally-driven peace processes and formal institution development. The failure to adequately understand elite bargaining processes and the wider political economy of the conflict has often, if not always, resulted in a misalignment between formal processes (e.g. the legal text of the peace agreement, new institutional structures) and the actual division of power and resources on the ground as defined by elite bargains and political deals.

<sup>53</sup> Stabilisation Unit (2017) *Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability; Guidance note*

<sup>54</sup> World Bank (2017) *World Development Report*, p. 211

12. So, we must also **analyse how far a proposed or existing formal peace agreement aligns with the underlying division of power and resources**. Where there is significant misalignment, there is a high risk that the peace agreement or new institutional structures will fail, leading to renewed violence and instability.



### Case study: Afghanistan and Tajikistan – alignment and misalignment

The post-Taliban peace agreement for Afghanistan made in Bonn in 2001 excluded the Taliban leadership, offering them little opportunity or incentive to engage in peaceful politics. The agreement became ever more misaligned with the underlying realities of power, given the extent of the Taliban's political, military and economic resources. Similarly, the internationally-backed 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement on South Sudan can also be said to have failed because it excluded and ignored powerful elites and armed actors.

In Tajikistan, by contrast, there was greater alignment between the peace agreement and the underlying realities of power. International actors backed a peace agreement that essentially formalised a series of bargains and deals to end the civil war between political and military elites on both sides of the conflict, in a manner that reflected their power on the ground. This deal was far from perfect, and many of the underlying drivers of instability remain unresolved, but it ended the conflict and there has been little political violence for the last 20 years.

## Assessing the impact of external interventions

13. When planning or undertaking an intervention, we must also **reflect on the potential and existing impact of our engagement on the conflict's political economy**. As soon as external actors intervene they become part of the conflict system, as the conflict parties factor what external actors do – or are expected to do – into their calculations. Any major security, political and economic interventions will radically alter the underlying division of power and resources. Moreover, the scale and nature of the intervention could lead external actors to be seen as a party to the conflict, rather than a more neutral force.
14. This emphasises the importance of **conflict sensitivity**. Given the critical influence of elite bargains and political deals for moving away from conflict, analysts and policy makers should use conflict sensitivity tools (see Chapter 2) to assess, and constantly reassess, how proposed or existing interventions will affect political actors and processes. Failing to be conflict-sensitive not only means plans and objectives are less likely to be effective but can in the worst cases prompt new conflict.
15. Any analysis and planning process must also make a frank assessment of the **trade-offs** that exist between interventions and weigh up the costs and benefits appropriately (this is explored in more detail below).



*As soon as external actors intervene they become part of the conflict system, as the conflict parties factor what external actors do – or are expected to do – into their calculations*





## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Analysing elites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who are the key elites and why do they think the way they do?</li> <li>What role do formal and informal institutions and wider structural issues play in shaping elite activity?</li> <li>From where do they derive their power?</li> <li>How do regional, national and sub-national elites interact and to what extent do they rely on each other or compete?</li> </ul>	Cheng, C, Goodhand, J, Meehan, P, <i>Elite Bargains and Political Deals project Synthesis paper</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2018
Analysing elite bargains, political deals and the division of power and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How are power and resources divided?</li> <li>Are existing elite bargains stable or unstable, and what are they based on?</li> <li>What has been the role and impact of external interventions on elite bargaining processes?</li> </ul>	<i>Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability Guidance Note</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2017
Analysing 'misalignment'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does the formal distribution of power match the more informal distribution of power on the ground?</li> <li>Is there a peace agreement in place, or is one being proposed? How well do its provisions (existing or proposed) align or fit with the actual settlement?</li> <li>Is the agreement transformative (i.e. in the manner of the reforms and changes proposed) or is it focused on formalising a series of existing elite bargains?</li> <li>Will provisions be made in any proposed agreement to revise it over time, allowing for greater inclusivity? Are the implications of any proposed agreement for the economy, governance, public security and social cohesion being thought through?</li> </ul>	
Analysing conflict sensitivity and trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the key policy trade-offs? How do the UK's primary policy objectives in this context align with those held locally, and by other external actors?</li> <li>How might they conflict with the goal of violence reduction and support for the emergence of stabilising elite bargains?</li> <li>What are the potential trade-offs between our counter-terrorism, democracy, human rights, gender, longer-term institutional reform and potential interests and the potential requirement to secure stabilising political deals between key conflict actors?</li> </ul>	

## Supporting a political process to reduce violent conflict

16. Once the analysis discussed above is in place, external actors may seek to provide direct or (more likely) indirect **support to political deal-making and bargaining processes**.
17. The possible approaches outlined below assume that the objective of such interventions is to reduce violent conflict (at a national or more localised level) and build a platform for longer-term stability, in line with the UK Approach to Stabilisation. These have been set out in a sequential manner for ease of reading, but it should be noted that this could provide the false impression that transitions out of conflict can be linear, when in practice they are always 'messy'. Any engagement in such fluid political environments should be undertaken iteratively, constantly updating our analysis and responding to shifting dynamics on the ground.

### Working with misaligned peace agreements

18. In circumstances where external actors are pushing for or backing a formal peace agreement, we must begin by assessing:
  - how far the agreement aligns with the configurations of power on the ground;
  - whether it is adequately supported by underlying deals among key conflict elites.

On this basis, we must set appropriate objectives.
19. Where the peace agreement is misaligned with the underlying division of power and resources, external actors should **consider activities to foster political support** for the agreement. We may also (or alternatively) need to reassess the level of ambition in the agreement. In some cases, the degree of political transformation proposed in the agreement reduces or blocks elite support for the agreement. The following questions should guide policy-maker engagement with local, international and regional partners in this regard.



## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Working with existing peace agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there adequate recognition of the risks inherent in misaligned peace agreements that are linked to externally driven transformative agendas?</li> <li>• Can more be done to highlight the evidence that complex, multi-actor conflicts are likely to require an iterative, step-by-step, deal-focused approach that builds support for a formal peace process and agreement, rather than trying to achieve everything at once?</li> <li>• Should policy-makers reduce the degree of change advocated for in the formal agreement, if that is what has been assessed to be preventing conflict elites from providing support? Conversely, where genuine opportunities to widen coverage or inclusivity exist, have they been fully exploited?</li> <li>• What more can be done to promote frank assessment of the impact of external intervening forces on the political economy of the conflict? Are external political, economic or security interventions distorting and potentially disincentivising local political engagement and dialogue?</li> </ul>	<p>Cheng, C, Goodhand, J, Meehan, P, <i>Elite Bargains and Political Deals project Synthesis paper</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2018</p> <p><i>Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability Guidance Note</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2017</p>

## Becoming more directly involved

20. Certain contexts may require more direct external political engagement by the UK and its partners. In some instances, as noted above, more support needs to be built among conflict elites for an existing peace agreement. Where there is no formal peace process in place, external actors may wish to **support the emergence of political deals among conflict actors** as a way of generating more immediate reductions in violence. For example, where there is deep mistrust between political elites and no side is willing to risk military defeat by entering into dialogue, external actors can play a role in building trust between elites and lowering the potential cost of participation. During the Colombian peace process, for instance, Venezuela and Ecuador played a key role in generating trust between the government and Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) leaders.

21. In some contexts, external actors can **catalyse private, confidential engagement between conflict actors** by providing support, resources, and suitable environments for dialogue. In the Philippines, the unique model established through the International Contact group (comprising Japan, Turkey, the UK and Saudi Arabia as well as four NGOs) provided vital political, technical and economic support to negotiations between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.
- external actors can catalyse private, confidential engagement between conflict actors by providing support, resources, and suitable environments for dialogue*
22. External actors, including the UK, may also decide to directly mediate, or **support the development of confidence-building measures** (CBMs) as they try to establish first steps towards an initial deal or bargain between elites. The annex at the end of this chapter provides a range of potential CBMs which external actors can consider. The following underlying principles should guide any attempt to support or directly develop CBMs:
- **CBMs must engender trust between parties.** Technical economic and security CBMs can be important, but CBMs must be kept as political as possible in order to facilitate processes of engagement and dialogue and develop trust and confidence between parties.
  - **CBMs should start small and build up.** Interventions such as ceasefires and humanitarian interventions may have merit in themselves, but they are unlikely to work as CBMs in the first stage of an attempt to bring together various parties.
  - **CBMs cannot be imposed from the outside and must be aligned with the configurations of power.** If one side has nothing to gain by agreeing to halt a particular tactic, attempting to agree or impose a related CBM will probably be detrimental to confidence building.
23. When operating in a hot conflict context, where external actors do not have a major security presence, there are likely to be fewer opportunities to directly support political deals 'on the ground'. **Generating support using regional elites** may therefore prove to be more productive, given the likelihood that they have greater access, leverage and influence. Donor pressure in 2003 on Rwanda was a major factor in its reduction in support for the M23 rebel group in DRC, which in turn led to the collapse of the group's support base.
24. In some instances, however, **direct external intervention may reduce the possibility that stabilising local deals emerge.** Initial pressure to do something to respond to violence and conflict can result in major external interventions which preclude more locally driven, 'good enough' solutions. Equally, we must be aware of the risk of instrumentalisation, as conflict elites will inevitably seek to leverage and instrumentalise their relationship with external actors to their own advantage.<sup>55</sup> This can go both ways, however, as external actors can also inadvertently instrumentalise local actors. Formal peace agreements and processes can result in elites becoming beholden to international policy commitments. For example, undertaking social reform or tackling powerful organised criminal networks can undermine their relationships with their domestic constituencies and power bases, leading to more instability.

<sup>55</sup> Instrumentalisation: when local/domestic elites view external interveners as potential force multipliers, providing coercive power, resources and rent-seeking opportunities, and legitimacy, to be used to tilt the balance of power in their favour. See C Cheng et al. (2018) op. cit.

## Expertise and resource

25. External interveners must have the right resources in place to support complex deal-making processes effectively. Suitable **analytical expertise** is required to shed light on behind-the-scenes political processes. Slower-moving analytical processes are unlikely to be adequately responsive to shifting local dynamics, so it is essential to use real-time **local expertise** and information from sources 'outside the wire'. (i.e. beyond the fortified compounds of international embassies and military bases). People with conflict resolution, mediation and facilitation skills can play an important role in developing policy and programming options. However, such thematic expertise cannot be a substitute for people with local knowledge (including of local languages) and people who have the confidence of the conflict parties.
26. A decision to undertake a political intervention does not mean that the UK must engage directly in (supporting) deal-making processes. A range of factors including resource constraints, risk appetite and analysis of the best way influence the process will often lead us to **consider other avenues for policy or programmatic interventions**. Multilateral partners or non-governmental external providers are often better placed in terms of expertise and access to support behind-the-scenes processes, whether from capitals or at a regional level. In such cases, UK support may involve providing targeted resources and expertise, such as generating and sharing conflict analysis, technical advice (on CBMs, communications, multi-track diplomacy) and potentially funding for third-party expert support.
27. So, policy-makers and programme staff may wish to identify whether external organisations and experts can be brought in to support specific political interventions. A key issue for consideration is the degree to which external mediators are perceived as neutral and legitimate. In some instances, multilateral organisations such as the UN, EU or IGAD can facilitate dialogue between conflict parties. For example, the small UN mediation team in Mali has facilitated informal political engagement with numerous conflict actors in support of the formal peace agreement between the Malian government and various rebel groups in the north. Their engagement has sought to generate support among conflict elites for the formal peace process and/or to respond to localised outbreaks of violence.
28. Non-governmental mediation experts and organisations are also increasingly being used in conflict contexts. They offer access into insecure areas and have skillsets that are often difficult for governments to deploy. For instance, EU funding for external non-governmental experts to support mediators in Somalia has generated positive results. Other attempts to insert external mediation experts have produced pushback. During the conflict in Nepal, some people accused Western governments of 'parachuting' in experts with limited expertise and too little time to properly commit.
29. When considering the opportunities for more direct engagement in the political processes surrounding a stabilisation intervention, policy makers and programme staff should consider the following.



*Slower-moving analytical processes are unlikely to be adequately responsive to shifting local dynamics, so it is essential to use real-time local expertise and information from sources 'outside the wire'*





## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Providing direct support to political deal making processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could external diplomatic interventions and/or security guarantees or certain resources help to overcome a lack of commitment from conflict parties to engagement? (See below for further discussion).</li> <li>• Could external facilitation provide important political and physical 'space' for, and facilitate deals and bargains between, key conflict elites?</li> <li>• Is there greater opportunity to bring diplomatic and economic resources to bear to create an enabling environment for elite bargains at the regional level?</li> <li>• Is there a role for the UK? Should the UK encourage others (e.g. regional actors, UN) to provide a more neutral platform for engagement?</li> <li>• Are there opportunities for more direct support to help the emergence of stabilising bargains, either through official or non-governmental channels?</li> <li>• What moment would suit an external intervention aimed at supporting a stabilising political deal or bargain? Have CBMs built momentum? Has one side lost or gained military advantage? Has there been a change in leadership, or the underlying political settlement? Have regional alliances shifted, opening up political space?</li> <li>• Have we fully considered who will benefit materially and symbolically, and who will lose, as a result of our support?</li> </ul>	<p>Cheng, C, Goodhand, J, Meehan, P, <i>Elite Bargains and Political Deals project Synthesis paper</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2018</p> <p><i>United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation</i> UN, 2012</p> <p>Mamiya, R. <i>Engaging with Non-State Armed Groups to Protect Civilians</i> International Peace Institute, 2018</p>

## Making the deal stick

30. While CBMs may constitute a vital part of any initial attempt to build trust between conflict parties, policy makers also need **to consider which factors are most likely to help these delicate political processes hold**. Two issues are of particular importance: elite access to political privileges and economic opportunities (often referred to as 'rents'), and the degree of inclusion or exclusion of particular elites in a deal or bargain.

### Rents

31. Rents are key in many conflict contexts because **political deals and bargains are sustained by elites providing or gaining privileged access to power and material resources**. Rents can be generated locally by conflict elites, through taxation and predation, or sourced externally from regional backers who want supportive local allies. Where the writ of the state is limited, the key issue may be access to and the 'right' to extract resources. This may include access to raw resources, control of illicit flows (such as drug trafficking routes) or exploiting external aid flows. In such contexts, power is likely to be very diffuse and resources limited. Bargains between conflict elites are likely to be unstable and volatile because elite calculations change with shifting resource opportunities. In some instances, it may be possible to **directly affect elite access to rents**, thereby increasing (or decreasing) the likelihood that a deal or bargain will hold.



#### Case study: External actors, rent flows and political deals

If external interventions affect rent flows, this can influence the nature and stability of deals and bargains between key conflict elites in various ways. In Mozambique during the early 1990s there was extreme dependence on external aid, meaning external actors could use aid flows to pressure the warring parties into negotiations. In Afghanistan's Sangin district in 2011, small, well-targeted and locally driven projects helped key conflict elites convince their communities that of the benefits of local ceasefires, leading to significant reductions in violence. In other instances, external actors may unintentionally provide financial flows that maintain key deals among elites. In Somalia, elite access to external aid flows has been vital in maintaining the 2004 Mbagathai agreement and the deal that exists between Mogadishu-based clans and wider factional elites (albeit those elite actors associated with Al-Shabaab remain outside the deal).

32. There are significant **trade-offs** in any decision by external actors to about rent flows – whether the decision is to try to influence them or to let them be. Rent flows often pose challenges to efforts to build medium- or longer-term stability. One risk is that elites turn their attention to competing for rents (including those provided by external actors), sometimes violently. They may seek the attention of external backers to gain greater access to rents, and if they are excluded from certain rent-sharing arrangements, they may use violence to contest their position. External actors can find themselves in a double bind, where they have bought peace by providing political or economic incentives but find that they cannot now withdraw financial flows without risking a breakdown in any existing deal or bargain, leading to renewed instability.

33. In seeking to understand and potentially influence the way rents impact on the political processes inherent to stabilisation interventions, policy makers should begin by asking the following questions.



### Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Understanding and effecting the 'stickiness' of a political deal: rents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which particular rent is the group in question seeking? Is the conflict about political power, or more immediate economic gain (or both)?</li> <li>• What are the existing sources of rents? Are they locally generated or do elites rely on external backers for support, leaving them relatively independent of local support? If they are externally sourced, can their backers elsewhere be influenced to reduce or alter their support?</li> <li>• What is the relative strength of the state? Are conflict elites generating rents through the central state, or more locally, with little to no engagement from the centre?</li> <li>• To what extent are international interventions providing rent opportunities for elites? Are they preventing the more resolution of the conflict, or helping to incentive conflict elites to enter in a bargain?</li> </ul>	<p>Meehan, P, <i>What are the key factors that affect the securing and sustaining of an initial deal to reduce levels of armed conflict?</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2018</p> <p>North, D, Wallis, J, Webb, S, Weingast, B, <i>Limited Access Orders in the Developing World: A New Approach to the Problems of Development</i> World Bank, 2007</p> <p><i>Natural Resources and Conflict: A Guide for Mediation Practitioners</i> UNDPA and UNEP, 2015</p>

## Inclusion

34. How powerful elites are included or excluded within a political bargain or deal can have a major effect on the extent to which it will hold. In contexts where external actors only have a limited influence over the key conflict actors, we may have limited scope to affect the degrees of inclusivity. However, where the UK and its partners have undertaken a significant intervention and/or have a major influence over local configurations of power and the parameters of deal making processes, we need to consider how policy priorities affect approaches to inclusivity.
35. As set out in the UK Approach chapter, the priority aim in any initial stabilisation intervention should in theory be to prioritise a near-term reduction in violence, on the basis that only then will there be an adequate platform for longer-term, sustainable change. In the initial post-conflict period, policy makers should where possible **consider taking a maximalist approach to elite inclusion** (often described as horizontal inclusivity),<sup>56</sup> i.e. aim to bring as much of the elite as feasible towards a deal. As set out below, such an approach involves difficult decisions and trade-offs over who is engaged and how, given the potential implications of engaging certain individuals and groups who are likely to be responsible for perpetuating the conflict.
36. In some cases, external actors may seek to exclude certain individuals or groups from a particular deal or more formal agreement on political, security or moral grounds. For example, international pressure has prevented the Malian government from engaging with individuals judged to have links to terrorist groups. Evidently, the exclusion of powerful actors from a specific bargain or agreement will pose challenges to its sustainability. The costs of doing so must be assessed against the ability of those excluded to generate further violent conflict. Experts argue that the policy of excluding the Taliban from the Bonn process in Afghanistan and similarly the exclusion of the Islamic Courts movement in Somalia were implemented with too little recognition of the potential longer-term costs.
37. Furthermore, while the horizontal inclusivity of key elites can bring about stabilisation, and in some cases longer-term stability, policy makers must **remain aware of tensions with other priorities**, such as the political, social and economic inclusion of the wider population. A failure to widen political inclusion beyond elites can undermine stability later on. In Lebanon, an inclusive bargain among elites in the post-conflict period has prevented major outbreaks of violence but has precluded wider reforms to address underlying drivers of instability, as any such change would pose a threat to the carefully balanced division of power and resources.

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*where the UK and its partners have undertaken a significant intervention and/or have a major influence over local configurations of power and the parameters of deal making processes, we need to consider how policy priorities affect approaches to inclusivity*

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<sup>56</sup> 'Horizontal inclusion' is concerned with the relationship between and across different elites, while 'vertical inclusion' involves the relation between elites and their constituencies.

38. A further factor to consider is **how far the conflict is being fought over 'divisible' or 'indivisible' issues**. 'Divisible' conflicts are those where competing interests and grievances revolve around contestation over access to resources, political rights and rent-sharing arrangements. 'Indivisible' conflicts are over territory, secession, or cultural politics where issues of ethnicity or identity have hardened into deep social division. Broadly 'divisible' conflicts offer greater immediate scope for negotiation as there is some room for compromise on the key issues. In Tajikistan, for example, while there was certainly an ideological aspect to the conflict, it was predominantly fought over a set of series of divisible issues around access to political and economic power. On the other hand, where issues have been framed in more indivisible and zero-sum terms, where one side is more evidently going to 'lose' if the other achieves their goals, securing a stabilising elite deal is likely to prove more challenging. This was evident in Sri Lanka, where Tamil groups' demands for succession left no room for the interests of elites in Colombo.
39. Nonetheless, even on seemingly more indivisible issues, there will always be some scope for external actors to support elites to find common ground with their opponents and focus on more divisible issues. In Aceh, the devastation caused by the 2004 tsunami led elites on both sides to alter long-held, more indivisible positions. In the context of a massive international aid effort, external mediators were able to help conflict elites sell a deal to their supporters and secure a lasting peace.
40. Key questions for policy makers to consider include the following.



## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Understanding and effecting the 'stickiness' of a political deal: inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent are key conflict elites being excluded from a deal, or more formal peace agreement? Who is preventing their inclusion and why?</li> <li>• How great is the risk that external policy agendas are preventing stabilising deals and bargains from emerging? Is there more that could be done to avoid broad-brush labels that fail to recognise the complexity of the conflict?</li> <li>• To what extent should external actors take a maximalist approach to the inclusion of elites in the initial post-conflict period? What does this mean for the UK government's role in this context, and what are the implications for our other interests?</li> <li>• How will the deal between elites impact on the political, social and economic inclusion of social groups? What might this mean for long-term stability?</li> <li>• Is the conflict framed in more divisible (political, economic opportunities) or indivisible (identity, ethnicity) terms?</li> <li>• Is there any scope for external actors to help positions and narratives evolve towards more divisible issues?</li> </ul>	<p>Haspeslagh, S and Yousef, Z, <i>Engaging Armed Groups</i> Conciliation Resources, 2015</p> <p><i>Guidance on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies</i> UNDP, 2017</p>

## Preparing a foundation for longer-term stability

41. The political deal-making and bargaining processes described here are highly complex and fluid. When planning interventions, policy makers and practitioners must recognise that the transition from war to peace is never linear. Political deals and bargains rarely lead to a formal peace process which culminates neatly in an inclusive political outcome. Given the prolonged and cyclical nature of many of today's conflicts and the limitations of externally-driven peace processes, adaptive, iterative and long-term approaches are required.
42. Many conflict contexts do not follow a clear transition towards but rather persist in a situation where nothing is negotiated 'once and for all'. Deals are frequently agreed, collapsed and revised. We must therefore remain conscious **that political deals and bargains can both dissolve and evolve**. There has often been a return to violence even in contexts where a deal has been done, driven by ongoing competition for power and resources. In other instances, negotiations are instrumentalised by one side to gain political or military advantage. In Libya, competition to control resources has seen militia commanders combine violence with temporary deals to position and re-position themselves to maximise their advantage. In other instances, high levels of criminal or state-led violence will continue even if the major 'political' conflict has come to an end. In El Salvador, the 1991 peace agreement was followed by the emergence of pervasive and powerful criminal networks, meaning rates of violence remained high.

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*conflict contexts do not follow a clear transition towards but rather persist in a situation where nothing is negotiated 'once and for all'*

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### Peace agreements, power sharing and political settlements

As noted, this chapter does not directly address issues relating to the negotiation of more formal peace processes, although it touches on many relevant issues. Edinburgh University's '[Political Settlement Research Programme \(PSRP\)](#)' offers a wealth of material relevant to more formalised power sharing processes, including a comprehensive [Peace Agreements Database](#). Especially relevant are papers on:

- [Political Power Sharing and Inclusion](#)
- [Military power-sharing Arrangements](#)
- [Economic Power-sharing, Conflict Resolution and Development in Peace Negotiations and Agreements](#)
- [Business and Peace Agreements](#)

43. Even where major conflicts stabilise, there is still a considerable risk that the underpinning deal-making process leads to **elite capture** of the spoils of peace. Elites come to see peace as the best way of furthering their (and potentially their constituencies') political or economic interests. The stronger the continuities between wartime and post-war power structures, the greater the likelihood there is of elite capture.<sup>57</sup> In contexts where there are high degrees of continuity, elites are likely to agree to end violence, but only in return for their continued 'right' to control or capture resources or control the means of violence (for example through control of local security forces). For example, new business elites emerged during the Guatemalan peace process who were able to pressure and provide political space for the government to enter negotiations to end the civil war. Yet the deal enshrined in the 1996 peace agreement saw political elites capture the benefits of peace. The more socially and politically transformative aspects of the formal agreement were never implemented.
44. The chances of more inclusive, potentially more equitable outcomes emerging are higher when the post-war transition entails a rupture which departs significantly from pre-war structures, because the rules of the game are in a state of flux. At the same time, there is a much higher risk of misalignment between the formal peace agreement (and the new institutions and structures it is likely to generate) and the actual division of power and resources on the ground, which heightens the risk of instability and a return to large-scale violent conflict. In Iraq, the transformational nature of the post-Saddam government offered radical change for many Iraqi citizens, but it also posed a threat to previously powerful Iraqi elites, many of whom supported the insurgency as a way of contesting the new political order.
45. It is important that the UK and its partners recognise that there will be no single 'moment' at which a particular conflict will be resolved. We should focus on approaches that are realistic about what can be achieved in the shorter term and cautious about externally imposed agendas, but we must also explore how more inclusive and stable change that addresses longer-term drivers of conflict can be supported. Even where a formal peace agreement has been reached, recent research highlights how post-conflict contexts can still embody a state of 'formalised political unsettlement'. While formal institutional structures have been agreed, former belligerents find themselves in an endless transition cycle and a constant state of 'no war, no peace'. These periods of institutional fluidity and contestation offer opportunities for accommodation of those previously excluded, in ways that more stable settlements do not, and as such provide potential entry points for policy makers trying to generate great long-term stability and inclusivity.<sup>58</sup>



*The stronger the continuities between wartime and post-war power structures, the greater the likelihood there is of elite capture*



57 C Cheng et al. (2018) op. cit.

58 C Bell and J Pospisil (2017) *Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: the Formalised Political Unsettlement*. Political Settlements Research Programme Briefing Paper 16

46. DFID's Building Stability Framework sets out the key broad building blocks for longer-term shifts towards more inclusive change in post-conflict contexts. Stabilisation efforts, including political deal-making, directly contribute to some of the building blocks,<sup>59</sup> most obviously fair power structures, conflict resolution mechanisms and a supportive regional environment. The framework describes how external actors can support reconciliation activities such as truth-telling processes and community reconciliation. It highlights that peace processes and conflict resolution mechanisms which meaningfully include women are more effective. Recent PSRP research highlights how locally-driven human rights mechanisms established as elements of more formal peace processes can become vital hooks for balancing power-sharing arrangements.<sup>60</sup> Such interventions, if delivered sensitively, can help societies to avoid falling back into violence, address historical grievances and build resilience against future conflict.
47. The Building Stability Framework also points to evidence that, over the long term, countries with fairer, more inclusive and open political institutions are more stable and that interventions should help broaden inclusion, voice, accountability and transparency over time. The nature of the political deal supported through stabilisation activities will inevitably shape the political context and what opportunities exist for making power structures more inclusive over time. The WDR 2017 also describes how external actors can help elites move from "deals-based bargains to rules-based bargains" and change elite incentives, reshape preferences and make the policy arena more contestable.<sup>61</sup>
48. In some cases, such activity will be complimentary to the wider stabilisation intervention. In others there will be trade-offs that need to be honestly and continuously assessed. The following questions should help policy makers to assess the tensions and trade-offs that shape the relationship between stabilisation and longer-term stability, as well as wider external policy objectives.

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59 Fair power structures, inclusive economic development, conflict resolution mechanisms, effective and legitimate institutions, a supportive regional environment and resilience to transnational stresses and shocks.

60 C Bell (2018) *Political Power-sharing and Inclusion: Peace and Transition Processes* (PSRP Report) (Edinburgh: Global Justice Academy, University of Edinburgh)

61 The 2017 World Development Report contains a wider and insightful discussion of the role of elites in state transformation processes. See Chapter 5.



## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Supporting stabilisation and building longer-term stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent does the deal, bargain or formal agreement involve elite capture? What are the implications for the conflict and for long-term development?</li> <li>• After a formal peace process has been completed, how aggressively are (former) elites continuing to compete for power and resources?</li> <li>• To what extent has the deal or formal agreement locked in other forms of violence? Have certain groups been given the 'right' to control certain security institutions? Has there been a tacit agreement that certain destabilising activities (i.e. drug trafficking) will be allowed to continue despite the 'formal' peace?</li> <li>• Where there has been a more transformative break in the pre-existing division of power and resources, what are the risks that excluded elites will compete to contest the new arrangements? Could this result in further outbreaks of violence?</li> <li>• What are the implications for long-term stability, including whether the deal can support an increasingly inclusive political system over time and whether it will affect the effectiveness and legitimacy of institutions?</li> <li>• Will the deal make economic development more or less inclusive of different identity groups?</li> </ul>	<p>Bell, C, and Pospisil, J, <i>Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: The Formalised Political Unsettling</i> Journal of International Development, 2017</p> <p><i>World Development Report</i> World Bank, 2017</p> <p>Menochal, A, <i>Inclusive Political Settlements: evidence, gaps, and the challenges of institutional transformation</i> Development Leadership Programme, 2015</p>

Political			Security	Humanitarian
Ceasefire / security monitoring mechanisms (joint / international)				
Declaration of principles or framework agreement on political substance to guide subsequent detailed negotiations	Confinement to barracks or fixed positions	Humanitarian safe zones or DMZs		
Agreed penalties for CBM non-compliance	Ban on new recruitment or conscription	International monitoring of human rights		
Agreement on immunities (temporary or long-term, for specific crimes or more generally)	National ceasefire (unilateral / reciprocal)	Agreement to respect human rights (specific rights or in general)		
International/regional declaration of will to let locals decide their own future	Ban on import of (certain) weapons	Unrestricted delivery of humanitarian aid and access for needs assessments		
Release of imprisoned leaders to participate in talks	Restrictions on particular weapons (e.g. aerial, artillery, mines)	Demining		
	Localised ceasefire (with in-built humanitarian access)	Agreement on humanitarian conduct (on medical facilities or equipment, fuel, civilian infrastructure e.g. water, etc.)		
Agreement on process, agenda, roadmap for talks		Prisoners / hostages: releases, exchanges, commitments on treatment		
Socialising leaders and negotiators through informal contact	Refraining from recruiting or using child soldiers	Family visits (across front lines, prisons)		
		Exchanges of information (on missing persons, prisoners etc.) and of bodies		
Ceasing propaganda and incitement to publicly promote the political process	Agreed mechanisms for armed actors to participate in the political process	Access for ICRC or similar organisations (particularly to besieged areas)		
Measures to build parties' confidence in the mediator's good faith credentials	Time-limited ceasefires	Vaccination campaigns		

Ambitious

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Modest



## Chapter 5: Service delivery and stabilisation

- Evidence has shown that the delivery, or non-delivery, of services in a violent conflict context can have both a positive and negative impact on the extent and trajectory of that conflict.
- Successful service delivery interventions must be anchored in a detailed understanding of the context, minimising the potential mismatch between the intervention and beneficiary expectations.
- Stabilisation actors should exercise caution to avoid politicising and/or securitising humanitarian action. Stabilisation activities designed to achieve political effect through service delivery should be deconflicted with critical needs addressed through humanitarian assistance.
- Stabilisation interventions should focus on protecting the means of survival, allowing the population to resume their livelihoods and access to markets and services without fear of predation.
- Service delivery as part of stabilisation interventions should not seek to be transformative or overly ambitious. They need to be sensitive to the fact that how a service is delivered can be as important as what is delivered.

## Introduction

1. This chapter looks at service delivery in support of stabilisation objectives. Services such as healthcare, education, power, communications, water and sanitation (often but not always provided by the state) allow societies and economies to function. Violent conflict damages existing services while creating further demand. It disrupts delivery, as the people that deliver services are displaced or killed and infrastructure is damaged or destroyed. It escalates the needs of populations made vulnerable by trauma, economic shock and displacement. Moreover, high levels of violence make it more difficult to reinstate services, especially when they undermine the ability of a government (or other governing authority) to exert control and provide basic security.
2. The humanitarian consequences of the absence or weakness of critical services are clear and well-documented. However, there are also consequences for conflict dynamics. A population that has lost hope of accessing basic services, especially services they have come to expect, may have little faith in the future, generating anger which can fuel cycles of violence. By contrast, the (re)instatement of basic services allows populations to rebuild their lives, re-establish livelihood activities and restore a degree of normality. Service delivery underwrites the idea of a more peaceful future and is a key element of most stabilisation interventions, even if the relationship between service delivery and government legitimacy is complex.
3. This chapter is divided into three sections, each ending with key questions for policy makers and programme staff as they develop their analysis, policy and plans:<sup>62</sup>

<sup>62</sup> As well as building on the extensive background work undertaken by the Stabilisation Unit on Elite Bargains and Political Deals, the chapter draws heavily on substantial research by the World Bank and the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC). See for example L Hammond and H Vaughan-Lee (2012) *Humanitarian space in Somalia: a scarce commodity*. HPG Working Paper, ODI

- The first section considers how service delivery as part of stabilisation interventions sits alongside service delivery within humanitarian and developmental approaches.
- The second section explains the links between meeting a population's needs through service delivery and stabilisation as defined in the UK Approach chapter.
- The third section sets out lessons and key considerations for programming in this area.

## Service delivery in the nexus of stabilisation, humanitarian and developmental responses

4. Stabilisation objectives often sit alongside humanitarian objectives. While humanitarian actors are trying to alleviate immediate harm, **stabilisation actors see service delivery as a means of restoring security for the population**. There are clear tensions between these objectives. The consciously political nature of stabilisation work contrasts with the neutrality, independence and impartiality of humanitarian interventions. These tensions can become especially acute when the local population and conflict actors perceive, rightly or wrongly, that the same external actors are responsible for humanitarian aid, stabilisation and any deployment of force.



### Case study: Tensions between stabilisation and humanitarian objectives in Somalia

The international community's interventions in Somalia testify to a long history of tension between humanitarian and political objectives. The UNITAF intervention following the state's collapse in 1991 succeeded in providing humanitarian access and prevented a more serious famine, but subsequent missions (UNOSOM II) were more politically focused. Aid quickly became part of conflict dynamics, despite humanitarian actors' attempts to steer clear of politics. Rents from aid resources became part of the war economy and international actors tried to use aid flows to influence change.

5. When violence is at a peak and immediately threatens the lives of non-combatants, **humanitarian responses** are essential. Humanitarian responses follow the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. However, it is increasingly recognised that humanitarian interventions can interact with conflict dynamics in both positive and negative ways, and that delivering in accordance with the principle of neutrality requires particular emphasis on conflict sensitivity.<sup>63</sup> We may need to build the evidence on the impact of aid and help strengthen the capacity of humanitarian actors to work in a conflict-sensitive manner. Nonetheless, the primary objectives of humanitarian interventions are to save human lives, provide immediate relief to human suffering, and preserve the dignity of those affected – rather than to support stabilisation.

63 See United States Institute of Peace and Overseas Development Institute (2018) The Unintended Consequences of Humanitarian Action in South Sudan: Headline Findings. Report available on request

6. Managing these tensions is challenging. A first step is for both humanitarian and stabilisation actors to recognise, based on clear evidence from the past 15 to 20 years, that **it is often not possible to separate service delivery from wider politics**. Their approaches must take this into account. It follows that coordination between humanitarian and stabilisation actors (and, as discussed below, development actors) is vital to manage potential risks and tensions. Given the extent of the overlap, both sets of actors must understand the objectives and frameworks which guide each other's activities. This chapter focuses on the objectives and frameworks which shape how stabilisation actors think about service delivery. It does not cover humanitarian guidance, which is available elsewhere.<sup>64</sup>
7. While there is an overlap between stabilisation and humanitarian approaches, there are also some clear distinctions. One such distinction is **target groups**. Humanitarian interventions target those with the most urgent needs and the most vulnerable populations, particularly displaced people. By contrast, the target group for stabilisation planners, who see service delivery as part of a platform for a transition out of conflict, is wider. It encompasses the broader needs of the population, even those who are less immediately threatened by violence but want to see services (re)instated.
8. This chapter focuses on service delivery during stabilisation interventions, as set out in the UK Approach paper. It acknowledges, however, that there can be significant **overlaps with more developmental approaches** to building stability, such as DFID's Building Stability Framework. The distinction between the two is mainly one of differing planning horizons. However, as discussed below, support for stabilisation through service delivery must recognise longer-term development trajectories, even if stabilisation is intended to have a shorter time horizon. Those planning service delivery interventions will ultimately need to consider both stabilisation guidelines, as per this chapter, and the approaches and principles of the Building Stability Framework.



*A first step is for both humanitarian and stabilisation actors to recognise, based on clear evidence from the past 15 to 20 years, that it is often not possible to separate service delivery from wider politics*



64 DFID (2017) op. cit.

- Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2015) op. cit.
- DFID (2017) op. cit.

## How service delivery contributes to stabilisation

### Protecting the means of survival

9. The UK Approach to Stabilisation states the need to protect the means of survival and restore basic security, which is relevant to service delivery. In many contexts, **restoring security is a precursor to service delivery** to protect the means of survival. In Iraq in 2003, for example, coalition forces did not provide adequate protection to allow service delivery to resume, ultimately leading to further societal collapse. Assuming, however, that there is a basic level of security, service delivery clearly contributes to protecting the means of survival. This includes housing internally displaced persons (or if possible allowing them to return home), removing rubble and unexploded ordinance, improving food security, children resuming their education, restoring utilities and communications networks. Humanitarian and development actors may be better placed, however, to respond to those challenges, and stabilisation interventions should rather be considered in the context of how they contribute to a political process to reduce violent conflict.
10. Service delivery in such difficult contexts is challenging, but it is a necessary part of stabilisation. It gives people the means to survive and become less dependent on humanitarian assistance and provides a foundation for longer-term development. It can also prevent things from getting even worse, since any further deterioration in services can increase the need for direct humanitarian protection and cause further displacement.
11. **Service delivery also underpins the resumption of pre-conflict patterns** of exchange and commerce. As livelihood activities and broader socio-economic patterns re-emerge, normal life begins to return, uncertainty reduces, and life becomes a bit more predictable. This can allow mechanisms for non-violent resolution of day-to-day conflicts to re-establish themselves, which can also help reduce conflict (although such mechanisms are far from a cure-all).

## Promoting and supporting a political process to reduce violence?

12. It is sometimes suggested that service delivery can help to promote a political process to reduce violence. This centres on two assumptions. The first is that service delivery increases the legitimacy of the delivering authority (i.e. the recognised government, or a body aligned with political power holders). The second is that increasing the legitimacy of a governing authority contributes to stabilisation. As part of their attempts to influence political processes, external actors often seek to boost the legitimacy of national and local partners. They have often assumed that supporting these actors to improve service delivery will boost their legitimacy and strengthen the social contract between state and society. However, the relationship between service delivery and legitimacy is considerably more complicated.
13. The first assumption has been at the core of 'state-building' approaches.<sup>65</sup> However, the evidence to support this assumption is comparatively weak. While there is some evidence that service delivery and legitimacy are linked, there are generally **too many variables to demonstrate a causal link between increased service delivery and increased state legitimacy**.<sup>66</sup> For example, legitimacy is also affected by the extent to which different elements of the population identify with the regime, and by political shifts such as regime or constitutional change.<sup>67</sup> This does not mean that service delivery has never contributed to improved legitimacy, but it warns against launching large-scale, centrally-driven service delivery interventions as a means of strengthening state legitimacy, since these tend to ignore the highly varied pre-existing relationships between citizen and state.
14. The main factor determining the validity of the second assumption, that increasing the legitimacy of a governing authority contributes to stabilisation) is the nature of the 'governing authority' in question and their alignment with broader – peaceful – political deal-making processes. This is explored in the section below on understanding the context and beneficiary expectations.



### Case study: Yemen – when service delivery fails to strengthen the state

Between 2012 and 2014, USAID provided \$100 million through the Yemen Stabilisation Initiative to support the government to implement a range of service delivery interventions. However, this transitional government was not backed by the Yemeni elites and its support base was narrow. As a result, the service delivery projects generally failed to boost either the government's perceived performance or to build security and stability.

65 Concepts such as state-building have encouraged a focus on the need for reciprocity in state-society relations. In search of entry points to support this, donors have focused attention on encouraging service delivery. This is based on assumptions, not necessarily supported by the evidence, that this will improve the state's legitimacy. See for example the DFID Practice Paper (2010) *Building Peaceful States and societies* for examples of how this was previously conceived. See also GSDRC topic guides on State Legitimacy, including A McCullough (2015) *The Legitimacy of States and Armed Non-State Actors: Topic Guide* (Birmingham: GSDRC and University of Birmingham)

66 Claire McLoughlin (2015), *When Does Service Delivery Improve the Legitimacy of a Fragile or Conflict Affected State?* Governance, Vol. 28, Issue 3, pp. 341-356

67 See for example H Nixon and R Mallett (2017) *Service delivery, public perceptions and state legitimacy: findings from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium* (London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium).

15. A further challenge is the **compressed timeframes** of many stabilisation interventions. Even where service delivery interventions align in a way that can build legitimacy, the evidence suggests that these are slow and iterative processes which stretch long beyond the desired timeline for stabilisation.
16. The evidence on the **relationship between legitimacy and service delivery** is clearer on the reverse pathway. Where conflict or a change of regime has led to a rapid decline in service delivery, this has often resulted in a correspondingly rapid decline in trust in the authority that is expected to provide it. As the expression goes, 'trust arrives on foot but leaves on horseback.'<sup>68</sup> A clear example is the failure of coalition forces to establish security and provide basic services in Iraq in 2003, which significantly damaged their legitimacy as a governing authority. Furthermore, opponents of those in power sometimes themselves provide services to their core constituencies, which can boost their legitimacy while undermining the legitimacy of the state.

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*Where conflict or a change of regime has led to a rapid decline in service delivery, this has often resulted in a correspondingly rapid decline in trust in the authority that is expected to provide it*

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### Case study: Afghanistan – the challenges of building legitimacy

The National Solidarity Programme in Afghanistan was successful at instigating community-driven development by putting in place mechanisms through which grants totalling over \$900 million over the course of the programme for infrastructure and livelihoods programmes were directed by local communities and local government. It led to some tangible benefits for communities in relation to water and electricity provision. However, it did little to sustainably build the legitimacy of the central government, at least in part because there was little prior history of national government delivery at the community level and therefore little association and connection between central government and communities.<sup>69</sup>

68 Rough translation of a Dutch proverb

69 A Beath, F Christia, R Enikolopov (2013) *Randomized impact evaluation of Afghanistan's national solidarity program* (World Bank)

## Preparing the foundations for longer-term stability

17. Service delivery can also help to promote early economic recovery and the resumption of government and administration at different levels. Getting the basics in place is an important foundation for (and can also work alongside) efforts to build longer-term stability. The Building Stability Framework challenges us to ensure that economic growth is inclusive and that emerging institutions are legitimate and effective.
18. Service delivery that begins as a stabilisation activity is highly likely to continue throughout a **transition from stabilisation to longer-term development**. There are no clear boundaries between short-term stabilisation and longer-term development (including longer-term stability-building), and it is in both sides' interest to ensure that there are no major contradictions between them and to manage the transition from one to the other.
19. However, we must be realistic in the early stages of a stabilisation intervention, both in terms of the absorption capacity of existing structures and the capacity of external actors to support delivery. The focus should be on **avoiding major contradictions with longer-term trajectories**, rather than instantly launching transformative change. Stabilisation contexts are not 'blank slates' where service delivery initiatives can be used to launch new models of delivery, potentially involving the central state for the first time. Moreover, conflicts are non-linear, making it risky to launch large-scale programmes early on, which can easily be swept away by reversals in conflict dynamics. Nonetheless, service delivery interventions may offer opportunities to nudge institutions towards better practice. For example, the Afghanistan National Solidarity Programme, although focused on infrastructure and livelihoods, had a lasting positive impact on women's participation in local governance.<sup>70</sup> Ultimately, it is better to take an iterative and pragmatic approach, looking to make progress but ensuring that interventions do not undermine processes to build political stability.
20. Stabilisation is about providing a breathing space which gives time for a less violent political process to take shape. This breathing space is made possible by re-establishing a degree of security. The need for physical security is of course paramount in many violent contexts, but people's perceptions of security include a wider set of factors such as their ability to feed their families, make a living and educate their children. Populations at large, not just those needing direct humanitarian assistance, need to feel they are able to resume their normal lives and that the services which hold society together are not in a downward spiral. There is therefore a rationale for service delivery interventions to help keep this space open in support of stabilisation. However, unless there is a process to promote a stabilising political deal, service delivery interventions are unlikely to be sustainable and maintain momentum.

“

*The need for physical security is of course paramount in many violent contexts, but people's perceptions of security include a wider set of factors such as their ability to feed their families, make a living and educate their children*

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70 A Beath et al., op. cit.

## Factors which determine the success of service delivery interventions in stabilisation contexts

21. The previous section set out how service delivery can support stabilisation objectives. This section turns to the practical question of what makes a good service delivery intervention in stabilisation contexts.
22. In broad terms, successful service delivery interventions are anchored in, and responsive to, a detailed understanding of the context, minimising the potential mismatch between the intervention and beneficiary expectations. In many ways, these success factors apply to service delivery interventions in all country contexts, regardless of whether they have stabilisation, developmental or humanitarian objectives. The analysis below draws out some of the specific challenges of working to more political objectives, dealing with compressed timeframes and operating in contexts where violent conflict has only recently ceased or is ongoing.

### Understanding the context and beneficiary expectations

23. The need for **good contextual analysis** is not unique to stabilisation, but it is equally if not more important than in other contexts. We must understand:
  - the problem we aim to address;
  - the different stakeholders involved (including groups who may face additional barriers to participation, such as women, young people and people with disabilities);
  - how the intervention might interact with wider socio-economic patterns and how it might interact positively or negatively with conflict dynamics.
24. However, doing such **analysis can be particularly challenging in stabilisation contexts**. Pressure to (be seen to) respond immediately can mean that there is very limited time to undertake analysis. Security or access issues might prevent work on the ground in certain areas, leading to a reliance on external reporting or the potentially distorted views of those from capitals or other locations. The dynamic nature of conflict and violence can also quickly render analysis out of date, as control or influence over different areas shifts. There are no comprehensive solutions to these challenges, but useful steps to mitigate them include:
  - engaging trusted local partners to help with the analysis, working to develop their capability, and ensuring a representative diversity of perspectives;
  - implementing adaptive approaches which start small, are monitored carefully and taken to scale as the analysis develops;
  - synthesising analysis in accessible formats and sharing it widely, both within individual donor institutions and between them.
25. There are also specific features of stabilisation contexts which merit analysis ahead of any service delivery intervention, relating to how well we understand: existing forms of service delivery, the political economy around services, the nature of violence and how this affects service delivery, and beneficiary expectations.

- 26. Understanding existing forms of service delivery** is also important. External actors often assume that it is always better to provide more services, and that 'best practice' service delivery will be well received. Both assumptions are risky. In some areas, particularly in the least developed countries and more isolated regions, there may be little history of formal service delivery, with such services as do exist provided by informal, often traditional mechanisms. Attempts to extend the writ of the central state through service delivery can cut across these mechanisms, inadvertently causing damage to functioning, cohesive communities. They may also threaten local elites who depend on traditional mechanisms for rents and status. Moreover, the central state often lacks the capacity to deliver these services properly, particularly if it is just beginning to emerge from violent conflict. In such circumstances, centrally-driven interventions risk disrupting informal systems without adequately replacing or even complementing them. Even where services have previously been delivered by the state, attempts to improve service delivery may come up against internal and public opposition, since expectations that services will be delivered in a certain way are hardwired into society and the institutions themselves.
- 27. Understanding the political economy of service provision.** Chapter 4 on facilitating political deal making emphasises the need to understand the distribution of power and resources among political elites and introduces the concept of elite bargains. By understanding and engaging with elite bargaining processes, external actors can sometimes facilitate deals which help to reduce violence and build support for more formal peace agreements.
- 28. Services are often a source of rents and patronage** for political elites. Conflict disrupts established networks, which can lead to battles for control of such rents. External actors must therefore consider how any service delivery interventions will affect the distribution of power and resources. Will it further entrench the current situation and, if so, is this in line with the overarching political stabilisation objectives? Can the intervention positively influence a critical elite bargain? Or does it inadvertently strengthen actors who do not support or are actively undermining attempts to reduce violence? If so, should the intervention not be delivered? In some cases, such as an intervention which ends up providing rents which fuel a violent insurgency, the answer may be obvious. In many cases, however, it is far less clear cut, and the trade-offs must be understood and considered.

- 29. Trade-offs** around political and financial corruption are particularly challenging for external actors. It may be necessary to accept some degree of rent-seeking or corrupt behaviour so that services can be delivered in a way that meets immediate needs and allows for wider progress. A major World Bank study recommends that interventions need to be realistic about good governance and suggests “a need to rethink how progress happens”:

Informal relationships, rent-sharing, far-from-perfect transparency or accountability, and deep politicization of service delivery—through political parties or ‘unsavoury’ powerful actors—can underpin change and progress ... [This] is not just about, or mainly about, preventing elite capture, but about how and why local elites can actively become part of pro-[service delivery] coalitions, even though some rent appropriation and corruption may occur.<sup>71</sup>

‘Good enough’ governance, implemented flexibly and adapting where necessary, is more likely to be effective than ‘best practice’.

- 30.** A further challenge is that **control of rents and services can be highly localised**. The World Bank study emphasises that the relationship between service delivery and the distribution of power and resources can play out differently at the national, sectoral, sub-national and village levels. Even where the central state is quite powerful, services can still be affected by and be a focus of local contestation. We must not assume that formal structures always have complete control over local service delivery.
- 31. Understanding the nature of violence.** Not all violent conflicts are the same, and not all forms of conflict affect service delivery in the same way. This is true both at the national level and at the local level. There can be a myriad of different conditions and responses in different locations within one overarching conflict. The presence of violence does not automatically preclude the possibility of effective service delivery, although in most cases basic security is a prerequisite, as noted above. Ultimately, what forms of service delivery are possible usually depends on the preferences of those who control the means of violence.
- 32.** The World Bank study suggests three dimensions of violence which affect the opportunities for, and obstacles to, service delivery. These are:
- the extent to which violent actors are organised, disciplined, and homogenous;
  - the ideologies, incentives, and motivations behind violence;
  - the degree of localisation of violence.

How these factors combine affects the likelihood that violent actors (and their political affiliates) will support service delivery. As a rule, groups that are more fragmented, mobile, ideologically extreme or criminally (as opposed to politically) motivated are less likely to allow service delivery interventions. There are more opportunities to bargain and make compromises regarding service delivery with groups who are more organised and disciplined, particularly if there is some alignment between their incentives and those of external actors.

71 Jonathan Di John, Simon Carl O’Meally, Richard Spencer Hogg (2017) *Social service delivery in violent contexts: achieving results against the odds – a report from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group)



### Case study: Service delivery despite ongoing conflict in Nepal

Throughout the Maoist insurgency, Nepal continued to make good progress to meeting health-related targets under the Millennium Development Goals. Progress was not significantly affected during the most violent periods and the areas most affected by the violence fared as well as others. One explanation is that the violent insurgency was organised and disciplined, meaning service providers could engage and bargain with its leaders. Furthermore, the insurgents had local roots and their ideology was supportive of improving the provision of healthcare.<sup>72</sup>

33. **It is important to analyse beneficiary expectations** and disaggregate them according to gender, location, ethnicity, age and other factors, since different groups have different expectations. Expectations and needs are not necessarily the same thing. Extra effort may also be required to assess the expectations and needs of groups who are particularly marginalised or discriminated against.
34. In areas where the state has not recently delivered many services, the public may have limited expectations and may not consider (particular) state-delivered services as part of the social contract. Even so,
 

‘there is an important role for the underlying narratives about and expectations of the state in influencing how people respond to services. ‘Legitimising narratives’ vary by country, and even by sub-national region and social group, essentially meaning that the precise nature of legitimacy looks different from one place to the next (and indeed, can change over time) ... Prior political and historical analysis of the local sources of legitimacy is therefore critical to establishing whether service delivery is likely to carry any real degree of legitimating potential in a given setting.’<sup>73</sup>
35. As well as varying from context to context, expectations also vary over time. Household wellbeing rarely remains on a steady upward trajectory and is often subject to shocks such as economic downturns, criminality or displacement, not all of which relate to conflict.
36. The following questions should assist policy makers and programme staff in understanding and planning for some of the challenges set out above.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> SLRC op. cit. See also Moro, Leben, Martina Santschi, Rachel Gordon, Philip Dau, and Daniel Maxwell (2017) *Statebuilding and Legitimacy Experiences of South Sudan* (London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium)



## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Understanding existing forms of service-delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through which channels (e.g. state, private, customary, religious, NGO) are different types of service delivered? Does this vary by geography and social group?</li> <li>Have previous service providers been consulted?</li> <li>How well do we understand pre-conflict financing of services and the degree of decentralisation that existed?</li> <li>Is the absence of a service actively destabilising?</li> <li>What actors (development, humanitarian and other) are currently enabling service delivery? How is this distributed geographically and across sectors?</li> <li>What national plans and strategies underpin service delivery? How are these resourced and implemented?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability Guidance Note</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2017</p> <p><i>Conflict Sensitivity Tools and Guidance</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2016.</p> <p><i>Social Service Delivery in Violent Contexts: Achieving Results Against the Odds</i> World Bank, 2016</p>
Understanding the political economy of service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How is delivery financed? Are those providing services accountable? To whom, via what channels?</li> <li>How does service delivery interact with the local distribution of power? Will dominant local political elites (armed or unarmed) gain or lose rents, resources and status when the service is delivered? Would the loss of rents risk creating or exacerbating violent conflict?</li> <li>How might elite interests influence patterns of service delivery?</li> <li>Where rents from service delivery flow to those supporting violence, does the benefit of the service delivery outweigh the cost of their increased resources and status?</li> <li>What are the experiences and expectations of different sections of the public with regard to service delivery and why?</li> </ul>	
Understanding the nature of violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How well do we understand the motivations of violent actors?</li> <li>Are violent actors organised and do they have recognised leadership? Are there structures of intermediaries that allow for negotiation about service delivery?</li> </ul>	
Understanding beneficiary expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are mechanisms in place to understand and continually monitor beneficiary expectations?</li> </ul>	

## Responding effectively

### Planning considerations

37. At the outset, we should ask whether service delivery needs to be part of a wider stabilisation intervention at all and how it contributes to a political process to reduce violent conflict. However, the above section makes clear that service delivery interventions in stabilisation contexts have a higher risk of failure and have the potential to exacerbate conflict drivers. This is particularly true when they are misaligned with the political situation or beneficiary expectations, so it should not automatically be assumed that a service delivery intervention will help.
38. Whatever decisions are made, **joint planning and coordination between stabilisation, humanitarian and development actors** is important to manage risks and tensions. It helps to ensure that we respond to both emergency and broader needs, consider longer-term issues and that our overall response is politically sensitive. Coordination and information-sharing mechanisms are important to deconflict activities on the ground. Stabilisation actors should consciously avoid the securitisation or politicisation of humanitarian aid and military delivery of humanitarian aid is particularly contentious. Stabilisation actors should consult guidance developed in country on civil-military cooperation, together with the 2006 guidelines on the use of military assets in complex emergencies.<sup>74</sup>
39. As far as possible, we must **anticipate urgent service delivery needs**, and similarly, we must try to predict levels of public expectations. The situation in Iraq in 2003, highlighted above, is a clear example of where such expectations could have been predicted.
40. The demands can be both urgent and vast. External actors often have little opportunity to pilot approaches and roll services out gradually, as they must **intervene at scale from the outset**. This requires sufficient budgetary and human resources. The UNDP-led Funding Facility for Stabilisation programme in Iraq, which supported areas cleared by the Iraqi army of Daesh forces from 2015 onwards, is an example of a better planned and resourced intervention, although even here the programmes on occasion struggled to meet expectations raised by early successes.<sup>75</sup>

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*At the outset, we should ask whether service delivery needs to be part of a wider stabilisation intervention at all and how it contributes to a political process to reduce violent conflict*

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74 UN OCHA (2006) Guidelines on the *Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies*

75 UNDP FFS / FFIS reporting sourced from <http://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/library/Stabilization.html>

41. Although it is critical to have enough resources to respond to needs, **it is not automatically the case that increased funding will accelerate progress**. In Afghanistan during the uplift of international military forces between 2009 and 2011, excess funding without the capacity to spend it or monitor progress effectively resulted in significant corruption and ultimately undermined broader stabilisation efforts.<sup>76</sup> In addition, the International Security Assistance Force chose to focus the majority of its stabilisation interventions to the least secure areas in the south and east of the country. These failed to deliver, largely due to an inability to sustain an adequate level of security. This impacted significantly on the credibility of the wider campaign.<sup>77</sup>



### Case study: How perceptions around access to service delivery can fuel conflict

Sri Lanka reformed its university admission criteria in the 1970s. Although this was designed to make the process objectively fairer for most of the population, the minority Tamil population felt it was discriminatory. Although the reform was then scrapped, this controversy was a key catalyst for the increasingly militant behaviour of Tamil youth and the subsequent civil war.<sup>78</sup>

42. When targeting service delivery interventions to different beneficiary groups with varied needs, **relative vulnerability should not be the only guiding factor**, not least as this can change quickly due to the conflict and other shocks. Alongside assessments of actual needs, it is critical to understand perceptions of needs and perceptions of fairness. The perception that some groups have favoured access to government services can exacerbate conflict fault lines and contribute to processes of de-legitimation.<sup>79</sup> Stabilisation planners need to consider the totality of support provided by all actors (including humanitarian aid) and assess how this is perceived in each context.
43. We also need to plan on the basis that we will be working within a much broader set of actors and interventions. In most contexts, **the UK government is unlikely to be working alone**. The challenges are too large for individual bilateral actors and the UK will work with like-minded partner countries and deliver through international organisations, including the UN system. It can be challenging to quickly reach consensus on priorities for and modalities of intervention. Moreover, we need to be realistic about our influence over stabilisation interventions in such circumstances. We will be one voice among many, and multilateral actors may themselves have limited influence over the national government. In turn, the national government may not be able to fully control what happens locally.

76 Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) (2018) *Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*

77 Ibid.

78 Claire McLoughlin (2018) *When the Virtuous Circle Unravels: Unfair Service Provision and State De-Legitimation in Divided Societies*, Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding, 12:4

79 Clare Cummings and Suman Paudel (2018) *The Legitimacy of the State in Nepal's Terai Region: Do Public Services Matter?* (London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium), upcoming in 2019 and Claire McLoughlin (2018) op. cit.



## Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much influence does the UK have in this context and what resources are available? What does this mean for our ability to contribute in a meaningful way?</li> <li>• Do planning scenarios adequately anticipate immediate service delivery needs?</li> <li>• Do we have robust plans to research beneficiary expectations? How can we do this quickly, carefully, locally and dynamically? How can we provide feedback loops to ensure that changes can be tracked over time?</li> <li>• Can plans be adapted to the situation on the ground and change course if necessary, and are proportionate monitoring, evaluation and learning processes in place to support this?</li> <li>• Are resources and capabilities available to meet the likely needs?</li> <li>• Would a stabilisation intervention have a comparative advantage, or are there development and humanitarian responses in place to address those needs?</li> </ul>	

## Who is best placed to provide services

44. There are various considerations relating to who delivers services in support of stabilisation interventions. Firstly, it is often impossible to make a rigid distinction between those implementing services and conflict actors. The UK government has often sought to support a central government or state which was considered sufficiently legitimate and inclusive (or had the potential to be), even if it was a party to the conflict. In Syria, by contrast, stabilisation activities supported local government structures in opposition-held areas. These were obviously not the central state, but still parties to the conflict.
45. Whoever the UK is supporting politically, from a service delivery perspective we need to start by **assessing which body or authority has traditionally governed these services** (as opposed to delivering them). In many contexts, the best option will be to ensure that the planning and delivery of services is undertaken through or in partnership with these governing authorities (e.g. a central or local government). National and/or local government actors are likely to have some pre-existing capacity to deliver, political acceptability among the population at large (albeit with caveats when that authority lacks full control), and the opportunity to ensure sustainability. In such cases, external actors should ask how they can best support this governing authority to resume services or adapt them to the needs generated by the conflict, which may be as simple as providing resources and undertaking joint planning. Longer-term, this relationship can evolve to address questions around the reform and modernisation of such services.
46. In other situations, **the national governing authority may not be able to deliver services** because the situation is too insecure or because it does not enough power and legitimacy at the local level. In the past, external actors have often responded by tasking their own military forces to provide support, given the lack of alternatives. Such interventions, often short-term 'Quick Impact Projects' (QIPs), usually sought to win 'hearts and minds' but have had little evidence of success.<sup>80</sup> The training of military forces to deliver such initiatives in difficult contexts has often been inadequate, leading to interventions being undertaken in a conflict-insensitive manner. Programming in communities where local political dynamics are poorly understood risks exacerbating conflicts, enabling corruption and bolstering support for insurgents.<sup>81</sup>
47. A further problem with military provision of services is that it is very difficult to combine support for service delivery with 'force protection' in a hostile environment. By definition, hostile environments which require force protection will not fulfil many of the criteria for successful service delivery. These might be a basic level of security, some local governance, and a coordinated civil-military approach which prioritises joint planning with local authorities and populations. Military-led QIPS are now generally considered an implementation modality of last resort.

*By definition, hostile environments which require force protection will not fulfil many of the criteria for successful service delivery. These might be a basic level of security, some local governance, and a coordinated civil-military approach which prioritises joint planning with local authorities and populations*

80 Sultan Barakat, Seán Deely and Steven A. Zyck (2010) 'A tradition of forgetting': stabilisation and humanitarian action in historical perspective,' Disasters, ODI, Vol. 34, Issue S3

81 Stuart Gordon (2011) *Winning Hearts and Minds in Helmand*, Feinstein International Centre and SIGAR op. cit.

48. There are other contexts again where there is **no real likelihood of the central state providing services**. In stabilisation contexts, the central state is often absent outside key urban centres, whether due to a lack of capacity or a lack of political will to extend service provision. In such cases, actors such as UN agencies, NGOs and community organisations are more likely to directly deliver services themselves. This can be challenging, as some organisations will be aiming to mobilise and deliver within different timescales than those envisaged for stabilisation, and there are risks around engaging ostensibly neutral actors in more political stabilisation activities. Stabilisation actors should try and work with other organisations to build the evidence on the impact that others are having on state authorities, with a view to highlighting when such organisations are undermining and displacing the central state.
49. More broadly, external actors have commonly held that the national government must be seen to have a leading role as a way of building legitimacy. As argued above, it is now understood that the links between service delivery and legitimacy are complicated. Furthermore, recent evidence from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, albeit relating to longer-term service delivery, has shown that other agencies delivering services only has a limited impact on perceptions of government. There are examples of NGO-delivered services having a somewhat negative impact on perceptions of local government, but only in some contexts.<sup>82</sup>

### Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Delivering services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who currently governs (rather than delivers) the services we wish to support, both locally and nationally? How much control do they have? Are there tensions with local political power structures?</li> <li>• What role do those local actors play in the conflict and how does it affect their governance role?</li> <li>• Can we mitigate the risk of securitisation of interventions, for example through appropriate civil-military coordination modalities?</li> <li>• How should service delivery be 'branded' in this context? What is the most pragmatic approach?</li> <li>• Should the local government lead in delivering services?</li> <li>• What capacity do multilateral partners have to deliver services in support of stabilisation efforts?</li> <li>• Can existing national systems be preserved or strengthened during stabilisation? As a contribution to long-term stability, what can be done to improve quality, coverage, equity and accountability of services?</li> </ul>	

82 Nixon and Mallett (2017) op. cit.

## Which services to deliver



### Case study: Aligning service delivery with local needs and expectations in Afghanistan

In the early days of stabilisation efforts in Helmand, the coalition did not always understand local needs. Schools and health centres were built where none existed before, without understanding what was wanted. For example, in 2009 the Provincial Reconstruction Team completed a large co-educational secondary school in Sangin District Centre. This was bombed by the Taliban within a week of opening, and subsequently closed. The Taliban knew that the school did not respond to local needs for community-based schools where children could work after lessons. After this, the District Stabilisation Team made greater effort to respond to local needs, not just in education but also small infrastructure projects and the distribution of wheat seed. This helped to reduce tensions, leading to the Sangin Accord, which effectively brought 'reconcilable' local Taliban elements onside with the national government.

50. External actors must also decide which services most require their support. Far too often, needs have simply been assumed, often reflecting external actors' perceptions of what is lacking. Although service delivery needs may be obvious in the immediate aftermath of conflict, once basic services are in place, **engagement with beneficiaries** becomes increasingly important. Since stabilisation-related service delivery interventions are intended to reassure the population that life will return to normal, beneficiaries themselves are the best guide to what is needed. We must try to understand the different needs of women, men, girls and boys, and those who are most severely marginalised, such as people with disabilities. There is a lot to learn here from humanitarian good practice, where beneficiary participation and accountability are core principles. The UNDP-delivered Funding Facility for Stabilisation in Iraq highlighted the importance of shaping interventions around the needs of IDPs.<sup>83</sup>



*Since stabilisation-related service delivery interventions are intended to reassure the population that life will return to normal, beneficiaries themselves are the best guide to what is needed*



<sup>83</sup> UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilisation reporting sourced from <http://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/library/Stabilization.html>

The UK National Action Plan (NAP) on Women Peace and Security emphasises the importance of needs-based responses that promote meaningful participation and leadership (in this case by women and girls). The NAP also draws attention to the importance of addressing the needs arising from gender-based violence which are often hidden.<sup>84</sup>

51. Beyond listening to beneficiaries, there are various other considerations for stabilisation planners when determining what to deliver:
  - **The politics of service provision.** Different sectors can be more or less politically sensitive, depending on the context. Education provision, for example, can be controversial where access has previously been determined by gender or ethnicity, or where schools have been used to propagate divisive narratives.
  - **Balancing short-term and long-term objectives.** There is a considerable tension between shorter-term stabilisation objectives and more transformative ambitions around service provision. Striking this balance can involve a robust consideration of standards of provision, leading to the parallel development of broader governance arrangements that will own service delivery over the longer term.
  - **Managing expectations and ambitions.** We must be careful not to raise expectations that we may not be able to meet. Projects which seek to be transformative are more likely to fail, and this can have serious consequences. A visible failure to deliver promised large-scale projects can rapidly undermine the population's trust in stabilisation processes and actors. Insurgent groups can exploit this to gain people's loyalties, by delivering more modest services which are nonetheless in line with people's needs and expectations.
52. A further issue to consider is **developing local governance capacity**. Some stabilisation planners have seen building the effectiveness of local authorities as part and parcel of service delivery. In Helmand, for example, considerable support was provided to the District Community Council and the Governor's Office. Similarly, governor's offices in places such as Anbar have been supported in Iraq. The theory is that focusing on local rather than national governance helps decision-making to be more context-specific, and also increases pressure for accountability as there is a more immediate connection with communities and beneficiaries. However, establishing new or better local accountability mechanisms can be a lengthy process.<sup>85</sup> Therefore they can only make a limited immediate contribution to stabilisation (though they are important as they make a statement of political support and can establish foundations for longer-term progress), and any improvements are inherently vulnerable while the situation remains highly unstable and at risk of returning to more serious violence. Care should also be taken to ensure that central government endorses and is committed to sustaining any such local governance structures. Experience with local initiatives in Afghanistan (notably in Sangin) and elsewhere shows that without central government agreement and involvement, such structures will only have a limited impact and their failure will add to popular grievances and perceptions of central government indifference. Investments in functioning grievance mechanisms could, however, pay more immediate dividends.<sup>86</sup>

84 UK Government (2018) op. cit. See also Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender-based Violence (GBV) Guidelines

85 DFID (2017) Tamkeen Project Completion Report Unpublished

86 SLRC research across four post-conflict countries showed that access to grievance mechanisms corresponded with improved perceptions of government. Nixon and Mallett (2017) op. cit.

53. The aforementioned UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilisation in Iraq put many of these points into action. It focused on delivering relatively simple, non-controversial, quick-to-deliver projects, consciously leaving more complex questions to a later date when, it was hoped, institutions would be better able to handle them. This approach mostly delivered success on the ground. It also made it easier to agree interventions in the first place across multiple donors and the Government of Iraq.<sup>87</sup>



### Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Understanding and responding to beneficiary needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are we taking a lead from the actual expressed needs of beneficiaries, ensuring all voices are heard?</li> <li>• Are we being sufficiently pragmatic, and aiming for an acceptable level of service provision rather than attempting substantive institutional transformation?</li> <li>• Are we making assumptions about a sustained and linear improvement in the security situation?</li> <li>• What if an intervention should fail? What might be the wider consequences of any such failure?</li> <li>• Have all actors involved in service delivery, including governance mechanisms, been considered?</li> </ul>	

87 United Nations Development Programme (2018) Funding Facility for Stabilisation: Lessons Learned Review

## How services are delivered

54. The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) research found that **how services are delivered and experienced** is sometimes just as important, if not more, to public perceptions of legitimacy, than the value of these services. The presence of grievance mechanisms and beneficiary consultation about services correlated with improved perceptions of government.<sup>88</sup>



### Case study: Using service delivery interventions to improve accountability in northern Syria

The DFID-supported Tamkeen programme in northern Syria imposed a degree of accountability on local councils by making funding dependent on having transparent budgets, accounts and procurement processes and setting up community complaints structures. After initially resisting this, several local councils reported favourably of this approach. Communities had previously suspected that councillors were pilfering funds but could now see that this was not the case.<sup>89</sup>

55. Equally, poor beneficiary experiences of service delivery have a negative impact on perceptions of government legitimacy. The SLRC found that “perceived unfairness, corruption or exclusion are important factors influencing how people connect their experience of services to their views of the government. This speaks to the idea ... that services have the potential to act as vehicles for transmitting or signalling wider norms and values, both for the good, and the bad.”<sup>90</sup> Importantly, fairness matters regarding both the outcome and the process. In the Terai region of Nepal, SLRC found that many felt unfairly treated by the state despite the material benefits they had received.<sup>91</sup> In Swat, Pakistan, people often had access to hospitals, but poor people described being unfairly treated by doctors.<sup>92</sup>



### Case study: Afghanistan's Sangin district

One of the factors that led to the collapse of the Sangin Accord, described in a previous example, was a failure on the part of the coalition to follow up the agreement quickly with the service delivery. Small infrastructure projects promised to local leaders in the Upper Sangin Valley, along with the failure by ISAF and the Afghan government to provide sufficient security to allow for the delivery of these services, also led to the collapse. A change in the funding mechanisms available to the District Stabilisation Team has been cited as a contributory factor.

88 Nixon and Mallett (2017) op. cit. See also Nayana Godamunne (2015) *The Role of Social Protection in State Legitimacy in the Former Conflict Areas in Sri Lanka* (London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium)

89 DFID (2017) Tamkeen Programme Completion Report. Unpublished

90 Nixon and Mallett (2017) op. cit.

91 Cumming and Paudel (2018) op. cit.

92 Aoife McCullough, Shehryar Toru (2018) *Imagining and Experiencing the State in Swat, Pakistan* (London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium)

56. The SLRC also found that local political actors generally gain more legitimacy from service delivery interventions than national actors, whereas perceived exclusion or unfairness tends to be projected upwards towards national-level actors. This needs to be taken into consideration when assessing how service delivery interventions might affect elite bargaining processes at different levels.
57. Above all, **service delivery interventions need to be flexible**. They must be able to adapt to specific local contexts. They must also be able to respond quickly as circumstances change or new opportunities arise. This requires decision-making mechanisms and funding modalities that can move quickly at all levels, both among international partners and within national and local government agencies. It also requires effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms that can highlight risks and opportunities as they arise. These mechanisms need to include **qualitative feedback from beneficiaries and intermediaries**, rather than simply equating funds disbursed or numbers of services provided with positive outcomes. This is clearly a challenge in many contexts, but stabilisation interventions should always aim to be as flexible as possible.
58. The question of who controls the money often brings broader questions about politics and power to a head. National authorities often use the process of disbursing funds to the local level as an instrument of control. This is clearly in tension with the needs for flexibility and responsiveness set out in the previous paragraph.
59. Lastly, all actors involved in service delivery, regardless of whether they are national or international and whether they are humanitarian, stabilisation or development actors, must be conscious of the potential power imbalances between service delivery agents and beneficiaries. They must have **robust mechanisms to counter the threat of exploitation** in all its forms.



### Key questions

Steps	Prompt questions	Tools and further reading
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are delivery modalities and due diligence requirements flexible enough to deal with a degree of rent seeking, if this can be demonstrated to be an acceptable trade-off for securing important objectives?</li> <li>• Can the wider impact of interventions on the local distribution of power and resources be monitored effectively?</li> <li>• On a practical level, can money be controlled from the right place?</li> <li>• Can safeguarding standards be met?</li> </ul>	



## 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.<sup>93</sup> 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.

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.
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).<sup>94</sup> 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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*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*

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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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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?</li> <li>• Which parts of society are 'conscious' and aggrieved? Has change been sought, but not fulfilled?</li> <li>• 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?</li> <li>• What sources of resilience exist?</li> </ul>	
Analysis: 'push' factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the (violent extremist) groups recruitment strategy, including their manifesto and 'offer'?</li> <li>• How are violent extremist groups operating and interacting with communities? Where do they derive their legitimacy?</li> <li>• How (e.g. in which collective environments and through which social networks) are messages being socialised?</li> <li>• By whom are these being socialised?</li> <li>• Can the 'offer' or manifesto be challenged or 'matched'?</li> <li>• What mechanisms and options are available to (credibly) challenge key messages and themes?</li> <li>• Can key opinion leaders be challenged? Are there other credible voices that can be engaged in the community?</li> <li>• Can certain environments be made safe or safer from extremist exposure?</li> <li>• How can sources of disillusionment or disengagement be exploited? What are the associated risks?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Countering Violent Extremism in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States</i> Stabilisation Unit, 2018</p> <p><i>Guidance on how to conduct a Serious and Organised Crime Joint Analysis.</i> Contact Stabilisation Unit for details</p> <p><i>Extremism, Violent Extremism and Terrorism (EVET) Conceptual Framework.</i> DFID, 2018</p>

### 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.<sup>95</sup> 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.

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 been 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.
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.

"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

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.<sup>96</sup> 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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<sup>96</sup> 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.



## 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.
- **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.

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

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## 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 doing so against the risk of provoking further political instability and uncertainty.
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.

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# Glossary

**Conflict** takes place when two or more parties find their interests incompatible, express hostile attitudes, or take action which damages the other parties' ability to pursue those interests. Conflict is not necessarily negative and can be a stimulus for addressing grievances and transformation.

**Conflict prevention:** actions, policies, procedures or institutions intended to avoid the threat or use of armed force and related forms of coercion by states or groups to settle political disputes, or to avoid the recurrence of violent conflict.

**Conflict resolution** traditionally refers to actions undertaken over the short term with the goal of bringing armed hostilities to an end. In its broader meaning, usually applied in practice to post-conflict situations, it refers to activities aimed at ending violent conflict, assuring that behaviour is no longer violent, attitudes are no longer hostile, and that the structural causes of conflict have been addressed. It overlaps with some definitions of 'peacebuilding'.

**Conflict sensitivity:** understanding the context in which one operates, the interaction between an intervention and that context, and acting upon the understanding of this interaction in order to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on conflict.

**Counterinsurgency** refers to military, law enforcement, political, economic, psychological and civic actions taken to defeat insurgency, while addressing the root causes. Successful counterinsurgency requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the political, economic, social, cultural and security dimensions of the unrest.<sup>97</sup>

**Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR):** the UN provides the following definitions: "Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population ... Demobilization is the formal and controlled discharge of active combatants from armed forces or other armed groups ... Reintegration is the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income."

**Elites** are those that hold a disproportionate amount of political power, who are able to influence decisions, mobilise popular support and implement policies at national, sub-national and transnational levels.

**Elite bargains:** a discrete deal or bargain, or series of bargains that explicitly re-negotiates the distribution of power and resources between elites. Elite bargains are fluid and evolve constantly.

**Fragility:** the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. Fragility can lead to negative outcomes including violence, the breakdown of institutions, displacement, humanitarian crises or other emergencies.

**Gender:** the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men.

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<sup>97</sup> British Army (2009) *Countering Insurgency Field Manual*, Vol. 1, Part 10, para. 1–11, pp. 1–6

**'Hot stabilisation':** activities largely delivered by the military through the means of 'Quick Impact Projects' as a consent-winning activity. Dominated by the US approach of 'Clear, Hold, Build' (as articulated in the hugely influential publication of Field Manual 3-24 'Counterinsurgency') and the perceived success of the US surge in Iraq, from 2007 onwards this resulted in stabilisation becoming a military-led activity and wholly conflated with counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine. Stabilisation had become a means of defeating insurgents rather than a process designed to facilitate political settlements and create the necessary precondition for building long-term stability.

**Instrumentalisation:** when local or domestic elites view external interveners as potential force multipliers, providing coercive power, resources and rent-seeking opportunities, and legitimacy, to be used to tilt the balance of power in their favour.

**Insurgency:** an organised, violent subversion used to effect or prevent political control, as a challenge to established authority. Insurgencies have many aims, the most common of which are to gain control of territory, seek resolution of a grievance or seek the overthrow of the existing authority. An insurgency's origins may be ideological, religious, ethnic, sectarian, class-based, or, most probably, a combination of these factors.<sup>98</sup>

**Intervention:** used to refer both to individual activities and to the sum of these individual activities, i.e. a 'stabilisation intervention'. References to 'external interventions' refer to those of any state or multilateral organisation engaged directly or indirectly in the conflict. The word 'external' is used for clarity: clearly no intervention can be considered truly 'external', given the degree to which intervening actors are part of the wider regional or international political economy of the conflict in question.

**Legitimacy:** actions and behaviours which induce voluntary support and lower the operating costs of governing. Legitimacy entails the normative belief by an actor that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed, which is a subjective quality, relational between actor and institution, and defined by the actor's perception of the institution. When an actor believes a rule is legitimate, compliance is no longer motivated by the simple fear of retribution or by a calculation of self-interest, so that control is legitimate to the extent that it is approved or regarded as 'right'. It springs from, and is influenced by, a variety of sources and when effectively cultivated, it translates into authority.

**Mediation:** a process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements.

**Non-state armed groups (NSAGs):** describes a variety of entities likely to be encountered in stabilisation contexts, including pro-state militias, paramilitaries, insurgent groups which are fighting against state authority, terrorist groups or militias which are fighting both the state and other insurgents.

**Negative peace:** the absence of war or direct physical violence while the root causes of conflict remain ignored, i.e. injustice and structural violence are allowed to continue. It is a condition in which opposing groups are not necessarily engaged in physical violence.

98 Ibid., para. 1–10, pp.1.5–1.6

**Peacebuilding:** is defined by the UN as “a range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management and to lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development”.

**Peace agreements:** Formal or semi-formal agreements entered into by warring parties, often but not exclusively brokered by external actors.

**Political settlements:** the distribution of power on which a polity and society is based, which results from conflict and negotiation between contending elites. Political settlements are dynamic processes rather than static entities that are historically specific to each state.

**Positive peace:** more than the mere absence of direct physical violence, positive peace is a condition in which the presence of institutions, norms and values positively maintain a state of peace.

**Rents:** the additional incomes or benefits that some individuals or organizations get as a result of specific policies or institutions. Since rents specify incomes, which are higher than would otherwise have been earned, there are incentives to create and maintain these rents.

**Rent-seeking:** activities which seek to create, maintain or change the rights and institutions on which particular rents are based.

**Resilience:** the ability of individuals, communities and states and their institutions to absorb and recover from shocks, while positively adapting and transforming their structures and means for living in the face of long-term changes and uncertainty.

**Stability:** DFID's Building Stability Framework describes long-term stability as a condition where “communities, states and regions are able to develop, and manage conflict and change peacefully”.<sup>99</sup> The 2011 cross-government Building Stability Overseas Strategy also discusses ‘structural stability’, “which is built on the consent of the population, is resilient and flexible in the face of shocks and can evolve over time as the context changes”.<sup>100</sup>

**Stabilisation:** an activity which seeks to support local and regional partners in conflict-affected countries to reduce violence, ensure basic security and facilitate peaceful political deal-making, all of which provide a foundation for building long-term stability.

**Security sector reform (SSR):** the OECD describes SSR as “*transforming the security sector/ system, which includes all the actors, their roles, responsibilities and actions, so that they work together to manage and operate the system in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance*”.

**State-building:** action to develop the capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state in relation to an effective political process for negotiating the mutual demands between state and societal groups.

**Sustaining peace:** activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.

<sup>99</sup> DFID (2016) op. cit.

<sup>100</sup> FCO, DFID and MOD (2011) op. cit.

**Transformative change:** an attempt to fundamentally reengineer the underlying division of power and resources and existing political structures in order to generate some or all of the following: greater social and political inclusivity, gender equality, reductions in poverty, sustainable economic growth.

**Transition out of conflict:** the move away from crisis, to situations that are likely to still be fragile not entirely violent or hostile, allowing for longer-term development activities to build further stability.

**Transitional justice:** defined by the UN system as the “full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempts to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past abuses, in order to ensure accountability, serve justice and achieve reconciliation.”

**Violence:** the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community. It either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. It takes the form of self-directed violence, interpersonal violence and collective violence.







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