The UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation (2014)

This document outlines the UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation.[1] It explains why and when HMG[2] engages in Stabilisation and sets out how the stabilisation approach links to other tools and approaches which HMG uses in situations of violent conflict (see box). It provides guidance for policy makers and programme staff about when the stabilisation approach might be appropriate and how to use it most effectively.

This document supports the strategic and policy framework comprising HMG's National Security Strategy (2010), Strategic Defence and Security Review (2010) and the Building Stability Overseas Strategy (2011).[3] It draws on evidence and lessons from experience in a range of situations over the past ten years, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kosovo, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia and South Sudan.

The UK seeks to address violent conflict within the framework of international law. The UK reserves the right to act bilaterally when its critical interests are threatened, but we aim to support coherent and effective responses to crisis through close partnerships with international and multilateral organisations. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council , the UK supports the Council's role in analysing and determining the threats to peace and security and the missions and operations authorised by the Council to contain violence, stabilise fragile conflict situations and reduce the likelihood of hostilities resuming.

> **Violent Conflict:** "Conflict is a normal part of human interaction, the natural result when individuals and groups have incompatible needs, interests or beliefs. The challenge we need to address is the violent conflict that emerges when these underlying incompatibilities are badly managed.
>
> In stable, resilient societies conflict is managed through numerous formal and informal institutions. For example, elections determine the outcome of political conflict, courts settle legal conflicts, and social norms prevent conflicts between neighbours escalating to violence. These mechanisms channel conflict, avoiding recourse to violence and facilitating positive change. In fragile states, however, they are weak, illegitimate or dysfunctional, so violence – organised and systematic, or individual and chaotic – becomes the primary mechanism to resolve conflict. Such violence undermines the institutions and relationships on which long term-peace and stability depend." (BSOS, p.5)

What is Stabilisation?

Stabilisation is one of the approaches used in situations of violent conflict which is designed to protect and promote legitimate political authority, using a combination of integrated civilian and military actions to reduce violence, re-establish security and prepare for longer-term recovery by building an enabling environment for structural stability.

What is 'Structural Stability'?

'Structural Stability' is the longer-term goal to which stabilisation contributes. The Building Stability Overseas Strategy (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"*.[4]

---

[1] This document updates the UK's Approach to Stabilisation, originally produced in 2008. For further information please see SU Publications online or email SULessons@stabilisationunit.gov.uk

[2] Her Majesty's Government (HMG) – the UK Government.

[3] It is also consistent with DFID (2010) Building Peaceful States and Societies: a DFID practice paper, London.

[4] FCO, MOD & DFID (p.5, 2011), Building Stability Overseas (BSOS), London.

Stabilisation contributes to structural stability by helping to establish the conditions under which an inclusive political settlement can be sought. Stabilisation can therefore be a 'first step'[5] towards progress on statebuilding and peacebuilding in very insecure environments. But recovery from extreme fragility is a painstaking process.

The World Development Report 2011 indicates that "even the fastest-transforming countries have taken between 15 and 30 years to raise their institutional performance from that of a fragile state."[6] Stabilisation needs to be applied in conjunction with longer-term statebuilding and peacebuilding to secure sustainable transition from fragility.

An Integrated approach

The Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) committed HMG to taking an integrated approach, joining up various capabilities across government to deal with threats to the UK;

> *"When crises emerge we will act to deliver rapid crisis prevention and response, improving our ability to take fast, appropriate and effective action to prevent a crisis or stop it escalating or spreading. […] Implementing the strategy will require a consolidated effort, using all our diplomatic, development and defence capabilities as well as drawing on external expertise." (BSOS, p.2, 2011)*

The UK's Stabilisation Unit (SU) brings together expertise from three departments of HMG predominately concerned with building stability overseas: the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Department for International Development (DFID) and facilitates an integrated, cross-government approach to conflict and instability. The SU increasingly delivers UK support to multilateral efforts in conflict prevention, stabilisation, statebuilding and peacebuilding.[7]

Stabilisation and the political settlement

Stabilisation is applied in politically messy, violent, challenging and often non-permissive environments in which the legitimacy of the state and political settlement is likely to be contested. In such circumstances, it is likely that the state has become only one of several actors which exercise the use of force. In some contexts the state may be an active belligerent in the conflict. The central challenge of stabilisation is to bring about some form of political settlement in a pressured and violent context. This may be subnational, regional (including across borders) or national, depending on the nature and scope of the conflict. This is unlikely to be a long-lasting settlement but should be one that can evolve and be adapted by national and local actors as the context shifts.

External support cannot *create* legitimate political authority, although such backing can provide some initial credibility. External support also risks undermining claims to legitimacy, and damaging a domestic political actor if seen to be too close to foreign governments. Therefore, the UK approach to stabilisation involves, from the outset, working to build the foundations of an inclusive political settlement, whilst continually analysing and responding to changes in the political context.

Identifying how to engage in a complex environment in ways which promote peaceful cooperation and reduce incentives for violence requires detailed and delicate political economy analysis[8] and broad political engagement. It is important to gather and consider the perspectives of different groups, including those traditionally under-represented such as women, youth and ethnic or religious minorities. It is also vital to consider who potential spoilers[9] may be, to ensure they have a stake in the process but are not empowered by it. This means the UK and

---

[5] DFID (p.36, 2010) Building Peaceful States and Societies: a DFID practice paper, London.
[6] World Bank (p.10, 2011), World Development Report 2011, Washington D.C.
[7] See the section below on 'Working Multilaterally' p.4.
[8] The UK Government's tool for this type of analysis is the Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS).
[9] Spoilers are defined as "leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it" (see Stedman, S., 1997, 'Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes', International Security, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 5-53.)

our international partners will have to make difficult choices about who to work with and how, particularly in the short term. Given the significant impact that externally supported stabilisation efforts can have on the balance of power, care should be taken to foster the establishment of locally and/or nationally-owned and led authority as early as possible, in order to make space for internal actors to reach a political settlement and prepare for transition (also see p.11).

Political Settlement: Some useful terms

Legitimate political authority	"States are legitimate when elites and the public accept the rules regulating the exercise of power and the distribution of wealth as proper and binding."[10] In the deeply divided contexts in which stabilisation actors are likely to work, different groups (both internal and external) are likely to differ in their judgements about legitimacy. For some, informal or religious institutions, for example, may have greater legitimacy than the formal institutions of the state during crisis.
Political settlement	"Political settlements are the expression of a common understanding, usually forged between elites, about how (economic, coercive and political) power and resources are organised and exercised between competing groups in a state (who is included and served etc.). Settlements are constantly changing and over time may broaden from narrow, exclusionary 'bargains' between elites, to include more members of society. The 'state' of the settlement will be dictated by the respective power of different groups. There is not necessarily a single settlement in a country."[11]
Elite pact	"Uneasy arrangements between elites that find accommodation through the brokering of interests. These may stagnate, often as a result of prolonged crisis…but will remain fragile."[12]
Inclusive political settlement	"Inclusive settlements are based on long-term negotiation between the state and groups in society…the inclusiveness of a settlement, and public perceptions of its fairness, is critical to state legitimacy and the sustainability of the settlement in the long term."[13] Importantly the political settlement should be capable of evolving and responding to public expectations in order to ensure that societal rights and responsibilities are broadly accepted.

Local actors will respond to violent political conflict in highly dynamic ways likely to result in shifts in power and authority. This can make planning stabilisation challenging especially when external actors, who may have limited or imperfect understanding of the context, need to seek out opportunities and entry points for activities. Any action needs to be continuously monitored, to assess any transformative effects (planned and unplanned), to minimise potential harm and manage risks and maximise any stabilising impacts. Consideration will also need to be given to other activities in the humanitarian, statebuilding or peacebuilding sectors which may be taking place concurrently and in close proximity to stabilisation. Progress is incremental and never linear; different geographical areas in a country may progress at different stages from violent political contest to structural stability, or vice versa, and there will be set-backs and reversals. As previously mentioned, any early political settlement is likely to develop and evolve continually, and may go through periods of consolidation and strengthening as well as periods of deterioration.

Working multilaterally
Stabilisation may be an appropriate response when it is judged that a situation of violent political conflict poses a threat to UK interests, or to wider international peace and security; but it is likely to be only one of several approaches applied. Various branches of HMG are involved in determining whether stabilisation should be part of the UK's approach to a particular situation of violent conflict.

---

[10] Papagianni, K. (2008) 'Participation and State Legitimation': in C. Call with V. Wyeth (eds.) Building States to Build Peace, Lynne Rienner, USA and FCO, MOD & DFID (2011), Building Stability Overseas (BSOS), London.
[11] Outlined in DFID (p.1, 2013) Country Poverty Reduction Diagnostic, London
[12] DFID (p.23, 2010) Building Peaceful States and Societies: a DFID practice paper, London.
[13] DFID (p.23, 2010) Building Peaceful States and Societies: a DFID practice paper, London.

This will likely include assessment staff, policy or country leads from the FCO MOD and DFID. The National Security Council (NSC) is one forum whereby Ministers consider the UK's response to these types of issues.

This paper describes the *UK approach* to stabilisation; but increasingly, HMG seeks to work in partnership with its allies and with multilateral organisations. Stabilisation approaches which are based on broad international ownership benefit from greater acceptance and coherence, as well as being able to draw on a greater range of resources and expertise. The 2010 NSS sets out how the UK follows a tried and successful approach to collective security using a wide set of alliances and partnerships - for example, with the United Nations (UN), North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), European Union (EU). The UK also recognises that regional bodies such as the African Union (AU) can play important roles in stabilisation. We seek to ensure that such interventions support the political processes which will deliver long-term stability.

The approach laid out here describes our bilateral approach, but it also informs and underpins our engagement and participation in wider partnerships which apply stabilisation. How HMG engages is dependent upon a range of factors, including the extent and nature of UK national interests, HMG comparative advantage, physical presence, and the activities of other stakeholders. Whether intervention is bilateral or multilateral, the degree to which any UK supported stabilisation efforts are perceived internationally as legitimate will depend on the strength of support from the UN Security Council. The UK Government attaches high importance to reinforcing and strengthening the rules-based international system, using our role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to build consensus on tackling conflicts and strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of UN peacekeeping through a combination of political, technical and financial support.

Since the mid-1990s, twenty-nine multi-lateral UN, NATO and EU missions have worked to peacekeeping, peace enforcement or political mandates which include the promotion of stability. Sixteen multi-lateral missions have been tasked to apply stabilisation to achieve their strategic objectives.[14] These missions are expressly tasked to carry out stabilisation by addressing security, peace, regional stability, economic stability, justice, and organised crime. The UK has a part to play in shaping these missions and in assisting in their successful implementation. The UK has directly supported UN-mandated stabilisation missions in Afghanistan, DRC, Haiti, Liberia, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan amongst others.

Whilst working multilaterally can enhance the legitimacy of stabilisation interventions, it can be challenging to achieve broad consensus on the parameters and objectives of the intervention and 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.

Applying the stabilisation approach

Typically, the stabilisation approach is applied following deterioration in security or state authority in a region where threats materialise with the potential to impact not only on the fate of the governing authority but also on wider peace and security. The UK has an important role to play in promoting shared analysis and understanding of a crisis within the multilateral organisations which are well-placed to respond and developing a consensus-based approach. The scale of the UK and international commitment to any stabilisation effort will largely depend on the level of threat to strategic interests, and the feasibility of mission based on an assessment of risks, opportunities and costs. Depending on the nature of the context, existing FCO, DFID and MOD commitments, activities and programmes may be continued, scaled up or down and adapted to the context or withdrawn in favour of different forms of engagement. Departments may jointly or individually initiate specific stabilisation activities, possibly funded through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF).

---

[14] See Herbert, S. (2013). *Stability and stabilisation approaches in multinational interventions.* GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 966. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

The departments will be supported by the Stabilisation Unit as required. This support can vary from crisis response and surge capacity in London and in-country or longer-term sustained engagement on a country. With agreement across the departments, support can include the deployment of Deployable Civilian Experts, or when appropriate core staff, into bilateral or multilateral posts to support joint departmentally-led strategies and activities, or the provision of technical stabilisation advice on policy development or programme design.

Stabilisation is unlikely to encompass the totality of international or even HMG engagement in a fragile state. In spite of (and because of) the high levels of insecurity, other international and national actors including local civil society, private sector, bilateral and multi-lateral donors, private security companies, and international and national non-governmental organisations are likely to be present, all operating according to their own objectives and perspective on the crisis. Close co-ordination is required across departments as well as with other relevant international and national stakeholders to try to align priorities where appropriate.

Humanitarian aid is delivered on the basis of need alone and according to the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. International commitments in this field are laid out in detail in the UK's humanitarian policy paper which commits to a principled, non-political approach to humanitarian aid, autonomous from political, military, security or economic objectives.[15] Stabilisation actors should exercise caution to avoid politicising humanitarian action, which could risk making humanitarian activities a target for violence. However, there can be opportunities to build on humanitarian action without compromising humanitarian principles.

Within this context there are four key characteristics of the UK's approach to stabilisation. First, any stabilisation action will be planned and implemented with an **overtly political** objective in mind,[16] ideally with a means of identifying success and a process of transition to longer-term recovery. All activities in fragile and conflict affected states need to have a clear political purpose and be underpinned by a shared understanding of how the planned activity is expected to deliver a shift away from the current instability. This may mean making some hard, even unpalatable, immediate choices about who we need to work with. These decisions will need to be based on a political economy analysis and assessment of the conflict drivers that is as thorough as possible. Such analysis should be refined and updated continually. Key areas of investigation include identifying; who are the power holders among the elites, state and population? What are their interests and how do they relate to each other? What are the different forms of violence used and to what end? For example, is there a pattern of sexual and gender-based violence in some communities? What can be done to shift interests towards stability? Who will gain and who will lose out? What are the consequences for emerging political processes?

HMG's short term requirements and priorities must be balanced against longer-term UK objectives. Difficult, short-term compromises may be needed and in certain environments, the political imperative to act may make things worse in the short term. These tensions should be identified, minimised and addressed as soon as conditions allow. For example, the decision to postpone Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) for programmatic or political reasons may have significant impacts on the willingness of other armed groups to participate in DDR, and may also affect other political processes.

Second, the stabilisation approach is **an integrated, civilian-led approach** which unifies effort across HMG. Even when there are military-led and implemented tasks in stabilisation (e.g. carrying out patrols to bolster local security), their application should occur in the context of an operationally civilian-led, politically engaged, stabilisation approach. Civilian actors will lead in other areas of security, as well as justice, governance and development activities, all of which may be applied within the stabilisation approach.

---

[15] DFID (2011) Saving lives, preventing suffering and building resilience, London.

[16] Primarily this means the UK's political objectives for that country, there are likely to be connections to broader international political objectives, for example, in UN Security Council Resolutions. However, the stabilisation approach must understand and, where relevant, adapt to regional, national and local political drivers.

Third, the stabilisation approach is both **flexible and targeted**. It can be applied in a state or part of a state which is affected by violent political conflict; or in a conflict-affected region that undermines local and / or regional stability. The actual activities are tailored to the specific context and the application of justice activities, for example, may be appropriate in one conflict but not in another. Experience from UK and other stabilisation operations shows that it is important to plan and implement local-level stabilisation in the context of the wider political settlement in order to avoid being overly focused on tactical gains. This requires close co-ordination between local level delivery and activities and policies established in the capital so that locally developed institutions or measures can be adapted to or merged into the appropriate national frameworks as soon as is feasible. This may include the New Deal framework on peacebuilding and statebuilding to which HMG is committed.[17]

Fourth, stabilisation will be **transitory** but cannot afford to be short-term in outlook or objectives. It must be planned and implemented with reference to other parallel or longer-term engagement. For example, it may be necessary to strike an elite pact over security arrangements in the short term, but these should have review mechanisms – or sometimes "sunset clauses" – built into them to ensure that they cannot become permanent without wider consultations (examples could be drawn from the Democratic Republic of Congo or the Liberian transitional governments). It is important to ensure that opportunities to build local capacity and promote local ownership during stabilisation interventions are not ignored, given the clear advantages these will bring during and after transition.

The Core Components of Stabilisation

> **The mutually reinforcing components for stabilisation are:**
> - **Protect political actors, the political system and the population**
> - **Promote, consolidate and strengthen political processes**
> - **Prepare for longer-term recovery**

The stabilisation approach is guided by an overtly political objective – all activities are planned and undertaken with a focus on how they will contribute to the process by which a political settlement can be promoted and developed. In some instances, acting with political expediency may be necessary.

Protect political actors, the political system and the population

In fragile and conflict-affected states, as in all states, power is established and protected through force and the threat of force. The UK's stabilisation approach explicitly enables the deployment of external military force to manage existing violence and deter further outbreaks. This may or may not include UK forces in direct combat activities.[18] It is more likely that the UK would be playing a supporting role to an internationally mandated force.[19] The ability to generate security is a key enabling factor for stabilisation.

An external military presence can benefit a weak political authority by reducing the capacity of other groups to challenge it through violent means. In other contexts, for example if the UN judges that a state is in breach of its international commitments or poses a threat to wider peace and security, an external military presence can be deployed to reduce the threats posed by unaccountable state security forces, whose actions can undermine a political settlement and the security of the population. Some groups will have become extremely vulnerable and marginalised as a result of violent conflict and these deserve particular attention. The specific situation of women and girls should be considered.

---

[17] See International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (2013), A New Deal for engagement in fragile states, Busan, South Korea.
[18] See DCDC (Forthcoming) Joint Doctrine Publication – 5 Shaping a stable world: the military contribution, UK.
[19] See FCO, MOD & DFID (pp.30-2, 2011), Building Stability Overseas (BSOS), London.

However, it is important to note that externally provided or backed security can only provide a short-term respite unless it is linked to efforts to shift political contest between powerful internal groups into non-violent fora. Experience has also shown that early engagement in the security sector can have significant long-term effects which must be understood and where necessary mitigated (see p.9). Alongside military activities, civilian actors from the FCO and DFID have important roles in political engagement and programmatic advice and delivery in this area.

Kosovo 1999-2000

In the wake of NATO military action in Kosovo, Security Council Resolution 1244 approved the deployment of an international civil and security presence that was designed to ensure conditions for a peaceful and normal life for all inhabitants of Kosovo and advance regional stability in the western Balkans. The UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) worked closely together in pursuit of progress towards a situation where differences between the key stakeholders and ethnic groups could be conducted through non-violent processes. A key plank of the initial approach was to demilitarise and transform the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The agreed, UNMIK mandated solution was the establishment of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) as a civilian agency tasked to provide emergency response and to contribute to reconstruction. This pragmatic means of initiating a DDR process by creating an organisation to absorb former KLA fighters was an important prerequisite to the initiation of political processes.

Not only is security by itself insufficient without political progress, it is essential to recognise that the way in which violence is managed and deterred will have an impact on the political process. If stabilisation aims to support those political players most likely to shepherd a transition to a sustainable political settlement, then the provision of security must be orchestrated in a way that is explicitly cognisant of the impact that engagement will have on those power dynamics. Without some form of legitimate political authority immediate stability and security will be compromised and the pursuit of longer-term statebuilding will not be feasible. In particular, it is vital to ensure that legitimate political authority is demonstrating responsible use of force and that it applies force in ways which are perceived to be legitimate. In this way, over time the political authority may be able to establish a monopoly on the use of force. This may mean that what makes

Iraq 2003

In Iraq the disbanding of the Iraqi security forces after the US-led invasion in 2003 meant that large numbers of previously enfranchised Sunnis at senior and junior levels now had no role in the new Iraqi state. This not only created a security vacuum which Allied forces did not have the capacity to fill but also resulted in alienation of the former army. This actively contributed to a deterioration in security, hampered political progress and was a factor leading to the subsequent insurgency as the former security personnel provided weapons, manpower and expertise.

sense from a military or security perspective needs to be amended in light of the over-riding political imperative.

It is clear that the prevention and deterrence of violence are not ends in themselves, although they can be stepping stones towards sustainable peace. Other objectives cannot be pursued without security, so it is perhaps most helpful to conceive of security as a necessary "enabling factor", though it is insufficient in isolation to support stabilisation.

Promote, consolidate and strengthen political processes

In stabilisation contexts a political settlement will be lacking, nascent or rudimentary; considerable efforts will be required to foster or develop it. Where a settlement exists, it will often be inherently fragile and unconsolidated. It may have limited endorsement from those on the ground and will often be contested. The political arena is likely to be militarised and characterised by significant fragmentation and factionalisation and an appreciation of how political deals will affect security is critical (see p. 9) because institutions and communities are likely to be polarised and aligned with armed groups. In such contexts, stabilisation can support interim political arrangements and lay the foundations for a fuller and more enduring political settlement to take shape. If a settlement has already been negotiated, stabilisation can support political processes to consolidate a nascent political settlement.

The UK stabilisation approach entails incentivising power holders to act in the interests of stability and creating or consolidating political processes to allow these groups to agree to divide power cooperatively and ultimately to contest power non-violently. It may be important to put in place transition arrangements which avoid power contests (e.g. elections) until there is sufficient stability. Parties to the conflict are likely to be bargaining and negotiating with one another at the same time as engaging militarily. An external contribution, led by the FCO, is likely to focus on building agreement between powerful groups about changes to the rules by which power is allocated and exercised and finding workable alternatives to violent contest.

Stabilisation may focus on the local level; buying time whilst higher level or national political processes evolve. This might take the form of working to address potential local flashpoints which could reignite conflict and destabilise a national level peace negotiation, or simply supporting and legitimising a broader settlement. Departments along with the Stabilisation Unit, have different roles in delivering activities that support stabilisation. In the case of Somalia below, the FCO led on regional and national political engagement whilst the tri-departmentally managed Stabilisation Team provided funding, facilitation and confidence building measures to support the political process.

South Central Somalia, 2012-14

In October 2012, the key town of Kismayo was reclaimed from Al Shabaab insurgents by the Kenyan AMISOM (AU Mission in Somalia) Forces, who had allied with the Ras Kamboni militia headed by Ahmed Madobe. This shift in clan dynamics inflamed conflict between local militias and armed groups, increasing crime and insecurity in the city.

A peace deal, brokered by Ethiopia with UK support in September 2013, offered prospects for improved stability. To support this, the UK Stabilisation Team facilitated a number of engagements with leaders from the key militias, the Federal Government of Somalia, and representatives from AMISOM, the Kenyan and Ethiopian governments, Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the UN as a means to maintain momentum for the fragile agreement.

In consultation with international partners, the team commissioned a six-month programme in Kismayo with initial interventions that aimed to act as entry points to build longer-term stability. These included support to civil infrastructure such as street lights. The UK's stabilisation response was politically led, shaped by international, national and local political realities and opportunities.

Activities to foster a political settlement will be carried out in partnership with other governments and multilateral partners. In some instances, comparative advantage will lie with those external actors who have the ability to persuade or compel local actors to come to the table. In other contexts, the neutral 'good offices' of multilateral bodies such as the UN will be sought out to facilitate. Priorities include the de-escalation of conflicts through the negotiation and facilitation of ceasefires, the establishment of conflict management and resolution structures; support for peace processes, including political outreach and negotiated reconciliation; and support for interim constitutional processes.

There may be opportunities to foster inclusion, for example, addressing long-standing marginalisation of some groups through legal reforms. The role of the FCO could include seeding these ideas with parties over whom the UK has influence. This can be supported by co-ordinated action by DFID, the MOD or the Stabilisation Unit who can provide technical assessment and guidance on how activities might be managed and delivered.

Any engagement with a national or local administration must be cognisant of the fact that administrations often lack broad-based legitimacy. At worst, administrations at various levels may have been captured by predatory, factional elites with little popular support. The precursor of any efforts to support the strengthening of links between a population, elites and a state must, critically, be an effort to ensure that the administration is legitimate, and an effort to reform it if necessary. This may include the reconstitution of administrations and the application of political pressure to encourage reform.

Preparing for longer-term recovery

It will not be possible to foster strong state-society relations or to address the underlying causes of conflict which can

Helmand, Afghanistan 2008-14
In Helmand, Afghanistan, the Provincial Reconstruction Team supported District Community Councils (DCC) in seven districts. These councils have applied a modified election/selection process in line with the tribal structures in Helmand that remain a key component of both formal and informal governance. Over the past four years the councils have been re-elected and an increasing number of Helmandis have participated. There have also been notable shifts regarding the elders who are elected and over time more significant elders are becoming involved. These councils have bolstered the executive branch of government in Helmand in reaching out to communities and tackling security and justice issues. Through their roles in mediating between communities and the government the DCC members' roles provide an important stabilisation effect as central Helmand emerged from overwhelming violent conflict. The UK military provided substantial support to the civilian personnel who delivered the programme who worked in the integrated civil-military Provincial Reconstruction Team in Lashkar Gah. The provincial approach taken in Helmand meant that co-ordination was necessary with national DFID programmes to ensure that the councils helped promote longer-term statebuilding in the province and were linked to national processes.

be done through longer-term peacebuilding and statebuilding. However, the stabilisation approach needs to be based from the outset on an understanding of the conflict dynamics and their impacts on women, men, boys and girls, and incorporate planning for transition to these longer-term approaches. Successful recovery will enable broader HMG engagement in a country by the FCO, MOD and DFID.

In fragile contexts many peoples' interaction with the state is at best limited and at worst, extremely negative. They may have become accustomed to a state which is predatory and dangerous and they may perceive that powerful elites are able to manipulate the state for personal gain, that organised criminal networks are either able to capture the state for their own objectives, or able to exploit the weakness of the state. Ongoing careful analysis needs to understand the relationships between elites, the state and the population, including vulnerable and marginalised groups. There should be a focus on strengthening relationships which have the potential to become the building blocks of an inclusive political settlement and unpick those relationships that actively undermine it.

Whatever the area of focus, the stabilisation approach requires different stakeholders to work together, rather than just delivering the output. Just as military and security objectives may need to be subject to political considerations, so does longer-term development. For example, it may be more important to do something that improves relationships between two sets of elites than to develop a programme to tackle extreme poverty or build state capacity. Equally, political expediency at the expense of longer term stability is unhelpful, for example agreements which privilege powerful elites, and do not address or leave open issues of justice and reconciliation are likely to fail.

Alongside protection and promoting political processes activities which prepare for longer-term recovery will vary with each stabilisation context but are likely to centre around:

Supporting security and justice

Security is essential to create a conducive environment for non-violent political processes (see p.6). In a stabilisation context, early engagement in the security sector is unlikely to produce sustainable arrangements, but it can provide

time and space for a political authority to gain legitimacy or acceptance. Security Sector Stabilisation (SSS)[20] will help to provide a basis for other stabilisation activities and a bridging activity towards longer-term recovery including Security Sector Reform (SSR). However, SSS is also important for transforming relationships between different actors, particularly between different armed and unarmed groups. The process by which new temporary security arrangements are designed and implemented can be used to build or re-set relationships between different groups (e.g. by engaging communities in decision-making). It is an opportunity to give women and young people a chance to have their voice heard in security planning.

Protecting the means of survival

In situations emerging from violent conflict, it is likely that many people will have lost some of their productive assets, been forced to restrict their livelihood activities and endured limited access to basic services because of restrictions in freedom of movement or outright destruction. Security permitting, there may be humanitarian agencies working to address these problems.

> ### South Sudan 2010-2013
>
> In parts of South Sudan, local level conflict analysis informed consultations with communities, local leaders and authorities to identify priority issues. The project was delivered by UNDP, funded by DFID and supported by personnel deployed via the Stabilisation Unit. At a local level the key actors agreed that the delivery of security posts, including some basic infrastructure and personnel, in several counties would improve local security for communities and they discussed where the posts should be placed to maximise local buy-in and their effectiveness. The subsequent presence of government security forces allowed opportunities for further engagement between local communities and state authorities.

HMG will allocate separate resources to ensure an effective humanitarian response to those affected by conflict. Humanitarian activities which protect civilians and promote adherence to International Humanitarian Law and human rights are at the core of the UK's policies to prevent, manage and resolve conflict.

Stabilisation activity must not impede humanitarian aid but, as mentioned earlier, stabilisation can build on the foundations laid by humanitarian assistance (see p.5). Nor should stabilisation actors seek to substitute for the state by providing large scale basic services. In some contexts, rushing to get the state to deliver these services can also be counter-productive because of long-standing mistrust of the state itself. Instead, the focus of stabilisation should be on facilitating access to services through the protection of freedom of movement so that communities are able to exercise choice over livelihood options. For example activities that reduce mistrust between the state and populations or building confidence between populations in conflict over access to shared resources.

It should not be assumed that simply by delivering projects that the area will become more stable. For example, there is little evidence that Community Driven Development programmes, where locally representative bodies identify priorities which are delivered by NGOs or the state, actually promote linkages between the state and the population. This may be because the money is not held by the state authorities and therefore the benefits are not perceived to be linked to the state; or because of concerns about corruption within the state institutions which participate in the identification of projects. There is also evidence that the one-off delivery of a community project (e.g. building a community centre) may not strengthen the social contract between a population and its government because the creation and maintenance of political legitimacy is a long-term and ongoing process.

---

[20] See Security Sector Stabilisation (2014) Stabilisation Unit, London.

How do you manage the transition out of stabilisation?

Stabilisation is not meant to be a permanent activity but should be applied for limited periods and activities should

then give way to longer-term recovery. As noted earlier, recovery from fragility is a generation's work, and as countries transition out of a stabilisation phase, external support should also transition to statebuilding and peacebuilding when and where feasible. Whatever the nature of the transition, it is unlikely to be linear - there will be shocks and set-backs and violence may be ongoing to an extent. The stabilisation approach may need to be re-engaged periodically to support faltering statebuilding and peacebuilding. Progress

South-central Somalia
The UK Stabilisation Team in Somalia has provided grants for small scale infrastructure in key towns that have been re-taken from Al-Shabaab by AMISOM. For these projects DFID has provided advisory input to the tri-departmentally managed Stabilisation Team which was staffed by personnel deployed by the Stabilisation Unit. The direct effects of a road, a bridge or street lights on local security or the economy was helpful in demonstrating a return to normality for the local community. More importantly the process of implementing the projects was designed to increase interaction between clan leaders, local administrations, militias and the population in a way that provides opportunities for them to engage in non-violent political processes.

will vary in different locations and in different sectors according to the mix of conflict dynamics, actors and resources. For example, stabilisation activities may need to continue in different geographic areas and over a prolonged period (i.e. years) as priorities and requirements for stabilisation change.

Flexibility and adaptability are vital. Stabilisation efforts will need to be refocused in light of unfolding events and must be informed by robust monitoring and evaluation systems and political judgement. The transition out of conflict is normally very challenging and there will be setbacks. There are numerous examples, including Kosovo, DRC and South Sudan where conflicts have re-started or flared up even after significant national and international stabilisation support. This means that HMG's strategy and programming must recognise that the stabilisation approach may need to be applied in areas which were once thought to have become sufficiently stable to allow more mainstream activities to be delivered.

The withdrawal of external stabilisation actors can sometimes be necessary to allow local actors to re-calibrate the balance of power and thereby begin to agree on and develop systems of governance for a more sustainable and inclusive political settlement. Broadly speaking, the transition should take place when direct external support is no longer required to address violent political conflict and the threat or use of force is responsibly used by legitimate political authorities. Setting benchmarks for transition is highly context specific.[21] Transition will be influenced by many factors – for example, internal political opposition to the presence of foreign forces may affect when other actors need to be prepared to take over stabilisation efforts. Ideally, the planning for transition must begin at the outset, as part of the planning for stabilisation.

FCO, MOD, DFID and Stabilisation Unit May 2014

---

[21] As a resource see Joint Doctrine Note 6-10 Security Transitions, (2010), DCDC, UK.