A Few Thoughts on the Military Contribution to Stabilisation 2017 [1]

Background

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 *interim 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.

What is Stabilisation?

The UK approach to stabilisation is defined in its cross government policy paper (UK Approach to Stabilisation, 2014), and the military contribution to this effort in JDP-05 (Shaping a Stable World; the Military Contribution). From a UK perspective, 'stabilisation' is one of the approaches used in situations of violent conflict, 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, so building an enabling environment for structural stability.

From a military perspective, stabilisation operations are one of a number of types of 'Stability Operations', which can broadly be understood as military operations short of major combat which have the primary objective of contributing to stability . Other types of stability operations include Counter Irregular Activity (counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism, and counter-criminality), Peace Support Operations, Humanitarian Assistance, and Capacity Building.

Stabilisation does not produce stability[2]. Stabilisation is a process, not an end state, designed to create an enabling environment for long term stability objectives. It is a 'first step' towards progress on statebuilding and peacebuilding in very insecure environments.

Through experience we have learned that the best way of providing this enabling environment for longer term stability is to support the emergence of a *legitimate* political authority. There is little point, for example, in focussing on military securitisation

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[1] Unofficial overview of military contribution to Stabilisation, written by Stabilisation Unit Liaison Officer to the Joint Services Command and Staff College. Draws on 'UK Approach to Stabilisation 2014' ,'Shaping a Stable World; the military contribution (JDP 05)', and Army Field Manual Tactics for Stability Operations (2017).

[2] Defined in BSOS 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'.

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accompanied by infrastructure and development programmes, if the absence of a legitimate political authority means that violent conflict will continue and longer term governance, security and economic efforts will fail.

Key characteristics of Stabilisation

Overtly political: *S*tabilisation action must always be planned and implemented with an overtly political objective in mind, ideally with a means of identifying success and a process of transition to longer-term recovery. 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 order to deliver a shift away from the current instability. This will need to be based on a thorough political economy analysis and assessment of conflict drivers.

Integrated, civilian-led: 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 many areas of stabilisation, including political support, police and justice, governance and development activities. But all actors within HMG should be delivering to the same overarching strategic vision, and proactively supporting each other.

Flexible and targeted: Stabilisation 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. But it may not be the only approach which HMG and/or international partners adopt in a given country or region. A 'pure' Stabilisation approach in one part of a country (where violent conflict is rife), may take place alongside humanitarian relief, and peacebuilding/ statebuilding efforts in other parts of the same country. It is important, therefore, 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.

Transitory: 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 built into them to ensure that they cannot become permanent without wider consultations. Wherever possible, prioritise building local capacity and promoting local ownership, given the clear advantages these will bring during and after transition.

Components of Stabilisation (the 3Ps) and the Military Contribution

- P1: Protect political actors, the political system and the population
- P2: Promote, consolidate and strengthen political processes
- P3: Prepare for recovery

This framework provides a useful way of conceptualising what needs to be prioritised within a stabilisation campaign. Note that these components must not be seen as sequential; their

delivery must always be concurrent. But the relative levels of effort may depend on the stage of the campaign, as illustrated below.
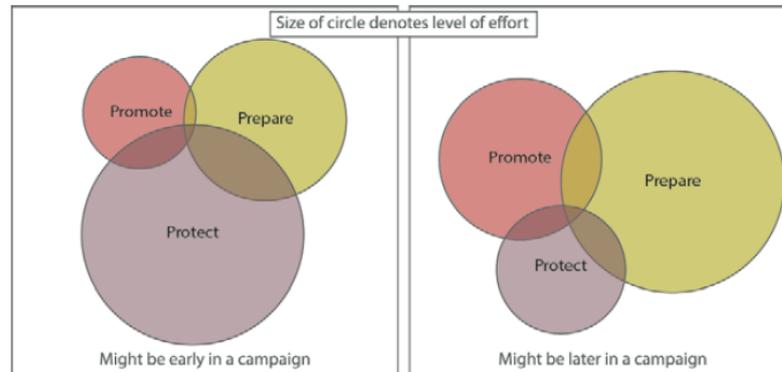
While UK and coalition effort under each of the 3Ps needs to be politically led and integrated, the potential **military contribution** to each may be as follows:

P1:'Protect' political actors, the political system and the population.

- Static protection of key sites and infrastructure; e.g. market places, government buildings, military depots, power stations, strategic bridges, TV/radio stations, refugee camps, natural resources, etc.
- Persistent security in areas secured and held; e.g. intensive patrolling and check points.
- Targeted action against adversaries; e.g. search or strike operations.
- Population control, for example, curfews and vehicle restrictions.
- Protection of specific individuals/groups; e.g. key politicians/government functionaries, civilian reconstruction and stabilisation personnel (international and domestic), aid workers, etc.
- Short term support to indigenous security providers (state/non state)

P2: 'Promote', consolidate and strengthen political processes.

Primacy of civilian leadership is paramount in this component, and frank and open channels will be required to decide how and when the military should support political processes (especially in hostile environments). Less contentious contributions may include;

- Secure environment for negotiations;
- Protection and freedom of movement for those engaging in political processes;
- Protecting sites where political processes take place;
- Identifying interlocutors and spoilers;
- Monitoring of ceasefires, peace agreements, etc.

P3; 'Prepare' for recovery.

A. Maintain security to create enabling environment for the work of others
As the primary contribution, ensure freedom of movement and protection of key actors, locations and infrastructure to allow others to deliver Humanitarian Assistance and basic

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services, and create the space and confidence for economic activity to restart. Where civilian agencies/ authorities cannot operate, the military <u>may</u> be asked to help in such areas as restoring/delivering essential services (water, sanitation, health, power…), repairing key infrastructure (hospitals, schools, clinics, bridges, markets…), delivering emergency humanitarian assistance, or commencing temporary local employment opportunities. But proceed with *real caution* and in consultation with Stabilisation Advisers/ 77Bde specialists /DFID advisers/ civilian agencies / local authorities. Providing such support may seem like an obvious win-win (we generate good will, population sees progress). However, it is fraught with dangers and the chances of doing harm or undermining our own legitimacy are high;

- Militarising humanitarian assistance can significantly undermine the independence, neutrality and impartiality associated with humanitarian aid that civilian agencies rely on for their security and access
- Substituting state service delivery is unsustainable and may directly undermine the legitimacy of the state/local authorities
- Simply delivering projects (including QIPs) can frequently be destabilising and create divisions within and between communities
- Those who win our contracts may well be the representatives of the corrupt elites/criminals/warlords/old regime who we are here to ostensibly confront
- Institutional governance transformation takes time – there are no quick fixes (30-40 years!)

B. Security sector stabilisation

Mentoring and capacity building of indigenous security forces (including police) and disarmament of some armed groups may well be a high priority. However, it is vital to recognise that these are never simply technical activities; they are highly politicised and fraught with risk, both in relation to the intended outcomes and to the UK reputation. Security and justice underpin a country's balance of power, and external intervention will challenge vested interests. Note that attempts to rapidly generate national security forces invariably *create* instability, through their impact on the political settlement, and through the long term impact of short terms decisions. 'Train and equip' approaches are often unsustainable and ineffective unless linked with governance reforms.

As such, the UK contribution – and the military role within that - should be a cross government, civ-mil effort under a political lead, in collaboration with international partners and indigenous authorities. Impact on the political settlement must always be at the forefront of thinking, as well as the longer term impact of short terms decisions and initiatives taken now.

Military Principles of Stability Operations

These principles are sound and provide a good summary of the key issues to consider on all stability operations, including stabilisation;

- **Primacy of political purpose:** Political aims dictate the desired outcome and drive the planning and conduct of the campaign. Military actions must always be subordinate to and aligned with the overall inter-agency, politically-led campaign.

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- **Unity of effort:** Military force is only one element required to deliver security and stabilisation. All agencies, military and civilian, international and partner nation must co-operate for the campaign to be effective.

- **Understand the context:** To ensure that the military campaign, operations and tactical actions are consistent with the political purpose, it is necessary to understand the historical, regional and political context of the problem. A shared understanding with other government departments and other international partners is essential to provide a basis for focused and coordinated action.

- **Foster Partner Nation Governance and Capacity:** At every opportunity the force must help to develop the partner nation's ability to govern effectively. In the security sector this is likely to include the capability needed to conduct effective and appropriate security and stability operations in accordance with the other principles**.**

- **Prepare for the Long Term:** The campaign must aim for the long term under legitimate authority (the partner nation). The intervening force is likely to be present for only a short time in large numbers, so its actions must be aimed at creating a foundation on which successor international and partner nation authorities and forces can build.

- **Provide Security for the Population:** For security forces, there are two primary aims: making the population safe from the effects of conflict (including from our own actions) and denying violent actors (such as insurgents) access to the population. The wider concept of 'human security' includes security as in safety, but also access to essential services, such as food, health, education and justice. Armed forces are not usually responsible for these wider aspects of human security, and must therefore co-operate with those who are.

- **Neutralise Adversaries**: The neutralisation of armed adversaries and their supporters can occur in a number of ways including deterrence, defeat, dispersal, disarmament or absorption into legitimate security forces, political movements and society. Armed forces play a significant role in neutralising adversaries.

- **Gain and Maintain Popular Support**: In stability operations, the state, its security forces and intervening external armed forces are in competition with adversaries for the support of the people. The side that succeeds in gaining the support of the people, and denies that support to the other side, is likely to win in the long term.

- **Anticipate, Learn and Adapt:** The effective force improves all aspects of its performance throughout the campaign. This requires formal systems to look for new ways of doing things, and learn lessons from effective and ineffective practice.

- **Operate in Accordance with the Law**: The armed forces and the other agencies involved in stability operations must abide by the law and be seen to do so. This also applies to any alliance or coalition we are part of, and the partner nation. It is a critical aspect of gaining and maintaining popular support, and of undermining any perceived legitimacy of adversaries.

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