
Adapting and Evolving: The Implications of Transnational Terrorism for UN Field Missions

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About the 2013 Policy Workshop

This report represents the culmination of a policy workshop undertaken by nine graduate students at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School for Public and International Affairs between September 2013 and January 2014. Working under the guidance of Minh-Thu Pham, Director of Policy at the United Nations Foundation and Visiting Lecturer at Princeton, and the assistance of Patrick Kuhn, Lecturer in Public and International Affairs and Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC) project at Princeton, we studied the drivers, nature, and consequences of transnational terrorist threats as well as UN responses to conflict and peacebuilding. Biographies of the research team and instructors can be found in Appendix 3.

The project was undertaken at the suggestion of senior United Nations (UN) staff in the Policy and Best Practices Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations who were interested in exploring what could be learned from UN and other organizations' experiences in places like Somalia and Afghanistan that could inform new UN peacekeeping operations and field missions as they are confronted with growing asymmetric or hostile and unconventional threats. Our research included an extensive literature review and over 100 interviews with experts in these topics. Team members traveled frequently to New York City to interview UN staff in various departments, as well as Member State diplomats, academics and researchers. We also traveled to Washington DC to interview United States (US) government officials and experts.

The team conducted field research in Addis Ababa, Bamako, Brussels, Dakar, Nairobi and Paris in October 2013. In Nairobi and Bamako, we met with UN field missions and agencies, local government and civil society actors, non-governmental humanitarian organizations, regional organizations and several embassies to better understand the nature of the threat in Mali and Somalia, as well as the challenges the UN has faced in these countries. In Bamako and Paris, we also interviewed the French military about "Operation Serval" and its interaction with the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

In an effort to glean lessons from the experience of regional organizations in environments with transnational terrorist threats, we met with officials from the African Union in Addis Ababa, Nairobi, and Bamako, as well as officials from NATO and the European Union (EU) in Brussels to learn about their operations in Somalia and Afghanistan. Finally, in Dakar, through meetings with the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), we sought to learn more about the regional dynamics of transnational terrorist networks and the UN's response to this particular aspect of the threat.

A complete list of the individuals we interviewed, and their affiliations, can be found in the Acknowledgements and in the Appendix 1 of the report. The views expressed in the report do not necessarily represent the views of any individual or organization with which the authors met.

Ultimately, we hope that this report provides a forward-looking, comprehensive analysis of the impact of transnational terrorist threats on the United Nations. As independent researchers, we seek to proffer an objective critique of issues that UN staff in both Headquarters and in the field believe to be crucial for the future of the Organization.

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Below is a list of people that the research group met with or consulted via telephone or e-mail during the course of the policy workshop. The content in our report draws heavily from the invaluable insights and experiences of these individuals, and we are very grateful for their willingness to participate in this project.

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Commandant Aku Salmi	Mr. Sean Brooks	Mr. Gordon Drake
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The content of the report has not been approved by nor does it represent the official views of the United Nations.

Executive Summary

In the coming years, there is a strong likelihood that the United Nations will be asked to deploy field missions or increase its presence in environments characterized by the presence of transnational terrorist networks. The recent deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) – the first time a multidimensional UN peacekeeping operation has been deployed in such an environment – has raised concerns that the UN may not be prepared to deal with the challenges of implementing complex mandates in operational theaters where transnational terrorist networks are active. This report analyzes the specific impacts that transnational terrorist threats have on UN field missions and identifies critical gaps that the UN must address in order to address these challenges.

We find that, even though the UN has faced terrorist attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last 10 years, transnational terrorist networks pose a fundamentally different threat to the United Nations than other non-state armed groups that the UN typically faces. First, the nature of their objectives means that their demands are hard to accommodate within the UN's state-centric system; second, their transnational scope of operations defies the UN's country-specific approach; and third, they have designated the UN as a priority target for attack. In addition to these three distinguishing traits, their links with transnational organized crime and their use of asymmetric tactics have a substantial operational impact upon UN field missions.

Given the complexity of the challenges posed by transnational terrorist threats, we argue that the UN Secretary-General and the Security Council should prioritize actions that will have an immediate and lasting impact and for which the UN has a comparative advantage over other actors. As such we believe the UN should first focus on taking preventive measures to inhibit transnational terrorist networks from destabilizing vulnerable states. If preventive action fails and the UN is asked to deploy a field mission, we argue that UN missions should focus on strengthening political mechanisms to address grievances, population security, and (re)establishing state authority.

In undertaking these and other activities, the UN faces four main challenges to its operations in these environments. First, the heightened risk to UN staff security can lead to “bunkerization” and a subsequent paralysis of direct engagement with local populations and stakeholders, as well as difficulties in staff recruitment and retention, challenges in force generation from troop-contributing countries (TCCs), and a reliance on parallel forces for protection that can compromise perceptions of UN impartiality. Second, political engagement with transnational terrorist networks and their local affiliates is more difficult than with other groups due to the nature of their objectives, decentralized structure, shifting allegiances, and rejection of the UN. Third, the linkages between transnational terrorism and transnational organized crime empower spoilers through illicit activities and foster corruption that delegitimizes state actors. Finally, the use of asymmetric tactics by transnational terrorist networks complicates the ability of the UN to measure progress and define success.

Bearing in mind the implications of transnational terrorist threats upon UN objectives and activities, we identify three critical gaps in the UN's current toolkit to address these threats. First, individuals at both Headquarters and in the field agreed that the UN lacks the real-time information and analysis capabilities necessary to adequately protect UN staff and assets and successfully implement its mandates in these settings. Furthermore, the UN's current "good offices" tools are inadequate to address the complex and evolving nature of transnational terrorist networks. Third, despite the UN's increasing attention towards developing regional approaches to address complex problems, UN field missions can still do more to adapt their tools and improve coordination in order to address the regional dynamics of transnational terrorist threats. We believe addressing these three critical gaps will provide immediate and crucial improvements for the UN's ability to respond to transnational terrorist threats, and we offer suggestions for possible steps in this direction.

Most importantly, our report argues that the specific characteristics of the threats posed by transnational terrorist networks, and the resulting impact on UN field missions, warrant more focused and differentiated attention by the Secretary-General and Member States. Failure to adapt will likely have devastating consequences. However, international consensus regarding the severity of this threat provides a promising opportunity for the United Nations to demonstrate that it can be forward-looking. We urge the Secretary-General to work with his management team and Member States to recognize the specific implications of these threats and develop a comprehensive strategy that ensures that the UN is adequately prepared for what will undoubtedly be some of the most pressing challenges to international peace and security of the 21st Century.

Introduction

In the coming years, the role of the United Nations in advancing peace and security in environments destabilized by transnational terrorist networks is likely to expand. Given this outlook, it is imperative for the United Nations to improve its understanding of the threat posed by these networks and to analyze the implications of the threat on its activities. This report aims to contribute to ongoing discussions within the UN Secretariat on this issue by providing a critical, forward-looking analysis of the UN's existing tools in settings with transnational terrorist threats as well as recommendations for the UN Secretary-General and Member States to respond effectively to these novel and pressing challenges.

Imminent Threats, Urgent Questions

The deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in July 2013 marks the first time that a multidimensional peacekeeping operation has served in an active theater of war with the presence of transnational terrorist networks, as well as with ongoing counterterrorist operations against those groups. In the past, UN peacekeepers have faced terrorist threats in other deployments – for example the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) or the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan Heights. However, unlike those two operations (whose main objectives as traditional peacekeeping operations were to maintain ceasefires in inter-state conflicts) the mandate of MINUSMA was designed to respond to some aspects of destabilization by transnational terrorist networks. The deployment of MINUSMA has raised concerns within the UN system about the Organization's capacity to respond to the threats posed by transnational terrorist networks and to deploy large field missions in environments characterized by these threats. In interviews at Headquarters and in the field, UN staff repeatedly voiced concerns that the challenges faced by MINUSMA present new challenges that UN peacekeeping is not sufficiently prepared to face.

These issues are not only salient in the context of MINUSMA, but also for other current and potential future deployments of UN field missions. In Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Somalia, UN Special Political Missions (SPMs) have been deployed for multiple years in environments in which transnational terrorist networks are currently active, some of which are associated with al-Qaeda and its affiliates. Looking forward, it is possible that the protracted violence in Syria may eventually result in a UN field presence beyond the current Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-UN Joint Mission. Also, an improved security situation in Somalia could see the UN expanding from a SPM presence into a peacekeeping operation. Furthermore, transnational terrorist networks continue to have the potential to destabilize other vulnerable states and regions across Africa and the Middle East, and the UN may eventually be called upon by Member States to respond to these threats.

At a recent event on UN peacekeeping, the Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet, Susana Malcorra, remarked that the UN needs to think ahead to future challenges rather than continuing to "play catch-up."¹ As the scenarios outlined above demonstrate, there is a strong likelihood that in the coming years the UN will be asked to play a greater role in settings with transnational terrorist threats. If the UN is unprepared to respond to these challenges, the potential exists for disastrous consequences for UN staff security, operations, and credibility. Moreover, failure to adequately

deal with these threats in one place can destabilize entire regions or provide havens for transnational terrorist networks to launch large-scale attacks on a global scale. It is therefore imperative for the UN to recognize the seriousness and distinct nature of these threats and take proactive steps to address them.

Research Questions and Scope of Analysis

Our research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How is the nature of the threat posed by transnational terrorist networks different from other threats the UN has faced before? (2) How do these differences impact the UN's objectives and activities on the ground? (3) What are the most pressing gaps in the UN's existing toolkit to respond to settings with these threats and how could they be improved?

We focus our analysis on the parts of the UN system that fall directly under the responsibility of the Secretary-General and, in particular, on UN Special Political Missions and peacekeeping operations,ⁱ which are the UN's most frequent frontline response to crises. We thus touch only slightly on the work of UN agencies, funds and programs (AFPs), whose priorities are largely determined by their executive boards. Nonetheless, we recognize that their activities target both the root causes and the humanitarian, social and economic consequences of transnational terrorist threats, and we touch upon these throughout the report. Finally, because this report is intended to apply to all environments in which transnational terrorist networks are active and that could necessitate a UN presence, our recommendations are not context-specific, despite references to specific UN field missions.

Key Findings and Arguments

In this report, we argue that transnational terrorist networks present challenges that fundamentally alter the operational environment for UN field missions, especially because the objectives and reach of these groups are incompatible with the UN's state-centric model and because they directly target the United Nations for attack. We find that the UN's response to these environments suffers most acutely because of the following gaps:

- 1) The UN, at Headquarters and in the field, lacks adequate, integrated real-time information, analysis, and expertise concerning transnational terrorist networks' objectives, tactics, and sources of power and influence.
- 2) The UN's existing "good offices" and mediation toolkit needs to be bolstered to support its objectives in these types of environments.
- 3) The UN needs to better address the transnational and regional drivers of transnational terrorism, including adopting a more preventive approach towards these threats.

ⁱ For the purposes of this report, we will use the term "UN field missions" to encompass both peacekeeping operations (PKOs) and Special Political Missions (SPMs). Note also that the latter includes peacebuilding support offices, special envoys, regional offices, "good offices" missions, sanctions monitoring groups and others.

Given the increasing likelihood that the UN will expand its presence in such environments, the Secretary-General should prioritize addressing these shortfalls because failure to do so may prove disastrous for the UN's effectiveness and credibility, as well as incur tremendous costs in terms of human lives.

Structure of the Report

The report is divided into four sections. In Section 1, we seek to define the threat and the specific aspects of transnational terrorism that distinguish it from threats that the UN has faced in the past. Based on this analysis, we then argue in Section 2 that the UN prioritize specific objectives for UN field missions in environments characterized by the presence of transnational terrorist networks. In Section 3, we explore how the specific features of the threat identified in Section 1 impact the ability of the UN to achieve the objectives set out in Section 2. Finally, in Section 4, we highlight the most pressing gaps in the UN's current capacity to operate in these environments and provide recommendations for the UN to overcome the challenges presented in the previous section.

Section 1: Defining the Threat

1.1 New Challenges, or Business as Usual?

UN field missions have been operating for years in environments characterized by the presence of transnational terrorist networks. Yet it was the deployment of MINUSMA—the first multidimensional peacekeeping operation in such an environment—that instigated a crucial debate within UN Headquarters about the future trajectory of UN field missions. For some, the threat in places like Mali is markedly different than those the UN peacekeeping has faced in the past and has major implications for the evolution of the UN’s toolkit. For others, environments with transnational terrorist networks pose many of the same challenges as previous environments to which the UN has deployed.

In many ways, the operating environment in Mali is indeed similar to those the UN has faced in the past. Vast swathes of ungovernable desert in the country’s north made this region ripe for exploitation by armed groups. Yet eastern Chad and South Sudan suffer from similarly harsh conditions and weak state authority. The multiplicity of actors with various agendas complicates efforts to resolve the conflict in Mali, but similar challenges existed in Bosnia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The maiming of Malian civilians is just as horrific as the maiming of Sierra Leoneans, and the asymmetric tactics employed by Tuareg separatist groups are just as common as they were in the guerrilla warfare of El Salvador.

What then explains the concerns surrounding the MINUSMA deployment? We argue that the key difference between the conflict in Mali and the other contexts in which UN field missions have operated stems from the presence of transnational terrorist networksⁱⁱ. The threat posed by these groups, and the resulting impact on UN operations, warrants more focused and differentiated attention by the Secretary-General, Member States and by the UN as a whole. In the section below we will examine the characteristics that distinguish this threat from those the UN has encountered in the past.

1.2 Transnational Terrorist Networks: Fundamentally Different from Other Non-State Armed Groups

Our analysis is that the threat to the UN from transnational terrorist networks like al-Qaeda and its affiliates is qualitatively different from the threats the UN has faced in the past, such as rebel militias and separatist groups, or even other terrorist groups. More specifically, it is the objectives of these networks, their regional and even global reach, and their designation of the UN as a priority target for attack, that make these groups different.

ⁱⁱ We recognize that the term “transnational terrorism” is controversial within the UN system. However, so as to be as clear as possible in our analysis, and in recognizing that one of our assets is our ability to provide an outsider assessment, we believe that this term best describes the challenge at hand.

Objectives

The stated objectives of these transnational terrorist networks include the imposition of political-religious structures that are incompatible with the modern state-centric model on which the UN is based. Whether they seek greater political power within a state, autonomy from a state, or the creation of a new state entirely, the groups with whom the UN is accustomed to dealing maintain political objectives that lie within the parameters of the state model. However, the leaders of transnational terrorist networks seek to install political-religious structures that run counter to the Westphalian state system and would impose a new moral order that would necessarily exclude “non-believers.” Thus, the stated demands of these groups are seemingly irreconcilable with the principles of the UN Charter. Moreover, when driven by religious convictions, leaders of transnational terrorist networks may not be swayed by pragmatic considerations like political concessions. In the case of Mali, the Mouvement National de Libération de l’Azawad (MNL), with its objectives of securing autonomy for Tuaregs in the north of Mali, would be an example of the former, while al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which seeks to impose a Caliphate across North Africa that transcends state boundaries, would be an example of the latter.

Nonetheless, these networks are not monolithic or immutable, and their members have varying motivations and levels of commitment.² In our interviews in Mali, both UN staff and Malian officials and civil society leaders repeatedly mentioned that different factions, individuals and communities in northern Mali switched loyalties and membership throughout the recent crisis. On the one hand, these differences suggest that some elements of these groups can be drawn towards moderation, political negotiations, or even disengagement. On the other hand, their shifting allegiances and decentralized nature often make the possibilities of negotiations significantly more difficult than groups with identifiable objectives, disciplined membership, and/or strong command and control.

Transnational Reach

The transnational reach and scope of operations of these networks presents a more daunting challenge than non-state armed groups within a single, clearly defined geographic area. Indeed, UN staff at both Headquarters and in the field repeatedly pointed to this regional dimension when seeking to distinguish the threat in Mali. Many of these groups operate in areas where porous borders and weak state authority allow them to move members and resources across international boundaries. In fact, there is evidence that terrorist networks across Africa and the Middle East are increasingly sharing tactics, techniques, training, and financing.³ Dealing effectively with the threat of these networks thus requires regional and international coordination, and comprehensive regional approaches. Such coordination, however, is often complicated by regional rivalries and by the lack of capacity or political consensus from regional and sub-regional actors. In the case of the UN, despite the adoption of regional strategies like the Integrated Sahel Strategy⁴ and the creation of regional offices like the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), there is still a tendency of UN field missions, country teams, and even the Security Council to focus on state-centric rather than regional approaches.

The UN as a Target

The United Nations is a direct and target of transnational terrorist networks. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates have publicly expressed their intention to carry out attacks against United Nations personnel and installations throughout the world and have designated the UN as a priority target. In his 1996 declaration of war against the United States, Osama bin Laden singled out the United Nations for conspiring with the U.S. to commit atrocities against “the people of Islam”.⁵ The pre-meditated, organized attacks against the United Nations in Baghdad in August 2003, Algiers in December 2007, Abuja in August 2011, and Mogadishu in June 2013 highlight the tragic toll exacted on the UN by transnational terrorist networks. These attacks were intentional, not crimes of opportunity or collateral damage. In fact, the UN has been attacked by armed extremists linked to al-Qaeda nearly 70 times since the summer of 2005.⁶ The rise in attacks by transnational terrorist organizations targeting the UN has changed the level of risk faced by UN staff in the field and the security posture that the UN must adopt to work in these environments.

In addition to their objectives, their regional reach, and their targeting of the UN, there are two other characteristics that, although not unique to transnational terrorist networks, magnify their impact on UN operations.

Links with Transnational Organized Crime

Transnational terrorist networks often have strong links with transnational organized crime. Most transnational terrorist networks rely on profits from criminal activities such as drug smuggling, kidnapping and weapons trafficking to finance their operations, allowing them to have greater reach, influence and power. While criminal networks flourish in many countries in which there is a weak or corrupt state, their links with jihadist groups are particularly pernicious since they could potentially tip the balance of power in a conflict. For example, ransom payments of between \$40 and \$65 million from 2008 to 2012 established al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA) as the leading military forces in northern Mali in 2012.⁷

The enormous profits from criminal activities obfuscate whatever political intentions these networks may have, as members begin to engage in criminal activities for their own sake. Moreover, because membership in these groups is highly fluid, clearly delineating between criminals and terrorists is nearly impossible. In Mali, for example, the current media narrative that pits jihadis against nationalists masks the more crucial intra-northern struggle for control of profitable smuggling routes. Analysts argue that the major friction between the groups formally known as MUJAO, Ansar al-Sharia, and Ansar al-Dine, as well as other northern networks, revolves around which commander and lineage group controls key north-south Saharan smuggling routes for cigarettes, petrol, people, narcotics, and arms, and the east-west route moving Moroccan cannabis resin to East Africa and the Gulf.⁸

Another important effect of the link between terrorism and transnational organized crime is that local authorities that are drawn into illicit activity because of the lucrative profits might be willing to turn a blind eye to the associated security threats. Indeed, corruption has corrosive effects on any society, but in these specific contexts, the complicity of state officials with transnational crime

can facilitate the empowerment of transnational terrorist groups and make states more fragile to penetration by these networks.

Asymmetric Tactics

Transnational terrorist groups generally employ symbolic asymmetric tactics, often through the targeting of civilians, in order to instill a pervasive sense of fear and to project power and influence. The unpredictable nature of their tactics has important implications upon the UN's capacity to protect its staff as well as to implement protection of civilians mandates. While such tactics are similar to all groups that employ asymmetric tactics, the opaque nature of terrorist organizations, as well as the limited communication between UN mediators and these networks, means there is even less understanding about their capacities. Moreover, since these groups have regional and even global reach, they are able to stage attacks outside their home countries. Finally, because transnational terrorist networks dismiss the current global order, international norms and laws do not serve as a deterrent from staging horrific attacks.

1.3 A Priority for Key Member States

Transnational terrorist networks pose a direct national security threat to the permanent members of the Security Council, particularly the "P3" (United States, United Kingdom and France). Consequently, even the most obscure conflicts garner attention if there is a transnational terrorist presence and are more likely to prompt Member States to deploy counterterrorism operations to these environments. These offensive military deployments present a slew of challenges to UN field missions that are also operating in these environments but with starkly different mandates.

That said, with Western Member States war-weary and constrained economically, the UN may increasingly be called on to respond to these threats itself and deploy in such contexts.⁹ One former senior UN official noted that the UN's efforts in environments with transnational terrorist threats are associated, with the United States' "War on Terror" rather than for the broader goal of advancing global peace and security.¹⁰ The West's potential "outsourcing" of such conflicts to the UN could provide more fodder for such perceptions and could be exploited by transnational terrorist networks as propaganda. In short, the UN must take into account the added complications of Member State involvement when analyzing the specific challenges of these environments.

The next section will focus on what specific objectives the UN should focus on in these environments in order to enhance operational effectiveness and possibilities of success.

Section 2: Impact on UN Objectives

In this section, we argue that the Security Council should focus field mission mandates on the actions that are the most likely to have an immediate and lasting impact, and for which the UN has a comparative advantage over other actors. Due to the security and political complexities of environments with transnational terrorist threats, we argue that the UN should first focus on preventive actions to ensure that transnational terrorist networks do not destabilize states. If a situation does destabilize, the mandate of UN field missions should focus predominantly on developing political mechanisms to address grievances, population security, and (re)establishing state authority. Offensive counter-terrorism operations should be left to other, more capable actors. Finally, UN field missions should improve harmonization with UN Country Teams whose objectives include long-term socioeconomic development and the establishment of good governance and rule of law. This coordination would help develop capacity of the host government and resilience of the local populations to resist future threats posed by transnational terrorist networks.

2.1 The First Objective: Prevention

Once transnational terrorist networks destabilize a state, it is extremely difficult and costly for the international community to counter the threats posed by these networks and to help those societies recover. Taking preventive measures to reduce the vulnerability of states to transnational terrorist threats may prove less challenging, less costly, and more effective.

Unfortunately, the UN often lacks a preventive approach to potential crises and does not invest enough resources in preventive actions.¹¹ The deterioration of the environment in Mali is particularly instructive. As several analysts in West Africa noted, as early as 2010 numerous actors expressed concerns about the threat posed by transnational terrorist networks in northern Mali as well as their connections to local rebel and independence movements and transnational criminal networks.¹² After the Libya crisis erupted in 2011, analysts warned of the risks of spillover across the Sahel from the political fallout of the collapse of the Qaddafi regime and the proliferation of small arms. However, it was not until the situation in Mali dramatically worsened in late 2011 and early 2012 that the UN Security Council began paying close attention. By then, the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that it required military action and an enormous investment of resources by the international community. While it is not possible to know if a more robust preventive effort would have precluded the need for AFISMA, Operation Serval, and MINUSMA, most of the analysts we talked to in the region agreed that stronger preventive and early response action could have prevented the situation from deteriorating to the extent that it did.¹³

An effective preventive approach should include both early warning and early action, but unfortunately a wide chasm seems to exist between early warning analysis and concrete actions from the international community for early response or early action. The UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) has country- and region-specific experts monitoring developments in every part of the world and producing valuable early warning analysis. However, early warnings are often not paid enough attention or are not translated into effective preventive action. The Security Council in particular often fails to react to crises until they have reached critical junctures. This

“preventive gap” is often due to political reasons related to Council members’ diverging views on whether a situation constitutes a “threat to international peace and security” and thus requires Council attention or not. Oftentimes the “preventive gap” is also due to Member States’ reluctance at being publicly identified as being “at risk”.

Even if the Security Council fails to heed early warnings about transnational terrorist threats to particular countries or regions, the Secretary-General still has many tools at his disposal to undertake preventive action, both diplomatically and through concrete actions on the ground. For example, through UN regional offices, the appointment of Special Envoys, or diplomatic missions from high-level Secretariat officials, the Secretary-General can transmit early warning analysis and recommendations to specific Member State governments.

The Secretary-General can also task DPA and other entities such as the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) and the Counter-Terrorism Integrated Task Force (CTITF) to work together with UN Country Teams in those countries to formulate action plans aimed at countering violent extremism, addressing root causes of threats, and building resilience to withstand the spread of transnational terrorist networks. In particular, and as we discuss further in Section 4, the UN should prioritize efforts to develop local capacity to prevent and address future threats posed by transnational terrorist networks through efforts to: (1) address internal political conflicts before they are exploited or co-opted by transnational terrorists networks; (2) reinforce border control mechanisms; (3) inhibit the ability of transnational terrorist and criminal networks to operate; (4) bolster the presence and authority of the state to prevent the spread of “ungoverned spaces” where terrorist networks can flourish; and (5) pursue other context-specific actions that will make it more challenging for transnational terrorist groups to gain a foothold.

2.2 UN Mission Objectives in Transnational Terrorist Environments

If transnational terrorist networks destabilize a state and the Security Council determines that a UN field mission is necessary, it must set clear and achievable goals and objectives. While we acknowledge that the Secretary-General must faithfully implement the mandates established by the Security Council, it is also the duty of the Secretary-General to convince the Council of the argument that we make in Section 1: that the threats posed by transnational terrorism are fundamentally different – more complex, more challenging, and more dangerous – than those faced by the UN in other environments, and thus require a differentiated response.

As our discussions with UN Headquarters staff revealed, it is imperative for the Security Council to define a shared vision of success when responding to this threat given the global implications. Indeed, with transnational terrorist networks exploiting ungoverned spaces to operate on a global scale, the cost of failure in these environments is far too high to continue authorizing mandates with a confusing mix of unfocused and distracting objectives.¹⁴ The Secretary-General must make the case to the Security Council that UN missions should focus only on the objectives most likely to achieve the greatest impact and for which UN missions have a comparative advantage over other actors. If the Security Council is unwilling to heed the Secretary-General’s counsel, goes ahead and authorizes lengthy and/or unclear mandates, it must be prepared for the Secretary-General – and the relevant Special Representative – to prioritize among the objectives mandated.

Based on our research, we believe the Secretary-General should emphasize three priority objectives in environments with transnational terrorist threats: strengthen political mechanisms to address grievances, ensure population security, and (re)establish state authority. While these objectives are similar to those of other environments in which UN field missions operate, transnational terrorism adds important nuance and complexity to these objectives.

Devise Political Mechanisms to Address Grievances

Our interviews on Mali and Somalia with a wide variety of actors – including security and military officials, UN officials, humanitarian, development, and civil society actors – confirmed that the root causes of these conflicts are political in nature.¹⁵ Moreover, in almost all of the interviews we conducted, the good offices and political mediation role of the UN was identified as both a core priority in environments characterized by transnational terrorism and as a core competency of UN missions.¹⁶ Our meetings with UN officials and observers on Mali and Somalia highlighted the significant comparative advantages that UN missions possess over other actors in political conflict resolution because of their legitimacy, impartiality, convening power, and holistic approach.¹⁷

However, as we discuss further in Sections 3 and 4 environments with transnational terrorism require a different approach to devising political mechanisms to address grievances: the goals of transnational terrorist groups contravene the state-centric model on which the UN is based, so these groups are not easily accommodated through peace agreements or national reconciliation efforts (though it may be possible to negotiate with affiliates of transnational terrorist groups if they have more modest objectives).¹⁸ Even those groups with whom the UN can negotiate may be so fluid and decentralized that the nominal leadership cannot control its members, creating the prospect of spoilers able to derail political processes through large-scale attacks.¹⁹ Nevertheless, devising political mechanisms to address grievances remains the fundamental basis for maintaining international peace and security.

Population Securityⁱⁱⁱ

UN peacekeeping operations play a pivotal role in population security, particularly after offensive operations. Interviews with UN and French officials in Mali, for example, indicated the criticality of MINUSMA's role in stabilization.²⁰ In particular, officials noted that by consolidating security

ⁱⁱⁱ We conceive of “population security” as comprising Tier 2 (protection from physical violence) and Tier 3 (establishing a protective environment) of protection of civilians (POC) as well as elements of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR). We follow the “Draft DPKO/DFS Operational Concept on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations” in defining POC. Per the Operational Concept, Tier 2 comprises “providing physical protection from violence”, which includes activities such as patrolling, ensuring freedom of movement, managing public order, and monitoring and early warning. Tier 3, “establishing a protective environment” entails promotion of legal protection, facilitation of humanitarian assistance and advocacy, and support to national institutions. Tier 1 of the protection of civilians concept is covered in the section on devising political mechanisms to address grievances. In addition, we note that DDR and SSR are cross-cutting activities that address all of the objectives we identify above. SSR efforts can contribute to a host country role in reducing the threat posed by transnational terrorist groups as well as to (re)establishing state authority. Meanwhile, DDR efforts also contribute to reducing the threat (by decreasing the number and lethality of combatants), (re)establishing state authority (by improving the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force), political mechanisms to address grievances (through the reintegration of combatants), and socioeconomic development (by reducing the attractiveness of supporting terrorist groups).

gains, UN peacekeepers free up French forces to focus on more offensive counter-terrorism operations.²¹ Though there have been concerns with the credibility and achievability of protection of civilians (POC) mandates in other contexts for some time,²² the presence of transnational terrorist networks creates challenges which call for subtle changes to this objective. Transnational terrorist groups, for example, will retain the ability to attack soft, civilian targets long after their strategic defeat, so part of the UN mission's efforts must help create resilience toward the inevitability of terrorist attacks and establish an "acceptable" level of security.^{iv}

(Re)establish State Authority^v

In meetings with interlocutors working on a variety of aspects of the conflicts in Mali, Somalia, and Afghanistan, weak state authority was regularly mentioned as a critical enabler of transnational terrorist groups.²³ Moreover, the UN is viewed by many as having a comparative advantage in helping the state to establish control over its territory and maintain a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. For example, where deployed in an advisory role UN police (UNPOL) can assist the state to expand its presence in areas secured by offensive military forces, a role so far played by the UN in Kosovo and elsewhere but one that has yet to be tested fully in these new environments.²⁴

While the context is likely to vary by mission, some components of this objective are likely to be consistent across missions in transnational terrorism environments and slightly different than other contexts. Border areas, for example, are often loosely controlled by the state and provide havens for transnational terrorist networks as well as lucrative linkages to transnational organized crime.²⁵ In addition, one UN official we met with noted that disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) in environments like Somalia is increasingly forced, rather than voluntary, resulting in new challenges for UN mission and host country efforts to deal with armed combatants and detainees.²⁶ Finally, government officials at all levels are targeted in attacks by transnational terrorist networks, hampering the (re)establishment and extension of state authority throughout the country and creating additional concerns that the UN must address in these environments.²⁷

^{iv} We define security as "acceptable" when transnational terrorist networks no longer possess the capacity to strike out internationally and when domestic security incidents are minimized (or eliminated), such that it is sufficiently safe for the state to deliver public services and for the UN mission and other actors to pursue activities to develop local capacity to prevent and address future threats. However, we recognize that an "acceptable" level of security likely has different meanings to different actors: whereas some Member States may view security as "acceptable" if transnational terrorist groups are degraded to an extent that they do not possess the capability to plan and implement an international attack, local populations will likely view security as encompassing much more than preventing international attacks; to local populations, security will be "acceptable" only if the threat of regular suicide bombings, kidnappings, or other violence is minimized. Moreover, defining an acceptable level of security is particularly challenging in these environments because transnational terrorist groups may resort to asymmetric tactics as they become weaker; many analysts we interviewed, for example suggested that al-Shabaab adopted terrorist tactics only after facing conventional defeat.

^v We define (re)establishing state authority as increasing the central government's control over its territory and the state apparatus. Activities to (re)establish state authority include policing, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), early security sector reform (SSR) initiatives, border patrols, deployment of civil authorities, and delivery of public services.

2.3 Other Considerations in Transnational Terrorism Environments

Offensive Military Force

The recent success of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has led a number of analysts to suggest that it is an effectively robust model for future UN peacekeeping operations.²⁸ However, our interviews revealed widespread agreement (though not unanimity) that, while offensive military operations may be necessary in environments with transnational terrorism threats, the UN should not be the actor to undertake such operations to neutralize the threat posed by transnational terrorist networks. Most individuals we interviewed agreed that UN missions do not and will not soon have the capacity to conduct counterterrorism operations.²⁹ More importantly, our interviews revealed that most UN staff and observers do not think the UN should develop such capabilities.³⁰ As one UN Somalia official put it, “the UN should not shoot things” because it is bad at it, it is unsustainable, and it will inhibit the UN from effectively pursuing other objectives, such as good offices, for which UN missions are better placed.³¹ Moreover, a number of individuals at UN Headquarters and in the field went to great lengths to stress that the FIB is not a model for the future, particularly in environments like Mali and Somalia because force, by itself, cannot solve the problem.³² Thus, not only are UN peacekeeping operations limited in their ability to carry out offensive operations, but such operations would pose strategic challenges to other core objectives.

Socioeconomic Development, Governance, and Rule of Law

We recognize the tremendous importance of long-term initiatives to address socioeconomic development, governance, and rule of law in transnational terrorism environments, where such efforts are particularly important because they address many of the root causes and underlying grievances that allow transnational terrorist and criminal networks to gain the support of local populations. Successfully developing government capacity as well as resilience among local populations will reduce the ability of transnational terrorist networks to operate and obviate the need for major international intervention in the future.

While our interviews confirmed the importance of improving governance and the rule of law in these environments, very few individuals noted successful UN initiatives to address institutional governance and rule of law.³³ Moreover, socioeconomic development is primarily the responsibility of UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and, as such, falls outside the scope of our detailed analysis. However, numerous interlocutors suggested that improving coordination and harmonization between UN missions and UNCTs would help ensure that missions’ efforts complement (or at least do not undermine) the long-term work of UNCTs.³⁴ Moreover, one official who is well versed on these issues suggested that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and other agencies, funds and programs should focus their work specifically on weak and fragile states and that UNCTs should focus on activities targeted specifically at reducing state fragility.³⁵

The next section will examine how transnational terrorist networks affect the UN’s ability to operate and to achieve the objectives that we have here defined.

Section 3: Implications for the UN

Drawing from field interviews, this section examines four major challenges posed by transnational terrorist networks: risks to UN staff and operations, obstacles to impartiality and political engagement, connections to transnational organized crime, and difficulties in measuring success. We then identify the implications of these challenges for the UN's ability to deliver on key objectives and successfully implement its mandates in the field.

3.1 Risks To UN Staff

The environments in which UN field missions typically operate are, almost by definition, plagued by insecurity and criminality. Yet those featuring transnational terrorist networks can prove even more dangerous because groups like al-Qaeda employ asymmetric tactics that directly target the UN. Efforts to increase the UN's security in these contexts, however, present their own complications. First, limiting staff exposure to risk can lead to “bunkerization” and hinder the implementation of mission mandates. Second, heightened security risks make these postings less attractive for staff and troop-contributing countries (TCCs) alike. Third, reliance on forces from parallel offensive deployments for security can hurt perceptions of UN impartiality, thereby increasing the targeting of the UN. There are two levels of risk assessment that the UN must bear in mind given these factors – a considered and unified policy on what level of risk is acceptable to UN operations in these environments and a systematic way of assessing the threats that can result in focused action.

Bunkerization

Given the increased risks in environments with transnational terrorist networks, the UN has either operated remotely—as was the case for the Nairobi-based UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) —or instituted enhanced security measures like limiting staff movements, deploying personnel, and fortifying compounds behind blast walls, barbed wire, and guards.³⁶ While a “protection approach” increases the ability to withstand attack,³⁷ a necessity in the highest threat environments like Iraq,^{vi} these measures also limit operational effectiveness. Moreover, such constraints deprive the UN of key situational awareness that, paradoxically, could help the UN anticipate or prevent attacks.

A fortified presence cuts the UN off from the people it is intended to serve and can even damage relations with local stakeholders. For example, one interviewee noted how United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) officials based in Mogadishu require expensive, hard-to-arrange convoys to visit Somali government officials and, as a result, ask Somalis to come to them, which can be humiliating for local counterparts.³⁸ If the UN cannot engage freely with the local population, its ability to address the underlying political grievances of these communities is hindered.

^{vi} In cases where the security environment is such that the UN cannot deploy staff and they must rely on local partner organizations or remote monitoring, interlocutors in Nairobi suggested the UN should look to lessons learned in remote-management from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The UN's efforts to support the local government are also negatively impacted. Supporting state authority requires that UN civilian staff move outside of fortified compounds in the capital to facilitate partnerships at the local level and play a capacity building role, while UN peacekeepers and police must be able to focus on training mandates and devote less time to their own force protection.

Because of this limited presence, UN field missions have sometimes relied on local organizations for their protection, but without the checks in place to ensure accountability. This was the case in Somalia where, according to interviewees, UN humanitarian agencies contracted with local NGOs who proved untrustworthy when managing funds and created non-existent program results, and the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) contracted security provision to Somali militias.³⁹ Pressure to maximize staff security while also delivering programmatic results can thus prove problematic.⁴⁰

Impact on Recruitment and Human Resources

The direct targeting of UN personnel leads to major recruitment and human resource challenges. UN staff members are often hired for temporary duty assignments (TDYs) because of the dangers involved. In Mali, non-UN development workers complained that the constant turnover in MINUSMA due to TDYs, complicated efforts to establish counterparts in the mission.⁴¹ Moreover, those UN staff members hired on longer contracts often take leave or quit in the aftermath of an attack, which leads to considerable losses in human capital, institutional memory and personal networks.⁴² Many UN staff members have raised concerns that the resources for staff support in the wake of violent attacks are insufficient, particularly in psychosocial support. In some instances, staff had to purchase their own airline tickets to return home following attacks due to bureaucratic hurdles within the UN system.⁴³ If the UN deploys staff to these environments, it is essential to put in place adequate provisions for their support in the event of trauma, or it risks the disillusionment and loss of capable staff, along with their hard-to-replace institutional knowledge and expertise.

Tensions with Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs)

Increased security risks in environments with transnational terrorist threats may also deter prospective TCCs. There has been speculation that if a higher threat profile emerges in Mali it may lead some TCCs to reduce their contributions of force enablers.⁴⁴ Given the transnational nature of the threat, not only are TCCs asked to put their troops in harm's way, they also increase the risk of reprisal attacks at home. Nigerian troops deployed as part of MINUSMA were recently attacked in northern Nigeria by Boko Haram.⁴⁵ Similarly, the 2010 Kampala bombings and 2013 al-Shabaab attack in Nairobi were retribution for Uganda and Kenya's participation in AMISOM.⁴⁶

Perhaps by necessity, MINUSMA troops (re-hatted from AFISMA) and the peace-enforcement operations of AMISOM consist primarily of troops from regional states, including neighbors of the host country. There is a perception that regional TCCs may have lower casualty aversion,^{vii}

^{vii} Although numerous interlocutors believed that TCCs to AU missions were willing to accept higher casualties, a few interviewees also highlighted that AMISOM was reluctant and conservative in reporting casualty figures. Kenya and

and can justify high losses of personnel to their domestic constituents, as asserted by several interlocutors at regional organizations and NGOs.⁴⁷ Yet interviewees were concerned that peace operations composed primarily of regional troops were susceptible to bias because of the regional interests at play.⁴⁸ On the one hand, regional TCCs may have a higher stake in restoring stability. On the other hand, as suggested in field interviews, these TCCs could be using these deployments to project power regionally, protect economic interests or pursue other motivations that jeopardize their troops' impartiality, and consequently hurt perceptions of impartiality of organizations like the UN.⁴⁹

Reliance on Parallel Forces for Protection

In the face of heightened security risks, the Security Council may call on forces from parallel offensive operations for protection, which could actually have the counter-productive effect of increasing the number of attacks on the UN. For example, the United Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) exercised extreme caution in engaging in any cooperation with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan primarily because of fears it would subsequently be targeted for doing so.⁵⁰ Indeed, close association with military forces engaged in offensive combat operations could compromise perceptions of UN impartiality and designate the UN as a party to the conflict in the eyes of terrorist networks and sometimes the local population. (The issue of impartiality is addressed in more detail in Section 3.2). Nonetheless, in both Mali and Somalia the UN relies on parallel forces. In Mali, UN Security Council Resolution 2100 authorizes French troops that are part of the counterterrorism operation Serval to “intervene in support of elements of MINUSMA when under imminent and serious threat upon the request of the Secretary-General.” Similarly, in Somalia, troops from the AU’s African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) provide security around the Mogadishu Airport where the UN Compound is located. That said, the UN is considering other options for protecting staff in Somalia including a UN guard force or the expanded use of private contractors because of these aforementioned concerns.⁵¹

3.2 Obstacles to Political Engagement and Impartiality

The UN's comparative advantage as an impartial political mediator becomes more complicated in environments with transnational terrorist threats. This is because transnational terrorist networks are often not interested in political compromises, but even if they were, the decentralized organizational structure of these groups makes compliance with any peace agreement difficult.

Political Solutions Are Less Possible

Transnational terrorist groups assert long-term goals that seem to contravene the values and principles of the UN. Motivated partially by religious ideology, these groups' stated aims seek to impose structures of government that defy universal human rights and state boundaries.⁵² Moreover, many transnational terrorist networks, particularly those affiliated with al-Qaeda, have stated that they do not recognize the legitimacy or impartiality of the UN.⁵³ As such, rather than

Ethiopia (note that Ethiopia is not a TCC with AMISOM) were especially averse to the potential domestic audience costs of a full disclosure about the toll of operations in Somalia.

participating in good-faith negotiations, terrorists may use pretexts for dialogue for their own benefit, demonstrating their staying power to the population while refusing to reject the use of violence.⁵⁴ UN engagement in the face of such intransigence could then be interpreted as formal recognition and implicit legitimization of terrorists.⁵⁵

The varying motivations and shifting allegiances of members of transnational terrorist networks further complicates avenues for negotiation. The lack of a "center of gravity" amongst these networks, and the prevalence of cell-based organizing structures, means that transnational terrorists often have weak enforcement mechanisms over their members. One faction buying into a peace process does not guarantee compliance from others.⁵⁶ Even when there is centralized leadership as there has been in al-Shabaab,⁵⁷ leaders of these networks are often in hiding due to fears of being targeted for assassination.

While some members of transnational terrorist networks are primarily driven by ideology, others fight for non-ideological reasons and are motivated by more immediate goals – including self-defense or economic gain. In Mali, one observer explained that the Fulani in Kidal were joining MUJAO for self-defense to protect themselves from MNLA troops pillaging their towns.⁵⁸ Interviewees in Nairobi stated that often al-Shabaab supporters possess many identities simultaneously – shifting from shepherd to fighter as their perceived costs for participation change. More pressing instrumental needs often overtake lukewarm support for radical causes,⁵⁹ which can create opportunities for skillful negotiators to identify those needs that could be addressed by political settlements. Yet such attempts at negotiation may be problematic for host country authorities or require extremely detailed knowledge of local dynamics. Moreover, while moderate or low-ranking members may be open to political settlement or de-radicalization efforts, it is often difficult to discern which members of a group are hard-liners or moderates.

Perceptions of Bias and Challenges to UN Impartiality

While the UN has been accused of bias in other settings, the tension is more acute in environments with transnational terrorist threats. Transnational terrorist networks have used an ideological campaign against the UN and tried to paint it as an arm of the United States' "War on Terror" or as being "anti-Islam." Since UN field missions must be authorized by the Security Council, transnational terrorist networks accuse the UN of representing the interests of the great powers or of seeking to impose their will upon Muslim populations. This can be even more critical in environments in which UN peacekeepers are deployed, as a military presence can fuel claims of a foreign occupation, as occurred after the arrival of peacekeepers to Mali and Somalia.⁶⁰ Some interlocutors suggested that UN leadership needs to take greater steps to develop the capacity of missions and headquarters for strategic communication to counteract accusations of bias, and build buy-in from local populations.⁶¹

The presence of counterterrorism operations in these environments can also have a negative impact on how the UN is perceived. For example, while MINUSMA peacekeepers have a different mandate from Operation Serval, the two conduct "joint" operations in the Gao region (French forces clear an area, UN peacekeepers then stabilize it) blurring the distinction between the two forces. In one interview, a Malian with extensive knowledge of the UN stated that for an average person in Mali, it is very hard to differentiate between any internationals operating in the country,

let alone between Serval and UN peacekeepers.⁶² Indeed, even international observers confuse the mandates of the two missions: in response to questions by journalists in October 2013, the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General had to send a note to UN correspondents clarifying that “MINUSMA is not taking part in offensive operations”.⁶³

The identification of the UN with parallel forces can become even more problematic when those forces are accused of committing human rights violations or even accidental killing of civilians. In Afghanistan, NATO operations resulting in civilian deaths also hurt the reputation of other international actors, including the UN. In Somalia, accusations of human rights violations by AMISOM troops,⁶⁴ including rape,⁶⁵ inevitably hurt the UN’s standing with local populations.

The “re-hatting” of parallel operations into UN peacekeeping operations can also impact local perceptions of the UN. For example, when AFISMA troops (previously given the mandate of peace enforcement), were re-hatted under MINUSMA, the majority of troops were the same despite the shift away from offensive operations. In interviews with UN staff, several highlighted their skepticism that the population would understand the distinction. Indeed, some interlocutors noted that a recent attack on UN peacekeepers might have targeted Chadian troops due to their previous support to French offensive operations prior to their “re-hatting” with MINUSMA.⁶⁶

Contrast with Humanitarian Actors

It is interesting to note the differences between the UN and humanitarian actors who maintain a reputation of “neutrality.” In Somalia, al-Shabaab expelled UNPOS, UNDSS, and UNDP from territory it controlled claiming that they were enemies of Islam, while allowing Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), who had cultivated local contacts and were perceived as more impartial, to continue operations.⁶⁷ These organizations were able to continue their activities in al-Shabaab-controlled areas because they were resolute in defending their neutrality and impartiality as core operational principles. Indeed, one interviewee mentioned that MSF raised concerns with the AU after AMISOM released a public statement decrying an al-Shabaab attack on MSF personnel.⁶⁸ For MSF, the fact that AMISOM would mention their organization in a public statement was seen to put their neutrality at risk.

As a Member State organization, the UN is unlikely to strive for the same level of impartiality fought for by NGOs such as MSF. Yet, the UN can draw key lessons from past experience. As much as possible the UN should aim to avoid perceptions that it is acting solely in the interests of members of the Security Council or other individual Member States. The efforts of al-Qaeda-linked groups’ to present the UN as beholden to a Western agenda can fuel perceptions of UN bias, which in turn dissuades local actors, whether government or civil society, from working with the UN or supporting UN objectives. Compared to Member State embassies, the UN is a relatively “soft” target for transnational terrorist networks⁶⁹ – it is both highly visible and relatively non-militarized. In this way, the UN experiences the “worst of both worlds” – being blamed for Member State behavior, while also lacking the level of protection of Member State actors operating in the same environment.

Several individuals we interviewed also commented on the potentially polarizing effects of the Secretary-General or SRSGs publicly condemning transnational terrorist networks.

Condemnatory statements from UN leadership creates issues on the ground for UN humanitarian actors, who wish to be viewed as impartial and separate from the assertions of the Secretariat and especially of certain Member States. For instance, one interviewee noted that if the SRSG condemns al-Shabaab publicly, the perception is that the UN as a whole has "chosen sides."⁷⁰ One interlocutor believed that the Secretariat's forceful rhetoric against al-Shabaab was a sign it was placating the permanent members of the Security Council rather than reflecting conditions on the ground.⁷¹

Undoubtedly, the UN has a responsibility to condemn violence and atrocities perpetrated by transnational terrorist networks or those actors affiliated or linked with them. However, the UN Secretariat must carefully consider the risks posed to the UN on the ground, including the ability of its field missions and UN agencies to operate in some areas, whenever UN leaders issue statements condemning transnational terrorist networks. SRSGs should coordinate with UN Headquarters to weigh the possible consequences of using certain kinds of rhetoric to refer to transnational terrorist networks and other similar groups upon staff safety, local perceptions, and ongoing or potential future negotiation efforts. More generally, and given the concerns outlined here, UN missions in settings with transnational terrorist threats should give adequate resources and importance to strategic communications efforts to more effectively convey the UN's mission and mandates to local populations and combat accusations of bias.

3.3 Transnational Organized Crime

Weak states facing transnational terrorist threats do not have a monopoly on transnational organized crime. However, in these specific environments, transnational organized crime is an important conflict multiplier, which can impact UN operations by providing material support for transnational terrorist networks and by delegitimizing state actors.

Empowering Spoilers

In weak states hosting violent groups opposed to the existence and/or authority of the state, transnational organized crime constitutes a critical source of revenue for spoilers. Criminal economies also reduce many actors' incentives to support the rise of a stable state. In fact, their operations along insecure border areas rely on the state's inability to project legitimate authority. Increased state capacity threatens the profits and power of entrenched interests groups, and as such, the interests of actors involved in transnational organized crime are not served by any political solution that would extend state authority to ungoverned border regions.

Delegitimizing State Actors

Transnational organized crime not only creates powerful groups whose motives run counter to UN efforts to restore state authority, it also undermines the very same state actors on whom the UN relies to re-establish state control. Nominal state actors – many times seen by locals as illegitimate or viewed with suspicion — are essential to enabling transnational organized crime to operate on the scale seen in Mali, Afghanistan or Somalia. Criminal networks depend in part on state actors to offer protection against rivals and help provide an interface between illicit commerce and lawful

economic transactions.⁷² Resources that enrich criminal networks and corrupt state agents alike further undermine the distinction between the state and organized crime. For civilians being extorted (or protected) by a loose alliance of government officials and criminal bosses, the extension of state authority does not appear to be a uniformly positive aspect of a potential UN mandate. Witness for example the hostility of northern Malians to the return of the national security forces.⁷³ The de-legitimization of the host state allows transnational terrorist networks to then acquire influence and power by making promises to fight corruption, to provide justice and conflict resolution.

Indeed, in settings with strong criminal networks, the UN faces acute challenges in building host-state capacity. Political leaders may possess ties to corrupt entities or have committed serious crimes or human rights violations and yet still be in a position of authority, or be in a position to use force on behalf of the state. In Afghanistan, Asadullah Khalid currently heads the National Directorate of Security, despite allegations of his direct involvement in torture and drug trafficking during his term as governor of violent Helmand province.⁷⁴ A top Canadian official also accused Khalid of ordering the deaths of five UN workers via bombing, likely due to the international community presence interfering with the drug trade.⁷⁵ Khalid now guides the performance and development of Afghanistan's leading intelligence agency, which has a well-documented history of torturing prisoners.⁷⁶

In the face of such egregious corruption, the UN might find it preferable to provide public services in place of the host state. In the short-term, this strategy may be necessary in an effort to counter terrorists' exploitation of weak state authority. Yet, in the long-term, choosing capacity substitution as opposed to capacity building on the part of the UN has major implications for the perpetuation of fragility in the country.

Transcending National Boundaries

The transnational nature of some criminal networks also demands that regional and global actors actively participate in any solution. This includes participation by more developed countries that generate demand for some of the illicit products that drive criminal economies in places like Mali or Afghanistan. UN missions will need to call on otherwise non-participating states to break key links in criminal chains. For example: the chain of actors involved in transiting illegal drugs through Mali begins in Latin and South America, and goes from the Gulf of Guinea coast, through the Sahel, into North Africa, and eventually to Southern Europe. Breaking the links that connect Mali to this criminal economy will give MINUSMA and Malian policy-makers the breathing room necessary to improve the rule of law and provide alternative livelihoods.

While the UN has already invested some resources in fighting regional and international criminal networks, few of these efforts link this larger strategy to the needs of UN field missions. The UN system relies on the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), adopted in Palermo, Italy in 2005, as the principal legal tool in the fight against transnational organized crime. The Conference of States Party to the UNTOC exercises diffuse and arguably weak leadership over the implementation of the UNTOC. On the other hand, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) is a specialized UN Agency, facing common bureaucratic hurdles to the dissemination and implementation of its analysis throughout the UN system.⁷⁷

3.4 Defining Success is More Difficult

Measuring progress on mission mandates is challenging in any setting, but can be particularly complex for the UN in transnational terrorist environments. Due to the use of asymmetric tactics and limited information on the capabilities of transnational terrorist networks, international and local actors struggle to convince the local population that the terrorist threat has been eradicated. Without definitive proof of security gains, the UN faces difficulty in achieving its objectives in two ways. First, the perceived military strength of terrorist networks can translate to political leverage, complicating efforts to engage in negotiations. Second, the local population will continue to live in fear, undermining efforts to restore confidence in the state.

Asymmetric tactics require relatively scant resources compared to the potential damage and fear they inflict on their targets,⁷⁸ so it is very difficult to gauge whether offensive operations have actually weakened terrorist networks. For instance, some interviewees asserted that al-Shabaab's asymmetric tactics were signs that the organization was unable to fight AMISOM and Transitional Federal Government forces conventionally, and that the international community's efforts in Somalia were showing progress.⁷⁹ Yet, due to transnational terrorist networks' adept strategic communications, accurately determining the strength of these groups proves extremely challenging. Al-Shabaab adopts tactics to signal greater resolve and capability than it possesses, and while large attacks like that on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi garner outsized media coverage, these attacks may actually be an indication of group weakness rather than of strength.⁸⁰ Better information gathering and analysis on key aspects of the threat (including level of resources and recruitment of terrorist networks) would allow missions to demonstrate short-term progress that can justify a longer-term presence.

Moreover, these asymmetric tactics create political pressure on the UN Security Council, Member States, and other external actors to show rapid progress. For Member States conducting counter-terrorism operations, a decisive military victory may prove elusive – complicating decisions to withdraw troops and impacting the UN's choices about its activities. In Mali, many interlocutors expressed fears that a premature French withdrawal would leave a security vacuum that UN peacekeepers may be forced to fill – despite lacking the capacity and mandate to do so. Regardless of the presence of parallel counter-terror operations, ambiguity about the security threat can muddle UN decision-making processes on whether to deploy a peacekeeping operation, draw down forces, or withdraw altogether.

The gaps identified by these challenges will require the UN to adapt its existing interventions *and* develop new tools, if it is to operate successfully in these environments. We turn to these gaps and the relevant tools required in the following section.

Section 4: Critical Gaps

This section explores the most critical gaps in the capacity of UN field missions to deliver on key objectives in environments characterized by transnational terrorist networks, namely, preventing transnational terrorist networks from destabilizing states, providing acceptable population security, devising political mechanisms for conflict resolution, and re-establishing state authority.

Through extensive interviews in the field, as well as a review of the academic literature on transnational terrorism, we have identified the following three critical gaps:

1. The UN lacks the real-time information and analysis necessary to adequately protect UN staff and assets and successfully implement its mandates.
2. The current ‘good offices’ mechanisms are insufficient given the complex and evolving nature of transnational terrorist networks.
3. The UN lacks effective preventive and regional approaches to counter the threat of transnational terrorist networks. Despite the UN’s increasing attention towards developing regional approaches to address complex problems, UN field missions lack the tools, structures, and experience required to address the regional dynamics of transnational terrorist threats. There is also a marked disconnect between early warning and concrete early actions to prevent transnational terrorist threats from destabilizing vulnerable states.

While additional deficiencies exist, our research suggests UN field missions cannot succeed in environments with active transnational terrorist groups if the UN system does not create or adapt tools to address the three gaps outlined above.

In the sub-sections below, we discuss why each of these gaps will limit the UN’s ability succeed in these environments, and offer tentative recommendations for ways in which the UN could address these deficiencies.

4.1 Increasing Missions’ Information Gathering and Analysis Capabilities

Status Quo

Our field research uncovered a strong consensus among UN officials at the national, regional and Headquarters’ level, as well as among UN interlocutors, that current UN information gathering and analysis capabilities are grossly insufficient to address the challenges posed by transnational terrorist networks. One non-UN security actor in Bamako put it succinctly, saying that "currently, the UN are blind in Mali."⁸¹

The current bottlenecks slowing UN progress toward a more useful information gathering and analysis framework are well known: the atomization and siloing of information; inadequate incentives for UN agencies to share information; lack of guidelines and procedures regarding information gathering; non-existent processes for determining how to classify information, compounded by poor information security; over-reliance on Member States’ willingness to share information; ad-hoc dissemination of information and analysis products; limited long-term

analysis and scenario planning; and limited human and technical capabilities for both collection and analysis^{viii}. These deficiencies were confirmed by our interlocutors in Dakar, Bamako, Nairobi, and Addis Ababa.

Several attempts to create a UN intelligence entity to support peacekeeping operations have failed in the past. First, the mention of intelligence conjures up ideas of a "UN Spy Agency" and the controversial methods employed by many national intelligence agencies – secrecy, duplicity, sometimes violence – are anathema to UN principles and values. Second, without safety valves in place to protect information flows, Member States fear that classified information could be leaked. Third, the humanitarian community is reluctant to be associated with intelligence activities that could threaten their capacity to operate as neutral actors.

We believe these fears are misguided. Information gathering and analysis capacity can and must be conceived as a fundamental tool that can provide an accurate understanding of the environment to UN operations and effectively support mandate implementation. Such a capacity can be developed within the current UN structure and certainly does not require covert or illegal action.

Arguably the UN has the most complex needs of any bureaucracy in the world, and now is being asked to tackle problems involving groups whose origins, motives, sources of power and influence, and membership require reams of high quality data to understand. More importantly, the lives of UN staff, troops and civilians depend on making accurate and timely decisions under pressure.

Many proponents of increasing the UN's information gathering and analysis capacity made clear that the UN's scale and scope of operations provide an ideal framework for collecting comprehensive first-hand information from the field and to combine it with open source information and information received from third parties. Through all the UN entities, UN Headquarters (or mission leadership) has access to potentially the most comprehensive and up-to-date information on countries of operation, including granular and timely information on local conditions.⁸²

The absence of guidelines and defined processes to classify information based upon its sensitivity does indeed create problems for the dissemination of information. On the one hand, there is no guarantee that such information will not be leaked outside the UN (whether to governments or to terrorist or criminal groups). On the other hand, there is no guarantee that information will be shared with the actors that need it, whether inside or outside of the mission. Every NGO, ministry, religious organization, industry association or other body collects information from media, partner organizations, employee networks, or other sources. This information is then aggregated and analyzed by people with an acute understanding of the organizations' needs.

^{viii} In addition to the field interviews, an extensive literature drawing from UN and non UN practitioners exists on the subject: cf. Dorn W. (2010), "United Nations Peacekeeping Intelligence", published in *The Oxford Handbook of National Security Intelligence*, Loch K. Johnson (Editor), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, pp.275–295.; Ramjoué M. (2011), "Improving United Nations Intelligence: Lessons from the Field", *The Geneva Centre for Security Policy, GCSP Policy Paper n°19*, August 2011; Ekpe B. (2009), "The United Nations and the Rational for Collective Intelligence", Cambria Press

Below we will lay out the strong case for prioritizing this gap. We believe deploying into environments with transnational terrorist threats without developing these capabilities is not only irresponsible, but also poses grave risks to UN operations and success.

The Need for More Robust Information Gathering and Analysis

Terrorist activity increases the complexity of UN operations, and therefore the need for more information and analysis, because actors are difficult to classify, operate across state lines, maintain some level of support from parts of the population, and the host state may not have sufficient information to offer. To use a well-worn cliché, terrorists groups do not wear uniforms or fly flags. Their political ambitions, motivations, tactics, and affiliations are not only more inscrutable, but also more dynamic. Affiliations change frequently in response to external pressures and/or incentives. Specific commanders – usually possessing near total autonomy for their cell’s operations—differ significantly, and titular leaders can rarely guarantee that their orders are followed throughout the organization.

The UN’s Information Disadvantage

In environments featuring transnational terrorist groups, weak government capacity exacerbates the asymmetry of information available to UN field missions, particularly vis-à-vis terrorist networks who possess deeper roots within the local population. Local terrorist and criminal organizations have a better understanding of the local context than the UN, and often have more information than host state security institutions, that cannot penetrate the area of conflict. As a Malian security actor highlighted, neither the UN nor the Malian intelligence service, understand all of the inter-group dynamics in the north of the country. Malian intelligence services have not accumulated the necessary information to anticipate and address the terrorist threat in the north because "the [Malian] intelligence services have been used as political tool and media control [unit] for the last 40 years."⁸³ The capacity to make up for this deficit of information will affect the effectiveness of UN operations.

Inadequate Risk Assessment Wastes Resources and Risks Lives

The lack of quality information prevents the UN from accurately assessing the risks associated with deploying its staff to more insecure areas, thus increasing the trend toward bunkerization. This in turn diminishes the flow of critical information even further as UN staff curtail their interactions with key interlocutors.

For example: in Mali, a common complaint among non-UN interlocutors was MINUSMA’s perceived unwillingness to leave Bamako and Gao.⁸⁴ A more nuanced view of the security landscape in the north might allow MINUSMA staff and soldiers to build bridges with northern communities (where it is safe to patrol) while reducing the burden on the southern population centers forced to host large contingents of foreign soldiers and personnel.

In the lead up to the attacks on the UN in Iraq, Algeria and Somalia, neither UN Headquarters nor the specific field missions adequately recognized the heightened threat level. In all of these attacks, there was a fundamental break down in the way information was analyzed and assessed by either

the UNCT or at the regional level. Warnings went unheeded, and responses were too slow to mitigate risk, demonstrating an inability by the UN system to systematically assess and respond to evolving threats.⁸⁵

The UNDSS is moving towards a system that includes regional information and analysis units. The Threat and Risk Assessment Unit (TRU), now the Threat and Risk Assessment Service (TRAS), established in 2005, is scaling up activities, increasing the capacity of stand-alone country and regional analysts.⁸⁶ A move towards regional hubs rather than country-specific approach to risk analysis is far better suited to the nature of the threat faced by the UN in contexts such as Mali and Somalia. The greatest lesson of past attacks on UN assets and personnel in Iraq, Algeria and Somalia must be that risk assessments should be given immediate priority in terms of resources for UNDSS, target hardening and focused attention at UN Headquarters in New York.

Impact on UN Objectives

The nature of the threat – discussed above—dramatically increases the need for timely, detailed information and analysis. UN field missions are unlikely to be able to implement their mandates effectively without this analysis, diminishing the prospects for long-term success.

Insufficient information gathering and analysis directly impacts the UN's ability to provide acceptable population security. At the most basic level, the UN needs advance warning of impending terrorist attacks, movements of arms or militants, and other significant threats to civilian populations. If terrorist groups continue to inflict significant casualties, the populace may turn to illegitimate armed groups, including transnational terrorists networks, to guarantee their security. Without detailed knowledge of threat locations or combatant movements, the chances of successfully preventing attacks on civilians become remote. Given the low information gathering capacity and the lack of information sharing between UN entities, only limited protection of civilians can be achieved.

The UN system – inside field missions and at UN Headquarters – must also make calculations based on threats to determine the level of risk for mission staff and blue helmets. Several Malians security officials and civilians were concerned about limiting the cantonment of UN military actors to cities, as the greatest risks to the population exist for those residing in rural areas. Higher quality information analysis would provide higher quality risk assessment, which would allow the UN to move patrols out of "safe areas" and into regions with the greatest need.

The UN and host government must possess a nuanced understanding of existing local power dynamics in order to create and implement an effective strategy for reestablishing state authority. Levels and means of UN support to the police, the judicial sector, the military, and public service delivery must be based on an accurate understanding of power dynamics between groups, the population and the host government. At the most basic level, the UN and/or allied actors need to protect state agents attempting to reestablish the capital's authority. This includes judges, police authorities, politicians, and social and cultural figures cooperating with the government. A Malian interlocutor pointed specifically to the importance of recruiting judges to conflict areas, and the difficulty in protecting them without increased information and analysis at the Mission level.⁸⁷

Effective political mediation, negotiation and reconciliation cannot be conducted without detailed information on the parties' motives, strategies, and objectives. Constant fluctuation in group affiliation and evolving tactics make these environments nearly impossible to decipher without improved information collection and expert analysis. Information is also needed to determine the ability of interlocutors to negotiate on behalf of their network, as well as their willingness and capacity to enforce an agreement.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The Secretary-General must make the case to Member States and the P5 that enhancing the UN's information and analysis gathering capabilities are a fundamental operating cost in any field operation but especially in environments characterized by transnational terrorist networks. Failing to develop these capacities poses a serious risk to the UN's ability to achieve success and a grave threat to the security of UN personnel and assets. In doing so, the Secretary-General must address a number of critical gaps, including: (1) protocols for information-gathering and sharing in the field among all components of the UN system; (2) potential need for uniform system-wide guidelines or processes on information-gathering and dissemination of analysis products; (3) review of existing information analysis structures in the field, including the Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC) concept; (4) review of existing information analysis structures at Headquarters, building on the reviews of the UN Operations and Crisis Center (UNOCC) and the UN counter-terrorism infrastructure; (5) recommendations for how information analysis can best feed into policy- and decision-making at Headquarters and in the field; and (6) the need to emphasize the inherent responsibility of Member States to share information with the UN system so that it can successfully implement its mandates.

The UN system has made some important steps in the right direction, such as the creation of the UNDSS Threat and Risk Assessment Service (TRS), which includes regional analysts, and the establishment of the UN Operations and Crisis Center (UNOCC). However, there is room for improved information-sharing and joint analysis among TRS and UNOCC, as well as with other UN agencies and departments with expertise on transnational terrorist networks, such as the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) and the component agencies of the Counter-Terrorism Integrated Task Force (CTITF). Although the analysis produced by TRS is often perceived as focusing on safety and security issues, it could prove extremely useful to inform decision-making by UN leadership at headquarters and in the field. The long-term analysis produced by the UNOCC Research and Liaison Unit (RLU) should also be widely disseminated to relevant actors.

We further recommend that the Secretary-General consider creating an independent in-house scenario-planning capacity to convene inter-departmental tabletop exercises to plan for potential crises and provide long-term analysis. We heard from United States government officials that such exercises are incredibly valuable in analyzing the roles that different actors would be called upon to play in the event of potential crises. These officials, who also have intimate knowledge of the UN system, agreed that such a capacity, whether in-house or subcontracted, would be tremendously beneficial to the UN system. Several UN officials at Headquarters also expressed their interest in establishing some sort of gaming or scenario-planning capacity, which could help raise issues for discussion and planning before they become problematic in the field.

One official brought up the important point that such a capacity would need to be independent, rather than based within a specific department, in order to look beyond department-specific aspects of the crisis. In the past few months the UNOCC has convened inter-departmental scenario-planning sessions on Bangladesh and the Sahel. The Secretariat can build on lessons-learned from those exercises to further build on this capacity.

We clarify that in none of the previous recommendations do we argue for the creation of a new UN entity. Our recommendations can be implemented within the current structure and respecting existing constraints.

Finally, we note the upcoming unprecedented deployment of intelligence specialists to form an All-Source Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU) in Mali in order to support the information gathering process of MINUSMA by March 2014. A review of this unique deployment should be conducted and considered for use in similar environments.

4.2 Adapting the UN's Good Offices Toolkit

The Status Quo

In our interviews, interlocutors inside and outside the UN consistently highlighted the UN's good offices capacity as a priority and a core competency of UN missions.⁸⁸ The good offices role includes all steps taken publicly and in private, drawing on the UN's independence, impartiality, and integrity, to prevent international disputes from arising, escalating, or spreading.⁸⁹ Historically, the UN could claim a comparative advantage in a number of the fundamental principles for effective mediation outlined in the "United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation", including: consent of the parties, impartiality, inclusivity, preparation, and adherence to international law and normative frameworks.⁹⁰

The Need for Bolstering the UN's Current Good Offices Toolkit

Our interviews and research suggest that the UN and UN missions have not thought systematically about the ways in which transnational terrorism affects the UN's good offices role. For example, published guidelines for mediators on terrorism are neither detailed nor instructive.⁹¹ The "United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation" makes no mention of terrorism even though the presence of transnational terrorist networks and the threat of terrorist activity undermines many of the principles defined within, including: impartiality and consent of the parties; preparedness; adherence to international law and normative frameworks; and inclusivity.

Impartiality and Consent

In the previous section, we explored how conflicts involving transnational terrorism undermine UN impartiality. Specifically, we mentioned how the stated governance objectives of al-Qaeda and other transnational terrorist networks seem to contravene the UN Charter, and thus may preclude impartiality on the part of the UN. UN missions and UNCTs will also inevitably be linked to the counter-terrorism objectives of particular Member States (particularly the major Western powers),

especially when a parallel counter-terrorism force is deployed alongside a UN mission. In these environments al-Qaeda (and possibly other terrorist organizations) will continue to denounce the UN as biased to delegitimize its activities among local populations. This will not only make it difficult for the UN to mediate conflicts between the state and affiliates of transnational terrorist networks, but also complicate UN engagement with more moderate groups.

Several UN observers have also pointed out the inconsistency in helping to broker a political settlement with groups that are simultaneously being attacked by forces nominally linked to the UN.⁹² In the language of negotiation strategy, this inconsistency eliminates any chance of offering spoiler groups *credible assurances* that offensive operations will stop if they negotiate in good faith. One academic observer, for example, notes that the Force Intervention Brigade in the DRC took the wind out of the negotiations by convincing M23 that the government and the UN was committed to a military victory.⁹³ Furthermore, interviews with host state officials in Mali and Nairobi (speaking with Somali officials) corroborated the claim that governments supported by UN missions feel less inclined to negotiate once the UN or UN-sanctioned parallel forces tip the military balance in their favor.⁹⁴

Thus, transnational terrorist networks (and their local affiliates) will be skeptical of UN impartiality and, as such, are less likely to consent to the UN serving as a mediator.

Preparedness

The UN is not adequately prepared to mediate conflicts involving transnational terrorist networks because it lacks the necessary information and analysis gathering capabilities (as detailed in Section 4.1) and because of limited capacity. An understanding of the organization and structure, identities, and motivations of terrorist networks is essential to mediation efforts, but the UN's information gathering and analysis capacities are severely deficient and it is unclear whether information collected by entities such as the al-Qaeda Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team are made fully available in support of the UN's good offices role.⁹⁵ One former UN official raised the further concern that the information available is often not relevant for achieving political objectives.⁹⁶

There is also insufficient human capital available for mediation efforts. According to one UN official, there are few mediators with the prominence, experience, and the trust of the various parties to the conflict to lead negotiations for the most intractable conflicts.⁹⁷ Moreover, it is incredibly challenging to structure complex multi-stakeholder mediation facilitation, or conflict prevention activities.⁹⁸ Although the UN's standby mediation team is small (with eight mediators) to keep the team nimble, the Secretariat would benefit from additional mediation experts who possess expertise on transnational terrorism and preventive diplomacy, specifically. While these challenges are significant, they are surmountable through investment in expertise on transnational terrorism, organized crime, and terrorist networks and by improving the information gathering and analysis capabilities that are fundamental to successful mediation efforts.

International Law and Normative Frameworks

Engaging with terrorist networks could potentially contravene several international laws and normative frameworks. First, Security Council resolutions 1267 and 1989 impose sanctions on individuals and entities associated with al-Qaeda. While the sanction measures do not explicitly prohibit the UN from meeting with those on the sanctions list, they do present normative and practical obstacles. For example, one interlocutor based in Afghanistan mentioned that UN staff have difficulty meeting with members of the Taliban listed on the sanctions list because of travel bans.⁹⁹ Second, several interlocutors noted that there is significant pressure from Member States not to engage with terrorist networks.¹⁰⁰ US regulations, for example, prohibit US citizens and permanent residents, NGOs, or other organizations from providing “material support”^{ix} to listed terrorist groups. Although it is unlikely, the UN and other organizations dedicated to promoting peace may be vulnerable to prosecution in US courts for engaging with proscribed groups.¹⁰¹ Many Member States fear that negotiating with terrorist groups confers legitimacy and rewards their tactics while undermining national efforts to combat terrorism. This is particularly a problem when P5 states have troops on the ground, meaning the UN will be reluctant to undertake a political initiative without their acquiescence.¹⁰²

Finally, the 2004 report of the Secretary-General on the Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict societies (S/2004/616) outlines a UN policy to reject any agreement that provides amnesty for genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, or gross violations of human rights. Given that terrorist attacks may constitute a gross violation of human rights, if not war crimes or crimes against humanity, the UN could not endorse an amnesty for members of terrorist organizations that have committed such crimes. Such stipulations will complicate any effort to bring members of transnational terrorist networks to the negotiating table since they would fear prosecution. It may especially discourage “moderate” terrorists from participating in political negotiations.

Inclusivity

Perceptions of impartiality, a lack of consent, and legal and normative limitations on engaging with terrorist groups combine to limit the UN’s ability to pursue inclusive mediation and reconciliation processes. The UN is often discouraged, if not outright prohibited, from including members of terrorist networks in mediation efforts. Moreover, host governments may resist the inclusion of such groups at the negotiating table. In Mali, for example, only three Tuareg separatist groups are considered “legitimate” parties to the conflict in the Ouagadougou Peace agreement – MUJAO and Ansar al-Dine were excluded, despite their significant role in the conflict.¹⁰³ The fluid structure and membership of transnational terrorist and criminal networks creates further complications in deciding what actors must be included in any negotiation efforts.

^{ix} According to the United States Institute of Peace, material support may include “providing transportation, offering coffee during a meeting, giving advice or technical support, or even advising a group to join a negotiation.”

Recommendations and Next Steps

We recommend that the Secretary-General strongly assert his and his staff's ability to talk to ALL parties to a given conflict. As stated throughout our report, most of the interlocutors we met with agreed on the importance of the UN's good offices efforts particularly because the UN has the ability to talk to all actors. UN officials are probably all too aware of the various risks associated with talking to elements of transnational terrorist networks and should thus proceed with extreme caution, but these risks should not deter them completely from pursuing contact and engagement. As one UN official noted, the UN is often seen as the "mediator of last resort" and so may not have the option to delegate another actor to negotiate in its stead, so it must be able to employ its good offices role, at least for informal engagement, when called upon.¹⁰⁴

It is in part the responsibility of the Secretary-General to create the conditions and space to enable his good offices to be effectively employed, and Member States must provide the Secretary-General and his team the political space to do so. To combat any political challenges associated with indicating the UN's willingness to talk to members of transnational terrorist networks, the Secretary-General should re-emphasize the UN's ability to engage "all actors" in talks. Moreover, in their private guidance to mediators, the Secretary-General and UN leadership should encourage mediators to explore all avenues for engagement with elements of transnational terrorist networks. While the UN's recent engagement with al-Nusra in Syria was related to humanitarian access, it demonstrates the necessity and possible benefits of informal talks as well as the potential for applying remote management techniques to the UN's good offices role (discussions were reportedly held over Skype).¹⁰⁵

With due regard to safety, credibility, and legal and other considerations, UN mediators, SRSGs, special envoys, civil affairs teams, and other political actors, should explore avenues for mediation with elements of transnational terrorist networks that may be amenable to moderation or political negotiation. As a former senior UN official expressed in an interview, the UN's tolerance for risk is currently too low, and yet successful mediation requires actors to think outside the box and cast a wide net in terms of potential interlocutors, partners, and avenues for engagement.¹⁰⁶ The UN should not engage in formal negotiations with the leadership of transnational terrorist networks unless their aims moderate to the point there is a mutually beneficial "win set" between the objectives of the UN and that of those networks. However, scholarly research suggests several potential benefits of informally negotiating with terrorist groups, including: hastening an end to conflict; bolstering moderates; shifting terrorist groups' attention away from orchestrating attacks; increasing understanding of the objectives, structure, and membership of terrorist networks; and improving the standing of the negotiator.¹⁰⁷ In the early stages of mediation, the UN should consider coordinating with NGOs and other non-state actors to pursue exploratory negotiations with terrorist networks. If and when these groups (or their members) take positive steps and demonstrate reconcilable aims, the UN should consider engaging directly.¹⁰⁸ We recommend that, in cases where UN envoys or personnel pursue such engagement, they keep national governments, local authorities, the P5 and other concerned Member States informed, but in such a way that this does not jeopardize the success of their efforts.

We recommend that the Secretary-General request additional resources for the Department of Political Affairs to further develop expertise on transnational terrorist networks and, in particular, to advise UN field missions on how to adapt their strategies to deal with these networks. We were especially surprised in Mali to hear from various individuals working for different components of MINUSMA that they had yet to consider the strategic implications of transnational terrorist networks upon their mandated activities.¹⁰⁹ While this may have to do with the short time the operation has been deployed, our analysis is that many UN actors on the ground do not have specific expertise on the threats they face, particularly transnational terrorist networks, which may be useful for tailoring activities and programs to such environments. We recommend that the UN develop in-house capacity to provide peacekeeping operations, SPMs and UNCTs with an analysis of the specific characteristics of the transnational terrorist networks in their areas of operation: their motivations, modes of recruitment, organizational structure, sources of support, etc. and work with personnel on the ground to adapt planning processes and action plans to incorporate the challenges posed by these networks to their specific mandated activities. To complement efforts to improve the UN's information and analysis gathering capabilities, the UN must increase the capacity of its staff at headquarters to employ its good offices role in environments characterized by transnational terrorism. Adding staff to the Mediation Support Unit with specific expertise in terrorism would greatly improve UN efforts to strengthen political solutions in the types of conflicts that the UN is likely to be asked to engage in the future.

Due to current worldwide financial constraints, it is likely that Member States will view with skepticism any requests from the Secretary-General for additional resources. Given the importance of the transnational terrorist threat to the national security interests of the P5 and major troop and financial contributors, as well as the pressing need given the deployment of MINUSMA and the high likelihood of additional similar operations in the near future, we believe that the Secretary-General can make a compelling case on the need for additional and adequate resources to address the political nature of conflict in environments characterized by transnational terrorist groups.

4.3. Adopting Effective Preventive and Regional Approaches

Status Quo

At an analytical level the United Nations senior leadership and Member States already understand the importance of regional dynamics in fueling transnational terrorist threats and the need to undertake preventive actions. In reality, however, the UN struggles to adapt concrete preventive or regional approaches to these threats.

Given the opacity of terrorist networks and their use of asymmetric tactics, anticipating terrorist attacks is particularly difficult. By contrast, the political, socioeconomic and security conditions in which terrorist networks thrive are more easily identifiable, and the UN has mechanisms, through DPA, regional offices and other entities, to identify these early warning signs.

However, we heard consistently in our interviews that early warning signs often are not heeded or do not translate into policy and concrete early action. The Department of Political Affairs' early warning analysis is often not transmitted to or not acted upon by Member States, including the

Security Council. We heard from several individuals at Headquarters that Member States are very reluctant to be publicly identified as being “vulnerable” or “at risk.” Some Member States have apparently lobbied Secretariat officials and/or Security Council members to avoid being “named” in the “horizon-scanning sessions” held during some Security Council members’ presidencies in which DPA officials briefed the Council on potential crises.¹¹⁰ Moreover, some members of the Security Council are deeply skeptical about undertaking preventive actions due to diverging opinions about if and when a situation constitutes a “threat to international peace and security,” as well as concerns over whether situations constitute “internal” matters or not.

In terms of regional actions, the release of the 2013 Integrated Strategy for the Sahel marked an important step in formalizing a UN approach to regional crises, but the strategy is largely humanitarian and long-term in nature; it did not create any new tools or mechanisms for addressing acute political crises or the presence of actors employing terrorist tactics.

The UN system currently addresses the regional dimensions via the ad-hoc appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary General to a region in crisis, and/or loose cooperation with regional organizations already providing mediation or military support. There are also regional offices – such as the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) – but these offices do not interact at a sufficiently high level with UN peacekeeping operation leadership to significantly influence the incorporation of regional solutions into Mission strategy.¹¹¹ According to interlocutors in Dakar where UNOWA is based, this limited interaction with UN field missions is due to personnel shortages, constrained access to information in the field, and efforts to use limited resources to provide a complementary rather than duplicative role to UN field missions.¹¹² For example, UNOWA seeks to focus on countries where there is not a UN field presence (such as Guinea). While this focus expands the geographical scope of UN operations, it also precludes UNOWA from contributing regional expertise and exerting pressure on key regional actors in support of country-specific field missions. Furthermore, the overlapping mandates and lack of clear hierarchy between the Special Envoy to the Sahel and UNOWA creates confusion over ownership of the strategy as well as the resulting frustration and duplication of efforts between staff.

Historically, the UN has played a constructive role in preventive regional mediation, aided by the work of DPA and UNCTs, particularly the Peace and Development Advisors deployed by UNDP. However, the dynamics mentioned above, limit the ability of regional offices to assess and address the new challenges posed by transnational terrorist networks through preventive measures, as they are not actively engaging key players with insight into the evolution of the threat nor coordinating extensively with the nodes of the challenge.

The Need to Include More Robust Regional Components in UN Missions

As the UN looks toward potential deployments in areas with active transnational terrorist networks, it is clear that limiting resources and deployments to national boundaries will only address part of the problem. Put bluntly, a foreign troop presence (including a UN peacekeeping operation) in one country raises the threat level for that country’s neighbors. In the Central African Republic (CAR), armed militias employing terrorist tactics have taken refuge in the weak border zones of CAR’s neighboring states to wait out the UN surge, destabilizing CAR’s neighbors. Today, in Mali, the

combined French and UN deployment has largely expelled AQIM from major population centers in the North, but many militants and transnational criminals bide their time or may even go on to cause further destabilization in Niger, Libya, Chad, and Algeria. This “balloon effect” where a terrorist network is “squeezed out” from one country only to have it emerge in another country, should be taken into account whenever offensive military operations are undertaken to root out transnational terrorist networks.

Our research – including extensive interviews with regional organizations and experts – suggests that the following dynamics make conflicts featuring transnational terrorist networks impossible to address effectively without a comprehensive regional strategy.

Porous Borders

Transnational terrorist networks and their enablers find safe haven in areas of least resistance. As a foreign military presence raises the costs and risks of operation in the host country, groups and individuals are likely to cross porous borders to take sanctuary in neighboring countries with sufficient ungoverned space. Front-line states differ in the level of political will and capacity they bring to border protection and the regulation of people and products crossing national lines.^x Even given sufficient political will and capacity, harsh terrain and vast geography may make it impossible for the host country to halt the flow of terrorists and supporting illicit goods – they require the active cooperation of their neighbors to make border areas unappealing for the planning and conduct of terrorist activities. This has been a key issue in the prolonged war in Afghanistan, despite the commitment of ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to securing Afghanistan’s borders – al-Qaeda and some Taliban leaders conduct their planning from safe havens inside the Pakistan border, which is beyond the reach of ISAF and the ANSF. A stronger commitment and effort from Pakistan is needed to fully address the terrorist threat destabilizing both countries.

Several French military and Malian interlocutors highlighted the impossibility of total victory over the militants in northern Mali; the militants had ceded ground and regrouped in Niger, Chad, and especially in southwestern Libya, where they launched attacks on host state military institutions, an American drone base in Niger, and industrial facilities in Algeria.¹¹³

One civil society leader in Mali suggested that militant Islamists – both regionally and internationally – were using Mali as the beachhead to radicalize the broader Sahel. While the international security presence drove many local militia members out of major population centers, it also acted as a magnet for international jihadists who viewed Mali as the latest battlefield between the West and Islam. This fear was echoed in internal Malian government strategy documents, as well as by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and AU decision makers.^{xi} A similar dynamic has been observed in Iraq and Afghanistan over the last ten

^x Several interviewees in Mali suggested that border regulation among front lines states was driven more by political will than capacity. Malian interlocutors, for example, frequently cited the belief that Algeria permitted militant groups to operate along the border provided they directed their activities toward Mali.

^{xi} The salience of regional dynamics correlates highly with the presence of extremist and/or terrorist actors. In Syria, for example, approximately eighty percent of Jabat al-Nusra’s leadership is non-Syrian, and between five and ten

years with the influx of foreign jihadists entering the conflict. These foreign jihadists not only destabilize the situation in the host country, but also use conflicts as a training ground to stage attacks in their home countries or abroad, increasing the threat to the broader international community.¹¹⁴

It is important to note that refugee flows will also implicate front-line states in the conflict. While refugee camps are prime targets for the recruitment and radicalization of potential terrorists, the refugee concerns in these environments are not significantly different from refugee concerns in areas experiencing more traditional armed conflict.

The Role of Regional Powers

Country-specific mandates limit the ability of international actors to address the challenges posed by transnational terrorist networks, as their power and influence extend only to the borders of the host country while transnational terrorist networks face no similar constraints. While regional bodies play an important role in addressing crises, there needs to be a legitimate, authoritative body with a mandate beyond state borders that can interact with all relevant key actors as necessary. Although MINUSMA can meet with visiting representatives from Niger, MINUSMA cannot exert consistent pressure on officials in order to encourage stronger enforcement of Niger's borders. Similarly, ISAF struggles to influence the decisions of Pakistani leaders with regards to its border regions. While UN field missions cannot realistically work directly with all relevant players, mission leadership can only formulate comprehensive strategies to respond to transnational terrorist threats with assured commitment and support from regional actors.

There is a clear tension between the state-centered logic of the Security Council's mandates and the regional or global nature of threats from transnational terrorist networks, leading to incomplete information. UN and Malian security actors acknowledged their extremely limited knowledge regarding the influx of resources, weapons and group members that cross borders not only within the region but also across continents. The absence of information gathering and analysis capacities from Niger, Mauritania or Algeria can only be detrimental to understanding the root of the conflict and anticipating future violent events. Several Malian and UN security officials recognized the need for cooperation between security forces among the Sahara-Sahel countries, but they doubt effective cooperation will occur in the short term due to political enmities.^{xii} The UN can play a role in fostering cooperation, but UN staff from both DSS and the UN field missions emphasized that they cannot rely solely on information shared by neighboring countries.

There was near unanimity from interlocutors in Addis Ababa, Bamako, and Nairobi that the UN should play a more active role in fostering cooperation between regional players, especially with regard to intelligence sharing and military assistance to prevent both critical gaps and duplication

thousand foreign fighters are currently fighting against the Assad regime, in addition to the thousands of Lebanese Hezbollah militia members fighting for the regime.^{xi}

^{xii} For example: One African member state intelligence officer claimed that previous attempts at cooperation – including those at the AU Intelligence center in Algiers, were undermined because Algeria took in all information shared by AU states but only re-distributed a small proportion. Note these interviews were carried out in October 2013. However, on January 12 2014, Mali and Mauritania signed an agreement for information sharing among their security services in order to fight the terrorist groups in the Sahara-Sahel region.

of effort. UN field missions currently attempt to remedy these problems by working through existing regional bodies. However, no regional grouping or body – e.g. the Arab League, African Union, ECOWAS, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), etc. – contains all of the front-line states and influential actors necessary to address transnational terrorist threats and its effects on host states. In Mali, for example, many interviewees believed Algeria, and to a lesser extent Niger, exerted more influence on the unfolding crisis in northern Mali than any state in ECOWAS, despite ECOWAS’s leadership role in drafting the Ouagadougou accords. Furthermore, despite the necessity of the regional cooperation, no mechanism or forum currently exists to address strategic rivalries between Algeria and Morocco, as well as between Algeria and Libya. These rivalries directly impact any proposed solution for northern Mali and need to be addressed at least within the context of the conflict.¹¹⁵

Recommendations and Next Steps

We recommend that, when a UN field mission is deployed to a country facing transnational terrorist threats, liaison officers or teams be deployed to neighboring countries. These liaison officers and teams would gather information and provide assistance to the host country, if requested, with preparations to contain spillover effects of the crisis. Since deployment of a foreign military force or strengthening of host government forces in one country can push terrorists into surrounding countries, it is important for neighboring countries to reinforce their capacity to address and contain any migration of the threat. UN liaison officers in neighboring countries could advise authorities on emerging trends and potential measures to implement in anticipation of the threat. Liaison officers can also coordinate UN and international assistance to reinforce local capacity in priority areas.

Liaison officers can also act as the UN field mission’s “eyes and ears” in neighboring countries to inform mission leadership on the political, military and other relevant dynamics in neighboring states that are likely to affect the transnational terrorist threat and/or on the implementation of that UN field mission’s mandate. We believe that MINUSMA’s decision to deploy liaison officers in neighboring countries is an important step in this direction. Once these officers have been deployed for over a year, it would be beneficial to conduct a review to analyze their contribution and draw lessons learned for MINUSMA and future missions. It is also important to note that an experiment of this nature is currently underway in United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), with liaison officers posted in Kigali and Kampala.

We recommend that UN regional offices facing transnational terrorist threats strengthen their capacity in terms of regional information analysis and inter-mission coordination. Given the need for the UN to better understand the regional dynamics of transnational terrorist threats, it is important for UN field missions deployed in that region, but also UN Country Teams and agencies, funds and programs, to improve cooperation in sharing information and analysis. The regional offices would be the appropriate fora to collate this information and for regional analysis to be shared with relevant UN actors, as needed. Increasing the human resource capacities of regional offices and supplying the mandate to take a leadership role in regional coordination and information-sharing would help the UN incorporate all important actors and regional dynamics into countering transnational terrorist threats.

We recommend that regional strategies be coordinated with and across regional and international entities and organizations. There are currently a number of competing regional strategies for the Sahel – the UN, AU, European Union (EU), World Health Organization (WHO), and others all have plans to respond independently to the regional threat. Instead of pursuing parallel actions and potentially undermining each other’s strategies, the UN regional office should take a coordinating role in generating a framework document for all such strategies to tie into, such as the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in the Great Lakes region.

We recommend that UN regional offices and envoys in regions facing transnational terrorist threats work with relevant regional and sub-regional organizations to foster information-sharing among states in that region. We found significant mistrust amongst the governments and intelligence services of countries in the Sahel region, despite the fact that most of these countries face similar threats from transnational terrorist networks. Affected countries would benefit immensely from improved cooperation. UN regional envoys can use the UN’s legitimacy and influence to help Member States overcome their mistrust and/or poor coordination mechanisms in order to foster closer cooperation against shared threats and challenges.

We recommend that efforts to preemptively address transnational terrorism utilize a coordinated regional response, capitalizing on shared information that highlights potential "hotspots" and emerging threats. Early warning systems should be augmented and better integrated with early response mechanisms. Furthermore, we found that DPA focuses its preventive diplomacy efforts on mitigating the effects of triggers, such as coup d’états and elections. It may be necessary for the UN to focus on “early” preventive diplomacy, exercising its good offices role to anticipate conflict triggers, such as state collapse or instability, that may create space for transnational terrorist networks to operate. Finally, the UN needs to devote actionable resources to preventive diplomacy – good reporting is not enough to prevent a crisis. Preparations, based on preventive reporting, can be useful in times of crisis but once a crisis escalates, it may quickly spiral out of control.

We recommend that the Secretary-General use diplomatic mechanisms to bring early warning analyses on transnational terrorist threats to the attention of Member States and, if required, the Security Council, and to ensure that early warning reports also include early action recommendations. As stated before, some Member States may be reluctant to be identified as being “at risk” of destabilization by transnational terrorist networks. The Secretary-General can therefore find ways of working through DPA, UN regional offices, UN Country Teams and others to relay early warning reports and recommendations to specific Member States without doing so publicly. If the Secretary-General believes a situation warrants attention by the Security Council, he should exercise his prerogative, and responsibility, under Article 99 of the UN Charter to “bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.” Most importantly, early warning reports are most effective when they also relay recommendations for early action that can be taken to anticipate threats and prevent them from escalating. Recommendations can be made to Member State governments, regional and sub-regional organizations, UNCTs and other UN entities.

4.4 Additional Gaps Identified

During the course of our interviews we heard consensus on several additional gaps that the UN should consider addressing to be more effective in conflict environments that feature threats from transnational terrorist networks.

UN Hiring and Staffing Practices

Interviewees regularly mentioned UN hiring and staffing practices as deserving serious consideration for reform. Senior and former UN staff interviewed throughout the course of our research noted that UN recruitment methods are not compatible with its goals. They stated that the UN should have a comparative advantage in being able to hire anyone – but due to the politicized nature of the hiring process (particularly for SRSG and DSRSG positions), this is not occurring. The UN should make a greater effort to tap into existing pools of country and language expertise – for example, by hiring staff from leading NGOs with years of in-country expertise. The UN also needs to work on developing capacity to deploy country and mediation experts together – people with local influence who can speak from prior experience. Interviewees were also concerned that mobility is not encouraged between departments in the UN (such as between DPKO and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)) and that the UN should welcome efforts to create a "foreign service" approach to staff mobility. The UN should do more to share personnel between missions who have expertise in remote management (in Iraq and Afghanistan for example) and operating in high-risk environments, which share similarities with environments facing threats from transnational terrorist networks.¹¹⁶

Engagement with Religious and Local Leaders

Multiple actors with extensive experience in conflict resolution noted that the UN needs to engage more effectively with non-traditional partners in environments with transnational terrorist networks. This would include religious leaders and local community leaders. These actors reported that the UN approach to negotiation often focuses on the state capital to the detriment of engagement at the local level. They suggested using examples of community development projects in Afghanistan, in which local communities raised funds and provided labor, as models that could help build local buy-in and lead to support for broader political goals. Interviewees also stated that the UN should be engaging with sub-state actors in Somalia, such as in Somaliland and Puntland, rather than focusing primarily on the Somali government in Mogadishu at the national level.¹¹⁷

Under-resourcing of UNDSS

Multiple actors, both inside and outside the UN, mentioned the under-resourcing of the Department of Safety and Security as an important challenge. If the Security Council continues to deploy missions to high-risk environments, interviewees believed that funding for UNDSS should be based on the risk of deploying to that country, rather than a fixed proportion of the mission budget. They also suggested that Member States could provide greater support for security budgeting when asking the UN to deploy to places where they are unwilling to deploy their own troops.¹¹⁸

Strategic Communication

Many suggested that the UN should focus more attention on strategic communication. One interlocutor noted that little has changed within the UN regarding strategic communication since the Brahimi report. Given that transnational terrorist organizations are becoming increasingly adept at presenting their narrative to the public, the UN needs to develop a capacity to explain not only its role in these contexts, but also to communicate successes and progress to local actors. One interviewee suggested that transparency should be the "fourth principle of peacekeeping".¹¹⁹

Section 5: Conclusion and Summary of Recommendations

In the coming years, UN missions will face an increasingly complex array of threats from transnational terrorist networks. The UN system is woefully unprepared. As we contend in Section 1, transnational terrorist networks present challenges that fundamentally alter the operational environment for UN field missions because of their stated objectives, transnational reach, targeting of the UN and civilians using asymmetric tactics, and links to transnational organized crime. Due to these challenges, we argued in Section 2 that UN field missions should focus first on prevention and, if a situation destabilizes, on devising political mechanisms to address grievances, delivering population security, and (re)establishing state authority, but not on offensive military operations. In Section 3, we examined the manner in which transnational terrorist networks challenge standard UN operations by directly targeting UN staff, posing obstacles to political engagement and impartiality, complicating efforts to define success, and maintaining linkages to transnational organized crime.

Interviews with dozens of senior officials inside and outside the UN system led us to conclude in Section 4 that the following three gaps in UN capacity need priority attention if UN missions are to function in these environments:

1. The UN lacks the real-time information and analysis capabilities necessary to adequately protect UN staff and assets, to effectively mediate in complex environments, and to provide adequate population security.
2. The current ‘good offices’ mechanisms are insufficient given the complex and evolving nature of transnational terrorist networks.
3. Despite the UN’s increasing focus on developing regional approaches to address complex problems, UN field missions lack the mandates, structures, and experience required to address the regional dynamics of transnational terrorist threats to international peace and security.

To address these gaps and improve the ability of UN field missions to achieve their objectives in environments characterized by transnational terrorism, we recommend the following to the Secretary-General:

Improving Information Gathering and Analysis:

- We recommend that the Secretary-General make the case to Member States and the P5 that enhancing the UN’s information and analysis gathering capabilities are a fundamental operating cost in field operations, especially those environments characterized by transnational terrorist networks and that failing to develop these capacities poses a serious risk to the UN’s ability to achieve success and poses a grave threat to the security of UN personnel and assets.
- We further recommend that the Secretary-General consider creating an independent in-house scenario-planning capacity to convene inter-departmental tabletop exercises to plan for potential crises and long-term analysis.

Bolstering the UN's Good Offices' Capacity:

- We recommend that the Secretary-General strongly assert his and his staff's ability to talk to ALL parties to a given conflict.
- With due regard to safety, credibility, legal and other considerations, UN mediators, SRSGs, special envoys, civil affairs teams, and other political actors, should explore avenues for mediation or engagement with elements of transnational terrorist networks that may be amenable to moderation or political negotiation.
- We recommend that the Secretary-General request additional resources for the Department of Political Affairs to further develop UN expertise on transnational terrorist networks and, in particular, to advise UN field missions on how to adapt their strategies to deal with these networks.

Improving the UN's Regional Response:

- We recommend that when a UN field mission is deployed in a country facing transnational terrorist threats, liaison officers or teams be deployed to neighboring countries. These liaison officers and teams would gather information and provide assistance to the host country, if requested, with preparations to contain spillover effects of the crisis.
- We recommend that UN regional offices facing transnational terrorist threats strengthen their capacity in terms of regional information analysis and inter-mission coordination.
- We recommend that regional strategies be coordinated with and across regional entities.
- We recommend that UN regional offices and envoys in regions facing transnational terrorist threats work with relevant regional and sub-regional organizations to foster information sharing among states in that region.
- We recommend that efforts to preemptively address transnational terrorism utilize a coordinated regional response, capitalizing on shared information that highlights potential "hotspots" and emerging threats.
- We recommend that the Secretary-General use diplomatic mechanisms to bring early warning analyses on transnational terrorist threats to the attention of Member States and, if required, the Security Council, and to ensure that early warning reports also include early action recommendations.

Future Strategy and Political Feasibility

We recognize that the recommendations presented above carry substantial political, administrative, financial and structural implications but we believe that the Secretary-General can and should move forward on some of these recommendations through an effective political strategy that focuses on the threat that the UN faces when deploying to environments where transnational terrorist networks are active.

We recommend that the Secretary-General begin by moving forward on the recommendations that do not require Member State approval or do not have financial implications, particularly in terms of improved coordination and information-sharing among UN entities with expertise on transnational terrorism. Before requesting additional resources from Member States for improved or enhanced capabilities, the Secretary-General should be able to demonstrate that he has already worked to streamline processes and address some of the shortcomings we identified within existing resources and capabilities.

For other recommendations that require engagement or approval from Member States, we urge the Secretary-General to adopt a diplomatic and communications strategy that emphasizes the increasing danger faced by UN staff from transnational terrorist networks. The issue of UN and staff security should serve as an effective "rallying cry", as all Member States should agree on the importance of improving security for UN staff on the ground. Troop-contributing countries should be especially sensitive to concerns over the security of their troops deploying as peacekeepers to settings where they may face attack from transnational terrorist networks. Troop-contributing Member States who for different reasons may have once objected to improved information gathering and analysis capabilities for the UN may now be more open to this idea given the increased danger their troops are facing from transnational terrorist networks. We would recommend that if the Secretary-General were to make an effort in the Fifth Committee or the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) to request more capacities for information gathering and analysis, that he engage a few key troop-contributing countries from across different regions to help champion this issue.

If and when the Security Council considers expanding current UN field missions in settings where transnational terrorist networks are present (such as in Mali or Somalia) or establishing new missions in such environments, we urge the Secretary-General to be firm in his assessment of what capabilities the UN would need to be successful in accomplishing the mandates the Council is considering. The Secretary-General should make clear that success in such environments, and the security of UN personnel, depends on the UN having the right tools to deal with the complex nature of these threats. The Secretary-General should emphasize that deploying in such environments cannot be seen as "business as usual" and requires the tools we have identified to confront the specific characteristics that distinguish these threats, namely: appropriate information gathering and analysis, adequate political and mediation engagement, and moving from reactive and country-specific responses towards more preventive and regional approaches.

Finally, it is important to point out that the word "terrorism" is still politically problematic in the UN due to Member States' disagreements on the exact definition of terrorism. Member States were not able to agree on a definition for "terrorism" for the adoption of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2006 and it is not clear that they would be any closer to doing so today. We have chosen to use the term "transnational terrorist networks" in this paper but the Secretary-General would perhaps find it more politically acceptable to use the term "transnational terrorist and criminal networks" or to refer specifically to al-Qaeda, its affiliates, or other groups or networks specific to the context he is referring to.

We are confident that due to the increased danger to troops and staff and the growing recognition that transnational terrorist networks pose qualitatively different risks than other groups, the Secretary-General has the political space to convince UN staff and Member States on the need to adapt the UN's toolkit and operations to these challenging circumstances.

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- ⁹⁹ Author e-mail interview, Kabul, January 2014
- ¹⁰⁰ Author interviews, New York, October and December 2013; author phone interview, New York, December 2013.
- ¹⁰¹ Veronique Dudouet, "Mediating Peace with Proscribed Armed Groups," United States Institute of Peace, October 2009, pg. 10. <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR239Dudouet.pdf>. See also: Noah Bialostozky, "Material Support of Peace? The On-the-Ground Consequences of U.S. and International Material Support of Terrorism Laws and the Need for Greater Legal Precision", *The Yale Journal of International Law Online*, Spring 2011. <http://www.yjil.org/docs/pub/o-36-bialostozky-material-support-of-peace.pdf>.
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- ¹⁰³ "An Agenda for Human Rights in Mali," Amnesty International, 2013, pg. 9. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR37/006/2013/en/1558b2eb-004c-4357-98f7-a3498c7e0c52/afr370062013en.pdf>
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- ¹⁰⁸ Author e-mail interview, Kabul, January 2014.
- ¹⁰⁹ Author interviews, Bamako, October 2013.
- ¹¹⁰ Author Interview, New York, December 2013
- ¹¹¹ Author interview, Dakar, October 2013
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- ¹¹⁶ Author Interviews, Nairobi, New York, Washington DC, October 2013
- ¹¹⁷ Author Interviews, Nairobi, Washington DC, October 2013
- ¹¹⁸ Author Interviews, Nairobi, New York, Washington DC, October 2013
- ¹¹⁹ Author Interviews, Nairobi, Washington DC, October 2013

Appendix 1: List of Organizations, Institutions and Other Affiliations of Individuals Consulted

The views expressed in the report do not necessarily represent the views of any individual or organization with which the authors met.

Princeton, New Jersey and New York City, New York, USA

Africa I Division, Department of Political Affairs, United Nations

Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation

Center on International Cooperation, New York University

Civilian Capacities After Conflict, United Nations Secretariat

Department of Safety and Security, United Nations

Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Section, United Nations Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support, United Nations

Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration, MINUSMA, United Nations

Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training, Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support, United Nations

Executive Office of the Secretary-General, United Nations

Former Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

Legal and Criminal Justice Group, Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, United Nations

Mediation Support Unit, Department of Political Affairs, United Nations

Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations

Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, MINUSMA, United Nations * (former staff member)

Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations

Partnerships Team, Division of Policy, Evaluation and Training, Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support, United Nations

Permanent Mission of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the United Nations

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uruguay to the United Nations

Policy and Best Practices Service, Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support, United Nations

Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning, Executive Office of the Secretary-General, United Nations

Research and Liaison Unit, United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre

Sahel Region, Department of Political Affairs, United Nations

Security Council Affairs Division, Department of Political Affairs, United Nations

Standby Mediation Team of Mediation Experts, United Nations

Threat and Risk Assessment Service, Department of Safety and Security, United Nations

United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre

United Nations Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaeda and associated individuals and entities * (former member)

United Nations University Office in New York
United States Mission to the United Nations
Washington D.C., USA

Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization
Operations, United States Department of State
Bureau of International Organizations, United
States Department of State

Counter Narcotics and Global Threats Policy,
Office of Secretary of Defense, United States
Department of Defense

Counter-Terrorism Policy, Office of Secretary
of Defense, United States Department of
Defense

Office of the Chief of Staff, National Security
Advisor Susan Rice, United States National
Security Council

Peacekeeping Policy and Operations, Office of
Secretary of Defense, United States
Department of Defense

The Stimson Center

The United States Institute of Peace

Bamako, Mali

African Union

Armée de Terre, Mali

Civil Affairs Division, MINUSMA

Delegation of the European Union in Republic
of Mali

Delegation of the International Committee of
the Red Cross

Disarmament, Demobilization and
Reintegration Unit, MINUSMA

Embassy of France to the Republic of Mali

European Union Training Mission in Mali

Human Rights Division, MINUSMA

International Rescue Committee

Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC),
MINUSMA

Joint Operations Center (JOC), MINUSMA

Mali Centre for Interparty Dialogue and
Democracy

Médecins Sans Frontières

Office of the Police Advisor, MINUSMA

Office of the Special Representative of the
Secretary-General, MINUSMA

Office of Transition Initiatives, United States
Embassy to the Republic of Mali

Operation Serval, French Army

Oxfam, Mali

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Mali to
the United Nations

Police Nationale Malienne

Political Affairs Division, MINUSMA

Programme de Gouvernance Partagée de la
Sécurité et de la Paix (PGPSP), United Nations
Development Programme

Protection of Civilians, MINUSMA

Public Information Office, MINUSMA

United Nations Office for the Coordination of
Humanitarian Affairs, Mali

United States Embassy to the Republic of Mali

Nairobi, Kenya

African Peace Support Trainers Association

African Union Mission in Somalia

Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization
Operations, United States Department of State

International Rescue Committee - Somalia

Office of the Chief of Staff, United Nations
Somalia

Office of the Director, United Nations Support
Office for the AMISOM (UNSOA)

Office of the United Nations Resident
Coordinator for Somalia

Public Affairs, United Nations Somalia

Regional Returns, International Rescue Committee – East Africa
Rift Valley Institute
Risk Management Unit, United Nations Development Program, Somalia
United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)
United Nations Department of Safety and Security, Somalia
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Somalia
United States Agency for International Development, East Africa
United States Department of State
United States Mission to the United Nations in Nairobi, United States Department of State

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

African Humanitarian Action
European Union Delegation to the African Union
Institute for Peace & Security Studies, Addis Ababa University
Institute for Security Studies
Intergovernmental Authority on Development
Office of the Foreign Minister, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Operational Planning and Advisory Section
United Nations Office of the African Union
Peace & Security Department, African Union
Peace Support Operations Division, African Union
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Representative to African Union & the Economic Commission for Africa
United States Agency for International Development, United States Mission to the African Union

United States Delegation to the African Union

Brussels, Belgium

Africa-EU Partnership and African Peace Facility, European Commission
Air Force Affairs and Armament Cooperation, Office of Defense Cooperation, United States Embassy
Army Services, Office of Defense Cooperation, United States Embassy
Crisis Management and Planning Directorate, European External Action Service
Department of International Affairs and Academic Director, European Peace & Security Studies, Vesalius College
Direction, Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability
Logistics & Defense Industry Liaison, Office of Defense Cooperation, United States Embassy
NATO Afghan Operations Team, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Headquarters
Office of the European Union Special Representative of the Sahel

Paris, France

Centre de Réflexion sur l'Action et les Savoirs Humanitaires, Médecins Sans Frontières
Institute for Security Studies, European Union

Dakar, Senegal

Embassy of the United States of America to the Republic of Senegal
Institute for Security Studies
Regional Centre for Africa, Dakar Liaison, United Nations Development Programme
Regional Office for West and Central Africa, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
United Nations Department of Safety and Security
United Nations Office for West Africa

Appendix 2: Acronyms

AFISMA: African-led International Support Mission to Mali

ALP: Afghan Local Police

AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia

ANSF: Afghan National Security Forces

AQIM: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

AU: African Union

CTED: Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate

CTITF: Counter-Terrorism Integrated Task Force

DO: Designated Official

DPA: United Nations Department of Political Affairs

DPKO: United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

EU: European Union

FIB: Force Intervention Brigade

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development

ISAF: International Security Assistance Force

ICC: International Criminal Court

JMAC: Joint Mission Analysis Center

MSF: Médecins Sans Frontières

MINUSMA: United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission for Mali

MNLA: National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawat

MUJAO/MOJWA: Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OPCW: Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

PKO: Peacekeeping Operation

POC: Protection Of Civilians

RLU: Research and Liaison Unit, UNOCC

SPM: Special Political Missions

SRSG: Special Representative of the Secretary-General

TCC: Troops Contributing Countries

TRS: Threat and Risk Assessment Service, UNDSS

UN: United Nations

UN AFPs: United Nations Agencies Funds and Programs

UNAMA: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

UNCT: United Nations Country Team

UNDOC: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNDSS: United Nations Department of Safety and Security

UNOCA: United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

UNOCC: United Nations Operations and Crisis Center

UNOCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UNOWA: United Nations Office for West Africa

UNPOL: United Nations Police

UNPOS: United Nations Political Office for Somalia

UNRCCA: United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia

UNTOC: United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime

Appendix 3: About the Authors

Mauricio Artiñano is currently a second-year Masters in Public Affairs candidate at the Princeton Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He graduated with a Bachelors Degree in International Relations from Tufts University in 2006. From 2008-2009 he worked at the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations during Costa Rica's term as elected member of the Security Council, where he first focused on African issues and peacekeeping, and later served as Security Council Political Coordinator for Costa Rica. He also worked for several years in his native Costa Rica on public-private partnerships, corporate social responsibility and on Central America-wide peacebuilding projects. Mauricio spent this past summer doing research with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

Peter Blair, from Belfast Northern Ireland, has spent the last three years working for the Carter Center in Guinea-Conakry, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal and also Atlanta, GA on a mix of election observation and conflict resolution. Most recently he worked as the Observer Project Coordinator for The Carter Center in Nepal, as security coordinator of their constitution drafting observation mission. He spent his 2013 summer working for IOM Iraq in Amman, Jordan on the Syrian refugee crisis and Iraqi returnee and IDP issues. Peter graduated from the University of Nottingham with a first class honors degree in Politics and expects to graduate from Princeton with a Masters in Public Affairs, focusing on Development Studies in June 2014.

Nicolas Collin is a second-year Masters in Public Affairs candidate at the Princeton Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, focusing on development and conflict issues. In the summer 2013 he worked at United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in the Strategic Planning Unit. Before coming to Princeton, Nicolas worked on development in Latin America; first on cooperation issues on migration and labor markets at the Center for Dialogue and Analysis on North America; and then at Fondo para la Paz (Fund for Peace), an NGO dedicated to extreme poverty alleviation in Mexico. Between 2010 and 2012, as a regional project officer for the State of Oaxaca, he managed community-driven development projects in rural communities. Nicolas has a BS in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Technology of Compiègne (UTC) and a MA in International Studies from ITESM, Mexico City.

Beatrice Godefroy is a Master in Public Policy candidate (mid-career) at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Before coming to Princeton, she had been engaged in humanitarian action for more than 10 years. After she got her Masters' degree in Sciences Po Paris, she first left to the field as a financial coordinator for Action Contre la Faim, a French NGO specialized in the treatment of malnutrition. She then became a Country Director, joined Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) and worked in a variety of contexts. She was mostly involved in emergency assistance to populations in conflicts areas (Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Darfur, Chad, Burundi) or affected by major natural disasters (Tsunami 2005, Haiti 2010). She was most recently posted in Geneva as Deputy Executive Director at MSF, mostly in charge of strategic planning, international development, and risk and crisis management.

Conor Godfrey is a second-year Master in Public Affairs candidate, and has five years of experience working on African issues in the public and private sectors. After completing two years in Guinea as a Peace Corps Volunteer, Conor helped U.S. companies design market entry strategies on the continent at the Corporate Council on Africa. He has also worked for the U.S. State Department in Burkina Faso, and consulted for the United Nations, among other projects.

Daphne McCurdy is second-year Master in Public Affairs candidate at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School. Most recently, she worked as a graduate intern with the Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia in Nairobi, Kenya. Previously, Daphne headed the research program at the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED). In that capacity, she launched and served as the editor of a policy brief series and observed elections in Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. Prior to POMED, Daphne worked in the Middle East division at the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) where she helped manage programs on anticorruption, corporate governance, and the informal sector. From 2007 to 2008, Daphne was on a Fulbright scholarship in Turkey conducting research on Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East and working at the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV). Daphne holds a B.A. in International Relations and Economics from Tufts University.

Owen McDougall has a background in election monitoring and constitution-building, as well as experience conducting research on peace and conflict issues. Before coming to Princeton, McDougall worked for five years at The Carter Center on democracy and governance projects in North/East Africa. This included most recently working as Field Analyst Coordinator for The Carter Center's election observation mission of Egypt's presidential elections of 2012. He has worked for the Center on various democratic processes in Sudan/South Sudan, including the April 2010 national elections, May 2011 elections in South Kordofan, and the 2011 referendum for Southern self-determination, which resulted in the creation of the world's newest state. Following independence, he also contributed to the Center's support to the drafting of election, political party laws, and the constitutional review process in South Sudan. As a research assistant from 2006-2007 at the Watson Institute for International Studies, he examined counter-insurgency doctrine used by NATO countries in Iraq and Afghanistan, with particular focus on recent trends to integrate cultural awareness into troop training. He also spent six months studying the post-conflict environment in Northern Ireland, including conducting interviews with former paramilitaries in West Belfast. McDougall graduated from Brown University with a degree in International Relations with Honors and expects to complete his Masters of Public Affairs at Princeton in 2014.

Steve Ross is a second-year Master in Public Affairs candidate at Princeton, where he is studying international relations with a focus on conflict and governance. After studying at Tufts University, he worked for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a think tank, in Washington, DC, where he was involved in an extensive evaluation of reconstruction in Afghanistan, culminating in the report he co-authored *Breaking Point: Measuring Progress in Afghanistan*. Steve then moved to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where he lived for two years while working on an anti-corruption project with Pact Cambodia. When not promoting private sector engagement on anti-corruption initiatives and helping to establish a coalition of NGOs dedicated to monitoring revenues from the extractive industries, he volunteered at a school in Phnom Penh's Dey Krahorm slum community. Upon his return from Cambodia, Steve managed a portfolio of seed grants and designed outreach efforts for the World Justice Project, a non-profit dedicated to strengthening the

rule of law around the world. Steve most recently served as a graduate intern at the U.S. Department of State in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, writing an evaluation of CSO's engagement in Burma and examining conflict dynamics in the lead-up to Bangladesh's January 2014 elections.

Briana Marticorena served as a Strategic Advisor to the Commander, International Security Assistance Force, under both General John Allen and General Joseph Dunford. Prior to deploying to Afghanistan, Marticorena worked with the Pakistan-Afghanistan Coordination Cell within the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, as well as with the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy-Space Policy. Before entering the Department of Defense, Marticorena completed a Rosenthal Fellowship with the Department of the Treasury, as well as internships with the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. House of Representatives. Marticorena holds an A.B. from Harvard and is currently completing a Master in Public Affairs from Princeton, where she is a fellow in the Woodrow Wilson School's Scholars in the Nation's Service Initiative

Faculty Advisors

Minh Thu Pham is Director of Policy for the United Nations Foundation, leading its work on the post-2015 development agenda and other strategic initiatives to advance multilateral cooperation and US-UN relations. She is also Visiting Lecturer at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, leading a policy workshop on UN peacekeeping. She previously served in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General for both Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-Moon, as policy adviser in the Strategic Planning Unit on negotiations leading up to the World Summit Outcome of 2005, UN reform policies and implementation, and UN relations with the U.S during a particularly difficult period of that relationship. She has worked in the UN Peacebuilding Support Office and was chief of staff to the UN Special Envoy for Malaria. Minh-Thu has advised the High Representative in Bosnia-Herzegovina on implementing the Dayton Peace Accord, supported early childhood education and refugee rights in Ethiopia, and advocated for refugees and asylum seekers in Washington, DC. Minh-Thu holds an MPA from the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University and a BA in History from Duke University. She has been a Term Member of the Council on Foreign Relations, is a fellow of the Truman National Security Project, and serves on the Board of Directors of the Coalition for Asian-American Children and Families.

Patrick M. Kuhn is a Lecturer in Public and International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC) project at Princeton University. He completed his PhD at the University of Rochester in 2013 and holds an M.A. from the University of Rochester and a Lic. phil. I in Political Science from the University of Zurich, Switzerland. At Rochester he specialized in Comparative Political Economy, with a special interest in the political economy of development and conflict. His research focuses on the causes and dynamics of electoral violence in Sub-Saharan Africa and the impact of natural disasters on political attitudes and political behavior in developing countries.