

2.2 Thematic Essays

Flying Blind? Political Mission Responses to Transnational Threats

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TRANSNATIONAL THREATS, LOCAL POLITICS

In early March 2009, the small nation of Guinea-Bissau on the West African coast was rocked by two political assassinations. First, on the evening of 1 March, a bomb in a stairwell at army headquarters killed army chief of staff, General Tagme Na Waie. A few hours later in the early hours of 2 March, President João Bernardo Vieira was killed in a shootout at his home. The President's assassination was quickly characterized by some army elements as a revenge attack for Na Waie's killing, following years of bad blood between the two. Yet many observers suspected the involvement of Latin American cocaine traffickers, who had spent years making Guinea-Bissau a transatlantic drug trafficking hub, and appeared to have deeply penetrated Bissau-Guinean ruling elites.²

Despite its best efforts, the United Nations' (UN) political mission in the country at the time, UNOGBIS, seemed largely powerless to stem what appeared to be crime-related instability. As events in late 2009 and 2010 would demonstrate, its successor, UNIOGBIS, seemed in little better position, despite an increased mandate. In late 2009, Rear Admiral José Américo Bubo Na Tchuto of the Guinea-Bissau Navy took refuge in the UN compound, having returned to the country following sixteen months in self-imposed exile after being accused of leading a failed coup d'état. Ninety-five days later, Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Jr. was temporarily arrested by a military faction; military forces soon after breached the UN premises, with Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto following them



An opium poppy field in Badakhshan, Afghanistan.

UNAMA/Shresh Kalantari

out. Again outsiders saw the hand of drug traffickers in these destabilizing events; in April 2010, the United States accused Bubo Na Tchuto of involvement in drug trafficking. Yet, in October 2010 he was reappointed as head of Guinea-Bissau's Navy.

Such intertwining of transnational threats (TNTs) and national political dynamics seems to be increasingly common in the countries and regions where international organizations such as the UN, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU) have established political missions. Whether in relation to allegations of organ trafficking used to fund war-time strategies and peace-time politics in Kosovo, a blend of drug trafficking and political corruption in Afghanistan, oligarchic control of illegal armed groups in Guatemala, *mafia*-style penetration of the police in Bosnia, links between

Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED)

The recognition of the strategic importance of political missions' convening power in addressing transnational threats is not confined to the UN's field-based SPMs. The United Nations Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate – a New York-based body created as a Special Political Mission in Resolution 1535 (2004) to assist the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) in its work to implement Resolution 1373 (2001) – has placed increasing emphasis on convening groups of regional and functional actors to build shared responses to terrorist threats. This has included five special meetings of the CTC with regional organizations since 2003; recurring regional workshops for prosecutors, judges and counterterrorism officials in South Asia; and a regional discussion of border management in East Africa.

piracy and politics in Puntland, transborder armed groups and resource exploitation in Central Africa and the Great Lakes, or the intermixing of transnational terrorism, kidnapping and rebel insurgencies in the Sahel – international organizations have been increasingly compelled to consider the impact that TNTs are having on national dynamics.

As the World Bank's *World Development Report (WDR) 2011* makes clear, in a globalized world, political and military conflict appears to be increasingly "criminalized," with a range of military, political and private actors directly or indirectly drawing financial and materiel support from transnational networks.³ The historical decline in inter- and intra-state battle deaths over the past two decades has been offset by a significant rise in crime-related homicide: death rates in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua now outstrip those of many countries recognized as being "in conflict." The June 2011 report of the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) to the Security Council provides a clear example, reporting that rising revenues from cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine trafficking in West Africa have "corrupting effects [which] have further weakened already fragile State institutions and may finance armed or terrorist groups operating across West Africa and the Sahel" – with those terrorist groups increasingly targeting state institutions and sowing regional unrest.⁴

The implications for political missions and peacemaking activities are clear: the proceeds of crime can fuel political corruption, undermine political institutions and processes, further delegitimize weak justice and security institutions and support armed actors. The organization of violence becomes less contingent on local political support, and more contingent on transnational funding and social networks. In this regard, purely "political" peace deals "may no longer provide a comprehensive solution to large-scale violence, since economic motives – often hidden or downright criminal – may also be major factors in determining conflict-termination outcomes."⁵ In both countries emerging from conflict and countries with weak accountability institutions and mechanisms, politics can be altered by illicit funding and transnational illegal activity, weakening the legitimacy of political processes and institutions.

As a rule, the threat to stability posed by the intertwining of TNTs and political, economic and social dynamics is more clearly recognized and addressed by the international community in countries that already figure prominently on the strategic radar of major powers (e.g., Afghanistan, Somalia, southeastern Europe) than those that figure less prominently (e.g., Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Guatemala, Haiti). The *WDR 2011* highlights that the resulting unsystematic approach poses a number of risks for peacemaking, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding in the sense that "the international system has not been adjusted to keep pace with the emerging analysis of conflict – in particular, recognition of the repetitive and interlinked nature of organized crime and trafficking."⁶ At the same time, the proliferation in international assistance has led to "overlaps and discontinuities" between different mechanisms and initiatives spanning the humanitarian, development, security and political realms.⁷

Notwithstanding, there are signs that policy-makers are increasingly recognizing the need to better equip the international system to address the multidimensional nature of TNTs and their impact on national dynamics, particularly political stability – however, policy intent appears to significantly outpace well-resourced operational responses at present. On 24 February 2010, the UN Security Council issued a Presidential Statement registering its "growing concern" that drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, cybercrime, arms trafficking

and the financing of terrorism pose threats to international security – and expressing “its intention to consider such threats, as appropriate.”⁸ The Council “invite[d] the Secretary-General to consider these threats as a factor in conflict prevention strategies, conflict analysis, integrated missions’ assessment and planning,” and to report “on the role played by these threats in situations on its agenda.” In response to these requests, on 2 March 2011 the Secretary-General approved the establishment of a UN System Task Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking, led by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA),⁹ “to develop an effective and comprehensive approach to the challenge of transnational organized crime and drug trafficking as threats to security and stability.”¹⁰

EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) have also been compelled to confront transnational threats in an array of settings – Afghanistan, the Great Lakes region and most notably Bosnia and Kosovo.¹¹ Meanwhile, in December 2006 a decision of the OSCE Ministerial Council registered “grave concern about the negative effects of organized crime on peace, stability and security,” while a decision three years later committed the OSCE to a range of efforts that would “address transnational threats and challenges to security and stability.”¹² Building the capacity of member states to handle a range of TNTs is now a significant aspect of the OSCE strategy to bring stability and security to its area of operations.

This essay surveys the approach being taken by UN, OSCE and EU political missions to address TNTs, and identifies areas where adjustments might usefully be considered. The essay argues that, for a range of reasons, most political missions continue to “fly blind” on TNTs, often approaching them as technical problems to be solved through technical means, rather than complex problems that touch on an array of political, economic and social issues. In addition, the maneuverability of political missions is often limited by: i) weak mandates; ii) highly limited capacity and resources; and iii) weak international – and to some extent national – structures, processes and capacity to respond coherently to threats that span the national and the global, the political and the developmental.¹³ The degree to which the problem of TNTs is acknowledged by national or regional governments can also have a significant impact on how a political mission responds to TNTs. Given the increasing impact

of TNTs on political stability, these shortcomings collectively risk setting political missions up for failure, notwithstanding the efforts of staff on the ground. The final section of the essay identifies several immediate measures that the UN and regional organizations could take to better leverage the comparative advantage of political missions to tackle TNTs, emphasizing their key role in helping national and regional actors, as well as the international community, to better understand the impact of TNTs on local dynamics, and to develop a coordinated strategic response.

THE CURRENT APPROACH: FROM A NARROW INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH TO ONE GROUNDED IN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL DYNAMICS¹⁴

Mandates and Activities

Since it was only in 2010 that the UN Security Council invited the Secretary-General to consider TNTs in mission planning and reporting, it may be too precipitous to expect the inclusion of detailed provisions on TNTs in the mandates of UN Special Political Missions (SPMs). Indeed, as current mandates stand, inclusion of TNTs is neither routine nor strategic; resourcing for these activities is, consequently, paltry. Nonetheless, SPMs are mandated to assist states to respond to TNTs with increasing frequency, largely through support to local capacity-building and rule-of-law oriented institutional reform efforts. They are not, however, clearly mandated to address the nexus between organized crime and national political or power dynamics, which increasingly constitute the driving force behind instability in various regions.

As Table 1 below shows, the main *thematic* areas addressed within UN political mission mandates are transnational organized crime, and drug and arms trafficking. Four political missions also have mandates to address counter terrorism and fight corruption. Mandates to assist states to build rule-of-law capacity, specifically to fight human trafficking, organized crime and drug trafficking, are more common amongst OSCE field operations.

Shifting our focus from a *thematic* breakdown of mandates to an analysis of the *types of activities* undertaken, we see that at present the activities of UN, OSCE and EU political missions relating to TNTs focus primarily on supporting and

Table 1: Mandates and activities relating to transnational threats of selected UN and OSCE political and field missions

IO	Political Mission	Organized Crime and Trafficking in General	Drug Trafficking	Countering Terrorism	Cross-Border Armed Groups	Piracy	Arms Trafficking	Border Management	Anti-Corruption	Anti-money Laundering	Human Trafficking	Resource and Environmental Management	Cybercrime
UN SPM mandates, as of July 2011	BINUCA												
	BNUB								x				
	UNAMA	x	x	x					x				
	CNMC												
	UNAMI							x					
	UNIOGBIS	x	x				x				x		
	UNIPSIL	x	x						x				
	UNOCA	x	x	x (LRA)		x (OC in Gulf of Guinea)	x				x	x	
	UNOWA	x	x	x			x		x				
	UNPOS					x	x						
	UNRCCA	x	x	x								x	
	UNSCO												
	UNSCOL					x		x					
OSCE activities in 2010	Presence in Albania	x		x					x		x		
	Mission in Kosovo	x	x	x				x		x			x
	Mission to Montenegro	x	x							x	x		x
	Mission to Serbia	x	x						x	x	x		x
	Spill. Mon. Mission to Skopje	x	x	x						x	x		x
	Mission to Moldova		x								x		
	Project Co-ord. in Ukraine										x		
	Office in Baku									x	x		
	Office in Yerevan		x								x		x
	Centre in Ashgabat	x	x					x	x		x		
	Centre in Astana	x		x					x	x	x		
	Centre in Bishkek										x		
	Office in Tajikistan	x	x	x					x		x		
Project Co-ord. in Uzbekistan		x							x	x			

Sources: UN missions – Responses to DPA/CIC questionnaire on TNTs, June 2011; UN SPM websites and reporting; OSCE, Report on OSCE Activities in the Fights Against Organized Crime in 2010, SEC.DOC/1/11, 22 February 2011, Appendix; and OSCE field operations websites.

facilitating capacity-building efforts by international bodies and states. Where they do work on these issues, political missions typically use their leverage in foreign capitals, their good offices and their convening power to mobilize resources and provide guidance and advice, to support technical assistance to national counterparts and training of local actors. OSCE field operations – especially in southeast Europe – have organized literally hundreds of projects to raise awareness, provide legal and institutional assistance, train local officials and build institutional expertise, facilitate cooperation and networking, and provide equipment.¹⁵ The most frequent OSCE activities are specialized training and cross-border convening.¹⁶

EU Special Representatives have played a similar role – but have also moved into a more overtly political mode. EUSRs are generally mandated to provide political guidance to, and sometimes to coordinate, EU-system wide activities in the respective country, including on TNTs. This frequently involves the EUSR supporting existing EU programming. The EUSR for the African Great Lakes, for example, has a mandate that specifically includes addressing illicit resource exploitation, and cross-border armed groups – including the Lord Resistance Army (LRA). The EUSR for Central Asia oversees programming designed to help countries in the region fight drug trafficking. In Afghanistan, the EUSR's mandate includes supporting EU police-led counter-organized crime and trafficking measures, including alternative livelihood development, policing and other justice sector reform, anti-corruption and border control.

There are signs that some UN SPMs may also be moving beyond a program support role, using their convening power and good offices to advance cross-border policy discussions, build confidence and foster joint approaches to tackling TNTs. In Central Asia, for example, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and head of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) has used his good offices as a basis for convening regional actors to discuss a range of TNTs, including terrorism and drug trafficking. In September 2010, UNRCCA worked with the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force to convene a meeting to assist Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in establishing a regional

counter-terrorism plan in line with the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. OSCE field operations have also moved towards regionalized policy discussions and training, for example convening a July 2010 meeting on cross-border anti-crime initiatives in Central Asia, a separate sub-regional workshop on maritime terrorism for the Black Sea Economic Cooperation countries and numerous regional training and policy seminars on TNTs in southeast Europe.

A similar regional approach has emerged in the work of UNOWA, where the SRSG has used his convening authority, political leverage and transnational reach to raise awareness of the impact of TNTs in West Africa, especially drug trafficking, and to broker support from the international community for responses designed to mitigate those threats, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Action Plan on Drug Trafficking;¹⁷ the Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa which includes a provision on preventing the financing of political parties and their campaigns by criminal networks, in particular drug trafficking networks;¹⁸ and the UN's West Africa Coastal Initiative (WACI).¹⁹ The latter – a program co-led by UNODC, DPA, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and INTERPOL – is assisting in building Transnational Crime Units in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau. It represents a particularly important example of inter-agency cooperation and innovation at the programmatic level. Conversely, as we discuss further below, the WACI initiative also provides important insights into the current limitations of the analytical capacities of international organizations, particularly regarding the intermingling of transnational threats and national political, economic and social dynamics.

Analytical Capacities

The UN's WACI demonstrates the capacity of UN peacekeeping operations and political missions to move beyond a narrow focus and work regionally with a range of partners to strengthen national capacities to counter organized crime. Through technical assistance and support to national-level Transnational Crime Units, UN bodies are also gaining access to important information about national criminal and criminal-political dynamics

– which can then be fed back into missions’ political analysis. Yet the exceptional nature of the WACI illustrates that such analysis is by no means routine.

UN SPM responses to a survey conducted jointly by the authors and DPA for this essay, for example, provided little evidence that these missions routinely consider transnational threat trends in developing strategic analysis of the political space in which they are operating. The causes are clear. Major capacity and resource constraints both at headquarters and in the field;²⁰ institutional structures and processes that have yet to adapt to new challenges; limited mandates; and limited political room for maneuver all lead UN SPMs to approach the analysis of TNTs from a narrow technical perspective. Frequently, it is a mission’s policing or military personnel that analyzes transnational threat trends – often only as a secondary or tertiary activity. Political economy and conflict analysis of the connections between crime and other transnational threats, and local political, economic and social dynamics, is largely absent. Nor are there dedicated human resources at headquarters, or protocols for inter-agency analysis of information gathered in the field, that might allow a more multifaceted, strategic analysis to emerge.

As a result, there is a risk that UN political missions will not fully grasp the deep connections between TNTs and political dynamics, and the leverage over political and civil society garnered by organized criminals or other problematic transnational actors. In Somalia, for example, the UN Political Office (UNPOS), citing resource constraints, has hitherto largely treated analysis of organized crime and trafficking as a technical matter for its small policing component – even as piracy (arguably a form of transnational organized crime) and transnational terrorism issues shape external donors’ perceptions of, and interventions into, Somalia.²¹ Yet the SRSG has himself recognized that external actors’ approaches to piracy and terrorism, including direct support to sub-federal authorities, risks working against the international community’s political strategy in Somalia, with its emphasis on the Transitional Federal Government.²² The mission is however moving to revive the work of the Somali Contact Group on counter-piracy.²³ While UNPOS officials have indicated that the mission is trying to ensure that efforts to respond to the piracy issue are tied into broader attempts to deal with the

multi-faceted political, economic and social challenges that Somalia faces, that very effort – to tie counter-piracy measures and political stratagems together – points to the underlying risk of strategic incoherence. Absent such strategic coherence, gains will continue at best to accrue at the tactical level, and will likely prove much harder to sustain.

In Guinea-Bissau, even as drug money seems to shape the development of national politics, UNIOGBIS’ analysis of, and response to drug trafficking focuses predominantly on programmatic support to reforming the criminal justice system and security sector. Key aspects of this support are channeled through the national Operational Plan to Combat Drugs, and the WACI.²⁴ UNIOGBIS also supports broader security sector reform and national dialogue – though none of these programs appear to have a specific focus on the interaction of trafficking, on the one hand, and political, economic and social dynamics and key governance issues in the country, on the other. While evidently the criminal justice system and the security services need to be strengthened as a means to respond to transnational threats, so too do political institutions and processes and accountability mechanisms. Limited attention continues to be afforded to the impact of drug trafficking on the latter.

Some SPMs have indicated that they do incorporate analysis of TNTs into their political reporting to headquarters. This appears however to be a rather *ad hoc* process, driven by the preferences and skill sets of personnel on the ground and their success in gleaning information from open sources and bilateral contacts in the host government, other UN agencies, and foreign partners.²⁵ Only one SPM, the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), mentioned using network or link analysis with any frequency. This contrasts to the analytical approach increasingly taken by national intelligence agencies to transnational threats – with fused link analysis from multiple open, confidential, human and technical sources. Such an approach has been used with success in some UN joint mission analysis cells, notably to fight gangs in Haiti.²⁶ These tools may be useful in developing a deeper political economy analysis of how power operates in a given setting, and its multi-faceted connections to transnational threats. This would, of course, require a significant increase in the resources devoted to such analysis – or at

the very least, clear support from senior mission or headquarters leadership for the use of existing resources to conduct such joined-up analysis, and the development of operational protocols for effective information-sharing and analysis.

OSCE missions, too, seem to have limited analytical capacity on these issues. Their focus has been more on exchange of information, capacity-building, legislative and technical assistance, and awareness raising and training.²⁷ However, as a result of the organization's experiences in response to TNTs issuing from Afghanistan, and in trying to respond to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) proliferation and trafficking pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1540, the OSCE leadership is now calling for the development of increased analytical capacity in this area, with a more "cross-dimensional," coordinated approach.²⁸

EUSRs, by contrast, may have access to more in-depth, joined-up analysis of transnational threat trends, especially where they are collocated with policing or security missions that are developing their own operational intelligence. Interviews conducted by one of the authors in Bosnia in 2006, for example, suggested fairly routine information sharing relating to organized crime between both international and national policing and military contingents and EUSR and Office of the High Representative (OHR) personnel. Further probing into how these information-sharing processes might have served to enhance EU efforts on the ground could be of value for other political missions.

Cooperation

Because political missions rarely have internal expertise dedicated to analyzing the links between TNTs and national political, social and economic dynamics, strategic cooperation and coordination is imperative.

Some UN SPMs are moving in this direction. One example is in Central Asia, where drug trafficking and drug consumption have risen dramatically over the past five years.²⁹ There is broad acknowledgement that the growing drug addiction in all the Central Asian countries is endangering the health of populations; and it is equally clear that drugs and drug-related crime can have serious implications for political, economic and social stability in Central Asia. Within the framework of its

conflict prevention mandate, UNRCCA has cooperated with UNODC and the OSCE to develop a strategic analysis of the nature and impact of the narcotics trade in the region as a basis for developing a framework to support regional cooperation and conflict prevention efforts. Such support could include assistance to regional consultation mechanisms, facilitating dialogue with and between governments in the region and between these and other international players, and promotion of cross-border cooperation. While regional factors will ultimately determine UNRCCA's scope of action and influence, the fact that the UN is perceived as a legitimate actor in the region gives it a comparative advantage for making progress on these issues.

In West Africa, UNOWA's experience with WACI shows how the head of an SPM, equipped with a flexible mandate, can convene a range of actors from the international community to mount a multidimensional response to TNTs. The role played by the SRSG in supporting WACI also shows how the political leverage of a political mission, which is comparably weaker than the leverage of a peace-keeping operation, can be strengthened through association with other entities; and by extension, help develop responses to TNTs that range from the tactical to the strategic. Using his role as chair of a new High-level Policy Committee for WACI, the SRSG has helped to ensure effective coordination between WACI and external processes, such as the ECOWAS Action Plan to counter drug trafficking. One result has been a decision to explore a strategic expansion of the WACI into Guinea, which is seen as particularly vulnerable to TNTs.³⁰

In other cases, though, political missions – especially those polled within the UN – appear to focus predominantly on operational level cooperation in the form of joint programming. UNIPSIL provides a good example. It has the most specific mandates of any SPM to assist the host country tackle organized crime and drug trafficking, and among the highest level of resources (including three police personnel) dedicated to working on these issues. (At the same time, the fact that a dedicated capacity of three police personnel represents a resourcing high-water mark is an indication of the paltry resources available to political missions to tackle transnational threats.)

There is only limited evidence to show that the extensive project coordination UNIPSIL has

Support for Multi-actor Efforts in Sierra Leone

UN SPMs are also increasingly providing support to other actors in their efforts to tackle TNTs. In Sierra Leone, for example, UNIPSIL provides advice and support to the local government to develop airport security, and to the local criminal justice reform taskforce. It plays an advisory role for a \$1.4 million UNODC project to strengthen institutional capacity to respond to organized crime and drug trafficking; and to a \$1 million US AFRICOM project to build the Transnational Organized Crime Unit's premises and forensic capacity.

developed has led to a more integrated and strategic response on the part of UN actors and their regional and international partners. UNIPSIL's police component does develop analysis of crime trends in the country, and shares these internally – yet it is unclear if or how such analysis is considered in the work of other core mission components such as political affairs and the Strategic Planning Unit. Experiences in UN peace operations suggest that the routine integration of such operational intelligence can play an important role in shaping strategic decision-making and influencing more targeted operational responses in extremely complex environments.³¹ The system is still plagued by obstacles to such integration, however.

TOWARDS A MORE STRATEGIC APPROACH

In mid 2010, the previous OSCE Secretary-General presented an analysis of the missed opportunities in the organization's response to TNTs.

...the OSCE as a whole has not made the most of its inherent comparative advantages: its broad membership and geographic scope, its key role as a forum for political dialogue, its ability to serve as a hub of co-operation for officials, NGOs and international organizations, its network of Field Operations and its unique comprehensive and cooperative security mandate. While the Organization, over the past decade, has developed important expertise in individual areas related to transnational threats, its overall response has not lived up to the coherent vision set forth [in earlier strategy documents].³²

This analysis could easily be applied to other

international organizations, including the UN and arguably the EU. Indeed, political missions enjoy at least three interlinked comparative advantages over other actors in tackling TNTs: i) the inherent legitimacy and leverage afforded to a political mission through its multilateral mandate; ii) access to information about both the “macro” (regional or global) picture, including trends in transnational networks or markets, and the local picture (including national and local level political-economy and elite structures); iii) their access to transnational networks of influence and resources. Political missions can thus have a unique perch from which to follow the interaction of TNTs and local politics, rally national, regional and international interest in the issues, and help design – and execute – a coordinated strategic narrative and response. Yet member states are not systematically equipping these organizations to play that role.

As noted above, some political missions are beginning to find their way of their own accord, largely through innovation by charismatic and influential mission leaders and an opening within the system that allows them some space for maneuver. These leaders use to their advantage the convening power and policy-shaping opportunities inherent to political missions, especially when it comes to transnational trends. As a result, they can use TNTs as a framework for joint problem-solving and cross-border confidence building, which as noted in the 2011 *WDR*, may have significant knock-on benefits for conflict prevention in other areas.

Yet as important as confidence- and capacity-building efforts are to address the institutional weakness and other conditions that allow TNTs to impact on national politics and societies, without the analytical and political tools necessary to identify and respond to the TNTs and the impact they can have on political stability, political missions could be left tilting at windmills. What may be necessary, therefore, is a series of measures to improve analysis and strategic guidance to SPMs on responding to TNTs. Fortunately, the political climate for such measures may be favorable.

International organizations should begin by using existing opportunities to strengthen the analytical capacities of political missions – and political analysts/desk officers at headquarters – in relation to TNTs. At the UN, member states seem increasingly inclined to invite assistance from DPA on

issues related to TNTs through SPMs or even *ad hoc* mechanisms such as the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).³³ For example, during a 4 March 2011 visit to Iran, the SRSG for the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) received requests for the mission to provide assistance on a range of cross-border issues, including cross-border resource and environmental management and narcotics trafficking.³⁴ Even more concrete openings are provided at the system-wide level by the UN Security Council's Presidential Statement of 24 February 2010, inviting the Secretary-General to integrate analysis of TNTs into conflict analysis and mission planning; by the Security Council's increasing interest in considering terrorism prevention in the same breath as conflict prevention and other TNTs; and the creation of the new UN System Task Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking, which has decided to focus at first on developing mechanisms for improved sharing of data, information and joint analysis. At the EU, the creation of the European External Action Service offers significant openings for the development and application of lessons learned from past EUSR experiences in political arenas affected by TNTs. And at the OSCE, the recent Secretary-General's 2010 report on these issues offers specific, concrete recommendations for the way forward.

The recommendations laid down in the OSCE Secretary-General's 2010 report on addressing transnational threats and challenges may also be instructive for the UN and EU. The report recommends the creation of "an analytical/threat assessment capacity (Unit) within the Secretariat, tasked with providing broader assessment, identifying emerging transnational threats, overall trends related to their evolution and the links between their various aspects."³⁵ The report argues that this analytical capacity is necessary to allow the OSCE Secretary-General to discharge his right to advise and inform the OSCE Permanent Council or Forum for Security Cooperation. A similar argument might be made that in addition to the recently established Task Force on Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking, the UN Secretariat may need to create arrangements for improved information-sharing and joint analysis of existing and emerging TNTs, making better use of the information already available to and within the UN family. Such analysis

should, ultimately, assist the development and execution of political strategy by political missions. The UN has significant expertise across the system in these areas. Hence, whether at headquarters or in the field, improved information and personnel sharing protocols between relevant entities could create the basis for the application of analytical capabilities and methodologies now routinely used at the national level to deal with TNTs, such as fusion cells, link analysis and open source analysis.

Improvements in analysis also, however, need to be coupled with a more integrated strategic approach on how to respond to TNTs and the impact they have on political, economic and social dynamics at the regional, national and local levels. A political lessons learned process might be initiated to explore how political missions have responded in specific cases, particularly where political actors with whom missions have interacted appear to have been implicated in activities that are internationally criminalized – whether drug trafficking in Afghanistan, Central Asia, Central America or West Africa, human and organ trafficking in southeastern Europe, terrorism or piracy in Somalia, illegal resource exploitation in the Great Lakes; or taking advantages of loopholes in the international banking system to launder drug-related or stolen public funds.³⁶ Enhancing strategic coordination and interaction anchored in the principle of shared responsibility is therefore imperative, not least because these kinds of situations can pose significant dilemmas for political missions particularly in countries or regions emerging from conflict or violent unrest. In such settings the broad range of interests implicated in negative transnational activity does not make it easy to determine whether national counterparts suspected of engagement in such activities are best treated as potential partners for peace, or immediate targets for law enforcement.

In this regard, it is also an opportune moment for the international system to take stock of the nature of assistance it is providing at the operational level as a means to counter transnational threats. As noted in this essay, most efforts are expended on strengthening and reforming justice and security institutions with limited consideration of the nature of the political system and its relations with these institutions. However, there is increasing evidence that this kind of assistance has limited impact, particularly in states where the political system operates

in a predatory fashion, and where elite structures serve as entry points for illicit business activities. A deeper debate on the merits of the current institutional reform approach may therefore be warranted.

Developing a more integrated strategic approach will also require careful consideration of the sources of strategic leverage that political missions can, ultimately muster to alter the interaction of TNTs and local politics.³⁷ Some political missions – such as some EUSRs – will be collocated with, and have authority over, executive policing and security capacities. Others will not, and must rely instead on their ability to mobilize national, regional and international actors through a cogent analysis of TNTs, their interaction with local society and politics and a convincing articulation of a response strategy. Those political missions, in particular, might benefit from a review of past efforts by political missions to coordinate and leverage organizational partners, diplomatic contacts, law

enforcement interest, public opinion, public and private economic power and social opprobrium, to alter the strategic landscape in which transnational criminal and extremists operate.

Until international and regional organizations identify and learn from these experiences, they risk setting political missions up for failure, leaving them – and the international organizations that back them – looking as powerless and irrelevant as UNOGBIS did to the people of Guinea-Bissau in the face of the drug-related violence of 2009. Without improved analytical capacities and arrangements leading to a shared strategic direction, the executive bodies of international organizations risk leaving these political missions flying blind. As in Guinea-Bissau, the results may all too often be tragic – not only for those directly affected by the resulting violence on the ground, but also for the men and women who put their lives on the line in the service of these political missions.

NOTES

- 1 James Cockayne is Co-Director of the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation in New York, and editor with Adam Lupel of *Peace Operations and Organized Crime: Enemies or Allies?* (Routledge, 2011). Camino Kavanagh is Senior Programme Coordinator and Fellow at NYU's Center on International Cooperation. The authors wish to thank Alischa Kugel, Jake Sherman and numerous UN and OSCE officials for their support in the research for this essay.
- 2 Scott Baldauf, "Guinea-Bissau assassinations: Is Colombia's drug trade behind them?", *The Christian Science Monitor*, 3 March 2009; interviews with Director of Research and Planning at GIABA, July 2011.
- 3 World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*, 11 April 2011, available at http://wdr2011.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf.
- 4 United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa*, S/2011/388, (20 June 2011), para. 8.
- 5 James Cockayne, "Crime, Corruption and Violent Economies", in Mats Berdal and Achim Wennmann, eds., *Ending Wars, Consolidating Peace: Economic Perspectives* (IISS/Routledge, 2010), pp. 189-218 at p. 190.
- 6 World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development*, Washington DC: 2011, p. 181. See also pp. 67-68, 78-81.
- 7 *Idem*
- 8 United Nations, *Statement by the President of the Security Council*, PRST 2010/4 (24 February 2010).
- 9 Other members include DPKO, the PBSO, UN Women, UNDP, DPI, OHCHR, UNICEF and the WB.
- 10 In addition in February this year and within the context of the 6479th meeting of the Security Council on the "Maintenance of international peace and security: the interdependence between security and development" the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to ensure his reporting contains conflict analyses and contextual information on *inter alia* social and economic issues when they are 'drivers of conflict, represent a challenge to the implementation of Council mandates, or endanger the process of consolidation of peace.'

- 11 See <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/policies/foreign-policy/eu-special-representatives.aspx?lang=en>.
- 12 OSCE Ministerial Council. *Decision No. 5/06. Organized Crime*, MC.DEC/5/06 (5 December 2006); OSCE Ministerial Council, *Decision No. 2/09 Further OSCE Efforts to Address Transnational Threats and Challenges to Security and Stability*, MC.DEC/2/09 (2 December 2009).
- 13 See Chapter 9 of the WDR – New Directions for International Support (p.269).
- 14 With the assistance of UN DPA the authors surveyed the organization’s thirteen field-based special political missions on their approaches to tackling TNTs. Responses to this survey were supplemented with a desk review of open source material on these political missions, and analogous OSCE and EU missions.
- 15 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Report on OSCE Activities in the Fights Against Organized Crime in 2010*, SEC.DOC/1/11 (22 February 2011).
- 16 Ibid. Specialized training and technical assistance is provided in the following areas: criminal codes and procedure; criminal analysis and investigations; cyber security/crime; terrorism financing; asset forfeiture; money laundering and financial investigations; anti-corruption; drug trafficking and trafficking in human beings; forged documents and travel document security; and witness protection.
- 17 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Regional Action Plan to Address the Growing Problem of Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organised Crimes and Drug Abuse in West Africa*, available at <http://www.unodc.org/westandcentralafrica/en/ecowasresponseactionplan.html>.
- 18 See Art. 13 of the *Praia Declaration on Elections and Stability in West Africa*, 20 May 2011, available at <http://unowa.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=706&ctl=Details&mid=1681&ItemID=1981>.
- 19 See <http://unowa.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=841> for background on the West Africa Coast Initiative.
- 20 Capacity constraints include limited headquarters’ capacity to provide analytical and fund-raising support and at times, strategic guidance to political missions in the field.
- 21 The survey responds stated that UNPOS does not deal with or analyze TNTs as part of its conflict resolution mandate “due to the shortage of manpower ... and no resource allocation.”
- 22 Augustine P. Mahiga, “SRSG Statement on Piracy to ICG”, Madrid, September 2010, available at <http://unpos.unmissions.org/Portals/UNPOS/Repository%20UNPOS/100928%20-%20ICG%20SRSG%20Statement%20on%20Piracy%20-%20final.pdf>.
- 23 The contact group was established on the basis of a request by Working Group 1 of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia at a technical meeting between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), Puntland and Somaliland in January 2010, with a view to promote internal coordination, information-generation and sharing, and to coordinate their respective counter-piracy offices. UNPOS provides secretariat functions for the CG, based in Hargeisa, to advance an integrated law reform strategy.
- 24 UNODC has noted that, given the evidence of corruption and the relative sizes of the contraband and the economy in Guinea-Bissau, virtually every political conflict in the country has criminal undertones. UNODC, *Crime and Instability, Case Studies of Transnational Threats, February 2010*.
- 25 Responses to DPA/CIC questionnaire on TNTs, June 2011.
- 26 James Cockayne, “The futility of force: the strategic limits of the UN’s war on gangs in Haiti,” in Betz et al., eds, *The Utility of Force: The Use of Force in Robust Peace Operations*, forthcoming 2012.
- 27 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Report on OSCE Activities in the Fights Against Organized Crime in 2010*, SEC.DOC/1/11, (22 February 2011), para. 6.
- 28 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Report by the OSCE Secretary General on the Implementation of MC.DEC/2/09 on Further OSCE Efforts to Address Transnational Threats and Challenges to Security and Stability*, SEC.GAL/107/10 (11 June 2010), para. 5.
- 29 Close to 100 metric tons (mt) of Afghan-sourced heroin, or over 20% of the total illicit heroin consumption worldwide, were trafficked in 2009 to Central Asia. While 89 mt were delivered further to Russia, the Caucasus and beyond, approximately 11 mt did remain in Central Asia to supply the local demand (*Addiction, crime and insurgency: the transnational threat of Afghan opium, UNODC, 2009*).

- 30 “West Africa Coast Initiative” available at <http://unowa.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=841>.
- 31 Cockayne, “The futility of force”, op. cit.; and see James Cockayne and Adam Lupel, eds., *Peace Operations and Organized Crime: Enemies or Allies?* (Routledge, 2011).
- 32 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Report by the OSCE Secretary General on the Implementation of MC.DEC/2/09 on Further OSCE Efforts to Address Transnational Threats and Challenges to Security and Stability*, SEC.GAL/107/10 (11 June 2010), para. 6. The unit referred to in the report has not yet been established, but the report implementation process remains on foot.
- 33 It would be important to bear in mind however, it took several years to negotiate the establishment of the body; and while it is being touted as an initiative worth considering for other contexts dealing with similar issues, no thorough assessment of the overall systemic impact of the CICIG has been conducted to date.
- 34 United Nations, *Second report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 6 of resolution 1936 (2010)*, S/2011/213 (31 March 2011), para. 5.
- 35 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Report by the OSCE Secretary General on the Implementation of MC.DEC/2/09 on Further OSCE Efforts to Address Transnational Threats and Challenges to Security and Stability*, SEC.GAL/107/10, (11 June 2010), para. 44.
- 36 In this regard, a deeper understanding of the work of the Financial Action Task Force and other multi-lateral mechanisms that study and investigate incidences of high-level political corruption including Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) initiatives would be valuable.
- 37 For a similar discussion in relation to peace operations see the concluding chapter of Cockayne and Lupel, “Peace Operations and Organized Crime,” op. cit.