



Peace Operations and the Rule of Law: Recommendations for Dealing with Transnational Organized Crime *

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Organized Crime: High on the Agenda

The international system is geared towards dealing with problems within or between states. However, many contemporary crises involve powerful non-state actors and transnational threats, like criminal groups. These groups do not sit in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly or the Security Council. Yet some of them are more powerful than states, and their macroeconomic clout is bigger than many economies. This is not a scenario that the UN was created to deal with, but it is the reality confronting Member States.

Over the past twenty years, states and international organizations have largely failed to anticipate the evolution of transnational organized crime (TOC) from a localized problem into a strategic threat to governments, societies and economies.¹ Now they are living with the consequences. Parts of cities, states and even regions are out of the control of central governments. Organized crime is a clear and present danger in almost every theatre where the UN has peace operations.

The extent to which organized crime has become a threat to security can be gauged by the increased frequency of debates on crime-related issues in the Security Council, for example on drug trafficking, piracy, Afghanistan, parts of Central America, the Sahel, and West Africa. Crime is having a detrimental impact in other areas as well, for example in relation to development, health, the environment, and the rule of law.

While governments have been revising their national security strategies accordingly, the UN has been slower to respond. Member States adopted the United Nations (Palermo) Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three related protocols in December 2000. Furthermore, in 2004, the UN High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, identified trans-national organized crime as one of “six clusters of threats with which the world must be concerned now and in the decades ahead”.² And yet, perhaps because of the

* This paper is a commissioned background paper for the International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations. The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Challenges Partnership or the Host.

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¹ “Transnational Organized Crime”, *IPI Blue Papers* No2, New York, 2009, p.1.

² “A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility”, Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, United Nations, 2004, p. 2.

strong focus on terrorism after 11 September 2001, the issue was low on the UN's agenda for the first decade of the 21st century.

The situation is changing. Concerned about the increasing threat that organized crime poses to security, the Security Council has invited the Secretary-General to “mainstream” the issue of fighting crime into the work of the United Nations.³ A UN System Task Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking was established in March 2011 “to develop an effective and comprehensive approach to the challenge of transnational organized crime and drug trafficking as threats to stability and security”. The *World Development Report 2011* has increased awareness about the relationship between instability, crime and development.

What can the UN and its Member States do to increase their effectiveness in fighting transnational organized crime? This is a big question, and requires an in-depth review of how the UN system is currently dealing with the problem, and what could be improved. That is the focus of an International Peace Institute (IPI) project called “Peace without Crime: Towards an Integrated Response to Transnational Organized Crime.” This paper focuses on one aspect, namely the role of peace operations and the rule of law. As James Cockayne has pointed out in a previous Challenges paper, “peace operations, already thinly stretched, should not now be expected to become the primary or sole provider of the wide range of services needed to tackle organized crime – or the primary developer of such services at the national level”.⁴ Nevertheless, they have a significant role in preventing and combating organized crime.

Crime in Every Theatre

Organized crime is a threat to peace in almost every theatre where the UN has peace operations. For example, it has an impact on peacekeeping missions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Haiti and Kosovo, political missions in West Africa and Somalia, as well as peacebuilding work in Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone. “If UN peace operations aim to build peace, security and the rule of law, then, logically, they need to be part of the strategy that addresses threats to these objectives, including transnational organized crime”.⁵ At the moment, this is not the case.

This is potentially dangerous because criminal groups can be spoilers in peace processes, they can threaten the security of UN staff, and failure to understand their motivations, connections, and incentives can exacerbate rather than calm the situation. Yet there are only a few references to organized crime in the UN strategic doctrines on policing and peacekeeping, like the “New Horizon Initiative”⁶ and the so-called “Capstone Doctrine”.⁷ And very few peace operations have crime-related mandates.

³ UNSC Presidential Statement, S/PRST/2010/4, 24 February 2010.

⁴ James Cockayne, “Providers, Platforms or Partners? Possible Roles for Peace Operations in Fighting Organized Crime”, paper commissioned for the International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations, 9 November 2009.

⁵ Victoria Holt and Alix Boucher, “Framing the issue: UN responses to corruption and criminal networks in post-conflict settings”, in James Cockayne and Adam Lupel (eds.), *Peace Operations and Organized Crime: Enemies or Allies?*, Routledge, 2011, p.21.

⁶ “A New Partnership Agenda. Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping”, DPKO/DFS, United Nations, New York, 2009.

⁷ “United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Principles and Guidelines”, DPKO/DFS, United Nations, New York, 2008.

Five recommendations

In order to reduce vulnerability to organized crime, and to improve the capacity of peace operations to deal with this challenge, this paper makes five concrete recommendations:

1. Make more effective use of **threat assessments**;
2. Promote a **culture of analysis**;
3. Strengthen **rapid reaction criminal justice support**;
4. Enhance **local and international criminal justice capacity**, particularly through South-South cooperation;
5. Smooth the process from **“trusteeship” to “ownership”**.

Threat assessments

The UN does not need to gather intelligence on its Member States, nor would its Member States want it to do that. Indeed, there have been heated discussions within the C-34 committee (which deals with peacekeeping) on even using the word “intelligence”. However, the UN needs to be aware of developments on the ground, not least – although not exclusively – in theatres where it has peace operations. As the Brahimi report (2000) pointed out, “the United Nations must be prepared to deal effectively with spoilers if it expects to achieve a consistent record of success in peacekeeping or peacebuilding in situations of intrastate/transnational conflict”.⁸

To figure out who the criminals are, their impact on society, and what to do about them, peace operations require a detailed knowledge of the motivations and *modi operandi* of peace spoilers.⁹

At the moment, there is a widespread impression that the UN is not particularly good at gathering and analyzing information, not least in relation to organized crime. As pointed out by the Senior Advisory Group on *Civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict*, “the United Nations often prepares its plans when it knows the least about a country and its capacities”.¹⁰ The International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding has also identified the “lack of context and conflict analysis” as one of the major challenges to achieving peacebuilding and statebuilding goals.¹¹ As pointed out in a report by the Centre for International Cooperation (CIC), 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.¹² This is echoed by a report by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) that says that “failure to understand the political, economic, and social contexts will mean failure to develop effective solutions”.¹³ The UN system is starting to recognize this need. For example, the “New Partnership Agenda” on charting a new horizon for UN peacekeeping stresses that “the strengthening of system-wide conflict assessment must be a priority of ongoing UN integration efforts”.¹⁴

⁸ Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, United Nations, A/55/305, S/2000/809, 21 August 2000 (Brahimi report), p.4.

⁹ Cockayne and Lupel, p. 157.

¹⁰ “Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict”, Independent report of the Senior Advisory Group, A/65/747-S/2011/85, 22 February 2011, p. 26.

¹¹ Dili Declaration, International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, 9 April 2010.

¹² James Cockayne and Camino Kavanagh, “Flying Blind? Political Mission Responses to Transnational Threats”, *Review of Political Missions 2011*, CIC, New York, p. 28.

¹³ Collette Rausch (ed.), *Combating Serious Crimes in Post-conflict Societies*, USIP, Washington, DC, 2006, p. 21.

¹⁴ “A New Partnership Agenda: Charting A New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping”, p. 11.

The main source of information gathering and analysis within UN peacekeeping missions is the Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC). JMACs were established through a Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) Policy Directive on 1 July 2006. The rationale for the JMAC, as well as Joint Operations Centres (JOC), is “to monitor developments and to understand the operational environment on a continuous basis.”¹⁵ JMACs can enable intelligence-led policy making, support integrated mission management, mission security, and strategic planning and forecasting.

JMACs – which are headed by a civilian staff member – are composed of a mix of military, police and civilian personnel. JMACs have been fully established in seven of the 16 missions administered by DPKO.¹⁶ Where the JMAC can provide quality analysis and where the SRSG and his senior staff realize the self-interest – for the sake of operational success and staff safety – of using that information, then the JMAC is a key resource. However, there are no JMAC equivalents within political or peacebuilding missions. This is a major lacuna.

There are other parts of the UN system that carry out situation assessments, particularly on organized crime. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) produces periodic threat assessments, usually about regions (rather than countries) affected by transnational organized crime. UN Panels of Experts have carried out top quality assessments, for example of the DRC and Somalia, but they are not strictly speaking about organized crime. Furthermore, on a case by case basis the UN draws on available information from national law enforcement agencies and INTERPOL. This should be done more systematically, for example plugging crime experts within UN field operations into the existing INTERPOL I/24 network.

Information gathering and analysis on organized crime should also be part of the Integrated Missions Planning Process (IMPP). This process, launched in 2006, is designed to ensure that there is a shared vision among all UN actors as to the strategic objective of the UN presence at country level.¹⁷ As the IMPP guidelines point out, the success of such integrated missions depends on a shared in-depth understanding of the specific country setting. That understanding is derived from a Strategic Assessment which is usually carried out in the planning stage of deploying an integrated mission. Such assessments are also vital for post-conflict needs assessments. Recently, joint assessment missions were carried out in the Sahel and the Gulf of Guinea.

Political-economy analysis should be a key part of such assessments. As Mats Berdal points out, “A political-economy approach that helps to identify what are complex but not unintelligible structures of incentives and disincentives for continued violence is an important aid for policymakers, enabling in theory at any rate, a ‘stakeholder analysis of conflict’ to be undertaken”.¹⁸ Furthermore, as Colette Rausch observes, “an assessment provides the necessary baseline information from which realistic goals and a strategy to address serious crimes, including prioritization, timing, and sequencing of actions, can be developed”.¹⁹

¹⁵ “Joint Operations Centres and Joint Mission Analysis Centres”, DPKO Policy Directive, 1 July 2006, p.2

¹⁶ Melanie Ramjoué, “Improving UN Intelligence through Civil-Military Cooperation: Lessons from the Joint Missions Analysis Centres”, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 18, Issue 4, 2011, p. 473.

¹⁷ See “United Nations Integrated Missions Planning Process (IMPP) Guidelines” endorsed by the Secretary-General on 13 June 2006.

¹⁸ Mats Berdal, “Building Peace after War”, *Adelphi Papers* No. 407, IISS, London, 2009, p. 93.

¹⁹ Rausch, p. 18.

The problem is that the UN currently lacks the guidelines to help assessors focus on the threat posed by organized crime.²⁰ As a result, UN staff involved in pre-deployment or mandate review processes are not attuned to look for crime-related problems. The result is that crime-fighting measures are often left out of mission mandates. If there is no mention of crime in the mandate, it is very hard to mobilize the resources and attention needed to tackle it.

To help fill this gap, IPI – as part of its “Peace without Crime project” – has created a guide called *Spotting the Spoilers*.²¹ This guide is designed to help practitioners identify warning signs of criminal activity in the theatre where they are operating, assess the impact caused by organized crime, and prepare assessments which can be used by policy makers to take remedial action. Not least, it can build national capacity to spot the spoilers.

A Culture of analysis

What is vital is to have assessments that are timely and tailored to the specific situation on the ground. After all, the point is not to have an exhaustive study, rather the aim should be to produce the evidence and analysis that can enable a quick and effective policy and/or operational response.

Furthermore, situation assessments should not be a “one-off” exercise. As pointed out in the *World Development Report 2011*: “To adapt to the reality of repeated cycles of violence and multiple transitions, assessment processes would become lighter and more flexible to provide regular, repeated assessments of risks and opportunities.”²² Furthermore, they should be translated easily into strategic and operational options.²³ As an IPI study has observed, such assessments should stimulate a culture of analysis.²⁴

Regional analysis is essential for dealing with transnational threats. Regional offices, like the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA, Dakar) and the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA, Ashgabat) could be key hubs of regional information-gathering and analysis. The West Africa Coastal Initiative (WACI) is an example of a relatively successful attempt to exchange and pool information.

Improved system-wide information management is crucial. As Melanie Ramjoué points out, the UN is actually well positioned to collect large quantities of data. “It deploys tens of thousands of staff, many of whom have valuable cultural and linguistic skills and who become privy to information through their daily interactions with local communities and political actors”.²⁵ The problem is not the collection of information: it is the analysis of this information and its management in order to transform it into actionable intelligence.²⁶

In that respect, it would be worth revisiting a proposal made in the Brahimi Report to create an Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat at UN headquarters that would consolidate the various departmental units that are assigned policy and information analysis roles related

²⁰ See Mark Shaw, “Know Your Enemy: An Overview of Organized Crime Threat Assessments”, *IPI Issue Brief*, New York, October 2011.

²¹ Mark Shaw and Walter Kemp, *Spotting the Spoilers: A guide for assessing transnational organized crime in fragile states*, IPI, New York, April 2012.

²² *World Development Report 2011*, p. 28.

²³ See Jenna Slotin, Vanessa Wyeth, and Paul Romita, *Power, Politics and Change: How International Actors Assess Local Context*, IPI, New York, June 2010, p. 13.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 2 and 15.

²⁵ Ramjoué, p. 468.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

to peace and security.²⁷ As the Brahimi Report pointed out, the UN system needs “a professional system for accumulating knowledge about conflict situations, distributing that knowledge efficiently to a wide user base, generating policy analyses and formulating long-term strategies. That system does not exist at present”.²⁸ More than a decade later, this is still the case.

Therefore why not create a unit within the Secretariat (perhaps called a Joint Policy Analysis Center) that synthesizes political economy and conflict-related information from, and for, all parts of the UN system (and other sources, like INTERPOL)? Such a unit could be a collection and analysis point for information related to security issues (including organized crime), and ensure that the analysis is then distributed effectively within the UN system. It could service peace operations, relevant departments (like DPA and DPKO), sanctions committees and other agencies of the UN.²⁹ The Center could report either to the Policy Committee or the Executive Committee on Peace and Security.

Rapid-reaction justice support

Not only does the UN suffer from limited information and analysis to identify organized crime, it has limited capacity to deal with the problem. It is striking that despite the threat posed by transnational organized crime in so many theatres where the UN is active, and despite its impact on so many aspects of the UN’s work, the UN has such limited capacity in this field. While there are over 100,000 blue helmets and 13,000 blue berets, there are only a few dozen organized crime experts in the UN system.

DPKO finds it difficult to attract military and police experts with the skill-set needed to deal with organized crime.³⁰ As the “New Horizon” non-paper observes: “Military peacekeeping rarely succeeds without a civilian component – but finding sufficient highly qualified civilian staff is often as hard, or harder, than finding troops”.³¹ This is particularly the case in the justice sector. As pointed out in the *World Development Report 2011*, “The supply of personnel is constrained, since states do not have the kinds of reserve capacities in police and criminal justice that they do in their militaries”.³²

The lack of justice expertise in this field means that there are few practitioners able to assist in rebuilding the rule of law, and developing national justice capacity. Worse than that, it increases the risk of relapse into conflict.³³ As Jean-Marie Guéhenno has pointed out, “The journey from war to sustainable peace is not possible in the absence of stronger civilian capacity. Without this capacity, there may be breaks in the fighting, but resilient institutions will not take root and the risk of renewed violence will remain”.³⁴ As a result, “The current systems of the United Nations can neither rapidly provide civilian capacities aligned with national needs nor cope with constantly changing circumstances”.³⁵

²⁷ Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, United Nations, A/55/305, S/2000/809, 21 August 2000 (Brahimi report), p.12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ See Cockayne, p. 96, see also recommendation 39 in the IPI *Blue Paper* on “Transnational Organized Crime”, 2009, p. 17.

³⁰ See for example Rudolfo Landeros, “What are the Most Critical Police Peacekeeping Challenges for the Future?”, paper for the Challenges Forum Seminar, 17 February 2011.

³¹ “A New Partnership Agenda: Charting a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping”, p. 38.

³² *World Development Report 2011*, p. 199.

³³ “Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict”, Independent report of the Senior Advisory Group, A/65/747-S/2011/85, 22 February 2011, p. 5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Fortunately, the issue is now getting serious attention as a result of the follow-up to the independent review on civilian capacity. The UN is trying to create a platform for qualified experts. This Civilian Partnership Cell would be a “docking mechanism” (in the Department of Field Support) that makes it simple to establish and operate successful partnerships.³⁶

But this will only work if the UN can attract people to “dock in”. Therefore, the UN needs to simplify the system of attracting and accepting short-term civilian experts, while Member States need to make it easier for such experts – not least in the justice sector – to take on short-term assignments.

One idea is to create a rapid-reaction criminal justice team, similar to the Mediation Support Unit or the Rapid Response Unit of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.³⁷ This would enable a short-term surge of international experts to strengthen national rule of law capacity, particularly in countries where there are no UN peace operations. One way to do this would be to scale up the existing Justice Rapid Response network – an inter-governmental stand-by facility of criminal justice experts.

Another idea, currently being explored by the UN Police Division (UNPOL), is to embed pre-formed organized crime experts within field operations. These so-called Serious Crime Support Units (SCSUs), on the model of Formed Police Units (FPUs), would enable the rapid deployment of national crime experts to a peacekeeping operation in order to help build local crime fighting capacity and, indirectly, help improve intelligence gathering and law enforcement. Ideally, these units would eventually put themselves out of business by building up national crime fighting agencies and/or enhancing the capacity of INTERPOL National Crime Bureaus.

There should also be a pool of organized crime experts as part of the UN’s Standing Police Capacity. When not deployed to hot spots, they could be used as part of threat assessment teams and for training in-coming UN police on organized crime issues.

Enhancing national capacity

Responding to organised crime and illicit trafficking has resulted in an enormous amount of technical assistance. This includes: support for police equipment and training; strengthening prosecution services; building independent judiciaries; providing training; and prison reform. Much of this work is bilateral, or carried out through the UN, particularly UNODC and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

Finding the appropriate entry point requires tact. States are wary of appearing to have a problem with crime or corruption. A more general rule of law support function and/or development assistance (which includes a criminal justice component) can therefore be more palatable options.

What is also essential is that assistance is provided in a holistic way, covering the whole spectrum of criminal justice. It should also be organized pursuant to a national strategy in order to ensure national ownership as well as clear objectives and a framework that is common to external and local actors. Otherwise it is too often the case that support is supply-

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁷ This Unit, established in 2006, is designed to swiftly prevent or address deteriorating human rights situations on the ground. The unit has a roster of over 70 human rights experts. Since its inception it has carried out more than 32 rapid deployments.

rather than needs-driven, too many countries provide the same things, and there is an over-emphasis on the securitization of responses rather than a more comprehensive approach that also takes into account criminal justice needs, anti-corruption measures, and development assistance. That is why even if the UN may have a limited role in providing technical assistance, it can provide the framework to ensure coordination and a comprehensive approach. This is particularly important in the transition phase from peacekeeping to other, lighter presences. Indeed, states may be particularly vulnerable to spoilers as international troops and police draw down.

However, as noted under point 3, very few states have personnel to spare when it comes to providing technical assistance on transnational organized crime. One way of overcoming this problem, and of increasing the pool of civilian capacity, could be to more effectively engage non-traditional troop and/or police contributing countries that have expertise in dealing with organized crime. The BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) as well as emerging powers like Indonesia, Mexico, Turkey and Colombia all have significant national expertise in dealing with organized crime. This would raise the profile of these countries within the operational work of the UN, enhance South-South cooperation, and give them a leadership role in dealing with one of the greatest threats to international peace and security.

Smooth the process from “trusteeship” to “ownership”

Sometimes the penetration of criminal groups into a society is so deep and the rule of law so weak that international actors must temporarily take over justice functions. This is often the case in fragile states, for example in post-conflict situations. In several cases (like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Fiji and the Solomon Islands) judges and prosecutors have been brought in to supplement national capacity. The international community, usually under UN auspices, has also helped to establish and run commissions of inquiry and criminal courts.

Perhaps the most prominent example of a law enforcement institution established as a partnership with external actors is the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala, known by its Spanish acronym CICIG. CICIG was established by treaty agreement between the UN and Guatemala and began work in January 2008. The specific objective of CICIG is to assist Guatemala in investigating and dismantling violent criminal organisations. The Commission operates under Guatemalan law, in the country’s courts and following Guatemalan criminal procedure. Yet CICIG also has some elements of an international prosecutor. Key staff, including the head of the Commission who is appointed by the UN Secretary-General, are internationals.³⁸

The challenge with such arrangements – which outsource key aspects of the justice system – is to ensure a smooth transition during which the international community can scale down its assistance, and ultimately leave. Otherwise transitional justice becomes increasingly permanent, building dependence rather than capacity. It is therefore advisable to integrate national experts as much as possible into the internationally-supported justice structures in order to build the capacity and ownership that are needed to enable a successful hand-over and a sustainable justice system. The need for country-led and country-owned transitions out of fragility is stressed in the New Deal for engagement in fragile states recently agreed in the context of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding.

³⁸ See “Agreement between the United Nations and the State of Guatemala on the establishment of an International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (‘CICIG’)”, 12 December 2006.

Without national capacity to uphold the rule of law, fragile governments will have to rely on international expertise. Furthermore, without justice, efforts to promote security and development will falter. Indeed, strengthening the capacity of peace operations to tackle organized crime and enhance the rule of law is only one aspect of a much broader strategy that is needed to reduce vulnerability to the corrosive effect of crime. In particular, it is vital to promote development, strengthen integrity, and fortify social antibodies against criminality. That is why a holistic approach at country level and a system-wide approach within the UN are vital for tackling organized crime.

When Your Interlocutors are Part of the Problem

There is one final point that needs to be considered in relation to peace operations and the rule of law, and it is probably the most sensitive. What happens when there is clearly a problem related to organized crime, but the local actors do not want external assistance? As has been pointed out by James Cockayne and Adam Lupel in a recent book on *Peace Operations and Organized Crime*, “since peace operations function on the basis of host-state consent, many countries may resist efforts by the Security Council or other international authority to mandate peace operations to take preventive action against potential peace spoilers, not least because some of them may be connected to, or protected by, the host-state government.”³⁹ Therefore, what do you do if the people that you have to work with are actually part of the problem, namely involved in, or somehow complicit in, illicit activity?

Answering this question in full goes beyond the limits of this paper, but there are a number of options to consider depending on the circumstances:

- Take a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach, for example the type of “citizen security” projects undertaken by UNDP in Central America;
- Contain the problem, for example by working with regional partners (i.e. the regional response to piracy off the Horn of Africa, ECOWAS strategy in West Africa);
- Name and shame the perpetrators;
- Use international mutual legal assistance, for example extradition, asset confiscation.

Taking a tough approach may make it difficult for the mission to operate in the affected country. But ignoring the problem will empower those who profit from instability, and further exacerbate the problem. As Cockayne and Lupel point out, “the transformation of an illicit political economy requires guidance in how to trade off the goals of political stability, effective state-building and law enforcement in countering organized crime”.⁴⁰ This is a tough call. Getting it right is essential for the effectiveness of peace operations and their ability to uphold the rule of law.

³⁹ Cockayne and Lupel, p. 11.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Related readings

- James Cockayne and Camino Kavanagh, “Flying Blind? Political Missions Responses to Transnational Threats”, pp. 19-30, *Review of Political Missions 2011*, Center on International Cooperation, New York, 2011.
- *Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict*, Independent Report of the Senior Advisory Group, United Nations, A/65/747-S/2011/85, 22 February 2011.
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