In the Line of Fire: Managing Expatriates in Hostile Environments

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This study explores best practice in the preparation and protection of strategic human resources deployed by MNCs in hostile environments. By building on the literature from the areas of strategic and international human resource management (SIHRM), expatriation, as well as risk and crisis management, the limitations and gaps of the extant research are highlighted. This provides a foundation for our investigation through a series of in-depth interviews with corporate executives, and insurers and relocation specialists with professional expertise in protecting and supporting human resources. This represents the first time such a detailed picture of the partnerships between MNCs and the specialists, required to deliver preparation and protection in hostile environments, has been depicted in the IHRM literature. The findings identify the challenges MNCs face when protecting their human resources and highlights the importance of specialist expertise, knowledge and management. A framework for managing human resources within international hostile environments is subsequently developed offering an opportunity to systematically consider some of the ethical and strategic issues associated with the contemporary challenges of international mobility.

Keywords: hostile environments, expatriates, international human resource management, risk, insurers, relocation specialists, protection.

Introduction

Multinational corporations (MNCs) typically coordinate and control their international operations through the varied use of expatriates, inpatriates and traveling executives (Edstrom & Galbraith, 1977; Harzing, 2002; Welch et al., 2009). The IHRM literature has explored in depth the deployment and development of these strategic human resources and acknowledged the range of practices used by organizations to select, train, develop, reward and support these managers (Dabic, Gonzalez-Loureiro & Harvey, 2015). There is recognition in this literature of an increased level of complexity in the supporting practices considered as part of IHRM, where issues beyond the workplace become part of HRM provisions for international staff, for example, in terms of housing, schooling and wider total reward concerns (Dabic et al., 2015; Brewster, Bonache, Cerdin & Suutari, 2014; Baruch et al., 2013). Significantly less research has been conducted on the HRM support and practices developed when the deployment of strategic human resources takes place in hostile (i.e. politically and socially unstable, violent) environments (Harvey 1993; Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2016). Where there has been research on people management in hostile environments there is a tendency to focus on individual managers' experiences and their perspectives of the treatment and support they receive and their concerns associated with their locations. This emphasis on the individual managerial standpoint has been at the expense of the organizational assessment of the challenges and practices of managing employees in hostile environments (Fee et al., 2013; Ramirez et al, 2015; Wernick & Von Glinow, 2012; Harvey, 1993).

There is then a specific gap in knowledge regarding corporate human resource executives' views on the specific risks their assignees face in hostile environments and the support and arrangements required for international managers operating in such challenging locations. While the literature abounds with evidence of environmental and organizational factors which influence the use of local or international managerial resources (Edstrom & Galbraith, 1977; Chang et al, 2012) there is limited evidence of how hostile environments shape such appointment decisions (Bader et al., 2015). As such, the aim of this study is to

explore the awareness of the risks, and the approaches taken to support managerial resources operating in hostile environments from the perspective of corporate executives. We do this by first examining the specific nature of the risks which organizations' managers are exposed to when deployed in hostile environments, and then by scrutinizing the specific practices and actions for the support and protection of these strategic human resources during different stages of expatriation. Many of these practices, such as extended duty of care, assisted relocation, personal self-defense, hibernation and evacuation, have received minimal attention in the existing literature (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2016; Fee et al., 2013) and little is known about their development, utilization and review in international organizations operating in hostile environments. Yet, these organizations are continuously called to deal with challenges and threats to their deployed human resources (Fox-Koob, 2016; Fuller, 2015; MND, 2016) which require rigorously planned responses based on clear and detailed policies and standards.

In addition, existing research fails to examine whether companies differentiate the risks and the practices deployed between specific groups of strategic human resources or adopt blanket approaches which cover the mobility of all managers. For example, while travelling executives (frequent flyers) and expatriates may be exposed to similar risks in hostile locations, and will both typically lack local knowledge, the intensity of the risks and comprehensiveness of support required may differ where frequent flyers are temporarily located and do not develop identifiable routines that increase their risk exposure. By building upon the expatriate cycle (Bianchi, 2015; Bonache et al., 2001) and the model developed by Fee & McGrath-Champ (2016), and by further addressing the limited coverage of organizational perspectives on the risks and support practices provided to international managers operating in hostile environments, this article provides new evidence on the expanding remit of corporate human resources and the know-how they seek from specialists with risk, security and insurance expertise. We also advance Fee and McGrath-Champ's (2016) conceptualization by investigating the international hotel industry, which depends on extensive mobility amongst its managers at both the corporate and operational levels (Gannon, Roper & Doherty, 2010) to deliver its global services. This sector offers a compelling focus due to its role in suggesting safe havens for international executives in hostile environments (Paraskevas, 2013; Wernick & Von Glinow, 2012). New implications and contributions emerge for HRM executives and academic researchers considering the findings and framework developed.

At the outset, this article explores the literature on the approaches taken to managing key human resources before evaluating what is meant by hostile environments. The existing literature on managing people in crisis/hostile environments is then appraised. The setting in which this study takes place, the international hotel industry, is subsequently described. The research design is outlined together with a rationale for the in-depth interview method deployed with international hotel company executives, insurance brokers and security relocation consultants. The findings from the interviews are analyzed in relation to the extant research on the practices deployed to protect human resources operating across international hostile environments. This paper proposes a comprehensive framework for the preparation, support and protection of human resources when deployed in such environments. Finally, a discussion of the main contributions and limitations of this study as well as the theoretical and research implications, conclude this article.

Literature Review

Managing International Human Resources

This domain of research has adapted its focus over the years depending upon the challenges and issues facing organizations (Harvey & Moeller, 2009; Dabic, et al., 2015), however, international subsidiary managers have typically been identified as the linchpins in successful MNCs where they coordinate, control and sustain organizations' interests and augment the transfer of knowledge across national boundaries (Welch et al., 2009; Chang, Gong & Peng, 2012). While the literature has focused on expatriates and their management, researchers (Elango, Graf & Hemmasi, 2007; Baruch et al., 2013) have also deployed the term 'expatriate' in the broadest sense to embrace 'the full range of international assignees, international business travelers and their dependents.' (Fee et al., 2013 p.247). This encompassing conception of the term expatriate is also often associated with the 'strategic human resources' label used by some commentators (Marchington, 2015; Boxall & Purcell, 2011). Such human resources arguably allow firms to capitalize on their proprietary knowledge and transfer it effectively across their operations to achieve competitive advantage (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). However, there are problems with this interpretation of strategic human resources as there is little differentiation between whether they are talented, aspiring subsidiary managers, experienced regional cluster managers or senior executives representing the organization overseas. This absence of clarity in the literature referring to expatriates, is captured eloquently by McNulty & Brewster (2016a; 2016b) who evaluate the confusion and complexity of the term, to provide consistency and coherency to empirical investigations. They recognize the growing myriad of terms, depending on various criteria applied such as, length of stay, (flexpatriates, business travelers, frequent flyers), cultural and national origins (inpatriates or expatriates of host country origin (EHCOs)), to organizational versus self-assignment (company assigned or self-initiated expatriates) and highlight why terminology matters but is equally challenging to accomplish (McNulty & Brewster, 2016a; 2016b). How companies differentiate in their management of these different forms of the wider term 'expatriate' is unclear, and ripe for further investigation (Dabic et al., 2015; McNulty & De Cieri, 2011). As such, there is no empirical evidence of whether there is any variation in terms of the strategic value of some 'strategic human resources' or how the practices and support, protecting these human resources operating in hostile environments, may differ.

What constitutes a hostile environment?
Within the expatriation literature there has been long-term recognition of hardship locations which provide international assignees with significant challenges for their working and personal lives (Harvey & Moeller, 2009; Bader, 2015). These hardship factors have often been associated with remoteness, adverse conditions, limited facilities, extensive cultural differences, political instability and developing economies (Suutari & Brewster, 1999; Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2016). To this list 'countries or regions that suffer from terrorism, severe crime or other forms of violence' (Bader, Schuster & Dickmann, 2015 p.1) can be added.

Hostile environments have more recently become strongly associated with terrorism; which is problematic to characterize (Glazzard & Pantucci, 2015). Williams' (2004, p. 7) definition suggests terrorism can be understood as 'politically [including ideologically, religiously or socially – but not criminally] motivated violence, directed generally against non-combatants, intended to shock and terrify, to achieve a strategic outcome'. However, there are challenges to differentiating between terrorism and criminal activity across the different sides of political, social, economic and religious divides (Institute of Economics & Peace, 2015). A quandary for MNCs and managers is that while the threat of terrorism may appear to be higher in specific locations, international assignees are still more likely to be victims of violent crime (Elango et al., 2007; Institute of Economics and Peace, 2015). Accordingly, there is a growing focus on the implications of living, and managing businesses, in environments where hostility (violent crime and terrorism) is seen as a contemporary fact

of life (McNulty & De Cieri, 2011; Ramirez et al, 2015; Bader, Berg & Holtbrugge, 2015; Fee et al., 2016; McNulty & De Cieri, 2011; Ramirez et al., 2015).

IHRM in hostile environments
Several factors including; the extent of national and international business travel (Welch, Welch & Worm, 2007; Elango et al., 2007; Kraimer et al., 2014), increasing variety in length and type of work assignments (Baruch et al., 2013), growing numbers of, and variations in, subsidiary ownership (Slangen & Van Tulder, 2009), further attention on risk factors and concerns over crisis management and business continuity (Czinkota et al., 2010), have seen HRM professionals extend their expertise in the related areas of health, safety and security (Mankin & Perry, 2004). After Harvey's (1993) seminal article there was an absence of research in this area until the early 2000's with the resurgence in interest apparently prompted by the events of 9/11 (Mankin & Perry, 2004; Howie, 2007). There is also evidence of a clear split between conceptual articles and those based upon empirical investigations. Conceptual articles typically involve the use of versions of risk or crisis management models (Liou & Lin, 2008; Wang et al., 2009; Fee et al., 2013), in relation to specific HRM practices and approaches.

These models are akin to the cycles of expatriation and repatriation as advocated by various authors (Harvey, 1982; Bonache et al., 2001; Brewster et al., 2014; Bianchi, 2015) with their phases of expatriation planning, pre-expatriation, expatriation and repatriation. These four phases focus upon different aspects of managing those on international assignments. In the initial planning stage attention is centered on analysis by determining the nature of the assignment in relation to the organization and the location and selecting assignees (Dabic et al., 2015; Bianchi, 2015). The second stage, pre-expatriation involves an emphasis on preparation through awareness raising, communication of assignee objectives and performance criteria, language and location training for the assignee and their families (Bonache et al., 2001; Bianchi, 2015). The expatriation or during assignment phase concentrates on issues of engagement on the assignment via expatriation performance and compensation, and offering sufficient support to the assignee and their families to pre-empt any shock or early return issues (Bianchi, 2015; Bonache et al., 2001). This third phase will also ideally involve planning for repatriation building on the experiences gained through the assignment. The final phase of repatriation or re-entry focuses on managing re-adjustment, family re-orientation, organizational updates for the assignee and career management for future international and domestic roles (Bianchi, 2015; Bonache et al., 2001).

These four phases of the expatriate cycle can be seen to mimic the models often adopted by organizations operating in uncertain or adverse political, economic and social conditions (Smith, 1990; Salter, 1997). For example, the risk management model known as PPRR: prevent, prepare, respond and recover (Salter, 1997) offers four stages. The two Ps (prevent and prepare) concern those activities and support provided by the organization in the pre-crisis stage of a potential incident's lifecycle whereas the two Rs (respond and recover) concern the other two stages respectively, i.e., during and post-crisis (Fee et al., 2013; Sawalha, et al., 2013). In the context of relocation to a hostile environment, the pre-crisis stage would refer to the time before the actual expatriation (pre-expatriation) but also the period in expatriation without an incident. Consequently, the 'during crisis' period refers to expatriation disrupted by a crisis event and the response to it; and the post-crisis refers to the resolution of the crisis that would entail repatriation, recovery, evaluation and possibly planning for re-expatriation in the same or other location, thus feeding into a new pre-expatriation period. These staged models of expatriation and crisis management offer useful possible routes to further understanding of the process of managing international human resources (See Figure 1).

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE
Figure 1. The Expatriate Cycle with Risk Management considerations

Several empirical studies focus on specific national contexts as part of their investigations of hostile environments, for example, Papua New Guinea (Bhanugopan & Fish, 2008); Sri Lanka (Reade & Lee, 2012); Mexico (Ramirez et al., 2015) and Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia which were identified as terrorism endangered countries (Bader & Schuster, 2015). Further scrutiny of the extant literature identifies the paucity of researchers undertaking empirical studies from the organizational perspective (Fee et al., 2016; Ramirez et al, 2015; Wernick & Von Glinow, 2012; Harvey, 1993). Instead there is a profusion of quantitative studies engaging with individual expatriates' experiences of being managed in hostile environments (Bader, 2015; Bader, Berg & Holtbrugge, 2015; Bader & Schuster, 2015; Bader & Berg, 2013; Reade & Lee, 2012; Bhanugopan & Fish, 2008). Key implications for organizations arise from these studies of individual expatriates' responses to people management practices in hostile environments, which include the perceived value of; organizational support, protection and assistance programs for expatriates (Reade & Lee, 2012; Bader & Berg, 2013) and their families (Bader & Berg, 2013; Bader, Berg & Holtbrugge, 2015), the merits of awareness, crisis and evacuation training (Bader & Berg, 2013) and organizational interventions developing social networks with colleagues and engagement with locals (Bader & Schuster, 2015).

Of those studies adopting an organizational stance Harvey's (1993) investigation provides insights on the corporate mindset for managing terrorism threats highlighting that the key concerns for those MNCs which did have programs, were the protection of assets, investments in security to limit threats and the training of executives. The investigation of domestic and international firms (Danish, Brazilian and US MNCs) operating in Mexico and the impact of this narco-terrorism environment on the HRM practices and approaches, focuses on the firm rather than the corporate level (Ramirez et al., 2015). It exposes the direct and indirect impact which this hostile national setting has on HRM practices and how employees at different levels, locals through to expatriates, are supported and protected, physically and emotionally. The authors also comment on the importance of the companies' adherence to managing the 'balance between stability and flexibility,' in relation to the dilemmas of SHRM, in such an environment (Ramirez et al., 2015 p.22).

Using the resource based view (RBV) approach alongside theories of the psychological contract and duty of care, Fee, McGrath-Champ & Liu (2013) developed a conceptual model focused on crisis management and the evacuation of expatriates, highlighting the value of integrating training for high risk locations into wider talent management practices in international organizations. Developing their original model Fee and McGrath-Champ (2016 p.7) interviewed relevant HRM specialists on their approach to managing the "safety and security of their expatriates" as well as scrutinizing relevant policy documentation. Their ground-breaking work provides crucial insights into the extensiveness and range of HRM policies and practices which protect expatriate aid workers, and go beyond the measures typically instigated by other international corporate entities. They suggest three service areas and the overall organizational culture (strategy, philosophy and policies about safety and security) which capture the HRM remit. The service areas are People services (screenings, training housing and employee well-being), Communication services (internal and external networks and locating and communicating with staff), and Information services (data collection and monitoring, evaluating and organizational learning). Fee and McGrath-Champ (2016) also attest to the pressures to adopt a hardened or 'protection' approach to managing these valued workers whilst simultaneously experiencing demands to embrace an 'acceptance' approach. An 'acceptance' strategy tries to reduce or remove threats by

increasing the acceptance (the political and social 'consent') for an organization's presence and work in a location (politicians and the military call this 'winning hearts and minds'). A 'protection' strategy uses protective devices and procedures to reduce the vulnerability of the agency, but it does not address the threat. In technical jargon this is called 'hardening the target' (Van Brabant, 2000; Childs, 2013). The authors also draw parallels between this 'acceptance' and 'protection' predicament and those faced by HRM when resolving the coinciding demands "for local responsiveness and global integration" associated with managing international human resources (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2016 p.21).

Each of the studies adopting an organizational (corporate or firm level) perspective, when studying hostile environments, remarks upon the challenges of gaining access and winning the confidence of managerial representatives to ensure participation in their research (Harvey, 1993; Ramirez et al., 2015; Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2016). This underscores the importance of studies with an organizational focus in this area of IHRM where opportunities to gain access and further understanding are limited. The extant literature emphasizes that while several studies have concentrated on the views of individual expatriates (Bhanugopan & Fish, 2008; Reade & Lee, 2012; Bader, 2015, Bader et al., 2015b) there has been more limited evidence of researchers adopting organizational level interpretations (Harvey, 1993; Ramirez et al., 2015; Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2016). This article specifically sets out to address the gap in our understanding of the organizational perspective by exploring corporate HR and risk and security executives' views on the support and practices provided to international hotel managers operating in hostile environments. The research also provides additional knowledge of the support corporate executives access through specialist advisors, from the world of risk and security, insurance brokers and relocation specialists, to protect these human resources.

The international hotel industry and management of its international managers

The international hotel industry provides a valuable setting for a study of this nature due to its global reach, complex ownership structures and the people intensive nature of its core services (Gannon et al., 2010; 2015; Melissen, van Ginneken & Wood, 2016). At the global level the largest hotel corporations have thousands of properties, stretching across more than 100 countries and employing more than 150,000 employees (ILO, 2010; Gannon et al., 2015). Such extensive portfolios are achieved via asset light market entry modes where ownership of a hotel property is split from the operational responsibilities, typically through arrangements such as management contracts and franchise agreements, amongst other dealings (ILO, 2010; Melissen et al., 2016). Properties in hostile environments have increasingly become part of these expanding hotel portfolios presenting a dilemma for companies where operating in such locations can offer attractive, competitive and political opportunities but also present significant operational and human resource challenges (Gannon et al., 2015; Sawalha, et al., 2013).

The asset light market entry modes adopted mean that local investors shoulder the financial burden and the Western hospitality services associated with these organizations offer refuge and recuperation for influential local residents and visiting politicians, media and non-governmental agencies (Paraskevas, 2013; Sawalha, et al., 2013). However, international brand names, which epitomize Western values and appear ostentatious compared to local services, may become targets for aggression (Wernick & Von Glinow, 2012). Furthermore, the clientele who patronize international hotel brands, and the international hotel managers who deliver their services may also be the victims of hostile behavior (Paraskevas, 2013; Sawalha, et al., 2013). This dilemma is difficult to resolve where hotels are typically open public spaces, involve people intensive services delivery, have high levels of footfall and are consequently cited as soft targets for aggression (Paraskevas, 2013; Malik, et al., 2014). Examples such as the attack on the Radisson Blu hotel in Bamako, Mali in November 2015

and other incidents in recent years (Wernick & Von Glinow, 2012; Fee et al., 2013) suggest that international hotel firms require comprehensive strategies and practices to prepare, support and protect their human resources in such environments. However, the asset light expansion arrangements also have implications for people management practices where hotel level employees are normally employed by a firm representing the investor/owner but are managed by expatriates, who are employed by the parent MNC (ILO, 2010; Hodari & Sturman, 2014; Gannon et al., 2015). Such hotel managers are viewed as strategic human resources (Gannon et al., 2010; 2015). This suggests that for international hotel companies managing their human resources operating in hostile environments their focus is likely to be on those occupying, or destined for, managerial roles rather than those working at operative levels, who are the responsibility of the local investor/owner.

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore MNCs' management of human resources deployed in hostile environments. Due to the recognized issues with gaining access to executives about these topics discussed previously, the authors used their own professional networks to invite participants from the global hotel sector. Initially, HRM executives from four of the largest international hotel companies, were invited to participate. In the process of the study, it became apparent that the management of expatriates in hostile environments took place in collaboration with risk and internal security managers as well as external insurance brokers and relocation service providers. Therefore, a snowball sampling technique was used to expand our sample with the external experts these companies were engaging. We interviewed nine HRM and risk and security executives from four international hotel groups (respondents HE1 to HE9) to gather insights of the challenges faced and the HRM practices used to protect personnel in hostile environments. This group then introduced us to, and we interviewed, six insurers and brokers specializing in people risks (respondents IB1 to IB6) and three relocation service consultants (respondents RC1 to RC3) all of whom worked with the hotel companies (see Table 1 – Participants). The participating hotel companies account for approximately 38 per cent of the total branded hotel market in terms of open rooms, and 65 per cent of the development pipeline (hotels in planning and under construction but not yet open). These are also the international hotel companies that normally operate in environments characterized as 'hostile', driven there by their corporate clients. Smaller international hotel companies usually do not have the risk appetite to operate in such environments. The participating insurers/brokers were from the leading companies in people risk coverage representing over 50% of the relevant market share. Similarly, the three relocation service providers came from the leading companies in their sector.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE
Table 1. Research Participants

The exploratory nature of the study led us to choose in-depth interviews as a data collection technique to secure the richest possible response from the specialists in this topic and to bracket any personal biases (Creswell, 2007). Participants were asked the question: 'Based on your experience, what would constitute best practice in preparing and protecting strategic human capital deployed internationally in hostile environments?' This type of interview was chosen to allow respondents to talk about what they see as important, an insight that could be compromised with a semi-structured interview. The respondents were encouraged to expand their answers in a non-leading manner by probing, 'Tell me more about

this,' or, 'Can you give me an example of that?'. In this way, we could gain a detailed understanding of the way the respondents made sense of their world and continued until we felt that the participants had nothing more to add. The interviews were conducted in UK, France and the US either in person (face-to-face) or via Skype and lasted on average between one to one and a half hours (min. 48 minutes; max. 112 minutes; mean 82 minutes). Transcriptions were offered back to participants for member-checking, 'the most crucial technique for establishing credibility' in a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 p.314).

The transcripts were analyzed thematically using the conventions of template analysis which involves the development of a coding 'template' which summarizes the themes and organizes them in a logical manner (King, 2004). The first criterion for the coding template development was temporal, i.e., the stage at which a particular service is provided by HRM to the expatriates. Following Fee et al (2013) the original template involved three stages: pre-crisis; during the crisis and post-crisis. In the process, however, it emerged that the codification should be done in four temporal stages: pre-expatriation, expatriation, and crisis response (in expatriation) and crisis resolution (in expatriation or repatriation). The second criterion for the coding template development was the types of services provided by HRM, i.e. people services, information services, communication services and the company's organizational culture as it is reflected by its HRM policy and standards as well as its risk and safety philosophy and strategy (Fee and McGrath-Champ, 2016). During the piloting of the interviews the need for a fifth category emerged from the respondents' examples: the risks to which an international manager is exposed in a hostile environment. The transcripts were analyzed and coded by the authors separately, following the use of hierarchical coding (by temporal stage, by type of service and by detailed service offered). This enabled the interviews to be analyzed at different levels resulting in broader higher-order codes describing the support offered whereas detailed lower order codes went deeper into the distinctions. The resulting coding did not show significant differences from one another. The reliability of the coding process was ensured with a test-retest reliability check, where the authors performed the same task for a second time, four weeks later. Inter-coder reliability was calculated to 83.5% which is higher than generally accepted as the norm for a good reliability test 80% (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007).

Findings and Discussion

The scrutiny and analyses of the interview data uncovered various issues that appear to offer important explanations of the approaches and practices involved in managing expatriates in hostile environments. Four areas emerge within this section centering on the themes of; an expanded understanding of hostile environments, minimizing the risk exposure of strategic human resources, the HRM practices associated with the temporal dimensions and key service areas. Alongside the four key themes, the existing literature will be deliberated to further demonstrate the theoretical implications and emerging themes.

An expanded understanding of 'hostile environment'
From our first engagement in our fieldwork it was apparent that corporate HR departments feel that they do not have all the knowledge and experience needed for managing the preparation and protection of expatriates deployed in hostile environments. They therefore develop 'specialist' knowledge networks internally with the risk and security departments and externally with relocation service providers who have unique destination expertise. In order to minimize both the expatriates' and the organization's risk exposure in such environments they add to these networks the services of insurers or brokers, normally specialists in political

insurance cover. These services may vary from simple asset insurance and medical/life policies to more complex services, such as staff evacuation, hostage negotiation, ransom/facilitation payments, hostage exfiltration and rehabilitation, alongside all relevant public and media relations activities and are often labelled as 'specialty products' (IB4, IB5). Although the levels of coverage vary depending on what services are included in the policy, policies against these risks are pretty much the same for all types of insured clients (IB4, IB5).

An immediate result of this expanded knowledge network is the much broader perception of what constitutes a 'hostile environment'. During the interviews, the participants identified several possible adverse incidents that expatriates could face in a hostile destination not all of which are discussed in the extant academic literature. To gain an insight of the risks that concern the participants, the researchers recorded the total number of mentions of these risks (Table 2).

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE
Table 2. Risk exposure in hostile environments

As was expected the risks related with political instability (war/terrorism and civil disorder) were the ones mentioned the most and, notably by all participants. The fact that the interviews were conducted in a period, autumn/winter 2015, when terrorist attacks and political violence events were making headlines may be a contributing factor but also the literature (Elango et al., 2007; Ramirez et al., 2015; Reade & Lee, 2012) shows that perceptions of 'hostile environments' are mostly related with politically unstable locations.

Crime and theft, in general, are also a concern for the participants. However, there are particular risks associated with this category that are seen and, at times, are managed separately. One of these is the risk of kidnap. Interestingly, the word 'abduction' also came up in the interviews several times. An explanation that was given was that 'abduction' is normally referring to children of expatriates taken by deceit or forcibly whereas 'kidnap' involves adults taken by force. When prompted about possible support offered in such cases all executives were reluctant to respond, with some of them saying that this is a law enforcement matter. This reluctance may also be attributed to the special clauses that 'kidnap and ransom' insurance policies have forbidding open disclosure of such policies (Lang, 2012; Fink & Pingle, 2014).

Other risks identified in the study that could also be associated with criminal behaviour were the wrongful detention and the extortion of expatriates, risks that are again not necessarily related with politically unstable and violent countries. Wrongful detention was associated with the expatriates' *'unlawful detention or imprisonment by the country's authorities or by an insurgent group'* (IB3). Two hotel executives mentioned this risk because their hotel groups experienced this situation recently in Libya and in Mali. Extortion is a risk which is not mentioned in the literature. This is probably attributed to the fact that this type of risk is covered by specific policies and is not so widely known or discussed.

> *Often, we have cases where expatriate or even domestic personnel of multinationals are receiving payment demands by local criminals threatening to injure or kill them or a member of their family, cause damage to their properties, contaminate products, harm hotel guests, etc. These are difficult cases to verify and negotiate and our cover provides specialist consultants to assist in handling.* (IB5)

The most accepted definition of 'hostile environment' by Bader et al (2015) talks about "terrorism, severe crime or other forms of violence" (p.1). This study confirms this definition and shows that crime is even of more concern than terrorism and political instability, as it

collectively received the most mentions (76 mentions collectively of crime, theft, kidnap, detention, extortion and cyber; and 54 mentions of war/terrorism/ civil disorder). However, our study revealed that there are many other risks, alongside the ones mentioned above, that also concern the participating organizations, such as health and medical, transport accidents and natural disasters. As these risks are not necessarily related to politically unstable or high violence countries, the above definition of 'hostile environments' appears too narrow, especially for destinations that are vulnerable to such hazards as epidemics and natural disasters or with weak transport and other infrastructure and prone for transport accidents. As a result of our findings we propose a new definition for a *'hostile environment'* as;

> *the work environment in a location where the organization's human resources and assets are exposed to severe, pervasive or persistent levels of risk originating from a variety of man-made or natural threats and hazards.*

HRM services for expatriates in hostile environments

The practices shared by the respondents fall largely into the three types of services identified by Fee and McGrath-Champ (2016), namely information services, people services and communication services. One further HRM activity that does not fall into these three categories is the development of policies and standards, which Fee and McGrath-Champ (2016) include under the label 'organizational culture'. However, there is also an important temporal dimension to these policies and standards which mean they sit alongside the three services, so that our findings indicate four areas, as opposed to the three identified elsewhere (Fee et al., 2013; Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2016) of managing human resources in hostile environments. Figure 2 outlines the temporal aspects as they emerged from the analysis of the interviews and how the stages of expatriation and crisis management coalesce.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE
Figure 2. HRM services across Expatriation Stages

HRM services for pre-expatriation planning (crisis prevention)
The support activities and types of services provided for expatriates' preparation for expatriation, shared by the participants in this and the next stage, broadly confirm features suggested in the extant literature (Fee & McGrath-Champ, 2016). It was also evident that this stage created the foundation for all the other phases and what was mentioned in this stage, across the four areas identified by our respondents, was then adapted to be relevant to the situation in subsequent stages.

Information services. Most participants emphasized as a first step here the need to make corporate decisions on the expansion of their activities in hostile environments based on in-depth intelligence gathering using expert professional sources, threat landscaping for risk identification and risk assessment procedures (Czinkota et al., 2010; Ramirez et al., 2015). *'Moral obligation to the employees who will take the assignment'* was unanimously mentioned and more times than any other reason (i.e., legal necessity, due diligence, and business sense) for collecting this information. Clearly, this is the information that will be fed into all other services at this stage and will determine the overall expatriation strategy.

People services. There was strong consensus that the information collected should provide the foundation for the assignee's pre-expatriation training (Fee et al., 2013; Wernick & Von Glinow, 2012). This training may range from a *'one-day briefing'* (HE2, HE4 and RC3) on the political, social and cultural issues of the destination, the associated risks and possible mitigation strategies, to more sophisticated *'on-boarding' training* (HE5, IB2, IB3, RC1) that

would include a full analysis by expert advisors of the political violence and crime levels at the destination, the main actors involved and basic self-protection practices to minimize risk exposure. According to some participants (IB5, RC1), depending on the severity of risk in a destination, this training may also include more sophisticated training on basic counter-surveillance and hostage survival practices (Fee et al., 2013; Bader & Berg, 2013). This level of training was mentioned only by one hotel company executive and only to express his skepticism:

> *Having a military background myself, I am aware of more 'intense' survival training courses in the market. [...] These perhaps are useful for NGO workers on war-zone assignments or war correspondents not hotel managers! (laugh) [...] Participants in such courses know well that they will not be killed, and therefore do not get the experience that will prepare them for a real situation. These courses, in their less extreme commercial versions are, at their best, good team-builders.* (HE7)

This view appears to be shared by the other hotel executives who, in their responses were happy with the assignees being able to '... *understand the threat, understand the [terrorist/criminal] attack cycle and not becoming a target ...*' (HE9).

Training aside, another service offered by HR departments (most often in collaboration with relocation service providers) is the assistance package for relocation in hostile environments. The practices shared were not significantly different from those reported (Harvey, 1993; Elango et al., 2007). It appears that in such assignments most companies (HE1, HE4, HE5) have tended to move away from the standard of a relocation lump sum to a more *'managed and controlled housing process'* (HE4, RC2) where the relocation consultant is given a budget and arranges housing according to the organization's safety and security standards. Relocation consultants will also provide advice on 'safe' and 'non-go' zones in the destination. Some hotel company executives (HE5, HE9) also suggested that for their high-value human assets who may be more likely targets for kidnap and ransom situations a *'life pattern threat and vulnerability analysis'* (HE9) should be undertaken to identify vulnerabilities in their daily routines to develop the necessary risk mitigation strategies and practices (Fee et al., 2013; Ramirez et al., 2015). In the rarer cases where families relocate together additions to the standard family/spouse support packages (Bader, Berg & Holtbrügge, 2015), i.e., settling-in advice, career support and counseling, retraining, assistance to the trailing spouse in finding work and arranging childcare, were evident. Several participants (H7, H9, IB3, RC2) required *'family awareness training'* [H9] i.e., a 'light' version of the assignee's on-boarding program, and if not relocated, the spouse/partner should undergo specific training to cope with possible crisis situations at a distance.

Communication services. Most hotel executives and all relocation consultants emphasized the need to carefully plan the development of social networks in the host country (H6 and RC1 consider this planning as an *'imperative pre-deployment [expatriation] activity'*) (Reade & Lee, 2012; Bader, 2015; Bader & Schuster, 2015). Although the understanding of these networks varied among the participants, they broadly suggested two types: (a) with the local expatriate and diplomatic community, mainly for intelligence sharing on safety and security matters but also for potential collaboration in emergency situations (Bader & Schuster, 2015); and (b) with local key stakeholders, primarily local authorities and law enforcement but also with all sides of religious and political actors (Bader, 2015; Ramirez et al., 2015). However, what is missing is the recognition that social networks organized by employers can be valuable in increasing perceived organizational support, where this is seen to tackle some of the results of the indirect impact of terrorism threats, namely organizational commitment, performance and positive work attitudes (Reade & Lee, 2012; Bader & Berg, 2013; Bader &

Schuster, 2015). Another type of contact rather than a network suggested by participants from all three groups (H1, H8, IB2, IB6 and RC3) was the *'family liaison' aspect.* However, their views as to where this liaison should be located and what exactly their role would be were mixed and in some instances unclear, which broadly supports the work of Bader, Berg & Holtbrügge (2015). The consensus was that this person should *'act as the company's designated contact person for the family'* (H1) in case of emergency situations.

A relatively surprising finding was that the provision of an open communication platform between expatriates and the corporate offices was an element perhaps taken for granted by most respondents, and not mentioned at this stage, unless prompted. It emerged as a response in the crisis stage and the word 'platform' was underscored by most of them (HE3, HE5, HE6, HE8, IB1, IB3, RC1, RC2, RC3) meaning that a 'line' is not sufficient and multiple means of 24/7 communication are needed.

Policies and standards. Participants HE3, HE7, HE9, IB1 and IB5 suggested that the intelligence available for the hostile environments considered for expatriation should provide the foundation for the organization's *'acceptable risk threshold'* (some used the term *'risk appetite'*), i.e., amount and type of risk the organization is willing to take by expanding in and relocating human resources to a hostile environment (Driffield et al., 2013). The articulation of a clear risk appetite statement is the basis for the development of any expatriation strategy, the networks of partners that will support it and the policies that will protect it. Another unanimously agreed element of the pre-expatriation support is the development of a detailed crisis management plan (Wang et al., 2009; Mankin & Perry, 2004; Harvey, 1993). The hotel executives with risk and security management roles (HE3, HE4, HE5, HE6, HE7, HE9) went into more detail than the other participants, indicating different levels of escalation for this plan but broadly agreeing that it should look at: *'hibernation'* during a crisis situation which refers to sheltering the persons in place until the threat is over or further assistance is rendered*; 'relocation'* which is the withdrawal of human resources from a location to a safer one but normally within the same country; an *'evacuation'* which is the withdrawal of human resources to another country. While the academic literature does mention evacuation (Fee et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2009; Bader, Berg & Holtbrugge, 2015) it does not mention hibernation. Most participants also emphasized that these plans need to be rehearsed and evaluated at least once in this (pre-expatriation) stage.

HRM services for Expatriation (crisis preparation)
As identified in Figure 2 this stage involves building upon the previous stage covering aspects of pre-expatriation and expatriation notably, the settling-in of the deployed human resources and the support they need to implement their 'acceptance' and 'protection' security strategies.

Information services. Participants from both the HE and RC participant groups also underscored the importance of continuous communication and intelligence flow between HR corporate departments and deployed expatriates on safety and security issues, new emerging risks and possible updates or changes on agreed security procedures or crisis management plans, from either side. Depending on the strategic value of the deployed human resources HE and IB participants recommend the monitoring of media coverage of the company and of the specific persons deployed both locally (at the hostile destination) and internationally. The information collected from this activity will facilitate the expatriate's *'profile management'* (HE2, HE3, IB4, IB5) discussed later in this section.

People services. According to the participants the HR support at this stage should focus on assisting the expatriate settle-in with clear *'arrival and reception processes'* (HE3, RC1)

(meeting points, contact persons, transport to accommodation) and *'local orientation'* (HE1, RC2) which can range from a simple city tour to a more detailed orientation on dealing with authorities, banks, public services and a reminder of safe and non-go zones. This orientation can be conducted by an experienced local member of staff or a relocation agent (Bader & Schuster, 2015; Briscoe & Schuler, 2004). Although most of the participants talked about the role of HR, at this stage, as facilitating the implementation of housing and schooling plans as well as ensuring the partner/spouse support plan developed in the previous stage, HE4 and HE9 placed increased emphasis on the need for the corporate HR department to adopt a rigorously structured approach for relocated staff in implementing the personal protection training they had received at the pre-expatriation stage:

> *We need to ensure that they are changing regularly the routines that render them vulnerable to terrorists and criminals, that they practice basic counter-surveillance and that they test their evacuation plans. Complacency is not an option!* (HE4)

Finally, there is a need for management (often based on new intelligence) of the expatriates' *'local socialization'* (RC3) process. *'Appearance and behavior' are crucial in hostile environments. The less attention one attracts the less chances of becoming a target they have'* (HE7). Interestingly HE6, HE9 and RC2 also spoke about the avoidance of attracting, *'the 'wrong' kind of attention'*. Quite often, in order to achieve an appropriate level of community acceptance there is need for corporate HR departments to *'manage the public profile of an expat with the assistance of a PR* [public relations] *agency'* (HE3). An important element of this local socialization is also the active development of the social networks with key local stakeholders as well as the expatriate and diplomatic communities (HE6, RC1, RC2, RC3).

Communication services. In common with the previous stage, the participants did not make any particular comment on communication but instead mentioned the use of pre-existing communication mechanisms to ensure robust and redundant internal communication systems between corporate headquarters and internationally deployed staff was in place.

Policy and standards. The actions associated with this particular stage focused upon the pre-expatriation knowledge and plans in place, so *audits* and *tests* for compliance (HE4, HE5, HE7) and periodic maintenance i.e., *periodic review* and *update* of policies (HE2, HE5) were on-going.

HRM services for Expatriation (crisis response)
This is the stage of expatriation where the expatriate is becoming to a large extent dependent on the support provided by the corporate HR department, which may vary according to the crisis situation (Wernick & Von Glinow, 2012). The security strategy at this stage shifts from 'partial acceptance' to 'full protection' but can go further. HE7, IB3 and IB5 identified examples in Iraq and Libya where severe threat levels and strategic human resources led to the change of the security strategy to 'deterrence' i.e., hardening the hotel and the security detail of the general manager with armed security guards (Childs, 2013; Van Brabant, 2000).

Information services. HE1 suggested that this is one of the most important functions of corporate HR in expatriation since as it becomes the hub of information collection and dissemination, and determines the course of the expatriation not only during but also after the crisis. Participants showed minimal variance in their responses referring mainly to monitoring and gathering information and data from local and international media; collecting situation

reports from expert sources; facilitating threat level assessment; and enabling the Crisis Management Team (CMT) to make crisis response decisions.

People services. HRM support in a crisis situation will aim to enhance the employees' and the organization's resilience in the hostile environment. Such resilience can be achieved by ensuring both business and human continuity through the provision of additional measures and resources, depending on the context and the level of threat. Some indicative responses included: enhanced protection measures with '*extra security personnel at higher levels of threat*' (HE7); specialist support such as '*expert legal advice in the case of wrongful detention*' (IB6), '*cyber security specialists dealing with cyber extortion*' (HE2) or even '*negotiation team in the case of kidnap*' (IB3); and additional financial resources such as '*funds for facilitation payments or the payment of ransom*' (IB4). HE9 warned that this support needs to be commensurate with the crisis situation and the local conditions:

> *We do not want situations such as the case of Dr [XXXX] who was kidnapped from the [XXX] Complex in XXXX and was killed in XXXXXXX during a rescue effort by the local Citizens-Police Liaison Committee. It is important that we are able to retain highly specialized negotiators and extraction teams that can handle effective such a crisis.* (HE9)

The participants also suggested that the most important support that can be provided by corporate HRM is the coordination of the crisis management plan's implementation. Accordingly, most participants acknowledged that although the personnel 'on the ground' will execute the plan, they agreed that the escalation of the crisis management plan is subject to corporate decision making. '*It is the corporate headquarters that will normally activate the plan and decide on the staff's hibernation duration and location*' (HE3). Again, the decision on '*how and when family members will be evacuated while staff is still in 'hibernation'* will typically be made at corporate level rather than at local (HE6). In the case of relocation within the country '*[…] the decision may be made at local level but the relocation sites whether 'hot' or 'cold' will be provided by the corporate headquarters who will also decide the 'how and when' a full-scale 'evac' and repatriation will take place*' (HE6).

Communication services. Clearly, since a large part of the crisis response decision making is made by the corporate team the need for abundant and redundant communication lines between the CMT and the deployed expatriates is obvious. However, HR is responsible also for open and continuous communication between the CMT and its extended network of support specialists (often provided by the insurers and/or the relocation consultants) and the crisis response team that may be 'on the ground' (HE8, IB6, RC1, RC2).
Almost all participants underscored the role of corporate communication with external stakeholders and the media but, in the clear majority of responses, it was suggested that this communication should be handled by an expert team and not just the HRM department. HE3 and HE7 were the only HR executives who felt confident in handling this task as they had received special '*media spokesperson*' training. H1, H8, IB2, IB6 and RC3 also referred to the role of the 'family liaison officer' who should be activated at this stage and acts as the link between the expatriate's family and the organization.

Policy and standards. Unlike the previous stage where the role of HR was more dynamic with regards to policy, in the stage of crisis response, the participants who explicitly or implicitly (HE3, HE4, HE9, IB1, IB3, IB4, IB5) alluded to the role of HRM used the words 'compliance', 'conformance' and 'adherence' once again confirming the role of 'policy

police'. This demonstrates how important the previous stages, and the associated service areas, are in executing the effective management of expatriates when crises occur.

HRM services for Expatriation or Repatriation (crisis recovery)
At this stage the participants discussed the support activities and practices related with the recovery of the repatriated staff after a crisis situation and what HE1 and HE2 eloquently termed *'consequences management'*. Many of the participants (HE3, HE4, HE6, HE8, IB2, IB3, IB6, RC1) however, noted that this stage is not necessarily connected with the end of expatriation in the specific hostile environment. *'It is not a total recall, repatriation may be temporary and only for a short while or it may not be needed if the deployment [expatriation] environment gets back to what we accept as normality'* (HE3). It was, therefore, implied that many of the practices described at this stage can take place while the expatriates continue their deployment at the same destination.

Information Services. The participants stressed the importance of managing the 'learning' from the crisis experience and using it for the re-design of the entire process based on this learning. HE1 suggested that a *'debriefing and an action review'* needs to take place where the organization and its stakeholders will have the opportunity to evaluate plans, actions and responses, identify potential weaknesses and re-design the whole process based on these new insights. HE3 and HE7 also suggested that this new learning should be *'codified'* by corporate HR and *'become a source for new policies and standards, new training and permeate the entire organization'*. These views are consistent with the literature on crisis knowledge governance where emergent 'crisis' knowledge complements or replaces already institutionalized knowledge until itself becomes obsolete (Paraskevas et al., 2013).

People Services. As already discussed, repatriation may be temporary or not take place at all. The participants suggested *'paid rest and rehabilitation'* (in the case of injuries sustained during the crisis or the evacuation) as well as *'individual and family counseling'* (HE1, HE2, IB2, IB4, RC3) to address any post-traumatic disorder (Liou & Lin, 2008; Ramirez et al., 2015). HE5 and all the IBs also talked about '*claims management and the payment of compensations via insurance covers'* whereas HE1 and HE2 talked about *'other consequences management'* explaining that in case of fatalities there is always a need for the organization to arrange the identification and repatriation of bodies and their personal effects.

One very important activity at this stage is the evaluation of the expatriate's *'level of recovery'* (HE3, HE4), *'acquired new knowledge' (*HE8) and *'appropriateness'* (HE1) or *'fit-for-redeployment'* (RC3) in order for *'re-assignment'* decisions to be made (HE1, HE2).

> *Decisions for re-assignment should not be only based on the company's business needs but also on a rigorous assessment of the candidate's 'physical and emotional fitness' and their 'fit' for the proposed destination.* (RC3)

The assessment of whether the individual is emotionally and physically fit for repatriation in the same or other work environments places particular onus on corporate HR departments to ensure the care and support packages created are suitable and effective (Mankin & Perry, 2004).

Communication services. The role of HR as a *'communication hub'* (HE7, HE9) or *'conduit'* (HE2) at this stage was also discussed in the study. As before, all people and information services imply open, 24/7 communication as an HR support service. The participants suggested that although it is not HR's direct responsibility to have an incident reporting

system, it plays a major role in establishing one. As all HR participants were operating in networks with the risk and security managers in their organization, they took this as granted. There was only one HR executive, (HE5), who stated that incident reporting and claims management was in their remit.

Policy and Standards. One of the major outcomes of this stage as noted by HE7, HE9 and IB5 is that the knowledge created by the debriefing and action review will enable the corporate HR department to re-assess and perhaps modify the organization's *'threshold of acceptable risk'*, something that will impact the entire expatriation strategy. Also, the crisis knowledge that will emerge from this evaluation process, as pointed out earlier, can be used to review, enrich and perhaps amend the policies and standards that support this strategy. This is part of closing the loop to more effectively prepare and protect human resources deployed in hostile environments.

Minimizing the risk exposure of strategic human resources
What also emerged from the interviews was that the focus of all these activities is the minimization of risk exposure for both the deployed expatriates and the organizations concerned, especially with regards to financial and reputational costs. Hence, the creation of extended networks that manage together such types of expatriation: the relocation partners offering deeper local knowledge which will protect the deployed staff; and the insurers/brokers with who, in a sense, a large part of the risk exposure is 'shared'. The focus on risk exposure minimization is evident by the increasingly adopted practice, emphasized by both the hotel executives group and the relocation consultants group (HE1, HE3, RC2), of the development and deployment of only local human resources in both hostile and non-hostile environments as inpatriates (Collings, 2014; Gannon et al., 2010; Harvey, et al., 2000).

> *As we expand internationally, we are trying to nurture leaders from within the ranks of in-country employees, something that in the long run will result in fewer expatriate assignments, particularly when it comes to geopolitical hotspots.* (HE1)

> *We sign up the 'best and brightest' from these destinations and give them short-term assignments in 'strong' properties where they can be fully exposed and 'indoctrinated' to our company's culture, standards and policies, [...], interact with senior management and mentors before re-allocating them to the countries they are already familiar with.* [HE3]

However, as the pool of strategic human resources is still relatively limited and the speed of hotel brand expansion fast, expatriation in certain hostile environments is inevitable. Again, however, risk exposure minimization dominates decisions with regards to how this expatriation takes place:

> *In such situations [hostile environments] we encourage the 'split family' approach. Normally these locations are inhospitable for families – they do not have international schools, don't offer family-friendly housing and accessibility to amenities and are, of course, unsafe. However, we realize that this is not a long-term solution and have to compensate accordingly with an increased number of home leave trips.* [HE1]

An important role in this decision is played also by the insurers. An expatriate with a family in a hostile environment represents higher risk exposure and therefore policy cover and premiums will reflect this increased exposure. Participants recalled cases where insurers have not insured expatriates where they were escorted by their families in certain countries [IB4, IB6]. This is not though a very common issue as, notably, many participants [HE2, HE6, HE7,

RC2 and RC3] claimed that there is an increased trend for expatriate assignees in general, and not only those assigned in hostile environments, to not relocate with their families: '*[...] with dual-career families, extended family responsibilities and children's education needs, the 'trailing spouse' tends to become a pattern of the past.'* [RC3].

The role of the insurers in the management of expatriation process is becoming evident also in other aspects. As Fee and McGrath-Champ (2016) identify there may be a 'partial acceptance' security strategy which blends elements of 'acceptance' with 'protection' and our findings suggest that since the risk exposure result of an acceptance strategy is shared with, if not completely transferred to an insurer through a policy, the latter may influence this approach. As revealed in the interviews, depending on the insurance policy, the level of risk exposure and the value of the protected human resources, the security strategy may move from 'partial acceptance' to outright 'protection' and even reach the level of 'deterrence' (Childs, 2013; Van Brabant, 2000).

We identified in the literature review that there has been limited consideration of how the differences in risk exposure of international managers, due to the variety in their established routines and length of stay in hostile environments, may impact on their management by corporate HRM executives. The loss or compromise of any one of these human resources (traveling senior executive, regional cluster manager or assigned expatriate) would be dreadful for those concerned but the impact for the organization is likely to be more ruinous if it is the senior executive. However, the participants did not differentiate between managerial resources on this basis despite their focus on risks associated with specific environments. For all the respondents, their focus was very clearly upon the widest use of the term expatriates as those who managed their international properties and the corporate and regional executives who coordinate business across their hotel portfolios. The synonymous treatment of these different forms of strategic human resources derives from the coverage of insurance policies which also do not vary between them. This highlights again that rather than company policies driving HRM practices and support, for deployed resources in hostile environments, insurance policies lead to a 'one-size-fits-all' approach with limited differentiation between non-native executives.

While local hotel employees were mentioned, they were seen to be the prime responsibility of their direct employers, the franchisees or investors/owners of the property. The four international hotel companies provided support to their business partners on risks, security and the protection of their hotels (customers and staff) but the focus of the corporate HR executives' attention was very clearly on direct corporate employees.

From the outset of our initial fieldwork invitations we were surprised by the introductions to the wider support networks offered by our initial research participants (the corporate HRM executives) who we had anticipated would be the primary sources for our investigation. There was also evidence that the corporate executives, both HRM and risk and security, had in place mechanisms and practices (for example, training, specific crisis management plans, communication platforms and support services) which constitute best practice in managing their human resources in threatened locations. This apparently matches the 'table stake' best practice SHRM approach where there are people management activities which all organizations in an industry will use and legitimize their industry membership (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). The unanimous employment of specialists in the fields of relocation and insurance further indicate that table stake best practice approaches were manifest in hotel MNCs' approaches to managing their human resources.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This article has attempted to identify and address the limitations in the existing literature on the missing organizational voice around managing people in hostile environments, specifically explore the approaches taken to managing expatriates in hostile environments, and examine the practices involved. By drawing upon the theoretical literature on SHRM and existing evidence of HRM practices it provides a more comprehensive definition of hostile environments and a detailed depiction of the ways managerial resources are managed by their corporate employers in such locations. The growth and importance of this IHRM area resulted in our targeted corporate respondents introducing us to the external specialists who augment the corporate approaches and practices with their knowledge and expertise. This business partnering of corporate executives, amid increasingly challenging competitive, social and political conditions, highlights the significance of relationship building for an organization's survival and reputational success. As such our study fills a gap in the literature where few have been able to provide the corporate perspective on managing human resources across international commercial operations in difficult surroundings.

Theoretical Contributions and Limitations

We contribute to the literature in four specific ways. First, this study is the first to explore the awareness of the risks, and the approaches taken to support managerial resources operating in hostile environments from the perspective of corporate executives and the specialists who support them (relocation consultants and insurers). Second, as part of our findings we provide a new definition of hostile environments which captures more broadly the way corporate HRM executives and specialists in the fields of risk, security, relocation and insurance view the concept. Whereas Bader et al., (2015) focused upon different forms of violence (terrorism, crime etc.) our definition takes a broader perspective and considers a variety of man-made or natural threats and hazards. Third, we further developed Fee et al., (2013; 2016) models on HRM services for expatriates to better reflect the key practices HR departments implement, at the different stages of expatriation, in order to prevent a crisis, prepare expatriates to face a crisis, respond to a crisis and recover from a crisis. This is one of the few occasions corporate executives have contributed to the area of expatriation under duress, and we not only captured their approaches to supporting human resources in hostile environments but the specialist expertise they rely upon to deliver such policies and practices. One particular feature of the new model is that it distinguishes different sets of support services in what Fee et al., (2013; 2016) call the pre-crisis stage. We identified a set of practices and services taking place pre-expatriation that aim at minimizing the risk exposure of the expatriate and another set of practices and services which take place during expatriation and prepare the expatriate to face a crisis but before a crisis incident. The findings also highlight that the focus for these HRM executives is very much based on ensuring the preparation for expatriation and crisis situations is comprehensively planned. The extensive nature of the initial stage of the model is crucial for all other subsequent stages. The proposed model also reinforces the importance of continual organizational learning from minor and major crisis incidents, and sustained business continuity. This is a sizable challenge where ownership is devolved, multiples of properties exist and there is substantial geographical dispersion (Paraskevas et al., 2013; Gannon et al., 2015). The final distinctive contribution identifies how the lack of differentiation in the support of different strategic human resources (traveling executives to expatriates on three year assignments) in hostile environments is founded on a blanket approach taken by the companies as dictated by the insurance policies available to them. This means that companies are forced to offer the same support to all expatriates in spite of their strategic importance, in all countries regardless of the types of risks each location may have. This indicates the strategic importance of external stakeholders,

such as insurance brokers, in developing support strategies, which is a novel contribution to the literature. It also shows the need for a better understanding of specific categories of risks that are present in hostile environments so that these strategies may be tailored for specific locations.

The research was undertaken with corporate executives from international hotel corporations which only represent a small percentage of MNCs. Although international hotel groups are amongst the most credible examples of multinationals we recognize perhaps research in other sectors would derive different results. We also interviewed hotel executives, insurers and relocation service providers associated with only four international hotel companies. The focus on respondents associated with the international hotel industry constrains the extent to which the results of this investigation can be generalized. However, as a truly international industry focused upon the mobility of people, the hotel sector still provides a pertinent setting for an investigation of corporate approaches and practices associated with managing human resources in hostile environments. Our hotel companies sample represent forty percent of the total branded hotel sector, however, a larger, or perhaps a cross-sectoral sample might reveal additional perspectives. Furthermore, the initial corporate respondents were drawn from the researchers' own personal networks and it should be acknowledged that they may not represent all executives' views on the topic.

Practical Contributions and Further Research
The crucial role of HRM executives and their partners in dealing with heightened recognition of the hostile threats is apparent. The continued developments in business travel as well as the trends in international alliances and market expansion, amidst the uninterrupted threat of terrorism and violence does suggest that organizations could actively engage all staff in training in crisis management skills. The findings show it is the less glamorous policy development and enforcement, and the critical information and communication aspects to managing mobility on a grand scale, which appear fundamental to HRM's role. These areas deserve greater attention from the academic community to support the development of effective practices. Undoubtedly, MNCs also have a moral dilemma about the extent to which they can protect their human resources in hostile environments due to the unforeseen nature of threats. Senior executives also therefore need to decide to what extent should their organizations' build in-house capability or customize expertise available elsewhere (Fee et al., 2013). Compared with the internal capacity and expertise of the human resource managers in the INGOs studied by Fee & McGrath-Champ (2016) we found limited evidence of the same level of expertise amongst our sample of international hotel company executives, and a reliance on external specialists brought in to clarify risks, coverage and provide appropriate support. This highlights that different business sectors are likely to have variations in their approaches to building internal expertise capacity, to manage human resources operating in hostile environments, dependent upon the requirement of their sector to operate in such locations. For example, sectors such as mining and extraction may have no choice in operating in such locations. In addition, we should also recognize the influence of international business formats in shaping where companies operate. The networked and diverse ownership nature of the international hotel industry presents particular challenges here where hotel owners and other partners may be reluctant to engage with the extra costs of enhanced risk expertise and other forms of organizational support (Gannon et al., 2010). As many other industries engage in varied ownership patterns and affiliations these issues have wider ramifications for the international business world. The overall complexity of addressing these factors highlight how the pressure to minimize business and human risks are leading to changes in the expatriation landscape itself, based upon our participants advocating the wider deployment of inpatriates and more split family relocations.

With regards to future research, this study highlights specific implications for academics and managers. It would be valuable to explore the relationships built between corporate human resource and risk and security executives and the external expertise they prize in safely managing their organizations' strategic human resources. The pressure to minimize risk exposure and develop inpatriates presents corporate HRM executives with specific problems in highly diversified and dispersed organizations. All four of the international companies, as well as the other respondents, mentioned the growing use of inpatriates as being safer (lower risk) sources of managerial expertise though it became apparent that companies were inconsistent in their approaches to developing these geographically and culturally dispersed managerial resources. If inpatriates are to be advocated more widely by insurers and corporate executives, then companies will need to improve their talent management and the development of these human resources as part of their attempts to gain advantage through their human resource management practices (Collings, 2014; Gannon et al., 2015). The implications of talent spotting and management for specific locations across the globe to satisfy the corporate risk agenda need to be deliberated in far greater detail. More specific investigations of how organizations might support and evaluate their practices supporting managers pre- and post- crisis, and ascertain fitness for subsequent duties, are also warranted. Such studies, where they can capture the perspectives of both the corporate executives and expatriates on the practices deployed, will be particularly appreciated. The overall risk appetite of organizations also suggests a valuable starting point for future investigations of people management practices, how does risk appetite shape the development of SHRM approaches and the HRM practices which support and protect staff.

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Figure 1. The Expatriate Cycle with Risk Management considerations
(adapted from Harvey, 1982; Bianchi, 2015 and Salter, 1997)

Planning/*Prevention*
- Analysis of assignment in relation to the location, organisational needs and selecting assignees
- *Environmental analysis and analysis of the need for international assignee, organisational support and provision required through a risk management plan*

Pre-Expatriation/*Preparation*
- Preparation through awareness raising, communicating objectives and performance criteria
- Language, cultural and location training for assignee and their families
- *Preparation of a business impact analysis prior to any incident for effective response and recovery*

Repatriation/*Recover*
- Managing re-adjustment, assignee and family re-orientation
- Organisational updating and career management
- *Minimise disruption and recovery times with the development of a recovery plan*

Expatriation/*Respond*
- Engagement during the assignment
- Issues of performance and compensation
- Support to assignee and family
- Latterly planning for repatriation
- *Focus on the containment, control and minimisation of any incident through an incident report plan*

Table 1 – Research Participants

Participant Code	Participant Job Role	Company's Activity	No of hotels / employees	Reach
HE1	Head of HR in Hotel Operations	International Hotel Company A	>5,000 hotels/	100+ countries
HE2	SVP Global Risk Management	International Hotel Company A	>5,000 hotels	100+ countries
HE3	Vice President Global Safety	International Hotel Company A	>5,000 hotels	100+ countries
HE4	Director Global Security	International Hotel Company B	>500 hotels	50+ countries
HE5	Vice President Human Resources	International Hotel Company B	>500 hotels	50+ countries
HE6	Vice President Human Resources	International Hotel Company C	>5,000 hotels	80+ countries
HE7	Director of Security & Safety	International Hotel Company C	>5,000 hotels	80+ countries
HE8	Vice President Human Resources	International Hotel Company D	>2,500 hotels	100+ countries
HE9	VP Global Security	International Hotel Company D	>2,500 hotels	100+ countries
IB1	Client Services Director, Major Risks Practice	Insurance Broker	>20,000 empl.	Global
IB2	Client Executive	Insurance Broker	>60,000 empl.	Global
IB3	Account Executive	Insurance Broker	>15,000 empl.	Global
IB4	Account Executive; International Liability	Insurance Broker	>5,000 empl	Global
IB5	Partner; Credit, Political & Security Risks team	Insurance Broker	>10,000 empl.	Global
IB6	Casualty Underwriter	Insurance Broker	>30,000 empl.	Global
RC1	Relocation Account Manager	Relocation Services	>2,500 empl.	Global
RC2	Expatriate Assignment Consultant	Relocation Services	>2,500 empl	180+ countries
RC3	Senior Global Mobility Consultant	Relocation Services	>6,000 empl.	170+ countries

Table 2 – Risk exposure in hostile environments (n= 18 interviews)

Parti-cipant Code	War / Terrorism/ Civil Disorder	Health & Medical	Transport Accidents	Natural Disasters	Crime/ Theft	Kidnap / Abduction	Wrongful Detention	Personal/ Property Extortion	Cyber Extortion
HE1	4	3	3	2	2	0	0	0	0
HE2	2	3	0	4	1	1	0	0	0
HE3	5	0	2	3	2	3	0	0	0
HE4	3	2	2	3	3	2	0	0	0
HE5	2	3	4	2	1	0	0	0	0
HE6	2	3	3	2	1	1	1	0	0
HE7	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	0
HE8	4	3	3	3	2	1	0	0	0
HE9	5	2	3	2	2	2	1	0	0
IB1	2	3	4	2	2	3	3	2	2
IB2	4	3	1	2	2	2	1	0	2
IB3	1	2	3	0	3	1	1	3	0
IB4	4	2	3	2	1	1	1	1	1
IB5	5	1	2	0	2	2	2	1	0
IB6	2	2	1	3	2	0	0	0	0
RC1	2	3	2	2	2	0	0	0	0
RC2	2	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
RC3	4	2	3	0	1	1	0	0	0
Total mentions	**54**	**42**	**38**	**34**	**32**	**22**	**10**	**7**	**5**

Figure 2. HRM services across Expatriation Stages

Prevention (PREVENTION STAGE)

Information Services
• Threat Landscaping
• Risk Identification and Assessment
People Services
• Situational Awareness Training
    Conflict/Violence Analysis & Actors
    Basic Self-protection
    Basic Counter-surveillance
    Hostage Survival
• Relocation Assistance
    Housing/Schooling Plan
    Safe and Non-go zones
    Partner/Spouse Support Service
    Family Awareness Training
    Partner/Spouse Crisis Coping Training
• Lifestyle Threat/Vulnerability Analysis
Communication Services
• Local Key Stakeholder Network Plan
• Expat/Diplomatic Network Plan
• Family Liaison
• 24/7 Internal Communication Platform
Policy and Standards
• Acceptable Risk Threshold (Risk Appetite)
• Crisis Mgt Plan
Hibernation/Relocation/Evacuation
• Insurance Policies

Pre-Deployment and Deployment (PREPARE STAGE)

Information Services
• Security Briefs on Emerging Risks
• Updates on Crisis Mgt Plan
• Local and International Media Coverage
People Services
• Settle-in Support
    Arrival and Reception
    Local Orientation
    Housing/Schooling
    Partner/Spouse Support Service
• Personal Protection Practice
    Changing Routines
    Counter-Surveillance Exercises
    Evacuation Table-Tops and Drills
• Local Socialisation
    Appearance and Behaviour
    Profile Management
    Local Networks
Communication Services
• 24/7 Internal Communication Platform
Policy and Standards
• Audit / Review / Update
• Ensure Compliance

Crisis Resolution in Deployment or Repatriation (RECOVERY STAGE)

Information Services
• Debriefing and Action Review
• Codification / Institutionalisation of Learning
People Services
• Consequence Management
    Repatriation (temporary or permanent)
    Rest and Rehabilitation
    Individual and Family Counselling
    Financial Compensation (Insurance)
• Evaluation and Re-assignment
    Physical and Emotional Fitness
    Acquired Knowledge
    Fit for Proposed Relocation
Communication Services
• 24/7 Internal Communication Platform
• Incident Reporting
Policy and Standards
• Review of Acceptable Risk Threshold
• Update / Revision of Policies

Crisis Situation in Deployment (RESPONSE STAGE)

Information Services
• Situation Reports from Expert Sources
• Continuous Threat Level Assessment
• Local and International Media Coverage
People Services
• Additional Resource Provision
    Enhanced Protection Measures
    Specialist Support (Security, Legal, Cyber)
    Negotiation Team
    Funds for ransom/facilitation payments
• Crisis Escalation / Business Continuity
    Hibernation (location, duration)
    Relocation (Hot/Cold Sites)
    Family Evacuation / Repatriation
    Personnel Evacuation / Repatriation
Communication Services
• 24/7 Internal Communication Platform
    Crisis Management Team (Command Centre)
    Crisis Response and Specialist Support Teams
    Family Liaison Activation
    Media and External Stakeholders
Policy and Standards
• Ensure Compliance