

The UK and United Nations peace operations

Identifying a way forward

A report based on a UNA-UK/RUSI roundtable discussion on UK engagement in UN peace operations

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About UNA-UK

UNA-UK is the UK's leading source of independent analysis on the UN, and a UK-wide grassroots movement. UNA-UK believes that a strong, credible and effective UN is essential if we are to build a safer, fairer and more sustainable world. We call for strong government support for the UN and demonstrate why the UN matters to people everywhere.

UNA-UK is a longstanding advocate for UN peacekeeping. In 2014, we launched a campaign on increasing UK engagement, which we believe will strengthen UN peacekeeping, protect civilians and contribute to the UK's own security goals. Specifically, we would like the UK to:

- Set out its strategic approach to UN peacekeeping in the next Strategic Defence and Security Review;
- Update doctrine on peacekeeping and ensure that this does not confine the UK's role to 'niche capabilities' and deployments to NATO-led missions only;
- Contribute more practical expertise and logistical support to UN peacekeeping operations, e.g. rapid response teams, training in areas like counter-insurgency, transport vehicles;
- Recognise the global service of British peacekeepers and celebrate their work and sacrifice in order to support a cultural change in the way UN peacekeeping is viewed by UK personnel, parliamentarians and the UK public.

UNA-UK seeks to achieve this by convening experts, parliamentary and government lobbying and public advocacy.

For more information, visit www.una.org.uk or contact Alexandra Buskie, Peace and Security Programmes Officer, at buskie@una.org.uk or 020 7766 3445.

About the author

Dr David Curran is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University. His primary research interest is in developments in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping. Since completing his PhD at the Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, David has undertaken research into a range of topic areas including the role of conflict resolution in training programmes for military peacekeepers; protection of civilians in UN Peacekeeping; the evolution of rapid-reaction peacekeeping and peacebuilding forces such as the African Union standby brigades and EU battlegroups; and the potential of specialised UN rapid reaction capabilities. During 2013-14, David undertook a research fellowship in New York for a UN-based NGO, covering the UN's Fourth Committee, Security Council, and C34 meetings.

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1. Introduction

This report is based on the proceedings of a *Roundtable on UK engagement in UN peace operations*, organised by UNA-UK in association with the Royal United Services Institute on 19 May 2015. The roundtable focussed on the ambition and appetite for increased engagement in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations in the UK, exploring the UK's rationale for its approach to peacekeeping and the perceived challenges and opportunities posed by UN-led operations. It considered current needs identified by the UN, and examined specific points in the life cycle of a mission where UK engagement could add value, drawing in perspectives from other troop-contributing countries (TCCs).

The workshop was split into three panels:

- **Session 1** - UK policy environment: ambitions and constraints;
- **Session 2** - The UK and UN peace operations: challenges and opportunities;
- **Session 3** - Military and non-military contributions to UN peace operations.

Invited guests (under the Chatham House rule) came from the UK's policy establishment (with input from the Department for International Development (DFID), Stabilisation Unit (SU), Cabinet Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and Ministry of Defence (MOD)), academic and policy institutions, defence attachés from European partners, and personnel (UK and non-UK) who had experience of deployment in UN peacekeeping operations.

The main body of this report maps the terrain for UK and UN peacekeeping operations, and identifies possible policy options. After outlining the context of the workshop, the report sets out where there have been developments in UK policy. The paper will then discuss the apparent inertia in current UK decision making with regards to the United Nations. It was clear from discussion that whilst those in Whitehall understand the benefits of UN peacekeeping, there is uncertainty about how the UK should approach peacekeeping activities. The report then outlines the effects that this is perceived to have had on the UK's approach. The third section offers an overview of the potential ways forward. Importantly, participants were in general agreement that the UK should increase its 'footprint' in UN Peacekeeping operations through increased contributions of military personnel. The final section sets out what is required for the UK to act, focusing on the need for political 'buy in' from ministers, longer-term approaches to security, and better use of existing policy tools.

The content of the report is anchored in participants' discussions on the day and does not necessarily reflect the views of UNA-UK.

2. Context

The workshop was held shortly before the publication of the report of the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, which was set to be the most comprehensive review of this area since the 1999 ‘Brahimi’ report.¹ The participants were briefed on the likely recommendations of the Panel, which was understood to reflect a desire for a stronger political process of engagement in conflict prevention and mediation. Moreover, the workshop was told that the Panel process is one that is owned by the UN secretariat, and although caution will be asked for in the report, there will be no going back regarding the policy developments that have occurred over the past 15 years (such as intelligence in peacekeeping, robust peacekeeping, UUAVs for instance). More likely, the panel will seek to provide the Secretariat with the legitimacy for what it already has been doing, and what it knows needs to be done.²

The discussions were also framed by a recent trend for Western European states to increase their engagement in peacekeeping operations. In 2014, German and Italian governments launched an initiative entitled ‘EU-UN Cooperation in Crisis Management and Peace Operations’, which followed the UN’s attempt to align European Union policies on peacekeeping with its own.³ Additionally, the Dutch government has concentrated on wider diplomatic initiatives aimed at increasing European contributions, including a high-level conference in Amsterdam, with participants from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), and over 40 member states. Providing the backdrop to this is the United States-led diplomatic effort to encourage European contributions to UN peace operations. Those European states that have strengthened their contributions have consequently found support in Washington. For instance, French-led deployments in Mali and CAR have led some observers to note that France has become viewed as a useful military partner for the US.⁴

This trend has the potential to challenge the status quo of the politics of troop contributions at the UN level. The current peacekeeping system gives significant political leverage to larger TCCs, allowing them to have a say over the general direction of peace operations, although the Security Council remains responsible for setting the mandate of a particular mission. Peacekeeping can be seen as a ‘sellers market’, where TCCs can make their own rules, caveats and rules of engagement when contributing troops. The Non Aligned Movement (NAM), to which most major TCCs belong, has shown scepticism about the reform process at the UN, and the use of Unarmed, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UUAVs) in UN peacekeeping operations. Those considering increased UK contributions to peacekeeping will have to navigate the political context in the UN as well as make the case in the domestic context.

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1 United Nations, Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects: Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, June 1999.

2 The report is now out: see http://www.un.org/sg/pdf/HIPPO_Report_1_June_2015.pdf.

3 Thierry Tardy and Richard Gowan, *Building EU-UN Coherence in Mission Planning & Mandate Design* (Berlin, ZIF, 2014); ZIF, EU-UN Peacekeeping Partnerships Initiative, <http://www.euun2014.eu>, accessed 10 June 2015.

4 Richard Gowan, ‘Small Wars Create Big Problems for U.K.’s Cameron, France’s Hollande’, *World Politics Review*, May 4, 2015.

3. Signs of movement in UK policy making

The UK currently has a record of establishing governmental structures to inform, guide, and pay for conflict prevention initiatives. The 2010 National Security Strategy, Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS), Conflict Pool, Stabilisation Unit, and more recently, the Conflict Security and Stability Fund (CSSF), all demonstrate a cross-party understanding of the importance of conflict prevention activities. At the UN level, the workshop heard that the FCO had offered support to the High Level Panel's review process, in addition to being the penholder on the Security Council for peacekeeping operations.

The UK's current uniformed contribution to peacekeeping operations is 288 (0.284% of the total), including 274 personnel deployed in UNFICYP (Cyprus), as well as smaller contributions to UNMISS (7), MONUSCO (5), and MINUSMA (2).⁵ Out of this, 21 are female. Of the 7 deployed to UNMISS, 4 are individual police officers. Additionally, the UK recently contributed an RAF C-130 Hercules aircraft to UNMISS, as part of the UN's Air Transport Fleet.⁶ The UK is the fifth highest provider of assessed contributions to UN peacekeeping, providing \$471.6 million (6.68%) of the \$8.5 billion that the UN currently spends on peacekeeping (as of 2015).⁷

The potential for the UK to play a greater role in UN peacekeeping has been discussed at senior levels across government (including at Chiefs of Staff level in the Ministry of Defence), particularly with regards to the role of the UK military post-Afghanistan. This was perceived to be driven by two factors. Firstly, there was the 'pull factor'; a perception that the UK could fill critical gaps in UN missions with relatively small contributions. It was argued that this could bring a 'disproportionately large benefit' to the UK and potentially make a significant difference to the effectiveness of the mission.

Secondly, the 'push' factor; that increasing participation would address reputational damage that the UK suffers amongst member states (particularly the larger TCCs) for 'punching below our weight'. Individual departments had responded well to this argument: participants from the MOD noted that there was a 'general agreement' amongst the higher echelons of the department and across wider Government, that the UK should do more for UN operations. As a result, the MOD has been examining ways to better integrate secondment to the UN (including peacekeeping) into the career development of UK personnel, so as to cultivate and reinvest expertise.⁸

Additionally, recent changes to the domestic policy structures were understood to offer a potential for the UK to be more able to engage with peacekeeping operations. The National Security Council provides strategy for conflict prevention based on regional priorities (44 countries are covered by the NSC's strategies) and cross cutting themes, such as peacekeeping. These priorities would be acted on through the CSSF. The CSSF has a budget of over £1 billion, which includes both assessed and non-assessed contributions to the peacekeeping budget, and is overseen by the National Security Council. The CSSF is believed to facilitate a more holistic approach to peacekeeping, incorporating input from a range of different government departments (and not just the MOD, DFID, and the FCO). This should allow ministers to view all tools available for conflict prevention activities from across Government, mitigate against 'siloing', and set out a clearer decision making chain, guided by NSC priorities for regions and countries.

5 UN (2015), UN Mission's Summary detailed by Country: 31 May 2015, New York, United Nations.

6 UNA-UK (2015). UK commits aircraft to UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan, www.una.org.uk/news/15/04/uk-commits-aircraft-un-peacekeeping-mission-south-sudan.

7 UN (2012). Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 55/235 and 55/236: Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/224/Add.1), 27 December 2012. New York, United Nations; UN (2015). Approved resources for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015: Note by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/69/17), 14 January 2015. New York, United Nations.

8 This is set in the context of change in UK defence structures. The 2010 SDSR resulted in a 20-30% cut in UK armed forces' operational ambition and deployable capability, and as part of "Future Force 2020," regular forces will reduce from 102,000 to 90,000 by 2015, and to 82,000 by 2020. Resource increases were confined to supporting special forces, cyber capability, and increasing the Army Reserve to a trained strength of 30,000. Included in these proposals are 'five multi-role brigades (one at high readiness) for intervention and stabilisation operations'. These targets have remained under constant review, not least because of criticism from the House of Commons Defence Committee. For more information see: MoD, Fact Sheet 5: Future Force 2020 - Summary of size, shape and structure, Crown Copyright, p. 1, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/62487/Factsheet5-Future-Force-2020.pdf accessed 10 June 2015; House of Commons Defence Committee, Future Army 2020: Ninth Report of Session 2013-14 (London: The Stationery Office Limited, 2014).

4. Inertia in UK decision making

It was clear in the discussions that UK policymaking suffers from policy inertia with regards to peacekeeping operations. Any debate over UK contributions to peacekeeping operations is handicapped by the fact that there is no single statement on the role of UN peace operations in wider UK strategy. The UK's National Security Strategy does not contain a clear statement of the potential role(s) UN peace operations might play to support British interests abroad,⁹ and there are only vague references to United Nations peacekeeping operations scattered across the BSOS, SDSR, and Defence Engagement Strategy. This means that there is not an obvious 'anchor point' for the debate, or any benchmarks to help identify successes in UK policy towards the UN.

The lack of a strategic approach to peacekeeping as a thematic issue means that the activity is seen through a geographic or regional lens. Discussions during the workshop reflected this, with participants outlining the difficulties of engaging in peacekeeping when current UK policy accords low strategic priority to many of the areas with active peace operations, such as sub-Saharan Africa, a region that contains eight of the ten largest UN peacekeeping missions. Without recognition of the importance of sub-Saharan Africa to immediate and near-future UK interests, participants believed that it could be challenging to get the UK engaged with peacekeeping in the region, with perhaps the exception of South Sudan.

Increased military and civilian contributions to operations in areas of little strategic interest become more problematic when the UK is faced with unexpected developments in the international sphere that require a swift response. In the past two to three years, policymakers have had to react to a range of emerging threats, such as: the conflict in Eastern Ukraine (with the increasing requirement to reassure NATO partners in Central/Eastern Europe); the rise of ISIL in Iraq/Syria; the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone and Liberia; and the need to work with NATO allies in Southern Europe/the Mediterranean in response to growing instability in Libya.

A combination of factors – the lack of a long-term strategy for UK engagement in United Nations operations, changes in UK military capacity, and geostrategic commitments outside of the region where the majority of UN operations are deployed – makes the chances of a large increase in contributions slim. There would also be significant challenges in 'selling' overseas military operations to the general public, unless the objectives of such operations are clearly linked to a positive outcome for the United Kingdom's stated national interests. One option would be to wait for an operation in an area of strategic importance to the UK. Previous UK deployment under a UN flag may indicate that this would either be in Europe, or a former colony. Apart from the UK's contribution of forces in support of the UNAMISIL operation in Sierra Leone, few precedents exist of considerable UK deployments under a UN flag outside of the continent (the UK's largest contribution to UN peacekeeping was as part of UNPROFOR operation in Bosnia).

As well as the broader strategic challenges, debates also exist at the operational level within departments. For instance, participants from the MoD outlined a range of challenges to its considerations over increasing contributions to UN peacekeeping. Firstly, peacekeeping is not

“The UK's National Security Strategy does not contain a clear statement of the potential role(s) UN peace operations might play to support British interests abroad”

⁹ HM Government, *A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy*, London, The Stationary Office, 2010, p. 9.

currently in 'the bloodstream' of the MOD. This means that while there is general agreement that the UK could do more, policymakers are not exactly sure of how to engage effectively and of what 'more' looks like.

Secondly, having been out of the habit of taking part in UN peace operations for some time, the mentality that UK forces adopt in some situations may not be suitable for UN missions. While the UK can bring important operational experience based on its fifteen year-long focus on counter-insurgency, there is a chance that this may not lie well with the way UN missions work. The example given for this was that in a peacekeeping mission with a counter IED element, the UN would dismantle IEDs, whereas the UK military would 'go after the bomb-maker'.

Thirdly, the MOD feels that UN missions have gaps in support capacities that the UK requires in order to deploy. For instance, shortfalls in contingency plans, health and safety, access to hospitals, logistics to transport food, etc., all mean that for the UK to commit it would need to send additional units along with its original contribution in order to support them. Alternatively, it would have to drastically change its force protection standards and expectations or concentrate on raising the UN's.

Fourthly, financial considerations come into play. With the development budget ring-fenced in UK law, questions have arisen about what activities count as Overseas Development Assistance, and whether activities should be categorised according to their output rather than their input. There are also additional challenges with regards to funding contributions that could straddle budget years and the MOD's year-on-year spending plans. For example, at one point during the last financial year, there had been serious discussions concerning a possible contribution of engineers to an ongoing UN operation. However, action on this was stopped, not because there was no desire or will but because it was unclear whether the force would be sustainable in the forthcoming budget year.

This demonstrates that while there is discussion in Whitehall about the UK's possible increased role in UN peacekeeping, movement on this issue is hampered due to a lack of an overarching approach or strategy and the fact that peacekeeping is not in the 'bloodstream' of the individual departments.

5. Effects of inertia: reputational damage and security risk

The UK is 'not viewed positively at the UN on peacekeeping issues'. Firstly, larger TCCs feel that there is a 'division of labour' in UN peacekeeping between those who pay and those who 'bleed' (i.e. deploy). The UK's predominantly political and financial role, which goes unmatched with deployment in UN operations, is viewed sceptically by these countries. As one study points out, this approach can be seen as 'a contradiction, not a mitigation.'¹⁰

Participants with expertise in the politics of UN peacekeeping were clear: unless the UK was to 'walk the talk' in peacekeeping activities, larger TCCs will not pay serious attention to the UK's position on peacekeeping. Leading by example would likely produce better results than asking other states to do something the UK does not do itself. Contributing more personnel and materiel would increase leverage within the Security Council, and other UN forums such as the C34, 4th and 5th Committees, which are crucial for implementing peacekeeping reforms.

Secondly, Western allies are placing pressure on the UK to boost its participation in peacekeeping operations. At the September 2014 high-level summit on 'Strengthening United Nations Peace Operations', member states were invited to outline contributions to peacekeeping. The United Kingdom's intervention was the last speech at the US-led summit and offered very little in the way of concrete steps and commitments. In the view of workshop participants, this gave the impression that the UK was 'literally at the bottom of the pack'. President Obama will convene a summit on this topic on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meetings in September 2015,¹¹ and there is pressure on the UK to develop a coherent response this time round. With the EU¹² and other EU member states responding positively to this process,¹³ the necessity for the UK to put together a plan of action was deemed essential.

As well as reputational costs, participants agreed that the UK's lack of engagement in UN peacekeeping also affects UK security. Participants outlined that the low level of European participation in sub-Saharan peacekeeping operations, has subsequently led to 'outsourcing' of conflict management on the continent, where African personnel are trained and equipped to 'bear the burden' of complex operations.¹⁴ However, this model has not brought resolution to violent conflict, and has resulted in a considerable refugee problem along the southern periphery of the European Union, most clearly demonstrated in the refugee flow from North Africa to Southern Europe. Participants suggested that in the near future, a raft of conflict zones around the European periphery may require the presence of UN peacekeepers if ceasefire and/or peace deals were to require international assistance. Here, Syria, Lebanon, Eastern Ukraine, Libya, and Yemen were identified as forming the potential future of peacekeeping operations.¹⁵ Moreover, existing operations around the European periphery (such as UNDOF in the Golan Heights, and UNIFIL in Lebanon) are being stretched substantially, requiring reinforcements.

10 Adrian Johnson, *Back in Blue?*, *The RUSI Journal*, 160:1, 2015, p. 16.

11 See, for example, Samantha Power, Remarks on peacekeeping in Brussels, 9 March 2015, <http://usun.state.gov/briefing/statements/238660.htm>.

12 Tardy, T. and R. Gowan (2014). *Building EU-UN Coherence in Mission Planning & Mandate Design*. Berlin, ZIF; ZIF (2014). "EU-UN Peacekeeping Partnerships Initiative." Retrieved 23rd February, 2015, from <http://www.euun2014.eu>.

13 Power, S. (2014). "Reforming peacekeeping in a time of conflict: A conversation with US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power, 7 November 2014." from www.aei.org/events/reforming-peacekeeping-time-conflict-conversation-us-ambassador-united-nations-samantha-power/.

14 For more information see, Richard Gowan and Nick Witney, *Why Europe must stop outsourcing its security: ECFR Policy Brief*, (London, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2015); Richard Gowan, *UN Peacekeeping: A Focus for Japanese Cooperation with the United States and Europe?* (Washington, German Marshall Fund, 2015).

15 For more information, see: Costelloe, Kevin, *Italy Would Consider UN Peacekeeping Libya Role*, Renzi Says, Bloomberg, 10 January 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-01-10/italy-would-consider-un-peacekeeping-role-in-libya-renzi-says>, accessed 10 June 2015; BBC, *Syria peacekeeping contingency plan mulled at UN*, 22 October 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20034422>, accessed 10 June 2015.

6. Identifying a way forward

Throughout the workshop, participants identified possible avenues for the UK to contribute more to UN peacekeeping operations. On a political level, this could be a decision to engage on a unilateral basis, or through increased cooperation with European partners.¹⁶

Going it alone: niche contributions, larger scale deployments, or something in between?

The provision of 'niche capabilities' was identified as a more achievable starting point for engagement. These are defined in UK doctrine as support helicopters, military intelligence/surveillance, logistic support, field hospitals and evacuation capabilities, as well as some newly established mechanisms such as the Military Stabilisation Support Group, the Defence Cultural Specialist Unit, Stabilisation Response Teams, and Female Engagement Teams.¹⁷ It was argued that the provision of niche capabilities makes it easier to justify smaller contributions in key missions. Moreover, it was felt that the UK has the potential to support a particular type of capability and see it through in a mission, in a similar vein to the Netherlands' contribution of intelligence capacities in Mali (see below). It was also argued that the UK could grow to champion a particular type of niche capability throughout the system; both practically in particular missions and in terms of ensuring the Secretariat had the necessary planning capacity.

On the other hand, participants raised questions about the overall utility of niche capabilities. Firstly, while the employment of a particular capability may have a beneficial effect on one mission, or one phase of a mission, a strategy of small contributions spread across a number of missions may not have much effect on peacekeeping as a whole, and therefore may not address the issues identified by participants, such as raising the overall effectiveness of UN peacekeeping and the UK's reputation in this regard. Secondly, the availability and utility of such capabilities, such as counter IED units, air transport, engineering, and intelligence, needs to be critically examined. Such capabilities cost money to operate, transport, and repair. Additionally due to their specialised nature, there are concerns that the hardware of niche contributions may be unavailable for UK deployments elsewhere if it was employed on UN operations. In short, contributing to a peacekeeping mission could mean sacrificing that capability elsewhere. While expertise might be easier to contribute, materiel may be more difficult to source and commit on a longer-term basis. Finally, participants were concerned that a mission could face fundamental challenges that could be too great for a small contribution of niche capabilities to offset.

Participants who had experience of UN deployment suggested that there would be greater benefit in deploying larger, battalion-sized contributions to UN operations. These larger contributions could offer the UK a better foothold in peacekeeping operations, which could be transferred into greater responsibilities at strategic levels (such as increasing the chances of a UK Force Commander being appointed). This influence, it was felt, would not be forthcoming if the focus were to be on smaller niche capabilities: 'old fashioned delivery on the ground' brings great benefits.

However, there are downsides to contributing a larger force for peacekeeping operations. For instance, to what extent would the UK 'own' the success or failure of a mission if it were

¹⁶ For a deeper discussion on frameworks for contributing, see Adrian Johnson, *Back in Blue?*, *The RUSI Journal*, 160:1, 2015.

¹⁷ Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, *Joint Doctrine Note 5/11*, p. 1-9.

to commit a larger contribution of peacekeepers? If the UK was to become a key player in a peacekeeping mission, and the mission was to experience trouble (for instance in South Sudan), concerns exist that the responsibility for the mission's success or failure could be placed at the door of the UK. Moreover, participants highlighted the concern that UK personnel could 'get stuck' in a mission. This can escalate when things start to go wrong, in particular when soldiers are wounded or killed in the line of duty. Finally, if the UK was to contribute a larger amount of military personnel, there is a greater burden to prove a mission is in the national interest, particularly if there is no overarching strategy for UN peace operations.

Therefore the answer may lie somewhere in between – a 'niche-plus' arrangement, where the UK contributes specialised skills, but in tandem with like-minded contributors. Other options would be to consider clearly-defined, time-limited support to get a mission off the ground and stabilise the situation to hand over to others, or to develop a holistic approach to supporting a particular capability, from the strategic through to the operational level across more than one mission.

Working with European partners

A number of participants advocated that the UK should view its contributions within a larger framework of European contributions to peacekeeping, and that there is potential for the UK to 'bulk out' overall contributions by cooperating and coordinating with allies. European states are gaining more experience of peacekeeping operations and workshop participants from France, Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands offered reflections on their experiences. Participants argued that the actions of the UK's European neighbours could influence domestic appetite for increased engagement, and once engaged, there would be a greater chance of success if the UK were to work with those states with which it has worked with before, not least in terms of operational familiarity and compatibility (e.g. training standards and rules of engagement): NATO allies.¹⁸

The model of co-deployment or operational partnerships wherein two or more countries combine their personnel to form a single military unit is increasingly used across a range of UN missions, with European states building a track record of co-deployment in peace operations.¹⁹ In UNIFIL, France, Italy, Spain and Ireland have brought higher capacity, IT and intelligence capabilities that have worked to overcome challenges in command and control, resources and logistics, which are usually seen to be typical stumbling blocks of UN missions.²⁰ In the MINUSMA operation in Mali, the 'substantial' commitment made by the Netherlands – a contribution of over 450 troops, and helicopters, alongside other European contributors – was outlined as a way in which to improve the mission's capacities for intelligence gathering and analysis.²¹ The Netherlands' decision was arguably not just about contributing generally where there are scarce resources within the UN, but contributing to making MUNISMA itself more successful.

With this in mind, participants advocated that increased coordination should be facilitated with a European-wide network that allows states to mix and match contributions or helps to coordinate a roll-over of contributions. This led to the suggestion that there should be a 'friends group' at the UN to help coordinate this. Such initiatives are not new. The EU's battlegroup structure allows significant opportunity to undertake joint training,²² as does the NATO Response Force.²³ Additionally, operational experience of NATO-led missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan, demonstrate that the UK has worked recently with European partners.

Deployment in support of a peacekeeping mission, but not as part of the mission itself was also discussed. Here, the experiences of French peace operations were put forward as an example. The French government committed troops to Mali with the understanding that the environment was not conducive to UN operations, and so focused on creating a favourable environment for the UN's capabilities. With French forces undertaking counter-terrorism in a mission separate to the UN, the MINUSMA operation was perceived as being better able to do what it is equipped and mandated to achieve. This has had an impact on the overall command and control of the

18 Though not part of workshop discussions, it is also worth noting that increased participation with the Irish Defence Forces will provide much needed advances in peacekeeping practice. In January 2015, the Ministry of Defence signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Irish Department of Defence, which looks to enhance cooperation in supporting 'UK Armed Forces engagement in peacekeeping operations, through the provision of peacekeeping training and addressing the potential of joint Ireland/UK contributions to UN mandated and UN led peacekeeping operations'. The Irish military has a long history of providing UN peacekeepers and is known for its willingness to 'serve the UN in places where other European countries would not'. Ireland could also provide a useful and highly experienced partner for future co-deployment. For more information see, HM Government, Memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Defence of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Department of Defence Ireland on the enhancement of bilateral engagement on certain aspects of defence and security cooperation, (London/Dublin, UK MOD/DoD Ireland, 2015), p. 5.; Edward Burke and Jonathan Marley, *Walking Point for Peace: An Irish view on the state of UN peacekeeping*, (New York, New York University Centre for International Cooperation, 2015), p. 4.

19 For more information, see: Donald C. Daniel, Paul D. Williams and Adam C. Smith, *Teaming up to Deploy: Lessons-Learned from Operational Partnerships in UN Peacekeeping* (IPI, Providing for Peacekeeping, forthcoming 2015).

20 Moreover, the UNIFIL mission houses a joint Irish-Finnish battalion, consisting of an Irish Mobile Mechanised Infantry Company Group and operating alongside a Finnish engineering company – See more at: <http://www.military.ie/en/overseas/current-missions/unifil/#sthash.q7dMDaaX.dpuf>.

21 The Netherlands, alongside Sweden, lead the 'All Sources Information Fusion Unit': see http://www.zif-berlin.org/fileadmin/uploads/analyse/dokumente/veroeffentlichungen/ZIF_Policy_Briefing_Adam_Smith_October_2014_ENG.pdf.

22 There is evidence to suggest that battlegroup training is a well organized activity. For instance, the Nordic Battlegroup (NBG) Lessons Learned report highlights the high level of joint training for personnel, including design and implementation of four major exercises, individual and collective staff training, testing of self-developed concepts, as well as involvement in wider European training exercises (VIKING 11). According to the NBG lessons learned report, the outcome of training, exercise and evaluation was assessed as 'very good'.

23 http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_49755.htm.

“Ultimately, decisions over contributions and partnerships will depend on answering the overarching question: what does the UK – at a political level – want from UN peacekeeping?”

mission. Participants with experience of the EUFOR Tchad/RCA mission,²⁴ highlighted how the French deployment provided a supporting role to the whole mission. It was argued that the French have been innovative in their approach, with the focus not purely on rapid reaction, but on sustaining the mission through its different stages. These contributions may not be large in terms of number, but it is believed that their impact resonates throughout the mission, getting the best out of other TCCs, improving the capabilities of missions, and providing a ‘rising tide lifts all ships’ effect. However, this model requires a long-term commitment; in the case of EUFOR Tchad/RCA, participants who had experience of the mission noted that it ‘withered on a vine’ once French support ended.

Participants felt that if the UK was to participate in closer partnership with other European states, then cooperation with France should be considered. French deployments in Mali and CAR – both preceding or in tandem with a UN peacekeeping operation – have brought renewed attention to the role that France plays in contemporary peace operations.²⁵ The UK and France were understood to ‘work well together’, with similar capabilities, outlook, quality of knowledge, operational experience, and an appetite to work together. Moreover, participants with experience of working on the UN Security Council outlined the range of initiatives that France and the UK had worked on together in the past in order to improve peacekeeping operations.²⁶

Ultimately, decisions over contributions and partnerships will depend on answering the overarching question: what does the UK – at a political level – want from UN peacekeeping? The desired outcome from contributing to peacekeeping should effectively define the strategy. Without such a strategy, UK actions will be ad hoc and uncertain. This is not a solid platform on which to build peacekeeping policy.

Additional contributions – political and technical

Regarding the High Level Independent Panel’s report on peacekeeping operations, the workshop heard that the UN Secretariat is determined to make peacekeeping more effective and will be looking to UK for support on this. In particular, it was suggested that the UK could utilise its position on the Security Council, as well as its links to African states – seen to be essential to UN reform in this area given their role as TCCs and host states – to help ensure that they are engaged with the panel and its recommendations.

It was emphasised that there is a clear need for the UK to be part of the conversation about the reform agenda of UN peacekeeping at the earliest stages, not least because there are significant divisions amongst TCCs, particularly those in the NAM. The workshop heard that the ‘united front’ of the NAM masks deeper divisions over the use of robust force in peacekeeping, with a divide beginning to appear between African members of the NAM (who are more comfortable adopting principles of robust peacekeeping), and South Asian TCCs (who are not). This is linked to a wider dissatisfaction of African member states with the UN as an actor in peace and security. With the emergence of formerly dormant powers in terms of peacekeeping – in particular China and Indonesia – the peacekeeping system is in a state of flux. This presents an opportunity (and arguably an imperative) for UK political engagement in peacekeeping policy. However, it is an opportunity that would be better utilised if the UK were to offer contributions as well.

Politically, participants suggested that the UK use its leverage as a permanent member of the Security Council to act as a link between the Security Council and TCCs. Moreover, within the Security Council, it was asked whether the UK could act as a link between those member states who do not think that the Security Council should be more cautious with regards to peace operations, and those who do.

On a more technical level, participants indicated that UK personnel could assist with strengthening the Secretariat – particularly with regards to its capacities for early warning and civilian capacities to analyse and respond to conflict. It was also suggested that the UK should engage more seriously in the leadership training for Force Commanders. More technically, the

24 A one-year long EU-led ‘bridging force’ deployed in advance of the UN peacekeeping mission MINURCAT between January 2008 to March 2009.

25 Thierry Tardy, ‘The Reluctant Peacekeeper: France and the Use of Force in Peace Operations.’ *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37:5, pp. 771.

26 See for instance france/uk non-paper.

UK could assist with updating the UN's IT systems, which were deemed insufficient to deal with current operational demands.

Discussion turned to the potential for the UK to enhance its policing presence in UN peacekeeping operations. The UK's current approach to policing in UN missions was described as 'benignly neglectful', with the UK's lack of practical engagement resulting in 'minimal credibility, legitimacy, and influence' in the realm of policing. Representatives from HM Government stated that there is a desire to look at how the UK's policing presence can be increased in operations, but that a lack of an agreed approach to policing at the DPKO level meant that there was still some difficulty with UK aligning its own approach with the UN.

7. What needs to be done? A clear cross-governmental strategy on peacekeeping

As detailed above, the UK lacks an overarching strategy on peacekeeping. The forthcoming SDSR provides a significant opportunity to begin a discussion about the role of peacekeeping in UK strategy. However, while discussions are clearly intensifying within policy circles, it should be noted that key documents released to date make scant mention of peacekeeping. For instance, the Defence Select Committee's three reports of their inquiry 'Towards the next Strategic Defence and Security Review' only mention 'peacekeeping' once, in relation to the recommendation that 'the next SDSR should look strategically at the legal framework for future armed conflict and the whole spectrum of military operations including peacekeeping and post-conflict stabilisation.'²⁷ Moreover, the 'United Nations' is only mentioned once over the three reports. Participants also noted the potential danger that the 2015 SDSR will be used as an opportunity to further cut costs in defence spending, as opposed to offering a wide-reaching approach to security, which includes peacekeeping operations.²⁸

Peacekeeping needs to get into the 'bloodstream' of policymaking. Precedence exists for this: after the Agenda for Peace in 1992, both the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and Defence Select Committee produced papers on the UK approach to peacekeeping.²⁹ In fact, the paper published by the Defence Select Committee – *United Kingdom Peacekeeping and Intervention Forces* – viewed the UK as having a special duty and responsibility as one of the five permanent members of the Security Council. It also showed that the UK could effectively use peacekeeping operations as a way of maintaining its international reputation and its role on the international stage:

British forces are among the best qualified and most professional in the world. If the increase in United Nations peacekeeping operations is not matched by at least something approaching a commensurate increase in UK participation... the United Kingdom's voice in international affairs will lose authority, and the operations themselves will be less likely to succeed.³⁰

²⁷ House of Commons Defence Select Committee, *United Kingdom Peacekeeping and Intervention Forces*, London, HMSO, June 1993, p. xxii.

²⁸ Editor's note: the roundtable was held before the government made their 2% commitment to defence spending.

²⁹ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, *The Expanding Role of the United Nations and its Implications for United Kingdom Policy* (Third Report), London, HMSO, 1993; House of Commons Defence Select Committee, *United Kingdom Peacekeeping and Intervention Forces*, London, HMSO, June 1993.

³⁰ House of Commons Defence Select Committee, *United Kingdom Peacekeeping and Intervention Forces*, London, HMSO, June 1993, p. xxii.

The central question for developing strategy is deciding what the UK wants from increased contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. This was a theme which ran throughout the workshop, particularly regarding the possible contribution of military personnel. Peacekeeping is not generally debated as part of government strategy, and peacekeeping operations are not usually in geographic areas of UK focus. Nor is there evidence in the UK's security policy documents of an awareness that the international peace and security climate is changing in ways that could make UN peace operations more crucial to UK national interests. The UK may therefore need to review its strategy and priority geographic areas, which may be necessary in any case in light of the changing threat environment. Alternatively, it could choose to focus on smaller, less visible, but more specialised contributions that would be 'under the radar', although this may raise the issue of 'who benefits' if the UK contribution is so small that no discernable change is brought to a mission by contributing.

Additionally if there is political commitment to increasing contributions, it needs to be long term. Reflecting on the Danish government's 'conscious decision' to contribute more to UN peacekeeping, a Danish participant noted that the rhetoric has not been matched by a substantial increase in numbers of deployed personnel. Hence committing more to peacekeeping is easy to say but not very easy to do.³¹ For the UK to develop a strategic approach to peacekeeping, a long-term view is necessary.

Considering the UK was the top TCC in the mid-1990s, had operational experience alongside UNAMSIL³² in 1999/2000, and provides the backbone to the UNFICYP operation, it is surprising how far UN peacekeeping has fallen off the UK's foreign and defence agenda. Discussion and debate about the role peacekeeping plays in UK policy is at an early stage. To move this debate forward, and ultimately develop a coherent, responsive strategy to peacekeeping operations, a coordinated approach is necessary. For the UK to enhance UN peacekeeping, and gain positive benefits as a result, policymakers cannot see UN peacekeeping as an 'optional extra' to foreign and defence policy. From strategic level initiatives such as establishing a cross-party approach from which a coherent strategy is produced, to smaller practices such as individual departments continuing to develop secondment to the UN as a career-enhancing activity, incorporating UN peacekeeping into the UK 'bloodstream' is essential. Without this, the UK runs a high risk of being viewed with scepticism by the TCCs, being left behind by its European neighbours and potentially damaging its relationship with the US. More to the point, peacekeeping also provides a framework within which the UK could address some of the emerging threats to its security and prosperity multilaterally, in good operational company and benefiting from the legitimacy of UN authorisation.

³¹ See also <http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/2014/04/03/contributor-profile-denmark/>.

³² United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone.

8. Recommendations to the UK Government

1. Strategic level

- a. The forthcoming SDSR should set out a coherent strategic UK government approach to UN Peace Operations over the next parliament. This should include a commitment to UN peace operations that focuses on increasing contributions of military and police personnel, aligned with growing civilian expertise, both in mission and at UN headquarters.
- b. Parliamentary Select Committees (in particular the Defence Select Committee, Foreign Affairs Select Committee) should consider launching inquiries into the role of UN peace operations in UK defence and foreign policy. Inquiries should outline current departmental approaches to the UN, and offer recommendations to HMG on suitable short, medium and long-term approaches to UN peace operations.
- c. The UK should outline phased plan of engagement with UN peace operations at forthcoming US High Level Summit on Peace Operations in New York in September 2015. It should also use the UK's position on the Security Council to shape peacekeeping mandates and policy to be more realistic and effective.

2. Departmental level

- a. Government departments should continue to cultivate a cultural change in the way the UN is viewed internally and make UN peacekeeping part of the 'bloodstream' of their departments. They should work to establish secondment to the UN as a desirable career enhancing activity and cultivate institutional knowledge of UN peace operations.
- b. UKMIS New York should be asked to review the potential for UK political and operational inputs at the UN to raise the levels of planning capability and policy-making capacity of the UN System.

3. Interim recommendations: *Whilst strategic analysis is ongoing, the UK should continually be open to deploying to on-going UN operations, should the need arise and the conditions be conducive*

- a. The UK Government and MOD should continue to examine models of co-deployment and/or operational partnerships with European partners into UN peacekeeping operations, with the view to co-deploy UK personnel into a UN mission.
- b. The UK Government should ensure that funding mechanisms for practical contributions to peace operations have the necessary flexibility in order for the UK to be able to take part in missions that last beyond UK budget cycles.
- c. The UK Government should bolster its support for UN policing, including through improving its ability to contribute police officers.

This report is based on the proceedings of a *Roundtable on UK engagement in UN peace operations*, organised by UNA-UK in association with the Royal United Services Institute on 19 May 2015. It maps the terrain for the UK and UN peacekeeping operations, and identifies possible policy options. After outlining the international context of the workshop, the report sets out current developments in UK policy. While policymakers in Whitehall understand the benefits of UN peace operations, there is uncertainty about how the UK should approach peacekeeping activities. The paper discusses this apparent inertia in current UK decision-making and the effect this has on the UK's reputation and security. It then offers an overview of the potential ways to strengthen the UK's engagement, including niche contributions, co-deployments with European partners and additional political and technical contributions. Ultimately, decisions over contributions and partnerships will depend on answering the overarching question: what does the UK – at a political level – want from UN peacekeeping? The final section sets out what is required for the UK to act if it were to choose to do more, focussing on the need for political 'buy in' from ministers, longer-term approaches to security, and better use of existing policy tools. The report ends with recommendations to the UK Government at strategic and departmental levels.

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