Version: 16 August 2016

Contributor Profile: The United Kingdom

David Curran
Coventry University

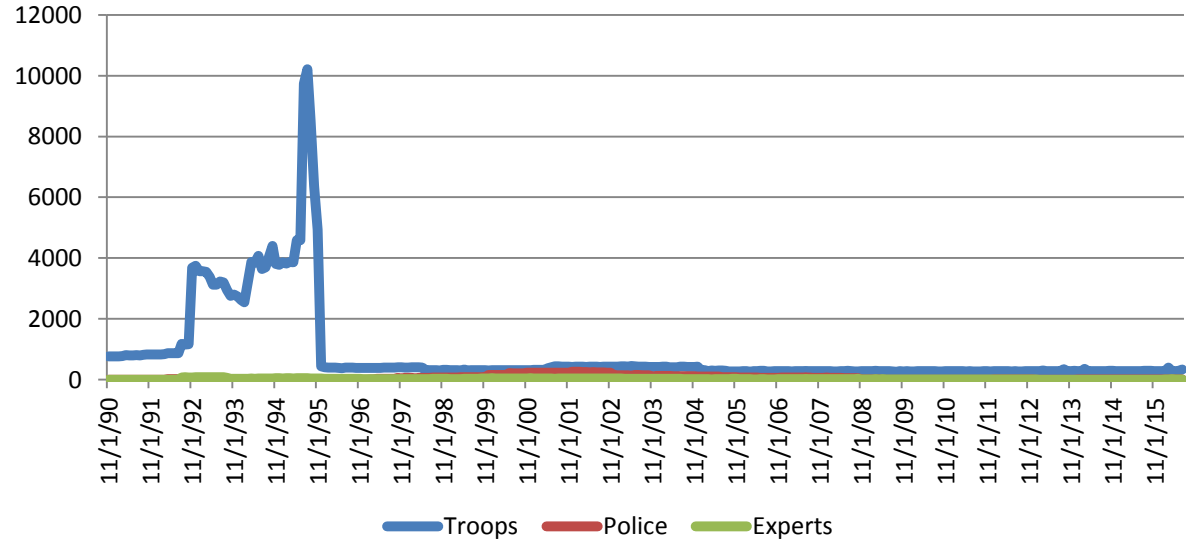
Paul D. Williams
George Washington University

Active Armed Forces[1]	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown	Other Significant Deployments
154,700 World Ranking (size): **33** Army: 88,300 (inc. 2,700 Gurkhas) Navy: 32,500, inc. 7,050 Royal Marines Air Force: 33,900 Reservists: 84,000	Attack: 50 (Apache) Multi-role: 89 Transport: 123 (58 heavy; 48 medium; 17 light)	2015: $56.2bn (2.05% of GDP) 2014: $61.5bn (2.22% of GDP) 2013: $58bn (2.25% of GDP) World Ranking (defense budget): **4**	336 (24 female) (31 July 2016) Ranking: 52nd (8th largest contributor from EU states, 5th from NATO)	MINUSMA 2 troops MONUSCO 5 troops UNMISS 9 troops UNFICYP 274 troops UNMIL 2 police UNSOS 44 (41 troops, 3 experts)	Afghanistan: 450 Serbia/Kosovo: 14 (1 NATO, 13 OSCE) Bosnia: 32 (31 EU, 1 OSCE) EUTM Somalia: 5 EUTM Mali: 26 Sierra Leone 27 Ukraine 29 OSCE Iraq (trainers) : 275 Kenya (trainers): 200
Defense Spending / troop:[2] US$362,865 (compared to global average of approx. US$79,396)					

Part 1: Recent Trends

In 1995, Britain was briefly the UN's top troop-contributing country through its commitment to the UN Protection Force in Bosnia, UNPROFOR. Since then the number of British uniformed personnel in UN-led peacekeeping operations has gradually declined (see fig. 1).

Fig. 1 UK Uniformed personnel in UN Peacekeeping Operations, 1990-2016



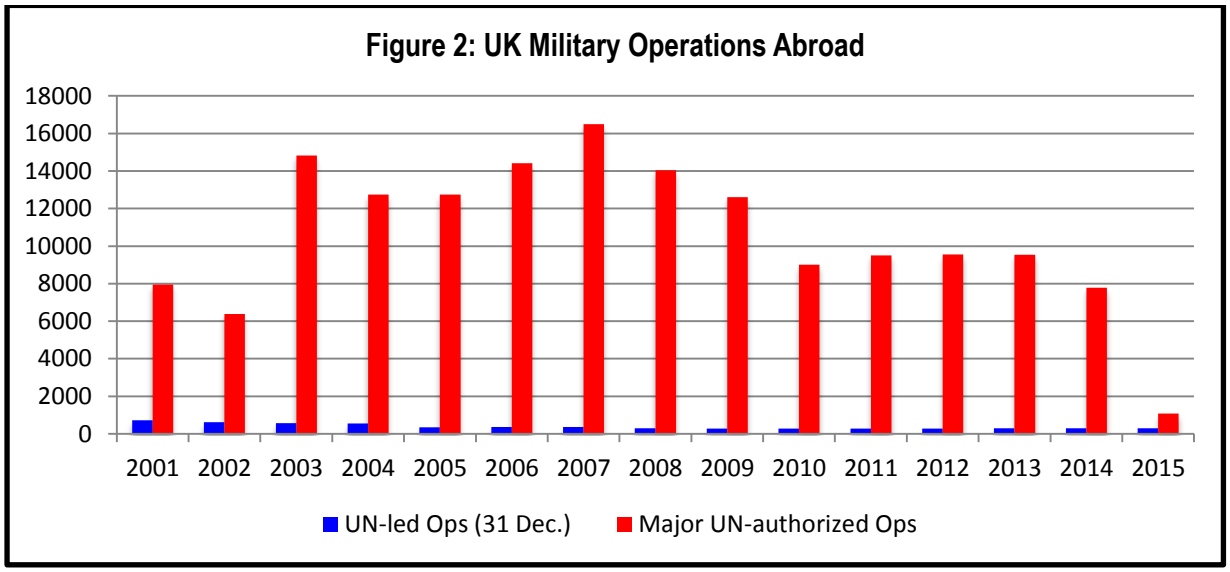
During this time, most UK personnel were deployed in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and Kosovo (UNMIK) with token contributions in several missions in Africa. In UNFICYP, Britain leads Sector 2 and the Mobile Reserve Force. The UK contingent comprises approximately 50 reservists alongside regular troops, who have returned to UNFICYP for the first time since

the Iraq and Afghanistan operations began in earnest. In stark contrast, between 2003 and 2013, Britain deployed well over 9,000 troops on various UN-authorized peace operations, principally in Afghanistan and Iraq (see fig. 2).

Since the beginning of the drawdown of forces in Afghanistan (the British Government has withdrawn all but 450 troops from Afghanistan), UK numbers have grown slightly in UN peacekeeping operations. The UK is currently building on its 2015 pledge to more than double UK military contributions to UN operations, with up to 70 personnel heading to the UN Support Office to Somalia (UNSOS) and between 250 and 300 to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). The UK has deployed smaller contingents in UN-authorized and non-UN peace operations in Sierra Leone, the Balkans, Somalia, and Mali. It also deploys specialists as part of bilateral capacity-building initiatives such as British Military Advisory Training Teams (Sierra Leone, Czech Republic, Jordan, Ghana, Nigeria), British Peace Support Teams (South Africa, Kenya), and British Army Training Unit (Kenya).

At home, the UK's policies on peace operations have been influenced by two documents in particular: Building Stability Overseas Strategy (2011) (BSOS), and the Strategic Defence and Security Review (2015). BSOS represents the first integrated cross-government strategy to address conflict issues, covering early warning, response, and upstream prevention. The November 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review reiterated the UK's commitment to strengthen "the rules-based international order and its institutions" and made three practical commitments to support UN peace operations:

1. the British military would prepare to "conduct operations to restore peace and stability;"
2. the UK would deploy more law enforcement and civilian experts, and continue training foreign peacekeepers;
3. the government would create a "cross-Whitehall joint UN Peacekeeping Policy Unit to maximise our military and civilian impact' and 'formulate UK policy on peacekeeping missions."



With regard to UN peacekeeping policy, over the last few years Britain has advanced relatively cost-free initiatives to stimulate reform without leading by example in the field. The Building Stability Overseas Strategy called for the UK to play a leading role to improve the "efficiency and effectiveness" of operations, to ensure such operations support peace

processes, and that they "stay no longer than necessary." On the Security Council, the UK plays an active role in developing mission mandates. As well as coordinating the Security Council working group on Protection of Civilians, the UK has held "the pen" for the Security Council on several issues related to peace operations. In 2014, it is the "penholder" for protection of civilians, peacekeeping operations, women's participation as part of the Women, Peace & Security agenda, as well as Cyprus, Libya, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Darfur, and Yemen. Moreover, the UK has remained active in various oversight mechanisms, such as the UN's Military Staff Committee, as well as supporting initiatives such as the new UN Strategic Force Generation Cell.

In 2012, the UK launched the Prevention of Sexual Violence Initiative. This involves attempts to ensure that at both the UN and African Union the "protection of civilians includes action to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN and AU personnel in peacekeeping settings, and women's participation and the promotion of gender equality in all peace and security efforts."

In addition to its longstanding contribution to the UNFICYP mission in Cyprus, Britain has taken particular interest in some other missions. During 2013-14 the UK lobbied for additional troops to deploy in UNMISS, and co-sponsored Security Council Resolution 2134 which mandated the EU military operation in CAR (as well as subsequent mandates regarding the MINUSCA mission). At the U.S.-organized "Strengthening United Nations Peace Operations" UN summit in September 2014, the UK also committed to build capacity for African peacekeepers, enable faster and more flexible deployments, and design more focused mandates. As well as pledging to increase its troop numbers, at the Peacekeeping Leaders' Summit in September 2015 Prime Minister Cameron agreed to host the follow-up summit in September 2016 (at the level of Defence Ministers). The 2016 summit is to focus on the "three Ps" of planning of missions, performance of peacekeepers, and pledges made by existing and new troop-contributing countries (TCCs).

Regarding the development of domestic policy dealing with peacekeeping and international crisis management specifically, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) uses NATO's Allied Joint Doctrine For The Military Contribution To Peace Support as the reference document for UK Peacekeeping, superseding the UK's own 2011 military doctrine note for peace operations. Financially, the government is placing greater emphasis on early warning and preventing violent conflict, with the creation of a £1 billion Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (to be increased to £1.3 billion by 2019/20), which will pool new and existing resources across government to "prevent conflict and tackle threats to UK interests that arise from instability overseas." Instead of being managed by three departments it is run by the National Security Council. This new mechanism might make it easier for the government to spend money on a relatively small but unexpected peacekeeping deployment without causing as many opportunity costs as under the previous system.[3] The MOD is also currently engaged in a project to better understand the military contribution to conflict prevention activities (as part of the Multinational Capability Development Campaign), and is in the process of revising NATO's military doctrine for peace support operations, which includes peace enforcement.

Part 2: Decision-Making

Although debate continues about the appropriate role of Parliament in authorizing UK troop deployments abroad, the legal "prerogative" on this issue resides with the executive branch. Executive branch ministers remain responsible to Parliament for their policies and decisions; but "prerogative" powers grant the executive virtually free-reign on questions of

peacekeeping deployments. Decisions thus tend to be ad hoc political choices rather than the result of any formal decision-making process. In the case of intervention in Libya (2011), for example, British participation was announced on 18 March 2011, and was followed three days later by a substantive motion seeking retrospective approval for the deployment of forces (the motion was passed). When supporting the UN-mandated African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) by deploying up to 200 UK troops to train Anglophone forces serving in AFISMA, there was no Government-led debate and no Parliamentary vote on the deployment. The Government stated this was because it was a response to a direct request by French and Malian authorities, backed by a UN Security Council Resolution, and that troops would not be involved in combat.

Since the mid-2000s, government decisions about whether and how to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations have been framed within Britain's overall international priorities as set out in a series of national security strategies (see box 1). The UK does not retain standby forces earmarked solely for use in UN peacekeeping operations. Since mid-2010, the government has funnelled such decisions through the newly established National Security Council. The 2013 Annual Report on the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review sought to link instability or conflict in the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel and South Asia to heightened threats of terrorism on the UK mainland.

There are signs in UK policy of a desire to work through multilateral institutions. The 2013 International Defence Engagement Strategy highlights the benefits of multilateral bodies in providing the opportunities to use Defence Engagement more efficiently, as opposed to bilateral channels. However, none of these strategies defined the deployment of British troops in UN peacekeeping operations as a major international priority.

Box 1: The UK's National Security Objectives and Major Risks

The 2015 National Security Strategy defines Britain's core national security objectives as:

1. "To protect our people" – at home, in Overseas Territories and abroad, and to protect territory, economic security, infrastructure and way of life. This includes pledging to spend 2% of GDP on defence, investing in "capable and globally deployable Armed Forces and security and intelligence agencies," renewal of the UK's Nuclear deterrent, "Prioritise the fight against terrorism, radicalisation and extremism," enhance cyber-security, strengthen capabilities to "disrupt serious and organised crime and to prosecute criminals."
2. "To project our global influence" – reducing the likelihood of threats materialising and affecting the UK, interests, and those of allies and partners. This includes strengthening of the "rules-based international order," and to "make both established and newer multilateral institutions fit for the 21st century," a commitment to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income on Official Development Assistance, invest at least 50% of the DFID's budget in fragile states and regions, promotion of "soft power," investment in alliances, and committing to "building stability overseas."
3. "To promote our prosperity" – seizing opportunities, working innovatively and supporting UK industry. Including advocating an "open and rules-based international trading environment," "maximise prosperity opportunities from our defence, security, diplomatic and development activities," work closely with the private sector, and support the UK's defence, resilience and security industries to grow.

Officially, executive decisions on whether/how to contribute to peacekeeping operations are made after considering recommendations from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and the Department for International Development (DFID). A political decision to contribute is followed by MOD options submitted to the UN for consideration alongside other troop contributing countries. After the political decision has been taken, the size, composition, and modalities of UK contributions depend upon an assessment of the risk to British personnel balanced against the severity of the situation.

The FCO is the lead department in the decision-making process, although there is constant dialogue with the MOD and DFID.[4] Specifically, the UK Mission to the UN acts as Britain's initial point of regular interface with the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), receiving requests and engaging with relevant UN mechanisms such as the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C34), the Security Council's Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, and the General Assembly's Administrative and Budgetary Fifth Committee. In 2005 a Cross Whitehall Peacekeeping Action Plan involving FCO, MOD and DFID personnel was established to facilitate coordination in this area. This has now been replaced by less centrally coordinated cross-governmental meetings on different strands of the international peace and security agenda, including Britain's National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and support to UN and regional peacekeeping from the multi-departmental Conflict (funding) Pool.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

The UK's relatively small contribution of uniformed personnel indicates that, at present, no rationales for providing UN peacekeepers are particularly strong. Insofar as successive UK governments saw generic value in UN peacekeeping this was only strong enough to drive financial contributions and a variety of significant voluntary contributions in areas such as peacebuilding support and training. Regular and sizable contributions of uniformed personnel were not forthcoming.

Political and Security Rationales: These rationales are traditionally important for the UK. Relevant concerns include Britain's wider foreign policy goals as well as the level of threat posed by the crisis in question, both for domestic UK security and international stability more generally (for instance, links made between instability, collapsing states, and increasing likelihood of transnational terrorism). These were the principal rationales behind Britain's troop contributions to the UN missions in Cyprus (as well as the UK's colonial legacy), Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. The likelihood of other countries contributing to the mission is a relevant but apparently not decisive factor.

Economic Rationales: Because UN compensation rates fall significantly short of the actual costs of UK troop deployments, the net effect of economic considerations is generally prohibitive and may become more so in the current era of financial austerity. The UK therefore has no direct economic incentive to provide uniformed UN peacekeepers. If it wants to contribute greater but still relatively small numbers of personnel, the financial set up in Whitehall means that they will come at the expense of some other conflict management-related programs operating with the joint FCO-MOD-DFID Conflict Pool funds.[5] Ironically, this might not be the case if Britain decided to make a major troop contribution to a UN peacekeeping operation, i.e. of several thousand soldiers. In that scenario, the Treasury would probably consider such a deployment a major operation and fund it directly from the contingency reserve.

Institutional Rationales: To the extent that they are present, institutional rationales play a largely constraining role inasmuch as important sections of the British security establishment remain deeply sceptical about the lack of appropriate structures and competence levels at the UN, especially for conducting robust multidimensional operations (see below).

Normative Rationales: Humanitarian concerns and the historical links between Britain and the potential host country in question also play minor but not decisive roles. The House of Commons Defence Select Committee has investigated this topic and has called on the Government to develop definitions of the terms "intervention" and "humanitarian intervention" in the next iterations of the National Security Strategy and the Defence and Security Review.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative political or strategic priorities: The principal reason for the small number of UK peacekeepers in UN-led operations is that Britain's top security priorities do not converge with current UN peacekeeping concerns. Specifically, UN-authorized and non-UN operations in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq soaked up the vast majority of political attention, military resources, and public support for overseas campaigns during the 2000s. In addition, the "Africa factor" was significant, namely, the majority of UN peacekeepers since 2000 have deployed to sub-Saharan Africa, a part of the world considered of relative strategic insignificance by many UK policymakers.

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: Although Britain remains committed to international crisis management, this only rarely translates into providing UN peacekeepers directly. For instance, the bilateral UK commitments to the French *Operation Serval* in Mali (approximately 200 military personnel supporting a C17 military air transport aircraft, a Sentinel airborne ground surveillance aircraft and in reconnaissance and liaison roles), and the EU Training Mission (40 military personnel in headquarters and training roles), was far higher than UK commitments to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), (two military officers to UN Headquarters posts).[6] NATO is the UK's preferred vehicle for robust international crisis management operations, although in 2000 over 1,000 British troops were deployed unilaterally to support UN objectives in Sierra Leone.

Financial costs: UN peacekeeping imposes additional financial burdens on the UK government, creating a further disincentive to contribute except where other interests are involved.

Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda: This is not a significant consideration. Britain has supported the expansion of UN peacekeeping over the last decade, including mandates in controversial areas such as the rule of law and civilian protection.

Exceptionalism: Many British political and military elites believe the country's significant military power mean it should not be considered an ordinary UN contributor. They thus routinely conclude that British troops would be wasted as rank and file infantry in UN operations because other states can provide such forces more effectively and cheaply. Instead, the UK military is best used for high-end military operations like those in Sierra Leone, Afghanistan or Iraq.

Difficult domestic politics: Although Britain's military is widely seen as one of its principal foreign policy assets, there are rarely calls for it to be used more frequently in UN peacekeeping operations. Peacekeeping is rarely debated in the House of Commons or House of Lords, and relevant debates that do occur tend to be country-specific rather than addressing general peacekeeping issues. There are few calls for Britain to provide more UN peacekeepers from within UK academia or the think tank community.

Resistance in the military: Although one can find strong supporters of UN peacekeeping within the British military, sceptics wield greater influence. While broadly comfortable with UN command and control procedures for traditional peacekeeping missions, significant portions of the British military retain concerns about the UN's structures for more complex multidimensional missions, especially those which might require the use of force. Some of this scepticism is based on popular mythology related to British military experiences in UNPROFOR and with UNAMSIL – both missions still badly tarnish the UN's image with some senior UK military officers. Increasingly, however, these views are based on outdated information about current UN best practices and reforms to its operational procedures, including, for example, the Strategic Military Cell within UNIFIL. Such criticisms also need to take into account that as a permanent member of the Security Council, part of the dysfunction of missions (particularly UNPROFOR) was due to the UK's own diplomatic activity in New York. A further problem is that there are few career incentives for exceptional British military personnel to pursue positions within UN peacekeeping operations. While some senior figures appreciate the benefits UN deployments deliver, others still see it as frivolous waste of limited resources. Whether such views will change with greater financial austerity remains an open question (see Part 5).

Legal obstacles: There are no major legal barriers to the UK's participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

Moving forward, much will hinge on the type of armed forces that emerge in the post-Afghanistan era and how the coalition government implements the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (particularly the new Peacekeeping Policy Unit). Moreover, the MOD's experience of deployments in South Sudan and Somalia will help shape future engagement. In the post-Afghanistan era of financial austerity, the armed forces may come under pressure to use certain assets or lose their funding. During the 2000s, the British military did not need UN peacekeeping to make a case for relevance or the relevance of particular assets. But if the UK military is put under pressure to find post-Afghanistan business, UN peacekeeping operations might become a more attractive proposition, especially if they were to take place in areas Britain considers strategically important such as the Middle East and Mediterranean. Indeed, there may be signs that the UK military establishment is beginning to turn attention towards UN peacekeeping. In a speech in late 2013, General Sir Nicholas Houghton, Chief of the Defence Staff argued that the UK must "be far more pro-active in our investment in United Nations Operations" because "such operations come pre-funded and with the benefit of an extant legal mandate which confer legitimacy." Moreover, the International Defence Engagement Strategy opens up room for engagement in peacekeeping, albeit not explicitly. Similarly, in his statement to the U.S.-organized "Strengthening United Nations Peace Operations" summit in September 2014, UK Permanent Representative Mark Lyall Grant stated that as UK forces "draw down in Afghanistan, we are looking actively at how we can increase our existing contribution, particularly in these niche-enabling areas."

However, without a major change of attitude among its senior political leaders, Britain is unlikely to deploy many infantry contingents to blue helmet missions. The central practical question is thus what alternative types of specialist capabilities might the UK provide? Perhaps because of this obvious reluctance to contribute troops, UN DPKO has often asked Britain to provide niche capabilities and enablers such as aviation units, APCs, medical support, senior staff officers etc. Although these requests were often unsuccessful, by the late 2000s, the UK's Stabilisation Unit began to develop initiatives to enable Britain to provide more personnel to fill senior mission civilian roles, including the Deputy Special Representative in UNMISS. In 2014, the UN appointed UK diplomat Dianne Corner, as Deputy Special Representative and Deputy Head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Britain's Joint Doctrine Note on peacekeeping (2011: 124-127) reiterates the focus on niche capabilities to UN peacekeeping missions. At the high-end of the military spectrum, options include "the utilisation of the UK's high-readiness military capability either in an early-entry or contingency peacekeeping role." Other options are support helicopters, military intelligence/surveillance, logistic support, and 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. Training and training support, specifically developing a new type of pre-deployment mission-specific training packages, are other areas where Britain could enhance the effectiveness of newly deployed UN peacekeepers. However, this Doctrine Note has been superseded by NATO doctrine, so it is unclear whether these recommendations will be pursued.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

There is not so much a heated and lively debate between champions and opponents of UN peacekeeping as a complete dearth of serious public discussion about the topic. None of the main UK think tanks on international affairs – Chatham House, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), The Foreign Policy Centre – have programs focused on peacekeeping issues. The closest the UK has to an institute for peacekeeping is the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, an MOD think-tank collocated with the Defence Academy at Shrivenham. The most consistently well-informed and vocal supporter of a greater UK role in UN peacekeeping is the United Nations Association of the UK, which begun a program in July 2014 to generate greater UK support for, and engagement with, UN peacekeeping. In addition, the Oxford Research Group has incorporated UK approaches to UN peacekeeping in their Sustainable Security Programme. Several prominent NGOs lobby the government on various aspects of the peace and security agenda related to peacekeeping, although much of their advocacy tends to be country-specific rather than calling for the British government to enhance UN peacekeeping per se. Examples include Crisis Action, International Crisis Group, and Human Rights Watch. With UK forces deploying to two UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, the UK hosting the 2016 Peacekeeping Leaders Summit, and the creation of the Joint Peacekeeping Policy Unit, the debate about increasing the UK's contributions to peacekeeping has intensified.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

The UK has one of the world's most advanced militaries. Although Britain's armed forces have been severely tested in long and deadly campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular, and are being downsized, they retain a wide range of modern capabilities, many of which are in high demand in UN peacekeeping operations. In the British case, the issue is not whether

the armed forces possess relevant capabilities but whether there is the political will to contribute them to UN missions. (The exception is the relative lack of suitable UK police officers for robust UN operations, in part because of Britain's devolved domestic police structures, the lack of career incentives to join UN missions, and their general lack of weapons training.) As part of UN DPKO's "Capability Driven Approach," the UK could be well placed to provide force enablers (outlined as specialised units such as helicopters and crews, transport companies or medical personnel), and in the post-Afghanistan environment be uniquely placed regarding the provision of counter-IED capacities to the UN.

Having taken the decision to participate in a UN peacekeeping operation, it is unlikely that British forces would operate with significant caveats beyond the usual premise that any personnel in UN missions ultimately remain under UK command.

Part 8: Further Reading

A Secure and Prosperous United Kingdom: National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015, (TSO, London, Cm9161, November 2015).

Curran, D. & P.D. Williams, The UK And UN Peace Operations: A Case For Greater Engagement, (Oxford Research Group, May 2016).

Peacekeeping: An Evolving Role for Military Forces (MOD, Joint Doctrine Note 5/11, July 2011).

NATO Standard AJP-3.4.1: Allied Joint Doctrine For The Military Contribution To Peace Support (Edition A Version 1), (NATO Standardization Office, December 2014).

Building Stability Overseas Strategy (FCO, MOD and DFID, July 2011).

UK-France Non-Paper on UN peacekeeping (January 2009).

Parliamentary Approval for Deploying the Armed Forces: An Update (House of Commons Library, December 2013).

International Defence Engagement Strategy (FCO, MOD, February 2013).

Intervention: Why, When and How? (House of Commons Defence Committee, 2013).

Williams, P.D., "The United Kingdom" in A.J. Bellamy & P.D. Williams (eds.), *Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges and Future of UN Peacekeeping Contributions* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

Notes

[1] Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from IISS, *The Military Balance 2016* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2016).

[2] Armed Forces Spending is a country's annual total defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of *active* armed forces. Using figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2016*.

[3] See Oliver Letwin, *Conflict Stability and Security Fund Settlement, Financial Year 2015-16: Written statement*, 12 March 2015.

[4] Whereas the FCO currently has a 7-person team to cover peacekeeping issues, the MOD's support to the UN is just two people. At UK-UN approximately a dozen officials work on peacekeeping issues – this includes those who work on geographic desks where peacekeeping operations are deployed, those who work on relevant cross-cutting issues, and the military team.

[5] The Peacekeeping Budget pays for the Government's legally binding commitments (assessed costs) to UN, OSCE and EU peacekeeping missions. The Conflict Pool funds discretionary activities that support conflict prevention and stabilisation and contribute to peacekeeping overseas.

[6] Mark Francois (The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence; Rayleigh and Wickford, Conservative), Answer to Written Question, Hansard (Citation: HC Deb, 18 November 2013, c700W).