

## **After Afghanistan: A British Military Return to Peacekeeping?**

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Historically, UN peacekeeping has played a relatively minor role in UK security priorities. While the UK has maintained substantial foreign military deployments since the end of the Cold War, aside from Bosnia, only token contributions have been made to UN operations. On the other hand, the UK has remained a proponent of peacekeeping reform and is one of the biggest contributors to the peacekeeping budget. With a general election and strategic defence review looming, as the British military considers its future post-Afghanistan there may be an opportunity to re-engage as a troop contributor. However, strategic priorities and spending constraints may work against this.

The British armed forces are small, highly capable, but very expensive. Successive defence reviews have maintained important capabilities and enablers—such as strategic lift, amphibious platforms and ISTAR (intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance) systems—that permit the UK to conduct high-intensity expeditionary operations, something even most other NATO allies would struggle with. The current Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) commits the military to return to a contingency posture—one of rapid response, reacting to crises as they occur. More widely, however, UK policy strongly leans towards a focus on conflict prevention, and the military's current work on defence engagement is part of this agenda.

### **UK Policy on Peacekeeping**

While the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) takes the lead on matters related to UN peacekeeping, it is the government of the day that would sanction any substantial commitment to operations. British policy on United Nations peacekeeping can therefore be derived from a number of key government and ministerial documents. Taken together, they show the relatively modest place UN peacekeeping currently plays in UK foreign and security policy. Even as the government looks to the future after Afghanistan, there is no indication of a major shift towards contributions of formed troop contingents. Rather, there is an emphasis on conflict prevention and upstream engagement, which will take the form of much smaller deployments of individual personnel and the lead of development and diplomatic actors. If this interpretation holds, and given the trade-offs involved, the UK will most likely continue to support

UN peacekeeping as an institution, but without doing much of it itself—perhaps increasing its assistance to build the capacity of other states to contribute effectively to UN operations. This contradiction is not unique to the UK, whose low level of troop contributions mirrors that of most other rich states.

The UK's National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2010—which, along with the Strategic Defence and Security Review, will be reviewed this year after the coming general election in May—says very little about peacekeeping, except to highlight Britain's financial contributions to the peacekeeping budget. In terms of regions of interest, the strategy notes the UK as sensitive to insecurity in South Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East. The statement that “Fragile, failing and failed states around the world provide the environment for terrorists”<sup>1</sup> may indicate some interest in the kind of environments that UN missions are often called to stabilise. But the dangers posed by fragile states only appear in the second tier of the NSS risk assessment. On the other hand, the instability since 2010 across the Middle East, Sahel and Horn of Africa has led to a merging of the foreign-policy and counter-terrorism agendas, which could provide a focus for British security policy that may coincide with areas of UN peace operation activity.

Following on from the NSS, the cross-departmental Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) of 2011 commits the UK to “address instability and conflict overseas because it is both morally right and in Britain's national interest.”<sup>2</sup> Reflecting the difficult experiences of Britain's Iraqi and Afghan campaigns, the strategy emphasises a preventative, upstream approach—though it does also mention rapid crisis response.<sup>3</sup> The BSOS seems to shy away from major troop contributions, as it describes UN peacekeeping as a British contribution to international peace and security “without the need for direct UK military intervention.”<sup>4</sup> The BSOS Strategic Guidance document of April 2013 reiterates this approach, suggesting some geographical priorities of Afghanistan, Africa, the Middle East, North Africa and Europe.<sup>5</sup>

More specifically relating to the defence sector, the 2010 SDSR only states that the UK is to work with the UN secretariat, regional organisations and key member states

<sup>1</sup> HM Government, *A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy*, Cm 7953 (London: The Stationery Office, 2010), p. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Department for International Development (DfID), Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence (MoD), “Building Stability Overseas Strategy,” October 2011, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> FCO, DfID and MoD, “Conflict Pool Strategic Guidance,” April 2013.

to bolster conflict prevention and more effective peacekeeping and peace-building.<sup>6</sup> The SDSR is also of note for retaining the UK's commitment to undertake a broad range of operations, including expeditionary and high-intensity actions. This comes at a cost: while it does necessitate a set of enablers that would be very useful for UN peacekeeping operations, it also, given what the UK is willing to spend on defence, means a relatively small army in manpower terms.

Government strategy does not therefore suggest any major realignment regarding UK contributions to UN operations. At the departmental level, the picture may be slightly different.

The Foreign Office peacekeeping strategy centers on British provision of niche capabilities; strengthening of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); better force generation; and developing a shared view of peacekeeping with partners. Over the years, the UK has consistently supported reforms to strengthen UN peacekeeping. It welcomed and backed, against some opposition, the Brahimi Report of 2000, which called for a substantial overhaul of peacekeeping.<sup>7</sup> The UK has also provided material assistance to implementation of the "New Horizon" recommendations on peacekeeping reform.<sup>8</sup> And, with France, the UK has led a peacekeeping initiative in the UN Security Council, which has included pushing for improved planning, generation and evaluation of peace operations.<sup>9</sup>

The military view, and particularly the army's perspective, can be gleaned from a number of sources. These tend to cite certain themes: bolstering UK political influence; retaining military capabilities and skills; and retaining operational relevance. There also seems to be some indication of a revived interest in some parts of the military towards peacekeeping, even though traditionally the army has viewed itself as better suited for high-intensity operations, to the extent of looking down on peacekeeping.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review* (SDSR), Cm 7948 (London: The Stationery Office, October 2010), p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> Mats Berdal, "United Nations Peace Operations: The Brahimi Report in Context," in Kurt R Spillmann, Thomas Bernauer, Jurg Gabriel and Andreas Wenger (eds), *Peace Support Operations: Lessons Learned and Future Perspectives*, Studien zu Zeitgeschichte und Sicherheitspolitik 4 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 49.

<sup>8</sup> Conflict Pool Annual Report 2009, p. 48, <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/67639/conflict-pool-annual-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67639/conflict-pool-annual-report.pdf)>.

<sup>9</sup> See the Franco-British non-paper on peacekeeping operations, 2009, available at <[http://www.franceonu.org/IMG/pdf\\_09-0116-FR-UK\\_Non-Papier\\_-\\_Peacekeeping\\_2\\_-2.pdf](http://www.franceonu.org/IMG/pdf_09-0116-FR-UK_Non-Papier_-_Peacekeeping_2_-2.pdf)>.

<sup>10</sup> Paul D Williams, "The United Kingdom" in Alex J Bellamy and Paul D Williams (eds), *Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges and Future of United Nations Peacekeeping* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Yet the current Chief of the Defence Staff, General Nick Houghton, said in his speech to the Royal United Services Institute in December 2013 that “we need to be far more pro-active in our investment in United Nations Operations... such operations come pre-funded and with the benefit of an extant legal mandate which confers legitimacy.”<sup>11</sup> As the British military is one with a tradition of active use overseas, there may be an element of wanting to maintain operational relevance beyond deterrence and territorial defence; UN operations would provide an opportunity for deployment without the political controversies that have marked the Iraq and Afghan campaigns of the last ten years. It may also permit a ready-made entry point for modest contributions of British personnel into ongoing, existing multinational missions—which could be appealing to a military facing further cuts in the next parliament that could severely impact its ability to undertake larger deployments.

There may also be an element of institutional self-preservation. The military’s own peacekeeping doctrine of 2011 suggests the most likely scenarios for UK engagement are the use of high-readiness capabilities as early-entry or contingency roles—along the lines of the UK’s intervention in Sierra Leone in 2000—and a number of niche equipment and personnel capabilities. Peacekeeping could provide the justification for keeping some of these beyond operations in Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup> On a similar note of skills retention, a recent article in the *British Army Review* argues that declining commitments in Afghanistan provide greater scope to support UN peacekeeping and to preserve and maintain “skills within our own forces that have utility across all operations.”<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the author’s discussions with various officials suggest a desire to use greater involvement with UN peacekeeping as a tool to build UK influence in a wider sense—on UN peacekeeping reform, in the UN more generally, and potentially to shape key missions of interest, particularly during their formative stages. There is also the matter of efficiency; as the UK contributes a substantial sum to the assessed peacekeeping budget of the UN, there is a natural interest among both the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the FCO to ensure this money is spent on efficient and effective missions.

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<sup>11</sup> Nick Houghton, Annual Chief of Defence Staff Lecture, 18 December 2013, <<https://www.rusi.org/events/past/ref:E5284A3D06EFFF>>.

<sup>12</sup> Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), “Peacekeeping: An Evolving Role for Military Forces,” Joint Doctrine Note 5/11, July 2011, pp. 1-9.

<sup>13</sup> Mike Redmond, “UK Defence and UN Peacekeeping: Time to Put Our Forces Where Our Money Is,” *British Army Review* (Vol. 159, Winter 2013/14), p. 91.

## Capabilities and Activities

As noted earlier, the 2010 SDSR—while imposing heavy cuts on the military—nevertheless retains a force capable of a broad range of operations and, along with the US and France, one of the handful of militaries in the world capable of expeditionary operations.

An inability or unwillingness to deploy substantial troop contingents might not matter so much to the UN; it is a common assessment that capabilities, and not pure numbers, are the main shortcoming of UN deployments.<sup>14</sup> Assuming the quality of contributions remains unchanged, two trends could make these shortcomings more acute. First, there is the (not uncontested) push towards an “ethos of ‘proactive protection’” as outlined by the current Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous.<sup>15</sup> Second, there is the increased need to operate in environments of asymmetric threat, in which better training and detection capabilities are vital. UN troops in Mali, for example, are targeted by improvised explosive device (IED) threats, which have caused a significant number of casualties.

There are consistent capability gaps across peacekeeping missions, namely engineers; air and ground transport and protected mobility; intelligence and surveillance; and medical facilities. These have all been critical chokepoints for the rapid deployment of missions in situations where time is of the essence, and subsequently their mobility and agility—how easily they are able to move geographically and adapt to new situations or tasks. Further, if protection-of-civilians mandates and mission tasks are to be credibly fulfilled, then intelligence gathering, assessment and fusion capabilities in an integrated operating environment become increasingly important.<sup>16</sup>

In this context, a number of British military capabilities could prove valuable enablers and force multipliers for UN operations. Like all contributions, their political feasibility and military utility would vary on a case-by-case basis.

First of all, the UK possesses well-trained and equipped combat infantry formations. The current Defence Planning Assumptions (based on the 2010 SDSR, which is due to be revised in 2015) are that the military will be able to either run a brigade-level enduring stabilisation operation and two smaller non-enduring interventions of up to

<sup>14</sup> Adam C Smith and Arthur Boutellis, “Rethinking Force Generation: Filling Capability Gaps in UN Peacekeeping,” International Peace Institute, May 2013, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Hervé Ladsous, remarks given at the Brookings Institution, 17 June 2014.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, the remarks by Major General Luiz Guilherme Paul Cruz, former force commander of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), in Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, “Report of the Conference on Peacekeeping Vision 2015 Capabilities for Future Mandates,” conference proceedings, p. 21.

2,000 personnel concurrently, or three non-enduring operations if not already engaged in an enduring operation. The military categorises units according to four levels of readiness: deployed (those already on operations); high readiness; lower readiness; and extended readiness (primarily covering equipment platforms held dormant). In the high-readiness category are formations that could be useful for bridgehead or fire-fighting operations in support of UN deployments, such as 16 Air Assault Brigade and the Royal Marines Commando. However, given these formations' focus on aggressive, high-intensity operations, they may not be best suited for the more restrained requirements of peacekeeping operations. In the lower-readiness category are infantry brigades that could form the basis of a more enduring UK contribution to peacekeeping missions, either as part of a purely British roulement or of one undertaken in conjunction with NATO and/or EU allies.

Secondly, the UK can offer a range of enablers that could help meet the UN capability shortfalls identified earlier. Many of these are the result of specific investment in enabling capabilities to allow the British military to operate at range, even if in recent years cutbacks have had an effect.

*Training and capacity building:* the UK has a number of bilateral initiatives in Europe and Africa to build up partner-state capacity in international peace operations.<sup>17</sup> The BSOS specifically highlights this kind of capacity-building activity,<sup>18</sup> as does the more recent Defence Engagement Strategy, both in terms of specific efforts in peacekeeping training and of wider security-sector reform efforts.<sup>19</sup> As an example of the latter, a key outcome of British assistance to Sierra Leone's post-war SSR process was troop contributions to international peacekeeping becoming a core task of the Sierra Leonean Armed Forces.<sup>20</sup> Looking forward, one particular need that the UK could address through capacity-building is intelligence-led operations. If surveillance and signal-intercept capabilities become more common in UN deployments, there will be a need to collate and analyse this intelligence and then integrate it into actual operations—something known to be a shortcoming of many contingents.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> David Curran and Paul D Williams, "Contributor Profile: The United Kingdom," *Providing for peacekeeping.org*, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> BSOS, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> International Defence Engagement Strategy, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Albrecht and Peter Jackson, *Security Sector Reform in Sierra Leone, 1997-2014*, forthcoming monograph, December 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Author interview with a DPKO official, New York, December 2013.

*Logistics and engineers:* In the British military, these capabilities are provided by the Royal Logistics Corps and the Royal Engineers. Particularly relevant to some of the recent challenges the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has faced in Mali is the British Army's Counter-IED Task Force, comprised of both the Royal Logistics Corps and Royal Engineers. Counter-IED training could be offered to other peacekeeping troop contributors as part of capacity-building efforts, or British personnel and equipment could be directly deployed to a mission itself. There may be a cultural adjustment required for British soldiers deployed on UN counter-IED activity, however, as proactive, aggressive operations going after bomb-makers may be incompatible with the mandate or other political considerations that force a more defensive counter-IED approach.

*Intelligence and surveillance:* the British military has invested in a broad range of platforms to gather battlefield information and the structures and personnel capacity to integrate this intelligence into operations. Indeed, over the last decade in Afghanistan, the UK has grappled with the challenges of generating the necessary understanding of the local human political, social and economic environment necessary for successful counter-insurgency operations—though with limited success. Nevertheless, the British military could provide a set of highly capable enablers, whether ground-based armoured and light reconnaissance; special-forces reconnaissance; or aerial surveillance. While intelligence has long been a controversial area of UN peacekeeping,<sup>22</sup> the authorisation of the use of unarmed surveillance drones in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Mali suggests that, in certain contexts at least, missions may increasingly have an aerial-surveillance capability. While these have so far been secured from the private sector,<sup>23</sup> the UK could elect to offer military drone capability, such as the Royal Artillery's Watchkeeper, which offers electro-optical, infrared and radar sensors, permitting persistent day and night capability. Given the constraints surrounding the intelligence and surveillance capability of UN forces, however, the RAF's Reaper drones would be politically unsuitable unless they were controlled within theatre and, more importantly, their sensor feeds went directly and only to the mission headquarters.

*Mobility:* The British military has a number of potential enablers for a mission's deployment, sustainment and in-theatre mobility.

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<sup>22</sup> See: Walter Dorn, "United Nations Peacekeeping Intelligence," in Loch K Johnson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of National Security Intelligence* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> "U.N. Seeks Surveillance Drones for Mali, Shelves Plans for Ivory Coast," *Reuters*, 12 May 2014.

A particular strength of the British military is strategic lift. Other than the US and Canada, the RAF is the only NATO air force that possesses strategic lift aircraft—in this case, its nine C-17 III Globemasters, each of which is capable of carrying 77,000 kg of cargo. Two Royal Air Force (RAF) Globemasters were deployed to support the French Operation *Serval* in Mali in early 2013. The RAF also has a significant tactical-lift capability, based on thirty-two C-130 Hercules transports of various marks, to be replaced by the new, more capable Airbus A400M Atlas, of which the first of twenty-two ordered is now entering service.

Recent operations in Afghanistan have also led to substantial investment in the UK military's helicopter capability. RAF helicopters deployed on UN operations would facilitate a whole range of mission tasks, ranging from monitoring and surveillance through to rapid response, troop insertion and extraction, medical evacuation and more. Further, military helicopter capability offers more operational flexibility than civilian contracted aircraft.<sup>24</sup> The Army Air Corps could also provide dedicated attack helicopters in the form of the Apache; notably, the Netherlands deployed four Apaches as part of their contribution to MINUSMA.

Finally, the army has built up a substantial inventory of armoured vehicles as a legacy of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

There are also civilian capabilities that the UK could offer. Modern, multidimensional peacekeeping operations have a substantial civilian component. The UK has a store of experience (with varying degrees of success) in civil-military co-operation dating back to the Balkan operations of the 1990s and through to the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Stabilisation Unit is a civil-military co-ordination cell able to work in high-risk, high-threat environments. It is a cross-ministry body, owned by the FCO, Department for International Development (DfID) and MoD. In essence, it is primarily a centre of expertise to support the government's crisis response and conflict and stabilisation priorities. It is not an executive body—it does not generate policy. But it can feed into the generation of policy by lending individual experts and building a common view across departments, even on thematic areas that may be owned by a particular department.

Of most relevance to UN operations, however, are the Stabilisation Unit's personnel functions. The Unit functions as a mechanism to identify and recruit appropriate

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<sup>24</sup> Center on International Cooperation, "Assessment of Helicopter Force Generation Challenges for United Nations Peacekeeping Operations," December 2011, p. 1.



British personnel for multilateral deployments. Recent examples include recruitment and deployment of staff to UN missions in the DRC, Mali and South Sudan. In doing so, the unit fulfils one of its roles to influence high-priority multilateral missions—one of the organisation’s stated performance indicators is whether it is able to offer credible candidates for all priority UN (and EU) posts.<sup>25</sup> Added to this, learning is a major part of the Stabilisation Unit’s work—collating and sharing best practice and lessons learned on a variety of issues in order to retain institutional knowledge beyond drawdown in Afghanistan.

### **The UK and the Future of Peacekeeping**

There is no reason to believe that the UK’s attitude towards UN peacekeeping—both in terms of its conduct and British contributions—is likely to markedly change. At the same time, the UK will continue to be supportive of peacekeeping reform, including making it more effective and more efficient in the field, with missions staying no longer than necessary. It will also continue to see peacekeeping as an important part of the global conflict management architecture.

A re-engagement could offer the UK some direct benefits to its foreign and security policy, most of which relate to the notion of British influence. Firstly, participation in a UN operation in a target country of interest would give the UK more influence in shaping its political and security situation. The argument is made by some that the capacity-building assistance the UK provides to UN troop contributors does not buy as much political capital as more direct contributions. Secondly, it could boost the UK’s standing in the UN by publicly meeting its P5 responsibilities and generating political credit to spend in influencing the direction of peacekeeping reform or winning senior appointments for Britons. Thirdly, if the UK did commit enablers and/or troops to a particular mission, a larger contribution gives it more capital to secure key personnel posts and shape the mission’s design and conduct. Fourthly, there is also the case made by some within the Ministry of Defence that UN peacekeeping operations could offer a good reason for retaining certain capabilities, as well as offering real-world operational experience for which training cannot fully substitute.

Despite these potential benefits, the UK is unlikely to substantially increase its personnel contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. This is due to a combination of political and financial reasons.

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<sup>25</sup> Stabilisation Unit, “Stabilisation Unit Business Plan, 2014-15,” March 2014, p. 17.

The political obstacles relate to the UK's national interests, even as an activist power with a heightened sense of its own international responsibility. At present, few of the UK's most immediate security concerns—Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and in particular the Gulf—relate to areas in which UN peace operations are active. There is also no evidence of a commitment in the prime minister's office to UN troop deployments as a means of building influence in multilateral forums or on the ground. Furthermore, there is a longstanding preference, since the end of the Cold War, for alternative frameworks for crisis response and stabilisation, namely NATO and US-led coalitions. The UK's enduring commitment to NATO is illustrated by its planned lead role in the new Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, declared at the 2014 Wales Summit, in response to Russian actions in Ukraine. These kinds of commitments reduce the available pool of deployable troops for UN operations.

Less convincing as a reason for not contributing, however, is war weariness. Britons are not necessarily withdrawing into isolationism. While the Commons defeat in August 2013 on air strikes in response to the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons was widely interpreted as a rebuke of interventionism, public polling afterwards conducted by YouGov Cambridge and RUSI found that "75 per cent supported taking part in an operation authorised by the UN Security Council."<sup>26</sup> It is also worth noting that the UK has joined the multinational operations against ISIS in Iraq—without a UN resolution, but at the invitation of the Iraqi government. Therefore it is not unreasonable to conclude that, at the very least, there may not be a strong objection in principle to UK participation in peacekeeping operations, particularly where the UK has strong historical links or there is a compelling humanitarian reason.

UK funding mechanisms also present an obstacle. British contributions to peacekeeping missions are funded from the Conflict Settlement, agreed between the FCO, DfID and the Treasury, of £630 million, set in 2011/12. Most of this already goes towards the UK's assessed contributions to the UN peacekeeping budget, which totalled £433 million in 2011/12.<sup>27</sup> The remainder of the Settlement makes up the Conflict Pool funding mechanism, which is a common fund for certain FCO, DfID and MoD activities—in 2013/14, this amounted to £229 million. A big change is due

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<sup>26</sup> Joel Faulkner Rogers and Jonathan Eyal, "Of Tails and Dogs: Public Support and Elite Opinion," in Adrian L Johnson (ed), *Wars in Peace: British Military Operations since 1991* (London: RUSI, 2014), p. 188.

<sup>27</sup> National Audit Office, "Department for International Development, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence: Review of the Conflict Pool," March 2012.

this year: from April 2015, the Conflict Pool will be replaced by the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund, which will amount to over £1 billion but will fund a broader range of activity—though it will include £100 million of “new funding.”<sup>28</sup> It will also be managed more directly by the National Security Council, which may have implications for what thematic and regional activities are prioritised.

The UK’s funding mechanisms matter because—unless the troop contribution is large enough to instead be funded by the Treasury special reserve—potential UN deployments must compete for resources with other conflict-related projects. The UN reimburses countries deploying military personnel at (since July 2014) just over \$1,400 per soldier per month.<sup>29</sup> Member states are also reimbursed for the equipment they provide according to set rates. These, however, would only cover a small portion of the additional costs of UK deployments, which in the case of Afghanistan were assessed to be just under £300,000 per year per serviceman or -woman.<sup>30</sup>

A contribution of about 250–300 troops in a low-risk environment, similar to the UK’s UNFICYP deployment, could cost about £18 million per year.<sup>31</sup> The UK could elect to instead make a deployment of enablers. The Dutch contribution to MINUSMA, for example, consists of special forces, SIGINT (signals intelligence) and attack helicopters, amounting to 380 personnel and budgeted to cost €65 million (£51 million) for a year.<sup>32</sup> At the top end, a larger contribution of formed troop contingents and enablers could look like the UK’s initial deployment to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2002; this amounted to 2,000 troops at a cost of £117 million for six months.<sup>33</sup> While these costs vary, they would all divert resources away from other activities, as well as face a hostile budgetary environment of fiscal austerity.

The government’s stated focus on conflict prevention—as manifested in the NSS, SDSR and BSOS documents—may also present a strong, competing challenge to

<sup>28</sup> Charlie Edwards, “Introducing the New Conflict, Stability and Security Fund,” *globaldashboard.org*, 26 June 2013.

<sup>29</sup> “U.N. Peacekeepers’ Pay Dispute Is Resolved,” *New York Times*, 3 July 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Defence, “Annual Report and Accounts 2012/13,” HC 38 (London: The Stationery Office, 2013), p. 8.

<sup>31</sup> Mark Francois, *Hansard*, HC Debates, 15 January 2014, Col. 576W.

<sup>32</sup> “Netherlands to Send Peacekeepers, Helicopters to Mali,” *Reuters*, 1 November 2013.

<sup>33</sup> The UK’s contribution to *Fingal* included elements of: HQ 3rd (UK) Division; an infantry battle group based around 2nd Battalion the Parachute Regiment and a company of Gurkhas; and Royal Engineers, Signals, Royal Logistics Corps and Royal Army Medical Corps. The RAF also deployed airfield enablers. Remarks by Geoff Hoon, *Hansard*, HC Debates, 10 January 2002, Col. 690. On costs, see Remarks by Lewis Moonie, *Hansard*, HC Debates, 7 March 2002. Prices given in current pounds sterling.

any military re-engagement with peacekeeping. Conflict prevention activities require sustained levels of funding to be effective, and one of the benefits of preventative activities is precisely that they do not require substantial military deployments, which governments may be very keen to minimise post-Afghanistan.

In the end, the most likely option for an increased UK engagement with UN peacekeeping missions will therefore be a provision of niche, enabler capabilities; there is no reason to believe that there will be a radical shift in British defence policy to see its military as a tool to bolster the UN architecture.

Britain could deepen its military involvement in peacekeeping if its security focus switches to areas in which the UN is one of the key conflict-management frameworks. For example, instability and armed extremist groups in East and West Africa—such as Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram—are of concern to the UK. Were the security situation to worsen (or continue to worsen) in Somalia, Kenya or Nigeria, and a UN response be considered appropriate, the UK could play a large role in such a deployment. It is also likely that the UK will continue to remain politically invested in Cyprus and South Sudan, both of which currently host UN missions.

## **Conclusion**

While the UK will continue to remain actively engaged in diplomatic efforts on peacekeeping reform and in support of individual missions, large, enduring troop contributions may be unlikely for reasons of cost and global strategic interests. After Afghanistan, if the UK is to increase peacekeeping contributions, a modest commitment of enablers is the most likely option. Alongside this is the possibility of the provision of rapid-reaction capabilities deployed in the event of a sudden deterioration in the security of a UN mission, but most likely deployed outside a UN framework. Much will depend, however, on the result of the coming general election and priority afforded to UN peacekeeping in the subsequent defence and national security reviews.

On the face of it, Britain's capabilities would seem to offer much to UN peacekeeping operations: well-trained, well-equipped troops; rapid deployment capability; a legacy of civil-military co-operation; and a first-class inventory of mission enablers. Further, UK leaders will continue to view peacekeeping as an important part of the global conflict-management architecture. But to what extent British military capability actually ends up in support of peacekeeping deployments is open to question.