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**Research Report**

## More German "Blue Helmets": Four reasons the Federal Republic of Germany should show greater commitment to UN peacekeeping

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## More German ‘Blue Helmets’

**Four Reasons the Federal Republic of Germany Should Show Greater Commitment to UN Peacekeeping**

*Markus Kaim / Lena Strauß*

The German Armed Forces contribute to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). This is the first time in more than 20 years that Germany has deployed a strong contingent for a United Nations peacekeeping operation, though the UN's multilateral crisis management is currently required to operate in very different conflict contexts. The Federal Government should scrutinize how Germany can participate more comprehensively and more strategically in these missions than it has done up to now. There are a number of reasons to sustain, prioritize and extend this commitment which pertains to issues of strategy, personnel policy, training and equipment.

For a long time, peacekeeping operations were a blank spot in German UN policy – at least in operational terms. In fact, there has not been a lack of political and financial support in Germany for such missions in past decades. However, its contributions of personnel have remained sparse. As shown in the following, there are four reasons for Germany to become more involved in UN peacekeeping operations. In this sense, its deployment as part of MINUSMA could or rather should signal a new prioritisation for German security policy.

### **1. The transformation of UN Peacekeeping Missions**

Since the mid-1990s, UN missions have undergone a steady transformation in terms of challenges and deployment environments. As a result, the range of tasks expanded from simple observer missions and traditional peacekeeping to multidimensional peace operations and peace enforcement missions. The deployment environment is often an ongoing civil war, involving non-state actors (e.g. rebels, terrorists) and external forces (e.g. neighbouring countries, transnational groups). Consequently, the missions' mandates were also extended to include the protection of civilians and the fight against other threats. In addition, the civilian component of the missions became the focus of peace efforts;

this includes disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants as well as reform of the respective security sector. Furthermore, political tasks such as monitoring elections, creating constitutional institutions and economic reconstruction became additional tasks. Longer deployment periods further burdened the missions. For example, the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or MONUSCO (formerly MONUC) has been in place since 1999.

In order to fulfil all these tasks and expectations, the UN urgently needs continuous support in terms of personnel, equipment and funding. To produce relief was also the aim of the Leaders' Summit on Peacekeeping, which took place in New York in September 2015 and was initiated by US President Barack Obama. Representatives of more than 50 countries pledged to counter the lack of personnel and equipment in UN peacekeeping operations. A force of nearly 97,000 uniformed personnel, including more than 80,000 contingent troops, 2,000 experts on mission, a little over 12,000 police officers and around 2,000 staff officers, is currently being deployed in a total of 16 UN peacekeeping missions.

## **2. The return of European peacekeeping**

Germany's commitment to ongoing UN missions is limited. Among Member States of the world body, the Federal Republic is ranked 34th – with a total of 804 seconded staff, consisting of 749 contingent troops, 18 experts on mission, 31 police officers and 26 staff officers (as of 30 June 2017). Compared to its European allies, Germany is somewhere in the middle of the pack. Italy has committed a total of 1,083 personnel (1,053 contingent troops/4 experts on mission/2 police officers/24 staff officers), France 804 (732/3/20/49), United Kingdom 700 (667/7/0/26) and Spain 658 (617/20/6/15).

However, something else is rather remarkable. In many European capitals, UN peacekeeping operations are being rediscovered as an effective tool of crisis management. The UK and the Netherlands are an example of this development. After years of 'abstaining', London sent 100 soldiers to the UN operation in South Sudan (UNMISS) in autumn 2016. As early as 2014, the Netherlands abandoned its policy of not participating in peacekeeping efforts by sending 450 soldiers to Mali. Although this policy field is experiencing a kind of renaissance, this does not necessarily apply to other European partners, such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden. This is expected to have a twofold impact on Germany. The political pressure on the Federal Republic to become a leading European power in this area (together with others) will only increase. At the same time, growing military integration within the EU means that Germany, as a partner and coordinator, is becoming increasingly indispensable in UN peacekeeping operations.

## **3. The 'responsibility debate'**

The 'responsibility debate' clearly outlines the extent to which German policy has already adjusted to these altered circumstances. In parallel speeches at the Munich Security Conference in 2014, Federal President Joachim Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen called for Germany to take on more responsibility in the world, given the changed security policy environment. One dimension of this postulate was that Germany would get involved more actively with the UN than it had done to date. This was already reflected in efforts by Germany's Federal Foreign Office at the Peacekeeping Summit in New York in 2015 and at the Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in London in 2016.

The Federal Government's security policy White Paper from 2016 also tackles the issue of peacekeeping missions as a field of action and prioritized the UN over other

multilateral organizations in which Germany is active with regard to security policy. At the European level, the European Global Strategy clearly outlines the EU's commitment to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Brussels not only wants to better coordinate EU missions with UN missions on the ground, but also to intensify cooperation with the UN in general.

#### **4. Candidacy for a seat on the Security Council**

At the same time, as its participation in MINUSMA, the German Federal Republic is applying for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2019/20. To date, there has been a clear discrepancy between Germany's political and financial support for UN missions and its modest contributions of personnel. This is a barrier for Berlin's application. Germany will have to substantially expand and restructure its contributions to UN peacekeeping operations on several levels – politically, strategically and operationally – in order for its application to be taken seriously.

The Federal Foreign Office had already begun to think in these terms when it highlighted securing peace as one of the four core objectives of the German application. Contributions to UN peacekeeping operations are, therefore, also becoming proof of Germany taking on more responsibility and are an important instrument within international security policy.

#### **Germany's commitment in Mali**

Germany is currently providing a civil as well as military commitment to all three international missions deployed in Mali. This engagement already demonstrates that German foreign and security policy is setting a new emphasis and is now focusing on UN missions. The German Armed Forces are providing training capacities and medical care for the EU Training Mission Mali (EUTM). Germany is represented in an advisory capacity at the EU Capacity Build-

ing Mission (EUCAP) Sahel Mali, the civilian EU mission. Its largest contribution of personnel – currently 639 uniformed and civilian staff – is to MINUSMA; the Federal Republic is contributing more than any other European country.

German commitment in Mali is not only unusual because of its scope, but also because of the mixture of political motives that led to it. Firstly, they intended to fill the hole created by the departure of Dutch combat and transport helicopters. Secondly, Berlin wanted to support the efforts pursued by the French Operation Barkhane in the north of the country. Another incentive was the threat to the civilian population as well as to the Malian state from extremist groups. Germany's commitment is exemplary in meeting its country and regional political objectives as well as its alliance obligations and international responsibility.

#### **Recommendations for more commitment and responsibility**

There is not only a need but also an opportunity for Germany to commit more strongly and comprehensively to UN peacekeeping missions. In this context, the Federal Government must take into account five fields of action.

*A strategy for German commitment to UN peacekeeping* is needed if the Federal Republic is to play a greater role in this area. This should reflect the following aspects: selection criteria for conflicts which German policy can and wants to help resolve; relevant measures with which Germany has already gained experience; required coordination with other actions and other actors. Also, the analysis capabilities of think tanks and other research facilities with regional expertise should be used more systematically in deployment planning and preparation than they have been to date. In addition, the German Armed Forces needs better experience management with regard to earlier missions.

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These Comments reflect the authors' views.

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More recently, countries in the Euro-Atlantic region have expanded their military cooperation and/or have significantly advanced the integration of their armed forces. As a result, German contributions to UN peacekeeping will be part of an “integrated quota” in the foreseeable future. A binding German UN peacekeeping strategy would, therefore, also send a clear signal of its intentions toward the EU and NATO.

Secondly, the German Armed Forces and Germany’s Foreign Office should coordinate and pursue a *strategic personnel policy*. Its aim must be to fill important posts for planning and decision-making processes in the UN Secretariat with German diplomats and officers, e.g. in the Integrated Mission Task Force, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and in the Office for Military Affairs. German personnel should be able to make key contributions to the Integrated Mission Planning Process in order to shape UN missions.

Thirdly, this requires *targeted training* of personnel by the German Armed Forces for UN deployments. To date, training to specifically deal with UN missions only constitutes a minimal part of the National General/Admiral Staff Officer Course (NGASOC). The German Armed Forces’ UN training centre in Hammelburg also trains selected or voluntary staff as military observers for UN missions. An integrated training course for German soldiers specifically designed for such missions would send a clear signal that the Federal Republic wants to assume leadership responsibility in current and future UN missions.

Fourthly, a *permanent personnel quota* should be defined for UN tasks with regard to short-term and prospective assignments. This applies, on the one hand, to military personnel (soldiers/observers). Here, the German Armed Forces should put forward more experienced personnel for operative posts on UN missions. It would seem sensible to incorporate such UN assignments in personnel planning as career-advancing posts to the same extent as is the case with tasks in the EU and NATO. On the other

hand, they also require civilian staff and police officers who can contribute to the comprehensive tasks of multidimensional missions. In the past, German police officers have frequently provided training services in various places, such as in Kosovo.

Fifthly, the German Armed Forces needs a *strategic equipment policy* for its missions because providing appropriate equipment for the deployment environment significantly increases the chances of a mission being successful. UN missions often have weaknesses in this area and particularly in logistics and air transportation. With a concept that would help develop autonomous as well as complementary capabilities, Germany would not only be showing initiative with regard to equipment, but it would also be ensuring it could make its own comprehensive contribution. Particular attention should be paid to the complementarity of equipment in conjunction with European partners in order to compensate for, or avoid, bottlenecks, duplications and supply gaps.

Such a strategy for UN peacekeeping would give credibility to Germany’s application for a seat on the Security Council. Moreover, it would represent a policy instrument with which the Federal Government could actively implement its ideas on international order.