A 'Force for Good'?

Examining UK engagement in Fragile and Conflict Affected Countries

The Foreign Policy Centre

Peaceful Change initiative

Executive Summary

The nature of conflict in the world is shifting, along with the challenges they present for the UK. The number of violent conflicts today is as high as at any point since the end of World War II and they are lasting longer due to complex transnational dynamics and increasing internationalisation. Fragile and conflict affected countries (FCACs) pose threats to international peace and security, undermining the stability of neighbouring countries, provide opportunities for transnational terrorist networks and criminal groups to operate, drive displacement of populations and provide opportunities for the UK's geopolitical competitors to exploit for strategic advantage.

The UK has significant experience and expertise engaging in FCACs. However, the UK's approach to the world and its capacities to do so are changing. The 2020 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy outlines a strategic framework for how the UK engages with the world. It calls for a more joined up and strategic approach between the foreign policy tools which the UK has available. Recent institutional changes, including the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID) into the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), provide an opportunity to more explicitly develop that joined up approach – particularly when dealing with complex, multidimensional problems such as those driving conflict in FCACs.

This essay collection looks at how various aspects of the UK's foreign policy engagement in FCACs is adapting to these changes and the impact these may have on peace and conflict in FCACs. It makes several key recommendations to inform how the UK undertakes future engagement in FCACs. The UK should:

- Embed consideration of conflict sensitivity across all government actions in FCACs;
- Ensure that its approach to engaging in FCACs puts peacebuilding and peacemaking in a central role, not in competition with other UK policy priorities these states;
- Use a wide range of tools to achieve its peace goals in FCACs including: diplomacy, sanctions, aid, trade, military engagement, peacebuilding, mediation and private sector regulation;
- Find the right balance between efforts aimed at promoting stability, for example through elite bargains and political deals, and addressing the structural drivers of violent conflict;
- Strengthen its peacebuilding capacity by bringing in more specialist expertise from the peacebuilding sector; improving coordination and information sharing across government and with external experts; enhancing embassy and FCDO operational capacity to support local peace actors; enabling local programming to become more responsive to evolving local situations; providing more settled guidance to the CSSF; and enabling longer project timelines for peacebuilding work;
- Leverage its convening power to shape international aid efforts towards peace;
- Address the gender gaps in its policies and plans, ensuring that it mainstreams gender, women, peace and security priorities in all government's commitments;
- Push for greater community accountability for peacekeeping missions and prevent resource diversion into counter-terror operations and other forms of warfighting;
- Strengthen private sector conflict sensitivity with an enhanced modern slavery act, new legal responsibilities for companies fuelling conflict and improving public procurement;
- Strengthen due diligence checks on both the direct use of arms sold and on the indirect consequences of the arms trade with clearer red lines on conflict actors;
- Prioritise partnership, both locally and internationally, in its engagement on FCACs;
- Understand the link between climate change and peace, ensuring that its work on climate change is conflict sensitive so that climate transformation does not embed the structural drivers of conflict; and
- Address its role, and that of its Overseas Territories, as facilitators of international corruption.

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1. Introduction: Understanding UK engagement in FCACs

By Tim Molesworth and Adam Hug [1]

The foreign policy of the United Kingdom (UK) is undergoing a period of evolution and adaptation, responding to: a changing geopolitical context; a different set of relationships with allies and partners due to Brexit; shifting priorities and resources due to the COVID pandemic; and institutional changes within Her Majesty's Government (HMG). At the heart of this adaptation is the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, which has provided a framework for thinking about how the UK engages overseas moving forward.[2] While providing a significant sense of direction, the Integrated Review does leave a lot of the operational detail to be worked out. This includes looking at how the UK engages with, and responds, to countries facing instability and war.

This essay collection looks to explore the implications of the Integrated Review, and the UK's changing place in the world more broadly, for the ways the UK engages with and in fragile and conflict affected countries (FCACs). The term 'fragile and conflict affected countries' is used, for the purposes of this publication, to denote countries experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, violent

[1] Tim Molesworth is the Senior Advisor for Conflict Sensitivity and Peace Technology at the Peaceful Change initiative, a UK based peacebuilding NGO. He has 11 years' experience working with the UN and NGOs in contexts such as Iraq, Syria, Sudan and Libya on strategic approaches to peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.
Adam Hug became the Director of the Foreign Policy Centre in November 2017, overseeing the FPC's operations and strategic direction. He had previously been the Policy Director at the Foreign Policy Centre from 2008-2017. His research focuses on human rights and governance issues particularly in the former Soviet Union. He also writes on UK foreign policy and EU issues. He studied at Geography at the University of Edinburgh as an undergraduate and Development Studies with Special Reference to Central Asia as a post-grad.

[2] Cabinet Office, Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, Gov.uk, March 2021, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy

conflict. While there are a number of different frameworks and indices available for assessing fragility and risk of conflict, each of which focus on different aspects of fragility leading to conflict, the term is used here more as a catch-all to think about the particular set of priorities, needs and challenges involved with working around, working in, or working on, conflict related issues in terms of the UK's foreign policy engagement.[3]

The UK has established expertise engaging in FCACs on conflict related issues, but this engagement is shifting, as the nature of conflict evolves globally, as a response to Britain's changing place in the world, and in response to institutional changes. This essay collection looks to explore this changing engagement further. It examines a number of the different ways in which the UK writ large, both a governmental level and more broadly, engages in FCACs, including: its strategic intent; how it works with UN peace structures; its peace-focused mediation and peacebuilding work; humanitarian and development assistance; private sector involvement; its work on gender in conflict; how the UK's work on climate change interacts with peace and conflict; and the changing role of the military.

This introduction aims to set the scene by outlining some of the ways in which conflict has been evolving. It then looks at why the UK engages in FCACs – what it gains and what it gives through its involvement. It looks at the tools it has available to have an impact in FCACs, the challenge of trying to make a positive different within the resource and strategic limitations placed on the UK.

Fragile and conflict affected countries in a changing world

Globally, the last decade has been a conflicted one, with historically high levels of conflict-related casualties and an increasing number of armed conflicts. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, the year 2018 saw a peak in the numbers of armed conflicts globally, 52, matched since 1946 only by a peak in the early 1990s when the Cold War settlement unravelled.[4] However, while there has been a rise in humanitarian ceasefires over that period, there has not been a corresponding rise in peace agreements (unlike in the early 1990s) – with the number of conflicts stabilising at a high level.

Worryingly, over the last five years there has been a growing internationalisation of internal conflicts.[5] This not only represents a greater number of conflicts within national borders in which external international actors are involved, but also how a wider range of international actors, both state and non-state, are involved – including regional actors. A greater number of international conflict actors significantly increases the complexities of conflict in FCACs, risks embedding international competition into national and local conflicts, and makes the job of promoting sustainable peace more difficult. Motivations for foreign intervention are informed by broader geopolitical considerations, ideological and economic interests, or based on an intent to disrupt. Foreign involvement may be direct, as in the case of Yemen or Syria, through proxies such as private security/mercenaries, in Libya or Mozambique for example, or by providing meaningful diplomatic, financial and materiel support to national conflict actors.

Many familiar drivers of conflict lay the heart of the problems in FCACs, including political, social and economic inequalities, non-inclusive governance, historic grievances and the legacies of past

[3] See for example: the Fragile States Index, https://fragilestatesindex.org; the OECD iLibrary, States of Fragility 2020, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/states-of-fragility-2020_ba7c22e7-en; the 2021 Global Peace Index, Overall GPI Score, https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/#/; and the World Bank, Brief: Classification of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations, https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/harmonized-list-of-fragile-situations

[4] Therése Pettersson, Stina Högbladh, Magnus Öberg, Organized violence, 1989–2018 and peace agreements, Journal of Peace Research, June 2019, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0022343319856046

[5] Júlia Palik, Siri Aas Rustad & Fredrik Methi, Conflict Trends: A Global Overview, 1946–2019, PRIO, 2020, https://www.prio.org/publications/12442

conflicts. The drivers of conflict in each country, and opportunities to transform that conflict towards sustainable peace, need to be considered in nuanced ways. However, a long-term trend is also the increasing significance of transnational dynamics to fragility and conflict. The direct impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events, are contributing to environmental, economic, humanitarian and social pressures in the most vulnerable countries, exacerbating conflict dynamics. Transnational crime, particularly around drugs and human trafficking, fuels conflict related economies and creates incentive for instability. Despite the efforts of the last 20 years, transnational terrorism and violent extremism remain an evolving threat, embedded within countries experiencing violent conflict, but also significant in countries under social and economic pressure. While having conflict effects within FCACs, none of these problems can be addressed solely at country level, requiring regional or global strategies and cooperation.

Why does, or should, the UK engage in promoting peace in FCACs?

There are a number of different reasons why the UK has historically engaged in promoting peace, building on its complex legacy of engagement around the world. The UK is a member of the UN Security Council, the fourth highest military spender, until recently the world's fourth largest aid donor and a country possessing both an experienced diplomatic network and an internationally recognised cluster of peacebuilding expertise both in civil society and academia.[6] It has a long-standing desire to show leadership on the world stage, currently embodied in the Government's concept of 'Global Britain'. This stated desire for continued leadership has been somewhat tempered by a sense that policy in recent years has tended to take the form of firefighting and ad hoc responses to crisis, the UK public's understandable fatigue towards further military engagement and the recent reductions in the aid budget. For much of the last two decades the UK's involvement in FCACs has often been driven by its counter-terrorism objectives and an increasing interest in stemming the source of potential refugee and migrant flows. Beyond government, British business, notably but not exclusively in the extractive sector, retains economic interests in fragile and conflict affected countries around the world that both directly shape conflict dynamics and potentially influence the UK Government's political interests in these countries.

When examining the Integrated Review for signs of the UK's priorities in this field it is worth noting that while the term 'peace' is used generically, neither peacemaking or peacebuilding are mentioned explicitly. The primary section on 'Conflict and instability' falls within the framework of 'Strengthening security and defence at home and overseas', highlighting the security rather the development lens through which this agenda is often seen by Government. This framing is likely to lead to changes in the UK's approach, such as narrowing the focus of the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) to 'the foundational link between stability, resilience and security, and work with governments and civil society in regions that are of greatest priority to the UK'. However, on a more values focused note the Integrated Review has committed the Government to acting as a 'force for good' in the world, with 'conflict resolution' identified a number of times as a part of this agenda.[7]

Engaging in FCACs poses significant challenges for the UK. Conflict dynamics are complex and murky, making it difficult to know what to do or with whom to engage; the positive, sustainable impacts of interventions cannot be guaranteed; interventions may inadvertently fuel conflict in unexpected ways; and significant operational challenges make it difficult to ensure the safety and wellbeing of staff and partners, while increasing costs. In certain country contexts today's conflicts may have

[6] OECD, Official Development Assistance (ODA), ODA 2020 preliminary data, https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm

[7] Cabinet Office, Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, Gov.uk, March 2021, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy

their origins in the UK's colonial legacy or where more recently the UK (or its business interests) may be a party to a conflict (both directly or indirectly), complicating the scope for current and future engagement. Providing support to both governments and peoples in FCACs to transform conflicts and promote sustainable peace is challenging and complex work, that requires a level of policy integration that the UK Government aspires to but has not always achieved in the past.

This publication seeks to set out a number of reasons why the UK should persevere with engaging with FCACs. It is clear that there are a number of benefits of the UK doing so, both as a broader value given by the UK and as value to the UK.

The first is the importance of contributing to international peace and security. Where successful, investing in conflict prevention, conflict reduction and peacebuilding reduces uncertainty in the international peace and security landscape, reducing threats to the UK and to other states from instability, transnational terrorism and geopolitical competition, while strengthening international norms around governance, human rights and international relations.

Promoting peace in FCACs is important in terms of improving sustainable development outcomes for vulnerable people in FCACs. This is directly true for reducing conflict related deaths and development outcomes related to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions – of which the UK has been a champion.[8] However, it is also true of the other Sustainable Development Goals generally. Violent conflict has a staggering impact on development outcomes including gender, health, inequalities, poverty reduction, education and economic opportunity.[9] It has a huge macroeconomic cost for affected countries: on GDP; on infrastructure; and access to global markets.[10] For the UK as an actor continuing to be committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and reducing poverty, supporting governments and communities in FCACs to prevent or respond to conflict must be a priority.

UK engagement in FCACs also has direct benefits to its ability to act through 'soft-power'. The UK has developed an important reputation for engaging constructively in FCACs, particularly through the former Department for International Development (DFID) and the CSSF which, together with other areas of aid assistance, has strengthened its moral weight and norm-shaping capacity relating to conflict within the international community. Engagement within FCACs provides UK with a 'place at the table' alongside other international actors when shaping the international response to conflicts, especially important when dealing with conflicts with geopolitical significance or of direct importance to UK security. Support to FCACs also facilitates relationships between the UK and the governments and communities within those countries, with the potential to bolster the UK's reputation and encourage partnerships. These are important components of the UK's ability to project its influence and support its interests globally.

The moral and prestige cases for engagement may persuade different politicians of the importance of the cause but are unlikely to persuade the treasury, whose control of the purse strings (and at times the political narrative) is often decisive. Investing in reducing conflict and promoting peace has the potential for significant savings to treasury. Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell's essay in this collection quotes the maxim that if you do not invest in diplomacy you have to buy more ammunition, however the cost of conflict is not only measured in the direct costs to the UK of intervention but in

[8] The Global Goals for Sustainable Development, 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, https://www.globalgoals.org/16-peace-justice-and-strong-institutions

[9] United Nations and World Bank. 2018. Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict. Washington, DC: World Bank, pp25-33.

[10] Institute for Economics & Peace, Economic Value of Peace 2021: Measuring the global economic impact of violence and conflict, January 2021, https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/EVP-2021-web-1.pdf; UN and World Bank, Op. cit., pp33.

managing the wider shocks to the global economy and the impact of instability on sensitive issues like refugees and migration.

Quite rightly, as a 'force for good', the UK shoulders a significant portion of the burden relating to the global humanitarian response. In 2019, the UK provided £1.5 billion towards humanitarian assistance, the vast majority to countries experiencing violent conflict or dealing with displacement due to violent conflict.[11] In 2021, the UN appealed globally for $35 billion USD to address humanitarian needs, again the vast majority of which are related to conflict.[12] Conflict prevention, conflict reduction and peacebuilding efforts cost a fraction of the amount needed for humanitarian response and have the potential to significantly reduce the humanitarian needs arising out of conflict.[13] This 'invest to save' approach to conflict work is only likely to become more relevant as climate change intensifies competition for access to resources including water and arable land in areas at risk of conflict. While it is often hard to prove a counterfactual, and most peacebuilding work is incremental and long-term, peacebuilders need to be able to cite successful examples of potential crises averted wherever possible to strengthen their case to Government.

In terms of the wider economy also conflict prevention, conflict reduction and peacebuilding also have a direct impact on the sustainability of previous and concurrent UK investments in FCACs, both through aid assistance and the private sector. It does this by reducing risk and facilitating an enabling environment for the long-term institutional and economic support that can help FCACs achieve sustainable peace. Ultimately, however, the UK does and should support governments and communities in FCACs to work towards sustainable peace because it is the right thing to do, and because not doing something to mitigate or respond to conflict would be unthinkable. A UK which sees itself as a 'force for good', which advocates for an international system based on rules and norms, and which promotes 'British values', would not be able to stand by and shirk its moral responsibilities.

How does the UK engage in fragile and conflict affected countries?

The first question relating to UK engagement in FCACs is what can the UK meaningfully do? Firstly, it is necessary to stress that the UK as an actor, can only do so much. In few contexts will the UK be able to play a determinative role in addressing conflict on its own. To have an impact, the UK must consider the complementarity of its work within broader national and international efforts, improve the coordination and integration of its actions, and focus on partnerships with likeminded countries and groups in local and global civil society.

Nevertheless, the UK is able to deploy a relatively impressive (compared with many other states) range of capacities to have an impact on peace and conflict. Furthermore, after its withdrawal from the EU the UK has new tools that it is able to use independently to support its foreign policy objectives, albeit at the expense of being able to draw on the EU's institutional weight, and new partnerships – notably with Canada – that can respond to emerging conflicts in more flexible ways.[14] While the UK's capacities in each context is different, a common set of tools exists, including:

[11] FCDO, Statistics on International Development: Final Aid Spend 2019, September 2020, https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-international-development-final-uk-aid-spend-2019

[12] UNOCHA, Global Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021, https://gho.unocha.org; In 2015, 97 per cent of humanitarian assistance targeted complex emergencies, "a humanitarian crisis in a country, region or society where there is total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict…'. See: UNOCHA. 2016. World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2016. New York: UNOCHA.

[13] United Nations and World Bank. 2018. Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict. Washington, DC: World Bank.

[14] For example of the UK-Canada partnership operating in response to a conflict see: FCDO and The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, Nagorno-Karabakh: UK and Canada joint statement in response to continued military clashes, Gov.uk, October 2020,https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nagorno-karabakh-uk-and-canada-joint-statement-in-response-to-continued-military-clashes

- *Diplomacy* – At a bilateral level, the UK is able to leverage its broad diplomatic presence and relationships to influence and encourage governments and elites in FCACs to abide by international norms, though this is most effective where the UK has strong ties or relationships already in place. Perhaps more significantly, the UK has a strong convening power, both through its wide diplomatic engagement globally, its strong engagement in multilateral institutions, and through its permanent membership of the Security Council, which allows it to influence and shape international diplomatic responses to conflict situations. The UK's role as a convening power has been shown in its ability to bring together development actors, both governmental and philanthropic, to coalesce around specific solutions, with the work of Gavi – the Vaccine Alliance being a prominent example. Using its role at the UN and membership of groupings, such as the Commonwealth, the UK has scope to further facilitate and support south-south dialogue and collaboration.

- *Sanctions* –The UK's Magnitsky-style personal sanctions (asset freezes and travel bans) on human rights abusers and those involved in corruption have begun to be gradually deployed since their first use in summer 2020.[15] As has been highlighted in previous FPC publications and elsewhere, these have the potential to make a significant contribution to the UK's role as a 'force for good' in the world.[16] However, it has been made clear by peacebuilding practitioners involved in this project, that the potential use of sanctions in a conflict context is more contested, given the need to maintain lines of dialogue with potential parties to the conflict.[17] So these sanctions, and the threat of their use, are tool that should be deployed but will need to be used selectively in a conflict context – when a stick may be needed to push a key actor to the negotiating table or into compliance with an agreement – with thought given to how such sanctions may be toggled on and off to incentivise cooperation in order to meet the UK's peacebuilding objectives in a given context.

- *Peacemaking and political settlements* – The UK has not historically been an actor directly involved in mediation activities at a state level, however the Integrated Review commits the UK to place a greater emphasis on the UK's role in mediation and '*dispute resolution*'.[18] The UK has clear assets that would assist it in this endeavour: its diplomatic network, soft power attractiveness, deep academic and civil society resources that can be drawn upon and a fine selection of stately homes available to host peace talks.[19] However, the UK is not a Norway, Switzerland or Kazakhstan and its ambitions to act as a mediator in the future may be complicated by colonial legacies and perceptions of its geopolitical interests. In many parts of the world it has been, and in some cases still remains, a significant figure in current events. In certain country contexts the UK may fall between two stools, too involved to be seen as a neutral arbiter but not powerful enough to enforce its will. However, the stated desire to play this role may be related to developing the UK's 'offer' in the Indo-Pacific, where the previous withdrawal from East of Suez for the last half century may have dulled some of the rougher edges of the UK's historic legacy in areas without a direct colonial past, as compared to the more active presence (with both benefits and drawbacks) in Africa and the Middle East in recent decades. Either way the UK does play important roles in support of international peace

[15] FCO and The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP, UK announces first sanctions under new global human rights regime, Gov.uk, July 2020, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-announces-first-sanctions-under-new-global-human-rights-regime

[16] FPC, Finding Britain's role in a changing world programme, https://fpc.org.uk/programmes/finding-britains-role-in-the-world/

[17] Through involvement in the private roundtables that preceded this publication.

[18] Dispute resolution: as part of a more effective and focused approach to addressing conflict and instability through prevention'.

[19] Albeit one that has been impacted by the pressure of cuts to foreign service personnel, the tendency for other parts of Whitehall to cease control of parts of the machinery and more recently be the impact of aid cuts.

processes, particularly those led by the UN, where it is able to use its position as a P5 member to influence and shape outcomes at the Security Council level, while also providing diplomatic, technical and financial support for peace processes at an operational level.

- *Peacebuilding* – Targeted support for institutions and communities to address the root causes of conflict and to build capacities for peace is an area in which the UK has significant expertise – both within FCDO and among the broader UK peacebuilding community of experts and NGOs. The UK's CSSF has been a strategic source of funding for such activities, though it will be important to recognise the impact on the sector of their reduced ability to access substantial EU project funding.

- *Aid* – The UK is a significant aid donor by any measure. This gives it significant influence in terms of its ability to engage with governments in countries receiving support, while also allowing it to target structural drivers of conflict, including poverty, governance and inequality. Perhaps equally significantly, the size of the UK's aid contribution compared to other donors in many countries, gives it the ability to influence and lead the coordination and strategic prioritisation of international assistance. This has the potential to allow the UK to help shape the way international aid is delivered more broadly.[20]

- *Trade* – The UK's newly independent trade policy, in theory at least, enables it to incorporate the ideas of conflict sensitivity into its future agreements and strategy. However, it has been clear in the initial post-Brexit phase of negotiations that the need for speed in mirroring the provision of previous EU trade deals and desire to take new economic opportunities to show progress has taken precedence over using trade more strategically. In practice, however FCACs represent a very small portion of the UK's foreign trade. As a result, the UK is rarely to be able to use trade policy to directly influence peace and conflict in FCACs directly. Nonetheless, where the UK has trading relationships with other states which may be involved in conflicts, it has the potential to apply conditions to trade to influence behaviour. As a result of the UK mirroring existing EU trade deals it now has trade deals with a number of FCAS either individually or as part of regional groupings that may be of potential relevance in future.[21] Even in circumstances where there would be limited scope to use trade relations for the purposes of leverage, a conflict sensitive approach to trade policy would see it be more responsive to human rights and conflict concerns (for example the UK was slow to amend its trade guidance for Myanmar even after the expulsion of the Rohingyas). However, the most obvious example of where the UK applies conditional trade relates to arms and military equipment, though the extent to which this has an impact has been called into question in relation to the conflict in Yemen.

- *Private sector* – Trading with FCACs poses risks that many private sector actors are often reluctant to take. However, as addressed in more detail in the essay by Phil Bloomer, the UK also has a role to play in ensuring the relatively small group of its firms, often in the extractive sectors, that do operate in FCACs abide by international best practice including the Ruggie principles for business and human rights.

- *Military engagement* – Depending on political will, the UK military can be deployed in a variety of ways with respect to FCACs, including provision of training to national partners, deployment

[20] The impacts of the UK's cuts in aid spending in 2020 due to COVID-19, which saw an approximately 60 per cent reduction in real terms from the previous year, are yet to be seen. Also yet to be seen is the degree to which aid spending will recover post-COVID, though the Government has indicated a return to 0.7 per cent GDP spending on aid 'as soon as possible'.

[21] Department for International Trade, UK trade agreements with non-EU countries, Gov.uk, January 2020, https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-trade-agreements-with-non-eu-countries#trade-agreements-in-effect

as advisors, monitors or peacekeepers under the auspices of the UN, provision of technical and operational support, and deployment in direct combat roles.

These tools are separate and are often the responsibilities of different parts of HMG. The challenge is to bring them together to ensure that their deployment is strategic and complementary. For this, a key strength is the way HMG is able to draw on cross-government resources and tools such as the Joint Assessment of Conflict and Stability (JACS), to identify key drivers of conflict and target interventions by different areas of government. Cross-government approaches are never perfect, however, the need to enhance joint approaches to foreign policy, and by extension to dealing with conflict, is a key message of the Integrated Review.

Few of the tools at the UK's disposal in FCACs are coercive in nature, the (rare) combat deployment of troops, sanctions and, possibly, the use of UK supported UN Security Council resolutions being the exceptions. This highlights the importance of soft power to the UK's ability to address conflict. Indeed, the UK is well known for its soft-power, from the attractiveness of its cultural assets to the good will generated by its aid spending – with positive perceptions globally – and the Integrated Review states the ambition for the UK to leverage this as a 'soft-power superpower'.[22] The challenge, however, is that soft-power depends largely on perception. For the UK, using its soft-power necessitates consistently matching language around British values and being a 'force for good' with its actions and behaviour.

To be at its most effective with the resources it has the Government needs to find ways to further build conflict expertise within its ranks. The merger of the FCO and DFID has blended two quite different organisational cultures. While some of the benefits of the merger have been addressed elsewhere, the rotation system of postings and roles inherited from the FCO risks limiting the build-up of institutional knowledge on conflict-related issues and country contexts.[23] Part of the response could include bringing in more specialist expertise from the peacebuilding sector into government, building on the existing secondment systems for senior academics and opening up recruitment channels. The FCDO, Cabinet Office and other relevant departments could take further steps to improve ongoing coordination and information sharing with external experts through improved ongoing stakeholder engagement, reducing reliance on ad hoc and informal consultation with existing partners.

As part of efforts to improve integration across government more work can be done to improve coordination and cohesion between the analysts and policy setting departments and those responsible for project implementation and day-to-day work on country 'desks' work. The UK's recent reliance on delivering aid spending through multilaterals may have improved coordination with other international partners, though perhaps at the expense of integration within, and local partnership building by, HMG. More needs to be done, through enhancing embassy and FCDO operational capacity, to find ways for the UK to support smaller, local peace actors rather than relying on multilaterals or large private consultancies. Building embassy and wider FCDO project management capacity may also enable local programming to become more responsive to evolving local situations and the learning developed through ongoing project delivery. In the wake of the release of the Integrated Review there may be scope to provide more settled priority setting and guidance to the CSSF, tackling a concern raised by experts that the funds priorities have regularly shifted despite conflict resolution work benefiting from a sustained focus.[24] Wherever possible

[22] The UK consistently rates highly in soft-power indices, such as the Global Soft Power Index (3rd in 2021), see: https://brandirectory.com/globalsoftpower/; or the Soft Power 30 (2nd in 2021), see: https://softpower30.com/
[23] Both the challenges and opportunities were addressed in: Protecting the UK's ability to defend its values, FPC, September 2020, https://fpc.org.uk/publications/protecting-the-uks-ability-to-defend-its-values/
[24] Raised at the expert workshops conducted as part of this project.

efforts must be made to enable longer project timelines for peacebuilding work rather than short-term fixes hemmed in by the yearly budget cycle.

The UK could also make a substantive difference to improving the conditions in fragile and conflict affected countries by more firmly addressing the role of the UK and its Overseas Territories as facilitators of international corruption, with a property market and financial sector that operate as a piggy bank for the kleptocratic elites of many FCACs. Tacking this corruption can help limit capital flight and address some of the endemic drivers of conflict, while giving the UK greater credibility when attempting to pursue anti-corruption measures at a project level.

Where the UK engages

The Integrated Review has sought to reset the 'areas of greatest priority for the UK', which it defined as being the Indo-Pacific and European Neighbourhood, with other regions of historic UK focus such as the Middle East and Africa (beyond parts of East Africa and strategic players like Nigeria) being downgraded in priority for engagement beyond the trade policy and other economic ties. If this approach is applied in practice it would have as serious and potentially damaging impact on a number of FCACs across the world.

However, going more with the grain of the Integrated Review, as set out in the recent FPC and Westminster Foundation for Democracy report 'Global Britain for an open world?', there is a case for a focus on working on improving conditions in major regional players whether that is in terms of democracy (as in that previous report) or peacebuilding.[25] The importance of placing the UK's engagement in individual FCACs in wider regional context should not be understated. For example were Nigeria's descent into multiple conflicts to be left unchecked, it would not only remove an important presence from regional and UN peacekeeping forces but would send potentially destabilising shockwaves across West Africa.[26] However where dynamics in FCACs have wider transnational and regional considerations, it seems unlikely that the UK can limit itself to engaging in a few key strategic countries.

Furthermore, as set out below and in other contributions to this essay collection, conflict sensitivity is a wider concept than simply where the UK invests government resources in peacebuilding or anything else. Applying the principles of conflict sensitivity in an integrated and cohesive way to all actions originating in the UK would provide assistance, even in conflict contexts that the UK is pulling away from.

What should the UK be trying to achieve in FCACs?

The moral responsibility to, and benefits of, engaging in FCACs may be clear, as may be the tools available to do so. What is less clear is the question of what the UK should be specifically trying to achieve in its engagement in FCACs.

The Integrated Review speaks to a need to be 'politically smart' with the UK's efforts at addressing conflict. This language speaks to the *Elite Bargains and Political Deals* work of the UK Stabilisation Unit, which acknowledges the need to ensure that efforts to advance peace in FCACs take into account the role and interests of elites in those countries who may be able to determine the success or failure of peace agreements.[27] It explicitly recognises that there may be a need for trade-offs

[25] Edited by Adam Hug and Devin O'Shaughnessy, Global Britain for an open world?, FPC, October 2021, https://fpc.org.uk/publications/global-britain-for-an-open-world/

[26] Abuja and Enugu, How kidnappers, zealots and rebels are making Nigeria ungovernable, The Economist, October 2021, https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/how-kidnappers-zealots-and-rebels-are-making-nigeria-ungovernable/21805737

[27] Stabilisation Unit, Elite Bargains and Political Deals, Gov.uk, June 2018, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/elite-bargains-and-political-deals

between the need to secure political settlements and structural efforts to address longer-term drivers of conflict. The latter, it suggests, should be done later, and incrementally, in order not to undermine elite based peace deals. There is value to this perspective, recognising the central role politics plays in identifying mutual interests and achieving peace, and it encourages stronger theories of change linking efforts to address conflict and promote peace with political realities. As a number of expert contributors to this project's fact-finding workshops identified, averting bad outcomes can be an important place to start before considering questions about how to actively make progress.

There is concern, though, that the shift to 'politically smart' engagement will, in practice, come to represent an exclusive preference for short-term stability over the need for longer-term structural transformation of conflict, and that 'elite bargains' demonstrates a potential willingness to tolerate, or even support, national partners in FCACs who act in ways contrary to the UK's values over the longer-term. This could practically serve to embed conflict-driving elites further in society, while at best ignoring and at worst exacerbating structural drivers of conflict. A shift to a more cynical approach to engaging with FCACs would also do damage to the UK's reputation as a values-based actor and undermine its credentials as a 'force for good'. This is not compatible with its ambition to be a 'soft-power superpower'.

Some of the essays in the collection highlight this potential tension between the goals of ending immediate conflict and ensuring stability and the more expansive and comprehensive goals of peacemaking (*resolving* violent conflict) and peacebuilding (transforming its root causes and drivers). Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell MP emphasises the importance of stabilisation and the reduction or ending of active conflict as an immediate and more achievable first step, on which more cohesive approaches may build in time. While Dr Alexander Ramsbotham and Dr Teresa Dumasy make the case that addressing deeper drivers of violence, such including the participation of habitually excluded groups, like young people or women, has also been shown to be make peace processes more effective and sustainable.

Particularly where the causes of conflict are situated at the grassroots within communities, track two dialogue and work on resolving issues of local friction can make a crucial difference in preventing and resolving conflict, both active and potential. However, where the conflict drivers are primarily political (or they have become so) then while community-led peace-building efforts may help reduce flashpoints and provide opportunities for dialogue they can be easily unmoored by political trends and forces far beyond their control. This is where the UK's diplomatic presence and reasonable political heft can be of greater relevance. The challenge for the UK and like-minded partners in each context is to find the right balance between values and deliverability, ensuring that pragmatism does not devolve into cynical short-termism and that desired outcomes can be realised in practice.

The Government will need to take hard decisions over what course of action and set of priorities are appropriate for the particular context. It is important, then, to ensure that a politically smart approach to engaging in FCACs is also guided by the UK's stated values. That does not mean that the UK should not be prepared to make difficult trade-offs when working in conflict, but that such efforts are properly coupled with bottom-up approaches to peace and sequenced with longer-term efforts to address structural drivers of conflict.

The importance of conflict sensitivity

The complexities of conflicts pose a particular challenge for international actors engaging in FCACs. Activities by international actors affect drivers of conflict, empower stakeholders and change the relationships between them. This may happen in unexpected and unintended ways, including potentially worsening conflict. Aid projects may provide more resources to one community than

another, triggering inter-communal tensions. Access for humanitarian assistance may be controlled by conflict actors, who can instrumentalise it for political reasons. Aid resources may be stolen or redirected and used by armed groups to support conflict. However, this is not just applicable to aid activities. It is just as important to think through the cascading impacts of all forms of engagement in FCACS, including policy priorities, diplomatic statements and of trade and private sector engagement.

'Conflict sensitivity' is an approach to delivering international assistance in a way that recognises and responds to the potential of those activities to impact, and be impacted by, peace and conflict. Specifically, a conflict sensitive approach seeks to: 1) manage the impact conflict has on the ability to undertake activities; 2) minimise the ways in which activities could worsen conflict; and 3) maximise the ways in which aid activities could contribute to sustainable peace. Conflict sensitivity promotes the efficiency, impact and sustainability of international activities, by seeking to maximise the potential for positive results while reducing direct negative impacts.

While a perfect world would see international activities able to mitigate any risks that they contribute to conflict. In reality, conflict sensitivity recognises that most situations in which an international actor such as the UK engages carries the risks of doing some kind of harm, while not engaging also leads to harms. These situations require thinking through the trade-offs and the proportionality of those risks to the benefits of activities.

The UK has been a thought leader in conflict sensitivity within international aid. Funding from the UK helped pioneer conflict sensitivity tools in the 2000s and early 2010s.[28] Project proposals under the CSSF are formally reviewed for conflict sensitivity. The UK also supports a conflict sensitivity facility in South Sudan, and more recently in the Republic of Sudan and Afghanistan, which provide conflict analysis and support to donors and implementers to manage conflict sensitivity considerations. Yet conflict sensitivity does remain largely considered at a development project level within aid activities and is rarely considered in a structured way in relation to other activities or at a higher policy level, even within the UK.

Thinking through the conflict sensitivity of UK engagement in FCACs

Conflict sensitivity is an essential tool for thinking about how the UK engages in FCACs – not just for aid projects, but as a framework for considering the broader consequences of all types of UK activities. However, the Integrated Review does not mention conflict sensitivity once. If the Review's goal of increasing the integration of the UK's international approach is to be achieved more thought needs to be given to how the broader consequences of UK activities on peace and conflict might be mainstreamed across UK foreign policy engagement in FCACs.

The Peaceful Change Initiative has developed a tool for thinking about conflict sensitive decision-making which can shed some light on how such structured thinking could be applied. The tool involves running key decisions about activities through four 'tests' or questions as part of a due diligence framework for conflict sensitivity. If the decision to be taken passes each of these tests, then that decision could be considered to be conflict sensitive. Conflict sensitivity harms may still occur as a result of the decision, or new opportunities to contribute to peace emerge and the decision maker has the responsibility to respond to these appropriately, but in the meantime they can act in the confidence that they have duly considered conflict sensitivity considerations.

The tool is relevant for conflict sensitivity at all levels, from those making policy decisions, to those making day-to-day decisions about activities. It is also relevant for all types of engagement, not just

[28] See, for example, Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, How to guide to conflict sensitivity, February 2012, https://gsdrc.org/document-library/how-to-guide-to-conflict-sensitivity/

aid activities but extending to diplomatic statements, trade, private sector involvement or military activities. It is also not intended to be a burdensome process, though the more significant the decision, the more effort one ought to spend thinking about conflict sensitivity. Rather it is about providing a structured framework that can inform the way international actors like the UK engage in FCACs.

The four tests are:

1. The objectives test: Are the objectives of the activity relevant, timely and appropriate?
   The first test seeks to interrogate the explicit and implicit objectives of the activity. Is the proposed activity something needed within the FCAC? Is it the right time to undertake that activity? Is the activity appropriate – does it adhere to UK 'values' or find the right balance between short-term elite bargains and longer-term conflict transformation?

2. The Harm-minimisation test: Have all reasonable measures been undertaken to identify and reduce the ways in which the activity could cause harm?
   The second test looks at the various ways in which the activity could cause harm and worsen conflict. This could include things such as exposing partners and beneficiaries to greater risks; empowering actors involved in conflict; inequalities in the beneficiaries or activities; or provision of tangible or intangible support to actors involved in conflict. It then asks the decision maker to consider ways to minimise those risks and develop plans for responding to them if they do occur.

3. The Benefit-maximisation test: Have all reasonable measures been undertaken to identify and leverage opportunities to contribute to peace through the activity?
   The third test is the flipside of the second. Are there ways in which the activity could be undertaken that can contribute to peace, even if that is not its primary objective? Small changes to the way activities can be delivered or the choice of stakeholders involved can help bridge divisions between conflict groups, address structural drivers of conflict or increase the cost of engaging in conflict.

4. The proportionality test: Are the harms identified in test 2 proportional to the benefits identified in tests 1 and 3?
   The final test asks the decision maker to consider whether they feel that the risk of potential harms caused by the activity are balanced by the potential benefits. There is no formal equation that can be used to work this out, but the process of considering it directly – particularly within a team – allows for the critical reflection needed for a sense of due diligence.

Answering these tests is not necessarily easy. They are likely to surface differing perspectives between officials and between different parts of government. This is their strength; they are intended to ensure that critical thinking and a sense of challenge is structured into the way decisions are taken, ensuring that the decision, when it is taken, has considered its broader conflict sensitivity impacts as much as possible. Ultimately, adopting a structured approach to considering the conflict sensitivity of the whole gamut of its engagement in FCACs, is essential for a state like the UK, with a stated ambition to be a 'force for good' and a 'soft-power superpower'. While the framework above may not be the perfect solution to addressing that, it highlights some of the key questions and considerations that need to be embedded within decision-making across government.

What our authors say

The Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP writes that as the world's progress is shared, so are the challenges we all face, at a time of rising nationalism and instability. His paper underscores why it's vital the UK helps protect the international structures and systems to address these interconnected challenges, but not without assisting these institutions to reclaim their founding principles. The UK's influence and experience should not be understated in this area. The paper argues that the UK could help lead the charge for a recalibrated internationalist strategy underpinned by values and working together.

Dr Alexander Ramsbotham and Dr Teresa Dumasy explain that UK involvement in peacebuilding and peacemaking has taken steps forwards and backwards over the last ten years. While we understand conflict and its drivers better and have more tools for peacebuilding and peacemaking, the strategic promise in successive UK Government policy documents to prevent conflict and build peace has failed to translate consistently into operational practice and impact. So how can the UK be a 'force for peace' in the coming decade? The authors argue that peacebuilding and peacemaking should not be in competition with other UK policy priorities for fragile and conflict-affected states, but at the heart of them; that UK policy and practical support needs to pivot to people and organisations working at local levels; and that we need to shift the ways we think and work authentically in local partnership to avoid getting stuck in self-sustaining cycles of superficial change.

Fred Carver writes that the work of multilateral actors in fragile states straddles the somewhat artificial distinction between peacekeeping and peacemaking. It is an area of controversy, particularly in balancing the of necessity state centric attitudes of these interventions with the fact that states themselves can be the primary perpetrators of violence. If the UK wishes to engage in these debates it needs to continue to demonstrate its worth through effective contributions such as its current deployment to the UN's mission in Mali.

Tim Molesworth and Phil Vernon's paper looks at factors affecting the UK's delivery of humanitarian and development assistance in fragile and conflict affected states in the coming years, placing it into the context of shifts in the international landscape and changes in the UK's institutional capacities. The paper concludes by drawing out implications for UK aid policy moving forward.

Richard Reeve argues the idea that the British Armed Forces have an almost uniquely global role and responsibility to do good is one that almost all in UK politics, media and military support, despite the evidence of the catastrophic impact of successive operations and interventions over the past two decades. Indeed, the Integrated Review doubles down on this global military mission and the Defence Secretary asserts that the armed forces should no longer be used as a force of last resort. This essay asks whether there is still a constructive role for the UK military to play in promoting global peace and security. It looks first at the military posture envisaged for the 2020s by the Integrated Review, then at some of the problematic principles and assumptions that underlie the current approach, suggesting some alternatives. It then examines some types of operation involving military contributions – not all of them violent – with which the UK could be involved, and identifies some of the unique capacities that might help the UK pivot to a more useful international role as a globally responsible heavy lift human security provider.

What would it take for 'Global Britain' to address British business' role in fragile states? Phil Bloomer's article highlights the opportunity to redirect profitable business to uphold human rights in fragile states, rather than undermine them. It deploys examples of British business' role in transition minerals like lithium; forced labour and human trafficking in supply chains; and access to vaccines in the pandemic. As with much of 'Global Britain' these examples demonstrate there is no credible or coherent plan to ensure British business and investment will help create conditions for shared

prosperity or environmental regeneration in these volatile and poor geographies. The article provides recommendations including enhanced access to justice for victims of abuse; new human rights and environmental due diligence legislation; redesign of the Modern Slavery Act; multilateral action on the just transition to clean energy; and an overhaul of the government’s incentives for business, such as public procurement.

In fragile and conflict affected countries (FCACs) climate change is one of the many factors that need to be contended with. Nevertheless, impacts from climate change can be wide-ranging and defy sectoral approaches. In their article, Dr Naho Mirumachi and Marine Hautsch argue that conflict sensitivity in the context of climate and development helps identify potential negative and perverse impacts at local to transnational scales. When considering climate mitigation or adaptation, interventions need to consider how and when winners and losers are created, and the security implications in often already politically charged social contexts. These insights will keep the UK Government focused on whom its promise as a ‘force of good’ will matter the most through its engagement in FCACs

Helen Kezie-Nwoha evaluates the role of the UK in promoting the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda, lessons learnt and the overall effectiveness of its interventions and assesses how gender fits into the UK’s recent Integrated Review. It further argues that the UK has shown evidence of its commitment to promoting gender equality and the WPS agenda through progressive frameworks, programmes, global initiatives and investments towards achieving set objectives. However, it concludes that there is a disconnect between what is planned and how the plans are implemented. The paper suggest that the Government strengthen its capacity to ensure proper documentation of progress achieved and enable effective response to existing gaps.

2. Cooperation and values at the heart of UK engagement on conflict

By Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell MP[29]

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the future trajectory of the world seemed assured. The political philosopher Francis Fukuyama even wrote an obituary of the past, proclaiming the end of humanity's ideological evolution and with it, the 'universalisation of western liberal democracy as the final form of government.'[30] More than a new beginning, this was the end of history.

This optimism was not unfounded. The West had won. The battle of ideologies produced a teleological triumph for liberal democracy. With the decline of great power rivalries, the prospect of nuclear cataclysm was diminished, while the principle of cooperation among nations espoused by victorious western allies after World War II was vindicated. Institutions such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, NATO, and the European Commission would be free to spread peace and prosperity throughout the world.

[29] Andrew Mitchell was Secretary of State for International Development from May 2010 until he became Government Chief Whip in September 2012. He was appointed to the Privy Council in 2010. Prior to joining the cabinet, he held numerous junior positions in Government (1992-1997) and in opposition (2003-2010). He has been the Member of Parliament for Sutton Coldfield since 2001. Previously he was Member of Parliament for Gedling. A graduate of Jesus College, Cambridge, he is a fellow at Cambridge University; a Visiting Fellow at Harvard University; and an Honorary Professor in the School of Social Sciences for the University of Birmingham. He is a member of the Strategy Advisory Committee at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

[30] Francis Fukuyama, The End of History?, The National Interest, No. 16 (Summer 1989), pp. 3-18, Center for the National Interest, https://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184

Indeed, if 20th century devastation had taught the world anything, it was that countries had more to gain by working together than by languishing in a distrustful state of isolation. Internationalism was the antidote to destructive nationalism.

However, things have not quite turned out as they were supposed to. Nationalism has made a comeback. World power rivalries are on the rise once again, with Washington, Beijing and Moscow jostling for dominance. Public anger at traditional centres of power has resulted in demands for protection from perceived external threats. Internationalism is being discredited as an antagonistic rather than defensive force, while the language of cooperation is being replaced with calls for tribal solidarity.

Brexit, the election of Donald Trump and the rise of far-right candidates in Germany and Italy are just a few recent examples of how the international rules-based model that has dominated geopolitical relations for 70 years is being challenged – ironically by some of its own architects. However, while shutting out the world may make popular politics at home, it makes terrible diplomacy. As Professor Paul Miller recently explained, 'if nationalism worries about bigger fish in the ocean, internationalism worries about the poison in the water'.[31]

We are beginning to witness the toxic consequences of state-centric resurgence. The United States' chaotic retreat from Afghanistan is not only plunging the country into a renewed reign of terror but threatens to destabilise the wider region. A US action, a manifestation of government foreign policy, being constrained by public uncertainty and anxiety. It was hoped that the election of President Joe Biden would prompt a softening of Trump's 'America First' policy, but his actions in office so far demonstrate that this is easier said than done. That it was executed with little consultation with US allies further confirms the derelict state of multilateralism.

The UK is also retreating from the international platform, invoking the pretext of domestic economic difficulties to justify pulling back our soft power globally, with tragic results. We know that the Chancellor's decision to cut foreign aid spending from 0.7 per cent to 0.5 per cent of GNI represents merely one per cent of his COVID borrowing. The cuts will hardly skim the surface of our financial woes but will almost certainly lead to the deaths of 100,000 children and the suffering of millions more.

Soft power, something the UK has excelled at historically, is one of the most powerful tools in any country's diplomatic arsenal. Aid is a veritable lifeline and a source of hope. It has helped educate millions of women and girls, brought relief to conflict zones and bolstered fragile health systems. However, the decisions on Afghanistan and foreign aid represent much more than a moral failure. There is a disturbing paradox at play: populist policies may appeal to narrow nationalist sensibilities, but ultimately they may negate the national interest. It is incontrovertible that the leading issues of the day – climate change, security, coronavirus, poverty, trade, and migration – cannot be dealt with in isolation, because the problems they create in one part of the world will eventually land here at home. Their resolution calls for closer international cooperation. General Mattis famously remarked that 'the more you cut aid, the more I need to spend on ammunition'.[32] General Mattis was right.

[31] Paul D. Miller, The rebirth of internationalism?, Atlantic Council, October 2019, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/the-rebirth-of-internationalism/

[32] Mattis' remarks came in 2013 in response to a question on foreign aid by Senator Roger Wicker. They were often cited during the Trump administration, when Mattis served as Secretary of Defense, when attempts were made to cut the aid budget. Dan Lamothe, Retired generals cite past comments from Mattis while opposing Trump's proposed foreign aid cuts, The Washington Post, February 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/02/27/retired-generals-cite-past-comments-from-mattis-while-opposing-trumps-proposed-foreign-aid-cuts/

There are other problems. Nationalist feelings often assume authoritarian expressions. The post-Cold War aspiration to expand NATO and the EU to its Eastern European neighbours while promoting liberal agendas has not lived up to expectations. Poland and Hungary, once viewed as the hopes for post-Soviet democracy, are appearing increasingly undemocratic, as clampdowns on media and political opponents become more common.

Meanwhile, Xi's China is using its economic power to consolidate authority at home, has ominously spread its monied influence abroad and demonstrated that economic integration does not produce the desired democratic results. Russia has revived its own territorial ambitions supported by an increasingly belligerent foreign policy.

Derek Shearer, a former American Ambassador during the Clinton era, described this state of play as a return to 'great power politics'.[33] This is gravely worrying because it increases possibly the biggest threat to international order: a breakdown in communication and dialogue. When leaders stop talking, they not only risk intensifying suspicion and hostility, but the possibility of catastrophic miscalculations.

The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 – seen as one of the most tense and threatening moments in the Cold War – is a stark case in point. The stand-off sparked by the American Government's discovery that the Soviet Union were assembling nuclear missiles in Cuba brought President John F. Kennedy and Premier Nikita Khrushchev eyeball to eyeball – both leaders apparently ready to risk World War III.

The crisis ended when the Soviets accepted a pledge not to invade Cuba in return for the withdrawal of their missiles. On the surface this was an unequal deal with the result that President Kennedy has been hailed the hero of the confrontation. However, Kennedy's real success lay not in his public displays of power, his real strength was that he maintained communication with his Soviet counterparts despite the immense pressures to go to war. We now know that in the end it was quiet, behind the scenes negotiation and continuing communication which secured the safety of the world.

The important lesson here is that security depended first and foremost on the commitment of two very different leaders to keep talking. The famous hotline established between Washington and Moscow on the heels of the crisis epitomised the importance of this very simple idea that keeping open a line of communication could mean the difference between life and death. In present day terms, the UK has considerable experience at the United Nations and other international institutions, as well as in regional and national fora. Talking to people is always the right thing to do and the UK is well placed to negotiate and assist with conflict resolution and mitigation, with the aim of bringing order to chaos.

I wish to emphasise the word 'order' as opposed to 'peace' in relation to internationalist pursuits. One of the reasons liberal internationalism is being discredited is a belief that it represents a utopian purpose which cannot be served. World affairs is full of hypocrisy and double standards which none of the existing systems have been able to square. Failed military interventions, notably in Iraq, have convinced many that the best action is inaction. This of course is untrue. One of the tragedies of the hasty exodus from Afghanistan is that our efforts there were working. For all the difficulties the country still faced, Afghanistan of 2021 was unrecognisable from Afghanistan in 2001. Sinews of state and civil society were burgeoning. Public services were being delivered. There was more education, better healthcare and improved financial management. Gender equality, once regarded

[33] Peter S. Goodman, The Post-World War II Order Is Under Assault From the Powers That Built It, The New York Times, March 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/26/business/nato-european-union.html

an elusive dream, became an attainable aspiration. Alas, much of the progress was overlooked. The shadow of past misjudgements continued to loom large in people's minds, their faith in the international system's ability to deliver peace and fairness all but lost. However, just as intervention can in hindsight be judged a mistake, so too can non-intervention. The world needs a new strategy.

In the introduction to *A World Restored*, the eminent Washington strategist Henry Kissinger argued that preoccupations with peacemaking, though noble, were counterproductive since 'the fear of war becomes a weapon in the hands of the most ruthless'.[34] In Kissinger's view, peacemaking was a gradual process that required time and the strategic patience to cultivate the right global conditions. The relative stability and state of non-war between Israel and Egypt post 1973 – which eventually led to the Camp David peace agreement – was attributed to this very strategy. Perhaps what the world should be aspiring to, first and foremost, is not universal reconciliation, but global stability.

Kissinger was controversial, but his template could help lift internationalism out of its present malaise. Global leaders need to articulate simple objectives to rebuild the trust on which cooperation depends. They need to make a fresh case for internationalism based not on lofty ideals but on pragmatism, setting out the importance, but also the limits of, positive engagement. The public will come on board if they feel their interests are being defended. The goal should be to build a consensus which would make a pluralistic world creative rather than destructive.

The good news is that we have the structures in place. The UN may not seem as formidable as it once was, but unlike the League of Nations, it is still going. And if it did not exist, we would need to invent it. Countries cannot afford to disengage. Conflict, for example, is in essence development in reverse. Tackling the drivers of conflict through aid and investment will not only help improve the lives of the people directly affected, but help create a safer world. The Cold War may be dead, but the nuclear spectre is far from buried. Fragile states are blighted by war and disease. Extremist forces prey on the most vulnerable. Poverty and inequality abound. These are complex and interconnected challenges which, left unchecked, will eventually lay themselves at our door. All countries, but particularly the UK and the US, must lead the charge for a recalibrated internationalist strategy to address them.

It is important to remember that the tug of war between internationalism and nationalism is not new, but they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. In 1926, the Chinese Professor David Yui argued that to love one's own country was right and natural. Nationalism need not be negative – so long as it does not come at the expense of others. The context he was writing in referred primarily to the link between nationalism and war. But it could also be applied to the questions of how, why and to what extent we should engage today. Yui would no doubt argue that abandoning people in their hour of need on the premise of national self-interest is destructive. Instead, leaders should capitalise 'on our differing national interests for the common good'.[35]

Similarly the 'idealist' Professor Alfred Zimmern reminded audiences in 1923 that the purpose of foreign policy was principally to serve the national interest. If internationalism failed, it was because states 'followed the least line of effort'.[36] To put it bluntly, it is lazy politics.

[34] Henry Kissinger, 1923-. A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh, and the Problems of Peace, 1812-22. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.

[35] David TZ Yui, Nationalism and internationalism (an address before the Rotary Club of Shanghai, November 26, 1926), Digital repository, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1061&context=moore

[36] Alfred Zimmern, Are Nationalism and Internationalism compatible?, Foreign Affairs, June 1923, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/1923-06-15/nationalism-and-internationalism

The world has changed. The UK has changed. Countries and people are brought ever closer through evolving technologies and the sprint towards globalisation. But if our progress is shared, so are the challenges we all face. That’s why it’s vital we protect the international structures and systems we have worked so hard to establish. For our part, Britain sits at many of the world’s political and cultural crossroads: the UN, Commonwealth, NATO, and the English language. Our influence and experience should not be understated and we should use it to help these institutions reclaim their founding principles, because working together is the only way forward. Internationalism is not a choice between ‘us’ and ‘them’. It is the difference between chaos and order, between evolution and regression. We know where narrow nationalism leads. We must not allow it to be tested to destruction before internationalism is legitimised once more.

3. A 'Force for Peace'? UK peacebuilding and peacemaking and FCACs

By Dr Alexander Ramsbotham and Dr Teresa Dumasy[37]

UK involvement in peacebuilding and peacemaking has taken steps forwards and backwards over the last ten years. We have a better understanding of conflict, its drivers and relationship to inclusive and sustainable development. We have more tools to understand how conflict is changing and for effective peacebuilding and peacemaking responses.

However, the strategic promise in successive UK government policy documents to prevent conflict and build peace has failed to translate consistently into operational practice and impact. And there are still major gaps in our knowledge and political commitment to peacebuilding, as developments in

[37] Dr Teresa Dumasy is Director of the Research, Advisory and Policy Department at Conciliation Resources (www.c-r.org). Teresa joined the organisation in 2010. As Director of Research, Advisory and Policy she is a member of the executive management team and oversees Conciliation Resources work on research, gender, policy and monitoring, evaluation and learning and EU facing work. Teresa also plays a coordinating role for NGOs on counter-terrorism laws and sanctions and their impact on humanitarian and peacebuilding work. Prior to joining Conciliation Resources Teresa worked for the UK Government in FCO and DFID. She is a Senior Research Fellow at the Conflict Analysis and Research Centre at the University of Kent.
Dr Alexander (Zand) Ramsbotham is Director of Research and Innovation at Conciliation Resources. Zand joined Conciliation Resources in 2009 as Head of Accord and now leads the organisation's research, learning and innovation agenda. Prior to joining Conciliation Resources, he was research fellow at the Institute for Public Policy Research, and has worked as specialist adviser to the House of Lords European Union Select Committee in its inquiry into the EU Strategy for Africa, and as head of the Peace and Security Programme at the United Nations Association-UK. He has also been an associate fellow in the International Security Programme at Chatham House. *Image by Rich Taylor/DFID under (CC).*

Afghanistan, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen tragically attest. The UK needs to acknowledge our own shortcomings and build on our strengths in order to move forward.

What have we got right and what have we got wrong, and what lessons can we draw to help the UK be a 'force for peace' in the coming decade? As we explain detail below, UK foreign policy needs to make three key changes in order to achieve a 'pivot to peace':

1. **Centre peace***:* peacebuilding and peacemaking should not be in competition with other UK policy priorities for fragile and conflict-affected states, but at the heart of them: addressing violent conflict is a *precondition* for advancing sustainable stability, not an inevitable *product* of other policy interventions.
2. **Boost 'bottom-up'**: local peacemaking and peacebuilding deliver – they are not luxuries or add-ons, but key components of an effective peace strategy. Local peacebuilding is severely under-resourced, however, even in comparison with more established forms of peace mediation that are already struggling for recognition and support. Resourcing it properly is the next step.
3. **Prioritise partnership**: partnership is key to effective peacemaking and peacebuilding – conflict is too complex and systemic for any one country or institution to tackle single-handedly. Working authentically in *local* partnership is the hardest, but most important challenge for UK Government and civil society alike to achieve our peace ambitions.

Detangling the jargon: who is building and making what?

To start with, in a field rife with jargon, we need to be clear *what* we're talking about. Peacemaking is about *resolving* violent conflict – peacebuilding about *transforming* its root causes and drivers. Both can help prevent conflict and are essential for peace.[38] But they are often conflated and confused with other conflict responses, such as peacekeeping, stabilisation and security – activities designed to 'manage' or 'contain' conflict.

These are all important parts of the conflict response spectrum, but lack of clarity of what approach is being used where, when, how and why is a problem. It can quickly dilute and undermine a long-term focus on tackling drivers of conflict, and on building legitimate institutions and relationships that can sustain peace. Initiatives to manage, contain, resolve and transform violent conflict can easily work against each other unless carefully strategised, managed and coordinated.

We also need to be clear *who* we are talking about when we refer to the 'UK'. The 2021 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy commits to 'harnessing the full range of government capabilities' to work on conflict and instability, 'placing greater emphasis on addressing the drivers of conflict'.[39] UK Government leadership and action on peacebuilding is vital. But UK capabilities for peacebuilding reach way beyond Government, to civil society and NGOs, the private sector, academia and Parliament.

The complexity of conflicts requires imagination in terms of who can best help to resolve what across the range of UK knowledge and capabilities. But even more fundamentally, it is the people living in the midst of conflicts who are best placed to understand and transform them. They hold a

[38] Peacebuilding involves understanding and addressing the underlying drivers of conflict, not its symptoms; it involves everyone from communities to governments; and it is a long-term process of rebuilding relationships, changing attitudes and establishing fairer institutions.

[39] HM Government, Global Britain in a Competitive Age, The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, March 2021, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age-_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security__Defence__Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf

wealth of (often untapped) peacebuilding knowledge and agency. Our job as the 'UK' is to listen and to support them. The concept of working 'in partnership' needs a refresh.

The UK as a force for peace – forward steps

UK policy frameworks have made important progress over the last ten years in recognising the importance of conflict prevention and resolution to sustainable development, and of inclusive dialogue and negotiation to achieve this. UK-based civil society has often worked closely with Government on the development of thinking on effective conflict response.

In 2011 the UK Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS) asserted that tackling conflict and building stability is in the UK's moral and national interest. It emphasised prevention, using evidence of what works, legitimate institutions and inclusive politics, and the need for dialogue to prevent and manage conflict.[40] BSOS gave way to the (then) Department for International Development's 2016 Building Stability Framework*,* which stressed that tackling conflict 'underpins the fight against global poverty'. It identified five 'pillars' of sustainable stability: fair power structures; inclusive economic development; conflict resolution mechanisms, both formal and informal; effective and legitimate institutions, both state and non-state; and a supportive regional environment.[41]

The UK has also been active in global policy. In 2015 the UK Government and civil society championed the inclusion of peace into the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – in particular Goal 16 to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies, as well as the integration of conflict and gender across the framework. The UK has played a leading role in highlighting the link between gender and conflict, and in championing the global Women, Peace and Security agenda, through four successive UK National Action Plans in 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018. These have included commitments to support women mediators, as well as to increase women's meaningful participation in decision-making in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.[42]

UK conflict policy and guidance has sought to be more responsive to analysis and evidence of how change really happens. In 2018, the UK Stabilisation Unit – established in 2007 as a 'centre of expertise on conflict, stabilisation, security and justice' in the UK Government – presented policy guidance on *Elite Bargains* and *Political Deals*, which advanced UK Government thinking about how to support peace processes and political transitions in fragile and conflict affected states, based on an extensive evidence base of case studies. It emphasised the need to align peace deals with the underlying distribution of power and resources, how external support can help make deals 'stick', and the importance – and challenges – of including 'elites and their constituencies'.[43]

Integrated and joint capabilities have been a growing feature of the UK Government approach – from the Conflict Prevention Pool, to the Conflict Stability and Security Fund, cross-government geographic units, and the Joint Assessment of Conflict and Stability (JACS) tool for conflict analysis. Gender has been increasingly integrated into analysis and programming. In 2020 a Mediation and Reconciliation Hub was established in the Stabilisation Unit to enhance the UK Government's

[40] DFID, FCO and Ministry of Defence, Building Stability Overseas Strategy, 2011, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67475/Building-stability-overseas-strategy.pdf

[41] Marcus Lenzen, Building Stability Framework, Department for International Development, 2016, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5968990ded915d0baf00019e/UK-Aid-Connect-Stability-Framework.pdf

[42] FCO, DFID, FCDO, Ministry of Defence and Stabilisation Unit, UK national action plan on women, peace and security 2018 to 2022, Gov.uk, January 2018, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security-2018-to-2022

[43] Stabilisation Unit, Supporting Elite Bargains to Reduce Violent Conflict, Gov.uk, 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/765973/Supporting_Elite_Bargains_to_Reduce_Violent_Conflict_-_Summary.pdf

competence and contribution to peacemaking and peacebuilding. And the 2021 Integrated Review commits to a more strategic and integrated approach to tackling political and social drivers of conflict, continuing support to global efforts and developing diplomacy and tools such as mediation.

UK as a force for peace – backward steps

Alongside these advances, the last ten years have also seen negative developments, regression and inconsistency in both policy and practice. These range from cuts to aid budgets that facilitate peacebuilding, lopsided strategies and capacities, compressed timeframes and overly securitised responses to conflict, despite the call for an urgent focus on inclusive approaches to conflict prevention by the UN and World Bank in 2018.[44]

Commitments on paper to peacebuilding and peacemaking have not been sufficiently nor appropriately resourced in practice. This is not just a problem for the UK. Globally, peace is chronically under-resourced, even within wider shortfalls in development funding and capacity.[45] It is hard to get support for building peace capacity given the timeframe for making and building peace is years and decades, rather than months. The results of peace efforts are also notoriously difficult (but not impossible) to measure – and to claim credit for. Most recently, in 2021 the Government reduced the budget for the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) by £492 million, of which at least £348.9 million was Official Development Assistance (ODA).[46] And in 2020 the Government decided to reduce ODA from 0.7 to 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income – shortly after announcing an increase in defence spending of over £16 billion.

There are policy tensions between UK aspirations for national security and peace. As others have noted, these are evident in UK defence and security investments in the capabilities of state partners, despite the fact that their repressive behaviour can put civilians at greater risk (think Saudi Arabia and Egypt) and that state-based violence is the cause of the majority of conflict deaths.[47] UK counter-terrorism laws and sanctions can also clash with peacebuilding and conflict resolution objectives, for example when the listing of armed groups as 'terrorists' constrains third party contacts to explore scope for reducing violence and for finding political solutions to conflict.[48] In this and other areas, the peacebuilding and conflict prevention intent in UK policy and legislation is ambiguous or lacking, making it difficult for peace objectives to win through other policy trade-offs. The risk, and often reality, is that UK security interventions can at times undermine rather than strengthen the potential impact of peacemaking and peacebuilding, and at worst exacerbate conflict.

In addition, the more recent acknowledgement in government strategies of exclusion as a driver of conflict – and of inclusion as a driver of peace – is not reflected in the attention to and resourcing of peacemaking and peacebuilding capacity at multiple levels of society. Many people maintain an old-fashioned view of peacemaking as an external mediator brokering formal talks between governments and rebels. Political attention and resources tend to focus on this. But conflicts are

[44] World Bank Group, Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict, 2018, https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337

[45] Pauline Veron and Aandrew Sheriff, International funding for peacebuilding: Will COVID-19 change or reinforce existing trends?, ECPDM Discussion paper No. 280, September 2020, https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/ECDPM-Discussion-Paper-280-International-Funding-Peacebuilding-COVID-19-Change-Reinforce-Existing-Trends.pdf

[46] Lewis Brooks and Abigail Watson, The UK Integrated Review: the gap between the Review and reality on conflict prevention, Saferworld, March 2021, https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/952-the-uk-integrated-review-the-gap-between-the-review-and-reality-on-conflict-prevention

[47] Ibid.; Lewis Brooks, Playing with Matches? UK security assistance and its conflict risks, Saferworld, October 2021, https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1374-playing-with-matches-uk-security-assistance-and-its-conflict-risks

[48] See for example, Conciliation Resources, Proscribing Peace, the impact of terrorist listing on peacebuilding organisations, January 2016, https://www.c-r.org/resource/proscribing-peace

evolving all the time, bringing an increasing range of challenges, such as the proliferation of armed groups, cross-border conflicts, gender-based violence, misinformation, and localised conflicts. Peacemaking capacity too is changing fast: diverse women and youth are active in mediation, including at local levels; and we are seeing increasing prevalence of private diplomacy and digital mediation. This less conventional, but essential range of peacebuilding capacity gets comparatively less attention and support.

UK as a force for peace: a forward jump?

How could the UK, drawing on all its capabilities for peace, be a force for good on peacebuilding and peacemaking in the coming decade and beyond? We have identified three priorities for the UK to better realise its peace ambitions.

1. **Centre peace***:* Peacebuilding and peacemaking should not be in competition with other UK policy priorities for fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS), but at the heart of them: we need peacebuilding and peacemaking capacity in order to face existing and new challenges to UK and global security, including to mitigate conflicts exacerbated by climate change, to negotiate the power shifts required to prevent climate catastrophe and to face the social, economic and political consequences of COVID-19. Violent conflict is a key driver of fragility and a major impediment to development. Addressing violent conflict is a *sine qua non* for advancing sustainable stability in FCAS.

   Evidence shows we currently know more about ending war – stabilising a conflict situation – than building peace.[49] But work that addresses deeper drivers of violence, such as supporting the meaningful participation of habitually excluded groups, like young people or women, has also been shown to be make peace processes effective and sustainable.[50] Peacemaking and peacebuilding can contribute to lasting stability that works for everyone.

   Our own society here in the UK is fractured and conflicted. We are only just coming to terms with the legacy of our colonial past. Peacebuilders and peacemakers can help negotiate the open societies and civic space required for the 'just, peaceful and inclusive society' foreseen in Goal 16 of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development. The fact that conflict challenges exist does not mean peacemaking and peacebuilding have failed, it means we need them more.

2. **Boost bottom-up**: Peacebuilding is critically under-funded compared with other foreign policy instruments – despite it being inexpensive relative to military responses, or the long-term economic impact of conflict. The quality of funding and support matters as much as quantity. Peacebuilding and peacemaking takes time and people, to build trust, and to change attitudes, behaviours and structures that perpetuate violent conflict. Local peacemaking and peacebuilding are particularly under-resourced, despite growing recognition of their importance. As the UN has acknowledged, 'mediation has to move beyond political and military elites and more effectively include efforts at the local level to help build peace from the ground up'.[51]

   Local peacebuilding delivers. It is not a luxury or an add-on. In northeast Nigeria for example, where the Boko Haram insurgency and Islamic State in West Africa continue to wreak havoc on

[49] Christine Bell, Navigating inclusion in peace settlements, British Academy, June 2017, www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/justice-equality-inclusion-peace-settlements-human-rights-common-good/

[50] World Bank Group, Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict, 2018, https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28337

[51] United Nations, UN Support to Local Mediation: Challenges and Opportunities, Mediation Support Unit, Policy & Mediation Division, November 2020, https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/UN%20Support%20to%20Local%20Mediation_Challenges%20and%20Opportunities_1.pdf

communities, local peacebuilders are facilitating reintegration back into communities of disaffected fighters and others associated with armed groups.[52] Local peacebuilding is also providing avenues for excluded groups to actively engage, such as young people who are often seen primarily as part of the 'conflict problem'. Conciliation Resources has been supporting Youth Peace Platforms in northeast Nigeria, which have been working with the most vulnerable and excluded, providing space for young men and women to talk, listen and learn new skills for employment and for resolving local conflicts.[53]

UK policy and practical support needs to pivot to people and organisations working at local levels. High-level agreements between elites that do not have broad buy-in are much less likely to last. In Central African Republic (CAR), numerous efforts to negotiate peace at the national level have broken down. The most recent peace accord signed by government and leaders of 14 armed groups in February 2019 seemed to be making headway, but like so many of its predecessors, soon gave way to growing instability. Conflict in CAR is complex and protracted, and finding effective solutions is hard. But peace strategies have too often ignored local drivers of violence and capacities for peace. The logic for 'boosting bottom-up peace' is clear. Resourcing it properly is the next step.

3. **Prioritise partnership**: Partnership is key to effective peacemaking and peacebuilding. Conflict is too complex and systemic for any one country or institution to tackle single-handedly. But while many people espouse partnership, it is very hard to achieve in practice. Even like-minded international peace NGOs struggle to work together towards shared goals, while maintaining each other's unique approaches, histories and networks.[54]

   But the paramount and perhaps toughest challenge for the UK Government and civil society is to work authentically in *local* partnership. This requires us all to embrace a very different way of thinking and working, which complements and supports local peace constituencies, nurtures long-term relationships, steps up engagement with diverse women and youth networks, and enables 'context-sensitivity' and adaptation. In practice, meaningful local partnership means reducing 'projectisation' of peace efforts, finding ways to take calculated risks, and having difficult conversations with people actively involved in violence. Local partnership requires us to 'decolonise' our relationships and a root and branch transformation of power – from strategy and programme design, to who is in the room, who is listened to and who gets the funding, and to helping to protect civic space and human rights. Local partnership is hard. But without it we are stuck in self-sustaining cycles of superficial change.

Conclusion: is the UK ready to 'pivot to peace'?

Is the UK ready for such a 'pivot to peace'? Our research in 2017 suggested that we may be more ready than many people think, and that there is broad public support for peacebuilding if you get the communications right. National surveys of public attitudes towards peacebuilding and dialogue with armed groups to further peace processes show a striking level of public support in the UK as well as in other countries.[55] This suggests that the Government can be more confident in redirecting

[52] Conciliation Resources, Smart peace: peacebuilding through learning, 2021, www.c-r.org/smart-peace-interactive-learning-resource

[53] Conciliation Resources, Creating safe spaces for youth to build peace, August 2018, www.c-r.org/news-and-insight/creating-safe-spaces-youth-build-peace

[54] Conciliation Resources, Smart peace: peacebuilding through learning, 2021, www.c-r.org/smart-peace-interactive-learning-resource

[55] Conciliation Resources, Public support for peacebuilding, September 2017, www.c-r.org/resource/public-support-peacebuilding; Conciliation Resources, Public attitudes in Japan towards peacebuilding and dialogue with armed groups, October 2020, https://www.c-r.org/learning-hub/public-attitudes-japan-towards-peacebuilding-and-dialogue-armed-groups

resources to peacebuilding, including potentially for more controversial activities such as talking to armed groups, and in communicating that to the public.[56]

Pivoting to peace is not about pretending that we have all of the answers. TV and radio news, and social media are full of real time footage of active conflicts that we are struggling to tackle. But we are learning all the time about how to make and build peace – through political settlements, community security, mediation and dialogue, conflict analysis, and managing natural resources, to name but a few approaches. For the UK to take a jump forward as a ‘force for peace’, we need to take some radical decisions about how and how much we are prepared to invest in it. The interests and capabilities of people affected by conflict and working for peace must lie at the heart of all of our policies and practice.

[56] Conciliation Resources, Public support for peacebuilding, September 2017, https://www.c-r.org/resource/public-support-peacebuilding

4. Multilateral partnerships: The UK and the UN as partners in peacekeeping and peacemaking

By Fred Carver[57]

The challenges

The role of multilateral institutions, pre-eminently the United Nations (UN), in fragile states is multifaceted. They invariably maintain primary responsibility for the delivery of humanitarian aid – the more fragile a situation the more irreplaceable their role. Insofar as development programming continues to occur the UN will often play a lead or convening role in it. Their staff and, where present, observers will be expected to bear witness and report upon violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. Particularly where there is a political mission or Special Envoy in place they will take a degree of responsibility for sustaining peace and maintaining stability: mediating and using their good offices function to convene and facilitate peace talks, and attempting to ensure external interventions are supportive of an agreed upon political process. And where peacekeepers are present they will have a more direct responsibility for maintaining peace, including on occasions by using force in the protection of civilians or in furtherance of a mandate to support a peace process.

These differing objectives frequently come into tension. Notably, the UN has often struggled to balance the need to maintain friendly relations, and therefore access, with host governments to

[57] Fred Carver is a freelance researcher working in the field of international relations, with specific expertise on the United Nations, Peacekeeping, Atrocity Prevention, civil wars and political violence. From 2011-2016 he ran the Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice, a human rights NGO, and from 2016-2020 he was head of policy at UNA-UK, a campaigning organisation for multilateralism. Prior to that he worked as a researcher specialising in South Asia (primarily Pakistan) and in UK politics. *Image by Sgt Russ Nolan RLC under (OGL).*

deliver humanitarian and development programmes, and the need to bear witness to human rights violations and apply pressure as part of a political theory of change. Following the catastrophic failure of the UN to strike this balance correctly in the final stages of the Sri Lankan civil war in 2009, the UN commissioned the 'Petrie Report' which in turn led to the 'Human Rights up Front' mechanism to rebalance the political and development aspects of its work.[58] It was therefore galling for the UN, not to mention tragic, when the atrocities in Myanmar's Rakhine state in 2017 betrayed many of the same failings in the UN response, on occasion even involving the same personnel.[59]

The reasons were straightforward enough. Despite the implementation of Human Rights up Front there had not been a substantial shift in the management of UN in-country interventions to ensure the primacy of political responses. In response to the second scandal of Myanmar, Secretary-General Guterres was able to push through structural reforms to support the primacy of a political strategy set by the UN Secretariat over delivery of development and humanitarian services, and while these reforms were watered down by states and implementation of Human Rights up Front remains incomplete and contested there is now a greater sense of political coherence in the UN's interventions in fragile states.[60]

Unfortunately, this is far from the only point of tension when it comes to multilateral initiatives in areas of fragility. Another is the somewhat artificial divide that exists between the UN's special political missions, run out of the UN's Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, and the UN's peacekeeping missions, run out of the UN's Department of Peace Operations.[61] Despite the recommendation of the UN's Independent High-level Panel on Peace Operations (the wonderfully named HIPPO report) that the UN de-silo its thinking in this area and instead consider all its interventions as existing on a continuum of peace support operations, and despite a compromise restructuring which saw a part merger of some aspects of both offices, the two entities still operate fairly distinctly with limited cooperation or skill sharing.[62]

This is not just a case of a structural disconnect. The UN's political missions operate in the fairly conventional and state centric manner of a UN mediator: attempting to increase stability and with an inherent bias towards state actors, which will always be seen as more legitimate by a state led institution such as the UN. UN peacekeeping, likewise accountable to a mandate established by member states in the UN Security Council, broadly operates in the same way. But there is a twist. In recent decades an expectation has been established that the preeminent role of UN Peacekeeping will be the protection of civilians.[63] The threat to the civilians, however, often predominantly comes from state actors, with non-state actors being as likely to be playing a protective role as themselves

[58] Charles Petrie, Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka, United Nations Digital Library, 2012, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/737299?ln=en
[59] Colum Lynch, For Years, U.N. Was Warned of Threat to Rohingya in Myanmar, Foreign Policy, October 2017, https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/16/for-years-u-n-was-warned-of-threat-to-rohingya-in-myanmar/
[60] IISD / SDG Knowledge Hub, "New Year, New United Nations": Structural Reforms Begin, January 2019, http://sdg.iisd.org/commentary/policy-briefs/new-year-new-united-nations-structural-reforms-begin/; Kenneth Roth, Why the UN Chief's Silence on Human Rights is Deeply Troubling, Human Rights Watch, April 2019, https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/25/why-un-chiefs-silence-human-rights-deeply-troubling
[61] United Nations Security Council, Special Political Missions, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/repertoire/political-missions-and-offices; United Nations Peacekeeping, Where we operate, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/where-we-operate
[62] United Nations Peacekeeping, Report of the Independent High-Level Panel on Peace Operations, June 2015, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/report-of-independent-high-level-panel-peace-operations; IISD / SDG Knowledge Hub, UN Secretary-General Details New Elements of Peace and Security Architecture, November 2018, https://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-secretary-general-details-new-elements-of-peace-and-security-architecture/
[63] Adam Day and Charles T. Hunt, Distractions, Distortions and Dilemmas: The Externalities of Protecting Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping, November 2021, Taylor Francis Online, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13698249.2022.1995680

constituting a threat.[64] There are even circumstances in which the objectives of increasing stability and protecting civilians are antagonistic – greater stability means fewer checks on the power of the state actor to harm civilians.[65]

A tangential, but closely related, point of contention comes when one considers the UN's role in counter terror operations. In the aftermath of the 'war on terror' the UN's counter-terror work has become increasingly extensive and coherent, now organised under the leadership of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and reaching to an extent where some researchers have deemed it the 'fourth pillar' of the UN's work (the traditional three pillars being peace and security, human rights and development).[66] But counter-terror work is not a natural fit for the UN. For one thing the UN emphasises neutrality in its approach to conflicts, particularly in its peacekeeping work, and its peace and security work primarily operates by mediating between partners it attempts to view as equals. Counter-terror operations are not neutral, nor do they treat parties equally: they label certain non-state actors as the adversary. Furthermore, counter-terror operations frequently take the form of, or closely approximate, warfighting, an activity which is both antithetical to the objectives of the UN Charter and one that the UN is congenitally ill suited to perform. To quote the British born architect of UN Peacekeeping Sir Brian Urquhart, "the moment a peacekeeping force starts killing people it becomes a part of the conflict it is supposed to be controlling, and therefore, part of the problem. It loses the one quality which distinguishes it from, and sets it above, the people it is dealing with."[67]

Peace in partnership

It is against this background of issues that discussions about multilateral partnerships for peacekeeping and peacebuilding have to be understood. The UN's initiatives in this agenda rarely happen in a vacuum, particularly in Africa where the African Union (AU) and powerful and effective regional economic communities (such as ECOWAS, SADC etc…) play a vital role. In a situation of fragility such as Mali, such interventions will also take place alongside multiple others, such as two EU missions (EUTM Mali, EUCAP Sahel Mali), unilateral missions (such as the French led Operation Barkhane), and ad hoc regional missions (such as the 'G5' mission from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger). When one therefore considers a question such as 'to what extent is the UN peacekeeping operation in Mali conducting conventional peacekeeping and to what extent is it performing counterinsurgency?', one has to not only consider the conduct of the mission itself (which I would argue mostly does still constitute conventional peacekeeping), but also the fact that in providing stability it creates an enabling environment for these other actors who are most certainly conducting counterinsurgency.

Therefore, while there is broad agreement that peacekeeping and peacebuilding are best when regionally led, and there is a consensus among most that they would like to see the AU and other regional actors take on more of the work with the UN playing a funding and support role, this has led to often insurmountable issues in practice. For example, states have so far resisted calls from the Secretary-General, primarily at the behest of lead donor France, to directly fund the G5. And quite right too, as scholars have argued, if they did they would be using UN funds to directly support the

[64] Center for Civilians in Conflict, From Mandate to Mission: Mitigating Civilian Harm in UN Peacekeeping Operations in the DRC, January 2017, https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/DRC_REPORT_Web_2016_12_30-Small.pdf; Severine Autesserre, The Crisis of Peacekeeping: Why the UN Can't End Wars, Foreign Affairs, January/February 2019, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-12-11/crisis-peacekeeping?cid=otr-authors-january_february_2019-121118

[65] Protection Approaches, Being the difference, November 2021, https://protectionapproaches.org/being-the-difference

[66] Ali Altiok and Jordan Street, A fourth pillar for the United Nations? The rise of counter-terrorism, Saferworld, June 2020, https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1256-a-fourth-pillar-for-the-united-nations-the-rise-of-counter-terrorism

[67] Urquhart, Brian E. 1987. A Life in Peace and War. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

fighting of wars – in contravention of the UN Charter.[68] But how then to follow through on the longstanding demand from many African states for the UN to provide direct funding to African Union peacekeeping missions? The AU defines peacekeeping differently to the UN, and many of its 'peacekeeping' activities could be considered warfighting.[69] Is it possible to fund some actions of a peacekeeping mission but not others that cross the line? This has been the logic behind various UN support offices (such as UNSOS in Somalia) which seek to channel funding and support in kind to AU missions while maintaining a degree of separation between the UN and peace enforcement operations. The results are often complex and convoluted.[70]

What is to be done? And what role for the UK?

None of these tensions have easy resolutions. Furthermore, even if some extraordinary technical silver bullet did exist in the mind of some policymaker that could perfectly thread these several needles, it would do us no good. The UN's peacekeeping and peacemaking work has evolved in ad hoc fashion as a result of protracted negotiations between states and other actors. So too, even more so, has multilateral peace support work outside the UN system. The discipline will inevitably continue to evolve in similar fashion: slowly, gradually and unevenly.

Nor should this be seen as an entirely negative thing. Immensely frustrating as multilateral peacebuilding is, it does – for a given value of the term – work. UN Peacekeeping in particular can boast a commendable track record of harm mitigated the presence of peacekeepers is credited with preventing genocide in the Central African Republic in 2014 and empirical studies show that "on average, deploying several thousand troops and several hundred police dramatically reduces civilian killings".[71] While it is harder to demonstrate the value of the UN's wider peace and security work (it being notoriously hard to prove the negative of a conflict not happening) one must always bear in mind that for three quarters of a century the UN has achieved its primary objective: preventing World War III.[72] And these successes cannot be disaggregated from the contestation and tension at the heart of multilateral approaches. Maddening as the lack of clarity, coherence, and singularity of purpose can be, these are the inevitable consequences of precisely what gives the approach its strength: the fact that one has established a mechanism for otherwise potentially hostile actors to resolve hard power differences through processes of negotiation leading to compromises. Frustrating as the messiness and incoherence of multilateral conflict management may be, it is nothing compared to the messiness and incoherence of conflict.

One potential reform that I believe is worth pursuing is to attempt to discourage and minimise micromanagement of peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities by state led mechanisms. Practitioners operating in a complex and fragile environment need clarity, but if the states that they are answerable to are not able to provide that clarity then flexibility and room to manoeuvre is the next best thing. Locally set policy can also better reflect local conditions, and match them in more granular detail, whereas blanket universal policies are bound to either be too robust for certain circumstances, not robust enough for others, or both.

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[68] Paul D. Williams, Why a UN Support Office for the G5 Sahel Joint Force is a Bad Idea, reliefweb, June 2021, https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/why-un-support-office-g5-sahel-joint-force-bad-idea

[69] Paul D. Williams, Lessons Learned in Somalia: AMISOM and Contemporary Peace Enforcement, Council on Foreign Relations, July 2018, https://www.cfr.org/blog/lessons-learned-somalia-amisom-and-contemporary-peace-enforcement

[70] Paul D. Williams, Lessons "Partnership Peacekeeping" from the African Union Mission in Somalia, International Peace Institute, October 2019, https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1910_Lessons-from-AMISOM.pdf

[71] Diane Corner, "Without the UN, there would have been genocide", UNA-UK, December 2017, https://una.org.uk/magazine/2017-2/without-un-there-would-have-been-genocide; Kelcey Negus, Mounting Evidence: Empirical Studies Show UN Peacekeeping Mission Presence May Reduce Violence Against Civilians, Center for Civilians in Conflict, December 2019, https://civiliansinconflict.org/blog/pk-presence-may-reduce-violence-against-civilians/

[72] Hultman, L., Kathman, J., and Shannon, M. 2019. Peacekeeping in the Midst of War. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A classic example of this dynamic came in a recent controversy regarding the use of lethal force by British UN peacekeepers in Mali.[73] While one can argue as to what the correct posture for the mission is, and while of course rules of engagement are a matter of legal and operational necessity, I would strongly suggest that any judgement made in New York is invariably going to be a poorer match for local conditions and circumstances than that of those participating in the incident. We have seen in the past the negative consequences of too rigid a mandate in peacekeeping and the value of mission command flexibility.[74] Of course, with such flexibility comes the opportunity for abuse, unless it is tempered by transparency and accountability. Peacekeepers must always fully account for their actions and must be accountable to, and able to be held to account by, those they keep the peace for. In this regards the UK's candid communications with respect the incident have been commendable but greater work to place the populations of fragile areas at the centre of UN peace operations, as proposed by the Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON), is vital.[75]

More broadly, what role can the UK play? Their role in shaping peacekeeping, and indeed in all negotiations, will of course be limited by the limitations on UK influence, but this remains a sector where the UK has a louder voice than many.[76] Its policy positions with respect to many of the controversies I have outlined above are reasonably thoughtful and nuanced. Certainly they are the least extreme among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council where France and the USA join with Russia and China when it comes to enthusiasm for counter terror operations.

It's also a sector in which the volume of your voice is proportionate to the size of your contribution. The UK has long contributed significantly to peacekeeping both financially and with small but influential members of senior staff in leadership roles. However, increasing resentment among traditional troop contributing countries at the division that exists between those that lead and those that bleed has meant that increasingly this is not enough, and a country such as the UK is expected to put non negligible numbers of troops at potential risk to earn its right to speak with authority.[77] The UK has done this commendably, doubling its traditional contribution of a mini battalion in Cyprus and senior leadership personnel with a series of commitments of a couple of hundred troops: first of a field hospital and then an engineering unit to the UN mission in South Sudan, and now of a long range reconnaissance force to the UN mission in Mali. The UK now contributes a similar number of troops to France, only a few less than China, and considerably more than the paltry contributions of Russia and the USA.

The military in particular have found that such deployments also offer significant additional benefits: unmatched on the job training and career enrichment opportunities; the strengthening of both traditional and new partnerships and the ability to practice work in coalition; enhanced situational awareness in strategic locations; the ability to match influence with rivals both in the areas of deployment and relevant international forums; and the opportunity to get a close look at some other nations' kit.

[73] Louise Jones, Mali: An Alternative View, Wavell Room, October 2021, https://wavellroom.com/2021/10/26/mali-an-alternative-view/

[74] Tony Ingesson, Trigger-Happy Autonomous, and Disobedient: Nordbat 2 Mission Command in Bosnia, The Strategy Bridge, September 2017, https://thestrategybridge.org/the-bridge/2017/9/20/trigger-happy-autonomous-and-disobedient-nordbat-2-and-mission-command-in-bosnia

[75] Cedric de Coning and Linnea Gelot, Placing People at the Center of UN Peace Operations, IPI Global Observatory, May 2020, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2020/05/placing-people-center-un-peace-operations/

[76] UNA-UK, Global Britain in the United Nations, https://una.org.uk/global-britain-united-nations

[77] Natalie Samarasinghe and Thomas G. Weiss, How "the rest" shape the UN, UNA-UK, October 2018, https://una.org.uk/magazine/2018-1/how-%E2%80%9C-rest%E2%80%9D-shape-un

An exemplary deployment in Mali: where next?

The UK's deployment to Mali has been widely praised, and rightly so. It provides a requirement the UN needs: enabling the mission to project influence many hundreds of miles from the immediate vicinity of the fortified bases where they had in the past on occasion felt somewhat besieged, and allowing civilian experts to spend significant time out and about among the Malian population. While one can reasonably raise concerns about the purpose and value of the mission as a whole – the reliability of the Malian Government as a host and partner, particularly post-coup; the manner in which the mission works alongside French and G5 counterinsurgency operations; and the appropriateness of a UN mission operating in a counter-terror environment – the work of the long range reconnaissance patrols seems to embody a clear theory of change: dissuading attacks on civilians with a show of force; enabling the investigation of human rights violations by providing security for investigators; and enforcing peace agreements through weapons inspections. A clear and candid communication strategy has made this readily apparent.[78]

The UK will need to maintain a contribution at this level if it is to continue to have the influence it does over UN peacekeeping and wider peacebuilding policy conversations. Given the warm reception and effectiveness of the Mali deployment, currently expected to last until 2023, the UK should be in no rush to look elsewhere. But all commitments must come to an end eventually, and it is right that thought be given to what comes next, or indeed if additional contributions could be made, particularly in light of the Prime Minister's as yet unfulfilled promise to the House of Commons that the increase in the UK's defence budget would enable it to "do more on peacekeeping."[79]

The Integrated Review, the UK's generational strategy paper on national security and international policy objectives, commits the UK to an "increased commitment to the successor mission to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)".[80] There's a number of reasons to doubt whether such a commitment could achieve the same policy objectives as the UK's deployment to Mali, and thus act as an effective replacement for it. For one thing the scope and nature of the successor mission to AMISOM has not yet been decided, and the process of negotiating that successor has been fraught with difficulty.[81] For another the situation in Somalia is highly complex and prone to risk, perhaps second only to Mali for the complexity of the interrelation between the various external actors, and likely even more deadly. Any UK intervention would have to be very carefully planned to ensure that it is indeed helpful. Finally, it is likely that – as now – any successor mission would place the AU in the lead role with the UN providing logistical, financial and in kind support through a support office.

The UK has already contributed significant numbers of staff to the UN support office in Somalia.[82] It is difficult to see how, in such circumstances, the UK's as yet undefined contribution could take a form which would see a Mali sized number of additional blue helmeted troops being exposed to a similar level of risk as in Mali so as to give the UK a similar degree of credibility in UN conversations.

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[78] These were mostly available by following the contingent commander at the time @WillJMeddings on twitter. Now troop rotation has seen the Royal Anglians replaced by the Welsh Cavalry it remains to be seen which channels they will use, but following @TheWelshCavalry on twitter is likely to provide a starting point.

[79] UK Parliament, Integrated Review, Vollume 684: debated on Thursday 19 November 2020, https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-11-19/debates/CA347B2B-EE02-40DF-B5CE-1E8FAA07139E/IntegratedReview#contribution-C41740DD-E9B0-410B-8597-98A1DD6E2E10

[80] Cabinet Office, Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, Gov.uk, March 2021, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy

[81] International Crisis Group, Reforming the AU Mission in Somalia, November 2021, https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/b176-reforming-au-mission-somalia

[82] Ministry of Defence and The Rt Hon Sir Michael Fallon, UK troops support UN mission in Somalia, Gov.uk, May 2016, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-troops-support-un-mission-in-somalia

The UK might be well served to disaggregate its commitment to supporting the successor to AMISOM and the strategic value of an ongoing higher level of commitment to UN Peacekeeping: providing AMISOM’s successor with the support, most likely political and financial, that it needs, but separately engaging with the UN’s Department of Peace Operations on plans to ensure the maintenance of at least one Mali-sized contribution to its ongoing multidimensional peacekeeping missions.

Recommendations:

1. That the UK take a ‘needs led’ approach to supporting the successor to AMISOM in Somalia, providing that mission with resources and capabilities it needs, and not contribute for the sake of contributing;

2. That independently from developing a contribution to the successor to AMISOM the UK commit to either renewing its contribution to the UN mission in Mali or offer a contribution, which similarly involves providing several hundred blue helmeted troops equitably sharing risk with other troop contributing countries so as to provide for similar policy benefits; and

3. That the UK use its position on the UN Security Council and involvement with the policy conversations, including the upcoming Seoul defence ministerial to push for:
    - Greater accountability to, and centring of, the communities at the heart of peacekeeping missions, as recommended by the EPON network;
    - To resist any urge for state based mechanisms to micromanage peace operations;
    - To resist state centricity in multilateral responses to areas of fragility and embrace the fact that states can often themselves be part of the problem and non-state actors part of the solution; and
    - To counter any attempt to have UN resources or UN supported missions diverted into counter-terror operations, counterinsurgency, or other forms of warfighting.

5. The changing context for UK humanitarian and development activities in FCACs

By Tim Molesworth and Phil Vernon[83]

The changing international landscape for humanitarian and development assistance in FCACs
The UK's overseas aid in coming years will be conditioned by the UK's national interest as understood through a political lens, and by other domestic political and institutional factors. The nature of UK aid will also necessarily be influenced by international trends beyond those prevailing in each individual country to which aid is delivered. Among those, we highlight the following for discussion:

- A trend of increased armed violence and instability;
- Geopolitical flux and uncertainty;
- A number of influential transnational factors; and
- Incoherent approaches to the delivery of aid in fragile and conflict affected countries (FCACs).

An increase in intrastate violent conflicts, linked to regional factors and violent extremism
Armed conflicts are on the rise, following a period of improvement after the end of the Cold War. The 2021 Global Peace Index noted there had been a reduction in peacefulness in nine of the past 13

[83] Tim Molesworth is the Senior Advisor for Conflict Sensitivity and Peace Technology at the Peaceful Change initiative, a UK based peacebuilding NGO. He has 11 years' experience working with the UN and NGOs in contexts such as Iraq, Syria, Sudan and Libya on strategic approaches to peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.
Phil Vernon is an independent advisor with over 35 years' experience in international humanitarian, development and peacebuilding. *Image by DFID under (CC).*

years.[84] During this period, armed conflicts have in the main been sub-national or internal in their manifestation, that is, the actual fighting has been contained within national borders. But they are often interconnected. For example, the conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya have been fought mainly within the borders of those countries but with the active involvement of outsiders. Meanwhile, many internal conflicts also spread destabilisation and violence beyond national borders, within the immediate region and even farther field. These international connections make military or political resolution harder. Thus conflicts remain unresolved locally, and they persist and further expand. External actors frequently pursue their own wider conflicts in local theatres. These include not only states or groups of states, but also non-state entities such as violent extremist groups, who have responded to their relative weakness in asymmetric conflict by pouring fuel on local conflict dynamics in multiple localities, upping the stakes and entrenching extremist violence more widely.

The humanitarian consequences of conflicts are severe, leading to vast, prolonged or repeated humanitarian aid programmes. These provide succour for those in need, but they can also prolong the conflict. This is because they protect the warring parties from some of the consequences of their actions, allowing them further leeway to continue prosecuting war. Meanwhile such aid is – or can certainly be painted as – intrinsically political; an indication that donors support one or other parties in the conflict.

Longer-term development aid to fragile countries is even more clearly politically charged, as it inevitably interacts with government choices and policies there, and with politics itself, in places where – by definition, if they are 'fragile and conflict affected' – political systems are frequently inadequate to permit sufficient dialogue and peaceful political disagreement and opposition. For example, the provision of large sums of development aid by the UK in Nigeria, despite the Government's human rights record in areas affected by Islamic extremism, is seen by potential recruits to the extremist cause as evidence that 'the West' is not on their side.[85] Therefore one of the challenges for aid agencies remains the delivery of 'conflict sensitive' aid, i.e. aid is designed and delivered in ways that avoid exacerbating conflicts, and preferably aim to reduce them.

A background of geopolitical uncertainty

If most violent conflicts are internal, interstate conflicts have not disappeared. In addition to being prosecuted through proxies in internal conflicts, some interstate conflicts continue to be fought directly, albeit in a context where major powers along with the UN or regional multilateral bodies have been relatively successful in keeping them frozen or at a comparatively low level of military action. Long-running conflicts such as those between Pakistan and India or South and North Korea remain unresolved but mainly at a very low level of action, though some flare up from time to time, as happened in 2020 between Azerbaijan and Armenia, before Russia re-imposed a ceasefire.

Larger geopolitical conflicts with the potential to develop into direct confrontations also loom increasingly large, especially as the period of US-dominated unipolar geopolitics is ending. US power – or at least its willingness to act decisively – is slowly waning, while China grows in confidence and capacity, and Russia continues to act as though it too has a claim to superpower status. The EU meanwhile is unable to create a mechanism through which its security or diplomatic capacity matches the economic weight it still retains. Regional geopolitics in the Middle East remain influential, notably linked to Israel's security posture and its treatment of Palestinians, and the enduring enmity between Saudi Arabia and Iran, along with their respective allies.

[84] Institute for Economics & Peace, Global Peace Index 2021, June 2021, https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/GPI-2021-web-1.pdf

[85] John Campbell, U.S. Policy to Counter Nigeria's Boko Haram, Council on Foreign Relations, Center for Preventive Action, Special Report No. 70, November 2014, https://www.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2014/11/Nigeria_CSR70.pdf

These complex, fragmented and overlapping conflicts and relationships form part of the background to an aid landscape which is also fragmented, at least compared with the Cold War and immediately post-Cold War periods. Much of the aid programmed by the UN and the main International Finance Institutions (IFIs) remains strongly aligned with that given by western states. All this can therefore still largely be considered under the broad heading of 'western' aid in support, broadly speaking, of the more or less liberal SDG agenda – even though western governments also allocate their aid in alignment with specific national interests, and for some, it is linked – explicitly or not – to other forms of support such as military assistance: UK and US military assistance in Somalia being one example of this.

Other players such as the Gulf States, Russia and China use their aid more nakedly in support of access to economic and other strategic resources and opportunities. China's Belt and Road Initiative illustrates this well.[86] Aid fragmentation is on very clear display in the Horn of Africa, where external powers combining aid with their economic or military goals include the US, the EU, the UK, China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in a web of influence that can be quite hard to unravel.[87] China in particular is seen as loading unsustainable debt levels onto many countries, including fragile countries, as part of its aid for infrastructure programme, much of which is in the form of loans.[88] To an extent, different approaches to aid reflect the political systems of the different donors, with western democracies more focused on conditionality linked to good governance, and programmes that aim to improve citizen – responsive governance, while their geopolitical competitors are less concerned about such factors. Aid is therefore an integral part of the narrative about global competition between democratic and autocratic political ideologies which is highlighted in the UK Government's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign.[89]

The challenge for UK aid is therefore to continue to support a liberal concept of 'progress', as a way to link its humanitarian and development aid to the foreign policy goals of shaping an evolving geopolitical landscape which maximises cooperation and conflict resolution, but without allowing aid to become simply a tool in a new Cold War.

Transnational factors

A third set of salient factors can be grouped under the heading 'transnational', as the Integrated Review does. One of these is international crime, whose networks take advantage of (and in so doing frequently worsen) inadequate governance in fragile countries to operate there, notably for the production and transit of illegal drugs and other goods – as for example the use of the vast and hard to police Sahel for trafficking drugs to Europe.

This phenomenon overlaps with another: the large numbers of migrants from poor and fragile countries seeking safety and opportunity in the developed West, often a great personal risk. Migrants often fall into the hands of organised criminal traffickers. Libya is a well-known location for this, where armed political groups operate as criminal enterprises, trafficking migrants seeking entry to Europe.

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[86] OECD, China's Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance Landscape, OECD Business and Finance Outlook, 2018, https://www.oecd.org/finance/Chinas-Belt-and-Road-Initiative-in-the-global-trade-investment-and-finance-landscape.pdf

[87] Alexander Rondos, The Horn of Africa - Its Strategic Importance for Europe, the Gulf States, and Beyond, Horizons 6, Winter: 150-160, CIRSD, 2016, https://www.cirsd.org/files/000/000/000/99/01cfafd6447aaa326037d9eb4d427acd326ea71a.pdf

[88] Zainab Usman, What do we know about Chinese lending in Africa?, Carnegie Endowment for Peace, June 2021, https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/06/02/what-do-we-know-about-chinese-lending-in-africa-pub-84648

[89] HM Government, Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, March 2021, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age-_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security__Defence__Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf

Organised crime also overlaps with international terrorism. Terror and organised crime groups make common cause in overcoming and corrupting local and national governments; in many cases, Islamist terrorist organisations are themselves involved in trafficking and smuggling, either directly or by effectively licensing and taxing traffickers.

A fourth factor is the phenomenon of, and the need to manage, transnational health risks. This is seen currently and most obviously in the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is expected to further undermine governance and stability in fragile and conflict affected countries as government services fail to support affected communities and potentially increase levels of alienation and armed opposition.[90] But the destabilisation caused by an outbreak of Ebola in fragile and conflict affected countries in West Africa in 2014-16, including long term long term aid partner Sierra Leone, is also well attested.[91]

Finally, it is increasingly clear that fragile countries are particularly vulnerable to further destabilisation due to the impacts of climate change, for example as competition for land and other economic opportunities ramps up in the face of inadequate governance. This is especially true of fragile countries in the tropics, where some of the direct and indirect environmental impacts of warming are expected to be most marked.[92]

Among the implications of these transnational factors: the need for the UK to work closely with others and especially with multilateral organisations and processes, ensuring that responses to these phenomena are conflict sensitive, and are used to promote stability and longer term, positive peace, as well as respond to the specific issue in question.

Incoherent approaches to the delivery of aid in FCACs

Given this background, aid resources are increasingly concentrated in fragile countries, and that is expected to remain the case.[93] Yet it is by no means clear that current approaches to aid delivery there are coherent, conflict sensitive or as effective as they could be. Partly, this is because of the instrumentalisation of aid for geopolitical competition, which skews design and other decisions. It is also partly due to ineffective programming and poor collaboration, even among experienced international agencies. These are typically siloed, failing to work in a joined up way, as each responds to its own mandate and perceived organisational interests differently. Because implementing agencies compete with one another for funds and opportunities, this further obstructs collaboration and coherence.

But this is not just a matter of poor operational collaboration. There is a tension at the highest level between two opposing forces. On one hand, it is increasingly acknowledged at high levels – at least in western and UN agencies – that aid agencies should support long term, enduring stabilisation and peacebuilding, in line with the UN's fundamental *raison d'être*. This is the thrust of the UN's *Sustaining Peace* agenda, to which the UN Security Council, General Assembly and UN affiliated agencies (including development banks) are all in principle signed up. This argues for long-term, sustained support for the development of peaceful societies and states. It acknowledges, on paper

[90] UN News, COVID-19 pandemic 'feeding' drivers of conflict and instability in Africa: Guterres, May 202, https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/05/1092222

[91] Conciliation Resources, Responding to Ebola-driven conflict: Dialogue initiatives in Mano River border regions, March 2015, https://www.c-r.org/resource/responding-ebola-driven-conflict

[92] Dan Smith & Janani Vivekananda, A Climate of Conflict: The links between climate change, peace and war, International Alert, November 2007, https://www.international-alert.org/publications/climate-conflict/?gclid=Cj0KCQiA-qGNBhD3ARIsAO_o7ynvgtN5zusQuCMjMOj5jzDm3ysSnTJ4u8aVesSnWxSn9uZKbTiXIvkaAtmVEALw_wcB

[93] OECD DAC, States of Fragility 2020, OECD, September 2020, https://www.oecd.org/dac/states-of-fragility-fa5a6770-en.htm

at least, that this is a complex, multi-generational endeavour requiring appropriate tools.[94] Yet such tools have not yet been developed, at least not on a commensurate scale. Instead, the existing institutions of aid – its organisations, systems and norms, designed for a different purpose – have been largely left intact, while in principle accepting a significantly amended mandate and role to which they are ill-adapted. This is equally true of donors such as the UK, and delivery organisations.

Meanwhile, and on the other hand, major western donors are largely retreating towards an approach that favours short-term stability, even when this is patently at odds with *Sustaining Peace*, and with some of the acknowledged features of the peaceful societies they claim they wish to build, such as individual freedoms and a dynamic civil society. In some respects, this is a resurgence of *realpolitik* perspectives in foreign policy where, in the present context, western donor governments actively support fragile country governments such as that of President El Sisi in Egypt, which trample on freedoms and are not obviously making progress towards long-term peace. This support is justified by western governments so long as the countries concerned are aligned with western interests in respect of issues such as migration or violent extremism, or in the interests of regional stability rather than political uncertainty to which political freedoms might give rise.

Partly, this tendency towards *realpolitik* also represents a frustration at the failure of high profile 'nation building' projects in Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan, and the failure of the Arab Spring and similar movements to replace those in power as well as systems of power. Partly, it reflects the genuine difficulty donors have in supporting long-term goals through open ended and unpredictable programming. This is especially the case for democratic donors who have to demonstrate impact for which they are held accountable by parliaments and journalists with limited patience or understanding. Partly too, it reflects the assessment that dealing with some of the complexities analysed above – migration, climate change, epidemics and violent extremism – is simply easier in a context of short term stability, than in the face of the complex and unpredictable dynamics that tend to accompany democratisation and liberalisation. Geopolitical competition creates additional incentives to adopt a *realpolitik*, rather than be led by the goals of peacebuilding, because western and multilateral aid is so easily outcompeted by less demanding aid from other 'non-traditional' sources, which impose less politically difficult conditions.

Finally, the difficulty aid agencies have had in reinventing themselves for the Sustaining Peace model means they are often all too happy to revert – with a sigh of relief, perhaps – to the simpler, technocratic approach to aid they have long been used to. In the absence of a clear operational approach to *Sustaining Peace*, they have focused attention on technical cooperation under the umbrella of aid frameworks such as the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. This sets out the needs for better collaboration among agencies delivering different packages of aid, designed for the three broad goals implied by its name.[95] But in practice the Nexus commits them to coordination merely, rather than to developing programming that is coherent with the idea that humanitarian, development and peacebuilding needs and rights co-exist simultaneously in fragile countries and societies, rather than being understood and delivered separately.

Changing UK institutional capacity for humanitarian and development assistance

The UK's institutional capacity to deliver international assistance within the shifting international context is also changing, due to a reduction in aid spending and institutional changes within government.

[94] UN. 2015. The challenge of sustaining peace: report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture. New York: UN.

[95] The Nexus is identified as a priority within the integrated review.

The UK aid budget

The UK is, by any measure, a significant international donor. In 2019, it was the third largest donor of Official Development Assistance (ODA), in absolute terms, within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries after the US and Germany, making a contribution of 19.35 billion USD. As a percentage of Gross National Income (GNI), the UK was sixth of OECD countries with its commitment of 0.7 per cent of GNI.[96]

In 2020, the COVID pandemic saw a significant reduction in UK ODA (minus ten per cent), driven by a decline in GNI.[97] This was followed by a reduction of the commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of GNI on ODA to 0.5 per cent in 2021, leading to an average spending change on ODA of -29 per cent. However, as spending on pandemic related costs, including COVID vaccines donated to other countries and other health related costs count as ODA, some sectors of humanitarian and development assistance suffered significantly steeper cuts than the 29 per cent average. Cuts to the aid budget are set to save around £4.4 billion in 2021, though this constitutes a fraction of the UK Government's broader pandemic response domestically (£250 billion in 2020-21) or its increase in the defence budget of £4.4 billion in 2021-2022 and a further £4.5 billion in 2022-2023.[98]

The Government has indicated an intention to return to the 0.7 per cent of GNI ODA commitment when the fiscal situation allows. Currently, this is projected to happen in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, depending on certain conditions to be met. How this will translate into the aid budget is not clear, especially given the UK is interested in redefining how it calculates ODA.[99]

Given the size of the UK economy, the UK will remain a significant donor internationally. The sharp decline in aid has significant ramifications for communities which would have otherwise received UK support, particularly in FCACs where the majority of international assistance is directed. This is more than a temporary blip, as well. Aid projects, particularly development or peacebuilding activities, are not able to be turned off and on like switches. They depend on maintaining significant operational capacities among partners (international and national) within recipient countries – which, once unfunded, are difficult to re-establish quickly. They depend also on deep networks and relationships with local stakeholders, authorities and partners, many of which will have been strained or broken by the sudden cessation of projects. This is especially important in FCACs, where trust and a nuanced understanding of complex conflict factors and political economy is essential for effective delivery of aid. These factors have significant consequences for the ability of the UK to deliver humanitarian and development assistance within the short to medium term as spending on ODA recovers.

Changing institutional structures for aid

The institutions through which the UK is delivering assistance are also changing. In 2020, the Government announced the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with the Department for International Development (DFID). Proponents of the merger argue both that it makes sense to link aid activities more explicitly with foreign policy and that the separation of aid from other aspects of foreign policy was artificial anyway. Critics suggest that the artificial separation was the strength of DFID, allowing it to get on with the business of addressing poverty effectively with less pressure to tailor activities to foreign policy agendas.

[96] OECD, Development finance data, https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/

[97] OECD, COVID-19 spending helped to lift foreign aid to an all-time high in 2020: Detailed Note, April 2021, https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-data/ODA-2020-detailed-summary.pdf

[98] Sam Hughes, Ian Mitchell, Yani Tyskerud & Ross Warwick, The UK's reduction in aid spending, IFS Briefing Note BN322, Institute of Financial Studies, April 2021, https://ifs.org.uk/uploads/BN322-The-UK%27s-reduction-in-aid-spending-2.pdf

[99] Philip Loft & Philip Brien, The 0.7% aid target, House of Commons Library Research Briefing Number 3714, House of Commons Library, November 2021, https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03714/SN03714.pdf

No matter the argument, the merger has happened. The new Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has incorporated DFID and has to overcome the inevitable internal distraction of managing the structural and cultural challenges of bringing two organisations with different institutional cultures together (at a time when they are also disentangling long-held aid and diplomatic relationships with the EU). Specifically focused on the problems associated with FCACs, the merger also included the UK's Stabilisation Unit, uniting that with the conflict capacities in FCDO and DFID within a new Conflict and Mediation Unit.

Also in 2020, the Government announced the Integrated Review completed later that year. The Integrated Review was framed as a pivot in the UK approach to foreign policy, promoting a more joined up and strategic approach to the changing world. The link between aid and other foreign policy tools are made clear, the integrated review promises a new international development strategy in 2022, which will ensure alignment of UK aid with the objectives in the strategic framework of the integrated review.

This is particularly the case with aid related to peace and conflict provided through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF). The Integrated Review refers to the intent: '[t]o tighten the focus of the cross-government Conflict, Stability and Security Fund. [The UK] will prioritise its resources on the foundational link between stability, resilience and security, and work with governments and civil society in regions that are of greatest priority to the UK.'[100] It also talks about making CSSF assistance 'politically smart', language which connects these ideas to concepts such as the *Elite Bargains and Political Deals* work of the Stabilisation Unit. This work has merit in providing a framework for better linking structural efforts to address conflict to the political realities of peacemaking.

There is a risk, however, that a focus on 'politically smart' aid addressing conflict will practically preference the elite bargains and political deals and neglect the longer-term structural peacebuilding activities which are necessary for meaningful and sustained peace. This concern mirrors a sense that the *realpolitik* perspective identified earlier in this paper is currently more in vogue and that, in practice, shorter term stability and short-term UK interests will be prioritised over sustainable peace – which is surely in the longer term UK interest. This feels at odds with the idea of the UK as a values-led 'force for good', reliant on its soft-power to promote its interests in the world.

A final point relating to institutional capacity needs to be made around partnerships. The UK's aid sector is not just the domain of the Government. It consists of a large number of partners through which aid is implemented, including multilateral organisations, UK and international NGOs and the private sector. Relating to peace and conflict aid in particular, the UK is a powerhouse – with a strong network of peace focused NGOs and a large pool of experts on which to draw. These capacities are also changing. Reductions in aid spending due to COVID-19 have exacerbated the impacts of a steady increase in focus on 'value for money', an important aim in a sector reliant on tax-payer money. However, this has seen a shift towards funding through projects rather than core funding, which limits the ability for organisations like NGOs to maintain capacity and expertise that can be drawn on by the Government to help build peace abroad. There is a broader value of this longer-term capacity to the UK that should not be discounted or lost under the rubric of 'efficiency'.

[100] HM Government, Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, March 2021, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age-_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security__Defence__Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf

Recommendations

The UK's aid activities are changing in response to uncertainty both in the international environment and as a result of domestic institutional changes which have not yet reached their conclusion. As UK aid goes through this process, a few key elements are important for the UK to take into account when looking at how aid will be delivered in FCACs:

- The UK is likely to see the largest portion of its aid going towards FCACs, due largely to need, but also to the explicit link made in the Integrated Review between aid and the UK's strategic priorities. To be effective, this aid needs to be defined and delivered with a clear emphasis on conflict sensitivity and building stability and peace. It needs to be framed – and reported on – showing its explicit contribution to peacebuilding, within a long-term strategic approach in each context.

- The UK's aid activities need to find the correct balance between efforts aimed at promoting stability, for example through elite bargains and political deals, with the need also to address the structural drivers of violent conflict. 'Politically smart' aid should look to create the opportunities, through stability, to then allow for longer-term structural change which is necessary for the evolution of like-minded peaceful societies the UK would like to see. To do so, however, it is necessary to ensure that these politically smart activities are linked to long-term theories of change for conflict transformation and that this theory of change is followed through in consecutive UK political cycles.

- The UK cannot meaningfully act alone in FCACs. The size of its aid programmes, and its expertise in dealing with peace and conflict, provide it with a strong convening capacity around international assistance. The UK should leverage this to maximise the collective impact of international aid towards peace. The UK should invest in making tools like the humanitarian-development-peace nexus more effective for strategic coordination in support of peace, investing in conflict sensitive coordination and advisory mechanisms, and championing conflict sensitive approaches within the broader international humanitarian and development sector. This means going beyond the better coordination, currently the focus of the HDP Nexus, to radically reform parts of the UN aid delivery institutions in line with Sustaining Peace.

- As the UK embarks on defining a new development strategy, and new frameworks for addressing conflict through the FCDO's new Conflict and Mediation unit, it should ensure that it does not fall into the trap of excluding its wider network of partners. The UK's capacity to engage in FCACs meaningfully depends on its networks of NGOs and independent experts based in the UK and elsewhere. Certainly, in an environment of aid cuts, it should commit to maintaining a base capacity within those networks.

6. Heavy lift human security: The UK military and fragile states

By Richard Reeve[101]

When we talk about conflict sensitivity, invariably the first words we hear are 'Do no harm'. In practice, we know that this is an impossible ask. All interventions, however benign or well intentioned, have consequences that create winners and losers. And in the most fragile societies, where relations are already most unjust and unequal, these knock-on effects can have much greater amplification. So we focus on understanding these consequences and how they influence the context.

When we think about the possibilities of using military 'force for good', we assuredly cannot presume that no harm will be done. In many ways, the use or threat of violence is the application of harm. It aims to break the will of at least one side of a conflict, to change power dynamics and compel a settlement on different terms. And it is axiomatic that it envisages serious physical harm as a potentially acceptable cost of shifting the status quo.

In the most extreme examples, unleashing such force on a vast scale and the destruction of millions of lives, was the cost that the UK and its allies felt was justified to prevent a Nazi German invasion of the UK, to liberate Europe and to end the holocaust. On a much smaller scale, it was the cost of protecting Bosnian, Kosovar, Timorese, Sierra Leonean or Yezidi civilians from mass atrocities and

[101] Richard Reeve is the Coordinator of the Rethinking Security network. He has worked in peace and conflict research in the UK, Africa and Western Asia for over 20 years, including as Chief Executive of Oxford Research Group, Head of Research at International Alert, research fellow at King's College London and Chatham House, and an editor/analyst at Jane's Information Group. *Image by DFID under (CC).*

the price that many believe the UK and other states should have been prepared to pay to avert genocide in Rwanda and carnage in Syria.

In the current century the option to utilise the military as a 'force for good' in supposed pursuit of liberal ideals – democracy, human rights, free markets – in illiberal lands, a magic wand for breaking and remaking other countries, has waxed and waned dramatically. Moving from the zero (British) casualty operations in Kosovo and Kurdistan to the megadeath quagmires of Iraq and Afghanistan, the increasing harm done by UK military interventions has become ever more apparent over time. Yet the idea that the British Armed Forces have an almost uniquely global role and responsibility to do good is one that almost all senior figures in UK political parties, the media and the military itself cling to. It is integral to this year's Integrated Review, as it has also been to every security and defence review since at least the Cold War.

This essay asks whether there is still a constructive role for the UK military to play in promoting global peace and security. It looks first at the military posture envisaged for the 2020s by the Integrated Review, then at some of the problematic principles and assumptions that underlie the current approach, suggesting some alternatives. It then examines some types of operation involving military contributions – not all of them violent – with which the UK could be involved, and identifies some of the unique capacities that might help the UK pivot to a more useful international role.

Lost in the grey-zone

How the UK military understands its future role is better approached through a study of the Ministry of Defence's Defence Command Paper and the armed forces' own Integrated Operating Concept than by studying the Integrated Review itself.[102] Unsurprisingly, the Defence Command Paper apes the Review's analysis of threat from all sides, not least in a risible infographic on page six that features 'Over exposure through globalisation' as its primary interconnecting threat.[103]

Whatever this means, the MOD is clear that it requires a different strategic approach. Secretary of State Ben Wallace writes, "The notion of war and peace as binary states has given way to a continuum of conflict, requiring us to prepare our forces for more persistent global engagement and constant campaigning, moving seamlessly from operating to war fighting."[104] He clarified this further in a speech in Washington in July, declaring that the armed forces must "compete below the threshold of open conflict" and "no longer be held as a force of last resort".[105]

The Defence Command Paper pursues the Integrated Review's logic of competitive advantage to make its case for 'Persistent engagement overseas':

> "In the current threat landscape, and in an era of constant competition, we must have an increased forward presence to compete with and campaign against our adversaries below the threshold of armed conflict, and to understand, shape and influence the global landscape to the UK's advantage. To pursue our foreign policy objectives and shape conditions for stability, we will rebalance our force to provide a more proactive, forward deployed, persistent presence."[106]

[102] Ministry of Defence, Integrated Operating Concept, September 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1014659/Integrated_Operating_Concept_2025.pdf

[103] Ministry of Defence, Defence in a competitive age (CP 411), p.6, Gov.uk, March 2021, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-in-a-competitive-age

[104] Ibid, p.2.

[105] Ministry of Defence and The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP, Defence Secretary's speech at the American Enterprise Institute, Gov.uk, July 2021, https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/defence-secretarys-speech-at-the-american-enterprise-institute

[106] MOD (2021) Defence in a competitive age (CP 411), p.15.

So the UK will pursue its advantage through having more personnel and equipment in more places for longer, ready for war. Paradoxically, the reduced size army does this by reorganising to have more special operations forces (four new Rangers battalions) and other specialised units deployed 'persistently' overseas to train, mentor and accompany allied armed forces against unspecified enemies. The Royal Navy will scatter its ships more widely, and especially into the 'Indo-Pacific', from free-roaming aircraft carrier strike groups to offshore patrol vessels based in Singapore and Gibraltar.

This seems like radical stuff – as the MOD rightly says – but it demands some critical unpacking. Are we really unilaterally declaring that everything is now so grey that there is no legal or perceptual threshold between war and peace? If we are already constantly campaigning, do we not need to specify who we are operating against? Because if so, then we are already at war, exactly the situation that normal countries seek to avoid. Or is that we have been at war all along but been unwilling to recognise it?

National interests, national ambitions and national assumptions

How does a normal country define its interests? How does it define its own security? These are not trivial questions but ignoring them has been central to British security policy since at least World War II. Victory in that global conflict, a permanent seat at the UN, and two or three centuries of imperial expansion have long persuaded the UK that it has a status above the normal, that of a great power with global interests. A state of global importance. A force for good.

Time and the Treasury have chipped away at this importance. Tensions within Europe, the long march of decolonisation and post-imperial economic dislocation made their mark in the 1960s and 1970s. But the hubris of victory in the Falklands, Gulf and Cold Wars also buoyed much talk of national ambition, of being a lighter country that punches above its weight, of projecting power. So we see in successive defence and security reviews from 1998 onwards the reassertion of the UK's global interests and the importance of a military with a global expeditionary capability. Increased dependence on and entanglement with the military of the United States is the little mentioned subtext to this revived assertiveness.

What we have lost sight of is how exceptional such a role is. Like the US and France, the UK continues to define itself as a global player with global interests and global responsibilities, even while fretting about the globalisation of Chinese or Russian ambitions. Other larger 'middle powers' without permanent UN seats or nuclear weapons – Japan, Germany, Indonesia, Brazil, Mexico, Italy, Canada, and Spain – do not seem to feel the same way. Defence, for virtually all states, means the defence of national territory and population, not the need to be involved in combatting threats thousands of kilometres away.[107] Despite a minor resurgence within the Integrated Review, homeland defence has been but a minor feature of UK security strategy for decades.

As painful as reckoning with the past and privilege can be, it is essential that the UK does understand how exceptional its approach to security is, how this came about, and why this might present problems for its engagement with other parts of the world. A strategic refresh should start not with how the UK can uphold its strategic advantage over other countries, but with how it can work cooperatively with other states to overcome common challenges. It should start from a place of humility that assumes no special rights, interests or privileges. It should work from the assumption

[107] Celia McKeon, Contrasting Narratives: A Comparative Study of European and North American National Security Strategies, Rethinking Security, March 2018, https://rethinkingsecurityorguk.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/contrasting-narratives-march-2018.pdf

that the shared security of people everywhere is a more stable basis for national security than struggling for competitive advantage.

'Force for good'?

Even starting from such a position of shared or common security, it is possible to recognise that aspects of the threatening world that the Integrated Review describes are grounded in reality. While we may recognise these 'threats' as manifestations of deeper underlying diseases like the desperation of poverty, the marginalisation of inequality, and the indignity of autocracy, each requiring very different kinds of intervention to transform conflict, such violent symptoms can often present real problems of how to manage violent conflict and crisis.

The most obvious international role for the military in a cooperative, multilateral context is through contributions to UN peacekeeping operations. The UK was once a leader in such support, not least during the Bosnian intervention of the mid-1990s. That fell away with the shift in emphasis to 'counter-terrorism' operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and beyond in the 2000s but was made more of a priority under David Cameron in the 2010s. This has included both deployment of British peacekeepers and the training of other militaries, usually African, to participate in UN peacekeeping operations. Even so, unlike some militaries from the Global South, UN peacekeeping still occupies a tiny fraction of the UK military – well under one per cent of personnel.[108]

A few caveats are worth making to UN peacekeeping in the 21st century. While some missions remain genuinely about observing truces, separating armed parties to peace agreements, protecting civilians and overseeing military-to-civilian transitions, in the last decade others have abandoned impartiality and become more enmeshed in active conflict through adopting mandates that exclude certain 'extremist' parties from political processes and commit to offensive operations against them.[109] UNAMSIL in Mali and MONUSCO in the DRC are examples. Also controversial has been UN mandating of offensive 'peace enforcement operations' by other states or institutions such as the African Union (in Somalia), France (in the Sahel) or even NATO (in Afghanistan and Libya), sometimes in parallel with UN peacekeepers. UK troops are far more likely to have been involved in such operations.[110]

Military forces can also be useful in what are essentially paramilitary policing roles. This can be within UN peacekeeping operations, in which gendarmerie-type units are increasingly in demand for policing roles, or on the high seas. Operations to counter piracy off Somalia and in the Gulf of Guinea have been the focus of much international cooperation in the last 15 years, including such unlikely partners as the US, UK EU, India, Pakistan, China and Japan. Yet most states send vastly complex frigates and destroyers to do there what could be done by patrol vessels of the sort that the UK has just deployed to Southeast Asia. Like helping to patrol unpoliced waters off West Africa against illegal trawlers, this is a role perhaps better suited to paramilitary coast guard patrol vessels and aircraft.

The UK military also has a role in crisis response that has been useful in a number of humanitarian disasters, including rescuing and supplying civilian victims of hurricanes or cyclones in the Caribbean and Philippines, and the heroic medical response to the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone. Possessing transport aircraft, heavy lift helicopters, engineers and robust equipment, field hospitals and a specialised hospital ship (RFA Argus) all give the UK military an advantage in such responses in

[108] As of September 30th 2021, the UK contributed 605 personnel to UN Peacekeeping operations, less than 0.5 per cent of c.140,000 personnel. At most a few hundred more were involved in training other peacekeepers.

[109] For discussion of the issues, see Larry Attree and Jordan Street, Incompatible Bedfellows: UN Peace Operations and Counter-terrorism, Saferworld, September 2020, https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/909-incompatible-bedfellows-un-peace-operations-and-counterterrorism

[110] Contribution of three Chinook heavy lift helicopters to France's Operation Barkhane in Mali is one current example.

several regions. While some militaries, notably the Italian, have made integrating such humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) capabilities into their forces a priority, it may be questioned whether a similar capability might not be more efficiently resourced through civilian structures with no primary warfighting role. Or perhaps a more hybrid military-civilian capability akin to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) or the military medical services is the future.

Finally, at the potentially more violent or ‘kinetic’ end of the spectrum of potential operations, there may be cases in which UK forces could contribute, alone or in coalitions, to more potentially lethal missions under the hazy international Responsibility to Protect (R2P). UK-spearheaded civilian protection and militia disarmament operations in East Timor (INTERFET, 1999, led by Australia), Sierra Leone (Operation Palliser, 2000) and Macedonia (Operation Essential Harvest, 2001) give some indications of the factors underlying potential success. Apart from the small physical scale of such contexts and well trained and equipped troops, these factors would include a UN mandate, the broad consent of the local government and/or civilian population, observance of international humanitarian law, and clear strategic objectives, including a military exit strategy and plan for long-term support. Many other UK operations, from Nigeria to Afghanistan, show how disastrously such missions can fail when these preconditions are lacking.

Human security advantages

What I have tried to sketch out above is some means by which the UK military could be reoriented to play a constrained but constructive international role in support of peace and human security. It does not presuppose that the British Armed Forces would not also retain a ‘normal’ role in actual defence of national territory and population. This, after all, is why most – but by no means all – countries retain armed forces. Nor does it presuppose that other civilian forms of building and maintaining peace – diplomatic, developmental, and humanitarian – should not be given far greater prominence and resourcing. It therefore aims to suggest how national security at home might co-exist with the promotion of human security abroad. Unlike the Integrated Review, it proceeds precisely from the premise that use of force *should* be a last resort and that war should be an exceptional state of affairs.

Such a posture is not without precedent internationally and can be seen in, for example, the internationalist positions of such states as Ghana, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden. Yet these are all relatively small countries with very limited military capabilities. The UK, even assuming a significant reduction in military spending, would be operating at far greater capacity: a globally responsible human security provider capable of heavy-lift operations and responses at strategic scale.

For the past two decades much larger British resources have been expended across Western Asia in catastrophic and futile wars of choice that have vastly diminished the security of millions abroad and diminished us as a country. Beyond curtailing such urges and associated forward deployments, a new focus on international cooperation and human security is vital to the UK, if not being a force for good, at least doing far less harm.

7. UK private sector interests in fragile states

By Phil Bloomer[111]

'Global Britain' encapsulates broad principles and aspirations for the UK's continued influence in the world. The Prime Minister, in his preface to Global Britain in a Competitive Age (often referred to as the Integrated Review), said: "The creation of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is the springboard for all our international efforts, integrating diplomacy and development to achieve greater impact and address the links between climate change and extreme poverty."[112]

A growing criticism of 'Global Britain' is that the aspirations, in a number of areas, are not backed up by a credible and coherent plan for implementation. Fragile states, and the precarious human rights of their citizens, are, regrettably, no exception to this criticism. The UK Government's approach to the impact of UK business on conflict and rights in precarious societies relies heavily on the belief of

[111] Phil Bloomer became Executive Director of Business & Human Rights Resource Centre in September 2013. Based at the Centre's London headquarters, Phil is responsible for leading the global organisation, delivering the mission and strategic priorities, and ensuring effective management of programme, personnel, finance, and administration. Prior to joining the Resource Centre Phil was Director of Campaigns and Policy at Oxfam GB, where he was responsible for a team of 170 staff working across policy, advocacy, programme and campaigns. His team's priorities were food justice, humanitarian protection and assistance in conflict zones, and the provision of essential health and education for all. Previously he was head of Oxfam International's Make Trade Fair, and Access to Medicines campaigns. Prior to joining Oxfam, Phil spent 11 years in Latin America and worked on human rights dimensions of business, including in food security, resource extraction; mega-projects; and business relations with public and private security in repressive environments.

[112] HM Government, Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, March 2021, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age-_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security__Defence__Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf

a benign invisible hand of the market, and an appeal to voluntarism -'do the right thing' – from both responsible and unscrupulous companies. But high-risk fragile states tend to attract those looking for big rewards at any cost, even fuelling conflict and gaining cheap, pliant communities or labour through collusion with state silencing of human rights defenders.

Fragile states often present opportunities for high return on investment to key sectors of UK business, but also risks. And from the flip side, UK investment can create new jobs for the people of fragile states but also threats to their livelihoods, labour rights and land rights. The outcomes for people's dignities and freedoms depend greatly on the intentions and approach of the UK company, the willingness of the national government to act as a fair interlocutor between the company and communities and, and the UK Government's own commitments to uphold responsible investment and business practice.

Globalisation, and the digitalisation of the UK economy, has transformed UK business and its global supply chains. These have become truly global, intensely complex, with short-lived supplier contracts that pass risk and cost down to the poorest and most vulnerable – often women and migrant workers in factories and farms. The pandemic has exposed fragilities in these supply chains, and has exacerbated inequalities of power and wealth in the extended supply chains that characterise many UK business interests in fragile states. The Business and Human Rights Resource Centre is still supporting apparel workers across Asia to gain their unpaid wages for the clothes they manufactured for UK fashion brands in the first phase of the pandemic.

Abuse is far more prevalent in fragile states, with low governance capacities. The Business and Human Rights Resource Centre's monitoring of abuse by global business from 2015 to July 2021 witnessed 3,303 allegations, of which over half, 1,859, were in the 32 fragile states, plus the Philippines, Colombia and Brazil.

This article seeks draw out some lessons from the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre's global monitoring and database of human rights in business, focusing on key areas where UK business can play a key role either in building resilience, or exacerbating fragility and risk for communities and workers.

From corporate voluntarism to smart regulation and incentives

UK multinationals span the world, and many have links with fragile states. Like most of Europe and North America, the UK Government, for decades, has had a hands-off approach, relying on market forces, voluntary action, and some 'nudge' politics to promote responsible business conduct, even in fragile states. But the mood has shifted in the US and Europe recently regarding business incentives and regulation, and the UK risks being left behind. Increasingly the abuse of workers and communities in fragile states with poor governance, and the trafficking of workers from these states to forced labour in fields and factories in global supply chains, are no longer tolerable. The US is debating new regulatory standards and the Customs and Border Patrol have aggressively banned imports of goods suspected of being produced with forced labour. While the EU, and member states, have legislative initiatives to demand companies identify and prevent human rights risks in their operations and supply chains – a move that has special relevance to fragile states where much abuse by unscrupulous business occurs, often in collusion with the state.

Global Britain has some legal strengths to build on, including the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and UK Supreme Court judgements. There is an increasing trend of victims of corporate abuse bringing civil claims against UK companies for harm caused by their overseas subsidiaries. Recent decisions indicate UK courts willingness to accept jurisdiction in some cases. Critically for abuse in fragile states, foreign claimants' inability to obtain sustainable justice in their home country, through lack of

resources, for instance, will be taken into consideration by the UK courts when assessing jurisdiction. The UK Supreme Court's landmark judgment in *Vedanta Resources Plc and Konkola Copper Mines Plc v Lungowe and Ors* held that a UK parent company does, under certain conditions, owe a duty of care to people and communities (in this case, Zambian villagers) affected by its overseas subsidiary's operations and could be held liable for harm.[113] In this case, the Supreme Court affirmed the UK courts' jurisdiction partly because there was a real issue to be tried and partly because "there was a real risk that the claimants would not obtain substantial justice in the Zambian jurisdiction".

Another positive development is the UK Supreme Court's 2021 judgement in *Okpabi v Shell* (concerning alleged oil pollution and damages in Nigeria).[114] The court cautioned against striking out a claim against a parent company at the jurisdiction stage (given the challenges claimants have in accessing evidence). This case will proceed to trial. This should make it easier for foreign claimants alleging parent company liability to have access to UK courts. Royal Dutch Shell is incorporated in the UK as a public limited company, with total assets of 379.3 billion USD in 2020. Shell has been operating in Nigeria since the late 1950s. The legacy the company has left in the country includes distrust and violence, environmental harm, and little to no economic development for many communities surrounding their projects. Allegations against Shell have ranged from exacerbating tribal conflict, complicity in unlawful arrests, and major pollution events.[115] In 2021, Shell was made to pay $45.7 billion naira ($111 million USD) in compensation from an oil spill from a ruptured pipeline in 1970.[116]

It is too early to assess whether increasing access to courts in the UK will actually translate into enhanced access to justice and remedy for victims of corporate abuse. To date there have been no court rulings on the merits. For example, Vedanta settled out of court in January 2021, two years after the UK Supreme Court affirmed the UK courts had jurisdiction; without admission of liability.[117] Nonetheless, this is a promising development. We can expect additional claims will be brought in UK courts going forward.

Transition minerals for clean energy futures

A number of fragile states hold key mineral wealth that is strategic to the world's transition to clean energy. Minerals such as cobalt, copper, lithium, manganese, nickel and zinc are central to success. The International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts a six-fold increase in production of transition minerals by 2030, for lithium it is 40-fold. Prices and production are already surging.[118] Most are concentrated in only a few states, many of which are fragile – Democratic Republic of the Congo (cobalt), Indonesia and the Philippines (nickel), and Bolivia (lithium). And even within these states, the minerals are often concentrated in the last territories of indigenous people whose nations'

[113] The Supreme Court, Judgement – Vedenta Resources PLC and another (Appellants) v Lungowe and others (Respondents), April 2019, https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2017-0185-judgment.pdf

[114] The Supreme Court, Judgement – Okpabi and others (Appellants) v Royal Dutch Shell Plc and another (Respondents), February 2021, https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2018-0068-judgment.pdf

[115] Onome Amawhe, Long-Dead Oilfield In Nigeria Still Sows Conflict Between Shell and Communities That Watched It Grow, Forbes, November 2021, https://www.forbes.com/sites/zengernews/2021/11/02/long-dead-oilfield-in-nigeria-still-sows-conflict-between-shell-and-communities-that-watched-it-grow/; Amnesty International, On Trial: Shell in Nigeria, February 2020, https://www.amnesty.de/sites/default/files/2020-02/Amnesty-Bericht-Nigeria-Shell-on-trial-Februar-2020-ENG.pdf

[116] William Clowes, Shell to Pay $111 Million to Resolve Long-Running Oil-Spill Dispute in Nigeria, Insurance Journal, August 2021, https://www.insurancejournal.com/news/international/2021/08/17/627485.htm

[117] Leigh Day, Vedanta & Konkola Copper Mines settle UK lawsuit brought by Zambian villagers for alleged pollution from mining activities, Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, January 2021, https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/vedanta-konkola-copper-mines-settle-uk-lawsuit-brought-by-zambian-villagers-for-alleged-pollution-from-mining-activities/

[118] International Energy Agency, World Energy Outlook Special Report, The Role of Critical Minerals in Clean Energy Transitions, May 2021, https://iea.blob.core.windows.net/assets/24d5dfbb-a77a-4647-abcc-667867207f74/TheRoleofCriticalMineralsinCleanEnergyTransitions.pdf

existence is intimately linked to the land. Chinese mining companies prevail and are investing heavily, and the UK is being urged to build its stake in these geopolitically strategic minerals as competition heats up for future access. The quality of UK investment will be critical to the people and communities that should also benefit from this boom.

At the Resource Centre we monitor threats and attacks on Human Rights Defenders, a powerful litmus test of fragility. Unsurprisingly, over a third are linked to the extractive sector. Our survey of human rights abuse in transition mineral extraction reveals a similarly concerning picture: more than 300 serious allegations against 115 transition mineral mining companies, ranging from violence, to violation of indigenous land rights, water pollution, health threats, corruption, and a systemic failure to consult local communities.[119]

Irresponsible investments are driving conflict and polarisation. For instance, water-intensive lithium mining in the arid lithium triangle of Chile, Bolivia, Argentina and Chile, the world's driest environment, has triggered a wave of protests and legal battles over water rights, pitching indigenous communities against multinational mining companies. Nickel production in Indonesia is driving battles over water pollution. Cobalt mining in the DRC is linked to allegations of child labour, large-scale corruption, and the funding of armed groups.

The UK Government cannot rely on voluntarism to prevent abuse. Codes such as the Voluntary Principles for Security and Human Rights encourage leading companies, but unscrupulous companies are, too often, immune to their influence. HMG should use the leadership it gained from COP26 to help build a multilateral commitment to demand companies identify and prevent risks through mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence, building on the example of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. With the US Securities and Exchange Commission and the European Union considering similar legislative initiatives, this could be low-hanging fruit if China can be persuaded to collaborate. The alternative is ballooning protest, legal challenge and loss of investor confidence, which together will act as a critical brake on projects and the fast transition.

UK Modern Slavery Act and fragile states

The conditions of fragile states create desperate people. Often facing poverty and repression, people seek routes to a better future elsewhere. Human traffickers, know these souls are a lucrative income source, and adopt strategies to funnel desperate people into conditions of forced labour.

In 2015, the UK Government established the landmark Modern Slavery Act. Its aim was to encourage global business to eradicate modern slavery. It deployed 'nudge politics' and voluntarism to shift companies to action on modern slavery. Section 54 requires companies to publish a statement of the steps they have "taken during the financial year to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place" in its operations or supply chains.[120] The intention was to create a 'race to the top' by encouraging businesses to declare their efforts to tackle modern slavery risks, and so increase competition to drive up standards for appropriate and effective response to modern slavery. There is no doubt that the Modern Slavery Act raised the profile of this issue of forced labour in many countries, but has it had an effect on UK companies' actions to eliminate this scourge from their supply chains?

[119] Transition Minerals Tracker, see: https://trackers.business-humanrights.org/transition-minerals/

[120] UK Public General Acts, Modern Slavery Act 2015 – Part 6 Section 54, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/section/54/enacted

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) hosted the only public repository of statements – the Modern Slavery Registry – for the first six years, to 2021.[121] We assessed compliance of over 16,000 modern slavery statements of some of the largest global companies over the past five years.[122] Unfortunately, the overwhelming evidence is that the approach of the UK Modern Slavery Act has failed in its stated intentions. The provisions of the UK Act itself, based on a requirement to submit a trifling level of reporting which was not monitored or enforced, has failed to drive systemic corporate action to expunge forced labour, even in high-risk sectors. The Act has raised awareness of the prevalence of modern slavery and encouraged a cluster of leading companies and investors to do more. But ultimately, our analysis reveals no significant improvements in the vast majority of companies' policies, practice or performance.

Despite six years of persistent non-compliance with the minimal demands of the Act by two in five (40 per cent) of companies, not one injunction or administrative penalty (such as exclusion from lucrative public procurement contracts) was applied to a company for failing to report. This stands in stark contrast to more robust approaches, such as the Section 307 of the Tariff Act in the US where goods suspected of being produced with forced labour have been banned from being imported. This has led to rapid and multi-million dollar repayment of recruitment fees to workers in conditions of forced labour by suppliers desperate to enter the lucrative US market.[123]

Critically, the Act has failed to drive systemic improvement in corporate practice to eliminate modern slavery because it does not place any legally binding standards on companies to undertake efforts to effectively address risks of labour exploitation in their business operations. In fact, the Act explicitly states a company may publish a statement that says it has taken no steps to address modern slavery risks during the financial year and still be compliant with the law. The inadequacy of the Act to protect the estimated 25 million victims of forced labour around the world has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has further increased the risk to workers of forced labour. The pandemic has demonstrated how systemic the causes of labour exploitation are, especially in fragile states, and the urgent need for legally binding obligations on companies – properly enforced – that go beyond weak reporting requirements.

Transparency is a necessary, but insufficient condition for systemic corporate change, even for the worst forms of labour abuse. Three policy shifts would more effectively tackle modern slavery in UK companies and their supply chains:

1. A new piece of legislation to impose legal liability on all companies in all sectors for a failure to prevent human rights abuses in their businesses;
2. The introduction of import bans for goods suspected of being produced with forced labour; and
3. The application of these laws to public procurement.

Migrants, forced labour and the UK's global hotel brands

Fragile states such as Nepal and Ethiopia also seek to augment their slim GDP through the export of migrant labour around the world. Remittances can become an important source of support to impoverished communities and regions where migration by recruitment agencies is better regulated and the employers abide by good labour law. But too often unscrupulous agents charge extortionate fees for the job and travel, leading to debt bondage, and employers and franchises tolerate abuse to

[121] Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, Modern Slavery Statements, https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/modern-slavery-statements/

[122] Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, Modern Slavery Statements, Briefing & Analysis Reporting, https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/modern-slavery-statements/briefings-analysis-of-reporting/

[123] Congressional Research Service, Section 307 and Imports Produced by Forced Labor, Updated May 20 2021, https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11360#:~:text=Section%20307%20of%20the%20Tariff,(CBP)%20enforces%20the%20prohibition.

provide cheap and pliant labour. Insights on the toleration of forced labour in UK business's supply chains are highlighted in our survey of international hotel brands gearing up in Qatar for the World Cup 2022. To manage the expected influx of players, supporters and the media, the Gulf state has seen exponential growth of the hotel industry, with an additional 26,000 hotel rooms brought on stream in time for the World Cup. Yet our research shows hotel brands have failed to take necessary action to protect migrant workers, who suffer serious abuses including: extortionate recruitment fees, discrimination, and being trapped in a job through fear of reprisal and intimidation. These occur despite 'landmark' labour reforms which promised to end the Kafala system – a fixed term sponsorship which leaves workers wholly dependent on one employer, no matter their treatment, and unable to change jobs.

The Business & Human Rights Resource Centre invited 19 hotel companies, three of them British (IHG, Whitbread, and Millennium and Copthorne), representing more than 100 global brands with over 80 properties across Qatar, to participate in a second survey on their approach to safeguarding migrant workers' rights in the country. Our survey revealed a widespread lack of action by hotel brands to prevent and exclude forced labour.[124] This reinforced the stream of stories from workers about abuse taking place in hotels, but the survey also highlighted a cluster of companies who have shown greater leadership. IHG Hotels & Resorts is the highest ranked company, whereas Millennium and Copthorne did not respond and were ranked 'no stars' due to lack of relevant information on their site.

Our interviews with hotel workers revealed a shocking contrast between many hotels' public policy commitments and their practical application or enforcement. This was particularly evident in recruitment processes, where eight out of 18 workers reported being charged high fees for jobs (the precursor to forced labour) despite the fact that only IHG provided transparent figures for the number of workers it identified had paid such fees. The interviews revealed discrimination in position and pay based on nationality and far worse treatment of subcontracted workers. Most alarmingly, almost all workers reported being scared to request to change jobs when they saw a better opportunity, with some fearful the hotels would report them to the authorities and subsequently have them deported.

Much of this points to conditions of 'forced labour' as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Unfortunately, the responses by brands revealed none conducted worker-centric monitoring of the conditions of subcontracted workers despite this vulnerable group often working long-term for the hotel brand. Huge profits are set to be made by the multinational and national hotel brands which will host these visitors. Meanwhile, migrant workers from fragile states in East Africa, South Asia and South-East Asia, trapped in exploitative contracts and paying back hefty recruitment debts, will serve these visitors. The good news is that the World Players Union, leading footballers, and some national football federations are demanding fair treatment in the luxury hotels, before they make their booking.

Fragile states and the pandemic

The pandemic is hitting many fragile and poor states hard. Low income countries had a two per cent vaccination rate on the September 9th 2021, compared to 65 per cent for high income countries. The further economic disruption and social challenges that the pandemic generates are exaggerated further in fragile states by the precariousness of people's lives and their lack of savings to cope with shocks. The after-effects are likely to last at least a decade as people try to recover from their loss of earnings, as well as friends and family.

[124] Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, Luxury hotels check out over migrant worker abuses in Qatar, July 2021, https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/from-us/media-centre/press-release-luxury-hotels-check-out-over-migrant-worker-abuses-in-qatar/

Global Britain could be doing far more than it is to ensure its own contracts with the businesses manufacturing the viruses. The UK has enough vaccine to jab everyone five times over, and we are about to give the general population boosters, while countries such as Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique, have vaccinated a fraction of their populations with one dose.

Equally, the G7 Summit this year, chaired by the UK, was a golden opportunity to put in place a rich-country financing plan for developing countries. Yet the chance was allowed to slip away, with tragic human consequences for fragile states, and potentially for the UK too. The pandemic highlights our interconnected world. As Mamta Murthi, the World Bank's Vice President for Human Development, has warned: "The situation that we see right now is absolutely unacceptable, because a large part of the world remains unvaccinated and this is a danger for all of us."[125]

To meet the international targets, we need to move beyond intermittent vaccine donations to fragile and poor states to large-scale, coordinated dose-sharing. As Kevin Watkins has argued: "The EU, the United Kingdom, and the US should immediately share an additional 250 million doses – less than one-quarter of their collective surplus – through COVAX…. with a clear schedule for providing an additional one billion doses by early 2022.[126]

Conclusion

'Global Britain' aspires to embrace the UK's fundamental values of fairness, care for the vulnerable, and promotion of peace and democracy. It has the potential to make this come alive in our relations with fragile states, including through the actions of responsible business. Nevertheless, the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office has a huge challenge to work across government departments to build a coherent and credible plan to realise the vision through trade and investment; business regulations and incentives, including UK tax havens; and vaccination policy. Currently the approach to fragile states appears to suffer from the same high rhetoric and low implementation that may undermine public trust in both the UK and in fragile states.

The UK could begin to demonstrate greater leadership immediately through some bold feasible actions:

1. Modern Slavery Act: Strengthen the modern slavery act by catching up with Australia and the US with:
    a. Obligations to report on mitigation measures and enforcement of transparency;
    b. Legal liability if these are inadequate and facilitate forced labour in supply chains; and
    c. The introduction of import bans for goods suspected of being produced with forced labour

2. Human rights due diligence: Adapt the landmark Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and the EU's Sustainable Corporate Governance legislation, to develop a legal obligation on companies to demonstrate they have identified salient human rights risks for workers and communities in their operations and supply chains, and taken proper measures to eliminate these risks.

3. Revision of UK Government's business incentives: Limit public procurement contracts and export credit guarantees to companies that both declare and report alignment with key

[125] World Bank Group, The Development Podcast, 'Absolutely Unacceptable' Vaccination Rates in Developing Countries, Episode 17, The World Bank, August 2021, https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/podcast/2021/07/30/-absolutely-unacceptable-vaccination-rates-in-developing-countries-the-development-podcast

[126] Kevin Watkins, Ending "Trickle Down" Vaccine Economics, Project Syndicate, September 2021, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/ending-trickle-down-vaccine-economics-by-kevin-watkins-2021-09

business and human rights law; from the ILO convention on forced labour to the late John Ruggie’s UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights.

4. Just transition to clean energy: In the aftermath of COP26, seek multilateral agreements with US, China, and EU to adopt minimum standards of corporate respect for human rights across the clean energy supply chain, and especially for fragile states.

8. Unpacking climate, development and conflict: Insights for contexts of FCACs

By Dr Naho Mirumachi and Marine Hautsch[127]

Climate change and pitfalls of low carbon development

The recently concluded discussions of the COP26 climate summit highlighted that progress towards meeting the 1.5C target could not come any sooner. Rapid, decisive action has been called upon by those states and peoples affected the most. Emission cuts need to be revised and nations need to redouble their efforts at limiting temperature rise. Side events at the summit featured low carbon strategies, ranging from renewable energy expansion, addressing deforestation and low carbon agriculture plans. Low carbon development will continue to be an attractive option for developing

[127] Dr Naho Mirumachi is Reader (Associate Professor) in Environmental Politics at the Department of Geography, King's College London, UK. She leads King's Water, an interdisciplinary research hub on water, environment and development. Her research focuses on the politics and governance of water resources, particularly in developing country contexts. Her research extends to issues of water diplomacy, water security and socio-political barriers to water sustainability. With over 15 years of experience, she has published extensively and is the author of Transboundary Water Politics in the Developing World (Routledge 2015) and Water Conflicts: Analysis for Transformation (Oxford University Press 2020). Naho recently served as lead author on freshwater policy for the 2019 UN Environment GEO-6 report and currently working on the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report.
Marine Hautsch holds an MSc degree in Environment and Development from the Department of Geography, King's College London. She is currently a research assistant working with Dr Naho Mirumachi on a Swedish Research Council funded international project on 'Conflict Prevention and Low-Carbon Development: Opportunities for promoting and sustaining peace through renewable energy projects'. *Image by Dean Calma/IAEA under (CC).*
This work was supported by Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development Formas 2017–01941 Conflict Prevention and Low-Carbon Development: Opportunities for promoting and sustaining peace through renewable energy projects.

countries whereby two objectives of enhancing economic growth and reducing carbon emissions can be met.[128]

In fragile and conflict affected countries (FCACs) climate change is one of the many factors that need to be contended with. Nevertheless, impacts from climate change can be wide-ranging and defy sectoral approaches, making it a very 'wicked' problem to contend with.[129] No easy solution can be found and coordinating across sectors makes for complex work. Moreover, it has been shown that doing something about climate change can cause perverse outcomes, further intensifying tensions and inflating grievances. This is because there is uneven distribution of costs and benefits from low carbon development between individuals, communities and even states.[130] The experience of low carbon development is not homogenous. Instead, it is differentiated between these actors and brings out the underlying structural inequalities, be they related to ethnicity, gender or class. In many FCACs, this is compounded by political divides and large disparities relating to poverty.

Leveraging conflict sensitive approaches

Various donors and implementing agencies have taken up the notion of conflict sensitivity to better understand how for example, development interventions, not limited to climate mitigation or adaptation, may produce harmful effects. Operational guidelines and toolboxes exist to help avert triggering violence and to fulfil the 'do no harm' principle.[131] The UK Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) is noted as enhancing its practice of conflict sensitivity analysis and ensuring programmes remain dynamic to contextual changes.[132] In this article, we argue that conflict sensitivity in the context of climate and development identifies not only propensity for conflict but also helps uncover the significance of tensions emerging from development interventions. In other words, consideration needs to be given to insecurity as being a barrier to development – ranging from economic to education opportunities – as well as affecting individuals' improvement of their own capabilities.[133]

The benefits of applying conflict sensitivity are clear. Lessons learned from past examples of investing in renewable energy show that, if conflict sensitive approaches are not taken, then existing patterns of violence are reinforced, especially in the contexts of FCACs. The Gibe III dam in Ethiopia on the Omo River is an instructive case. UK involvement in this project has been questioned over the years, as resettlement of people affected has been problematic and criticised as far from satisfactory.[134] As a large-scale renewable electricity infrastructure located upstream of Lake Turkana, there has been an array of contestations over the costs and distribution of benefits.[135]

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[128] Urban, F. 2010. The MDGs and beyond: Can low carbon development be pro-poor? IDS Bulletin, 41(1), 92–99; Mirumachi, N., Sawas, A. and Workman, M. 2020. 'Unveiling the security concerns of low carbon development: climate security analysis of the undesirable and unintended effects of mitigation and adaptation', Climate and Development, 12(2), pp. 97–109. doi: 10.1080/17565529.2019.1604310.

[129] Rittel H and Weber M, 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning', Policy Sciences, Vol 4, No 2, June, 1973, pp 155-169.

[130] Ibid.

[131] Anderson, M. B. 2004. Experiences with Impact Assessment: Can we know what Good we do? In Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict (pp. 193-206). VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden.

[132] HM Government, Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: Annual Report 2019/20, January 2021, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956538/FCDO0044_CSSF_Report_2019-20_v4.pdf

[133] Adano W.R., Dietz T., Witsenburg K., and Zaal F. 201.) "Climate change, violent conflict and local institutions in Kenya's drylands", Journal of Peace Research, vol 49 (1): 65-80; Sen, A. 2009. The Idea of Justice. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

[134] John Vidal, EU diplomats reveal devastating impact of Ethiopia dam project on remote tribes, The Guardian, September 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/sep/03/eu-diplomats-reveal-devastating-impact-of-ethiopia-dam-project-on-remote-tribes

[135] Abbink, J. 2012. 'Dam controversies: contested governance and developmental discourse on the Ethiopian Omo River dam', Social Anthropology, 20(2), pp. 125–144. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-8676.2012.00196.x; Hodbod, J. et al. 2019. 'Social-

There is controversy that the dam does not supply the energy needs of local households and thus does not serve much-needed rural electrification. It has also been claimed that the irrigation benefits from the dam are being used for cash crop production for one of the world's largest sugar cane plantations instead of food staples in a region facing food insecurity. [136] There are multiple ethnic groups who rely on a range of livelihoods including fisheries, pastoralism and small-scale farming in this region, and a history of conflict over access to water involving small arms.[137] The project brought to the fore trade-offs between water, energy and food security that were not accurately considered in the environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) of the project.

The impacts of the dam are not merely technical calculations about water, energy and food security but require contextualised analysis embedded in local security issues. The dam impacted water levels, which had cascading effects for local livelihoods and ecosystems: it intensified water scarcity for the 300,000 individuals who rely on the lake's resources.[138] This production of scarcity was wrapped up in armed violence between ethnic groups—there are a reported 17 ethnic groups in the Lower Omo Valley (Ethiopia) and Lake Turkana (Kenya)--, which further exacerbates competition for resources.[139] Despite this existing condition of instability, there was a problem of inclusion of communities' concerns.[140] The trade-offs of dam construction needed to be understood through the interests of the communities relying on the Omo River and Lake Turkana.

Furthermore, applying conflict sensitivity perspectives extends to understanding transboundary implications. The construction of the dam inevitably resulted in withdrawal of water from the lake. This had knock-on effects on cross-border movements of the semi-nomadic groups affected and increased conflict, which spilled across the Kenyan border as they sought water and pasture. The ESIA neglected integrated costs of the project, especially its transboundary impact of Lake Turkana water availability.

The Gibe III dam project resulted in variegated costs and benefits for different stakeholders. Had a conflict sensitive lens been applied rigorously at the planning and implementation stage, there would be opportunities to consider not only avoidance of conflict repercussions but also enhancing project benefits for inclusive development.

Taking long-term views on development consequences

Good intensions can nevertheless result in harm, when actions towards adaptation can inadvertently place more burden. This is called 'maladaptation', which places disproportionate burden on those most vulnerable or incurs high opportunity costs.[141] Low carbon development projects that end up being maladaptive pose additional challenges. In FCACs, these actions can be problematic because they entrench existing tension and produce new vulnerabilities. It has been found that

ecological change in the Omo-Turkana basin: A synthesis of current developments', Ambio, 48(10), pp. 1099–1115. doi: 10.1007/s13280-018-1139-3.

[136] Hodbod, J. et al. 2019

[137] Human Rights Watch, "What Will Happen if Hunger Comes?" Abuses against the Indigenous Peoples of Ethiopia's Lower Omo Valley, June 2012, https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/06/18/what-will-happen-if-hunger-comes/abuses-against-indigenous-peoples-ethiopias#:~:text=The%20Ethiopian%20government%20is%20forcibly,the%20Gibe%20III%20hydropower%20project.

[138] Carr, C. 2012. Humanitarian catastrophe and regional armed conflict brewing in the transborder region of Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan: The proposed Gibe III Dam in Ethiopia. Berkeley, CA: Africa Resources Working Group (ARWG).

[139] Leslie Johnson, Kenya Assessment – Ethiopia's Gibe III Hydropower Project Trip Report (June – July 2010), Mursi Online, July 2010, http://www.mursi.org/pdf/USAID%20July%202010.pdf; Mara Budgen, Gibe III dam disastrous for indigenous Ethiopians and Kenyans. "We can't eat electricity", Lifegate, October 2015, https://www.lifegate.com/gibe-iii-lower-omo-valley-lake-turkana

[140] Abbink, J. 2012.

[141] Barnett, J. and O'Neill, S.J. 2013. Minimising the risk of maladaptation: a framework for analysis. In: Palutikof, J.P. et al. (Eds.) Climate Adaptation Futures, pp.87-94. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell.

maladaptation impacts existing inequalities but also pose future risks as well.[142] Examples of modernisation of agriculture in places like Sub-Saharan Africa have showed that they can lead to environmental degradation, further resource conflict or exasperating livelihood conditions for those who are landless.[143]

Seemingly 'successful' interventions may not disrupt existing conditions of peace; they can maintain the status quo of conflict without causing regression. However, low carbon development in the form of infrastructure can pose challenges in the long term. Large-scale projects like the dam highlighted above have socio-economic and ecological impacts that manifest over time. Even small-scale projects can have impacts down the line. For example, in a case of mini solar grid expansion in the Turkana region in Kenya, which was funded by then-Department for International Development (DFID), it was found that the design and location of adaptation projects highly determine those who benefit from the investment in infrastructure.[144] While there is no overt conflict at this stage, instalment of infrastructure restricts pathways of how, when, where and at what price community members access green energy in the future. In FCACs, establishing long-term views are particularly challenging but needed when considering the heightened vulnerability of communities.

Scrutinising winners and losers

Just as with any kind of development, low carbon development creates winners and losers. Technical assessments of project impacts are often void of the qualitative outcomes to individuals. Here the notion of absolute and relative winners/losers is helpful to give a sense of the lived experiences of impacts. Absolute winners and losers refer to groups or individuals that experience gains or costs compared to their own status quo before the project. In contrast, relative winners and losers emerge through a comparative look across different groups or individuals.[145] For example, a relative winner is identified when other groups bear more costs of the project. A relative loser may not be worse off but nevertheless does not benefit from the project.

The absolute or relative nature matters because it sheds light on perceptions of individuals regarding their gains and losses induced by a project.[146] Furthermore, these perceptions can trigger contestations and thus a barrier to the implementation, much less success of a project.[147] Conflict sensitivity can better incorporate these grounded insights of absolute and relative winners/losers.

The largest wind power project in Africa is a case in point. The Lake Turkana Wind Farm in Kenya has been lauded as a 'catalyst' for renewable energy production.[148] With a capacity of 310 MW and over 300 turbines, it represents Kenya's ambition towards securing green energy as well as private investment opportunities, which includes British investment companies as the largest

[142] Magnan, A. K., Schipper, E. L. F., Burkett, M., Bharwani, S., Burton, I., Eriksen, S., and Ziervogel, G. 2016. Addressing the risk of maladaptation to climate change. Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change, 7(5), 646–665. doi:10.1002/wcc.409; 25

[143] Asare-Nuamah, P. et al. 2021. Farmers' maladaptation: Eroding sustainable development, rebounding and shifting vulnerability in smallholder agriculture system. Environmental Development, 40, 100680; Mikulewicz, M. 2020. Disintegrating labour relations and depoliticised adaptation to climate change in rural São Tomé and Príncipe. Area. https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12630

[144] Lomax, J., Osborne, M., Aminga, V., Mirumachi, N., and Johnson, O. 2021. Casual pathways in the political economy of climate adaptation: winners and losers in Turkana, Kenya solar mini-grid projects. Energy Research & Social Science, 8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2021.102296

[145] O'Brien, K. L. and Leichenko, R. M. 2003. Winners and losers in the context of global change. Annals of the association of American geographers, 93(1), 89-103

[146] Ibid.

[147] Abbink, J. 2012.

[148] David Whitehouse, Kenya's Lake Turkana points the way forward for African wind power, The Africa Report, July 2019, https://www.theafricareport.com/15832/kenyas-lake-turkana-points-the-way-forward-for-african-wind-power/

shareholder.[149] But this project has been marred by delays and legal cases, with domestic and international concern about the negative impacts. In court, it was ruled that the land acquisition process was illegal, having dispossessed indigenous communities from their land.[150] Clearly, local communities are absolute losers in this regard, with the project company as an absolute winner having benefited from the land acquisition process. Furthermore, the subsequent impacts of realising the wind farm generates relative winners and losers in employment. Jobs were handed out to those of the Turkana tribe, whereas proportionally fewer workers from the Samburu ethnicity were employed; both tribes have been affected by displacement, along with several other groups.[151] In a context of existing tensions between pastoralist groups in this region, the creation of relative winners and losers adds to rivalries and hostility.

Intersecting climate change and security

The COP26 discussions called for urgent action in the face of climate crisis. The underlying narrative presents this future crisis as dangerous and calamitous. There is no denying that many individuals will suffer the consequences of droughts, flash flooding and sea level rise. But this narrative should not be used as an excuse to label countries and regions – particularly of the Global South – as violent, irresponsible or doomed to insecurity. The concerns of climate security are bound up in issues of migration, terrorism and other factors pointing to the fragility of a state. These concerns can reveal some deeply problematic assumptions about risks and threats emerging from 'ungoverned spaces' of insecurity.[152] Such notion underlies the geopolitical order that distinguishes the Global South as the 'other' and shapes the need for development assistance or humanitarian aid as mechanisms to maintain this geopolitical configuration.[153]

Rather than seeing regions or states as a faceless entity of danger or risk, there needs to be more attention paid to the vulnerable and marginalised individuals who are at the sharp end of climate impacts. The everyday is where climate and security intersect. The everyday struggles of maintaining a livelihood, the prevalent challenges of accessing clean water and recurrent blows to the way of life are real and pressing. Any kind of support towards climate mitigation and adaptation needs to consider their vulnerabilities.

Charting the way forward for UK engagement in FCACs

Predicting conflict or peace is not easy. There are no simple linear causations between climate change, conflict and various development programmes, whether for adaptation or mitigation. There is no guarantee how UK engagement will impact FCACs amidst multiple climate, political and socio-economic uncertainties. Nevertheless, it is possible to glean two key insights from experiences of low carbon development. First, there is a significant need to monitor how engagement affects conflict dynamics or contributes to peace. As the above sections highlighted, this monitoring needs take into consideration the qualitative impacts to individuals and over the long-term. Conflict sensitive approaches need to be maintained and revisited throughout programming.

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[149] Dr. Edward Mungai, British Companies Emerge Biggest Investors In Kenya's Wind Farms, Africa Sustainability Matters, February 2020, https://africasustainabilitymatters.com/british-companies-emerge-biggest-investors-in-kenyas-wind-farms/

[150] Louise Voller, Vestas' wind farm in Kenya is the country's largest green investment ever. Now a court has declared it illegal, Danwatch, November 2021, https://danwatch.dk/en/perspektiv/vestas-wind-farm-in-kenya-is-the-countrys-largest-green-investment-ever-now-a-court-has-declared-it-illegal/; Cormack, Z., & Kurewa, A. 2018. The changing value of land in Northern Kenya: the case of Lake Turkana Wind Power. Critical African Studies, 10(1), 89-107; Achiba, G. A. 2019. Navigating contested winds: Development visions and anti-politics of wind energy in Northern Kenya. Land, 8(1), 7

[151] Kazimierczuk, A.H. 2020. Tracing inclusivity: Contribution of the Dutch private sector to inclusive development in Kenya. Case study of Unilever Tea Kenya Ltd., the flower sector and Lake Turkana Wind Power project, Thesis (PhD) Leiden University.

[152] Hartmann, B. 2010. Rethinking climate refugees and climate conflict: Rhetoric, reality and the politics of policy discourse. Journal of International Development, 22(2), 233–246. doi:10.1002/jid.1676; 18

[153] Mirumachi et al. 2020.

Second, any kind of climate action needs to be embedded in broader development agendas and plans. The urgency to tackle climate change should not blinker the debate and efforts towards addressing the underlying structures of poverty, inequality and marginalisation. The inadvertent and perverse impacts of low carbon development show that a critical and integrated approach is needed to consider security and vulnerability. As the examples above showed, security considerations must include local, regional and transnational scales. In addition, understanding vulnerability requires multi-sectoral perspectives that include livelihoods, food, water and energy. A comprehensive view to climate, development and conflict can provide a more robust justification of the UK’s engagement in FCACs.

The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy published earlier this year sets out ‘Global Britain’ and its vision of a values-driven foreign policy. The UK’s commitment towards a ‘force of good’ needs to be founded on deep understanding of these complex intersections across climate, development and conflict. Importantly, the Government needs to continually ask ‘force of good’ *for whom* through its engagement in FCACs.

9. The importance of Gender in FCACs and the wider Women, Peace and Security Agenda

By Helen Kezie-Nwoha[154]

The year 2020 marked 20 years of the landmark United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325(UNSCR1325) on women, peace and security.[155] Since then nine additional Resolutions have been adopted to reinforce the original agreements contained in UNSCR1325. There have been global commitments to ensure that these Resolutions are implemented at national level, through the development of National Action Plans (NAPS). As of August 2021, 98 countries globally have developed NAPs.[156] The United Kingdom (UK) was one of the first few countries to develop the NAP in 2006 and is currently implementing the fourth generation NAP (2018 – 2022).[157] The UNSCR1325 and its related resolutions constitute the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which all

[154] Helen Kezie-Nwoha is the Executive Director of Women's International Peace Centre an international feminist organisation that works on promoting the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Africa. Helen has over 20 years-experience working on women's rights, gender, peace building, conflict resolution and governance in Nigeria, Liberia, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Uganda and Nepal. She has managed international and regional programmes; led advocacy efforts at international, regional and national levels specifically in Africa and Asia. Helen has researched women's war experiences in several conflict affected countries in Africa. *Image by Amanda Voisard/UN Women under (CC).*

[155] United Nations Security Council, Resolution 1325 (2000), October 2000, https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement; OSAGI, Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security, UN, https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/

[156] 1325 National Action Plans (NAPs), see: http://1325naps.peacewomen.org/

[157] FCDO, Ministry of Defence and CSSF, UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018 to 2022: report to Parliament 2020, Gov.uk, April 2021, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-action-plan-on-women-peace-and-security-2018-to-2022-report-to-parliament-2020

provide the guidelines for addressing the impact on conflict on women and ensure women and girls participation in decisions around response to war impact and in all peacebuilding processes. The objective of this paper is to evaluate the role of the UK in promoting the WPS agenda, lessons learnt and the overall effectiveness of its interventions. The second is to assess how gender fits into the UKs recent Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

UK's role in the WPS agenda

The UK's approach in promoting the WPS agenda following its development of the first generation NAP has focused on preventing conflict related sexual violence. It took the lead role in profiling the need to address sexual violence in conflict, provide training to ensure peacekeepers understand sexual gender based violence and its impact on women and girls, as well as ensure perpetrators are held accountable. In 2012, the UK led the global effort to end conflict related sexual violence by launching the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI). This was followed by a global conference that brought together about 120 world leaders and civil society activists. The conference ended with a commitment by the Foreign Secretary to move from pledges to actions to end sexual violence in conflict. In the same year, the Protocol for the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict was launched, aimed to ensure enough evidence for accountability. A follow up conference was planned but could not be held due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The other area of focus of the British Government has been the role of women in violent extremism. In 2015, the Government created the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) to tackle instability overseas, the CSSF replaced the Conflict Prevention Pool. In the 2016-17 plan, £500,000 was set aside by the FCO to ensure programme activities and research focus on increased understanding of women as victims, perpetrators and preventers of violent extremism. Building on its global leadership, in 2018 the Government allocated about £3.4 million to address sexual violence in conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar, Columbia and Iraq, it also responded to the Rohingya crises as one of the largest donors contributing £129 million to humanitarian response. In addition to these contributions, the UK has demonstrated its global leadership on the WPS agenda by promoting women's participation in peace processes and women and girls' issues at the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016. The UK contributed towards addressing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by UN Peacekeepers through support for the UN outreach project to victims of SEA in the DRC and Central Africa Republic (CAR), including supporting the International Peace Support Training Centre in Kenya and strong support to the UN Secretary General's agenda for reform. Following on from this, the UK played a significant role in supporting the adoption of the voluntary compact between Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) and the UN with respect to SEA, with the UK Prime Minister the first to join the Secretary General's informal circle of leadership on SEA and also pushed for UNSCR2272, which allows for the repatriation of peacekeeping contingents where SEA is found to be widespread and systemic. The UK contributed £1.6 million towards amplifying the voices of women peacebuilders; launched a global call to action to drive lasting progress on gender equality by supporting education for women and girls in situations of conflict; endorsed the Safe School Declaration in April 2018; supported women's mediators network across the Commonwealth; and ensured voices of women at the Security Council were heard (for example a female civil society representative from Iraq addressed the UNSC in 2018).

The UK NAPs progressively increased the countries of focus from initial three to nine in the current NAP (Afghanistan, DRC, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria). At the national level, the UK NAP has focused on training and awareness of the armed forces on the rights of women and girls in conflict settings, enhancing policy coherence, improving the representation of women in armed forces, the inclusion of equality markers to all programmes in the CSSF and declaring gender equality funding for the CSSF.

Despite the impressive leadership role exhibited by the UK Government, there remain areas that require strengthening to ensure the UK plays its leading role on the WPS agenda as well as to effectively ensure women and girls in conflict benefit from the huge investments. An ICAI review of the PSVI found that the most significant achievement of the initiative is the Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, which has been used to access justice for survivors in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Columbia, the DRC, Myanmar, Syria, Uganda and Iraq.[158] The review noted that, despite efforts by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to provide leadership at global and national level and convening countries to address sexual violence in conflict, the PSVI from the start lacked a strategic vision or plan that could have driven the initiative. Over time 'high level ministerial interest waned' and funding and staffing levels reduced, leaving the PSVI lacking a system of monitoring impact that makes it difficult to track progress or results from programmes implemented. GAPS latest assessment of the implementation of the WPS noted that even though the Government played a key role in the development and adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) it continues to export arms to countries who have used weapons indiscriminately against civilian population.[159] Experience shows that such actions against civilians impact women and girls most. The report also noted the need for the NAPs to look inward and extend its commitment to Northern Ireland, refugees and asylum seeking migrants and trafficked women and girls from fragile and conflict affected countries.

Gender and the Integrated Review

Following the UK's departure from the EU, the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy became an important action by the Government to carve a way forward for its foreign policies.[160] The overall aim of the review is to increase commitment to security and resilience to ensure British people are protected against threats, focused on territorial integrity, building critical national infrastructure, strengthening democratic institutions, and reducing the threat from states, terrorism and serious and organised crimes (SOC). The Review proposes four areas of focus of the strategic framework, including sustaining strategic advantage through science and technology; shaping the open international order for the future; strengthening security and defence at home and overseas; and building resilience at home and overseas. As with many Government policies, gender within the review document is an 'add on and paste' approach, there is no evidence that a gender analysis informed the review and proposed actions. However, there is a priority action to promote gender equality, which is believed to be enough for gender responsiveness. One of the significant gaps in the Review is the lack of analysis and inclusion of WPS. This takes away the opportunity to streamline the UK's commitment to promoting the rights of women and girls in conflict. With this in mind, this paper will zoom in on the second area of the strategic framework: 'A force for good: supporting open societies and defending human rights', and more specifically on two priority actions that align more closely with gender, women, peace and security: to defend universal human rights and to promote gender equality.

The Integrated Review recognises that open societies are crucial building blocks in a sustainable international order, modelling inclusive, accountable and transparent governance. It also notes that such open societies and individual liberties on which they are built are under pressure in the physical and digital world. As rightly pointed out by the Integrated Review there is general decline in global freedom with autocracies becoming stronger and more influential. The UK plans to work with its

[158] Tamsyn Barton, The UK's Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, ICAI, January 2020, https://icai.independent.gov.uk/review/psvi/

[159] GAPS UK, Assessing UK Government Action on Women, Peace and Security in 2020, April 2021, https://gaps-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/GAPS-Shadow-Report-2020.pdf

[160] Cabinet Office, Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, Gov.uk, March 2021, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy

global allies, like-minded partners and civil society worldwide to protect democratic values, and to achieve this it is important to start at home. The proposed actions to achieve this require further interrogation, but before then I would like to point out that the democratic values being promoted need to be clearly defined by the UK and agreed with the partners who it plans to support. This is because democratic values are defined and understood differently by different countries and most have defined their values based on their desire to move away from colonial legacies which the UK represents. It must also be noted that many democracies in Africa for example have failed and continue to struggle because colonial powers imposed the Western model of democracy, which was problematic to adapt with existing cultural traditions and leadership styles of the people. In addition, the African states have failed to fulfil the social contract that could have enhanced their legitimacy, with the majority of the countries having weak economies with high corruption and a lack of accountability. Going forward the UK Government needs to recognise the norms and values of democracy and ensure collaborative ways of improving democracy to determine and agree on the nature of support to be provided.

I now turn to the proposed priority actions: to defend universal human rights and to promote gender equality. The UK plans to promote human rights by using an independent sanctions regime to hold accountable those who violate human rights. The sanctions regime was established in 2020 which enables the UK to hold accountable those who violate human rights by imposing targeted asset freezes and travel bans. Asset freezing is an efficient preventive measure and has been effective in fighting terrorism, however the nature of human rights violations experienced by women, including conflict related sexual violence and sexual and gender based violence which is usually committed in the home and in public institutions, will not benefit from asset freezing as perpetrators usually remain in country and may not even have any assets that would warrant such actions. It would be more beneficial for the UK to assess the nature of human rights violations experienced by women in the context of shrinking civic space and during the COVID-19 pandemic to find appropriate strategies, such as supporting transparent and efficient justice systems to ensure justice for victims of human rights violations and in the case of building back better after COVID-19 ensure girls and women's participation in post COVID-19 plans and actions. There is a need to focus on a victim-centred approach to addressing human rights violations.

The other priority area is to promote gender equality. To achieve this, the UK plans to work with women's rights organisations (WROs) to address the root causes of gender equality including discrimination, violence and insecurity. The strategy to achieve this priority is to 'use aid spending and diplomacy to pursue the goal of getting 40 million more girls into school in low and middle income countries by 2025, starting with the Global Partnership for Education Summit in 2021'.[161] As well as promote women's economic empowerment at the WTO, G7, OECD, the UN and World Bank and in the UK's free trade agreement (FTA). The review rightly identified some of the root causes of gender inequality as discrimination, violence and insecurity but missed out other factors that have facilitated gender inequality including social norms and practices and unequal power relationship between women and men.

While education is an important strategy to achieve gender equality, it would require other strategies running in tandem to ensure that the structural barriers to girls' education is eliminated, this is applicable to so called peace times and in fragile and post conflict settings. In South Sudan, barriers to girls' education include unfavourable sociocultural attitudes and practices that prevent girls from enrolling, being retained and completing school. The context in South Sudan where most people live below the poverty line instigates families to marry off their girls to acquire resources. In

[161] FCDO, Every girl goes to school, stays safe, and learns: Five years of global action 2021-2026, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/986027/FCDO-Girls-Education-Action-Plan.pdf

addition, early marriage and pregnancy result in higher levels of maternal and infant mortality. Other factors that prevent girls' education include preference for educating boys instead of girls who will be married off, insecurity and cost of education. Some of these factors are sociocultural and require actions towards behavioural change and changes in cultural practices. If this is not done, despite the investment and good efforts to ensure girls are in school, it may not yield any significant change. In the COVID-19 context, when many countries have used locked down measures to curtail the spread of the disease, many girls have been married off or impregnated by strangers and relatives in some cases. In Uganda, UNICEF reported that between March and June 2020 there was a 22.5 per cent increase in pregnancy among girls aged ten to 24 years.[162] To promote gender equality, the Government must apply an intersectional approach to address the underlying factors that prevent girls' education.

The ongoing discussion indicates that the UK Government speaks more than it can actually do, the strategies proposed at all fronts, whether at the implementation of the NAPs, the review process and the general commitment to taking the lead in promoting gender equality globally, do not match the commitments. A recent aid cut to research on issues of gender equality and women's empowerment indicates the lack of political will to achieve the stated commitments. Feminist academics and women peace builders have raised concerns that women and girls worldwide are under threat of violence as a result of the aid cut by two-thirds. This action has been qualified as 'backsliding' on the Government's commitment to promote gender equality. The UK Government claims that the cut is due to the need to respond to the economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the reasons articulated, the aid cuts undermine its commitment to be a 'force for good' and take the lead in achieving gender equality globally, which further impacts on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. At a time when the world is grappling with the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, there has been significant impact on women and girls in fragile and conflict affected countries, the UK must take a leadership role building on existing partnership to ensure that 'building back better' means girls and women's needs and their participation in all rebuilding processes are prioritised.

The UK has shown evidence of its commitment to promoting gender equality and the WPS agenda through progressive frameworks and investments towards achieving set objectives. However, there is a disconnect between what is planned and how the plans are implemented. I would recommend the following:

- The UK Government should strengthen its capacity to ensure it is able to address the gender gaps in its planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of policies and plans. This will enable proper documentation of progress achieved and enable effective response to existing gaps;
- Ensure all plans and policies are reviewed to mainstream gender, women, peace and security for coherence, synergy and sustainability of this agenda in all government's programmes and policy commitments; and
- The UK should use its experience and position as 'a force for good' to influence the global agenda on gender, women, peace and security.

[162] Daily Monitor, Back to School: Addressing Key Issues Post COVID, September 2021, https://adrauganda.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ADRA-News-13-September-2021.pdf

10. Conclusions and recommendations

By Tim Molesworth and Adam Hug[163]

This collection of essays has looked at the ways in which the UK's foreign policy engagement in FCACs is adapting to changes in the global foreign policy environment, the evolving nature of conflict and to changes in the UK's institutional capacities and its place in the world.

The nature of conflict in FCACs is shifting, along with the challenges they present the UK. The number of violent conflicts today is as high as at any point since the end of World War II, only matched by a period in the early 1990s. Unlike the 1990s, however, we are not seeing a parallel rise in peace agreements. This is at least partly due to the transnational impacts on conflict, including transnational crime, violent extremism, climate change, migration and, since 2020, COVID-19. It is also due to a tendency towards the increasing internationalisation of conflicts. While conflict still play out within borders, a larger number of international actors are directly or indirectly involved – increasing the complexity of conflict resolution processes and the number of stakeholders who need to be considered and included.

[163] Tim Molesworth is the Senior Advisor for Conflict Sensitivity and Peace Technology at the Peaceful Change initiative, a UK based peacebuilding NGO. He has 11 years' experience working with the UN and NGOs in contexts such as Iraq, Syria, Sudan and Libya on strategic approaches to peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.
Adam Hug became the Director of the Foreign Policy Centre in November 2017, overseeing the FPC's operations and strategic direction. He had previously been the Policy Director at the Foreign Policy Centre from 2008-2017. His research focuses on human rights and governance issues particularly in the former Soviet Union. He also writes on UK foreign policy and EU issues. He studied at Geography at the University of Edinburgh as an undergraduate and Development Studies with Special Reference to Central Asia as a post-grad. *Image by FCDO under (CC).*

The effect on the UK of this is of strategic importance. FCACs pose threats to international peace and security, undermining the stability of neighbouring countries. FCACs can provide ungoverned spaces in which transnational terrorist networks can develop and which can facilitate transnational crime. The situation in FCACs drive displacement, including refugee flows and other irregular migration into neighbouring countries and, ultimately, towards Europe and Britain. FCACs also provide a space for geopolitical competition, which the UK's geopolitical competitors are able to exploit for strategic advantage, to develop partnerships or to disrupt the geopolitical status-quo. The UK, then, must be proactive in its engagement in FCACs, not only for its own security interests, but because supporting governments and communities in FCACs to resolve conflict and transition to a sustainable peace is the right thing to do and constitutes an obvious responsibility under the UK's ambitions to be a 'force for good'.

As the UK's strategic priorities change, increasing its focus on the Indo-Pacific and European Neighbourhood and reducing it in large parts of Africa and the Middle East, it will be important for the UK to ensure that its change in posture is managed carefully so as not to further destabilise FCACs. Wherever possible this should include retaining capacity and engagement in contexts crucial for the UK's 'force for good' agenda beyond its priority regions wherever possible and adopting a more coherent approach to conflict sensitivity that should applied across the range of the British engagement with all FCACs.

The UK has significant experience and expertise engaging in FCACs. As one of the most significant international donors, it has invested in the tools and capacities needed to understand conflict and leverage cross-government tools and resources to deal with conflict strategically. However, the UK's approach to the world and its capacities to do so are changing. The 2020 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy outlines a strategic framework for how the UK engages with the world. It indicates a more joined up and strategic approach between the foreign policy tools which the UK has available. Recent institutional changes, including the merger of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DFID) into the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), provide an opportunity to more explicitly develop that joined up approach – particularly when dealing with complex, multidimensional problems such as those driving conflict in FCACs.

However, it also comes with risks. Relating to FCACs, the Integrated Review calls for more focused and 'politically smart' interventions aimed at addressing drivers of conflict. This reflects language and perspectives such as the *Elite Bargains and Political Deals* work of the UK's former Stabilisation Unit (now incorporated into a new conflict unit within the FCDO). These perspectives have a lot of value, in so far as they are intended to inform how aid and other foreign policy tools can contribute to peace in complex political economies. There is a risk, however, that a focus on elite bargains will end up deprioritising the longer-term structural peacebuilding contributions which are necessary to help countries transition to sustainable peace. It suggests a higher tolerance for engaging with national actors who do not necessarily act in ways that are compatible with the values which the UK espouses, an approach that needs to be used strategically but sparingly, while remaining committed to more integrated and long-term approaches to building sustainable and equitable peace.

The publication makes the case for an integrated, conflict sensitive approach to the UK's approach to the world both inside government and beyond. As well as building in a conflict sensitivity due diligence approach such as the conflict sensitivity tool outlined in the introduction across the full range of UK Government engagement in FCACs, it means also ensuring, as Helen Kezie-Nwoha writes, that gender analysis be made a more integral part of the UK's policy development, informing all aspects of policy rather than being an 'add on and paste' approach as she puts it. She also rightly points out that the UK's approach needs to be cognisant of and responsive to local dynamics,

particularly in post-colonial contexts. As Kezie-Nwoha puts it 'this is because democratic values are defined and understood differently by different countries and most have defined their values based on their desire to move away from colonial legacies which the UK represents', noting the regular failure to make Western style institutions work within local cultural frameworks and leadership models, which have led to issues of corruption, weak legitimacy and poor accountability.

Similarly, Dr Naho Mirumachi and Marine Hautsch highlight the need for conflict sensitivity both in dealing with the impact of climate change and ensuring that future green infrastructure does not replicate problems of previous international investments that have exacerbated local conflict dynamics (citing the Gibe III dam in Ethiopia and solar grid expansion in the Turkana region of Kenya as examples of poorly thought through green investment). Climate action needs to be fully integrated as part of, rather than in competition with, wider strategies to address the underlying structures of poverty, inequality and marginalisation that can fuel conflict. Phil Bloomer's contribution widens this point out to argue that the UK's wider economic engagement with fragile and conflict affected countries needs to be conflict sensitive and comply with international best principles for business and human rights.

A number of authors, including Fred Carver and Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell MP, have rightly made the case that the UK has an important role as a leader and convenor within multilateral institutions (including the UN, Commonwealth and NATO) if it chooses to continue to take this approach. A commitment to partnership at an international level must be matched with a commitment to building and resourcing local partnerships with civil society and peacebuilding, boosting from the 'bottom-up' as Dr Alexander Ramsbotham and Dr Teresa Dumasy argue.

For a country reliant on its soft-power to project its influence, perception and trust are key. The UK must, as it considers how to engage in the world moving forward and how to operationalise the strategic vision outlined in the Integrated Review, ensure that it stands by its stated ambition to be a 'force for good' in the world. This is particularly important in FCACs, where the ways the UK engages can demonstrate, perhaps most starkly, the degree to which it acts in accordance with the values it promotes.

The individual essays in this collection include a wide variety of policy recommendations regarding the particular areas of UK foreign policy engagement to which they relate. Some of the key recommendations include that the UK should:

- Embed consideration of conflict sensitivity and the myriad direct and indirect ways in which its activities can worsen or address conflict into decision-making relating to all areas of UK engagement in FCACs, not just within aid projects where it has made significant progress but across HMG. It should look to embed a structured way of approaching conflict sensitivity due diligence to assess and mitigate the potential impact of interventions.

- Ensure that its approach to engaging in FCACs puts peace in a central role. Wherever possible peacebuilding and peacemaking should not be in competition with other UK policy priorities for fragile and conflict-affected states, but at the heart of them; addressing violent conflict is often a *precondition* for advancing sustainable stability, and it is not always an inevitable *product* of other policy interventions without a clear focus on making it so.

- Be willing and able to use a wide range of policy tools to assist in its conflict resolution and peacebuilding objectives including diplomacy, sanctions, aid, trade, military engagement (including peacekeeping), peacebuilding resources (both inside Government and in civil society), mediation (in appropriate contexts), and reform of private sector involvement in FCACs.

- Find the correct balance in its aid activities between efforts aimed at promoting stability, for example through elite bargains and political deals, with the need also to address the structural drivers of violent conflict. 'Politically smart' aid should look to create the opportunities, through stability, to then allow for longer-term structural change which is necessary for the evolution of like-minded peaceful societies the UK would like to see.

- Strengthen its peacebuilding and conflict resolution capacity. This could include:
  - Bringing in more specialist expertise from the peacebuilding sector into government, building on the existing secondment systems for senior academics and by opening up recruitment;
  - Improving coordination and information sharing across government and with external experts;
  - Enhancing embassy and FCDO operational capacity, helping find ways for the UK to support smaller, local peace actors rather than relying on multilaterals or large private consultancies;
  - Enabling local programming to become more responsive to evolving local situations and incorporating the learning developed through ongoing project delivery;
  - Providing more settled priority setting and guidance to the CSSF, and
  - Allowing for longer project timelines for peacebuilding work beyond the yearly budget cycle.

- Leverage its strong convening capacity to build international coalitions, as the UK can rarely act alone in FCACs. It should use its ability to consider conflict from a wide range of perspectives in government, to multiply its impact by seeking to influence and shape the collective effort of international aid and other actions towards peace.

- Address the gender gaps in its planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of policies and plans, ensuring that they mainstream gender, women, peace and security priorities in all government programmes and pledges. It should maintain its commitment to influence the global agenda on gender, women, peace and security.

- Use its position on the UN Security Council and involvement with the policy conversations to push for:
  - Greater accountability to, and centring of, the communities at the heart of peacekeeping missions;
  - To resist any urge for state-based mechanisms to micromanage peace operations;
  - To resist state centricity in multilateral responses to areas of fragility and embrace the fact that states can often themselves be part of the problem and non-state actors part of the solution; and
  - To counter any attempt to have UN resources or UN supported missions diverted into counter-terror operations, counterinsurgency, or other forms of warfighting.

- Strengthen the conflict sensitivity of UK private sector activities, by strengthening the modern slavery act, introducing new legal responsibilities for companies that failing to prevent human rights abuses, corruption or that fuel conflict in FCACs and strengthening conflict and human rights sensitivity compliance in public procurement.

- Improve compliance with the principles of the Arms Trade Treaty and strengthen due diligence checks on both the direct use of arms sold and on the indirect consequences of the arms trade. It should provide clearer red lines on arms sales and military collaboration with conflict actors.

- Prioritise partnership in its engagement in FCACs. Partnership is key to effective peacemaking and peacebuilding – conflict is too complex and systemic for any one country or institution to tackle single-handedly. Working authentically in *local* partnership is the hardest, but most important challenge for UK Government and civil society alike to achieve our peace ambitions.

- Embed understanding of the links between climate change, peace and conflict into its wider work on climate change. It should ensure that its work on climate change is conflict sensitive, taking into account the ways in which the necessary economic transformation for responding to the climate crisis can embed or address structural drivers of conflict.

- Address the role of the UK and its Overseas Territories as facilitators of international corruption that can be a key driver of conflict in FCACs.

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