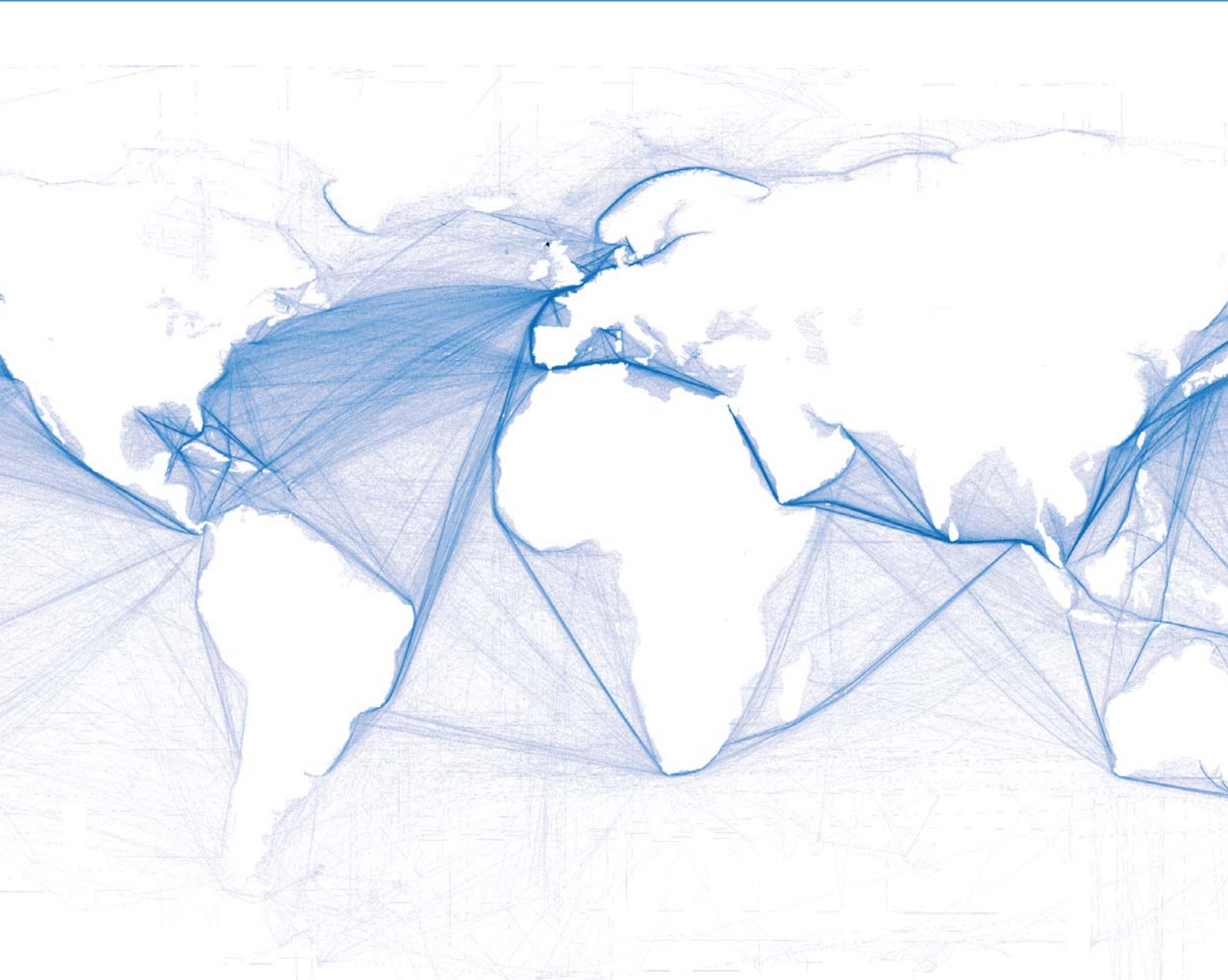


Keeping Britain Global?

Strengthening the UK's role in the world



UNA-UK



About UNA-UK

Founded in 1945, the United Nations Association – UK (UNA-UK) is the country's foremost advocate for UK action at the UN; the UK's leading source of analysis on the UN; and a vibrant grassroots movement of 20,000 people from all walks of life.

We are the only charity in the UK devoted to building support for the UN. We believe that a strong, credible and effective UN is essential if we are to build a safer, fairer and more sustainable world. We advocate strong government support for the UN - political and financial - and seek to demonstrate why the UN matters to people everywhere.

UNA-UK derives great strength from its nationwide network of members and supporters which forms a critical mass of support for the UN in the UK and beyond. We also provide policy expertise to the London diplomatic community and the media, and act as the Secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the United Nations.

UNA-UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee (no.1146016), and is independent of the UN system.

Cover image: an excerpt from a spatial analysis of the relative density of global commercial shipping. Picture licenced under Creative Commons SA 3.0: S. Halpern (T. Hengl; D. Groll). More details available at: <http://spatial-analyst.net/worldmaps/shipping.rdc>

For more information, visit www.una.org.uk, or contact Fred Carver, Head of Policy, on carver@una.org.uk.

© UNA-UK April 2017

Contents

Introduction	2
Keeping Britain Global is in our national interest ..	3
Top-level recommendations	3
Five opportunities for a global Britain.....	4
1. Arms control	5
2. Human rights	6
3. Nuclear disarmament.....	7
4. UN peacekeeping	8
5. Preventing atrocities	9
Conclusion	10
Recommendations	11

“Whether we like it or not, Brexit has signalled to others a retreat from the world stage. Reviving the collective approach has never been more important for UK interests, because the line between national and global challenges no longer exists.”

UNA-UK’s Chair Lord Wood of Anfield and UNA-UK advisor, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, writing in the Guardian newspaper, 27 July 2016

Introduction

Everybody in the UK benefits from the international system – from laws that govern trade and protect our rights, to institutions that deal with shared challenges. Over the past 70 years, this system has brought stability and prosperity to many of us.

But the proceeds of globalisation have not been evenly distributed. Many perceive a Britain that is more ‘global’ as more dangerous, more foreign, and more ‘other’.

This is not a purely British phenomenon. Across the world, insularity is on the rise and outlooks are narrowing. In some countries, embracing this trend has led to electoral advantage, at least in the short-term. But this is not a strategy for the future.

Britain’s long-term interests require a different approach. Increasingly, our prosperity and security depend on factors that we cannot control alone. From employment to energy, Port Talbot to Hinkley Point, the things we care about increasingly have a global dimension. Climate change, conflict, financial instability, pandemics, extremism – what happens in other countries matters to our own lives.

UNA-UK believes the national response should be to look outwards, not inwards. Now, more than ever, Britain’s national interest and the UN Charter’s vision of a peaceful and more just world are one and the same.

Britain’s foreign policy needs to acknowledge this new reality by investing in the international order with the United Nations at its heart. By doing so, the UK can support the “rules-based international system” which successive British governments have considered fundamental to delivering positive outcomes for UK citizens.

Keeping Britain Global? highlights the need for the UK to develop a comprehensive strategy for investing in the health of the UN and urges an increased awareness of how Britain’s own conduct, both domestically and on the world stage, affects the well-being of the international system.

UNA-UK has two primary concerns: first, that the polarising trends in geopolitics are weakening the appeal and impact of the UN, and that if a leading supporter of the UN such as the UK does not actively defend it, few others will; and second, that a failing system of collective action will gravely damage the UK’s own interests as one of the primary beneficiaries of security and stability worldwide. It is therefore vital for the British Government to show unmistakeable leadership in key areas of international concern.

The report highlights five areas where there are practical opportunities for UK action that will strengthen the international system: human rights, arms control, nuclear disarmament, peacekeeping, and atrocity prevention. Taken together, UNA-UK believes that these areas will serve as a proving ground for the UK’s commitment to the rules-based, international system.

Public support for this agenda is crucial. In December 2016, UNA-UK commissioned a poll which demonstrated that the British public have internationalist instincts, but that recent political trends have made them wary of an explicitly ‘global’ political agenda.² Squaring this circle requires sustained and constructive national dialogues, with informed debate around the ways in which British citizens benefit from the international system. UNA-UK with its supporters and civil society partners across the country will do its bit, but Government, media and the private sector have an important role to play if we are to succeed in *Keeping Britain Global*.

1. 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478933/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_web_only.pdf and https://web.archive.org/web/20101222022127/http://www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_191634.pdf

2. www.una.org.uk/news/britons-tell-una-uk-what-they-stand

Keeping Britain Global is in our national interest

Policy-making in the UK, as in many countries, has been slow to embrace the extent to which national and global interests overlap. Recent crises have made us look inwards, leaving us less prepared to tackle global challenges and support institutions like the UN, which – imperfect as they may be – remain our best hope for finding global solutions.

There are signs that Britain's withdrawal from the European Union is accelerating the pace of nationalist agendas, as well as inspiring some – within and outside Government – to make the case more forcefully for internationalism. Whatever the eventual settlement, while the process continues, there is a risk that resources will not be directed to addressing global challenges, and that our partners around the world will remain wary about our commitment to international cooperation.

For Britain to survive and prosper, it must invest in global solutions. Like the UK Government, UNA-UK believes in a "Global Britain". But rhetoric must be backed up by concrete action. A global Britain should be a champion for multilateralism. Whether its migration, climate change or threats to international peace, a global Britain should lead a national conversation about how the UK can help address the defining issues of our time. A global Britain should champion its rich legacy of internationalism with a sense of pride, from the values that British civil servants wrote into the UN's founding documents, to the UK's pivotal role in shaping the international human rights system.

Above all, a global Britain should invest in the health of the United Nations – considered by the Government as an essential global institution and a lynchpin of a rules-based international system.³ At this turbulent time in global affairs, when multiple crises are converging, the UN is stretched to breaking point. It needs political leadership and support from the UK.

Top-level recommendations

The UK should:

1. Develop a cross-departmental strategy for strengthening the UN and the rules-based international system that it serves, with a focus on supporting the new Secretary-General – including by championing UN effectiveness through merit-based senior appointments, and on seeking to keep British allies engaged, active and coordinated at the Organisation
2. Acknowledge the extent to which Britain's own conduct affects the health of the Leaders should seek to set out an inspiring, patriotic vision of a global Britain, with policies that support the international system and an outward-looking UK. They should take responsibility for ensuring that this is reflected across the actions of all departments of Government. and that spokespeople refrain from anti-internationalist rhetoric
3. Deepen public and civil society engagement on foreign policy issues, including by enhancing the Global Britain Fund, to support educational and outreach programmes that demonstrate the value of international organisations to UK citizens
4. Recognise the central role that must be played by UK diplomatic networks if Britain is to sustain or expand its influence on the world stage. This should include maintaining its 0.7 per cent GNI on Official Development Assistance, and increasing funding to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with an emphasis on operations that support work at the UN-level as the UK's role on the Security Council, and relations outside the European Union, become more important

3. Government response to the House of Lords International Relations Committee on the Priorities for the next Secretary-General: www.parliament.uk/document/s/lords-committees/International-Relations-Committee/uk-priorities-un-secretary-general/170104%20Response%20to%20House%20of%20Lords%20International%20Relations%20Committee.pdf

Five opportunities for a global Britain

Support for the rules-based international system means considering the extent to which UK foreign policy decisions could strengthen or weaken this system. As highlighted in the top-level recommendations, this requires that the UK not only maintain its current levels of support, but take positive action to sustain the international system against a backdrop of growing insularity and global instability.

UNA-UK considers that the following areas contain clear opportunities for the UK to demonstrate its commitment to the international system. Each area is one in which either the UK is well positioned to make a significant contribution, one where past action has risked weakening international norms, or both.

Over the coming months, UNA-UK will monitor the UK's contribution across these areas, and will be publishing and updating a 'scorecard', to help the public keep track of the Government's commitment to a "Global Britain".

We believe the UK's performance on these issues will represent a reasonable bellwether for the extent to which the Government of the United Kingdom is living up to its promise and investing in the health of the rules-based international system.

1. Arms control

Arms control represents one of the most tangible ways in which our global system of rules and standards can make the world a safer place.

Having played a key role in the creation of international treaties banning cluster munitions and landmines, and in the development and adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), successive UK governments have understood the imperative for international controls and have shown leadership in driving progress among the international community.

But since the ATT entered into force in December 2014, the UK has continued to export arms to countries with poor human rights records, most notably, Saudi Arabia – a country engaged in a violent conflict in Yemen. According to the UN figures, the death toll of the Yemen conflict stands at more than 10,000, many of whom, civilians, with a further 19 million people in need of humanitarian aid.⁴

Two Parliamentary Committees in 2016 called for a suspension of UK arms exports to Saudi Arabia, stating that “the UK’s support for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, primarily through arms sales in the face of evidence of International Humanitarian Law violations, is inconsistent with the UK’s global leadership role in the rule of law and international rules-based systems.”⁵ The UK has not followed this advice, nor has it been supportive of efforts to establish an independent investigation into allegations of war crimes in Yemen.⁶

Such actions undermine the ATT, damage the UK’s standing and influence on matters of international peace and security, and are at odds with Britain’s responsibility as a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

Existing arms control frameworks are also being challenged by rapid advances in technology. The expanded use of armed unmanned aerial vehicles has dramatically changed warfare, bringing with it new humanitarian and legal implications which the UK is yet to address.⁷ Creeping autonomy in weapons systems is raising the spectre of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) – or ‘killer robots’ – giving rise to new ethical and legal challenges.

International consensus on the use of armed drones and the development of LAWS is urgently required.^{8,9} Given the security threat to Britain of the proliferation of such technology, regulation is also squarely in the UK’s national interest.

Leadership from the UK on these issues could have a significant strengthening effect on the rules-based international system as well as help recover the UK’s historic role at the forefront of international arms control initiatives.

Recommendations

The UK should:

- Implement the Arms Trade Treaty to a consistently high standard, refraining from conduct which undermines the Treaty, including by ceasing arms exports to countries where there is concern that they will be used to commit war crimes and human rights violations
- Articulate a clear and coherent policy on its use of armed drones for counter-terrorism purposes, both within and outside the context of armed conflict – with mechanisms for parliamentary scrutiny and accountability
- Publish a detailed policy on its approach to autonomy in weapons systems, and take on a more active role in international fora to build consensus for an international framework to control the development and deployment of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

4. www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/16/yemen-war-death-toll-has-reached-10000-un-says

5. www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmbis/679/67908.htm

6. www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/boris-johnson-yemen-criticised-human-rights-watch-amnesty-international-blocking-war-crimes-inquiry-a7330136.html

7. www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session25/Documents/A_HRC_25_59_ENG.DOC

8. *ibid*

9. www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session23/A-HRC-23-47_en.pdf

2. Human rights

The scale of violations currently facing the international community means that the need for a strong UN centred response to human rights challenges is as strong as ever. Created in 2006, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) is the body to do just that. It has achieved a significant amount during the first 10 years of its existence, but it needs the support of the UK if it is to succeed.

The UK has shown leadership at the UN Human Rights Council on a number of issues, notably the prevention of violence against women and girls, modern slavery, Sri Lanka and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Iran.¹⁰ Most recently the UK played a pivotal role in defeating an attempt to suspend the mandate of the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity.¹¹ The UK also does much work to promote human rights internationally, with the Department for International Development continuing to contribute £2.5 million to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.¹²

However, consistency on human rights is a vital component of any attempt to globally project British values. Shortcomings across three broad areas threaten to undermine the UK's global credibility and prevent the positive work the Government is doing in other areas from having its full impact. These include missed opportunities for the UK to strengthen international human rights mechanisms; concerns over the future of human rights law in the UK¹³; and the sense that there has been a deprioritisation of human rights in UK foreign policy.¹⁴

While the UK's championing of some human rights issues in international fora has been commendable, on others it has been notably silent. The UK is rarely critical of allies and this selectivity undermines the credibility of UK criticism of other nations.¹⁵ The Government distances itself from ministers who voice private criticism of allies, even when justified.¹⁶ The UK has also applied diplomatic pressure in an attempt to drop references to torture in a Swiss-authored joint statement on Bahrain in February 2016.¹⁷

In 2014 the United Kingdom campaigned against a modest resolution in the Human Rights Council on Unmanned Aerial Combat Vehicles or drones.¹⁸ By citing a procedural question of jurisdiction, the United Kingdom copied precisely the tactics that have been used over a number of years by opponents of the Human Rights Council to limit the Council's scope and power. In so doing it further legitimised those tactics.

At the national level, UNA-UK is concerned by Government proposals to "scrap" the 1998 Human Rights Act and replace it with an (as yet) unspecified British Bill of Rights. Proposals by senior ministers for the UK to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights have amplified these concerns. While the details of such proposals remain unclear, fears over the future of human rights in the UK are fuelled by a broader, increasingly negative debate around human rights. For example, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee has expressed concern that human rights have been deprioritised by the Government.¹⁹ While UNA-UK is not wedded to any particular piece of domestic legislation, we are concerned that the proposed changes may weaken human rights protections. Such rhetoric has already had an impact internationally, with senior Government officials in Kenya and Russia pointing to the UK's example as justification for asserting their nation's sovereignty over international human rights mechanisms.²⁰

Recommendations

The UK should:

- Ensure that any changes to human rights law serve to strengthen, not weaken, universal human rights protections in the United Kingdom and should refrain from introducing any human rights exemptions based on extra-territoriality
- Take steps to strengthen the Human Rights Council and engage constructively with all UN human rights mechanisms, including UN Special Procedures, and serve as an example to other states as recommended in our recent report²¹

10. www.una.org.uk/sites/default/files/The%20UK's%20role%20in%20the%20UN%20Human%20Rights%20Council%20-%20Priorities%20for%20the%20UK's%202014-16%20term.pdf

11. twitter.com/martin_shearman/status/800745193221877760

12. 1.15 per cent of the total budget for the Office. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/OurDonors.aspx>

13. www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/gbsession1.aspx

14. www.una.org.uk/news/foreign-affairs-committee-report-criticises-uks-deprioritisation-human-rights

15. www.amnesty.org.uk/issues/Saudi-Arabia

16. www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/dec/08/boris-johnsons-remarks-about-saudi-arabia-not-the-governments-view

17. www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/feb/21/britain-lobbied-un-bahrain-human-rights-abuses

18. www.una.org.uk/think-piece-strengthening-un-human-rights-pillar-0

19. The former Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice made a distinction between those who are "meritorious" of human rights and those who are not. www.una.org.uk/news/foreign-affairs-committee-report-criticises-uks-deprioritisation-human-rights

20. ukhumanrightsblog.com/2014/10/24/kenyan-president-uses-tory-human-rights-plans-to-defend-war-crimes-charges/

21. www.una.org.uk/think-piece-strengthening-un-human-rights-pillar-0

3. Nuclear disarmament

Our international system of treaties, rules and norms has helped to create more predictable and stable international relations and has controlled the proliferation of nuclear technology, reducing the likelihood of nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands.

At the heart of this system is a bargain written into the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The 186 non-nuclear States Parties to the Treaty are prohibited from developing nuclear weapons; in exchange, the five nuclear-armed States Parties, including the UK, have committed to a process of multilateral nuclear disarmament.²²

With little appetite for disarmament apparent from nuclear-weapon states, this bargain is increasingly called into question. Deteriorating international relations, in part due to dissatisfaction with the slow pace of disarmament, caused a failure of the 2015 NPT Review Conference to agree an outcome.²³

Domestically, the debate has been highly politicised, with the decision taken to renew the UK's nuclear weapon system with little public consultation or informed discussion on the international context. The UK's 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review failed to build on modest progress made in 2010 with regards to disarmament and missed the opportunity to follow the French lead in being explicit about disarmament obligations.²⁴

In recent years, a new movement to eliminate nuclear weapons based on humanitarian imperatives has gained traction, with non-nuclear weapon states and civil society working together to put the catastrophic environmental, health and societal impacts of any use of nuclear weapons at the forefront of discussions.

The humanitarian movement has now culminated in UN negotiations to create a legally-binding treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, mandated by a General Assembly resolution passed with 113 states voting in favour, 35 against, and 13 abstentions.²⁵ The UK voted against the resolution, opposing the 2017 negotiations.²⁶

Given the dangers arising from deteriorating international relations and the potential emergence of a new arms race between the nuclear powers²⁷, principled and engaged leadership from nuclear weapon states is sorely needed. This means Britain taking unmistakable steps to demonstrate its commitment to multilateral disarmament while working energetically to engage with the legitimate concerns of non-nuclear-weapon states.

Recommendations

The UK should:

- Take unmistakable actions to improve diplomatic relations between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states by participating in negotiations and stimulating dialogue
- Work energetically to restore the health of the NPT regime, including by initiating an inclusive process to work on the 2010 64-point Action Plan and by publish an annual report on the UK's contribution to its implementation
- Breathe life into the 'P5 Process' talks between the nuclear weapon states including by strengthening their agenda and increasing their transparency
- Review the prominence given to nuclear weapons in the UK's security doctrines in close consultation with parliament and civil society
- Use the opportunity of the 2018 UN High Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament to highlight UK leadership and progress on this issue

22. disarmament.un.org/treaties/t/npt

23. www.un.org/press/en/2015/dc3561.doc.htm

24. data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/national-security-strategy-committee/national-security-strategy-and-the-strategic-defence-and-security-review-2015/written/30997.html

25. www.un.org/press/en/2016/ga11882.doc.htm

26. www.icanw.org/campaign-news/voting-on-un-resolution-for-nuclear-ban-treaty/

27. www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/22/donald-trump-vladimir-putin-signal-renewal-nuclear-arms-race/

4. UN peacekeeping

UN peacekeeping represents one of the most effective and proven methods for developing and maintaining global peace and security. Recently appalling acts committed by a minority of peacekeepers have brought peacekeeping into disrepute, but its value remains considerable.²⁸

The United Kingdom has a commendable track record on UN peacekeeping. The UK has for some time been one of the largest financial contributors, and used to be one of the largest contributors of troops.²⁹ Troop numbers have been smaller in recent decades, but last year the UK pledged to double its total number of peacekeepers with a deployment of 370 troops to Somalia and South Sudan.

However, the UK is able to play a greater role. Its military is the fifth largest in the world by spending,³⁰ and it has a relative lack of other active deployments, meaning there is capacity for the UK to contribute more troops. Yet the United Kingdom provides less than one per cent of the UN's total uniformed personnel. This represents a missed opportunity

A revised approach to peacekeeping would help achieve a more meaningful contribution. Since the UK's doctrine for peacekeeping missions was replaced by a NATO document in 2014,³¹ there has been no formal document in which the UK puts forward a distinct rationale and approach to UN peace operations. While the absence of any specific rationale for peacekeeping weakens the ability of the Ministry of Defence to generate forces for UN missions. A formal statement on the UK's approach would help add clarity.

Such a move would support the increasingly complicated world in which peacekeepers operate. The nature of UN peacekeeping is changing considerably³² and future missions will require not just sufficient numbers of troops but troops of sufficient quality. The UK has at its disposal armed forces well suited to provide peacekeepers with the experience, discipline and rapid deployment capabilities that future missions will require: adaptable forces trained to deliver overseas engagement and capacity building, specialist logistical units, and units such as the Royal Marines and the Parachute Regiment with an unmatched ability to cross rough terrain.

Beyond committing troops, the UK can look to champion the ideas that will be needed to make peacekeeping fit for the 21st century. Missions need to be designed with the people of the conflict-affected area at the centre, and with a willingness to robustly implement measures to protect them. Greater transparency is needed over what caveats and restrictions countries place upon the troops they deploy. And accountability mechanisms should be established to ensure that peacekeepers guilty of sexual exploitation and abuse do not go unpunished.

Having not contributed significant numbers of troops in recent years, the UK must demonstrate sensitivity and caution in advancing these agendas with other countries that provide troops, but as the UK re-develops its expertise and credibility in peacekeeping it should look to act as an exemplar.

28. <https://www.una.org.uk/MissionJustice>

29. www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/briefing_papers_and_reports/uk_and_un_peace_operations_case_greater_engagement

30. books.sipri.org/files/FS/SIPRIFS1604.pdf

31. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/432647/20150427-DCDC_JDN_5_11_Archived.pdf

32. www.una.org.uk/magazine/3-2016/fog-war

Recommendations

The UK should:

- Articulate a distinct rationale and approach to UN peace operations
- Ensure that the policy and practice of the new UK deployments in Somalia and South Sudan showcase 'people centred' peacekeeping and the robust implementation of a 'Protection of Civilians' mandate, including by demonstrating transparency when it comes to the caveats attached to troop deployments
- Consider how it can strengthen peacekeeping at the UN with an emphasis on improving the UN's rapid response capacity
- Lead calls for victim-centred accountability mechanisms to ensure peacekeepers guilty of sexual exploitation and abuse do not go unpunished

5. Preventing atrocities

There is no greater test of our international system than its record when it comes to preventing atrocities. Atrocities – genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing – demonstrate humanity at its worst. Such acts are abhorrent and the antithesis of the global system of rules and laws upon which we all rely.

The world's record on preventing atrocities is poor, but over time past failures have produced a set of tools to guide the international community's response. These tools are collectively known as the "Responsibility to Protect (R2P)". R2P consists of a series of policies and measures split across three "pillars". The first pillar outlines a state's own responsibilities. The second tasks the international community to support the state in meeting these responsibilities. If, however, the state manifestly fails to protect its own civilians, the third pillar is activated: the international community can use peaceful means to encourage action, and if this is unsuccessful, they may resort to the responsible, proportionate and collective use of force to ensure that civilians are protected.

But R2P is rarely about military action. It is about states living up to their obligations towards the helpless victims of war, and global powers like the UK taking a leadership role, in particular at the UN Security Council, to ensure that this happens. It is about adopting sanctions or convening peace talks, or – more fundamentally – about accepting refugees and supporting reform and development to help states protect civilians.

The doctrine of R2P emerged from lobbying led by the global South: the African Union and the governments of Benin and Cameroon.³³ But the UK can be proud of its role in supporting the adoption of the concept in 2005 by publicly endorsing it. Since then, the UK has continued to engage with the principle, for example, by appointing an R2P point-person within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and by indicating support for restraint in the use of the veto by permanent members of the Security Council in atrocity situations, an integral part of making R2P more effective.

Frustratingly, most debate on the subject has concentrated on R2P's coercive elements. Our research suggests that having enthusiastically cited R2P when backing the use of force in Libya in 2011, the UK now feels that the term is politically problematic and has thus refrained from presenting its work on preventing atrocities in R2P terms. However, such an approach overestimates the extent to which other countries feel the term is tainted; most member states remain deeply committed to improving and enhancing the still emerging doctrine.³⁴ 52 Security Council resolutions passed since the Libyan intervention have referenced R2P.³⁵

As a permanent member of the Security Council, the prevention of atrocity crimes is a UK responsibility and warrants greater attention than it has been given in recent years. The UK's present action on R2P does not meet UN best practice. No NSS/SDSR document has ever mentioned atrocity prevention. The UK needs to overcome its reticence towards R2P and champion responsible action to prevent atrocity crimes. Elevating the role of the R2P focal point to ministerial level would help ensure that this takes place.

Recommendations

The UK should:

- Declare the prevention of atrocity crimes to be a foreign policy priority and mention R2P in its speeches and Security Council interventions on situations where there is a significant risk of atrocity crimes
- Strengthen its R2P strategy by ensuring it is coordinated by a ministerial point person with sufficiently resources to support best practice
- Champion the "code of conduct" put forward by the ACT group of countries, whereby UN member states voluntarily agree to not veto action on issues relating to atrocity crimes

33. *Mass Atrocity Crimes: Preventing Future Outrages*, edited by Robert I. Rotberg

34. www.una.org.uk/sites/default/files/From%20promise%20to%20practice%20-%20strengthening%20the%20UK's%20approach%20to%20atrocity%20prevention%20and%20R2P.pdf

35. <http://www.globalr2p.org/resources/335>

Conclusion

In this period of increased domestic and global uncertainty, the UN is more valuable than ever. Concerted UK action to invest in the health of the rules-based international system will be required to maintain the UK's influence on the world stage and to realise the Government's vision of a "bold new positive role".³⁶

Outside of the European Union a greater proportion of the UK's diplomatic activity is set to be channelled through the UN. Therefore, Britain's stake in the health of the Organisation is set to increase.

A comprehensive strategy should be established by the UK to ensure that policy decisions are consistent with the need to support and strengthen the international system. This should involve: cross-departmental work to support the UN; a greater awareness of the extent to which Britain's own conduct affects the health of the international system; a deepening of the debate around foreign policy issues through sustained civil society engagement; and a strengthening of the UK's diplomatic capacity. The upheaval of the UK's international arrangements necessitated by Brexit increases the requirement to adopt such a strategy.

Over the course of the next year UNA-UK, together with its nationwide network of supporters, will support the British Government in pursuing a principled, joined-up foreign policy, and will monitor the UK's performance in our five identified test areas.

A patriotic vision for a 21st century Britain should embrace the UK's contribution to the world and the associated benefits. And it should recognise that "taking back control" requires a greater, not lesser, degree of collaboration with our neighbours and allies.

Public support for this agenda is crucial. UNA-UK urges the British Government to work with civil society to help stimulate a national dialogue on the "Britishness" of institutions like the UN, and foster debate with people from all walks of life on the benefits of Keeping Britain Global.

³⁶ Prime Minister, Theresa May, speaking outside Number 10 Downing Street, July 13, 2016.

Recommendations

The following is an aggregation of recommendations made in this report, including opportunities for action in the five areas identified by UNA-UK as a proving ground for the sincerity of the UK's commitment to the rules-based international system.

Top-level recommendations

The UK should:

1. Develop a cross-departmental strategy for strengthening the UN and the rules-based international system that it serves, with a focus on supporting the new Secretary-General – including by championing UN effectiveness through merit-based senior appointments, and on seeking to keep British allies engaged, active and coordinated at the Organisation
2. Acknowledge the extent to which Britain's own conduct affects the health of the Leaders should seek to set out an inspiring, patriotic vision of a global Britain, with policies that support the international system and an outward-looking UK. They should take responsibility for ensuring that this is reflected across the actions of all departments of Government. and that spokespeople refrain from anti-internationalist rhetoric
3. Deepen public and civil society engagement on foreign policy issues, including by enhancing the Global Britain Fund, to support educational and outreach programmes that demonstrate the value of international organisations to UK citizens
4. Recognise the central role that must be played by UK diplomatic networks if Britain is to sustain or expand its influence on the world stage. This should include maintaining its 0.7 per cent GNI on Official Development Assistance, and increasing funding to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with an emphasis on operations that support work at the UN-level as the UK's role on the Security Council, and relations outside the European Union, become more important

On arms control

The UK should:

- Implement the Arms Trade Treaty to a consistently high standard, refraining from conduct which undermines the Treaty, including by ceasing arms exports to countries where there is concern that they will be used to commit war crimes and human rights violations
- Articulate a clear and coherent policy on its use of armed drones for counter-terrorism purposes, both within and outside the context of armed conflict – with mechanisms for parliamentary scrutiny and accountability
- Publish a detailed policy on its approach to autonomy in weapons systems, and take on a more active role in international fora to build consensus for an international framework to control the development and deployment of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

On human rights

The UK should:

- Ensure that any changes to human rights law serve to strengthen, not weaken, universal human rights protections in the United Kingdom and should refrain from introducing any human rights exemptions based on extra-territoriality
- Take steps to strengthen the Human Rights Council and engage constructively with all UN human rights mechanisms, including UN Special Procedures, and serve as an example to other states as recommended in our recent report

On nuclear disarmament

The UK should:

- Take unmistakable actions to improve diplomatic relations between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states by participating in negotiations and stimulating dialogue
- Work energetically to restore the health of the NPT regime, including by initiating an inclusive process to work on the 2010 64-point Action Plan and by publish an annual report on the UK's contribution to its implementation
- Breathe life into the 'P5 Process' talks between the nuclear weapon states including by strengthening their agenda and increasing their transparency.
- Review the prominence given to nuclear weapons in the UK's security doctrines in close consultation with parliament and civil society
- Use the opportunity of the 2018 UN High Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament to highlight UK leadership and progress on this issue

On UN peacekeeping

The UK should:

- Articulate a distinct rationale and approach to UN peace operations
- Ensure that the policy and practice of the new UK deployments in Somalia and South Sudan showcase ‘people centred’ peacekeeping and the robust implementation of a ‘Protection of Civilians’ mandate, including by demonstrating transparency when it comes to the caveats attached to troop deployments
- Consider how it can strengthen peacekeeping at the UN with an emphasis on improving the UN’s rapid response capacity
- Lead calls for victim-centred accountability mechanisms to ensure peacekeepers guilty of sexual exploitation and abuse do not go unpunished

On preventing atrocities

The UK should:

- Declare the prevention of atrocity crimes to be a foreign policy priority and mention R2P in its speeches and Security Council interventions on situations where there is a significant risk of atrocity crimes
- Strengthen its R2P strategy by ensuring it is coordinated by a ministerial point person with sufficiently resources to support best practice
- Champion the “code of conduct” put forward by the ACT group of countries, whereby UN member states voluntarily agree to not veto action on issues relating to atrocity crimes.



UNA-UK

The United Nations Association – UK (UNA-UK) is the UK's leading source of independent analysis on the UN and a vibrant grassroots movement campaigning for a safer, fairer and more sustainable world.

To find out more and to join our growing movement, **visit www.una.org.uk**

UNA-UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee (no. 1146016). UNA-UK is not part of the UN.