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Australia's Readiness for Peace Operations

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About the author

Josie Hornung is a PhD candidate in International Relations at the University of Queensland, Australia. She was awarded 2019 AEUIFAI Postgraduate Research Fellowship to study at the European University Institute in Florence and recently completed a visiting PhD student fellowship at the University of Oxford. She is broadly interested in mass atrocity prevention and her research looks at the decision-making process that has historically led to action or inaction in the face of imminent mass atrocities (such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing).

The Australian Civil-Military Centre hosts internships from several Australian Universities with the goal to engage students from undergraduate to PhD with civil-military-police and whole-of-government interaction as part of their studies. As part of her PhD Program, Josie Hornung was required to undertake a placement outside of the University of Queensland. The Australian Civil-Military Centre operates a bespoke internship program as a Department of Defence Work Experience Placement for Tertiary Students.

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The views expressed in this Civil-Military-Police Occasional Paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Australian Civil-Military Centre or of any government agency. Authors enjoy the academic freedom to offer new and sometimes controversial perspectives in the interest of furthering debate on key issues.

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Australia's Readiness for Peace Operations

Australia has a proud history of participating in and leading Peace Operations. From the first United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission in 1947 to the regional stabilization missions of the early 2000s, Australia has shown it is willing to assist affected countries.

This paper seeks to assess Australia's current levels of preparedness for Peace Operations and to discuss the opportunities and challenges that have arisen in this space since Australia's last major engagement—the Indo-Pacific Peace Operations of the early-mid 2000s. This paper seeks to evaluate whether Australia is sufficiently ready to 'stand up' a peace operation quickly from an operational point of view, and in a whole of government manner. The evidence underpinning the paper is derived from a series of informal conversations undertaken in July 2019 with subject-matter experts from the Australian Federal Police (AFP), Australian Defence Force (ADF), government and non-government sectors. It will first discuss Australia's readiness for Peace Operations in terms of personnel capabilities and training. Then, it will reflect on the challenges and opportunities drawn out of the conversations. Finally, it will offer some reflections and policy recommendations.

An important first step in considering Australia's readiness on Peace Operations is to assess its preparedness for responding to crises. Readiness is the *raison d'être* of the military, and evaluating readiness is a crucial first step in assessing crisis preparedness. It is here that the distinction between types of Peace Operations becomes important. Australia must be prepared for the spectrum of peace operations, and the related implications for readiness depending on what form the operation takes. As such, this project took a broad interpretation to capture the range of responses that Australia may be called on to make. Peace Operations can range from regionally led stabilization missions such as the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) to observer missions such as Operation Mazurka in the Sinai, to UN-led peacekeeping operations such as UN's Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). The difference is largely in terms of the mandate for action; however, strategic direction and resourcing are also affected by the differences in definition. In regionally-led missions, nations or coalitions of nations maintain much higher levels of control over the operation. Though Peace Operations take different forms, the objective of each type of operation is ultimately to maintain international peace and security and the conduct of individuals engaged on the ground is not significantly different. The difference is primarily at the level of mandate, strategy, and resourcing.

Australia's current readiness to engage in Peace Operations seems mixed. Until recently, Australia was a world leader in Peace Operations policing. During its time on the UN Security Council in 2014, Australia championed police peacekeeping and secured the first-ever UN Security Council resolution focused on UN policing (r.2185). Australia also has deep levels of experience gained in regional stabilization missions such as RAMSI. Since then, however, its commitment and capability specific to undertaking UN-led Peace Operations appear to have faded. The capability shortfall ranges from a lack of basic understanding of how the UN system works (e.g. the effect of a UNSC mandate on the rules of engagement, and how the chain of command works in a UN mission) to a lack of specific UN-mandated

pre-deployment training (which used to be but is no longer integrated into the ADF training continuum). It would be a fair assumption to expect that the limited familiarity of ADF personnel to operate within a UN mission would extend to tactical impact on the ground. Although these shortfalls do not specifically impact non-UN Peace Operation readiness, it still represents a significant gap in readiness.

The Asia-Pacific region has some of the highest troop-contributing countries to UN Peace Operations in the world and several of our neighbours have invested heavily in domestic Peace Operations training centres and UN engagement on Peace Operations training. In Australia, the majority of the ADF's current engagement with UN Peace Operations is through its own Peace Operations Training Centre (POT-C). Through POT-C, Australia is keen to position itself to be a regional leader in UN pre-deployment training. However, our neighbours hold crucial recent mission experience that the ADF lacks. Many of those Australians who have actual Peace Operations experience have now moved on in their careers, often out of the ADF and AFP. Added to this, the nature of Peace Operations has dramatically changed since the last major Australian-led UN Peace Operation into Timor-Leste over 20 years ago. While Australia might have aspirations as a regional leader in this field, its ability to do so is weakened by the diminishing pool of Australian officers with Peace Operations experience, and the growth of its regional neighbours' capacity for more modern UN Peacekeeping than it appears prepared for. Indeed, the latest generation of Australian soldier is unlikely to have any field experience at all. Given this disjuncture, there is an opportunity to draw on regional nations and Australia's comparative advantages more effectively. Where Australia lacks field experience, it has a highly-skilled, highly-trained military who can assist its neighbours in improving their performance.

Given that ADF's engagement with Peace Operations is currently focused on training through POT-C, it was interesting to learn that the now mandatory UN Pre-Deployment training is not part of the regular training continuum for ADF members. This scenario is unlikely but if another UN Peace Operation on the scale of Timor-Leste were to be suddenly stood up in the region, the ADF would face problems since they would need to quickly conduct this now mandatory UN pre-deployment training on large numbers of troops. Given that POT-C contains a small number of qualified trainers, a 'train the trainers' was mooted as the solution in this scenario, but it would be time-consuming, and the delay caused could certainly result in poorer outcomes for the mission. The readiness of the ADF to deploy quickly to a Peace Operation is complicated by a lack of institutional readiness to train large numbers of troops pre-deployment.

Peace Operations, particularly in our region, often contain significant and essential policing and rule of law components. Australia's policing contribution to Peace Operations has also taken a backseat in recent years. In 2015, the International Deployment Group (IDG) of the AFP faced a significant internal restructure. This group was a highly trained and highly specialized unit focused on the particular challenges of police peacekeeping that are distinct from the day to day work of the AFP. Of course, internal restructuring is a consistent feature of government, and at the time the perception was that the role would no longer be required in an environment of limited AFP resources. However, what was lost was the readiness to deploy quickly, as training in those essential and particular skills was

removed from AFP training. The result is that if a crisis requiring Peace Operations policing arose, AFP note that they can and would deploy, but it would not be sustainable long-term. For a police contribution to a Peace Operations mission would need to be “recruited to”, and specific training would need to be completed by AFP officers before they could be operationally deployed. Given Australia’s current focus on the Pacific, it is most likely that this is where an Australian contingent would be deployed if the need arose. Police networks are much more prevalent in the region than militaries, too, which means the AFP is more likely to be called on than the ADF to respond to a crisis. While AFP maintains extensive community policing and mentoring networks across the region, with 113 AFP members currently embedded across the Pacific, it is already well-situated at the front line of relevant institutions. However, the reality is that any decision to pull these people from these roles to contribute to a Peace Operations mission would be at the cost of existing tasks, and diverting resources from these established tasks to a new line of effort would require time, funding and interrupt other essential work. To put it another way, the AFP does not have built-in ‘fat’ as an organization, and diverting officers to Peace Operations takes them away from anti-drug operations, airport security, institution-building, counter-terrorism or other vital tasks in our region. Currently, Australia has no UN police peacekeepers deployed, despite previously ranking near the top in the world in terms of this commitment. The restructuring of the IDG is a significant blow to the readiness of the AFP to deploy into Peace Operations.

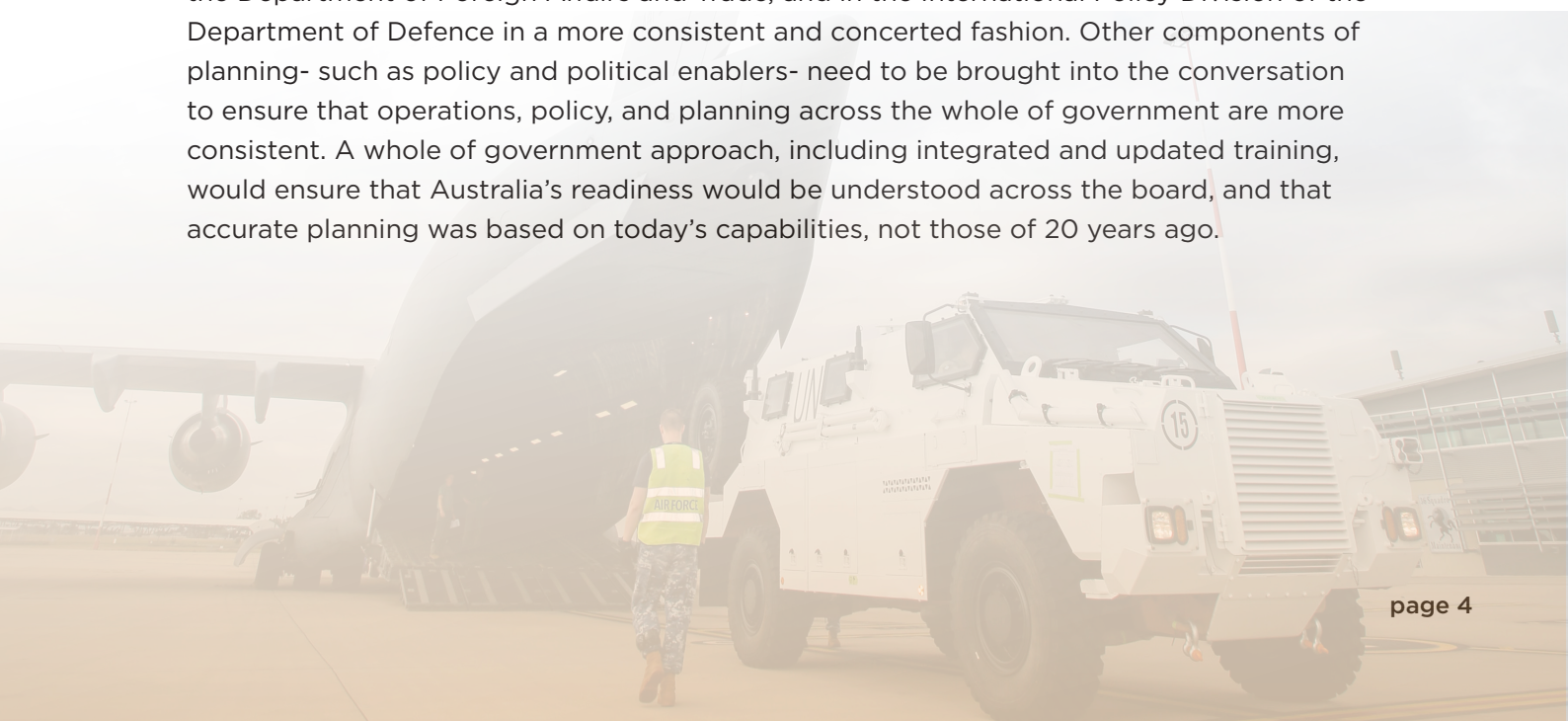
There also seems to be some confusion between key agencies regarding the whole of government capabilities and readiness. For example, the status of the AFP’s IDG is not well known within the ADF (based on discussions with ADF members). Unless the reality of the AFP’s readiness is accurately understood and taken into account by the ADF now, the viability of planning in a real-life crisis is at risk. It was clear from discussions with AFP and ADF members that there is a broad assumption that Australia would be likely to act if something were to happen in the region on the scale of the Solomon Islands or Timor-Leste. What is lacking, however, is the readiness to quickly respond to such a crisis. For example, Peace Operation specific skills are not integrated into large scale military exercises like Talisman Saber, as they reportedly once were. If the transition from warfighting to Peace Operations- or green to blue- is not practiced with Australia’s closest military allies, it may be underprepared should a crisis arise.

Australia has made limited direct personnel contributions to UN Peace Operations missions in the last few years. These contributions were described as ‘below the level of press release’ in my discussions with those involved, and often did not involve the deployment of troops, but rather specialists to fill specific roles. While the numbers may be modest, nonetheless, contributing niche capabilities-known as enabling capabilities by the UN- is considered rare, and is highly valued by the UN Department of Peace Operations. An important example of where Australia has assisted through the provision of such capabilities is in the ‘strategic lift’- using Australian airframes to move large equipment- it gave to Vietnam to deploy its field hospital into UNMISS in 2018. Similarly, the development of guidelines to benchmark medical standards for UN Peacekeeping missions was co-led by Australia, who wrote the English version of the ‘Medical Support Manual’ and sponsored field visits. Australia seems much more comfortable contributing niche capabilities or

expertise than boots on the ground, as is consistent with the ADF force design. While this contribution is valuable, if this posture remains the preference, Australia must realize what is lost by not contributing police officers and troops. Without recent operational experience, Australia loses its legitimacy on the international stage as a Peace Operations trainer and leader. While it has, up until now, rested on the experience gained in Timor-Leste, this experience is increasingly dated. UN missions today are much closer to war-fighting or counter-terrorism operations than they were in the early 2000s when Australia led the Peace Operations in Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands.

Australia also jeopardizes its ability to forward competitive candidates for senior UN positions that require operational experience as a pre-requisite by not contributing police officers and troops. Australia is well respected internationally as providing defence leadership. It is unlikely to ever be a large troop-contributing country, but it would like to be a leadership contributing country. If Australia wants to garner influence and insight through appointments such as MAJGEN Cheryl Pearce's recent appointment to Force Commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, it needs to think and plan more strategically across the whole of government, and to realise what allows Australian candidates to secure UN leadership roles when they are advertised. At the moment, this process is ad hoc. If a strategic leadership pathway was created, however, Australia could leverage its international reputation to great advantage, and continue to be seen as a leader in Peace Operations without needing to contribute thousands, or even hundreds, of boots on the ground. This could be targeted towards areas in which Australia already leads (e.g. championing the Women Peace and Security agenda). There are opportunities for Australia to have a much larger contribution to the UN through leadership, without needing to dramatically increase deployments.

What is lacking with Australia's current Peace Operations readiness is clear: there is no whole of government policy. People working in this area see Australia as a frontrunner in training and leadership for Peace Operations. It seems that this is based on Australia's Peace Operations experience of 15-20 years ago and its standing in the region as a professional, highly-trained defence force. Both of the major institutions involved in Peace Operations in Australia—the AFP and ADF—need to work together with their counterparts in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and in the International Policy Division of the Department of Defence in a more consistent and concerted fashion. Other components of planning—such as policy and political enablers—need to be brought into the conversation to ensure that operations, policy, and planning across the whole of government are more consistent. A whole of government approach, including integrated and updated training, would ensure that Australia's readiness would be understood across the board, and that accurate planning was based on today's capabilities, not those of 20 years ago.



Recommendations:

- Expand provision of niche capabilities to UN Missions. This will allow Australia to fulfil its commitment to the rules-based international order, as well as gain operational experience for the ADF and AFP. This experience can tie into the development of a strategic career pathway so that Australia can competitively target leadership roles within the UN. Pathways could be aligned with Australia's strengths such as within the Women Peace and Security agenda with the creation of ADF training for gender advisers.
- Review regional readiness for Peace Operations with Australia's partners in the Pacific. Such a review could be integrated with regional training that is currently being undertaken by POT-C and AFP could focus on what the response would look like and how each country would contribute if a crisis was to occur in the Pacific region. Integrating table-top exercise (TTX) or scenario planning as the second stage of existing large-scale military exercises could assist in planning and preparing to respond effectively as a region to a crisis. Including AFP objectives into military exercises in the region is essential to this operational context.
- Explore opportunities to deploy with other Five Eyes partners. The UK recently announced a significant expansion of its troops deployed to UNMISS. A frequent reason given for Australia's low level of deployment has been that UN missions can't guarantee a NATO/Five Eyes standard of medical support for its peacekeepers. If Australia was to embed with the UK (for example in UNMISS), this concern could be mitigated. Similar opportunities exist for police connections within a five-eyes context.



