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PEACE & CONFLICT

Corruption & peacekeeping

Strengthening peacekeeping
and the United Nations

Executive summary

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**“We should be entitled
to have effective
peacekeeping without
waste, without
corruption, and without
mismanagement”**

John Bolton, Former US Ambassador to the UN



Embargoed until 9 October, 3pm New York time

Executive summary

This report articulates the need for the UN and its Member States to initiate a serious discussion on how to consider addressing corruption in the context of peacekeeping.

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THE PROBLEM

Corruption is both a cause and a consequence of conflict. Conflicts and revolutions may start because of the excesses of ruling regimes and they perpetuate when corruption becomes more deeply entrenched, so that the warring parties benefit from continuing the conflict and actively seek to prolong it. Corruption is also a consequence of conflict in that it can destroy already weak institutions and potentially expand to compromise the integrity of a state. This is often fuelled by post-conflict money flows, the influence of organised crime or as a result of a post-conflict peace deal entrenching corrupt factions.

Peacekeeping forces coming into such environments have the difficult job of making progress despite the endemically high levels of corruption.

Yet explicit guidance on corruption is largely absent from almost everything to do with peacekeeping. There is no general UN Peacekeeping policy relating to corruption. Peacekeeping mandates rarely, if ever, mention it and peacekeeping training centres currently do not include specific training on how to identify risk or address corruption. The 157-page DPKO-OROLSI 'Planning Toolkit for Peacekeeping Missions' mentions corruption just five times, typically as a general caution or afterthought on 'governance'. There is a sense among peacekeeping and foreign policy professionals that—because corruption is difficult—it is better to adapt and to cope with it than to recognise it more formally and address it.



Peacekeeping forces have the difficult job of making progress despite the endemically high levels of corruption. Photo credit: UN Photo/Staton Winter

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This is an almost universal mental model for diplomats, policy-makers and peacekeeping practitioners. Policy analysts, for example, did not anticipate the emergence of the Arab Spring in 2010, despite signs of growing social discontent with governments that was significantly provoked by endemic corruption. Equally, it was only after nine years of international military involvement in Afghanistan—one of the largest interventions in history—that even modest international action on corruption started to take place.

In addition, there is an internal dimension to corruption risks. Whilst peacekeeping missions are expected to behave with integrity themselves, their record is replete with instances where they have directly contributed to increased corruption levels either by the misdeeds of a few individuals or a failure to understand the consequences. UN oversight institutions also have a poor record of investigating and prosecuting corruption.

The issue is, of course, not an easy one. Peacekeeping forces have to balance a number of competing goals and objectives. They may have no option but to work with local actors involved in corruption in order to help stabilise a particular region. Yet they must also consider the reputational implications; it is never politically easy to 'accept' a given level of corruption and doing so can compromise the success of the force and of its mandate.

But the fact that the issue is difficult does not mean it should be ignored. The actors involved can and should do better. In particular:

- This report articulates the need for the UN and its Member States to initiate a serious discussion on how to consider corruption in the context of peacekeeping missions.
- It goes on to suggest a framework for doing this. While tackling corruption early on may increase the complexity of the early stages of a mission, it is likely to pay dividends in terms of subsequent institution building and stability. It is in the UN's self-interest to get this right so that the outcomes are improved and can be delivered at a lower cost both to the host nation and the international community as a whole.
- The UN needs to be more accountable internally in relation to corruption, and needs to strengthen its system of internal oversight.

TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Since 2004, Transparency International UK's Defence and Security Programme (TI- DSP) has actively engaged defence and security ministries, armed forces, police, defence contractors, and peacekeepers to counter corruption in the defence and security sectors. Our emphasis has been on practical measures that reduce corruption risk, each of them trialled in a real-world national environment. Our work is designed to aid policy-makers and those engaged with managing defence and security institutions to increase transparency and accountability, recognise the threat posed by corruption, and encourage the development of 'clean' establishments.

The main authors of this report are experienced policy-makers and practitioners in anti-corruption, in peacekeeping, and in post-conflict environments.

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THE WAY FORWARD

The UN needs to put in place systems that enable peacekeeping missions to contribute to a reduction of corruption in conflict and post-conflict situations in the host nation. Staff members should also have more clarity on what to do and more accessibility to the tools that will help them achieve this. These new systems need to be codified into the following:

- policies, rules and regulations on recognising risk and addressing corruption
- guidance on what peacekeeping forces may or may not do in corrupt situations
- training requirements for Special Representatives of the Secretary General (SRSGs), their staff, and peacekeeping forces
- a strengthened system of oversight

Taking corruption explicitly into account in a mission represents a change from the way things operate today. But given that the anatomy of conflict and our understanding of it have changed, reform is essential. In addition, public engagement and participation have brought the issue of corruption to the forefront more than ever before. Whilst it will no doubt take a lot of effort to put such systems into place, it will strengthen the UN's reputation and lead to more durable and lasting peacekeeping outcomes at lower overall cost to the host nation and for the international community.

Work by Transparency International UK's Defence and Security Programme and others in the field has shown many ways in which the issue of corruption can be better recognised and better addressed than it is today.

In this report we first present a new way of distinguishing and categorising corruption issues that afflict a peacekeeping mission and the host nation. This helps frame the discussion and allows guidance material to be developed that is practical and constructive, rather than being simply descriptive of the problem.

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We lay out a typology of the corruption risks in peacekeeping. This typology is structured around five different areas of corruption risk:

1. corruption risk arising from the political settlement framework
2. corruption risk arising in the troop contributing countries
3. corruption risk within the Mission and emerging from it
4. corruption risks in central UN Peacekeeping procurement
5. the quality of local and central oversight, whistleblowing and investigation of corruption allegations

These five categories are then further broken down into specific corruption risk areas, as shown in the typology opposite. Each of these risks is discussed in the report, with examples from past missions.

FIGURE 1 | PEACEKEEPING CORRUPTION RISKS TYPOLOGY

28 Peacekeeping corruption risks		
POLITICAL FRAMEWORK	MISSION OPERATIONS	OVERSIGHT
Mandate	Bribery	Central oversight
Settlement	Theft	Field oversight
Mission planning	Trust funds	Whistle-blowing
Conduction of operations in a corrupt environment	Natural resource exploitation	Investigations
TROOP CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES	Field procurement	CENTRAL PROCUREMENT
Selection of troops & police	Sexual exploitation & abuse	Single sourcing
TCC/PCC reimbursement	Exploitation of local staff	Agents/brokers
Mission subsistence allowance	Withdrawal of mission	Vendor selection
Skimming of salaries	Asset disposal	Collusive bidders
Contingent owned equipment	Central procurement	Information broking

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RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no ‘one-size-fits-all solution’ to the problem of corruption in peacekeeping. However, a passive approach, in which corruption is seen as an inevitable part of the context in which the mission must operate, is insufficient. We believe that many in the UN and peacekeeping worlds agree.

Failure to act allows corruption to become more deeply embedded alongside organised crime at both a local and transnational level. Taking a more robust line on corruption will have a significant and positive impact on mission capability, and thus on the success of a peacekeeping mission in achieving its mandate.

The study suggests a policy framework that the UN can develop and adapt for its own use. This framework consists of a clear statement of UN policy towards recognising corruption, guidance and training requirements, and a more independent and professionalised UN oversight capability.

There are eight actions we suggest the UN can undertake to prevent corruption confronting its peacekeeping missions:

1. The UN Secretary General should make a strong statement of UN Policy towards recognising the threat posed by corruption.

This should address the need to prevent corruption arising within the mission and from mission operations, and to stop embedding corruption more deeply in the host nation. The UN, through the Secretary General, should make clear how the Organisation views corruption and peacekeeping, failing-state and other

conflict and post-conflict environments, and how it will develop and implement the necessary action and guidance in its various operations.

The development of this statement and accompanying practical guidance could take various forms: from the most high-profile route of a Security Council Resolution, as was the case for mainstreaming Gender; through to a Guidance Note of the Secretary General supported by the development of appropriate policy documentation. Clearly this will need the support and approval of Member States as has been the case in addressing other cross-cutting issues such as sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) or gender.

2. In the light of this report Member States should consider how they can contribute to strengthening the UN’s ability to understand endemic corruption and its implications.

This will enable peacekeeping missions to implement mandates more effectively and to draw lessons for their own participation in peacekeeping operations. Member States are part of several initiatives, such as the Challenges Forum where better approaches to peacekeeping are already being discussed. They could also stimulate a debate outside formal UN structures on countering corruption confronting peacekeeping missions that could assist the development of the policy referred to above, and possibly lead to a resolution in the UN General Assembly.

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3. The UN should prepare Guidance on how to approach corruption issues in the design of the Settlement and Mission Mandate.

This guidance should be specific for each of the stages of the mandate: before it begins, for its adoption, and for its negotiating and implementation phases (details on page 53 of the report).

4. The UN Secretariat should prepare guidance for Special Representatives of the Secretary General (SRSGs), their staff and peacekeeping forces on addressing corruption in implementing mandates.

Guidance should also address host nation corruption issues and their impacts on the mission. It should address corruption inside Mission operations, and recognise host nation corruption issues and their impact on the Mission.

5. Guidance should be prepared on all areas where there is corruption risk.

This should include selection of troops and police, troop contributing countries (TCC) and police contributing countries (PCC) reimbursement, and Mission Subsistence Allowance (MSA), amongst others.

6. The UN Secretariat should establish training requirements for SRSGs, their staff and peacekeeping to recognise and limit corruption risk.

There is an extensive network of training centres for peacekeeping and peace support operations. Until recently, however, none of these had conducted specific training on corruption risk, either as a stand-alone topic or in conjunction with related topics.



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Photo credit: UN Photo/Marie Frechon

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At a more senior level, relevant counter-corruption training should be included in the UN Senior Mission Leaders' Course for prospective senior appointees, the Senior Leader Programme run for senior appointees and as part of the induction programme for newly appointed SRSGs.

7. The UN should establish a more independent and professionalised oversight and investigation capability. Work is underway in a number of areas designed to improve the UN's oversight and investigation capability.

Internal UN bodies such as the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), the Ethics Office and other Secretariat departments have been involved in this for a number of years. However, this activity has not resulted in a more independent, transparent and professional system. Nor has the UN yet fully absorbed the lessons learned by other organisations such as the World Bank. Internal discussions inevitably generate internal conflict and ineffective compromise. Despite recent specific initiatives involving OIOS, the JIU and the UN Ethics Office, the Secretary-General should commission a strategic review by an outside organisation designed to establish a clear direction of travel and take the best of the progress already made. Civil society organisations and others with a professional interest in counter-corruption work should be asked to contribute to this review.

The UN Secretariat should strengthen mechanisms through which concerns—whether raised by UN staff, peacekeepers or host nation citizens—can be reported locally and followed up in a transparent and robust way.

8. The UN must initiate a serious and focused discussion on corruption and practical anti-corruption measures.

Although it is the UN which should initiate the debate and be prepared to implement the outcome, it may be that most of the detailed discussion would be best conducted outside the formal framework of the Organisation. This could follow the example of work facilitated by Liechtenstein on the definition of 'aggression', where moving a difficult debate away from established UN forums produced results.

The UN should invite NGOs to join this discussion, as they are both part of the solution and sometimes part of the problem. They can also advise on how best to strengthen host nation civil society in encouraging the reporting of corruption concerns.

We hope that as a result, Peacekeeping Missions will become more effective, and the UN will become more attuned to recognising corruption as a business-critical issue. The Organisation should also become more accountable to its Member States and to the nations hosting peacekeeping and other conflict-related missions.

Peacekeeping Missions will become more effective if the UN becomes more attuned to corruption as a business-critical issue.

**Transparency International UK's
Defence and Security Programme
works to reduce corruption in
defence and security worldwide.**

**We engage with governments,
armed forces, security forces,
defence companies, civil society
and others to advance this goal.**

**We provide new tools, practical
reforms, benchmarks and research
to enable change.**

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