

Contributor Profile: The Republic of Serbia

Prof. Timothy Edmunds
University of Bristol

Marko Milošević
Belgrade Centre for Security Policy

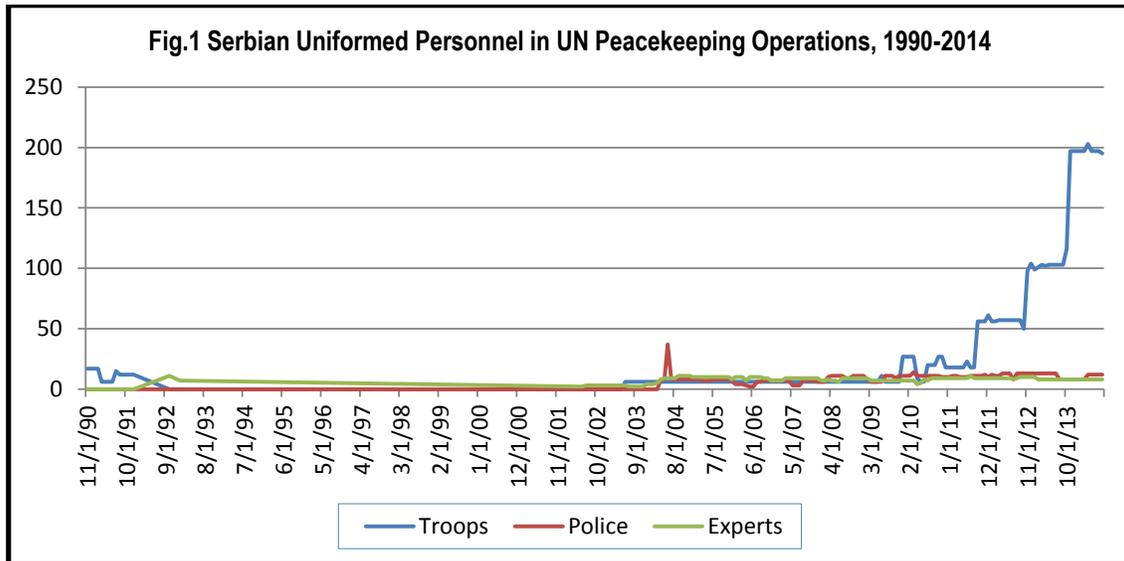
Active Armed Forces ¹	Helicopters	Defense Budget	Uniformed UN Peacekeepers	UN Contribution Breakdown ²	Other Significant Deployments ³
28,150 World Ranking (size): 78 Army: ⁴ 13,250 Air: 5,100 Training Command: 3,000 Guards: 1,600 MoD: 5,200	Attack: 2 Multi-role: 51 Transport: 7 med	2011: \$975m (2.12% of GDP) 2012: \$841m (2.25% of GDP) 2013: \$681m (1.58% of GDP)	215 (9 female) (31 Aug. 2014) Ranking: 51 st	MINUSTAH 4 police MONUSCO 6 troops UNMIL 10 (6 police; 4 milex) UNOCI 3 milex UNFICYP 48 (2 police; 46 troops) UNIFIL 143 troops UNTSO 1 milex	OSCE Kyrgyzstan (1) EUNAVFOR (4) EUTM Somalia (5)
Defense Spending / troop: ⁵ US\$24,547 (compared to global average of approx. US\$70,000)					

Part 1: Recent Trends

Since 2002 Serbia has steadily re-engaged with UN-led peacekeeping after a period of international isolation and hiatus in the 1990s. Serbian military and police personnel have been deployed to eight UN-led operations in this time. Serbian contributions have been relatively modest, though increasingly ambitious over time. The two largest Serbian contingents are a 143-strong contingent in UNIFIL consisting of several staff officers and an infantry company (with an additional platoon for security purposes to be deployed imminently), and a 48-strong deployment to UNFICYP, including an infantry platoon, observers and a staff officer. Individuals from the Serbian Armed Forces (SAF) have also participated in EUNAVFOR Somalia and EUTM Somalia since 2012. Since 2008, the Ministry of Interior has also contributed one policeman on a rolling basis to the OSCE mission in Kyrgyzstan (where 5 have served to date). Serbian peacekeepers have not yet been able to deploy in an independent capacity at battalion level, but have been attached to or integrated within other national contingents (such as the Hungarian-Slovak contingent in UNFICYP and the Spanish contingent in UNIFIL).

Serbia's contribution to UN peacekeeping follows the fall of authoritarian president Slobodan Milošević in 2001 and has paralleled the country's wider efforts towards democratic reform and closer integration with European institutions. As part of this process, successive governments have pursued the reform and modernization of the country's armed forces, police and security services, an endeavor which has gathered pace since the (peaceful) separation of Serbia and Montenegro into two independent states in 2006, although it slowed recently in the face of the European economic downturn. As of 2014, the armed forces have been reduced considerably in size (from 105,500 in 2001 to 28,150 today), were placed under democratic civilian control, and embarked on a process of restructuring from a conscript to an all-volunteer force. While funding remains severely constrained, a [National Defence Strategy](#) (2009), a [National Security Strategy](#) (NSS) (2009) and a [White Paper on Defence](#) (2010) all point the way towards a smaller, more professional SAF in the future, with a continued commitment to participate in UN, EU or OSCE-led peacekeeping operations. Serbia signed a

[Framework agreement with the EU](#) on participation in crisis management operations in June 2011 and a [Memorandum of Understanding with the UN to commit a military contingent to the United Nations Standby Arrangements System](#) in November 2011. In early elections held in March 2014, Serbia elected a nationalist government under the dominance of the right wing Serbian Progressive party), which has reaffirmed the country’s intention to contribute further to UN and EU missions.



Part 2: Decision-Making Process

The decision-making process for deploying Serbian troops and police to multinational operations takes place within a strict legislative framework. Key documents include the [Law on Police](#) (2005), the [Law on Defense](#) (2007) and, most recently and importantly, the [Law on the Engagement of the Serbian Armed Forces and other Defence Forces in Multinational Operations outside the Republic of Serbia Borders](#) (LMNO) (2009). Civil and police contributions are covered by the [Law on Emergency Situations](#) (2009) and [Law on Foreign Affairs](#) (2007). The deployment of the SAF and other actors to multinational operations is decided on the basis of an Annual Engagement Plan (AEP) (Article 8, 140, LMNO). The AEP is prepared by the MoD (and/or Ministry of Interior (MoI) for police) and proposed by the government for final approval by the Serbian parliament (National Assembly). The National Assembly may also approve the engagement of SAF personnel in multinational operations abroad in ways not envisaged by the AEP “provided [the] security or humanitarian situation ... has considerably deteriorated” (Article 8, LMNO). “Exceptionally,” the government may approve the participation of Serbian defense forces in specifically “humanitarian operations” not envisaged by the AEP in the case of urgent natural disasters and crisis situations.

Parliamentary responsibility for the deployment of police or other civilian representatives to multinational operations is somewhat less clear, at least with regard to deployments that fall outside of the AEP process. Article 8 of the Law only specifies the need for National Assembly approval “of the participation of SAF personnel in multinational operations,” while article 10 states that decisions on the engagement of police and other actors which fall outside the AEP are the responsibility of the government and so potentially not subject to parliamentary oversight.

Part 3: Rationales for Contributing

Serbian attitudes towards UN peacekeeping are influenced by a conflicted historical legacy. On the one hand, many Serbs look back proudly to the important peacekeeping contribution made by the armed forces of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), including the participation of over 14,000 SFRY troops in UNEF 1 over 22 rotations. On the other, as part of the former-Yugoslavia, Serbia found itself on the wrong side of UNPROFOR in the 1990s and faced direct military action by NATO during the Kosovo war of 1999. These experiences have left a deep suspicion of military intervention in general and outright hostility towards all external engagement in the Kosovo question.

Political and Security Rationales: Political and security rationales are prominent in justifying Serbian participation in UN-peacekeeping, though these are not linked in any systematic way to foreign policy goals. “Cooperation and partnership with international security organizations...” is identified as one of the three “vital defence interests” of the Republic of one of the four components of Serbian defense in the Law on Defence (Article 5). This is justified on the basis that “participation in building and maintaining peace in the region and the world is realized by participating in international military cooperation and multinational operations” ([Defence Strategy](#), p.14). Similar narratives are echoed in the NSS and [White Paper on Defence](#), though it is notable that in all cases these are rather generic and vague in nature. There is no direct linkage in any of the documents between the specific risks and challenges that are seen to characterize the Serbian security environment and the role of multinational operations in meeting these. Participation in peacekeeping also helps demonstrate Serbia’s re-engagement with the norms and practices of European institutions. This connection is not articulated in any formal sense in Serbian foreign policy or security documentation. However, it is implicit in, for example, the country’s [Individual Partnership Action Plan \(IPAP\)](#) with NATO, which includes a commitment to contribute to the UN Standby Arrangement System.

Economic Rationales: Economic rationales for contributing to UN-led missions are relevant at the level of individual participants. The [LMNO](#) outlines some financial benefits for personnel deployed on multinational operations, including a pay increase and increased years of service (with every 12 months deployed counted as 18 months for the purposes of pensions and so on) as well as the standard UN per diem. Peacekeepers are paid for from the national budget rather than defense budget specifically so there may also be some marginal financial advantage to the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior of sending personnel on UN missions. Clearer financial incentives exist for civilian contributions to both UN and EU missions. The UN reimburses part of the costs of such missions, whereas EU (CSDP) does so in full, though the initial budget is the responsibility of each participating state.

Even so, in most cases any such benefits are likely to be outweighed by the organizational costs of preparing personnel for multinational roles. At the individual level, the financial benefits of participation may be outweighed by potential career disincentives for returning personnel of the police. Individual participation in multinational missions has not been formally recognized by nor integrated within the career structure or promotions process, at least to date. In the worst cases, returnees appear to have missed out on promotion opportunities or favorable assignments due to their participation in overseas missions. This has led to a reticence among some personnel to volunteer for multinational operations. On the other hand, and as a consequence of the increasing professionalization of the armed forces, there are signs that these barriers may be lifting and armed forces personnel may increasingly see deployment overseas as beneficial to their careers.

Institutional Rationales: The armed forces of the SFRY had a long tradition of participating in UN peacekeeping. Today's SAF look back fondly to these legacies and their participation in contemporary operations is generally seen as a reference point for their re-emergent professionalism. It is likewise a visible representation of Serbia's international "normalization" after the isolation of the Milošević years. It is also noteworthy that Serbia has recently added a [military adviser](#) post to join the Serbian mission to the UN.

Normative Rationales: Serbian defense documentation emphasizes normative (if generalized) commitments to regional and global peace and security, while the [White Paper on Defence](#) identifies participation in peacekeeping is "an attribute of our responsibility." The [Defence Strategy](#) and [National Security Strategy](#) both prioritize collective security and the maintenance of international order, specifically through a strengthened role for the UN, OSCE and EU.

Part 4: Barriers to Contributing

Alternative institutional preferences for crisis management: Serbia prioritizes the UN, OSCE and EU for crisis management activities.

Alternative political or strategic priorities: Membership in the EU remains a key strategic priority for Serbia, though the EU's popularity amongst the Serbian public has recently declined in response to the European financial crisis. Serbia applied to join the EU in 2009 and was granted official candidate status in 2012. Serbia made its first contributions to EU missions in 2012 and these could increase in significance (Chapter 31) if the accession process gathers pace. Serbia's other main strategic priority concerns the status of Kosovo, with the [National Security Strategy](#) identifying the "unlawfully and unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo" as the "greatest threat to the security of the Republic of Serbia." Under current circumstances, direct Serbian intervention in Kosovo is extremely unlikely and the country is committed to a peaceful solution to the problem with practical steps being taken in negotiations that have increased in pace and seriousness since 2012. However, the issue remains a thorn in the side of Serbia's relationship with the UN and contributes to narratives of Serbian exceptionalism, discussed below.

Financial costs: The Serbian defense budget remains constrained, and has shrunk significantly in recent years (from \$905m in 2011 to \$691m in 2014). UN reimbursements cover much of the cost of Serbian peacekeepers while deployed. However, these do not provide for the structural costs of preparing and training personnel to an adequate standard for multinational operations. In 2014, Serbia allotted 800 million RSD (approx. US\$8.67 million) for peacekeeping missions. This is around 1.25% of budget allotted to one of the military's three core tasks (defense of the country in wartime, participation in peace operations, and helping civilian structures in emergency situations).

Discomfort with the expanding UN peacekeeping agenda: Serbia participates in traditional blue helmet peacekeeping or military observer missions. It is actively opposed to more intrusive forms of intervention, particularly "interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, as well as [the] concept and practice of preventative attacks and military interventionism" ([NSS](#), p.5).

Exceptionalism: Serbian exceptionalism with regard to peacekeeping derives from the country's experiences during the 1990s, particularly the Kosovo war (1999). This manifests

itself as a general suspicion of military interventionism, a continued hostility to the independent status of Kosovo, and the prioritization of bodies such as the UN, OSCE and EU over NATO. To date, Serbia has favored joining with parent contingents for its peacekeepers from states that do not recognize Kosovan independence, though there are increasing indications of greater flexibility on this issue, including under the new nationalist government.

Absence of pressure to contribute: Serbia's small size and recent history means that there is no strong external pressure for it to contribute to peacekeeping operations in any more substantive way than at present, though Serbia's [IPAP](#) with NATO includes a pledge to participate in UNSAS.

Difficult domestic politics: Serbian domestic politics can be heated and polarized between different political factions. In this context, nationalist parties in the Serbian parliament have sometimes opposed Serbian engagement in multinational operations, arguing instead that the government should prioritize the return of the SAF to Kosovo in a peacekeeping capacity, under UN auspices and on the basis of Annex 2 of UN Security Council Resolution 1244.

Even so, in and of itself, peacekeeping is not an especially charged issue in Serbian politics and a strong political (or foreign policy-driven) narrative or debate about participating in such missions is mostly absent. Support for peacekeeping among the Serbian public is lukewarm at best, with a poll in 2013 suggesting that only 38% of respondents had a positive attitude to the deployment of Serbian forces in multinational operations. Furthermore, 57% of respondents were against any monetary allocation for peacekeeping missions.⁶

Resistance in the military: The SAF have a broadly positive view of peacekeeping and see it as a marker of their professional identity. Military professionalization appears to be leading to an increasing recognition that experience on peacekeeping deployments is useful for units. Even so, the impact of service abroad on the career of individual service personnel remains uncertain, with soldiers even suggesting that they were more likely to be eligible for extraordinary promotion had they stayed at home. Similarly, police officers are facing obstacles such as the suspension of wider employment benefits and labor rights – such as health insurance for military families – for military personnel on UN (or other) secondment remaining in place.⁷

Lack of fit with legislative, procurement and operational timelines: In most cases, the timeframe for the commitment of Serbian personnel to UN-led operations is long-term in the sense that it needs to be planned in advanced through the AEP process, though this can also include the allocation of declared formations for short-notice deployment, for example through UNSAS. In the 2014 AEP it is envisaged to participate in further 9 (8 SAF and 1 Police) missions. Undeclared number of MLO, staff officers and medical teams (of SAF) are assigned for such tasks under so-called “stand-by” arrangements.

Legal obstacles: The [Serbian Constitution](#) commits “...all state bodies to uphold and protect the state interests of Serbia in Kosovo and Metohija in all internal and foreign political relations.” In practice Serbian Kosovo policy has constrained the actors with whom it is willing to cooperate in peacekeeping and restricted its engagement in some international operations. However, there are some signs that these restrictions are relaxing, at least in relation to peacekeeping issues and including ongoing discussions over a potential future deployment with Italy (a platoon in UNIFIL).

Part 5: Current Challenges and Issues

At present, the SAF and police are steadily increasing their contribution with one further platoon to UNIFIL, as this capacity is associated with increasing the professionalization of the military. Yet, the budget poses limitations on Serbian capacities. The Serbian defense budget is small compared to the days of the SFRY, and the (ongoing) reform and restructuring of the SAF has had to take place in an environment of considerable financial constraint. The armed forces established a [Peacekeeping Operations Centre](#) in 2003 in order to plan, select and train Serbian peacekeepers. Since 2014, a “declared company on stand-by” (which was included in the AEP for 2012 and 2013) was abandoned, with a focus instead on the rotation of units within SAF brigades to peacekeeping duties. There is also a general lack of foreign language skills among uniformed personnel, an issue that intensifies the pre-deployment training demands of peacekeeping, especially for the police.

Without a clearer and more specific foreign policy rationale for participating in multinational operations, and in the face of continuing economic constraint at home, it seems unlikely that Serbian contributions will increase very significantly beyond their current levels. At the same time, the institutionalization of the peacekeeping mission in the police is limited. Representatives of other civilian ministries have shown general willingness to participate in missions, but without providing specific details their potential contribution. Generally speaking, there is a lack of knowledge among those ministries about the demands and requirements of such missions, together with an absence of leadership in this from either the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the government.

Part 6: Key Champions and Opponents

Serbia elected a new nationalist president in May 2012 and new nationalist-led government in March 2014. In opposition, the nationalist parties opposed Serbian participation in peacekeeping operations. Even so, and while the detailed contours of the new government’s foreign policy remain opaque, there has been considerable continuity with past policy in this area. Institutionally, the main proponent of peacekeeping is the Ministry of Defense, which has taken the lead on the LMNO, the AEP and the establishment of the [Peacekeeping Operations Centre](#). The Ministry of Interior has increased its level of participation, committing their personnel to UN and OSCE missions, and appears to support participation in EU crisis management operations.⁸ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has shown only lukewarm interest in peacekeeping operations to date, in large part due to the frequency of elections in 2012 and 2014, which has inhibited the consolidation of government strategy and policy in this area. There are signs this may be changing with the Serbian government holding a high level meeting of Western Balkan countries in October 2014 to discuss how states in the region can increase their participation in UN peacekeeping operations.

Part 7: Capabilities and Caveats

The small size and relatively constrained funding of the SAF mean that its peacekeeping capabilities are limited and dependent on cooperation/integration with other contingents. Even so, Serbia has particular expertise (and an established track record) in contributing medical teams to UN operations. The deployment of an infantry platoon to UNFICYP and the company-sized contribution to UNIFIL indicate that further, infantry-style contributions may also be possible in the future. Since 2002, around 13% of Serbian peacekeepers have been women, with stronger representation in medical and police deployments. The Serbian Ministry of Interior also maintains a paramilitary force (the *Žandarmerija*) that could hypothetically fulfill gendarmery-style roles on future operations. However, its current

commitment to internal duties and lack of specific preparation for external deployment make this unlikely in the foreseeable future. At present, Serbian peacekeepers contribute to traditional UN peacekeeping missions with a modest commitment ([AVDP team](#)) in the EU's missions EUNAVFOR and ATALANTA. They are unlikely engage in more robust peace support or peace enforcement activities.

Part 8: Further Reading

[Defence Strategy of the Republic of Serbia](#) (Belgrade: October 2009).

Ejdus Filip, Savkovic Marko and Dragojlovic Natasa, *Towards a Western Balkans Battle Group*, (Belgrade: BCSP 2010).

“[Law on Emergency Situations](#),” *Official Gazette*, No 111-09.

“[Law on Engagement of the Serbian Armed Forces and Other Defence Forces in Multinational Operations outside the Republic of Serbia Borders](#)” (LMNO), *Official Gazette*, No. 88-09, 26 October 2009.

“[Law on Foreign Affairs](#),” *Official Gazette*, No 116-2007, 126-2007 and 41-2009.

Marko Milošević, ‘Small Steps into the Big Picture: Challenges and Obstacles to Serbia’s Participation in Multinational Operations’, *Western Balkans Security Observer*, 5:16 (January-March 2010).

Marko Milošević, Bojan Elek, *Serbian Civilian Capacities for Peace Operations: The Untapped Potential* (Belgrade: BCSP, 2014).

[National Security Strategy of the Republic of Serbia](#) (Belgrade: October 2009).

[White Paper on Defence of the Republic of Serbia](#) (Belgrade: MoD, 2010).

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise stated, data is drawn from *The Military Balance 2014* (London: IISS/Routledge, 2014).

² Data from *Republic of Serbia Ministry of Defence website*, http://www.mod.gov.rs/sadrzaj.php?id_sadrzaja=4366 [Accessed 29 August 2014]

³ Data from RoS MoD website and *The Military Balance*.

⁴ The Navy of Serbia and Montenegro was transferred to Montenegro on independence in 2006. The SAF's river flotilla is integrated into the Army.

⁵ Armed Forces Spending is a country's annual total defense budget (in US dollars) divided by the total number of active armed forces. Using figures from IISS, *The Military Balance 2012*.

⁶ Euro Atlantic Initiative 2013 Survey “Attitudes towards military cooperation of Serbian Army” (unpublished), IPSOS Strategic Marketing, Belgrade

⁷ Milosevic, M, Elek B. *Serbian Civilian Capacities for Peace Operations: The Untapped Potential* (Belgrade: BCSP, 2014) p.3

⁸ AEPs for 2012 and 2013 envisage this contribution, yet no initial budget allowances are visible in 2012 and 2013 budgets to support such contribution.