

International Police Peacekeeping Missions - Recruitment and Selection of German Police Officers

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Abstract

International Police Peacekeeping Missions stand or fall with recruitment and selection of competent police officers. The present article starts with an introduction into missions from a German perspective. Specifically, Germany is providing law enforcement staff to perform a series of different tasks such as fighting crime, helping countries to develop their own police forces, and securing EU borders (Frontex). In this context, we focus on the topic of how to recruit and select qualified police officers. For this purpose, we present an overview of the personnel selection process and highlight the importance of intercultural competence. Finally, we discuss implications and research directions.

Keywords: *International Police Peacekeeping Missions; personnel selection; development center; assessment center; interview; recruitment; Frontex*

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Introduction

"German Police Officers help at the Greek Border" – in March 2020, you could read this title in a German newspaper (Schiermeyer, 2020). Indeed, it is quite rare to read about the international deployment of national police officers. While media coverage of military missions occurs virtually automatic, the fact that police officers are also involved in international services is often overlooked. Yet, the German police forces have already supported several missions since the fall of the Iron Wall in 1989, i.e. by the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE). By 2014, over 9 000 German police officers had served internationally. Compared to a total of 250 000 police officers in Germany, that number seems to be quite low. By the end of March 2019, there were only 109 officers serving in a foreign country (Albrecht et. al., 2019). In this article, we discuss challenges of International Police Peacekeeping Missions from a German perspective. As one of the first challenges, recruitment and selection of competent police officers are crucial for a successful service abroad. A wrong decision in the selection process will have a negative impact on the mission as a whole. Because almost no papers have been published on this issue and it is very hard to access data on this topic, we want to incite an international discussion on personnel selection practices for International Police Peacekeeping Missions.

Challenges and Shifts in International Police Peacekeeping Missions

Police Peacekeeping Missions in foreign countries pursue different aims. Mostly, they fight crime such as corruption or organised crime like drug dealing, piracy, or human trafficking. Moreover, they engage in missions to help other countries to develop their own police forces. More recently, they are deployed to secure EU borders (Frontex). In order to successfully promote mission outcomes, competent and well-trained law enforcement personnel are needed. Indeed, police officers in a mission are involved in crisis prevention, promotion of stabilisation and security, post-conflict support and humanitarian help to strengthen democracy, rule of law and human rights worldwide (Grosser, 2018, p.10).

An important field of activity are fragile states or conflict zones. Here, International Police Peacekeeping Missions contribute to the development of a functioning police force that operates based on the rule of law. Within the last couple of years, we have seen a change in the geographic focus of missions. Nowadays, there is an emphasis on conflict zones as origins of a high numbers of refugees, like Afghanistan and the Sahel region (i.e. Mali, Niger) (Albrecht, Kopp & Hof, 2019). Since a high number of refugees also creates challenges for European countries, European police forces may help to fight the causes of flows of refugees in those areas (Grosser, 2018, p.9). Moreover, in recent years, we have also seen

a change in task orientation of missions (Wehe, 2006). Specifically, tasks of police officers in conflict areas shifted from *capacity building* to *specialised counselling*, both, at an operative level and up to the strategic ministry level. Until a couple of years ago, there was need for a *generalist*. Now, there is need for a *specialist*. Both, changes in geographic focus to distant conflict areas and changes in task orientation to specialists produce challenges for recruitment and selection of police officers. Finding a "*competent, motivated specialist*", however, seems very difficult. These challenges and the fact that there is often no binding obligation for a nation to support International Police Peacekeeping Missions, makes participation in such a mission de-facto voluntary (European Union, 2000). Summing up, these circumstances pose a challenge to find qualified staff for those missions.

Applicant Situation

As it is a challenging task to find the "*competent, motivated specialist*" for International Police Peacekeeping Missions, the applicant situation is tense in Germany. In recent years, there seems to be less and less interest in the service abroad. Although working in a mission may serve to fulfill individual work values such as altruism, personal development, task variety or salary surcharges (Thielgen, Schade & Carobolante, 2019), several hurdles may hinder applicants to apply. On the one hand, the deployment abroad may often be perceived as an obstacle for the career as a police officer in their home countries. That is partly due to the fact, that immediate supervisors are often unable to see the additional value of the competencies acquired abroad for the job back home. Moreover, demographic changes and increased societal demands have led to chronically understaffed police forces in many police organizations (Thielgen et al., 2019). Therefore, every single officer is needed in Germany. Thus, supervisors feel urged to keep their colleagues at home. With that being mentioned, most immediate superior officers are not very happy to see their officers apply for international deployment. In many cases, police officers are aware of that fact and refrain from applying, even if interested.

On the other hand, German police officers are not the only ones applying for International Police Peacekeeping Missions. Specifically, the pool of applicants, and therefore, direct competition is international. With that, the pool of applicants is bigger, the competition is higher, and a smaller percentage of applicants will be selected for the position. Furthermore, the fact that every country has its own policies when it comes to international missions is yet another strain. German police officers in the state of Baden-Württemberg, for example, can only stay for a maximum of 12 months, whilst other countries allow longer deployments. Being able to stay for a longer period might give certain applicants an advantage over those who are restricted in their length of stay. Before discussing possible directions on how to overcome these challenges, we need to understand how police officers are typically recruited and selected for such missions.

Task Force 'International Police Missions' (AG IPM) Recruitment and Selection Standards

In the year 1994, the German Ministry of the Interior initiated a strategic task force for International Police Missions (AG IPM). Specifically, AG IPM members defined standards and general regulations for employee selection purposes. Moreover, they created a pool of potentially suitable officers for international deployment. Notably, the creation of such a personnel base conforms with the guidelines by the EU for national personnel pools (European Union, 2000). Subsequently, if an International Police Mission is constituted, then the mission has access to a large pool of suitable police officers and therefore access to the best international talent.

Personnel Selection Practice and Development Center

Taking changes and circumstances of foreign deployment into account, the AG IPM task force has designed a Development Center (DC) for police officer selection. Typically, a Development Center is used as an internal Assessment Center (AC). It is based on a job profile of police officers deployed in International Police Peacekeeping Missions and comprises a variety of diagnostic tools to assess applicant's competencies. In contrast to an AC, candidates assessed in the DC already work for the organisation and will continue to do so. While with an AC one aspires to select the person that best fits to the job, with a DC one aspires to find high-potential individuals that can easily be trained and prepared for a new and higher work position. High-potential individuals are individuals inside an organisation who perform well, are fast learners and are able to adjust to new surroundings. Because international placement comes with all kinds of challenges, applicants are not expected to already be the best fit for the job but are expected to be eager to learn and motivated to grow into the new role as an expatriate. Thus, the DC has two advantages (Tett, Simonet, Walser & Brown, 2013). First, according to the principle "*find a person that fits to a job*", the organization may assess police officers that are suitable for vacant positions abroad. Second, according to the principle "*develop a person to increase the fit between the person and the job*", the DC may uncover potential development needs of police officers, in order to better prepare them for their future mission. In other words, the DC is used to find suitable staff within the organisation. Moreover, it is suitable to select for new and specialised jobs and to prepare applicants accordingly. So, the key question guiding this kind of selection is: "*Who has promising potential for deployment abroad?*"

In the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg, police officers having served for more than eight years can apply for the DC. After a security check, their superior gives a statement about the candidates' soft skills, such as stress resistance, self-discipline, communication and conflict management skills, intercultural competence, and capacity for teamwork.

The actual Development Centre predominantly aligns to specific cognitive skills, such as language skills, physiological fitness, as well as social and personality competencies. See Figure 1 for an overview of the Development Centre.

Figure 1. Overview of the Development Centre currently used for recruitment and selection of German officers for International Police Peacekeeping missions.



Next, we will describe each part in more detail.

At first, regarding language skills, all the candidates are required to pass a B2 level English exam, as English is the working language on International Police Peacekeeping Missions. Subsequently, language courses are offered to make sure that there are no additional complications due to a lack of language skills during the missions. Additional language skills on an advanced level may be considered as an extra asset.

Next, the Cooper test assesses physical abilities of the candidates. An assessment of physical fitness is important because living abroad in completely different climate conditions can cause severe physical issues. Therefore, it is important that the candidates show

a good physical health in all respects. The Cooper test specifically focuses on stamina. The distance run in 12 minutes determines if the candidate passes or fails the test. Norm tables are specified for age and gender.

Not only the language skills and physical performance but also psychological potentials are being tested. To do so, the candidates have to answer multiple psychological tests, which include questions to working and health behaviour (AVEM; Schaarschmidt & Fischer, 2008), and personality (FPI-R); (Fahrenberg, Hampel & Selg, 1994). In addition to those two tests, candidates also have to answer a resilience scale (RS25; Leppert, Koch, Brähler & Strauß, 2008) to prove their psychological capacity of resistance.

After passing the tests, candidates will be asked to participate in a role-play scenario. This interactive task will provide the opportunity to evaluate the candidates' ability to work under pressure, to show their diplomatic skills, and intercultural competence. For reasons of objectivity, all candidates are given the same scenario.

To test their social skills, the candidates are involved in a group task. In groups of four to eight people, they have to solve a task together. Observers watch and evaluate the candidates' behaviour and group interaction. Notably, observers are trained and familiar with the materials.

As the last step within the recruitment process, candidates have an interview with a panel of three people – two senior managers working in the department of International Police Peacekeeping Missions and one police psychologist. On grounds of quality criteria (e.g., Campion, Palmer & Campion, 1997) the interview is structured, and interviewers are trained and experienced. The selection committee has the opportunity to see the candidates' verbal skills, also in English. Furthermore, the motivation that makes a police officer apply for deployment abroad is of interest and is thoroughly explored by the committee.

For the finish of the DC procedure, one of the core principles is taken into account, i.e. to *"develop a person to increase the fit between the person and the job"*. Specifically, the candidate will be given feedback regarding their individual strengths and development potential. Moreover, they will also be informed about the further process.

Police Officer Pool and Onboarding Process

After having successfully passed the Development Centre, police officers are added to the pool of candidates for deployment. Here, they will remain for three years. If there is no deployment abroad during that period, a new application is required, and the candidate has to be re-assessed by undertaking the same recruiting process.

During the time of pool membership, police officers are required to attend several series of seminars. The basic requirement is a two-week seminar that is certified by the EU and the United Nations. Depending on the officers' English test results, they are also asked to take up English lessons to improve their language skills.

Once an officer is accepted for deployment, mission targeted trainings need to be attended. The competence set of the officers ought to be trained particularly for the host country and its unique culture. Therefore, there are trainings like '*Intercultural Management and Behaviour*', '*Monitoring, Mentoring and Advising*' or '*Women, Peace and Security*'. All of these trainings are held in English and are organised by the AG IPM. Participating in those seminars generally leads to a successful deployment abroad.

Discussion, Implications and Further Directions

International police peacekeeping missions stand or fall with recruitment and selection of competent police officers. A wrong decision in the selection progress can result in negative consequences like having to replace an officer on short notice, lower job satisfaction, or lower job performance. This is why the selection and recruitment process are crucial for the success of international police peacekeeping missions. Indeed, colleagues are involved in a series of different tasks such as fighting crime, helping countries to develop their own police forces, and securing EU borders (Frontex). In this context, we focused on the topic of how to recruit and select qualified police officers. Therefore, we presented an overview of the personnel selection process and highlighted the importance of intercultural competence in Germany.

According to the elements of the Development Centre described above, there is no particular test to assess the intercultural competence of a candidate. Elements like the group assignment or the one-on-one interview capture aspects of this particular skill. In other words, an elaborated DC is needed. However, given the importance of this skill set for the work of a police officer abroad, we are urged to persistently evaluate and further develop our assessment practices. For instance, it could be considered to add a specific measure of intercultural competence to the DC in the future. An example for a suited test is the TMIK, a situational judgement test to assess such a construct (e.g., TMIK; Schnabel, Kelava, Seifert & Kuhlbrodt, 2014). This measurement approach combines self-evaluation and situation assessment, and thus, it seems to be suitable for the selection process outlined in this paper. Moreover, intercultural competence is not the only aspect of the DC that could be reconsidered. In fact, to this day an adequate evaluation of the Development Centre has yet to be done. To do this, follow-up tests with recruits after their return home as well as analysing data of numbers and reasons of returning home early are foreseen. In addition, an exchange of best practices between different nations concerning their in-

dividual processes to find suitable officers for a mission abroad will help to create a more elaborated Development Center.

After completion of an International Police Peacekeeping Mission, the multifaceted work started abroad should not stop after coming home. In fact, one of the essentials of deployment is continuing, just at the moment a police officer returns to their department in the homeland. Building up to the help for the host country, the expatriate should transfer experience to the home organisation. Indeed, a reliable international network can be advantageous to that end. Unfortunately, this aspect of deployment still shows a great shortfall. So far, the question of how to utilise international mission experience back home and to generate added value within the German police has yet to be answered (Jacobs & Kunze 2017).

To this day, many opportunities have been missed out when colleagues have achieved higher levels of intercultural competencies. Indeed, intercultural competence is a skill not only required abroad. Like most countries, Germany is becoming more and more multicultural. By the end of 2019, about 20.8 million people of a total population of 83.1 million had foreign roots, i.e. roughly 25% of the German population (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019). Indeed, a large variety of different cultures is represented in Germany police officers encounter. In a survey among 2630 German police officers, 90% agreed that they are involved with people from foreign cultures on a daily basis. Out of this group, 65% of the police officers considered knowledge about other cultures helpful for their day-to-day job (Hagenlocher, 2019). This emphasises the importance of intercultural competence for the police work on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, the topic of International Police Peacekeeping Missions and its personnel selection practices continues to be an important one. Future research should consider the issue of deployment of police officers to ensure that those missions are successful. In our opinion, media should cover those missions to appreciate this valuable facet of police work.

Conclusion

This paper offered an overview of the personnel selection process for International Police Peacekeeping Missions. We stress that it is important to recruit and select competent police officers for such missions since it is generally a challenging task in an intercultural setting. Only the German perspective was taken into account here, since the research topic is fairly under researched and no data from other countries are published so far. The outlined recruiting process was found to fit well with the specific needs of the institute of foreign police affairs. We hope to open the way for international discussion on this topic.

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