



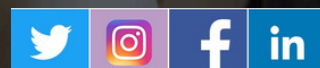
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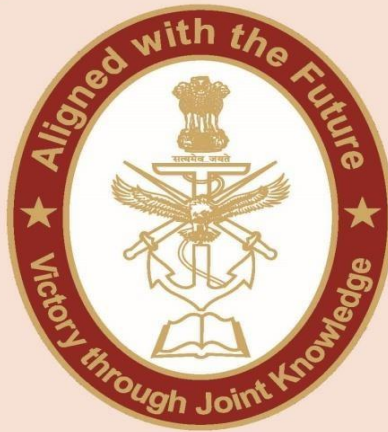
REASSESSING INDIA'S ROLE IN UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

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Reassessing India's Role in UN Peacekeeping Operations



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INTRODUCTION

After the end of Second World War, whole world was in a chaos, many new nations were formed as the process of decolonisation was taking place. It was in the year 1948; when United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was established to oversee the Armistice Agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbours.ⁱ The UN Peacekeeping was officially formed years later, to provide stability to war affected areas and protect common people from getting killed. Overall, it strived for upholding world peace with the support of member countries. Post conflict reconstruction is another main objective of United Nations Peacekeeping Forces (UNPKF).ⁱⁱ

India has been consistent in its contribution to UN peacekeeping. Indian troops are known around the world for their disciplined behavior, high degree of professional etiquettes and an unbiased mindset. India is playing a very important role in UN peacekeeping missions. But as the world order is under transformation, India needs to modify its current policy to adapt itself to it. In the following section of the article, India's participation in UN missions for peacekeeping and the difficulties it went through during its operations has been discussed. It also sheds light on the future of India's peacekeeping missions.

EVOLUTION OF INDIA'S PARTICIPATION AT UN PEACEKEEPING

India's move of sending a team of doctors and nurses to Korea in 1950 was in alignment with the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. Clearly, India has given preference to roles involving mediation rather than direct military action. The first direct participation of Indian troops was seen in UN peacekeeping operations in the Congo region during the period of 1960s.ⁱⁱⁱ India was successful in protecting the common people and stopping the violent separatist movement from spreading further.

Cambodia, former Yugoslavia, Sinai, Cyprus, and Angola are other countries where India has sent its troops. Especially in Cambodia, where India was active in the 1990s, India effectively portrayed its capabilities of not only sending military but also providing support at the administrative level.^{iv} India's engagement with the UN peacekeeping missions has come at the cost of lives. As per the record of the number of casualties, India has lost 170 of its soldiers.^v This is the highest number compared to all the other nations that contributes troops.

India is second only to Nepal in the list of the numbers of peacekeepers contributed by each country. At present, India has sent approximately 5,000 personnel on various missions abroad.^{vi} The main ones are the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).^{vii} Indian peacekeeping forces are known for their expertise in counterinsurgency operations, which they learned from operational experiences in the Northeast and Kashmir. The Indian army believes in involving the community to arrive at an acceptable peace solution. Indian troops have also provided operational support wherever required. Advanced techniques and equipment have been used by the Indian army in its operations at the UN.

Impact of India's Participation in UN Peacekeeping Missions

India's contribution in providing troops to the UN peacekeeping missions is far greater than that of western countries, thus, India's presence in the functioning of UN peacekeeping is of prime importance. India is setting an example for the third world countries to follow for becoming influential in the working of international organisations, which were earlier under the control and authority of first world countries like the US and the major west European countries. India's involvement at UN peacekeeping missions, has led to enhanced operational efficiency of the Indian soldiers. At the world level, India's soft power diplomacy receives a boost. The Indian army is viewed with trust by all the countries around the world.

The Indian soldiers and officers who serve in various capacities in UN missions abroad bring their years of experience; this experience is highly valuable. It provides them with greater know-how about ways to deal with a wide variety of conflicts both at the national and international level.^{viii} The people here in India might think that the Indian government could have used the money and resources with which it is sending our people to serve in UN peacekeeping initiatives for fulfilling the country's own needs first. Common

people might feel that when our own country is dealing with major issues like poverty, insurgency, and gaps in infrastructure development, it is better to address these issues first.^{ix}

Seeing India's successful role at UNPKF, China is also looking to increase its contribution to get recognition at the global level. But here, there exists a difference in approach. India participates actively because of its commitment to ideas like the greater good of humanity and principles of unbiasedness. While on the other hand, China is using this platform to take its economic interests forward. The countries where China sends its peacekeeping forces, it seeks to gain hold of their infrastructure projects by supporting them financially. This spirit of competition between India and China is doing nothing but, in the long run, actually benefitting the UN peacekeeping operations more. India's impact is somewhat subdued by the obstacles it faces during its operations. Following are some difficulties India encounters during its UN peacekeeping missions.

Problems Faced by India in UN Peacekeeping Missions

- ❖ Changes in the character of conflicts- Today the line between civilians and soldiers has become vague. The majority of the peacekeeping missions in contemporary times don't occur between two countries; rather, they are mostly internal conflicts or armed rebellions. These scenarios often call for troops to do away with the principle of minimum force, which was used earlier. It is an ethical concern for India, as India has usually given preference to non-forceful roles.^x
- ❖ Lack of resources- India is already occupied with China on the northeastern front and with Pakistan on the northwestern front. And at times, forces need to be deployed to resolve internal disputes in the states as well. Thus, it becomes a task to send huge contingents on missions abroad under the UNPKF. On top of all of this, the defence budget in India faces constraints.^{xi}

- ❖ **Economic obstacles-** It has come to notice that salaries of the peacekeepers have often been delayed. As India is a developing country, it is difficult for India to send more troops, as it cannot take more economic burden.
- ❖ **Impact on India's reputation-** Sometimes, the countries don't welcome the deployment of Indian troops. For example, in the region of Congo, the troops were blamed for their failure to stop the killing of innocent people.^{xii} Though India was mandated to follow certain protocols and had limited resources at its disposal, Indian soldiers tried their best to manage the situation. Thus, India's image is at risk if such incidents get repeated, and it might affect how other countries view India.

Recommendations for India's participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations

There are many parameters which could form the basis of India's further engagement with UNPKF. Before making any changes to the present strategy, a dive into historical events will help to carve a proper framework.

❖ India should get involved in specific missions

India could adopt a method of careful selection of the missions it becomes a part of. Only those missions that suits India's interests and benefit our country in the longer run should be taken ahead. Countries in the continent of Africa especially the ones spread over the Sahel and Horn of Africa should be prioritised, as they have the potential for trade and to provide energy supplies.

❖ Tech expertise

India can utilise the progress made in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and drone building in its UN peacekeeping missions.

Thus, India can become a leader and pave the way for “smart peacekeeping.”^{xiii} Live updates from the battlefield will not only enhance the efficiency of the missions but will also lead to a reduction in the casualties of the troops.

- ❖ **Prioritising training over field presence-** Since long, India has been providing troops to UNPKF; now the time has come for India to aim for capacity building more instead of providing ground force. Along with the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK), India can start courses and develop curriculum on skill development for the armed forces personnel from different countries working with the UNPKF.^{xiv} It will be beneficial for India to save its vital human resource, which it sends to different locations to serve.
- ❖ **Promoting reforms-** There are many areas where the UNPKF can do better. India should voice these concerns at the regular meetings held at the headquarters. It includes reforms such as diversifying funding sources, bringing more clarity in objectives, and giving Troop and Police contributors (TCCs) a greater say in the operations they are involved in. Doing this will help India not only to push forward its interests but will also lead to the attainment of a multipolar world.
- ❖ **Emphasis on regional security-** If the UN requests India to get involved in missions involving India’s immediate neighbours like Sri Lanka or Myanmar, India should definitely try to take part in them. This will help India to assert its position regionally, specifically in the Indo-Pacific region.

CONCLUSION

India's involvement with UN peacekeeping operations reflects India's pledge for peace not only in its country but also around the world. Indian soldiers have been effective in bringing peace to countries like Congo and South Sudan. As the form of conflict is witnessing a change around the world, and India's own priorities are also getting altered, a revised analysis of its UN peacekeeping operations policy becomes important. There is a need for taking into account practical concerns while following the idealist approach. A careful review involving a cost evaluation of India's missions till now should be done. India will be able to sustain its role in peacekeeping operations of the UN by formulating an effective strategy focusing on reforms and accepting innovation in technology.

DISCLAIMER

The paper is author's individual scholastic articulation and does not necessarily reflect the views of CENJOWS. The author certifies that the article is original in content, unpublished and it has not been submitted for publication/ web upload elsewhere and that the facts and figures quoted are duly referenced, as needed and are believed to be correct.

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