

Assessment of India's UN Missions and Impact on Host Nations

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'India's spontaneous and unreserved participation in UN peacekeeping operations over the years has been a clear demonstration of the country's commitment to the objectives set out in the UN Charter. Not in terms of rhetoric and symbolism, but in real and practical terms, even to the extent of accepting casualties to personnel.'

– Lt Gen Satish Nambiar, PVSM, AVSM, VrC (Retd)

Multifunctional peace operations under the umbrella of United Nations (UN) have become an integral part of the global society to the extent that they are now one of the major regulating institutions of international relations. Over the years, however, as the operational environment has become more complex and stakeholders have increased, peacekeeping has evolved and become just one of the many aspects of multinational peace operations that now include humanitarian assistance, election supervision, repatriation of refugees, disarmament, de-mobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, restoration of the state's ability to maintain security and enforce rule of law. The intent is to support the founding of legitimate and effective governance institutions.

India has been consistent in assisting the UN in maintaining international peace and security. It has a unique combination of being the world's largest democracy with a strong tradition of respect for rule of law and a successful experience in nation-building. This has made

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her particularly relevant in the era of 21st century peacekeeping. The performance of Indian soldiers in global conflict zones has generated widespread respect and acclaim and given impetus to Indian claim for a greater role in the UN. There is always scope for further enhancing the profile of Indian peacekeepers and towards that end, an assessment of their performance in UN missions would be relevant. Moreover, impact on the host nations wherever Indian peacekeepers are deployed also needs to be seen in context. These aspects would provide a broad review of effectiveness of India's current and desired levels of peacekeeping. The scope of this paper is as listed below:

1. Indian Army (IA) participation in UN Peacekeeping.
2. Current IA deployment in UN Missions.
3. Evolving Trends in UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO).
4. Assessment of IA contributions.

INDIA IN UN PEACEKEEPING

Historical Perspective

India has subscribed to 51 of the 71 UN missions undertaken so far, contributing more than 2.5 lakh IA troops towards peacekeeping. As an 'original' founder-member of the UN, India has not hesitated to respond to calls of the UN to contribute troops for maintaining international peace and security. India's participation in the initial UNPKOs resulted in a pool of Indian military officers seconded to the UN whose professionalism and experience have contributed to the evolution of the UN peacekeeping doctrine. Two Indian Generals have served as Military Advisors in recent years, while in the Mission Area, 15 Indian General Officers have acted as Force Commanders with distinction. Besides senior leadership, Indian troops have also displayed exemplary dedication to duty and courage in the face of danger. One hundred and fifty nine Indian peacekeepers have sacrificed their lives in the service of the mandate and earned laurels for themselves and the country. They have earned gallantry awards that include the sole PVC in UN operations for Capt GS Salaria in Congo, five MVC, one KC, 19 VrC, three SC and 14 SM.

Current Deployment

IA is presently deployed in countries across Central Africa and the Middle East, with large presence in Congo (MONUSCO), South Sudan (UNMISS), Lebanon (UNIFIL) and Golan Heights (UNDOF). A total

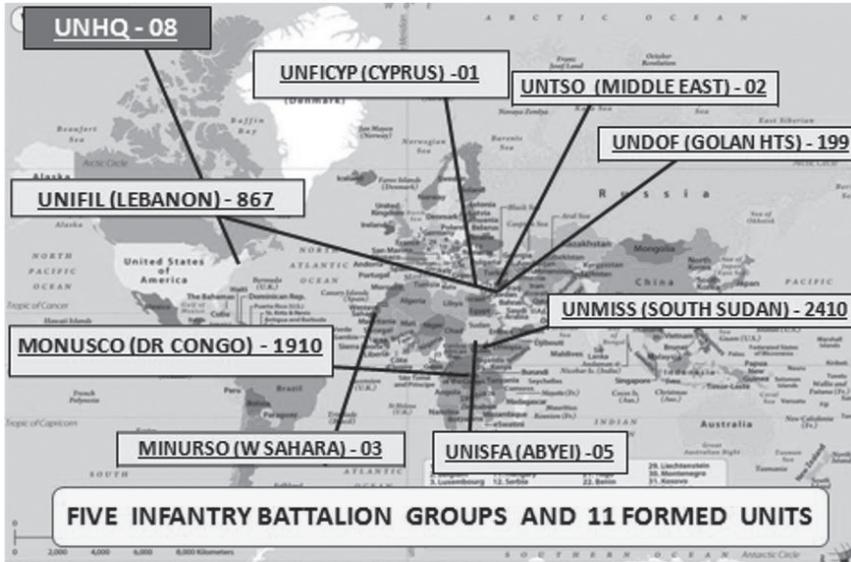


Figure 1 IA Deployment in UN Missions

of 5,405 personnel are committed in peacekeeping tasks in five infantry battalion groups and 11 formed units.

EVOLUTION IN PEACEKEEPING

Transition in Peacekeeping Ops

UN peacekeeping is an improvisation born out of the Cold War and de-colonisation. The aim of the initial two UN peacekeeping missions, namely UN Truce Supervision Org (UNTSO) in Palestine and UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan, was in response to withdrawal of British colonial power from Palestine and India. In 1956, the UN mandated the first armed peacekeeping operation, the UN Emergency Force (UNEF-I) in the Middle East. Initial UN peacekeeping goals were primarily limited to maintaining ceasefires and stabilising ground situation to ensure a political resolution. The end of the Cold War changed the nature of both international politics and peacekeeping operations. A series of multi-dimensional UN missions were established that performed a broad range of tasks, including non-military roles. In contrast to traditional operations, these new peacekeeping missions were also given peace-building tasks.

The best-known cases of this are the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Yugoslavia and UN Operations in Somalia-II (UNOSOM-II).

These operations failed, however, because they lacked the resources to enforce their mandate. This led to a review of conduct of Peacekeeping Ops. The term 'robust peace operations' was introduced by the 'Brahimi Report' (Report of the Panel on UNPKO chaired by Lakhdar Brahimi) of 2000, after which missions were usually mandated under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to implement the mandate.

Evolution of Multidimensional Missions

Over the past 60 years, peacekeeping has evolved to adapt to complex conflicts that pose a threat to international peace and security. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the number of military, police and civil personnel deployed in UNPKOs around the world has reached unprecedented levels. Not only has it grown in size, but it has become increasingly multifaceted and functions beyond traditional monitoring of ceasefires. Today peacekeeping is a multidimensional activity encompassing facilitation of political processes through promotion of national dialogue and reconciliation, protection of civilians, assistance in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of combatants, support conducting of elections, protect and promote HR and assist in restoring rule of law. In addition, peacekeeping may also include organising elections, monitoring sanctions and training civil police personnel. At times, those involved in peacekeeping operations also monitor transitional regimes (like in Cambodia) or in exceptional cases, even temporarily assume some or all of the tasks of government (like in Bosnia and Herzegovina and East Timor).

Budgetary Constraints

As a result of the economic crisis that began in 2008, many Western governments have had to take drastic austerity measures. This reality has also changed the way in which peacekeeping operations are viewed. The demand for evaluations, indicators and benchmarks of success therefore became more pertinent. Particularly with respect to UN operations, this development led to a further improvement in efficiency through, among other measures, the strengthening of cooperation between different operations being carried out in the same region. As a result, the budget for UN operations has been decreasing since 2012. Concurrently, there was a reduction in the number of troops deployed in UN peacekeeping. This has a cascading operational effect, wherein the mandate is increasing while the available funds are reducing. The effect is visible on ground

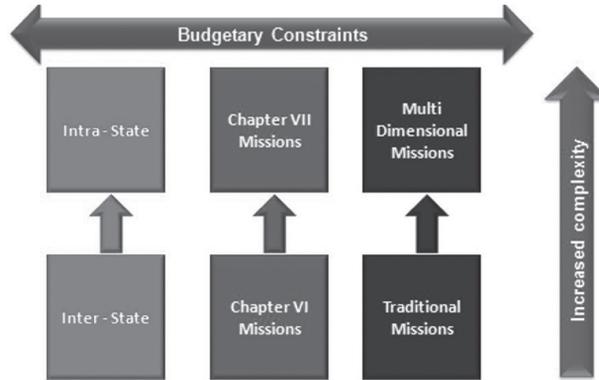


Figure 2 Evolving Trends in UNPKOs

with a substantial drawdown in big missions where troops have been substantially reduced. This has at times adversely affected the gains made by the peacekeeping elements.

ASSESSMENT OF IA CONTRIBUTION

Peacekeeping Operating Environment

The Indian peacekeeper is functioning in a complex and hostile environment that has multiple stakeholders with conflicting agendas. The challenges are accentuated by the international media keeping a

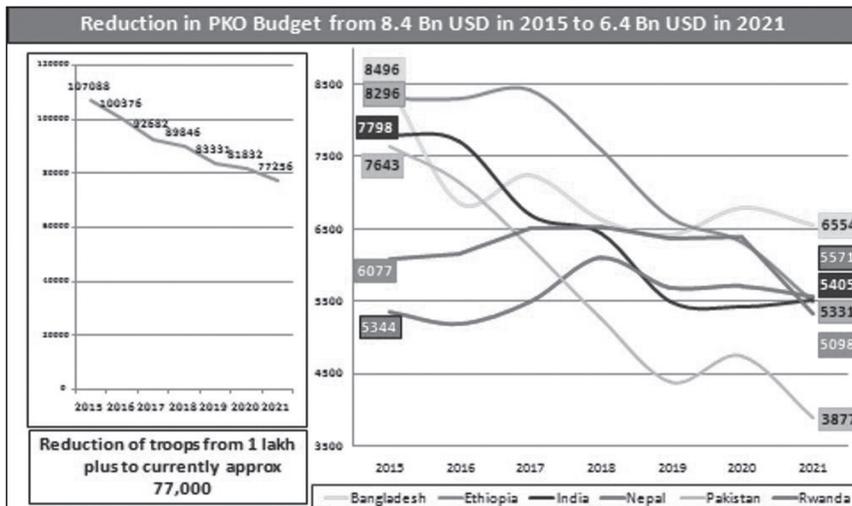


Figure 3 Operations under Budgetary Constraints

strict watch. Some major issues that impinge on peacekeeping tasks are further elaborated next:

1. **Armed Groups and Host Nation:** There has been a surge in brutal, intractable, high-casualty conflict, most evidently in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan. These conflict zones have witnessed limited success of military and peace operations to end conflict. The multiple facets of current belligerents that do not permit effective peace-building are highlighted below:
 - Fighting in South Sudan and CAR is an armed competition for power and resources between different, largely ethnic and religious factions.
 - Causes of conflict also evolve over time and the starkest case is that of Mali. In 2012, the traditional Tuareg separatist impulse re-assembled in the National Movement for Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), provided the initial trigger for war. Thereafter, its leadership of the rebellion was soon eclipsed by supposed allies—Islamist militant groups in three different factions with connections to neighbouring states such as Algeria.
 - A third phenomenon witnessed repeatedly is the extreme fragmentation of armed groups, which is evident in the proliferation of non-state armed groups over the past decade throughout Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab world.
 - Host nations are also an impediment and remain consistently intransigent, occasionally hostile and sometimes neutral. Their own interests often contradict the UN mandate and procedural delays are routinely created to hamper holistic peace-building efforts. Moreover, the perceived loss of sovereignty within the ruling dispensation also creates challenges between the mission leaders and the political leadership.
2. **Civilian Population:** In 2000, the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) became the first peacekeeping operation to be given a Chapter VII mandate for 'protection of civilians (POC) under imminent threat of physical violence'. A POC task under Chapter VII of the Charter of UN has been a virtually standard part of peacekeeping operations since 2000. Although the capability required to perform this task is often lacking, it is critical to prevent dramatic events of the kind that took place in Srebrenica and Rwanda from recurring and in part to preserve its own legitimacy.

3. **Limited Resources:** The biggest challenge faced by peacekeepers is the limited resources available to the mission for execution of UN mandate. There is a reduction in various mission budgets due to overall financial constraints and the impact is being felt by the ground troops. While daily functioning is not directly affected in terms of conduct of military duties, shortage of funds affects the balance of peace-building tasks. On the military front, limited intelligence about the local armed groups and rebels hampers kinetic operations. This is accentuated by limitations of employment of complete military equipment available with the contingents.
4. **Media Scrutiny:** UN peacekeepers are under constant media scrutiny and any inadvertent misdemeanour also gets highlighted exponentially in the international environment.

Tasks of IA Peacekeepers

IA is uniquely suited to perform peacekeeping duties because of its long commitment to Counter Insurgency Operations. Both operations are seen to be similar in that they are intra-state conflicts and involve rogue elements, who are often civilians fighting due to competing political ideology or identity related conflicts. In both cases, operations must be people-centric and focus on protecting innocent civilians and minimising collateral damage. Peacekeeping operations cannot be successful without civilian engagement. Cultural sensitivity and building a rapport with local communities is a further commonality between the two types of operations. With this core competency, IA Peacekeepers are performing a multitude of tasks that encompass kinetic and non-kinetic actions. Some of these that merit highlighting are listed below for consideration:

1. **Neutralisation of Armed Groups:** Indian contingents are constantly undertaking offensive operations to ensure that the mandated responsibility is executed optimally. Their role and performance in protecting UN assets and personnel has been appreciated and generated tremendous goodwill. UN troops have been at the receiving end of violent incidents in Congo in Goma in 2013 and more recently in Beni in October–November 2019. During these incidents, IA troops performed with professionalism and displayed their operational capability to an international audience. They successfully ensured protection of UN assets and safeguarded the local population that was not part of the violence. These standalone

actions are in addition to routine tasks (listed below) that are undertaken to honour the UN Mandate:

- Conduct of Area Domination Patrols (ADPs) including Heli-launched ADPs (HLADPs) and Heli-Recce Missions (HRM).
 - Providing escorts and convoy protection to UN agencies undertaking humanitarian assistance.
 - Conduct of training and logistic support to Government forces.
- (b) **Nation Building:** Indian peacekeepers play a key role in assisting UN in its nation-building tasks. Some of the major tasks that contribute in this are listed below:
- **Humanitarian Assistance:** Indian Contingents are running hospitals in mission areas looking after the local population and UN employees. In addition, medical units have assigned a veterinarian doctor with a dedicated office and support team to cater to the 'wealth in cattle' that is a reality in South Sudan. Indian troops are at the forefront of rescue operations in any natural disaster. It was evident in relief efforts undertaken after the eruption of Mount Nyaragongo in Congo. Similarly, the role of IA doctors during the Covid-19 and Ebola crisis was also recognised by the international community. IA troops were the first among all mission components to be vaccinated during the Covid-19 outbreak. By ensuring necessary coordination, the complete peacekeeping strength was vaccinated, thereby ensuring that operational tasks continued to be performed without any hindrance.
 - **Infrastructure Development:** There are Engineering companies which help maintain the infrastructure, both inside and outside bases. The performance of these Engineering companies is especially praiseworthy, as they have repeatedly gone beyond the 'Call of duty'. Recently, the runway at Malakal airport (South Sudan) was repaired in a single night by Indian troops. In addition, their dedication and diligence has led to a number of supply routes being opened in host nations with primitive road connectivity.
 - **POC:** India's UN peacekeepers have made a positive difference in POC caught in intra-state conflicts, especially in complex UNPKOs like MONUSCO and UNMISS. With expertise in counter-insurgency operations, POC tasks which are primarily oriented towards supporting local communities through

vocational training, rebuilding infrastructure and providing food, medical and veterinary support, and thereby building trust are extremely easy for IA troops. IA's cultural sensitivity in people-centric operations has also assisted in executing this role optimally. Indian peacekeepers have volunteered medical services, including veterinary support and engineering services in these UNPKOs, which has contributed to sustaining the livelihood of conflict-impacted local communities. It is due to this dedicated effort that Indian contingents have successfully rehabilitated nearly 5,500 Internally Displaced Persons.

Impact of IA in UN Missions

IA has been largely successful in achieving the laid-down tasks accorded to the contingents. This includes peaceful transition of the area from volatile to a peaceful and stable region, and an overall social upliftment of the population. The unique experience of serving in Counter Insurgency Operations in Jammu and Kashmir and the North East has given Indian soldiers great insight into holistic approach to peacekeeping operations. These have generated dividends that make the IA sectors within the peace mission the most regulated, peaceful and developed. Many UN personnel have been awarded medals for their efforts in furtherance of UN mandates and there is 'across the spectrum' recognition of IA's professionalism in operations, conduct and discipline.

Measures to Enhance Impact

IA is making a major effort to build on its existing capability and enhance the impact of its peacekeepers internationally. Towards that end, detailed plans are being made by IA in concert with Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Defence. Some of the initiatives currently being formalised are highlighted below:

1. **Increased Troop Contribution:** There is a need to enhance the presence of IA troops in UN Missions across the globe. Additional pledges have been made for deployment of contingents in various UN missions in the African continent. In addition, enabling units such as engineers and field hospitals are also being offered to UNHQ for deployment in various missions.
2. **Rapid Deployment Capability:** Concurrent to the additional pledges, logistic capability to deploy on short notice is being developed though procurement of Reserve Brick of UN equipment. Dedicated

transportation assets are being requisitioned to ensure that the IA capability is showcased optimally during any deployment.

3. **Military Diplomacy:** Triangular Partnership with African Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) and training with friendly TCCs such as Vietnam to include 'In Mission Training' is on the cards. In addition, co-deployment of troops in missions/ multi-national missions under the Indian Flag is also being proposed.
4. **Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK):** Plans have been formalised to energise and develop CUNPK as a Centre of Excellence by restructuring of the establishment and creation of state-of-the-art infrastructure.

CONCLUSION

India has championed the cause of UN peacekeeping for several decades. She has won global acclaim for her focused resolve, unbiased approach and professionalism of her soldiers. In keeping with India's enhanced stature on the world stage and aspirations to be counted as a key player in the UN Security Council, enhanced troop contribution, committed pledges to the UN cause and increased military diplomacy with like-minded countries would be steps in the right direction.