

India's Contribution to Peacekeeping

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The United Nations (UN) was established post-Second World War in 1945 to prevent another catastrophe of that magnitude and to promote international peace and cooperation.¹ The UN Charter aims to maintain international peace and security and to that end, take collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression. Of all the activities undertaken by the UN, peacekeeping missions have attracted the greatest public attention. The concept of peacekeeping evolved in 1950. During this period neither of the superpowers, the US nor the Soviet Union would permit forceful UN intervention against their allies. However, they were ready to accept peacekeeping as a non-coercive means of conflict control and tension reduction, which was devoid of offensive combat connotations.

The main purpose of peacekeeping is the use of military forces not to fight but to prevent fighting between belligerents and to maintain ceasefires. This provides stability in conflict zones while peace is being negotiated. Public opinion in general has always appreciated the task undertaken by peacekeepers. This has helped to improve the image of the UN, which often has not performed creditably in other fields. However, in the late 1990s, even peacekeeping received criticism due to its failings in Yugoslavia, Cambodia and Somalia. Nonetheless, the people of India can feel proud that Indian peacekeepers have always been universally appreciated for performing their task credibly.²

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India stands firmly committed to help the UN, with its proud history of peacekeeping operations, in the maintenance of international peace and security. India has possibly contributed the largest number of troops from any country and participated in numerous peacekeeping missions. Even today, India provides the command element in terms of capable Force Commanders. Further, Indian soldiers have willingly laid down their lives for the UN. Thus, peacekeeping for the UN is done by the Indian government and its contingents with elan, pride and military precision. UN peacekeeping is considered a mission by Indians.

INDIA'S SUPPORT TO THE UNITED NATIONS

While peacekeeping has been a mission for India, it has been a friendly nation open to international organisations. Currently, India is associated with nearly 3,700 international organisations, including 200 inter-governmental ones. Possibly it is the country most entangled with international organisations, next only to Brazil. It is of interest that the Realists and the Liberals offer different views because countries need international organisations like the UN. The Realist is of the view that international organisations are entirely dependent on the power of dominant states and help keep the prevalent systematic balance. The Liberal approach is that countries bestow authority on international organisations to optimise their interests in a cooperative³ mode, which is possibly the approach a country like India follows.

Considering these issues, it would be pertinent to point out that as a founding member of the UN, India strongly supports its principles and has made contributions to implementing the goals of the Charter and the evolution of its programmes and agencies. India's engagement with this august body is based on its commitment to multilateralism and dialogue as key for achieving shared goals.

India believes in the UN and its norms. The same is enumerated below:

- Believes it remains the most efficacious means for tackling today's global challenges.
- The global challenges pertain to sustainable development, poverty eradication, environment, climate change, peace building, peacekeeping, terrorism, disarmament, human rights, migration and health pandemics. All these contribute to greater peace in the world.

- It has an important role in emerging new areas such as cybersecurity, space, frontier technologies like Artificial Intelligence. Historically, India was among the select members that signed the Declaration at Washington on 1 January 1942. Though not yet independent, she participated in the conference at San Francisco from 25 April to 26 June 1945. India stood by the UN in its struggle against colonialism and apartheid. It was the co-sponsor of the landmark 1960 The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which proclaimed the necessity of terminating colonialism in its various forms. India was also elected the first Chair of the 24 nations' Decolonisation Committee where it strived very hard to put an end to colonialism.

India was a strong critic of apartheid and racial discrimination in South Africa. She was the first country to bring forward the issue and played a leading role in the formation of a sub-committee on the issue in the General Assembly. In 1965, India was a leading signatory of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. India stood for the cause of developing countries and in 1964, a group of 77 countries in the Non-Aligned Movement formed an important organisation for the creation of an equitable international economic and political order.

India enjoys goodwill and support at the UN and has been elected to several UN bodies. She was elected to the Human Rights Council, Economic and Social Council, International Narcotics Control Board, International Court of Justice, UN Board of Auditors, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Tribunal for the Law of Sea, International Law Commission and Joint Inspection Unit.⁴

India is currently a non-permanent member of the Security Council with effect from 1 January 2021. It was elected on 17 June 2020, with 184 of the total 192 votes. A member country needs a two-third majority of votes in the General Assembly to become a non-permanent member. This is the eighth time India has become a non-permanent member. It has been a non-permanent member for the years 1950–51, 1967–68, 1972–73, 1977–78, 1984–85, 1991–92, and 2011–12. India was the President of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for August 2021 and its main focus was on counter-terrorism.⁵ It is pertinent to note that India played an active role in the discussions on all issues related to international peace and security. These include Afghanistan, Cote d'

Ivoire, Libya, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. In view of the serious threat posed to international maritime trade and security by piracy off the coast of Somalia, India promoted concerted international cooperation against the pirates. She also encouraged concerted international cooperation for the release of hostages taken by piracy off the coast of Somalia. India is party to 13 sectoral conventions on terrorism adopted by the UN. India worked very hard to produce a Draft on the Convention on International Terrorism in 1996. She supports the strict global implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on Anti-Terrorism. Further, she advocates a holistic and integrated approach on human rights. India's stand has been guided by its democratic thought and experiences as a developing country. India has also been playing an important role in economic development, health and other sectors that are important to the UN. However, its most important contribution is in the field of peacekeeping.

PEACEKEEPING AS A RESPONSIBILITY

The major responsibility of the Security Council is the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the UN Charter. It is also meant to enhance the effectiveness of the organisation in preventing and ending armed conflicts, their escalation and their resurgence once they terminate. Conflicts have proliferated since the Charter was framed. Though its primary mission remains maintenance of international peace, conflict prevention is an important tool in this direction. This would include Confidence Building Measures, fact finding, early warning and preventive deployment. Preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peace enforcement are often overlapping in conflict situations.

In the initial years of peacekeeping, the Security Council's task was mainly in response to conflicts between nations and it did not focus on prevention or containment of the conflict. These operations were based on three principles as enumerated below:

- **Consent:** The peacekeeping force was deployed to the conflict area with the consent of parties after ceasefire had been established.
- **Use of Force:** To be used only in self-defence or in support of the mandate only.
- **Impartiality:** Must be apparent and cannot be compromised.

In contemporary peacekeeping it may not be possible to obtain the consent of all parties, but the host government's consent is a must.

Currently new conflicts are beginning to emerge based on ethnic, socio-religious differences and these are intrastate, not necessarily fought by states but by non-state actors. Women, children and civilians are often the victims. It is pertinent to note that these conflicts bear the characteristics of a civil war. Accordingly, modern peacekeeping operations often involve de-mobilisation of warring factions, restoration of effective governments, promotion of national reconciliation, capacity-building and humanitarian relief. In accordance, UN peacekeeping has become complex, multi-dimensional, more dangerous and expensive. Changed international security environment in the current era could be attributed to rise of populism and nationalism and hostility by non-state actors. This would require a responsive approach and multi-lateral intervention.⁶

PEACEKEEPING—A MISSION FOR INDIA

As an emerging global power, India has the political will, economic and military strength to allow it to participate at both regional and international forums. India's diplomatic and economic interests are also spreading globally. India has interests in Africa and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries. Accordingly, she has been a great contributor to UN peacekeeping and is linked to it both qualitatively and quantitatively. Since peacekeeping operations were launched, the UN has been involved in 71 peacekeeping operations and India has taken part in 49 of these operations. Currently, India is the second largest troop contributor: 6,608 personnel in nine out of the 14 active peacekeeping missions.

India has so far provided 15 Force Commanders in various UN missions. Besides the Force Commanders, India has also had the honour of providing two Military Advisors and one Deputy Military Advisor to the Secretary General. Further, she has provided two Divisional Commanders and seven Deputy Force Commanders. Lady officers from India have also served as Military Observers and Staff Officers apart from serving in medical units.⁷

India has been on numerous peace missions. Details of a few are as mentioned below:

- To facilitate treatment and evacuation of casualties a medical unit comprising 17 officers and 309 Personnel Below Officer Rank was deployed in Korea from 1950 to 1954.

- Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC)-1953: Custodian Forces of India, comprising the 190 Infantry Brigade, one platoon of engineers and the 26 General Hospital. One battalion (2 PARA) was airlifted and the rest were moved by ship.
- During 1954–70, India assisted in command and control of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. This was executed by an infantry battalion. UN Emergency Force-I (1956–57): Infantry, supply transport and signal units.
- UN Observer Group in Lebanon (1958): Military observers.
- UN Operation in Congo (1960–64): Two infantry brigades, aircraft (air and ground personnel), field hospital personnel, signal company, air dispatch team, postal unit and supply unit.
- UN Transition Assistance Group for Namibia (1989–90): Military observers, civilian police and election supervisors.
- UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (1992–93): 1,373 personnel with civilian police, military observers and troops.
- UN Operation in Mozambique (1992–94): 1,078 all ranks, including military observers, two engineer companies and logistics and headquarters companies.
- UN Operation in Somalia-II (1993–94): A brigade of 5,000 troops.
- UN Mission in Haiti (1993–96): Troops and police.
- UN Mission in Bosnia–Herzegovina (1997): Civilian police.
- UN Interim Force in Lebanon (1998–ongoing): 650 troops of all ranks from infantry battalion and level II hospital.
- UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (1998–99): two infantry battalion groups, two engineer companies, a quick reaction company along with medical, logistics and attack helicopter units.
- UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (2000–08): one infantry battalion, one construction engineer company, one force reserve company and military observers.
- UN Mission in Kosovo (2001–ongoing): civilian police.
- UN Mission in Sudan (2005–11): Infantry battalion group, engineer company and observers.
- UN Disengagement Observer Force in Golan Heights (2006–ongoing): Logistics battalion with 196 personnel.

- UN Mission in South Sudan (2011–ongoing): Infantry battalion group, police, experts, signal company and level II hospital.⁸
- On UN Missions several Gallantry Awards have been won. These include one Param Vir Chakra, six Maha Vir Chakra, two Kirti Chakra, 20 Vir Chakra, Four Yudh Sena Medal and 32 Sena Medal.

The list above shows India's capability to provide personnel for an onerous task. India's approach to peacekeeping is based on its foreign policy, avoiding the use of force, peaceful co-existence and maintenance of a stable international order. If one observes the list minutely, it is evident that our peacekeepers have served in all continents except North America. It is pertinent to note that India always felt that international peace would become meaningful when methods of moderation and mediation were systematically used.

It is worth noting that the UN did not have a prior design of peacekeeping. The Charter has no reference to peacekeeping at all. The technique of peacekeeping evolved on a case-by-case basis. India's policy can be traced to India's experience during the Korean conflict in the early 1950s. India used a non-coercive mode that was effective in establishing lasting peace across the Demilitarised Zone in Korea. The search for a mode of organised action for peace took a turn with the establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in 1956. The guiding principle in the Israeli Egypt conflict was no use of force except in self-defence. Initially peacekeeping was restricted to the non-aligned group but gradually the big powers also joined.

It is important to note that two peacekeeping missions were opened in India. The first was the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). It was established on 24 January 1949⁹ and has practically no role in the current milieu. The second was UN India–Pakistan Observation Mission (UNIPOM), which was established after the 1965 War in September 1965 and terminated in March 1966.¹⁰

HOW DO WE MOVE AHEAD?

India's approach to peacekeeping for many years has been on a case-by-case basis. Possibly it is time for considering whether we should provide peacekeepers in areas where our foreign policy interests are furthered. In addition, there is no point in spreading our peacekeepers where there is a minimal requirement, rather than focusing on areas where a bigger

complement of troops and equipment is required. This would relate peacekeeping to our foreign policy. Contributions like these would enable our country to showcase its effectiveness and professionalism. As Mr Akbaruddin, India's former permanent representative to UN, told the Security Council, a worthwhile consideration while serving in UN peacekeeping, 'is to keep incentivizing change, institutionalizing best practices and placing a premium on innovation'.¹¹

NOTES

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2. Satish Nambiar, *For the Honour of India: A History of Indian Peacekeeping*, Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research, United Service Institution of India, New Delhi, 2009, p. 1.
3. C.S.R. Murthy, *India in the United Nations, Interplay of Interests and Principles*, Sage Publications India, New Delhi, 2020, pp. 1–2.
4. 'India and United Nations', Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, available at <https://www.mea.gov.in/india-and-the-united-nations.htm>
5. PIA Krishnankutty, 'All About the Security Council and India's Two-year Term as Non-permanent Member', *The Print*, 2 January 2021, available at <https://theprint.in/theprint-essential/all-about-the-un-security-council-and-indias-two-year-term-as-non-permanent-member/577973/>
6. Sanjay Barshilia, *United Nations Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution*, KW Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, 2018, pp. 36–38.
7. 'India and UN Peacekeeping and Peace Building', Permanent Mission of India to the UN, available at <https://www.pminewyork.gov.in/pdf/menu/49151pkeeping.pdf>
8. 'Troop and Police Contributors', United Nations Peacekeeping, available at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>, accessed on 19 January 2022.
9. 'UNMOGIP', available at www.unmogip.unmissions.org.
10. 'UNPOM', available at www.peacekeeping.un.org.
11. C.S.R. Murthy, *India in the United Nations, Interplay of Interests and Principles*, SAGE Publications Private Limited, New Delhi, 2020, pp. 141–42.