

Conduct and Discipline in United Nations Peace Operations and India's Perspective

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The United Nations Charter requires that all UN personnel must maintain the highest standards of integrity and conduct. The UN is committed to ensuring that all its personnel deployed globally serve with professionalism, courtesy and dignity. Allegations of Misconduct as well as Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by peacekeepers from various nations have often tarnished the image of the mission they represent and UN in general. India's excellent track record in the area of Conduct and Discipline has given it valuable lessons by keeping the levels of indiscipline to the minimum and rigorously training its peacekeepers for the same. This article attempts to understand the salience of Conduct and Discipline in UN Peace Operations, Indian Army's approach to the same while deploying troops in various missions and important lessons that can be carried forward for the future.

Keywords: *United Nations, Conduct and Discipline, Misconduct, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, UN Peace Operations, Peacekeepers, India, Indian Army*

INTRODUCTION

The Charter of the United Nations (UN), which is also considered its 'founding document', forms the basis for all actions taken by the UN. It

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emphasises on the personal conduct of all personnel working for the UN, and expects that they serve with integrity, honour and commitment. Personal qualities such as self-discipline, professionalism and sensitivity to the mission area's cultural differences are some of the important attributes expected from peacekeepers involved in such operations. The UN has currently deployed over 1,00,000 personnel involved in peacekeeping operations as well as in special political missions across the globe.

The various categories of personnel involved in different UN missions comprise:

- Military (which includes both major and minor Military Contingents, Experts on Missions, and Staff Officers)
- Police (which includes Formed Police Units and UN Police Officers)
- Civilians (which includes both international and local UN staff, and UN Volunteers).

For these different categories, the UN has instituted standards of conduct which are applicable to all. Misconduct can range from individual lapses to group offences and the UN has instituted a three-pronged approach to address these through "Prevention", "Enforcement of UN Standards of Conduct" and "Remedial Action". The UN has been endeavouring to implement this approach through a variety of measures such as conducting focused training, raising awareness, laying out very clear standards, promoting investigations and facilitating assistance to victims of crimes such as Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA).

In the words of the UN Secretary-General Mr Antonio Guterres, 'Although the vast majority of UN personnel live up to the highest standards of conduct, any lapse not only has a devastating impact on victims and survivors, but also undermines our operational efficiency and our global reputation'.¹ Allegations of Misconduct and even SEA have been levelled on just a tiny minority of peacekeepers deployed in various mission areas, and these being sensational in nature, have often grabbed headlines and tarnished the image of the mission they represent and the UN in general. The apex body at the UN HQ for handling its conduct and discipline functions is the Conduct and Discipline Service, which forms part of the Department of Management, Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC). It monitors offences related to misconduct and allegations, and endeavours to prevent them and their recurrence through appropriate policies and intervention.²

India's tryst with UN Peacekeeping Operations since 1950s has earned it a lot of respect and admiration from the international community for its disciplined and professional peacekeeping efforts. India's excellent track record in the area of conduct and discipline has paved the way for evolving the best practices in the field and has addressed the issue of misconduct by dealing with indiscipline strictly and training the peacekeepers for the same. Its robust implementation of various measures instituted by the UN has kept the levels of indiscipline to the minimum.

This article aims to explore the issue of conduct and discipline in UN peace operations. It seeks to explain its significance in the context of peacekeepers' performance in the mission areas, trace out the timeline of conduct and discipline aspects, and the Indian Army's approach to these while deploying troops in various missions. It also aims to draw upon important lessons learnt about the issue that can be carried forward for the future.

In order to bring out the essence of the subject, this article relies on the various documents and data available on the Conduct and Discipline Service website, UN documents pertaining to its policies related to the subject and UN Secretary-General's tabled reports in UN General Assembly/Security Council sessions. Books by Indian authors for Indian perspectives as well as media/press reports have also been referred to for relevant input. The author's own experiences have also provided factual insight on the issue.

SALIENCE OF CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE IN UN PEACE OPERATIONS

Soon after its inception in 1945, the UN found itself rapidly embroiled in dealing with conflicts. Initially, these were of inter-state nature but intra-state conflicts were soon to follow. The first two peacekeeping missions were the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in 1948 and the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in 1949. Both were (and continue to be) observer missions involving unarmed military observers. Later, armed battalions were inducted in 1956 for United Nations Emergency Force-I (UNEF-I), again for observing and monitoring ceasefire duties by the military. From 1960 till 1964, the UN had to deploy military peacekeepers in the Congo (ONUC mission) but then had to induct UN civilians and provide technical assistance to the government there, due to the complexities of the situation. The Indian contribution to this mission was immense in terms of the leadership provided, and forces

deployed (an Army Brigade Group and a Squadron of Canberra aircraft from IAF); and the casualties suffered in action against rebels. Thirty-nine Indian peacekeepers³ laid down their lives in this mission alone and Capt G.S. Salaria was posthumously awarded India's highest gallantry award and the only such one given overseas—'The Param Vir Chakra'.

This mission was significant as it involved a very large number of troops (approximately 20,000⁴ peacekeepers at its peak), but the UN also had to use deadly force against local rebels, at times to deal with the complexities of the ONUC mission. The direct involvement of UN civilians along with military in a mission area thus made it a mission of multi-dimensional nature, a first of its kind. This was a path-breaking deployment for the UN, which transformed its role and was an augury for the future UN complex deployments. In the late 1980s, the UN had to establish a similar mission again, facing a complex situation and necessitating a multi-dimensional deployment of military, police and civilian UN personnel at the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) mission in Namibia in 1989. Thereafter, the UN has been regularly involved in dealing with an increasing array of intra-state conflicts which have needed interventions well beyond 'monitoring of ceasefire and observing'.

As the complexity of such UN missions increased over the decades, the UN had to contend with prolonged mission deployments, resulting in frequent rotation of troops from various countries and increased contact between its three mission components and the local civilian population in the mission areas. Over a period of time, a sense of perceived 'normalcy' was inadvertently felt by some peacekeepers, at times misreading the situation and not understanding the trauma and vulnerability of the civilian population. The UN personnel were better paid and had a position of power, by virtue of possession of weapons, and resources/aid to assist locals, etc. At times, the local conditions of poverty and unemployment also led to greater contact with the locals, beyond professional requirements, resulting in certain forms of misconduct.

Over the past seven decades of peace operations, the UN has persevered to assist countries and people affected by conflict across the globe. As of 31 December 2021, 4,173 peacekeepers⁵ have laid down their lives while serving under the UN flag. Despite the sterling roles played by a majority of peacekeepers, a select few have invariably taken advantage of their position in exploiting the trust and the differential power that they enjoyed, in field missions and elsewhere, thus dishonouring those

who have sacrificed their lives for the UN cause. Such misconduct has brought shame to the individuals, the country they represent, and the UN community. Some of such severe offences of misconduct, which have come into media limelight include offences of SEA such as soliciting prostitutes, rape and sexual offences against children.

Uniformed peacekeepers need to understand that their attitude and role needs adaptation to the cultural and environmental realities of the mission areas. Equally important is the role of the non-uniformed component of the UN peacekeeping to be responsive about their conduct and discipline functions. Shukuko Koyama and Henri Myrtilinen⁶ have argued that peacekeeping forces are at times easier to control as compared to the activities of civil police, civilian UN staff and others such as contractors, aid workers, media reporters, etc. Hence there needs to be a change in attitude amongst UN staff as well.

TIMELINE ON CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

While there was a growing awareness of the pitfalls of misconduct and indiscipline in UN missions in the 1990s and early 2000s, efforts to structurally address these issues has gathered momentum in just the last two decades. In February 2005, a task force comprising of the Executive Committees on Humanitarian Affairs and Peace & Security along with UN and NGO was created to prevent SEA. This led to the formulation of the website for Prevention of SEA.⁷

Further, on 24 March 2005, the 'Zeid Report' was tabled in the UNGA bringing a comprehensive strategy to address the issue.⁸ Although focused on SEA, the report also tried to identify challenges caused by misconduct in general, which included lack of awareness regarding standards of conduct, ignorance of procedures for lodging complaint, incomplete data on offences, and poor investigative capacities. This eventually led to the creation of the 'Conduct and Discipline Unit' at the Headquarters while the 'Conduct and Discipline Teams' were created for the field missions later that year.

In July 2007, the UN and Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) agreed to adopt a revised model of the MoU⁹, now officially addressing concerns regarding SEA by the TCCs. Later, in December 2007, the UN adopted the 'Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of SEA'.¹⁰ The focus here was to ensure that assistance and support was extended in time to the victims of SEA. These included aspects such as medical assistance, legal support and material assistance, as necessary.

The strategy also catered for issues like paternity establishment and child support claims.

In 2008, the UN started the 'Misconduct Tracking System (MTS)', a database for confidential tracking of allegations of misconduct by UN personnel. Between 2009 and 2010, the UN Headquarters released the Core Pre-Deployment Training Materials (CPTMs)¹¹ for standardising UN training. In this, a specific module on 'Conduct, Discipline and SEA' was introduced. In 2010, the website for Conduct and Discipline¹² was launched, thus giving the issue visibility and importance. Data from MTS was integrated and the website started displaying statistics of allegations relating to SEA as well as other forms of misconduct. In 2014, the UN issued guidance on assistance for handling paternity claims,¹³ to all the field missions.

In early 2016, a major step in the drive against SEA offences was the inclusion of information pertaining to nationality¹⁴ of uniformed personnel who have been identified in credible SEA allegations.¹⁵ This put the onus on member states to address the allegations more seriously. This was followed up by adopting Resolution 2272, wherein police and troop contributors are responsible for investigating SEA allegations against their personnel. Also, the Secretary-General was requested to repatriate units if clear evidence on widespread abuses by any unit were available.¹⁶ To proceed with the commencement of timely investigations, the concept of 'National Investigation Officers (NIOs)¹⁷, within each contingent was introduced in the same year. In 2018, the UN launched the 'SEA Risk Management Toolkit'¹⁸, aimed at identifying, assessing, treating and monitoring risks, so that mission leadership is aware of the risks and is able to deal with such risks in a pre-emptive manner.

CATEGORIES OF CONDUCT

The standards of conduct spelt out by the UN applies to all categories of UN personnel and is based on three key principles: Highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity; Zero-tolerance policy on SEA; and, accountability of those in command and/or leadership who have failed to enforce the standards of conduct.¹⁹

Misconduct has been defined differently for the various categories of personnel—Civilians (basis—Staff Rule 310.1), Military (basis—We are the UN Peacekeeping Personnel) and Police and Military Observers (basis—Directives for Disciplinary Matters involving Civilian Police Officers and Military Observers). While they may be defined differently,

the central idea of what constitutes misconduct remains the same in all three categories. For UN Military Contingent personnel, misconduct has been defined as:

Any act or omission that is a violation of United Nations Standards of Conduct, mission-specific rules and regulations or the obligations towards national and local laws and regulations in accordance with the status of forces agreement or status of mission agreement where the impact is outside the national contingent of military forces or UN mission. Misconduct is considered serious, when it includes criminal acts that result in or are likely to result in, serious loss, damage or injury to an individual or to a mission.

SEA constitutes serious misconduct. For India, for whom the military component constitutes the major share of its deployed troops under the UN flag, this definition assumes significance.

The UN codified a new system for categorising misconduct which was introduced in January 2021. Allegations are grouped into two categories—Serious Misconduct and Misconduct. Serious Misconduct refers to offences that have serious legal implications affecting the perpetrators and the victims. It encompasses offences such as SEA, criminal offences committed against individuals or groups, offences related to fraud and property, etc. On the other hand, Misconduct refers to offences of a lesser degree such as verbal assaults, unauthorised outside activities, violation of national or local laws, theft, fraud, harassment at work, traffic incidents like speeding or carrying unauthorised passengers, etc.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR MISCONDUCT

In 2015, the UN initially laid out its policy on ‘Accountability for Conduct and Discipline in Field Missions’ and revised it in 2017. The policy has brought out a framework for ensuring accountability of all personnel in peacekeeping and special political missions. The rationale is based on the UN Charter (Article 101, Para 3), that ‘the paramount consideration is the employment of staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity’.²⁰

Individual accountability for offences committed by UN personnel and the responsibility of leadership for failing to discharge or ignoring their conduct and discipline functions, have been given due importance to rein in impunity, and minimise incidents of misconduct. However,

there remains much to proceed in this area as this is a continuous process. External factors like rotation of fresh troops, differing circumstances in different missions, and heterogeneous composition in the component hierarchy having differing cultural perspectives, add to the challenges faced by the UN.

The UN Civil Affairs Staff Book (Handbook) has emphasised individual accountability through the need for civil staff to properly conduct themselves with local communities. The handbook brings out that ‘while power differentials between UN personnel and beneficiaries of UN assistance are often more apparent, differences also exist between international and national staff in terms of compensation and security’. Although it may not be entirely possible to alter these dynamics, efforts can be made to be more sensitive to them by avoiding excessive displays of consumption and also by considering the security implications of one’s actions vis-à-vis colleagues from the local nation. It is also important to be aware that relationships—whether emotional, financial or work-related—between staff members and the local communities, may be perceived as potentially involving an abuse of power or a conflict of interest.²¹

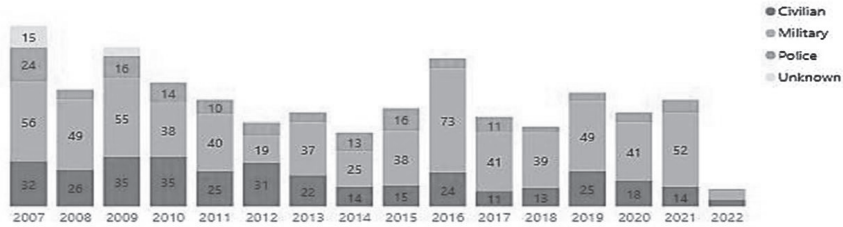
Since 2015, the Conduct and Discipline website has been displaying information of the nationality of individuals who have been allegedly involved in SEA violations. This is in line with the UN Secretary-General’s report (A/69/779) on ‘Measures for protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse’. Accordingly, the Misconduct Tracking System, a database of allegations relating to misconduct by UN personnel was upgraded to the Case Management Tracking System, which assists in managing cases and sharing of information between the nodal agency, UNHQ and field missions.

Figure 1 shows the category of personnel (by allegation) pertaining to SEA violations since 2007. Allegation has been described as ‘uncorroborated information pointing to the possible occurrence of misconduct and if sufficient information is available, an allegation will be followed by investigation’.²²

A look at this figure on category-wise allegations levelled against personnel shows that allegations have been somewhat consistent over the years. This could be attributable to various reasons such as frequent rotation of troops/staff, induction of troops from fresh TCCs, deployment in new areas, poor training of peacekeepers by some nations, lack of enforcement, etc. It has been seen that the cases of unknown

Category of personnel (by allegation)

This graph provides information on the number of allegations by year, separated by the category of the implicated personnel.



Comparison of number of allegations and identified number of alleged perpetrators (2010 -)

This graph provides information on the total identified number of alleged perpetrators and a comparison with the number of allegations per year.



Figure 1 Category of personnel (by allegation)

Source: <https://conduct.unmissions.org/data>, accessed on 21 February 2022.

IDENTIFIED NUMBER OF VICTIMS

Identified number of victims

This graph provides information on the identified number of victims by year, separating the data into adult victims, child victims and victims whose age is unknown.



Comparison of number of allegations and identified number of victims (2010 -)

This graph provides information on the total identified number of alleged perpetrators and a comparison with the number of allegations per year.



Figure 2 Identified Number of Victims

Source: <https://conduct.unmissions.org/data>, accessed on 21 February 2022.

and police categories have reduced. The identified number of allegations since 2010 has been 864 while 1,459 persons have been identified as alleged perpetrators, which means that some allegations had multiple perpetrators.

Figure 2 gives a glimpse of identified number of victims, with the ones in dark grey being adult victims while the light grey blocks are

child victims. The larger number of adult victims could hint at awareness amongst peacekeepers of the more stringent rules (national laws) towards dealing with child victims of SEA. While the number of allegations have been 864, the number of victims are 1,308, also hinting that some allegations had multiple victims.

Figure 3 indicates that out of 864 total allegations mentioned in Figures 1 and 2, the number of substantiated allegations against uniformed personnel is 211, while that of civilian personnel is 70 so far. The action by national governments against uniformed personnel range from jail to dismissal and other administrative actions. However,

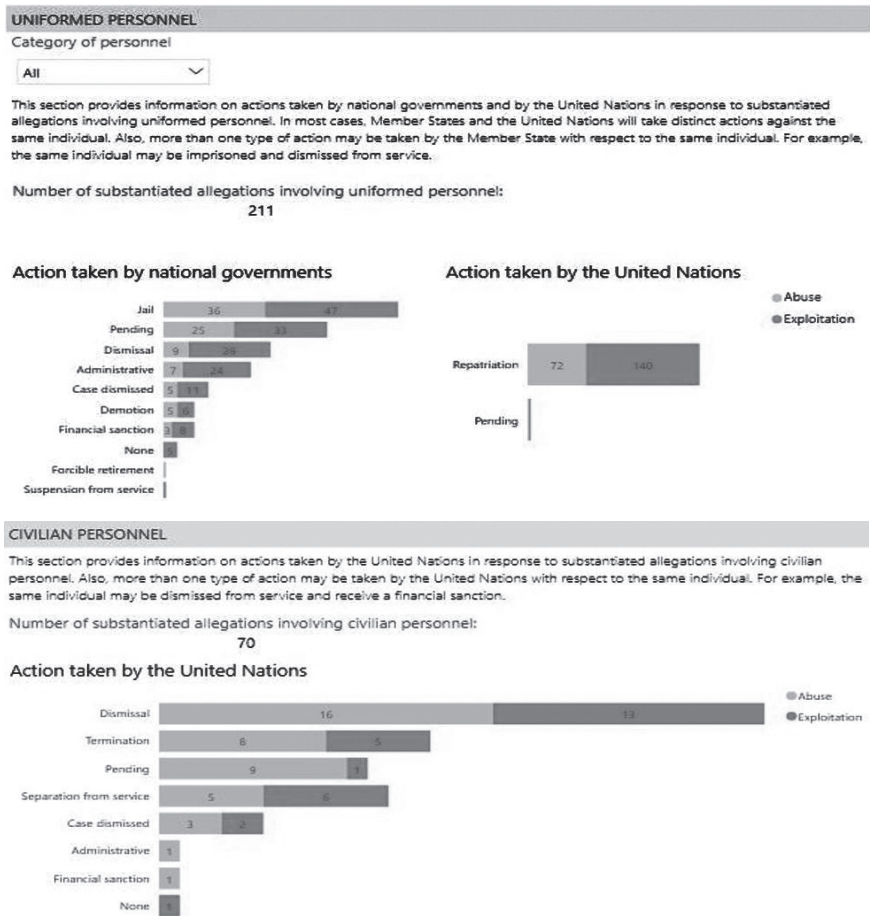


Figure 3 Action Taken by the United Nations and National Governments

Source: <https://conduct.unmissions.org/data>, accessed on 15 May 2022.

the action by UN against civilian personnel range from dismissal to termination and also include administrative action.

The data sets presented above imply that there is a huge gap between the number of allegations (864) and those which are substantiated (211 + 70). This gap (which means that large numbers of investigations remain uncompleted) needs to be narrowed, otherwise the UN will continue dealing with long-pending allegations. It is pertinent to note that in case of civilian perpetrators, no data exists of any of them being jailed, meaning that the maximum UN does is to dismiss, or terminate the services of, the civilian perpetrator. Whereas, uniformed personnel, for a similar offence, could even be jailed.

Another important perspective is based on the monthly summary of Military and Police Contributions to United Nations Operations,²³ issued by the UN. The total number of uniformed peacekeepers across all missions between 2010 and 2016 has been increased from approximately 99,000 to 1,05,000, whereas between 2016 and 2022, due to downsizing of missions, the figure has gradually reduced to approximately 75,000. This implies that despite reduction in the number of troops, the number of allegations have not come down in proportion during a similar time period. This indicates the seriousness of the issue despite multiple measures to arrest such misconduct.

INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

India's contributions to UN peacekeeping operations commenced in 1950 with the deployment of the Para Field Ambulance in Korea. Since then, India has participated in 49 missions of the 71 missions the UN has conducted so far and has deployed more than 2,53,000 military and police personnel to the UN peace operations.²⁴ It is the largest strength deployed by any country. In addition, India also holds the highest number of peacekeepers who have sacrificed their lives (175 personnel),²⁵ while serving abroad under the UN flag. As of 31 December 2021, India is third in the list of largest TCCs with 5,579 boots on ground.²⁶ Also, since 1998, India has consistently been among the top five TCCs²⁷, which indicates the immense faith and trust it has earned over the years. The sheer number of troops that have served and kept peace under the UN umbrella is testimony to India's commitment, its track record of maintaining discipline and the goodwill that it earned over a period of time.

| Date | Mission | Date of incident | Personnel | Nationality | NIO appointed | Investigation (days) | Results | Interim Action | Final Action | Referral For Criminal Accountability |
|---------|---------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|----------------------|---------|----------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1/2022 | MONUSCO | Unspecified / 2006 | Military (MC),1 | India | Yes | TCC (Pending) | Pending | UN Pending | NG Pending | N/A |
| | | | | | | | | | UN Pending | N/A |
| 12/2021 | MONUC | April / 2006 - Unspecified / 2007 | Military (MC),1 | India | Yes | TCC (Pending) | Pending | UN Pending | NG Pending | N/A |
| | | | | | | | | | UN Pending | N/A |
| 12/2021 | MONUSCO | March / 2008 | Military (MC),1 | India | No (no response) | UN OIGS (Pending) | Pending | UN Pending | NG Pending | N/A |
| | | | | | | | | | UN Pending | N/A |

Figure 4 Pending Cases

Source: <https://conduct.unmissions.org/data>, accessed on 25 February 2022.

As mentioned in Figure 4, three cases are pending against India, pertaining to acts alleged to have been committed between 2006 and 2008 (incident dates appear incorrect as two of the cases pertain to MONUSCO which came into force only from 1 July 2010). These allegations represent 0.35 per cent of the total 857 allegations (see Figure 1), reportedly could have been of the period 2010–13 as per media, citing UN report of 2015.²⁸

For a nation regularly contributing troops for UN peace operations and being the most significant troop contributor by its sheer numbers so far, the responsibility of ensuring discipline in its rank and file is enormous. In comparison to others, India has one of the least cases of SEA allegations, i.e., 0.35 per cent of total allegations.

INDIA'S BEST PRACTICES ON CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

Being the largest ever troop contributor, India has its share of challenges. These include ensuring that the troops contributed are fully prepared and aware of their conduct and discipline responsibilities, ensuring zero tolerance to SEA at all times, being consistent in approach towards having a zero allegation track record and living up to the expectations of the reputation it has built. India has seen a few cases of misconduct prior to 2013, but since then it has maintained a good track record by investing heavily in training, educating and shaping the minds of its peacekeepers towards this critical issue. In June 2021, a meeting was held at UNHQ, which was attended by various member states on the agenda of 'Strengthening the Conduct of Peacekeeping Personnel'. Among the best practices promoted in this forum, India's efforts to focus on prevention were highlighted through its Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping

(CUNPK) initiative that employs online 'Prevention of SEA' training modules, integrating it to its pre-deployment training courses.

Also, the unique cultural backdrop and training methodology of the Indian Army along with a very strict discipline framework, which are not related or specific to participation in UN peacekeeping, have been key to its success in keeping SEA incidents to the minimal comparatively. The Indian troops, at times, are exposed to conditions somewhat similar to UN mission areas when deployed in counter-terrorism/counter-insurgency operations within the country. This includes language and cultural issues as well as many of the other operational conditions including handling of a restive population, providing safety to vulnerable sections such as women and children, distribution of food and other support and assistance for the return to normalcy. Apart from odd stray cases, the Indian Army has a stellar record as far as SEA goes in its extensive and protracted internal security deployments. Its good record in UN deployments is but an extension of this trend. This practical experience is one unique Indian perspective about the popularity of its contingents in UN missions abroad.

In October 2019, the author of this article, who was the head of CUNPK then, was approached by the Conduct and Discipline Service in the UNHQ to deliver a talk during the annual meeting of International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IAPTC) at Peru. The theme of the talk was on the best practices being followed by India in its approach to overcome challenges facing Conduct and Discipline in UN Peacekeeping Operations. During the talk, the following aspects were highlighted:

- **Focus on Prevention:** With substantial strength to be deployed on field missions, the best approach is to ensure prevention of misconduct and indiscipline. This lies at the core of Indian Army's approach to fielding peacekeepers. Hence, the continuous training of peacekeepers to be deployed assumes immense significance as thousands of troops are deployed on a rotational basis every year. The CUNPK carries out extensive training of trainers and officers and follows it up by monitoring the training of troops to be deployed. The Commanding Officers are thereafter responsible for pursuing the in-mission training of their respective contingents.
- **Selection of Peacekeepers:** The yardstick for selecting individual peacekeepers has been laid out in the UN document

'Operational Readiness Preparation for Troop Contributing Countries in Peacekeeping Missions'. The Indian Army has been ensuring that aspects like cohesion of units and sub-units, track records in operations and administration alike are also taken into consideration so that the best performing units with well-disciplined soldiers are selected for peacekeeping missions. Contingents are concentrated together at the national capital 3–4 months prior to deployment to ensure training and facilitate mental preparation for unique UN deployments.

- **Training of Peacekeepers:** The training curriculum of CUNPK follows the thematic and online modules recommended by UNHQ covered in the Core Pre-Deployment Training Material (CPTM) as well as Specialised Training Material (STM) on SEA. In addition, case studies of past experiences and scenario-based exercises are conducted to provide reality-based learning for better understanding. Officers who have recently served in the mission areas and have handled appointments dealing with the subject and senior officers who have handled these issues at higher leadership levels are invited for interaction modules, further strengthening the quality of training. The focus is on training the leadership of the various contingents and the trainers from these units so that they further implement the training down to the troops.
- **Exemplary Personal Conduct and Discouraging Others from Misconduct:** Whether a leader or a teammate, personal conduct of the individual is harped upon, while on or off duty. Simultaneously, peacekeepers are educated on the pitfalls of not reporting serious misconduct which they may be witness to, and the harm it may bring about later. They are encouraged to report such misconduct by others so that monitoring and intervention can be strengthened and implemented.
- **Leadership and Accountability:** Leadership both in India facilitating the UN deployment and leadership in mission areas is highly proactive on accountability issues. Constant feedback, rigorous checks and balances, periodic reorientation in this important subject, leading by example, and fixing accountability where leadership has failed, are some institutionalised measures being adopted. To ensure accountability, leadership at various levels is encouraged not to overlook minor infringements as they might snowball into a major issue if left unchecked.

- **Themes Infused in Training:** Certain themes that are employed to instill understanding amongst the peacekeepers include:
 - ‘Individual is responsible for the nations image’
 - ‘Emotional connect—how will your family react if you shame the nation’
 - ‘Nothing is hidden in mission area—all misconduct will be known sooner or later’
 - ‘UN deployment is not a ticket for personal enjoyment’
 - ‘No second chances for serious misconduct’
 - ‘You will become the next case study’
- **SEA is not the only Misconduct:** One needs to understand that because of the gravity of its implications, and while it may assume serious implications; SEA is not the only misconduct. Other misconduct which merit attention include: financial and legal negligence, procurement violations, obstruction of accountability, misuse of office/position, fraud and theft , traffic-related violations, etc. Fairness in conduct needs to be ensured in all aspects of operational and administrative functions in a mission area.

INITIATIVES BY THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT

To promote the underlying need and support the UN in maintaining its clean image in peace operations, the Indian government has been involved in initiatives such as:

- In 2017, the Indian prime minister joined the ‘Circle of Leadership’ towards prevention of and responding to SEA in UN operations. The collective responsibilities of both the UN and the member states towards addressing this important aspect have been noted. This initiative was taken to highlight the sensitivity of the subject right to the highest levels of political leadership from various member states, especially those that contribute military and police troops. As of February 2022, the ‘Circle of Leadership’ has 100 serving and former heads of states as its members and has conducted eight informal expert sessions so far.²⁹
- India is also a signatory to the Secretary-General’s initiative for a voluntary compact on prevention and address of SEA. It aims to signal to the international community the need for a joint commitment on behalf of the UN and the member states and to be mutually accountable to ensure prevention and adequate address of

SEA offences. As of December 2021, the number of member states who have signed this compact stands at 105.³⁰

- India has also been supporting the ‘Pipeline to Peacekeeping Command Programme (PCP)’.³¹ This programme is aimed at focusing on the development of capacities of future peacekeeping leadership (both commanders and managers) at all levels so that they lead by example. It also endeavours to instill awareness on the UN standards for Conduct. Towards this initiative, India donated approximately USD 300,000 for the programme in 2018.³²

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The credibility of peacekeepers and the global image of peacekeeping operations hinges on this important issue—their standards of discipline and professional/personal conduct. For this, focused training and periodic reorientation, especially while being deployed in mission areas are critical. The large number of unresolved and outstanding cases of SEA by various TCC/PCC have conveyed an important lesson—‘Prevention is better than Cure’. There is an inescapable need for the policy formulators to harp on this moot issue. Also, more mechanisms need to be developed to involve the various nations concerned, to address the long-pending SEA cases that need closure. Unresolved SEA cases that linger will remain a blot in the image of UN and of the respective countries.

The ‘Circle of Leadership’ and ‘Voluntary Compact’ are excellent initiatives by the UN and member states. Their effectiveness can be enhanced by periodic review, strict implementation and regular commitments. It would augur well for the UN if permanent members in the UN Security Council pitch in for additional troop/police contributions as this will offer better say and push the agenda of conduct and discipline more rigorously, since field experience offers better perspectives.

If not done earlier, the UN must consider incentivising Troop and Police Contributing Countries for their disciplined record with more deployment opportunities, citations/awards for units that perform well, individual awards for being champions of discipline, and so on. Conversely, strict action needs to be taken against erring individuals and contingents (if it’s a wider problem). Repatriation of units having multiple cases, non-allotment of future deployments for countries that do not enforce strict measures can instill deterrence.

There has been a growing awareness for the need to fast fulfil gender parity needs in UN peace operations. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

rolled out the Gender Parity Strategy in 2019 and has stated that it is just not the numbers, but also of effectiveness in fulfilling mandates.³³ He has added that the presence of females in troop contingents could contribute to lowering of SEA incidents. There is a need to promote gender representation in adequate numbers by contributing countries.

CONCLUSION

The Secretary-General of UN, Mr Antonio Guterres has remarked:

The men and women serving under the blue flag across the world have a duty to uphold the highest standards of integrity, professionalism and respect for the dignity of the human person. As we serve the world's people and work for peace and the advancement of humanity, the United Nations must be a source of inspiration and a beacon of hope for all. Together, let us solemnly pledge that we will not tolerate anyone committing or condoning a crime, particularly, crimes of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.³⁴

Through his Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiatives, the shared declaration between UN and member states includes the strengthening of the conduct of peacekeeping operations and personnel in which a collective commitment to hold personnel and leadership accountable for proper conduct, including thorough support to the UN zero-tolerance policy with its victim-centred drive against all forms of SEA. Further, member states have committed to certifying that prospective personnel meet UN standards for service in UN peace operations.³⁵

For all the excellent work being carried out by the UN peacekeeping forces the world over, allegations and explosive revelations of misconduct has harmed the image of UN and the Troop or Police Contributing Countries. The Conduct and Discipline Service in the UNHQ has instituted a slew of proactive measures, including publishing data online on allegations, victims, investigations, and actions. In doing so, it has taken a huge step in highlighting attention to the issue. India has taken this aspect seriously in preparing its peacekeeping forces and remains committed to ensuring conduct and discipline amongst its rank and file.

The future of peace operations will remain even more challenging and will require the highest standards of personal and collective conduct by its military and police components. India should continue to take lead in this subject due to its vast experience and evolving capability to adapt to the stringent requirements of conduct and discipline functions.

Training, personal conduct, leadership, accountability all play an important role in shaping its future peacekeeping efforts.

NOTES

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