

Concept Note

United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Lessons, Trends and Future Prospects

As the 21st century progresses, United Nations Peacekeeping Operations still continue to play an important role in the protection of civilians, stabilising internal as well as inter-state conflicts, and nation building. India continues to provide large numbers of troops to such operations and finds itself as one of the principal countries in providing training, support and concepts for future peacekeepers.

Roughly a dozen UN Peacekeeping Operations are currently ongoing, many of these operations being located in Africa. These operations are assigned different objectives and have had varying degrees of success. Peacekeeping has often become either Peace Enforcement or Peace Making, as in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This changing mandate will continue to pose challenges for contributing countries.

However, history provides many lessons which may guide planning for ongoing and future operations. The role of the UN forces in the 1960s in Congo, where air power, armour and infantry under UN command were aggressively deployed was one such example, as were the missions in Somalia and Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the increased use of technology and new dynamics in civil–military relations present both challenges and opportunities for UN Peacekeepers.

While Peacekeeping operations may be, at times, robust, kinetic operations, at their core, they are exercises in conflict management and reduction. Peacekeepers have to ensure compliance with agreements, proper conduct on the part of the antagonists and provide support to authorities as they seek to restore or establish order in chaotic circumstances. All the while, the protection of civilians, care for displaced persons and protection of aid workers remain priorities. Even without humanitarian challenges, peacekeepers often walk a metaphorical tightrope between diplomacy and conflict even in less intense conflict zones. They face numerous challenges including a mismatch between their mandate and ground realities, logistics, resources and communication.

Possibilities of preventive deployment to obviate future violations of International Humanitarian Law have been discussed among the peacekeeping community and academia.

India has made a unique contribution to peacekeeping. It has conceived, led and executed many such operations both as a contributor of troops and in respect of preparing and monitoring the diplomacy required for such successful conduct. Moreover, in respect of the nation-building that often accompanies such UN operations, India has valuable experience to share. Legal challenges, negotiations between warring factions, brokering truces, handling ethnic tensions and rebuilding institutions all present challenges which require study and analysis, so as to learn from the past, and to postulate on what might be applicable to future UN missions. The rich and diverse experiences of UN Peacekeepers need to be harnessed for an objective analysis of the challenges and prospects for peacekeeping in future.

With these issues in mind, the *Journal of Defence Studies*, a peer-reviewed journal of the Manohar Parrikar Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), intends to bring out a special issue dealing with the subject of UN Peacekeeping Operations. To this end, articles are being sought dealing with all aspects of peacekeeping operations. These articles, to be between 4,000–8,000 words long, can incorporate any analysis of UN Peacekeeping Operations, whether a historical perspective, personal reflections of a particular operation and the challenges therein, an examination of political dynamics and civil–military relations, the use of force, air power, tactical operations and an examination of the role of technology in past and future operations.