



International Day of UN Peacekeepers

29th May

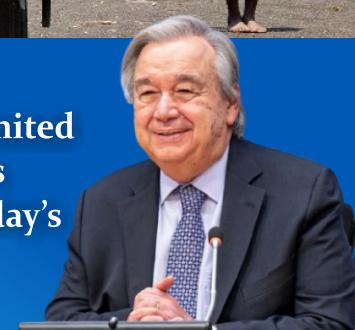


75 Years of
Indian
Contribution to UN Peacekeeping

Major General PK Goswami, VSM (Retd)



Now more than ever, the world needs the United Nations- and the United Nations needs peacekeeping that is fully equipped for today's realities and tomorrow's challenges.



About the Monograph

The Centre for UN Studies (CUNS), United Service Institution of India (USI) has always taken the lead in providing a platform for organising discourse and research in the field of UN peace operations, to put across an Indian perspective on crucial attributes of the contemporary challenges faced by UN peace operations. To this end, Maj Gen PK Goswami, Director, Centre for UN Studies has briefly collated the 75 Years of Indian contribution to UN Peacekeeping, staring from Korea War in 1950 till date. This monograph seeks to chronicle India's rich and multifaceted peacekeeping journey, analysing its impact, challenges, and evolving role; and aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of India's role in peacekeeping over the past 75 years.

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UN Peacekeepers - 29 May**

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Edited by

Maj Gen PK Goswami



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Preface

India's contribution towards world peace is deeply ingrained in its philosophy, policies, and actions, as India has always advocated and supported the betterment of humanity. India has adhered to the principles of non-violence and peaceful dispute resolution through dialogue and mediation, which remain the central tenets of India's foreign policy. Thus, India's contributions to the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping (UNPK) are not merely calculated engagements but a reflection of its civilisational and cultural values, ethical foreign policy, and commitment to global peace and security, aimed at fostering harmony, cooperation, and a stable international order.

India has played a pivotal role in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) for over seven decades, with its contributions underscored by the professionalism and dedication of the experienced personnel of the Indian Armed Forces and police. So far, since the inception of UNPK missions in 1948, India has taken part in more than 50 out of 71 UNPK missions, with a total contribution exceeding 2,90,000 troops and nearly 15,500 police personnel. India has remained one of the largest and most consistent Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs) to the UNPK missions, demonstrating professionalism, valour, and an unwavering dedication to

conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This fact is validated by the UN statistics on India's contribution.

India has not only provided troops but also senior leadership to UNPK missions as well as at the UN Headquarters. Indian leadership has played a crucial role in shaping organisational culture, giving strategic direction, and ensuring sustainable goals. Indian leadership has not only enunciated achievable goals but also guided and inspired multinational teams to attain them. India has a long tradition of sending women military observers and staff officers, apart from them forming part of medical and Formed Police Units (FPU) in the UNPK missions. Indian women have been part of the UNPK missions since the 1960s with Congo being the first mission where they served as medical personnel in operational roles. India was the first country to send an all-women FPU to Liberia in 2007, an initiative that empowered local communities and set a precedent for gender-inclusive peacekeeping. Continuing with the tradition, Indian Female Engagement Teams in South Sudan and Abyei, and Community Liaison Assistants for Congo have been recognised for their commendable achievements. Indian medical personnel have also made significant contributions by establishing hospitals in conflict zones and providing urgent medical care to affected population, as well as veterinary support for the domestic animals. Similarly, combat engineering

elements have assisted in infrastructure development and provided essential services to the affected local population by adopting some quick impact projects.

However, all these achievements have come at a significant cost, as India has paid a heavy price with the sacrifice of 182 peacekeepers, the highest fatalities among the TCCs. Indian Peacekeepers, Brigadier Amitabh Jha of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and Havildar Sanjay Singh of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), were posthumously awarded Dag Hammarskjöld Medal by the UN Secretary General (UNSG) on 29 May 2025, on the occasion of International Day of UN Peacekeepers. Award of the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal is a testament to courage and dedication of peacekeepers. It's well accepted that 'No one can do meaningful peacekeeping better than Indians', given its historical experiences, multicultural ethos and unique perspective.

In the evolving geo-political milieu, the relevance of the UN and UNPKOs have come under closer scrutiny, due to its failure to prevent some of the major conflicts and protect civilians from collateral effects of these conflicts. In this regard one needs to remember the simple yet profound realisation, stated by a tireless and fearless champion of peace, Dag Hammarskjöld – second UNSG, who died in a controversial plane crash on 18 Sept 1961,

while trying to broker a peace agreement to end the conflict in the Congo. He had said, *'The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned'*. It is notable that the UN did not originally have any mention of peacekeeping in the UN Charter. However, it can be stated that peacekeeping actions align closely with the spirit of the Charter, as specified in Chapters VI, VII, and VIII. Dag Hammarskjöld famously described peacekeeping as a 'Chapter six and a half' activity, placing it between the traditional methods of resolving disputes peacefully, such as negotiation and mediation under Chapter VI and the more forceful actions authorised under Chapter VII. Thus, even in the current geopolitical environment, the UN peacekeeping remains one of the most effective viable options for conflict management and can be better leveraged to achieve sustainable peace. As global conflicts continue to evolve, traditional UN peacekeeping operations must adapt to complex and diverse environments using innovative means for future peacekeeping.

India has continuously evolved its UN peacekeeping doctrines, from its past learning experiences and its role in the emerging global order. India's strength lies in its capacity and capability to undertake peacekeeping operations in any terrain, social milieu, or adverse situations, and sustaining such

operations across the globe for prolonged periods. India has a vast scope to further strengthen its peacekeeping capabilities by integrating new technology, retraining its troops to the new realities on the ground, and encouraging innovation and incentivising rather than merely maintaining the status quo.

On 29 May, on the occasion of International Day of UN Peacekeepers, United Service Institution of India (USI) organised a symposium on 75 Years of Indian Contribution to UN Peacekeeping, a tribute to all the UN peacekeepers, who have sacrificed to defend the mandate of the UN Charter for world peace. Also, to highlight India's enduring commitment to international peacekeeping efforts, and remember fallen Indian Peacekeepers. During the event, a chair was kept vacant in Seminar Hall, in memory of fallen peacekeepers, with a placard - *This seat is dedicated in memory of fallen Peacekeepers, who made supreme sacrifice defending the world peace.*

This monograph is compilation of the talks delivered by all speakers during the symposium. I hope that this monograph serves as a valuable resource to not only update but also inspire a deeper appreciation of India's remarkable contributions to world peace.

About the Participants

Major General BK Sharma, AVSM, SM (Retd)** is the Director General, USI, India's oldest think tank established in 1870. He represented his country at the UN as a Military Observer in Central America and has been India's Defence Attaché in Central Asia. He was senior faculty at the National Defence College, New Delhi. He is a prolific writer and regularly participates in international events and track 2 level dialogues.

Major General PK Goswami, VSM (Retd), is Director, Centre for UN Studies, USI. He was Military Observer with UN Verification Mission at Angola (UNAVEM) and senior faculty at National Defence College, New Delhi. He represented National Defence College at the 16th ASEAN Regional Forum for Heads of Defence Universities, Colleges and Institutions at Beijing, China in Nov 2012. He is credited with eight monographs on various UN peacekeeping themes, and a book 'The India and UN Peacekeeping: Through the Prism of Time', which was released by Mr Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General, DPO, UN, on 07 Oct 2022 at the USI. He regularly represents USI in events related to UN peacekeeping, in India and abroad.

Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, PVSM, AVSM, VrC (Retd) is an Indian Army veteran of the 1965 and 1971 wars, and a well-known and acclaimed personality on the

issues related to UNPKO. He is the first former Head of Mission and Force Commander of the UN forces in the former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR) and Director of the USI. He established Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK) in 2000 at USI, during his tenure as the Director. He was appointed as Adviser to the Government of Sri Lanka on the peace process in that country from 2002 to 2003 and was a member of the UN 16-member high-level panel to study global security threats and recommend measures for effective collective action. The General is the recipient of the Indian national award of Padma Bhushan for his contribution to national security affairs.

Lieutenant General JS Lidder, UYSM, AVSM (Retd) is an Indian Army veteran, with vast UN experience in both political and military spheres. He was Chief of Staff in ONUMOZ (Mozambique) 1994-95 and Force Commander UNMIS (Sudan) from 2005 to 08. Post military retirement, he was Deputy SRSG, UNMIS from 2010 to 11. Presently, he is involved with multiple UN Offices, global think tanks, and training establishments as an expert and mentor.

Ambassador (Retd) Asoke Mukerji is a well-known Indian diplomat, who was the most successful permanent representative of India to the UN. During his tenure, he successfully spearheaded the acceptance of the Indian proposal to declare 21 Jun as the International Yoga Day by the UN. He also convinced the UN to launch a Virtual Memorial Wall in memory of India's fallen UN peacekeepers in 2015, and the current initiative of the UN General Assembly to construct a Memorial Wall for UN Peacekeepers in UN Headquarters. Currently, he is a Senior Fellow of the Diplo Foundation established by the governments of Malta and Switzerland, where he teaches diplomacy. His book 'India and the United Nations 1945-2015: A Photo Journey' is among seven published books, and the first copy of this book was presented by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in Sep 2015.

Lieutenant General Rakesh Kapoor, AVSM, VSM, Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Information Systems and Coordination), is a graduate of the US Army War College and a former advisor to the Botswana Defence Force. He has held varied staff, command, and instructional appointments, and possesses rich operational experience. He commanded a Corps in the desert sector before assuming the present appointment last year. Presently he oversees preparation and pre induction training of Indian Units and military observers, before

deployment to UN Missions, and also training of participants from friendly foreign countries.

Mr Shombi Sharp is a UN Resident Coordinator in India. He has devoted more than 25 years in promoting inclusive and sustainable development internationally. Previously, he held several leadership positions at the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and was the UN Resident Coordinator in Armenia before his present appointment.

Welcome Remarks

***Major General PK Goswami, VSM (Retd), Director,
Centre for United Nations Studies***

Major General PK Goswami, Director, Centre for United Nation (UN) Studies, United Service Institution of India (USI), welcomed all the distinguished guests and participants to the event. The symposium commenced with all participants observing silence for a few seconds, in memory of fallen peacekeepers who sacrificed their life for world peace. He highlighted the importance of 'International Day of UN Peacekeepers' and introduced the theme of the day i.e., '75 Years of Indian Contribution to UN Peacekeeping (UNPK)'.

29 May was designated as the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, by UN General Assembly resolution 57/129 on 11 Dec 2002; to pay tribute to all the men and women (military, police, and civilian personnel) who have served and continue to serve in UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO); for their high level of professionalism, dedication and courage, and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace. It also serves as an opportunity to reaffirm the international community's commitment to peace, security,

and international cooperation. This is the date in 1948 when the first UN peacekeeping mission—the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)—began operations in Palestine. This year's International Day of UN Peacekeepers, under the theme 'The Future of Peacekeeping', reflects the evolving nature of peace operations in a complex and rapidly changing world. In this backdrop, USI has organised this symposium on '75 Years of Indian Contribution to UN Peacekeeping: 1950 to 2025', in honour of all peacekeepers, and pay tribute to the fallen heroes.

Over the past 80 years, more than two million men and women from 125 countries have served under the UN flag in over 71 peacekeeping operations. Currently, more than 60,000 military, police, and civilian personnel are serving in 11 ongoing UN peacekeeping missions, confronting increasingly complex and interconnected challenges shaped by a shifting geopolitical landscape. Till date, India has contributed over 2,90,000 personnel in more than 51 UNPK Missions and presently approximately 5,800 are deployed in 9 out of 11 ongoing missions. India is first to contribute an all women Formed Police Unit (FPU) in 2007, and in continuous of this legacy, presently 'Female Engagement Teams' are deployed in Congo, South Sudan and Abyei.

Despite increasingly complex and interconnected challenges—and occasional criticism—peacekeepers remain steadfast in their pursuit of peace. However, this commitment comes at a cost. As of 30 April 2025, more than 4,433 peacekeepers have lost their lives in the line of duty, including

182 from India—the highest among Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs).

To mark the International Day of UN Peacekeepers at UN Headquarters, the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) laid a wreath at the Peacekeepers Memorial on 29 May 2025. This was followed by award of the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal, to the fallen peacekeepers. From India, Brigadier Amitabh Jha, who served with the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), and Havildar Sanjay Singh, who was deployed with the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), were honoured posthumously with the medal, among other awardees. UNSG also presented the UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year award to Squadron Leader Sharon Mwintso Syme from Ghana, presently serving with UN Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA). Last year, Major Radhika Sen, who served with MONUSCO received this award. This year's the UN Woman Police Officer of the Year award went to Superintendent Zainab Gbla of Sierra Leone, presently serving with UNISFA.

Opening Remarks

***Major General BK Sharma, AVSM, SM** (Retd),
Director General United Service Institution of India***

Major General BK Sharma brought out that it was an honour for him to address the esteemed gathering as the USI commemorates 75 years of India's steadfast participation in UNPKO—a journey that reflects India's deep commitment to the UN Charter and our unflinching belief in international peace and security.

India's association with the UNPK began in 1950, when an Indian medical unit was deployed to support multinational military operations and war-affected civilians in Korea. Since then, India has contributed more than 2,90,000 troops, including women peacekeepers, across over 50 missions. India remains among the most significant and dependable troop and police contributors to the UN.

What sets India's contribution apart is not just its scale, but also its substance and spirit. India has consistently stepped forward in high-risk theatres, taking on some of the most demanding operations in the history of peacekeeping. Few such examples are:

- In the Congo Crisis of the 1960s (ONUC), Indian troops undertook combat roles under Chapter VII. They conducted some of the earliest air operations in UN history using Indian Air Force Canberra bombers. India's legendary contribution in Operation Rum Punch and Operation Grand Slam

set the template for future peace enforcement mandates.

- During the Somalia deployment in the 1990s (UNOSOM II), Indian contingents operated in urban war zones like Mogadishu under hostile conditions, where mandate ambiguity, warlord politics, and extreme asymmetry posed daily threats. Yet, Indian troops delivered with professionalism and restraint.
- In Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), India led the largest UNPK mission at the time and conducted Operation Khukri (2000)—a bold and successful offensive to rescue 223 peacekeepers held hostage by rebels. It showcased India’s joint planning capability and special forces expertise under UN command.
- In South Sudan (UNMISS), Indian battalions have repeatedly protected civilians amid brutal inter-ethnic violence, including the 2013 Bor siege, where Indian peacekeepers defended the UN base under extreme odds, saving thousands of lives.

Beyond battlefield courage, India has added unique operational value and institutional innovations to peacekeeping:

- The deployment of the first all-female FPU in Liberia in 2007 was a game-changer. It demonstrated how women peacekeepers can build

- trust and be a role model for local girls and women, enhance community policing, and support gender-sensitive conflict resolution in post-war societies.
- India's military medical capabilities, engineering units, and logistics corps have repeatedly delivered critical humanitarian support, built roads, schools, and sanitation facilities, and provided public health and trauma care under UN mandates in Africa and Asia.
- Indian contingents have shown cultural intelligence, linguistic adaptability, and respect for local customs, often serving as stabilising anchors in volatile environments. UN mission leaders have consistently recognised our ability to engage with local communities while remaining neutral.
- India has also institutionalised its peacekeeping experience through the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK), New Delhi—a global training hub offering pre-deployment training, civil-military interaction modules, including specialised courses for women peacekeepers.

Indian peacekeepers have not only maintained peace but also shaped it with courage, compassion, and competence. Tragically, 182 Indian peacekeepers have laid down their lives under the UN flag—the highest among all TCCs. The USI honours their supreme sacrifice.

Today, peacekeeping is at an inflection point. Traditional ceasefire monitoring has evolved into complex multidimensional missions with asymmetric threats, cyber risks, and blurred state-non-state dynamics. Hence, India always advocated for more explicit mandates, improved mission support, better force protection, and fair representation of TCCs in mission leadership. India believes peacekeeping must evolve but always align with UN values and principles.

India sees peacekeeping not as a transaction but as a moral and strategic duty, rooted in its commitment to a rules-based order, South-South cooperation, and global security. Looking ahead, India continues to offer not just troops, but also leadership, training, technology, and values aligned with the UN's founding principles—shaped by decades of experience.

To conclude Major General BK Sharma outlined a few reflections on the USI's contributions to UNPK. The very foundation of modern Indian UNPK, in the form of CUNPK, was laid by the revered former Director, Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, who is present at this event. USI played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual discourse surrounding UNPK in its formative years. In a sequel to his yeoman-service; to briefly outline some of the USI's key initiatives during this period:

- Published over eight comprehensive books and hosted series of international seminars with global participation.

- Published over ten monographs covering a broad spectrum of operational, legal, and doctrinal issues in peace operations.
- Published two special editions of the *USI Journal* dedicated to UNPK themes.
- Launched a USI-Model UN programme for students and Global Leadership course jointly curated and certified by the USI and the University for Peace (UPEACE), Costa Rica.
- The USI is a founding member of the Challenges Forum and an active partner of Norwegian Institute for International Affairs, Effective Peace Operations Network, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung , International Committee of the Red Cross and the Global Alliance for Peace Operations.

With this repository of knowledge and expertise, the USI today is well-positioned to collaborate closely with the CUNPK. It is reaffirmed that while CUNPK must continue to lead from the front, the USI stands ready to provide robust back-end support in terms of thought leadership, training modules, and research capabilities.

All institutions, including armed forces, should leverage the USI's extensive institutional memory and multi-domain expertise—resources that newer officers, despite their operational excellence, may struggle to access amid demanding schedules. The USI is here to support—readily,

reliably, and resourcefully. Together a new niche can be established for India's leadership in the UNPK, particularly in doctrinal innovation, multi-domain training, and the development of future-ready skill sets essential for new-generation peace operations.

Keynote Address

**Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, PVSM, AVSM,
VrC (Retd)**

During much of the eighty-year history of the UN as an organisation, of all its activities, peacekeeping operations have attracted maximum attention. Primarily because conflicts make dramatic news and the deployment of an international military force by the Security Council to preserve a fragile peace, makes a good story that captures public interest in this electronic age. As it evolved over the years, peacekeeping became an extraordinary art that called for the use of the military personnel not to wage war but to prevent fighting between belligerents; to ensure the maintenance of cease-fires, and to provide a measure of stability in an area of conflict while negotiations were conducted. Of course, the publicity generated by its peacekeeping activities in the past had for the most part, been beneficial; especially in times when the UN Organisation did not otherwise enjoy public confidence or credibility. Since the 1990s, however, with the deployment of UN forces in intra-state conflicts and civil war situations where there were perceived inadequacies, even peacekeeping operations have drawn adverse comment. There can be little doubt that UN peace operations are at a cross-road. The last three decades have severely tested the concept, philosophy and manner of conduct of these operations. The Horta Panel report that was put out in the public domain in June 2015, makes an effort to address some of the issues. It however goes beyond the UNPK to

the wider spectrum of ‘Peace Operations’, of which peacekeeping is only a part. Even so, the recommendations mostly reiterate the points made in Boutros Boutros Ghali’s 1992 ‘Agenda for Peace’ document, and the Brahimi Panel Report of 2000.

In any discussion on the subject, it is important to distinguish between the concept of ‘Collective Security’ and ‘Peacekeeping’ in the international environment. Whereas ‘Collective Security’ is a punitive process designed to be carried out with some degree of discrimination, but not necessarily impartially, ‘Peacekeeping’ is intended to be politically impartial and essentially non-coercive. Hence the UNPK was, and has always been, based on a triad of principles that give it legitimacy, as well as credibility; namely, consent of the parties to the conflict, impartiality of the peacekeepers, and the non-use of force by peacekeepers except in self-defence and defence of the mandate. All three principles have been under severe strain in the last three decades. The premise on which the UNPK was based, is that violence in inter-state and intra-state conflict can be controlled without resort to the use of force or enforcement measures. No doubt, some theorists and one may dare say quite a few practitioners, are of the view that force needs to be met with force. An objective analysis of the history of conflicts probably reveals that the use of force and enforcement measures, particularly in internal conflicts, tend to prolong the conflict rather than resolve it speedily. This is not however, to suggest that the use of force be discounted altogether. In certain circumstances, use

of force may well be called for as a catalyst for peaceful resolution. A quote attributed to Al Capone, a notorious Chicago gangster of the early 20th Century is probably appropriate in this context- “You can get a lot more done with a kind word when you have a gun in your hand, than with a kind word alone”.

In any case, use of force in the UNPK is not a new phenomenon. The UN force in the Congo in the early 1960s, was mandated to use force to deal with Katangese secessionists led by Moise Tshombe. An Indian brigade-sized contingent undertook combat operations to stabilise the situation. But at great cost—36 dead and 124 wounded; a heavy price to pay for a UNPKO. Similar operations were undertaken, again by the Indian contingent in Sierra Leone, to rescue hostages taken by rebel forces in 1999. Hence the ‘Use of Force’ for the protection of civilians is not an issue that merits debate or discussion; it is a task that UN peacekeepers should be prepared to undertake. The dilemmas however that arise in the process must be recognised and addressed. One, the UN Security Council (UNSC) must mandate the use of force; no doubt easily done, particularly because those who mandate do not provide the ‘Boots’ on the ground as it were. Two, adequate resources must be provided for effective implementation of the mandate, as also political back-up support; on both counts, the situation at the ground level is most disappointing, as reiterated by the Horta panel. Three, it must be accepted that in the combat operations that are undertaken, there will be casualties; to UN personnel taking

part, personnel from the opposing rebel forces, and possibly some collateral impact on innocent civilians caught up in the fighting. Four, having taken sides in the local conflict, the ‘Blue Helmets’ become party to the conflict and are hence perceived as legitimate targets later. And five, UN mediators and negotiators could lose their legitimacy and credibility with those against whom the operations are undertaken. To that extent, references can be found in the Horta panel report to “A Designated Enemy”, “Pre-Emptive Use of Force”, etc, somewhat disturbing. Equally, bringing ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P) interventions into the debate on UN peace operations is not only misplaced, but also positively dangerous. Where the ‘Bad Guy’ has been identified and needs to be dealt with, the option for the international community is not a UN peace operation, but Chapter VII combat operations undertaken by multi-national forces under an agreed lead nation or organisation. Recent examples are: Operation Desert Storm (against Saddam Husain in 1991); and in Afghanistan (against the Al Qaeda led by Osama Bin Laden) in Oct 2001, following the terrorist attacks in New York in Sept 2001.

Preventive action must be the focus of the UN if the organisation has to regain its considerably eroded credibility and legitimacy. It appears that a vital element of prevention, namely preventive deployment, has not received much attention; the Horta panel also does not seem to have addressed this aspect with any seriousness. In the speaker’s personal experience of deployment in Dec 1992, on a request made by then President Gligorov (of Macedonia) to

Cyrus Vance, the UN SG's Special Envoy at the European Conference on the former Yugoslavia, and implemented by the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) of which the speaker then was the Head of Mission (HoM) and the Force Commander, leads him to believe that this tool needs to be better exploited.

The speaker has long been an advocate of the imperative need to set up a 'Standing UN Rapid Deployment Force'; if the UN is to have the capacity to deploy quickly into a mission area following agreement between local belligerents, and a decision taken by the UNSC to deploy a peacekeeping force. The speaker made an effort to have a recommendation to this effect included when he was a member of Kofi Annan's High-Level Panel on 'Threats, Challenges and Change' in 2003, but without success. The speaker noticed that the Horta panel had made a 'Timid' effort in this regard. The fact of the matter is that today, it takes anything from two to three months for deployment to be effective after a Security Council resolution is passed. The situation on the ground does not remain static in the meanwhile; it invariably worsens, to the detriment of the objective of the UN mission.

Another vital issue that the speaker has been raising at every conceivable forum over the last couple of decades merits mention. Namely, that the developed world must get back to UN peacekeeping if such operations are to be effective, and the UN is to retain any credibility. (Legitimacy is another matter altogether, given the current lack of representation from Africa and South America in the

permanent membership category in the Security Council). Because, it is the countries of the developed world that have the equipment resources and trained manpower so desperately required to make UN peacekeeping effective. To suggest that the countries of the Western world prefer to operate under the auspices of North Atlantic Treaty Organization because of the 'Inefficiency' or 'Incompetence' of the UN system, in the speaker's view, is hypocrisy of the highest order. The speaker has not noticed any such reluctance by countries of the Western world in garnering senior command positions in the UN missions that are deployed, or in securing senior military and police staff positions at the headquarters of the missions now deployed. A point often made in justification of this arrangement, is that the countries of the Western world are the ones that make significant financial contributions to the UN, and hence they are entitled to such positions in UN HQ and mission areas. This is a myth that the speaker addresses from personal experience. Besides being the Force Commander of UNPROFOR, the speaker was also the HoM, in which capacity, the Civil Affairs Department, the Civil Police, as also the Administration were under the speaker's oversight. The speaker therefore knew for a fact that, at that time (1992-93), every single contract, whether it was for provision of aircraft, helicopters, vehicles, provisions, bottled water, maintenance of equipment, communication equipment, or whatever, was in the hands of the countries of the developed world. Who therefore got back from the UN system as much if not more, than the

contributions their governments ostensibly made as financial contributions to the UN.

And finally, it is with some pride that the speaker wishes to place on record the fact that in order to build on the institute's expertise and experience in this field of UN activity, as the Director, of the USI, with support from the Ministries of External Affairs and Defence, and Army Headquarters, had the privilege of setting up the CUNPK in Sept 2000. The Centre besides overseeing the training of contingents earmarked for peacekeeping operations undertakes conduct of training courses for our sub-unit commanders, military observers, and officers earmarked for deputation on staff appointments. It is a measure of our commitment to the UN, that a minimum of fifteen vacancies on each of these courses, are offered to developing countries, with all expenses incurred on travel from home country and back, training, accommodation and meals, borne by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. A number of developed countries like the USA, UK, Australia, Japan, Norway, etc also subscribe to these courses on a self-financing arrangement. It is indeed a matter of great satisfaction that, in the last twenty-five years, the CUNPK has established itself internationally as a Centre of Excellence, and is now often called upon to conduct specialised international courses on behalf of United Nations Department of Peace Operations (UN DPO).

Over View of Indian Contribution to United Nations Peacekeeping

Major General PK Goswami, VSM (Retd)

No one can do meaningful peacekeeping better than Indians

India has a distinguished history of participating in the UN peacekeeping, and has contributed more personnel and made more sacrifices than any other country. The philosophy of India's commitment revolves around India's national ethos and ancient traditions. Since ancient times, as per India's social, cultural, and religious ethos, India has always prayed for world peace and emphasised support to humanity. This reflects clearly in our age-old Indian shlokas:

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः । सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु । मा कश्चिददुःखभाग्भवेत् ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

(May all sentient beings be at peace,
may no one suffer from illness,
May all see what is auspicious, may no one suffer.
Om peace, peace, peace.)

Similarly, ever prevalent Indian philosophy of

वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् (The World is One Family) emphasises unity, interconnectedness, and inculcates an understanding that the whole world and humanity are one family. It highlights that India's contribution towards world

peace is deeply ingrained in its philosophy, policies, and actions.

India is a land of unity in diversity, home to a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multilingual society that has co-existed for millennia. This resulted in the creation of a pluralistic and tolerant society. This remarkable heritage is deeply ingrained in the Indian character and reflected in Indian troops and police personnel in the missions abroad. As a result, Indian peacekeepers can quickly appreciate and respect different cultures, and effectively connect with local populations in mission areas. This helps in building trust, leading to greater acceptance, and maintaining peace in conflict areas, resulting in effective peacekeeping.

Thus, India's contributions to the UNPK reflects its civilisational values and ethical foreign policy, and not just strategic engagement. These long-standing efforts have reinforced India's commitment to the UN mandate, while offering valuable learning experiences.

The roots of India's peacekeeping go back to its humanitarian contribution to the Korean conflict and the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) along with its Custodians Force in 1950; then moved on to Indochina, UN Emergency Force in Egypt & Gaza; followed by major peacekeeping missions in Lebanon, Congo, Iran-Iraq, Angola, Namibia, Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Eritrea, and ongoing missions in Cyprus, Golan Heights, Lebanon, Congo, South Sudan, and Abyei.

Over the years, with this vast learning experience, many lessons have emerged, and have been incorporated into the development of India's peacekeeping ethos, in alignment with India's civilisational values. Some of these are:

- **Strict Adherence to the Principles of Peacekeeping.** India has firmly followed the three basic principles of the UNPK—‘Consent of the Parties, Impartiality; and Non-Use of Force except in Self-Defence and Defence of the Mandate’ in letter and spirit and has made its peacekeepers accountable for any deviation.
- **Professionalism.** This underscores the Indian Armed Forces ecosystem. Indian Armed Forces have a first-hand on-ground experience of Counter Insurgency and Counter Terrorism operations. Their outstanding professionalism has been displayed in extremely complex operations in Korea, Congo, Cambodia, Somalia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Yugoslavia and South Sudan.
- **Indian Leadership.** Faith in the Indian leadership in peacekeeping missions has been built over the years since they provided unambiguous direction with a clear vision and political courage. Experienced and committed peacekeepers like Lieutenant General Dewan Prem Chand, Major General Indarjit Rikhye, Lieutenant General PS

Gyani, General KS Thimayya, Lieutenant General S Nambiar, and Lieutenant General JS Lidder are examples of transformative leadership. This resulted in a growing pool of Indian military officers seconded to the UN, whose professionalism and experience have contributed to UN peacekeeping doctrine. The contribution of Lieutenant General Dewan Prem Chand and Major General Indarjit Rikhye is seminal in this context.

- **Effective Performance.** Leadership role given to Indians in complex and challenging missions, itself speaks of faith and confidence in Indian Leadership. Some examples of effective performance by Indian leaderships are:

- Major General Indarjit Rikhye operated continuously for over 17 years with UN, and was the first Military Adviser to the UNSG between 1960-1967 (with two UNSGs), as well as a lead or head of a few missions. As military advisor, he was responsible for operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, West Irian, Yemen, and Cyprus. Special assignments included advisor to the Secretary-General during the Cuban Missile Crisis, Chief of the UN Observer Mission to the Dominican Republic, and participant in

the Spinelli-Rikhye Mission to Jordan and Israel in 1965.

- Lieutenant General Diwan Prem Chand headed the Congo (Katanga) UN

Force during a critical period, the UN Peacekeeping force in Cyprus during a major conflict, and as a negotiator during the transition of Rhodesia to Zambia and Zimbabwe. Finally, he was recalled after retirement to head UN mission in Namibia.

- General KS Thimayya as Chairman, NNRC, effectively handled the thorny issue of Prisoners of War who did not want to return to their own countries. Later as a Force Commander in Cyprus.
- Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, first HoM and Force Commander in the former Republic of Yugoslavia, established this difficult and complex mission with a notable depth of understanding and vision and provided a resolute operational leadership to the diverse forces under his command.
- Lieutenant General JS Lidder, was the Force Commander when the first mission in Sudan was established, and after retirement, the UN entrusted him with a critical role in Sudan as a Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (P). His meaningful

contribution to political reconciliation, peace and stability; played a major role in the South Sudan Referendum,

leading to it becoming an independent country.

- **Conflict Management.** The fact that force can be legally used does not always mean that it should be used. India's stand has always been that the use of force should be calibrated, and only be used after all other options have been exhausted. A case in point is when, in Jan 1963, then Major General (later Lieutenant General) Dewan Prem Chand, Katanga Sector Commander in Congo, rolled down an armoured UN force to open the road from Elisabethville to Rhodesia (present day Zambia and Zimbabwe) and threatened to use force against any obstruction. Moise Tshombe (self-appointed President of the secessionist African state of Katanga, and Premier of the United Congo Republic [now the DRC]) rushed ahead, and in fact, he led the UN force and kept ordering his rebel cadre in all villagers enroute not to attack the UN force, to avoid heavy causalities to his rebel forces. This final step led to the stabilisation of the overall situation in Congo and the peaceful settlement of the conflict after many bitter skirmishes. Besides Congo, other examples are Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Golan Heights and ongoing missions in Congo and South Sudan.

- **Empathy for the Local population.** The Centre of Gravity of successful peacekeeping remains the local population. Poor operating environment, lack of development, poor connectivity, continuous resource exploitation, and prevailing conditions of the local population in host countries resonate with our peacekeepers. Thus, Indian peacekeepers with humane approach adapt to their needs, and it is so reflective that they are accepted, and it becomes easier to accomplish their task/mandate. An apt example is the mutual learning of languages and singing of the Indian National Anthem and Hindi songs by the children and local population.
- **Protection of Civilians.** India being a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious society, Indian peacekeepers understand the differences and serve the host nation with adaptive impartiality without any consideration for the differences. Whenever and wherever the local population needs support, Indian peacekeepers willingly extended helping hand of humanitarian support.
- **Gender Sensitivity.** India was the first country to deploy an all-women FPU in Liberia in 2007. And in continuance, presently the Female Engagement Teams (FETs) in South Sudan and Abyei, and Community Liaison Assistants in Congo are deployed. These initiatives have empowered local communities and set a precedent for gender-inclusive

peacekeeping. Their interaction with the locals made a difference and further added to the credibility of Indian peacekeeping. They also serve

as role models for girls and women; beside highlighting gender sensitivity to peacekeepers. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General, DPO, UN, said that present Indian Engagement Platoons in Abyei and Congo 'exemplify' the impact of women in peacekeeping. Contribution of Indian women peacekeepers has been recognised and awarded. Police officer, Ms. Shakti Devi, deployed in Afghanistan (UNAMA), was awarded the International Female Police Peacekeeper Award in 2014, for her 'exceptional achievements' in leading the establishment of Women Police Councils. UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award in 2019 was awarded to Major Suman Gawani, of UNMISS, and in 2023 to Major Radhika Sen of MONUSCO.

- **Grassroots Development and Nation Building.** Indian peacekeeping efforts are focused on bringing lasting peace to a war-torn country and then assisting in nation-building. The local population needs the basic necessities of life, for which Indian peacekeepers have been using integral resources to provide humanitarian assistance, infrastructure development, and capacity building. These micro-level quick-impact projects lead to the long-term efforts of the UN peacekeeping.

- **Indian Creativity.** Indians are exceptionally innovative and adapt by employing unconventional methods (Jugaad) to resolve problems at hand. This is being practised extensively in various mission areas. During the Korean War, the Indian 60 Para Field Ambulance, when faced with a lack of transport in the face of the advancing enemy, famously used an abandoned train to transport its vital equipment and medical supplies. The unit formed a human chain with buckets to the nearby river to fill the boilers of the steam engine, thus, earning the nickname 'Bucket Brigade', and drove this small train in time to cross the Han River Bridge to Seoul, hours before it was demolished by advancing Communist forces. Refurbishing of schools, playfields and resuscitating many dried wells by Indian peacekeepers, is all part of quick thinking and innovation with local material. Provision of 'Jaipur Foot' to local mine casualties in Congo and Lebanon Missions are some examples.
- **Intellectual contribution.** The USI has long been a cornerstone of India's peacekeeping philosophy and academic expertise. Since 2000, USI has nurtured the CUNPK as a regional hub for capacity building, enabling it to evolve into a full-fledged unit of the Indian Army. USI now focuses on strategic and operational aspects of peacekeeping, contributing intellectually through seminars,

workshops, publications, and collaborative studies with prominent international think tanks, including:

Challenges Forum, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Effectiveness of Peace

Operations Network, Geneva Centre for Security Policy, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, International Committee of the Red Cross, and Global Alliance for Peace Operations. In the process, the USI has now been recognised worldwide as India's premier think tank related to UN peace operations.

To conclude, India's strength lies in its capacity and capability to undertake peacekeeping operations in any terrain, social milieu or adverse situations and sustaining such operations across the globe for prolonged periods. Thus, India can play a more prominent role by strategically utilising its field experiences for a more structured and strategic approach to peacekeeping, by integrating new technology, and reorienting training to the evolving realities on the ground. India's future peacekeeping approach should enhance its global standing and diplomatic influence by linking peacekeeping activities to its wider foreign policy objectives.

Strategic Leadership

Lieutenant General JS Lidder, UYSM, AVSM (Retd)

These are difficult times. The world is at inflection point with fragmented geo-strategic landscape, proliferated conflicts and unprecedented violence. In this transforming challenging environment, UN peacekeeping is under scanner like never before for non/under performance. The theme for 2025 International Day of UN Peacekeepers is thus rightly 'The Future of Peacekeeping'.

Modern conflicts are undefined in space and time, with new threats—notably unconventional (terrorism and non-state actors), cyber (weaponisation) and climate emergencies. The peacekeeping narrative has undergone a fundamental change. Peacekeepers are being deployed in politically unstable and violent environments with humanitarian deaths and displacement in demanding mandates. Most disturbingly, safety and security of peacekeepers has become a major concern. UN peacekeeping accordingly needs a strategic reset.

In the information age with live, each peacekeeping activity (action or inaction) has fast-flowing communicative effect with strategic impact. It follows that strategy and strategic leadership is delinked from rank and appointment as understood in the conventional strategic-operational-tactical warfare construct. A paradigm shift is hence required to generate strategic culture in contemporary peacekeeping.

Good leadership is central to effective peacekeeping. Selection of UN leaders needs to be based on multi-skill resilience and integrative competence for attaining substantive mission objectives—political stability, safe and secure environment and principled humanitarian support. Importantly, ethical uprightness is imperative for honest Protection of Civilians (POC).

The top positions of UN mission authority, Senior Mission Leaders (SML), need to understand the conflict dynamics and adapt mission strategies for mandate success. They must ensure practical measures to effectively operationalise mission frameworks and directives in the field offices. Civil-military cooperation lies at the heart of mandate delivery, for which the balance between political primacy and military authority is to be harmonised.

‘Think Strategic and Act Operational’ is the thought promoted by the author in Peace Operations Training Institute (POTI) Course ‘Leading within UN Peace Operations’. Mission leaders are to seize and maintain the mandate initiative by deft political diplomacy, dynamic security and principled humanitarian support.

Transformative leadership demands physical manoeuvre to build relationships and obtain authentic inputs—not only within the mission but with multiple stakeholders. While requisite safety and security protocols are to be followed, technology overdependence needs to be guarded against. Mental manoeuvre allows leaders to stay ahead of the story arc for proactive resolutions and out-of-box innovations.

Time critical decision making requires updated conflict knowledge and risk opportunity evaluation. Technology is a force multiplier, nevertheless it should not replace the human face of peacekeeping. Junior leaders need to be empowered for operational initiative. Mistakes are bound to happen and therefore should be treated as learning opportunities.

Information wars dominate peacekeeping perceptions. Leaders must understand that effective strategic communications are at the very heart of mandate implementation. They form a core leadership function against which they will be held accountable. Gaining information advantage is thus imperative—for which an authentic mission narrative needs to be created with credible messaging.

Host-nation relationship has become critical, with many missions being asked to leave. Ensuring sovereign status and respecting ethnic/tribal impartiality is pivotal. Notably, institutionalised whole-of-nation networking and pragmatic long-term commitment for peacebuilding help win local trust.

Training is the key to peacekeeping success. Fundamentally, training is a leadership responsibility and a function of command. A leadership climate of strategic culture and on-job learning has to be ensured. Comprehensive performance and conduct accountability are prudent. Status-quo and play-safe attitude is unacceptable—‘Inaction is also an Action’.

In conclusion, there may be situations where mission leaders are navigated by particular course(s) of action, because of specific mandates, political pressures and limited capacity. Nevertheless, an effective leader finds creative ways to meaningfully address the ongoing conflict(s) to obtain peace dividends.

Future of Peacekeeping

Shri Asoke Mukerji, IFS (Retd)

On 17 Sept 1948, Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden, a UN Mediator for Palestine, was assassinated in Jerusalem while on a UN mission to broker peace. It was the first official mediation in the UN's history and introspection of that archived event of 1948 and comparing it with evolving happenings of 2025, one realises that people are not far away from what Count Folk Bernadotte confronted and gave his life for. In the evolving geopolitics, the relevance of the UN and its peacekeeping operations have come under scrutiny and the speaker looks at the future of peacekeeping from three different perspectives. These are:

Mandates of Peacekeeping Operations

How are the future mandates likely to be constructed, to be agreed upon? Those who have been following the regular debates on renewal of mandates of existing peacekeeping operations, know that it is becoming more and more difficult for the UNSC to agree on the mandate and to roll over the mandate. This is because of the disconnect between the TCCs and the UNSC's five permanent members, for example, the ongoing debate on renewal of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) mandate. Despite a provision in the Article 44 of the Charter, for the TCCs who are not elected to the Security Council but who have contributed troops to the peace

operation, to have direct discussions with the Security Council before the deployment of their troops, the five permanent members have steadfastly refused to honour this provision of the UN Charter.

Therefore, the disconnect, which was recognised 20 years ago in 2005, by the UN Summit, mandated the reform of the Security Council to make it more effective on the ground but disconnect continues and has grown. It has grown because of several factors, but primarily the reason is the withdrawal or the fading away of the leadership of the United States (US), which conceptualised and created the UN process. It is a very sad situation today when, because of domestic politics, the US as the host country of the UN refuses to even give visas to the officials of South Sudan who have to travel to New York for discussing the mandate for the UN mission in South Sudan. This illustrates the kind of challenge faced by the UN today.

There is a challenge to the formulation of mandates also because of the confrontation within the five permanent members. Of course, this has existed from 1949, from the year NATO was created by three permanent members against one, Soviet Union. Today, that confrontation has become multi-aligned, since each permanent member has its own agenda and allies. In the discussions on UN peacekeeping, the role and influence of China is very often not heard, but the speaker urged to keep an eye on China in this regard.

The end result of all this is that, each of these permanent members contributes in its own way to the

challenge of formulation of UN mandates for peacekeeping. The impact on mandate formulation is that the roadmap of Article 33 of Chapter 6 of the UN Charter for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes, is completely lost sight of. Thus, the priority of peacekeeping, which is to engineer a political settlement, is being ignored. The Indian Prime Minister often referred to this aspect and stressed dialogue and diplomacy for conflict resolution. This challenge has aggravated attempts to set a clear exit date for peacekeeping, which affects mandate formulation. One example of this today is South Sudan (UNMISS) where maximum number of Indian soldiers are deployed.

In light of an ineffective and unreformed UNSC, its mandate for maintaining international peace and security, is being usurped by either proxies of the permanent members or by regional groupings or by non-state actors. There is a very chaotic situation on the ground, live examples are UN peacekeeping missions in Africa and West Asia.

Deployments of United Nation Peacekeepers

UNPK mandate formulation has a direct impact on deployments. The situation is that the Security Council does not act, does not want to act, or cannot act. On the other hand, the failure of the Security Council to prioritise political settlements is aggravated by Article 12 of the Charter, which very clearly says that as long as the Security Council has the item on its agenda, there is no role for the UN General Assembly. Instead of taking the inaction of the Security Council to the General Assembly, which elects ten members of the Security Council, the UN is held hostage

from acting on the dispute. Civilians suffer, get killed, destruction takes place, but nothing can be done due to dysfunctional multilateralism at the UN.

It is time to look back at the experience of the deployment of troops during the Korean War in 1950. There was a short window of a few months when the Security Council, due to disputes about its own internal working procedures, was not able to take a decision on deploying the UNPK mission in Korea. It was the General Assembly which convened under the Uniting for Peace provision and authorised the contributions by individual member states to the mission, which eventually got regularized as a UN peacekeeping mission. It is time to similarly empower the General Assembly, for deployment of troops in a UN peacekeeping mission.

Terrorism today is the single largest threat to UNPK, but the Security Council does not recognise and act decisively against the threat posed by this cancer of terrorism to UNPK. This cancer appeared in 2013 in West Asia, when the Security Council attempted to brush it under the carpet. The Council pretended that the UN can manage this threat, and it should not be raised. That time has now gone. And the best example to now analyse this is the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). One reason why the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali was asked to wind up, was the killing of more than 300 peacekeepers serving in MINUSMA by terrorist violence.

The terrorist violence might have been prevented if the UN had taken action to prosecute and bring justice to the offenders who took peacekeepers hostage in the Golan Heights in 2013. 46 Fijians and 23 Filipino peacekeepers were held hostage by the Jabhat al-Nusra in two separate incidents. This caused a United Nations Disengagement Force (UNDOF) Mission to be executed to secure the release of the hostages. A ransom-for-hostages deal was brokered through a UN member-state from West Asia. Today, the proscribed leader of the Jabhat al-Nusra is the President of Syria. This mainstreaming of terrorism by the UN Security Council goes against our commitment under the UN Charter to collectively respond to the challenge posed by terrorism to UN peacekeepers. India during its Presidency of the Security Council in Aug 2021, initiated a resolution for such collective action, which has been largely ignored. Unless terrorist violence is stopped in its tracks, it is a cancer which will spread and eat into any effort for peace and security.

New technologies and equipment also have an impact on the deployment of UN peacekeepers. India needs to be aware of technology applications that are already in use in conflict situations around the world, not only in areas where UN troops are deployed like in MONUSCO in the DR Congo, but also in ongoing conflicts in Europe and West Asia. India needs to train peacekeepers to respond to the use of these technologies against their mandate. Otherwise, India will face a tremendous challenge, that can only be countered collectively.

Policy on United Nations Peacekeeping - An Indian Perspective

There is no doubt, given the many successes of the UNPK during the past over 75 years, that this innovation by the UN has been very beneficial to bring about a peacefully negotiated end to conflicts. The three cardinal principles of UN peacekeeping have been validated by India's experience on the ground. The speaker thinks this is an opportunity for India to take a lead in policy on UN peacekeeping issues, given the atrophy within the UNSC, and the challenges given earlier. In this regard, some ideas for consideration are:

- The Indian CUNPK probably could play a lead role in establishing regional centres of UN peacekeeping in Africa and West Asia. India should share experiences with member-states from these two regions who have contributed troops for UN peacekeeping to bring about cohesiveness of vision and operation when they are deployed by the UN.
- The financing of UN peacekeeping missions which are of strategic interest to India, could be integrated by its financing of the India-UN Development Fund, launched in 2017. This will illustrate the interlinkage between peace, security, and development, which is the new paradigm for UN peace operations today.
- 'Make in India' defence equipment should be as a matter of policy integrated into all UN peace operations where Indian troops are deployed under the UN flag. This will significantly increase the

‘Economic Footprint’ of India in the areas of deployment of UN peacekeepers. The UNITE-AWARE platform offered by India during its Presidency of the UNSC in 2021 is one example of this.

To conclude, UNPK remains an effective multilateral tool for preventing and limiting armed conflict, sustaining peace, as well as responding to a broader range of threats to international peace and security. However, it has to adapt to the evolving geopolitics and character of modern conflicts, and change the way it does business. At the same time, UN needs to speeded up reforms to maintain its relevance, legitimacy, effectiveness and inspire confidence.

From Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding

Lieutenant General Rakesh Kapoor, AVSM, VSM

Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Information Systems and Coordination)

Today, as India marks 75 years of participation of the Indian Armed Forces in the UNPK, India stands at a solemn crossroad, with pride in India's achievements and poignance while remembering the sacrifices of the brave hearts.

India, since the inception of UNPK in 1948, has remained steadfast in its commitment. Brave men and women in uniform have stood tall in distant lands, not for conquest, but for peace. It is with this reverence that the USI pays homage to 182 Indian peacekeepers who laid down their lives under the Blue Flag.

India's Enduring Contribution

India is amongst the top TCCs in UN missions. Indian peacekeepers have earned the trust of local communities, setting standards in professionalism, cultural sensitivity, and humanitarian compassion. Indian Army's ongoing deployment in the multiple missions stands as a stellar example, where Indian troops have not only enforced peace but have actively engaged in community development, infrastructure rebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

The deployment of FETs and Community Liaison Assistants by the Indian Army in UN missions represents a progressive and impactful stride towards inclusive, community-driven peacebuilding. As the first country to

deploy an all-female FPU in Liberia in 2007, India has since expanded the role of women in uniform, notably through the integration of FETs within military contingents in all missions.

The CUNPK, New Delhi, exemplifies India's thought leadership, and has trained thousands of peacekeepers from India and other friendly foreign countries, reflecting India's commitment to global peace and cooperation. Recently the centre hosted the Global South Women Peacekeepers Seminar, the first of its kind in the Global South. This reaffirmed India's commitment towards peace, security, and belief in inclusive peacebuilding.

Operating Environment in Peace Keeping Missions

UN peacekeeping missions were initially designed to monitor ceasefires and support political processes. However, current deployments often occur amid unresolved conflicts, political instability and humanitarian crises. Peacekeepers today operate in deeply fragmented societies, facing challenges that transcend traditional military roles. The operating environment in current mission areas differs significantly and can be summarised as follows:

- Political Rivalries and Intra-State Conflicts.** Today's peacekeeping operations are increasingly entangled in internal political rivalries, leading to complex and devastating conflicts. Peacekeepers have to navigate competing political factions with divergent interests, many of whom may not be signatories to peace agreements. These

rivalries often undermine peace accords, delay political processes, and endanger peacekeepers' neutrality.

- **Ethnic Clashes and Identity Conflicts.**

Ethnic and sectarian violence remains a core feature of many contemporary conflicts. Peacekeepers often deploy into regions, where historical grievances and ethnic marginalisation fuel cycles of violence. In places like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), efforts to prevent atrocities are complicated by inter-ethnic militias, tribal allegiances, and the absence of effective governance.

- **Displacement of Populations.**

Peacekeeping operations increasingly take place amidst large-scale humanitarian disasters, with millions of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees. Displacement causes friction over access to land, resources, and services, often sparking new conflict cycles. Missions need to integrate humanitarian coordination and protection of civilians as core functions.

- **Gender-Based Exploitation and Abuse.**

Vulnerable population, particularly women and children, are often at risk in unstable environments. Tackling this requires robust accountability frameworks, cultural training, and greater deployment of FETs to enhance gender-sensitive operations and local trust.

- **Trust Deficit and Perception Challenges.** Peacekeepers frequently face hostility or suspicion from local communities, who may view them as foreign occupiers or ineffective actors. Failures to protect civilians or delays in response exacerbate the trust deficit. Building legitimacy involves not only operational success but also community engagement, communication, and visible impartiality.
- **Weaponisation of Information and Technology.** The proliferation of social media, drones, and digital propaganda have added a new dimension to conflict zones. Disinformation campaigns are often weaponised to discredit missions, inflame local tensions, or manipulate international opinion. Peacekeeping forces need to develop strategic communications capabilities, cyber-awareness, and tools for information warfare resilience.
- **Capabilities vs Expectations Gap.** There is a growing mismatch between mission mandate and the resources allocated. Multidimensional mandates call for security, development, institution building, and human rights protection, but missions are frequently understaffed, under-equipped, and constrained by rules of engagement. This capability-expectation gap often leads to mission fatigue, reputational loss, and unfulfilled mandates.

Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding: A Roadmap for Future United Nations Operations

Modern conflicts are multidimensional, involving political unrest, humanitarian crises, human rights violations, and economic collapse. Thus, need for omnibus peacekeeping missions, that integrate military, police, civil, and development components under unified leadership, are critical. These missions must function across sectors, securing ceasefires, rebuilding institutions, and restoring governance in a coordinated and adaptive manner. Future missions need to pay special attention to following aspects:

- **Integrating Humanitarian Operations.** Post-conflict zones are often marked by food insecurity, lack of healthcare, education gaps, and infrastructure breakdowns. Peacekeeping operations must be embedded with humanitarian assistance capabilities, enabling them to respond to immediate needs and stabilise communities. Partnerships with UN agencies (e.g., World Food Programme, United Nations Human Rights Council, World Health Organization) and NGOs should be streamlined into mission mandates from inception.
- **Women and Youth as Agents of Change.** They are often disproportionately affected by conflict; they are also powerful agents of resilience and reform. Their participation in peace processes is a must for durable agreements and community ownership.
-

- **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support.**

Peacekeepers and local populations alike endure immense trauma during and after conflicts. Ignoring mental health perpetuates cycles of violence and social alienation. Peacebuilding efforts must:

- Provide mental health services and counselling.
- Train local care providers.
- Include psychosocial recovery as a core part of rehabilitation, particularly for ex-combatants and children.

- **Cultural Sensitivity and Local Ownership.**

Lack of cultural understanding has historically undermined peace missions. Peace Operations must respect local beliefs, languages, customs, and power structures. This can be achieved by:

- Incorporating cultural advisors in missions.
- Using local languages in outreach.
- Supporting traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.
- Ensuring community participation in decision-making processes.

- **Strengthening Regional and Local Communities.** The foundation of sustainable peace

lies in empowered local institutions and resilient communities. Missions must support local governance and civil society.

Conclusion

To remain effective and credible, UN Peacekeeping must evolve in tandem with its operational environment. Speaker proposed an acronym FLAME for his recommendations:

- **Flexible Financing (F).** Ensuring flexible, sustainable financing and realistic mandates. It is strategic necessity to address the root causes of conflict, support local priorities and enable sustainable recovery.
- **Local Communities (L).** Sustainable peace cannot be imported; it must be built from within. Peace that is designed and implemented with local participation enjoys greater legitimacy, making it more likely to endure beyond international presence.
- **Adaptability (A).** The capacity to continuously reassess, recalibrate and respond dynamically to evolve ground realities has become an essential principle for effective peacebuilding. It ensures that peacebuilding missions stay relevant, responsive and resilient.
- **Mechanisms (M).** To unify multiple UN agencies, a strong inter-agency coordination framework is critical to deliver coherent, synergistic and locally relevant peacebuilding support.
- **Empowered Leadership (E).** The multi-dimensional nature of peacebuilding spanning security, politics, development and HR demands leaders who are savvy, operationally agile and

ethically grounded. Empowered leaders are not only implementers of mandates but architects of confidence and trust between international actors, host governments and local populations.

Closing Remarks

Mr. Shombi Sharp

Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, a legend in the halls of UNPK, Lieutenant General Rakesh Kapoor, Ambassador Asoke Mukerji, and hosts Major General BK Sharma and Major General PK Goswami, colleagues of USI, members of international community, Indian Armed Forces, peacekeeping, academic and other faculties: it was a great honour to be here on behalf of the UN. “*Aap sabhi ko UN Parivar ki taraf se, Peacekeeping Divas ki hardik shubh kamnayai*” (Warm greetings to all of you on behalf of the UN family on the occasion of Peacekeeping Day).

As heard throughout these sessions, India stands at a very decisive moment of history. The world is off track in so many ways: 83 per cent of the sustainable development goals are off track, conflicts abound, and the climate crisis rages. At the same time, this year is meant to be a year of milestones, a year of celebrations. Very importantly, 2025 marks 75 years of India’s support and leadership in the UNPK, and in peace and security more broadly. It is, in fact, the 80th year of the UN itself—the very concept of countries coming together and collecting solutions for common challenges. It is also the 25th Anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, and the 10th anniversary of the Sustainable Development Goals, bringing together development and so many other elements in a broader sense.

Unfortunately, it is also turning out to be another unhappy milestone. Many are moving away from the sense of working together, seeking collective solutions to common challenges. It can be said, perhaps daringly, that this movie has been seen before. Where will this lead in next 5, 10 or 20 years? UN needs support for international peace and security, now more than ever, and that is why this conversation is so important.

The peacekeeping concept, as mentioned, was something radically new: the very idea of having men and women in uniform there not to wage war, but to keep the peace. Over 2 million men and women from 125 countries have served in 71 peacekeeping missions worldwide since the beginning. Today, approximately 60,000 peacekeepers from 121 different countries are engaged in 11 ongoing noble peacekeeping missions.

Indian peacekeepers are facing more challenges than ever before. The number of conflicts has doubled in the past five years, and the percentage of children living in conflict zones has also doubled. The weaponisation of new, unforeseen digital tools has increased, and physical and digital attacks have lowered barriers to use of other types of weapons. Misinformation and disinformation whirl around, further complicating an already challenging task.

At the same time, just when UN peacekeepers need more resources, they are having to deliver more with less. The UNPK budget, from 2016 to 2024, fell by over USD 2 bn, a 25 per cent drop in resources, at a time when the challenges are increasing. Peacekeepers are now facing so many different types of risks, not just conventional forces, but terrorists, organised crimes, proliferation of other non-state actors—and even state actors.

The speaker's first experience working with peacekeeping came in Lebanon, with UNIFIL. The speaker was pleased to mention that he in fact first met with the Indian Battalion (INDBATT), overlooking the Sheeba farms, where he was very impressed to see not only his first Blue Helmets, but also his first Blue Turbans. The speaker also enjoyed some wonderful Indian meals. The purpose of that engagement, as he was the UN Development Programme's Deputy Country Director at that time, was exactly aligned with the goal of bringing together the peacebuilding and development mandates. It also sought to identify communities in the UNIFIL areas of operation that could be supported with development projects and positive opportunities to move their lives forward, to help counter other, often more negative reminders of why peacekeeping forces must be there. It is observed with concern that, despite minimal, even declining resources, our peacekeepers are bravely undertaking their mission where no one else would dare to go. As General Nambiar mentioned: India, in particular, has a record of serving in the most difficult places.

This year's theme, 'The Future of Peacekeeping', has emphasised that parallel processes, the Pact for the Future, adopted at the UN General Assembly, has reinforced the need to ensure a bright future for future generations on the basis of reforms and changes. Reforms to peacekeeping are a very essential component of that. Some of the more longstanding challenges, such as the reform of the UNSC, as discussed and being debated in various forms, are absolutely vital. While it is of course the Member States who decide, one could not possibly argue objectively that there is any country with a stronger resumé for permanent membership in a reformed UNSC than India.

The recent UNPK Ministerial in Berlin also reinforced the collective view, that UNPK needs many of the elements mentioned on this day: strengthened local ownership, adaptability, flexibility, predictability in terms of financing, efficiency and accountability. Under the 'UN at 80' broader reforms, the UNSG has already launched many reforms to do better with less. This has now been overtaken by events in recent months, and we are looking at very dramatic changes in the funding profile and structures of the UN across the board. At this crucial time, India's leadership in peace and security and other mandates of the UN is more important than ever before.

India has stood strong and been the largest contributor to peacekeeping operations since the beginning, nearly 3,00,000 over the years, and it continues to be absolutely vital, with some 6,000 peacekeepers deployed across nine active missions today. The speaker also wishes

to join in remembering the 182 Indian peacekeepers and fallen heroes, who have given the ultimate sacrifice for peace. On behalf of the UN family, the speaker offers deep condolences to their families, the government and the people of India for their sacrifices, dedication and bravery.

India's efforts are not only about scale, but also about transformation. As discussed, India has brought the UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security to life in so many different ways, which is truly inspirational, and India is continuing to push the envelope in what is possible. The speaker was very privileged to interact with Major Radhika Sen, who had received the UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award from the Secretary General last year, and to really understand the power of having women in peacekeeping forces. India's remarkable contributions can and will inspire all nations in implementation of the Pact for the Future.

Finally, as was just mentioned, 'Make in India' has come into play now at a better and greater scale in UN peacekeeping. The speaker has had the opportunity to also see the state-of-the-art armoured personnel carriers and vehicles that India is making and now providing to UNPK missions. Thankfully, the speaker did not have to test the impact resilience as the other speaker mentioned, but he did get to drive one, and he has to say that it was impressive. This is another important dimension of India's support.

The speaker concluded by simply stating that the world today not only needs peace and security more than ever before, but also India's leadership. India continues to

be the 'Voice of the Global South' and advocates for a more inclusive international system in which developing countries have more representation in shaping the international order. India is also uniquely positioned to bring the countries of the world together across the divides—East and West, North and South, the club of those countries who land on the moon, mission to Mars, and the G77 countries. There is not a single dimension where India is not bringing very important leadership and relationship capital, now, at a time when we need it more than ever.

The time is now; the place is here. "*Aaj ke din, hum Bharat ko DIL se dhanyawad kahete hain!*" (On this day, we wholeheartedly thank India!).

About the Author



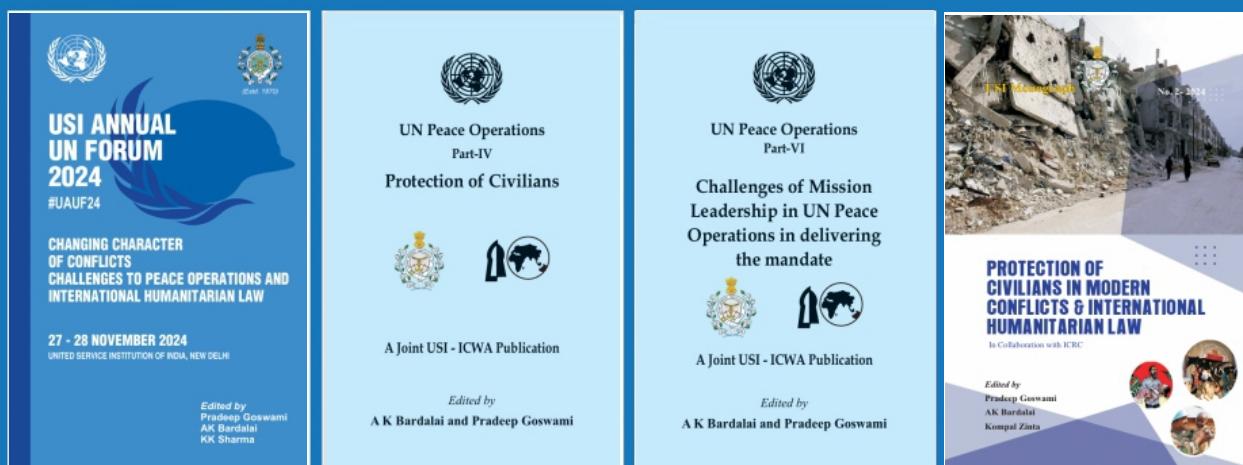
Major General PK Goswami, VSM (Retd) is an Indian Army veteran. He was a Military Observer in the UN Verification Mission at Angola in 1991-92 and Senior Faculty at the National Defence College, New Delhi.

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He is credited with nine monographs on various UN Peacekeeping themes. His book “The India and UN Peacekeeping: Through the Prism of Time” was released by Mr Jean Pierre Lacroix, Under Secretary General, Dept of Peace Operations, United Nations, on 07 Oct 2022 at USI.

About the USI

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