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USI Latest Publications: 2023-2025

Pub Code	Type	Title of Publication and Author	Price '₹'	Year
M-1/ 2025	Monograph	COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC DETERRENCE TO MEET INDIA'S FUTURE CHALLENGES by Brig (Dr) Rajeev Bhutani (Retd) **M/s Manohar Publishers & Distributors**	250	2025
Adm/SYB-2024*	Year Book	STRATEGIC YEAR BOOK 2024; Editor-in-Chief: Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM** (Retd); edited by Maj Gen Sanjeev Chowdhry (Retd), Ms Komal Chaudhary, Mr Vinayak Sharma, and Mr Mihir S **M/s Vij Books of India Pvt Ltd**	2,750	2024
P-39/ 2023*	National Security Paper-2023	THE INDO-PACIFIC CONSTRUCT—INDIA'S MARITIME HIGHWAY TO GREAT POWER STATUS by Vice Adm (Dr) Anil Kumar Chawla, PVSM, AVSM, NM, VSM (Retd) **M/s Vij Books of India Pvt Ltd**	395	2024
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Adm-Mil Ops/2024	Book	MILITARY OPERATIONS: LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR MULTI-DOMAIN WARFARE by Gp Capt Kishore Kumar Khera, VM (Retd), and Wg Cdr (Dr) UC Jha (Retd) **M/s Vij Books of India Pvt Ltd**	1,750	2024
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CS3/R-117/2024	Book	THE VICTORIA CROSS ICON: VISION AND LEGACY by Maj Gen Shashikant G Pitre (Retd) **M/s Vij Books of India Pvt Ltd**	1,550	2024

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the furtherance of interest and knowledge in the art, science, and literature of National Security in general and of the defence services in particular

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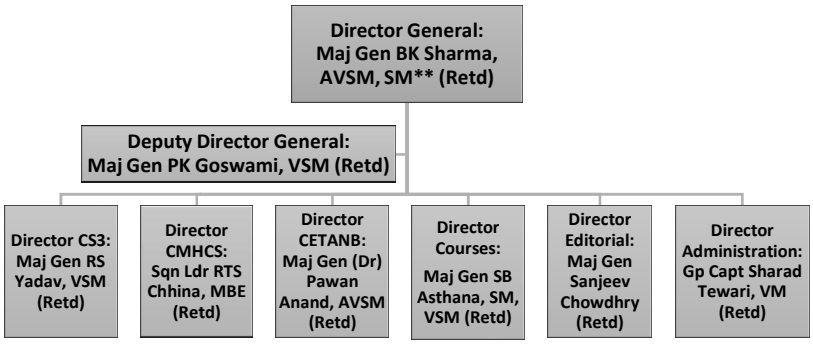

Auditorium/Seminar Room Rates w.e.f. 01 April 2022

	Capacity	Full Day (up to 8 hours)	Half Day (up to 4 hours)	Additional per hour	Additional for Sat/Sun/ Holidays	Security Deposit
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1. 18% GST extra.
2. Armed Forces will be given a 10% discount.
3. Banquet Hall Pavilion – ₹ 5,000/- per day.

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2. The Courses have been remodelled to make it more interactive and the admission procedure has been simplified to make it user friendly.
3. Membership of the USI is mandatory to join any correspondence course and OPSC-2025.
4. Schedule of Correspondence Courses 2025.
5. Course Schedules.

Course	Commencement of Course	Date of Exam	Cost All Subjects	Cost per Subject
DSSC (Army)	Second Week of Nov 2024 **Registration open for 2025**	Sep 2025	₹ 9,000/-	Tactics B – ₹ 3,000/ Current Affairs and Military History – ₹ 2,000/- (each) Science and Military Technology – ₹ 1,500/- Tactics A – ₹ 1,300/- Administration and Military Law – ₹ 1,200/-
DSSC (Navy)	Second Week of Jan 2025 **Registration open for 2025**	Jul 2025	-	Paper 1 – ₹ 3,000/- (Current Affairs, Military/Naval History and Maritime Strategy)
DSSC (IAF)	Second Week of Nov 2024 **Registration open for 2025**	Jul 2025	-	Correspondence Course • Military History – ₹ 3,000/- • Current Affairs – ₹ 3,000/- Online Course • Current Affairs – ₹ 4,000/- • Refer to Prospectus available on the USI website for other details
Part B	Second Week of Jan 2025 **Registration open for 2025**	Jun to Jul 2025	₹ 3,000/-	Tactics, Current Affairs and Military History – ₹ 1,000/- Administration and Military law – ₹ 800/-
Part D	First Week of Apr 2025 **Registration open for 2025**	Oct 2025	₹ 4,000/-	Tactics, Current Affairs and Military History – ₹ 1,500/- Administration and Military law – ₹ 1,000/-

6. **Contact Programs**. Three contact programs for DSSC/DSTSC (Army)-2025 have been planned. Dates are: 16 to 21 Jun 2025, 30 Jun to 05 Jul 2025, and 14 to 19 Jul 2025. Separate test papers will be set for each programme. Fees - ₹ 7,000/- per contact programme and ₹ 3,500/- only for material of each contact program.
7. **USI Online Pre-Staff Course**. Two capsules of three subjects (Military History, Science and Military Technology, and Current Affairs) for 2025 will be conducted from 21 Apr to 03 May 2025 and 05 May to 17 May 2025. Details are available on the USI website.
8. Correspondence courses for Special to Corps subjects are not conducted.
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13. Telephones : Dir Courses – 2086-2325, Course Section - 2086-2318 or 2086-2321 Extn 207, 208, and 210
14. Prospectus and Form : Available on Website and from Course Section.

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$(For 3 years commencing 01 Jan)
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- The USI welcomes original researched articles pertaining to national security, defence matters, and military history for publication in the USI Journal. Articles should preferably not exceed 3,000 words. Along with the article, the author should forward abstract of the article not exceeding ten per cent of the total words. These should be forwarded as a word document on e-mail to the Director Editorial United Service Institution of India, on direditorial@usiofindia.org. In the e-mail, the author should state that "the article titled (Title of Article) has neither been previously published in print or online, nor has it been offered to any other agency for publication. The Editor reserves the right to make alterations".

- It is mandatory that the author furnishes complete details of the book/journal referred to in the article as endnotes. A guide to writing endnotes is given on the next page. Besides endnotes, if the author so desires, a bibliography may also be included, though it is not mandatory.

- The article should be in Arial Font, size 12, and language English (UK). Avoid use of symbols like %, & and so on, unless unavoidable to explain a point. The date style should be 24 Jun 2020. Abbreviations, if any, should be used in their expanded form the first time and indicated in brackets.

- The full name and address of the author along with a brief Curriculum Vitae should be given. Serving officers are advised to follow the prevailing Services instructions for publications of their articles.

- The author will receive a copy of the issue of the Journal in which his/her article appears along with three offprints. A suitable honorarium will also be paid after the article is published.

Guide to Writing Endnotes

- Endnotes are notes added to the main body of a paper or an article, in which the author directs readers to sources referred to or to add extra comments of his or her own. Endnotes are placed at the end of the paper/article. A superscript number (1,2,3,4) at the end of the sentence signals the reader to look for the corresponding endnote at the end of the article. The endnotes should be numbered consecutively, starting from '1'. Citations should include the author's name, title of the book (in italics), publishing information (in parenthesis) and pages consulted, all separated by commas. Citations should be in the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) format. A quick reference is available at: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html.
- Some examples are given below:

[1] Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy : A Prime in the Social History of Pictorial Style,* (Oxford University Press, London, 1988), p. 45.

[2] Lina Bolzoni and Pietri Coral, *The Culture Memory,* (Bologna: Societa editrice Il Mullno, 1992), p. 45.

Use of Ibid., op. cit., and loc. cit.

Ibid. refers to the immediate preceding reference; op. cit. refers to the prior reference by the same author and loc. cit. is used instead of op. cit. when reference is made to a work previously cited and to the same page in that work. For example :-

[4] R Polrer, *Learning Physics,* (Academic, New York, 1993), p. 4.

[5] Ibid, p. 9.

[6] T Eliot, *Astrophysics,* (Springer, Berlin, 1989), p.141.

[7] R Millan, *Art of Latin Grammar,* (Academic, New York, 1997), p.23.

[8] Eliot, op cit., p148.

[9] Eliot, loc. cit.

- Where websites have been used to access information, the complete web address of the website should be cited, followed by the date the website was accessed by the author e.g. Accessed 24 Jun 2020 from http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1947degana.html.

For detailed style sheet, go to https://usiofindia.org/publications.php?category=7

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Quarter Ending Mar 2025

During this period, a total of 32 new books have been added. Details of the new books are available on the USI Website.

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During the period Jan-Mar 2025, 12 registered as New Life Members; 06 have registered as Special Members; 04 have renewed Ordinary Membership; and 140 registered as new Ordinary Member.

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During Jan-Mar 2025, 182 Officers registered for Course Membership.

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Jan-Mar 2025

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Greetings for the New Year!

As we step into a new year, it is an opportune moment to reflect on global peace and security, particularly the role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs) in an increasingly complex world. The past decades have witnessed traditional peacekeeping models being tested against asymmetric threats, fragile political landscapes, and rising geopolitical competition. As the United Nations (UN) adapts, member states must also recalibrate their contributions, strategies, and engagements.

India, as one of the largest Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs), has remained an indispensable pillar of UN peacekeeping. With a legacy of deploying over 2,75,000 personnel across missions, India has played a pivotal role in fostering stability in some of the world's most volatile regions. However, the operational, political, and ethical challenges facing peacekeeping today require fresh perspectives and innovative solutions.

Thus, this edition of the United Service Institution (USI) Journal delves into critical dimensions of UN peacekeeping, India's role, and the broader strategic imperatives shaping future deployments. The contributors explore multifaceted issues, ranging from anthropology's impact on mission effectiveness to China's growing influence, from corruption risks within peacekeeping structures to gender inclusivity and reforms.

This special edition of the USI Journal is divided into three sections, each focusing on a key aspect of UN peacekeeping. The sections are titled: UN Peace Operations and Challenges: An Indian Perspective, Multilateralism and UN Peace Operations, and Lessons from Field Missions.

The first section, titled 'UN Peace Operations and Challenges: An Indian Perspective', contains six articles that focus on India's contribution to UN peacekeeping efforts, the challenges encountered, and the lessons to be drawn from past experiences.

The lead article of this section is authored by Major General PK Goswami, VSM (Retd). Titled 'India and United Nations Peacekeeping: The Philosophy, Impact and Way Forward', it highlights India's significant contributions to UN peacekeeping and underscores Bharat's steadfast commitment to multilateralism and dialogue as essential to achieving shared global objectives. The following article, by Major General Alok Deb, SM, VSM (Retd), titled 'The Evolving Character of Conflict: Implications for United Nations' examines the evolving nature of conflict and its implications for UN peacekeeping in an era shaped by rapid technological advancement and shifting geopolitical dynamics. It calls for a re-evaluation of UN peacekeeping doctrines, mandates, and capabilities to meet contemporary challenges effectively.

The third article titled 'Women Peacekeepers in United Nations Peace Operations: Critical to Mitigate Gander-Based Violence in a Mission Area' features the thoughts of Colonel (Dr) KK Sharma (Retd), who asserts that despite the various successes of UN peacekeeping, the world continues to witness a rise in conflicts, many of which are marked by gender-based violence, often targeting women and children. In such contexts, both the UN and its member states increasingly recognise the vital role that women peacekeepers play. The article highlights how women contribute unique perspectives and skills that enhance the effectiveness and credibility of peacekeeping missions. In his article titled 'Protection of Civilians in Conflict Environments: Challenges and Recommendations', Lieutenant General Mohan Subramanian, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, argues that while the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping is frequently questioned, it remains the most viable option available to the international community. Drawing from his experience as the Force Commander of the UN Mission in South Sudan, he analyses the challenges in implementing the Protection of Civilians mandate. He points out that 'Over-ambitious' promises, combined with limited funding and a lack of genuine commitment from host nations, often hinder mission success. These issues, he contends, must be addressed to restore and reinforce global confidence in UN peacekeeping.

Major General (Dr) AK Bardalai, VSM (Retd), in his article titled 'Impact of Anthropology on the Effectiveness of United Nations Peacekeeping', underscores that the multinational composition of peacekeeping missions brings together personnel with diverse training standards, operational ethos, cultural backgrounds, and national traditions. He argues that these anthropological factors significantly influence the performance of peace operations. Rather than being a hindrance, he contends that the varied perspectives peacekeepers bring from across the globe can, if harnessed effectively, enhance the overall success of peacekeeping missions. The sixth and final article of the first section, titled 'India's Perspectives on United Nations Summit of the Future' by Brigadier V Vidyashankar, offers an in-depth analysis of India's position on 10 of the 56 action points outlined in the UN Summit of the Future. Through a critical evaluation of India's engagement with the UN, its policy priorities, and its evolving global role, the article explores key areas of alignment and divergence between India's interests and the summit's objectives, providing insight into India's vision for the future of multilateral cooperation.

The second section of this edition of the USI Journal is titled 'Multilateralism and UN Peace Operations'. This section delves into the evolving dynamics of multilateralism in the context of UN peacekeeping, examining how collective decision-making, international partnerships, and institutional reforms shape the effectiveness and legitimacy of peace operations.

The lead article in this section, titled 'Preserving United Nations Peacekeeping for a Multilateral World' by Colonel (Dr) Ali Ahmed (Retd), argues that UN peacekeeping is currently under strain due to increasing polarisation in international affairs. He contends that for peacekeeping to remain relevant and effective in a shifting global order, emerging powers—referred to as aspirant pole countries—must individually and collectively assume greater responsibility in supporting and sustaining peace operations. In the following article, titled 'A Few Implications of United Nations Peacekeeping Reforms on the United Nations Police', Dr Ai Kihara-Hunt examines recent developments such as the Pact for the Future and the Independent Study on the Future of UN Peacekeeping: New Models and Related Capabilities. She explores

the implications of these reform initiatives for the UN Police (UNPOL) component and highlights the critical role of member states in reshaping peace operations. Dr Kihara-Hunt argues that personnel selection must be based on skill and merit, and that the training, deployment models, and operational posture of UNPOL should be adapted to the specific needs and context of each mission.

The third article in this section, authored by Parth Bhatt and Aislinn, is titled 'The Pact of the Future and its Implications for Peacekeeping'. It acknowledges that while UNPKOs have historically served as a vital tool for maintaining international security, they are increasingly challenged by the rapidly evolving nature of contemporary conflicts. Drawing from the Pact for the Future, the authors explore how UNPKOs can be reformed and strengthened to effectively address the complex and multidimensional conflicts of the 21st Century. In the subsequent article, 'Corruption and United Nations Peacekeeping', Dr Parineet Kaur and Wing Commander (Dr) UC Jha (Retd) examine instances of corruption within UN peace operations. They have referred to findings from the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone, which, during its inquiry into the causes of the country's 1990s civil war, identified endemic greed, corruption, and nepotism as key factors that eroded national dignity and plunged much of the population into poverty. The article concludes with a set of lessons learned and offers actionable recommendations to enhance integrity and accountability in future peacekeeping efforts.

The final article of this section, authored by Colonel (Dr) DCS Mayal (Retd), titled 'China's Strategic Manoeuvring in United Nations Peacekeeping Dynamics', examines the advancement of China's strategic calculus through the UN peacekeeping framework. As a major financial contributor and one of the largest TCCs, China utilises its position—particularly its status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council with veto power—to expand its soft power and influence the shaping of international norms. The author argues that as global governance structures continue to evolve, China's growing role in UN peacekeeping reflects a broader shift in international power dynamics and strategic alignments.

The third and final section of this Special Edition of the USI Journal is titled 'Lessons from Field Missions'. This section offers grounded insights drawn from the practical experiences of peacekeepers who have served in various UN missions across the globe.

Lydia Walker, in her article titled 'From War to Intervention: The Korean War and the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission', focuses on General KS Thimayya, former Chief of the Indian Army, who led the prisoner exchange and resettlement programme under the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (1953–54) in the aftermath of the Korean War. Contrary to the common portrayal of this mission as a one-off or unique event, Walker argues that the Commission represented a new form of international intervention—one where the objective was not territorial conquest but managing conflict through negotiated settlements and humanitarian mechanisms. The Korean War and its tenuous truce thus exemplified a shift in how international peace efforts were conceived and implemented. The second article in this section, authored by Major General (Dr) Pawan Anand, AVSM (Retd), is titled 'Impact of Technology on Conflicts'. He contends that emerging technologies—such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing—along with the military adaptation of commercial technologies, have fundamentally transformed the nature of warfare. These advances have given rise to multi-domain conflicts that blur the lines between military and civilian spheres, leading to a persistent state of contestation. The article stresses that UN peacekeeping missions must urgently acknowledge and adapt to these evolving dynamics if they are to remain effective and relevant in future conflict environments.

The next article, authored by Dr Alexander Gilder and titled 'Learning from United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali's Entanglement in Counterterrorism', examines one of the more contentious aspects of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali's deployment—its direct and indirect involvement in counterterrorism efforts in the Sahel. The article outlines how the mission operated in a complex environment where other actors pursued counterterrorism through offensive military means. Dr Gilder argues

that this entanglement blurred the lines between peacekeeping and counterterrorism, potentially undermining the impartiality and credibility of the mission. He concludes by recommending that future UN peace operations should avoid supporting counterterrorism activities to preserve the core principles of UN peacekeeping. The penultimate article of this edition, authored by Major General AK Dhingra, SM (Retd), is titled 'Assessment of United Nations Mission in Liberia: A Strategy for Successful Peacekeeping'. It focuses on the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), widely regarded as one of the most effective peacekeeping operations undertaken by the UN. The article highlights the mission's strategic collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States, which played a crucial role in fostering regional cooperation, political stability, and post-conflict reconstruction. UNMIL, according to the author, serves as a model for designing future peacekeeping missions with clearly defined objectives, strong regional engagement, and a focus on sustainable peace.

The final article of the Journal is by Ramanshi Dwivedi, titled 'Case Study of United Nations Operations in Congo: Impact on India's Future peacekeeping', wherein, she provides a historical case study of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She further provides the role of the Indian military, its legacy, and the future of such contributions and the evolving role in the coming time.

We look forward to your feedback and suggestions.

Happy Reading!

Major General Sanjeev Chowdhry (Retd)
Director Editorial

Section I:
United Nations Peace Operations and Challenges: An Indian Perspective

India and United Nations Peacekeeping: Philosophy, Impact, and Way Forward

Major General PK Goswami, VSM (Retd)[@]

"India remains a cornerstone of UN Peacekeeping and Indian women peacekeepers are redefining peacekeeping itself"[1]

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General,
Department of Peace Operations, United Nations

Abstract

As an original founder member of the United Nations (UN), India has not hesitated to respond to the calls of the UN to contribute to its efforts for world peace. India has a long and distinguished history of contributing to UN Peacekeeping, having contributed more personnel and made more sacrifices than any other country. This has reinforced India's commitment to global peace, security, and stability. Bharat's deepening engagement with the UN is based on its unwavering commitment to multilateralism and deep faith in dialogue as a key to achieving shared universal goals and addressing common challenges.

Introduction

The idea behind peacekeeping lies in the use of military forces not to fight but to prevent fighting amongst belligerents and to maintain ceasefires. It also attempts to provide stability in a conflict zones, while peace negotiations are initiated to progress conflict resolution by peaceful means. Since their inception, peacekeeping operations have generally been received positively and helped to bolster the image of the United Nations (UN), especially at times when its credibility in other fields has been under question. However, in the late 1990s as well as in the prevailing geopolitical environment, even peacekeeping received some adverse criticism,

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mainly because of its failings in some of its dispositions in intra-state conflicts of the day and the present situation in Africa, Ukraine, and Gaza. Nevertheless, peacekeeping has proven to be one of the most effective tools available to the UN in assisting host countries navigate the difficult path from conflict to peace[2] and can be better leveraged to achieve sustainable peace.

It is noteworthy that the UN did not originally have a specific design for peacekeeping, nor is there 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. UN peacekeeping further received a morale boost when it received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988 and witnessed a renaissance in facilitating the implementation of agreements on cessation of fighting and political reconciliation.

As an original founder-member of the UN, India has not hesitated to respond to the calls of the UN to contribute troops for maintaining international peace and security. India's historical engagement with the UN is based on its steadfast commitment to multilateralism and dialogue as the key for achieving shared goals and addressing common challenges. India has a long and distinguished history of contributing to UN peacekeeping, having contributed more personnel than any other country. Presently, 5,384 Indian peacekeepers, including 153 women, are deployed across 10 missions; and 20.45 per cent of its deployed Military Observers and Staff Officers are women.[3] India takes pride in the fact that the Indian commitment to, and participation in, peacekeeping is unparalleled in history.

Indian Philosophy about Peacekeeping

Since ancient times, as per Indian social, cultural, and religious philosophy, Bharat has always prayed for world peace and emphasised support to people in distress. India's rich heritage of diversity in languages, and a variety of social, cultural, and religious beliefs, combined with its diverse geographical and economic conditions have resulted in the creation of a pluralistic and tolerant society. This reflects clearly in ever prevalent philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*[4], which inculcates an understanding that the whole world and humanity is one family. This great heritage has been built into the Indian character and Indians carry it wherever they go. Thus, it highlights that the Indian contribution

towards world peace is everlasting as India has always advocated and supported betterment of humanity. Since Independence, India has consistently adhered to the principles of non-violence and peaceful settlement of disputes, which remains the central tenets of India's foreign policy. Thus, India's contribution to UN peacekeeping flows out quite naturally from the country's social and cultural heritage and ethos, and hence, Indian peacekeepers are able to quickly understand and connect with affected local population in UN mission areas, resulting in more effective peacekeeping.

India's Contribution to Peacekeeping

India's contributions to UN peacekeeping have been underscored by the professionalism and dedication of its experienced soldiers and police personals. This fact gets further validated by the UN statistics on India's contribution. So far, since the inception of UN peacekeeping missions in 1948, India has taken part in more than 50 out of 71[5] missions, with the total contribution exceeding 2,90,000[6] troops and a significant number of police personnel.

India has been at the forefront of dispute resolution in the 1950s and 1960s with peacekeepers like Major General (Maj Gen) Indarjit Rikhye, Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) Dewan Prem Chand, Lt Gen PS Gyani and General (Gen) KM Kariappa. Besides two Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and a Deputy SRSG, India also has the honour of contributing 15 Force Commanders[7], two Divisional Commanders, and seven Deputy Force Commanders till date. In addition, India provided two Military Advisors, two (including one woman) Police Advisers, and one Deputy Military Advisor to the UN Secretary-General. India has a long tradition of sending women as Military Observers and Staff Officers, apart from them forming a part of medical units deployed in UN peacekeeping missions. The first all-women contingent for a peacekeeping mission, a Formed Police Unit, was deployed by India in 2007, in Liberia under the ambit of UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which earned incredible goodwill of locals to the extent that at the time of deinduction of the unit in Feb 2016, the Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said, "We see you as family, If I had my will, I would have recommended for another unit of the UNMIL to leave, so that the Indian Formed Police Unit would continue its stay in the country for the time being".[8] This was

followed by sending an all-women Army contingent to the Abyei mission in Jan 2023. In an interview ahead of his attending the conference on 'Enhancing the Role of Women in Peacekeeping: A Global South Experience' organised by India on 24-25 Feb 2025, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General, UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO), said, "More women in peacekeeping means a more effective peacekeeping. India has long been a leader in advancing women, peace, and security in peacekeeping missions—not only as a top troop and police contributor but also as a pioneer in advancing gender parity, its leadership in training and capacity building, and its commitment to increasing women's participation in missions".[9]

Medical care is among the many services Indian peacekeepers provide to the communities in which they serve. They also perform specialised tasks, such as veterinary support and engineering services. Indian veterinarians serving with the UN Mission in South Sudan stepped up to help cattle herders, who were losing much of their stock to malnutrition and disease in the war-torn nation. Indian engineers helped to rehabilitate roads as part of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Similarly in South Sudan, Indian engineers and peacekeepers saved a large number of displaced local population from savages of calamity from flood by repairing dikes and subsequently road rehabilitation in Unity region.[10] India was the first country to contribute to the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, which was set up in 2016. Indian peacekeepers have also brought the ancient practice of yoga to UN missions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, India provided made-in-India vaccines to vaccinate field personnel. Thus, India continues to contribute in many ways to strengthen UN peacekeeping.

However, India's longstanding service has not come without cost. 180 Indian peacekeepers have paid the ultimate price while serving with the UN.[11] Bharat has lost more peacekeepers than any other member state and that itself speaks of the Indian peacekeepers' commitment to the UN cause. India's participation in UN peacekeeping remains unparalleled.

Impact of India's Contributions to the United Nations Peacekeeping

India's sustained contributions to UN peacekeeping have not only strengthened its commitment to fulfilling the UN mandate but have also provided valuable learning experiences. The origin of India's UN peacekeeping policy can be traced back to its humanitarian contribution in the Korean conflict from 1950 to 1953. India learned from the mistakes made by major member states and the global organisations, for e.g., limitations of relying on great power interventions that employ coercive force to maintain peace. Whereas, India has consistently advocated the systematic use of moderation and mediation as meaningful methods for maintaining international peace and evolved technique of peacekeeping on a case-by-case basis. As a result, India successfully demonstrated an alternative approach—effectively utilising non-coercive methods to establish lasting peace, e.g., across the Korean Demilitarised Zone, Indo-China, Namibia, Angola, Cambodia, Liberia, etc.

Over the years, many lessons have emerged, most of which 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 followed the three basic principles of UN peacekeeping—'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. India's peacekeeping efforts in Korea, Indo-China, Golan Heights, and Lebanon are the perfect examples.

- **Professionalism**. Professionalism is a hallmark of the Indian Armed Forces ecosystem, who have a first-hand on-ground experience of counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism operations. India follows a performance-based deep selection of peacekeepers, thus, enabling selected peacekeepers to handle all assigned tasks of a mandate, even beyond, effectively and with maturity. Their outstanding professionalism has been displayed in extremely complex operations in Korea, Congo, Somalia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan.

● **Faith in Indian Leadership.** Faith in Indian leadership in peacekeeping missions has been built over the years since they provide direction with clear vision and political courage. India's selection process of peacekeepers ensures leadership is balanced in their act as well as directions, and they prove their worth at the assigned appointment. Veteran committed peacekeepers like Lt Gen Dewan Prem Chand, Lt Gen PS Gyani, Maj Gen Indarjit Rikhye, and Gen KS Thimayya are examples of transformative leadership. They all devoted long services at the strategic and operational levels under the UN in support of peacekeeping, peacebuilding as well as peace enforcement. Maj Gen Rikhye operated continuously for over 17 years on various UN appointments, as a head of a few missions and as military adviser to two UN Secretary-Generals. Lt Gen Chand headed the Congo (Katanga) UN Force during a critical period, a peacekeeping force in Cyprus during a major conflict, and as a negotiator during the conversion of Rhodesia to Zambia and Zimbabwe. Due to his exemplary reputation, he was called back even after his retirement, designated as a Force Commander in 1980 for UN Transition Assistance Group (Namibia) and the UN Secretary-General kept him waiting, allowing him to negotiate and prepare for the mission till 1989 when the mission was finally established. Gen Thimayya served as the Chairman of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission and later as a Force Commander in Cyprus. Lt Gen Satish Nambiar, first Force Commander and head of mission in Yugoslavia, established this difficult and complex mission and provided a resolute operational leadership to the diverse forces under his command, with a noteworthy depth of understanding and vision. Lt Gen JS Lidder was the Force Commander when the first mission in Sudan was established, and after retirement, he was again entrusted with a critical role by the UN as a Deputy SRSG (Political) in Sudan. He meaningfully contributed to political reconciliation, peace, and stability, and played a major role in the South Sudan Referendum, leading to it becoming an independent country. Later, he successfully headed the liquidation mission in Sudan, under a challenging political and security environment. India has also contributed its best leaders to the two ongoing largest and most complex missions, a force commander, and a divisional commander

in Congo, and three force commanders and a deputy force commander in Sudan/South Sudan.

- **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 only be considered after all other options have been exhausted. A case in light is when on 11 Jan 1963, then Maj Gen (later Lt Gen) 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 Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC]) rushed ahead. In fact, he led the UN force and kept ordering all villagers enroute not to attack the UN force to avoid heavy causalities to his rebel forces.[12] This final step led to the stabilisation of the overall situation in Congo and the peaceful settlement of a conflict after many bitter skirmishes.

- **Empathy for the Local population**. Due to a lack of development, poor connectivity, and continuous exploitation, conditions of the local population in host countries resonate with our peacekeepers. Our soldiers from rural background relate to the same, as India after its independence resembled a similar landscape. Thus, our peacekeepers can connect and empathise better with the affected population and earn their respect. Indian medical professionals, especially the veterinarians, have addressed local medical problems on the spot, and were welcomed in Somalia, Ethiopia-Eretria missions, and current Congo and South Sudan missions. Indian peacekeepers' humane approach to connect with affected populations in the host country and adapt to their needs is so reflective that they are quickly accepted by the local population. An apt example is the mutual learning of languages and singing of the Indian national anthem and songs by the children and local population.

- **Protection of Civilians and Gender Sensitivity**. India is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious society. Indian troops understand the differences and serve the nation without any consideration for the differences. This enables them to adapt to the local communities in an unfamiliar territory. It is generally seen that when the local population needs support, some countries are indifferent but Indian peacekeepers rush in with an extended hand of humanitarian support. This has been evident in all UN peace operations, where Indian peacekeepers have operated. Taking a cue from the UN efforts to increase women peacekeepers, India was the first country to deploy a Female Police Unit in Liberia. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General, DPO, UN, said that the present Indian Engagement Platoons in Abyei and Congo 'Exemplify' the impact of women in peacekeeping. He also quoted that Captain Seema Gowdar, Deputy Commander of the Female Engagement Team in Abyei, has strengthened civilian protection and community trust.[13] Another example of Indian women leadership in peacekeeping is Maj Radhika Sen, whose 'Outstanding Work' in Congo (UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC) earned her the 2023 UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year award. This allows Indian contingents to understand and adhere to gender sensitivity in the mission areas. Despite internal human resource challenges, there is a sincere effort to increase the women peacekeepers' contribution, as per the laid down norm of the UN.

- **Micro-Level Development and Nation Building.** Indian peacekeeping efforts are based on bringing lasting peace to a war-torn country and then helping in nation building. The local population needs 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 agencies. At the government level, it is peace-building and national development of the host country through development partnerships, e.g., Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programmes, agricultural support, and building major infrastructure.

- **Indian innovation.** Indians are exceptionally innovative in their own way and adapt in employing *jugaad* (unconventional ways) to resolve problems in hand. This is practised extensively in various mission areas. During the Korean War, the Indian 60 Para Field Ambulance, when faced with a lack of transport in face of advancing enemy, famously used an abandoned train to transport its vital equipment and medical supplies. The unit formed a human chain with buckets from the river to fill the boilers of steam engine, thus, earning the nickname 'The Bucket Brigade'[14], and drove this small train in time to cross the Han River Bridge to Seoul, hours before it was demolished by Communist forces. Refurbishing of schools, playfields, and many dried wells by Indian peacekeepers are all part of quick thinking and innovation with local material. Provision of 'Jaipur Foot' to local mine causalities in Congo and Lebanon[15] missions, and effective fuel-contaminated water management at unit level in South Sudan are some examples.

India and United Nations Peacekeeping: Way Forward

India's role in UN peacekeeping will continue to evolve from its past experiences. It has evolved from being an observer in the early days to an active stabiliser in conflict zones worldwide. From monitoring ceasefires in Korea and Indo-China to Cambodia and Gaza, Namibia to Bosnia and multidimensional peace enforcement missions in Africa, Indian peacekeepers have demonstrated professionalism, courage, dedication, and a humanitarian approach, which has left a mark and is universally applauded. India has not only demonstrated its capacity and capability to make large and simultaneous troop commitments in many of the peace operations but has also proven itself as a reliable troop and police contributing country, by taking considerable risks to sustain its commitment in hazardous operations for prolonged periods.

India's continued involvement and steadfast commitment to the principles of the UN Charter will be vital in ensuring the ongoing effectiveness and success of critical missions in the years to come. As brought out earlier, India's strength lies in its capacity to undertake peacekeeping operations in any terrain, social milieu, or adverse situations. Consequently, India can play a more prominent role by strategically utilising its field experiences for more structured and strategic approach to peacekeeping. India's

future peacekeeping approach should enhance its global standing and diplomatic influence by linking peacekeeping activities to its wider foreign policy objectives and showing the world that peace is not just about security but also development, trust-building, and a shared commitment to a stable world. For this, the focus should be to concentrate its efforts in a few key areas/missions for a lasting impact, strengthening peacekeeping capabilities by integrating new technology, and encouraging innovation and incentivise, rather than merely maintaining the status quo.

Conclusion

As a founder member, India has always responded to the calls of the UN to contribute to its efforts for world peace. India has a distinguished history of contributing to the UN peacekeeping, having contributed more personnel and made more sacrifices than any other country. The philosophy of India's commitment revolves around its basic ethos and ancient traditions. This has reinforced India's commitment to global peace, security, and stability. India's deepening engagement with the UN is based on its unwavering commitment to multilateralism and deep faith in dialogue as a key to achieving shared universal goals and addressing common challenges.

Due to evolving geopolitics and its impact on international relations, collective endeavours by the UN will continue to face many challenges. India's future model must keep pace with fast-changing world order and play a greater role in global governance by fine-tuning its approach to peacekeeping, strengthening humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts, and claiming its rightful place. India can shape the future of global peacekeeping not only as a participant, but as a leader. India, with its vast repository of experience, best practices, and renewed approach, will continue to navigate through such challenges and play a crucial role in shaping UN peacekeeping efforts worldwide.

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The Evolving Character of Conflict: Implications for United Nations Peacekeeping

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Abstract

This article explores the evolving character of conflict and its implications for United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping in an era marked by technological advancements and shifting geopolitical dynamics. Modern conflicts, such as the Ukraine-Russia war and maritime disputes in the South China Sea, demonstrate the increasing use of drones, artificial intelligence, and hybrid warfare tactics, involving state and non-state actors across multiple domains. Traditional drivers of conflict—geopolitical rivalries, resource competition, and socio-economic disparities—persist while emerging threats, such as transnational crime and technological coercion, reshape the nature of warfare. This article emphasises the need for the UN to rethink peacekeeping doctrines, mandates, and capabilities. Clear mandates, modular mission structures, and specialised personnel equipped to counter cyber threats and drones are essential. By incorporating new conflict management approaches, such as mediation and multi-domain strategies, this article highlights how the UN can adapt its peacekeeping framework to sustain international peace and security in a volatile world.

Introduction

In Dec 2024, Ukraine mounted an attack on Russian positions in the village of Lyptsi in the Kharkiv region. A novelty of this operation was the employment of large numbers of Uncrewed

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Ground Combat Vehicles (UGV) and First Person View (FPV) drones. As reported by The Kyiv Independent, an English language online Ukrainian newspaper, "Ukrainian forces successfully attacked Russian positions using only ground and FPV drones instead of infantry…".[1] According to Australian military strategist Major General Mick Ryan (Retd), the ground vehicles used during the assault were employed in various roles including surveillance, mine clearing, and direct firing with machine guns. He further clarifies that "UGVs were apparently supported throughout the activity by FPV drones…". While this does not make the attack fully autonomous—the vehicles need human operators—it is one of the most significant examples of drone combat in this war. This combination of ground and aerial reconnaissance—attack capabilities—means that the operation was in effect an air-land operation...'.[2]

Dec 2024 also witnessed a different kind of exchange between a China Coast Guard (CCG) ship and a Philippine vessel. Video footage showed the CCG ship firing a water cannon at other's navigational antennae before crashing into it, during a maritime patrol near the disputed Scarborough Shoal.[3] In an initial statement, China's coast guard said that the Philippine ships 'Came dangerously close' and that its crew's actions had been 'In accordance with the law'. Subsequently, it accused Manila of making 'Bogus accusations in an attempt to mislead international understanding'.[4] Even as Philippine sources described the Chinese manoeuvres as blocking, shadowing, and dangerous, China's coast guard said that its actions were professionally standardised, legitimate, and lawful.[5]

Ingredients of the Character of Modern Conflict

The above examples highlight two of the numerous facets of the character of conflict in the current era. This character continues to evolve, aided by circumstances that provide fertile ground for rising conflict across the world. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program at Uppsala University records that the number of active state-based conflicts has increased from 37 in 2011 to 59 in 2023[6]; there are separate numbers for non-state violence and one-sided violence.

What is driving this upsurge in violence? Traditional drivers of conflict, such as geopolitical contestation, remain as potent as ever. Post World War II, this has led to the Cold War, wars in

Korea and Vietnam, and more recently, proxy wars in Africa and Asia, through which rival players attempt to change the existing order and establish a new balance of power. Safeguarding against this has resulted in rising defence budgets that conversely add to growing militarisation and reduced expenditure on other essentials, increasing inequity in poorer nations. Competition over resources (mineral wealth including rare minerals, water, and land) and the impact of climate change (where South Asia will be hugely affected) is getting more acute and shall inevitably lead to conflict. Further, the economic situation arising from these and numerous other issues is forcing a change of mindsets in liberal democracies, making them insular and susceptible to extreme ideologies. This has resulted in aggressive attitudes that demand action for perceived wrongs while lauding strong leadership that promises to provide the same—attitudes conducive to conflict. Equally responsible is an ethno-nationalistic mindset which demands the restoration of past glories, including lost territories. The Balkans are a good example.

An unstable domestic polity resulting in the disenchantment of the populace with the ruling dispensation (see Pakistan and Bangladesh) is another factor. Finally, there is the nexus between transnational crime and terrorism (in Myanmar, the United Nations [UN] Office on Drugs and Crime records exploitation of fleeing Rohingya refugees by the Arakan Army to smuggle synthetic drugs into Bangladesh in exchange for money used for arms purchases. From drug smuggling to working for Jihadist networks is only a small step).

Many drivers of conflict are traditional, as are the participants—states, non-state actors, and combinations thereof. However, it is the policy objectives of the belligerents and, additionally, the geography, individual characteristics, and ingredients of the conflict that differentiate its overall character. While the Soviet Union had been fighting insurgents in its Caucasian republics for years (and later in Afghanistan) to restore primacy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States (US) relearned counter-insurgency operations to fight Islamist terrorism in distant and unfamiliar societies in Iraq and Afghanistan, aiming to create a democratic system in traditional cultures unused to such arrangements. This effort, when translated into objectives at the operational level, met with failure. The Soviets,

with a more limited objective, achieved a greater measure of success.

In Ukraine, too, geopolitics, geography, and individual capacities have majorly impacted the character of the conflict. With western weapon systems at Russia's doorstep, ostensibly to halt Russian expansionism and Russia's concerted push to capture Ukrainian territory for securing a buffer on its western border, both sides have resorted to conventional operations, unlike their earlier conflict in 2014. The outcome, thus far, has made the West rethink its military strategy, the US in particular realising the need to move away from counter insurgency to conventional operations. Today, the US Training and Doctrine Command advocates training for large-scale combat operations that will increasingly involve multiple interconnected domains and dimensions.[7] Even as Ukraine heralds a return to conventional wars, the ongoing Gaza War illustrates another distinction—militaries will have to prepare for both conventional wars and insurgencies against multiple adversaries that could involve pitting armies against combinations of state and non-state actors. Israel's air strikes against Iran in Oct 2024[8], while concurrently battling Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, are one example; another canvas is possibly waiting to unfold in Syria.

The second aspect pertains to the use of coercion—using threat of force to achieve strategic objectives. One example is 'Operation Restore Democracy' in 1994, wherein the US mobilised 23,000 troops to sail for Haiti to restore an elected leader to power, forcing the Haitian junta to succumb, even as former President Carter carried out negotiations.[9] 21st Century tools for employing coercive force are many—posturing, a show of force, trade embargoes, sanctions, and diplomatic isolation. Another example pertains to China and the Philippines in 2012, when in 2012 China tightened quality controls on Philippine fruit exports, resulting in a ban on imports while reducing tourist visas. Coercion is aided by technology—tomorrow, by deploying newer systems like unmanned maritime drones, a nation might attempt to obstruct shipping lanes or harass commercial vessels of an adversary, exerting pressure on that state without resorting to use of direct force.

Allied forms of coercion include denial of technology, not guaranteeing the viability of a vital supply chain, imposing tariff and non-tariff barriers, and similar tactics. China leads in this domain, having originated terminology such as 'Grey Zone Warfare', 'Three Warfares Strategy', and the theory of 'Unrestricted Warfare', advocating an all-of-nation approach.[10] Another phrase is 'Hybrid Warfare'[11], where adversaries (again combinations of state and non-state) select from an array of tools ranging from multidomain military operations (including the sub-conventional, space, electronic warfare, cyber, and informational) to terrorist acts and insurrections that are fused as necessary with other elements of national power—technological prowess, industrial capacity, economic, diplomatic, and informational resources—to achieve national goals. The alleged action by a Chinese cargo ship in Dec 2024 of severing subsea communications cables in the Baltic Sea connecting Germany and Finland, Lithuania and Sweden, respectively, can be viewed in this light.[12]

Though the world has witnessed elements of such forms of warfare earlier, these terms gain salience because modern technology enables real-time synergy of these elements, creating highly disruptive and devastating effects at tactical, operational, and strategic levels. The impact is exemplified in current conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, with the latter conflict serving as an eye-opener of how technology can transform warfighting. Innovative use of technology has synergised the impact of multiple sensor systems, automation, massed fires, and precision weaponry. In other words, conflict is now a battle of sensors, munitions, digital signals, and radio waves, creating immense transparency, resulting in greater lethality, even as the other side constantly innovates to counter these advancements. New terms like 'Cyber kinetic warfare' have been introduced, after the Sep 2024 incidents with exploding pagers in Lebanon.[13]

The Soviet leader Joseph Stalin is famously quoted as saying, 'Quantity has a quality of its own'. This was true for major conflicts until the first Gulf War, which saw large-scale use of precision munitions, giving rise to the theory of the 'Diminution' of mass. However, today's technology has aided generation of mass. Proliferation of numbers of drones is one example; Germany alone is supplying Ukraine with 4000 Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled drones.[14] Technology has also provided these mass munitions

with precision capabilities. Cheap commercial drones fitted with sensors, surveillance, and smaller weapon packages, costing as little as USD 500 or less, are highly effective force multipliers and can be deployed at scale. The concepts of mass and precision have merged, giving rise to a new term, 'Precise Mass'.[15]

Availability of cheap technology by states, non-states, and individuals has resulted in a phenomenon described as the 'Democratisation of warfighting', aided by innovative means of funding, such as crowdsourcing, in the case of Ukraine.[16] This democratisation empowers non-state actors and militias that operate within and across national borders—Houthis, Hamas, or others—to openly confront established powers, be it western armed forces or national governments, despite the asymmetry in combat power. Other non-state actors could be professional private military companies hired by business enterprises, military contractors fighting each other as proxies for states, or armed drug cartels vying for territorial control. Such wars might be limited or restricted in scale or escalate beyond borders. Also, post-COVID, the vulnerability of global supply chains has made them prime targets for disruption. These asymmetrical wars can be couched in conceptual terms as a contest between western 'Shock and awe' strategies and the attrition mindset of a non-state actor.

Use of newer technologies such as AI in military systems has exponential benefits–improved decision-making and targeting, greater precision, better surveillance, improved deception, and information ops.[17] Although AI inherently introduces objectivity into decision making, it is essential to ensure human oversight. Lack of the same can lead to failure, as witnessed by the breaching of Israel's Iron Wall in Gaza in Oct 2023.[18] Equally important as government control over AI development is the necessity to control developments in space; in Ukraine, Starlink and SpaceX have shown how space technology can significantly assist terrestrial battles. As private corporations end the monopoly of governments, regulation becomes imperative to prevent the space domain from becoming another tool of hybrid warfare. All of this raises critical questions—how do you begin to categorise total war today? How fine is the distinction between total, limited, and grey zone? Has the distinction between traditional war and conflict disappeared?

Implications for Peacekeeping

Despite criticism of the UN as an institution and the imperfect functioning of certain peacekeeping missions, statistics show that since its first mission in 1948, the UN has deployed over two million peacekeepers to 71 missions in more than 40 states, in the process projecting more military power in terms of troop deployment than any other country, except the US, in the current century.[19] Since the character of conflict, as outlined earlier, continues to evolve, it stands to reason that peacekeeping policies, doctrines, strategies, organisations, and implementation must adapt accordingly.

The first prerequisite for successful peacekeeping, namely a clear, unambiguous mandate, acquires even greater salience today. With geopolitics in flux and competing national interests, there are differing views on conflicts, especially when initiated by major power proxies. The outcome is fissures in the Security Council and other UN agencies, preventing formulation of a balanced, holistic mandate.[20] This further manifests in fragmented political and financial support for the mission, particularly when the mandate is ambitious and requires a specific force structure and appropriate equipping. As Adam Day, Head of the Geneva Office of the United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, suggests: "Rather than continue to saddle peacekeeping with sprawling mandates covering national reforms, security sector transformation, capacity building, and the extension of state authority, the UN may need to consider a much smaller set of tasks for tomorrow's missions". In the process, mandates may become more focused but stand a better chance of success. They must be realistic and, if necessary, subject to review based on the mission's capabilities and the tactics employed by the belligerents.

The second aspect follows from the first, relating essentially to the capabilities that a mission must have to implement the mandate, considering the means that belligerents might employ. Israel has come in for criticism for using AI programs like 'Gospel', 'Lavender' and 'Where's Daddy' in Gaza, resulting in the most concentrated and devastating bombing of the current century with huge casualties.[21] Considering the multifarious tasks that future missions could undertake[22], specialist peacekeepers should be capable of monitoring the electronic and cyber spectrums to combat

grey zone warfare—detect likelihood of unethical usage of AI programs, prevent spread of disinformation or alternative reality through information operations, hacking of UN and other civilian infrastructure, and so on. The mission might also require specialists from fields like intelligence, bio weapons, communications, negotiation, policing, governance, reconstruction, and the like; essentially a tailor-made modular structure for a mission whose mandate accurately reflects the character of the conflict on ground. Finally, since 'Protection of Civilians' will invariably be part of the mandate vide Action 14 of the Pact of the Future[23], capability for this must be provided based on geography, spread of population, boots on ground, and logistic sustainability.

The third issue pertains to 'Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate', the third tenet of peacekeeping (and extremely difficult to follow in a conflict situation as many peacekeepers will testify), and the ability of peacekeepers to respond effectively to threats to life. At times, Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) have been known to issue caveats directly to their troops, bypassing the chain of command and restricting their activities for reasons of personal safety.

Given the easy access of belligerents to sophisticated weaponry and tendency to coerce UN peacekeepers towards a certain line of action[24], 'Blue Helmets' in this context need to be adequately equipped and trained. One example could be of the deployment of counter-drone systems, and utilising drones for surveillance, logistics, and other tasks. Another is to enhance counter improvised explosive devices' capabilities. Using technology to assist in tactical tasks, such as keeping supply routes open, ensuring access to water, and medical facilities, is a third. TCCs must ensure the deployment of sufficient skilled personnel for such tasks to ensure freedom of action and safety of their contingents (safety was again endangered in South Lebanon in 2024 during the war between Israel and Hezbollah, with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon personnel suffering casualties[25]). Thus, the use of force in self-defence has to be a 'Sine qua non' in peacekeeping doctrine; also new tactics have to be wargamed to prevent situations where peacekeepers are rendered ineffective and cannot implement a given mandate.

The fourth issue pertains to the doctrine itself. Several new studies on UN Peacekeeping have been authored in recent years, with recommendations ranging from future peacekeeping models to challenges currently faced and those anticipated in the future. The document 'United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines', also known as the Capstone Doctrine, was approved over 16 years ago in 2008. Given that peacekeeping has become more complex with the world itself and the world becoming far more unpredictable and volatile, it would be prudent to update the doctrine and produce a more contemporary one to meet peacekeeping requirements for the short to medium term, i.e., for another 10 to 15 years or so. This doctrine would also incorporate approaches to conflict management, such as mediation; while 33.3 per cent of all peacekeeping operations had mediation mandates in 1991-2000, it increased to 40 per cent and 60 per cent in 2001-2010 and 2011-2020, respectively.[26]

Concluding Thoughts

The 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review is scheduled this year. The review encompasses an appraisal of the three offices, i.e., the Peacebuilding Commission, the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund, and the Peacebuilding Support Office. As per its terms of reference endorsed on 30 Apr 2024, "The review should take stock of the work done by the UN on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the implementation of all resolutions on the peacebuilding architecture. The review should also be forward-looking, aiming at further improving the work of the UN on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with appropriate emphasis on implementation and impact at the field level, encompassing activities aimed at supporting national and regional efforts to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict, and supporting the UN Peacebuilding Architecture".[27] Given such a comprehensive mandate, developing an updated peacekeeping doctrine as part of this review would positively impact the efficacy of UN peace operations, which, in turn, would enhance the stature of the UN. Because finally, as Richard Holbrooke, former US Ambassador to the UN, has been quoted as saying, '…The UN will ultimately be judged by its peacekeeping scorecard more than anything else**…**'.[28]

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Women Peacekeepers in United Nations Peace Operations: Critical to Mitigate Gender-Based Violence in a Mission Area

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Abstract

United Nations Peace Operations (UNPOs) have been used as one of the successful tools in a protracted conflict to enable a country to transition into a peaceful existence and long-term development. Despite scepticism, this endeavour has met with many successes over the past 75 years. Unfortunately, the world continues to witness ever-increasing conflicts, replete with different forms of gender-based violence, often targeting women and children. In such situations, the United Nations (UN) and most member states acknowledge that women peacekeepers can play a crucial role. UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 (2000) also recognised the role of women peacekeepers as an enabling factor. With the UNSC Resolution 1820 (2008), the UNPOs came under increased pressure to prevent conflict-related sexual violence, which is largely attributed to local security actors. In this article, a systematic review of the academic and other literature was used to ascertain the efficacy and effectiveness of women peacekeepers in the mitigation of gender-based violence. The role of women peacekeepers was considered a crucial independent variable for the protection outcome. The article brings out that women peacekeepers play a critical

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role in peacekeeping missions, contributing their unique perspectives and skills that enhance operational effectiveness. The UN has been setting targets for the number of women peacekeepers and most contributing countries are obliging. However, they also face significant challenges in their recruitment, training, deployment, and participation. It has also been highlighted that the UN field operations are still heavily biased towards male-dominated and aggressive infantry-dominant deployments. The results are also dependent on the sufficient presence of women peacekeepers in the sector. The article addresses a significant gap in academic discourse, as the influence of women in peacekeeping is infrequently discussed and scholarly opinions on their actual impact differ. It points towards a limited yet positive influence of women peacekeepers on gender-based violence and overall mission effectiveness.

Introduction

The adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000 formalised the persistent demand for women to play their part in peace and security. The Resolution recognised the disproportionate impact of armed conûicts on women and the importance of their equal voice in peace, security, and decision-making. Adopted on 19 Jun 2008, the UNSCR 1820 (2008) asked the United Nations Peace Operations (UNPOs) to prevent Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), attributed mostly to local security actors. It condemned the use of sexual violence as a tool of war and highlighted that in such intense conflicts, most victims are women and children, who need special attention from the peacekeeping community. Motivated by political, military, or economic objectives to control territory or resources, CRSV is frequently and deliberately used to target civilians, triggering their massive displacement. Women and girls continue to be the prime victims of CRSV, which is also attributable to the existing gender discrimination and inequality.[1]

Studies on the effectiveness of the Protection of Civilians (PoC) mandate reveal that host nations obtain support from bilaterally deployed forces and private military contractors to

achieve their security objectives, thus, further aggravating the situation for the locals.[2] To enhance its PoC effectiveness, the role of women peacekeepers has been advocated as the most desirable step as a corollary to UNSCR 1325. Action 19 of the Summit of the Future in Sep 2024 specifically laid down that "We will accelerate the implementation of our commitments on women, peace, and security". With progress towards its implementation, more women are serving the UNPOs as a part of the United Nations (UN) military, staff, UN Civilian Police (UNPOL) and other non-uniformed staff, as compared to 2000.

There are mixed inferences on the efficacy and effectiveness of women in peacekeeping, though the positive contributions outweigh the naysayers. Responding to the UN Department of Peace Operations (UNDPO)'s call, many Troop and Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) are fielding more women peacekeepers. It is well known that the rates of sexual and other forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) are higher in areas of armed conflict than in non-conflict-affected settings.[3] PoC remains a top priority of all UN-mandated UNPOs in such settings, where women and children remain the primary victims. It is in these situations that women peacekeepers can provide an effective bridge towards peace.

The objective of this article is to analyse different efficacy perspectives, UN efforts of gender mainstreaming, and barriers to the women peacekeepers' efforts to mitigate GBV in conflict-ridden areas. The article is based on a systematic review of available literature, various UN reports on the topic, and personal experiences through various interventions in the seminars, conferences, and training of women peacekeepers. Data is based on the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Scopus Indexed Journals, UN web, the United Service Institution (USI) of India archives, and UNDPO web pages, mostly from the last 10 years. The article discusses prior literature, inferences drawn on the key topics, and conclusions. Key words used for the search were women peacekeepers, GBV, protection mandate, measuring effectiveness of peace operations, and women, peace, and security.

Perspectives on the Efficacy of Women Peacekeepers

There are studies on both sides of the divide, encouraging or remaining neutral on the efficacy of the inclusion of more women peacekeepers. As per some authors[4], women's contributions are highly undervalued due to systemic challenges. There is an intrinsic link between women and intelligence, adeptness in negotiation, and socio-emotional intelligence—skills crucial for handling 'Masculine' security concerns like terrorism and national threats. In this case, examples of Indonesians in Palestine and the Indian peacekeepers in Liberia can be considered a great success. Indonesian peacekeepers contributed immensely to the maintenance of physical security and empowering women and children, addressing cases of sexual violence, and advocating for gender equality.[5] In Palestine, a study showed that the involvement of female peacekeepers in the prevention of GBV can be a stimulus for other countries to participate in helping and reducing such cases.[6] Similarly, the Indian formed police unit deployed from 2007 to 2016 in Liberia transformed the societal mindset and encouraged more women to participate in local civil administration, a fact acknowledged by Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.[7] As per UN Police Adviser Stefan Feller, the 'All-female Indian unit played an outstanding role in Liberia since 2007 and put the soul of UNSCR 1325 into operational action and visibility'.[8]

South African experiences in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Darfur/Sudan revealed that most national armed forces have infantry troops for the UNPO duties and, therefore, women come under tremendous performance pressure. There is a pressure to assimilate masculine values to be recognised as 'Good' soldiers.[9] Continuous push for the inclusion of more women has an assumption of increased operational efficacy related to women's 'Added Value' and for greater gender equality. Instrumentalist arguments prove contrary to this and may undermine gender equality. Under pressure, women peacekeepers try to live up to the high expectations by fitting into gender stereotypes. Rather than increasing gender equality, such efforts risk transforming the female 'Added Value' into an 'Added Burden'.[10]

The efficacy of women peacekeepers in reducing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) of locals by male peacekeepers has also been a reason for the UN to encourage more women

peacekeepers. As per the UN data of 05 Dec 2024, there are over 700 paternity and child support claims implicating UNPO personnel since 2006. 95 per cent of these involve military or police personnel from member states, who are responsible for addressing these claims. More than 70 per cent claims remain unresolved, leaving 500 children without much-needed legal recognition and financial support.[11] In such a situation, women peacekeepers can deter such misadventures and do a reality check on locals, while exerting a positive influence on their male colleagues. Studies point out that this dual role, tending to the local needs and regulating the behaviour of male peacekeepers, places women peacekeepers under a double burden. Recruiting more women into UNPOs due to the perceived unique contributions may avoid unintended consequences for the locals. However, the consequent rise of sexual violence by male peacekeepers against their women colleagues has also been an alarming factor. A study on the UN Missions in DRC revealed that many female peacekeepers experienced exploitation or harassment during their UNPO missions.[12] A study by the International Peace Institute revealed that sexual abuse was a major threat to uniformed peacekeepers, especially women. Among all survey participants, approximately one in 10 said they experienced sexual abuse during their tenure in a peacekeeping mission, while a similar proportion witnessed sexual abuse against another peacekeeper.[13]

Despite the pitfalls, many studies infer that women's participation in UNPOs has many tangible benefits for a conflict-ridden society. Summit of the Future emphasised inclusive structures under Action 19, where it considered full, equal, safe, and meaningful participation of women in decision-making at all levels of peace and security, as essential to achieve sustainable peace.[14] The UNDPO has always been persistent in its efforts to increase women in various UN missions. Such deployments encourage empowering the women in the host community, easier collation of data on the survivors of GBV, support for female ex-combatants, and making the UN force approachable to women in a community. The presence of women peacekeepers also helps to reduce conflict and confrontation, besides better access and support for local women. As was seen in Indian formed police unit's deployment in Liberia, women peacekeepers also become role models for the community. Another important fact is that in a

volatile security environment, women at checkpoints create a less confrontational atmosphere.

The impact of women peacekeepers on local populations was also studied in some other missions, showing a potential positive influence on reported sexual violence cases, though the overall impact was found to be limited, perhaps due to the limitation of numbers. The study views that the current UN approach—simply deploying women to peacekeeping missions—fails to address the underlying issues rooted in military deployment, signalling a need for more comprehensive strategies to bring in a lasting change.[15]

Gender Mainstreaming and United Nations' Initiatives

The UNDPO has been working arduously with the T/PCCs to increase the number of women in line with the UN Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative. The UN carried out a study on gender parity to ensure that the uniformed component of UNPOs is diverse and inclusive of women, reflecting the communities that the UN serves.[16] To this end, over recent years, the UN has set successive targets: the UNSCR 2242 (2015) called for doubling the number of women in uniformed components by 2020.[17] The UNDPO had set specific goals for 2028, as regards the percentage share of women peacekeepers. UN military experts on mission and staff officers' targets are at 25 per cent, UNPOL at 30 per cent, and those for the contingents are at 15 per cent. While the UNPOL is near its targets, the same for contingents remains largely elusive, as the statistics at the end of Oct 2024 suggest. The data in Table 1 is only for the UNPOs with more than 9,000 uniformed personnel, as of 31 Oct 2024.

The progress in operational leadership is more visible now, though it is always tied up to the gender balance at the UN headquarters. Seven leaders at the Special Representative of the Secretary-General level also show a growing role as heads of missions (special political missions included). The glass ceiling was broken on 11 Dec 2024, when Major General Anita Asmah from Ghana took over as the first woman Head of Mission and Force Commander of the UN Disengagement Observer Force at Golan Heights.

Table 1[18]

Peacekeeping Missions (more than 9,000 uniformed personnel)	Total Military	Female troops	Per cent of troops	Total UNPOL	Women UNPOL	Per Cent of UNPOL	All uniformed personnel
UNMISS (South Sudan)	13,912	1,099	7.9%	1,548	424	27.3%	**10.15%**
MONUSCO (Congo)	10,630	880	8.3%	1,324	303	22.8%	**10%**
MINUSCA (Central African Republic)	13,958	1264	9%	3,014	495	16.4%	**9.6%**
UNIFIL (Lebanon)	9,619	803	8.3%	0	0	8.3%	**8.3%**

Universal growing attention to female Engagement Teams (ETs) recognises the benefits of women peacekeepers at the field level. The efficacy of women peacekeepers in community engagement was found to be better than their male counterparts but, at the same time, these peacekeepers needed protection from the military when on patrol, thus, imposing a limitation. At the UN level, senior women's protection advisers and women's protection advisors fulfil a crucial role in implementing the GBV protection mandate. The UN has also devised various mechanisms such as PoC Advisor, Gender Advisor, Gender Advisory Unit, Community Liaison Assistants, and Community Alert Network. More diverse and inclusive teams mean more effective and empathetic peacekeeping. Women peacekeepers often have greater access to communities and serve as role models, inspiring local women to participate in peace and political processes.[19]

Barriers to the Deployment of Women Peacekeepers

Women in UNPOs primarily face three challenges—widespread exclusion and discrimination, growing incidents of SEA by male peacekeepers, and a tendency to deploy women peacekeepers to safe locations.[20] Women in their home countries make up a small percentage of operational forces, thus, limiting their deployment options. The environment still carries prejudices about the physical and psychological capacity of women peacekeepers.[21] Many social constructs view the military as 'Inherently Masculine', where characteristics associated with men (strength) make them 'Perfect'

soldiers. Female stereotypical characteristics such as compassion can be looked down upon, though highly crucial while interacting with local women. These are the societal prejudices inhibiting their deployments in many T/PCCs. As the UN Uniform Gender Strategy report identifies, military components are largely composed of combat-related capabilities, while UNPOL components are largely composed of police with public order management or other operational policing experience. These are some of the challenges women must overcome to participate in UNPOs.[22]

A study on Zimbabwean women peacekeepers in Liberia and East Timor[23] brought out that despite being a key ingredient for successful operational impact in any UNPO, their contributions are not appreciated. The study confirmed a number of challenges, including language and cultural barriers, a low number of female peacekeepers, gender stereotypes, and a non-family status of most UN peacekeeping missions. Strategic and operational leadership for UNPOs needs to be gender-responsive and believe in the inclusive approach to ward off biases and discrimination in UNPOs.[24] There is a need to conduct gender and cultural sensitivity training, extending to military training with inclusive language. A gendered approach to training will improve not only the operational mandate itself, but also the professional capacity of a soldier, especially women soldiers who may not see value in their position as a woman in the military.[25]

Conclusion

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda of the UN remains critically important for UNPOs while its implementation is transformative in field missions and is an operational necessity. The WPS framework has set two priorities—women participation in peace processes and their protection from CRSV or GBV. These forms of violence may be theoretically outside the scope of PoC, but have a significant impact on the ability and willingness of women to participate in peace and security. This is where women peacekeepers contribute immensely by creating a safe ecosystem, where the locals express their concerns fearlessly.

From the instant literature, it is deduced that the participation of women in UNPOs enables a high level of discipline among male staff in a mission, resulting in a decrease in SEA cases. By having a civilising effect, women's presence ensures a better-

behaved, less corrupt, and less abusive UN mission. Despite the challenges faced by women peacekeepers, they need to be considered as a positive addition to the UNPO agenda. To be effective, they must be included at every level, from analysis and decision-making to the leadership roles. There will be challenges and intimidations, statusquoist will always hinder this progress, but the results on the ground in various field missions indicate their overwhelming contributions. They need to be fully trained to understand the nuances of a field mission, care for the local communities, interact with all at local levels, and be considerate of the local culture. Notwithstanding certain reports of scepticism, women peacekeepers in the UNPOs remain critical to mitigate GBV in a mission area. The primary objective of the UNPOs is advancing local reforms and bringing a new perspective of hope, development, and equality. To promote reforms at local levels, the UN must be viewed as a champion of gender equality.

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Protection of Civilians in Conflict Environments: Challenges and Recommendations

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Abstract

In this era of increasing geopolitical multilateralism and questions being raised on the continued relevance of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping, one central fact remains indisputable. There is no better option available to the international community. The UN peacekeeping is as credible, politically neutral, and cost-effective as it gets for addressing global conflicts. Given the enormous difficulties in achieving the ultimate political purposes of UN peacekeeping missions, 'Protection of Civilians' (PoC) in the conflict-affected countries becomes the central and immediate purpose of UN peacekeeping missions while efforts to achieve political objectives continue. There are, however, several critical challenges that confront effective PoC actions by UN peacekeeping missions. They include non-unanimous 'Over Ambitious' mandates, 'Underresourcing' by member states, lack of genuine commitment by host government in supporting the UN peacekeeping missions, peacekeepers, and contingents that are not fully free from operational caveat, civilian, and military mindset issues, and an inability to adapt to emerging threats, amongst other challenges. The need of the hour is to confront these challenges, implement mitigating measures, and strengthen the faith that the world has in UN peacekeeping as the most credible,

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politically neutral, and effective instrument for addressing global conflicts, rather than 'Throwing the baby out with the bathwater'.

Introduction

The world today is witnessing multiple concurrent conflicts leading to questions being raised about the relevance of the United Nations (UN). However, this criticism overlooks the critical facts that the UN alone cannot prevent and mitigate conflicts without the active participation of other stakeholders. Despite these challenges, UN peacekeeping remains the most credible, politically neutral, and a cost-effective tool available to the international community for addressing global conflicts.

There is also a growing realisation that the lofty political objectives of UN missions will take significantly longer to achieve than the typical duration of these missions. Protection of Civilians (PoC), an intermediate but equally important objective, has thus emerged as the most significant and central purpose of most UN peacekeeping missions.

The PoC in conflict environments is critical to the legitimacy and credibility of UN peacekeeping missions, the peace agreements they are deployed to implement and the institution of UN itself. Past mission failures in providing security during complex crises and protecting civilians from mass atrocities have tested the fundamental principles and capabilities of UN peacekeeping operations. Irrespective of whether a mission is mandated for peacekeeping or peace enforcement, the expectation of the community in the host country is that they would be protected by the missions from all threats that affect their lives significantly. Former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that PoC is the defining purpose of UN peacekeeping in the 21st Century.[1] The current Secretary-General António Guterres states, "Civilians have suffered the deadly effects of armed conflict for too long. It is time we live up to our promise to protect them".[2] The President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame stated in 2015 at the International Peace Conference at Kigali that "The central purpose of peace operations is the protection of civilians. It is not the protection of peace agreements or UN mandates, even peacekeepers for that matter, much less the protection of politicians. The mission is to protect the ordinary people most at risk".[3] Given the importance of PoC to

all missions and the legitimacy and credibility of the UN, there is a need to constantly discern and evaluate the challenges to effective PoC and find and implement mitigating measures.

Evolution of Protection of Civilians

PoC was first mentioned in the Operational Directive of 08 Feb 1961, during the UN Operation in Congo. It was later briefly referenced in the mandates of the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (1993–96) and the UN Protection Force (1992–95). However, the first explicit and unambiguous mention of PoC in a mandate appeared in the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (1999) under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Over the years, 16 UN peacekeeping missions have received explicit PoC mandates. Of the 11 current missions, five (South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Abyei, and Lebanon) have specific PoC mandates. However, rather than focusing solely on the number of missions with explicit PoC mandates, it is more telling that approximately 90 per cent of peacekeepers across all current UN missions operate under some form of PoC mandate. Meanwhile, during the same period, civilian casualties have increased as a proportion of overall casualties in civil wars and sub-national conflicts. PoC mandates also ensure that communities in host countries become tangible beneficiaries of the missions' efforts.

Without prejudice to the primary responsibility of host governments towards PoC, peacekeeping missions perform their PoC tasks within their capabilities and areas of deployment through use of all necessary means, up to and including use of deadly force. Typically, PoC in all peacekeeping missions has evolved to be a 'Whole of Mission' responsibility with three clear domains, which are concurrently addressed in all PoC situations.[4] While the policy on PoC in UN peacekeeping describes the PoC actions in terms of tiers, it is useful to treat them as domains, as these actions are non-linear and occur concurrently.

- **Domain 1. Dialogue and Engagements.** Engagements by all relevant mission components with political and military leadership of the host government, armed forces/factions, police, communities, religious groups, and traditional leaders to prevent conflicts or to prevent escalation of ongoing conflicts.

- **Domain 2. Physical Protection.** Predominantly done by the force supported by the UN Police.

- **Domain 3. Creating a Protective Environment.** Supporting holistic capacity building of host government in terms of building institutions and legislative framework by all components of the mission.

Protection of Civilians: Challenges and Recommended Mitigation Measures

Mandates.

- Mandates should ideally be unanimous, consistent, and realistic in relation to the resources available for peacekeeping missions. Non-unanimous mandates may create the perception, particularly among host governments, that certain aspects are negotiable. Inconsistent mandates with significant year-on-year changes make adaptation difficult and hinder the ability of missions to build on previous gains. However, the fundamental challenge often lies in the 'Mandate-to-resources Gap', where member states are under-resourced in relation to their mandates, sometimes setting them up for failure. Financing PoC initiatives should be prioritised, with certain non-PoC aspects of the mandate taking secondary importance until a reasonable level of civilian protection has been achieved.

- There is a view that mandates raise high expectations among the communities served, the host government, and the international community by setting expansive and often utopian objectives that cannot be realistically achieved. While there is some truth in this view, in the face of the overwhelming suffering of communities in war-torn nations—where missions are often the last resort and hope for civilians caught in conflict—high expectations are inevitable and justified for peacekeeping missions. However, expectations of the communities are not solely dictated by mandates. The legitimacy, credibility, and the track record of UN peacekeeping, built over years, heighten community expectations the moment the blue helmets enter conflict zones. Furthermore, mandates with high expectations can also be seen as empowering peacekeepers on the ground, as they enable the prioritisation of all capacities and resources within missions toward PoC.

- Mandates should, therefore, clearly indicate priorities while listing the expectations from missions. In the absence of such prioritisation, limited resources are divided uniformly across all sections of a mission, thereby, affecting mandate delivery in priority sectors. Thus, there is a need for optimal and efficient preparation and allocation of resources in alignment with mandate priorities, while also ensuring leadership accountability within missions.

Commitment of Host Government to Peace Agreements.

- Mandates require proactive actions by peacekeeping missions in PoC situations to address imminent physical threats to civilians, irrespective of the source, while respecting the host government's primary responsibility for responding to such threats. However, when such threats originate from host government forces or their allies, peacekeeping actions may impact the core UN principle of 'Consent'. While consent pertains to all parties in a conflict, it is often more closely associated with the host government's approval. Moreover, taking action contrary to the host government's stance in PoC situations—even when its forces are not directly involved—can result in restrictions on other mission activities. To some extent, losing host government's consent may hinder PoC effectiveness, particularly by limiting Freedom of Movement (FoM), exposing peacekeepers to targeting, and increasing the risks of misinformation, disinformation, or hate speech. Balancing PoC effectiveness while maintaining host government's consent presents a significant leadership challenge for missions, especially given that most host governments lack a genuine commitment to fully implement peace agreements.

- Peacekeeping missions may also, at times, lack the capacity to confront host government's security forces. In such scenarios, missions must ensure strict and unwavering adherence to the core UN principles of consent, impartiality, and non-use of force, except in cases of self-defence and defence of mandates. To uphold these principles, missions should establish clear red lines in advance. If stakeholders or parties to the conflict cross these red lines in violation of the foundational agreement that authorised the UN mission, robust

action should be taken. While this approach is challenging in practice, it remains the only viable course of action.

Robust Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). Whenever missions are established and SOFA are prepared and signed, a few mandatory provisions must be explicitly mentioned:

- Freedom to induct/de-induct and deploy forces within the area of responsibility of the mission, within the mandated ceiling must be a mission prerogative. Any restriction in this regard by the host government should not be acceptable.

- Freedom to move to and deploy forces to any location within the area of responsibility of the mission temporarily or permanently must be a mission prerogative. Interference in this regard by the host government must be explicitly prohibited.

- Availability and employment of appropriate aerial surveillance resources such as drones and aerial photography or employing helicopters must be a non-negotiable requirement.

- This freedom of movement must be for both day and night and for using any mode of transport—ground, sea, river, or air.

Conceptual Clarity of Protection of Civilians. It is imperative that ground commanders and peacekeepers tasked with executing the mandate have a clear conceptual understanding of the scope of PoC. Currently, the definition of PoC primarily addresses threats of physical violence. However, its scope must be expanded to include threats to life arising from physical violence, Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), and the impacts of climate change. Additionally, there must be clarity on the definition of a 'Civilian' who merits protection. A civilian is an unarmed individual who does not aid or abet conflict in any way and is a helpless victim of war.

Mindset of Uniformed and Civilian Peacekeepers: Caveat-Free Mandate Delivery.

- PoC responsibilities require commanders at all levels to make timely and proactive decisions without constantly looking over their shoulders. While the safety and security of

peacekeepers are of paramount importance, being risk-averse to the extent of inadequate or improper implementation of the mandate is unacceptable and poses a reputational risk for the UN. Over the last few decades of peacekeeping, a risk-averse, non-proactive mindset has taken root among some civilian and military peacekeepers, which needs to be shifted towards a proactive, dynamic, and responsive approach. Ensuring accountability of the mission in this regard must be strictly enforced. That said, shaping an appropriate mindset is also a dynamic leadership function. Many civilian substantive and support sections must develop a proactive mindset regarding the prioritisation of all resources and capacities of the mission towards PoC, ensuring robust aviation, engineering, and logistical support for forces on the ground.

- Declared or undeclared caveats by troop contributing countries/police contributing countries, if any, may also derail PoC effectiveness. There is always an apprehension that, in times of conflict, member states may impose declared or undeclared caveats on their contingents and Integrated Unit Patrols concerning deployment locations, execution of certain tasks, and conflict-related PoC actions. Even in the absence of conflict, some contingents refer to their national doctrines, and resist certain actions. Additionally, many countries stipulate specific deployment locations for their personnel or units, a practice that must be strongly discouraged. The mission cannot allow country-specific concessions. Furthermore, there is a need for full operational freedom for the mission and force leadership to make appropriate decisions without being encumbered by caveats.

Freedom of Movement. FOM, both from the perspective of host government restrictions (access denials) and environmental restrictions on mobility, are serious challenges that need to be considered when assessing the impact or lack, thereof, of actions taken by the mission in any conflict situation. Addressing host government's restrictions on FOM is a priority Domain 1 Key Leadership Engagement action for peacekeeping missions. To this end, missions must establish mechanisms at national and local levels to continuously push the envelope toward greater FOM over land, river, and air. Missions must systematically follow up on each access denial with the host country authorities and UN

Headquarters (HQ). UNHQ and the Security Council must seek accountability from the host government in this regard. In the case of environmental limitations on mobility, missions rely on robust aviation support and enhanced land mobility options, such as all-terrain vehicles. These resources should be prioritised and provided for PoC.

Decision Dilemma on Prioritising Protection of Civilians Efforts by Ground Commanders.

- Peacekeeping commanders on the ground often face a decision dilemma in conflict situations. There is a need to prioritise responses when addressing different possible PoC options, such as directly intervening in clashes between armed factions, protecting the movement of civilians fleeing from the area of conflict, creating a temporary protection area where civilians escaping conflict can be congregated and safeguarded, or securing areas/locations where the conflict may escalate next. The guiding rule in peacekeeping missions is that the option facilitating the protection of the maximum number of civilians should be chosen. This decision must be taken in a timely manner by relatively junior commanders on the ground amid the fog of conflict. Regardless of the option chosen, there may be retrospective criticism about why other alternatives were not adopted. Tactical commanders should be insulated from retrospective inquiries and punitive actions if decisions were taken in good faith. Missions often lack the resources to address all PoC options and must prioritise. In such decision-making dilemmas, 'The best is the enemy of the good' should be the guiding principle, as the timeliness of the decision is of paramount importance.

- The primacy of the host government's role in PoC should not be compromised. If and when the host government's intentions and actions do not indicate a commitment to fulfil this responsibility, peacekeeping missions should not hesitate to step in. Mindlessly targeting armed groups with whom UN missions face a resource asymmetry, especially when no PoC purpose is being served, is detrimental to the safety and security of peacekeepers. There is an important leadership role to be played in this regard in every situation. Tactical commanders should be empowered and trained intensively

to make timely decisions without hesitation. The top leadership of the mission/forces should take proactive decisions to prevent contingents from being subjected to unnecessary risks when there are no corresponding PoC requirements. To quote General John J Pershing, “A competent leader can get efficient service from poor troops while an incapable leader can demoralize the best of troops”.

Mindful Integration and Effective Command and Control (C2). The need of the hour is integration. However, integration is not a panacea for all requirements. It can be counterproductive to efficiency and robustness when accountability and the empowerment of tactical commanders are obscured. Integration should primarily occur during the planning stages. Tactical commanders must exercise full command over all elements participating in an operation. Any dilution of command authority can be perilous. Establishing the C2 structure well before operations are undertaken is half the battle won. However, this is often a challenge in integrated missions. There is a pressing need for a UN-wide policy on the leadership of tactical operations, including all types of patrols.

Inadequate Early Warning and Inherent Drawbacks of Peace Keeping Intelligence (PKI). PKI cannot be clandestinely acquired. Missions cannot use obtrusive or intrusive means, nor can they offer incentives to sources for acquiring PKI. These are restrictive conditions that must be accepted to ensure that PKI remains within the boundaries of the UN’s principles and norms. However, this constraint leads to inadequate early warning at tactical levels, which may be compensated through technological advancements, intensified community engagement, enhanced language proficiency of peacekeepers, allocation of quick impact projects under tactical commanders, and other related measures.

Gap Between Situational Awareness and Situational Understanding. While force personnel have good situational awareness of ongoing events, they often lack adequate situational understanding of the background and rationale behind these incidents due to short tenures and the consequent lack of institutional memory. This gap can be mitigated through the seamless integration of civil affairs personnel with intelligence officers and military observers. Staying ahead of the curve through

effective situational awareness and understanding is the key to ensuring proactive PoC.

Gap Between Early Warning and Early Action. The absence of the right mindset among peacekeepers, both uniformed and civilian, host country restrictions, inadequacy of appropriate air and surface mobility resources, insufficient training, and deficiencies in leadership contribute to a gap between early warning and early action, in both temporal and physical domains, crippling PoC effectiveness. Additionally, there is a need for conceptual clarity on the prioritisation of PoC, the protection of UN personnel, the priority protection of the mandate, and the protection of key leaders of the host country.

Absorption of Relevant Technology. In the fields of integrated databases, predictive analysis, Geographic Information System utilisation, base defence, aerial surveillance, and digital surveillance, missions still have a long way to go to align with contemporary threat scenarios. While efforts are ongoing, they are resource and fund-intensive and require substantial support from member states.

Genuine Gender Parity and Responsiveness. The need for an adequate number of women peacekeepers in contemporary missions is well established. However, ensuring that all peacekeepers meet the required job descriptions for full and meaningful employment across all domains of peacekeeping is sometimes overlooked in the pursuit of meeting quantitative targets. This focus on numbers can prove counterproductive. It is also crucial that all decision-making and policy formulation be gender responsive. Both women and men peacekeepers must be provided with an enabling environment, free from any form of harassment. A zero-incidence and zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse must be upheld in both letter and spirit through a combination of sensitisation, training, audits, and punitive measures. These requirements must be genuinely fulfilled, avoiding any form of tokenism.

Off the Bases and Into the Communities. Peacekeeping forces are often burdened with a large number of static and force protection duties, reducing the 'Boots on Ground' for mobile PoC operations. There is a need to incorporate technology to minimise reliance on personnel for static duties. As a general principle, at least two-thirds of personnel in each base should be 'Off the base and into

the community' at all times. Maintaining a strong presence within communities is not only operationally effective but also reflects a proactive mindset, the creation and sustenance of which is a critical leadership function.

Inadequate Language Assistance. Contingents operating in the field in most missions face a critical deficiency in the availability of language assistants, which affects their operational efficiency. To address this, contingents should be empowered to hire language assistants and receive reimbursement for the same. Additionally, sector HQs should be provided with funding to hire language and community liaison assistants to enhance communication and engagement with local populations.

Contingent Level Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). In order to endear the local communities to the contingents operating in their areas, contingent commanders must be empowered to execute small but relevant QIPs at their level. The current model of centralised planning and implementation of QIPs does not empower the contingent commanders who are the face of the missions in the field.

Need for Contemporary Protection of Civilians Doctrines. While extensive theoretical guidance exists, the evolving nature of PoC threats necessitates continuous refinement of concepts and procedures, customised for each mission. Past reports of expert committees may not always remain fully relevant to the current PoC environment. Therefore, a dynamic approach is required to align theoretical guidance with practical ground realities. A reasonable timeframe for the relevance of expert committee reports should be five years. At present, the focus should be on clarifying the scope of PoC, identifying the threats that need to be countered, defining who qualifies as a civilian, determining the appropriate course of action against armed factions (particularly those affiliated with or part of the host government), and establishing the priority between protecting civilians, peacekeepers, and key local leaders.

Tactical Operations to Counter Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. Current measures to counter CRSV primarily focus on monitoring, reporting, investigation, and ensuring accountability. However, these measures are largely reactive, addressing incidents post-occurrence rather than emphasising prevention. There are no customised tactical operations specifically designed to prevent

CRSV. In 2024, the UN Mission in South Sudan introduced the concept of Patrols to Combat CRSV (PTCC) to address this gap. PTCCs consist of two types: Base PTCCs and Deliberate PTCCs. Base PTCCs serve as a proactive measure, with patrols visiting every village and settlement within a 10 km radius of the base almost daily, at random times, focusing on locations and routes where abductions and sexual violence are likely to occur. These patrols, often referred to as 'Twilight Patrols', are conducted at dawn and dusk when CRSV incidents are more probable. Deliberate PTCCs are deployed to known or predicted CRSV hotspots across the area of responsibility. Their objectives include deterring CRSV, enhancing the capability of communities and security forces to prevent such crimes, and generating early warnings through community alert systems. This emerging concept merits further refinement and development to enhance its effectiveness in preventing CRSV.

Conclusion

PoC remains the central purpose of most peacekeeping endeavours, either directly or indirectly. UN peacekeeping continues to be the most credible, reliable, and cost-effective tool for achieving effective PoC in conflict environments. The challenges outlined in this article are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The key requirement is to discern, recognise, and comprehend these challenges, and implement appropriate mitigation measures. Substituting the central character of UN peacekeeping or diluting its core principles must be avoided—ensuring that the essence of UN peacekeeping remains intact while addressing its evolving challenges.

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Impact of Anthropology on the Effectiveness of United Nations Peacekeeping

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Abstract

United Nations (UN) peacekeeping is an effective conflict management tool conceived during the early part of the Cold War. In the multinational structure of peacekeeping missions, the peacekeepers bring varying training standards, operational ethos, cultures, and traditions that are practised in their countries. These elements form the core of the member states' approach to peacekeeping which, in turn, impacts the performance of the peace operations. Adapting the respective social and military norms, which take years to develop, to the norms of peacekeeping helps implement the mandate. This is reflected in the behaviour of the peacekeepers while executing the mandated tasks. Studies and experience from the ground have revealed that soldiers from the Global South, especially from India, are better suited for UN peacekeeping. The anthropological perspective of the national culture that peacekeepers bring from across the world can help to enhance the effectiveness of the peacekeeping mission.

Introduction

United Nations (UN) peacekeeping can be as effective as the UN Security Council and the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) want it to be. Once deployed, operationalising peace operations face several challenges. At the operational and tactical level, interoperability between different contingents of the TCCs is one of the main hindrances. With the varying training standards, operational ethos, cultures, and traditions that the peacekeepers bring with them after years of practice in their countries,

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coordination of operational activities becomes a challenge. The study of anthropology helps to recognise different cultures of the TCCs with their unique beliefs, values, and norms, followed by various actors in the conflict zone. This includes the peacekeepers, the state and non-state actors, as well as the civilian population of the country amid conflict. Culture, which is the core concept of anthropology, is intertwined with history. Cultural anthropology, hence, helps to better understand why individuals of different groups can behave differently in response to the same situation.

Soldiers can perform well, particularly in counterinsurgency/ terrorist operations, when they have a better understanding of the non-state actors and their psyche, and the support base of the local population. It also helps to plan and execute operations against military adversaries in a conventional war. Military anthropology remains valid even when the armed forces take part in operations as part of an international force. Therefore, a perspective of the different traits of national and military cultures that peacekeepers bring from across the world can act as an enabler for the leaders to enhance the performance of the peacekeeping mission. This article will explore the impact of military anthropology on the effectiveness of uniformed peacekeepers.

The Mission and the Cultural Challenges

There is no yardstick on the number of TCCs that can participate in a peacekeeping mission. As an example, the total number of TCCs in three missions in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Lebanon varies between 40 and 60. Similarly, the number of top TCCs with contributions of more than 200 soldiers also varies. The multicultural and multilinguistic composition of any international force creates tension not only among the peacekeepers from different member states but also between peacekeepers and civilian staff.[1] It results in interoperability challenges in a peacekeeping mission's heterogeneous structure.

Peacekeepers, once deployed, are expected to adhere to the basic UN peacekeeping norms such as adherence to the principles of peacekeeping, respect for gender diversity, sensitivity to local culture and discipline, refrain from abuse of authority and exploitation of sex, and climate change, etc. There can, however, be differences in the interpretations of the UN norms.[2] Varying interpretations of the three principles of peacekeeping are one

such example.[3] As peacekeeping has evolved, understanding and interpretation of these principles have also changed. For example, there is confusion over the interpretation of the use of minimum force.[4] Over time, more clarifications came opening new windows for their interpretation. Such mismatch influences even the member states' positions on the doctrinal aspects of peacekeeping and their approach to operationalising the mandated tasks. In this regard, Soeters and Meulen, in their publication *Cultural Diversity in Armed Forces: An International Comparison,* cited how the cultural sensitivity of Turkish soldiers makes it easier for them to interact with the local population.[5] Accordingly, Soeters and Manigart, editors of *Military Cooperation in Multinational Peace Operations,* noted that military personnel should be trained in cultural awareness and develop cultural intelligence.[6]

In the UN, the developed nations have the self-acquired rights to make all important policy decisions. On the other hand, the dirty and dangerous work is left to the bulk of the peacekeepers who come from the Global South. It has resulted in a clear divide in the approach to peacekeeping among the peacekeepers from the West and Global South. The distinct difference between the military culture of the western and non-western militaries will be described in the following section.

Military Culture of the Western Peacekeepers

What Chiara Ruffa, Professor of Political Science at the Centre for International Studies, had to say about differences in cultures and traditions was best understood after she studied the military culture of Italian and French peacekeepers, who are the major contributors to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The current military culture of the Italian military is historical and its legacy during World War I (WWI) and World War II (WWII), where they changed sides, supported Mussolini's coup and helped marginalise the monarchy in 1924. Later, the Italian military was sidelined by the government, limiting its role completely. There was a dent in the military's image, and it needed revival. There was also a notion that Italian soldiers were good people during WWI and the colonial era, even though it was a myth. It was important for the Italian military to maintain that image of 'Less Aggressive'. Italian military's involvement in multinational operations post-Cold War was an opportunity to revive its image. Participating

in softer peacekeeping missions with a human face helped to maintain their image, find better acceptability, as well as reduce the chances of fatality for peacekeepers when the armed groups retaliate.[7]

The French military had a higher status before WWII. However, certain events that followed, thereafter, impacted its status. Nevertheless, it is seen and accepted as an important institution, always ready to intervene unilaterally and sacrifice itself for the nation. Besides, the historical myth of 'French Fury' is a driving spirit that is displayed even in peacekeeping missions. For the French, force protection is a higher priority and, hence, has deployed even Leclerc tanks for routine operational patrolling. As a result, the French peacekeepers are generally seen as more arrogant by the local population of South Lebanon.

The influence of the cultural beliefs of the western nations is noticeable in the operational activities of their peacekeepers. The Italian peacekeepers maintain a slightly softer approach. The French military is ever ready to use force when provoked. French peacekeepers feel that anyone who is not allowing the peacekeepers to move in a particular area is a hindrance. Hence, it is justified to use force against them to ensure their freedom of movement.[8]

Spanish Legion peacekeepers are also very disciplined and proud of their soldierly appearance. To them, there is no grey between white and black, and interpret the mandate that way, which unfortunately is a political product. On 24 Jun 2007, a roadside improvised explosive device exploded in southern Lebanon, killing six Spanish peacekeepers serving with the UNIFIL.[9]

One of the common behavioural traits of peacekeepers from developed nations is that they are fond of attiring in full battle gear wearing dark glasses, holding guns ready to fire, and driving at high speed. This, however, is considered a sign of arrogance by the host state. Apart from this, photography of the area of the operation, even if it is for updating terrain information, is taken as an intrusion into their privacy by the host nation. This results in the local population disliking the peacekeepers from the West, limiting their freedom of movement, and at times influencing violence by the non-state actors against the peacekeepers.

The nations that participate in an international force but lack an understanding of military anthropology might pay huge political costs. In Mali, the separatist movement by the Tuaregs, who are from north of Mali, began sometime in early 2012. Over the years, the movement was hijacked by the Islamist jihadis who migrated from the northern part of Africa. The approach of the French military, which was supporting the Malian army to fight the rebels, was different. French did not want the Malian army to attack the separatist groups. Their strategy was to force the separatists to break away from the jihadis. Since this strategy was not in line with the Malian junta, France was asked to end their operations in Mali.[10] The French did not understand the military anthropology of the Malian army, who considered the separatist movement to be a lesser threat than the jihadis.

Joseph Soeters, Professor of Management and Organisation Studies at the Netherlands Defence Academy, in his study of military sociology, later commented that western soldiers' nationalistic bent hinders their adaptation to the needs of local society.[11] That the member states participate in peacekeeping only because of their strategic interest explains this. When the genocide in Rwanda began on 06 Apr 1994, Belgium, France and the United States were the first to vacate the country.[12] Even otherwise, it is not surprising to find well-trained and well-equipped peacekeepers shying away from using force even when it is legitimate to do so. One reason is that no member state would prefer to carry the body bags of their peacekeepers home because it becomes difficult to justify politically.

The action of the Swedish peacekeeping force in Srebrenica, in Dec 1993, is an example of the contrary. Despite being heavily outnumbered by a Croatian battalion-size force, one platoon of this force refused to hand over two Muslim nurses to the Croats for more than 12 hours. In another incident, when a tank detachment of the same battalion was lured into an ambush by the Bosnian Serbs, the crew opened the main guns of tanks until the Bosnian Serb ambush team were silenced. Colonel Henricsson, the commanding officer, instead of taking clues from his political superiors, formulated his mission objective, even if it became necessary to use force and ignore rules and regulations when the civilians were threatened. The resolve to achieve the mission objective disregarding the highest political authority and without

worrying about one's future career is the culture of mission command which takes decades to grow and develop.[13]

The developed nations from the West are blessed with relative internal peace. They don't have to use their armed forces to defend their nation's border and, hence, can carry the battle far away from their homelands in pursuit of their countries' strategic interests. But these nations miss out on the challenges of the criticality of fighting internal conflicts where the line dividing the armed man and an innocent civilian gets blurred.

The western member states rarely participate in difficult and complex peacekeeping missions. When they do, they generally lack popular support from the host government. The support, if available, is purely transactional in return for the investment the governments of these militaries make in the local societies to win the hearts and minds of the people, and probably to buy peace. Funding special developmental projects in the countries that are in the middle of the conflict is such an example. This is one of the elements of the Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) concept of the UN peace operations. Continuation of such programs, however, is contingent upon the member states' participation in the peacekeeping mission. No matter how much money is spent, it does not help to implement the mandate.

Military Culture of the Global South

The Global South peacekeepers' idea of peacekeeping, which comprises countries like India and from Asian and African regions, is different. They have fewer doubts about the ambiguous terminologies, are more accessible, and maintain a human face, yet are ready to use force to either protect themselves or the civilians in danger. For example, if pelted stones, Indian peacekeepers would get out of their armoured cars unarmed and approach the civilian population with a smile. The human face of the peacekeepers helps disarm the civilians of their aggressiveness. Besides, the effect of common Asian cultures like family orientation, respect, kindness, finding joy in giving, etc., is reflected in the peacekeepers' operational activities on the field.

However, when it comes to confronting the non-state actors and armed groups in intra-state conflicts, the soldierly characteristics take control of their actions. The African region is

the place for most violent intra-state conflicts. The civilian population suffer the most from the armed rebel groups. Hence, protecting civilians from the violence of conflict is a common and priority task of all peacekeeping missions. There are ample instances of peacekeepers from the Global South, especially the Indians, not hesitating to use force even at the cost of fatal casualties to the peacekeepers, when it came to protecting civilians. Similarly, Mongolian peacekeepers, amongst several other TCCs from the developing nations, always displayed courage and fearlessness when threatened by armed rebel groups.[14] Their valour and warrior skills go back to Genghis Khan's time. How can such a phenomenon be explained? The answer lies in the legacy of the military culture of the TCCs.

Legacy of Military Culture

The national culture and traditions influence the military culture and tradition. The general composition of the Indian Army is based on regional martial races, which is rooted in their tradition to fight for their cause. The soldiers come from across the country. Two examples, one from northern India and the other from northeast India (which comprises hilly tribes), will help to get a glimpse of the two different military cultures of the Indian soldiers. This remains unchanged even while they are part of an international force. The work of Rahul Sagar, Professor of Political Science at New York University, Abu Dhabi, delved into one of the warrior classes from North India. They are known as Rajputs, who believe more in the power of the swords than anything else.[15]

The next example is from northeastern India. The Mughal Empire ruled India for more than 300 years, until the British came. When the Mughals began their rule in northern India, the Rajputs fought but finally succumbed because of their greed. The Mughals, however, despite 18 attempts could not rule northeastern India. A detailed account can be found in the seminal work on the history of Assam by Edward Albert Gait.[16] Besides Ahoms, several other tribes in the far northeast are also fierce fighters. The regiments they join carry the culture of these warriors.

Springing back from setbacks to fight another day is in the true spirit of the warrior class of India. Marston, in his work *The Culture of Military Organizations,* observed that the Indian Army, despite earlier challenges and setbacks, reformed and performed

at the highest levels of professionalism, especially towards the end of WWII. In his opinion, "Its performance in that conflict was the high-water mark of the largest all-volunteer army in history".[17]

The regional martial composition, however, is limited to only Junior Commissioned Officers (equivalent to warrant officers) and soldiers. The officers come from all over India. After joining their respective regiments, they pick up the cultures, traditions and religions of the troops they command. So much so that the officers who serve with the troops from northern India find it extremely difficult to adapt to the cultures of those from northeast India. On the flip side, the officers, regardless of their background, grow up like the soldiers they serve with, and the acquired traits are reflected in their style of command. When allowed to lead multinational forces, Indian generals have made the country proud. India has the distinction of contributing several senior mission leaders at the operational level as well as at the UN headquarters.[18]

Most nations from the Global South are besieged with internal strife. As a result, the militaries from this block, mostly the armies, are involved in counterinsurgency/terrorist operations on daily basis. Aside from its primary role to defend its geographic borders against its enemies, close to 50 per cent of the Indian Army is deployed to fight insurgency and terrorist movements. For any insurgency movement to survive, the insurgents need among others, support from the local population. Fighting insurgency, therefore, is a special skill with hands tied behind their back. When practised for years, it becomes a habit. One benefit of the Indian Army's prolonged deployment in the counterinsurgency/terrorist operation is its ability to deliver the most with the least of the resources. For instance, while reaching out to the local population in the conflict zone, the peacekeeping contingents contribute to the infrastructure development in their area of operations. India's budget for the maintenance of its contingents does not cater for CIMIC activities. Hence, Indian contingents resort to saving and using the available resources to extend similar CIMIC-related benefits to the local populations. India's innovative ideas seem to have produced better results in building trust amongst the local populace.

The peacekeepers from the Global South find it easy to adapt to the peacekeeping environment far away from their homes. Coming from the developing world, their needs are few and can

easily operate in an alien environment with ease even making supreme sacrifices. Out of a total of 4,409 fatal casualties as of 30 Nov 2024, India lost 180 peacekeepers.[19] Likewise, when Israel invaded Lebanon in Jul 2024, the war continued for 34 days.[20] According to the locals, Indian and Ghanaian soldiers were the only ones who used to come out of their bases and pick up the injured and dead civilians during the lull of the battle.[21]

India also does not want to carry the body bags of their soldiers home while serving as part of a peacekeeping force. Unlike most member states, India, however, rarely issues caveats to Indian peacekeepers on their operational activities of the mission. India holds a clear line on the consequences of fatalities which are a result of firefights with non-state armed groups while saving innocent human lives. Instead of issuing caveats, India relies more on extensive pre-deployment mission-oriented training to better prepare its contingents for mandate implementation.

The centre of gravity of peacekeeping lies with the local population. Besides, professional skills, getting local legitimacy—acceptance in the societies of the host nation is crucial. Local legitimacy, however, is not available upfront. It must be earned with evidence and consistency. It, in turn, helps to get cooperation from the population. For instance, respect for local sensitivity is a crucial factor in winning the hearts and minds of the local population. The author recalls his conversation with Timur Goksel, the then-political advisor to the Head of the Mission and Force Commander of UNIFIL, during the author's official visit to the mission headquarter in Oct 2001. With deference to Indian military culture, Goksel stated that when Indian peacekeepers lower their gaze while interacting with the local Lebanese women, it helps build trust and get cooperation.

Conclusion

Culture and traditions are different. However, over the years, the culture and traditions get mixed and reflected in a distinct military attitude, while combating internal disturbances, defending the border, and as part of an international intervention force. The study of military anthropology is not new. The colonial masters used this as the bridge between the rulers and the ruled. They ruled their colonies far away from their countries for hundreds of years. It is through a different matter that the colonial masters

perhaps did not factor in the probability of the resurgence of the warrior spirit of those who were conquered. At the individual level, the slave masters, with a good grasp of slave anthropology, fully exploited the weaknesses of their slaves to the hilt.

As for the military, the tradition of the necessity to know your men and enemy is grounded in the military anthropology of the enemy and the diverse composition of their soldiers. The peacekeepers bring with them varying standards of training, operational ethos, and cultures and traditions that are progressed and practised in their countries. This is reflected in the peacekeepers strategising the mandated tasks. Studies and experience from the ground have shown that the soldiers from the Global South, especially from India, find global acceptability as good peacekeepers to help the return of peace and stability. The study of military anthropology of the national and military culture of peacekeepers can be a crucial factor in exploring why peacekeeping either succeeds or fails. Besides, it can act as an enabler for the leaders to take the best out of the Blue Helmets.

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India Perspectives on United Nations Summit of The Future

Brigadier V Vidyashankar[@]

"We can't build a future for our grandchildren with a system built for our grandparents"

– Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, 17 Jan 2024

Abstract

The Summit of the Future was held at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York between 20 and 23 Sep 2024, which was attended by heads of more than 130 UN member states and over 4,000 participants. On 22 Sep 2024, world leaders adopted a Pact for the Future that includes a Global Digital Compact and a Declaration on Future Generations. This Pact has 56 action points under five major heads—Sustainable Development and Financing; International Peace and Security; Science, Technology, Innovation, and Digital Cooperation; Youth and Future Generations; and Transforming Global Governance. In this context, as a rising global power and a key player in the UN, Indian perceptions on the themes and purposes of the summit assume significance. This article examines and focuses on India's stance relating to 10 of the UN summits' 56 action points—Sustainable Development; Climate Change; Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict; Cooperation and Understanding Between Member States; Building and Sustaining Peace; Women, Peace, and Security; Adapting Peace Operations to New Realities; Addressing Terrorism; New and Emerging Technologies; and Reform of UN Security Council. Through a critical

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examination of India's engagements with the UN, its current policies, priorities, and emerging global role, this article will attempt to identify key areas of convergence and divergence between India's interests and summit's objectives. It argues that India is likely to emphasise the need for a more inclusive and equitable global governance architecture, especially as a voice of the Global South.

Introduction

The Summit of the Future was held at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York from 20 to 23 Sep 2024, which was attended by heads of more than 130 UN member states and over 4,000 participants.[1] Post the COVID pandemic, there was a call from many UN members to ideate on addressing the current and futuristic challenges. This, in turn, led to the preparation of Our Common Agenda Report by the UN Secretary-General in 2021, and served as the origins for the Summit of the Future.

The Common Agenda report advocated for a renewed sense of mutual trust and solidarity across nations, peoples, and generations. It argued that our economic, social, and political frameworks need to be fundamentally rethought for the purpose to serve everyone more effectively and fairly. Additionally, it suggested a commensurate rejuvenation of the multilateral system, with the Summit of the Future serving as a crucial occasion for establishing a consensus on the most important changes that are required.[2]

Leaders from around the globe adopted a Pact for the Future on 22 Sep 2024, which contains the Declaration on Future Generations and the Global Digital Compact. Covering five main headings—Sustainable Development and Financing; International Peace and Security; Science, Technology, Innovation, and Digital Cooperation; Youth and Future Generations; and Transforming Global Governance—this Pact contains 56 action points.

Indian Context

As a rising global power and a key player in the UN, Indian perceptions on the themes and purposes of the summit assume significance. During his address to the UN summit on 23 Sep 2024, the Prime Minister of India underscored the nation's vision of creating a sustainable world for subsequent generations. India's achievements in scaling sustainable development initiatives, the importance of a

human-centric approach in a shared pursuits, India's development experience, and solidarity with the Global South were highlighted. He urged sensible laws to encourage responsible and safe technology use, pointing out that India is open to exchange of greater social interests and digital public infrastructure, and called for balanced rules to ensure the safe and responsible use of technology. He also urged for immediate reform of the UN Security Council (UNSC) and other global governance organisations, pointing out that reform is essential to relevance.[3]

Key Action Points of Pact of the Future—Indian Outlook

Sustainable Development.

- Adopted by 193 member states at the UN General Assembly Summit in Sep 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which includes 169 targets.[4] The fundamental idea, 'Leave No One Behind', is at the heart of this worldwide plan for 2030 and aims to involve everybody in all aspects of development, including the most marginalised and vulnerable. This comprehensive agenda acknowledges that economic growth alone is no longer enough.

- In India, coordinating the SDGs, mapping initiatives relevant to the SDGs and their targets, and identifying lead and supporting ministries for each target are all tasks assigned to the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, the Government of India's leading think tank. Furthermore, negotiations for creating national indicators for the SDGs have been spearheaded by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.[6] As per SDG India Index 2023-24, issued by NITI Aayog, the nation's overall SDG score for 2023–2024 is 71 (as shown in Image 1), which is a considerable improvement above the baseline report's scores of 66 in 2020–21 and 57 in 2018.[7] This has been due to notable advancements toward the objectives of eradicating poverty, ensuring good employment, economic expansion, addressing climate change, and preserving land.

- In terms of goal-wise performance (as shown in Image 2), there have been improvements in ensuring Zero Hunger (SDG-2), Quality of Education (SDG-4) and in Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure (SDG-9), while Gender Equality (SDG-5) remains a grey area.

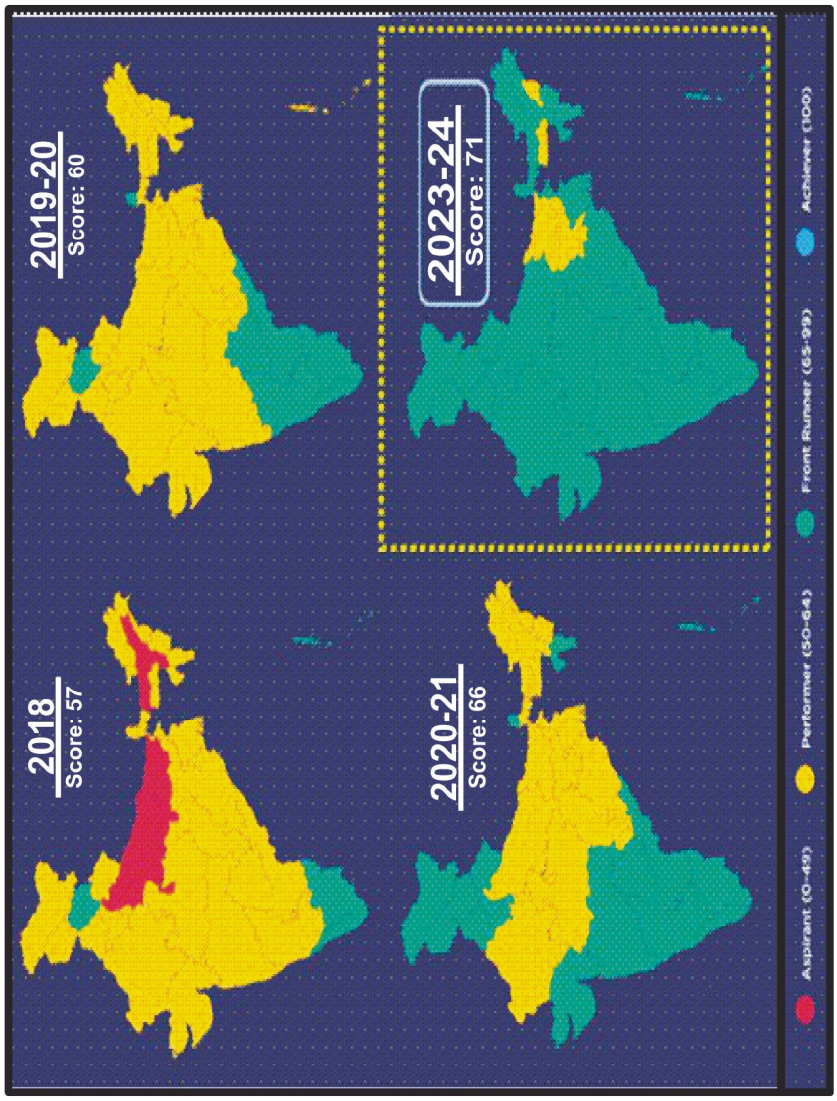
2018
Score: 57
2019-20
Score: 60
2020-21
Score: 66
2023-24
Score: 71
Aspirant (0-49)
Performer (50-64)
Front Runner (65-99)
Achiever (100)

Image 1[5]

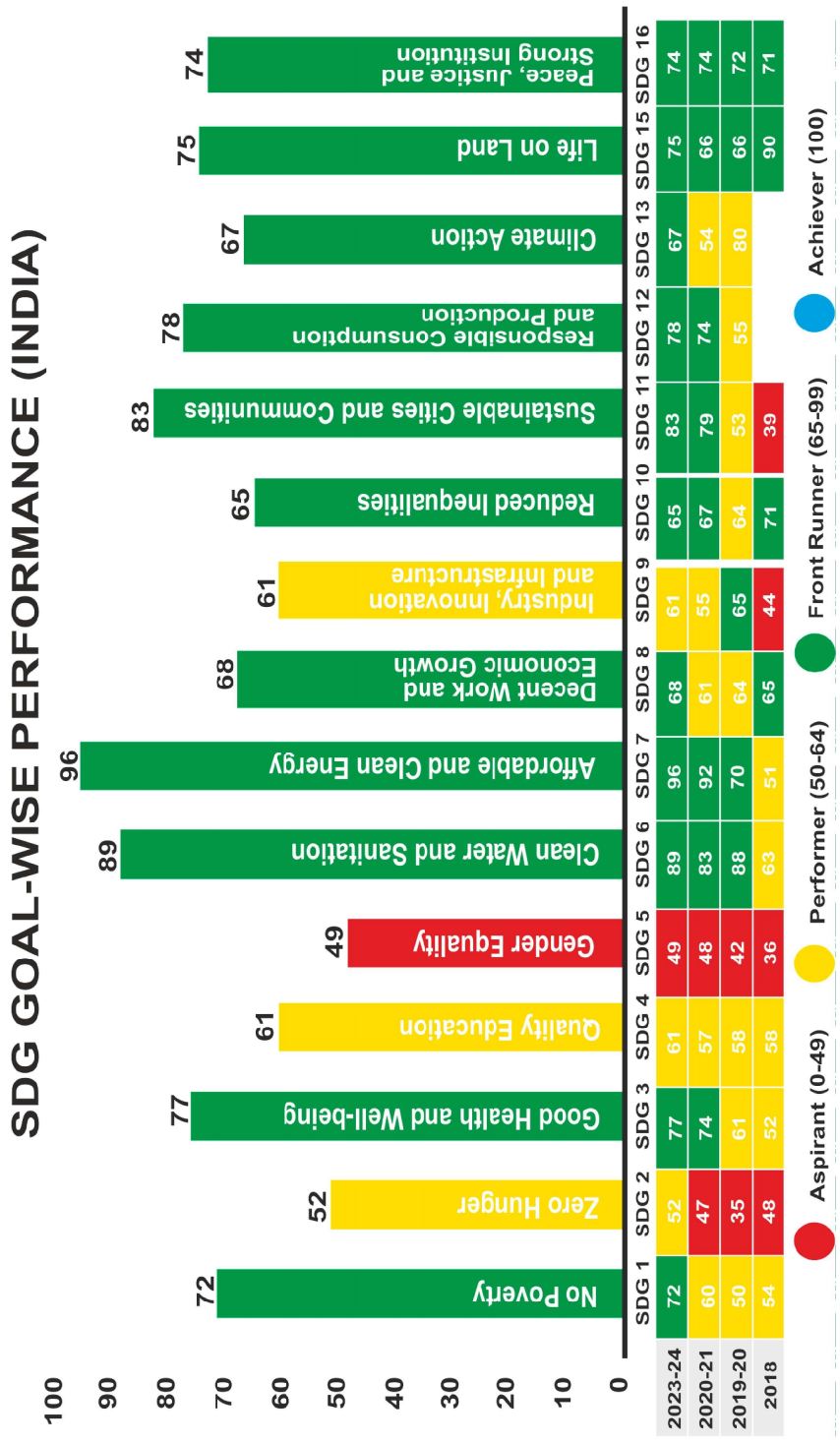
SDG GOAL-WISE PERFORMANCE (INDIA)
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
72
52
77
61
49
89
96
68
61
65
83
78
67
75
74
No Poverty
Zero Hunger
Good Health and Well-being
Quality Education
Gender Equality
Clean Water and Sanitation
Affordable and Clean Energy
Decent Work and Economic Growth
Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
Reduced Inequalities
Sustainable Cities and Communities
Responsible Consumption and Production
Climate Action
Life on Land
Peace, Justice and Strong Institution
SDG 1 SDG 2 SDG 3 SDG 4 SDG 5 SDG 6 SDG 7 SDG 8 SDG 9 SDG 10 SDG 11 SDG 12 SDG 13 SDG 15 SDG 16
2023-24 72 52 77 61 49 89 96 68 61 65 83 78 67 75 74
2020-21 60 47 74 57 48 83 92 61 55 67 79 74 54 66 74
2019-20 50 35 61 58 42 88 70 64 65 64 53 55 80 66 72
2018 54 48 52 58 36 63 51 65 44 71 39 90 71
Aspirant (0-49)
Performer (50-64)
Front Runner (65-99)
Achiever (100)

Image 2[8]

Climate Change.

- Action 9 of the Summit of the Future deals with 'Strengthening of actions to address climate change'. The summit decided to agree on the following—reaffirm the objective of the Paris Agreement to keep the rise in the average global temperature well below 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels and to work toward a 1.5 degree Celsius increase over pre-industrial levels; acknowledge the necessity of significant, quick, and long-term cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with 1.5 degrees Celsius trajectory; understand that while maintaining energy security, transitional fuels can help to ease the energy transition; stress the significance of preserving and repairing ecosystems and environment, including through increased initiatives to stop and reverse decline of forests and deforestation by 2030; and leverage and bring the new finance arrangements into action, which shall be nationally determined.[9]

- In India, there has been an increase of 13 points within three years (from score of 54 [performer] in 2020-21 to 67 [front runner] in 2023-24) in the SDG-13 index towards climate action (as shown in Image 3). This has been majorly due to improvement in disaster preparedness score, improvement in electricity generation through renewable sources, and compliance of industries with environmental standards.[11]

- It is pertinent to understand that climate change has direct impact on forests, agriculture, and human health. Further, extreme events related to climate change have manifested in terms of floods, storms and cyclones, forest fires, heat, and cold waves. Climate change is likely to exacerbate already-existing inequalities pertaining to economic elements like class and geographic location[12], as well as social factors like gender and caste.[13] Ms Leela Nandan, Secretary to the Union Environment Ministry, has opined Indian stance at the UN Summit of the Future on 20 Sep 2024, which focusses at looking beyond reduction in emissions and adopting sustainable lifestyles, which might address many of the issues caused by climate change. Further, providing inexpensive solutions increase the likelihood of global success.[14]

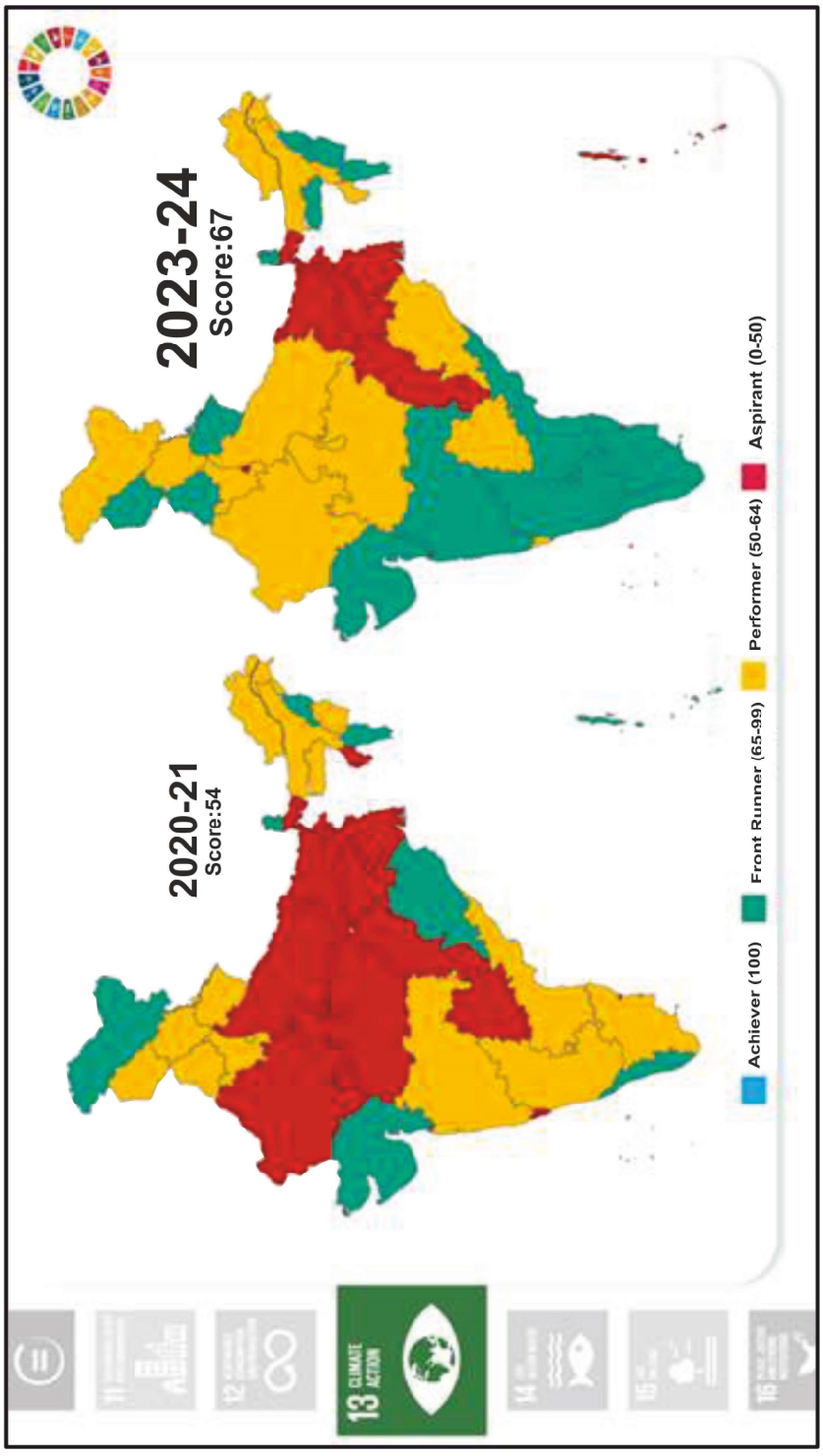
2023-24
Score:67
2020-21
Score:54
Achiever (100)
Front Runner (65-99)
Performer (50-64)
Aspirant (0-50)
13 CLIMATE ACTION

Image 3[10]

Protection of Civilians (PoC) in Armed Conflict.

- Addressing Action 14, the members of the Summit of the Future reiterated their adherence to their responsibilities towards PoC. Some of the key points include—implementing tangible productive measures for PoC; rapidly implementing obligations towards children and armed conflict; limit or abstain from using explosives in populated areas as necessary; making humanitarian aid and access safe, quick, and unhindered; and increase efforts to ensure accountability for violators of the law and to bring an end to impunity.[15]

- UN data obtained from UN Economic and Social Affairs (as shown in Image 4) suggests that there has been a 72 per cent increase in the conflict-related deaths of civilians. Seven out of 10 recorded civilian deaths in 2023 took place in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory, however, there were notable rises in other conflict zones.[17]

- In 1999, the UNSC mandated for the first time, the PoC in its mission to Sierra Leone. Since then, 15 UN peacekeeping missions have been deployed with an explicit PoC mandate in the past 25 years, with five still in operation today in complex and evolving conflict settings.[18]

- Professor CSR Murthy, who teaches at the Center for International Politics, Organisation, and Disarmament in Jawaharlal Nehru University, argues that India bases its strategy on legal, moral, political, and policy factors when it comes to PoC during armed conflicts. Regardless of the perpetrator, India opposes use of repressive violence in armed conflicts and maintains that the principle of sovereign equality and international law should guide the protection of people. As per Prof Murthy, India's stance is that any action taken by the UNSC and the international community should be grounded in reliable and verifiable evidence, be realistic, and be proportionate to the threat to civilians.[19]

- Indian peacekeepers, with a history of 75 years of peacekeeping experience, have a regular and large presence in UN missions in Africa, where most of the PoC mandates have been operationalised. They have a varied experience in handling PoC requirements, as no two missions have the

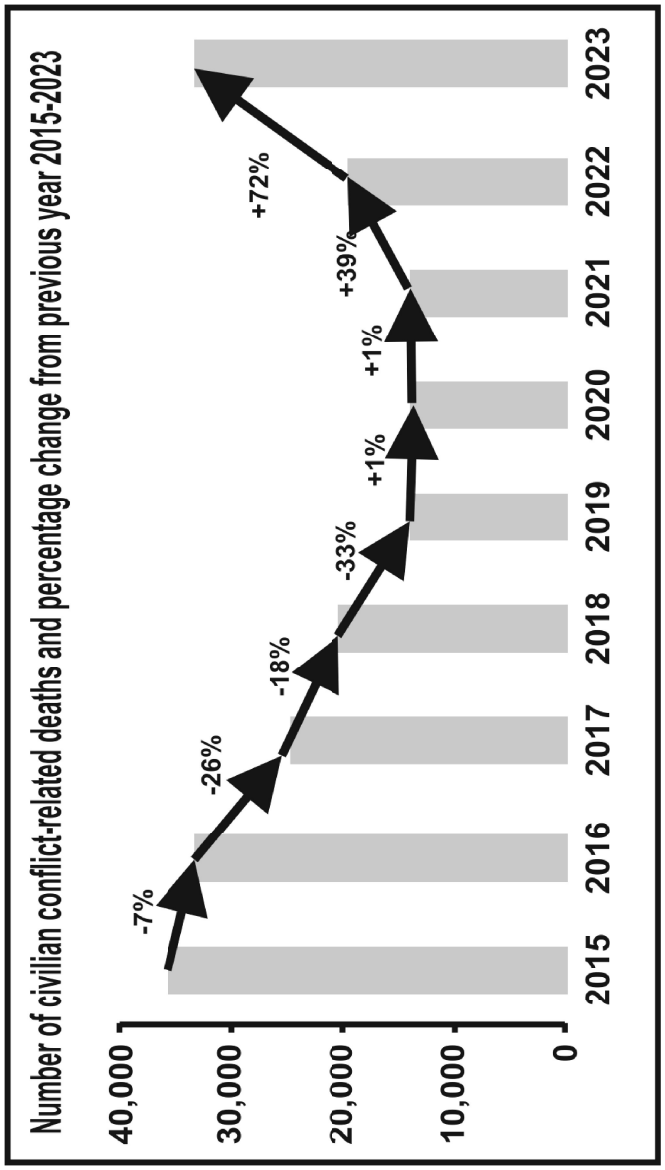
Number of civilian conflict-related deaths and percentage change from previous year 2015-2023
40,000
30,000
20,000
10,000
0
2015
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023
-7%
-26%
-18%
-33%
+1%
+1%
+39%
+72%

Image 4[16]

same PoC requirements, and are determined by the prevailing conflict scenario of that state. Indian approach to proactively train its peacekeepers on PoC requirements have ensured a consistent track record for conduct and discipline of its troops while engaging with civilians, employment of Female Engagement Teams, and enabling host nations through training and capacity building of their security forces.

Cooperation and Understanding Between Member States.

- The Summit of the Future deals with reaffirming the dedication of UN members to peaceful settlement of disputes. It acknowledges the importance of the UN partnership with regional and sub-regional organisations in preventing and resolving conflicts and disputes between member states, in line with the Charter. Action 16 of the Summit reaffirms its commitment to international law and the UN Charter, resolving disputes through dialogues, seeking collective efforts in resolving threats related to world peace and security, and use the Office of Secretary-General to facilitate and lead preventive diplomacy and mediation.[20]

- As per the Permanent Mission of India in New York, India consistently pushes for equitable solutions through communication and cooperation with all member states of the UN, highlighting multilateralism as the primary strategy for addressing global issues like peacebuilding, sustainable development, climate change, and human rights.[21] A fundamental part of India's approach to the UN is its call for 'Reformed Multilateralism' to effectively address current challenges. Through various international forums, India actively supports and participates in South-South cooperation, observing it as an essential forum for addressing the wants and needs of fellow developing nations. It particularly uses initiatives such as India-UN Development Partnership Fund to support projects aimed at eradicating poverty, promoting gender equality, and facilitating access to education in the developing world.[22]

- On 17 Aug 2024, India held the third Voice of Global South Summit virtually, with the theme 'An Empowered Global South for a Sustainable Future'. The Summit was an extension to the global forum of India's idea of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*

(One Earth, One Family, One Future). During the summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed a comprehensive four-fold Global Development Compact that would include the following components—technology sharing; trade for development; building capacity for sustainable growth; and project-specific grants and concessional financing.[23]

Building and Sustaining Peace.

- Action 18 of the Summit of the Future focuses on building for and ensuring sustainable peace. Key points include commitment towards reduction in all forms of violence, strengthening national prevention strategies, addressing risks associated with hate speeches, disinformation and misinformation, and expanding the resources available to UN peacebuilding commission.[24]

- India plays a significant role in building and sustaining peace globally, primarily through its substantial contribution to UN peacekeeping missions, where it is one of the largest troop contributors, whose peacekeepers are considered to be highly trained and disciplined in maintaining international peace and security. Since the founding of Peacebuilding Commission in Dec 2005, India has also been a part of the same and has made contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund totalling around USD 6 mn till date, with the last tranche of contribution of USD 150,000 pledged in 2021.[25] Further, for the 2025–26 term, India has been re-elected to the UN Peacebuilding Commission, which has 31 members.

Women, Peace, and Security (WPS).

- Action 19 of the Pact of the Future focuses on women as agents for peace, committing the efforts of its members towards empowerment of women and gender equality, undertake steps to eliminate threat to the safety and rights of women, by facilitating their meaningful participation in peace processes and in peace operations.[26]

- With its substantial contributions to UN peacekeeping missions, where it has sent a sizable number of female peacekeepers, India actively advances the WPS agenda on a global scale, emphasising the value of women's involvement in efforts to resolve conflicts and build peace. In addition to

deploying the first all-female police unit from 2007 to 2015, India has committed to provide more for UN peace operations and has since deployed a Female Engagement Team as part of the Rapidly Deployable Battalion in the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo.[27] Two Indian women peacekeepers, Major Suman Gawani (2019) and Major Radhika Sen (2023) have been awarded the prestigious Military Gender Advocate of the Year award.[28] Additionally, the Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK), India, has been actively involved in educating incoming peacekeepers on gender-sensitive subjects and has collaborated with UN Women India to create a course for female military officers. On 24-25 Feb 2025, the CUNPK hosted a two-day seminar on 'Conference on Women Peacekeepers from the Global South', which was attended by peacekeepers from 35 nations.[29]

Adapting Peace Operations to New Realities.

- Action 21 of the Pact of the Future aims to address the following key issues— ensure that peace operations are based on and directed by political strategies, carried out with realistic, achievable, and well-defined mandates, exit strategies, and workable transition plans; review all forms of future peace operations; ensure safety and security of peace operations; and address root causes of conflict.[30]

- In 2021, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar opined during an UNSC open debate on technology and peacekeeping that the execution of peacekeeping responsibilities is made harder by the lack of resources. The problem gets more complicated when such mandates are extended on a 'As is needed basis'. Asymmetric risks, such as landmines and improvised explosive devices, have increased in frequency against peacekeepers in recent years. Peacekeeping in the 21st Century needs to be rooted in a robust innovation and technology ecosystem that can help UN peacekeeping missions carry out their mandates.[31] India believes that the global community needs to understand how the nature and purpose of modern peacekeeping missions are changing rapidly. The mandates given by the UNSC to UN peacekeeping missions must be grounded in reality and aligned with the resources allocated to the operation.

Participation from nations that provide troops and police is essential at every level and in every facet of mission preparation. When UN peacekeeping operations are mandated in post-conflict countries, there should be more financial and human resources available for peacebuilding.[32]

Addressing Terrorism.

- Action 23 of the Pact of the Future unanimously condemned terrorism of all forms and manifest. Towards addressing terrorism, the Pact agreed to the following—adopt whole of society and whole of government approach to combat violent extremism and terrorism; prevent misuse of emerging technologies; and coordinate counter-terrorism efforts.[33]

- India has consistently led international counterterrorism initiatives. Bharat undertook the lead to pilot a draft Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism in 1996, long before UNSC Resolution 1373[34] of 2001 was adopted.[35] India is involved in all significant international initiatives related to terrorism and has signed and ratified all of the key agreements and protocols on the subject that the UN has adopted.

- New Delhi has also laid great significance to the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism's (UNOCT) mission and efforts to strengthen member states' ability to combat terrorism. In support of its initiatives to counter this menace since 2018, India has contributed USD 2.55 mn so far to the UN Counter-Terrorism Trust Fund, the most recent being USD 500,000 in 2024. India's contribution would help UNOCT's international initiatives, primarily the Countering Terrorist Travel Program and the Countering Financing of Terrorism.[36] They are intended to increase the eastern and southern African Member States' ability to tackle the serious problems of terrorism financing and stopping terrorists' travel and movement.

New and Emerging Technologies.

- Action 27 of the Pact of the Future acknowledges that our combined efforts to uphold global peace and security face both opportunities and challenges due to the rapid advancement of technology. Some key decisions include—advocating additional actions and suitable international

discussions to stop a weapons race in space in all of its facets; advance urgently the discussion regarding deadly autonomous weapons systems in collaboration with governmental experts on the same; narrow the digital divide and make sure every state can profit from digital technologies in a safe and secure manner; and evaluate the current and possible threats related to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in military applications.[37]

- India takes an active role in discussions and initiatives related to emerging technologies at the UN, frequently promoting its own digital public infrastructure as a model for inclusive development. India is a strong advocate for responsible development and equitable access to emerging technologies within the UN, highlighting the need for global collaboration to ensure that these technologies benefit all nations, with a particular focus on ethical AI, digital inclusion, and robust governance frameworks to prevent potential harms.[38]

- In Aug 2021, the UNSC adopted a statement acknowledging the value of technology in peacekeeping, while India was serving as its president. It had led to the introduction of Unite Aware, a digital platform created by India in partnership with the UN with the goal of giving UN soldiers terrain-related information to ensure their safety and security. In the realm of space, through the UNISPACE+50 initiative, which includes a capacity-building program on small satellite building, India is attempting to share its experience with partner nations who are interested in space travel. Also, through the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education in Asia and the Pacific, which is linked with the UN, India also contributes its resources and knowledge in the application of space science and technology.[39]

Reform of United Nations Security Council.

- Action 27 of the Pact of the Future has dealt with the reform of UNSC. There has been a growing need to make the UNSC more effective through equitable representation of members. Some key points highlighted are—prioritise redressing historical injustices against Africa while simultaneously improving the representation of regions such

as Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean; increase the strength of the UNSC to better reflect the conditions of contemporary world; an expanded council's membership should balance its effectiveness and representativeness; and increase efforts to come to a consensus over the veto's future, including talks about restricting its application and scope.

- India believes that the process of implementing UNSC reforms should not be viewed as an exercise ad-infinitum.[40] It believes that the existing UNSC structure does not reflect the contemporary realities of a changed world order. The last expansion of UNSC was carried out in 1965, in the non-permanent category. During UN General Assembly Plenary in Nov 2024, India's Permanent Representative to the UN has expressed concern that attempts to 'Mere Tinker' with the current UNSC structure could permanently delay important aspects like increasing permanent membership and addressing the underrepresentation of Asia, Africa, and Latin America to a 'Very distant future'. Three key issues were highlighted—the Global South's under representation, certain nations' insistence on consensus, and the ineffectiveness of the processes involving intergovernmental negotiations.[41]

Conclusion

As India envisions its role for the future, it must recognise the complexity of a world that is becoming more interconnected. The UN Summit of the Future presents a pivotal opportunity for India to reaffirm its commitment to multilateralism, while advocating for reforms that address the needs of the Global South. India has the potential to contribute to the development of a more sustainable, inclusive, and fair global order by utilising its distinct combination of traditional knowledge, resilient democracy, and technological innovation. India's development experience, characterised by growth in its economy, poverty alleviation, and social empowerment provides significant insights. As an advocate for the Global South, India can be a major force in advancing technology transfer, capacity building, and South-South collaboration. In addition, India's dedication to sustainable development, renewable energy, and climate action can serve as an example for a worldwide response to today's urgent issues.

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Section II:
Multilateralism and United Nations Peace Operations

Preserving United Nations Peacekeeping for a Multilateral World

Colonel (Dr) Ali Ahmed (Retd)[@]

"We recognise that the multilateral system and its institutions, with the United Nations and its Charter at the centre, must be strengthened to keep pace with a changing world"

– Pact for the Future

Abstract

The article posits that United Nations (UN) peacekeeping is under an eclipse due to the polarisation in international affairs. This may deepen in the case of a retreat to isolationism of a significant supporter of UN peace operations, the United States. To ensure peacekeeping remains fit for purpose in an emerging multilateral world order, the aspirant pole countries must individually and collectively step up to shoulder a heavier peace operations' burden, not only in terms of troop contribution but also logistics support, doctrinal input, and increased proportion of financing. This will not only preserve peacekeeping as the foremost multilateral instrument of choice for the international community but will also usher in such a world order.

Introduction

United Nations (UN) peacekeeping is at a critical juncture in its chequered history. There have been no UN peacekeeping missions[1] authorised over the past decade. The mission in Mali has pulled out after withdrawal of consent by the government. The mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, though amid drawdown at the request of the government, has been managing yet another upheaval in eastern Congo. The African Union (AU) is coming into its own on peacekeeping under Charter Chapter VIII in partnership with the UN[2], with the modalities of the financing of its missions being worked out, its mission in Somalia likely to

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serve as prototype. The return of President Trump to the White House has begun impacting the UN on the humanitarian and development front[3], and could also affect the peace and security dimension through attitudes the United States (US) adopts to the UN and to peacekeeping.[4]

It would appear that UN peacekeeping is no longer a ready instrument of choice for the international community. However, the hold up on peacekeeping deployments does not have any marked deficiency in peacekeeping practice at its core. Instead, the UN Security Council (UNSC) dynamics are at its root. The geopolitical positioning of the US, Russia, and China—three of the significant Permanent Five (P5)—has been impacted UNSC readiness to use its peacekeeping option. Whereas there is precedent of the General Assembly deploying peace missions under the Uniting for Peace mechanism, it has not stepped up. Polarisation effects peacekeeping.[5]

The major phenomenon in international affairs is the transition from a post-Cold War unipolar world to a multipolar world. The rise of China led by President Xi Jinping and the return of Russia under President Putin to active involvement in international developments has put the US-led West on notice. While Russian actions in Ukraine have set back Russia-US relations, US-China relations are subject to the inevitable wariness between a hegemonic power and a rising challenger. Adversarial relations imply a return to the Cold War practices, in which the P5 privilege respective interests, restricting UN actions to where these do not impact such interests. Alongside, the US is retreating from liberal internationalism, which had driven its post-Cold War engagement with peacekeeping, with no guarantee other powers might step into the void.

The last decade-long hiatus in UN peacekeeping deployments was in the 1980s, when the resurgence of the Cold War in wake of the Soviet Union intervention in Afghanistan made the UNSC yet another site of the competition. It is no coincidence the last UN mission deployed—to Central African Republic—was in 2014, the year when the Russians wrested Crimea from Ukraine. The situation in Ukraine having only worsened with a war on since 2022, the effect has been on co-operation within the UNSC.

Last time, it took an outbreak of détente with the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan for a resurgence in peacekeeping. The present international situation does not show signs of any such light at the end of the tunnel. Resuscitation of the instrument of peacekeeping cannot be reliant solely on the UNSC, in particular its feuding P5. The international community would be deprived of a potent option to address the myriad conflicts, ongoing and latent, if the peacekeeping instrument is not kept in good repair.[6]

This article argues that with geopolitical positioning potentially impacting the delivery of the UNSC mandate adversely, there is a need for the emerging powers to step up and play a proactive role. This will demonstrate their efficacy and create space for multilateralism in line with the theme of the recent UN Summit of the Future: 'Multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow'. The benefit for the UN is that it would retain its credentials as the principle multilateral forum[7], while resuscitating its premier multilateral innovation, peacekeeping.

The Continuing Validity of Peacekeeping

For now, some conflicts are being addressed by the UN through the medium of Special Political Missions (SPMs).[8] A peacekeeping option on the table helps make for the success of SPMs' peacemaking endeavours by offering peacekeeping as a means to ensure and support implementation of agreements arrived at. A peacekeeping mission, by definition, creates and sustains a secure environment that, to begin with, helps with humanitarian relief, and over time helps sustain a peaceable environment for furthering peacebuilding. Early peacebuilding—known in theory as structural peacebuilding—is enabled by multidimensional peace operations. This is necessary to lay the foundation for prevention of relapse into conflict, setting the stage for development and cultural peacebuilding.[9]

UN peacekeeping, having traversed much ground across multiple conflict zones, now has a thoroughly practiced repertoire.[10] Peacekeeping has come a long way since its beginning at the cusp of the Cold War, in what has come to be known as traditional peacekeeping. It has since traversed into second generation or wider peacekeeping at the end of the Cold War and, this century has been engaged in integrated, multidimensional peace

operations. This owed to the shift in the types of conflict from inter-state to internal conflict. However, lately, inter-state conflicts appear to have rekindled, which alongside continuing internal conflict puts a premium on UN's operational expertise.

To be sure, peacekeeping has had its troughs but has a credible record of learning alongside.[11] In fact, it was its setback in the mid-90s that led up to the progressive professionalisation of peacekeeping[12], beginning with the Brahimi report. Training infrastructure and networks are now highly evolved and variegated.[13] Though the last official doctrinal product is some 15 years old, doctrinal evolution has kept the UN peacekeeping doctrine contemporary and adaptable. The command-and-control aspect, at both strategic and operational levels, has come a long way. Gender balance, geographic representation, and enhancing quality of leadership are a continuing focus. Technology and best practices absorption are key areas of upgrades. The civilian component, both substantive and support, now has both expertise and depth. The Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) are conscious of the quality of capability offered.[14] China—a P5 member—is upping its game as a TCC.

A challenge foreseen is the financing of operations.[15] This is attenuated by the fresh approaches that the new US administration may take as it settles in. However, the UN has faced financial troughs earlier, such as in the mid-60s, over the costs of the Congo mission. In President Trump's second term, there may be financing issues that unsettle peacekeeping. This could prove as an opportunity for the Chinese to up their act. Since, opening up space for China might not be in the US' interest, it is possible that peacekeeping may not see the financial turbulence apprehended. Instead, a competition to stay engaged by both the powers so as not to concede space to the other could benefit peacekeeping. Even so, developing countries with adequate financial muscle, such as India, could increase their contribution on a non-reimbursable basis in the form of transportation, supplies, and personnel contributions beyond their assessed share.

Even as the unipolar moment is decisively over, fresh winds buoy multilateralism. That a multipolar world is on the horizon is visible in the effervescence of the Global South, in the G20 and the expanding footprint of groupings, such as Brazil, Russia, India,

China, and South Africa (BRICS). Peacekeeping offers scope for multipolarity advocating countries to show their salience in their peacekeeping presence and contribution.

The UN is looking for enablers and the latest in technology. This is an area for emerging powers to displace the UN leaning on western countries for niche subunits. This would not only be reflective of a multipolar world but also usher in the reality. It would help fill in any vacuum that possible US disengagement might create. A case to point is equipment such as surveillance drones, mine clearing innovations[16], and soft-skinned and armoured vehicles from its *Atmanirbhar* (Self-reliant) program could be offered to the UN or its agencies for service in the UN missions.

Making peacekeeping fit-for-purpose in a multipolar world is a potential site for contenders for a permanent seat in the UNSC to make their mark. The UN Charter requires that those selected for the UNSC are distinguished by their contribution. Countries such as India could then make credible demands at the intergovernmental negotiations in the General Assembly to move to text-based negotiations. Power dynamics, that otherwise mostly have the Western bloc to the fore, will shift to privilege the interests of the non-West. Getting to the horseshoe table needs such fresh pathways.

Ushering in Multilateralism

Peacekeeping has demonstrated its flexibility and relevance through all phases of contemporary history. Lately, inter-state conflicts have also been witnessed. Peacekeeping, particularly its preventive deployment variant, calls out for a relook in such circumstance. The grievous damage that recent conflicts have wrought makes recovery and reconstruction, and peacebuilding even more necessary. The increased involvement of other states in conflict zones is making peacemaking more complex, putting to naught years of efforts by successive mediators. Cumulatively, the interplay between peacekeeping, peace-making, and peacebuilding has got more complex.[17] A wider ideational engagement than the hitherto reliance on western sources for doctrinal next steps is required.

Precedence of peacekeeping's flexibility and resilience indicates that it can adapt to the challenges of the times[18], such as from new domains as information and challenges, therein, of

mis/disinformation and hate speech. It has been able to draw on regional capabilities in sequential, parallel and hybrid operations, such as those of the AU and the African regional communities in Southern and Western Africa. It has adjusted to out-of-area interventions by bodies such as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). It has managed transitions, taking on an interim administrative role. It has been relied on by UN-authorised and arbitrary coalitions, as in Afghanistan and Iraq respectively, and by the NATO in Kosovo, to oversee the aftermath of the peace enforcement. The pragmatism that underpins peacekeeping keeps it resilient and responsive to the nuances of the discrete challenges thrown up over the years. Its record suggests that it must be retained as an instrument of choice in a multilateral world.

Multilateral engagement will bring fresh thinking and innovation, especially from the hitherto under-represented ones, such as Africa and Latin America. Since multilateralism-enthused countries are also rising in economic stature, the financing aspect can be revisited so as to balance the onus that is currently on developed countries. The adage 'He who pays the piper calls the tune' is also applicable to the UN. Greater voice for a wider cross-section of powers allows for a larger peacekeeping budget to insulate against financial vagaries.

A greater sense of ownership in the developing world will revitalise the C-34 forum. This can potentially dispel reservations that Russia and China have regards peacekeeping. Their fuller support in the UNSC will then be forthcoming. It would also balance the perceived asymmetry in the UNSC, in which three of the P5 belong to the Western bloc. It would rekindle the UN's credibility, which has taken a beating during Israel's war in Gaza.

Mutually empowering engagement of rising powers with peacekeeping helps with democratising of global governance, even as the structures catch up through UNSC reforms in their own good time. Such engagement distances peacekeeping from the perception that is seemingly an instrument of the West, making it proximate to the developing world and its concerns. This would have a positive tactical-level effect on the security of peacekeepers, who may otherwise unwittingly be taken as proximate to the West and liable to be targeted by forces inimical to the West. A broad

basing of support in a larger body of 'Friends of Peacekeeping' will ensure that it makes for easier accorded host state consent to missions. Host states will be more sanguine that they are not subject to a re-colonising agenda. They would prove less obstructive in terms of imposing movement restrictions on missions or be more forthcoming with consent.

Keeping Peacekeeping Ticking

Upcoming forums must be appropriated by multilateralism-persuaded countries. The Pact for the Future adopted at last year's Summit of the Future has mandated a review of peace operations.[19] There has been a decade since the last comprehensive report on peacekeeping was published, that of the high-level panel, popularly known as the 'Hippo Report'.[20] It reviews the interested countries, in which the number of principal TCCs can participate in the exercise both individually as well as as part of collectives. Placing peacekeeping renaissance on the agenda of collective forums will create momentum and critical mass for broad-basing international peace and security ownership away from being held hostage by powerplay in the UNSC. This will enhance the outcome of the forthcoming biennial Ministerial in Berlin.[21]

A recent think-piece from the Department of Peace Operations, The Future of Peacekeeping, New Models, and Related Capabilities[22], lends direction to the reforms ahead, as do publications from think tanks, such as Future of the Pact.[23] The former study shows the versatility of peace operations in the listed range of the 30 functional capabilities of peace operations. While multidimensional peace operations undertook these functions as mandated, the thrust appears to be to make operations manageable by niche interventions, such as electoral support, security sector reform or disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration assistance. This will keep operations modular, nimble, smaller, and so, less costly.

However, multidimensional peace operations with a large footprint must not be thrown out with the bathwater. With countrywide presence and visibility, these serve a purpose in stabilisation and extension of state authority. By deterring spoilers, they help with the protection of civilians. They serve as an embarrassing witness, helping prevent atrocity crimes. A heavier

footprint is necessary to access and survey remote areas and reduce the extent of ungoverned spaces. Peacebuilding activity is given an incidental security cover by their very presence and humanitarian protection assured. The peacebuilding architecture is also due for an upgrade, a timely opportunity to rethink the relationship between the two.

Imagining Counterfactual Possibilities

Continued resort to peacekeeping over the past decade could have made a constructive difference to the conflict and their outcomes. To be sure, peacekeeping could not have been applicable in tackling the Islamic State episode, requiring as it did peace enforcement. However, though a counter factual, it can be argued that the drawdown and departure from both Iraq and Afghanistan of the coalitions could have witnessed successor peacekeeping operations. If a peace operation in Syria had got off the ground after the brief three-month-long SPM there, it could have created a new reality supportive of the several rounds of talks as part of the peace process. The long-running conflicts in Libya and Yemen could also have been suitably addressed, with a preventive impact on current-day turmoil in Sahel and in the Red Sea, respectively.

If peace operations were not held in abeyance in the UNSC, it was possible to visualise a pre-war insertion also in eastern Ukraine in a preventive deployment mode.[24] Even at this juncture, Ukraine is a candidate location for a peace intervention, as the prospects of a ceasefire have increased lately.[25] Indeed, today, Syria, Yemen, and Sudan could benefit from deployment of a multidimensional peacekeeping operation to help recoup their broken societies and polities.

An illustrative case is of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).[26] Six years of relative peace since signing of the peace agreement have witnessed a power-sharing in the government, with consensual extensions in the interim period till elections at the end of 2026. This is a plausible response to the financial crisis brought about by the stoppage of oil flows owing to the civil war in neighbouring Sudan. Since the government is balancing the geopolitical extant in Africa, it is pressurised by western countries over the election timeline. This makes an already fragile security situation more tenuous. Increased engagement with peacekeeping

in its operational detail by a larger set of countries persuaded by the multilateral principle would prevent such use of peacekeeping operations by powerful states for their foreign policy purposes by, for instance, weaponising criticism of the interim government.[27] It will give South Sudan greater breathing space and the UNMISS a modified mandate of state capacity building support, arguably more relevant to its current circumstance.

Under the circumstance of a deadlock in the UNSC and the inattention to peacekeeping as a viable and desirable instrument over the past decade, it is possible to visualise the impunity of Israel's actions in the areas of operation of the UN inter-positioning operations along the Blue Line and on the Golan Heights It also explains in part the nonchalance with which the Rwandese trespassed into the area of operations of the stabilisation mission in Congo, in close and direct support of the M23 rebel outfit. It would be s fair assessment that the dwindling of the UN's clout has been an enabling condition for such blatant actions. The corollary is stark: the UN needs revitalisation.

Conclusion

Peacekeeping is an efficacious peace intervention in conflict environments. It must be preserved from the vagaries of geopolitics reflected in the UNSC dynamics. Emerging powers could step up to preserve it as a desirable practice in forthcoming multilateral world. Doing so will not only see further evolution of peacekeeping but also help construct such a multilateral world. India, as a leading advocate for the UN, peacekeeping, and a multilateral future, has a significant role to play in mobilising support on these lines.[28] It must use the multilateral forums it is part of to energise support for peacekeeping with other like-minded actors. Alongside, it must increase its contribution in all dimensions of peacekeeping beyond its forte of boots on ground. The downswing in UN peace interventions must be taken as an opportunity to forge a desired future.

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A Few Implications of United Nations Peacekeeping Reforms on the United Nations Police

Dr Ai Kihara-Hunt[@]

Abstract

Following the Pact for the Future and Independent Study on the Future of United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping, New Models and Related Capabilities, the UN and its member states are reforming UN peace operations. The independent study suggested models ranging from those on prevention, with a focus on protection of civilians, on traditional monitoring tasks, on the support to political transitions, on key functional areas, on human security issues, on the protection of non-humans, and on new domains and spatial focus. Many of them clearly involve policing, law enforcement, or broader rule of law functions. Many require specialised police skills. This means three things. Firstly, member states' selection process needs to be skill and merit-based, and the pool of candidates needs to be diverse, beyond current practice. Secondly, where models require missions to engage with various segments of the local community, police can be well-suited but their selection, training, form of deployment and posture in the mission need to be tailored to the local situation. Lastly, smooth transition and partnerships of each mission is vital for the mission, and for the police.

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) peacekeeping has stayed relevant by constantly adapting to the situation since its birth.[1] It has several advantages compared to other potential multilateral responses, including their ability to swiftly generate uniformed and civilian

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personnel. That notwithstanding, it is facing challenges, some relating to new threats.[2] Larger multidimensional missions are no longer default[3], and no new mission has been established since 2014.

Currently, there is a large reform effort ongoing, following the Secretary-General's call for a strategic review of UN peacekeeping in his policy brief on the requirement for New Agenda for Peace. The Pact for the Future in Sep 2024 called for a full review of UN peacekeeping. The UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) commissioned an independent study on the Future of UN Peacekeeping, New Models and Related Capabilities[4], and the study was made public in Oct 2025. There are many sectors and dimensions that are undergoing reform within it. Among them, this article will focus on the police and policing.

The independent study suggested 30 plausible models for the future. A model here means a package with a strategic goal, mission tasks, and related capabilities, and is to be distinguished from mandate. Suggested models are largely learned from previous experiences, ranging from those on prevention, with a focus on the Protection of Civilians (PoCs), traditional monitoring tasks, the support to political transitions, key functional areas, human security issues, the protection of non-humans, to models in new domains and spatial focus. Many of these models involve policing, law enforcement, or broader rule of law functions as key capabilities. Several of them require specialised police skills.[5] At this stage, a brief recapturing of the UN Police and policing functions in UN Peace Operations (UNPOs) is warranted.

The Importance of the United Nations Police

The UN Police and its functions have grown from being non-existent in earlier missions to becoming part of the main goal and often also the exit strategy of many missions. The heap of UN Police deployment was in 2011 with around 14,000 personnel deployed across the globe. They have been delivering diverse roles, including monitoring and reporting, training, investigation, providing security including in certain settings such as election, capacity building, institution building, police reform and governance, security sector reform, executive policing including arrest and detention, and PoCs and important cities. Their roles have been increasingly professionalised. One development on the deployment

modes is that there has been a shift from largely deploying Independent Police Officers (IPOs) to deploying more Formed Police Units (FPUs) since 1999. Today, an increased number of police are deployed in the form of Specialized Police Teams (SPTs)—self-sufficient teams of a small number of police officers with specific expertise, such as sexual and gender-based violence, criminal intelligence, community policing, diplomatic protection, livestock protection, organised crime, and crime scene management.[6] There are also claims that certain roles that traditionally military contingents have delivered may be better delivered by police, especially in politically vulnerable situations.[7] Out of the 42 most frequently mandated tasks between 1948 and 2023 that the independent study cited (peace missions), at least 13 of them are tasks that should have police as a key actor, ranging from provision of security, security sector reform and governance, tasks related to local police activities, protection-related tasks, and justice-related tasks.

The UN Police and policing functions are also key in many of the 30 plausible models that the independent study suggests. Some models are focusing more apparently on police and broader law enforcement, security sector reform/governance, and the rule of law. Models 13 to 15 on Security Sector Reform/Governance, Rule of Law and Law Enforcement, and Police Reforms may be the clearest models in this regard. Many other models need a significant UN Police and related functions. Models 1 and 2 on Prevention Type Deployments need deterrence, early-warning, monitoring, confidence-building functions to prevent violence, to create political space, and to defuse tensions. Model 3 on PoCs may include police in all phases and stages. PoC is also part of many other models, and models on protection of non-humans (Models 23, 24 and 26) require protection roles that police can deliver, especially FPUs, jointly with military. In certain cases, such roles are better delivered by police, whose intervention may pose less concern for the host state than that by the military. Hunt claims that police may have an advantage of working in densely populated areas, where the biggest threat is of a criminal nature. Providing protection while retaining civilian character can help avoiding escalation of violence.[8] Models that require provision of security for specific circumstances or periods (Models 19 to 22 on Emergency Humanitarian Response, Public Health, Natural Disasters, and Humanitarian Accompaniment), may mean that

police are demanded for providing security and safety, and protecting dignity of affected persons. In models that are largely on supporting peace processes and transitions (Models 7 to 10), tasks are wide-ranging, but often include assistance to the local security sector, the rule of law, security, and security sector reform, and strengthening judicial capacity. Model 16 on Assistance to Accountability and Justice is specific on assistance to tribunals and other accountability mechanisms in the investigation and prosecution of serious violations of international law. Related tasks may require specific skills in investigation, and arrest and detention. Model 17 on Counter-Organised Crime may include providing technical expertise and assistance to national institutions, including police and law enforcement institutions, collecting, and analysing information about criminal networks, taking executive action like arrests, and tackling criminal actors and banditry. The so-called spatial models (Models 28 to 29 on Regional Security and City Security) focus on different types of threats, both likely requiring police and policing expertise.

It is apparent that the UN Police and policing functions are very important in current and future missions. Even with the general trend in downsizing and conducting more focused types of UNPOs[9], policing, law enforcement, and larger rule of law functions remain key to sustaining peace.[10] In certain cases, a more police-centric approach may be more appealing to local stakeholders.[11] The question is, therefore, not whether to deploy UN Police, but how. Issues have been identified in reviews of UN Police, including in the Secretary-General's report[12], including on rapid deployment, operational modes, required skills and equipment, coordination with other sectors in the mission, performance, accountability, and safety of personnel. UN Police is undergoing a major reform.[13] For example, the new standing operating procedure on IPOs, which clearly refers to SPTs. For the UN Police to use their full potential, three points are discussed below.

Skill-based United Nations Police Selection

The first point is that the UN Police personnel's selection process needs to be skill and merit based. When UNPOs become more focused and more specific skills are sought in personnel, the UN and member states need to explore a large pool of candidates from diverse backgrounds, beyond current practice.

Police personnel are needed to respond to new threats and demands. Amongst threats discussed in the independent study, increased urbanisation of armed conflict may mean that police personnel who understand the city complexity, combining urban migration, loss of community connections and, thus, protection, putting people into vulnerable situations and increasing urban crimes are desired.[14] Increasingly international and region-wide armed conflicts may mean that personnel with expertise in knowledge in the regional and local political, economic, and social settings are desired. Transnational organised crimes cannot be ignored, something that is called 'Elephant in the room' by experts.[15] Police personnel are also increasingly required to deal with weapons utilising new and emerging technologies, and conflict in the cyber space. There peacekeeping personnel are required to work with specific expertise, possibly in the form of SPTs. The different modes of police deployment—IPOs, SPTs (which technically are within IPOs' framework), or FPUs (which are deployed as 120 to140 national units, suited for tasks requiring coherent group response in providing security and public order)—are not interchangeable when required tasks are specific and focused.[16] This means that the selection and deployment system need to be able to generate desired personnel with appropriate skills. The current ratio of FPUs within UN Police is over 70 per cent.[17] Where specific skills are sought, this ratio may change, as consideration on which tasks are suitable for FPUs is necessary. In that process, capable younger generation and women candidates should be encouraged to join peacekeeping, and the UN and members states should try to facilitate this by broadening the channels for search and by removing obstacles such as hazardous work environments, for example, involving harassment.

In order to respond to the demands for specialised skills, how a standing capacity, like the Standing Police Capacity and Standing Justice and Corrections Capacity, is deployed for the mission start-ups, reinforcement of an existing mission or on specific assistance, can be reviewed and expanded.[18]

The Pledging Guide, prepared by the UN DPO for the Peacekeeping Ministerial 2025, specifies the type of personnel and skills sought, and are helpful in this regard. Pledges typically involve personnel or technical contributions to UN peacekeeping, most notably pledges of uniformed units that will be registered in the Peacekeeping Capability Readiness System.[19]

Engagement with the Local Community

The second point is regarding the UN Police's engagement with the local community.

One of the key success factors is continuous support and cooperation by the host state and local stakeholders.[20] In some missions, especially in Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the waning cooperation by the host state and anti-mission sentiments have made the effective delivery of the mandate significantly difficult.[21] Local trust is not given as default and needs cultivation.[22] For this, effective communication with the host government and local stakeholders is vital. It requires an open, inclusive approach to all stakeholders[23], engaging with a vast segment of the local population.

The independent study highlighted the need for a better understanding of the local and regional political and operational context.[24] To do so, having multiple channels to engage with various segments of the community is a requirement. The independent study stressed the importance of strategic communication and tackling mis/dis/mal information and hate speech.[25] For that, UN missions need to have transparent two-way communication with the host government(s) and the population. Providing tangible benefits to the local population was highlighted as a factor for success.[26] This is only possible if the UN mission understands what the local population wished for. In many of these, UN Police and police functions need to have a good community engagement based on professionalism, transparency, and trust. In other words, police can and should engage with communities.

Community-oriented policing employed by UN Police focuses on enhancing the relationship and interaction between the mission and local populations. This approach has become a pillar of mission local engagement strategies, facilitating more people-centred operations[27] and reducing local forms of inter and intra communal violence.[28] In PoC, UN Police contribute to all pillars, and in engaging with dialogue and engagement, the UN Police usually promote protection priorities directly with local stakeholders.[29] Where situation allows this, the UN Police can help in detecting security threats for different communities, early warning, and prevention.[30] The UN Police can build trust in populations who have suffered at the hands of abusive security forces, thereby,

assisting in the regaining of local trust in security forces in the long term.[31] Also, because they are visible in playing these roles, the UN Police personnel engaging in community-oriented policing can enhance the missions' credibility to the population they serve.[32]

However, for community engagement to work well, the selection and training of police personnel, their form of deployment, and posture in the mission need to be tailored to the local situation. Here, desired skills are not only policing skills but also commitment to local peace and security, knowledge of the local settings[33], and appropriate language skills. Police contributing countries have different experiences with UN peacekeeping, and they provide varying types and levels of preparedness to deliver their increasingly challenging tasks. Rapidly generating enough and appropriate quality of personnel and equipment is a challenge. The gap between high expectation and implementation realities is a continuous issue[34] but again, good and strategic communication with the local counterparts and population would be the key.

Partnerships and Smooth Transition

The third point is that smooth transition and partnerships, both within the mission, and between the mission and partners inside and outside the UN, are vital for the UN Police and the mission as a whole. Partnerships and smooth transition are highlighted in the independent study as well.[35]

First part of this is within the mission. UN Police work together with military counterparts, including in protection-related duties. Because the line between violence, threats of a military nature, and those of a criminal nature is blurred, it is all the more important for the UN Police to work closely with military.[36] UN Police also collaborate closely with human rights and civil affairs personnel within the mission, in particular, in protection-related tasks. Investigation is another area that police and human rights divisions work together.[37]

Partnerships are also about working with local actors, chiefly the local police and security sector. The UN Police may undertake operations that provide for the physical protection for civilians or important non-human subjects, such as key installations or natural resources, in partnership with host-state police. Commonly, UN Police provide operational support to host State law enforcement

agencies, such as in responding to serious public order issues or conducting joint patrols with national police or other security forces.[38] These joint operations with national counterparts have been seen as largely successful in cultivating trust.[39] This needs to be in accordance with all ethical codes and accountability, including Human Rights Due Diligence Policy.

Another key area in partnerships and transition is to place peacekeeping in the broader peacebuilding spectrum. This is effective only if peacebuilding and development actors are working closely with the mission from the start. Policing and the rule of law are good areas to bridge these actors. Police support and build the capacity of local police and security actors, encourage resilience and ownership of security of local actors, thereby, contributing to the prevention of occurrence or recurrence of armed conflict or violence. Police reform or governance can be a beneficial aspect of UNPOs transitions and exit strategies. This may also help realising the goals of sustaining peace and prevention agendas.[40] Actively seeking ways to work with UN country teams, UN peacebuilding, and development actors is necessary in the very challenging operating environments that the missions are deployed in. In the independent study, named potential UN partners include UN Office on Drugs and Crime, UN Office of Counterterrorism, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, World Health Organization, and UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. It may also be an advantage that the UN Police can be deployed in special political missions or in other outside-of-mission environments. It may be a big asset in ensuring cooperation across UN actors working in peace and security.

The independent study found that partnerships should be sought actively outside the UN, too, including non-traditional ones. International Criminal Police Organization and international financial institutions such as World Bank were named as potential key partners in the independent study. Regional Organisations and arrangements are vital partners, sub-regional ones are increasingly becoming important partners. Relevant private entities may also be partners in certain situations. Innovation as to in-house and external partnerships has been ongoing, and such partnerships can help deliver collective challenging tasks.

As the independent study highlighted, a smooth transition from keeping peace to building a longer-term foundation for peace and development requires good planning, in full cooperation with other UN presences in the country and beyond. The required tasks are wide-ranging compared to what the limited number of UN Police personnel can provide with the authorised strength. Virtually all these police-related tasks are expected to be carried out in partnership with the UN and external partners. There is a need for innovation in partnerships.

Conclusion

In sum, the role of the UN Police has become increasingly important, while achieving their objectives has become more difficult in increasingly challenging operating environments. Looking toward the future, they remain key players. Three implications of the ongoing UNPO reform initiatives on the UN Police were discussed.

Firstly, UNPOs need to be more focused, with specific strategic goals, and for that, UN Police personnel must be selected based on their skills. This is possible only if the pool of candidates is diversified beyond current practice.

Secondly, where missions aim to engage with various segments of the local community, police can be well suited. However, appropriate personnel with relevant skills must be carefully selected and deployed. Their selection, training, form of deployment, and posture in the mission should be tailored to the local context.

Lastly, smooth transitions and strong partnerships are vital for the success of missions and the police. Close cooperation within the mission is essential, and creative collaborations with partners both within and outside the UN are necessary. Peacekeeping cannot be isolated but must be integrated into the broader framework of peacebuilding.

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The Pact of the Future and its Implications for Peacekeeping

Parth Bhatt[@] and Aislinn[#]

Abstract

United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs) have been an important tool for international security but are now struggling to meet the fast-evolving conflict challenges. This article draws inspiration from the Pact of the Future and explores how UNPKOs can be reformed and emboldened to meet the 21st Century conflicts characterised by asymmetric warfare, stiffening geopolitical tensions, the involvement of Non-State Actors, and an ever-increasing intersection with technology and climate change.

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) Summit of the Future, referred to as a 'Once-in-a-Generation' opportunity, took place on 22-23 Sep 2024, with over 130 heads of states adopting the Pact of the Future (A/RES/79/1), which is considered 'The most comprehensive international agreement in decades'.[1] [2] [3] The Pact covers a wide range of issues, including global equity, climate action, and peace, addressing areas on which agreements could not be reached earlier, aiming to embolden international institutions to shape our shared future in a contemporary world that has changed radically since these institutes were created.[4] While the leaders pledge to 'Promote international stability, peace, and security, whereby, conflicts and crises are resolved through peaceful means' (Commitment 11 of the Declaration on Future Generations), roughly 60 armed conflicts, highest ever recorded, are gripping the world today, leaving about 2 billion people in conflict-affected areas.[5] Meanwhile, the global military spending soared to an all-time high

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of USD 2.443 tn in 2023, a year-on-year increase of 6.8 per cent.[6] The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2025 at Davos ranked conflicts as the 'Greatest danger facing world' in its latest Global Risk Report.[6]

Amidst these conflicts, UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKOs) are falling into deepening unprecedented scrutiny. The Pact of the Future emphasises on redefining multilateral cooperation and augmenting the efficiency of global governance, and stresses on modernising UNPKOs for increasing their operational efficiency, while leveraging emerging tools such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data-driven conflict prevention mechanisms to tackle the root causes resulting in and fuelling conflicts. As UNPKOs, especially the stabilisation missions such as UN Organisation Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), are being questioned on legitimacy coupled with operational constraints and political complexities, the Pact provides a guiding framework for much-needed reforms.

Since their inception 77 years ago, UNPKOs have evolved significantly from their meek beginning as conventional peacekeeping efforts during the Cold War, to today's multifaceted missions addressing a multitude of dimensions. Over the decades, the scope of UNPKOs have evolved significantly in nature, goals, and challenges. Although, the traditional UNPKOs seem to struggle to catch-up with the shifting landscapes and adapt to the complex and multidimensional threats. This, however, in no way negates the need for UNPKOs, especially in the current geopolitical environment. UNPKOs, once believed to be the cornerstone of conflict resolution and stabilisation, are increasingly burdened by multiple challenges. While 11 out of 16 UNPKOs have 'Successfully ended and withdrew' since the Cold War, their effectiveness is under constant scrutiny because of an amalgamation of constrained resources, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and the ever-evolving nature of modern conflicts.[7] This resulted in no new UNPKOs being sanctioned since 2014. The current situation of MONUSCO bears the testimony of these challenges, leaving the mission struggle for maintaining its legitimacy and operational relevance.

In today's era, signified by asymmetric conflicts, stiffening geopolitical tensions, and an ever-increasing intersection with technology and climate change, reforming UNPKOs is not just an option, but a necessity which is imperative for maintaining international stability. The present-day conflicts, manifesting as protracted civil wars, non-state actors, polarisation, and hybrid threats, call for a transition from reactive peacekeeping to proactive conflict prevention and stabilisation. Without substantial reforms, UNPKOs will further become susceptible to loss of credibility, risking diminishing their role as the central pillar of global peace and security.

Challenges Faced by Existing Missions: The Case of United Nations Organisation Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo

MONUSCO, one of the longest running and most expensive UNPKOs, has been grappling with intensifying challenges recently, undermining its ability to fulfil its mandate. Originally deployed in 1999 to supervise a fragile peace process, MONUSCO's mandate has been expanded to include Protection of Civilians (PoC), disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement, and security sector reforms. These additional responsibilities burdened the mission, which is limping on a thin budget, while it faces stark resistance from Congolese authorities and locals.

In spite of MONUSCO's deployment since decades, the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continues to remain fragile. Armed groups, including M23 and the Allied Democratic Forces, continue to commit atrocities against civilians. Recently, the rebels seized Goma, where the Force Headquarters is situated, and have taken control of Bukavo ahead of the African Union (AU) Summit, while killing hundreds of civilians.[8] The mission's inability to decisively arrest violence and discharge its PoC mandate has fuelled resentment leading to protests demanding its withdrawal. This is exacerbated by the sentiment that UNPKOs prioritise foreign interests over local needs, further weakening their legitimacy.

UNPKOs operate under strict mandates, constraining their ability of offensive actions, leading to disappointment in host nations expecting more decisive interventions. The DRC government has

repeatedly called for MONUSCO's withdrawal, underscoring the tension between national sovereignty and UNPKOs. Moreover, stabilisation missions often find themselves in difficult situation as they do not have consent of all the warring parties, increasing the risk of offensive action by non-consenting parties while the mission is held by limitations on use of force. This issue is likely to become more eminent in present-day conflicts, where all the warring parties are unlikely to consent to UNPKOs. Beyond MONUSCO, UNPKOs are incapacitated by a broader set of structural and financial challenges:

- With the UN being a bureaucratic organisation, UNPKOs are held back by complex decision-making processes, sluggish response to predicaments, and fragmented coordination among member states, UN agencies, and other stakeholders. This systematic inertia hinders UNPKOs' ability of adapting to evolving conflict landscapes.

- With an annual budget often exceeding the entire UN general budget, UNPKOs are a cash-intensive affair. As an element of the UN, UNPKOs are not immune to their dependency on member states for financial contributions. The 2024-25 budget for UNPKOs is USD 5.6 bn, an 8.2 per cent decrease from USD 6.1 bn in 2023-24.[9] The rapid change in policies of the United States post 2024 presidential elections might further deteriorate the financial health of UNPKOs in face of increasing conflicts globally. Member states delaying their dues and funding cuts from major donors, coupled with the snowballing global crises and straining resources, jeopardise UNPKOs.

- UNPKOs struggle to develop clear success metrics or transition plans for post-mission stability. This lack of clear exit strategy and elongated deployment in absence of a well-defined timeline for withdrawal contributes to the frustration of the national authorities.

- Modern-day conflicts are becoming more asymmetric, which the traditional UNPKOs were not designed to tackle. They continue to largely remain reactive rather than preventive, obstructing their ability to de-escalate tensions before they mushroom into full-scale conflicts.

Proposed Reforms

The increasing disenchantment with UNPKOs highlight the dire need for structural reforms, flexible mandates contextualised to fast-evolving landscapes, and stronger integration with regional security mechanisms. Curbing the inefficiencies plaguing UNPKOs will be crucial in restoring legitimacy and credibility and ensuring that peacekeeping continues to be a practicable tool for international stability in decades to follow. With UNPKOs at a critical juncture, the Pact of the Future proposes a set of actions intending to curb long-standing structural weaknesses for making UNPKOs more adaptive, responsive, and aligned with present-day security threats. The same are explained below:

- Actions 13 and 18 of the Pact highlight the need to address the root causes of conflict to ensure UNPKOs are not just a temporary quick fix, but a step towards sustainable peace, focusing on inclusive governance, socio-economic development, and reducing inequalities.

- UNPKOs have been criticised for failing to adequately discharge their PoC mandates. To counter this, Action 14 commits to redoubling efforts to end impunity and ensure accountability for violations of the International Humanitarian Law and strengthen transfer of arms laws and legislations.

- Acknowledging that today's multidimensional UNPKOs operate in tandem with humanitarian agencies, Action 15 strengthens efforts to prevent, anticipate, and mitigate impacts of humanitarian emergencies, while paying special attention to the needs of people in most vulnerable situations, and calls for better coordination between the peacekeeping missions and humanitarian organisations.

- Recognising the role of multilateralism and that many present-day conflicts require diplomatic engagement complementing military deployments, Actions 16 and 17 provide a framework for reinforcing mediation efforts and resolving conflicts diplomatically. The actions stress on ensuring that the International Court of Justice can effectively discharge its mandate and promote awareness of its role in peaceful settlements, while respecting that parties may also seek other peaceful means of their own choice.

- Actions 19 and 20 accelerate commitment to greater gender equality and youth engagement in UNPKOs by including them in conflict resolution processes, complementing women, peace and security, and youth, peace, and security agendas.

- Action 21 calls for modernisation of UNPKOs for more flexible and adaptive threat responses, while fostering cooperation with Regional Organisations (ROs), especially the AU. This action calls for following:

    - The UN Security Council (UNSC) to ensure that UNPKOs are anchored in and guided by political strategies, deployed with clear, sequenced, and prioritised mandates that are realistic and achievable, exit strategies and viable transition plans, as part of a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace.

    - Requests the UN Secretary-General to provide strategic and action-oriented recommendations to the member states on how the UN toolbox can be adapted to meet evolving needs for more agile, tailored responses to existing, emerging, and future challenges.

    - Ensures that UNPKOs engage host countries and relevant stakeholders at the earliest possible stage in planning.

- Recognising the increasing internationalisation of conflicts, Actions 22 and 24 address the emerging security challenges posed by maritime security and transnational crimes by increasing cooperation and information sharing.

- Observing that terrorism destabilises conflict-ridden regions, Actions 23, 25 and 26 commit to strengthen counter-terrorism efforts by enhancing cooperation between the UN and ROs, and adapting to new technologies which can be used for terrorist activities. The actions also address the risks associated with nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

- Action 27 encourages integration of AI and other emerging technologies for peace efforts. These technologies can enhance predictive analysis and data-driven mechanisms for Early Warning Systems (EWS), while real-time information

sharing can increase ability of UNPKOs to anticipate and respond to crises efficiently.

The Pact offers a transformative guiding framework for UNPKOs, calling for more agile, technologically driven, and locally integrated and contextualised missions. By aligning UNPKOs with the actions, peacekeeping can evolve to tackle modern-day security challenges, while discharging its core responsibility of PoC and promoting sustainable peace. However, its successful execution will require political will from the member states to pay their dues on time and provide adequate funding and resources. Simultaneously, the institutions must be reformed to reduce inefficiencies and systematic hinderances, and improve accountability, while better synergies need to be established between the peacekeeping forces, humanitarian agencies, and ROs.

Proposed Way Forward

For UNPKOs to remain a relevant, effective, and adaptive tool in a constantly evolving and complicating world, following is proposed:

- **From Reactive to Preventive Peacekeeping.** A paradigm transition from reactive peacekeeping to more proactive conflict prevention and mediation is the need of the hour. Pre-empting and preventing crises before they escalate would minimise human and financial loses, while strengthening long-term stability. This could be achieved by greater investment in political and diplomatic solutions, EWS, and mediation efforts, enabling UNPKOs to tackle the root cause of conflicts rather than just containing the aftermath.

- **Harnessing Emerging Technologies.** Emerging technologies have the potential to revolutionise UNPKOs by enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness. AI, cyber monitoring, and strengthening data-driven EWS can provide real-time information on conflict dynamics, enhancing the situational awareness of peacekeepers, and enabling them to make better and swift decisions.

    - AI-powered analytics can detect early signs of conflict and instability. Using machine learning algorithms, AI-driven EWS can warn against possible conflict flashpoints before they escalate into violent incidents, by

analysing trends such as socio-political developments, economic instability, and online extremist activities. Satellite imagery and geospatial technologies can effectively track migration and population displacement, violations of human rights, and monitor ceasefires and militia movements.

- Unmanned aerial vehicles, such as those deployed in MONUSCO, and remote sensing technologies can give better battlefield transparency to peacekeepers, safeguarding them from risks faced on ground and attacks, like in DRC and Mali.[10]

- Simultaneously, the increasing threat of cyber warfare and disinformation campaigns must also be effectively addressed to curb polarisation and instability fuelled by propaganda. UN cyber monitoring units can be established at sector level to counter digital propaganda and misinformation campaigns, while also protecting UNPKOs from cyberattacks.

- Aligning with the Secretary-General's Strategy on New Technologies, blockchain technology could be employed in mission areas for curbing corruption while ensuring that financial aid reaches the affected populations.[11] Moreover, the supply chain management of UNPKOs can be made more efficient and transparent by digitising all procurement and logistical operations.

- However, the ethical and legal implications of these technologies must be prudently considered for ensuring their responsible use.

- **Strengthening Regional Partnerships.** ROs such as the AU, the European Union (EU), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are important players in maintaining regional security and stability. Reinforcing collaborations between the UN and ROs could greatly improve rapid response capabilities of UNPKOs, while ensuring that they are contextualised and locally driven.

    - Regional security frameworks, such as the East African Community Regional Force and the South African Development Community, can be incorporated in

UNPKOs to increase efficiency and enable burden sharing. This can give the UN a flexibility to align its peacekeeping strategies with regional military operations, while UN could concentrate its limited resources on strategic planning and coordination and capacity-building.

- UNPKOs must transition from an UN-centric top-down model to a more regionally integrated approach leveraging the expertise, networks, and rapid response capabilities of ROs.

- UN could conceptualise hybrid peacekeeping forces for integrating regional peacekeepers with expertise of the UN. This can materialise in forms such as UN-AU rapid response units. Also, the UN can explore expanding the mandate of UNPKOs for incorporating proactive diplomatic mediation and working along bodies like the AU and the EU, while deploying preventive peacekeeping missions emboldened to intervene before violence escalates. As per Action 21 of the Pact, the UN should also strengthen the AU with adequate and sustainable financing to support peace operations. Simultaneously, the role of African Standby Force can also be expanded, empowering them to lead rapid-response deployment in crises.

- Concurrently, the UN should enhance the UN-EU collaboration, especially in post-conflict stabilisation efforts and governance building initiatives. In areas where both the UN and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) operate, the UN could coordinate with NATO's military assets to complement UNPKOs.

- Whereas, in the Indo-Pacific, the UN can collaborate with ASEAN for developing joint security mechanisms for prospective maritime peacekeeping operations, especially in disputed regions such as the South and East China Seas, while reinforcing ASEAN's role in regional mediation and conflict resolution.

- In Latin America, the UN can collaborate with the Union of South American Nations and support their peace initiatives for curbing drug-related conflicts and

insurgencies. While in the Middle East, the UN can expand its role in peacebuilding efforts by closely coordinating with the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

- Decentralising the currently UN-centric peacekeeping operations and working closely with ROs will enable the UN to increase the efficiency of its missions, along with cultural sensitivity and local trust. However, in no way UNPKOs should be completely outsourced to ROs.

- **Establishing Ownership.** The top-down approach of UNPKOs often sideline local actors, reducing the local ownership of peace efforts, while also attracting hostility from communities instead of fostering stability. The missions should prioritise engaging local populations and foster community-driven peace processes. The missions should see peacebuilding beyond military presence and encourage youth and women-led peace initiatives to ensure grassroots engagement in security dialogues. This should be achieved through Track-II Diplomacy and complemented by socio-economic programmes focusing on education and development. Collaboration with local leaders and members of the society can speed up the process of building sustainable peace at the community level. Simultaneously, community-led peace councils could be established to integrate civilian peacebuilders and human rights monitors into operations to work alongside UNPKOs. It is extremely important to involve the national authorities and local population of the host country, as the conceptualisation of the mission for building ownership or the UNPKO would risk meeting the same fate as the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.

- **Comprehensive Exit Strategy.** The UNPKOs must have a well-defined exit and transition plan to prevent the creation of power vacuums post the withdrawal of the mission. The national institutions must be strengthened to avoid any instability or possibility of the region sliding into conflict again. Furthermore, UNPKOs can also strategically create infrastructure, which could support the mission till its presence

in the country and later support the community after the mission's withdrawal. One such example is the solar energy plant made by the UN Mission in Somalia, in Baidoa, which powers both the UN base and the host community, and will light more homes and facilities in the future after the mission withdraws.[12]

- **United Nations Peacekeeping Operations vs Special Political Missions (SPMs).** While the UNPKOs have proven to be highly effective in certain contexts, their success is highly dependent on a viable political framework. In its absence, UNPKOs become mere static stabilisation efforts instead of mechanisms for establishing sustainable peace. Multiple experts have recommended the UNSC to look beyond UNPKOs in such cases.[13] A presently available alternative is SPM, which focus on political transition, mediation, and conflict prevention. While the UNPKOs are more military heavy, SPMs are more politically and diplomatically driven and are more adaptive to dynamic conflict environments. The UNSC can explore expanding the role of SPMs by deploying them more proactively in scenarios where the environment for UNPKOs would be premature or unnecessary. The UNSC could also conceptualise hybrid operations, which combine elements of both UNPKOs and SPMs for balancing military stabilisation with long-term political stability. Meanwhile, SPMs can also be utilised for enhancing the capacity of ROs to mediate conflicts before they spiral into full-scale armed conflicts.

In today's evolving and fast-paced conflicts, UNPKOs necessitate a fundamental shift from their origin as a deployment for maintaining ceasefire and stabilising post-conflict landscape. Traditional peacekeeping, often limited by static deployment, mandates, and bureaucratic inefficiencies, focuses on deployment post escalation of conflict, and is grossly inadequate to tackle contemporary security challenges. Building upon the Pact of the Future, UNPKOs should prioritise conflict prevention and pre-emptive action, incorporating and leveraging emerging technologies, and strengthening regional partnerships.

Conclusion

The constantly evolving global security and geopolitical landscape necessitates a fundamental reform of UNPKOs. As demonstrated by the challenges in missions like MONUSCO, traditional peacekeeping models struggle to keep pace with present-day conflicts. The Pact of the Future provides a guiding framework for reforming UNPKOs, grounded in its commitment to curbing conflicts at their roots and revitalising multilateralism through stronger regional cooperation. Incorporating these actions into UNPKOs is not just an option but a necessity to safeguard international peace and security in the 21st Century and beyond.

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Enhancing Integrity in United Nations Peacekeeping Missions: Challenges and the Path to Reform

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Abstract

Corruption remains one of the major causes of concern in any state. It exacerbates poverty, inequality, and injustice, ultimately fostering more corruption. It undermines the rule of law and remains a root cause of instability and insecurity in any state. It weakens the state's capacity for effective governance and may eventually lead to civil war. The National Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone, during its investigation into the causes of the 1990s Civil War in the country, found that the main cause of the war was endemic greed, corruption, and nepotism which deprived the nation of its dignity and reduced most people to a state of poverty. The tasks of modern United Nations peacekeeping missions are much more complex than traditional responsibilities, sometimes even requiring support for the formation of new institutions. Post-conflict corruption can be a serious impediment to peacebuilding and reconstruction. It may directly affect several key peacebuilding activities in a fragile state. Curbing corruption is thus vital in post-conflict environments to strengthen the rule of law, restore trust in public institutions, and build and sustain peace. Failing to account for the threats posed by corruption during peacekeeping may put the success of the mission at risk.

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Introduction

The United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions have remained a cornerstone of international efforts to maintain peace and security in regions emerging from conflict. These missions, which are often deployed in complex and volatile environments, are tasked with various responsibilities including protecting civilians, supporting the rule of law, and facilitating the transition to stable governance. However, these democracies have continually grappled with the issue of corruption. Along with terrorism, poverty, and organised crime, corruption is deemed a 'Global Problem' and has severe consequences. Corruption is generally defined as the 'Misuse of entrusted power for direct or indirect personal gain'.[1] Corruption could be categorised as 'Grand' or 'Petty' corruption. Grand corruption pervades the highest levels of government, leading to major abuses of power that erode the rule of law, economic stability, and confidence in good governance. Petty (or administrative) corruption involves the exchange of small amounts of money and granting of minor favours, which can also result in significant public losses. In some cases, administrative corruption benefits not only those who first receive the bribes but also higher-ranking officials to whom some of the proceeds are passed.

Forms of Dishonesty

Various forms of corruption are present within the peacekeeping missions, posing a serious risk to the operations of these missions.[2] In 2008, while the UN celebrated 60 years of successful peacekeeping, it did not delve into the charges of sexual abuse and other misconduct. The British charity Save the Children issued a report alleging that children as young as six are trading sex with aid workers and peacekeepers in exchange for food, money, soap and, in very few cases, luxury items such as mobile phones. It also highlighted instances of rape, verbal sexual abuse, child pornography and prostitution, and trafficking of youngsters, many of whom were poor, displaced, or orphaned by conflict. Human Rights Watch accused the UN of covering up allegations of embezzlement against peacekeepers implicated in arms and gold smuggling while serving in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).[3] In addition, several missions have been shown to involve financial misconduct like bribery and theft. For example, the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the UN Transitional Administration

in East Timor (UNTAET) were found to have issues related to fuel mismanagement, theft, and fraudulent activities. These activities have wasted valuable resources and eroded the trust of local populations in the UN's ability to provide peace and stability.

Sexual exploitation and abuse are critical issues that undermine the trust people have in peacekeeping missions. The exploitation of women and even the operation of sex rings involving children—sometimes in situations where food is exchanged for sex—has been a persistent problem, particularly among more powerful military personnel. These activities are unacceptable and violate the dignity of the population that is not capable of defending themselves. It severely tarnished the reputation of the UN. While there have been efforts made to bring about change, no concrete reform has been seen.

Post-conflict corruption can be a rather serious impediment to peacebuilding and reconstruction. Some of the most common acts of corruption in post-conflict situations have been associated with fuel, food, non-existent soldiers, extortion, narcotics, illicit mining, bribery, theft, or illegal sale of government property. One of the main factors for systematic post-conflict corruption is the existence of political power-sharing institutions in a country recovering from conflict.

Impact of Ethical Concerns on Credibility of United Nations Peacekeeping Missions

Corruption contributes to maintaining and intensifying violence once a conflict has broken out. Additionally, corruption can also impede economic and humanitarian initiatives.[4] When corruption impacts the defence industry and peace operations—for instance, through kickbacks, bribes, collusion, extortion, the awarding of non-competitive contracts, unfair offset agreements, and manipulation of soldier payrolls—the vulnerability of peacekeeping missions increases even more.[5] By combining a conflict environment with weak and unstable institutions, corruption makes it more difficult for the UN and other organisations to carry out their job and jeopardises the success of UN peacekeeping deployments.

The trust of local residents is undermined by corruption in peacekeeping efforts. Bribery, embezzlement, and other corrupt activities by peacekeepers damage their credibility and foster

animosity among the people they serve. This may result in resistance and outspoken opposition to the mission's goals. Moreover, important funds meant for reconstruction, humanitarian relief, and the upkeep of local organisations are also diverted by corruption. Corrupt officials may embezzle funds meant for these crucial programmes, impeding the mission's capacity to accomplish its goals and exacerbating already-existing disparities and social unrest. This can hinder the host nation's long-term recovery and stability, and have disastrous effects on people who are already at risk.[6] When peacekeeping forces engage in corrupt practices, they may unintentionally aid particular groups or people, escalating already-existing tensions or possibly triggering fresh acts of violence. This might prolong or even rekindle war, undermining the same peace that the mission is tasked with maintaining.[7]

Last but not the least, corruption scandals significantly harm the UN's reputation. Public confidence in the organisation's capacity to effectively address global issues and uphold international peace and security is severely undermined by these scandals. The UN's capacity to gather funding and support from other countries for upcoming peacekeeping missions may suffer significantly as a result of this harm to its image.[8] For instance, the UN's reputation suffered and public confidence in its capacity to adequately safeguard vulnerable populations was fairly weakened by the sexual exploitation and abuse scandals that beset the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).[9] Corruption has posed grave problems for the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in DRC. The mission's goals have been seriously weakened and claims of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers have severely eroded local people's faith. In addition to harming the victims, these instances have eroded public trust in the UN's capacity to safeguard vulnerable groups.[10]

Role of International and Local Partnership

UN peacekeeping operations are tasked with maintaining peace and stability in post-conflict areas. These operations are inherently linked to humanitarian aid and the protection of human rights, which are fundamental elements of the UN Charter. Collaboration between international organisations, such as UN bodies and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), with national entities and local communities, strengthens the effectiveness of peacekeeping

missions. One example is the collaboration between national societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in conducting humanitarian work. According to the ICRC, such collaboration is crucial in addressing humanitarian needs during times of crisis, particularly when the demand for aid rises. It also helps in locating and reuniting the families of the victims, which is crucial for peacebuilding in areas of violence.[11] Likewise, in peacekeeping situations, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees' engagement with local people is essential. It ensures that the needs of vulnerable populations are met effectively, which helps peacekeeping operations succeed overall.[12]

Role of Technology in Combating Integrity Gaps in United Nations Peacekeeping Missions

Transparency and accountability are essential for ensuring legitimacy and guarantee the efficient use of resources in high-stakes environments where these missions frequently operate. Technology has become a game changer in combating corruption as it provides innovative ways to improve operational effectiveness, accountability, and trust. This can be achieved in the following ways:

- **Enhancing Transparency with Data Mining.** Data mining is a powerful tool for auditing and monitoring financial and administrative processes in peacekeeping missions. It enables the analysis of large datasets to detect patterns of collusion, identify anomalies, and uncover red flags in procurement and payments. For example, anti-corruption software uses intelligent mining techniques to identify fraudulent transactions or inconsistencies in contracts. By leveraging data mining, peacekeeping operations can proactively detect corruption, ensuring that resources are allocated transparently and effectively.[13]

- **Securing Systems with Blockchain Technology.** With blockchain technology, financial transactions, documents, and contracts may be managed in a decentralised and impenetrable manner. Blockchain technology can be used in peacekeeping operations to monitor the distribution and use of funds, preventing them from being exploited for private benefit. Blockchain also guarantees the safekeeping of asset

registries, procurement contracts, and land records, thus lowering the possibility of manipulation.[14]

- **Predicting and Preventing Corruption with Artificial Intelligence (AI).** AI offers instruments for anticipating and averting corruption in peacekeeping operations. AI algorithms can uncover hidden linkages by examining past data and highlighting odd transactions or instances of partiality in procurement procedures. AI can also improve decision-making process by providing peacekeepers with useful information that allows them to take preventative action against possible corruption.[15]

- **Building Trust and Efficiency.** Incorporating technology into peacekeeping operations not only fights corruption but also fosters confidence among international stakeholders and local communities. Technology-enabled transparent procedures provide host communities confidence that resources are being spent sensibly. Additionally, technology tools simplify operations, freeing up peacekeeping missions to concentrate on their primary goal of preserving stability and peace.[16]

- **Strengthening Data Management with Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) and Common File Storage and Sharing Cloud (COSMOS) under the Unite Aware Initiative.** Tools like SAGE and COSMOS have been established by the UN' Unite Aware Initiative, a technical framework, to improve situational awareness and expedite data collecting in peacekeeping missions. These technologies are intended to give peacekeepers centralised operational data storage and real-time insights, facilitating improved coordination and decision-making in challenging situations.[17] To ensure that SAGE and COSMOS fulfil their intended function of enhancing situational awareness and operational efficiency, peacekeepers should get regular training on how to operate these systems.[18] It can significantly improve accountability and operational effectiveness in peacekeeping missions, ultimately strengthening trust and delivering justice in post-conflict regions.[19]

AI can also provide mission oversight and monitoring. During the 9381st UN Security Council meeting, the members talked about the harsh realities of AI and its applications. The participants concurred that the AI system will boost early warning systems' analytical capabilities and be useful as a monitoring system. Additionally, it may monitor ceasefires, spot trends of violence, and support human efforts, mediation, and peacekeeping.[20]

Role of Whistleblower and Reporting Mechanism

Whistleblowers are the most important and trustworthy source of information on fraud and corruption in any system. Whistleblowing and reporting mechanisms are crucial tools for preventing misconduct and detecting corruption within organisations, including peacekeeping missions. However, they frequently face insufficient legal safeguards and institutional immunities.[21] One of the primary issues with the current system is that the UN Ethics Office often functions more as a grievance mechanism for staff complaints related to work performance rather than a body facilitating reports of serious misconduct. Many accusations received involve improper behaviour against the complainant by their management rather than actions that could harm the organisation. This misuse dilutes the intended purpose of whistleblowing policies, undermining their effectiveness.[22] The case of United States diplomat James Wasserstrom examined unethical behaviour within the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). It highlights the structural obstacles that UN whistleblowers must overcome.[23]

Training and Capacity Building for United Nations Peacekeepers Concerning Transparency Deficits

UN peacekeeping policy lacks comprehensive standards or guidelines to prevent corruption, and despite its widespread impact, corruption is rarely addressed in peacekeeping training programmes. Corruption is mentioned only five times in the 157-page Department of Peacekeeping Operations – Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions Planning Toolkit for Peacekeeping Missions, indicating that this important issue is not given enough attention.[24] Integrating counter-corruption training into leadership programmes enables staff to recognise and successfully reduce risks to combat corruption in UN peacekeeping missions. Practical instruction in risk assessments, reporting wrongdoing, and moral decision-making should be provided to peacekeepers, backed by explicit protocols for protecting whistle blowers.

Lessons Learned from Past Missions

A few lessons learned from past peacekeeping missions relating to the issue of corruption are as follows:

- **Understanding that Corruption Endangers the Success of Missions.** The realisation that corruption poses a risk to the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations is among the most significant lessons learned. Early missions frequently misjudged the degree to which corruption could jeopardise their goals. For instance, corruption damaged public confidence in the UN and local government in nations like South Sudan and DRC.[25] As a result, the UN has come to recognise that combating corruption is essential to establishing lasting peace.

- **The Significance of Accountability Systems.** One consistent problem in peacekeeping operations has been the absence of strong accountability systems. Peacekeeping forces have occasionally been linked to corruption, including financial embezzlement and exploitative behaviour. The credibility of missions in Haiti and Kosovo, for instance, has been damaged by claims of financial mismanagement and misbehaviour.[26] The Brahimi Report on UN Peace Operations highlighted the necessity of more accountability and robust supervision procedures in peacekeeping operations.

- **Resource Management Transparency.** One important lesson that has emerged is the importance of transparency in resource management. Many peacekeeping operations take place in areas where the reconstruction of institutions and infrastructure depends on foreign assistance and resources. On the other hand, corruption may worsen if these resources are mismanaged. The UN Mission in Liberia, for instance, had difficulties making sure that help got to the right people without being embezzled by dishonest officials.[27]

- **Establishing Robust Collaborations with Regional Organisations.** The need to forge solid alliances with regional organisations to fight systemic corruption is another important lesson. In these situations, enforcing anti-corruption policies without local support may encounter opposition and have little efficacy. The UNTAET, for instance, emphasised the

significance of including local stakeholders in anti-corruption campaigns.[28] The mission was able to promote better accountability and openness by collaborating with community leaders, civil society organisations, and local authorities.

- **Impact of Capacity Building.** Building capacity is a successful tactic in the fight against corruption in host countries. Training programmes for local law enforcement, courts, and public officials are frequently a part of peacekeeping efforts. These initiatives aim to improve the ability of institutions to identify, stop, and deal with corruption. To improve its capacity to fight corruption, the UN Integrated Mission in Sudan, for example, concentrated on training local law enforcement and judicial staff. In a similar vein, the UNMIK offered technical help to fortify governance structures and encouraged the creation of anti-corruption organisations.

- **Activating Civil Society and Media.** The media and civil society are essential in advancing accountability and transparency. For instance, to reveal corruption and advance good governance, the UN Mission in Sierra Leone worked with regional journalists and NGOs. Involving the media and civic society not only raises public awareness of corruption but also gives people the authority to hold their leaders accountable.

- **Implementation of Context-Specific Strategies.** One important lesson is that combating corruption requires context-specific tactics. Peacekeeping operations take place in a variety of settings, each with its special dynamics and difficulties. Fighting corruption with a one-size-fits-all strategy is highly unlikely to be successful. The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic took a customised approach that addressed corruption in the diamond trade, a key cause of instability in the area. In a similar vein, the MINUSTAH in Haiti focused on judiciary and police corruption.[29]

- **Importance of Long-term Engagement.** Long-term involvement and consistent dedication are necessary to combat corruption. For instance, the UN mission helped Bosnia and Herzegovina develop anti-corruption structures, but the process was sluggish and continued to need assistance even after the mission concluded.

- **Encouraging Global Cooperation.** Corruption frequently crosses national boundaries, especially when it comes to organised crime and illegal cash transfers. In order to solve these problems, the UN has realised how crucial it is to work with global institutions like the World Bank and Interpol. For instance, the UN worked with foreign partners in Liberia to prevent money laundering and develop financial transparency measures. By combining the resources and experience of several groups, these collaborations increase the efficacy of anti-corruption initiatives.

Assisting the UN to combat corruption may come with a lot more ease now, since the 2021 UN General Assembly Against Corruption resolution on combating corruption and strengthening the UN's commitment to fight corruption provides a clear pathway on how integrity may be entrenched in all its work, including its peacekeeping missions. The resolution comes as the countries face a growing threat from corruption undermining stability, trust, and governance, and calls for international cooperation, preventive measures, and the use of audits and other tools of technology to stamp out corruption.[30] These principles are especially important for UN peacekeeping missions which are deployed in many of the toughest and most resource-constrained environments in the world where the risks of corruption are acute.

Recommendations for Overcoming Integrity Gaps in Peacekeeping

Peacekeepers at all levels must possess effective anti-corruption abilities. There is no standard solution to solve all problems relating to corruption in the UN peacekeeping missions. However, some of the recommendations to prevent the menace of corruption in peacekeeping missions are as follows:

- The UN should prepare guidelines for the Special Representatives of the Secretary General, their staff, and peacekeeping forces on addressing corruption inside mission operations.

- For senior appointees in the peacekeeping missions, relevant counter-corruption training should be included in the UN Senior Mission Leaders' Course.

- All central procurement for peacekeeping missions must be undertaken through a task force specially selected for the purpose.

- The UN should develop a stronger and speedy mechanism in investigating allegations of corruption and must ensure adequate protection to whistleblowers.

- AI must be used in averting corruption in peacekeeping operations.

- The state parties must include 'Corruption' as a criminal office in their state legislations.

- The state parties must ensure measures to enable the identification, tracing, and seizure of proceeds of crime of corruption for the purpose of confiscation.

- The Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) must have a transparent system of oversight in procurement of contingent-owned equipment.

- The TCCs must design suitable curriculum and train their troops in the UN policies relating to anti-corruption measures.

Conclusion

Corruption delays the stabilisation of society by encouraging armed organisations to continue their illegal activities, which hinders efforts like disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration. Combating corruption and locating its sources becomes especially important in peacekeeping operations by the Security Council due to the high stakes involved in saving the lives of the affected civilians. Focusing on corruption during operations at peacekeeping missions is not solely about the success of the mission, but more about protecting the reputation and credibility of the UN as a peacekeeping institution. If member states, the people in the area, and global partners believe in the framework, then the relevant peacekeeping operations will be successfully able to provide sustainable peace and security in the regions following a conflict. The degree to which the UN has managed to coordinate its peacekeeping interventions with the tenets of transparency, accountability, and justice will determine its place in the future of peacekeepers and the world at large.

Endnotes

[1] The definition is, however, limited since it portrays corruption as a one-way process driven by the greed of corrupt officials. Almost all corrupt transactions have two players–the person who is receiving the bribe, and the corporation or individual who is offering it. Moreover, the balance of power is not necessarily on the side of the corrupt person with 'Entrusted Power', since outside influences can serve to overwhelm weak and ineffective administrations. Rajeevan Anuradha, 2007, 'Understanding corruption from a development perspective: How can it be curbed?', *HDRU* Brief No. 06/07, Colombo: UNDP Regional Centre, accessed 21 Feb 2025

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[17] 'Unite Aware Initiative: Enhancing Technology in Peacekeeping Missions', *United Nations Publications*, 2021, accessed 11 Feb 2025

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[21] Brook Judge, 'A Gross Institutional Failure: The UN Whistleblower Protection System Does Little to Protect Whistleblowers in Policy or Practice', May 2020, accessed 18 Feb 2025

[22] 'United Nations Secretary-General Report on the Administration of Justice at the United Nations', A/67/265, 2012, accessed 16 Feb 2025

[23] Wasserstrom exposed widespread corruption in the mission, particularly bribes on contracts for the purchase of power. He was subjected to harsh reprisals in return, which included being arrested, having his possessions searched, and being relieved of his duties. Wasserstrom's

case became a landmark for whistleblowers when the UN Dispute Tribunal ruled in his favour, criticizing the Ethics Office's uncritical acceptance of an OIOS investigation report. Judge Goolam Meeran called it a "Worse case of insensitive, highhanded, and arbitrary treatment" and highlighted the Ethics Office's failure to uphold its mandate to ensure staff integrity in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, *UN Dispute Tribunal*, 'Decision on James Wasserstrom Case', 2012, accessed 11 Feb 2025

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China's Strategic Manoeuvring in United Nations Peacekeeping Dynamics

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Abstract

China's strategic role in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping reflects its ambition to reshape global security governance while advancing its geopolitical and technological interests. As a major financial contributor and provider of peacekeepers, China leverages its position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, with veto power, to enhance its soft power and shape international norms. By supplying technologies such as communication systems, drones, and surveillance tools, China integrates its tech industry into peacekeeping operations, fostering reliance on Chinese technology standards. Its peacekeeping mandates prioritise state sovereignty, economic reconstruction, and minimal use of force, opposing interventionist measures such as sanctions. This development-oriented model, emphasising civilian protection, demining, and infrastructure rebuilding, aligns with China's philosophy that poverty and underdevelopment drive instability. While initiatives such as the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative expand China's influence and promote its vision of a 'Shared future for mankind', critics argue that these efforts may prioritise Chinese interests over multilateral transparency. As global governance evolves, China's growing influence signals a potential shift in international dynamics.

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Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC; herein referred to as China) has emerged as one of the most influential United Nations (UN) members after the United States (US), despite joining relatively late in 1971, when it replaced Taiwan as the representative of 'China'. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC), China wields significant power, including the veto, which it uses strategically to shape mandates, align peacekeeping operations with its principles, and protect its geopolitical interests. China's growing financial contributions in UN and active involvement in UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) have surged, further consolidating its position as a key player in global governance.

China and the United Nations

Beijing views the UN as a strategic platform to advance its 'Middle Kingdom Dream' by reshaping global governance and aligning it with its vision of a 'Shared future for mankind'. China emphasises state sovereignty, security, and economic growth while downplaying human rights and transparency, contrasting with the UN's holistic approach that integrates development, human rights, and peace for human protection.[1] Leveraging its veto power and existing structures, China seeks to reform the UN from within to shape the organisation into a platform reflecting its state-centric governance model in a multipolar world.[2] China presents itself as a key 'Builder of world peace, contributor to global development, defender of international order, and provider of public goods' while shaping global organisations and governance through its 'Shared Future' rhetoric into UN documentation.[3] China's Shared Future concept is deliberately kept broad, promoting its authoritarian model as superior to democratic systems. It frames global governance around flexible partnerships, with Beijing as the central leader in areas like development, security, and culture. Advocating 'Dialogue, non-confrontation, and non-alliance', China seeks 'Win-win Cooperation' across diverse regimes. Its vision of 'New Multilateralism' emphasises 'Democracy in international relations', calling for equal participation in shaping global rules and affairs, aiming to counter western-led hegemony, by granting all states, regardless of ideology or resources, a voice in global governance.[4]

As China rises as a dominant economic and military power, the UN is increasingly depending on its contributions. Despite joining the organisation later, China has effectively penetrated the key UN departments at both strategic and operational levels, leveraging its economic and political clout to align global norms with its long-term ambitions. Through strategic placement of nationals and proxies in influential positions, significant financial contributions, and the launch of aligned programs, China has reshaped agendas and built coalitions to counter western dominance. Its assertiveness is evident in its ability to influence policies, block unfavourable proposals, and use the UN bodies to advance its interests. This growing influence raises concerns about transparency, weakened human rights norms, and the future balance of global governance.[5] A recent report by the House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Majority Staff dated 24 Oct 2024 reveals that China has co-opted for international institutions like the UN and World Health Organization, often neglecting its commitments. This influence is bolstered by Communist Party of China (CCP) leaders, prioritising CCP loyalty over organisational responsibilities. Erik Bethel, former US Executive Director, World Bank, highlighted in his testimony that China's substantial impact on global standards, particularly through support for telecom companies Huawei and Zhongxing Telecommunication Equipment Corporation (ZTE), is viewed by the US as national security threats.[6] Evidence also suggests China's imposition of conditions on its donations, including restrictions on funds for states with ties to Taiwan.[7] Moreover, Chinese diplomats have held the position of Under-Secretary-General of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs since 2007, enabling China to shape UN development programs.[8]

China and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

UNPKO are a key symbol of the UN's role in maintaining global peace and security. However, recent criticisms have highlighted their failure to achieve lasting peace and effectively implement civilian protection mandates in high-profile missions. This has led to a legitimacy crisis, exemplified by mass protests in Mali, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where local populations have called for the expulsion of UN peacekeepers from these conflict-ridden nations.[9] Initially wary of the UN peacekeeping system after joining in 1971, China gradually

became involved in the late 1980s and has since become a key player in UNPKO.[10] In the year 2000, China provided fewer than 100 personnel to all UNPKO. Now, Beijing is the 10th largest troop and police contributor (2,274 personnel) of any country and the second largest financial supporter, providing nearly 19 per cent of UN peacekeeping programme funding. China also provides more peacekeepers to UNPKO than all the other UNSC permanent members combined.[11] To commemorate the 50th anniversary of China's UN membership, Foreign Minister Wang Yi highlighted China's UNPKO contribution in 2021, emphasising that the country had honoured its commitment to establish an 8,000-member standby peacekeeping force, participated in 29 UNPKO (both past and ongoing), and contributed over 50,000 personnel.[12] In 2018, China established its Peacekeeping Affairs Centre to oversee international cooperation and manage its UNPKO deployments. Alongside its increasing troop and financial contributions, China actively leads peace training workshops and seminars. Through these initiatives, China is steadily advocating for normative changes in UNPKO, promoting a more technocratic and state-focused approach.[13] Following Xi's 2015 pledge, UN officials collaborated with their Chinese counterparts to develop a broader range of rapid reaction capabilities, including helicopters. China has also established a logistics base in Djibouti, partly to support its peacekeepers in Africa.[14]

In Sep 2020, China's State Council released its first 'White Paper' on UNPKO, highlighting the People Liberation Army's contributions and outlining China's approach to peacekeeping. While acknowledging China's role in humanitarian aid and proposing improvements to relief efforts, the paper notably omits any mention of 'Human Rights'. It strongly advocates for UNPKO reforms, emphasising on the sovereignty of host states to independently choose their social systems and development paths. The paper also stresses that the needs of host states should be prioritised in the design and renewal of mission mandates.[15]

China seeks to occupy key UN executive leadership positions to enhance its influence and shape policy direction, with peacekeeping being a particularly high-priority area. Given its growing involvement in peacekeeping, China's push to lead the UN Department of Peace Operations is well-documented, supported by a decade-long campaign. Chinese leaders have

expressed frustration that their contributions have not yet resulted in greater status or decision-making power within peace operations, viewing the top appointment as a crucial step toward asserting China's global security leadership.[16] In 2019, Ambassador Huang Xia was appointed special envoy for hotspot regions in the African Great Lakes, marking the highest-ranking position held by a Chinese national in UN security and political affairs.[17] The UN's adoption of 'Political Accompaniments' as a key peacebuilding concept, applied in tandem with peacekeeping operations under its sustaining peace agenda, appears to share some innate characteristics with China's 'Political Settlements' concept.[18] China's political settlements concept in peacekeeping mirrors aspects of the UN's political accompaniments, but with a strong emphasis on state sovereignty and non-interference.

China's experiences with troop fatalities in Mali and South Sudan have driven its focus on peacekeeper safety, shaping its policy leadership in this area. China focuses on low-hanging fruit such as better training, equipment, and medical care, while eschewing thorny issues regarding the use of force.[19] Leveraging the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund (UNPDTF), it financed the Cruz Report on peacekeeper security and, during its Mar 2020 UNSC presidency, secured the adoption of Resolution 2518, the first thematic resolution on peacekeeper safety. In 2021, China founded the Group of Friends on the Safety and Security of UN Peacekeepers and made safety a key agenda during its May 2021 presidency. Its approach emphasises state-led support and host-state cooperation but offers little on adapting peacekeeping to address civilian protection or human rights challenges.[20]

China wields considerable influence in shaping peacekeeping operations through its veto power over mandate (approvals or renewals), financial contribution (influence resource allocation and prioritise missions), and troops contribution. China has strategically increased its influence in UN by placing its nationals or pro-China figures in key/steering roles, allowing it to shape global discourse and promote policies aligned with its strategic objectives.[21]This placement is generally undertaken using diplomatic channels, political leverage, and monetary support. These carefully positioned representatives then help advance Chinese interests by influencing how organisations make decisions, respond to issues, and set policies. China also promotes its interests by embedding a network

of supporters at lower levels within the UN and its specialised agencies. Beside coordination, these lower-level officials immensely contribute towards agenda-setting, monitoring sensitive discussions, and influencing bureaucratic processes from within with reduced accountability.[22]

China views UNPDTF as a demonstration of its commitment to provide a global public goods and fulfilling its responsibilities as a major power. Nearly a third of the fund's projects focus on peace operations, including peacekeeper safety, integrated planning training, and certification for UN police units, making peacekeeping its primary area of support. The fund also prioritises African initiatives, such as those related to conflict prevention in the Great Lakes, the Sahel, and Sudan/South Sudan, as well as supporting the Southern African Development Community. By strategically disbursing funds, China aims to strengthen its influence within the UN, advance its foreign policy goals, and promote South-South cooperation and African capacity-building.[23] China's peacekeeping efforts appear to match its resource investments and economic interests, particularly in Africa, where more than three quarters of Chinese nationals on UN missions are deployed. Beijing has progressively linked these deployments to protecting its interests and citizens on the African continent.[24]

By increasing its contributions to troops, police, and equipment, China bolsters its soft power while reaffirming its commitment to international stability and cooperation.[25] Leveraging its technological capabilities, China supports UNPKO with affordable, reliable, and cheap solutions across various domains. Chinese firms like Huawei and ZTE provide digital/information technology infrastructure for field communication, while Chinese-made vehicles, drones, solar panels, and energy-efficient systems enhance logistics, reconnaissance, and sustainable energy in peacekeeping camps. Surveillance technologies, such as facial recognition and camera networks, are deployed in conflict zones to aid peacekeeping and promote their adoption by host nations, creating dependencies on Chinese standards. As a major exporter of surveillance equipment, China uses these initiatives to build security ties, expand its firms' market reach, and potentially gather intelligence, solidifying its influence in global security governance.[26] The setup, operation, training, and maintenance of Chinese equipment forge strong security connections, often at subsidised

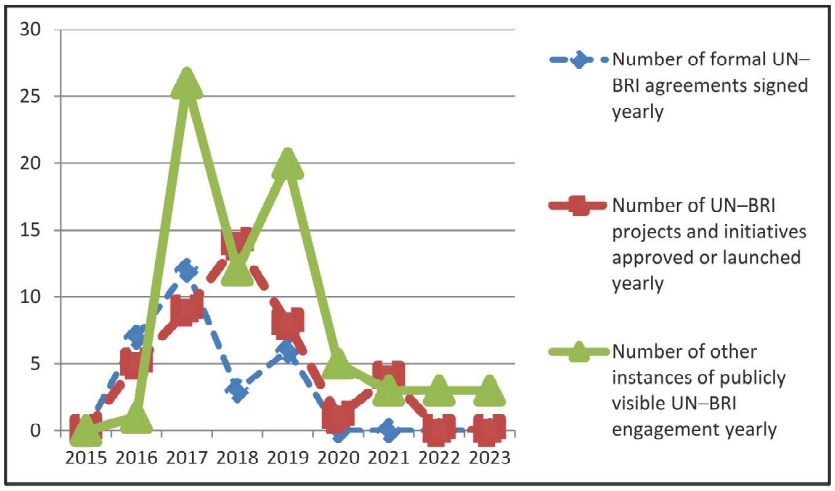
rates or as part of broader aid packages. This strategy cultivates goodwill with host countries and establishes long-term trade relationships for post-conflict reconstruction. In 2022, a study revealed that China provided substantial security assistance to nearly all African nations, strengthening ties with local governments and security agencies.[27]

Chinese forces, once isolated, are now also actively engaged in medical aid, infrastructure projects, school support, and community activities, fostering trust among local African populations as a basis for future economic and political engagement. This cooperation not only strengthens ties with African governments but also builds support from citizens and enhances protections for the Chinese diaspora.[28] By introducing low-cost medical and engineering solutions, Chinese peacekeeping contingents not only utilise Chinese products but also demonstrate them to potential buyers.

United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and Major Chinese Initiatives

China leverages the UN platform for peacekeeping to complement its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013, integrating security and development as mutually reinforcing goals. The BRI initially gained momentum within the UN as a potential catalyst for advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals. With endorsements from key bodies such as the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the UNSC, and support from over two-thirds of UN member states, China appeared well-positioned to influence global development. UN entities actively engaged with the BRI to safeguard their legitimacy amid China's growing clout, while China sought to bolster its international stature by integrating the BRI into UN frameworks. These mutually beneficial dynamic thrived temporarily but soon faced mounting resistances, primarily from western nations wary of China's expanding geopolitical reach. Sustained criticism prompted a retreat by many UN entities, exposing a widening rift between the western bloc and a coalition of developing countries more receptive to China's agenda.[29] The number of formal UN-BRI agreements signed (per year), number of UN-BRI projects and initiatives (per year) approved or launched, and number of other instances of publicly visible UN-BRI engagement (per year), between 2015 and 2023, are given in graph below. With phasing out of BRI, China has adapted its

approach by launching three new global initiatives between 2021 and 2023 to reshape multilateral engagement on its terms.



Graph: Formal UN–BRI agreements signed, projects and initiatives approved or launched, and other instances of publicly visible engagement between 2015 and 2023[30]

Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI), and Global Security Civilization (GCI) form a trio of interrelated yet vaguely defined pillars within the 'Community of common destiny for mankind'. This framework represents Beijing's proposed alternative to the western-led 'Rules-based international order', championed by CCP under the stewardship of Xi Jinping.[31] Internally, the three initiatives were given top priority over the BRI in Xi's key work report at 2023 Party Congress, sending a clear signal to China's highly responsive policy system to focus on developing them further.[32] Externally, China has advocated countries to work together on the trio initiative mentioned above to build a world of lasting peace, universal security, shared prosperity, openness, inclusiveness, and environmental beauty. Within the triumvirate, the new major global initiatives also complement each other, with security as a pre-requisite for development, development as a guarantee of security, and both security and development embodying civilisation.[33] The new major initiatives represent a comprehensive vision for global governance that seeks to reshape international norms and practices. These evolving initiatives increasingly influence China's participation in

UNPKO, reflecting its growing role in international security and development.

The GDI, introduced by Xi Jinping on 21 Sep 2021, during his speech at the 76th Session of the UNGA, emphasises poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, and sustainable growth principles that align with the developmental needs of post-conflict regions where UN peacekeeping missions operate. Within three years, the GDI has garnered widespread support from over 100 countries and international organisations, including the UN, with more than 80 nations joining the GDI's 'Group of Friends'.[34] China has skilfully leveraged an obscure UN mechanism to quickly establish the Group of Friends for the GDI. Through GDI, Beijing seeks to boost policy dialogue, strategically coordinate with UN development agencies, create new platforms like the Global Development Promotion Centre Network, and elevate China's image as a global leader in development, capacity-building, and knowledge sharing.[35] UN Secretary-General António Guterres has also endorsed the GDI in 2022, recognising its potential to advance the UN's 2030 SDGs. [36]

The GSI, introduced by Xi Jinping on 21 Apr 2022 during his keynote speech at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference, highlights the principles of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security, emphasising conflict resolution through dialogue and respect for national sovereignty. China's involvement in UNPKO aligns with these principles, supporting multilateral efforts to stabilise conflict areas without enforcing external political agendas. As China considers the UN to be fundamental to this proposed security order, it sees its peacekeeping contributions as part of what makes this 'Shared Future' possible, with troop deployments and funding underscoring China's support of world peace, global development, and a multilateral world order.[37] The 20 priority areas outlined in the GSI concept paper, spanning traditional, regional, and non-traditional security, emphasise China's holistic approach to security and development. They align with Xi's 'Comprehensive national security' framework, showcasing opportunities for China to assert leadership in shaping the future of global governance.[38] China ultimately aims to use the GSI framework as catapult to establish mechanisms or agreements that would legally enable Beijing to offer military or security assistance overseas.[39]

The GCI, introduced by Xi Jinping on 15 Mar 2023 during a virtual keynote speech at the High-Level Dialogue on Global Civilization, promotes dialogue among civilisations and mutual respect as a foundation for global peace. The GCI complements UN peacekeeping's emphasis on fostering understanding and reconciliation in post-conflict societies. By placing nationals or proxies in key UN roles[40]and lower level[41], China gains access to sensitive information, including diplomatic strategies and decision-making processes. This influence allows China to subtly legitimise its policies, counter criticism, and promote narratives that align with its interests. In Jun 2024, the 78th session of the UNGA unanimously adopted a resolution proposed by China to designate 10 Jun as the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations. This resolution emphasises respecting civilisational diversity and promoting equal dialogue and mutual respect among different cultures, reflecting the core principles of the GCI proposed by Jinping. The unanimous support highlights the GCI's alignment with global trends and its relevance in an interconnected world. It addresses critical questions about the coexistence of civilisations and the future of humanity, offering Chinese perspectives and solutions to foster mutual learning and advance human progress.[42]

Conclusion

China has strategically leveraged the UN to advance its 'Middle Kingdom Dream' and vision of a 'Shared future for mankind'. As a permanent member of the UNSC, China advocates for peacekeeping mandates that prioritise state sovereignty, non-interference, and development-focused peacebuilding. It avoids mandates involving extensive human rights monitoring or coercive measures, safeguarding its global and domestic interests. China's evolving peacekeeping efforts, such as protecting civilians, reconstruction, supporting local governance, and demining, align with its belief that poverty and underdevelopment are root causes of instability. By providing medical aid, infrastructure development, and community support, China enhances its soft power through the UN framework. With the BRI being phased out and replaced by the vaguely defined GDI, GSI, and GCI, China is expanding its influence under new global cooperation models, with initial successes evident in shaping UN agendas and garnering support for its development, security, and cultural initiatives. As China's role in the UN grows, its influence on global decision-making is

expected to further challenge the traditional rules-based international order, signaling a shift in global governance dynamics. As the UN implements the 'UN 2.0' initiative, China's active engagement in peacekeeping operations positions it to influence the modernisation process, particularly in areas that intersect with its strategic interests. These evolving strategies merit close observation to understand how China's new initiatives reshape peacekeeping and international norms, consolidating its position as a dominant global power.

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Section III:
Lessons from Field Missions

From War to Intervention: The Korean War and the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission

Dr Lydia Walker[@]

Abstract

In the Korean War's contested aftermath, a Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (1953-54) handled the thorny issue of Prisoners of War who did not want to return to their own countries. General KS Thimayya, former Indian Chief of Army Staff, oversaw this prisoner exchange and resettlement program. His account of these events pinpointed how warfare had fundamentally changed since the World War II. In Korea, it was in neither side's best, long-term, and ideological interest to outright defeat, disarm, and occupy the other. Far from the unique, one-off experience it is so often portrayed, the Repatriation Commission showcased how the Korean War and its uneasy truce were a new type of international intervention, one where combatants sought victory without conquest.

Introduction

The armistice agreement that ended the Korean War in 1953 was neither negotiated nor signed by the South Korean government. In its contested aftermath, a Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) (1953-54) handled the thorny issue of Prisoners of War (POWs) who did not want to return to their own countries that had recently been created by the civil war, Cold War divisions, and international intervention. Indian General Kodendera Subayya Thimayya oversaw the prisoner exchange and resettlement program. He and his staff had the

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difficult job of providing buffer space from the pressure exerted by both South Korea (and its United Nations [UN] Command allies) and North Korea (and its communist Chinese allies), so that individual POWs could decide whether they wanted to return to their home country or resettle elsewhere.

Thimayya's posthumously published account of these events pinpointed how warfare had fundamentally changed since the World War II (WWII)[1]: In Korea—unlike WWII—it was in neither side's best, long-term, and ideological interest to outright defeat, disarm, and occupy the other. According to Thimayya, the war resulting in cold truce (which remains ongoing as of this writing) provided an opportunity for both the United States (US)-dominated UN Command and communist North Korea to attempt to win 'The hearts and minds' of their portion of the Korean population. Such an opportunity would have been foreclosed by the devastation of occupation and violent regime change. Far from the unique, one-off experience it is so often portrayed, Thimayya's 'Experiment in neutrality', as he characterised the NNRC, showcased the Korean war, its truce, and its aftermath as a new type of international intervention. This kind of intervention sought victory without conquest, becoming an antecedent for those to come in the era of decolonisation, the Cold War, and beyond.

From Kashmir to Korea

In Oct 1953, Thimayya arrived at the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) of the 38th Latitudinal Parallel, which he described as 'A piece of hell'. Because South Korea would not let the NNRC travel physically across its own sovereign territory, he and his team travelled by the US military helicopter directly to the DMZ. This mode of transport underscored how the US and the UN material supported the commission, even as it was led and operated by neutral nations and became a key moment for India to demonstrate what its neutral, non-aligned foreign policy could be within the violence of Cold War hot war.

The question of Korea, its war, and the threefold-role of the UN— As a forum for the international community to grapple with the issue; As the actual military command dominated by American forces; and As an entity in which the NNRC itself was developed—provided a key opportunity for India and Indians to intervene in the operations of global affairs. As the Cold War intersected with

anti-colonial struggles for self-determination across Asia, Korea became the highest-profile case of active dynamics across much of the Asian continent. Thimayya argued that the Korean War presaged a new form of war after the WWII, a form of warfare that was simultaneously sweeping across Malaya, Vietnam, and elsewhere, where 'The military is attempting to proselytise on a large scale'.[2] This was warfare as ideological combat, where victory did not require territorial conquest.

This was not Thimayya's first experience with such limited war in service of necessarily bordered nation-building projects. He had 'The same problem in (India's) Kashmir operation', where he was not allowed to follow militants across the Pakistan border and political restrictions from New Delhi constrained military strategy.[3] 'From a strictly military point of view', Thimayya could not prevent Pakistani 'Military equipment from reaching the raiders' as that would have required invading Pakistan. In Korea, the UN forces did cross the 38th Parallel into North Korea but refused to expand the sphere of war by invading China, a political decision which led to US General Douglas MacArthur's removal from command, since he virulently disagreed with it. Thimayya well understood the need for such political limitations on warfare by refusing to cross into an 'Enemy's territory for the purpose of getting at the enemy's source of supply'. But, in both Kashmir and Korea, 'The result (of such constraint) represent(ed) a kind of stalemate'.[4]

In Kashmir (as in Korea), the UN worked with belligerent states to establish a ceasefire line, though in Korea, the UN was itself an active belligerent and in Kashmir, this demarcation was hammered out at a meeting of Indian and Pakistani commanders at the 53rd milestone on the road from Srinagar to Muzaffarabad.[5] At this meeting, Thimayya knew most of the Pakistani officers from their shared experiences in the British Indian Army during the WWII, so, beyond high stakes and international boundary-making, this was an opportunity for 'Back-slapping and good natured banter', where the Pakistanis provided the 'Beer', the Indians 'Fresh Apples', and the official business only took 30 minutes.[6]

In both cases, the stalemate of a truce or ceasefire sufficed instead of the conquest of occupation and regime change, exemplifying Thimayya's depiction of how warfare had changed

since the WWII. If conquest was not considered politically feasible, advisable, or even (according to Thimayya) desirable in Korea, what then did each side expect to win? How did fighting such wars, where the traditional elements of victory were not part of the horizon of political possibility work for those whose job is to win a war, who believe that 'Their function in society is to protect (their) country from its enemies', i.e., for soldiers such as those who became POWs in Korea?[7] Can enemies be defeated without pre-eminently disarming them and occupying their territory? These questions that Thimayya posed articulate the shifting understanding of what political settlement war should—or could—produce during the first wave of Cold War and decolonisation conflicts.

The Changing Character of War

Thimayya began his exposition of the changing character of warfare by describing what war had been in the past. In this pre-history, defeating an enemy was different than overcoming their will to resist, which was why a nation could win a war and lose the peace.[8] Yet an enemy's will to resist increased by crushing a defeat they experienced, since defeat led to extreme vulnerability, a cause of increased fear, which itself was a source of amplified hatred.

This history of the changing character of war began before conscription and the modern nation-state, when armies were made up of mercenaries. Therefore, it was relatively easy for victors to cut deals with defeated commanders and their rulers. If rulers would not agree to rule their conquered people under the victor's terms, then the victor would simply replace them.[9] Thimayya himself did not make this comparison, but the form of pre-national warfare he outlined echoes mechanisms of British conquest of the South Asian subcontinent in the 18th and 19th Centuries. These imperial wars relied upon armies made up of colonial soldiers and alliances with and between local rulers. Thimayya was part of the first generation of Indian officers who served in the British Indian Army in command roles, so he was intimately aware of this history. These colonial soldiers, particularly the officers who had greater economic options, were sometimes even called mercenaries.[10] Following his imperial service and Indian independence, Thimayya was a creator of the 'New' independent Indian Army. Therefore, he had direct command and combat experience in both pre-

national/imperial warfare and war in defence of independent India's new nation-building project. Therefore, his strategic theorising about the changing character of war in *An Experiment in Neutrality* came from hard-earned, first-hand knowledge.

The issue Thimayya diagnosed—the political constraints that prevented armies from pursuing strategies which crossed national boundaries—was endemic to international intervention. During the Korean War, the UN and the US (essentially synonymous with each other in Korea but not in other circumstances) were trying to fight pre-national war in an age of extreme ideology, nationalism, patriotism, and communism. 'The Hostilities' in Burma, Indo-China, Malaya, Indonesia, and Korea formed a crescent of Asian revolution, where the aftermaths of the WWII rolled into decolonisation and Cold War conflict. These wars were 'Primarily Ideological' as the military objectives for those on both sides were focused on 'Capturing the minds as much as the property of the enemy'.[11] Victory hinged upon making people decide that belonging to new or newly constructed nation-states was in their individual interests, not in simply occupying and ruling their territory. The creation and work of the NNRC was example, symptom, result, and showcase of this form of war, where the mind of an individual became a battleground. Perhaps in Korea, the NNRC could have created 'A formula … for removing the violence from ideological conflict'. If that were the case, then such a 'Formula could be applied to the violent conflicts already raging in other parts of Asia'.[12]

Perils of Neutrality

Within such forms of war that were demonstrably—and even primarily—ideological, how could neutrality exist? By the end of Apr 1952, both the UN Command and communist North Korea (and its allies) had agreed in outline to a narrowly determined truce agreement that recognised the pre-war status quo, i.e., the 38th Parallel as an international boundary. The final issue that remained once the territorial stalemate was accepted was that of POWs: should they be returned to their pre-war country, by force or by choice, and how?[13] The NNRC was set up to handle these set of interlinked questions and India assumed leadership.

The NNRC was not the first time when India and Indians played a role in the international-legal recognition of Korea (North and South) through and by the UN. India was deeply concerned with the political fate of Korea, as well as of other newly independent Asian states, whose struggles Thimayya had linked together in his description of the changing character of war. The Indian government had been a member of the UN Temporary Commission on Korea that oversaw the 1948 election, which created South Korea. With its tragic familiarity with partition, India had also had significant qualms about the UN's failure to remove the 38th Parallel as a line of division between the two countries.[14] When the North Korean Army crossed the 38th Parallel into South Korea in Jun 1950, India's Ministry of External Affairs and its UN delegation had concerns over how the US used the term 'Act of Aggression' in its draft UN resolution, arguing that there was not yet enough information available to place unilateral blame on North Korea.[15] While he did send a field ambulance unit and later on, a signal Corps and members of the Custodian Force that protected the NNRC, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru did not commit Indian combat forces to the UN Command.[16] For these reasons, when the Indian-led NNRC took on the question of where and how POWs from both sides could choose to be repatriated, the South Korean leader Syngman Rhee did consider India a neutral actor. Rhee refused to allow the Indian-led mission to travel and operate on North Korean sovereign soil, so they had to fly into the DMZ and communicate with the UN Command at a distance in Tokyo.

The idea of repatriation is built upon the concept that an individual belongs to a nation-state as its citizen in the first instance. Yet the physical polity of the nation-state to which an individual as soldier, as citizen can belong—by choice, by territorial logic, or by force—was changing rapidly following the WWII, as well as the wars and partitions of decolonisation and the Cold War. In contrast to the general history of refugees as well as forced and coerced population transfers, Korean POWs were given a circumscribed choice: to join communist North Korea, capitalist South Korea, communist China, nationalist China/Taiwan, or a neutral nation that they could not select for themselves. Many of these polities had been newly constructed in the years prior, so how much sense of national belonging could, or should, an individual POW feel towards their prospective nation-state home? This tenuousness

of practical national affinity made the NNRC's job overseeing how North Korean and South Korean representatives presented their cases a key site for how the two countries made their own national claims. In this way, the NNRC became the frontline for Korean ideological competition, even though the truce had officially halted fighting. Competition for POWs' 'Hearts and Minds' served as a battleground in the long Korean War and as a key example of war's transformation from territorial conquest to international intervention.

In the circumstances of the Korean War, victory had to mean something outside of territorial governance and occupation. Therefore, what that 'Victory' could look like for each side was ideological, seemingly fluid, and up for grabs, even as their actual national options presented to POWs were quite circumscribed, ripe with misdirection and even propaganda. The NNRC did its best to combat these pressures, though Thimayya remained fascinated by how many POWs had 'Been persuaded to become in effect traitors'.[17]

Each POW entered an explanation room, maintained by the NNRC, their transportation handled by the Custodian Force, also under Indian leadership. POWs then listened to explanations provided by representatives from their pre-war nation-state on why they should return 'Home', and from their wartime combatant state on why they should choose a different country.[18] In political practice, these controlled encounters were messy and uneven, especially when pre-war relationships surfaced. One North Korean POW, originally from South Korea, refused repatriation. In the explanation room, the South Korean explainer was a friend of the POW, 'Who had been in the same (wartime) regiment. They greeted and hugged each other as old comrades would … The two men started to reminisce and to tell stories about the old days, and the prisoner made enquiries about his mother'.[19] Personal connections could be stronger than national ones.

As with Thimayya's experience with Pakistani officers following the discussions demarcating the Ceasefire Line in Kashmir, older connections that had been reordered or even severed by war included seemingly surprising personal affinities. These connections did not necessarily sway political decision-making, but they underscored how recent and potentially contingent new nation-states (and their boundaries) felt at the individual level. Back in

1953, no one would have predicted that the 38th Parallel and the surrounding DMZ would have lasted for decades as an international boundary. When they were constructed, they had not yet had the opportunity to structure daily life and national identity.

Conclusion

The Indian Ministry of Defence's official history of the Custodian Force in Korea, a contingent under Indian command that guarded and facilitated the NNRC's activities, considered their work the 'First international peace mission undertaken by the armed forces of independent India'.[20] This presents a counterpoint to general official UN chronologies of what came to be called as peacekeeping, which either begin with the UN Observer Missions in Palestine and Kashmir (1947 and 1948) or with the UN Emergency Force in the Middle East following the Suez Crisis (1956), the latter involving an Indian presence under UN auspices.[21] The Korean War sits uneasily within the UN's own history of its international interventions, since the UN Command was dominated by the US military. In Korea, the UN was clearly not a neutral actor invited in to prevent or de-escalate war, even as it supported the creation and efforts of the NNRC.

Indian Lieutenant General and head of multiple UN missions (a field commander in Congo, special envoy in Rhodesia, and head of mission in Cyprus and Namibia) Dewan Prem Chand considered Korea one of two 'Extraordinary' UN interventions—the second being the 1990 Iraq War. In both instances, the US troops were deployed 'In proxy operations on behalf of the UN'.[22] These two interventions bracketed the Cold War but did not extend into the post-Cold War era when the number of UN interventions dramatically increased. The Korean NNRC's experiment in neutrality may not have been replicated but the problem it sought to solve, of wars that sought political, ideological victory without territorial conquest and long-term occupation, grew in significance across the 20th and 21st Centuries.

Thimayya closes *Experiment in Neutrality* with the 'Lesson Learned' that the whole international concept of 'Freely' chosen (re)patriation was a boondoggle: the international community (the UN, North Korea, South Korea, and neutral nation negotiators of the truce that halted the Korean War) would have been better off giving POWs no choice at all, simply assigning them a national

home based on for whom they had fought. From this perspective then, the experiment in neutrality would seem a failure. Indeed, such a large repatriation program focused on individual choice was not repeated. However, managing the aftermaths of the Korean War provided an early template for wars that did not alter—or even seriously seek to alter—national boundaries. These wars sought victory without conquest, and over time, became the dominant form of inter-state conflict in the second half of the 20th Century and beyond.

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Impact of Technology on Conflicts

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Abstract

The content of this article was presented at the United Service Institution of India United Nations (UN) Forum in 2024. It highlights current characteristics and the fast pace of change in modern war-fighting, accelerated by rapid technological developments. Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and quantum and the military application of commercial ones have led to multi-domain forms of conflict, blurring the differentiation between national and societal lines and leading to a constant state of contestation. UN peacekeeping operations will need to recognise these rapid changes in conflict-ridden areas and adapt to these new paradigms if they are to remain relevant.

Introduction

The first 20 years of this century have seen wars in 54 countries (of 193), and most of these are continuing even today. Around 60 states and 100 armed groups were actively in conflict in 2020, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross, with many other states supporting these wars diplomatically, financially, or by supplying arms. As of Nov 2024, data stands at over 120 armed conflicts around the world, involving over 60 states and 120 non-state armed groups.[1] Some of the unique issues characterising current-day conflicts are:

- **Stakeholder Coalitions.** Most of the conflicts since 2010 have taken the form of groups comprising a coalition of state and non-state actors. This diffused the pressure on states from the perspective of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and rules of war.

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- **Duration.** Just as the belief that long-duration wars would be a thing of the past drew currency, wars have now begun to lengthen, and as they get prolonged, they tend to mutate. The Ukraine war has been ongoing for three years, and the tactics, techniques, and procedures, and strategies have undergone numerous changes as the introduction of newer technologies finds application again and again. Such wars have a tendency to degenerate into a form of national insurgency, factional civil war, Islamist terror, or forced occupation (as is expected in the Middle East).[2]

- **Restricted Spaces.** Unlike the World Wars, armies (including navies and air forces) have not fought at larger scales as they did in the 20th Century. Most wars between 2000 and 2020 involved an asymmetric struggle between relatively small government forces and armed groups supported by bigger nations who, at times, have used them as proxies. Some exceptions do exist, but none seem to even equal the scale of the Gulf Wars under the leadership of the United States (US) including the Global War on Terror with a 'Coalition of the Willing'. The areas of operations in most of these wars have been restricted to specific areas in any one or two countries, regardless of urban or rural, except the wars in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Sudan, and now Gaza, and Ukraine.

- **Diffused Outcomes and Prolonged Political Contestation.** The democratisation of technology has enabled smaller forces to achieve disproportionate results, making it difficult to crush ideologies or achieve complete victories, resulting in festering wounds on all sides. This makes way for prolonged law and order situations or gang violence internally, as seen in some South American nations and currently in Haiti.[3]

- **Computer-based Warfare.** Computerisation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) put warfare on a new trajectory—into the new domains of outer space and cyberspace involving highly complex 'Systems of Systems' that are automated with extraordinary precision and speed well beyond the understanding of their human operator. AI-based Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) systems can gather

extraordinary amounts of detailed information and provide decision support functions, almost in real-time. Drones are being used in attack, defence, surveillance, and supply. They can operate alone or in swarms, and operate in tandem with combatants in 'Hybrid Operations'. AI-based weapons are achieving high levels of functional autonomy, putting to test ethically-based decisions.

- **Sub-threshold Conflicts Involving Entire Populations.** The covert use of special forces, espionage, assassinations, cybercrimes, disinformation campaigns, and election tampering are often deniable and exist in a 'Grey Zone'. Mobile phones and social media platforms have reduced human misery to a spectacle, with the ancient art of propaganda, misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech taken to the next level. Weaponisation of all forms of public interaction is the dominant narrative. Allegations of Russian subversion of western elections and Chinese pressure to retake control of Hong Kong can be below-threshold conflict examples.[4]

- **Lawfare.** This has come starkly to light during the Gaza war, where states themselves or specific heads of state have been dragged to international or domestic courts debatably beyond their jurisdiction.

Impact of Technology on Warfare through Different Generations

Warfare has evolved based either on concepts and doctrines or on the evolution of technology that shapes war fighting. Today, the phenomenal speed in the evolution of technology is shaping future warfare, wherein, AI, big data analytics, cyber, militarisation of space, nanotechnology, directed energy weapons, and hyper-velocity technology portend non-contact kinetic and non-kinetic dimensions of asymmetric warfare. Table 1 below reflects the increasing speed with which warfare has morphed.[5]

Warfare	Characteristics	Weapon Systems
1st Gen	• Massed manpower, • Line and column, face to face.	• Based on 'attrition' • Use of swords, arrows, lances, cannon (Napoleonic Wars,3rd Battle of Panipat)
2nd Gen	• Massive fire power, deployment of troops • Emergence of Operational Art	• Rifled barrel, guns and indirect fire (1st WW, First Anglo-Sikh War)
3rd Gen	• Maneuver Warfare • Development of Advanced Missile technology	• Armored units replace Horse Cavalry • Military aircraft and airborne forces (2nd WW, Indo-Pak 1965)
4th Gen (4 GW)	• Product of Globalization • Insurgency, Terrorism, Guerilla warfare	• Resembles traditional low-intensity conflict (Gulf Wars, LTTE, Kashmir, Chechnya/Baluchistan)
5th Gen	• Non—contact warfare • Spread due to digitization	• Use of Networks & combat clouds (cloud computing), • Multi-domain battle (non-mil, trans-mil and mil domains) • Fusion warfare (Russia-Ukraine Conflict, Nagorno -Karabakh War, Azerbaijan)
6th Gen	• Extreme Electronic Deception • Manipulating space-time loop to own advantage.	• A mix of manned and unmanned automated platforms and systems (Chinese disinformation campaigns during Covid, Hamas/Hezbollah-Israel)
7th Gen	• Totally automated warfare • AI completely removes human interface in decision making, command and execution.	• Advancements in Nano-technology, robotics, surveillance and digital networks

Table 1

Militarisation of Commercial Technologies

Military research and development famously led the race for innovation, but recent decades have seen an interesting reversal in this order, with civilian or commercially developed technologies being rapidly adapted and integrated for military purposes. This has the advantage of such technologies being driven by necessity and a profit motive before they find military application. Recent examples are the employment of StarLink in the Ukraine war and how the Israelis seem to have won the war against Hamas but lost the television war (of narrative) to Gaza and its images of destruction, which replaced the horrors of 07 Oct 2023. Yet it raises ethical and legal questions, as well as concerns about the potential misuse of technology.[6]

Emerging Cyber Threats

Cyber threats are no more merely ransomware; they are now increasingly sophisticated, targeting critical information infrastructure, governments, and individuals across the spectrum. Cyberattacks and malware present threats via advanced persistent threats[7], phishing, data breaches, and Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS), with the potential for significant damage.[8]

As more devices become connected to the internet, the Internet of Things (IoT) presents new attack vectors for cybercriminals. Insecure IoT devices can be compromised to launch large-scale attacks, such as DDoS attacks. At the same time, the 'Internet of Battle Things' or 'Internet of Military Things' are increasingly vulnerable as attack surfaces for cyber interventions increase, especially at the interfaces of media, such as communications via 5G or 6G networks, software-defined architectures, etc. Increasingly, governments are feeling the need for indigenously developed systems.

The use of AI in cybersecurity has both positive and negative implications. While AI can enhance security measures, cybercriminals can also leverage it to automate attacks, evade detection, and launch more sophisticated phishing campaigns.

It must be noted that unlike the physical battlespace, cyberspace presents the defenders dilemma—the attacker has the advantage of initiative and surprise while the defender has endless surfaces to defend and can easily be blind-sided.

Artificial Intelligence

The use of AI is beginning to revolutionise operations. It helps analyse enormous amounts of data in real-time, detect patterns, and identify potential threats. AI systems are being employed to help detect and identify wireless communication links of interest and to deploy the appropriate technology to jam these signals or to help intercept and monitor them as needed. Sensor-shooter linked systems require high-speed data processing, but their advent has tightened up the Orient Observe Decide Act loop to unimaginable levels. Augmented/virtual reality systems provide realistic immersive training. Predictive AI analytics becomes useful in maintenance operations. Routine and repetitive tasks can now be performed by AI-driven systems, making cognitive skills gain salience.

Yet, AI poses challenges such as the need for big data storage, secure connectivity, and high-powered computing for real-time processing, analysing, and protecting it from interdiction and corruption. While India sits on and continues to generate humongous amounts of data all the time, it also poses challenges like data sovereignty, its collation, and finally, its utilisation.

While machine learning algorithms learn from new data, improve accuracy and adaptability, AI systems, which have not fully matured, tend to be vulnerable to data poisoning and hallucinated outputs. There is a dire need for edge computing and advanced graphics processing units.

Un-crewed Weapon Systems

Unmanned vehicles or 'Drones'—can be deployed in the air, on the ground, or in maritime configurations. The United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, in his policy brief on a 'New Agenda for Peace', has emphasised the proliferation of un-crewed systems in armed conflicts. When used to attack civilian targets or critical infrastructure, they border on international law infringements and have presented a threat to peace operations.[9] On one hand, these present a reduced risk to personnel but, on the other, can lead to uncontrolled escalatory actions. The employment of drones in wars is well underway, but the threat of their use by terrorists and non-state actors has become infinitely high, making things difficult for law enforcement agencies.

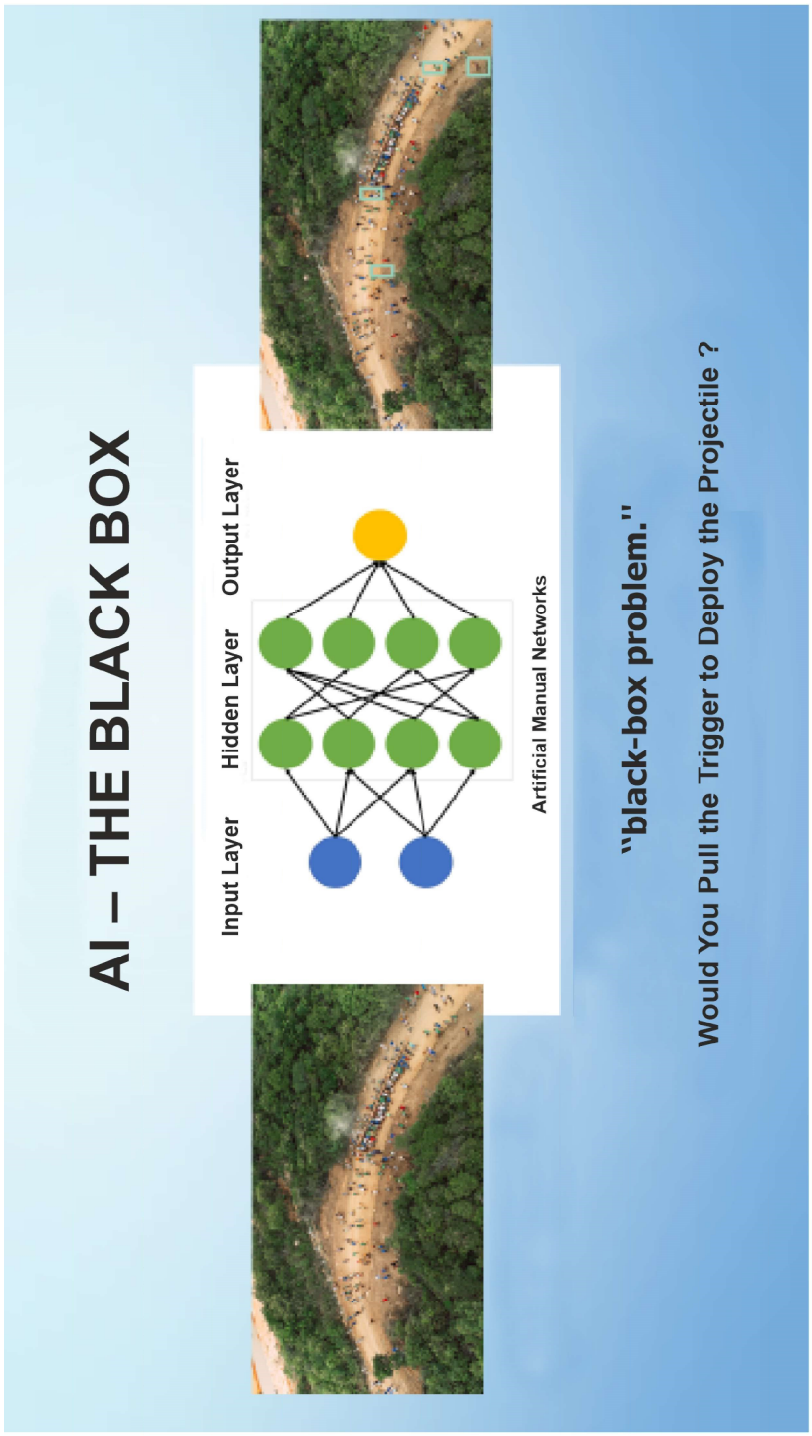
AI – THE BLACK BOX
Input Layer
Hidden Layer
Output Layer
Artificial Manual Networks
"black-box problem."
Would You Pull the Trigger to Deploy the Projectile ?

Figure 1

The defence industry has been revolutionised by lethal autonomous weapon systems, which make use of advanced robotics and AI. The speed of development has been unimaginable—the US developed an AI-based change detection system for ISR within eight months under Project Maven, which proved to be a hugely successful military-private sector enterprise.

Neural networks produce outputs based on their self-learned algorithms, and in many cases, the basis for the generation of this output cannot be understood. This is called the 'Black Box' problem of neural networks, which are based on machine learning. The fielding of such weapon systems, thus, raises the questions of IHL and responsible AI in the military domain.

These AI-based weapons will need to meet the principles of explainability, interpretability, and accountability. It is essential to build a global consensus to adhere to these principles. While nations jostle for policy and regulatory supremacy in this uncharted territory, India hopes to represent the have-nots by being the voice of the Global South in such matters. It will not fall prey to earlier discriminatory policy regimes such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Blockchain

Blockchain technology, initially developed for cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, has revolutionised security. Its decentralised and immutable nature provides transparency, integrity, and resistance to tampering. Blockchain can be employed to secure transactions, verify the authenticity of digital assets, and ensure the integrity of supply chains. In the context of security, blockchains enhance data integrity, prevent unauthorised access, and enable secure identity management. It can be used to create secure, tamper-proof logs of cybersecurity events, facilitating incident response and forensic analysis. Another noteworthy feature of blockchain is its consensus algorithm, which keeps an eye out for any malicious activity and false positives without requiring a central authority.[10]

Quantum Technology

With quantum technology on the horizon, traditional cryptographic methods will soon be immensely vulnerable. Quantum cryptography and encryption techniques are being developed by the US and China, followed by some other advanced nations.

While the technology is not yet matured, considering its extreme requirements like high purity levels or low temperatures to make rare earths super-conductive (e.g., beryllium and aluminum oxide become superconductive at zero-degree Kelvin); once deployed, it will break blockchain algorithms in a short span of time. The need for segregated discrete data storage and high-speed retrieval methods would then be invaluable.

Quantum key distribution allows for the secure exchange of cryptographic keys, confidentiality, and data transmission with integrity. Post-quantum encryption algorithms are being designed to withstand attacks from quantum computers, ensuring long-term security.

While India has managed up to 6-14 qubits, China and the US have already achieved 1,200 qubit capability, and the former has made claims to soon achieve 6,000 qubits.

Space Race

Increased activity by many nations is driving strategic competition in outer space, posing new risks, with possibilities of collisions and the threat of hazardous debris. Satellites support tactical operations and strategic defence with enhanced capabilities for communication, navigation, and reconnaissance. They also provide a range of capabilities to existing systems, including precision targeting. Space communications, when intercepted, will enable hostile takeovers of command-and-control systems of even satellites or weapon systems—to take them off course, crash, collide, disable, change loyalties, etc., making space stations vulnerable to killer satellites. Vulnerable satellites and spacecraft computers are potential targets for cyberattacks by states, their proxies, or terrorist groups. Offensive cyber capabilities are now an integral part of anti-satellite toolboxes.[11]

Race for Resources

Just as oil is a source of conflict, critical and rare minerals, and rare earth elements pose an even greater threat to security as nations battle for resources powering advanced weapons system capabilities. In addition to this, competition over natural resources is a major driver of conflict. Often, control over valuable resources like minerals, forests, diamonds, oil, water, and the like directly cause or compound violence. Access and sale of such lucrative

resources helps finance or prolong conflicts which arise out of entirely different causes.[12] Converging national interest for capability development is forging new international groupings, even alliances.

Nuclear Revisionism

There is a perception that the unravelling of the international arms control architecture and a gradual backtracking on established arms control agreements may not support global stability, restraint, and transparency. The continued existence of nuclear weapons poses a greater threat than ever before. Indeed, when the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty ended in Aug 2019, the UN Secretary-General deplored the loss of 'An invaluable brake on nuclear war'. A similar situation arises for the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which may never effectively see the light of day. The Ukraine war, followed by the Middle East conflict, has already prompted Russia to revisit its nuclear doctrine, which it declared publicly. Others are following suit as the Iranian capability nears fruition.[13]

Dilemmas in United Nations Peacekeeping in High-Tech Wars

The preceding issues make it evident that the deployment of the latest tech in warfare and conflicts has raised unique dilemmas in peacekeeping. Modern armed conflicts have witnessed small-scale, lightly-armed, high-tech-enabled, mounted groups capable of inflicting great damage in short periods of time. Their form of hostility is hard to identify as they do not model or shape themselves as traditional adversaries do. There is also an evolving threat of violent extremism, transnational terrorism, and transnational organised crime, which bring about unimaginable collateral damage.[14]

Increased employment of private security organisations makes them difficult to be differentiated from terrorist groups and criminal gangs, yet assists in building the capacity of government forces. This environment is difficult for peacekeepers to operate in, until peace and stability are restored. For example, activities of Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, international terrorism in Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, and the Sahel region, as well as transnational organised crime, have negatively affected peace efforts. The death toll of at least 462 UN and associated personnel who were killed in deliberate attacks in the past 11 years is evidence of this.[15]

TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS OVER A DECADE

Technology	Expected Advances	Potential Military Applications
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	-Advanced machine learning algorithms and neural networks. -Autonomous military systems. -Enhanced decision support systems.	-AI-driven unmanned vehicles and drones. -Improved command and control.
Quantum Computing	-Faster encryption and decryption. -Improved quantum communication. -Advanced simulations.	-Secure military communications. -Advanced military planning and research.
Hypersonic Weapons	-Faster and more maneuverable missiles. -Precision strike capabilities. -Potential for defense systems.	-Rapid and precise strike capabilities. -Enhanced strategic deterrence.
Cybersecurity	-Addressing more sophisticated cyber threats. -AI-powered threat detection. -Enhanced network protection	-Safeguarding military networks and data. -Real-time threat response.
Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs)	-More autonomous UAVs. -Improved endurance and stealth. -AI integration for autonomous missions.	-Surveillance and reconnaissance. -Swarming drone operations.
Advanced Materials	-Lightweight and durable armor materials. -Advanced energy storage. -Extreme environment materials.	-Enhanced soldier protection. -Extended mission capabilities.
Biotechnology	-Advanced medical solutions. -Bio-inspired sensors. -Soldier enhancements.	-Medical support in the field. -Improved situational awareness.
Space-Based Technologies	-Reliable satellite communication and navigation. -Advanced space situational awareness. -Potential space-based weaponary.	-Secure communication and navigation. -Monitoring potential space threats.

Table 2

Conclusion

Peacekeeping operations will need to be upgraded to the highest existing levels of existing capability to be able to meet these new challenges. This transformation will happen only when peacekeepers rapidly adapt to emerging techno-threats and challenges with agile mind-sets and organisational flexibility. Supply chains and lines of communications will need to be constantly monitored to avoid poisoning. Commercial technologies need to be used as a service, and talent acquisition and skilling need to be upgraded constantly.

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Learning from United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali's Entanglement in Counterterrorism

Dr Alexander Gilder[@]

Abstract

As the United Nations (UN) and others reflect on the legacy of the recently closed UN Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), this article discusses one of the more controversial aspects of MINUSMA's deployment—namely, the mission's direct and indirect involvement in efforts to counter terrorism in the Sahel. The article first outlines how the mission navigated a complex operating environment in which other actors sought to defeat terrorism through the use of offensive force. It then suggests that in the future, UN peace operations should step away from providing support for counterterrorism activities.

Introduction

For over a decade, Mali, regional partners, and international forces have fought terrorist organisations in the north of Mali and the wider Sahel region. The region became a smörgåsbord of military operations, and international and regional cooperation. With initial interventions in Mali in Jan 2013 from the Economic Community of West African States and France, a United Nations Peace Operation (UNPO), the United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established in Apr 2013. In the following years, the United Nations (UN) forces worked alongside Malian Security Forces, French Operations Serval and Barkhane, the regional G5-Sahel Joint Force, the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Mali and European Union Training Mission in Mali, and the Takuba Task Force. Not all these missions

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were expressly mandated to combat terrorism in Mali and the wider Sahel region but these multifaceted operations have, nevertheless, worked in tandem to contribute to the stability of the Malian state and the region as a whole with varying degrees of support lent to counterterrorism efforts.

Activities that involve both states, regional and international organisations, and ad hoc coalitions produce complex relationships between those actors that can result in differing methods of countering terrorism and ultimately differing rhetoric on the conflict. This can be divisive where states and organisations are operating with different end goals in mind and different principles that govern their actions. For instance, in 2016, the UN Secretary-General presented a Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism to the General Assembly and in 2017, the UN established a UN Office of Counterterrorism to provide leadership on counterterrorism mandates and assistance. These initiatives have pressured the UN to engage with counterterrorism activities around the globe, with Mali a key example of how the UN sought to work with other actors on these issues. However, the UN has been reluctant to label particular groups in Mali and the Sahel as terrorist organisations so as not to undermine MINUSMA's support for peace agreements during its deployment.

As the UN and others reflect on the legacy of the recently closed MINUSMA, this article discusses one of the more controversial aspects of MINUSMA's deployment—the mission's direct and indirect involvement with efforts to counterterrorism in the Sahel. The article first outlines how MINUSMA navigated a complex operating environment in which other actors sought to defeat terrorism through the use of offensive force. Then, the article suggests that in the future, UNPOs must step away from providing support for counterterrorism activities. Instead, international and regional actors should cooperate to empower communities, pursue de-radicalisation, avoid alienating stakeholders, harmonise mandates, and carefully consider how exactly they work together in shared areas of interest in pursuit of similar targets.

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali's Role in Counterterrorism

It is important to preface this discussion with a brief explanation of the three principles of UN peacekeeping. First laid down in 1958 by Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, the traditional principles of UN peacekeeping include consent, impartiality, and minimal use of force.[1] These principles have been reinterpreted over time as the role and functions of peacekeeping operations have adapted and evolved, but at their core, they remain mostly the same. A UN peacekeeping operation will only be deployed with the host state's consent, in accordance with state sovereignty and territorial integrity. Without such consent, the UNPO would amount to an enforcement action, which is typically conducted by coalitions of the willing, as authorised under Chapter VII. Importantly, the UN explains that consent by the state(s) involved represents a "Commitment by the parties to a political process", which is key in the distinction between peacekeeping and other uses of military force.[2]

Another of Hammarskjöld's principles, impartiality, ensures that a UN peacekeeping mission is not used to force a political settlement in favour of one party to the conflict or influence the balance of power. The principle of impartiality again distinguishes the peacekeeping from, for example, a coalition of the willing authorised under Chapter VII that may involve military action directed against an aggressor state. In the case of the Sahel, a coalition of states may form an ad-hoc organisation to undertake joint operations and establish a Joint Force with the specific purpose of offensively countering terrorism and transnational crime.

The third principle of UN peacekeeping is that force must only be used for defensive purposes. The use of offensive force would be 'Beyond the competence' of an operation.[3] With many modern missions holding Chapter VII mandates to protect civilians and use force in defence of the mandate, it has been interpreted to enable the UN forces to respond effectively and 'Silence a source of deadly fire that is directed at UN troops or at the people they are charged to protect'.[4] Nonetheless, UN peacekeepers must not take the initiative in using force, as such action would risk the UN straying into enforcement operations, which are typically carried out by other actors.

As a consequence of these principles, MINUSMA was limited in several ways. It could operate only within the territory of Mali, not in other Sahelian states or G5 members, and had to adhere to its Status-of-Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the Malian government. The SOFA served as the legal framework between the UN and Mali, defining the obligations of UN peacekeepers. Additionally, the principle of impartiality restricted MINUSMA's ability to differentiate between various groups involved in the conflict. The Malian authorities refer to the entire conflict, since 2012, as terrorism and does not distinguish between Tuareg rebel armed groups seeking self-determination and Islamic terrorists operating in the country.[5] With the label of 'Terrorist Organisation' carrying particularly negative connotations, this poses a challenge for the UN, which must ultimately promote a peaceful resolution to the conflict among the various armed groups and the Malian government.

Finally, MINUSMA was mandated to protect civilians in Mali. Consequently, when a terrorist organisation threatened civilians, UN peacekeepers were permitted to intervene and use deadly force when necessary. However, MINUSMA could not employ offensive force in the manner of Operation Barkhane or the G5 Joint Force. The use of offensive force would not only contravene a core principle of UN peacekeeping, but UN peacekeepers are also typically not the most suitable actors for conducting offensive operations, as they are neither trained nor equipped for such engagements. Mali called for the UN Security Council (UNSC) to help government forces in countering terrorism by deploying a Force Intervention Brigade, similar to that in United Nations Organisation Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is specifically mandated to offensively use force and conduct joint operations with the host state, to combat terrorist groups.[6] The UNSC refused to authorise such a force despite Malian officials believing that the 'UN should do its job and break these terrorists'.[7]

Nevertheless, MINUSMA supported Mali, Operation Barkhane, and the G5 Sahel in their fight against terrorism. MINUSMA gave technical assistance to Mali's Specialised Judicial Unit to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Organised Crime as well as to personnel in the criminal justice system on the housing of inmates 'Suspected or convicted of terrorism-related offences'.[8] Importantly,

the UN recognised that the host state's counterterrorism activities have led to 'Repeated Allegations'. The allegations include executions, torture, enforced disappearances, various levels of ill-treatment, and arbitrary arrests. However, cooperation between the UN and the Malian authorities continued until the mission's departure.

MINUSMA further supported the international community's fight against terrorism in the Sahel through the identification of groups and individuals considered a threat to the mission, and included them in 'Targeting Packs'.[9] MINUSMA had a sophisticated intelligence system that had, for example, made use of a German unmanned aerial vehicle unit and a Swedish reconnaissance company of armoured vehicles, amongst others.[10] The targeting packs were compiled by MINUSMA's dedicated intelligence unit, the All Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU) which was tasked with collecting actionable intelligence, and included personnel from the Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway.[11] ASIFU also carried out non-military intelligence analysis on issues such as illegal trafficking and narcotics, ethic and tribal dynamics, corruption, and bad governance.[12] ASIFU's targeting packs were informally shared with Operation Barkhane and this was reported to the UN as possibly having 'Serious operational, political and legal implications'.[13] The legal implication being, MINUSMA becomes a party to the conflict under the law of armed conflict as a result of providing 'Actionable Intelligence' for the French Operation Barkhane.[14] UN documentation openly discussed the importance of sharing information between MINUSMA and its international partners fighting terrorism in the region with a Coordinating Body for Mali being created in Jan 2019 to improve information sharing.[15]

In addition to ASIFU, two military units deployed as part of MINUSMA also engaged in intelligence gathering, namely the Special Operations Land Task Group and a helicopter detachment. Both units were Dutch and collected intelligence alongside their other objectives. A Dutch commander confirmed that, "The special forces went to Mali to kill people. Hunt people and arrest them ... This was the case even though we upfront agreed that the mission would be calm, shooting kept to a minimum, and wear the blue beret".[16] Where MINUSMA is concerned, the divisions have at times become blurred with ASIFU and other military units working closely with non-UN forces fighting terrorism.

The UN rightfully states the fight against terrorism must not infringe upon human rights or marginalise communities.[17] The UN itself has recognised that Malian counterterror operations have violated human rights law, 'Which compounded the communities' feeling of marginalisation from the peace process'.[18] In addition, the UN has already begun investigations into serious human rights violations committed by the G5 Sahel Joint Force, including the killing of civilians.[19] The G5 Sahel Joint Force does have civilian components tasked with human rights protection but these elements were not operational in 2019, two years after the creation of the Joint Force.[20]

If, in the eyes of communities, the UN is perceived as part of counterterrorism efforts alongside the host state and international forces—both of which have committed numerous human rights violations—a peacekeeping mission's efforts to bring together the affected parties and reconcile the conflict would be undermined. As early as 2003, Ralf Bredel, Director and Representative to UN headquarters, warned that "The UN should be cautious about allowing counterterrorism to encroach unduly on the notion of long-term conflict prevention".[21] For instance, the mandates of the UNSC could have led to further marginalisation in northern Mali, where they expressly supported a counterterrorism agenda. This resulted in MINUSMA forces operating alongside the G5 Sahel Joint Force, which has committed human rights violations. Consequently, the UN's position as an impartial arbitrator was naturally weakened. In such circumstances, it becomes more difficult to work with communities to identify what is vital for their rebuilding efforts and to implement peacebuilding programs that require bottom-up engagement.

Support for counterterrorism has also led MINUSMA to deploy specialised contingents from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries keen to support French and European Union (EU) efforts in the wider Sahel. This included the use of transport and combat helicopters, as well as drones. Much of this was to meet NATO requirements regarding the extraction of wounded troops, enabling its member states to contribute forces. As a result, the package has been described as establishing 'A new level of combat readiness'.[22] Moda Dieng, Associate Professor in the School of Conflict Studies, has argued that it is necessary to support state institutions and provide space for populations to

take up responsibility for their development.[23] However, the encouragement of a security-focused strategy "Works to the detriment of other essential tasks such as state building and effective governance".[24] For instance, by fighting terrorism in Mali, the UN supported the host state in devoting resources to 'Excessive Militarisation', which prevents and delays development and community work. The use of NATO forces meant German and Dutch contingents (deployed as part of MINUSMA) had agreements to provide transport for French forces conducting counterterrorism operations under Operation Barkhane.

With new relationships emerging in the Sahel between Sahelian states, European and NATO partners, and the UN, the UNSC remains far from reaching an agreement on the extent to which the UN should be involved in offensive counterterrorism operations. On one hand, the Secretary-General is of the view that "Stronger support to the Joint Force, including with predictable and sustainable financial resources, is critical to ensure the success of that initiative".[25] States, such as China, have also called for continued support to the host state to build Mali's capacity to fight terrorism. On the other hand, it was previously mentioned that the resolution welcoming the Joint Force, Resolution 2359, does not authorise the G5 Sahel Joint Force under Chapter VII, in fact the mandate makes no mention of enforcement action, due to the United States' reluctance.[26] The UNSC previously used Chapter VII to not authorise force against terrorists and instead states typically use force in self-defence.[27] Therefore, MINUSMA found itself in a unique situation. It was mandated under Chapter VII to use robust force, provide logistical and operational support to the G5 Sahel Joint Force, share intelligence, and utilise forces contributed by NATO and EU member states, which were also providing financial or material support to EU and French missions in the region. Consequently, MINUSMA's Chapter VII mandate became linked to supporting a regional counterterrorism operation that employed offensive force, with the explicit encouragement of the UNSC.

MINUSMA has also been shaped by the overlap between African and European troop contributing countries that share financial and political interests in the G5, French, and EU operations in the region.[28] That said, following the coups in 2020 and 2021, the security landscape in Mali changed significantly, presenting

MINUSMA with new security challenges. With Mali's withdrawal from the G5 and its Joint Force, the departure of Operation Barkhane, and the exit of the EU's Takuba Task Force, MINUSMA faced a riskier operating environment. The UN peacekeepers no longer had the protection of international and other forces willing and authorised to use offensive force. Already the UN's second most fatal peace operation in history, support for MINUSMA at the UN could have waned if the mission had suffered further casualties while operating independently in Mali.

However, less than a year after French forces withdrew, the Malian Foreign Minister, during a press conference in Moscow, asked MINUSMA to withdraw 'Without Delay' because "MINUSMA seems to have become a part of the problem in fuelling inter-community tensions".[29] As mentioned previously, the Malian government had wanted MINUSMA to offensively counter terrorism. The Russian Ambassador to the UN stated that "The real issue is not the number of peacekeepers but the functions, and one of the key tasks for the government of Mali is fighting terrorism, which is not provided for in the mandate of the blue helmets".[30] With the principles of peacekeeping preventing the UN from using offensive force to fight alongside the Malian government, Mali's turn to seeking Russian allies, such as the Wagner Group, inevitably made the UN's presence untenable.

Lessons to be Learnt from United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

MINUSMA made great strides towards inclusive, bottom-up processes that saw the mission work alongside communities affected by violent conflict and radicalisation. The promotion of an inclusive peace process was a priority for the UNSC in Mali and those vulnerable to radicalisation had been singled out by the UN as a particularly vulnerable group.[31] The UNSC consistently stressed the need to involve all Malian communities in peace negotiations, which showed a concern for ensuring Malian people are able to make choices for their future and demand improvements which improves their security.[32]

MINUSMA had, on a number of occasions, undertaken and supported actions that created space for people to be empowered to act on their own behalf in identifying and implementing solutions to the crisis. This was evident in instances where MINUSMA

arranged workshops, supported government initiatives that empowered local communities, and consistently advocated for the active inclusion of women. These actions demonstrate an understanding within the mission and the UNSC that a successful peace process must involve local and regional negotiations and be inclusive, ensuring that individuals have the opportunity to 'Make better choices' and contribute to preventing future conflict. Particularly in the case of women, the Secretary-General directly recognised that the empowerment and participation of women contributes decisively to whether the peace process will be successful.[33] As a result, a strategy that empowers people was central to the mission's mandate, ensuring the inclusion of all communities in the peace process, promoting the participation of women, and supporting national reconciliation.

But for the UN in particular, engagement with counterterrorism must be distinct from its other work if it wishes to avoid the risk of undermining an inclusive peace and national reconciliation. Richard Gowan, the UN Director at Crisis Group, believes that the UN must be prepared to conduct robust operations to counter terrorism and if it does not, it risks irrelevance.[34] However, UN missions cannot work alongside offensive international forces, such as Operation Barkhane, if they genuinely aim to reconcile the differences among communities and groups that form the root causes of the conflict. If a mission gathers intelligence and designates certain individuals as terrorists for targeting purposes, it could easily undermine other mandated activities, such as supporting local peace committees. The UNSC must utilise its mandating function to provide clearer guidance on a mission's role when engaging with counterterrorism activities. A more transparent and well-defined approach to counterterrorism is essential to delineate the types of support UN forces can offer and, importantly, where the UN draws the line.

Conclusion

Perpetual war and excessive militarisation have long been at odds with efforts to establish bottom-up peace. International and regional actors must develop a clear framework for cooperation and delineation of their activities to ensure they can simultaneously empower communities, pursue de-radicalisation, avoid alienating stakeholders, and adapt to changes in the security environment.

When multiple operations pursue different agendas—particularly when one employs offensive force and supports state-led military actions while another seeks to engage with communities—it becomes crucial to carefully manage the relationship between these missions. For instance, if the UN assists in French or G5 counterterrorism activities that result in the targeting of specific communities by international forces, will local people still be willing to engage with the UN?

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Assessment of United Nations Mission in Liberia: A Strategy for Successful Peacekeeping

Major General Ashok K Dhingra, SM (Retd)[@]

"The UN was not created to take mankind into paradise, but rather, to save humanity from hell"

- Dag Hammarskjöld, former Secretary-General of the United Nations

Abstract

The United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations have faced significant challenges over the past two decades affecting its foundational principles, i.e., impartiality, the consent of involved parties, and non-use of force. The constraints of finances and resources, coupled with inadequate troop contributions, have significantly impacted the execution of stringent peacekeeping mandates. The intricacies of conventional peacekeeping initiatives are aggravated by the participation of non-state entities and armed factions, particularly in Africa. In light of this context, the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is acknowledged as one of the most effective and successful peacekeeping missions, demonstrating a strategy of regional collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States to promote peace and stability. UNMIL's comprehensive approach emphasised disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation, and reintegration, showcasing the UN's capacity to foster sustainable peace in Liberia. This analysis highlights that success in contemporary peacekeeping operations is assured when the UN Security Council undertakes prompt and adequately funded interventions with well-defined mandates to ensure robust supervision of the operations of non-UN peacekeeping organisations.

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Introduction

International peacekeeping is a prominent concept in the United Nations (UN) that illustrates progress in conflict resolution. Peacekeeping functions as an essential instrument for the UN to uphold peace, promote democratic transitions in failed governments, and protect fundamental human rights. Peacekeeping has now expanded to include a diverse group of non-UN participants, such as regional coalitions, non-governmental organisations, and private enterprises, and has developed to undertake complex operations. Peacekeeping has been extensively employed to resolve numerous international crises and remains a critical conflict management tool for the UN and the international community, despite its challenges.

The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) stands as a remarkable achievement in the realm of UN peacekeeping, emerging from the productive collaboration between the UN and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Liberia and its people suffered greatly as a result of the country's two decades of prolonged civil war, which caused a massive number of deaths and displacement, a destroyed economy, and a lack of democratic governance. Liberia has now achieved lasting peace, and the country has experienced three peaceful transitions of power under free and fair elections, establishing itself as a model of political stability.

Three peacekeeping operations were established in Liberia: the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the Economic Community of West African States Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL), and the UNMIL, aimed at resolving the Civil War. Though there were both successes and setbacks from the operations, the experience gained from them can guide upcoming UN peacekeeping missions. This article evaluates the versatile peacekeeping operations in Liberia following the civil war, highlighting lessons for the international community to enhance its conflict management approach in the future.

Historical Context of Peacekeeping

The UN Charter is silent on peacekeeping as a method for resolving conflicts. An effective strategy for conflict management is the peacekeeping approach advocated by former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold, commonly termed as 'Chapter Six-

and-a-half' of the UN Charter.[1] Peacekeeping operates under the guiding framework of three essential principles: consent, neutrality, and the prohibition of force. It involves the maintenance of a truce between conflicting parties through the deployment of international military, civilian, or police forces. The primary objectives include the protection of civilians, the reduction or cessation of violence, and the enhancement of institutional frameworks. The main aim of peacekeeping is to prevent, contain, moderate, and end wars between or within states through internationally coordinated third-party intervention.[2]

Peacekeeping has a firm historical foundation in UN conflict management, as evidenced by the establishment of the UN Truce Supervision Organization to monitor the agreement between the Arab states and Israel in 1948. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations currently oversees eleven ongoing operations, and approximately 70 UN peacekeeping missions have been established worldwide.[3] The African continent has been consistently impacted by the challenges of long-term conflicts. Countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Liberia have experienced adverse effects on their security and well-being as a result of civil wars.

Even though the UN's political will and capacity have been under constant criticism since the Cold War, its peacekeeping operations continue to play a pivotal role in the continent of Africa. The premature loss of lives and the forced migration of vast populations have culminated in a significant rise of refugees across the continent. This has been accompanied by widespread devastation and destabilisation of fragile democratic structures, ultimately leading to the collapse of state systems due to such violent confrontations.[4]

An Analysis of the Liberian Civil War

The Liberian Civil War symbolises intra-state conflict and is regarded as one of the most violent in contemporary Africa. The first and second phases extended from 1989 to 1996 and 1999 to 2003, respectively. For the formerly peaceful and rising West African nation, the effects of this destructive period were profound and long-lasting. Throughout the war, rebel forces from several breakaway factions caused significant turmoil that resulted in over a 1,00,000-50,000 deaths and thousands of lifelong injuries.[5]

Additionally, approximately one million civilians were either internally displaced or compelled to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, including Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana. The once-promising economy was disrupted, leading to considerable losses across both public and private sectors. In a short period, the humanitarian situation in Liberia underwent a rapid decline, prompting the need for external intervention from ECOWAS and later, the UN.[6]

The Initial Phase of the Liberian Conflict

On 22 Jul 1847, liberated slaves and indigenous ethnic groups established Africa's oldest republic, and for more than a century, the minority American-Liberians dominated the West African nation of Liberia. Their control was characterised by authoritarian measures, exerting influence across all sectors, including politics. In 1980, the more than century-old American-Liberian aristocracy that had caused deep division and discontent was overthrown by a coup d'état carried out by 28-year-old Sergeant Samuel Doe.[7] The assassinations of the president and several high-ranking government officials occurred during that period, and the American-Liberian domination came to an end with the subsequent killings of important government and ruling classes.

The new president pledged to uphold the dignity of the majority population and restore Liberia's prominence among the community of nations. However, Doe and his People's Redemption Council soon fell short of meeting the expectations, and the excitement surrounding the takeover was short-lived due to authoritarian rule. Many who opposed his government were killed or disappeared. To sustain his dictatorial administration marked by human rights abuses and summary murders, he rigged the 1985 elections to further justify his hold on power.[8]

On 24 Dec 1989, Charles Taylor led the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), a weakly organised rebel group, into the country from Côte d'Ivoire. As other rebel groups emerged, each with its aim of seizing control of the capital Monrovia, the conflict swiftly expanded across the nation. Prince Yormie Johnson and his rebels, who had split from the NPFL, killed President Doe and his fighters during the attack. The civil conflict continued, especially affecting Sierra Leone, in spite of attempts by ECOWAS, and later the UN, for intervention.

Figure 1: Map of the Republic of Liberia

Beginning in 1991, the factional war grew more intense, with the NPFL particularly controlling the trade of iron ore, diamonds, and timber. The conflict, which ended in 1996, was also prolonged due to outside intervention and backing for different factions. Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Party won the elections that were held in 1997. The use of child soldiers and the shoot-to-kill strategy used by all factions were two of the war's shocking distinct features in Liberia.

The Second Phase of the Liberian War

The Liberians for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), another rebel group, attacked northwestern Liberia from their base in Guinea to start the next phase of the Civil War. President Taylor's specific omissions and his authoritarian rule—which was particularly noticeable in the repression of opponents—were the catalysts for these attacks. In addition, his involvement in Sierra Leone's internal issues fuelled the fighting. In reaction to the LURD attacks, Taylor mobilised his ex-NPFL cadres and participated in a conflict involving neighbouring countries. However, Taylor's government, already

weakened by UN sanctions, was unable to defeat the rebels, resulting in their retreat into Liberia and Sierra Leone.[9]

In early 2003, Taylor proclaimed a state of emergency and requested ECOWAS to deploy a military force to Liberia to assist in the fight against the LURD insurgents. Though the regional organisation intervened again, he was compelled to quit as the president on 11 Aug 2003. He was arrested when trying to escape to Nigeria and was convicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) subsequently. There was a three-year break between the two Liberian civil wars, the first lasting seven and the second four years. The wars were caused by ethnic competition resulting from territorial disputes, dictatorial rule, discrimination, and the prolonged domination of the minority American-Liberian ethnic group.[10]

Peacekeeping Intervention by the United Nations and Economic Community of West African States

The UN and ECOWAS played a crucial role in the success of peacekeeping efforts in Liberia over the past nearly 20 years. Although these organisations were instrumental in the overall success, they are also accountable for the operational challenges and mistakes committed during the collaborative period. The initiatives implemented by the UN and ECOWAS in Liberia have significantly influenced the methodology for addressing such internal conflicts.

Peacekeeping by the United Nations

The UN involvement in Liberia occurred relatively late, despite initiating humanitarian activities from the beginning. UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 866 launched UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) on 22 Sep 1993, establishing the UN's active participation in Liberia. This mission was the first UN peacekeeping operation to work alongside a regional effort. In the domain of military operations, elections, transportation, logistics, and communication strategies, UNOMIL was tasked with supporting ECOMOG in the implementation of the Cotonou Peace Agreement. It monitored, disarmed, and demobilised soldiers, documented human rights abuses, and coordinated humanitarian aid efforts, all while overseeing the 1992 UN arms embargo in Liberia.

The difficult relationship between UNOMIL and ECOMOG, caused by different circumstances, hampered its functioning. UNOMIL staff was regularly harassed at ECOMOG checkpoints, hindering operations.[11] Notwithstanding the difficulties, the UN-ECOWAS partnership in Liberia yielded valuable insights. UNOMIL's mandate ended on 30 Sep 1997, and UNMIL was created to help the Liberian government consolidate peace and national reconciliation after the 1997 elections.

UNMIL was established in accordance with the UNSC Resolution 1509 (2003) after the Liberian government and opposition leaders could not reach an agreement. UNMIL was a comprehensive peacekeeping operation that included military, police, and civilian elements. The mission's main goals were to implement the Ceasefire Agreement and protect civilians, facilities, and UN personnel. It focused on delivering humanitarian aid, promoting security reforms to advance the peace process, and most importantly, disarming and demobilising various factions.[12] It aimed to arrest former President Charles Taylor upon his return to Liberia for transfer to the ICC, as mandated by UNSC Resolution 1638 (2005). UNMIL's successful and professional operations restored peace to a failed state, which is now a successful democracy.

Further, non-UN actors also contributed to the success story in Liberia. Their activities included peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, human development, election monitoring, diplomatic interventions, funding for government and private projects, and human resource training. The involvement of the United States (US) and the United Kingdom was significant, alongside the participation of the African Union, various UN agencies such as UN Development Programme, UN International Children's Emergency Fund, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and the World Bank, as well as non-governmental organisations including Oxford Committee for Famine Relief, US Agency for International Development, Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, and World Vision.

Peacekeeping by Economic Community of West African States

On 28 May 1975, 15 West African nations met in Lagos to form ECOWAS. Following a thorough evaluation of the situation in Liberia, ECOWAS initiated the deployment of ECOMOG during a summit meeting held on 23 Aug 1990. Initially, the mission

mobilised approximately 3,000 soldiers from Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. Subsequently, over 10,000 soldiers were deployed, with practically all member nations boosting this contingent by providing a further 20,000 troops to Liberia. The mandate focused on securing a ceasefire, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, civilian protection, and preventing any side from seizing control by force.[13]

The initial mission failed due to financial and operational issues, hostile actions, the international community's non-interventionist stance, and the delayed deployment of the West African peacekeeping force. The truce was reached after various peace deals were signed by ECOWAS' Head of States. After UNOMIL was deployed, ECOMOG set up an interim administration under Amos Sawyer, which was followed by the formation of a coalition government in Aug 1993. ECOMOG stabilised the war-torn country for more than seven years. Following the 1994 Cotonou and Akosombo agreements, it also helped organise the 1997 democratic election, which was won by Charles Taylor.[14]

ECOMOG operated in phases and was fairly successful, but not perfect. Rebellion and domestic opposition from some ECOWAS member states hampered its early operations. In the second phase, ECOMOG's peace enforcement measures provided stability and peace, allowing many refugees to return to Liberia. Due to rebel rejection of successive peace treaties, the third phase was chaotic and stalled peace talks. Owing to human rights violations and the absence of neutrality among the peacekeeping contingent, the fourth phase transitioned to peace enforcement.[15]

In 1999, ECOWAS established ECOMIL in Liberia due to increased violence during the second Civil War. About 4,000 soldiers from Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and a few other West African nations were initially part of the mission. It monitored and demobilised rebels while protecting civilians and important military and political figures in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1497 of 2003. The operations were successful and built on the peacemaking activities of its predecessors. On 19 Sep 2003, ECOMIL personnel became part of UNMIL, following the establishment of UNMIL by UNSC Resolution 1509.

Lessons Learnt

The Liberian crisis emerged as a significant historical event, underscored by the effective peacekeeping initiatives implemented in the region. An in-depth examination highlights that peacekeeping operations under the framework set forth by the UN produced extensive lessons, derived from the challenges and actions of diverse factions and implementation strategies. The insights derived from the failures and successes of these operations by the UN and ECOWAS remain relevant and are shaping current peacekeeping operations.[16]

Conflict Prevention. The Liberian crisis underscored the possibility of unforeseen conflicts emerging in any region, even those deemed relatively stable. Therefore, initiatives focused on conflict prevention need to be improved and systematically structured. Conflicts that emerge, irrespective of their location or timing, must be acknowledged as a global issue necessitating prompt attention.[17]

Type of Peacekeeping. Intra-state conflict, like the Liberian Civil War, can be complex and persistent without proper conflict management. The international community's initial Liberian crisis interventions were flawed and ineffectual. Given the rebel's initial non-cooperation and the need for proportionate force, ECOMOG's ceasefire should have been followed by peace enforcement. Peacekeeping operations succeed when their functions match conflict dynamics.

Timely Deployments. The creation of a UN office dedicated to tracking trouble spots around the world and efficiently communicating with the UNSC is a prudent measure to facilitate timely and appropriate responses. The formation of ECOMOG was an unplanned decision by ECOWAS, which accounts for the inconsistent implementation of the initial mission and the mistakes that occurred during operations. The UN must intervene in conflict resolution early, and the force deployments must be completed as soon as possible. While it took three years to establish the UN's presence in Liberia, the ECOWAS intervention was put into action in one year. During this period, combatants engaged in extensive violence, leading to deaths, injuries, property destruction, and population displacement. The subsequent Civil War, which required a significant amount of time and resources, might have been prevented if ECOWAS had stepped in when Charles Taylor and his soldiers first attacked Monrovia.[18]

Commitment of United Nations. Peacekeeping success demands the UNSC's full commitment, but a lacklustre approach from the UN system and member states to conflict resolution will always generate poor results. The UN and member states must reaffirm their commitment to funding operations adequately. The UNSC should implement timely and appropriate interventions with clear mandates at the onset of conflicts. The UN's late participation in Liberia hampered the peace process as ECOMOG struggled to meet its goals due to budgetary and equipment constraints.[19]

Regional Organisations. In combined peacekeeping operations with regional organisations, the UN must have political authority. UNOMIL appeared to play a subordinate role to ECOMOG in local decision-making during Liberian joint operations, which hampered or halted peacekeeping in the besieged country. Since many parties involved in the final phases of the Liberian multifaceted intervention took inconsistent steps that harmed the peace efforts, effective coordination of non-UN organisations activities in peacekeeping is crucial.[20]

The Principle of Neutrality. This must be consistently maintained and demonstrated across all operations. The problem was made worse by the fact that some ECOWAS members, including Guinea, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso, supported specific groups during the Liberian crisis and provided financial assistance to them.

Implementation of Peace Accord. ECOMOG faced financial difficulties due to its limited resources and weak mandate, which adversely affected its performance. Within ECOWAS, a restricted number of member states offered financial, logistical, and military support for the collective cause, while the UN observed from a distance. The presence of 'Political Will' and a commitment to establishing peace in war zones by the relevant parties is crucial for the efficacy of peacekeeping operations.[21]

Constraints of Peace Enforcement. The limitations of employing military force to achieve peace were exemplified by ECOMOG's experience. While force can be employed to end violence and alleviate suffering, it cannot attain genuine peace, which is fully dependent on the agreements by the involved sides. Since the use of armed forces alone does not ensure the success of peacekeeping operations, alternative strategies, including negotiation and mediation, are beneficial.[22]

Sanctions on Warlords. The second Civil War in 1999 was caused by punitive actions taken by Charles Taylor, the principal warlord in Liberia, after he was elected president. This conflict could have been avoided if all warlords had been excluded from politics. Individuals identified as warlords exacerbating conflicts should be sanctioned to deter such behaviour. The majority of factions and warlords refused to work together or acknowledge Charles Taylor as the head of state appointed by the constitution.[23]

Child Soldiers. The subject of child soldiers in Liberia was not appropriately addressed by the international community. It took time for child soldiers to be reintegrated into their families and society. Many children had already been permanently affected by the time help was provided through educational support and career training.[24]

Violations by Peacekeepers. Peacekeepers, belligerents, and Liberia's government were blamed for operational errors. ECOMOG peacekeepers, notably Nigerians, committed illicit trade, sexual exploitation, looting, human rights violations, civilian deaths, and other crimes. Although there were numerous mistakes in the Liberian mission, these were analysed and disseminated to avoid the same errors of judgment in future peacekeeping missions.

Effective Leadership and Training. UN accomplishments are maximised when qualified special representatives are assigned to lead peacekeeping operations. The special representative's competence determined the mission's success in Liberia as poor leadership reduced performance. ECOMOG peacekeepers were hindered by insufficient training and equipment prior to the start of operations.

The success of the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia can be attributed to the above lessons, which should be incorporated for UN operations in the future. The factors to be included for efficient execution of the mandate are as follows:

- The commitment of ECOWAS towards resolving the Liberian crisis was notable, as the organisation proactively engaged in the crisis even in the absence of UN involvement, departing from the typical approach of awaiting UN initiatives.
- The transition from peacekeeping to post-conflict democratic governance is attributed to the effective initiatives undertaken during the three primary missions.

- The comprehensive execution of operational peacekeeping initiatives in Liberia ultimately restored peace and revitalised the failed state.
- UNMIL oversaw the peaceful transfer of power through free and fair elections, positioning Liberia as a model of political stability.
- UNMIL was among the most well-funded missions, significantly contributing to its overall success.
- The peace process was greatly aided by the cooperative relationship between the UN, ECOWAS, the Liberian government, and donor nations.[25]
- Peacekeeping operations facilitated the reconstruction of Liberia's economy, infrastructure, and essential governmental institutions.
- The UN continued to maintain a significant presence in Liberia post-operations, providing funds, and support as needed to prevent a recurrence of conflict.

Conclusion

The prolonged crisis in Liberia and its resolution provide relevant insights and serve as an important foundation for future peacekeeping operations. It supports the assertion that Africa serves as a significant continent for global peacekeeping efforts. Although the joint UN and ECOWAS operations were prolonged, the necessary interventions ultimately revitalised a failed state. UNMIL also highlights a relevant strategy for managing international conflicts, with the UN continuing to play a pivotal role. The lessons bring out the immense potential for the UN and international community to improve future international peacekeeping operations. The Liberian model aptly demonstrates that the peacekeeping methods employed by the UN, when utilised as a framework, will enhance the effectiveness of international conflict management in the 21st Century.

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Case Study of United Nations Operations in Congo: Impact on India's Future Peacekeeping

Ramanshi Dwivedi[@]

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

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

Abstract

India's contributions to the United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Congo (1960–1964), marked a transformation in India's approach from non-alignment and minimal intervention to a more assertive, strategically nuanced engagement in global peacekeeping. Indian Armed Forces units were deployed amidst tribal conflicts and political turmoil threatening the nascent Congolese state. India's contingent played a decisive role in facilitating the withdrawal of Belgian troops, and neutralising secessionist movements, particularly in Katanga, thus, preserving the country's unity and territorial integrity. By balancing military effectiveness with ethical imperatives in conflict resolution, India's role in the Congo reflects a broader strategic recalibration.

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly the Belgian Congo) is a country defined by its vast geography and rich natural resources. Often described as the gift of the Congo River, it occupies 23,43,904 sq kms at the heart of Africa. With a short coastline of 40 kms extending north from the mouth of the Congo

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River, the country remains largely landlocked. Before gaining its independence, the Congo was a vast but sparsely populated territory, home to a highly diverse indigenous population divided into over 200 ethnic groups.[1] Tribal divisions and regional disparities played a significant role in shaping the country's political landscape, contributing to instability post-independence. The most influential groups included the Ba-Kongo, Ba-Luba, and Ba-Mongo, each of whom had distinct regional and political roles. These ethnic divisions and regional rivalries fuelled post-independence instability, directly shaping the challenges that had to be addressed.[2]

Road to Crisis

The rise of nationalism in post-World War II Africa and Asia initially bypassed the Belgian Congo, which remained under direct colonial rule. This changed in Dec 1955 with Professor Van Bilsen's Thirty-Year Plan for the Political Emancipation of Belgian Africa, which sparked debate among the Congolese elite.[3] In response, they demanded an end to discrimination, democratic governance, and eventual independence. By independence on 30 Jun 1960, nationalist movements had fragmented, leaving the Congolese leadership largely inexperienced. The-then Prime Minister (PM) Patrice Lumumba, President Joseph Kasavubu, and Chief of Staff Mobutu Sese Seko had no prior governance experience, nor did Moïse Tshombe, the future leader of secessionist Katanga. As United Nations (UN) Special Representative Dr Ralph J Bunche remarked, "Congo was totally unprepared for independence. Technicians are non-existent on the African or indigenous side".[4]

Post-independence Congo faced severe instability, starting with a Force Publique mutiny on 04 Jul 1960, as soldiers demanded Africanisation, higher wages, and Belgian officers' expulsion. The revolt escalated into widespread anti-Belgian violence, with riots and looting in major cities and the seizure of key infrastructure in Leopoldville. Belgian nationals were targeted, leading to a mass exodus, which created a humanitarian crisis. In response, Belgium deployed 2,500 paratroopers, prompting condemnation from Congolese leaders, who sought UN assistance.[5] In response, the UN adopted Resolution 143 on 14 Jul 1960, establishing UN Operations in Congo (ONUC) to help restore order. However, its mandate barred interference in internal affairs, limiting its ability to curb secessionist movements in Katanga and South Kasai. The

mutiny, political crisis, and lack of preparation weakened central authority, creating a power vacuum that was exploited by separatist movements and local militias, which, combined with political fragmentation, precipitated widespread violence and instability, caused the situation to spiral out of control.[6]

Peacekeeping Operations

In the immediate aftermath of Congolese independence, escalating internal violence and the disintegration of central authority necessitated a decisive international response. On 14 Jul 1960, the UN Security Council mandated Belgium's withdrawal from the Congo and authorised the mobilisation of military aid to support the nascent national forces.[7] Within 24 hours, the first peacekeeping units principally from Ghana and Tunisia had arrived, signalling the commencement of a landmark multinational operation. Dr Bunche was appointed as the Special UN Representative in the Congo, tasked with overseeing the mission's rapid deployment and operational integrity.[8] On 17 Jul 1960, following an ultimatum from the Congolese government to expel Belgian troops within 72 hours, the UN escalated its intervention. By 18 Jul 1960, 3,500 UN troops had been confirmed in the country. The situation intensified further on 26 Jul 1960: amid persistent pressures, including PM Lumumba's emphatic declaration at the UN that its forces must enter Katanga to remove foreign elements, the peacekeeping contingent expanded to 8,396 troops drawn from seven member states. This force was supported by 100 personnel from the UN Secretariat and 24 technical experts, ensuring a comprehensive operational capability.[9]

Key contributors to the operation included India, Ghana, Tunisia, and Sweden. India's substantial contingent was instrumental, with its policymakers insisting on a well-defined mandate for ONUC and rejecting any ambiguity in its operational objectives. Ghana and Tunisia provided robust infantry and logistical support, while Sweden contributed specialised technical and engineering expertise, each playing a critical role in the mission. The operation was further underpinned by a strategic principle of self-defence, which permitted UN forces to secure vital communication centres and establish ceasefire lines where necessary.[10] Such measures were essential in enabling the multinational force to act decisively amidst a rapidly deteriorating

security situation. Through these coordinated actions, ONUC not only aimed to stabilise the Congo and safeguard its territorial integrity, but also set a precedent for future UN peacekeeping missions, demonstrating the efficacy of collective international intervention in resolving complex conflicts. In addition to the initial deployment, ONUC's operational framework was marked by the diverse composition of contributing nations, with over 30 countries providing troops, ranging from infantry and mechanised units to logistical and engineering support.[11] This diversity in forces presented both a challenge and a strength, as the UN had to manage interoperability among varied military structures. Key engagements included the suppression of secessionist movements in Katanga, particularly in response to the Belgian-backed forces, which required UN troops to engage directly in combat to uphold the territorial integrity of the Congo. To address the complex and volatile political environment, a series of strategically executed military operations were launched. These operations, each addressing specific challenges faced by the newly independent nation, were pivotal in attempting to restore order, neutralise secessionist movements, and maintain the territorial integrity of the Congo.[12] A total of six major operations were carried out, each with distinct objectives and military engagements that shaped the trajectory of the mission[13]:

- **Operation Rumpunch (1960).** Operation Rumpunch, launched on 28 Aug 1960, was a critical military initiative aimed at neutralising the growing influence of foreign mercenaries and external combatants supporting the secessionist cause in Katanga. The mission's central objective was to dismantle the mercenary infrastructure and halt the influx of weapons and supplies into the region, which had been exacerbating the instability. Commanded by General Indar Jit Rikhye, the operation involved approximately 10,000 troops drawn from India, Ghana, and Tunisia. These forces were tasked with disrupting the logistical networks, sustaining the rebellion, and targeting mercenary camps, which had become a focal point for secessionist resistance. The operation saw a series of coordinated raids and tactical arrests, with 100 mercenaries either captured or neutralised by mid-Jan 1964. The combination of ground and aerial operations allowed the UN forces to secure strategic areas.

However, despite the success in eliminating many foreign agents, the operation was less effective in curbing local militias and political figures, which continued to fuel the rebellion. As General Rikhye remarked, "We are clearing the path to peace—one step at a time".[14] While Operation Rumpunch was operationally successful in weakening the mercenary presence and destabilising the secessionist movement, it did not end the rebellion. The groundwork laid by this mission ultimately set the stage for Operation Morthor, which more directly targeted the secessionist leadership and sought to restore full control to the central government in the following months.[15]

- **Operation Morthor (1961).** Operation Morthor was initiated on 13 Sep 1961 as a decisive military intervention aimed at neutralising the entrenched secessionist forces in Katanga, which had received backing from Belgian mercenaries and local rebel groups, thereby, undermining the authority of the newly formed Congolese government. Conceived with the vision of restoring central government control and upholding the territorial integrity of the Republic of the Congo, the operation was commanded by General Rikhye. Under his leadership, a multinational force of approximately 20,000 troops was deployed, with significant contributions from India, Ghana, Tunisia, and Morocco. The operation commenced on 13 Sep 1964 with meticulously planned ground assaults on key rebel positions, resulting in the loss of about 13 UN soldiers and 200 secessionist fighters. During the engagement, General Rikhye asserted, "The integrity of the Congo is non-negotiable"[16], a declaration that underscored the UN's commitment to re-establishing order. Ultimately, while the operation succeeded in dismantling several critical secessionist strongholds, sporadic resistance persisted, necessitating further the UN's involvement and attracting criticism for the perceived excessive use of force amid ongoing regional instability.[17]

- **Operation UNOKAT (1961).** On 05 Dec 1961, Operation UNOKAT was launched as a UN military offensive aimed at breaking the secessionist stronghold of Katanga, led by Moïse Tshombe. Following the failure of Operation Morthor (Sep 1961) and the death of UN Secretary-General Dag

Hammarskjöld, tensions between ONUC and Katangese forces escalated. The operation was commanded by Brigadier-General Sean MacEoin of Ireland, who led a multinational UN force of approximately 5,000 troops drawn from India, Sweden, Ireland, Ethiopia, and Ghana. The primary objective was to disarm Tshombe's forces, regain control of key infrastructure in Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi), and reassert Congolese sovereignty over the breakaway province. The assault began with coordinated air and ground offensives targeting Katangese Gendarmerie positions, followed by intense urban combat as UN troops advanced through the city. The battle resulted in heavy casualties, with at least 11 UN soldiers and over 100 Katangese fighters killed. Despite achieving its immediate military goals, Operation UNOKAT did not fully dismantle the secessionist movement, which persisted until the larger Operation Grand Slam (1963). Internationally, the operation was met with mixed reactions—the Congolese government welcomed it as a step toward national unity, while Western powers, particularly Belgium and the United States (US), criticised the UN for excessive force, fearing a power vacuum that could be exploited by communist factions.[18]

- **Operation Grand Slam (1962).** Operation Grand Slam was launched on 28 Dec 1962 as part of the ONUC's last effort to dismantle the secessionist movement in Katanga, a province that had long defied the authority of the central Congolese government. The mission's primary objective was clear: to decisively defeat the remaining secessionist forces and restore full government control over Katanga. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) RS Banerjee of the Indian Army, a force of 5,000 troops from India, Morocco, and Belgium was mobilised for the operation. The mission was meticulously planned to target the key fortified positions held by rebel leaders, with the aim of breaking the backbone of the secessionist movement. The operation unfolded with a series of coordinated air and ground attacks aimed at key rebel strongholds. Within a matter of days, the UN forces secured vital positions, forcing the secessionist forces to disband, and leading to a marked reduction in their military capabilities. As Lt Col Banerjee remarked, "This operation will be a turning point for the Congo"[19], highlighting the

mission's critical significance in shifting the balance of power. By the end of the operation, UN forces had successfully neutralised the core of the secessionist resistance, and Katanga was largely brought back under central government control. The success of Operation Grand Slam was celebrated as a decisive turning point, signalling the effective end of Katanga's secession, although the broader challenges of stabilising the region continued to persist.[20]

- **Operation Dragon Rouge (1964).** On 24 Nov 1964, Operation Dragon Rouge was launched as a high-risk military intervention to rescue over 2,000 hostages held by Simba rebels in Stanleyville (now Kisangani), Congo. The hostages, primarily European and American nationals, had been seized amid the Congo Crisis, escalating tensions in the region. The operation was led by Colonel Charles Laurent of the Belgian paratroopers, with logistical and intelligence support from the US. The mission was planned in coordination with the Congolese government of Tshombe, who sought to reclaim control over rebel-held areas. The assault force comprised approximately 550 elite Belgian paratroopers, flown in by American C-130 transport aircraft from Belgium's base in Ascension Island. The operation commenced with a swift airborne assault, targeting key rebel positions in Stanleyville. Belgian forces landed at Simi-Simi Airport and rapidly advanced toward the city's central district, where the hostages were being held at the Victoria Hotel. As the paratroopers moved in, the Simba rebels responded with chaotic but brutal resistance, executing dozens of hostages before they could be rescued. Despite this tragedy, the Belgian troops managed to secure the area and evacuate the surviving hostages within two days, completing the mission by 26 Nov 1964. While the operation was tactically successful, it was highly controversial.[21] Dozens of Congolese civilians were killed in the crossfire, and the intervention intensified Cold War rivalries, with the Soviet Union and African nationalist leaders condemning the western military presence. Nevertheless, Operation Dragon Rouge remains one of the most daring hostage rescue missions of the 20th Century, showcasing the complexities of foreign military interventions in post-colonial Africa.[22]

The series of military operations conducted under ONUC demonstrated the complexities and challenges of UN peacekeeping in a politically unstable environment. While each mission had clear objectives, their execution highlighted the evolving nature of peace enforcement in a volatile conflict zone. The engagements in Katanga and the eastern Congo not only shaped the trajectory of the mission, but also set a precedent for future UN interventions. Despite achieving significant tactical successes, such as restoring government control over rebellious regions and dismantling insurgent networks, the long-term stability of the Congo remained uncertain. The operations underscored the limitations of military action alone in resolving deeply rooted political divisions, reinforcing the notion that peacekeeping efforts must be supported by sustained diplomatic and governance initiatives to ensure security and stability.[23]

India's Military Contribution

India's contribution to the ONUC was driven by the commitment 'To serve the cause of the people of the Congo, help them in their difficulties, and serve the cause of peace'. India initially sent approximately 800 personnel to the Congo, primarily for non-combat duties. In its communications with the UN Secretary-General, the Government of India expressed its disapproval of how ONUC was functioning in the Congo and declared that it had no desire to send Indian combatant forces unless UN policy was changed and rendered more effective. As the former Indian PM Jawaharlal Nehru stated, "We do not want to send our people to be insulted and without being able to do anything".[24]

Nevertheless, the adoption of the Feb 1961 Resolution in the Security Council clarified UN policy regarding the Congo, largely aligning it with India's perspective. This resolution was created in collaboration with Indian representatives, and India sensed a related obligation to assist the UN in establishing law and order in the Congo. In his statement, the PM of India at the time clarified to the Lok Sabha, "First of all, the intrusion of any great power forces would not have been welcomed anywhere. Secondly, countries which are normally associated in military alliances are not welcomed, because they give rise to counterforces coming into, so that by a process of exclusion, or call it what you will, it fell to us to take a step. We were invited to do so, and if we did not take it up, there was grave danger of the whole of the UN

structure in the Congo not functioning, or even collapsing, at a time when, oddly enough, the UN was being attacked from both directions—that is, the so-called two major military blocs, both of them, were attacking the UN for entirely different reasons, of course. And we decided, therefore, to do something which we had done previously in this way".[25]

The Indian troops played an exceptional role in the service of the UN Peacekeeping Operations in Congo, and this was recognised by all. As Lt Gen S McKeown complimented, "The Indian Independent Brigade Group can be likened to a very small blanket thrown over a very large man. When the top of the body gets cold the blanket is drawn up, and when the feet get cold the blanket is moved down again. Not only this, but the blanket had to be cut into small pieces to cover at the same time various parts of the body".[26] Three notable features singled out the Indian contingent in the Congo. Numerically, it was the largest single component, since Apr 1961, of the UN force drawn from over a dozen 'Un-committed' nations. Secondly, the Indian troops were all professional, highly trained soldiers, and not volunteers 'Enrolled' on a short-term basis. Thirdly, all three Indian Infantry Battalions and the bulk of other combat elements were concentrated in secessionist Katanga to bear the brunt of the fighting. Furthermore, the presence of an Indian Air Force detachment of Canberra interdiction jet aircraft, in service since Oct 1961, exerted a marked influence on the very conduct of the ONUC—acknowledged as the biggest and most hazardous ever undertaken by the international organisation. It must go to the credit of India that even after the sudden and massive Chinese invasion of India's northern frontiers in Oct 1962, India did not withdraw her troops from the soil of the Congo until the UN objectives were fully achieved.[27] The Indian Independent Brigade Group, which was the keystone of the UN operation in the Congo, comprised some of the finest soldiers of the Indian Army, drawn from three renowned regiments—the Jat, the Dogra, and the Gurkha. These regiments, with their glorious traditions, have been famous for gallantry and heroism dating back to the earliest days of the Indian Army. An integral part of this brigade was several other supporting units which shared equal credit with the infantry battalions in the success of the Katanga operations. A detachment of Daimler armoured cars and armoured personnel carriers of the 63 Cavalry, whose Commanding Officer Major Moti Singh earned the epithet

'Indomitable Major' by being always at the forefront in every action, struck terror in the heart of the enemy. The Indian troops served in every part of the Congo ungrudgingly and with full loyalty to the UN and its ideals, they consistently advanced to the aid of fellow UN troops whenever they were in peril. Despite overwhelming attacks, strafing, and bombing, the Indian troops displayed exemplary courage, never wavering from the soldier's code of conduct. From the standpoint of international cooperation, the Congo operation will go down as one of the most important chapters in the history of the UN peacekeeping. The achievement of the UN and its remarkable international force in restoring peace and freedom to the people of the Congo will ever remain a thing of pride to the rest of mankind.[28]

Legacy and Future Implications: India's Evolving Role in United Nations Peacekeeping

India's participation in UN peacekeeping has been profoundly shaped by its rich cultural heritage and ethical traditions, which emphasise compassion, human dignity, and respect for personal rights. The Indian contingent has consistently demonstrated a commitment to gender inclusivity, drawing on a long-standing tradition of recognising and empowering women in society. This culturally rooted approach is evident not only in the professional calibre of the soldiers—sourced from diverse regiments renowned for their gallantry—but also in the way Indian peacekeepers engage with local populations. Their conduct in conflict zones is characterised by a deep sensitivity to the cultural and social dynamics of the communities they serve. By forging personal, empathetic relationships with those affected by conflict, Indian forces have embodied a model of peacekeeping that goes beyond mere military intervention, ensuring that humanitarian concerns and the rights of individuals are interwoven with operational objectives.[29] The legacy of India's contributions in the Congo has set a benchmark for future peacekeeping endeavours, highlighting the transformative potential of an approach that is both strategically robust and intrinsically humane. Indian peacekeepers have not only met the exigencies of complex military operations but have also pioneered a style of engagement that is rooted in cultural sensitivity and ethical responsibility. This dual focus on operational efficiency and the upholding of personal rights, including gender inclusivity, has ensured that the Indian contingent remains a

stabilising force in some of the world's most volatile regions. By integrating traditional Indian values into the fabric of multinational operations, India has provided the UN with a model for conflict resolution that balances hard power with compassionate outreach. In doing so, the Indian experience continues to influence contemporary peacekeeping policies, encouraging a more inclusive and culturally attuned framework that can adapt to the multifaceted challenges of modern conflicts.[30]

Conclusion

Looking ahead, the legacy of India's performance in the Congo has become a catalyst for the nation's own military evolution. The lessons learned during this crisis have led to a strategic recalibration, emphasising technological integration, rapid interoperability with multinational forces, and a balanced approach that combines hard power with humanitarian outreach. This evolving doctrine is not merely a reflection of past success but a dynamic framework that positions India as a pivotal contributor in shaping the future of international peacekeeping. As new challenges emerge in an increasingly complex global security environment, the experience garnered from the Congo continues to serve as a model for robust, ethically grounded intervention, reinforcing India's reputation as a responsible, forward-thinking partner in the pursuit of global stability.[31]

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OUR ACTIVITIES

Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation (CS3)

The erstwhile Centre for Research was re-christened as CS3 on 01 Jan 2005. The Centre focuses on detailed and comprehensive enquiry, research and analyses of national and international security related issues, and undertakes gaming and simulation of strategic scenarios, to evolve options for wider discussion and consideration.

Centre for Military History and Conflict Studies (CMHCS)

The CMHCS was established in Dec 2000 at the behest of the three-service headquarters for encouraging an objective study of all facets of Indian military history with a special emphasis on the history of the Indian Armed Forces. It focuses on diverse aspects of the history of Indian military evolution, policies, and practices—strategic, tactical, logistical, organisational, socio-economic, as well as the field of contemporary conflict studies in the broader sense.

Centre for Emerging Technology for Atma Nirbhar Bharat (CETANB)

The centre started as the Atmanirbhar Bharat Initiative in Apr 2022 and later rechristened as the CETANB on 01 Jan 2024 and includes Cyber Centre of Excellence (CCoE) as part of it, in conjunction with Cyber Peace Foundation. The centre's objective is to forge emerging technologies with geostrategic and geopolitical situations, with a view to make the services self-reliant by making possible the indigenous production of defence equipment and spares. The CCoE trains military personnel in artificial intelligence, cyber, and machine learning, in addition to cyber forensic analysis in its well-equipped lab. Furthermore, it helps MSMEs to break into the defence industrial ecosystem.

Centre for United Nations Studies (CUNS)

The centre was established as Centre for United Nations Peace Keeping (CUNPK) in 2000. It organises workshops, seminars, and training capsules for peacekeepers, observers and staff officers, both Indian and foreign. It also oversaw the practical training of the Indian contingents. In Aug 2014, CUNPK moved to the Integrated Headquarter (Army) of Ministry of Defence. The USI has now established CUNS, which is focusing on operational, strategic, and policy issues related to United Nations Peacekeeping. It also organises seminars and conferences on such issues.

Courses Section

The Institution conducts regular correspondence—interactive courses and mock test practices and assists armed forces officers in online and offline modes to help them prepare for promotion examinations and competitive examinations for entrance to the Defence Services Staff College, and the Technical Staff College. Over the years, this has been a significant and well-received activity.

Editorial Section

This section manages the USI's key publications including the *Strategic Year Book, USI Journal,* books, monographs, occasional papers, and joint publications. These works contribute to an informed discourse on defence, strategy, and national security. The *Strategic Year Book* offers an annual review of critical developments, while other publications provide deeper analysis and collaborative perspectives. The *USI Journal,* Asia's oldest defence journal (est. 1871), serves as a platform for military and strategic thought, welcoming contributions regardless of rank. The journal remains a vital space for responsible and quality-driven engagement.

USI Gold Medal Essay Competition

Every year, the Institution organises a Gold Medal Essay Competition, open to commissioned officers of the Defence Services of India, officers of the Territorial Army, Assam Rifles, and the Senior Division of the National Cadet Corps, and Gazetted Officers of the Civil Administration in India, including retired officers. These essays, the first one of which was introduced in 1871, constitutes a barometer opinion on matters that affect national security, in general, and the defence forces, in particular.

Lt Gen SL Menezes Memorial Essay Competition

This has been instituted from 2015 on a subject related to armed forces historical research. The essay competition is open to everyone across the globe.

USI War Wounded Foundation Joint Essay Competition

This essay competition was instituted in 2021 through a Memorandum of Understanding between the USI and the War Wounded Foundation. The competition is open to all across the globe and must be about issues relating to the experiences and/or rehabilitation of war-disabled personnel of the Indian Armed Forces.

MacGregor Medal

This medal is awarded to armed forces personnel for valuable reconnaissance and adventure activity they may have undertaken.

Lecture, Discussions and Seminars

A series of lectures, discussions, and seminars on service matters, international affairs, and topics of general interest to the services are organised for the benefit of local members in Delhi.

Library and Reading Room

The library holds over 68,000 books and journals, including some books from the 17th, 18th, and 19th Centuries, on an astonishing variety of subjects. While the principal emphasis is on strategy and defence, there are many works on different vistas of Indian life. There are memoirs, biographies, recollections, diaries, journals, and manuscripts for scholars and researchers. The reading room is air-conditioned, spacious, and well-stocked in terms of current reading material. The library was automated in 2002.

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