

Challenges, Innovations, and Prospects for India's Leadership and Vision in UN Peacekeeping

Introduction

India has always been strongly committed to world peace and safety. It has taken part in many United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions over the years. As one of the biggest and most reliable countries to send soldiers for these missions, India plays an important role in keeping peace around the world. Indian peacekeepers have distinguished themselves throughout the years in some of the most hazardous combat areas on earth, frequently working in unstable and unexpected environments. The dedication of Indian personnel is reflected in their exemplary service and the sacrifices they have made, with over 175 Indian peacekeepers having laid down their lives in the line of duty.¹ The loss of lives shows how risky peacekeeping can be today, but it also shows India's strong commitment to supporting peace and fairness around the world.

A Legacy of Peacekeeping and Strategic Engagement

India's association with UN peacekeeping began in 1950 when it contributed medical units to the Korean War.² Since then, India has participated in over 50 peacekeeping missions, deploying more than 275,000 personnel across diverse regions.³ Whether stabilizing conflict-ridden areas in Congo, Sudan, Lebanon, or Haiti, Indian peacekeepers have consistently demonstrated their ability to navigate complex socio-political landscapes with remarkable sensitivity and effectiveness.

India's method is unique because of its sophisticated comprehension of regional circumstances. This characteristic enables its soldiers to interact with local populations and establish confidence via communication and aid. Indian peacekeepers serve as catalysts for establishing a nation, reconciliation, and government reform in addition to enforcing the peace. The deployment of an all-female police unit to Liberia in 2007 was a groundbreaking moment that showcased India's pioneering efforts to promote gender-sensitive approaches in peacekeeping.⁴ Female peacekeepers play an essential role in addressing gender-based violence, fostering trust among local communities, and ensuring that women's voices are heard in post-conflict societies.⁵ By advocating for greater representation of women in peacekeeping, India reinforces the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches in conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery.

Using Innovation and Technology to Improve Peacekeeping

As asymmetric warfare and unconventional tactics have become more commonly used in modern conflicts, India has seen the need to equip peacekeeping forces with state-of-the-art technology. The introduction of the 'UNITE Aware' program in 2021, which gives peacekeepers working in dangerous situations real-time situational awareness, was a major step in this regard.⁶ This platform integrates geospatial mapping, satellite imagery, and predictive analytics to offer comprehensive threat assessments and enable peacekeepers to make informed decisions. By enhancing

situational awareness and minimizing operational blind spots, UNITE Aware has played a critical role in reducing casualties and ensuring the safety of peacekeepers.⁷

India is using technology in peacekeeping in smart and modern ways. It's not just about watching things in real time. India is also looking into using tools like artificial intelligence, machine learning, and big data to study large amounts of information from missions. This helps find patterns and even predict possible dangers before they happen.⁸ UAVs and drones provide real-time surveillance and reconnaissance, allowing peacekeepers to monitor vast areas without exposing personnel to unnecessary risks. Additionally, India has been at the forefront of advocating for cybersecurity integration into peacekeeping frameworks to safeguard sensitive mission data from cyberattacks—a reflection of India's proactive approach to addressing 21st-Century challenges.⁹

In Peacekeeping, Promoting Inclusivity and Sustainable Development

India has been a strong supporter of increased inclusion and representation in the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) decision-making processes, in addition to its deployment of personnel. As a leading troop-contributing country (TCC), India has consistently argued that nations contributing personnel and resources to peacekeeping missions should be more prominent in shaping mission mandates.

India believes that countries deploying troops on the ground understand local dynamics and operational challenges. But decision-making in the UNSC and DPO is regularly divorced from these ground realities. India has advocated for a more participatory approach, where the TCCs are not merely executors of mandates but actively involved in making them.¹⁰ Such a shift would ensure that peacekeeping missions are context-specific, adaptable, and aligned with the evolving complexities of conflict zones.

India's advocacy for inclusivity is further reflected in its active role in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34).¹¹ India has consistently pushed for consultation mechanisms that allow TCCs to provide real-time feedback and contribute meaningfully to mission planning. By championing a bottom-up approach in peacekeeping, India seeks to bridge the gap between policy formulation and operational execution, ensuring that peacekeeping frameworks are responsive to real-world challenges.

India's vision for the future of peacekeeping extends beyond merely maintaining ceasefires and preventing violence. It advocates for a holistic and development-oriented approach that addresses the root causes of conflict by fostering inclusive political processes and promoting socio-economic development. India has emphasized the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into peacekeeping mandates to ensure that peacekeeping efforts contribute to long-term stability and resilience in post-conflict societies.¹²

India envisions peacekeeping missions that focus on more than short-term conflict resolution; they also need to address capacity building, governance reforms, and community empowerment.¹³ India's strategy focuses on empowering people to handle disputes on their own, bolstering local institutions, and making sure peacekeeping missions leave behind long-lasting structures that stop violence from happening again.

India's Quest for a Permanent Seat in the UN Security Council

India's active role in peacekeeping and its multilateralism follow its larger geopolitical ambitions, specifically its longstanding desire for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). India's consistent contributions to peacekeeping and advocacy for UNSC reforms underscore its desire to play a more prominent role in shaping the global security architecture.

India's argument for permanent membership is based on the fact that the UNSC should represent the dynamics of a multipolar world where the emerging powers are a greater determinant; India as the largest democracy in the world and one of the fastest-developing economies believes that its membership as a permanent member of the UNSC would render the body more representative, democratic, and accountable. India has a lot of experience handling tough conflicts and helping people in need. It also works on building skills and using technology to solve problems. Because of this, India is in a good position to support peace and safety around the world.

Ensuring a Lasting Legacy in Peacekeeping

India has a long and strong history of taking part in UN peacekeeping missions. This shows not just its military strength, but also its use of new technology, kindness towards others, and respect for the rules of the United Nations. In places affected by war, Indian peacekeepers have helped rebuild governments, protect people in danger, and support important changes to improve how countries are run.

One of India's most important contributions to peacekeeping is its focus on including women. India sent an all-women team to Liberia and has many women serving in important roles during missions. This shows that India understands how important women are in building peace and handling conflicts in a fair and balanced way. By giving women soldiers more authority, India has established a standard for inclusive and participative peacekeeping methods that are popular throughout the world.

India's leadership position in peacekeeping will play a crucial role in determining the direction of peacekeeping systems in the face of changing global dynamics and a more unstable international security environment. India makes ensuring that peacekeeping missions are prepared to handle the challenges of the twenty-first century by placing a strong emphasis on greater inclusivity, technology and innovation, and sustainable development. Such forward-thinking improves the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions and strengthens India's position as the global emblem of sustainable development, peace, and security.

Conclusion-

India has played an important role in UN peacekeeping and has always stood by the values of peace and fairness that the UN believes in. Because of its honest efforts to help the world, India is seen as a trusted and friendly country in peacekeeping. What makes India special is how it respects all people, uses new technology to help others, and always tries to support those in need. India's work doesn't just bring peace for the moment—it also helps local people stand on their own feet and build a better future.

India is leaving behind a legacy of hope and toughness by setting the example that future generations will find inspiring to pursue a safer, more inclusive community. Its actions remind us all that peacekeeping is not about enforcing the law, but about inspiring individuals as well as strengthening the bonds among nations.

Endnotes

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Article uploaded on 01-05-2025

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