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## Pivotal Role of India in UN Peacekeeping Operations



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### Abstract

India has always had a pragmatic approach towards UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPK Ops). More than two hundred and fifty thousand Indian troops have served in 49 out of the 71 United Nations Peacekeeping Operations so far.<sup>1</sup> Ensuring a smooth political transition to bring about peace in war torn areas, providing humanitarian aid, augmenting the peace building process, Indian peacekeepers have always been at the forefront. With changing dynamics, Indian troops have been a pioneer in bringing gender parity in peacekeeping operations by deploying the first ever 'All Female' Formed Police Unit in Liberia in 2007. The bravery of Indian soldiers

### Key Points

- One of the prominent members who contributed towards the creation of the United Nations Charter was an Indian named Sir Arcot Ramaswami Mudaliar.
- India has contributed more than two hundred thousand Indian troops serving in 49 of the 71 United Nations Peacekeeping Operations so far.
- India is the third largest troop contributing country after Bangladesh and Nepal.
- Indian Troops are pioneers in bringing gender parity in peacekeeping operations by deploying the first ever all female police contingent in 2007 in Liberia.
- There is an increased need for training and capacity building, better situational awareness, robust protection mechanisms to enable the Peacekeeping Forces to adhere and deliver to the mandate of peacekeeping operations.



seconded by their commitment towards attaining their goal has helped them to earn several laurels. Operational challenges such as increased terror threats, loss of lives, uncalled and unfair charges of violation, requires a balance between physical safety of the peacekeepers and their legal protection. Going forward, there is an increased need for training and capacity building, better situational awareness, and robust protection mechanisms to enable the forces to adhere and efficiently deliver their UNPK mandate.

India's contribution towards the UNPK Ops has been commendable. As one of the founding member India has always stood at the forefront to respond to calls of the UN to contribute troops for maintenance of international peace and security. Sir Arcot Ramasamy Mudaliar was one of the prominent members who contributed towards the creation of the United Nations Charter. Later, he became the first elected President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (1946-1947). During the process of drafting the UN Charter the Indian delegation made three propositions which eventually became part of the provisions of the Treaty. – The three propositions are: **(a)** promotion of human rights as one of the objectives of the UN (Article 1.3); **(b)** penalising member states that failed to pay their assessed contributions (Article 19); and **(c)** criteria for election of non-permanent member states to the UN Security Council (Article 23).<sup>2</sup> With the passage of time, UN peacekeeping has become multifaceted—protection of civilian mandates also becomes important along with pacifying conflicts, promoting peace building efforts, managing and regulating electoral process, promoting rule of law in war-torn areas and enabling overall economic & social development.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that “the foundation of UN was led by the brave soldiers on the battlefield of the Second World War. By 1945, they included 2.5 million men of the Indian Army— the largest volunteer force in history”.<sup>3</sup> Today, India is one of the largest troop contributing country in various peacekeeping missions— more than two hundred and fifty thousand Indian soldiers have served in 49 out of 71 UNPK Ops so far.<sup>4</sup> Professionalism and Experience seconded by the expertise of Indian troops, have contributed largely to the correct implementation of UNPK doctrine— be it ensuring smooth political transition augmenting peace building activities or leading the ground level response.

India has always led the movement towards combating terrorism. For instance, in the year

2014, in the Golan Heights (Syria), a terrorist group named Jabhat-al-Nusra took UN peacekeepers as hostages, and the Indian officers, as part of the operation, were the first to respond and counter the challenge.<sup>5</sup> Approximately, 4183 soldiers have laid down their lives in defence of the United Nations Charter since 1948 till date, with highest number of casualties being Indian soldiers— a total of 175 peacekeepers from India have laid down their lives. To remember the sacrifices, a virtual wall of remembrance has been recently launched.<sup>6</sup>

### **Timeline of a Few Historical Facts Showcasing Indian Peacekeepers' Participation**

The Indian Peacekeepers played vital role since the establishment of the International organisation:<sup>7</sup>

- **1945.** 2.5 million Indians participated in the Second World War which resulted in the formation of the United Nations.
- **1950- 1954.** Indian troops played a significant role in the Korean War— 60 Para Field Ambulance was sent for providing medical assistance to UN troops who were engaged in the Korean War. **1956-1967.** 11 Infantry Battalions from India served in the UN Emergency Force to sustain peace between Israel and Arab.
- **1960-1964.** Around 37 Indian personnel lost their lives while carrying out humanitarian tasks during the reintegration of Congo after Belgian rule. Captain Gurbachan Singh Salaria was posthumously conferred Indian highest military award— Param Vir Chakra, for his action in Katanga and for making the supreme sacrifice while defending the United Nations mandate.
- **1960-1967.** The time period has been seminal for India since Major General IJ Rikhye was appointed as the first Military Adviser to the UN Secretary General. There are three core principles, identified on the basis of on ground experience of peacekeeping missions, that has been laid down by Dag Hammarskjöld for effective UN peacekeeping missions — **(a)** deployment with the consent of parties; **(b)** impartiality in operations; and **(c)** non-use of force except in self-defence or defence of the mandate. The UN Charter legitimises the use of force with an aim to ensure safety of the population and success of the operation. However, the use of force should not be endorsed as the only mechanism to achieve the objectives “The

ultimate use of force is to influence and deter spoilers working against the peace process or seeking to harm civilians; and not to seek their military defeat. The use of force by United Nations peacekeeping operations should always be calibrated in a precise, proportional and appropriate manner, within the principle of the minimum force necessary to achieve the desired effect, while sustaining consent for the mission and its mandate”.<sup>8</sup>

- **1987-1990.** Indian Peacekeeping Force performed a peacekeeping operation in Sri Lanka— ‘Operation Pawan’, which was aimed at taking control of Jaffna Peninsula from the LTTE and also work for disarmament of the Tamil Elam. The action was part of the accord between India and Sri Lanka.<sup>9</sup>
- **1992-1994.** The Indian Army have participated in several missions of the United Nations in different parts of the world. For supervising ceasefire, disarmament of the combatants and monitoring electoral process in Cambodia, around 1373 Indian peacekeepers were involved and they did a tremendous job. Apart from this, Indian and personnel also participated in providing logistics support in Mozambique, took an active part in Somalia (UNITAF and UNOSOM II).
- **1995–1999.** Seminal role was played by Brigadier Shiva Kumar, who was the force commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Troops serving in Rwanda (UNAMIR). A group of Indian soldiers, from various battalions and companies took part in the operations in Rwanda between December 1995 and March 1999. During the period, Indian troops also actively contributed to operations in Angola as part of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) which primarily involved overseeing withdrawal of the Cuban Forces from Angola.
- **1999-2001.** In order to pacify the civil war in Sierra Leone, India deployed its troops to implement and provide other logistics support to implement the provisions of the Lomé Peace Accord, as part United Nation Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).
- **2006–2008.** India also contributed to United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) with multifaceted contingent of soldiers, sourced from multiple headquarters, and a team of military observers for the mission.

India has also participated in several other peacekeeping operations in countries like Somalia, Angola, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Sudan, Cambodia, Haiti, and many



more. India has also been part of the Indo-China supervisory commission deployed in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos. Major General (later Lt Gen) Prem Chand, who was the Commander during the peacekeeping operations in Namibia in 1989, supervised Namibia's transition to independence. India has been seminal in protecting civilians, rehabilitation of former peacekeeping soldiers and helping affected countries towards a peaceful existence along with regulating and managing law & order in the country.

### **Role of Indian Women as UN Peacekeeping Troops**

India is the first country to deploy a 'women only' contingent in one of the UNPK Ops. This brought out the effectiveness and impact of women as contributor to the peacekeeping missions. The first all women contingent was deployed from India to United Nations operations in Liberia in 2007 until 2016. The first All-Female, Formed Police Unit (FFPU) to a United Nations Peacekeeping Operation in Liberia was applauded internationally for bringing women to the forefront of peacekeeping operations globally and imparting in them the spirit of professionalism and service to humanity. The move inspired women across the globe to take part in such missions, including women of West African nations who went on to become police officers. The 125 strong women peacekeepers gave spurt to the concept of women empowerment in its true sense. The United Nations Mission In Liberia (UNMIL) helped in the process to disarm more than one hundred thousand fighters and provided protection to hundreds and thousands of civilians; assisted the police, security services and other institutions to regroup and rebuild themselves to be an effective and functional unit again; helped to facilitate distribution and provisions of humanitarian aid and assisted in promotion and protection of human rights. This found a mention by the United Nations Deputy Secretary General Amina Mohammed at a ceremony in Monrovia in March 2018. The Indian women troops were lauded for accomplishments in terms of combating gender-based violence and prioritising the empowerment of women. It focused on women's rights such as right to vote, right to run for office, right to join the police and other rule of law institutions.<sup>10</sup>

Gender responsive leadership is essential to promote gender equality in UN missions. It warrants leaders to develop capacity, intent and incentivise implementation of practices at workplace that alleviate and improve the environmental conditions that tend to create or produce gender biased outcomes. To foster gender equality, several measures have been

taken. Decades of efforts and activism helped women in ameliorating their conditions and being at par with their men counterparts in the peacekeeping operations. The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action 1995, helped in bringing sustainable peace and removing gender biasness. It was further strengthened by Resolution 1325 (2000) which helped in addressing the impact of war on women and the importance of full & equal participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. It also focuses on ending sexual violence, inflicted on women, in conflict ridden areas.

To strengthen gender parity, the UN piloted a gender responsive program in 2020 at the UN Headquarters. Department of Political and Peace Building Affairs (DPPA) along with the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) conducted several sessions for its civilian staff which focussed on developing leadership skills, countering sexual harassment at workplace, creating balance in both— the internal workplace culture and implementation of the Women Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda. The focus area in creating gender parity within peacekeeping operations will be achieved only by inducting more and more women in conducting the operations, training them to the best of their ability, creating an atmosphere of gender inclusiveness, prioritising and removing gender biases & stereotypes and developing resources which further promotes gender equality.<sup>11</sup> The role of women peacekeepers have further increased due to the outbreak of the pandemic which has led to an increase in domestic violence against women and girls.

Although, there is increased responsibilities of women in peacekeeping operations, however, their participation in quantitative terms still seems to be meagre. United Nations should make concerted efforts in integrating the role of women and institutionalising gender responsive leadership, building women centric strategies, developing capacity building programs and facilitating hiring & orientation programs that are exclusive to women, and adopting intersectional approach towards inclusive leadership that breaks gender barriers and is more responsive towards mandate of the UN. More and more women should be inducted in the national police and armed forces. Strategies should be developed to enable career development and progression as also to ensure that women hold higher positions in their offices. The member states of the United Nation Security Council and participating countries in the peacekeeping operations should earmark on a budgetary allocation for





training and development of the women personnel.

### **Accomplishments of Indian Troops in UN Peacekeeping Missions**

India has always been firmly committed to the cause of UN— maintaining international peace and security. It has been part of the UN since its inception in 1950 and is one of the prominent troop contributors with more than fifty-five hundred peacekeepers deployed to various peacekeeping missions in different places of the world currently. Historically, India has been part of some of the most difficult mission around the world and close to 1,76,000 Indian soldiers have been part of such mission.

The dedication as well as personal and professional commitment of Indian peacekeepers is reflected in various bravery awards and recognitions. Recently, Major Suman Gawani of the Indian Army was awarded with the prestigious United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award for successfully performing her duties with the UNPK Mission in South Sudan. So far, several prestigious awards and recognitions have been conferred upon our brave soldiers.

Recently, during the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, which is observed annually on 29 May to pay tribute to the civilians and Blue Helmets for their invaluable contribution towards attaining world peace, three Indian Peacekeepers were honoured. India's permanent representative to the United Nations— Ambassador TS Tirumurthi, paid abode to Corporal Yuvraj Singh who served with the UNMISS, and two civilian peacekeepers— Ivan Michael Picardo and Mulchand Yadav who worked for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq and were honoured posthumously with the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal.<sup>12</sup>

A total of 836 troops from the Indian Army, serving in UNPK Ops in South Sudan have been awarded UN medal for their services to ensure durable peace in the world's youngest country. They were lauded for protecting civilians, creating conditions conducive for humanitarian aid, supporting the implementation of revitalised peace agreement, monitoring and investigating human rights violations, and ensuring their dignity. The troops performed duties in some of the most physically challenging, tough and demanding operational conditions & environments.



## Challenges and Way Forward for Ensuring Safety & Integrity of Blue Helmets

One of the biggest challenges that the peacekeeping forces face is becoming the victim themselves. The UN must ensure and adopt practices which define engagement rules that strengthen the mission as well as protect them from ‘uncalled-for’ and ‘unfair charges’ of violations. It is necessary to foster a balance between the safety of the personnel deployed in peacekeeping operations and their legal protection.

An article titled “India and United Nations Peacekeeping: A Saga of Dedication and Commitment” states that, “the use of force in United Nations peacekeeping is not a new phenomenon. The UN forces in Congo in early 1960s, was mandated to use force to deal with the Katangese secessionists led by Moise Tshombe. An India brigade sized contingent undertook combat operations to stabilise the situation however the mission cost the Indian troops heavily, with 36 casualties and 124 injured personnel. Similar operations were undertaken again in Sierra Leone in 1909 to rescue the hostages taken by rebel forces. Hence, use of force undertaken by the UN Peacekeepers is not an issue for the protection of civilians, but the dilemma arises in the process of recognition and addressing the issue”.<sup>13</sup>

The challenges faced by Indian troops comprises terror threats to UN Peacekeepers by non-state actors accompanied by an even bigger challenge— the denial of permanent membership to India in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). India’s Former Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin<sup>14</sup>, stated in UNSC in 2019 that the peacekeeping currently is a “no man’s land” and called for the next generation of reforms in peacekeeping based on incentivisation, innovation, and institutionalisation. Responses to the new security environment requires a willingness to adapt to abilities to meet the emerging realities.

The delay in payment of funds to countries contributing to the forces is another big challenge. The delay jeopardises the effective management and deployment of troops by the contributing countries like India. India has raised this issue time and again and voiced for institutionalised approach, data backed decisions and assessment around performance and professional competence.<sup>15</sup>

The Under- Secretary- General for Peace Operations— Jean- Pierre Lacroix have also





emphasised the need for better protection of the Blue Helmets. On several occasions, he raised the need to do more in terms of training, awareness of threats, improved equipment, and ability to collect information in a better way in order to prevent threats before they fall on them. He also emphasised on better use of technology and medical support during the era of pandemic as an important cross-cutting issue. As new conflicts emerge with newer facets, UNPK Missions have become more expensive, multi-pronged and carries a higher degree of danger and safety concern. With the passage of time, there has been a lot of quantitative changes in peacekeeping operations. The dynamics of operations have changed and operations in the current state are more towards managing intra-state conflicts rather than major state to state conflicts which also brings another aspect of managing the victims, who in these cases, are mostly civilians.

Traditional roles of peacekeeping operations have evolved over time to cover areas such as disarming and demobilisation of troops, restoration and reconciliation of nations, effective governance and implementing rule of law.<sup>16</sup> post-conflict management or taking preventive action to stop the conflict before it flares up, is one of the prominent roles being played by the peacekeepers. Conflict prevention strategies or actions could be categorised depending on the need of the peacekeeping operations; however, a broader classification could be as shown below:

**Table 1: Types of Conflict Prevention**

<b>Direct Conflict Prevention</b>	<b>Indirect Conflict Prevention</b>
These measures address immediate causes of conflict.	These address the root causes/structural needs/ John Burton's Basic Needs theory.
More tactical & operational in nature.	These measures are basic & evolving in nature.
Eg: Sending high-level diplomatic missions to mediate between parties, peace keeping.	Good offices, negotiation, mediation & Special political missions.
Forceful methods like economic sanctions, inducements, or collecting weapons and demobilising the warring factions, and deployment of peacekeeping mission are used.	Protection of human rights, minority rights, non-violent responses to conflicts, involvement of women & civil society.
The operational role finishes once the Peace Keeping Mission ends and leaves.	This is an ongoing peacebuilding process continuing even after the UN Peace keeping mission leaves.

Source: <https://bipss.org.bd/pdf/DR.Pathania-Joint-Publication-BIPSS-UN.pdf>

### **Changing Dynamics of UN Peacekeeping Operations**

In a recent debate at the UNSC, Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs of India, while presiding over the session, emphasised on the use of technology in modern peacekeeping operations to make it more effective and at the same time safe for troops. He announced a technical platform— UNITE AWARE, to improve the safety and security of UNPK Forces. Mr. Jaishankar outlined a 'four point framework' for securing the peacekeepers: (a) deployment and use of proven, cost-effective, environment friendly and field serviceable



technologies in their construction; (b) need for sound information and intelligence, which would require precise positioning and overhead visualisation thereby enhancing the security of missions; (c) he also emphasised on the need of visualising the operations, coordination and monitoring on a real time basis; and (d) he also brought out the need for investment in capacity building and training of peacekeepers with regard to technology.<sup>17</sup>

According to Satish Nambiar, “Developing countries like India are the ones currently shouldering the responsibilities for UNPK; they must have a decisive say in the decision making apparatus that goes into the setting up of missions, formulation of mandates, resource mobilisation, contractual provisions and so on and also be given a significant share of positions (including senior ones) in the Department of Peace Operations in the United Nations Headquarters”.<sup>18</sup>

It is often justified that countries of the western world are the ones who make significant financial contributions to the UN and are well equipped, have trained manpower and hence should be entitled in securing high positions in the UN headquarters.

According to India’s Former Permanent Representative— Asoke Kumar Mukerji, training of peacekeepers from Asia and Africa in India’s Centre for UN peacekeeping, negotiating higher reimbursement of troops deployed in peacekeeping, deployment of units of women UN Peacekeepers to augment the ability of peacekeeping operations, are necessary to meet the primary mandate of protecting civilians and in making peacekeeping operations effective.

In his article, titled “India’s Contribution to current UN Peacekeeping Missions” Major General Michael AJ Fernandez comments on the changing nature of conflicts. With the end of the Cold War in early 90’s, there has been a decline in interstate conflicts and on the contrary, there has been an increase in intra-state conflicts. Due to weak governmental machinery, armed terrorists try to establish control by violent acts which leads to the terrible collapse in economy and internally displaced populations. The recent pandemic has further aggravated the problems. Due to the changing dynamics of conflict, UN Peacekeepers have now transited to the domain of peacebuilding and reinforcement.



There has been a departure from the traditional peacekeeping approach; current operating environment not only requires a strengthened command and control system but also better situational awareness, greater interoperability, and force protection measures. He suggested a few measures for Indian Peacekeepers so that they can match the pace of the changing dynamics— increased women participation both in terms of contingents and observers, matching logistic capabilities which would reduce dependency on un-hired assets and further allow us to showcase our equipment and logistic capabilities. Capacity building has to be a major element coupled with training of peacekeepers which has to be multidimensional with the sole purpose of empowering them. Information operations is a key that highlights the contribution of peacekeepers and plays an important role in executing the mandate of the UN. The achievement of Indian Peacekeepers must be highlighted in national & international media and their contributions towards peacebuilding in pursuance with the mandate should be positively promoted.

### **Training and Capacity Building of the Indian Personnel (CUNPK)**

CUNPK is the nodal agency for UN pre deployment training in India which conducts tailor made national and international courses for Indian Armed Forces, select personnel from all services, central armed police forces and from Friendly Foreign Countries.

The Centre for United Nations Peacekeeping (CUNPK) mentions was established in 2000 with an aim is to impart quality training to Indian peacekeepers. The Centre is a joint venture of Ministry of Defence, Ministry of External Affairs and the Service Headquarters and serves as a Centre of Excellence (CoE) in collaboration with Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) and various other governmental and non-governmental agencies. The Mission of the centre is to be “an international centre of excellence for UN , promoting niche training, multinational collaboration and contemporary research in the field of UN peace operations”. The CUNPK offers theme-based Table Top Exercises, seminars, and panel discussions on peacekeeping operations at the national and international level on a regular basis. To ensure world class training, the centre has a pool of approximately 300 serving officers, senior retired officers and distinguished civilians with experience of the UN in military, police and diplomatic spheres. Trainings are conducted with the help of agencies like UN Women, International Committee of Red Cross, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

and Defence Institute of Psychological Research.

## Conclusion

The world today continues to be volatile in terms of geopolitical graphs, inflamed regional dynamics, and economic slowdown. Involvement of non-state actors, rising terrorism and insurgencies, increasing conflicts— both inter-state and intra-state, are destabilising factors in International Relations. India has played a key role in the Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations as well as in its reforms. It has been able to bring in several reforms in making a prominent contribution towards ending evil practices such as apartheid and bringing an end to colonialism, and has always taken a strong stand and active involvement in issues of global importance. As a major military and economic power with significant contributions toward peacekeeping operations, India needs to continue championing the cause in terms of capacity building, re-evaluating the structures and processes, embracing creativity and result oriented & time bound actions. The 21<sup>st</sup> century emerging new world order needs to reckon India's contribution as a strong democratic nation and as a valuable contributor to the ideals of the UN charter.

## End Notes

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<sup>11</sup> Sarah Smith, "Gender-Responsive Leadership in UN Peace Operations: The Path to a Transformative Approach? ", *The International Peace Institute (IPI)*, January 2022. Available at [https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2202\\_Gender-Responsive-Leadership.pdf](https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2202_Gender-Responsive-Leadership.pdf). Accessed on 16 May 2022.

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<sup>18</sup> Satish Nambiar, "India and United Nations Peacekeeping: A Saga of Dedication and Commitment", *Centre for United Nation Peacekeeping*, New Delhi, pp. 37–40.

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