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Sushma
Research Scholar, Centre for
East Asian Studies, School of
International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi, India

India and UN peacekeeping: Stance and challenges

Sushma

Abstract

The United Nations Charter does not include the term peacekeeping. The main impression of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping was that it involved military personnel during the international crisis but without using any military equipment, which is needed for war, in order to maintain peace and security in the areas of emergency. The United Nations peacekeeping mission was an innovative method that began in 1948 as an undefined system to primarily deal with inter-state differences. But later, during the 1990s, with changed circumstances and new mandates, UN peacekeeping lengthened and became a much sought-after means of providing peace and resolving intra-state differences. India has a fundamental connection with UN peacekeeping which has evolved over time. This article focuses on India's position with respect to the UN peacekeeping missions and also tries to explain the future aspects of the relationship between India and UN peacekeeping.

Keywords: United Nations, peacekeeping, India, South Asia, military, humanitarian assistance.

1. Introduction

In 1946, delegated by the UN charter, the Security Council came into power. It had the authority and so-called responsibilities to take the necessary action to maintain international peace and security. Most of these peacekeeping missions were implemented by the United Nations itself, with military personnel serving under the UN peacekeeping command. Taking the experience from its previous peacekeeping operations, the UN exercised its authority during the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War. The UN has absorbed new approaches in significant ways to tackle many aspects of resolving intra-state conflicts and, of course, handling their consequences (Murthy, 2012) ^[11].

South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Nepal contribute a large proportion of the UN peacekeeping missions across the world, which is around 30 percent of the total peacekeepers, including military troops, medical and humanitarian staff, provided by the other countries internationally (Figure1). The western countries' states, by assessment, contribute a mere 5 percent of the worldwide peacekeepers. As for African countries, Ethiopia and Rwanda are two countries that provide a large number of peacekeepers. At the end of 2016, the top six countries providing military and police services included four South Asian countries and two African countries (Table 1) (Nations, 2016). These peacekeepers have various dangerous responsibilities. Coping with threats to their lives with day-to-day missions, they provide protection to civilians, arrange relief efforts, and deal with local militants and authorities (Nambiar, 2014) ^[12].

India and United Nations Peacekeeping

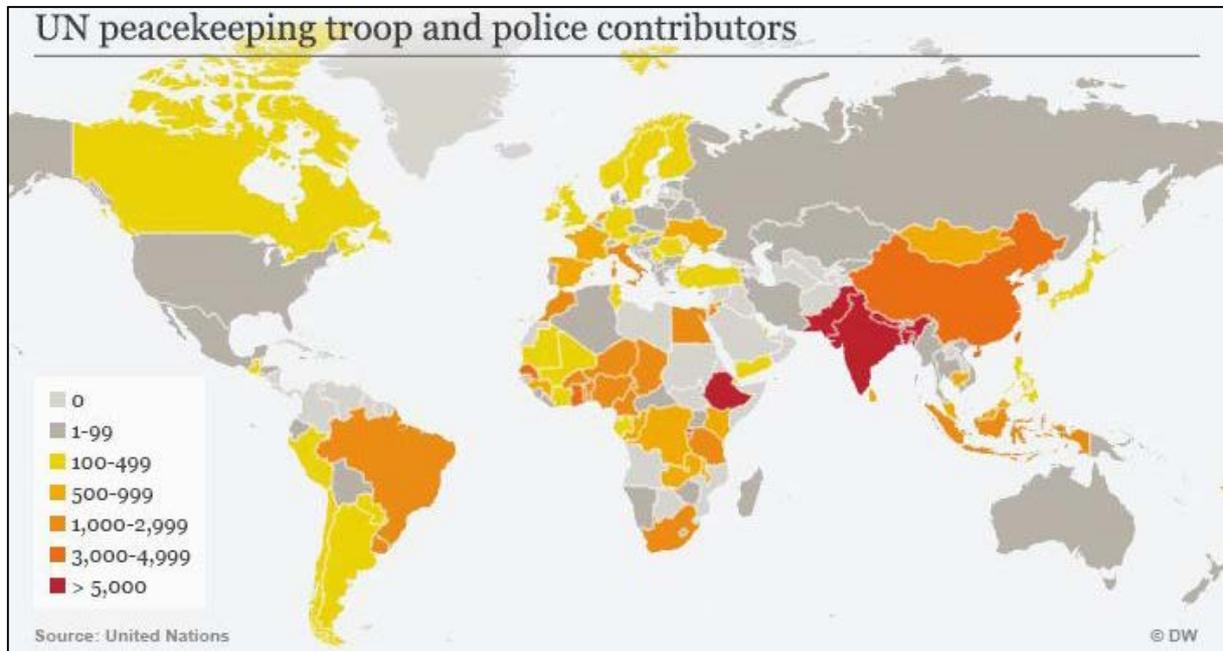
Since the formative stages of the United Nations, India has boldly stood by peacekeeping and assisted the UN in maintaining international peace and security. India is one of the biggest supporters and largest contributors of peacekeepers to the UN-led peacekeeping operations. To date, India has participated in more than 49 peacekeeping missions around the world with nearly 1, 95, 000 Indian military troops and police, out of which 168 Indians have sacrificed their lives while serving in these missions (Bhatnagar, 2015) ^[4]. In 1953, India deployed its medical personnel during the Korean War as a part of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC). Those medical personnel were sent on a humanitarian basis, and later, as a backup, a custodian troop was also sent to investigate the situation there. This was followed by the deployment of Indian troops in Vietnam, Cambodia, Lebanon, Yemen, Congo, Laos and many more from 1954 to 1990.

Correspondence

Sushma
Research Scholar, Centre for
East Asian Studies, School of
International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi, India

For some of these missions, Indian peacekeepers were deployed as observers, and for others, they assisted in ceasefire agreement roles. From 1956 to 1967, India sent its military troops to Gaza to carefully oversee the tense situation between Israel and Egypt. Since 1991, with the end of Cold War, India has been supported and involved in

many UN peacekeeping missions. The number of Indian peacekeepers has been increased since then including female peacekeepers (Graph 1). These peacekeepers include staff officers, police personnel, military commanders and advisers, medical units, observers and also many volunteers, both male and female.



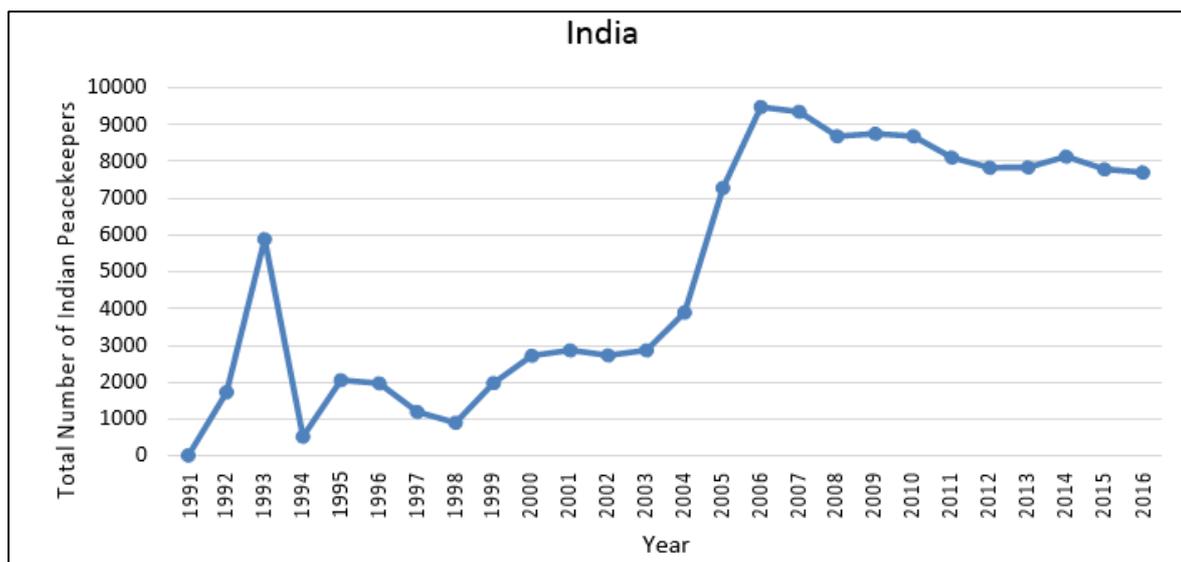
Source: United Nations, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>

Fig 1: UN peacekeeping troop and police contributors

Table 1: Ranking of total UN troop contributors by country, December 2016.

Rank	Country	Male	Female	Total
1.	Ethiopia	7,728	567	8,295
2.	India	7,670	40	7,710
3.	Pakistan	7,135	21	7,156
4.	Bangladesh	6,661	201	6,862
5.	Rwanda	5,895	257	6,152
6.	Nepal	5,013	171	5,184

Source: United Nations, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>.



Source- United Nations, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>

Graph 1: Total no. of Indian peacekeepers to the UN peacekeeping missions, 1991-2016

In order to involve in emergency situations, India always keeps a large group of military troops and police personnel for the UN Standby Arrangement System (UNSAS) as these peacekeeping missions are so important. Other than that, according to the need in any particular mission, India has also deployed Indian Air Force personnel and Indian Navy Personnel. As for the record, India is not in top nations to provide funding for these missions but the last twenty years or so represents India's increasing funding to the UN peacekeeping. the funding has increased from 2.69 million in 2008, to 4.15 million in 2011, to 24.4 million US dollars in 2016 (times, 2017).

India's stance towards peacekeeping

India has continuously contributed to some of the most dangerous and challenging peacekeeping missions. With its magical staying power, during most difficult times, India has presented the exceptional measurements to sustain such large troop obligations over extended times. The well-known historic contribution of India also contains a huge role of all-women formed police personnel unit in resolving many conflicts in various operations in countries such as Haiti, Sudan, Namibia, Cambodia, Congo, Bosnia and Liberia (Yeshi, 2007) ^[5].

Recent past trends show that India's stance towards peacekeeping has been sceptical. The way international peacekeeping has been performed; many Indian senior officials are not quite pleased with it. In 2014, militants in South Sudan attacked an Indian army base and killed three Indian peacekeepers, and other than that in Congo, 39 Indians were killed due to their involvement in the peacekeeping operation. With all these brutal killings of Indian peacekeepers, India has objected and shown its disappointment towards the management of peacekeeping operations.

The Indian Government raised this grave issue in front of Herve Ladsous (the former United Nations Under-Secretary-General), when he last visited India in 2014. Adding to that, at the UN General Assembly, India has demanded a major role in decision-making while presenting the grave concern of killing Indian peacekeepers. India asked for tougher regulations regarding peacekeeping operations, especially in the areas which are greatly affected by internal political struggles (Haidar, 2014) ^[6]. As India contributes the most of the peacekeepers, it expects great participation from the Indian side in order to finalise the mandates and also the international peacekeeping missions. Other than that, India also wishes to play an active and unbiased part in agreements assigned to maintain the missions. The Indian government believes that peacekeepers are sent to a kind of civil war region and, due to the lack of proper constitutional authority there, peacekeepers find themselves between the belligerent groups who neither cooperate with them nor give them any kind of agreement (Basu, 2017) ^[3].

Therefore, keeping all this in mind, UN peacekeeping officials should always look out for the smallest of alterations that take place in the various circumstances where such operations take place and also the way in which the operations are being completed. Thus, India is looking forward to playing a greater part in deciding mandates regarding UN peacekeeping. This can also be seen as a better chance for India to get a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (Yadav, 2014) ^[15].

Critical Analysis of India' Stance

From the beginning days of peacekeeping, India has been a keen and highly valued contributor to world peace in order to face the challenges of international security issues (Krishnasamy, 2010) ^[9]. Indian troops are known to sustain dangerous situations as they have the ability to take risks and help others. There are some reasons on which India's peacekeeping contributions are based. The primary reason is to reduce defence costs by training Indian soldiers in the most difficult territories, and the secondary reason is to share positive ambiances in the international community. Adding to that, India also wants to send a message to other nations that it just wants to help people trapped in conflicts and civil wars, without any discrimination based on their state or beliefs. It is purely based on humanitarian support (Krishnasamy, 2010) ^[9].

During the initial peacekeeping days, there was a difference between the salaries provided to the Indian troops by the United Nations were much higher than the salaries provided by the Indian government, but in recent times, the gap has narrowed. For the past decade, the daily allowance provided to peacekeepers has been \$1.28 per day, with an additional \$1.25 per day for recovery and rest. Indian peacekeepers have been facing complex and dangerous situations during their missions for decades, but it seems their operational and training reimbursements have been minimised now (Yeshi, 2007) ^[5]. With peacekeeping operations becoming increasingly risky, a permanent seat on the UN Security Council appears to be an ambitious goal for India. With respect to Indian participation in UN peacekeeping, there are some other problems. In 2008, Indian peacekeepers were attacked in Congo by the locals, and later, the Congolese government requested Indian troops to leave the area, which forced them to withdraw from there. Indian peacekeeping was also affected by the entry of China's peacekeeping powers. China can be known as a country that deeply opposes international involvement, but unexpectedly, it has been taking a great interest in UN peacekeeping. By 2011, China had become one of the largest peacekeeper contributors in the world. The numbers have increased from contributing 120 police personnel and military troops in 2003 to 2,146 in 2008, which is quite remarkable for a country like China. India does not deny that it is pleased to be sharing the peacekeeping work with China, but it does not appreciate the inconsistent attention that China is receiving, which places India in a significant competitive position in terms of the impact of resources in Africa (Hansel, 2014) ^[7].

In my opinion, for the past decades, UN peacekeeping operations have been in question constantly because of their strategic benefit. In the early 1990s, many operations such as the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) and Unified Task Force (UNITAF) missions in Somalia were withdrawn. The US extracted itself from the mission after the Black Hawk Down incident of 1993, which accelerated the collapse of the peacekeeping missions and India's efforts to complete these missions were compromised.

Governance challenges and solutions

At present, saving the lives of peacekeepers is one of the biggest challenges for the United Nations, as most of the time, peacekeepers are dispatched to very dangerous environments without any arms or with very limited arms

and supplements. The United Nations should address this problem and help everyone understand that the peacekeeping mandate tasks can be achieved while modernising their aptitudes and defending themselves. In 2000, the Brahimi report pointed out some impressive recommendations for new peacekeeping missions while overhauling the existing missions, such as: enhancing the speedy disposition of peacekeeping missions; better strategic planning for both the long and short term; flexibility of the mission must be improved; to support the ongoing operations, the capacity of the headquarters should be enhanced; multinational forces should be ready to be deployed on short notice; and the department of peacekeeping operations should be increased. However, among other things, there is the problem of monetary limitations for existing operations, as the financial support from the western states is very low. Necessary measures should be taken in order to improve the training of troops, including their recruitment and selection process. The recruitment process should be shared by all the members of the United Nation by enrolling more peacekeeping personnel from other countries. The more countries recruit their citizens, the more the burden of restoring peace and security will be shared.

Peacekeeping missions always face the problem of logistics barriers, as there is a huge gap between the resources provided by the UN and the deployed troops' ability to get the resources. De-centralization of power can be a good idea in order to overcome these barriers. To prevent these types of leakages, the process of distributing supplements and resources should be transparent with donating nations supervising the whole process. The allegations of sex violations and abuse against UN peacekeepers are also very concerning and serious issues which have faced criticism at a global level. The allegations of sexual exploitation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by UN peacekeepers have drawn the attention of the world. In 2004, the permanent representative of Jordan, Prince Zeid, was given the responsibility of reviewing and determining the actual extent of the problem and presenting a report. In 2005, Prince Zeid submitted the report after analysing the situation thoroughly. In the report, he mentioned the vulnerability of the locals who are devastated by the war in the conflict zones, and unfortunately, the peacekeepers have been taking advantage of their vulnerable situations by abusing and exploiting them (Al-Hussein, 2005) [2]. There should be an unbiased and professional investigation regarding such allegations, and people who are found responsible for such heinous crimes should be taken into custody no matter what rank they hold as peacekeeping personnel. They should leave the deployed site immediately and report back to their military authorities for further investigation. UN peacekeeping authorities should investigate the international human rights norms of the people that can be violated in any case, and ensure that the rule of law is properly enforced in conflict zones. The process of restoring peace and security should work smoothly.

The United Nations should work on strengthening its partnerships with member nations and also with regional and sub-regional organisations such as the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As Africa has been the centre of most of the peacekeeping operations, it will be helpful for

the UN to draw up a basic structure in order to achieve international peace, security, and stability by refining its cooperation with the African Union (Hansel, 2014) [7]. Finally, the countries contributing the most peacekeepers should have been given a greater role in decision making. These countries, such as India, send their military troops and police personnel to the largest peacekeeping operations, but when it comes to making decisions about how and what they will be doing, India has no role in it. That is why rich and developed nations stay clear of these operations while developing and poor nations are lured to these missions by the UN just for the tax-free payments (Bhatnagar, 2015) [4].

Conclusion

There is no doubt that UN peacekeeping operations are noble effort at international level but these operations definitely need some makeover. The South Asian countries, which contribute most of the peacekeepers in the world, need to replan their strategy regarding peacekeeping. India, with other SAARC nations, should look into the bigger picture of developing and formulating its role at the UN instead of just supplying more and more peacekeepers to it. India doesn't want to leave peacekeeping completely because it would be devastating for the UN, but it wants reform in the peacekeeping process. India has stated that its future involvement in UN peacekeeping operations should be more transparent. This includes greater participation from other troop-contributing nations and improvements in burden sharing. India has also worked for a change in fundamental peacekeeping mandates regarding the use of force so that there should be more clarity on use of force guidelines. Overall, in conclusion, I want to add that, as one of the largest peacekeepers contributing nations, India deserves to be heard and given a proper role in decision making regarding UN peacekeeping operations so it can be a rule maker.

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