

India's Quest for United Nations Security Council Permanent Seat with Special Reference to its Peace Keeping Credentials

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Abstract

India's concerted bid to be admitted as a veto-wielding "P" member of the Security Council is the single most watched issue within the country when it comes to the United Nations organization as a whole. As the Sanctum Sanctorum and prime custodian of International Law with more powers than any other entity in the International System, The Security Council is a "Bull's eye" for India to target. The demand for India's inclusion in a reformed security council keeps getting shriller as the country persists with large personnel contribution to UN peacekeeping missions and leap frogs out of mediocre economic performance in to an Asian Giant with a Pluralistic Democratic Political System to boot.¹

Introduction

The term peacekeeping is not found in the UN Charter. Nevertheless, over the years, peacekeeping has come to be the most significant way in which the United Nations has fulfilled its responsibility to maintain International Peace and Security. Falling somewhere between the United Nation's commitment to resolve disputes peacefully through the means such as negotiation and mediation (chapter six) and more forceful actions to maintain security (chapter seven), Peacekeeping was described by the second United Nation's Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjold, as belonging to "Chapter Six and a Half."²

Globalization is bringing nearer Kant's vision of moral interconnectedness, but as the Rwandan genocide and global inaction over Darfur so brutally demonstrate, This growth in cosmopolitan sensibilities has not yet been translated in to a global consensus on forcible Humanitarian Intervention. Western publics are increasingly sensitized to the human suffering of others, but this media-nurtured sense of compassion is very selective in its response to human suffering. The media spotlight

ensured the governments directed their humanitarian energies to the crisis in Northern Iraq, Somalia and Bosnia, But during the same period millions perished in the brutal civil wars in Angola, Liberia, and Democratic Republic of Congo.

Each case has to be judged on its merits, but as the examples of Somalia and perhaps Kosovo demonstrate intervention that begin with humanitarian credentials can too easily degenerate in to a range of policies and activities which go beyond, or even conflict with the label “humanitarian”³.

“Peacekeeping” as an operation has grown out of the practice of the United Nations. It has been described fairly accurately in the “Blue Helmets: A review of United Nations Peacekeeping”, thus as the United Nation’s practice has been evolved over years, A peacekeeping operation has come to be defined as an operation involving military personnel, but without enforcement powers, undertaken by the United Nations to help maintain or restore international peace and security in areas of conflict. These operations are voluntary and are based on consent and cooperation. While they involve the use of military personnel, They achieve their objective not by force of arms, Thus contrasting them with the “Enforcement Action” of the United Nations under article 42”.⁴

With the end of the Cold War, United Nations Peacekeeping changed from traditional missions involving strictly military tasks to complex multidimensional activities aimed at building the foundations of sustainable peace. According to a United Nation’s Report, ‘Today’s peacekeepers undertake a wide variety of complex tasks, from helping to build sustainable institutions of governance, to human rights monitoring, to security sector reforms, to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants’. The report further observes that the ‘nature of conflicts has also changed over the years. Originally developed as a means of dealing with interstate conflict, United Nations Peacekeeping has been increasingly applied to intra state conflicts and civil wars’.

Although the blue helmets still constitute the back bone of most peacekeeping operations, the many faces of peacekeeping now include Administrators and Economists, Legal Experts and Police Officers, Election and Human Rights Observers, Specialist in Civil Affairs and Governance, De-Miners and Experts in Communications and Public Information.⁵

India’s Contribution to UN Peace Keeping Operations

In the 66 years History of the United Nations as Organization peacekeeping operations have attracted maximum attention, primarily because conflicts make dramatic news and deployment of an International Military Force by the Security Council to preserve a Fragile Peace makes a good story that can capture Public Interest in this Electronic Age. Of course, the publicity generated by its peacekeeping activities in the past had, for the most part, been beneficial, especially in times when the Organization did not otherwise enjoy public confidence or credibility. In recent years, particularly since the deployment of United Nations forces in some intra-state conflicts where there have been perceived inadequacies, even peacekeeping operations have drawn considerable adverse comment. However, India can take pride in the fact that even in the context of such adverse comment on United Nations peacekeeping

operations the Indian commitment has been hailed as remarkable for its successful conduct and execution.

India's spontaneous and unreserved participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations over the years has been a clear reflection of the country's commitment to the objectives set out in the United Nations Charter not in terms of Rhetoric and Symbolism, but in Real and Practical terms. This commitment has been acknowledged by the international community, successive Secretaries General and the United Nations Secretariat. But even more significantly, the effectiveness of such participation and commitment to United Nations peacekeeping efforts has drawn respect and praise from fellow professionals of other countries and many others that have served jointly with our commanders, observers, police monitors and contingents, in various parts of the world. Hence, the image of the Indian armed forces and police in the international arena is that of highly competent, professional, and well-trained forces. The qualitative change is even more important, in that most of the recent conflicts have taken place, or are taking place, within states, or between elements that were part of unitary states till they began to fall apart.

They have not always been fought by national armies, but by Para-militaries and irregulars, in which process, civilians have been the main victims (90 per cent today as against 10 per cent two decades or so ago). In many cases, state institutions have collapsed; in a few cases, there are no governments. As a result, humanitarian emergencies have forced the international community to intervene. This is why the demands on United Nations peacekeeping have gone well beyond traditional peacekeeping. They now encompass activities like demobilization of troops and armed Para-militaries or irregulars, promotion of national reconciliation, restoration of effective governments, the organization and monitoring of elections, provision of broader support to humanitarian aid missions, including protection of "safe areas" and escort of relief convoys, and so on. The focus in the last few years is increasingly on 'protection of civilians' in the mission areas. United Nations peacekeeping operations have therefore become more expensive, more complex, and more dangerous.⁶

According to Paul Diehl, "The primary goal of a peacekeeping operation is to halt armed conflict or prevent its recurrence. It achieves this goal by acting as a physical barrier between hostile parties and monitoring their military movements".

Since its first peace keeping operations undertaken in 1948 to supervise truce in Palestine, Over 750000 military and civilian personnel have serve in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

Peace keeping operations are set up by the Security Council, Which is responsible for maintenance of International Peace and Security. The operations must have the consent of the host government. It is imperative that they must not be used in any way to favor one party against the other.⁷

India as one of the founder member of the United Nations and has appreciated its responsibilities towards the United Nations Charter and consistently contributed towards United Nations efforts in maintenance of International Peace and Security. It may be noted that India's participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations started in 1950 and continues till date. In fact India has earned the distinction of being

amongst the longest serving and the largest troop contributors to the United Nations Peacekeeping activities.

Korea

India's First peacekeeping assignment was in Korea when the 60 Para Field Ambulance of the Indian Army formed a part of the UN force under General

Douglas MacArthur. The team performed lifesaving surgeries and treated 400 casualties. After the Korean War ended, a large number of prisoners were taken, many of whom were refused repatriation. Lt. General K.S. Thimayya of India, as chairman of Neutral National Repatriation Commission (NNRC), and Maj. General S.P.P. Throat, as Custodian Force Commander, tactfully handled the issue of prisoners. The Indian handled the delicate situation with compassion, patience, fairness and neutrality, which earned them worldwide admiration.

Congo

In 1961 the Indian Army contributed an infantry brigade for conduct of military operations in Congo. This brigade successfully conducted the first peace enforcement operations of the United Nations. On 31 December 1961 the Brigade Group regained full control of Katanga amidst stiff resistance by the Katangese Gendarmerie. By the end of 1962 the Indian brigade secured the key town of Kolwezi. On account of pressure of Indian brigade, the Gendarmerie laid down their arms which resulted in re-unification of Congo.

Gaza

In 1956 India contributed infantry battalion of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), which monitored the buffer zone between Egypt and the Anglo-French forces. The Indian contingent ensured smooth exchange of prisoners of war. It monitored the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai Peninsula and supervised the cession of hostilities between Egypt and Israel along the Armistice Demarcation line. The Indian peacekeepers maintained peace in the Gaza Strip till May 1967, when war again broke out between Egypt and Israel. In fact even at present an Infantry Battalion Group of India is performing the delicate task of maintaining peace in Southern Lebanon as part of UNIFIL.

Cambodia

India contributed infantry battalion group, field ambulance company, mine training teams, staff personnel and military observers to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) to deal with the Cambodian Crisis, One of the most vicious conflict in recent history. Indian battalion was given the responsibility of handling three most politically sensitive provinces in Cambodia, including the underdeveloped and rather large province of Kampong Cham. The mission was entrusted with the responsibility of disarming large factions and providing secure environment for registration of voters and ensuring electoral security. The Indian field Ambulance provided medical cover to the United Nations Units and Thousands of Locals. The mine training team of India, in conjunction with teams from 14 other countries, undertook large scale demining operations, involving the local community as well.

Somalia

India contributed to UNOSCOM II (United Nations Operations in Somalia) which sought to restore order, promote reconciliation and help rebuild Somalia's civil government and economy. India contributed an all arms infantry brigade group, including armor and helicopters. In addition India also contributed a Naval Task Force of three warships as part of UNITAF (United Task Force). The Indian Brigade did commendable work in very difficult conditions. The Indian Brigade demonstrated to the international community, not only its capability to deal with the military aspects of UN peacekeeping but also its capacity to assist the local community in restoring village level organizations, and providing water supply and humanitarian assistance like medical aid, reviving schools, livestock care and so on.

Namibia

India contributed contingents to the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) which was formed to ensure free and fair elections in Namibia (formerly known as South West Africa). The Indian contingent led by Lt General. Dewan Prem Chand, comprised of 15 military observers, police monitors and electoral supervisors.

In addition to the above discussed operations, India also contributed peacekeeping contingent to United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), which was set up to monitor implementation of the Agreement and assist in the establishment and maintenance of a transitional government in Rwanda. India also contributed contingents to the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) which was dispatched to Angola to monitor the Cuban troops withdrawal. This withdrawal was completed in May 1991.

Sierra Leone

In October 1999, India in pursuance of UN Security Council Resolution, contributed two infantry battalions, Aviation Units and support elements to the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). However in view of the hostilities by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) 221 Indian peacekeepers and 11 military observers had to live under siege, which they faced with great courage. This was greatly commended by the UN as well as the world media. During this operation India lost one of its soldiers. As per the arrangement the Indian troops returned to India in two phases. The first phase of de-induction was completed on 26 December 2000. During this phase 1442 Indian troops returned to India. During the second phase of de-induction 1621 personnel's were de-inducted between 26 January and 11 February 2001.

Lebanon

In 1998 India contributed an infantry battalion comprising of 619 ranks to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) which was established in 1978 after occupation of Southern Lebanon by Israel. Subsequently India contributed another 172 troops to this force. The Indian soldiers played an important role in checking sporadic incidents of violence between the Israel Defense Forces and Hezbollah group.

Kosovo

India also participated in the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and contributed 300 civilian police officers. In addition it deployed two companies comprising of 240 personnel. India also deputed 30 Indian civil servants, who helped in the management of civil administration in Kosovo. The Indian contingent earned great admiration for its discipline and professionalism from various quarters.

Ethiopia and Eritrea

On 31 July, 2000 the UN Security Council adopted a resolution authorizing establishment of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE). India conveyed its readiness to take part in this peacekeeping mission and provided an infantry Battalion, a Force Reserve Company and a Construction Engineering Company. In addition India also contributed Military Observers.

It may be observed that apart from contributing contingents to the various peacekeeping operations. India has contributed outstanding force commanders like Lt General. Dewan Prem Chand, Maj Gen. K S Thimayya, Maj Gen. S P P Throat,

Maj Gen. I J Rikhye, Maj Gen. P S Gyani, LtGen. S Nambiar etc. These commanders greatly helped in generating awareness on peacekeeping, fine tuning the doctrine of peacekeeping and dealing with delicate nuances of such operations.⁸

Nehru's idea of a "World Federation" was a consonance with Wendell Willkie's idea of One World, Envisioning a "Grand World Alliance" for a permanent, lasting and just peace. Imprealism and human catastrophe in various forms still remain and original ideal of one world has a greater relevance in the interacting contemporary world seeking efficient global governance.⁹

Towards supporting and furthering world peace, India has participated in some of the world's most difficult peacekeeping missions. Over the last 61 years 155000+ Indian Troops have donned the Blue Beret in 43 of the 61 United Nation Missions conducted so far. But these have not been without the sacrifice of 140 Indian Blue Berets the highest number amongst troop contributing countries. Today 8504 personnel serve in United Nation Missions, The third largest troop contribution after Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Coupled with supporting the United Nations Charter, India's participation in United Nations Peace keeping Operations has also contributed to the furtherance of its own National Security Interests.

Indian participation in the operations in Korea MNF/NNRC/CFI (1950-54), Cambodia UNAMIC (91-92), UNTAC(92-93) and Timor leste UNMIT (2006) was impelled by India's stake in the political stability of East and South East Asia. India's vital nonrenewable energy interest in West Asia, the significant Indian Diaspora in the region, as well as Historical Connections, have manifested themselves in Indian participation in UN missions in the Gaza Strip and Sinai UNEF 1 (1956-57), Iran/Iraq UNIIMOG (88-91), Iraq/Kuwait UNIKOM (1991-2003), Lebanon UNOGIL (1958) and UNIFIL (1998), Yemen UNYOM (1964) and Golan heights UNDOF 2006 onwards. India's geo strategic interests in the stability and wellbeing of the newly emerged states of Africa has been demonstrated by its contributions and participation in operations in Congo ONUC (1960-63), Namibia UNTAG(89-90), Mozambique

ONUMOZ (92-94), Angola UNAVEM I, II, III (1988-97), MONUA (1997-99), Somalia UNSOM II, (93-94), Liberia UNOMIL (93-97), UNMIL 2007-, Rwanda UNAMIR (93-96), Sierra Leone UNOMSIL (98-99), UNAMSIL (1999-2005), Ethiopia/Eritrea UNMEE (2000-2008), Ivory Coast UNOCI 2004-, Burundi ONUB (2004-2006), and Sudan UNMIS (2006-11) and UNMISS 2011-. India has also contributed military observers to peacekeeping operations in Central America ONUCA (89-92) and El Salvador (91-95).

In the post-Cold War World, India's policy has been directed at moderating the unilateral approach of the more powerful Military Blocs, And it has insisted that its peace operations will only be undertaken under the UN Flag, as opposed to United Nations Mandated Missions that are Regional or Alliance Based. India's denial of troops for NATO/EU or AU deployment needs to be seen in this light.

India's participation in peacekeeping operations is influenced by a number of factors: Assessment of national interests in a given situation, Adherence to the principles of peacekeeping, Bilateral Relations and Consent of all the Parties, Regional Equations, Public perception in Host Country, The Viability of the Mission, the potential for the Professional Enrichment and Exposure of the Armed Forces, Command and Control, Availability of Troops to match the Mandate, and The Time Frame of the Deployment.

United Nations Peacekeeping would need to be forward looking and missions would need to be sustainable. Often preventive deployment would be the answer. In the view of regional intervention gaining currency as a means of restoring peace, India needs to build up capacity to shoulder the lead role amongst South and South East Asian Nations.

Is there a common meeting ground and objective for nations that formulate the mandate, the nations that provide money, and the nations that provide the troops? This is critical to the success of the mission.

As a nation that has participated in most UN Missions., As a Nation that has consistently provided leadership in Peacekeeping at all levels., As a nation where peacemaking, peace keeping and peace building comes naturally due to its basic ethos of nonviolence and reconciliation-India has a lot to contribute to the world peace and harmony.¹⁰

India's claim for UNSC Permanent Seat in perspective of its role in UN Peacekeeping

India has deployed well over 100, 000 Troops, Military Observers and Police Officers in UN Missions over the years but it has not yielded much in terms of its efforts to seek a Permanent Seat in United Nations Security Council, or even in its attempts to seek a Greater Role in World Affairs.

But the large troop contribution does reinforce India's claim for a Permanent Seat when the UNSC is expanded. Besides, it provides handsome monetary compensation and "International Exposure" to soldiers and accrues a lot of Good Will for India on the Global Stage, Especially in places like the Oil and Mineral Rich Africa, Where the new "Great Game" is now being played.¹¹

The killing of five Indian army soldiers serving in the recently created state of South Sudan is a Poignant Reminder of the Sacrifices our Troops have been rendering for Decades to make the World a better place.

Why do Indian soldiers die fighting for distant causes like this ?One of India's biggest contributions to global governance is its constant supply of able, highly skilled, and professional military forces to peacekeeping operations. Many developing countries are eager to depute their soldiers as Blue Berets, but India's Military has the quality that a few can match.

India's peace keeping units are famed in global hot spots for their sensitivity in understanding local contexts, respecting human rights and remaining free of scandals. In 2001, the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan singled out our peace keepers for special praise and told them "You have much to teach the Peace keepers of other Countries, Who may share your enthusiasm and determination, but lack your experience and training".

India's claim to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council is buttressed by claims about our extraordinary talented peace keepers who have been huge assets for promoting safety and normalcy in war devastated countries. The goodwill they earn for our country is invaluable and every drop of blood they shed is worth its weight in gold.

Be it Somalia, Congo or Afghanistan, India has not fled after absorbing grave and dastardly attacks on our Peace keepers and Reconstruction Specialists. Despite losing five comrades in arms, The United Nations has described the present morale of the Indian contingent in South Sudan "Very High". India does not quit when the cause is a worthy one, and all Indians must appreciate the rationale behind this determination by learning in depth about distant conflict zones and their internal and regional dynamics. When our soldiers are laying down their lives in far flung war zones, Indians cannot remain unaware of or indifferent to the fate of this countries.12.

India's Performance as Non Permanent Member of UNSC 2011-2012

Having the choice to set the agenda during its presidency month at the Council, India chose to organize a debate on peacekeeping, a priority issue for the country. During the debate, India called for enhancing resources and strengthening the legal backing for UN peacekeeping operations across the globe. Among other concerns, it flagged the issue of the "severe mismatch" between resources and the "ambitious" mandate of peacekeeping operations. India also called for an "innovative approach" towards peacekeeping, which at times becomes "peace-building". It also suggested improving consultations between the troop contributing countries and the police contributing countries (TCC/PCC) and the Security Council, brought up the issue of joint deployment with regional security organizations and the adoption of a capability-driven approach to peacekeeping that is demand-driven and responsive to national priorities. The only new subject dealt with in an otherwise generic debate was the element of communication between the Council and the TCCs. For a country that is a major contributor to UN peacekeeping missions and has in the past demonstrated impressive credentials with regard to peacekeeping, India was criticized for having 'shied away' from addressing critical issues such as the quality of mission leadership and troops and multiple interpretations of a particular mandate.13.

Conclusion.

Although the clouds of cold war had vanished in the early days of the decade of 1990's global order of peace and stability has continued to be threatened in both old and new ways. Notwithstanding the two wars on Iraq, Foreign invasion as a major danger to peace has diminished in importance and instead, the civil strife's in Africa, Asia and Latin America have played havoc with Political Systems, Economies of Nations and even the lives and Rights of Innocent Men, Women and Children. Societies of Yugoslavia, Haiti, Somalia, Rwanda, Angola, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and many more Countries have become victims of this Disturbing Trend. At United Nations, India disapproved forcible occupation of territory of any state or interference by one state in matters of other states, which are violation of the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, and advocated settlement of problems through negotiation and other peaceful methods.

India strongly supported the sovereign rights of Egypt, Hungary, Congo, Lebanon, and demanded immediate and unconditional ending of fighting whoever started it and for whatever reason. India was remarkably flexible in its approach to peace. We preferred moderation whereby other countries that might have violated rules are given an honorable escape route for restoration of normalcy. This approach was successful and effective in the context of invasion of Egypt by United Kingdom, France and Israel in 1956. Similarly after the 1967 war between Israel and its Arab neighbors, India joined other members in the Security Council in providing a frame work for the coexistence of both Israel and its Arab Neighbors with in secure boundaries after withdrawal from occupied territories.

India supported the military action by the US led coalition-blessed by the United Nations Security council –to free Kuwait. Although many would see softness towards the United States in India's position in United Nations, India opposed the American action in 2003 to remove President Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq, An action the United States launched unilaterally in violation of the UN Charter. India is among the many countries that are worried about the weakening of international institutions and the tendency to impose unilateral preferences over others.

To guard against these unhelpful trends, the United Nations must be suitably strengthened. There is no more important organ of the United Nations than the Security Council, Which needs to be reformed to correct some of the founding weaknesses in its composition and powers. India has argued since 1992 that the Security Council needs Democratization in tune with the changed realities. There is something specific to be noted here, based on its contribution for World Peace and Security, The Appreciation it receives as the World's largest and Functioning Democracy, Its Economic performance and Potential, Many in India are convinced that India deserves a Permanent Seat along with a few other Developing Countries. With only china as a permanent member presently, Asia is grossly under represented; Whereas Africa and Latin America do not have any representation in the inner circle of this important organ. Although consensus on the issue is yet to be reached, India is patiently waiting for a favorable outcome at a future date.

India believes that the cause of peace could be promoted not just through cautionary advice but through concrete action on ground. The peace keeping activity

is the strongest symbol of that action under the United Nations umbrella¹⁴.

Regardless of whether or not India gets a permanent seat on the Council, and indeed especially if it does, India must simultaneously work towards reforming the United Nations. The United Nations must have an efficient and capable bureaucracy, it must have the resources to carry on its work, and it must get past members pushing agendas solely on the basis of state interest. India can actively take the lead on the first two problems. It must commit to sending its best and brightest to serve in the international institution. And it must increase dramatically the amount of money it sends to support UN activities, must send forces and supporting materials to support UN missions, and must in other ways step up to assume a much greater share of the burden of maintaining this crucial international body.

Altering the nature of representation at the UN is by far the trickiest element of change, but it is also the most critical. There needs to be, as David Held has recently argued, “layered cosmopolitan perspectives” that account for local, regional, and national formations. Thomas Weiss, the scholarly authority on the UN, has concluded that global government, as opposed to global governance, is the only way forward. And so, we come full circle, and return to the wise foresight of Gandhi and Nehru.

How precisely one might build up global government in reforming the United Nations is not surprisingly a matter of some debate. Proposals include weighted voting schemes and the creation of a new, democratically elected global parliament. India must examine these proposals carefully and take a stand in support of a plan that balances the voices of states with voices of people grouped together under a number of varied rubrics. Only by becoming more responsive and representative will the international institution live up to the dreams of its creators and the needs of our time.

An India that leads the way on human rights, climate control, and the fight against poverty and injustice, that assumes greater responsibility in and for the United Nations, that partners with the United States even as it partners with other countries around the world, and that tirelessly works to reform the UN will be an India that the world admires and respects. It will be at the forefront of the creation of a better tomorrow for all of earth’s children. Nehru’s words echo across the decades: “All this may seem fantastic and impractical in the modern world.... And yet we have seen repeated failure of other methods and nothing can be less practical than to pursue a method that has failed again and again.”¹⁵

End Notes

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