



Mains Practice Question

Q.How does the concept of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping as a "necessary but imperfect tool" reflect its role in maintaining the global peace order? What role has India played in supporting these missions? **(250 words)**

29 Oct, 2024 GS Paper 2 International Relations

Approach

- Provide a brief introduction to UN peacekeeping and its objectives
- Discuss the necessity and challenges of UN peacekeeping missions.
- Highlight the role of India in UN peacekeeping missions.
- Conclude by suggesting measures to enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions.

Introduction

UN Peacekeeping refers to the **activities carried out by the United Nations (UN) to help maintain or restore international peace** and security in conflict-affected areas. Over the past seven decades, more than **1 million men and women** have served under the UN flag in over **70 peacekeeping operations**.

Body

Necessity and Achievements of UN peacekeeping missions. :

- **Conflict Resolution:** UN peacekeepers have successfully resolved conflicts in countries such as **Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone**. Overall, interstate conflicts have **decreased by 40% since 1945**.
- **Humanitarian Aid:** Peacekeepers have protected over **125 million civilians in conflict zones** and facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance, supporting refugee returns and resettlement.
- **State Building:** They have supported **democratic elections in over 75 countries** and helped establish functioning government institutions, alongside assisting in security sector reforms and training.

Imperfections and Limitations of UN peacekeeping missions :

- **Power Politics and Veto Exploitation:** The increasing polarization among P5 members has led to **frequent use of veto power, particularly in critical situations**.
 - Since 2011, **Russia has used its veto 19 times**, with 14 focused on Syria with remaining vetoes addressed **Ukraine, Srebrenica, Yemen, and Venezuela**.
- **Resource Constraints and Funding Challenges:** Major powers' reluctance to increase funding has led to understaffed missions.
 - For instance, **UNIFIL in Lebanon** operates with limited resources despite increased tensions.
- **Changing Nature of Conflicts:** Modern conflicts involve complex **urban warfare, cyber**

elements, and non-state actors, which traditional peacekeeping isn't equipped to handle.

- The Gaza conflict exemplifies this, where **traditional buffer-zone peacekeeping approaches are inadequate for urban combat situations.**
- **Credibility Crisis and Past Failures:** Historical failures continue to haunt UN peacekeeping's reputation.
 - The **inability to prevent genocides in Rwanda and Srebrenica**, coupled with recent inaction in contemporary conflicts, has eroded global confidence. .
- **Emerging Regional Alternatives:** Regional organizations are increasingly taking lead roles in peacekeeping operations.
 - The **African Union's peace operations in Somalia (ATMIS)**, and Arab League's growing role in regional disputes show a shift toward regional solutions.
- **Lack of Political Will for Reform:** Despite numerous proposals for reforming UN peacekeeping, including the **2015 HIPPO report recommendations**, implementation remains slow.
 - The proposed expansion of the **Security Council to include nations like India** and reforms in veto power remain stalled.

India's Contribution to Peacekeeping Missions:

- **Historical Leadership and Personnel Contribution:** India has been the largest **cumulative contributor of UN peacekeepers**, with more than **2,53,000 troops, participating in more than 49 missions.**
- **Medical Expertise:** India has mobilized efforts to assemble two teams of medical specialists to be deployed in the **Hospitals at the UN Missions in DR Congo and South Sudan.**
- **Specialized Military Capabilities: Indian Aviation Contingent-I (IAC-I)** was inducted at **Goma (with four Mi-25 attack helicopters and five Mi-17 utility helicopters)** in 2003 providing critical air support.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** The **Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK) in New Delhi** has a track record of having more than 67,000 personnel who have participated in 37 out of the 56 U.N. peacekeeping missions.
- **Women in Peacekeeping:** India has deployed **Female Engagement Teams (FETs) in Democratic Republic of Congo and Abyei (the second-largest Indian women contingent after Liberia).**

Conclusion

To enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions, the UN should implement structural reforms in the Security Council, create rapid response mechanisms, and establish clear mandates. Financial enhancements, such as mandatory funding and public-private partnerships, should be prioritized alongside technological modernization using AI and surveillance.