India’s role in UN Peacekeeping Missions

Why in news?

There is a need to invest more in technology and resources for the safety of United Nations (UN) Peacekeepers deployed in conflict-torn regions.

What is UN peacekeeping?

- **UNDPO –** The UN Peacekeeping, governed by the Department of Peace Operations (UNDPO), assists countries tormented by conflict in their journey towards sustained peace.
- It follows 3 fundamental principles: consent of the parties, impartiality, and refraining from the use of force, except in self-defence.
- Since 1948, UN Peacekeepers have undertaken 71 Field Missions.
- There are approximately 81,820 personnel serving on 13 peace operations led by UNDPO, in four continents currently.
- **Countries contributed –** A total of 119 countries have contributed military and police personnel to UN peacekeeping.

What is the role of UN peacekeepers?

- **Peacekeepers –** They protect civilians, actively prevent conflict, reduce violence, strengthen security and empower national authorities to assume these responsibilities.
- This requires a coherent security and peacebuilding strategy that supports the political strategy.
- UN peacekeeping helps host countries to become more resilient to conflict, laying the groundwork to sustain long-term peace, including by addressing root causes of conflict.

What is India’s contribution to UN Peacekeeping?

- India has a long history of service in UN Peacekeeping, having contributed more personnel than any other country.
- India has also provided, and continues to provide, eminent Force Commanders for UN Missions.
- **TCC –** India is the fifth largest troop contributor (TCC) with 5,323 personnel deployed in 8 out of 13 active UN Peacekeeping Missions, of which 166 are police personnel.
- India ranks third after Bangladesh (7,237) and Nepal (6,264) in troops contribution.
- **Highest fatalities –** India also holds the unfortunate record of having the highest fatalities due to malicious acts, during UN peacekeeping missions.
- A total 175 Indian peacekeepers have so far died while serving with the United Nations.
- India has lost more peacekeepers than any other UN Member State.

What are the incidents of India's participation in UN Peacekeeping missions?

- **Korea –** India's contribution to UN Peacekeeping began with its participation in the UN operation in Korea in the 1950s.
- India's mediatory role in resolving the stalemate over prisoners of war in Korea led to the signing of the armistice that ended the Korean War.
- India chaired the 5 member Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission, while the Indian Custodian Force supervised the process of interviews and repatriation that followed.
- **Middle East –** The UN entrusted the Indian armed forces with subsequent peace missions in the Middle East, Cyprus, and the Congo.
- **East Asia –** India also served as Chair of the 3 international commissions for supervision and control for Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos established by the 1954 Geneva Accords on Indochina.

What is the role of women in Indian Peacekeeping?

- India has been sending women personnel on UN Peacekeeping Missions.
- In 2007, India became the *first country to deploy an all-women contingent* to a UN Peacekeeping Mission.
- The Formed Police Unit in Liberia provided 24-hour guard duty and conducted night patrols in the capital Monrovia, and helped to build the capacity of the Liberian police.
- These women officers not only played a role in restoring security in the West African nation but also contributed to an increase in the number of women in Liberia's security sector.

What are the additional services offered by India?

- **Medical camps –** Medical care is among the many services Indian Peacekeepers provide to the communities in which they serve on behalf of the Organization.
- **Veterinary support –** They also perform specialised tasks such as veterinary support and engineering services.

Are Indian efforts recognised?

- The Indian contingent in the Upper Nile region have all received UN Medals of Honour.
- India had the honour of providing two Military Advisers, one Female Police Adviser, and one Deputy Military Adviser to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

India was the first country to contribute to the Trust Fund on sexual exploitation and abuse, which was set up in 2016.

What is the way forward?

- It is critical that troop and police contributing countries should be fully involved at all stages and in all aspects of mission planning.

- There should be greater financial and human resources for peace-building in post-conflict societies, where UNPKOs have been mandated, according to officials.
- India is of the view that the international community must grasp the rapid changes that are underway in the nature and role of contemporary peacekeeping operations.
- The Security Council's mandates to UN Peacekeeping operations need to be rooted in ground realities, and co-related with the resources provided for the peacekeeping operation

Quick Facts

United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF)

- The first United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was established to supervise the ceasefire between Egypt and Israel, which operated along the border for the next 10 years.

United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC)

- Days after the Republic of the Congo, a former Belgium colony attained independence on 30 June 1960, disorder and chaos broke out.
- This prompted Belgium to send its troops to the Congo in the name of restoring law and order and protecting Belgian nationals, without the consent of the Congolese Government.
- The need for authorised military assistance led to the formation of the United Nations Operation in the Congo/ Opération des Nations Unies au Congo (ONUC).

United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM)

- Following President Siad Barre's downfall in 1991, Somalia plunged into a civil war between factions supporting Interim President Ali Mahdi Mohamed and General Mohamed Farah Aidid.
- The UN and other organizations intervened to resolve the conflict and provide humanitarian aid.
- This lead to ceasefire and the establishment of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM).

References

1. The Indian Express │India's role in UN Peacekeeping Missions
2. The Hindu │75 years of peacekeeping

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