

Nepal's Contributions to UN Peacekeeping



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Joint Workshop by ISAS, COSATT and KAS

Nepal's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping

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Executive Summary

While Nepalese peacekeepers have served in peace building efforts across the world, regrettably little critical analysis has been done on their contributions to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions, even as the contours of peacekeeping duties and missions, and the expectations thereof from nations providing the troops, are evolving. Both UN peacekeeping and Nepali contributions to global security have changed and turned increasingly complex in the last two decades, with hybrid conflicts increasing and insurgents in various theatres now using sophisticated weapons and communication devices unavailable to peacekeepers. Nepali peacekeepers have nevertheless undertaken such challenges and been commended by the international community. Not only the Nepal army, but also the armed police force and Nepal police personnel have also contributed to UN peacekeeping.

This gives rise to several questions worth considering in the wider context of South Asia's contributions towards global peace. What are the motivations – both internal and external – in Nepal's enthusiastic support for peacekeeping? How have the peacekeeping missions changed Nepal's international profile? What do Nepali contributions to peacekeeping reveal about Kathmandu's aspirations and challenges in dealing with global multilateral institutions?

This Special Report specifically assesses Nepal's participation in peacekeeping missions from three broad perspectives: international relations, international security and domestic politics.

Introduction

On 19 April 2021, a hybrid event on 'Nepal's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping' was organised by the Consortium of South Asian Think-Tanks (COSATT), in cooperation with the Political Dialogue Asia Programme of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), and the Institute of South Asian Studies-ISAS (Singapore), in Kathmandu, Nepal. The event was inaugurated by Nepal's Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali. Security and strategic affairs experts, including serving and retired army personnel, senior police officers, think tank representatives and the media attended the workshop.

Ever since Nepal became a member of the UN in 1955 and deployed five observers to the UN Military Observation Group in Lebanon in 1958, its contributions to UN peacekeeping have been part of the bedrock of global peace and security. Nepal has contributed to UN peacekeeping missions for over six decades, making it the second-largest contributor to peacekeeping operations (as of 2021). Till date, Nepali soldiers have taken part in over 40 missions in countries such as Lebanon, Iraq, Mali, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Ongoing missions include Yemen, Libya, the Central African Republic, Syria, Mali, Lebanon, Israel, Western Sahara, South Sudan and the Congo.

Nepalese blue helmets' contributions to protecting vulnerable communities and assisting in countries' transition from war to peace has won them accolades as 'Peace Champions'. When the UN and its Secretary General were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001, Kofi Annan took a Nepali peacekeeper along with him to receive the prize. The country's peacekeepers have also received additional international recognition, such as when they were awarded UN medals, and for playing a pivotal role in the Multi-dimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in the Central African Republic to promote security, stability and peace in the Central African Republic. Today, more than 5,000 Nepali soldiers, including female contingents, serve in 12 different missions of the UN across the globe.

However, although Nepalese peacekeepers have served in peace building efforts across the world, little critical analysis has been done on the changing contours of peacekeeping duties and missions, or on the expectations thereof from troops-contributing nations such as Nepal. Both UN peacekeeping and Nepali contributions to global security have evolved and turned increasingly complex in the last two decades.

What are the internal and external motivations in Nepal's enthusiastic support for peacekeeping? How have the peacekeeping missions changed the country's international profile? What can the Nepali contributions to peacekeeping efforts reveal about Kathmandu's aspirations and challenges in dealing with global multilateral institutions? What are the similarities and differences in the Nepali approach compared to other South Asian contributors? This workshop specifically assessed the country's participation in peacekeeping missions from three broad perspectives: international relations, international security and domestic politics. It also explored comparative perspectives from other South Asian countries.

The Special Report has been organised according to the presentations provided by the speakers during the workshop. The key takeaways from each presentation, except for the foreign minister, have been summarised and ordered in such a way so as to frame significant trends within the UN's peacekeeping operations over time; the duties required of troops-contributing countries such as Nepal, and what their evolution entails; as well as a detailed accounting of Nepal's specific contributions and the challenges arising from them.

The report opens with Foreign Minister Gyawali's unredacted inaugural address, which – through his overview of Nepal's contributions, perceptions and challenges to peacekeeping – sets the analytical agenda. It provides an overview on the role of peacekeeping missions and their significance, highlighting Nepal's efforts in the context of the peacekeeping contributions made throughout South Asia, which, as one speaker argues, have not been well-recognised or acknowledged. Since the first deployment in 1948, the scope of UN peacekeeping operations has evolved significantly, advancing from 'ceasefire monitoring' to 'multi-dimensional' operations. It now entails not only military and police personnel, but also civilian experts of various fields such as rule of law, justice, human rights, gender equality, women empowerment and economic reconstruction for promoting peace, stability and development.

As global peacekeeping has evolved, the UN has expected higher standards from its members, even as peacekeeping mandates grow more complex. Peacekeepers, for instance, must avoid greater risks of attacks and adapt to the vagaries of technological change as well as the cultures of unknown lands. At the same time, inequalities persist in the types of participation provided by richer and lesser developed countries. The analyses, as they progress, underscore how the global burden of international crisis management has mostly been borne by the Global South. While such hierarchies pose challenges, it was pointed out that Nepal can also leverage its high levels of contributions to enhance its foreign policy.

During the workshop, the indispensability of the UN and its principles were well-appreciated, including the perceived necessity to balance comprehensive as well as targeted approaches to peacekeeping missions. There are three basic principles of UN peacekeeping operations: i) consent (by the host country); ii) impartiality; and iii) non-use of force (except in self-defence or defence of the mandate). There are also set purposes – to protect civilians, actively prevent conflicts, reduce violence, strengthen security and empower national authorities to ultimately assume these responsibilities – which require a coherent security and peace-building strategy that supports the overall political mandate. This is also true amid critical challenges such as strengthening the rule of law and navigating power-sharing arrangements.

The presentations also touched on the substantive role of the Nepal army and police, providing a transition from principles the military component of Nepali support, especially as the UN is reliant on member state's military and police personnel to undertake and fulfill its missions. Nepal has lately become the UN Peacekeeping Mission's second-largest troop contributor. It had previously been in fourth place. Over 135,000 Nepalese personnel have participated, and over 80 Nepali peacekeepers have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. Currently, the country has about 5,700 personnel serving in 12 peacekeeping operations. Nepal has thus earned an international repute as a country committed to upholding the principles as stipulated in the UN Charter. 'The norms of world peace' has been one of the fundamental bases of Nepal's foreign policy.

The report concludes by appraising the unique cultural character and values of Nepalese soldiers, who have earned them the title of 'Peace Champions', and how Nepal has institutionally pooled knowledge and expertise for regional benefit. While Western countries are reducing troop contributions, the South Asian countries have been stepping forward. However, although Nepalese troops have been deployed globally, only six Lieutenant Generals have been Force Commanders till date, and it was felt during the workshop that Nepal needs to lobby harder and more extensively to win these prestigious positions. Nepalese peacekeepers continue to have a multi-dimensional and robust involvement in peacekeeping, despite being subjected to harsh conditions on the field. As such, their armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and other logistics need to be at par with other troop-sending nations. Training in the French language was also deemed essential as there are several conflicts in French speaking countries of Africa.

Perspectives and Challenges in Nepal's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping

*Honorable Pradeep Kumar Gyawali
Former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Nepal*

I would like to commend the efforts of ISAS, COSATT and KAS for organising this event on 'Nepal's Contribution to UN Peacekeeping'. I thank the hosts for inviting me to share my thoughts on a theme, which is of paramount importance for Nepal.

I will focus on three key aspects: Nepal's contribution to UN peacekeeping; our perspectives on peacekeeping; and the challenges we face in our efforts to further enhance this flagship contribution of Nepal to the cause of international peace and security.

Since the first deployment in 1948, the scope of UN peacekeeping operations has evolved significantly. Over the seven decades, UN peacekeeping has advanced itself from 'ceasefire monitoring' to 'multi-dimensional' operations. It now entails not only military and police personnel, but also civilian experts of various fields such as rule of law, justice, human rights, women empowerment and economic reconstruction for promoting peace, stability and development.

Peacekeeping has continued to remain not only a unique innovation, but also an effective tool available to the UN to maintain peace and security in the troubled parts of the world. It is more so during the crises. Therefore, the call for adequate and predictable resources and support to UN peacekeeping missions has been more critical than ever before.

In line with Nepal's unflinching faith in the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, we have been a steadfast partner and a consistent contributor to UN peacekeeping since 1958, which was only three years after our joining the UN. Needless to say, Nepal's decision to join the UN peacekeeping was to support the noble cause of maintenance of international peace, security and stability. Over six decades, our peacekeepers have acquired immense international exposure and experience of working in a complex security environment. The longstanding involvement of our personnel has helped them treasure the skills, expertise and confidence required in a professional army.

Through participation in UN peacekeeping, Nepal has earned an international repute as a country committed to upholding the principles as stipulated in the UN Charter. 'The norms of world peace' has been one of the fundamental bases of Nepal's foreign policy. We wish to prosper in peace and spread the same message to the global community through our blue helmets. After all, peace, harmony and compassion are the innate attributes that we inherited from Buddha, the apostle of peace and the enlightened son of Nepal.

Nepal contributes to UN peacekeeping in multiple ways.

First, through its constructive participation in different international negotiations, Nepal contributes to the setting of normative frameworks, which guide the peacekeeping operations. It is an active member of the Special Committee on UN peace operations, popularly known as the C34 Committee at the UN. Nepal focuses particularly on improving the safety and security of UN peacekeepers, enhancing partnership among different stakeholders, protecting the civilians, peace-building and sustaining peace in conflict-affected countries, and enhancing the participation of women and youths in peacekeeping and peace-building activities. Nepal also participates in the triennial Contingent-Owned Equipment (COE) working group, which determines the rates of reimbursements to the troop and police-contributing countries. It chaired the COE working group in 2017. Similarly, Nepal is active in the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, which deliberates on all aspects of peacekeeping and special political missions. Nepal has served twice as the Chair of the Fourth Committee as of now.

Second, Nepal contributes financially to UN peacekeeping operations by paying the assessed contribution as per the rules of the UN. The assessed contribution to each of the missions is based on the size of the economy of a country.

Third and importantly, it contributes through the deployment of troops, form police units and individual police and military officers, at the request of the UN headquarters. Nepal has also contributed through the provision of niche capabilities such as engineers, military police and special force contingents. Additionally, Nepali civilian experts have participated in peace missions in their personal capacity. Nepal has thus far participated in 61 peacekeeping and special political missions with a total contribution of more than 151,000 peacekeepers. As of March 2021, a total of 5,681 Nepali peacekeepers have been serving in 12 peacekeeping and special political missions in 11 countries. Currently, Nepal is the fourth major troops and police contributing country (T/PCC). However, this achievement has its own cost. Eighty-two fellow compatriots have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of their duty with hundreds of others left wounded.

Nepal has always responded positively to every call of the UN even at the shortest notice. Our peacekeepers are deployed in some of the most fragile and complex security environments. Nepal deploys its peacekeepers without any national caveat to enhance the performance of peacekeepers. We have stated our commitment that we stand ready to contribute 10 per cent of our total military size to peacekeeping missions at the UN's request.

Nepal has supported every effort of the UN Secretary-General on combating Sexual Exploitations and Abuse (SEA). It has also signed the Voluntary Compact on preventing and addressing the SEA. It has been implementing a zero-tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers.

Similarly, Nepal has already endorsed the Kigali principles on the protection of civilians. Before deployment, we provide tailor-made training to its peacekeepers, which includes, inter alia, the issues of protection of civilians, human rights and humanitarian law, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Aware of the responsibility of the peacekeeping missions to promote the sustainability of the local ecosystem, Nepali peacekeepers have also contributed to preserving the sanctity of the local environment.

Fourth, Nepal contributes to enhancing the professional capabilities of peacekeepers from other fellow troops contributing countries. Birendra Peace Operations Training Centre in Panchkhal, the oldest training institute in the region, has earned a reputation as a centre of excellence for peacekeeping training, and

its courses are recognised by the UN.

Allow me to share some of our general perspectives on peacekeeping:

We believe that for the achievement of sustainable peace, the UN peace operations need to aim at addressing the root causes of conflict. This may require a coordinated and inclusive socio-economic transformation of the conflict-affected countries. And for that to happen, system-wide coherence – including in planning, designing and executing of peace operations – is critical. We should be mindful that the UN peacekeepers are not the permanent force but the interim means that help generate an environment for the conflicting parties to find an appropriate political solution to the conflict. Peacekeepers, by the virtue of who they are and what their mandate is, should refrain from being involved in the internal political dynamics of the place they are deployed. Deployment of peacekeepers should be demand-driven.

Nepal also believes that peacekeeping missions cannot substitute an inclusive and nationally owned conflict resolution method. It underlines the importance of national ownership and leadership in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. The root causes of conflicts should be addressed through a participatory political settlement. Since sustainable development and sustaining peace approaches complement and reinforce each other, the prevention strategies should be integrated into the national development plan.

Likewise, every conflict situation is different from the other and would need its own kind of solution. Nepal itself has well-demonstrated that a nationally driven, homegrown political process cannot only best manage the post conflict situation, but also ensure sustainable peace in the society.

The local community, including the youth, women, community leaders and social activists, should be engaged in the promotion of social harmony, tolerance and understanding among themselves. Externally imposed measures cannot be sustainable. The ownership and primacy of local actors should be strengthened. To take Nepal's example once again, during Nepal's peace process, around 2,800 Local Peace Committees were established at the local level. These committees were instrumental in promoting people's participation in building and sustaining peace.

We believe that the cardinal principles of peacekeeping, such as the consent of the parties, impartiality and non-use of force, except in self-defence and defence of the mandate, are important fundamentals for achieving a political solution to a conflict.

The mandates of peacekeeping missions should be clear, achievable, realistic, sequenced and prioritised with adequate and predictable financing. Similarly, the mandates should support the host government's initiatives for achieving sustainable development with sustained peace. Success of peacekeeping operations largely depends on the full ownership by the UN Security Council as well as the clear definition of roles of responsibilities and the key actors. Also, any mismatch between mandates and resources jeopardises the functioning of the mission as well as safety and security of peacekeepers.

Equally importantly, it is that mandates should be clearly communicated to the peacekeepers at the operational level on the ground. The performance of the mission should be considered a responsibility of the mission leadership. The leadership should be empowered as well as held accountable for the

whole-of-mission performance including for the performance of the troops and police, for which mission-specific performance indicators are essential.

To ensure the overall ownership of the mandate of the peacekeeping operation, it is important that the prospective troops contributing countries be adequately consulted. Nepal also stresses that commensurate with its contribution to UN peacekeeping, the participation of Nepali citizens in senior positions, both in the fields as well as at the UNHQs, should be increased.

Participation in peace missions is not devoid of risks and challenges. I take this opportunity to highlight a few of these challenges and share my thoughts on how these can be addressed.

First, in recent years, the security threats and targeted attacks against UN peacekeepers have increased considerably. Nepal upholds that the safety and security of the lives and dignity of the peacekeepers should be adequately guaranteed through the development of a mechanism to provide timely support and reinforcement to the peacekeeping missions when needed. Nepal encourages the Secretariat to enhance the safety and security of the peacekeepers including through the utilisation of new and reliable technologies. We also emphasise the importance of peacekeepers' health security including during the current pandemic.

Second, the lack of timely procurement of contingent owned equipment, including APCs, has also hampered the timely deployment of our peacekeepers. It has also compromised their safety and security.

Third, the delayed reimbursement for the service rendered to the peacekeeping missions has affected maintaining and enhancing the existing operational capabilities and training activities of the peacekeepers. The lack of adequate resources due to the late payment and withholding assessed contributions from certain UN member states has resulted in deferred reimbursement to the troops contributing countries.

And fourth, the demand for high-technology troops is ever increasing in multidimensional missions. The use of frontier technologies like drones, artificial intelligence, etc., is increasing to ensure the effective implementation of the mission mandates, including protection of civilians, and safety and security of peacekeepers. Investing in these capabilities has emerged as a new challenge before us.

You may all agree that Nepal is known for the impeccable track record of loyalty, professionalism and world-class performance of its peacekeepers. We are committed to take measures for further enhancement of our peacekeepers' profile and performance – be it through greater effort to meet the gender parity benchmark of the United Nations or through investment in exposure of our security forces to the advanced technology.

I conclude by expressing my gratitude to all peacekeepers for their sincere contribution to the noble cause of upholding peace and security around the world. I am sure today's discussion will provide wider perspectives on how the peacekeeping role of the UN can be made more effective, sustainable and attuned to the changing circumstances. I wish the workshop a productive and successful outcome.

I thank you for your attention.

Peacekeeping as a Concept

Prof. C Raja Mohan

Peacekeeping has proven to be one of the most effective UN tools for assisting host countries in navigating the difficult transition from conflict to peace. It has distinct advantages, such as legitimacy, burden sharing and the ability to deploy and sustain troops and police from all over the world, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to accomplish multifaceted missions.

Today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations are tasked with not only maintaining peace and security, but also facilitating the political process, protecting civilians, assisting in disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, supporting election organisation, protecting and promoting human rights, strengthening democracy and assisting in the restoration of the rule of law.

Peacekeeping has always been a fluid process that has changed in response to new challenges. Because UN Peacekeeping is almost always deployed in the most physically and politically challenging environments, success is never guaranteed. However, over the course of its six decades of existence, the UN Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) have established a track record of success, including winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan are among the top contributors to UN peacekeeping missions worldwide. These four South Asian nations have signified and reinforced the importance of South Asia as a region to global peace. However, their genuine effort and contribution have not been well-recognised and acknowledged. Therefore, there is a need to study and appreciate the contributions made by the individual member states as well as South Asia as a region to establish world peace and harmony.

Nepalese peacekeepers are known for their unwavering professionalism, dedication, impartiality and dedication to the mandate. Internationally, Nepalese peacekeepers have been praised for their efforts to restore peace, stability and normalcy in conflict zones.

UN's Expectations and Challenges

Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Balananda Sharma

Nepal joined the UN in 1955, and the Nepal army has been involved in UN peacekeeping missions for more than half a century, with over 135,041 personnel serving in 43 missions. The army's long involvement with UN peacekeeping missions began in 1958 with a modest deployment of five military observers in Lebanon (UN Observer Group in Lebanon). In 1974, the Nepali army deployed its troops for peacekeeping, making it the first Nepalese contingent. Nepal places high importance to peacekeeping operations that are in line with its foreign policy objectives. It sees the peacekeeping missions as an important tool to maintain ceasefire, saving lives and property, and preventing human rights violations in conflict-affected areas.

The Nepali army has also made contributions by sending force commanders such as the recent Force Commander in the UN Disengagement Observer Force to Syria. It has also made a significant contribution by providing niche capabilities like engineers, medical teams and Special Forces contingents. Their commitment to duty and outstanding performance has received widespread praise. However, this has taken a heavy toll on the organisation's personnel. To-date, more than 80 Nepalese personnel have sacrificed their lives on the altar of world peace, while another 66 have been physically disabled.

The story of Major Kabindra Jung Thapa deployed in Congo in 2005 is one such example. At the time, the contingent of the country responsible for an unstable area refused to send in their troops. Thus, Nepal was requested to send its troops, and it obliged. Later, the Force Commander had voiced his regret in never being able to thank the contingent that not only followed the order, but also successfully completed the task, as Major Thapa's life was lost in the very altercation. This example showed the level of commitment of Nepal to peacekeeping.

UN's Expectations

UN peacekeeping missions assist conflict-torn countries in establishing conditions conducive to long-term peace. UN peacekeepers provide security as well as political and peace building assistance to countries transitioning from conflict to peace. The UN wants full commitment from the troop contributing country (TCC) as it wants to enhance the performance. However, the TCC normally waits for home instructions. Most troops in UN missions come from developing and least developed countries. The TCCs want to actively collaborate with the Secretariat in ensuring the rapid deployment of well-trained and well-equipped peacekeepers. The troops of rich nations' unwillingness to co-work with the troops of poor countries in the conflict zone has been noticed.

New and much stricter standards are being adopted by the UN. It promulgates a series of guidelines on the COE, conduct and discipline unit and human resources vetting, framework classification's evaluation of military entities and the operation readiness assurance Framework. They are cumbersome and place a lot of administrative burden on T/PCCs.

Challenges

UN peacekeeping faces increasingly difficult challenges, including attacks against peacekeepers, complex mandates and uneven political support. It is becoming increasingly difficult to carry out responsibilities. Similarly, the UN expects the TCCs to improve their performance through the use of modern technology. (Weapons used in training are not the same as weapons used in combat.)

For the deployed force, it is difficult to acclimate to a new culture, a new dietary habit and a new language. The job isn't done just by issuing a mandate and giving a directive. Those on the ground must be constantly supported. Individuals working in the field should be empowered by the UN. The issue is that the rich countries are losing interest in UN peace keeping jobs. As such, most contributors are from developing countries. However, the glaring disparity is that the leadership positions are held by the wealthy and powerful nations. They believe that third-world countries are incapable of providing leadership, but this is not the case. Given the opportunities, these countries can also justify their leadership positions and successfully conclude difficult missions. Third world countries are accused of participating in these missions for the money they receive, but their sacrifices have gone unnoticed.

Peacekeeping as a Foreign Policy Tool

D B Subedi

For more than six decades, Nepalese women and men have served as UN peacekeepers all around the world. They protect vulnerable communities and assist countries in their efforts to maintain law and order, often at a great personal risk and in difficult circumstances.

Peacekeeping has been constantly evolving as a tool of international crisis management. The global burden of UN-led peacekeeping is borne by countries in the Global South. The UN peacekeeping budget for 2020-2021 has been approved at US\$6.58 billion (S\$8.83 billion) per country or US\$1,500 (S\$2,012) per soldier. The nature of future conflicts and security will determine the future of peacekeeping. There are four approaches to international peacekeeping:

1. Realist inspired 'self-risk calculation';
2. Liberal approach to 'collective security';
3. Public/private good approach: to halt the conflict; and
4. Civil-military relations approach.

Peacekeeping duties have gradually evolved from a 'minimalist mission' (ceasefire monitoring and stability) to 'multi-dimensional peacemaking', such as assistance and monitoring during elections. Moreover, the emergence of new conflict actors and security threats necessitates creative peacekeeping responses. As a way forward, he suggested that from the foreign policy point of view, our proposed priority should be the IED model:

1. Influence (international system, order and global governance);
2. Enhance (National prestige, position and power); and
3. Diffuse and Avert (regional and international conflict and security threats).

UN Peacekeeping and Nepal's Position

Rajesh Shrestha

While discussing Nepal's contribution to UN peacekeeping, it is important to acknowledge the country's strong belief in the UN's centrality and indispensability in multilateral affairs, how much importance the country attaches to the centrality and indispensability of the UN in multilateral affairs, especially in maintaining of international peace and security and promoting international cooperation for economic and social development.

Since October 2002, the Armed Police Force (APF) has made significant contributions as advisers, instructors and monitors in missions such as the UN Guards Contingent in Iraq; UN Mission in Kosovo; UN Mission in Liberia; UN Mission in Sierra Leone; UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti; UN Mission in Sudan; UN-Africa Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID); UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste; and UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. The APF has currently two formed police units (FPU) in The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) with the strength of 180 and 140 respectively. Currently, 10 APF officers are deployed in various UN missions as individual police officers (IPOs). A total of 7,224 personnel (male: 6,956, female: 268) have participated in UN peacekeeping missions as members of the APF's FPUs and 845 (male: 831, female: 14) as IPOs.

However, while mentioning the existing concerns and issues, a balance must be struck between the need for a comprehensive approach and the need for clear, focused mandates. While planning peace operations, it is important to consider the realities on the ground. Similarly, coordination among the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the T/PCCs and UN field missions as well as women's participation in the UNPKO must be improved and increased.

Nepal Police in UN Peacekeeping Operations

Honorable Nawaraj Silwal

Internal and External Considerations

UN peacekeeping is guided by three basic principles: consent of the parties; impartiality; non-use of force except in self-defense; and defense of the mandate. All the deployments and operations should always consider and follow these principles. Similarly, protecting civilians, actively preventing conflicts, reducing violence, strengthening security and empowering national authorities to assume these responsibilities are some of the imperative purposes of the UNPKO. This requires a coherent security and peace building strategy that supports political strategy. Nepal has been deprived of the benefits that it should have received, given the sizable contributions it has made to the UNPKO. Nepal has been deprived of leadership roles.

The model often followed by UN peacekeeping operations involves the 'Interactive Triangle' of peace, democracy and development. Without peace, developmental gains are quickly destroyed. Without democracy fair distribution of economic progress is unlikely. And without sustainable development the disparities become marked and can be a cause for unrest.

Nepal Police in the UNPKO

The Nepal police first participated in the United Nations Protection Force Mission, established in former Yugoslavia, on 12 March 1992 at the call of the UN. Since then, the Nepal police personnel have been participating in peacekeeping missions in various countries and are currently working in Sudan (UNAMID), South Sudan (UNMISS), Somalia (UN Assistance Mission in Somalia), Congo (UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo), Mali (UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali) and UN Interim Security Force for Abyei missions. In line with the Nepali government's commitment to international peace, the goal is to select qualified and efficient Nepal police personnel and involve as many police personnel as possible in the UN missions as professional IPOs/FPUs.

Challenges of the UNPKO

The UN is in the midst of its worst financial crisis in a decade, as nearly one-third of its member states have failed to pay their dues. This has undoubtedly influenced the UNPKO. Also, in recent years, there have been an increasing number of casualties caused by acts of violence against peacekeepers. The police contributing countries need to adapt to a new reality that the blue helmet and the UN flag no longer provide 'natural' protection. Armed groups, organised criminals and street gangs nowadays exist side by side with insurgents in conflict environments. Although the era of 'Chapter VI-style' peacekeeping has passed, the UN and T/PCCs are still plagued by the 'Chapter VI Syndrome'. The UN and T/PCCs will be knowingly sending troops into harm's way if they do not change their mindset, take risks and show a willingness to face these new challenges.

If the UN and T/PCCs do not upgrade the quality leadership, operational behaviour, use of force, defensive posture, principles of peacekeeping, selection of TCCs/PCCs, pre-deployment training, equipment, intelligence and technology, the casualties will continue to occur, and may even increase.

Financial Contributions of UN Peacekeeping States

Dr. Dinesh Bhattarai

Peacekeeping is an innovative idea as it was never explicitly mentioned in the UN Charter at the beginning. As the UN lacks its own armed forces, it relies on member states to provide military and police personnel to carry out peacekeeping missions.

Military personnel from the UNPKO are responsible for a variety of peacekeeping missions. They range from protecting civilians and securing relief efforts to negotiating the conditions of their day-to-day operations with local authorities or warlords, as well as dealing with the constant threat of armed attacks.

UN peacekeeping is an integral part of Nepal's military contributions to the cause of world peace. Despite its formal entry to the UN in 1955, Nepal sent its first permanent representative a year later. Rishikesh Shaha served as Nepal's first permanent representative to the UN from 1956 to 1960. Nepal has no geopolitical agenda when it comes to peacekeeping, which is one of its strengths. In line with its foreign policy objectives, as stated in Articles 50 and 51 of its Constitution, Nepal has been responding to the call of the UN in various trouble spots. Since then, it has continuously contributed to the UNPKO.

Despite its modest military in size, Nepal is one of the top contributors of troops to UN peacekeeping missions. Given the fact that the UN has 193 member states, this ranking is a huge accomplishment for Nepal. Late King Mahendra had said that small states like Nepal come with great dedication and consistent contributions. So, small states have worked to ensure that the great powers do not monopolise the UN. As there is no alternative to the UN; it has to be more effective, more democratic and not be dominated by the big powers.

The UNPKO has, in recent years, faced a financial crisis as a relatively negligible budget has been allocated for this onerous role. While the UN Security Council makes decisions about whether to establish, maintain or expand a peacekeeping operation, the financing of UN peacekeeping operations is the responsibility of all UN member states. Every member state is legally obligated to contribute its fair share to peacekeeping efforts. This is in accordance with the provisions of Article 17 of the UN Charter. The five permanent members of the UN Security Council are expected to pay a higher share due to their specific responsibilities for ensuring international peace and security.

Nepal's Action for UN Peacekeeping

Chiran Jung Thapa

Nepal's contribution to peacekeeping has been notable, not only for the consistency and length of time spent, but also for the selfless bravery shown by its personnel. Its army is well-known for its significant contributions as an international peacekeeper. The country has consistently upheld Article 51 of the UN Charter, which calls for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Known for being disciplined, professional, and daring soldiers, the Nepal army has earned the title of 'Peace Champion' by winning the hearts of conflict-affected people during its peace mission journey. In peacekeeping operations, there are both paper and real tigers. Paper tigers follow the rules and avoid taking risks. The Nepalese are known to be real tigers for taking risks. As a result of taking risks and following through, Nepal has increased its credibility and reliability.

The Nepal army, which is dedicated to safeguarding the country's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national unity, has been at the forefront of peacekeeping operations in conflict-torn countries. The world community has openly praised Nepal's work in full compliance with human rights, conflict management and humanitarian assistance. The fact that the Nepal army has been at the forefront and assumed important responsibilities in Liberia, Congo, Sudan and other countries that are considered very sensitive in terms of deploying peacekeepers for the first time has been widely praised. Peacekeeping should be approached holistically and as a national effort, with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Armed Police Force (APF), Nepal police and other relevant entities cooperating. However, peacekeeping operations are unfortunately not owned by the MoFA because they are viewed solely as a military goal.

Action for Peacekeeping

UN peacekeeping assists countries in achieving long-term peace, supporting political processes, protecting hundreds of thousands of civilians and assisting in ensuring ceasefires. However, protracted conflicts, elusive political solutions, increasingly dangerous environments, rising peacekeeping fatalities and broad and complex mandates all pose challenges to peacekeeping. To address these challenges, in March 2018, the UN Secretary General's Initiative on Action for Peacekeeping was launched with the goal of reigniting political commitment to peacekeeping operations. The initiative's 'Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations' has been signed by 154 member states and four regional organisations.

Military and police personnel assigned to the UNPKO are first members of their own national forces, after which they are seconded to work for the UN. They come from a variety of countries, both wealthy and not so well off. They come to the job with a variety of cultures and backgrounds, but they are united in their desire to promote peace.

Western countries have been reducing troop contributions to peacekeeping missions in recent decades. South Asia, on the other hand, has been at the forefront of committing more troops to these activities. The South Asian countries also contribute election observers, civil reconstruction teams and development

specialists, in addition to military personnel. It is not correct to claim that South Asia only sends troops and no resources. While some of these are carried out by the governments, others are carried out by international non-governmental organisations or the private sector.

In order to achieve peacekeeping excellence, there is a need for a stronger commitment from all actors in support of peacekeeping efforts, including political and operational issues.

Conclusion

It has to be acknowledged that despite challenging situations and high and stringent expectations, South Asia in general and Nepal in particular has provided troops in very difficult and hostile environments for peacekeeping. As of 19 April 2021, the Nepali army has contingents that include 171 female soldiers serving in 12 different missions around the globe. Nepal has a commitment to provide up to 10,000 peacekeepers, should the UN request for them.

Nepal wanted to establish an institution where the returning peacekeepers could create a pool of knowledge. Hence, these peacekeepers started institutionalising their experience by establishing a training centre in Panchkhal in 1986. In January 2000, an international multi-platoon training exercise, 'Shanti Prayas-I', co-sponsored by the United States Pacific Command, was organised in this centre, which paved the way to turn the ad-hoc centre into the full-fledged Birendra Peace Operations Training Centre, whose mission is to provide a nucleus of expertise within the Nepali army and oversee the development of peace support operations. Since Nepal has the expertise and UN accreditations, this institution is slowly but surely reaching the UN's training standards. It is also envisioned that this institution will grow into a regional hub of excellence.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation as an institution does not discuss much about the contributions made by the South Asian militaries to global peace. COSATT, ISAS and KAS have successfully organised this hybrid event, bringing together experts from various regions virtually as well as physically in Nepal. This event is a first-of-its-kind workshop that will consolidate and strengthen Nepal's role in peacekeeping. Such discussions and knowledge exchanges are more important than ever before, as the contours of international peacekeeping, as well as the types of conflicts, are continuously evolving.

Appendix 1

List of Participants

Honorable Gyawali, Pradeep Kumar
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Nepal

Dr Subedi, D B
Postdoctoral Research Fellow
University of New England
Australia

Hon'ble Silwal, Nawa Raj
Former DIG, Nepal Police
Politician

Hon'ble Yadav, Pramila
Member of Parliament,
Parliament Secretariat

Ambassador Rayamajhi, Bharat Bahadur
Former Ambassador

AIGP (Retd) Thapa, Rabi Raj
Former AIGP

Ambassador Dr Bhattarai, Dinesh
Former Ambassador

Ambassador Dr Acharya, Jaya Raj
Former Under-secretary
Former Permanent to the UN

Ambassador (Retd) Bhattarai, Sundar Nath
China Study Centre

Lamicchane, Veera
Research Fellow, CSAS

Ambassador (Retd) Dhital, Arun
Former Ambassador

Adhikari, Chandra Shekhar
Journalist

Adhikari, Kabi
Freelancer

Adhikari, Aashiyana
Research Associate, CSAS

Brigadier (Retd) Dharma Baniya
Former Brigadier, Nepal Army

Brigadier (Retd) Dr Srivastava, Brajendra
Former Brigadier, Nepal Army

Brigadier General Poudel, Santosh Ballav
Spokesman, Nepal Army Headquarters

Colonel (Retd) Thapa, Subash
Former Colonel, Nepal Army

DIG Magar, Ganesh Thada
Armed Police Force Headquarters

Dr Sharma, Jan
Senior Journalist

Dhakal, Ram Babu
Former Under-secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kathmandu

Koirala, Kosh Raj
Republica Daily

Lieutenant General (Retd) Chand, Nepal Bhusan

Lieutenant General (Retd) Shah, Sadip Bahadur

Lieutenant General (Retd) Sharma, Balananda

Major General (Retd) Pokharel, Jagadish

Pandey, Jagdish

Kantipur Daily

Professor Dr Kunwar, Ramesh Raj

Tribhuvan University

Professor Pandey, Sushil Raj

Tribhuvan University

Professor Vaidya, Meena

Professor Thapa, Dambar Bir

UN Association of Nepal

Shah, Apekshya

Tribhuvan University

Paudel, Binod

Government Laboratory

Rijal, Padma

Student

Thapa, Preeti

The Asia Foundation

Karki, Rudra

Reporters' Club

Thapa, Chiran Jung

OXFAM

Shrestha, Rajesh

Executive Director

Institute of Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Appendix 2 About the Workshop

ISAS-COSATT-KAS WORKSHOP Nepal's Contributions to UN Peacekeeping

19 April 2021 | 3.00pm-6.30pm (SG Time) | Hotel Himalaya, Kupondol, Nepal

Programme

3.00pm	Opening Remarks Dr Nishchal N Pandey Director, Centre for South Asian Studies, Kathmandu; and Convenor, Consortium of South Asian Think Tanks
3.10pm	Introductory Remarks Professor C Raja Mohan Director Institute of South Asian Studies, NUS (via zoom)
3.20pm	Inauguration and Keynote Address Honourable Pradeep Kumar Gyawali Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nepal
3.40pm	Address Mr Christian Echle Director, Political Dialogue Asia Programme Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Singapore (via zoom)
3.50pm	SESSION I THE GLOBAL SOLDIER: HISTORY OF NEPAL IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS Lieutenant General (Retd) Balananda Sharma National Defence University, Nepal
	Dr D B Subedi Postdoctoral Research Fellow Faculty of Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences and Education University of New England, Australia
	Mr Rajesh Shrestha Executive Director Institute of Foreign Affairs Kathmandu, Nepal

Discussion Session

5.00pm **Break**

5.05pm **SESSION II**
PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONSIDERATIONS
Honourable Nawaraj Silwal
Member of Parliament
Nepal

Ambassador (Retd) Dr Dinesh Bhattarai

Former Nepalese Permanent Representative to the United Nations
Geneva, Switzerland

Mr Chiran Jung Thapa
Strategy Security Analyst
Nepal

Discussion Session

6.15pm **Wrap Up/Conclusion**

6.30pm **End of Event**

Appendix 3

About the Authors

Mr. Chiran Jung Thapa is the Strategy Security Analyst from Nepal. Currently he is engaged with OXFAM International. Prior to OXFAM, he also worked in the Saferworld Nepal.

Mr. Christian Echle is the Director of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung's Regional Programme Political Dialogue Asia, based in Singapore. He is a journalist by training and an alumnus of the foundation's scholarship programme for young journalists. Before moving to Singapore, Christian was the Director of KAS Media Africa, the regional media programme for Sub-Saharan Africa based in Johannesburg, since 2012. After joining the foundation in 2007, he first served as an online editor and Social Media expert at headquarters in Berlin. Throughout his different postings, the influence of Social Media on Political Communication remains to be one of his main focuses.

Prof C Raja Mohan is the Director of the Institute of South Asian Studies. Earlier, he was Professor of South Asian Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Prof. Mohan is one of India's leading commentators on India's foreign policy. He has been associated with a number of think tanks in New Delhi, including the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, the Centre for Policy Research and the Observer Research Foundation. He was also the founding director of Carnegie India, New Delhi – the sixth international centre of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC. He was the Henry Alfred Kissinger Chair in International Affairs at the United States Library of Congress, Washington DC, from 2009 to 2010. He served on India's National Security Advisory Board.

Prof. Mohan has a Master's degree in nuclear physics and a PhD in international relations. Among his recent books are Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific (2013) and Modi's World: Expanding India's Sphere of Influence (2015).

Dr. D B Subedi is a research fellow in the school of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences at the University of New England in Australia. He has an interdisciplinary academic background, specialising in political sociology, politics, and peace and conflict studies. His research interests include peace building and conflict transformation, religion and politics, countering violent extremism, populism and nationalism, migration and critical development studies. He has conducted research fieldwork in South and South East Asia, especially Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Dr Dinesh Bhattarai was Foreign Affairs Adviser to the Prime Ministers of Nepal in 2014-2015 and 2017-2018. He was Nepal's Ambassador/Permanent Representative to Geneva, Switzerland. He joined the Nepalese Diplomatic Service in April 1983. He served as First Secretary (Political Affairs) at the Embassy of Nepal in New Delhi from 1991-1994, and Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of Nepal in Washington D.C. from 1998-2003. Dr. Bhattarai has worked in various capacities in Divisions of Protocol, Europe and America, Southeast Asia and Pacific, North Asia.

Hon. Nawaraj Silwal is a Nepalese Politician, former DIG of Nepal Police and serving as the Member of House of Representatives. He is member of the Nepal Communist Party.

Dr. Nishchal N. Pandey is director of the Centre for South Asian Studies (CSAS), Kathmandu. He is currently one of the board of directors of the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS), Colombo. He was Executive Director of the Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1998-2006). He is Ph.d in political science from Tribhuvan University. He was also Advisor to the National Planning Commission in 1996-97. A man of letters, he is author of 3 books published by SAGE and Manohar Publishers, New Delhi.

Dr. Pandey was visiting research fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), National University of Singapore in 2006-07 and visiting fellow at the University of Hull, UK in 2009. In Sep. 2013, he was visiting fellow at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), a leading think-tank in Berlin, Germany. Dr. Pandey is a Visiting Faculty at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), New Delhi. A well-known strategic analyst of Nepal, his comments and interviews are regularly published in international news magazines and telecast in t.v. channels.

Mr Rajesh Shrestha is the Executive Director of the Institute of Foreign Affairs Kathmandu, Nepal. He is the former Additional Inspector General of Nepal Armed Police Force.

