

South Asia: United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Challenges, Achievements & Future Directions

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Abstract. This research assesses the efficacy of United Nations peacekeeping operations in South Asia, focusing on the challenges, achievements, and future directions of these missions. The study examines key UN interventions in the region over the past two decades, including missions in Kashmir, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Through a comprehensive analysis of mission reports, regional dynamics, and stakeholder interviews, the research identifies critical successes and limitations of these operations. It explores how regional political factors, including the roles of major South Asian states such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, influence mission effectiveness. The study also investigates the unique challenges faced by peacekeepers in South Asia, such as complex ethnic conflicts and geopolitical tensions. By evaluating the adaptive strategies employed by the UN and proposing innovative approaches, the research aims to enhance the overall impact of peacekeeping efforts. The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and international organizations seeking to improve peacekeeping practices and promote stability in South Asia.

Keywords: UN Peacekeeping, South Asia, conflict resolution, regional dynamics, mission effectiveness.

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Introduction

United Nations peacekeeping operations have played a crucial role in conflict management and resolution across various regions, including South Asia. Despite the UN's extensive involvement in global peacekeeping, the effectiveness of its missions in this region remains a subject of debate. South Asia

presents a unique set of challenges due to its deep-rooted historical conflicts, geopolitical rivalries, and complex ethnic divisions. This research critically examines the efficacy of UN peacekeeping operations in South Asia, assessing their successes, limitations, and potential improvements.

The rationale for this research stems from the significant and often contentious role that peacekeeping plays in South Asia's security landscape (Abdenur, 2019). Unlike other regions where UN peacekeeping has led to clear conflict resolution, South Asia remains a hotspot of political instability and prolonged disputes. The Kashmir conflict, for instance, continues to challenge UN peacekeeping efforts due to the ongoing rivalry between India and Pakistan. Although the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) was established in 1949 to monitor ceasefire violations along the Line of Control, its impact has been severely limited. India's refusal to acknowledge the mission's relevance and Pakistan's insistence on its necessity illustrate the political deadlock that undermines peacekeeping efforts. In contrast, Nepal's experience with the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) showcases a more successful engagement, as the mission contributed to the country's post-conflict transition following the Maoist insurgency. These contrasting cases highlight the uneven effectiveness of UN interventions in the region, warranting a deeper analysis of the underlying factors (Adler & Pouliot, 2011).

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, focusing on document analysis as the primary approach to data collection and interpretation. By reviewing official UN reports, mission mandates, academic literature, and policy analyses, the research systematically evaluates the achievements and shortcomings of UN peacekeeping in South Asia. This method allows for a critical examination of historical and contemporary trends without the potential biases introduced by interviews. For example, the study analyzes key UN Security Council resolutions related to South Asian conflicts, assessing their implementation and impact. Additionally, regional policy documents from India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka provide valuable insights into how national governments perceive and interact with UN peacekeeping efforts. The use of qualitative content analysis ensures that the study remains grounded in empirical evidence while allowing for a nuanced interpretation of peacekeeping dynamics.

Historical Context

The history of the United Nations' peacekeeping in South Asia is deeply intertwined with the region's post-colonial conflicts, territorial disputes, and political transitions (Aoi & Heng, 2014). Unlike in Africa or the Balkans, where UN peacekeeping missions have often been deployed in response to internal civil wars or state collapses peacekeeping efforts in South Asia have primarily been shaped by interstate rivalries, particularly between India and Pakistan. The longest-standing UN peacekeeping mission in the region, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), was established in 1949 following the first Indo-Pakistani war over Kashmir. This conflict erupted soon

after the partition of British India in 1947, leading to competing territorial claims over the region of Jammu and Kashmir. Despite its mandate to monitor ceasefire violations along the Line of Control, UNMOGIP has been rendered largely ineffective due to India's refusal to recognize its relevance after the 1972 Simla Agreement, which India argues replaced the UN's role with bilateral dispute resolution mechanisms. However, Pakistan continues to advocate for the mission's presence, illustrating the political impasse that has significantly constrained UN peacekeeping efforts in South Asia (Adler & Pouliot, 2011).

While the Kashmir conflict represents the most prominent case of UN involvement, Nepal's experience with peacekeeping presents a stark contrast. The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), established in 2007, played a crucial role in overseeing the country's post-conflict transition following a decade-long Maoist insurgency. Unlike UNMOGIP, which was caught in geopolitical tensions, UNMIN was invited by Nepal's government and key political actors, allowing for relatively smoother operations. The mission was tasked with monitoring the disarmament of Maoist combatants and supporting the electoral process that led to the country's transition from a monarchy to a federal democratic republic. However, its mandate remained limited, and while it contributed to stabilizing Nepal's political landscape, critics argue that its failure to address deeper structural issues—such as the integration of Maoist fighters into the national army—left gaps that later contributed to political instability. UNMIN's experience highlights both the potential and limitations of UN peacekeeping in South Asia, particularly in cases where domestic political will aligns with international peace efforts.

Beyond these major missions, the broader historical trajectory of UN peacekeeping in South Asia reflects the region's reluctance to fully embrace external intervention in security matters. India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are among the largest troop-contributing countries to UN peacekeeping missions worldwide, yet they have historically been resistant to foreign peacekeeping within their borders. India, for instance, has repeatedly opposed UN involvement in its internal conflicts, including in regions such as Nagaland and Manipur, preferring to handle such matters through national security mechanisms (Banerjee, 2013). Pakistan, despite supporting UNMOGIP's presence, has also resisted deeper UN interventions in its internal conflicts, such as the insurgency in Balochistan. Bangladesh, while not a major site of UN peacekeeping operations, has had its internal conflicts, including the Chittagong Hill Tracts insurgency, which was resolved through a peace accord without direct UN involvement. These cases demonstrate how South Asian states strategically navigate their engagement with UN peacekeeping—actively contributing troops to international missions while maintaining sovereignty over their internal security affairs (Aoi & Heng, 2014).

The historical evolution of UN peacekeeping in South Asia also underscores the changing nature of conflicts in the region. While the early peacekeeping missions focused on traditional interstate conflicts, recent engagements have been more concerned with intrastate conflicts and post-conflict transitions (Bellamy & Williams, 2013). The role of UN peacekeepers has expanded beyond monitoring ceasefires to include civilian

protection, electoral assistance, and human rights monitoring. However, the effectiveness of these efforts has been uneven, largely due to the political complexities of South Asian conflicts and the often-limited mandates given to peacekeeping missions. The mixed legacy of peacekeeping in the region suggests that while the UN has played a role in mitigating conflicts, its ability to achieve long-term stability is contingent on both regional political dynamics and the willingness of host states to cooperate.

Key Missions in the Region

United Nations peacekeeping in South Asia has been characterized by a series of missions that have responded to different types of conflicts, ranging from interstate tensions to internal political transitions. Among these, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) stands as the longest-running peacekeeping mission in the region. Established in 1949 to monitor the ceasefire between India and Pakistan in the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir, UNMOGIP was initially tasked with observing and reporting violations along the ceasefire line. However, its effectiveness has been severely hampered by the shifting political landscape. Following the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, which led to the Simla Agreement between the two countries in 1972, India argued that the agreement replaced the need for UN mediation, effectively rendering UNMOGIP obsolete in its view. Pakistan, on the other hand, continues to advocate for the mission's role, seeing it as an international acknowledgment of the Kashmir dispute. This political deadlock has significantly limited UNMOGIP's influence, with India refusing to grant it operational access beyond Pakistan-controlled areas, reducing its ability to fulfill its original mandate. The mission serves as a symbolic presence rather than an active peacekeeping force, demonstrating how entrenched political positions can neutralize the effectiveness of UN interventions (Bove & Ruggeri, 2016).

In contrast to UNMOGIP's restricted mandate and diminished impact, the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) presents a more engaged form of peacekeeping tailored to post-conflict stabilization. Established in 2007 following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Nepali government and the Maoist rebels, UNMIN played a crucial role in facilitating Nepal's transition from a monarchy to a democratic republic. The mission was tasked with monitoring the disarmament and integration of Maoist combatants, assisting in the management of arms depots, and supporting Nepal's election process. While UNMIN was initially seen as a success in stabilizing the fragile post-conflict environment, its limitations became apparent when the integration of Maoist combatants into the national army became a contentious issue. Political infighting among Nepal's parties, coupled with concerns over UNMIN's neutrality, led to the mission's early termination in 2011. The inability to fully resolve the integration process before UNMIN's departure contributed to lingering political instability, raising questions about whether the mission's mandate was sufficient to address the deeper structural causes of conflict. The case of UNMIN illustrates both the strengths and weaknesses of UN peacekeeping

in South Asia: while it was instrumental in supporting democratic transition, the lack of a long-term conflict resolution strategy limited its lasting impact.

Beyond these high-profile missions, the UN's involvement in Sri Lanka has been more indirect yet remains a significant example of the challenges of peacekeeping in the region. Unlike in Nepal, where the government welcomed UN involvement, Sri Lanka's approach to its internal conflict with the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) was marked by resistance to international intervention. During the final phase of Sri Lanka's civil war in 2009, allegations of war crimes and humanitarian violations prompted calls for UN peacekeeping engagement. However, the Sri Lankan government, under President Mahinda Rajapaksa, firmly rejected any UN peacekeeping presence, instead favoring a military solution to the conflict. In the absence of a peacekeeping mission, the UN's role was largely limited to humanitarian assistance and post-conflict human rights monitoring. The UN's failure to prevent civilian casualties and address the aftermath of the conflict led to significant criticism, culminating in a 2012 UN internal review that admitted the organization had failed to adequately respond to the humanitarian crisis. Sri Lanka's case highlights the limitations of UN peacekeeping in scenarios where host states actively resist external intervention, reinforcing the notion that peacekeeping is only as effective as the political will of the parties involved.

Bangladesh's role in UN peacekeeping has been distinct from the cases of India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Unlike its neighbors, Bangladesh has not been a site for UN peacekeeping operations but has emerged as one of the largest contributors of troops to UN missions worldwide. This commitment has been driven by both strategic and economic incentives, as peacekeeping deployments provide financial benefits to the Bangladeshi military while enhancing the country's global diplomatic standing. However, this raises an important paradox: while Bangladesh is deeply involved in global peacekeeping, it has faced internal security challenges, particularly concerning the Rohingya refugee crisis. Despite calls for international peacekeeping interventions to manage the refugee situation and border tensions with Myanmar, Bangladesh has preferred bilateral and regional approaches over direct UN involvement. The contrast between Bangladesh's international peacekeeping contributions and its reluctance to host UN peacekeepers domestically reflects the broader South Asian pattern of selective engagement with UN missions.

The varied experiences of UN peacekeeping missions in South Asia underscore the complexities of deploying international forces in a region deeply marked by sovereignty concerns, historical rivalries, and domestic political considerations. UNMOGIP's limited influence in Kashmir, UNMIN's partial success in Nepal, Sri Lanka's outright rejection of peacekeeping, and Bangladesh's external engagement all demonstrate that the effectiveness of UN missions is ultimately shaped by the political environment in which they operate. These cases collectively reveal that while the UN has played important roles in certain contexts, its ability to enforce peace remains constrained by the strategic calculations of South Asian states.

Challenges of UN Peacekeeping in South Asia

Regional political dynamics

The interplay of historical rivalries, national interests, and strategic alliances among key South Asian states often dictates the scope and limitations of peacekeeping efforts. While the United Nations seeks to operate as a neutral actor, regional powers such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh frequently shape the political environment in ways that either facilitate or hinder the success of peacekeeping missions (Abdenur, 2019).

One of the most significant regional conflicts impacting UN peacekeeping in South Asia is the India-Pakistan rivalry over Kashmir. Since the partition of British India in 1947, both states have laid claim to the territory, leading to multiple wars and continuous hostilities. The presence of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) since 1949 was intended to monitor ceasefire violations and de-escalate tensions. However, the mission's effectiveness has been severely restricted by the political maneuvering of both states. Pakistan has largely welcomed UN involvement, using it to internationalize the Kashmir dispute, whereas India has rejected UN mediation, insisting that the issue should be resolved bilaterally. This political standoff has turned UNMOGIP into a largely symbolic mission, with its monitoring confined to the Pakistani-administered areas of Kashmir. The limitations of UNMOGIP reflect how regional power dynamics can obstruct peacekeeping efforts, rendering them ineffective when key actors refuse to engage meaningfully.

The role of Bangladesh in UN peacekeeping adds another layer to South Asia's political dynamics. As one of the largest contributors of troops to UN peacekeeping operations worldwide, Bangladesh has been a key player in shaping global peacekeeping policies. However, its domestic politics reveal a preference for regional conflict management over direct UN intervention. This is particularly evident in its handling of the Rohingya refugee crisis. When nearly a million Rohingya refugees fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh in 2017 following military-led ethnic violence, international organizations, including the UN, called for stronger intervention. Despite these appeals, Bangladesh resisted any formal UN peacekeeping mission, opting instead for diplomatic negotiations and regional pressure through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). While Bangladesh continues to cooperate with UN agencies for humanitarian assistance, its reluctance to allow a peacekeeping force underscores the selective engagement of South Asian states with the UN—actively supporting peacekeeping abroad while resisting direct intervention at home (Caballero-Anthony & Heywood, 2010).

Nepal's political transition provides an example of a more cooperative approach to UN peacekeeping but also exposes the limitations of international involvement in deep national conflicts (Caplan, 2019). Following a decade-long Maoist insurgency, Nepal signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006, leading to the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) in 2007. The mission was mandated to oversee the

disarmament and integration of Maoist combatants, support democratic elections, and assist in the transition from monarchy to a federal democratic republic. While UNMIN was relatively successful in ensuring a peaceful transition in its early years, it struggled with Nepal's shifting political alliances. Major political parties, including the Maoists, often accused the UN of favoring one side or being ineffective in resolving deeper structural issues. The failure to integrate former Maoist fighters into the national army before UNMIN's departure in 2011 left a critical gap, leading to prolonged political instability. Nepal's experience highlights how peacekeeping missions can be constrained by the fluid and often unpredictable nature of regional politics, where national actors use international organizations to their advantage while resisting deeper structural changes (Cook, 2014).

Sri Lanka's response to UN involvement further illustrates the challenges posed by regional political dynamics. During the final phase of its civil war in 2009, the Sri Lankan government rejected any form of UN peacekeeping, insisting on a military solution to the Tamil insurgency. The UN was relegated to a peripheral role, focusing on humanitarian assistance rather than conflict resolution. After the war, international organizations, including the UN, pushed for war crimes investigations and human rights accountability, but Sri Lanka's government resisted, viewing such efforts as interference in its sovereignty. The political resistance to UN intervention in Sri Lanka underscores a broader pattern in South Asia, where governments prioritize national security concerns over international peacekeeping efforts, particularly when conflicts involve internal political struggles rather than inter-state disputes (Di Salvatore & Ruggeri, 2017).

Beyond individual states, broader geopolitical factors also shape UN peacekeeping dynamics in the region. The increasing influence of China in South Asia has created additional challenges for the UN. As China strengthens its economic and strategic ties with countries like Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), its role in shaping peace and security policies in the region grows. While China has traditionally avoided direct involvement in UN peacekeeping missions in South Asia, its economic influence often determines how host countries engage with international organizations. For example, Sri Lanka, which relies heavily on Chinese investment, has been more resistant to Western-led human rights interventions at the UN, aligning itself with China's non-interference approach. Similarly, Nepal's balancing act between India and China has influenced its engagement with UN peacekeeping, as it seeks to maintain diplomatic neutrality while leveraging international assistance.

The complex interplay of national interests, regional rivalries, and global geopolitics makes UN peacekeeping in South Asia highly challenging (Gledhill et al., 2021). India and Pakistan's long-standing hostility limits the scope of peacekeeping in Kashmir, while Bangladesh's selective approach to UN involvement highlights the strategic calculations of states that contribute heavily to peacekeeping operations but resist intervention in their affairs. Nepal's experience with UNMIN demonstrates how political instability can weaken peacekeeping effectiveness, and Sri Lanka's rejection of UN involvement underscores the

limitations of peacekeeping in the face of strong nationalist sentiments. These examples collectively illustrate that UN peacekeeping in South Asia is not just about conflict resolution but is also deeply entangled in regional power struggles, where the willingness of states to cooperate with international efforts often determines the success or failure of peacekeeping missions.

Geopolitical tensions and state interests

South Asia remains one of the most politically volatile regions in the world, with unresolved territorial disputes, nuclear-armed adversaries, and external interventions influencing peace and security (Druckman & Diehl, 2013). The competing interests of major regional states, particularly India, Pakistan, and China, significantly determine the success or failure of UN peacekeeping efforts. These tensions often lead to selective engagement with the UN, where states either leverage peacekeeping missions for strategic advantages or resist international intervention to maintain their sovereignty and regional influence (Gledhill et al., 2021).

The most notable example of how geopolitical tensions undermine peacekeeping effectiveness is the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan. Since the partition of British India in 1947, both states have claimed Kashmir, leading to multiple wars and continuous hostilities. The establishment of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in 1949 was meant to monitor the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC). However, its ability to function has been severely curtailed by India's refusal to allow UNMOGIP to operate on its side of the LoC, arguing that the mission has lost relevance following the 1972 Simla Agreement, which established bilateral conflict resolution mechanisms. Conversely, Pakistan continues to welcome UNMOGIP as part of its broader strategy to internationalize the Kashmir dispute. This divergence in state interests has rendered the UN mission largely symbolic, with limited capacity to de-escalate tensions. The deadlock over Kashmir illustrates how states use peacekeeping selectively, either restricting its role or using it as a tool for diplomatic leverage.

Beyond Kashmir, China's growing influence in South Asia has added another layer of complexity to regional geopolitics, further impacting UN peacekeeping. China's deepening strategic ties with Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have shifted regional security dynamics. As China asserts itself as a major economic and military power, it increasingly challenges Western-led UN peacekeeping norms, promoting a non-interference policy that often aligns with authoritarian regimes. In Sri Lanka, for instance, China's strong financial and military backing during the final stages of the civil war allowed the Sri Lankan government to reject international peacekeeping interventions. Even after the war ended in 2009, China shielded Sri Lanka from UN-led human rights investigations, arguing that external interventions would violate national sovereignty. This support enabled Sri Lanka to resist UN efforts for post-conflict peacekeeping and

accountability measures, demonstrating how major powers use their influence to limit the scope of UN missions when they conflict with their strategic interests.

Similarly, Nepal's geopolitical positioning between India and China has influenced its engagement with UN peacekeeping. The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), established in 2007 to oversee the peace process after the Maoist insurgency, operated under challenging political conditions. India, which has historically played a dominant role in Nepalese politics, viewed UNMIN with suspicion, fearing that an extended UN presence could weaken its regional influence. As a result, India exerted pressure on Nepalese political elites to ensure that UNMIN's mandate remained temporary. The mission ended in 2011 without fully integrating former Maoist combatants into the national security forces, leaving Nepal in a prolonged state of political instability. This case highlights how regional powers manipulate peacekeeping missions to serve their strategic interests, often at the expense of long-term stability (Jones, 2015).

Bangladesh, despite being one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping forces worldwide, has also demonstrated strategic selectivity in its engagement with peacekeeping. While Bangladesh actively deploys troops to UN missions abroad, strengthening its international reputation and securing economic benefits, it has been hesitant to allow direct UN intervention in its internal conflicts. The Rohingya refugee crisis, which escalated in 2017 following Myanmar's military crackdown on the Rohingya minority, tested Bangladesh's stance on UN involvement. Despite calls from the international community for a peacekeeping presence to facilitate refugee protection and resettlement, Bangladesh preferred bilateral and regional solutions, seeking support from ASEAN rather than inviting a UN peacekeeping mission (Helmke, 2009). This reluctance reflects a broader trend among South Asian states, where governments strategically engage with the UN when it benefits their national interests but resist peacekeeping involvement when it threatens their political autonomy.

Pakistan's approach to UN peacekeeping also reflects a balance between strategic advantage and geopolitical positioning. As one of the largest troop-contributing countries to UN missions, Pakistan uses its peacekeeping role to enhance its global standing and military prestige. However, its commitment to peacekeeping abroad contrasts with its policies toward conflicts within its borders, particularly in Balochistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where insurgencies and human rights violations persist. Pakistan has consistently rejected UN involvement in these internal conflicts, framing them as national security issues rather than matters requiring international intervention. This selective engagement with peacekeeping allows Pakistan to benefit from the global legitimacy of participating in UN missions while maintaining strict control over its domestic security challenges (Dominguez, 2016).

The geopolitical rivalry between the United States and China also plays a crucial role in shaping UN peacekeeping efforts in South Asia. The United States has historically supported India's position on Kashmir while maintaining strategic military alliances

with Pakistan. This dual approach has resulted in inconsistent international responses to regional conflicts, limiting the UN's ability to act decisively. China, on the other hand, has used its position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to block resolutions that could challenge its allies, particularly Pakistan. These global power struggles mean that UN peacekeeping missions in South Asia often operate within restricted mandates dictated by the geopolitical calculations of major international actors (Bove & Ruggeri, 2016).

The combination of unresolved territorial disputes, strategic alliances, and great-power competition makes UN peacekeeping in South Asia particularly challenging (Abdenur, 2019). The Kashmir conflict remains at the center of geopolitical tensions, with India and Pakistan's opposing interests limiting UNMOGIP's effectiveness. China's expanding regional influence has enabled states like Sri Lanka to resist UN interventions, while India's dominance over Nepal's political landscape has shaped the limitations of UNMIN. Bangladesh and Pakistan demonstrate a pattern of strategic peacekeeping engagement, contributing troops abroad while resisting intervention at home. These examples reveal that UN peacekeeping in South Asia is not merely a question of operational effectiveness but is deeply entangled in the region's geopolitical rivalries. As long as major state actors continue to prioritize national and strategic interests over collective security, the potential for meaningful peacekeeping remains constrained (Caplan, 2019).

Logistical and operational constraints

The complex terrain, inadequate infrastructure, and bureaucratic inefficiencies within host states have all contributed to significant challenges in mission deployment, resource allocation, and operational efficiency (Gledhill et al., 2021). In a region marked by high-altitude conflicts, insurgencies, and widespread political instability, the UN has struggled to maintain supply chains, mobilize personnel, and ensure the security of peacekeepers. These logistical challenges have often delayed critical interventions and reduced the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations, limiting their ability to de-escalate conflicts and protect civilian populations.

One of the most pressing logistical challenges has been the deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in contested and remote areas. The Kashmir conflict, for instance, presents a unique challenge due to the rugged Himalayan terrain, harsh weather conditions, and ongoing military confrontations between India and Pakistan. The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), responsible for monitoring the ceasefire along the Line of Control, has often found itself unable to effectively carry out its mandate due to severe access restrictions imposed by both countries. India has limited UNMOGIP's operations since 1972, arguing that the mission is no longer necessary following the Simla Agreement. This restriction, combined with the logistical difficulties of operating in an active conflict zone, has significantly undermined the UN's ability to enforce peace agreements or investigate ceasefire violations. The lack of adequate transportation and

secure access points further complicates the movement of UN personnel, making it difficult to maintain a continuous presence in conflict-prone areas (Jetschke & Schlipphak, 2020).

Nepal's post-civil war peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), also faced severe logistical challenges, particularly in disarmament and reintegration efforts. Nepal's mountainous geography and underdeveloped road infrastructure created serious obstacles in monitoring the cantonments where former Maoist combatants were housed. UNMIN struggled to deploy its personnel effectively across these remote areas, relying on outdated transportation methods that slowed down critical operations. Additionally, delays in the delivery of resources, including essential supplies and communication equipment, hampered the mission's ability to function efficiently. These logistical hurdles not only limited the UN's monitoring capabilities but also weakened its credibility among local actors, who saw the delays as evidence of international inefficiency rather than the result of infrastructural constraints.

In Sri Lanka, although the UN was never able to establish a peacekeeping mission due to the government's outright rejection of international intervention, logistical barriers would have posed a significant challenge had a mission been deployed. During the final stages of the Sri Lankan civil war, intense military operations in the north and east of the country led to a humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands of Tamil civilians trapped in conflict zones. The UN's inability to establish safe corridors for humanitarian assistance was partly due to Sri Lanka's refusal to allow UN personnel access to affected areas. However, logistical constraints, including a lack of secure transport routes and a hostile operational environment, would have further complicated any potential UN involvement. The government's strategic use of blockades and movement restrictions demonstrated how logistical challenges can be exacerbated by state policies aimed at limiting external intervention.

Pakistan, despite being one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping forces globally, faces significant internal logistical challenges that would make the deployment of a UN mission within its borders highly difficult. The tribal regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, both of which have experienced ongoing violence and insurgencies, present extreme logistical difficulties due to their rugged terrain, lack of infrastructure, and security risks posed by armed groups. A hypothetical UN peacekeeping mission in these areas would struggle to establish supply lines and maintain effective communication with headquarters due to the region's poor road networks and frequent attacks on military and civilian convoys. The Pakistani government's tight control over access to these conflict zones further limits the feasibility of UN intervention, as logistical constraints are compounded by state-imposed restrictions on foreign personnel.

Another critical operational challenge for UN peacekeeping in South Asia is the issue of insufficient resources and funding. Many UN missions in the region have operated on limited budgets, which restrict their ability to procure necessary equipment, maintain transport fleets, and sustain personnel over extended deployments. In Nepal, for example,

UNMIN faced persistent budgetary constraints that affected its ability to carry out its mandate effectively. The mission's limited funding meant that it could not adequately support reintegration programs for former Maoist combatants, leading to prolonged tensions and dissatisfaction among ex-fighters. Similarly, UNMOGIP has faced chronic underfunding, which has restricted its capacity to expand monitoring operations or upgrade its communication and surveillance technologies. These financial constraints have resulted in peacekeeping missions that are often reactive rather than proactive, reducing their ability to implement long-term conflict resolution strategies (Peter, 2018).

Compounding these logistical and operational challenges is the issue of coordination between the UN and host governments (Pouliot & Cornut, 2015). Many South Asian states view peacekeeping missions with suspicion, often perceiving them as an infringement on national sovereignty. This skepticism has led to bureaucratic delays in granting permissions for troop movements, setting up operational bases, and deploying critical resources. In Nepal, government officials frequently clashed with UNMIN over the mission's role and scope, leading to inefficiencies in disarmament and peacebuilding efforts. In the case of Kashmir, both India and Pakistan have imposed restrictions on UNMOGIP's activities, limiting its ability to access key conflict zones and report ceasefire violations promptly. Such bureaucratic obstacles further weaken the operational effectiveness of peacekeeping missions, rendering them ineffective in rapidly changing conflict environments.

The challenges of logistical coordination extend beyond interactions with host states to include issues within the UN system itself. Peacekeeping operations in South Asia, like elsewhere, have suffered from slow bureaucratic decision-making processes, which delay the mobilization of troops and resources in critical moments. UN agencies often struggle to synchronize their activities with those of international humanitarian organizations, leading to gaps in service delivery and duplication of efforts. The Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh, although not a conventional peacekeeping operation, illustrates these difficulties. While various UN agencies, including UNHCR and the World Food Programme, have assisted displaced populations, a lack of coordinated logistical planning has resulted in inefficiencies in aid distribution. The absence of a dedicated peacekeeping mission in the region further highlights how logistical challenges, including inter-agency competition and bureaucratic inertia, can hinder effective crisis responses.

The cumulative impact of these logistical and operational constraints has severely limited the ability of UN peacekeeping missions to achieve their objectives in South Asia. Whether in the form of access restrictions in Kashmir, transportation difficulties in Nepal, or bureaucratic resistance in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, peacekeeping operations in the region have been repeatedly undermined by logistical challenges that hinder their ability to function effectively. Addressing these issues would require stronger mandates, better coordination with host governments, increased funding, and more adaptable deployment strategies. However, as long as logistical and operational constraints remain unresolved, UN peacekeeping in South Asia will continue to face significant obstacles in maintaining stability and fostering long-term peace in the region.

Case Studies of UN Interventions

Kashmir: A stalemated peacekeeping effort

The United Nations peacekeeping mission in Kashmir represents one of the longest-running yet least effective UN interventions, illustrating the limitations of international peacekeeping in highly politicized and deeply entrenched conflicts. Established in 1949 through the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), the mission was intended to monitor the ceasefire line following the first Indo-Pakistani war over Kashmir. However, more than seven decades later, the mission remains largely symbolic, lacking the authority or resources to meaningfully influence peace processes in the region. Unlike other UN peacekeeping missions with more robust mandates, UNMOGIP functions primarily as an observer force, unable to enforce ceasefire agreements or intervene in escalations, thereby reinforcing its status as a passive bystander rather than an active mediator.

One of the primary reasons for the stagnation of UN peacekeeping efforts in Kashmir is India's rejection of UNMOGIP's continued relevance. While Pakistan has consistently supported an international role in Kashmir, India argues that the mission became obsolete after the 1972 Simla Agreement, which established a bilateral framework for conflict resolution. This agreement effectively sidelined the UN from playing any substantive role in negotiations, as India insisted that all Kashmir-related disputes must be resolved through direct bilateral talks with Pakistan. As a result, UNMOGIP personnel have been largely restricted in their ability to monitor developments on the Indian-administered side of Kashmir, significantly weakening the mission's effectiveness. Unlike peacekeeping operations in places such as East Timor or Kosovo, where the UN played a decisive role in conflict resolution and post-conflict governance, its role in Kashmir has been confined to routine monitoring, without any real influence on political negotiations or military engagements.

The failure of UN peacekeeping in Kashmir is also a consequence of the broader geopolitical dynamics between India and Pakistan. Both nuclear-armed states view Kashmir as a core national security issue, making any external intervention highly sensitive. India perceives UN involvement as a challenge to its sovereignty, while Pakistan views the UN as a potential leverage mechanism to internationalize the dispute. This fundamental divergence in perspective has paralyzed the UN's ability to engage constructively. In contrast, UN peacekeeping missions in conflicts such as those in Liberia or Sierra Leone succeeded because the conflicting parties, as well as major international actors, supported UN mediation. The absence of such consensus in Kashmir has rendered UNMOGIP largely ineffective, operating in a space where neither party fully acknowledges its authority.

The operational constraints faced by UNMOGIP further highlight the structural weaknesses of the mission. Unlike UN peacekeeping forces in other protracted conflicts, such as the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which has a more substantial mandate to maintain stability along the Israel-Lebanon border, UNMOGIP

lacks the power to intervene in active hostilities. This limitation has become even more apparent in recent years as ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC) have escalated. Reports indicate that both Indian and Pakistani forces have engaged in cross-border shelling, often resulting in civilian casualties, yet UNMOGIP remains powerless to enforce any meaningful ceasefire adherence. The lack of access to critical areas, particularly on the Indian side, further weakens the mission's ability to provide accurate assessments of ground realities. Unlike UN peacekeeping missions in Cyprus or the Democratic Republic of Congo, where peacekeepers play an active role in conflict stabilization, the Kashmir mission exists in a purely observational capacity, limiting its ability to prevent violence.

The broader regional implications of the Kashmir conflict also complicate UN engagement. Beyond India and Pakistan, external factors such as China have strategic interests in the region, particularly in Ladakh, where territorial disputes intersect with the broader India-China rivalry. This further diminishes the UN's ability to influence peace processes, as any international initiative in Kashmir risks entangling itself in the larger geopolitical contest between South Asia's key powers. Unlike in Bosnia or Rwanda, where UN peacekeeping efforts were able to secure at least temporary stabilization through direct intervention, the Kashmir conflict is embedded within a web of regional power struggles, making any meaningful UN role almost impossible.

While UNMOGIP's presence in Kashmir may serve as a symbolic reminder of international concern over the conflict, its effectiveness as a peacekeeping force remains highly questionable. The lack of a robust mandate, India's political opposition, Pakistan's instrumentalization of UN involvement, and the broader geopolitical complexities have collectively rendered the mission ineffective. The case of Kashmir thus stands as a stark example of the limitations of UN peacekeeping when faced with deeply entrenched territorial conflicts, particularly in regions where major state actors resist external mediation. Without a fundamental shift in the geopolitical landscape or a change in the willingness of India and Pakistan to engage with the UN as a neutral mediator, peacekeeping efforts in Kashmir will remain a stalled, largely symbolic effort with little impact on conflict resolution.

Nepal: A success story in post-conflict transition

Nepal's experience with UN peacekeeping support stands as one of the more successful examples of post-conflict transition in South Asia, demonstrating how international intervention, when carefully aligned with national political processes, can contribute meaningfully to stability and reconciliation. The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) was established in 2007 in response to the decade-long civil war between the Nepalese government and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M). Unlike UN peacekeeping missions in more intractable conflicts such as Kashmir or Sri Lanka, UNMIN operated under a clear and time-bound mandate to support the implementation

of the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which formally ended the conflict. By focusing on specific transitional tasks, including the supervision of arms management, electoral assistance, and the reintegration of former combatants, UNMIN played a crucial role in Nepal's political transformation from a monarchy embroiled in civil war to a federal democratic republic.

One of the key factors behind UNMIN's relative success was the willingness of both the Nepalese government and the Maoists to accept UN involvement as a neutral arbiter in the peace process. Unlike in Sri Lanka, where the government outright rejected international peacekeeping in its civil war against the Tamil Tigers, Nepal's warring factions recognized the strategic benefits of UN assistance in facilitating a peaceful transition. The mission's primary function was to oversee the arms management process through the establishment of cantonments where Maoist combatants were housed and monitored while the Nepalese Army was also confined to its barracks. This mechanism was essential in preventing a relapse into violence, ensuring that both parties adhered to the commitments outlined in the CPA. Although the process faced logistical and political challenges, including delays in the integration of Maoist fighters into the national security forces, UNMIN's presence provided an essential framework for conflict resolution that was absent in other South Asian contexts.

UNMIN's role in Nepal also highlights the importance of a focused and limited mandate in ensuring the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping missions. Unlike open-ended interventions such as the UNMOGIP mission in Kashmir, which has continued for decades with little impact, UNMIN was designed as a temporary mission with a clear exit strategy. This approach allowed the UN to play a catalytic role in Nepal's transition without becoming an indefinite presence, which often leads to dependency or resistance from local actors. However, despite its successes, UNMIN also faced criticism, particularly regarding its inability to enforce political agreements or prevent post-mission instability. When the mission ended in 2011, many of the underlying tensions between Nepal's political factions remained unresolved, leading to prolonged constitutional deadlock and periodic unrest. Nevertheless, the mission's accomplishments in the crucial early years of the post-conflict transition illustrate how targeted UN involvement can facilitate peace processes when local actors are willing to engage constructively.

A major distinction between Nepal and other conflict zones in South Asia is the absence of external geopolitical interference, which allowed UNMIN to function with relatively fewer constraints. Unlike in Kashmir, where India and Pakistan's rivalry severely limits UN effectiveness, or Sri Lanka, where global powers were divided in their support for either the government or the Tamil Tigers, Nepal's civil war was largely an internal affair with minimal external intervention. While India remained an influential regional player with vested interests in Nepal's political stability, it did not actively obstruct UNMIN's mandate. This created a more conducive environment for the UN to support Nepal's transition without facing the kind of diplomatic resistance that has hindered peacekeeping

efforts elsewhere in the region. This absence of external geopolitical competition is a critical lesson in understanding when and where UN peacekeeping can be most effective.

Despite its relative success, Nepal's post-conflict transition has not been entirely smooth, and some of the challenges that UNMIN sought to address remain unresolved. The reintegration of former Maoist combatants into Nepal's security forces was a particularly contentious issue, with disagreements over the number of ex-rebels to be integrated, their rank assignments, and the broader restructuring of Nepal's security apparatus. While a portion of the Maoist fighters accepted financial compensation to leave military life, many others felt marginalized in the integration process, fueling grievances that continue to influence Nepal's political landscape. The country's journey to a stable democratic republic has also been marked by persistent political instability, with frequent changes in government, disputes over federalism, and tensions among various ethnic and regional groups. These unresolved issues demonstrate that while UN peacekeeping can provide critical short-term support in post-conflict transitions, long-term stability ultimately depends on domestic political will and governance.

The case of Nepal serves as an important counterpoint to other UN peacekeeping missions in South Asia, illustrating both the potential and limitations of international intervention in post-conflict environments. Unlike Kashmir, where the UN has been largely ineffective due to the unwillingness of key stakeholders to engage, or Sri Lanka, where no peacekeeping mission was deployed, Nepal represents a scenario where a well-structured, time-limited UN engagement contributed to a successful transition. However, it also underscores the reality that peacekeeping missions cannot resolve all structural political issues; rather, they can only facilitate conditions for a broader, domestically driven reconciliation process. In this sense, UNMIN's role in Nepal is a valuable case study for understanding how peacekeeping missions can be most effective when they are designed with clear, achievable objectives and when they operate in a political environment that allows for constructive engagement.

Regional Influences on Peacekeeping Effectiveness

The Role of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh

The engagement of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in UN peacekeeping operations has been marked by a complex interplay of national interests, historical rivalries, and strategic ambitions. While all three states are among the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping forces globally, their involvement is shaped by distinct political motivations, regional security considerations, and historical experiences with conflict (Salikha, 2018). Their participation not only influences peacekeeping operations in South Asia but also has broader implications for their foreign policy objectives and global standing. The contradictions between their commitment to international peacekeeping and their respective domestic

and regional conflicts highlight the nuanced role these states play in shaping UN missions both within and beyond South Asia (Von Einsiedel & Yasaki, 2016).

India has historically positioned itself as a strong advocate of UN peacekeeping, seeing it as an extension of its broader diplomatic strategy. As one of the largest troop-contributing countries, India has deployed forces in missions across Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. However, its stance on peacekeeping within South Asia is more complicated. India has consistently rejected any UN involvement in the Kashmir conflict, arguing that the dispute is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan. This position is rooted in the 1972 Simla Agreement, which established that all disputes between the two countries should be resolved through direct negotiations. Consequently, India has largely restricted the operations of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), limiting its ability to monitor ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC). Despite its outward commitment to global peacekeeping, India's reluctance to allow UN intervention in Kashmir underscores the tension between its international peacekeeping role and its regional strategic interests.

Pakistan, like India, has been a significant contributor to UN peacekeeping missions and has used this engagement to enhance its international image and diplomatic influence. Pakistani peacekeepers have been actively involved in missions in Africa, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan, where they have played a crucial role in stabilizing conflict zones. However, within South Asia, Pakistan has been a vocal advocate for greater UN involvement in the Kashmir dispute, often calling for an expansion of UNMOGIP's mandate. This position aligns with Pakistan's broader diplomatic strategy of internationalizing the Kashmir issue, countering India's efforts to keep it a bilateral matter. While Pakistan has welcomed UN peacekeeping in other parts of the world, its push for intervention in Kashmir is driven more by its geopolitical rivalry with India than by a commitment to international peace and security. Additionally, Pakistan's internal conflicts, particularly in Balochistan and its tribal areas, further complicate its stance on peacekeeping, as the government remains resistant to any external oversight of its domestic security operations.

Bangladesh has emerged as a leading contributor to UN peacekeeping forces, consistently ranking among the top providers of troops and police personnel. Unlike India and Pakistan, Bangladesh does not have an active territorial dispute requiring UN intervention, allowing it to engage in peacekeeping without the contradictions that characterize its neighbors' approaches. The country views peacekeeping as a key pillar of its foreign policy, using it to strengthen its international reputation and secure diplomatic leverage. The participation of Bangladeshi forces in UN missions in Africa and the Middle East has also served as a means of professionalizing its military and generating significant financial benefits through UN reimbursements. However, Bangladesh's strong support for UN peacekeeping has not extended to the Rohingya crisis, where it has resisted the idea of a UN peacekeeping mission to manage the humanitarian situation in refugee camps. While Dhaka has called for greater

international pressure on Myanmar, it has been hesitant to invite UN peacekeepers onto its territory, reflecting a broader reluctance to cede sovereignty to external actors even in times of crisis.

The engagement of these three states in UN peacekeeping also reflects broader regional dynamics, particularly in how they use peacekeeping as a tool for international diplomacy (Whalan, 2017). India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have leveraged their contributions to peacekeeping missions to secure positions of influence within the United Nations, including lobbying for greater representation in decision-making bodies such as the UN Security Council. India's longstanding campaign for a permanent seat on the Security Council often highlights its extensive participation in peacekeeping operations as evidence of its commitment to global security. Similarly, Pakistan's and Bangladesh's peacekeeping roles have allowed them to cultivate strategic partnerships with major powers, including the United States and China, which have supported their peacekeeping efforts as part of broader diplomatic engagements.

Despite their shared status as top contributors, the domestic and regional policies of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh often contradict the principles of UN peacekeeping. India's crackdown in Kashmir, Pakistan's internal security operations in Balochistan, and Bangladesh's handling of political dissent all raise questions about the consistency of their commitment to peace and stability. These contradictions highlight the complexities of peacekeeping engagement, where national interests often take precedence over the broader ideals of international peace and security. The role of these states in peacekeeping operations, therefore, must be understood not only in terms of their contributions but also in the context of their regional political strategies and internal governance challenges.

Contributions of South Asian troop-providing countries

The contribution of South Asian countries to UN peacekeeping operations is among the most significant globally, both in terms of numbers and operational impact (Zaman, 2015). India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh consistently rank among the top troop-contributing nations, reflecting their deep engagement in international peacekeeping efforts. Their contributions are not only a testament to their military capabilities but also serve as a strategic tool for diplomatic influence and global positioning. Despite their commitment to peacekeeping, their motivations, operational effectiveness, and the broader implications of their engagement reveal complex dynamics that are shaped by domestic, regional, and international considerations.

India has been one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping forces since the inception of modern peacekeeping operations. Indian troops have played critical roles in missions across Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, including major deployments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Lebanon (UNIFIL), and South Sudan (UNMISS). India has also been at the forefront of peacekeeping reform

efforts, advocating for better training, equipment, and operational effectiveness for UN missions. Indian contingents have been widely recognized for their professionalism, with notable contributions such as the deployment of an all-female Formed Police Unit in Liberia (UNMIL), which set a precedent for greater female participation in peacekeeping. However, India's contributions to peacekeeping have often been paradoxical. While it strongly supports UN missions abroad, it remains resistant to any UN involvement in the Kashmir conflict. This contradiction reflects India's broader strategic priorities, where it seeks to enhance its global influence through peacekeeping while maintaining strict control over its internal and regional security matters.

Pakistan is another major player in UN peacekeeping, frequently deploying thousands of troops in some of the most challenging conflict zones. Pakistani forces have been instrumental in missions in Haiti (MINUSTAH), Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), and the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), often undertaking high-risk assignments that require strong combat and peace enforcement capabilities. Pakistani peacekeepers have earned international recognition for their humanitarian efforts, including medical assistance and infrastructure development in war-torn regions. However, Pakistan's deep engagement in UN peacekeeping contrasts sharply with its domestic and regional security policies. While it champions international peace efforts, Pakistan faces ongoing insurgencies in Balochistan and its tribal areas, where state security forces have been accused of human rights violations. Additionally, Pakistan's advocacy for UN intervention in Kashmir stands in opposition to India's position, highlighting the geopolitical undercurrents that shape peacekeeping engagement.

Bangladesh has emerged as a peacekeeping powerhouse, often leading in the number of troops and police personnel deployed in UN missions. The country has built a reputation for its disciplined and effective peacekeeping forces, contributing to missions in Mali (MINUSMA), Sudan (UNAMID), and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Bangladeshi peacekeepers have been particularly active in providing logistical and medical support, playing a crucial role in stabilizing post-conflict regions. The financial benefits of peacekeeping are a significant factor in Bangladesh's commitment, as UN reimbursements provide a substantial economic boost to its military and government. Peacekeeping has also served as a tool for professionalizing Bangladesh's armed forces, fostering closer ties with the international community. However, despite its global peacekeeping role, Bangladesh has faced criticism for its handling of internal security challenges, particularly regarding the Rohingya refugee crisis. While it has called for international support, Dhaka has been hesitant to accept a UN peacekeeping presence within its borders, reflecting a broader reluctance to internationalize its domestic challenges.

The contributions of South Asian peacekeepers extend beyond combat and security operations, encompassing critical aspects such as civilian protection, infrastructure development, and humanitarian assistance (Peter, 2018). Their ability to operate in complex environments has made them an asset to UN missions. However, challenges remain, including issues related to misconduct, lack of adequate equipment, and difficulties in

adapting to evolving peacekeeping mandates. Cases of sexual exploitation and abuse involving peacekeepers from South Asian countries have been reported in various missions, leading to increased scrutiny and calls for stricter accountability measures. Additionally, the often-politicized nature of peacekeeping deployments means that troop contributions are sometimes driven by diplomatic calculations rather than purely humanitarian concerns.

Despite these challenges, South Asian troop-contributing countries continue to play an indispensable role in global peacekeeping efforts (Jones, 2015). Their engagement has helped shape the evolution of UN peacekeeping, influencing debates on operational effectiveness, peace enforcement, and mission mandates. While their contributions enhance their international standing, the contradictions between their peacekeeping roles and their domestic and regional policies highlight the complexities of balancing national interests with global responsibilities. The future of their involvement in UN peacekeeping will likely depend on both geopolitical developments and internal security dynamics, making their role a subject of continued analysis and debate.

Conclusion

The assessment of United Nations peacekeeping operations in South Asia reveals a complex interplay of successes, limitations, and broader geopolitical constraints that shape their effectiveness. While UN peacekeeping has made notable contributions to stability in certain contexts, such as Nepal's post-conflict transition, its impact in other areas, including Kashmir and Sri Lanka, has been severely restricted by regional political dynamics, state interests, and deep-seated ethnic conflicts. The varied experiences of these missions underscore the reality that peacekeeping efforts cannot be evaluated solely based on operational efficiency but must also consider the larger political, social, and historical contexts in which they are deployed.

One of the most significant factors influencing the efficacy of UN peacekeeping in South Asia is the extent to which host states and key regional players are willing to engage with international interventions. In Nepal, the government and the Maoists recognized the strategic advantage of a neutral UN presence in managing the post-conflict transition, leading to a relatively successful mission with a well-defined mandate. In contrast, in Kashmir, the long-standing hostility between India and Pakistan has effectively paralyzed UNMOGIP, rendering it largely symbolic rather than functionally effective. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the government's refusal to allow UN peacekeepers during the civil war and its post-war resistance to international scrutiny highlight the limits of UN involvement when host states perceive peacekeeping missions as a threat to their sovereignty. These examples illustrate that peacekeeping missions cannot succeed in isolation but must be embedded within a broader political strategy that ensures the cooperation of key stakeholders.

Another critical takeaway from South Asia's peacekeeping experience is the importance of tailoring UN mandates to the specific conflict environments in which they operate. Open-

ended missions with limited enforcement mechanisms, such as UNMOGIP in Kashmir, often struggle to make a tangible impact, especially when powerful regional actors actively obstruct their work. Conversely, time-bound, focused missions like UNMIN in Nepal demonstrate how a clearly defined mandate can enhance peacekeeping effectiveness. However, even in successful cases, peacekeeping alone cannot address deeper structural issues such as political instability, ethnic divisions, and governance failures. While the UN played a constructive role in Nepal's transition, long-term stability ultimately depended on domestic political negotiations, which continued to be contentious even after the mission ended.

Beyond the missions themselves, the contributions of South Asian troop-providing countries highlight another dimension of peacekeeping in the region. India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have emerged as some of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping forces worldwide, yet their motivations for participation are shaped by a mix of political, economic, and strategic considerations. While these countries provide essential personnel and logistical support to UN missions across the globe, their own geopolitical interests often complicate peacekeeping efforts closer to home. For instance, while Pakistan is a major contributor to peacekeeping operations, its involvement in Kashmir is deeply intertwined with its national security strategy vis-à-vis India. Similarly, India's significant contributions to global peacekeeping contrast with its firm stance against third-party mediation in Kashmir. This paradox underscores the reality that while South Asian states are deeply engaged in UN peacekeeping on the global stage, their domestic and regional policies sometimes contradict the principles they support in international operations.

Looking ahead, the future of UN peacekeeping in South Asia will depend on the ability of missions to adapt to evolving conflict dynamics while navigating the region's complex political landscape. The rise of nationalist politics, increasing geopolitical rivalries, and the emergence of non-traditional security threats such as cyber warfare and transnational terrorism will further challenge the conventional peacekeeping model. In regions like Kashmir, where a long-standing conflict remains frozen with no clear path to resolution, the UN's role may continue to be limited unless there is a fundamental shift in the positions of key stakeholders. In contrast, cases like Nepal suggest that where local actors are willing to engage constructively, the UN can still play a crucial role in facilitating peaceful transitions.

The effectiveness of UN peacekeeping in South Asia reflects the broader challenges of international peacekeeping efforts worldwide. While the UN has made meaningful contributions in specific contexts, its impact is often constrained by political realities that go beyond the scope of its mandates. Peacekeeping, in its most successful form, serves as a temporary mechanism to stabilize conflict-affected areas, but long-term peace and stability require sustained domestic political commitment, economic development, and institutional reform. South Asia's experience offers valuable lessons for future peacekeeping missions, emphasizing the need for clear mandates, regional cooperation, and a nuanced understanding of local conflict dynamics to maximize the effectiveness of international interventions.

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