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UN PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS

Identity with India's agenda

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UNITED Nation peace-keeping is a very complex concept to define in the present situation. There is no legal, structural or constitutional basis for such activity as the UN Charter has no provision for it. It is neither purely an exercise in pacific settlement of disputes nor is it one of completely collective coercion. The charter of the United Nations, as signed in 1945, set out a code of behaviour by which nations would work together to eliminate aggression and promote economic and social security.

The central aim of the United Nations charter was to "maintain international peace and security, and to that end, take collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression". Chapter VI of the UN charter regarding specific settlement of disputes obliged parties to a dispute likely to endanger international peace and security, to seek a solution by "negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice".

Chapter VII confers powers on the Security Council to take resort to the use of armed force if various other measures fail to maintain or restore international peace and security. Under this chapter, member states are also required to provide armed forces and other assistance and facilities for the purpose.

Social reconstruction

Yet peace-keeping is not only a distinct but also a dynamic concept which changes according to the global milieu and the requisite

role of the UN in that environment. India, even when it was not independent, had always taken keen interest in activity which at times demands considerable creativity and imagination. "Peace-building", for example, facilitates and assists the reconstruction of social and economic structures and interactions to such an extent that war or any other form of violence is no longer considered necessary.

Neutral intervention

"Peace-keeping", generally speaking, stands for "the prevention, containment, moderation and termination of hostilities between or within states, through the medium of peaceful third party intervention organised and directed internationally, using the forces from the members of the UN to restore and maintain peace".

Yet it is manifest from UN operations that the concept of peace-keeping in the post-Cold War era has undergone both quantitative and qualitative change. Operations have increased significantly from 13 in 1948-87 to 22 in 1988-1998. They now entail the restoration of democracy, recovery of failed state authority and in some cases, even the transformation of society.

In this context it is pertinent to examine why India is actively engaged in these activities. India's participation can be traced back to the Korean war in the 1950's. India grew involved because its foreign policy goals required a world order based on peace and tranquillity. This UN system was devised to keep big power inter-

vention at bay in disputes between smaller states. In a way it served the purpose of India's policy of non-alignment.

Since the inception of the UN, India has been favouring the concept of settling the disputes through amicable means. It has never liked the idea of the UN using force. Even before its independence India was committed to the principle of self-determination. It could not approve of any coercive or interventionist activities taken without the approval of the concerned states. Thus, the objectives of UN peace-keeping operations could be identified with India's own foreign policy goals.

The significant role played by India in peace-keeping is evident from its participation in various operations. Firstly, India, despite its limitations in terms of military and financial power, has taken part in the maximum number of UN peace-keeping activities. Though the level of its participation has not always been high in terms of magnitude, India's commitments have always been deep. Its involvement in these activities has been established from the fact that even while it was engaged in wars with neighbours (1962 and 1965), it supplied troops for UN activities in Yemen, Congo, Cyprus and other areas.

India's role

Secondly, India did not only send soldiers to meet the UN's requirements, it played a key role in several operations. India's defence forces have not only performed collective roles in a well-disciplined and objective manner, they have provided leadership to

several important missions, such as the ones in Sinai (1956-57), Yemen (1963), Cyprus (1964), Namibia (1989) and Yugoslavia (1992).

Thirdly, India has been associated with the implementation of UN directives and helped the global organisation in conceptualising and developing the framework of UN peace-keeping. Finally, India is also concerned with future responsibilities. Troops are required for the growing number of peace-keeping operations. Due to the hazards of such missions, the number of countries contributing troops have decreased. But India, in keeping with its long tradition and commitment to global peace, took an important decision in 1995 to commit a Brigade Group to the UN standby Force arrangement so that peace operations were not delayed. This activity may strengthen the UN's peacekeeping role.

Significant term

Despite India's adverse economic conditions, it is spending \$ 16 million on UN activities annually. It has cleared all its dues in contrast with some major powers.

Peace-keeping operations have undoubtedly not only become expensive, complicated, larger and comprehensive, they have to deal with challenges like monitoring human rights, assisting mine clearance and safeguarding humanitarian relief. Hence, the term "peace-keeping", despite its non-explicit definition in the UN charter, has acquired prominence both in the Cold War and post-Cold War idiom. India's response has been spontaneous and to an extent an inevitable expression of the principles and humanitarian objectives it shares with the UN.