Analyzing the Evolution of UN Peacekeeping through Positive Peace (1948-2025)

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ABSTRACT

United Nations peacekeeping was among the earliest operations and a significant step undertaken by the Security Council in 1948. This initiative established the groundwork for later peace operations. However, over time, peace operations have undergone notable shifts in their roles and mandates, largely driven by evolving conflict dynamics. This paper traces the evolution of UN peace operations from their origins to the present, analyzing them through the lens of positive peace. Using qualitative documents and literature analysis, the research examines primary sources, such as UN reports, and secondary scholarly studies. The study tracks the evolution of peace operations from a traditional observer role to multidimensional operations. The findings indicate that increasing fatalities among peacekeepers, the proliferation of intra-state conflicts and asymmetric warfare, along with environmental pressures and technological challenges, have intensified operational risks. Based on these insights, the study recommends revisiting peacekeeping strategies with theory-informed policies and practical adaptations to enhance the effectiveness of UN peace operations.

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Introduction

The United Nations was established as a result of a global consensus aimed at ensuring lasting peace, preventing another large-scale conflict and strengthening international cooperation. Since its inception, the UN has been committed to 'Peace, dignity, and equality on a healthy planet' and has worked to mitigate conflicts and alleviate suffering. Immediately after the foundation of the UN, following the Second World War, it faced an uncertain and insecure landscape. Therefore, a neutral authority trusted by states was needed at the time to address the emerging challenges. Consequently, the United Nations was established to promote peace through its dedicated agencies and institutions. One such institution was the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), which was formally established in 1992 (as the Department of Peacekeeping Operations) and was restructured in 2019 to assist member states and the Secretary-General in their efforts to maintain international peace and security (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.-a). Even before the formalization of the DPO as an institution, the UN was active in ensuring peace in areas already marked by agreed truces. For example, to monitor ceasefires and prevent renewed hostilities, the UN Security Council authorized the first United Nations peacekeeping mission, known as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), which was deployed to the Middle East (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization [UNTSO], n.d.).

Later, during the Cold War era, it was observed that the nature of the international system influenced the functioning of peace operations. As the balance of power shifted towards a bipolar order, peace efforts became subject to power struggles between major power blocs. However, in a volatile environment, UN peace operations have been relatively successful in containing several conflicts and effectively protecting them from broader superpower rivalries (UN Peacekeeping: 70 Years of Service & Sacrifice, n.d.). Similarly, Tardy (2014) observed that, despite differences in the methodologies used to consolidate peace in fragile states, peacekeeping largely remained immune to the influence of power politics.

In recent decades, achieving peace has become increasingly complex due to the changing dynamics of modern conflicts. This dynamic has affected not only the peacekeepers on the ground but also the overall peace mission. A similar trend has been noted by scholars such as Chawla (2001), who observed that the changing nature of conflicts has radically transformed the role of peacekeepers, expanded their responsibilities, and made their mandates multilayered, thereby requiring a broader range of skills and expertise. These adaptations and transitions of peacekeeping can be understood from the perspective of peace studies reviewed in this research. Building on Johan Galtung's understanding of 'peace', this

study adopts the analytical lens of positive peace – a framework that moves beyond the mere absence of war between states (negative peace) to address the underlying challenges and structural conditions (Galtung, 1964). Galtung developed these ideas during the Cold War, an era that largely shaped future national and international institutions.

Therefore, while numerous studies have traced the developments of UN peacekeeping, this research focuses on the changing conceptualization of peace itself and its impact on peace operations, making a significant contribution to the field. Subsequently, the study examines the evolution of peacekeeping from its inception to the modern era, capturing the changes in peace operations in relation to emerging threats. Not only does it trace the developmental stages of peacekeeping operations over time, but it also provides a comprehensive understanding of UN operations within the shifting context of peace and conflict discourse. Additionally, it provides policy lessons for addressing increasingly complex challenges.

Research Questions

1. To what extent has the UN peacekeeping mission evolved from its origin, and what key developments have been made from traditional to multidimensional peacekeeping operations?

2. What are the major challenges faced by contemporary peace operations?

Conceptualizing Peacekeeping

To understand UN peacekeeping, it is essential to comprehend the concepts of peacekeeping as articulated in the existing literature. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines peacekeeping as the "international enforcement and supervision of a truce between hostile states or communities," reflecting the traditional approach to peacekeeping. Diehl (1988 cites the International Peace Academy's definition, which describes peacekeeping as "the prevention, containment, moderation, and termination of hostilities between or within states, through the medium of a peaceful third-party intervention, organized and directed internationally, using multinational forces of soldiers, police, and civilians to restore and maintain peace." The UN itself explains peacekeeping as "one of the most effective tools available to the UN to assist host countries in navigating the difficult path from conflict to peace" (United Nations, n.d.-a). Furthermore, the UN elaborated that today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations

encompass maintaining peace and security, facilitating political processes, protecting civilians, assisting in the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants, supporting the electoral process, protecting and promoting human rights, and helping to restore the rule of law (United Nations, n.d.-a). This operation demonstrates a transition from the traditional role of merely observing truces to one of engaging in multidimensional functions.

In contrast, the effectiveness of peace operations has been the subject of debate, including what constitutes effectiveness and success, how peace missions can achieve long-term stability, and the ability of peacekeepers to protect civilians (Brennan, 2019). Studies have shown that despite peacekeepers' best efforts, the effectiveness of peacekeeping varies across contexts, resulting in successful, partially successful or unsuccessful peace missions (Pushkina, 2006). One key factor influencing its effectiveness is the presence of a viable political project (de Coning, 2023).

Building on the above literature, a shifting trend is observed in the definition of peacekeeping, reflecting its expanding scope. Scholars such as Whalan (2014) have criticized this expanding trajectory, noting that in practice, peacekeeping has evolved more rapidly than the theoretical and policy frameworks designed to guide it. Furthermore, Roberts (1994) observed that, despite its achievements, peacekeeping is in crisis in both conceptual and substantive respects, which has blurred the line between peacekeeping and various enforcement activities.

Understanding the Principles of UN Peacekeeping Operations

UN peacekeeping operations are founded on three interrelated and mutually reinforcing core principles. These principles have emerged in consideration of the functioning of peace missions (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2022).

1. *Consent of the parties*

UN missions are deployed with the consent of the primary parties to the conflict, providing the UN with the necessary freedom of action, both politically and physically. Historically, securing consent for peacekeeping missions was straightforward, typically involving agreements between two state actors. For instance, the UNMOGIP (United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan) was established with the consent of both India and Pakistan. However, obtaining consent has become more challenging with the rise of intra-state conflicts, mainly due to the presence of diverse factions and stakeholders. The UN offices first

had to identify those actors and then engage with them in a fragmented conflict zone. Under such circumstances, consent from the primary actors involved in the conflict is obtained. In contrast, consent from secondary actors, such as competing armed groups, is not required, as it would further delay the peace mission.

Nevertheless, the principle of consent, although an important pillar of peacekeeping, is often challenged by civilians and host governments, impacting the original agreement. Such challenges often arise when the government and the populace differ in their views on consent. Tensions may further escalate when the host government calls for the premature withdrawal of a mission, voiding the original consent. Scholars have observed that sustainable peace depends on inclusive politics, where consent is managed through engagement with all parties (Duursma et al., 2023; Johnstone, 2011). Therefore, the quality and inclusivity of host-state consent can significantly influence the success of UN peace operations.

2.   Impartiality

The second core principle of UN peacekeeping is impartiality, which is essential for upholding a mission's credibility and effectiveness. Impartiality requires treating all parties fairly and without bias or favoritism. Furthermore, impartiality is often related to neutrality; however, in peace operations, the two are not the same. For impartiality, peacekeepers must remain objective and fair in their conduct and carry out the mission's mandates. In traditional peacekeeping missions, there were usually clear and recognizable parties involved. These were mainly state actors who were directly engaged in maintaining the peace process.

In contrast, modern peacekeeping missions operate in an environment where more than one armed group and political entity are involved. Every stakeholder has its own agenda and goals. This diverse array of actors makes it harder for peacekeepers to be seen as impartial. Different parties interpret peacekeepers' actions differently and often align with local communities' preferred views. Similarly, scholars like Whalan (2014) agree that impartiality is a contested term serving different political and operational interests. Another major factor that has significantly challenged impartiality is the rise of asymmetrical warfare. Modern warfare involving non-state groups employing guerrilla tactics and unconventional methods against state actors and UN forces often blurs the line between combatant and non-combatant. Therefore, asymmetric conflicts have made peace operations less effective and unrealistic in maintaining impartiality (Di Salvatore, 2020).

3.   Non-use of force except in self-defense and to protect the mandate

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) permits peacekeeping missions to use force in certain conditions. This permission was the result of harsh lessons from the field, including fatalities and intensified conflicts. Previously, peacekeeping missions were small-scale, unarmed, and involved visible parties. Today, with the rise of non-state actors, these dynamics have shifted, leading to large-scale, heavily armed operations with expanded mandates. Peacekeepers are now permitted to use force both tactically and strategically, ensuring robust peacekeeping and defending the mission's mandate. Nevertheless, the UNSC imposes strict guidelines to prevent the misuse of force, as miscalculations can damage the mission's credibility and exacerbate conflicts (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2022). Additionally, the shift toward robust peacekeeping has led to criticisms that UN missions are increasingly functioning more as enforcement agents rather than pure peacekeepers.

Taken together, the three principles of peacekeeping are interdependent and mutually reinforcing and define the limits and legitimacy of a mission. However, any shift in one principal would directly affect the two others. Furthermore, these principles have not remained static; they have evolved along with the context. Theoretically, they aim to address the challenges peacekeepers face; however, in practice, these principles are difficult to uphold and are thus criticized. For instance, in Rwanda and Somalia, the limitations of these principles were exposed (Roberts, 1994). For this reason, the UN has been severely criticized for its intervention choices and for how it prioritizes issues.

Research Methods

The research employs a qualitative analysis of documents and literature to explore the evolution of United Nations peacekeeping operations. It relies on both primary and secondary resources, including UN reports, UNSC resolutions, mission reports, academic journals, books, and other resources. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of peacekeeping developments from 1948 to 2025. The use of multiple verified sources enhanced the reliability of the data and the depth of discussion. In line with Johnston's (2014) explanation, this method includes the "analysis of data collected by someone else for another primary purpose." Accordingly, the data was systematically reviewed based on relevance, credibility, and contribution to understanding the evolution of UN peacekeeping. For this purpose, the selection process drew from major academic databases (e.g., Google Scholar) and UN digital

repositories. The analysis compared different periods in the nature of missions and experiences to identify key patterns and shifts across peace operations. The changing nature of UN peacekeeping was interpreted through Galtung's positive and negative peace framework. This methodology was appropriate for the topic, as it allows for an in-depth analysis of the evolution of UN peacekeeping within a limited timeframe and contextual scope.

Discussion

Factors Analyzing the Development of UN Peacekeeping

One important distinction in understanding the trends of peacekeeping is that of positive and negative peace, which is considered a significant contribution to peace studies

Negative Peacekeeping and Positive Peacekeeping:

The term peace encompasses multifaceted factors, which makes it subjective. Due to its broad scope, there is no single agreed-upon definition of peace. Reflecting this, the interpretation of peace transitioned historically. A prominent scholar in the field of peace studies, Galtung (1964), coined the terms 'negative peace' and 'positive peace'. His understanding added new perspectives that contributed significantly to the theoretical framework of peace studies. In general terms, peace was mainly understood as the absence of war, violence, and direct conflict, a concept Johan Galtung referred to as negative peace. Galtung (1964) distinguished the concept of peace by introducing the term positive peace, which refers to the absence of indirect, structural, and cultural violence, as well as social injustice. Scholars have argued that positive and negative peace represent two dimensions of the same phenomenon (Diehl, 2016; Royce, 2004; Söderström et al., 2021). The debates around positive and negative peace mainly developed after the Second World War and during the Cold War. These debates not only influenced academia but also practitioners. The following figure illustrates how peacekeeping can be understood in terms of positive and negative peace.
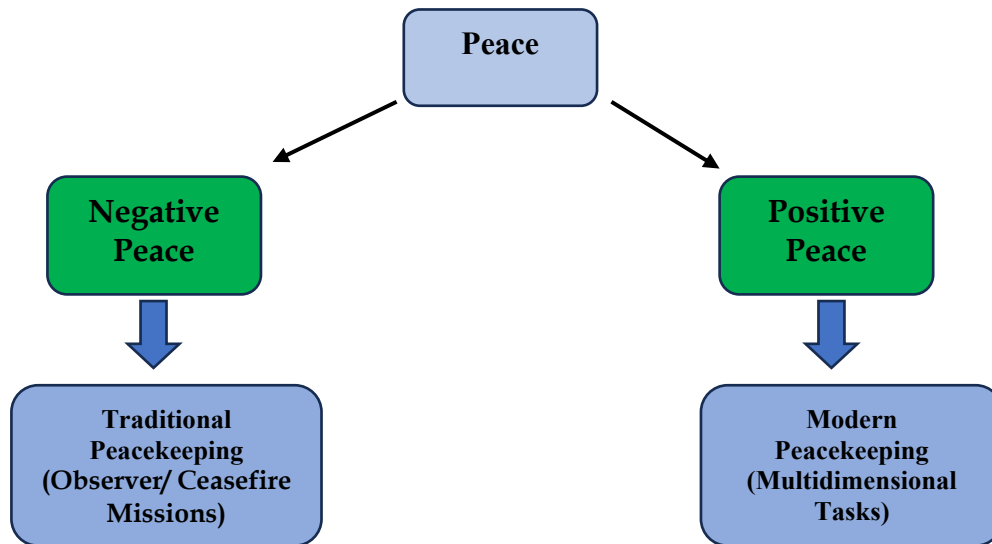
Figure 1. Development of peacekeeping following the concepts of peace.

Source: Author

While the concepts of positive and negative peace were being developed, UN peace operations were also evolving. Peacekeeping, which once focused solely on monitoring ceasefires (negative peace), expanded to pursue broader goals (positive peace). As a result, peacekeeping missions became multidimensional, with roles including protecting civilians, maintaining law and order, and conducting humanitarian interventions, among others. This role indicates that peacekeepers' tasks within the mission area have expanded to encompass a diverse array of actors and roles beyond traditional ones. Subsequently, peacekeeping missions have included civilian personnel, regional organizations, and civil actors to address ongoing issues. While this shift required maintaining a conflict-free state, it also sought to address the challenges posed by the dynamic landscape of peace, conflict, and violence. Sempiga (2017) linked the chronological evolution of peacekeeping to the evolution of peace studies. However, addressing the ideals of positive peace is more challenging because its scope is broader and more intricate than that of negative peace.

Consequently, peace education and peace research in relation to peacekeeping and peacebuilding became key areas of research. As peacekeepers encountered both violent and nonviolent situations, it became important for the blue helmets to understand peace education and to communicate effectively with different peace agents. Therefore, Galtung emphasized the peace profession, which enables participants to develop expertise in both conflict theories and practical research and training (Galtung, 1974).

Sloan's Five Phases of Peacekeeping

The doctrine of peacekeeping missions has undergone significant changes from the mid-20th century to the present. Various scholars have explored the patterns of these changes, with one prominent study by Sloan (2014) categorizing their progress into five distinct phases. This illustration shows that peacekeeping has progressed from an observer force into an armed force with a mandate for self-defense and the authorized use of force.

Phase I: The first phase includes peace observer missions, which were predominantly unarmed, such as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) during the late 1940s. These early missions are regarded as precursors to actual peacekeeping operations. They were smaller in scale and primarily centered on reporting and observation for the Security Council.

Phase II: UN Emergency Force (UNEF I) in 1956, which is regarded as the first actual peacekeeping operation. It was the first time the UN deployed armed forces rather than unarmed observers. Approximately 6,000 troops from 10 nations were deployed under UN command (Weinlich, 2014). Given the deployment's armed nature, it sparked debate over the use of force and self-defense. Concerning the use of force in self-defense, then Secretary-General Hammarskjöld remarked that force in self-defense "should be exercised only under strictly defined conditions." Sloan (2014) noted that the second phase witnessed the emergence of three fundamental principles: the use of force in self-defense, consent from host states, and impartiality.

Phase III: During the third phase, the concept of self-defense was further extended to include "defense of mandate," which allowed the use of force to protect peacekeeping operations' mandated duties. Additionally, the second iteration of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II) was established in 1973 between Israel and Egypt. Security Council Resolution 340 (1974) mandated the mission to implement an immediate ceasefire. In this mission, the blue helmets had the right of self-defense, which was broadened to include resisting any forceful attempts to obstruct the mission from fulfilling its Security Council mandate (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.).

Phase IV: Phase IV marked the transition from non-forceful peacekeeping operations to the offensive use of force in response to escalating violence, marking the foundation for a more assertive UN mission. This shift resulted from an increase in civil wars, humanitarian crises, and disorder that hindered peacekeeping missions in implementing their mandates, as exemplified by the missions in the Congo (ONUC), Somalia (UNOSOM II), the former

Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR), and East Timor (UNTAET). These missions permitted peacekeepers to utilize force beyond mere self-defense.

Phase V: Sloan categorizes the fifth phase of peacekeeping according to the landmark Brahimi Report, presented in 2000. This report brought about revolutionary changes in peacekeeping missions, marking a committed start to the 21st century. The Brahimi Report argued for reinventing peacekeeping to ensure security and protect civilians. It recommended deploying larger, better-equipped, and more confrontational forces that would also serve as a deterrent. Additionally, the report led to the invocation of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which authorizes actions in response to threats to peace, breaches of peace, and acts of aggression (United Nations, n.d.-b).

Jett's Three Stages of Peacekeeping

Another prominent scholar, Jett (2019), provides a classification that offers a critical analysis of the evolution of peacekeeping, presenting valuable insights into its changing nature and complex operations.

Classical peacekeeping missions

Classical peacekeeping missions were relatively uncomplicated. Peacekeepers were primarily tasked with monitoring demilitarized zones between two armed forces after conflicts, which were mainly over territorial disputes. The aim was straightforward: to reassure the parties involved that neither side would exploit the ceasefire to strengthen its military position. Since these missions typically involved states that recognized the UN's authority and principles, peacekeepers were not targets and remained safe. The prime examples are UNMOGIP and UNTSO.

However, these traditional peace missions drew criticism because territorial disputes remained unresolved, keeping peacekeepers in place for years and giving the impression that missions were never-ending. The core challenge in achieving peace lies in persuading countries to renounce their claims on disputed boundaries, which often seems an impossible task. Several classical peacekeeping missions centered on territorial disputes include UNTSO, UNMOGIP, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Syria, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

Another point to note about UNMOGIP is that, at the beginning of the dispute, neither

Pakistan nor India possessed nuclear weapons. This fact was an ideal time for international agencies to intervene and resolve the issue. The conflict between them intensified as both countries acquired nuclear capabilities. This capability made dispute resolution difficult, as neither party is willing to soften its stance.

Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations

The road towards multidimensional peacekeeping missions was a response to the evolving challenges of civil wars and protracted conflicts. After the Second World War, nations strived for independence and autonomy from colonial rulers. While some achieved independence peacefully, others had to struggle through prolonged revolutions to obtain their freedom. Between 1945 and 1960, approximately three dozen new states were formed in Asia and Africa (Office of the Historian, n.d.). The newly established states faced numerous challenges, particularly in governing the fault lines. In developing countries, fragile socio-economic conditions and weak institutional structures exacerbated existing conflicts. As wars between states became less common, internal conflicts grew more frequent, giving rise to humanitarian crises such as displacement and human rights violations. To address these novel emerging complexities, a different approach, distinct from traditional peacekeeping, was needed. Consequently, multidimensional peacekeeping operations were proposed that encompassed a wide range of sectors, including military forces, civilian police and political advisors operating in the areas of civil affairs, aspects of the rule of law, human rights, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction efforts, mine action support, public information, gender mainstreaming, and more (Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 2003). This shift in peacekeeping operations introduced new goals and ideals for achieving lasting peace. To achieve sustainability, peacekeepers needed the essential skills and resources to address emerging challenges. However, a 2015 report on peace operations noted that UN peacekeeping operations had also been assigned a conflict-management role. However, it lacked political support, adequate administration, troops, and other essential resources to protect missions and civilians (United Nations, 2015). This trouble also shows that the roles of peacekeepers were being expanded without adequate pragmatic support.

Rise of violent extremism

In the third stage, the author observed that the rising wave of violent extremism and terrorism has changed the security landscape of UN missions and posed additional significant challenges for peacekeepers. Extremist groups have been attacking peacekeepers and

undermining their efforts to maintain security and stability. These extremist groups also often disregard UN agreements, mandates, and interventions. As a result, peacekeepers have to face violent attacks, which confine them to their bases and hinder their mission goals.
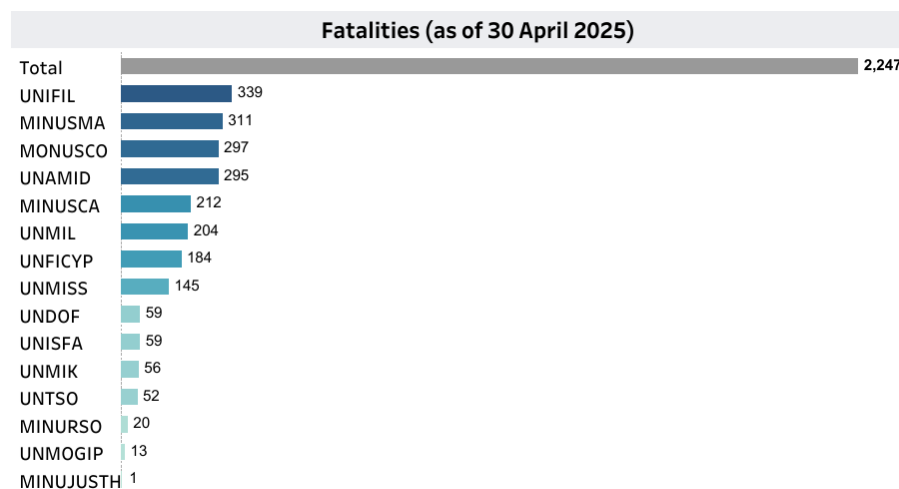
In response to global terrorism, states introduced and implemented policies of countering violent extremism (CVE) and preventing violent extremism (PVE). The debate over how to adopt these strategies for peace operations, in particular, was raised when Ban Ki-moon proposed integrating PVE into peacekeeping (Ucko, 2018). It was perceived as a proactive approach that critics warned would blur the line between peacekeepers and combat forces. For instance, in the case of MINUSMA, blue helmets assisted the Malian government in combating extremist networks and regaining control over territory. Their duties included anticipating threats and taking action to prevent asymmetric attacks on civilians and UN staff. As a result of this active engagement, MINUSMA was one of the deadliest UN missions. Scholars have pointed out that this role makes blue helmets appealing targets for terrorist groups, as any major attack increases extremist groups' visibility and support (Hansen et al., 2020).

While Sloan (2014) emphasizes phase-wise institutional and doctrinal transitions, such as shifting from observer missions to robust operations under Chapter VII, Jett's (2019) stages focus more on the operational and security dynamics of peacekeeping, highlighting peacekeepers' roles in responding to multidimensional threats. Together, these frameworks reveal how peacekeeping has expanded both in scope and risk exposure.

Rising Fatalities of Peacekeepers Since 1948

One of the major concerns in recent years has been the rising number of peacekeeper fatalities in mission areas. With expanded responsibilities, peacekeepers are now more exposed to attacks. This increased risk stems from both conventional and emerging security threats, as well as traditional and non-traditional security threats. Traditional threats, such as violent assaults from multiple adversaries, are complemented by non-traditional threats, including harsh environmental conditions, climate change and others. Both kinds of threats have contributed to the rising number of deaths and posed different security risks for peacekeepers. The intra-state nature of conflicts has played a substantial role in driving these fatalities. According to the UN, since 1948, more than 4,400 peacekeepers have lost their lives, with 2,247 of these fatalities occurring in active peacekeeping missions. To illustrate this, the following graph shows the number of fatalities across the fifteen active missions, which together account for more than half of all UN peacekeeping missions (United Nations, n.d.-c), demonstrating that the changing nature of peacekeeping operations has directly affected

peacekeepers' safety and security.

Fatalities (as of 30 April 2025)

Mission	Fatalities
Total	2,247
UNIFIL	339
MINUSMA	311
MONUSCO	297
UNAMID	295
MINUSCA	212
UNMIL	204
UNFICYP	184
UNMISS	145
UNDOF	59
UNISFA	59
UNMIK	56
UNTSO	52
MINURSO	20
UNMOGIP	13
MINUJUSTH	1

Graph 1. Fatalities in Active Peacekeeping Missions

Source: United Nations Peacekeeping (https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/fatalities)

The nature of the dangers faced by peacekeepers has changed significantly, shifting from ambushes to the growing threat of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The rise of IEDs has notably compromised the safety of peacekeepers, as these devices have become a foremost cause of fatalities in conflict zones. Since 2013, approximately 643 peacekeepers and UN staff have been injured or killed by such devices. IEDs are not only relatively easy to deploy but also exceedingly difficult to detect, posing a persistent and formidable threat. Furthermore, IED incidents severely disrupt peacekeeping operations by restricting patrols and limiting convoy movements. (Sarfati & Stoddard, 2023). The surge in fatalities due to non-state actors using a variety of lethal mechanisms, such as IEDs, has shown the impact of asymmetric warfare. Peacekeepers, who once remained safe in their traditional roles, are becoming primary targets as their roles expand. Also, entire peace missions are being impacted by asymmetric warfare.

Beyond the danger of asymmetric conflicts, non-traditional security threats, such as environmental conditions, have significantly hindered peacekeeping. It is reported that between 2000 and 2017, around 897 peacekeepers died from disease due to the harsh environment. This casualty accounts for 43 percent of health-related deaths during that period (Yuan et al., 2024). Non-traditional threats will further increase the risks to peacekeepers' security.

Action for Peacekeeping (A4P): Preparing Peacekeeping Missions for the Future

In 2018, the UN introduced the Action for Peacekeeping initiative (A4P) in response to challenges and threats posed in peace missions. This document aims to address constantly changing threats and enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. The A4P initiative focused on multiple areas to support peace operations. These include political solutions, improving peacekeepers' capabilities, and ensuring they are prepared to fulfill their mandate. Therefore, A4P highlighted a collective approach that engages relevant stakeholders: member states, the Security Council, the General Assembly, financial contributors, troop- and police-contributing countries, host nations, intergovernmental and regional organizations, and the UN Secretariat. As a result, the initiative concentrated on eight key areas, which were endorsed by 150 member states (United Nations, n.d.-d).

Table 1. Action for Peace (A4P) Focused Areas.

	Focused Area	Summary
1.	Politics	Advance political solutions and strengthen the peacekeeping impact
2.	Women, Peace, and Security	Ensure equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of the peace process and implement the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.
3.	Protection	Implement protection of civilian mandates and strengthen strategic engagement with local populations.
4.	Safety and Security	Address the increasing fatalities among peacekeepers and continuously enhance medical, technical, and logistical support in peacekeeping operations.
5.	Performance and Accountability	Hold civilians, peacekeepers, and leadership accountable for their performance and address any shortcomings. Collaborate with Member States to secure specialized capabilities, such as language skills, and enhance force generation, equipment readiness, and sustainability.
6.	Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace	Support inclusive, participatory approaches with host governments, involve civil society in peacekeeping efforts, ensure effective coordination between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding

	Focused Area	Summary
		Commission, and support UN Country Teams during peacekeeping transitions.
7.	Partnerships	Improve peacekeeping partnerships with organizations such as the AU and EU, support AU policy and capacity-building, and improve predictability for AU-led operations under Security Council authority.
8.	Conduct of Peacekeepers and Peacekeeping Operations	Commit to maintaining accountability and endorsing the UN's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, ensuring that personnel adhere to UN standards for service.

Source: United Nations (https://www.un.org/en/A4P/)

However, A4P has been widely criticized for the significant gap between its vision and practical implementation. Sherman (2018) argues that despite its ambitious goals, A4P lacks groundbreaking ideas and effective follow-up mechanisms. Sherman (2018) notes that UN officials often operate within constraints imposed by the preferences of the P5 (the permanent members of the Security Council), which can persistently limit progress. Furthermore, implementing A4P proves challenging in multidimensional peace operations, especially those involving armed groups, extremist ideologies, and the ambiguous roles of regional actors. In these scenarios, the absence of peace agreements with key conflict actors complicates international compliance and effectiveness.

In response to these challenges, and on its third anniversary, Secretary-General António Guterres introduced A4P+, aiming to build upon the foundation established by A4P (United Nations, n.d.-e). The primary objective of A4P+ was to expedite progress on the Declaration of Shared Commitments for UN Peacekeeping Operations, addressing shortcomings identified in the initial A4P initiative.

Technological Advances and the Proliferation of Hate Speech, Misinformation, and Disinformation

In the mid-20th century, when peacekeeping was first established, information technology was still in its infancy. There was no internet, so there were no social media

platforms. The internet and digital platforms have transformed this landscape, allowing information to be shared across continents instantly.

While these emerging technologies provide opportunities, they also introduce new risks for peacekeepers. For instance, in conflict zones, information manipulation often deceives large populations, shaping their actions and perceptions. Hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation challenge UN operations, complicating efforts to sustain peace and security. In 2023, a survey revealed that approximately 58% of UN peacekeepers believed that misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech had not only impacted their mission work but also put them in danger. The spread of false information weakens local support for UN missions, hampers peace efforts, creates a trust deficit between local communities and peacekeepers, and puts the lives of civilians and peacekeepers at risk (Wardle, 2024).

To address these issues, the UN launched the Rabat Plan of Action along with the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (United Nations Human Rights, 2012). These initiatives aim to strike a balance between freedom of opinion and expression and effective measures to counter hate speech. However, the threat has persisted, with numerous instances of manipulated information undermining peacekeeping missions (Goswami, 2023).

In 2019, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), false information about the Ebola epidemic incited violence against health workers. Rumors regarding Ebola vaccines and vaccination centers led to over 130 attacks on health workers, with dozens killed by rebels.

In Mali, a fake letter circulated on Facebook, falsely accusing peacekeepers of collaborating with armed groups, which went viral via WhatsApp. Likewise, in the DRC, there were allegations that peacekeepers were aiding M23 rebels by providing transportation (Trithart, 2022).

Furthermore, anti-UN disinformation alleging that peacekeepers exploit local resources contributes to a significant trust deficit between local populations and peacekeepers, undermining the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations and obstructing the efforts of regional and international organizations.

Artificial Intelligence

The phenomenon of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has further accelerated the spread of hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation. As stated by the UN Secretary-General, "Misinformation, disinformation, hate speech and other risks to the information ecosystem are fueling conflict, threatening democracy and human rights, and undermining public health and climate action. Their proliferation is now supercharged by the rapid rise of readily available

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, increasing the threat to groups often targeted in information spaces, including children" (United Nations, 2024). In parallel, a new wave of cyber threats, amplified by AI, has significantly reshaped the landscape of peacekeeping operations. These cyber threats pose risks to critical infrastructure, including supply chains, nuclear facilities, and national databases. The challenge of protecting civilian populations from harm caused by AI-driven data is increasing. Therefore, emerging technologies have great potential to violate human rights and undermine social cohesion (Pauwels, 2021).

Advances in emerging technologies, including AI, are prompting peace operations to reevaluate. These advances have not only shaped communication but also enhanced the intelligence capabilities and effective response of peacekeepers. Therefore, their utilization is becoming an integral component of modern peace operations, adding both new opportunities and risks. Peace missions had to enhance their training and revise policies and strategies to keep pace with rapidly advancing technology.

Considering the above discussion, it is observed that the peace operations were initially established with a focus on achieving negative peace, which involves the cessation of direct hostilities and the preservation of ceasefire agreements. Over time, peace operations had to expand their scope to address concerns such as environmental issues, the protection of women and children, intra-state conflicts, technological advances, and other aspects related to positive peace. This evolution has made peace operations robust and multidimensional. However, embracing the theory of positive peace and designing practical approaches to achieve it remain subject to debate.

Policy Lessons:

To address modern challenges, UN peacekeeping must reassess its theory and practice to ensure they are realistic and well-balanced. Moreover, peace operations must be linked to positive peace, thereby enhancing operational experience and conceptual understanding. To achieve this, peace education courses must be introduced into the training modules for blue helmets, bridging the gap between practitioners and researchers. Additionally, the mandate of a mission that is deemed sacred should be reevaluated to address emerging threats and ensure the integration of positive peace.

Moreover, to keep up with technological changes, training modules should integrate advanced technologies, such as virtual reality, to simulate operational experience and increase preparedness. Importantly, the Global North must ensure that advances in AI and emerging technologies are shared with countries in the Global South. This approach would prepare peacekeepers to address hybrid threats in mission areas and enhance their security.

Conclusion

From their origin to the present, UN peacekeeping missions have faced complex operational environments. Initially, peacekeeping missions began as observer missions, involving unarmed personnel, and were primarily tasked with monitoring agreed ceasefires or truces between conflicting parties. Over time, the nature of conflict evolved with the rise of intra-state conflicts involving non-state actors, such as ethno-religious armed groups and violent extremism within society. Additionally, emerging non-traditional security threats, such as climate change, health risks, food insecurity, and broader human security challenges, have heightened the insecurities faced by peacekeepers. Consequently, it has become essential for peacekeepers to engage with and address both traditional and emerging non-traditional threats. As a result, the responsibilities and mandates of peacekeepers have grown and become more difficult to implement, placing peace operations within a multidimensional framework.

Furthermore, it is noted that peace discourse has significantly influenced the UN peace operations. Galtung's concepts of positive and negative peace aim to explain the evolution of peacekeeping from an observer role to a multidimensional mission. This study has contributed to understanding both peace and peacekeeping in theory and practice. It is also observed that limited resources and increasing challenges on the ground make it harder to achieve peace.

The analysis also highlights rapid technological change and the spread of disinformation, misinformation, and hate speech. These factors have fueled violence that disrupts missions and have, at times, led to fatalities. Countering false narratives remains a necessity because they undermine trust and erode the UN's credibility with local communities. AI has opened new opportunities and challenges for the blue helmets. The misuse of technology can pose a serious threat to peacekeeping missions. On the positive side, AI has become an important tool for training and provides immersive experiences, significantly enhancing peacekeepers' preparedness. It can also support surveillance and patrols in mission areas, improving safety and reducing risk.

Therefore, peace operations need regular reassessment and adaptive approaches to

keep pace. Despite the challenges, UN peacekeeping remains central to global peace efforts. Its member states continue to value the work of the blue helmets, who play a key role in helping communities. By connecting positive and negative peace frameworks to gradual developments in peacekeeping, this research provides an integrated understanding of the evolution of peacekeeping and adaptation to emerging threats. This study contributes to peacekeeping and peace scholarships by demonstrating the need for a dynamic balance between theory and practice.

Biography

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