

Budget Constraints and Rising Demand: Resources Allocation for Effective Peacekeeping

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Evolution of UN Peacekeeping Funding

Since its inception, the United Nations (UN) has wielded peacekeeping as a vital tool to manage and mitigate conflicts across the globe. To date, nearly 71 missions have been deployed to many volatile regions of the World, evolving from their initial, more traditional form. Early on, the focus rested on deploying UN observers or peacekeeping forces to monitor ceasefires between warring nations or factions. Mandates for these missions were often limited, their budgets constrained, and troop numbers carefully calibrated. Yet, within this modest framework, UN peacekeepers played a crucial role in de-escalating tensions, protecting civilians, and paving the way for dialogue and eventual peace processes. With increasing consensus in the UN Security Council (UNSC) after end of the cold war, the scope of UN peacekeeping got enlarged with complex, multi-dimensional missions with expanded mandates becoming a norm. As a result, the peacekeeping budget escalated from a modest 141 million dollars in 1985 to 3364 million by 1995,

an unprecedented increase in a decade catering for many big peacekeeping missions in Cyprus, Kuwait, Angola, Western Sahara, Rwanda, Somalia, Haiti and the former Yugoslavia¹.

Year	Missions	Budget Million USD
1995	18	3364
1998	13	995
2000	16	2139
2005	13	4737
2015	14	7594
2020	12	8158
2023	12	6100

Despite a substantial increase from its initial years, the UN peacekeeping budget remains a tiny fraction compared to major nations' defence spending. Even at its peak, it has been insufficient to fulfil the ever-expanding mandates assigned

¹<https://archive.globalpolicy.org/un-finance/tables-and-charts-on-un-finance/the-un-peacekeeping-operations-budget.html>

to peacekeeping missions. The devastating failures of missions in Rwanda and Bosnia during the mid-1990s exposed the need for reform and a more robust approach to peacekeeping, particularly for operations under Chapter VII aimed at protecting civilians. Additionally, expenditures on peripheral activities related to peacekeeping have also ballooned. While the requirement for larger and more capable missions has persisted into the 21st century, the budget has not kept pace. No significant increase in funding occurred until 2005, and even now, the current 6–8-billion-dollar budget barely covers inflation, let alone the expanding demands of peacekeeping.

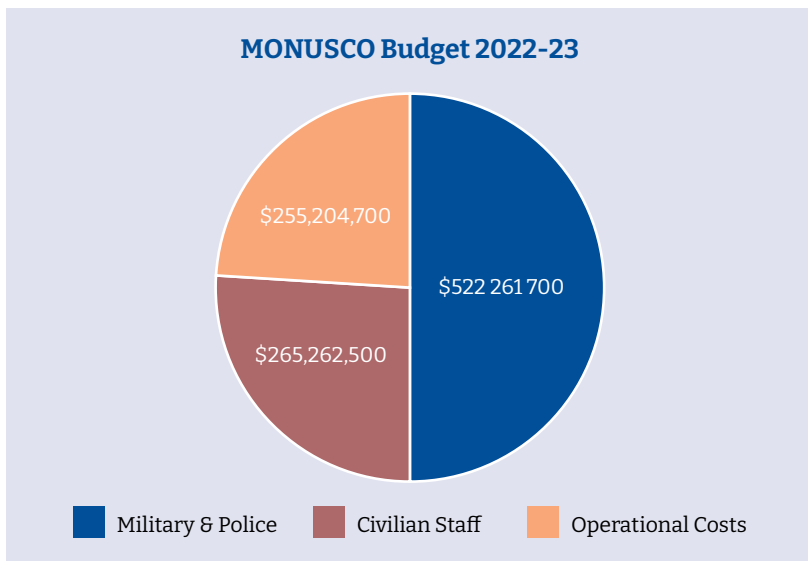
Utilisation of Peacekeeping Funds

The UN peacekeeping budget is utilised across various critical areas, all geared towards fostering peace and stability in conflict zones. The largest chunk goes towards personnel, encompassing not just soldiers and police officers, but also vital civilian experts in fields like human rights, development, and political affairs. Beyond personnel, missions invest heavily in operations which necessitates aircrafts, helicopters, vehicles, weapon systems, robust

communication networks and infrastructure for effective deployment. Training, and community outreach programs are also crucial, allowing peacekeepers to deter violence, engage with locals, and promote reconciliation. Furthermore, missions often provide essential humanitarian assistance like food, water, and healthcare, supporting war-torn communities in their struggle for basic needs. Some missions like MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo face distinct complexities, leading to more resources directed towards neutralizing armed groups, securing elections, and promoting accountability for human rights violations.

Perpetual Shortages

The peacekeeping financing has not been easy to come and has always been a bone of contention amongst the member states due to economic and political reasons. The current methodology for funding was agreed by the UN General Assembly in 1973 wherein the peacekeeping expenses are allocated based on a special scale of assessments under an intricate formula which takes into account, among other things, a member state's share of the world economy, its per capita income and the debt burden with the five permanent members of the UNSC required to pay a larger share because of their special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security². Historically, the UN has been particularly prone to pending and late payments from its major financial contributors which places a strain on UN peacekeeping. As per "Fifth Committee" responsible for approving peacekeeping budget, unpaid contributions for peacekeeping operations as of 30 April 2023 stood at \$2.8 billion, \$693 million more than 30 June 2022³. Since 2017, the United States has started to hold back a portion of its contribution and build up arrears as the United States Congress has implemented its 1994 decision to cap its share at 25 percent of the total against UN



²<https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded>

³<https://press.un.org/en/2023/gaab4421.doc.htm>

figure of 27 percent⁴. Additionally, there are many procedural restrictions on expenditure which takes away the flexibility from the UN Secretary General. For instance, all peacekeeping missions have separate accounts and till 2022, funds could not be deployed from one mission to the other, nor are the savings incentivised as these are supposed to be reimbursed to the contributing member states rather than to be used within the mission⁵.

Impact on Peacekeeping

Financial constraints have deterred the international community from engaging in peacekeeping missions in many conflict zones. This leaves these regions with two undesirable options: either struggling on their own, as seen in Syria, or falling under the control of single-nation-led multinational forces, as in Iraq and Afghanistan. While inaction incurs a heavy cost in human lives, deploying multinational forces often proves significantly more expensive than UN peacekeeping missions.

In addition, the shoestring budgets allocated to the sanctioned UN peacekeeping missions compromises their capabilities in both size and quality. Large missions like MONUSCO and UNMISS struggle to maintain peace with troop numbers and equipment woefully inadequate for the vast operational areas and powerful armed factions they must control. This gap becomes glaring when UN troops face formidable groups like the “Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda” (FDLR), M23, or even the host nation’s forces while protecting civilians. Nearly all missions suffer from a lack of modern military equipment for surveillance, rapid deployment, and operational response, severely hindering their effectiveness in violent situations⁶. As a

result, these missions face unfair criticism for underperformance, which should be attributed to insufficient “mission capability” and inadequate support from the UNSC. This perceived lack of effectiveness, in turn, results in tightening the flow of funds from contributors, creating a vicious cycle.

Persistent delays and budget cuts further cripple the already compromised capabilities of peacekeeping missions, particularly impacting troop deployment. This is largely due to the UN’s chronic indebtedness to troop-contributing countries. Rwanda, for instance, was forced to withdraw a planned MINUSCA rotation due to unfulfilled reimbursements crucial for updating their equipment. In 2018, the outstanding debt to troop and police contributors ballooned to a staggering \$339 million⁷. India, too, voiced concerns in March 2019, highlighting \$38 million owed for its contingent equipment⁸. The Fifth Committee concedes that spending restrictions may have averted a cash crisis and a disruption of operations; however, they hampered budget implementation and mandate delivery with several activities and outputs postponed or cancelled⁹.

Sustainable Financing for UN Peacekeeping

The international community needs to recognise the relevance and cost effectiveness of UN peacekeeping hence commit larger amount of resources to it. As per a study “even though peacekeepers rarely engage in direct combat with the warring parties, they inhibit violence on the battlefield through several mechanisms. By separating combatants, demobilizing armed groups, and reducing uncertainty through security guarantees, peacekeepers reduce

⁴<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10597>

⁵<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/financing-un-peacekeeping-avoiding-another-crisis-p.7>

⁶<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13533312.2023.2263178> p431-432

⁷<https://press.un.org/en/2019/gaab4323.doc.htm>

⁸<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-voices-concern-over-delays-in-reimbursement-to-un-peacekeeping-contributing-countries/article27169474.ece>

⁹<https://press.un.org/en/2022/gaab4394.doc.htm>

killings on the battlefield. To effectively engage in these actions requires stronger mission capacity – specifically, large numbers of armed troops able to perform these tasks”¹⁰.

Many forward-looking procedural changes have been introduced in the recent years to enable the UN Secretary General to appropriately fund the ongoing missions. Notable amongst these are the provision to temporarily utilise funds held in the account of other missions, facility to utilise the funds from the peacekeeping reserve fund retaining 40 million dollars as standby for the new missions and a single annual assessment of the expenditure thereby reducing the time lag between the approval of the mandate and availability of funds¹¹.

UN must also explore diverse funding options beyond assessed contributions, including voluntary contributions, public-private partnerships, and innovative financial instruments.

Efficiency in Peacekeeping

Beyond securing reliable and adequate funding, the UN Secretariat must also adapt peacekeeping to the challenges of the 21st century. By implementing the following suggestions, we can enhance both the operational effectiveness and financial efficacy of peacekeeping missions.

Sharpening Mission Focus: Prioritizing Core Objectives in Peacekeeping. Peacekeeping mandates require refinement to ensure achievable objectives that directly address conflict’s root causes while avoiding mission overreach. Prioritizing core tasks – the physical protection of civilians, facilitating humanitarian access, and promoting political dialogue becomes crucial. Currently, missions grapple with a multitude of diverse tasks, leading to

competition for already scarce budgetary resources. Consider MONUSCO as a case in point, its mandate encompasses security sector reform, electoral support, sanctions monitoring, and bolstering the DRC judicial system, amongst others¹².

Prioritize Regional Partnerships and Burden-Sharing. Regional organizations like the African Union must be encouraged to take on more responsibility for peacekeeping and cooperation with troop-contributing countries should be strengthened. UN is also yet to explore innovative partnerships with private sector and NGOs for specialized technical assistance.

Cost-Effective Deployment. Troop deployment needs to be based on mission-specific threats and terrain, optimizing troop levels. Imprudent financial practices like six monthly rotation of troops needs to be done away with as it will bring down the troop rotation costs and time spent on troop familiarisation.

Tech-Powered Peacekeeping. In today’s complex conflict environments, peacekeepers urgently need to leverage cost-effective technologies like drones, surveillance systems, and AI. These tools can revolutionize information gathering, monitoring, threat assessments, and early warning, empowering missions with enhanced situational awareness and proactive responses. The UNSC’s 2021 call to harness digital technology for peacekeeping is a timely and crucial step, demanding swift and prioritized action¹³.

Strengthened Performance Monitoring and Evaluation. The existing performance metrics must be made stringent and effectively implemented to eliminate inefficient and redundant mission components. Regular, independent and unbiased evaluations must be

¹⁰https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2300139p.27

¹¹<https://press.un.org/en/2022/gaab4394.doc.htm>

¹²https://monusco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/resolution_2666_2022_0.pdf

¹³<https://press.un.org/en/2021/sc14607.doc.htm>

carried out to identify areas for improvement and ensure accountability. Best practices and lessons learned must be shared across different missions to enhance overall effectiveness.

Promote Sustainable Peacebuilding and Exit Strategies. Develop clear exit strategies linked to benchmarks of progress and sustainability. Work with national governments and local communities to build local capacity for conflict resolution, governance, and security to ensure lasting peace after peacekeeping missions end.

Increase Transparency and Public Engagement. At present most peacekeeping missions suffer from lack of communication with the stakeholders which needs to be improved by clear and regular dialogue stating with the mission objectives, challenges, and progress to stakeholders and the public. Peacekeepers must engage much more proactively with local communities to understand their needs and concerns, fostering trust and collaboration.

Foster Innovation and Adaptability. Peacekeeping needs to evolve hence must encourage experimentation and pilot projects to test new approaches and technologies in peacekeeping. There is also a requirement to build institutional flexibility and responsiveness to adapt to changing conflict dynamics and challenges. UN also must invest more on research and development to improve peacekeeping effectiveness in the face of evolving threats and contexts.

Conclusion

In a 21st century marked by complex conflicts, UN Peacekeeping remains a vital, though not a perfect instrument for global security. It stands as a beacon of hope, shielding vulnerable populations and fostering fragile peace. Yet, budgetary constraints threaten to diminish its positive effect. To navigate this challenge, the member states must increase their financial contributions, not just in numbers, but in unwavering dedication. In addition, the

peacekeeping must embrace cost-effective technologies, streamline operations, and forge partnerships so that the peacekeeping budget is maximised so that UN Peacekeeping continues to contribute towards a safer, more peaceful world.



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Major General Gajinder Singh was commissioned into the Garhwal Rifles on 08 June 1985. The officer has commanded his battalion in a high-altitude area, an Assam Rifles Sector in North Eastern India and a Mountain Division. For his distinguished services, he was awarded “Ati Vishisht Seva Medal” in 2019.

In UN peacekeeping operations, he has been a military observer in the UN Mission in Angola in 1997-98, Chief of Integrated Mission Training at the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2003-2004 and Chief of Operations in the UN Mission in Sudan 2010-2011.

The officer is a Master of Philosophy from Indore and Punjab University and a PhD in peace and conflict studies focusing on “protection of civilians in UN peacekeeping operations” from Jamia Millia University. He retired from the Army in 2021 and since then is involved in writing and speaking on security matters.