

# VICTORIA SHANGHAI ACADEMY MODEL UNITED NATIONS



*15-16th April 2023*

**SPECPOL**

Chair Report

Topic 1: Establishing a Framework for Future UN  
Peacekeeping Operations  
Chairs: Belle Tse & Ka Ho



## Message from the Chairs

Greetings delegates!

On behalf of the VSAMUN secretariat and ourselves, we warmly welcome you to the Special Political and Decolonisation Committee. We are Belle Tse and Ka Ho Cheung, both year 12 students studying at Maryknoll Convent School and Victoria Shanghai Academy respectively, and we are delighted to serve as your chairs.

The Special Political Decolonisation Committee is the Fourth Committee within the UN General Assembly. It covers a broad range of issues involving decolonisation-related agenda items, a comprehensive review of the question of peacekeeping operations as well as special political missions. In the MUN circuit, SPECPOL is considered an intermediate committee that strives to strengthen the skills of experienced delegates while allowing less advanced delegates to experiment around.

As chairs, we hope that these two chair reports will only serve as starting points for delegates to conduct extensive research about their country's stance on both topics. With that being said, we hope VSAMUN serves as a good opportunity for you to form strong bonds with fellow delegates and have fun!

We look forward to witnessing riveting debates, interesting resolutions and hearing your insightful speeches in April. Should you have any queries, please feel free to reach out to either of us through email. Good luck and all the best!

Cheers,

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VSAMUN 2023 Special Political and Decolonisation Committee



# Background Information

When diplomatic mediation and negotiations are not effective in resolving conflicts, the United Nations strengthens its intervention by sending its peacekeeping force into involved countries. The United Nations, being a body that aims at protecting civilians and preventing conflicts, is an integral part of peacekeeping. As of 2023, there are 12 peacekeeping operations led by the Department of Peace Operations under the United Nations such as MINURSO in Western Sahara and UNTSO in the Middle East. Though ongoing, these operations have, according to the UN themselves, assisted in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants, facilitated peace talk processes, and maintained peace and security to a degree. However, every time the UN launches a peacekeeping operation, it unfailingly manages to harbour criticism and public backlash for its inefficiency, number of casualties and collateral damage.

## **Significance of UN Peacekeeping Operations**

Why the United Nations? Why not any other state? The United Nations asserts that its operations achieve the goals of protecting civilians under the threat of violence or war, as well as deterring, preventing and responding to gender-based and sexual violence. It also performs important tasks such as investigating and reporting human rights abuses and instances of violations of international humanitarian law. The United Nations, being composed of multiple countries, also give the chance for all member states' interests to be well-represented and acknowledged. It is said to be one of the steps to guaranteeing long-lasting peace and security, as well as preventing the outbreak of conflicts. The UN also follows three pillars, namely human rights, peace and security, and development. With the help of all its member nations, it becomes a powerful body which augments the ability to build a stable society.

## **Peacekeeping Mechanisms and Public Backlash**

### **1. Inefficiency**

Public backlash towards the United Nations peacekeeping operations had always existed, but was more apparently observed during the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War, where Ukrainian President Zelensky implored the UN to 'act immediately'. This act was seen as indirect criticism towards the UN for its inaction: not only did the UN Security Council fail to mediate the conflict, but they also only demanded that Russia withdraw from Ukraine, to which the public responded with dissatisfaction. Till now, the UN has supported the Ukrainians by delivering lifesaving aid and providing emergency food and shelter, but effective efforts in appeasing the conflict are yet to be seen. Another instance would be during the peacekeeping intervention in South Sudan, where UN troops faced criticism for "not having acted enough to protect civilians". In the operation, the UN faced multiple errors, including the delay of troops' arrival, insufficient military and humanitarian equipment, poor planning and the mishandling of a political crisis. This operation in South Sudan had also been extended numerous times, with its latest extension being up till March 15, 2023.



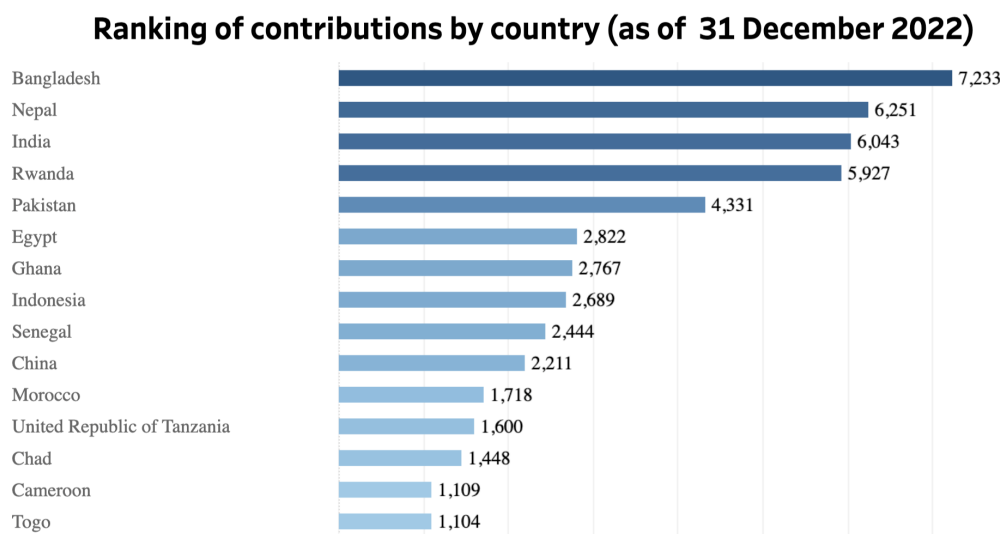
## 2. Collateral Damage

Every UN peacekeeping operation inevitably brings about collateral damage, where properties are destroyed and non-combatants are harmed. Though one may criticise soldiers for ‘misidentifying targets’ or being ‘rash’, military operations often require quick judgement, which leads to claims of such attacks being necessary. In a few cases, UN Peacekeepers have also become targets, with 3,737 peacekeepers dead since 1948. This has once again resulted in discontent from the public of nations where UN Peacekeepers are deployed.

## 3. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN Personnel

Although the UN has a ban on any sexual relationships that ‘abuse the position of vulnerability’, multiple reports of soldiers sexually abusing and or exploiting non-combatants have arisen in the past decades. This includes missions such as but not limited to the ones in Haiti, Somalia, and the Central African Republic. However, not many soldiers have been held accountable nor prosecuted as the accountability of peacekeepers is up to the country that sends the troops.

## Contribution and Guidelines



*Figure 1. A graph of the Top 15 countries that contributed to UN peacekeeping missions by sending troops*

The top 10 providers of assessed contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations for 2020-2021 are:

1. **United States** (27.89%)
2. **China** (15.21%)
3. **Japan** (8.56%)
4. **Germany** (6.09%)
5. **United Kingdom** (5.79%)
6. **France** (5.61%)
7. **Italy** (3.30%)
8. **Russian Federation** (3.04%)
9. **Canada** (2.73%)
10. **Republic of Korea** (2.26%)



*Figure 2. A list of the top 10 countries that contributed to UN peacekeeping missions financially*

The UN peacekeeping operations follow three principles: impartiality, the consent of the parties, and non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate. Troops are also expected to respect local laws, customs and practices all the while treating host country inhabitants with respect and consideration. Peacekeepers also operate while following the aims to protect citizens, actively prevent conflict and strengthen security.

Peacekeepers are also divided into two groups, namely military observers and peacekeeping forces. The former is unarmed and only observes the enforcement of ceasefire arrangements while the latter is equipped with arms to stop conflicts with force when necessary. To put this in a more concrete example, military observers in the Russo-Ukrainian War only had the task of observing and reporting the current situation in an objective manner. On the other hand, UN soldiers can carry weapons, and are allowed to fight back.

### **Past Notable Operations**

There are various UN peacekeeping missions that were regarded as a failure by the public. To begin with, MONUSCO, was a peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Funded with more than 1 billion USD, MONUSCO had more than 16,000 personnel to protect civilians from armed groups. Yet, in the midst of this operation, people in the Congo region started protesting for MONUSCO to leave as its strategy to maintain peace did not stand. This was due to how despite the presence of MONUSCO, people continued to live in unsafe conditions while the number of armed groups rose even though the operation was kicked off to prevent exactly that. High levels of violence plagued the region, and civilians lost trust in the UN.

Regarding successful interventions, ONUSAL is one of the examples. ONUSAL was a peacekeeping mission in El Salvador, where armed political violence threatened to break out. In response, UN troops established stable coordination mechanisms within a short period of time and facilitated information campaigns and educational programmes on human rights. This was one of the few operations in which the UN successfully ended a decade-long civil conflict within a few years' time.

### **Going against militarily stronger states**

As made evident from the Russo-Ukrainian War, condemning member states, and imposing economic sanctions and arms embargos fail to resolve conflicts when these are made against a militarily strong and self-sufficient state. This ultimately leads to the question: how can future UN peacekeeping operations be improved such that there is an increase in efficiency, less backlash from the public, and that the goals of the UN are achieved?



## Key Terms

Term	Definition
Peacekeeping	According to the United Nations, peacekeeping refers to the role held by the Department of Peace Operations as an "instrument developed by the organisation as a way to help countries torn by conflict to create the conditions for lasting peace".
Collateral damage	Forms of damage, including death and injuries that result from fighting in war, yet affect people who are not involved in the military or non-military buildings, e.g. civilians and residential buildings. In short, damage that was not intended but occurred due to military operations
Military necessity	A principle of international humanitarian law. It refers to the notion used to justify the recourse of violence and measures that are actually needed to accomplish a legitimate military purpose.
Non-combatants	A person who is not directly involved in fighting during a war, especially a civilian, a chaplain, or an army doctor.
Legitimate target	Refers to an object, structure, individual or entity that is considered a valid target of attack by belligerent forces during armed conflict.
Proportionality	The idea that an action should not exceed its necessity, which can be shown in peacekeeping operations by weighing the anticipated military advantage and the incidental harm expected from it.
National sovereignty	The power for a nation to govern itself without interference from outsiders such that they complete control over its own territory.
Department of Peace Operations (DPO)	A department of the United Nations that is tasked with planning, managing, and deploying peacekeeping officers, and makes an effort in supporting the political and peacebuilding missions of the UN.
Veto power	The power to say no, or stop an official action. In the UN Security Council, the P5 nations, namely China, France, Russia, the UK and the US have the power to veto decisions. This indicates that any resolution supported by other permanent members will become ineffective if even one of the permanent members votes against it.



# Key Clashes

## Accountability and Consequences

Noting that each peacekeeping operation ultimately causes collateral damage and sometimes even death to non-combatants and personnel, the UN has been criticised for lacking sufficient resources to protect civilians. The public has called for the improvement of UN operation systems and that member states involved should be held accountable for the effects, favourable or not, of peacekeeping operations.

## Host Country's Stance

Consent is constantly changing over the span of a peacekeeping operation, and is often strengthened or weakened by the host country's government. This could happen when the host state feels that the peacekeeping mission challenges national sovereignty or when the UN's pursuit of human rights in a nation implicates that the government is committing wrongdoing.

## Military Threats

As observed from the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War, threats of the outbreak of a nuclear war are not new to the UN. This serves as a disruption to UN peacekeeping operations as no member states are willing to send out their troops under the threat of an attack from a militarily robust state.

## The Shackles of Veto Power

The P5 nations, namely China, Russia, France, the UK and the US are a part of the UN Security Council which authorises most UN peacekeeping operations. These countries all have the power to veto clauses in resolutions or resolutions as a whole for their own economic and political interests, rather than protecting the sovereignty interests of P5 states. That being said, multiple operations that had the aim of protecting the sovereignty of other nations were vetoed by P5 nations. Case in point, during the Russo-Ukrainian War, 4 (including China) out of 15 members of the SC voted against taking action on Ukraine, rendering the possible peacekeeping operations ineffective. Though undemocratic, it is important to note that veto power has been used to protect the allies of the P5 nations, and has also been viewed as a 'form of protection'.

## Financial Restraints

It should be noted that each operation of the UN requires huge costs, for instance, MINUSCA, which cost a total of 1.12 billion USD, and MINUSMA, which took up a total of 1.26 billion USD. Provided that the United Nations is funded by its member states, which pay their share in accordance with their relative economic wealth, these large costs have caused the UN to face cash crises and thus the disruption of operations quite a few times. In the past, the UN also had to close down several humanitarian programmes in Yemen due to the 'failure of materialisation' of monetary funds by member states. The question of funding is therefore crucial in enabling the peacekeeping operations of the UN.



## Key Actors

Country	Involvement
Ethiopia, Rwanda, Nepal, India, Indonesia, Pakistan	These states are all included in the top 10 contributors to troops and police forces in UN peacekeeping operations. Ultimately, they take up a high degree of significance in peacekeeping operations in MENA regions.
Bangladesh	Bangladesh has the largest peacekeeping force in the UN, with 7,233 soldiers involved up till December 2022.
China	As the second largest funding contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, China has set up an 8,000-strong standby force and a 300-member permanent police force for UN peacekeeping missions. China has also made investments in the multilateral system of the UN.
Russia	<p>Renowned for its actions in the Russo-Ukrainian War, Russia is one of the self-sufficient nations that are hardly affected by the peacekeeping efforts of the UN. Russia has also been accused of framing its military interventions for its own interests as ‘peacekeeping’.</p> <p>On the flip side, Russia has made substantial troop contributions to the UN Protection Force and has been credited for ‘providing a sense of security’ before.</p>
The United States	Being the top provider of funds for United Nations peacekeeping missions, the US serves as an integral part of said operations. The US is also widely known for its heavy investment in security assistance, namely, in delivering tools and training to its allies. Additionally, it has made multiple commitments in peacekeeping operations, with a dozen US troops serving as trainers or military advisers.





## Timeline

Time	Event
May 29, 1948	United Nations Peacekeeping Operations commenced. The Security Council authorised the deployment of UN Military Observers to monitor and maintain the ceasefire during the Arab-Israeli War.
1949	During the Indo-Pakistani War, which was initially fought between Jammu and Kashmir State Forces, UN Military Observers were deployed to the borders of India and Pakistan to monitor the situation.
1950	In one of the conflicts of the Cold War – the Korean War, the UN forces pushed the North Koreans out of the South. In 1953, a ceasefire was declared, yet UN troops remained along the demilitarised zone.
1956	During the Suez Crisis, the UN responded by sending the United Nations Emergency Force to oversee the withdrawal of invading forces. Starting in 1956, most UN peacekeeping forces, including those labelled “observers”, have been armed.
1993	The United Nations intervened in Somalia for a second time, with its operation named UNOSOM II. The operation aimed at reconciling the factions involved in the Somali Civil War, as well as promoting political settlement. Though peacekeeping forces were able to distribute humanitarian aid and save some civilians, their mandate could not be fulfilled. Towards its end, UNOSOM II was even plagued by corruption and mismanagement and failed to achieve its goals.
1994	UNAMIR was an operation in Rwanda, which was regarded as a failure. A mandate rendered UNAMIR unable to intervene militarily, with a majority of the UNAMIR forces killed in a genocide. This caused the operation to become nothing more than just an onlooker and failed to provide much assistance to Rwanda.
1996	UNSMIH was an operation in Haiti that authorised the removal of its military regime. The operation consisted of 300 civilian police personnel and 600 troops to assist the government of Haiti in professionalising its National Police Force and revitalising the justice system
1995	After the fighting between Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United Nations employed its protection force and operated



	UNMIBH to monitor a ceasefire for peace negotiations between the two parties.
1998	During the Kosovo War, UN peacekeeping forces were deployed. Although the UN successfully pressured Serbia and the Kosovo Albanians into negotiating, the tension between the two parties still stood. The UN then shifted its focus to promoting security and stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo.
2010	The UN deployed MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo to solve the issue of violence and armed conflicts, yet only caused the citizens of Congo to respond with protests due to the UN's inefficiency. MONUSCO troops also responded to the protestors' demands with violence. Most people regarded this operation as a failure.
2011	UNMISS was operated in South Sudan in an attempt to monitor and investigate human rights violations and promote the implementation of a peace agreement. Though UNMISS had saved thousands of lives within the region, it had only played a limited role in supporting and coordinating the end of Sudan's civil war.



## **Past Actions by the Council**

### **Caring for Victims of Sexual Abuse**

Since there have been numerous reports of UN peacekeeping soldiers sexually exploiting civilians, the UN had established a trust fund and psychological care programmes to alleviate the victims' trauma. In 2015, the UN had also begun to hold soldiers accountable by disclosing the nationalities of those who have been alleged to sexually exploited or abused women and girls. In 2017, the UN even went on to establish a global 'Victim Rights Advocate' which included court accompaniment services for the victims.

### **Reforming Peacekeeping**

This included widening the strategies, mechanisms and resources by reversing past peacekeeping missions and reducing fragmentation for better delivery of aid. The Secretary General of the UN also launched the "Action for Peacekeeping", which aimed at renewing mutual political commitment to peacekeeping operations.

### **Strengthening Core Capabilities**

The UN has made efforts in identifying the additional capacities, skills and training that peacekeeping troops may need. For example, in terms of politics, the UN proposed to enhance political solutions to conflicts. Regarding other aspects, the UN has also started to implement the women, peace and security agenda, which systematically integrates a gender perspective into the stages of planning and mapping out an operation.



# Possible Solutions

## **Protection of Peacekeepers**

UN peacekeepers have to operate in highly volatile areas plagued with conflict, and so there are numerous reports of deaths and injuries of UN soldiers. Delegates may consider coming up with ways to protect not only civilians but also soldiers.

## **Increased Intervention**

The UN only mediated 34 of the 137 conflicts that took place between 1945 to 1989 and played an active role in merely 11 of them. This has made the UN appear less important than NATO and the US, thus it may have to increase its interventions while improving its existing framework to regain its status as a global peacekeeping force.

## **Tightened Guidelines**

Provided that collateral damage hinders the public's trust in the UN, delegates could consider tightening the guidelines for operations, for instance only sending troops when it is militarily necessary, attacking proportionately and aiming more accurately at legitimate targets.

## **Securing a Source of Funding**

As mentioned earlier, the UN requires huge funds in order to conduct peacekeeping operations. That being said, delegates could discuss whether the existing funding system could be improved, or whether a completely new system should be established.

## **Combatting the Deterioration of Consent**

Given that UN operations are sometimes affected due to the withdrawal of strategic consent from host nations, one of the reasons being the failure of the peacekeeping mission to deliver on promises. As such, delegates may consider taking actions that would prevent mismatched expectations about the goals of the mission and strengthen the confidence of the host states.

## **Holding Soldiers Accountable**

Although the UN has made efforts in establishing psychological care programmes for victims of sexual abuse in peacekeeping operations, it should be noted that in some countries, the legal systems are still underdeveloped such that the soldiers are not prosecuted for their crimes. To tackle this, the media could play a part by exerting more pressure to allow soldiers to respond to abuse allegations with increased transparency.



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