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India and UNEF (1956–1967)

The Foundation and Evolution of India's Approach to Peacekeeping and Peacemaking

✧ Nicolas Blarel

Introduction

India has been one of the principal contributors to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations since the early 1950s. Out of 69 UN peacekeeping missions launched from 1948 through 2016, India participated in 44, contributing a total of nearly 180,000 troops. India also suffered the highest number of fatalities (164 out of 6,593) among countries that contributed troops to these operations.¹ Even now, India remains the fourth largest troop contributor, with more than 6,000 personnel deployed on UN peacekeeping missions as of 2020.² Consequently, India's contributions outrank by far the commitments of the rising powers of the early 21st century, China, Brazil, and South Africa, as well as those of the established great powers, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia. By many standards, India can present itself as a leader of the collective security mechanism that took shape after 1945. This strong and consistent commitment to international mediating operations in distant theaters of operation during the Cold War is hard to explain, given that a newly independent India was simultaneously facing nation-building problems, including economic development and poverty alleviation, the creation and consolidation of new institutions, and the management of various ethnic minorities and conflicts.

There is no scholarly consensus over the main factors behind India's active support and participation in UN peacekeeping. Many accounts have emphasized the personal commitment of India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal

1. V.B. Krishnan, "India Has Lost Highest Number of Personnel in UN Peacekeeping Mission," *The Hindu* (Chennai, India), 11 January 2019, p. 3.

2. See India's position in the Ranking of Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations as of June 2019, "Troop and Police Contributors," United Nations Peacekeeping, Troop and Police Contributors table.

Nehru, to the development of multilateral institutions for the preservation of world peace and the importance given by Indian policymakers to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) as explanations for India's role in UN peacekeeping.³ The problem is that these studies do not discuss the context-dependent nature and evolution over time of India's contributions to UN peacekeeping efforts during the Cold War.⁴ What were the long-term and more immediate determinants of India's peacekeeping policy? Why did India contribute to certain UN peacekeeping operations and not others? Has there been any change in India's position? How have India's early experiences helped to set standards for subsequent interventions?

The importance of these questions can be seen by looking back at the decision-making process leading to India's first contribution to UN peace-making, in Korea. The evolution of India's thinking and participation during the Korean War (1950–1953) demonstrates the need to dissociate on-the-ground practices and contextual motivations from the principles and long-term drivers of India's approach to peacekeeping and peacemaking. Nehru's initial position was that UN forces intervening in Korea must avoid taking sides, respect the national sovereignty of countries, and avoid pursuing political aims beyond peacekeeping. For instance, India initially opposed the creation of a U.S. command for the use of force and refused to send combat troops to fight under the U.S. command in Korea. India condemned the North Korean invasion in 1950 but did not want to be linked with just one side of the Cold War divide. In fact, because India had also recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, Nehru had the ambition of serving as an intermediary between the PRC and the United States during the Korean hostilities.⁵

However, India later dispatched a military medical unit of 60 parachute field ambulances along with 26 medical officers and 300 non-combat troops. The unit received international recognition, including a citation.⁶

3. For an example of the former argument, see C. Raja Mohan, "India's Military Diplomacy: Legacy of International Peacekeeping," ISAS Working Paper No. 190, Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore, June 2014; for a defense of the latter, see Alan Bullion, "India and UN Peacekeeping Operations," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 98114; and Yeshe Choedon, "India's UN Peacekeeping Operations Involvement in Africa: Change in Nature of Participation and Driving Factors," *International Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 1–4 (2014), pp. 16–34.

4. For one notable exception, see Swapna Kona Nayudu, "'In the Very Eye of the Storm': India, the UN, and the Lebanon Crisis of 1958," *Cold War History*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2018), pp. 221–237.

5. Rudra Chaudhuri, *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States Since 1947* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 53–65.

6. Dipankar Banerjee, "India," in Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, eds., *Providing Peacekeepers: The Politics, Challenges, and Future of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 225–244.

Furthermore, toward the end of the Korean War, India once again played an instrumental role in facilitating the repatriation of prisoners of war by suggesting the establishment of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (which it then chaired) and forming an International Custodial Force (1953–1954) to manage the transfer of prisoners. Although these were non-UN missions, they demonstrated India's support for the mediating role played by international institutions. Such efforts had a clear signaling purpose: India's leaders wanted their country to be recognized as an important actor on the world stage and a leading force for peacekeeping and peacemaking.⁷ This status-seeking behavior was partly successful insofar as India's mediation and facilitation skills were publicly acknowledged by U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower in a letter to Nehru declaring that "no military unit in recent years has undertaken a more delicate and demanding peacetime mission than that faced by the Indian forces in Korea."⁸ In addition, by intervening mainly through the UN and other international institutions, India was consciously avoiding being identified with just one side of the East-West standoff.

The Korean case underscores that India's approach to peacekeeping and peacemaking was never one-dimensional or fixed.⁹ Indian policymakers wanted to uphold the nonintervention principle and to support the nascent collective security regime institutionalized through UN peace missions, while promoting their global status-seeking ambitions. The Korea example also shows that geopolitical and local developments influenced India's behavior.

Building on these observations, this article focuses on one crucial case: India's contribution to the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in the Gaza Strip, which was the first deployment of Indian combat troops to a UN peacekeeping mission. This case, because of its long duration (eleven years), can help us observe and assess how evolving international, regional, domestic, and personality factors affected specific Indian decisions to participate in (and withdraw from) peacekeeping efforts over time. The analysis

7. For more on India's status-seeking behavior, see Baldev Raj Nayar and T.V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Mahesh Shankar and T.V. Paul, "Status Accommodation through Institutional Means: India's Rise and the Global Order," in T.V. Paul, Deborah Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 165–191.

8. Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Message to Prime Minister Nehru Commending the Indian Custodial Forces in Korea," 19 February 1954, in Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, University of California, Santa Barbara, *The American Presidency Project*, available online at <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>.

9. For more on India's participation in the Korean War, see Chaudhuri, *Forged in Crisis*, pp. 53–65; and Swapna Kona Nayudu, "The Nehru Years: Indian Non-Alignment as the Critique, Discourse and Practice of Security (1947–1964)," Ph.D. Thesis, King's College London, 2015, ch. 4.

here sheds light on the foundations and evolution of India's involvement with and support for peacekeeping. Drawing on a variety of archival resources, the article adds to the small literature on India's involvement in UNEF by carefully tracing and comparing the decision-making processes that motivated India's UNEF participation during the Middle Eastern crises in 1956 and 1967.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. The first section offers a brief overview of the existing literature and arguments regarding India's motivations to participate in UN peacekeeping both during and after the Cold War. The next section discusses the decision-making process that led to India's involvement in UNEF in 1956. The third section examines India's UNEF participation in practice and more specifically the withdrawal of Indian troops in 1967. A concluding section summarizes the findings and analyzes the varying rationales for India's UNEF contribution and the precedent it set for India's subsequent participation in UN peacekeeping.

India and UN Peacekeeping: Mixed Motives?

There is no consensus in the scholarly literature over India's reasons for participating in UN peacekeeping. Geopolitics, status-seeking, norms, Third World leadership, and military expertise have often been cited to explain India's sustained engagement with UN peacekeeping. Some scholars have emphasized the capabilities India possessed to perform peacekeeping operations after 1947—capabilities stemming from the military legacy of the British Indian Empire. A newly independent India emerged with important military capabilities in 1947, as well as experience in pacifying distant regions.¹⁰ The acquired experience and expertise for Indian troops proved useful when India first considered contributing to UN peacekeeping in the 1950s. However, capabilities do not automatically drive intentions. The expeditionary missions of British India and the UN peacekeeping were radically different in their goals and means. Furthermore, Nehru mainly tried to break with the foreign and security policies of the Raj, especially with regards to the former European colonies. The British Indian legacy can be interpreted as a structural factor to account for the

10. Daniel Marston, *The Indian Army and the End of the Raj* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014); C. Raja Mohan, "India and International Peace Operations," SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 3 (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2013); and Srinath Raghavan, *India's War: World War II and the Making of Modern South Asia* (New York: Basic Books, 2016).

capacity to participate in UN peacekeeping, but it was hardly a *causal* driver in the 1950s.

Other scholars have emphasized the pivotal role played by the worldview of India's Prime Minister Nehru in promoting the concept of collective security. Although recent works underline India's ambivalence when it comes to the use of force to resolve tensions, India's first prime minister clearly underlined its responsibility to contribute to international peace and security through the mandate of international institutions.¹¹ Even before India gained independence in 1947, representatives of India's policymakers had participated in the San Francisco Conference, which led to the creation of the UN. In the post–World War II context, Nehru believed in the transformative role of international institutions like the UN to hamper interstate conflict. In this context, the UN was considered a novel and effective means of peacefully discussing and controlling disputes.¹²

However, Nehru's perception of an effective and neutral UN was quickly confronted by operational realities. India asked for the arbitration of a UN military observer mission in 1949 after the stalemate in its military conflict with Pakistan over Kashmir.¹³ Despite what Nehru considered to be a clear-cut case in favor of India's territorial claims, Pakistani diplomats managed to shift the focus away from the question of legality to human rights and religious genocide.¹⁴ Two UN resolutions condemned Pakistan as the aggressor state but also insisted on the holding of a referendum to determine the wishes of the Kashmiris as soon as military troops had been withdrawn. The two UN resolutions were never implemented.

As a result, Nehru grew disillusioned with the decision-making structure for international arbitration, which increasingly proved to be shaped by national interests and lobbying strategies. Beyond the successful efforts from Pakistani diplomats to mobilize UK and U.S. support at the UN over the Kashmir issue, India also had to face a concurrent vote at the UN on the forceful integration in India of another large state, Hyderabad. Nehru was particularly disappointed by the Arab states' votes against India on the Hyderabad

11. Kabilan Krishnasamy, "The Paradox of India's Peacekeeping," *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2003), pp. 263–280; and Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

12. Manu Baghavan, *The Peacemakers: India and the Quest for One World* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2012); and Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), ch. 4.

13. Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

14. Joseph Korb, *Danger in Kashmir* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966).

issue.¹⁵ However, despite these adverse developments, Nehru affirmed in 1949 India's commitment to "the principles and purpose of the UN Charter" and its commitment to "the realization of these principles and purpose."¹⁶ Nehru's ideas certainly played an important role in influencing India's initial support of UN peacekeeping efforts, but the ideological commitment to collective security did not mean that Indian leaders were averse to trade-offs between principled beliefs and operational necessities when the situation on the ground directly affected India's national interests, as in the context of the Suez crisis.

In parallel with the influence of Nehru's worldview, other scholars emphasized India's global ambitions in the international order.¹⁷ Through participation in international mediation efforts and UN peacekeeping, India initially aimed for recognition as an international power and a responsible actor in the UN system. For instance, India sent its first military missions under UN mandate in Korea in 1950, and it also chaired the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission it helped to create. A few years later, India assumed chairmanship of other multilateral non-UN bodies, such as the three International Control Commissions (ICC) for Indochina, which were established after the 1954 Geneva Accords. The commissions were set up to implement the ceasefire agreement between Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and France. Beyond civilian leadership, India provided one infantry battalion and supporting military and civilian staff for the ICC.¹⁸

India's custodian roles in both Korea and Indochina were in line with its willingness to play a pivotal role in maintaining peace in Asia. In the 1950s and 1960s, India mainly aimed at participating in mediating missions in post-colonial interstate conflicts in Asia and Africa. Its contributions served as a way to brandish its credentials as a committed, effective, and neutral country

15. Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise since 1922* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 104, 110; and for more on the Hyderabad integration, see Taylor C. Sherman, "The Integration of the Princely State of Hyderabad and the Making of the Postcolonial State in India, 1948–56," *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (2007), pp. 489–516.

16. Jawaharlal Nehru, "3rd Session Address to the United Nations General Assembly in Paris," by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru," 3 November 1948, available online at <https://www.pminewyork.gov.in/land>.

17. Bullion, "India and UN Peacekeeping Operations," pp. 98–114; Kabilan Krishnasamy, "A Case for India's 'Leadership' in United Nations Peacekeeping," *International Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 2–4 (April/July 2010), pp. 225–246; and C.S.R Murthy, "Unintended Consequences of peace operations for troop contributing countries from South Asia," in Chiyuki Aoi, Cedric DeConing, and Ramesh Thakur, eds., *Unintended Consequences of UN Peacekeeping Operations* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007), pp. 156–170.

18. D.R. Sardesai, *Indian Foreign Policy Cambodia, Laos Vietnam: 1947–1964* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 55.

in undertaking UN peacekeeping.¹⁹ India's peacekeeping profile contributed to its international identity as an honest and non-aligned mediator in conflicts involving other developing countries—an image that appealed to domestic constituencies within India. Status recognition gained renewed salience among Indian policymakers, who sought to be acknowledged by external observers as a great power in contemporary international politics.

Beyond the ideological and status-seeking arguments, former Indian officials have evoked more practical explanations for India's contribution to UN missions. Officials involved in UN peacekeeping operations have stressed the importance of acquiring unique experience, notably in interoperability with the militaries of many other Third World countries but also with Western and Soviet-bloc armies.²⁰ UN peacekeeping also helped test and improve the Indian army's capacities in varying operational domains and environments.²¹ There were also direct economic benefits of peacekeeping. UN reimbursements for the deployment of Indian troops proved beneficial for a newly independent India. At the personal level, officers participating in UN peacekeeping also had the opportunity to earn four times their monthly salaries. Assignments to peacekeeping missions were taken into account in decisions on promotion to senior positions in the Indian military.²²

The impact, however, was mixed. There were reputational costs for the Indian military linked to participating in certain UN missions with loosely defined mandates. This relates again to the politicized and divided decision-making process leading to UN peacekeeping mandates during the Cold War. Yet, despite misgivings about the process, Indian officials regularly contributed to UN peacekeeping. In this sense, Gowan and Singh have argued that rather than normative and political explanations for India's rationale, path-dependence logic accounts for why Indian policymakers were so often willing to contribute to UN peacekeeping missions.²³

19. Bullion, "India and UN Peacekeeping Operations," pp. 98–114.

20. For instance, both Indian and Polish troops collaborated in the context of UNEF II in the Sinai in 1973.

21. Richard Gowan and Sushant Singh, "India and Peacekeeping" in WPS Sidhu, Pratap Bhanu Mehta, and Bruce Jones, eds., *Shaping the Emerging World: India and the Multilateral Order* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), pp. 177–196.

22. David Malone and Geetanjali Chopra, "India and United Nations Peacekeeping," in Sumit Ganguly, Nicolas Blarel, and Manjeet S. Pardesi, eds., *The Handbook of India's National Security* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 434–457.

23. Richard Gowan and Sushant K. Singh, "India and UN Peacekeeping: The Weight of History and a Lack of Strategy," in Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu, Pratap Banu Mehta, and Bruce Jones, eds., *Shaping the Emerging World: India and the Multilateral Order* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

In the post–Cold War period, a new scholarly debate emphasized India's inconsistent commitment to international peacekeeping.²⁴ Those who made this argument saw an inherent contradiction between India's defense of traditional “Westphalian” conceptions and principles and the related principle of nonintervention (with the possibility of use of force exclusively limited to self-defense) and its regular commitment to contributing troops for UN peacekeeping. These longstanding tensions became more acute after the UN adopted the so-called Responsibility to Protect in 2005.

Although most of the scholarly literature has identified and isolated some crucial factors behind India's approach to peacekeeping and peacemaking, analysts have not yet set forth clear and satisfactory causal mechanisms and evidence linking these different factors. What is the relative causal weight of each of these dimensions? Were all of these factors salient over time and across all cases of Indian involvement in UN peacekeeping? In the next two sections, I look at the particular historical case of India's participation to UNEF to see which of these factors were the most relevant.

The Path to India's Participation in UNEF

By the mid-1950s, India had been involved in two international mediation efforts, a medical mission in Korea under UN command and the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Indochina. Nehru advocated the key role of UN institutions in mediating military disputes but was cautious about the risk of politicization and manipulation of the decision-making process leading to UN peacekeeping, notably in the divisive context of the Cold War. Despite these concerns, India had shown its interest in participating in arbitration efforts in conflicts occurring in recently decolonized countries, albeit without deploying armed troop contingents. It is in this international and institutional context that India was faced with the Suez Crisis of 1956 and offered to contribute to the first UNEF in the Middle East.

In July 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser decided to nationalize the Suez Canal. This sudden, drastic move escalated a bitter political

24. Ian Hall, “Tilting at Windmills? The Indian Debate over the Responsibility to Protect after UNSC Resolution 1773,” *Global Responsibility to Protect*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2013), pp. 84–108; Madhan Mohan Jaganathan and Gerrit Kurtz, “Singing the Tune of Sovereignty? India and the Responsibility to Protect,” *Conflict, Security & Development*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (2014), pp. 461–487; Kudra Virk, “India and the Responsibility to Protect: A Tale of Ambiguity,” *Global Responsibility to Protect*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (2013), pp. 56–83; and Mischa Hansel and Miriam Moller, “House of Cards? India's Rationales for Contributing to UN Peacekeeping,” *Global Change, Peace & Security*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (2014), pp. 141–157.

dispute that had developed over talks between Egypt, the United States, and the United Kingdom to fund construction of the Aswan High Dam. Because the Suez Canal was a strategic trade link that had remained under British control after Egyptian independence, Nasser's decision to nationalize the facility was considered a direct challenge to European powers, which had important stakes in the canal.²⁵

India's initial reaction was to support Nasser's decision. Nehru officially approved of the nationalization in a statement to the Indian parliament in August 1956.²⁶ He argued that the Egyptian decision complied with the terms of sovereign Egypt's laws.²⁷ India had also supported at the Bandung Conference a joint statement disassociating Egypt from any "dependence on the West."²⁸ However, in an effort to support international legal principles, Nehru referred to the "international character" of the Suez waterway according to the Anglo–Egyptian Agreement of 1954. Nehru equally regretted the "suddenness" of the decision and of its implementation, which directly affected European economic interests. The Indian argument was that Egypt had the right to nationalize the Suez Canal but should have done so in "the normal way of international expropriation."²⁹ Nehru, therefore, deplored the lack of consultation through UN-led mechanisms between the UK and Egypt on this matter. To prevent the conflict from escalating, Nehru encouraged the holding of an international conference to resolve the crisis.

India's position during the Suez Crisis was shaped not only by moral and legal considerations but also by practical concerns and national interests. The Indian prime minister was concerned that the closure of the canal would cause long-term economic damage. India was not a "disinterested party" but a "principal user of this waterway" whose "economic life and development" was

25. For background on the nationalization, see Keith Kyle, *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East* (London: I.B Tauris, 2011).

26. Until 1989, India's foreign policy decision-making structure was limited to the prime minister, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Ministry of External Affairs. For more see Vipin Narang, and Paul Staniland, "Institutions and Worldviews in Indian Foreign Security Policy," *India Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2012), pp. 76–94.

27. The Canal Corporation was an Egyptian company subject to Egyptian law and the nationalization was therefore considered to be within the competence of Egyptian law. See statement in *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 7, pt. 2 (8 August 1956), Col. 2536–2544 (the Lok Sabha is the lower house of India's bicameral parliament).

28. Nayudu, *The Nehru Years*, p. 131.

29. Quote from V.K. Krishna Menon, who was India's representative to the UN, at London Conference. U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955–1957, Suez Crisis*, July 26–December 31, 1956, Vol. XVI, pp. 159–178 (hereinafter referred to as *FRUS*, with appropriate year and volume numbers).

directly affected.³⁰ Despite the close links between Nehru and Nasser, the nationalization came as a surprise for the Indian prime minister. Nehru had not been warned beforehand despite having met Nasser just a few days before at the tripartite summit in Brioni, the Yugoslav Island. Nehru wanted Egyptian guarantees that the canal would remain available to all users without discrimination. He urged all involved countries to abandon threats, violence, and unilateral acts in order to avert dangerous escalation.³¹ Nehru also supported the principle of a conference reuniting the parties to the Convention of 1888 in London.³²

After an international conference was scheduled in London to resolve the dispute, India was invited as a concerned party. The Indian delegation sought to update the 1888 Convention (which had been negotiated by the British Indian administration) to ensure freedom of navigation and security for the users of the canal. India's envoy, Krishna Menon, emphasized India's dependence on the canal, noting that, in 1956, about 70 percent of India's imports and 60 percent of exports passed through Suez.³³ Menon then criticized the absence of an Egyptian delegation at the conference. He was concerned that a solution should not be decided without Egypt's consent.³⁴ Presenting itself as a neutral party, India attempted to mediate among London, Paris, and Cairo.³⁵ While Nasser had asked India to boycott the conference, Nehru had preferred maintaining an open line of dialogue and directly presenting Egypt's grievances to the conference.³⁶

Despite mediation efforts during the conference, India did not manage to broker an agreement between the various parties. Nehru was concerned by the risk of escalation after the refusal of European countries to negotiate further in the wake of Egypt's rejection of the U.S. proposal was rejected by Egypt.

30. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 7, Pt. 2 (8 August 1956), Col. 2536–2544.

31. *Ibid.*

32. The Constantinople Convention of 1888 was signed by nine parties and asserted that the Suez Canal should remain open to all merchants and naval vessels both in times of war and peace. See Jean Allain, *International Law in the Middle East: Closer to Power than Justice* (London: Ashgate, 2004), p. 53.

33. A.M. Rosenthal, "India Reports Egypt Would Yield on Fees," *The New York Times*, 15 September 1956, p. 1.

34. James Eayrs, *The Commonwealth Suez, A Documentary Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 141–142.

35. In fact, the Indian delegation was in regular touch with Egypt during the negotiations. One of Nasser's personal advisers, Ali Sabri, was even a member of the Indian delegation. Jean Krasno, "Interview with Arthur Lall," interview, New York, 27 June 1990, United Nations Digital Library, United Nations Oral History Project, available online at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/>.

36. Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, *The Cairo Document: The Inside Story of Nasser and His Relationship with World Leaders, Rebels, and Statesmen* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 282.

Because the Suez Canal was deemed to be of “vital importance” to India, Nehru continued to push for a “peaceful negotiated settlement.”³⁷ These efforts led to a new Indian proposal, which intended to satisfy all parties to the dispute. The proposal of September 1956 offered to recognize the Suez Canal as an integral part of Egypt and a waterway of “international importance” open to free and uninterrupted navigation in accordance with the 1888 Convention and requiring toll charges and cooperation between the Canal Authority and the canal users.³⁸ In October 1956, the UNSC adopted Resolution 118 (sponsored by the UK, France, and Egypt), very similar to the Indian plan with respect to Egyptian sovereignty and open transit through the canal.

As a result, India was optimistic about a peaceful settlement until Israel launched a sudden military attack on Egypt on 29 October 1956. Two days later, British and French troops took control of the Suez Canal. India sternly criticized the Anglo-French-Israeli operation and denounced the Anglo-French ultimatum on the cession of the Suez Canal as a “flagrant violation of the UN Charter.”³⁹ In a letter sent to U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Nehru described the Israeli military operation as “clear, naked aggression.”⁴⁰ Similarly, Nehru condemned what he called a return to past colonial “predatory methods” in a letter sent to UK Prime Minister Anthony Eden in November 1956.⁴¹ Nehru’s reference to colonialism was intentional: the Suez conflict was framed as a de-colonization and self-determination problem.

India was surprised by the attack, which followed weeks of negotiations. The Indian government wanted to bring an end to the conflict and reopen the Suez Canal. The Indians supported efforts by the UN General Assembly in a Special Emergency Session to obtain an immediate ceasefire by all parties and the withdrawal of troops behind the armistice line. Additionally, in November, India sponsored a new resolution, indicating that all parties had not complied with UN Resolution 118 and urging the General Assembly to take effective measures to ensure implementation of the resolution. On the same day, India supported a Canadian-sponsored resolution requesting

37. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 8, Pt. 2 (13 September 1956), Col. 6963–6968.

38. *Ibid.*

39. “Statement from official spokesman of the External Affairs Ministry, Government of India, New Delhi,” 31 October 1956 in India Ministry of External Affairs, *Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol. 2, No. 10 (New Delhi: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10 October 1956), p. 150.

40. Quoted in M.S. Rajan, *India in World Affairs, 1954–1956* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 151.

41. Letter to Eden cited in Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography, Vol. 2: 1947–1956* (London: Cape, 1979), p. 286.

the UN Secretary General to demand the creation of UNEF to supervise the ceasefire in the region.⁴²

The ceasefire was accepted by all parties, but India co-sponsored two other resolutions in November that pressed for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Egypt. India also agreed to join ten other countries in contributing troops to UNEF on the condition that Egypt would agree to have such forces based along the 1949 demarcation line separating Egypt from Israel. India (along with Yugoslavia) understood that the deployment of UNEF was dependent on the consent of the territorial sovereign power (Egypt), through the Good Faith Accords, and with the approval of the UN command structure. The unresolved question of Egypt's necessary approval of UNEF's presence later became a major factor in the escalation of the 1967 crisis.⁴³ Nehru also criticized Israel's persistent refusal to evacuate Gaza, in violation of the UN resolutions.⁴⁴ The first UNEF troops arrived in Cairo on 15 November 1956, and UNEF was at its full force of 6,000 by February 1957. India immediately supplied one infantry brigade to the mission. UNEF was then fully deployed in the Sinai and Gaza when Israel withdrew its last forces from Rafah in March 1957.

India's direct involvement in mediation efforts during the London Conference and then in supporting the creation of an unprecedented UN military force was shaped by various factors. Indian officials wanted to play an active role in conciliating varying positions. During the crisis, Nehru was in direct correspondence with President Eisenhower and the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. However, India also spoke on behalf of Egyptian concerns in international negotiations and thereby indirectly acted as a defender of the economic and political rights of Third World countries, which feared aggression from the former colonial powers.⁴⁵ Nehru also vigorously promoted the role played by the UN and of a UN-mandated military force as a necessary means to alleviate rising tensions in the region.

India's political and ideological concerns were coupled with practical interests. Nehru was eager to cultivate and strengthen India's relations with secular Arab states to obtain their diplomatic support on Kashmir and other international issues. Even though the Indian prime minister was not informed

42. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 7, Pt. 2 (8 August 1956), Col. 2536–2544.

43. *Ibid*; and *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 9, Pt. 1 (13 December 1956), Col. 1426–1428.

44. Jawaharlal Nehru, "Anglo-French Intervention," 16 November 1956, in Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Publications Division, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946–April 1961*, pp. 536, 538.

45. For a similar argument about Nehru's mixed motivations, see Zorawar Daulet Singh, "India's Role during the 1956 Suez Crisis: Between Peacemaking and Postcolonial Solidarity," *India Review*, Vol. 17, No. 5 (2018), pp. 456–475.

in advance of Nasser's actions, the Suez Crisis cemented Indo-Egyptian ties, as Nehru strongly supported Nasser with the goal of receiving reciprocal support in future disputes. Economic and trade considerations in India's policymaking vis-à-vis the contribution to UNEF were also decisive during the Suez Crisis. Arab sea lanes and airspace were of vital economic and strategic importance to India's early economic development and the progress of its initial five-year plans.

As a result, India's economic interests and trade routes were dependent on friendship with Arab countries and stability in the region, which could be ensured through the presence of UNEF troops in Gaza and the Sinai. The Indian government emphasized the need for a quick solution to the Suez Crisis and sought to avoid military action, which would affect the long-term flow of shipping through the canal. India's involvement was a practical approach dictated by self-interest, including the imperative to keep the Suez Canal open so it would remain India's "life-line."⁴⁶ The government of India was satisfied with the resolution of the crisis only when the canal finally reopened to traffic in May 1957, after the full deployment of UNEF.

This combination of various factors (ideological commitment, quest for prestige and global leadership, and economic concerns) led to India's first major peacekeeping operation in 1956. Rather than a consistent ideological position in support of collective security, India's activism in this particular crisis and the nature of its contribution to UNEF can be explained by more pressing concerns about economic welfare and the need to express solidarity with Nasser, an important partner for India in the nascent NAM. More importantly, given the need to accommodate Egyptian sovereignty, India made its participation in UNEF conditional on Egypt's consent to the presence of a UN force in Gaza. Nehru was concerned about Egypt's sovereignty, but he also wanted to avoid creating a precedent over the international involvement of UN peacekeeping without prior national consent, as Pakistan had itself called in 1957 for UN troops to be stationed in Kashmir to supervise a plebiscite, which had been projected in the UN resolutions of 1948. However, many of the factors that had shaped India's decision in 1956 evolved over time.

India in UNEF, 1956–1967

India remained the largest contributor for UNEF until 1967. As noted, it was the first UN peacekeeping mission for which India provided armed troop

46. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 1, Pt. 1 (26 March 1957), Col. 800–803.

contingents. Over a period of eleven years, India contributed eleven infantry battalions to UNEF, comprising 12,383 troops and 802 officers.⁴⁷ In addition, two Indian officers, Lieutenant General P. S. Gyani (1959–1964) and Major General Indarjit Rikhye (1966–1967), served as force commanders of UNEF. This important commitment to UNEF continued despite two leadership transitions in India as Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi became prime minister in 1964 and 1966, respectively.

Because of the deterioration of the situation in 1966–1967, UN Secretary General U Thant appealed to Israel, Syria, and Egypt to reconvene in a Mixed Armistice Commission for the first time since 1960. A series of military clashes on the Syria–Israel border in April 1967 spurred both countries to accuse each other at the UN Security Council of violating the armistice agreement. The situation further escalated as Nasser formally asked UNEF on 18 May 1967 to vacate the Egyptian-controlled areas near the demarcation line in the Sinai. A debate at the UN followed over the legitimacy of this unilateral request from Egypt.⁴⁸

India was directly involved in the crisis of 1967 for various reasons. First, as the largest contributor of troops to the UNEF contingent, India had to decide how to respond to the Egyptian request. Second, as a nonpermanent member of the UN Security Council at the time of the events, India was not a passive observer and was forced to take a public stand on the crisis.⁴⁹ India built on its initial understanding from 1956 that UNEF's deployment was conditional on Egypt's agreement and that the withdrawal of Egypt's consent would require the departure of UN troops. In November 1956, as Indian UNEF troops were being deployed in Egypt, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Arthur Lall sent a letter to the UN Secretary General explaining that if UNEF had to be based in Egypt, Egyptian approval for its establishment was a necessary condition.⁵⁰ In 1957, in a speech to the Indian parliament, Indian Minister of Defense V. K. Krishna Menon also clearly specified that India had agreed to contribute to UNEF troops on the condition that UN forces would not "be asked to violate the sovereignty" of Egypt. In the

47. Figures available at "India and UN Peacekeeping," Permanent Mission of India to the UN, available online at <https://www.pminewyork.gov.in/index>.

48. U Thant, "The United Nations as Scapegoat," address delivered on 3 December 1970, quoted in John Norton Moore, ed., *The Arab Israeli Conflict Volume 2* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 713.

49. See the Minister of External Affairs M.C. Chagla's speech to the Lok Sabha on 18 July 1967: "As a Member of the Security Council, [India] Has Got to Review and Pass Judgment on World Events" in *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 7 (18 July 1967), Col. 12678–12712.

50. Eayrs, *The Commonwealth Suez, A Documentary Survey*, p. 360.

absence of this condition, the concern was these forces could eventually take “the functions of invading forces” or become “armies of occupation.”⁵¹

In 1967, Indira Gandhi also argued that because Israel had refused to allow UNEF troops to be stationed on its side of the contested border, Egypt had the right to ask for UNEF to be pulled out.⁵² Additionally, India’s ambassador to the UN, Gopalaswami Parthasarathy, interpreted Egypt’s decision to move troops in the demilitarized Sinai area as “defensive” and “precautionary” measures.⁵³ Consequently, India supported UN Secretary General U Thant’s decision to comply with the Egyptian demand on 18 May. As Egypt closed access to the Gulf of Aqaba and the Strait of Tiran to Israeli ships on 22 May, India also supported Egypt’s sovereign rights over these waters. Both India’s Foreign Minister M. C. Chagla and Parthasarathy reiterated the position taken by India at the UN General Assembly in March 1957 that the Gulf of Aqaba was an “inland sea” and that Egypt had the legitimate right to close it to Israeli shipping, especially because it was formally at war with Israel.⁵⁴ Parthasarathy, however, also encouraged Egypt to find a “modus vivendi” with other countries to ensure free access to these national waters.⁵⁵

The support given to Egypt over the immediate withdrawal of UNEF was not consensual. An Indian diplomat, Arthur Lall, who was also in the Indian delegation, argued that U Thant’s decision was illegal because UNEF had been created by the UN General Assembly. Lall argued that questions related to UNEF’s deployment could be addressed and modified only through a vote at the UN General Assembly.⁵⁶ Parthasarathy also supported a phased withdrawal of UNEF insofar as it had played a crucial security role in Gaza and the Sinai since 1956.⁵⁷

After the imminent withdrawal of the full UNEF contingent and the movement of Egyptian troops to the Sinai, Israeli troops sought to ward off the threat by launching a preventive strike against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan on 5 June 1967. During the Six-Day Arab-Israeli War, Israeli forces took control

51. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 1, Pt. 8 (26 March 1957), Col. 800–883.

52. Ministry of External Affairs, Annual Report 1967–1968 (New Delhi: Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 1968), Col. 37.

53. See G. Parthasarathy’s statement in United Nations, “Security Council Official Records, 22nd Year, 1343rd Meeting,” 29 May 1967, UN Official Document System, S/PV/1343.

54. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 3 (25 May 1967), Col. 871–876; and United Nations, S/PV/1343.

55. United Nations, S/PV/1343.

56. Arthur Lall, *The UN and the Middle-East Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), p. 14.

57. Indarjit Rikhye, *The Sinai Blunder: Withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Force Leading to the Six-Day War, June 1967* (London: Frank Cass, 1980), p. 131.

of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. During the brief conflict, Indira Gandhi supported Egypt and the Arab states and accused Israel of escalating the situation into a full-scale armed conflict.⁵⁸ Parthasarathy also regretted that what he had labeled as a “largely juridical dispute on shipping rights” had spiraled into a “tragic conflagration” and accused Israel of being responsible for this “grave situation.”⁵⁹ India asked for an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli troops to positions held before 4 June 1967. India also argued that Israel should not be able to retain the territories it had seized.

India's reaction was driven not only by solidarity with its NAM ally, Egypt, but also by the fact that Indian troops from UNEF had suffered casualties during the initial Israeli artillery and air strikes against Egyptian forces in Gaza. When the hostilities broke out on 5 June, India still had an important contingent on Egyptian soil, which had not yet been evacuated.⁶⁰ As a result, UNEF troops were stuck between the Israelis and the Egyptians and had all of their vehicles and communications equipment destroyed. In addition, some Indian soldiers were killed.⁶¹ Consequently, Indira Gandhi alleged that the Israeli raids were “deliberate and without provocation” and insisted that the Indian parliament must “unreservedly condemn this cowardly attack on our men.”⁶² The Indian ambassador to the UN also regretted the deaths of UNEF soldiers following “unprovoked,” “deliberate,” and “cowardly” attacks.⁶³

However, even though the Indian parliament generally condemned the Israeli attack on Indian UNEF troops, some leaders of the opposition, like the Jana Sangh leader, Balraj Madhok, criticized the UN for not evacuating the Indian troops by air. He also accused the government of India of failing to repatriate the Indian soldiers in Gaza and Sinai soon after the Egyptian

58. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 4 (6 June 1967), Col. 3292–3295.

59. See G. Parthasarathy's speech, 1348th UN Security Council Meeting, 6 June 1967, UN Document S/PV1348.

60. Indarjit Rikhye, who was a major general in the Indian Army and an adviser to U Thant at the UN, had been put in charge of overseeing the withdrawal of UNEF from Gaza and the Sinai in June 1967. See Rikhye, *The Sinai Blunder*, Ch. 12.

61. The exact number of Indian casualties has never been clear. Initially, on 7 June, the Indian government claimed that eight soldiers had been killed. See the report in *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 4 (6 June 1967), Col. 3292–3295. However, on 9 June, at the UN Security Council, Ambassador Parthasarathy reported nine deaths. In a later statement on 18 July 1967, Chagla gave another figure of fourteen dead. In a report to the Permanent Mission of India to the UN, Rikhye announced nine deaths. See Rikhye, *The Sinai Blunder*, pp. 125–26.

62. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 4, No. 11 (6 June 1967), Col. 3292–3295.

63. United Nations, S/PV/1343.

request.⁶⁴ For instance, the Canadian contingent had been evacuated well before the hostilities started in June. Other officials also strongly criticized the Indian position. General Rikhye explained that although India had promptly supported Egypt's demand for removal of UNEF, it had not provided the necessary air transport for its troops based in Gaza.⁶⁵ Rikhye's account of the events in June 1967 pointed to a shared responsibility vis-à-vis the killings of UNEF soldiers. Although some Indian soldiers were killed and injured under Israeli artillery, Rikhye stated that others died because their cars rode over Arab mines.⁶⁶ Furthermore, Rikhye emphasized that the geographical proximity of UNEF to Egyptian and Palestinian forces in Gaza made it operationally difficult for the Israeli military to separate them. By early June, as events were still unfolding, the government of India mostly relied on inaccurate reports of casualties to justify its criticism of Israel as solely responsible for the crisis.

For the first time, the government's position on UNEF was strongly scrutinized and debated within parliament. An initial turbulent session took place on 25 May 1967, before the conflict erupted. Chagla's unconditional endorsement of Egypt's demand for the withdrawal of UNEF and for the interdiction of Israeli shipping in the Gulf of Aqaba was perceived by the opposition in parliament as one-sided.⁶⁷ The opposition reminded the government that Arab partners like Jordan and Egypt had not supported India during its 1965 conflict with Pakistan and that the support of Arab states was also lacking when India was a candidate for a non-permanent position in the UN Security Council in 1966.⁶⁸ India's early support for U Thant's decision to withdraw UNEF was therefore considered to be "unnecessary and precipitate."⁶⁹

As the conflict then escalated, the opposition parties were further convinced that the unilateral evacuation of UNEF, the blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba, and the mobilization of the Egyptian and Syrian armies were direct provocations from the Arab side. Despite the evidence of shared responsibilities over escalation of the crisis, the Indian government continued its uncritical support of the Egyptian decision. The perceived lack of objectivity in India's UNEF policy prompted the leaders of the Swatantra Party, Jana Sangh, and the Praja Socialist Party to send a joint letter to Indira Gandhi calling

64. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 7 (18 July 1967), Col. 12678–12712.

65. Rikhye, *The Sinai Blunder*, p. 154.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 4 (6 June 1967), Col. 3296.

68. *Ibid.*

69. C. Rajagopalachari, "Aggression Triumphantly Met: What Next?" *Swarajya*, Vol. 11, No. 51 (18 June 1967), p. 1.

on her to stop putting the sole blame on one disputant (Israel) and to adopt a more neutral attitude.⁷⁰ The three political parties judged that a more impartial position vis-à-vis the role of UNEF and a condemnation of the shared responsibilities for the conflict would have the “support of the country” and place India in a better position to play an “honourable part” in helping to resolve the dispute.⁷¹

India's first deployment of armed troops in a UN peacekeeping operation from 1956 to 1967 was formative in various ways. Until the crisis of 1967, India demonstrated that it could effectively project its armed forces in a distant theater of operation. India also proved its “staying power” by maintaining a regular, strong troop commitment to UNEF despite adverse circumstances, such as casualties.⁷² India suffered a total of 27 casualties during the UNEF mandate. India also proved its skills as a competent, neutral peacekeeper. Both Egypt and Israel largely respected the mediating efforts of UNEF until 1967. India effectively supervised the cessation of hostilities between Egypt and Israel in 1956, monitored the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Sinai in 1957, and ensured the exchange of prisoners of war.

However, India did not effectively adapt to the changes on the ground in May–June 1967. Whereas Nehru had frequently adapted India's position and accepted trade-offs between his principled beliefs and operational necessities depending on the evolution of the situation, Indira Gandhi proved much less flexible. This might have been because the case for supporting Egypt was not as clear-cut as in 1956. At the London Conference, Nehru had attempted to conciliate varying positions as an honest broker. By contrast, India's policy proved to be too Cairo centric during the crisis of 1967. Indian officials hoped their support would ensure reciprocal backing from Arab states in other disputes. By unconditionally supporting Nasser's request for UNEF withdrawal and a blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba, India adopted a biased position when the situation demanded a more balanced approach.

Gandhi's government also did not account for the evolution of the regional situation and how it affected India's own interests. For instance, the Egyptian military gamble of 1967 went against India's economic interests because of the consequent closing of the Suez Canal. In 1967, 70 percent of

70. These were the three main opposition parties to the Indian National Congress in the Fourth Indian Parliament elected from 1967–1971. This letter was quoted by M. R. Masani from the *Jana Sangh* in a statement to Parliament. See *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 6 (15 July 1967), Col. 12132–12138.

71. *Ibid.*

72. Krishnasamy, “A Case for India's ‘Leadership.’”

Indian exports and 80 percent of its imports still went through the canal.⁷³ The second and long-term closing of the Suez Canal after the events of 1967 was extremely costly for India. Because the canal remained closed until 1975, the costs of India's exports to Europe considerably increased.

Instead of advising caution to Nasser over the potential diplomatic drawbacks of his policy, India effectively gave carte blanche to the Egyptians.⁷⁴ This proved detrimental to India's aspiration for leadership in the NAM. India's support of Nasser ignored the growing political disagreements between Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria. In contrast to the 1950s, India's position on UNEF left little room for diplomatic maneuvering. Indira Gandhi's uncritical pro-Nasser policy led to the alienation of Arab leaders, like King Hussein of Jordan and King Saud of Saudi Arabia, who did not agree with the Egyptian president.⁷⁵ The impression of partiality damaged India's credentials as a neutral mediator.

India's support for Nasser's request for UNEF withdrawal also had some important practical implications for further UN peacekeeping contributions. By supporting the Egyptian decision, India effectively endorsed the principle of non-interference over the concept of collective security and mediation. India was very cautious to not have its troops considered by Egypt or other Third World countries as occupying forces. However, by giving overwhelming priority to the sovereign concerns of Egypt, the Indian government did not anticipate the operational problems and the fact that this decision was putting its own troops at risk. The evacuation of UNEF effectively created conditions for conflict escalation, as Egypt was moving its troops in the Sinai and Israel was forced to launch a preventive attack. Despite these deteriorating security conditions, the Indian government supported an immediate withdrawal of UNEF. However, as Major General Rikhye noted in his memoirs, India never provided the logistical support to ensure the evacuation in a timely fashion.

As a result, there were different operational factors that influenced India's commitment to UNEF in 1967. The government of Indira Gandhi stood by its adamant support for Egypt and did not take into account how Nasser created the conditions for the outbreak of a war with Israel, which directly affected India's economic interests and the security of its own UNEF troops.

73. Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy*, p. 197.

74. C. S. Jha, *From Bandung to Tashkent: Glimpses of India's Foreign Policy* (London: Sangam Books, 1983), pp. 308–309.

75. Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy*, pp. 173–174.

Conclusion: Findings and Future Avenues of Research

In examining India's UNEF policy from 1956 to 1967, this article has shown that there was no dominant rationale behind India's peacekeeping commitments. The Indian government's initial involvement in the Suez Crisis and its contribution of Indian troops to UNEF were driven by an ambition to play an active mediating role between the European powers (France and Great Britain), the two superpowers (United States and USSR), and a Middle Eastern country (Egypt). India wanted to be recognized by these various international actors as a neutral and effective peace broker and also to reinforce its claim to leadership in the NAM. Indian officials made sure that Egypt's political and economic wishes were respected during the settlement of the crisis. Alongside these status-seeking motivations were exigent economic concerns that shaped India's participation in UNEF in 1956. Most of India's imports came through the Suez Canal, and India had a direct interest in ensuring a quick and sustainable solution to the Suez Crisis to resume the flow of shipping through the canal. Thus, a combination of varying factors spurred India's first major peacekeeping operation in 1956 after initial cautious and non-armed contributions to UN peacekeeping in Korea and Indochina.

This historical episode seems to have shaped India's position in subsequent years toward peacekeeping in the region. India played a similar role in the resolution of the Lebanon crisis in 1958 as a member of the core group in the United Nations Observation Group in Lebanon (UNOGIL) and in the peacekeeping mission. In this other case, India played a pivotal mediating role between the UN, the United States, Egypt, the USSR, and the Lebanese government. India's participation in UNEF and UNOGIL was part of a broader engagement process that India initiated in the 1950s and then expanded in the early 1960s by contributing to the UN peacekeeping force in Congo.⁷⁶

However, the 1967 crisis provided different lessons for India and Nehru's successors. Indira Gandhi built on the rationale provided in 1956 by her father and the Indian government when justifying India's contribution to UNEF and later by supporting Nasser's request for the withdrawal of UNEF. India had agreed to contribute troops to UNEF only on the condition that UN forces would be deployed with the consent of Egypt. By 1967, some of the factors that accounted for India's rationale in 1956 regarding UNEF had changed. First, the presence of UNEF in the Sinai for eleven years had helped to reduce tensions between Egypt and Israel, and both countries had

76. Nayudu, "In the Very 'Eye of the Storm.'"

withdrawn forces from the region. Consequently, any sudden withdrawal from UNEF followed by a rearming of the Sinai created the conditions for a renewed conflict. Second, whereas Nehru's efforts to conciliate varying interests in 1956 were well received, Indira Gandhi was criticized both internationally and domestically for unconditionally supporting Nasser's position. The impression of bias hurt India's image as a neutral actor. Third, Nehru had regularly advised caution to Nasser and the Egyptian government during the 1956 crisis to ensure de-escalation. By contrast, the policies adopted of Nasser in 1967 sparked the conflict and the closure of the Suez Canal, with adverse effects on India's economic interests.

A comparison of India's decision-making processes in 1956 and 1967 regarding UNEF demonstrates that the motives varied and evolved over time during the deployment of the UN peacekeeping mission. Another important lesson is that the adoption of a rigid policy would have been detrimental to India's long-term interest. The situation on the ground evolved during the eleven-year mandate, and Indian policymakers had to adapt.

The article suggests that a more systematic comparison of past and present justifications of the deployments of peacekeepers will shed valuable light on India's approach to peacekeeping and peacemaking. The learning process among Indian decision-makers in the wake of the UNEF evacuation undoubtedly influenced subsequent Indian policies regarding peacekeeping missions.⁷⁷

Finally, this article adds to recent academic literature that illuminates the oft-overlooked role of African and Asian states in the formative years of UN peacekeeping. Recent scholarship has highlighted the major troop and police contributions made by Asian and African states, such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Nepal, and Pakistan, but in fact, as we have seen here, the interest of lower-income states in supporting and shaping UN peacekeeping is long-standing.⁷⁸ Further research on the role of Asian and African states and leaders in UN crisis management and peacekeeping in the 1950s and 1960s will be of great value for scholars of the Cold War as well as those interested in the UN and international peacekeeping.⁷⁹

77. Beyond the second UNEF mission (1973–1979), India did not participate in another UN operation for another two decades (United Nations Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group in 1988).

78. Paul Amar, "Global South to the Rescue: Emerging Humanitarian Superpowers and Globalizing Rescue Industries," *Globalizations*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2012), pp. 1–13; and Philip Cunliffe, *Legions of Peace: UN Peacekeepers from the Global South* (London: Hurst & Co., 2013).

79. Kabilan Krishnasamy, "'Recognition' for Third World Peacekeepers: India and Pakistan," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2001), pp. 56–76; Alanna O'Malley, *The Diplomacy of Decolonisation: America, Britain and the United Nations during the Congo Crisis 1960–1964* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2018); and Yongjin Zhang, "China and UN Peacekeeping: From Condemnation to Participation," *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (1996), pp. 1–15.