



Committee: United Nations General Assembly (GA)

Topic: The question of implementing a standing military force within the United Nations system

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I. Committee Background

The General Assembly (GA) is the primary deliberative, decision-making and representative body of the United Nations (UN). The General Assembly has many vital functions, including the admission, removal or expulsion of UN member states. The UN Charter summarizes its key purposes as “promot[ing] international co-operation in the economic, social, cultural, educational, and health fields, and assists in the consciousness of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion” (Whiting, WEF, 2018). Currently, the GA consists of 193 member states and two non-member observer states. The committee’s headquarters are located in the UN Building in New York City. The General Assembly is responsible for overseeing the budget of the UN, selecting the non-permanent members of the Security Council, voting on the Secretary-General of the United Nations, making recommendations in the form of resolutions and establishing subsidiary organizations (Charter, UN, 2020).

II. Topic Information

a) History of the Topic

According to the United Nations, peacekeepers are specially trained individuals who “provide security and the political and peacebuilding support to help

countries make the difficult, early transition from conflict to peace” (Thematic Issues, UN, 2019). All UN peacekeeping operations are governed by rules set out in the UN Charter and are approved of by the United Nations Security Council. The role of peacekeepers has evolved since the UN’s first peacekeeping mission in 1960. Besides ensuring peace and security, peacekeepers now “facilitate the political process, protect civilians, assist in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants; support the organization of elections, protect and promote human rights and assist in restoring the rule of law.” UN peacekeeping operations consist of volunteer soldiers, police officers and civilian personnel. As of 2019, 111,512 people are involved in UN peacekeeping missions around the world. During a mission, volunteers serve under UN operational control. However, they remain members of their respective armed forces. Once a mission is complete, the peacekeepers return to their home countries. The UN does not have a permanent peacekeeping force (What is Peacekeeping?, UN Peacekeeping, 2020).

A standing military force is an enduringly established military force maintained by a nation and has the purpose to defend a country during a conflict, war, etc. (Vance, Anti-War, 2007). Since 1948, there have been multiple proposals for a permanent UN force that would be directly recruited, trained, equipped and controlled by the UN. Supporters of the idea of a permanent standing military force have included former UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie and former United States President Ronald Reagan. Those in favour of a standing military force argue that it would provide the UN with the “capability to prevent and respond rapidly and effectively to conflict or mass human rights violations” (Herro, Oxford Research Group, 2018). Currently, it takes the UN between three to six months to organize a peacekeeping mission. Critics of the UN believe that this reaction time is too slow, especially during an emergency.

Furthermore, the UN peacekeeping operations are irregular and therefore struggle to pull together adequate supplies and materials needed. A standing military force would be able to circumvent this issue as it would already have weapons, materials and supplies in place (Rachman, Financial Times, 2009). Additionally, in 2002 and 2006, the non-governmental organization Global Action to Prevent War proposed a standing military force within the United Nations system that was introduced through the United Nations Emergency Peace Services (UNEPS) plan. Essentially, this force would contain a mixture of soldiers from around the world stationed at various UN-run military bases in areas of concern (The Simons Foundation, 2020).

The proposals for implementing a standing military force within the United Nations system has failed due to a variety of reasons. The cost of such a large global force and who would fund it has been raised as a major concern by nations such as the United States and Russia. A standing force would require billions of dollars in funding for military bases, weapons, living materials, salary, medical care, etc. Moreover, there have also been concerns raised about national sovereignty and the chain of command. There is a concern about which member states should contribute forces to the standing army. Also, technologically advanced nations have stated that they would not want to share their training strategies, new technologies or weapons with others, especially countries deemed to be their rivals or enemies. Then there is the issue of creating a chain of command within the force. The UN would need to establish a system that would fairly select the best individuals to lead. Finally, there is the problem that each soldier will need to decide where their allegiances lie, with the UN or with their nation (Telhami, Cornell International Law Journal, 1995).

b) Current Issues

China: Since 2013, China has increased its donations to UN peacekeeping missions immensely. The country went from contributing 3% of the annual peacekeeping budget

in 2013 to 15.21% in 2019. Furthermore, China has also specially trained 8,000 soldiers to serve as permanent peacekeepers for UN peacekeeping operations around the world (Shendruk, Quartz, 2019). China does not support the creation of a standing military force within the United Nations system. The country's government has stated that it would like to have complete sovereignty over decisions related to armed conflict and declaration of war. Moreover, China has begun a global development strategy called the Belt and Road Initiative. Part of the initiative to promote peace and end conflict around the world. One of the ways China is doing this is by participating in UN peacekeeping missions across Africa (Pauley, The Diplomat, 2018).

Russia: Russia, being one of the 5 permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, is fully responsible for maintaining the peace and security promised by the UNSC. Russia regards peacekeeping as one of the UN's principal functions. According to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Russia is consistently setting high importance on peacekeeping as an essential tool for decreasing the level of conflict in international relations and handling crises that in chaotic times continue to pose a warning to international law and security (Bratersky, International Organisations Research Journal, 2018). The 15th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade was established to enable the Russian troops to engage in operations to maintain international peace and safety. Under the decision of the President of the Russian Federation and in the interest within the Commonwealth of Independent States, its forces may be withdrawn to peacekeeping contingents such as for OSCE, NATO-Russia Council and, if necessary, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Besides, Russia sends military observers to UN

missions located in the Middle East, Western Sahara, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sudan (MOD Mission, 2020).

South Africa: South Africa is rather new to international peacekeeping, starting its duties in 1998 with troop deployment to Lesotho. The first UN mission South Africa was involved in was called the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in 1999. However, the country's first major UN contribution came in 2004 when South African troops, stationed in Burundi as part of the African Union (AU) mission, were reorganized to form the basis of the United Nations Operation in Burundi (UNOB). South African troops have since participated in 14 multinational peacekeeping operations and seven UN peacekeeping missions. South Africa has not publicly discussed the idea of creating a standing military force within the UN system (Makanda, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2016).

C) UN Action

While the idea of creating a standing military force within the United Nations system has been discussed since the organization was founded in 1945, it has not materialized due to a variety of factors. As previously mentioned, concerns about funding, sovereignty, organization, etc. have prevented discussions from moving further through the UN system. Currently, the UN is dedicated to supporting its peacekeeping missions around the world. As of 2019, there were 13 UN peacekeeping missions around the world including in Darfur, Kosovo and Mali. Major reforms to organization and accountability within the UN peacekeeping leadership have been implemented over the past two years, with further reforms planned for 2020 and 2021. By improving the organization, UN Secretary-General António Guterres hopes to improve its efficiency and reassert its relevance in maintaining the UN's mandate which is to ensure world peace and security (UN Evaluates, UN Peacekeeping, 2019).

III. Essential Questions

1. Does your country have a standing military force? If so, what role does it play in maintaining international peace and security?
2. Where are United Nations peacekeeping currently operating?
3. Does your country support and invest in UN peacekeeping operations? If so, in which way?
4. What is your nation's position on the UN implementing a standing military force?
5. Has your country been in a situation that could have benefitted from the UN having a standing military force? If so, in which way?
6. How could UN peacekeeping operations be further enhanced in order to improve its efficiency?

IV. Quorum

- Afghanistan
- Brazil
- Canada
- China
- Egypt
- France
- Germany
- India
- Iran
- Israel
- Japan

- Kenya
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Nigeria
- Pakistan
- Russia
- Saudi Arabia
- South Africa
- South Korea
- Syria
- Turkey
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom
- United States

V. Resources

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