

The Historical Analysis of the Turkish National Police's Contribution to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

Türk Polis Teşkilatı'nın Birleşmiş Milletler Barış Operasyonlarına Katkısının Tarihsel Analizi

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Abstract

This study analyzes Türkiye's evolving role in global peace and security by examining the historical contributions of the Turkish National Police (TNP) to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKOs). Since its initial deployment in the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) in 1996, the TNP has participated in numerous missions, contributing to the promotion of public order, the rule of law, and human rights. Particular emphasis is placed on Türkiye's involvement in the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the mission with the highest number of TNP personnel deployed, as well as the increasing engagement of female police officers in line with the UN's gender mainstreaming policies. The study adopts a qualitative approach, supplemented by quantitative data extracted from the UN's official "Troop and Police Contributors" database. These data, compiled and analyzed by the author, are presented through tables and graphs. By utilizing previously unexplored data, this research provides an original, interdisciplinary, and data-driven contribution to a relatively underexamined area within Turkish academic literature. The study concludes with policy recommendations to enhance Türkiye's future participation in UN PKOs.

Keywords: Turkish National Police, Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations, UNPOL, International Security.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Türk Polis Teşkilatı'nın (TPT) Birleşmiş Milletler Barışı Koruma Operasyonlarına (BM BKO) yaptığı tarihsel katkılar üzerinden Türkiye'nin küresel barış ve güvenlik alanındaki dönüşen rolünü analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Türk polisinin ilk olarak 1996 yılında Bosna-Hersek'teki Birleşmiş Milletler Misyonu'na (UNMIBH) katılımıyla başlayan süreçte, TPT birçok operasyona iştirak etmiş ve kamu düzeninin sağlanması, hukukun üstünlüğü ve insan haklarının korunması konularında uluslararası çabalara önemli katkılar sunmuştur. Çalışma, özellikle Türkiye'nin en fazla personel katkısında bulunduğu Kosova'daki Birleşmiş Milletler Geçici Yönetim Misyonu'na (UNMIK) katılımına ve BM'nin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği politikaları doğrultusunda kadın polis memurlarının artan katılımına odaklanmaktadır. Nitel bir araştırma yöntemi benimsenen çalışmada, BM'nin resmî "Askeri ve Polis Katkı Sağlayan Ülkeler" veri tabanından elde edilen nicel veriler de kullanılmış; bu veriler yazar tarafından derlenmiş ve tablolar ile grafikler aracılığıyla sunulmuştur. Bu yönüyle çalışma, daha önce kullanılmamış verilere dayanan özgün bir katkı sunmakta; Türk akademik literatüründe yeterince incelenmemiş bir konuya disiplinler arası ve veri temelli bir yaklaşım getirmektedir. Çalışma, Türkiye'nin gelecekteki BM BKO'larına katılımını güçlendirmeye yönelik politika önerileriyle sona ermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Polis Teşkilatı, Barış Operasyonları, Birleşmiş Milletler, BM Polisi, Uluslararası Güvenlik.

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Introduction

Following the Second World War, the United Nations (UN) assumed a central role in establishing global peace and ensuring sustainable stability. Since its first peacekeeping operation (PKO) in 1948, aimed at managing conflicts arising from the establishment of the State of Israel, the UN has conducted over 70 operations across various regions. Initially, these missions were predominantly military in nature, focusing primarily on monitoring and reporting ceasefire violations. However, since the late 1990s, UN PKOs have evolved into complex structures that incorporate military components, civilian experts, and police units.

This transformation began in 1960 with the deployment of police personnel under the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC). The institutionalization of police functions within UN missions was further solidified in 1964 with the creation of the first formal Police Unit under the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). These early developments highlighted the growing importance of police forces within PKOs, and by the 1990s, police components had become indispensable elements of such missions.

It was nearly three decades later that Türkiye began contributing police personnel to UN PKOs, starting with its involvement in the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH). Since then, Türkiye has progressively played a more active role in international peacekeeping. Particularly from the 1990s onward, as the global demand for PKOs surged, the contribution of the Turkish National Police (TNP) has significantly increased.

This study explores the role of the TNP in UN PKOs from a historical and analytical perspective. It aims to analyse the types of operations in which Turkish police have participated, their specific roles, and the nature of their contributions. A particular focus is placed on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the mission with the highest number of TNP personnel. The study also assesses the participation of female officers in light of the UN's gender equality framework. The analysis is based on secondary quantitative data obtained from official UN sources and publicly available reports.

Adopting both historical and case-based methodologies, the article situates Türkiye's contributions within the broader context of institutional development and international norms. The findings highlight Türkiye's growing commitment to UN PKOs, particularly in areas requiring civilian policing expertise and gender-sensitive engagement. By offering data-driven insights and a focused case study, the article provides an original contribution to the limited literature on Türkiye's involvement in UN peace and security initiatives.

United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

The UN was established in 1945 with the primary objective of maintaining international peace and security. To achieve this aim, the organization functions through a variety of institutional mechanisms. According to the UN Charter, the responsibility for ensuring global security is vested in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). In fulfilling this mandate, the UNSC utilizes a range of intervention tools, including conflict prevention,

peacemaking, peace enforcement, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping (United Nations, 2008).

Although the UN Charter does not explicitly mention PKOs, such interventions have gradually become institutionalized within the UN's operational framework and have evolved into one of the most critical instruments of the organization's peace and security architecture (Aslantaş, 2019). The early PKOs conducted during the Cold War period were primarily military in nature, focusing on monitoring ceasefire agreements between conflicting parties and reporting violations in the field. During this period, the role of UN personnel was considerably limited, mainly involving the maintenance of balance between parties in conflict zones, refraining from direct intervention, and serving as neutral observers (Findlay, 2002).

However, from the mid-1990s onward, significant changes in the international security environment such as the rise in civil wars, the emergence of non-state armed actors, and the weakening of state structures rendered traditional peacekeeping approaches increasingly inadequate. In this context, peacekeeping activities evolved into broader and more multidimensional frameworks, giving rise to a new intervention model that actively involves not only military components but also civilian experts and police personnel (Bellamy & Williams, 2010). This new model, known as "Multidimensional Peacekeeping," goes beyond the traditional mandate of maintaining ceasefires and incorporates a broad spectrum of objectives. These include training local security forces, strengthening the rule of law, supporting democratic institutions, monitoring electoral processes, safeguarding human rights, and promoting gender equality (Durch, 2006).

The first two peacekeeping PKOs mandated by the UN were the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), established in 1948, and the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), established in 1949. Both missions remain active today, primarily tasked with observation and monitoring responsibilities. These early operations, carried out with a limited number of personnel and minimal intervention, rely on unarmed UN military observers to fulfil their mandates (Findlay, 2002).

A significant turning point in the evolution of UN peacekeeping occurred with the establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) in 1956, in response to the Suez Crisis. As the first armed PKO, UNEF I marked the UN's expanded capacity to deploy peacekeepers in more complex and volatile environments. This expansion was further demonstrated by the launch of the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) in 1960, which, with approximately 20,000 military personnel, became the largest peacekeeping mission of its time (United Nations, 2025). These missions underscored the insufficiency of purely diplomatic efforts and the increasing necessity of incorporating military capacity to maintain international peace.

The post-Cold War period witnessed a sharp increase in both the number and scale of PKOs. Between 1989 and 1994, the UNSC authorized 20 new missions, accompanied by a significant rise in UN peacekeeping personnel. Unlike earlier operations composed exclusively of military observers, these missions adopted an integrated approach, bringing together military, police, and civilian components. In line with this shift, the UN developed a new institutional framework designed to support long-term peacebuilding.

This structure incorporated experts from a diverse range of fields, including political affairs, human rights, humanitarian assistance, institutional reform, civilian protection, and gender equality, into mission mandates, thereby enhancing the strategic and operational scope of peacekeeping efforts (Durch, 2006).

The Role of Police in UN Peacekeeping Operations

Although police officers were first deployed by the UN in 1960 and the first formal police unit was established in 1964, the United Nations Police (UNPOL) only emerged as an institutionalized and effective actor in PKOs in the latter half of the 1990s. A critical turning point in this process was the series of peacekeeping missions launched in response to the conflicts following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. These missions marked a significant expansion of police roles within UN operations, as the contribution of police personnel became increasingly central (United Nations, 2025).

Among these missions, the UNMIK stands out as particularly significant. Unlike traditional PKOs that operated primarily in advisory roles, UNMIK was mandated with executive authority, enabling UNPOL not only to conduct routine policing tasks but also to play a leading role in the establishment and management of local security institutions (Aslantaş, 2025). Moreover, UNMIK deployed the largest number of Civilian Police (CIVPOL) personnel in UN peacekeeping history (Aslantaş & Özdal, 2023). This development reflects the expanded and increasingly strategic role of police within UN peacekeeping, establishing UNPOL as a critical actor in peacebuilding and institutional reform processes. UNMIK thus serves as a model for integrating policing into broader security sector reforms, demonstrating the potential of police contributions beyond traditional law enforcement.

Another significant innovation of this mission was the deployment of Formed Police Units (FPU), which are organized units assigned to handle public order situations, often referred to as "riot police" in many countries (United Nations, 2025). Following their introduction in UNMIK, FPU units became indispensable and institutionalized components of PKOs. The consistent presence of FPUs in these missions demonstrates the evolving and expanded roles of the police force in UN peacekeeping strategies. This model has contributed not only to the management of public order but also to strengthening the capacity of local security forces and building trust within local communities.

In 2005, the term CIVPOL was officially replaced by UNPOL, which today operates through two main components: Individual Police Officers (IPOs) and FPUs. IPOs are typically deployed on an individual basis and focus on mentoring, advising, and training local police forces to strengthen institutional capacity. In contrast, FPUs are pre-formed, well-equipped units tasked with crowd control and public order functions, particularly in unstable environments. Together, these two components form the operational backbone of UNPOL's field presence (Aslantaş, 2025).

One of the major turning points in the history of UNPOL was the release of the reform document commonly referred to as the "Brahimi Report" in 2000, which was prepared with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of PKOs (United Nations, 2000). Drafted by an independent panel chaired by Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi, the report critically

assessed the UNs' past shortcomings in peacekeeping and emphasized the need to build a stronger, more rapid, and more effective peacekeeping capacity. The report clearly stated that relying solely on military components in PKOs is insufficient, and that such missions must be supported by civilian and police elements.

The Brahimi Report paved the way for a series of structural reforms aimed at enhancing the effectiveness and rapid deployment of police capacities. In line with these recommendations, the Standing Police Capacity (SPC), a permanent unit composed of police experts, was established in 2005 in Brindisi, Italy. The SPC's core mandate is to facilitate the swift and effective establishment of police components in peacekeeping missions, particularly by enabling immediate deployment in emergencies without waiting for the arrival of seconded IPOs from Member States (Weinlich, 2014).

Following the release of the Brahimi Report, a significant increase in the number of police personnel deployed in PKOs can be observed. In December 1992, the total number of uniformed personnel across all missions was 52,154, of which 4,413 (8.5%) were police officers (United Nations, 1992). By 2000, this number had risen to 7,725 police officers out of a total of 37,733 uniformed personnel, marking the highest percentage recorded to date at 20.5% (United Nations, 2000). In 2010, the number of police officers in PKOs reached 14,322, comprising 17.5% of the total 82,014 uniformed personnel (United Nations, 2010). As of January 2025, a total of 6,131 police officers, 4,333 from FPU and 1,798 IPOs are deployed among 61,197 uniformed personnel, representing approximately 10% of the total (United Nations, 2025). As the data illustrates, the number of police officers in PKOs peaked following the introduction of the Brahimi Report but has gradually declined over time.

UNPOL Areas of Responsibility

The tasks of international police personnel deployed in PKOs are categorized into four distinct areas according to the “*Strategic Guidance Framework for International Policing*” (SGF), which was implemented in 2014 (United Nations, 2014):

1. *Police Administration*: This area encompasses essential administrative processes, including budget management, procurement, record-keeping, archiving, and personnel management, all aimed at ensuring the effective and efficient operation of police units.
2. *Police Capacity-Building and Development*: Focused on enhancing the institutional capacity of local police forces and the training and development of security actors, this category aims to ensure the long-term sustainability of international peace efforts.
3. *Police Command*: This category covers the leadership, planning, coordination, and resource management skills required to effectively manage multidimensional and complex PKOs.
4. *Police Operations*: This area involves daily security duties, including community policing and intelligence-led policing approaches, such as conducting investigations, maintaining public order, and, when necessary, carrying out special operations (United Nations, 2014).

On the other hand, FPU's generally consist of 140-160 personnel and tasked with three main responsibilities:

- Maintaining public order,
- Protecting UN personnel and facilities,
- Supporting police operations that do not involve military threats but require coordinated intervention (United Nations, 2014).

Among the police personnel deployed in PKOs, Specialized Police Teams (SPTs) constitute a third category alongside IPOs and FPU's (Turgay, 2025). These teams play a crucial role, particularly in enhancing the capacity of local police forces and performing tasks that require specialized expertise. The first deployment of SPTs occurred in 2010 as part of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), serving as a significant example of such a structure. Following the MINUSTAH, a total of 14 SPT teams were deployed and assigned responsibilities across five different PKOs (Hunt, 2024).

SPTs are composed of expert IPOs who provide specialized policing support to the host state's police forces, focusing on enhancing local police capacity in specific technical areas. Recently, these teams have been frequently called upon for efforts to protect children and women. Each team consists of experts from a single Member State or a small number of Member States with specialized skills in areas such as investigations, serious and organized crime, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), or community-oriented policing (United Nations, 2024).

Another key category of assignment in PKOs is the "Professional Police" positions. Personnel in these roles are professional decision-making managers who are temporarily incorporated into the UN's staff, enjoying employment rights and salary benefits similar to those of permanent UN personnel. Professional Police Officers assume managerial responsibilities by commanding UNPOL personnel in PKOs. These individuals are selected through a highly competitive and rigorous process and are appointed to represent their countries at the highest level. Chosen from among hundreds of candidates, these professional managers play a vital role in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of PKOs. As of 2020, the TNP had secured only 15 Professional Police assignments since 1996 (General Directorate of TNP, 2020), a number which had increased to 20 by 2025.

Personnel Selection for UNPOL

The UN does not maintain a permanent police force for deployment in PKOs. Instead, personnel required for these missions are selected through a recruitment board led by a representative from UN Headquarters in New York. The initial stage of the selection process assesses candidates' written and spoken language proficiency, followed by interviews to evaluate their professional experience and familiarity with the UN system. During the interview, the board also determines which of the four core areas of police work in PKOs the candidate is best suited for. This approach ensures the deployment of personnel whose qualifications align with each mission's specific needs. Candidates who pass the language assessment proceed to a practical driving test to evaluate their vehicle operation skills, followed by a firearms proficiency test. Those who fail the firearms test remain on an eligibility list for missions that do not require weapons (Aslantaş, 2025).

Each PKO submits its personnel requirements, including the number and qualifications, to the UN Headquarters. Based on these requests, the UN considers factors such as the representation rates of member states in PKOs and their rotation cycles. It then invites the Permanent Missions of relevant member states to deploy personnel who have successfully passed the selection process. In response, member states nominate their selected candidates to UN Headquarters following the same procedure, thereby initiating the deployment process (Aslantaş, 2025).

Contribution of the Turkish National Police to UN Peacekeeping Operations

There is no official report, comprehensive analysis, or publicly available document on the institutional website of the TNP regarding Türkiye's contributions to PKOs. The most comprehensive study in this area is the "Türkiye Peacekeeping Database" project developed by Haldun Yalçınkaya and his team. This project documents all international missions in which Türkiye participated between 1988 and 2015, including the number of police and military personnel deployed (Yalçınkaya, 2018). Additionally, a 2021 study focusing on Türkiye's contributions to international policing activities also draws on data from this project (Yılmaz, 2021).

Since this study focuses exclusively on Turkish police personnel deployed in UN PKOs, all data used were obtained directly from the UNs' official website under the section titled "Troop and Police Contributors," collected on a monthly and yearly basis. These data were analysed and compiled into tables by the author. Given that the statistics are based on the monthly salary payments made by the UNs to deployed personnel, they are considered to provide the most accurate and realistic representation.

Within this framework, Türkiye made its first contribution to UN PKOs in March 1996 by deploying four personnel to the UNMBIH. Since this initial deployment, Türkiye has contributed significantly to the UN's peace and stability efforts by participating in a total of 28 different PKOs to date. However, Türkiye has only contributed personnel under the IPO category, without participation in FPU or SPT roles. According to statements from the General Directorate of TNP in 2020, over 2,000 Turkish police officers have participated in PKOs since 1996, with nearly 700 of whom are experienced officers who have served in multiple missions (General Directorate of TNP, 2020).

Following its initial deployment in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1996, Türkiye's contributions to PKOs have continued across various regions, including Yugoslavia, Kosovo, East Timor, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Haiti, Burundi, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan, Darfur, the Central African Republic, Chad, Afghanistan, Mali, Abyei, and Yemen.

The UN peacekeeping operations to which Türkiye has contributed include:

1. UNMIBH (United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina)
2. UNPREDEP (United Nations Preventive Deployment Force)
3. UNMIK (United Nations Interim Administrative Mission in Kosovo)
4. UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor)
5. MONUC (United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo)

6. UNMISSET (United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor)
7. UNAMSIL (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone)
8. MINUSTAH (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti)
9. ONUB (United Nations Operation in Burundi)
10. UNMIL (United Nations Mission in Liberia)
11. UNOCI (United Nations Operations in Côte d'Ivoire)
12. ONUCI (United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire)
13. UNMIS (United Nations Mission in the Sudan)
14. UNOTIL (The United Nations Office in Timor-Leste)
15. UNIOSIL (United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone)
16. UNMIT (United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste)
17. BINUB (United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi)
18. UNAMID (United Nations Hybrid Operation in DARFUR)
19. MINURCAT (United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad)
20. MONUSCO (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo)
21. UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan)
22. UNMISS (United Nations Mission in South Sudan)
23. MINUSMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali)
24. MINUSCA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic)
25. MINUJUSTH (United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti)
26. UNITAMS (United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan)
27. UNISFA (United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei)
28. UNMHA (United Nations Mission to support the Hudaydah Agreement)

As shown in Table 1, Türkiye's contributions to UN PKOs during the first three years remained limited and were concentrated primarily in its immediate region, the Balkans. During this period, only a small number of personnel were deployed to the UNMIBH (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and UNPREDEP (North Macedonia) missions. However, a significant increase in deployments occurred in 2000 with the establishment of the UNMIK mission in Kosovo. This upward trend continued with Türkiye's participation in the UNTAET mission in East Timor in 2001, followed by the MONUC mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2002. These deployments marked a pivotal shift, as TNP extended their involvement beyond the Balkans to address regional conflicts in Asia and Africa for the first time, representing a major step toward contributing to global peace efforts. By 2004, Türkiye expanded its peacekeeping footprint to the Americas by participating in the MINUSTAH mission in Haiti, which addressed another regional crisis. The TNP's contribution to this mission began in 2014 and continued without interruption until its conclusion in 2017. This period reflects Türkiye's growing commitment to geographical diversification in its peacekeeping engagements.

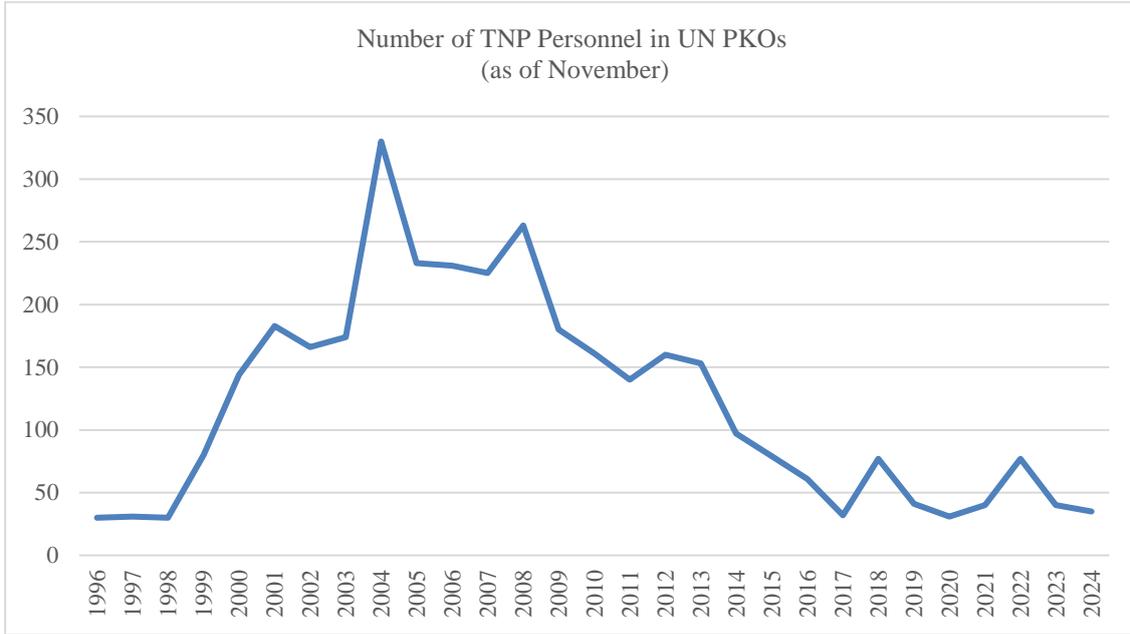
In addition, the majority of the UN PKOs to which Türkiye has made the most substantial contributions are located on the African continent. Prominent among these missions are those in Liberia (UNMIL), Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Sudan (UNMIS), Darfur (UNAMID), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), South Sudan (UNMISS), and Mali

(MINUSMA). Türkiye’s extensive engagement in Africa is closely linked to the declaration of 2005 as the “Year of Africa,” which marked a significant turning point in Turkish foreign policy. This strategic initiative aimed to deepen Türkiye’s relations with the continent not only in terms of trade but also in the areas of security and peacebuilding.

	U N M I B H	U N P R E D E P	U N M I B E K	U N T A E T	M O N U C	U N M I S E T	U N A M S I L	M I N U S T A H	O N U B	U N M I L	U N O C I	O N U C I	U N M I S	U N O T I L	U N I O S I L	U N M I T	B I N U B	U N A M I D	M I N U R C A T	M O N U S C O	U N A M A	U N M I S S	M I N U S M A	M I N U S C A	M I N U J U S T I H	U N I T A M S	U N I S F A	U N M H A		
1996	26	4																											30	
1997	26	4																												30
1998	27	4																												31
1999	30																													30
2000	31		49																											80
2001	27		114	18																										159
2002	36		122	20																										178
2003			164		3	11	5														1									184
2004			158		13	1	7	1		34												1								214
2005			207		11	6	5	8	3	34	10		1																	285
2006			137		18			15		31		23	8	2	1															235
2007			151		5			28		33	20		27		1	8	2													275
2008			131		1			59		23	9		19		1	12	1	1												257
2009			7		10			46		25	18		32			12		3												153
2010			1		20			36		30	19		36			20	1	1	3			1								168
2011			1					41		24	13		24			21		11		15	1									151
2012			1					40		27	13					19		37		10		23								170
2013			1					21		25	15							58		14		24								158
2014			1					12		21	15							67		11		27	4							158
2015			1					17		11	7							15		2		21	4							78
2016			1					32		1	2							15		9		20	3	1						84
2017								16		1								19		5		20								61
2018			1															20		2		16	1		12					52
2019			1															34		9		19	2		7					72
2020			1															22		3		21								47
2021																		3		9		7	4							23
2022																			9		26	6			1					42
2023																				11		32	11	11						65
2024																				8		9	11							28
	203	12	1250	38	81	18	17	372	3	320	141	23	147	2	3	92	4	306	3	117	3	265	35	23	19	1	0	0	3498	

Table 1: Number of TNP Personnel in UN PKOs by Year (as of March) (Source: Data compiled from the UN “Troop and Police Contributors” statistics page)

This involvement became increasingly institutionalized following the First Türkiye-Africa Cooperation Summit held in Istanbul in 2008, which laid the groundwork for more sustainable bilateral relations. The process was further strengthened during the Second Türkiye-Africa Partnership Summit in 2014, where a joint implementation plan focusing on peace and security was adopted. These summits reflect Türkiye’s growing interest in Africa and underscore the continent’s strategic significance within its foreign policy framework. Most recently, the Third Türkiye-Africa Partnership Summit in Istanbul in 2021 further consolidated Türkiye’s engagement across Africa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2021). Alongside Türkiye’s intensified focus on Africa, it is important to note that, in recent years, the majority of UN PKOs have been deployed on the continent, while the number of missions suitable for global personnel deployment has gradually declined.



Graph 1: Number of TNP Personnel in UN PKOs (as of November) (Source: Data compiled from the UN “Troop and Police Contributors” statistics page)

Graph 1 illustrates the contribution of the TNP to UN PKOs over time. During the initial three years, Türkiye’s involvement remained relatively limited and stable. However, starting in 1999, a notable upward trend began, continuing through 2001. The TNP reached its historical peak in November 2004, with the deployment of 330 personnel across eight different UN PKOs. Although some fluctuations occurred in subsequent years, the number of deployed personnel stabilized at around 200 until 2008. From that point onward, a steady decline in annual deployments became apparent, marking a shift toward reduced engagement.

Table 2 presents the monthly personnel contributions of the TNP to all UN PKOs from 1996 to 2024. An examination of the data reveals that Türkiye’s contribution rose to 80 personnel in October 1999 and, for the first time, surpassed the 100 in April 2000 with 154 personnel deployed. This upward trajectory continued steadily, reaching 194 personnel in February 2004, surpassing 200 in March, and ultimately peaking at 330 personnel in November of the same year. This significant increase is closely linked to Türkiye’s robust support for the UNMIK mission in Kosovo, a region with which it maintains strong historical and cultural ties.

Between 2009 and 2014, the number of deployed missions increased, and Turkish police personnel were assigned to a broader range of geographical regions, resulting in a consistent contribution of over 100 personnel. However, beginning in October 2014, the number of deployed personnel fell back to double digits. This decline is primarily attributed to two key factors: the scaling down of major missions such as MINUSTAH, UNOCI, and UNMIL, and the disruption of overseas deployment processes due to domestic political developments in Türkiye. Moreover, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 severely constrained participation in international deployments. By

February 2021, the number of Turkish police officers serving in UN PKOs had decreased to 23, the lowest level recorded to date.

	Ocak	Şubat	Mart	Nisan	Mayıs	Haziran	Temmuz	Ağustos	Eylül	Ekim	Kasım	Aralık	
1996			30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	300
1997	30	30	30	31	31	28	31	31	31	30	31	31	365
1998	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	30	30	370
1999	31	31	30	18	18	18	26	49	47	80	80	80	508
2000	80	80	80	154	173	171	158	165	165	152	144	141	1663
2001	169	164	159	160	152	170	158	144	171	177	183	182	1989
2002	181	179	178	178	177	168	157	183	163	166	166	163	2059
2003	162	162	184	184	184	188	184	186	185	163	174	177	2133
2004	193	194	213	190	224	277	283	283	328	328	330	288	3131
2005	288	291	285	236	310	310	243	243	232	234	233	236	3141
2006	236	236	235	235	236	162	246	240	229	240	231	242	2768
2007	271	274	275	275	254	239	213	151	189	195	225	207	2768
2008	241	239	257	256	252	274	288	284	278	275	263	257	3164
2009	176	168	153	177	177	182	170	166	161	184	180	169	2063
2010	141	164	168	163	156	155	151	147	157	156	161	160	1879
2011	155	152	151	134	134	144	121	142	140	124	140	152	1689
2012	148	153	170	160	171	164	150	146	146	149	160	157	1874
2013	163	162	158	159	147	164	160	158	158	161	153	141	1884
2014	141	142	158	152	139	116	112	104	104	88	97	82	1435
2015	87	83	78	88	74	68	72	87	92	90	79	77	975
2016	73	77	84	95	91	93	94	81	71	63	61	57	940
2017	56	53	61	65	62	59	52	47	46	33	32	33	599
2018	29	54	52	53	58	60	77	78	73	77	77	76	764
2019	75	77	72	77	70	72	58	50	45	40	41	42	719
2020	29	43	47	47	45	52	43	43	39	33	31	26	478
2021	32	21	23	23	35	32	37	37	38	38	40	39	395
2022	39	40	42	37	35	45	66	66	67	76	77	76	666
2023	70	67	65	67	63	61	58	50	43	40	40	43	667
2024	32	29	28	32	42	38	50	45	45	37	35	35	448
	3359	3396	3497	3507	3571	3571	3519	3467	3504	3490	3524	3429	41834

Table 2: Total Number of TNP Personnel in UN PKOs (Source: Data compiled from the UN “Troop and Police Contributors” statistics page)

Another significant factor contributing to the decline in personnel contributions is the "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity" announced by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in 2017. This strategy aims to increase the representation of women at all levels across the UN system, including within PKOs. In line with this goal, the UN Police Division has launched various initiatives to enhance the participation of female police officers in peacekeeping missions. One such initiative requires that at least 25% of the personnel nominated by member states for peacekeeping roles be women. However, in countries like Türkiye, where the proportion of female police officers remains relatively low, this quota presents a practical challenge. It not only limits the number of male officers eligible for deployment but also constrains the overall number of personnel contributions, potentially diminishing the country's ability to meet its previous levels of engagement in UN PKOs.

Table 3 illustrates the number of different UN PKOs in which TNP personnel were simultaneously deployed over the years. Türkiye's contribution to UN PKOs began in March 1996 with deployments to the UNMIBH and UNPREDEP missions. This engagement expanded in 2000 with the addition of the UNTAET mission, increasing the number of concurrent deployments to three. A notable escalation occurred in July 2004, when Turkish police officers were assigned to seven different missions simultaneously,

signifying a qualitative shift in Türkiye's contribution to UN peacekeeping and reflecting a more ambitious and sustained commitment. From this point onward, and throughout the twelve-year period until September 2016, the number of PKOs to which Turkish police officers were concurrently assigned never fell below seven. Accordingly, the years between 2004 and 2016 can be regarded as the "golden era" of Türkiye's police contributions to international peace and security. The pinnacle of this era was reached in March and April 2010, when TNP personnel were deployed to a record eleven different missions concurrently, underscoring both the scale and strategic depth of Türkiye's international policing engagement during this period.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1996			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
1997	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
1998	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
1999	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2
2000	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
2001	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
2002	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3
2003	3	3	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5
2004	5	5	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8	8	8
2005	8	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	8	7
2006	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
2007	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	10	10
2008	10	10	10	9	9	9	9	9	8	8	8	8
2009	8	8	8	8	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
2010	10	10	11	11	9	10	9	9	9	9	10	9
2011	9	9	9	9	9	9	8	9	9	9	9	8
2012	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	7	7	8	8	7
2013	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8
2014	8	8	8	8	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	8
2015	8	8	8	9	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	9
2016	9	9	9	8	8	9	9	9	7	6	6	6
2017	6	6	5	6	6	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
2018	5	5	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
2019	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	5	5	5	4
2020	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	3
2021	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	6	6	6	5
2022	5	4	4	3	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
2023	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
2024	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4

Table 3: Representation of TNP in Different UN PKOs (Source: Data compiled from the UN "Troop and Police Contributors" statistics page)

The most comprehensive and effective contribution made by the TNP to the UN occurred within the framework of the UNMIK mission, established on June 10, 1999, by UNSC Resolution 1244, following the Kosovo War. In July 1999, shortly after the mission's establishment, Türkiye deployed two police officers to UNMIK. This early contribution was consistent with Türkiye's broader foreign policy objectives, particularly its desire to support the Turkish community in Kosovo. Türkiye was among the first countries to endorse and actively participate in the 78-day NATO air campaign aimed at compelling the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo. Its engagement, however, extended beyond military involvement; by contributing police personnel to the post-conflict

stabilization process, Türkiye underscored its long-term commitment to regional peace and security.

UNMIK

S.NO	MİSYON	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	
1	January		49	120	124	148	153	214	137	141	119	26	1231
2	February		49	115	122	148	153	214	137	148	118	14	1218
3	March		49	114	122	164	158	207	137	151	131	7	1240
4	April		123	112	125	164	149	159	137	151	128	6	1254
5	May		123	111	124	167	158	228	135	148	128	6	1328
6	June		123	125	125	161	208	228	51	146	152	1	1320
7	July	2	110	114	113	159	207	167	134	137	148	1	1292
8	August	25	118	100	139	161	207	167	132	86	147	1	1283
9	September	25	118	123	119	161	256	134	125	114	136	1	1312
10	October	49	107	126	139	139	252	133	124	123	125	1	1318
11	November	49	107	125	139	150	250	138	121	131	124	1	1335
12	December	49	107	124	149	152	214	134	132	126	103	1	1291
		199	1183	1409	1540	1874	2365	2123	1502	1602	1559	66	15422

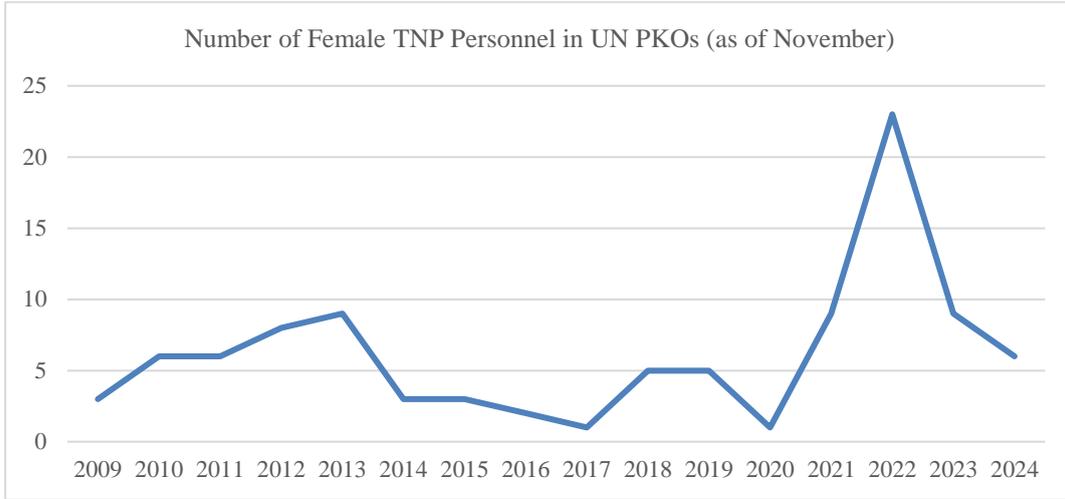
Table 4: Number of TNP Personnel Deployed to UNMIK Between 1999-2009 (Source: Data compiled from the UN “Troop and Police Contributors” statistics page)

As illustrated in Table 4, following Türkiye’s initial deployment to UNMIK, its contribution to the mission has steadily increased over the years. By September 2004, Türkiye had deployed 256 personnel to UNMIK, marking the highest level of contribution to this mission since its inception. This figure also constitutes the largest number of personnel that Türkiye has contributed to any single mission among the 28 different UN peacekeeping operations in which it has participated, underscoring the strategic and symbolic significance of Kosovo within Türkiye’s international peacekeeping engagements.

Türkiye’s personnel contribution to the UNMIK mission surpassed 100 in April 2000 and, following the outbreak of unrest in Kosovo in March 2004, exceeded 200 by June of the same year. This elevated level of engagement was maintained until June 2005. However, after Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008, a significant portion of UNMIK’s responsibilities was transferred to the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX), in accordance with the international community’s decisions under the Ahtisaari Plan. Consequently, Türkiye’s representation within UNMIK was reduced to a single police officer, a level that remained unchanged until January 2022. While the TNP resumed deployments under the EULEX framework from that point onward, this study focuses exclusively on United Nations peacekeeping operations and therefore does not consider those assignments.

Türkiye's Contribution of Female Personnel under the UN's Gender Equality Strategy

Finally, when examining the contribution of female personnel to PKOs, it can be observed that the UN began separately classifying female and male personnel only from 2009 onwards.



Graph 2: Number of Female TNP Personnel in UN PKOs (as of November) (Source: Data compiled from the UN “Troop and Police Contributors” statistics page)

According to the data presented in Graph 2, Türkiye’s contribution of female police personnel to UN PKOs began with the deployment of three officers in November 2009, reaching 9 by 2013. While the numbers remained limited in the following years, a notable increase was observed in 2022, when the number rose to 23. This development aligns with the UN’s “*System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity*,” introduced in 2017 to promote gender balance across all levels of the organization (United Nations, 2017).

The analysis of Graph 2 clearly illustrates this trend. Between 2009 and 2016, female participation remained low, but a gradual increase began after 2017, with significant growth in 2021 and 2022. This pattern indicates that the UN’s structural incentives and quota-based policies have started to yield results among member states, including Türkiye. Nonetheless, the limited proportion of female personnel within the Turkish National Police continues to constrain the overall scale of participation.

Conclusion

Türkiye’s contribution to the UN PKOs has made significant strides in both quantitative and qualitative terms since its initial deployment in 1996. Starting with the dispatch of four personnel to Bosnia and Herzegovina under UNMIBH, Türkiye gradually established itself as a key actor in international peace and security by contributing police personnel to a total of 28 different UN missions across diverse regions.

Personnel deployments, which gained momentum in the early 2000s, reached their peak in 2004, with a total of 330 Turkish police officers serving in 8 different missions simultaneously. This period marked Türkiye’s most visible engagement in international security arena. Between 2004 and 2016, the number of missions to which Turkish police were assigned never fell below seven. In this context, these years can be regarded as a “golden era” in terms of Türkiye’s representation in UN missions.

Among all contributions, Türkiye’s involvement in the UNMIK mission in Kosovo stands out as the most comprehensive and sustained. In September 2004, with 256 Turkish police officers deployed, Türkiye reached its highest-ever personnel contribution to a single

mission. This engagement reflects not only Türkiye's commitment to the UN but also its historical, cultural, and geopolitical ties with the ethnic Turkish community in Kosovo.

However, after 2015, Türkiye's overseas personnel contributions declined sharply due to domestic political developments and the global COVID-19 pandemic. By February 2021, personnel numbers had fallen to just 23. Additionally, the United Nations' 2017 "System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity," aiming to increase female representation in peacekeeping, introduced new mandates that posed practical challenges for Türkiye. Given the relatively low proportion of female officers within the TNP, meeting the quota requirements constrained overall personnel contributions. Although female participation began to be recorded from 2009 and peaked at 23 female officers in 2022, this number remains limited relative to the total deployment.

Overall, Türkiye's contribution to UN PKOs reflects an approach aligned with foreign policy objectives, responsive to regional crises, and integrated with international norms. The operational experiences gained by the TNP in this process have contributed to the development of its institutional capacity and strengthened Türkiye's role in the international security architecture. Moving forward, it is possible for this contribution to continue growing through more planned, inclusive, and sustainable participation strategies.

For Türkiye to enhance its qualitative and quantitative contribution to UN PKOs, a multidimensional and institutional approach may be adopted. In this regard, priority should be given to organizing intensive language courses and professional training programs within the Police Academy, particularly aimed at improving foreign language proficiency. This would significantly contribute to increasing the number of personnel eligible for deployment to international missions.

Given the growing importance of female personnel in PKOs, specialized training and capacity-building activities for this group will not only increase female representation in the long term but also enable male personnel to be deployed by overcoming the constraints imposed by female quotas. This, in turn, would facilitate a significant increase in the total personnel numbers.

Furthermore, institutional preparations should be made to increase assignments to Professional Police positions. In this context, it is recommended that the Police Academy develop and implement training modules to prepare candidates for the selection processes for these specialized positions. Additionally, diplomatic efforts through Türkiye's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York should be made to enhance visibility in these positions and ensure that more candidates are included in the evaluation process.

The steps taken based on these recommendations will enhance the TNP's international visibility in peacekeeping and establish a more institutionalized, sustainable, and effective foundation for Türkiye's contribution to the global peace and security architecture.

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