

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UN PEACEKEEPERS-2009

Special Supplement

UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATION TRENDS AND CHALLENGES FOR BANGLADESH

1. Since its inception in 1945, the United Nations (UN) has undertaken the responsibility for maintaining world peace and security. UN peacekeeping operations (UNPKO) commenced with the deployment of Blue Berets in the Middle East in 1948 (UNTSO) and since then a total of 63 missions were launched across the globe. Currently, 18 operations are directed and supported by the Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO) with 115,311 peacekeepers including 91,842 uniformed personnel from 118 member states. From its commencement till 2008, UN has spent approximately US \$ 54 billion in peace keeping efforts and the current year budget in US \$ 7.1 billion. In 1988, Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to UN peacekeepers for their decisive contribution to cause of peace.

2. In recent years, there had been a surge in peacekeeping activity not only in numbers but also in complexity. Basically three factors contributed in shaping the evolution of UNPKO. They are changing patterns of conflicts, changing major powers relations and the evolving structure of regional security arrangements.

3. During Cold War till 1988, 13 missions were launched known as the 'First Generation Peacekeeping' and mostly involved in post-truce interposition of a peacekeeping force with the consent of parties to the conflict. After 1988, UNPKO went through a transition of unprecedented growth (approximately 80,000 troops in 18 missions) particularly after the demise of Cold War. These missions were complex and are classified as the 'Second Generation Peacekeeping'. UN operations since early 1990s were launched with large scale deployment in the areas primarily involving internal conflicts within the state, e.g. Somalia (UNOSOM), Bosnia (UNPROFOR) and are classified as the 'Third Generation Peacekeeping'.

4. Analyzing the evolution and the trends of UNPKO, the following facts are revealed:

a. Early in Mid-90s, number of

UN peacekeeper's deployment increased as against the sharp decline of the number of internal wars.

b. 1990s saw a slow but a steady rise of regional organizations as important actors in response to internal conflicts; sometimes in partnership with UN (e.g. NATO in Kosovo). Simultaneously, Regional organizations like EU also deployed forces in the 'Out of Area' initiating the concept of Multi-national Force (MNF) with UN mandate but not UN Command.

c. In late 90s, there were sharp decline of UN Force deployment with the failures in few missions (e.g. Somalia, Rwanda, etc.).

d. Early 2000 mark the rise of number of inter-state wars causing new military and peacekeeping responses.

e. In Mid 2000s, there was a sharp rise of force deployed with initiation of several larger missions especially in Africa.

f. Since 80s, there had been a decline in the troop's contributions of developed states to UN peacekeeping, particularly in Africa. Conversely, developed nations enhanced their contribution to MNF. However, with the recent expansion of UNIFIL, the representation of developed nations in UNPKO has increased to around 15%. Interestingly, their deployment is concentrated in the Middle East (around 64%).

g. Since 1990s, there had been exponential rise in the civilian dimension of the peacekeeping which encompass a wide spectrum of functions e.g. Human Rights, Gender Issues, Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, Security Sector Reform, Child Soldiers, Transitional Justice, Aid Coordination, Refugee Control, Protection of Civilians, etc. Some missions were mandated with full governing authority e.g. UNMIK, UNTAET. Civilian dimension of UN peacekeeping has also paved way for the growing role of the non-state actors, particularly non-governmental organizations.

h. UN peacekeeping has been most responsive to conflicts in Europe, Latin America, and Africa but least responsive in Asia. UN has sent more



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peacekeepers in Africa than anywhere else (current deployment in Africa in 67% of 115,311 peacekeepers).

j. Bulk of the UN troops comes from South Asia, predominantly from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal, accounting for almost 43.2%, followed by African nations (22.4%). These troops are primarily deployed in African missions.

k. There is a remarkable growth of Police Force in UNPKO. In December 2003, 4635 policemen were deployed in various UN missions. The figure now is 10,328.

l. There is a steady rise of troop's contributors from member states in UNPKO. Currently there are 118 Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) as against 89 in 2001.

m. There is a gradual trend to form Hybrid Forces with regional organizations e.g. Darfur (UNAMID) with the pre-dominance of the regional forces.

n. African Union (AU) has initiated with the support of UN and G-8 Nations (under GPOI) to raise AU Stand by Force of five brigades to meet the challenges of peace and security within the continent. This is likely to offload the pressure on UN to launch a mission in Africa at an early stage. However, on being transformed into a UN mission, regional forces are likely to be the pre-dominant forces in the UN force.

p. To continue with the strengthening the peace, security and development of a state in post conflict scenario, Peace

Building Commission (PBC) was formed in 2007. PBC aims to address the overall development of the state at the strategic level with many partners in hand. Currently, Sierra Leone and Burundi are under PBC programme. Bangladesh is an active member of PBC being a leading TCC.

5. Bangladesh as a top TCC in the UNPKO, has been consistently taking part to the cause of peace and security across the globe in the last two decades. Since 1988, Bangladesh has participated in 32 UNPKO missions in 23 different countries with approximately 75,000 uniformed personnel. Currently 9234 personnel including 971 police are deployed in twelve missions (total uniformed strength is 91842 in 18 missions) ranking second top contributor amongst 118 countries. Current deployments are in Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, Darfur (Sudan), Liberia, Congo, Western Sahara, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Georgia, Timor-Leste, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan.

6. Bangladesh's active participation in UNPKO stems from the sacrifice that the country had made in the War of Liberation in 1971. Through UNPKO, Bangladesh finds it constitutionally supportive in upholding the peace, freedom and justice. It is also an extension of Bangladesh Foreign Policy objectives in supporting UN policies and activities.

7. In the history of UNPKO Bangladesh, though entered in the Second Generation of Peacekeeping (1988), has proved to be an invaluable partner to UN. Bangladesh troops have gone through many critical situations in number of UNPKO missions where they have held the UN flag high and steadfast. We can recall many such incidents while operating in Cambodia, Bosnia, Somalia, DRC, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sudan.

8. In several occasions, Bangladesh responded to UN urgent calls for deployment in volatile situations with least response time. For instance, in 2001 under a reverse situation

when few TCC withdrew their contingents from Sierra Leone, Bangladesh only contingent held the Lungi International Airport and on urgent request from UN flew in a Brigade Group to reinforce the Mission. In October 2006, Bangladesh deployed a Formed Police Unit in Timor-Leste on 10 days notice only. Bangladesh commitment to global peace has not been without a price. Ninety one of her brave men have fallen in maintaining world peace at distant lands.

9. UNPKO has given Bangladesh forces unique opportunities to work in environments and conditions that are evolving, complex, multi-dimensional and

forces deployed in the field missions as well as to prepare for future missions. Bangladesh has established dedicated branches at all Service Headquarters (HQ), Police HQ and Armed Forces Division (AFD) with defined standing operating procedures. Defense Wing in the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations, New York (PMBNY) maintains an excellent operational link with all concerned branches of the UN Secretariat. Bangladesh is also an active participant in the Special Committee of Peace Keeping Operations (C-34 Committee), and various meetings between Security

the blue berets and the scale of the involvement of the member states as well as regional organizations across the globe as against the growing needs has placed UNPKO in the forefront of international politics and power play. New generation of UNPKO demand robust peacekeeping with multidimensional approach. Bangladesh needs to constantly revise and update her forces in terms of policies and practices. Some of the important challenges and possible response are:

a. The credibility that has been earned internationally and the organizational set up and logistic base developed over the years,

requirement of the future peacekeepers. Joint sponsorship of Seminars/Workshops with UN or other Centers will perhaps facilitate Bangladesh active role in the policy formulation of UNPKO.

c. DPKO and Department of Field Support (DFS) in the UN Secretariat direct and monitor field missions. These departments are manned by almost 85% civilian permanent staffs and rest 15% are deputed uniformed personnel from member states. Bangladesh representation in the civilian staffs is negligible though, uniformed representation has come to a satisfactory level recently. A coordinated effort by Foreign Ministry, AFD and Police HQ is essential to pursue the implementation of Bangladesh initiated Resolution (Paragraph 215 General Assembly Resolution A/61/19 part-II dated 05 June 2007) on the proportionate representation of TCC, particularly Bangladesh in DPKO and DFS.

d. Number of missions are in Francophone and Arabic speaking countries where our forces are deployed. Local language plays an important role in the effective communication which facilitates success in operations. Programme should be initiated to develop skill on French and Arabic languages to the officers and troops.

e. To remain actively engaged with UN Secretariat and to ensure appropriate coordination with MOFA, AFD and Police HQ, Defence Wing of PMBNY be strengthened with at least one additional staff officer.

f. Our peacekeepers in all the missions have established tremendous goodwill with the Government and people of the concerned country. This goodwill may be further carried forward through the development of bilateral relations with these countries to mutual benefits. Many such opportunities have already been missed but yet not completely lost.

13. The excellent performances of Bangladesh peacekeepers have not only earned name and fame of the country but also facilitated huge experiences and exposure of our forces. Every effort should be made by all concerned so that the reputation is upheld and focused more on the qualitative rather than quantitative representation in future UNPKO. However, our engagement in UNPKO should continue and pursued vigorously.



undertaking military, quasi-military and civic actions. Experiences of her forces in various national development activities, Disaster Management and Counter Insurgency Operations in the Chittagong Hill Districts have proved to be very useful in UNPKO. Participation in UNPKO facilitated our officers and soldiers to gain invaluable experiences in conflict management, knowledge on modern weapons system, international operating procedures, command and control system, etc while operating with other TCCs.

10. Bangladesh has an agreement with UN under the 'United Nations Standby Arrangement System' (UNSAS) for provision of a Brigade Group. Bangladesh contribution to the UN 'Enhanced Rapidly Deployable Capabilities (ERDC)' is under active consideration. To maintain the

Council, Secretariat and troops contributing countries.

11. The acceptability and credibility of Bangladesh peacekeepers in UNPKO are attributable to many factors including followings:

a. It is a disciplined and professional force that maintains an international standard vis-à-vis UN standard.

b. It maintains absolute neutrality in discharging its assigned duties in various UNPKO.

c. It completely adheres to the given mandate and follows the principles of fair practice in operations.

d. Bangladesh forces maintain a very cordial relation with the people of the host nations and respect their culture and traditions.

e. Bangladesh forces maintain strict code of conduct to ensure discipline of her forces.

12. In recent times, the magnitude of the deployment of

should be capitalized through continued participation. In this respect, both diplomatic and military efforts should continue specially the logistic build up to maintain the leading role.

b. Bangladesh should monitor the future trends and requirements of UNPKO and prepare her forces accordingly. In view of the raising of the AU Standby Force and increased engagement of regional organizations, it is apprehended that the demand of traditional peacekeepers specially from South Asian nations, is likely to reduce gradually in Africa. However, experience, professionalism and enhanced capability will always be a strength to be considered by UN, which Bangladesh should avail. BIPSOT should maintain close liaison with Integrated Training Services (ITS) of UN HQ and other recognized peacekeeping training centers worldwide to remain updated on the dynamic

MEMOIRS OF TAJIKISTAN

The sun was far below to be seen between the rugged mountain peaks surrounding Garm, one of the remote and most neglected districts of Tajikistan. It was dawn in this part of Central Asia, but too early to see anything in naked eyes except the silhouettes of mountains, trees and the township buildings. There were still whispers of the wild winter in late May that needed sweaters in the morning. I saw Boris already dressed for the day, sitting in the verandah with a hot cup of tea. "Good Morning, Khan," he giggled. "We need to start early today. Where is the Team Leader?" he inquired nervously. Lieutenant Colonel Boris Kremenetsky was my best friend in Tajikistan. A Ukrainian Air Force officer, Boris joined the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) in early January, 1995, a few days after I joined UNMOT as a Military Observer (MILOB) along with 6 other Bangladeshi Observers: five from the army and one from the Air Force. I gave him a smile. "Don't worry. We'll start on time."

There were enough reasons for Boris to be nervous. That was the first time we were going to meet a rebel leader in a hideout without the knowledge of local authorities and militia. It was a dangerous game, but we opted to play it. We were four MILOBs manning the remote Garm Field Station of UNMOT. Apart from me and Boris, there were one Captain from Jordan Army and a Major from Austria. The Austrian was the Team Leader and I was his Deputy. We also had a civil affairs officer named Kavoot (a Cambodian-American) and a Tajik interpreter named Jourajon. It was decided earlier that the Jordanian Captain will remain on station as a 'Duty Officer' and rest of us would proceed for the day's mission in two cars (Toyota Land Cruisers).

UNMOT Headquarter was in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. Garm was one of the five field stations of UNMOT. We all were fairly new in the station, joined just a month ago. Only the interpreter was an experienced

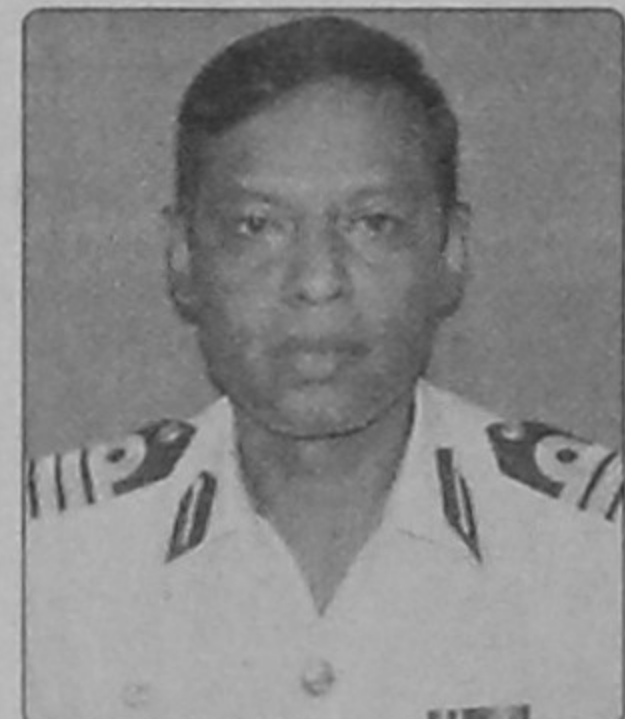
man and knew the Garm area well. Tajikistan was in a state of political turmoil for months after the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic declared independence from the Soviet Union in September 1991. Tensions began in the spring of 1992 after opposition members took to the streets in demonstrations against the results of the 1991 presidential election. President Rahmon Nabyev and Speaker of the Supreme Soviet Safarali Kenjayev orchestrated the dispersal of weapons to pro-government militias while the opposition turned to rebels in Afghanistan for military aid. Fighting broke out in May 1992 between old guard supporters of the government, backed by Moscow, and a loosely organized opposition composed of ethnic and regional groups from the areas Garm and Gorno-Badakhshan (the latter are also known as Pamiris). Ideologically, the opposition included democratic liberal reformists and Islamists. The government, on the other hand, was dominated by people from the Leninabad region, which had also made up most of the ruling elite during the entire Soviet period. It was also supported by people from the Kulyab region, who had held high posts in the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Soviet times. After many clashes, the Leninabadis were forced to accept a compromise and a new coalition government was formed, incorporating members of the opposition and eventually dominated by them. On 7 September 1992, Nabyev was captured by opposition protesters and was forced at gunpoint to resign his presidency. Chaos and fighting between the opposing factions reigned outside of the capital Dushanbe.

With the aid of the Russian military and Uzbekistan, the Leninabad-Kulyabi Popular Front forces routed the opposition and the coalition government in the capital was forced to resign. In December 1992, the Supreme Soviet (parliament), where the Leninabad-Kulyabi faction held the majority of the seats all along, convened and elected a new government under the

leadership of Emomali Rahmonov, representing a shift in power from the old power based in Leninabad to the militias from Kulyab, from where Rahmonov came. The height of hostilities occurred between 1992 and 1993 and pitted Kulyabi militias against an array of groups, including militants from the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) and ethnic minority Pamiris from Gorno-Badakhshan. In large part, due to the foreign support they received, the Kulyabi militias were able to soundly defeat opposition forces and went on what has been described by Human Rights Watch as an ethnic cleansing campaign against Pamiris and Garmis. Tens of thousands were killed or fled to Afghanistan. There were a number of regional attempts for peace in 1992 and 1993, none of which were particularly successful. In September 1994, after talks in Moscow and Tehran, the Tehran Agreement (or the Agreement on a Temporary Ceasefire and the Cessation of Other Hostile Acts on the Tajik-Afghan Border and within the Country for the Duration of the Talks) was signed. It went into effect on 20 October 1994, after the first 15 observers arrived. Resolution 968 (1994) of 16 December 1994 formally established the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT). "Hello Khan, where are you? We are all set." It was the team leader.

I came back to reality. We were going for a mission. "I'll be right there," I shouted. I was in a hurry now. I have lost some useful time thinking about the recent past of Tajikistan. These thoughts were getting on my nerves. Even when I was driving, I kept drifting away to a state of mind where thoughts of Tajikistan automatically floated over my mind. "Is this because I am appalled by the state of the country and the signs of brutal killings of the recent past, or life of a Military Observer is too boring, or I started loving the country already? I don't know." I again drifted back to thoughts!

We started at 6:30 in the



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morning. We almost needed our headlights to follow the road. The sun was still having morning nap. We followed the main road of Garm that leads to Dushanbe. Soon we left the main road and drove through a bumpy trail with steep mountains on both sides. The beauty of Tajikistan is its abundance of exotic valleys surrounded by mountain peaks covered with snow.

"Be careful. The bridge ahead has holes all over." The interpreter alerted me. I reduced speed and called the team leader over radio to inform him about the bridge. He was driving the second car.

We crossed the fountain, flowing below the bridge with holes. It was a huge valley through which the fountain made its way.

At about 9:00 in the morning, the radio crackled. It was the team leader, "Khan, we are running out of water. Can we stop somewhere near and fill our bottles?"

"Roger. I'll stop somewhere nearby." I replied and stopped beside the road where a man was herding cattle in the field. I called the man to know the place in the village from where we can get water. This was a set game. We intentionally kept our water bottles empty so that we could announce the same in the radio in case anybody tapped us. The man in the field was our contact to reach the rebel leader. After the greetings, the man boarded my car and told me in Tajik to follow the road. After a while, we left the main road and drove off-road following a branch of the main fountain. After a few miles, we stopped at a mountain to collect water. There were steps to get down to the fountain. Team leader went

to collect water and I got down to watch our back. As far as I could see the track we left, nobody was following us. It was such a place surrounded by numerous mountains that nobody could follow us without coming through the off-road track. It was almost pin-drop silence. We started again. Suddenly it seemed to me that I saw a mirror reflection and sharp movement of a black object. Being inquired, the contact onboard my car told that the rebels are guarding the track covertly to confirm that we are alone and not being followed by any security force. We kept on following the track for more half an hour, and about 11:00 AM we reached a wide valley.

We switched off our engines and got down. Suddenly, 20 to 30 people in complete black dress and mask appeared from the hills and bushes around us. Someone shouted, "Hands up." We were surrounded and lifted our hands up. The way they were pointing guns at us, it seemed they needed only a silly reason to shoot. A man came forward and talked to the contact we brought with us and then to the interpreter. The interpreter told us that the man inquired about whether anybody knew about our mission to meet them. The interpreter explained him the overall situation and he told us to sit on the ground. He instructed one of his men in Tajik. The man ran up the mountain. We could see a wooden hut on top of that particular mountain peak. I needed to smoke. As I put my hands in my pocket to reach for

the cigarettes, three black suited masked men jumped up, put their gun barrels on my neck and chest and shouted something in Tajik. The interpreter was alarmed and told me to bring empty hand out from my pocket. I did that. One of them came forward and searched me. He brought out the cigarette packet and the lighter and broke into happy smile. He told something in Tajik to the interpreter, who, in turn, told me that the man asked if he could take two cigarettes from my packet. I gave the whole packet to the man and told him that the packet was a gift from a Muslim brother. The man thanked me happily and lighted a cigarette. He dragged it so hard that the fire came down to middle of the cigarette. He told that he was smoking after five days. I borrowed a cigarette from the team leader and lighted. The situation was relaxed and we continued gossiping with them through the interpreter. Fifteen minutes later we found some movement around the hut up the mountain and took binoculars to watch. We found a tall man in white with a checkered turban like Yaseer Arafat climbing down followed by twenty to thirty men in black. All of them were masked except the man in white. After about twenty minutes, he reached us, extended his hands and said, "Assalamu Alaikum." "Walaikum-Assalam," we replied and extended our hands to greet him. We sat down in the valley and talked. The man was the rebel leader of one of the groups in Garm. He was

the Police Chief of Garm during Soviet era. He had been in hiding for almost six months with his people, many of whom were his ex-police subordinates. Their aim was to uproot the Leninabad-Kulyabi influence in the Central Government.

"You are lucky," the leader said. "I have 4 platoons of armed militias guarding the whole mountain pass through which you came. If we doubted about any trace of government forces behind you, all of you would be dead before reaching here," he added.

The leader basically explained that there was no problem of food, medicine and water. They had their own sources. But they were in dire need of communication sets. They were increasingly being alienated from the rest of the UTO. They also demanded that their representative must be included in any meeting between the government and the UTO. The leader also said that we were their guests in Garm area and they covertly took care of our safety and security. In a way, he indirectly threatened us that if their demands were not met, UN might face security problems in the area. Our team leader acknowledged his demands and promised that he would convey the message to the higher authority. It was noon and the rebels didn't forget to show the Tajik traditional hospitality. Lunch was served and we realized that we were really hungry.

When we started back, the sun was already old enough for the day and was hanging on the western sky. The rebels

covertly guarded us till we reached the main road. The moment we were out on the main road, Boris, who was my co-ride, lit two cigarettes, dragged hard and gave one to me. "Do you know they initially planned to kill us so that they are heard in Dushanbe?" A chill suddenly struck my spine and made me stiff.

"How do you know?" I asked. "I overheard the militias. The rebel leader decided not to kill us only after another older faction leader, who is his mentor, convinced him not to do so; because, the small factions in Garm could not absorb the after shock of such incidence. The older man rather advised him to demand for the communication sets and their participation in the meetings between the government and the UTO."

"God helps them. I cannot even think of such stupidity," I said and kept on driving. The sun was already behind the mountains. We were passing those one after another. The valleys looked so calm and the whole area seemed so stunningly beautiful. Only if the population and the leaders could understand the potential they had to be a beautiful, almost rich country. They have huge aluminum reserve and the biggest aluminum factory in Asia. Their cotton is one of the best in the world and they produce huge cotton, which are mostly taken away by Russia. There is huge potential of hydro electric power plants. They already have the highest dam in the world named 'Nurek'. I tried to change my thoughts and concentrate on what Situation Report (SITREP) I had to prepare and send to the UNHQ in Dushanbe that night.

Today, in 2009, looking at Tajikistan, I really appreciate how quick they recovered as a nation. They have a democratic government in place, though there is a question mark on the process of election. Tajikistan's economy grew substantially after the war. The GDP of Tajikistan expanded at an average rate of 9.6% over the period of 2000-2004 according to the World Bank data. They made huge infrastructural development, building tunnels, bridges etc, and became a proud nation once again with economic strength that shows them prosperous future.

