

## ... peace missions from the UN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

in peace making by providing comfort to the victims of gender-based violence in war-ravaged countries. It is relevant here to mention that in 2015 by breaking the stereotype, a group of 160 women from Bangladesh became the world's first all-woman United Nations peacekeeping contingent. Now many women peacekeepers from Bangladesh are serving in different UN peacekeeping missions.

The UN Charter gives the Security Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. In fulfilling this responsibility, the Security Council may adopt a range of measures, including the establishment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation. The legal basis for such action is found in Chapters VI, VII and VIII of the UN Charter. These give the legal cover for the UN Peacekeepers to be deployed in the dangerous aftermath of a violent internal conflict and may employ a mix of military, police and civilian capabilities to support the implementation of a comprehensive peace agreement. As a leader TCC and PCC, our diplomats have to remain engaged in intense diplomacy with the UN DPKO, the delegations of UN Security Council and the member states in general, to take any decision in committing our peacekeepers in any particular Mission.

In the recent decade, some multi-dimensional United Nations peacekeeping operations have been deployed following a request from the national authorities to support the transition to legitimate government, in the absence of a formal peace agreement. In exceptional circumstances, the Security Council has also authorized multi-dimensional United

Nations peacekeeping operations to temporarily assume the legislative and administrative functions of the State, in order to support the transfer of authority from one sovereign entity to another, or until sovereignty questions are fully resolved (as in the case of transitional administrations), or to help the State to establish administrative structures that may not have existed previously.

UN Peacekeeping operations went through a bad time in the mid 1990s, making it controversial and allegations of Egregious (outrageous) Failures. Among these were Somalia Tragedy (1993); Rwanda Genocide (1994); Bosnia Massacre (1995); DR Congo aka "Rape Capital of the World", Increased Prostitution, Sexual & Child Exploitation.

The reasons for this situation: UN Peacekeepers were short of or lax in mandate of the extent of their terms of reference and rules of engagement. Allegations of corruption on the part of peacekeepers of certain countries, lack of discipline and leadership of peacekeeping troops and sexual exploitation and abuse of civilians, lack of unanimity of the member states, in particular of the regional countries, also put the lives of the peacekeepers in harms way. All this led the then UN Secretary General to convene a panel for reform of the UN PKOs. That brought about the landmark 2000 Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (aka The Brahimi Report), to help guide United Nations peacekeepers. The Panel Chaired by the then UN Under-Secretary-General Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi of Algeria for reform of the UN PKO was commissioned in 2000 during the

Millennium Summit of the UN, when Bangladesh was a non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, Bangladesh delegation to this historic Summit was led by the present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Bangladesh diplomats were closely involved in the preparations of the report and made valuable contributions towards making Peacekeeping Operations meaningful and designed in a manner to secure peace with minimal collateral damage to the lives of the peacekeepers.

To uphold the legacy of Bangladesh, it is necessary that our professionals develop their skills on key areas of international diplomacy that go hand in hand with PKO. These are :

Human Rights is an integral part of the normative framework for United Nations peacekeeping operations. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which sets the cornerstone of international human rights standards, emphasizes that human rights and fundamental freedoms are universal and guaranteed to everybody. United Nations peacekeeping operations should be conducted in full respect of human rights and should seek to advance human rights through the implementation of their mandates.

International Humanitarian Law: International humanitarian law is also known as "the law of war" or "the law of armed conflict," and restricts the means and methods of armed conflict. International humanitarian law is contained in the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977, as well as in rules regulating the means and methods of combat.

Security Council Mandates :United

Nations peacekeeping operations are deployed on the basis of a mandate from the United Nations Security Council. The tasks that a United Nations peacekeeping operation will be required to perform are set out in the Security Council mandate. Security Council mandates differ from situation to situation, depending on the nature of the conflict and the specific challenges it presents. Since United Nations peacekeeping operations are normally deployed to support the implementation of a cease-fire or a more comprehensive peace agreement, Security Council mandates are influenced by the nature and content of the agreement reached by the parties to the conflict.

The lessons learned over the past six decades indicate that a United Nations peacekeeping operation is unlikely to succeed when one or more of the following conditions are not in place:

A peace to keep.

Positive regional engagement.

The full backing of a United Nations Security Council.

What separates Bangladesh from others is the national policy to motivate them to a culture of peace. They are not mercenaries but professionals who go out to strange and foreign lands and in hostile conditions to help in restorations of peace and order and to help build institutions in post-conflict periods. They are trained to respect human rights and saving lives from atrocities and in-fights, to win the locals over and earn their confidence. This is among the many reasons why Bangladeshi peacekeepers are sought by the international community to serve the cause of peace and democracy.

The writer is former Foreign Secretary.

# My peacekeeping mission experience



Lt General (Retd)  
ABDUL HAFIZ

Having served in Bangladesh Army for 37 years, I had the rare opportunity of putting on blue beret for nearly six years in four missions. I spent nearly five years in Africa.

Needless to mention that majority of UN's peacekeeping operations have been and are in Africa. Why is it that the bulk of the UN's peacekeeping efforts in terms of number, deployment and cost have been in Africa? The youngest President in the history of France, Emmanuel Macron, recently uttered a blunt truth which none of his predecessors dared to say. He said that "the colonization of Africa was a barbaric act." Many academicians and experts believe that the root cause of conflict, violence, strife and civil war in Africa lies in the way the continent was colonized and subsequently decolonized. Africa's present borders were drawn up on a map in 1885 by European rulers who disregarded the ethnic demography across the continent. Very sadly, it was

seen that people belonging to same ethnic group were to live in two, three or four different countries where they were either marginalized or became a minority.

When these countries gained independence in the second half of last century, it was appalling that the colonial powers did not leave behind a strong political system and legacy. The state institutions were weak and dysfunctional. Africa saw the emergence of highly autocratic rulers who practiced exclusionist politics and repression. They mostly favoured their own ethnic people resulting in marginalization of minorities and causing ethnic animosities. Tension and unrest in the society gave rise to coups, countercoups and civil war.

It would be worthwhile to take a respite from my pondering on Africa and talk about my first mission performed in the rank of 'Major' in early nineties. 27 years ago in 1990, Iraq's President Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Soon afterwards, a multi-national force led by the US launched offensives and Kuwait was liberated in March 1991. In April 1991, UN Security Council deployed an observer mission to monitor the demilitarized zone along the Iraq-Kuwait border, deter border

violations and to report on any hostile action. Bangladesh was one of the 32 participating countries and contributed 7 Army Officers to this 300-strong observer mission.

My Experience in United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM)

I was indeed fortunate to be in the first group – the pioneers of UNIKOM that arrived in the mission area in April 1991. To have been the part of the first group in a peacekeeping mission was challenging in the sense that we didn't have the necessary amenities and infrastructure. But it was highly rewarding to see how a peacekeeping mission grew and developed from scratch. We had to adapt ourselves very quickly to the work in a multi-national environment – all the permanent member countries (P5) of Security Council contributed military observers in this mission. So, we were excited about proving that we know how to conduct patrols, prepare reports, give briefings and deal with emergencies such as evacuating Iraqi civilians who used to get injured almost regularly due to mine and unexploded ordnance blasts. It has to be underlined that our first six months were the most difficult as we had to live in tents in temperatures soaring above 50 degrees

Celsius. As Bangladeshis, we proved that we can survive in isolated camps in the desert without any sort of modern amenities.

Our concern was that we must not let ourselves down. Overall, as precursors in UNIKOM, we performed well. A testimony to this is that after a few years, the UN chose Bangladesh to contribute an Infantry Battalion for providing security to the unarmed observers when the security situation worsened in the demilitarized zone.

My Experience in Ivory Coast (MINUCI and UNOCI)

I performed three different roles in Ivory Coast. First, in 2003-04, I served as the Chief of a group of 75 Military Liaison Officers. The next year, when a peacekeeping force was deployed there, I served as the Deputy Force Commander (DFC) for one year. Thereafter, I returned home in 2005. After five years, in 2010, I returned to Ivory Coast as Force Commander of UNOCI.

In June 2003, when we landed at Abidjan, the economic capital of Ivory Coast, we were amazed to find a city with skyscrapers, good road networks and solid

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13