

# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPERS JOURNAL

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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UN PEACEKEEPERS, 29 MAY 2023

## *Father of The Nation*



*"I want to reiterate our full confidence on the human being winning impossible and overcoming difficulties."*

*Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman  
in the United Nations, General Assembly  
29<sup>th</sup> session on 25 September, 1974*





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## EDITORIAL

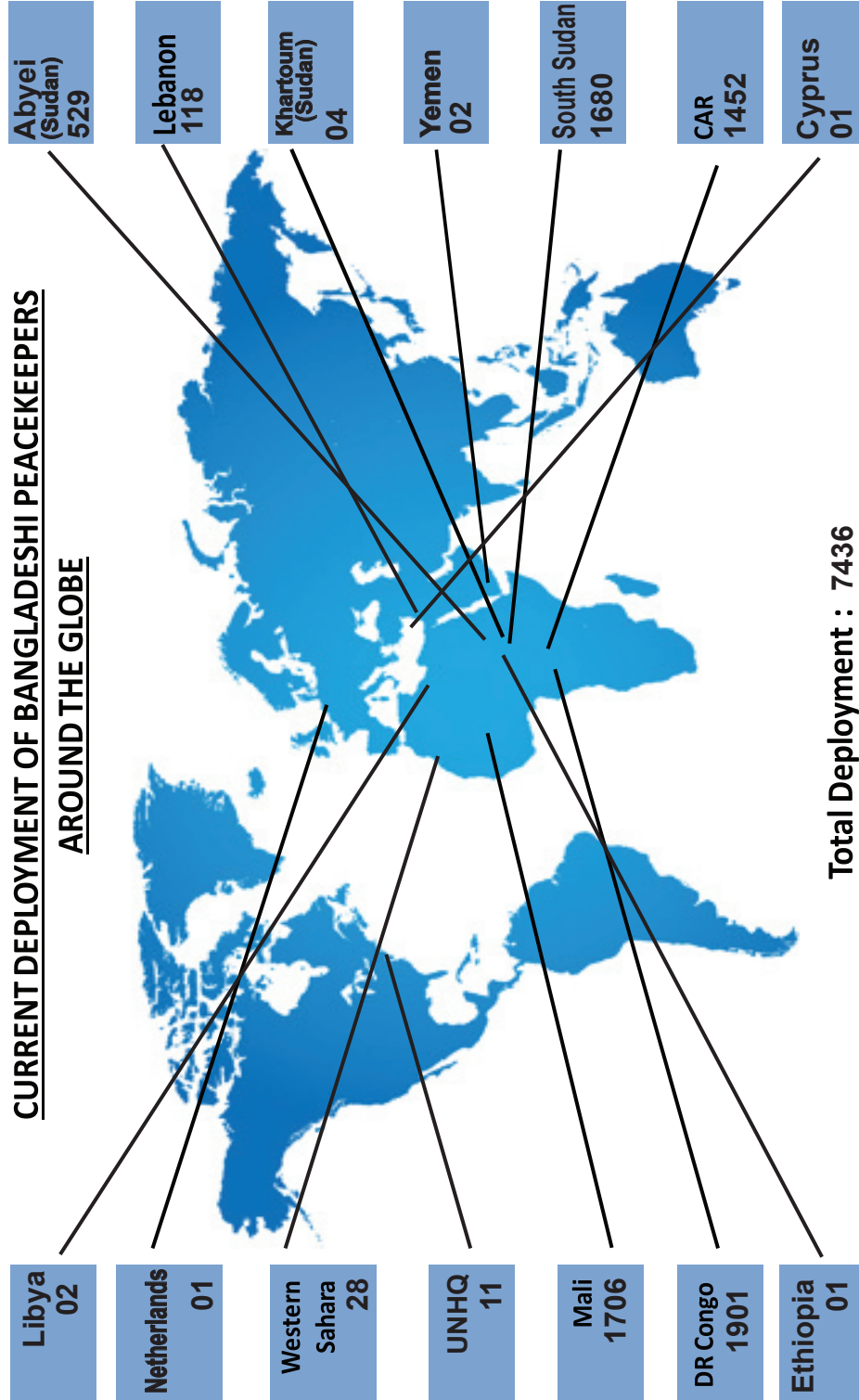
United Nations Peacekeeping (UNPK) operations serve as a vital instrument in maintaining international peace and security. Bangladesh's unwavering commitment to global peace is evident through its consistent participation in UN peacekeeping missions. Keeping in line with constitutional obligation to maintain, promote and preserve international peace and security, Bangladesh started her journey in UN peacekeeping operations from 1988 with deployment of only 15 peacekeepers from Bangladesh Army in 'United Nations Iran Iraq Military Observer Group' (UNIIMOG). Subsequently, in 1989 Bangladesh Police and in 1993 Bangladesh Navy as well as Bangladesh Air Force joined the UNPK operations. This year Bangladesh commemorates 35 years of glorious service in UNPK having achieved the status of a leading 'Troops and Police Contributing Country' (T/PCC). This pride came at a cost of 167 brave souls while 259 suffered major injuries for the greater cause of world peace. With an illustrious history of active participation in peacekeeping missions, Bangladesh has exemplified its commitment to global peace and harmony, earning respect and admiration on the international stage.

Every year on 29 May, people worldwide observe the "International Day of UN Peacekeepers." This year's theme, "Peace Begins with Me," emphasizes the individual's role in promoting peace. In recognition of the contributions made by courageous peacekeepers and to honour those who have been injured or lost their lives in the line of duty, the Armed Forces Division (AFD) collaborates with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Bangladesh Police to present the 9th Issue of the *International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers Journal*. The articles in the journal primarily focus on highlighting the achievements of UN Peacekeepers, sharing their diverse experiences, discussing the hazards and challenges they face in complex mission environments, and emphasizing the importance of gender mainstreaming and the involvement of women in peacekeeping operations.

We must not overlook the Board of Editors' deserving praise for their spirited teamwork throughout the entire process, guaranteeing the timely publication of this acclaimed and internationally recognised journal. Despite being busy service professionals, the authors have managed to allocate time to provide thought-provoking and comprehensive writings, deserving recognition. Esteemed readers will have the opportunity to explore a diverse range of topics encompassing the UNPK landscape. We are optimistic about receiving spontaneous response, support, and cooperation from all parties involved in the future.

## **COMPLETED PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS** **AROUND THE WORLD**

<b>Ser</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Name of Mission</b>	<b>Total</b>
1.	Afghanistan, Afghanistan-Pakistan	UNAMA UNSMA/UNGOMAP	11
2.	Angola	UNAVEM & UNAVEM III	635
3.	Bosnia	UNMIBH / UNPROFOR	177
4.	Burundi	BINUB / UNOB	06
5.	Cambodia	UNAMIC / UNTAC/UNMLT	1,301
6.	DR Congo	MONUC, MONUSCO	37,559
7.	Croatia/East Slovenia	UNTAES	76
8.	East Timor	UNAMET / UNTAET / UNMISSET	2,718
9.	Ethiopia / Eritrea	UNMEE	1,108
10.	Georgia	UNOMIG	131
11.	Haiti	UNMIH / MNF/MINUSTAH	5,382
12.	Iraq	UNGCI/UNMOVIC	124
13.	Iran	UNIIMOG	31
14.	Ivory Coast	MINUCI/ONUCI/UNOCI	32,850
15.	Kosovo	UNMIK	539
16.	Kuwait	UNIKOM	8,239
17.	Liberia	UNOMIL/UNMIL	23,793
18.	Macedonia	UNPREDEP	07
19.	Mozambique	ONUMOZ	2,622
20.	Namibia	UNTAG	85
21.	Rwanda	UNAMIR	1,022
22.	Sierra Leone	UNAMSIL/ UNIOSIL	11,981
23.	Somalia	UNOSOM-I –II/AMISOM	1,975
24.	Sudan (Darfur)	UNMIS	9,023
		UNAMID	8989
		UNITAMS	01
25.	South Sudan	UNMISS	11,273
26.	Tajikistan	UNMOT	40
27.	Uganda	UNOMUR	20
28.	Western Sahara	MINURSO	414
29.	Yugoslavia (Former)	UNPROFOR / UNMOP	1,584
30.	Chad	MINURCAT	10
31.	Lebanon	UNIFIL	2,843
32.	West Africa	UNOWA	02
33.	Kenya (Nairobi)	UNSOA	01
34.	Syria	UNSMIS	18
35.	Mali	MINUSMA	13,077
36.	CAR	MINUSCA	8,815
37.	Somalia	UNSOM	05
38.	Office of the African Union	UNOAU	01
39.	Abyei	UNISFA	12
40.	UNHQ	UNDPO	51
41.	Cyprus	UNFICYP	04
42.	Yemen	UNMAHA	03
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>1,88,558</b>



**Force-wise Total Completed Deployment**

Bangladesh Army	Bangladesh Navy	Bangladesh Air Force	Bangladesh Police	Total
1,51,930	6,704	8,640	21,284	1,88,558

**Supreme Sacrifices for World Peace**

(From April 1989 to April 2023)

Bangladesh Army	Bangladesh Navy	Bangladesh Air Force	Bangladesh Police	Total
131	04	09	23	167

**Summary of Injured Peacekeepers**

(From April 1989 to April 2023)

Bangladesh Army	Bangladesh Navy	Bangladesh Air Force	Bangladesh Police	Total
232	09	06	12	259

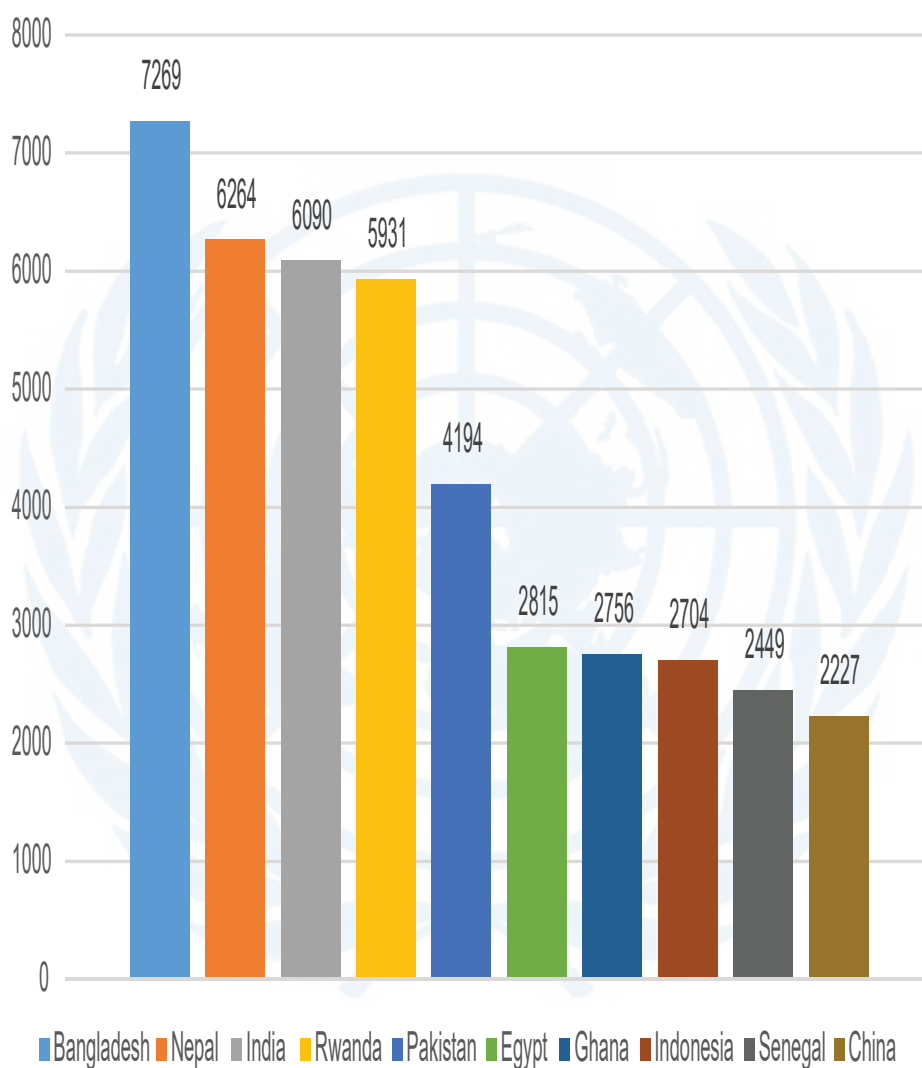
**Participation of Female Peacekeepers in UN Mission**

S/N	Forces	Participated	Currently Deployed
1	Army	797	388
2	Navy	34	12
3	Air Force	131	15
4	Police	1,766	157
Grand Total		2,728	572



## **CONTRIBUTIONS TO UN OPERATIONS**

(Report Date : 31 March 2023)



CONTENTS

- 1. Bangladesh - An Icon of UN Peacekeeping: Contributions, Challenges and Ways Forward** 01-16  
Lieutenant Colonel Md Mostaq Ahmed, BSP, PPM, psc
- 2. Emerging Security Challenges in the Sahel and the Need for an Adaptive Approach towards Peacebuilding** 17-34  
Lieutenant Colonel Syed Md As-Sazid, afwc, psc
- 3. Dichotomy between Guarding Vulnerabilities of Women in Armed Conflict Under Peacekeeping Perspective: A Ground Reality** 35-50  
Colonel Mohammad Masud Parvez, afwc, psc
- 4. A Comprehensive Approach to Counter Improvised Explosive Devices from MINUSMA Perspective and Takeaways for Bangladesh Army** 51-70  
Lieutenant Colonel Md Mamunur Rahman Siddiqui, psc
- 5. DDR in War-to-Peace Transition: Examining the Case of Kosovo for Wider Peace and Security Building** 71-87  
Mohammad Tarekul Islam, Superintendent of Police
- 6. Digital Transformation of UN Peace Operation: Challenges and Options for Bangladesh** 88-104  
Lieutenant Colonel Md Wadud Ullah Chowdhury, psc
- 7. Bangladesh Air Force Aviation Contingent in Central African Republic (CAR): Experiences as a Pioneer Contingent Commander** 105-124  
Air Commodore Md Asadul Karim, GUP, afwc, acsc, psc, GD(P)
- 8. The UN Peacebuilding Missions and Bangladesh: Contemporary Challenges and Future Outlook** 125-140  
Abu Salah Md. Yousuf and Nahian Reza Sabriet

CONTENTS

- 9. One Era of BN Ships in UNIFIL: Glorious Achievement of Bangladesh Navy in Multinational Maritime Operation** 141-152  
Captain M Mizanur Rahman, (G), afwc, psc, BN
- 10. A Contemplative Study on Fourth Generation United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Operations: Endeavouring for Peace in a New Cycle** 153-169  
Colonel Md Kamal Uddin Komol, psc
- 11. Challenges for Peacekeepers and Ways Ahead: In Light of the Anti-MONUSCO Movement in Late 2022** 170-181  
Dr. Ashik Mahmud BPM-Seba
- 12. Significance of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Humanitarian Assistance: A Passive Methodology to Attain Mission Mandate** 182-192  
Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Tauhid Ali, psc, G
- 13. The Evolving Conflict Environment and the Future of United Nations Peace Operations: Natural Resources, Environment and Climate in Perspective** 193-209  
Sajid Karim and Ayesha Binte Towhid
- 14. Ceasefire Dynamics in Sudan and It's Implementation by UN** 210-220  
Lieutenant Colonel Md. Shamim Iftakhar, PBGMS
- 15. Civil War in Syria-Challenges of UNMO's and Recommendations For Bangladesh Armed Forces** 221-234  
Colonel Sahidur Rahman Osmani, OSP, psc
- 16. Peacekeeping to Cyber peacekeeping: The Changing Dynamics of UN Peacekeeping and the Future** 235-250  
Mujtaba Rafid Rafa

## **Bangladesh - An Icon of UN Peacekeeping: Contributions, Challenges and Ways Forward**

Lieutenant Colonel Md Mostaq Ahmed, BSP, PPM, psc

### **Introduction**

The essence and spirit of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as well as his constitutional philosophy of foreign policy is fully reflected in the words, "I want to reiterate our full confidence on the human being winning impossible and overcoming difficulties"<sup>1</sup> and "...We may prosper in freedom and may make our full contribution towards international peace and cooperation in keeping with the progressive aspirations of mankind."<sup>2</sup> Bangladesh is thus committed to contributing to global peace, security and stability. After the Liberation War in 1971, Bangladesh takes pride in many noteworthy successes in its progress and development. One of its most significant and flagship achievements is its contribution to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNKPOs). The country has been one of the most trustworthy UN partners over the last three decades. Bangladeshi peacekeepers have demonstrated inspiring performance in all the peacekeeping missions. Being outstanding in conduct and discipline, they have been highly praised worldwide. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres who highly praised Bangladeshi peacekeepers aptly observes, "Though Bangladesh has graduated from least developed country to developing country this year [2018], but they graduated in peacekeeping much before."<sup>3</sup> They have earned the heart and minds of the host nations over the years with their hard work, professionalism and respect for diversity, integrity and dedication. As a result, Bangladesh has already emerged as a significant role model in the international peacekeeping spectrum.

The journey has not been so smooth for Bangladesh. It has already faced many challenges in the last century including the supreme sacrifices of over 167 precious souls of our beloved country and 259 received injury for the global peace and stability. Not only this supreme sacrifice and injury for the cause of peace, but Bangladeshi Peacekeepers also face numerous challenges like the multifarious working environment, asymmetric threats, high rate of fatality etcetera. Moreover, there was a paradigm shift of challenges including the Covid pandemic situations in the recent years. The emerging challenges are- increased number of T/PCCs, the high level of regional influences, international defunding to PKOs, inadequate intelligence support, unequal number of female participation and cyber warfare by terrorist groups.

These unique and emerging challenges conjure up comprehensive policy and strategic inputs from competent stakeholders of national, regional and international partners. As these are vast and thematic discourses, individual stakeholders may not mitigate all the potential challenges. Apart from the high level of policy negotiation, concentrating on issues like compliance with UN reports and regulations, customized assessment of high risk and complex working environments, robust readiness and quick response, use of sophisticated weapons and high-tech equipment, enrollment of more female and mainstreaming gender, building cyber peacekeepers force in line with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, continuous education and training aligning with UN Core values, SEA issues, Code of conducts, UN Ethics could make way for Bangladesh for the current leading role of Bangladesh in UNPKO in the days to come.

### **The Remarkable Contributions of Bangladeshi Peacekeepers in UNPKOs**

The overwhelming contribution of Bangladesh in UNPKOs have remained steady and steadfast since 1988. Currently Bangladesh is the top contributor with 7144 peacekeepers mostly in Africa.<sup>4</sup> From the beginning Bangladesh has continued to comply with UNSCRs, SOFA, ROEs, Code of Conducts, Ethics, Core Values, mandates and UN principles at the forefront of all its administrative and operational activities. As such, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) lauded Bangladeshi peacekeepers as the 'Cream of UN peacekeepers'<sup>5</sup> who have played a unique role in hosting states' democratization process, national electoral process, quick response and capability of readiness and instant reinforcement issues. On the occasion of the UN's 76th founding anniversary, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina remarked, "Bangladesh has become a brand name in the UN peacekeeping operations."<sup>6</sup> Some significant contributions in UNPK are highlighted below:-

a. In August 1988, Bangladesh entered into 'Blue Helmets' family providing 15 observers in the UN Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG). In January 1991, after the outbreak of the air strike in Gulf War, Bangladesh provided support as stipulated in the UN resolutions. Due to its solid discipline, professionalism and high commitment, Bangladesh earned remarkable appreciation from the coalition forces. As the then Saudi Commander of the coalition forces Prince Khalid bin Sultan put it, "Bangladesh made the most valuable contribution to our logistics, sending us some of their best support units which, at that stage, I needed more urgently than combat troops."<sup>7</sup>

b. Participation of Bangladesh in Sierra Leone is one of the most glowing examples in international peacekeeping in the best practice domain. In

this mission, the contribution of the Bangladeshi peacekeepers was so appreciated that Bangla had been declared the official language of Sierra Leone. *The Indian Express* has rightly focused on the the contribution of Bangladesh as: "Soon after peace was restored in 2002, the country's President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah announced that Bengali would henceforth be considered an official language of the Republic in recognition of the work done by Bangladeshi troops in restoring peace to the region."<sup>8</sup>

c. In course of last 35 years, Bangladesh has participated in peacekeeping missions in Kosovo, Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sudan, Chad, Syria, the Central African Republic (CAR), DR Congo, South Sudan and Mali and so on. In this incredible momentum of peacekeeping, the hard work and professionalism of Bangladeshi peacekeepers earned international accolades and laurels, consequently, generating scope for more chances in global peace, security and stability. In this regards UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres remarks, "The people of Bangladesh should be very proud of their women and men who serve the cause of peace in some of the world's most difficult places such as Darfur, Mali, and South Sudan. Each time we call on Bangladesh's support, the country responds."<sup>9</sup>

d. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina proposed the 'Multi-Dimensional Peace Model' at the UN General Assembly in 2011 that brought holistic approaches for building peace around the world. The leadership role for international peace under the UN umbrella of Bangladesh has been widely applauded around the globe. On the other hand, military leadership in different capacities in UNHQ and Field Missions has also earned a reputation at home and abroad.

e. Bangladesh has provided senior leaderships as Force Commander (FC), Deputy Force Commander (DFC) and Sector Commanders for United Nations Field Mission to command the troops to implement the mandated tasks. So far, Bangladesh has provided 06 Force Commanders, 08 Deputy Force Commanders and 60 Sector Commanders in different UN field missions. Besides, at present 47 staff officers from Bangladesh Army, Navy and Police are holding very important appointments at various levels in United Nations Secretariats, New York, USA.<sup>10</sup>

f. Bangladesh Navy (BN) on its voyage to establish world peace and stability has already made substantial role under the patronages of UN blue helmet. Since 1993, Bangladesh Navy have been contributing in UN peacekeeping mission and so far, 6365 personnel have completed UN mission in 30 countries. Presently, 348 personnel are deployed in seven countries such as Lebanon, Western Sahara, Mali, DR Congo, Central Africa, South Sudan, Darfur

and UN Headquarters. BN personnel have been performing their duties in UN peacekeeping mission with sincerity, dedication, efficiency, devotion and high professional attitude. BN has already earned name and fame, honour for Bangladesh by successful completion of their UN missions.

g. Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) has a magnificent history of UN peacekeeping missions. In 1993, BAF started its contribution for UN Peacekeeping by providing six Military Observers to Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1995, first contingent of BAF was deployed to Kuwait along with 02 x Bell 212 helicopters. So far, BAF personnel have participated in 28 different UN Peacekeeping Missions around the world. Currently, BAF contingents are deployed with one Medium Utility Helicopter Unit with Mi Series Helicopters, one Air Transport Unit with C-130B aircraft and one Air Field Support and Management Unit at MONUSCO, DR Congo, one Air Field Support and Management Unit at MINUSMA, Mali and one-Armed Helicopter Unit with Mi Series Helicopters at MINUSCA, CAR.<sup>11</sup> Besides, BAF UNMOs and SOs are currently deployed in six ongoing UN Peacekeeping Missions, exemplifying the BAF's commitment to promoting global peace and security.

h. The contribution of Bangladesh Police gained laurels every now and then. Bangladesh Police sets its footprint in UNPKO back in 1989 through participation in the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia. Since then Bangladesh Police made impressive strides in its glorious journey in UNPKO which is manifested in total number of 21,271 personnel in 23 UN Missions around the globe to date. Currently, Bangladesh Police deployed 505 personnel in 06 different UN peacekeeping missions. With this number, Bangladesh Police holds 4th position in terms of personnel contribution among PCC in the world.<sup>12</sup>

i. Bangladesh Police in UNPKO renders its service in maintaining law and order, facilitating the process of disarmament and reintegration, protecting displaced and distressed persons, facilitating humanitarian assistance and protecting human rights. Demonstration of expertise, professionalism and commitment of Bangladesh police personnel in each filed of policing won numerous accolades in UN peacekeeping arena. UN Assistant Secretary -General Christian Francis Saunders quipped, "Bangladesh Police have been playing a unique role in maintaining peace in various war-torn countries of the world."<sup>13</sup> Bangladesh Police personnel embrace martyrdom in the cause of international peace. So far 22 personnel sacrificed their lives valiantly working in UNPKO.<sup>14</sup>

j. Bangladesh is one of the forerunners of contributing female peacekeepers' contingent in UNPKOs. Since 2008, the number of Bangladeshi female peacekeepers has been sharply increasing. Currently, the deployment of female peacekeeper by Bangladesh has already reached the set target of 18% of the ratio of Military Observers and Staff Officers in UNPKOs. Moreover, from January 2019, Bangladesh also included 'Female Engagement Team'<sup>15</sup> in the major contingents and it shall endure the same in future deployment in UNPKOs.

**Table 1: Bangladeshi Female Participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations<sup>16</sup>**

Service	Participated		Total	Currently Deployed		Total
	SO/UNMO/IPO	Contingent/FPU		SO/UNMO/IPO	Contingent/FPU	
Army	53	500	553	21	327	348
Navy	22	06	28	06	04	10
Air Force	09	111	120	04	09	13
Police	80	1544	1624	13	138	151
Total	164	2161	2325	44	478	522

Source: Author's self-construct

### Challenges of Peacekeeping Operations

The challenges of the 21st century are multidimensional and unique. The changing nature of conflicts are most intractable and former intrastate conflicts are increasingly becoming regionalized. These scuffles are obsessed by a complex mix of factors including issues of governance, ethnic conflicts, organized criminal and terrorist attacks, the grave concern of humanitarian and public health issues. The harsh terrain and increasingly hostile working environments bring Bangladesh to critically analyze the challenges as a leading contributing country in UNPKOs which are highlighted below:-<sup>17</sup>

a. **Changing Security Situation:** In the changing security situation, the UN peacekeepers often operate in high risk environment. Peacekeepers face complex and asymmetric security threats. The violent extremist terrorist groups often conduct IED attacks, Vehicle Borne IED (VBIED) attacks, Suicidal Vest IED (SVIED) attacks, complex attacks, ambushes and hostage situation. With the limited capacity, peacekeepers are being tasked to protect civilians or stabilize the security situation. UN peacekeepers have been attacked by a violent extremist group in CAR and Mali and held hostage by jihadists in Syria. This kind of asymmetric threat brings ground challenges for peacekeepers.



b. **High Rate of Fatalities:** Since 1948, over 4,280 peacekeepers have made the supreme sacrifice while serving in UNPKOs.<sup>18</sup> As of 30 April 2023, 167 Bangladeshi Peacekeepers lost their lives and 259 Bangladeshi Peacekeepers received injury in different UNPKOs while serving for the cause of international peace.<sup>19</sup> To the friends and families, the personal loss of life of a peacekeeper is irreparable and permanent. Meanwhile, the scale of suffering for Bangladesh is immense. This increasing fatality poses considerable threats to Bangladesh and remains a great concern for experts and analysts.

c. **Competition of T/PCCs:** It is known that there is no army for the UN, but certainly it has peacekeepers. Peacekeeping is also an admirable job worldwide. Due to the high demand for peacekeepers, the UN has been increasing the number of contributing countries by inviting new T/PCCs. The underlying objective of UN Experts is to expand the base of contributors and strengthen partnerships with AU, EU, CSTO, NATO and others. There were only 34 Troops Contributing Nations in the year 1965 which by 2022 has risen to 128. Thereby, there is a huge competition among the T/PCCs and the UN has the flexibility to choose better T/PCCs. In existing multidimensional peacekeeping operations, it has become a challenge for Bangladesh to hold the leading role among 128 countries and meet the evolving security situation in the UNPKOs.

d. **Inadequate Intelligence:** Twenty first century is all about mass information, disinformation and sometimes fake news and rumours. Intelligence plays a vital role in conducting any operation. Peacekeeping traditionally uses direct observation by patrolling, establishing check posts or observation posts. Though, a direct monitoring system helps to stabilize and resolve some conflicts, intelligence requirement has emerged as paramount importance for conducting robust peacekeeping especially in MINUSMA, MONUSCO, MINUSCA, UNMISS. Due to the lack of intelligence, the terrorist groups plan and conduct various successful terrorist activities in Mali and the CAR. Most of the time, peacekeepers conduct the operations in a risky and volatile environment with little or no intelligence. As a result, it causes the vulnerability of peacekeepers and leads to death and injury from acts of terrorist violence.

e. **Influence of Regional Organizations:** Multi-level stakeholders have played a significant role in resolving intrastate conflicts in UNPKOs. The UN has trusted progressively on regional bodies to spearhead conflict resolution in some scenarios. Indeed, regional players are familiar with local knowledge, languages, culture, customs, ethnography and anthropological issues. Thereby, the UN has the flexibility to invite and choose more T/PCCs for peacekeeping Operations. Thus, regional organizations get preferences in peacekeeping which is a risk for other T/ PCCs like Bangladesh to hold the current leading position in UNPKOs.

f. **COVID-19 and Peacekeeping:** The COVID pandemic has emerged as a new global challenge across the countries influencing all stakeholders. These incredible challenges hamper the conventional peacekeeping workflows, mandated responsibilities, humanitarian activities, protection of civilian activities in all ways. Due to COVID, donor countries are facing a global economic recession that has severely disrupted to UNPKOs. As a result, many kinds of challenges such as: defunding to UNPKOs, unwillingness to enroll as peacekeepers, communication disruption and timely deployments.<sup>20</sup>

g. **Cybercrimes and the Challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution:** The era of the 4th Industrial Revolution brings new technologies, Ethernet, crypto currencies, artificial intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality, big data, deep mind, block chain and disruptive technologies. Due to all these emerging issues, the conventional workflow has rapidly been changing with the speed of lightening and UNPKOs are not an alienated discourse. Terrorist groups, armed gangs, extremists have been using these technologies wrongfully, including the dark net for illegal, unauthorized and criminal activities in host states and worldwide. Timely coping with this emerging era is a challenge that requires a speedy and creative transformation of the T/PCCs from conventional work process to emerging work process.<sup>21</sup>

### **Ways Forward**

The evolving multidimensional challenges of peacekeeping are great concern and undoubtedly pose a huge threat for sustaining the leading role of Bangladesh in UNPKOs. Challenges are sticky but not insurmountable. It requires a broad spectrum of immediate necessary actions from every stakeholder of the country. A comprehensive and futuristic action plan as outlined below can ensure the leading position in the future:-

a. **Formulation of National Peacekeeping Policy:** There is a strong urge for national peacekeeping policy in Bangladesh. It refers to the capacity building of individual peacekeepers and peace support institutions. Many countries in the world formulated peacekeeping strategies such as Kenya, Sweden, Serbia, Brazil, Japan, South Africa, and Ethiopia. Being the top T/PCC, Bangladesh does not pose any problem about a national policy on peacekeeping. Indeed, peacekeeping policies determine vision and strategies for recruitment, capacity building and regional cooperation. Bangladesh needs to formulate a national peacekeeping policy to effectively utilize its resources and potential. National peacekeeping policy will also assist in coordinating the role of various training institutions and in fulfilling the future pattern of requirements of international peacekeeping endeavors. The national peacekeeping policy will synchronize the fundamental factors of peacekeeping operations. This is shown in Figure1 below :-

Figure 1: Proposed Model of National Peacekeeping Policy<sup>22</sup> for Bangladesh



Source: Author's self-construct

b. **Preparation for Robust Peacekeeping:** The concept of robust peacekeeping started from the UNs' review of its failures in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia in 1990. DPO and DFS generated a document in January 2009 named, 'A new horizon for UN peacekeepers.'<sup>23</sup> It determines three key peacekeeping challenges: critical peace building, Protection of Civilian (POC) and robust peacekeeping. In this regard, Bangladesh should be ready with peacekeepers who can deter and confront any obstruction to implementing assigned duty if required using force. Robustness can be categorized into two tactical levels: organization robustness and individual robustness. A contingent should be ready in terms of workforce, equipment, organization and adequately trained with the mission-specific mandate. Now, the UN is also demanding for an agile unit to implement the robustness in DPOs. Bangladesh should prepare its peacekeepers with modern gadgets, better mobility, credible fire power and adequate air support to perform the robust peacekeeping.

c. **Preparation for Cyber Threats and the 4th Industrial Revolution:** As a top contributor, Bangladesh must cope with the challenges of cyber threats and the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. The contingents must engage their personnel in

emerging technologies and existing cyber threats. The UN work processes are changing in line with new reality. To cope with it and continue to be top contributor, digitization, data analysis, deep mind, financial technologies, and regulatory technologies and blockchain technologies must need to be addressed as an inbuilt and inherent capacity. It also relates to adopting new technologies like; virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), robotics, drones and other emerging technologies in T/PCCs.

**d. Implementation of Recommendations of Reports Including Cruz Report:** UN and Concerned Organizations published several reports, periodicals and along with recommendations like, 'HIPPO Report',<sup>24</sup> 'CRUZ Report'<sup>25</sup> et cetera. In order to reduce the fatalities and to improve the overall security of peacekeepers, on 19 December 2017, Lieutenant General (retired) Carlos Alberto das Santos Cruz prepared and submitted a report and recommendations known as 'Cruz Report.' The core issue of the report was how to increase the security of peacekeepers and how to reduce the fatalities rate in UN missions. Bangladesh being top T/PCC should train and adapt its peacekeepers with the recommendation of the 'Cruz Report' to cope with the evolving security situation. Following are the areas as to where UN and T/PCCs need to give due emphasis which will contribute to improving the security threats and reducing the fatalities to T/PCCs.<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 2: Areas to Be Focused by UN and T/PCC**

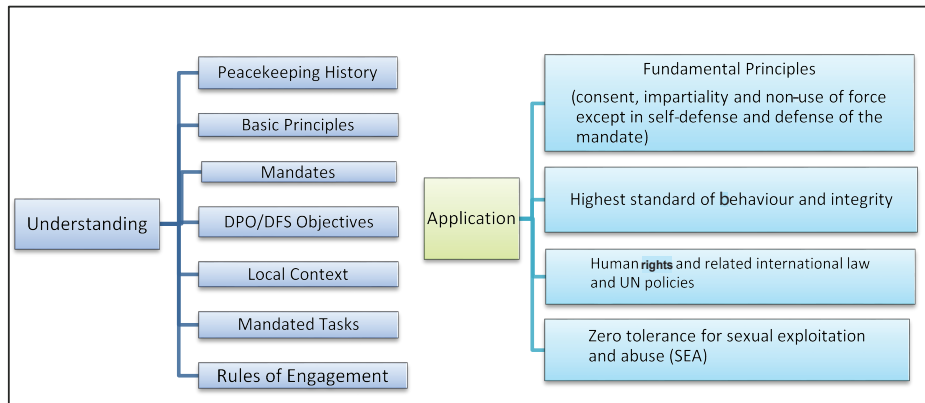


Source: Author's self-construct

**e. Development of Tech-Based Futuristic Training and Education:**

Peacekeeping operations are now moving away from conflicts resolution to conflict management. In the evolving security situation, peacekeepers are increasingly facing direct threats from the militia groups and are targeted by asymmetric attacks. The UHIPPO recognized in the report, 'where asymmetric threats are present in the operating environment, UN missions must be provided with the necessary capabilities and training.'<sup>27</sup> Being the largest T/PCC, Bangladesh requires an exclusive remodelling of updated peacekeeping training to meet the complex peacekeeping challenges. As per General Assembly resolution A/RES/49/37 (1995), T/PCCs recognized their obligation for training for UNPKOs the based on nature of peacekeeping and the challenges are faced by the peacekeepers. The Department of Peace Operations (DPO) has given due priority on ensuring adequate skill, knowledge and training for the peacekeepers to perform their duties.<sup>28</sup> In such a scenario, the Global Peacekeeping Training Needs Assessment (GPTNA)<sup>29</sup> also can be taken under due consideration. There must be a clear understanding and application of the following factors:-

**Table 2: Understanding and Application of UN Peacekeeping Training<sup>30</sup>**

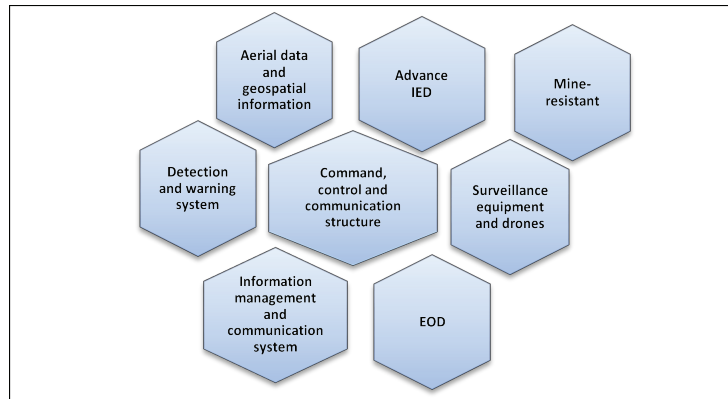


Source: Author's self-construct

**f. Development of Modern Equipment and Technologies:**

The Robust peacekeeping demands the acquisition of military hardware needed to encounter the evolving and future challenges of peacekeeping operations. In this regard, the UN HIPPO recommended in its report that contingents must deploy with the necessary equipment and training and a clear understanding of the mission rules of engagement.<sup>31</sup> To meet the contemporary trends and impending challenges of peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh should focus on the acquisition of modern technology and sophisticated equipment. In order to ensure the safety and effective peacekeeping operation and to ensure force protection in the evolving operating environment following aspects are very imperative:-

**Table 3: Modern Equipment and Technologies for Effective Peacekeeping Operations<sup>32</sup>**



Source: Author's self-construct

**i. Streamlining, Balancing and Mainstreaming Gender in Peacekeeping:**

It is evident that 'blue helmet' are for everyone irrespective of gender, colour, race and religion. It has been duly embraced and cherished by the UN. However, to fulfil the demand of global essence, it requires broader structural changes, gender-neutral administration, raising incentives and fund flow for females, and strengthening the capacity of female peacekeepers within the peacekeeping model.<sup>33</sup> To address the holistic approach to peacekeeping, Bangladesh must look into the issue seriously in regards to recruitment, training, motivation and education of females to be deployed in UNPKOs. The other areas need to be strengthened that the competitive stakeholders must enable the environments for gender parity in all spheres of social structure. Most importantly, Bangladesh as top T/PCC, must maintain the strict practice of zero tolerance for SEA policies, guidelines and instructions.<sup>34</sup>

**ii. Development of Peacekeeping Diplomacy, Negotiation and Strategic Alliances:** Well-coordinated diplomatic move is essential to stand against the evolving challenge of UN peacekeeping operations. The government of Bangladesh should explore diplomatic engagements by opening up embassies or high commissions where Bangladesh Troop/Police participate in UN Mission, with particular consideration to African Nations. To establish more communication and cooperation in peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh Government needs to have cooperative relations with the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In the present context of T/PCC and existing competition Bangladesh should establish relations with the regional organizations to strengthen effective contribution in the UN-mandated peace building operation.

## **Conclusion**

Bangladesh is the role model in UN peacekeeping missions. With the essence of the political philosophy of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh has been significantly progressing towards sustainable security, peace and development both at home and abroad. The same spirit continues in peacekeeping and consequently Bangladesh has emerged as the top contributor in the international arena. Bangladesh has already proved its capacity all the way and is now a 'brand name' in UNPKOs.<sup>35</sup> Since 1988, Bangladesh has been relentlessly participating in 56 UNPKOs in different parts of the world and earned name and fame for the country. As such, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) stated Bangladeshi peacekeepers as the 'Cream of UN peacekeepers.' In recognition of the contribution of Bangladeshi peacekeepers, Bangla had been declared as the official language of Sierra Leone. Bangladesh is one of the forerunners of contributing female peacekeepers contingent in UNPKOs. The remarkable contributions of Bangladeshi peacekeepers have been acknowledged and highly appreciated by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres. The noteworthy role in humanitarian efforts, gender mainstreaming and female empowerment, quick response and capability readiness and so on made Bangladesh as a role model in UNPKOs.

There has been a gradual paradigm shift in the nature of UNPKOs in 21st century. The changing natures of conflicts are obsessed by a complex mix of factors including issues of governance, ethnic conflicts, organized criminal and terrorist attacks, the grave concern of humanitarian and public health issues. The harsh terrain and increasingly hostile working environments are great challenge for Bangladesh to be continued as a leading contributing country in UNPKOs. Bangladesh has already faced so many hitches including 167 peacekeepers who lost their lives and 259 peacekeepers who received injuries for the sake of world peace. High rate of fatalities, competition among T/PCCs, emerging trends and technologies, asymmetric threats, volatile working environment, and cyber threats emerge as a thoughtful impediment in this hard earned journey of Bangladesh in peacekeeping operations.

The bold participation of Bangladesh in UNPKO has taken the country to a prestigious position in the world. Bangladesh has a glorious episode in PKO. Though challenges are hard but not insurmountable for Bangladesh. There is a strong urge for national peacekeeping policy in Bangladesh. It refers to the capacity building of individual peacekeepers and peace support institutions. Bangladesh should prepare its peacekeepers with modern gadgets, better mobility, credible fire power and adequate air support to perform the robust peacekeeping. Bangladesh being top T/PCC should train and adapt its

peacekeepers with the recommendation of the 'Cruz Report' to decrease the fatality rate. Well-coordinated diplomatic move is also essential to stand against the evolving challenge of UNPKOs. The comprehensive and futuristic action plan, policy formulation, capacity building, increased female participation, redesigning training and diplomatic endeavour and so on can ensure the leading position time and again for future Bangladesh peacekeeping operations.

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#### Brief Biography



**Lieutenant Colonel Md Mostaq Ahmed, BSP, PPM, psc** was commissioned on 26 November 2000 with 43rd BMA Long Course in the Corps of Infantry. He has served in various infantry units in various capacities. He participated in Counter Insurgency Operations in Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT). He commanded 25 East Bengal at Mohalchari, Khagrachari in CHT as well as in plain land. He served as Assistant Adjutant and Quarter Master General (AA&QMG) at Headquarter Logistic Area. Besides attending different courses at home, he attended Civil Military Interaction Course in Turkey and User Training Program of Cellular Information Analyzer Course in Singapore. He is a graduate from Defence Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur and completed his Master of Science in Military Studies from Bangladesh University of Professionals. For his gallantry performance, he was awarded with Distinguished Service Medal (BSP). For heroic and bravery activities, he was also awarded with President Police Medal (PPM). Besides, he was bestowed with 'Chief of Army Staff Commendation' and 'Inspector General of Police Exemplary Good Service Badge' for rendering exemplary services. He has served as Military Staff Officer (MSO) while participating in UNPK missions in Mali and Contingent Member in DR Congo. Currently, he is serving as Battalion Commander, RAB-6, Khulna.

## **Emerging Security Challenges in the Sahel and the Need for an Adaptative Approach Towards Peacebuilding**

Lieutenant Colonel Syed Md As-Sazid, afwc, psc

### **Introduction**

The Sahel region, spanning the entire northern part of the African continent from west to east, has witnessed a surge in security challenges in recent years. A combination of factors, including political turmoil, socio-economic insecurity, and armed extremist groups, has made the Sahel a hotspot for violence, instability, and humanitarian crises. The region is also prone to environmental challenges, such as droughts and desertification, exacerbating security threats. One of the main drivers of the security challenges in the Sahel is the presence of armed extremist groups, such as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and Boko Haram. These groups have exploited the region's porous borders, weak governance, and poverty to gain a foothold and attack civilians and security forces. Another factor contributing to the security threats is the inter-communal tensions between ethnic and religious groups in the Sahel region. These tensions have been aggravated by competition over resources, like land and water, and have resulted in violent clashes and displacement of communities. Despite being one of the lowest global CO<sub>2</sub> emitters, the region is also among the most affected by climate change, thus worsening the already unstable humanitarian situation there. As a result of the persistent hostilities and food shortages brought on by war and climate change, Sahelians have been displaced and migrated in significant numbers inside and across borders.<sup>1</sup> To explain the ongoing Sahelian instability, several analysts point to the interlinked structural weaknesses, such as bad governance, widespread corruption, porous borders, institutional fragility, chronic poverty, climate change, and rapid increase of population and mass migration.

The emerging security challenges in the Sahel region have put immense pressure on peacebuilding efforts. Traditional peacebuilding approaches, such as the deployment of peacekeeping forces and the implementation of peace agreements through disarmament and rehabilitation of dissident groups, the establishment of legitimate governments, and enforcement of law and orders, have been continuously hindered by the dynamic and rapidly evolving security situation, political turmoil, weak governance structures, and limited resources. As such, the complex and multifaceted nature of the security threats in the Sahel, including terrorism, inter-communal violence, organised crime, and environmental challenges, require a comprehensive and adaptive approach towards peacebuilding. Such an approach should engage the regional

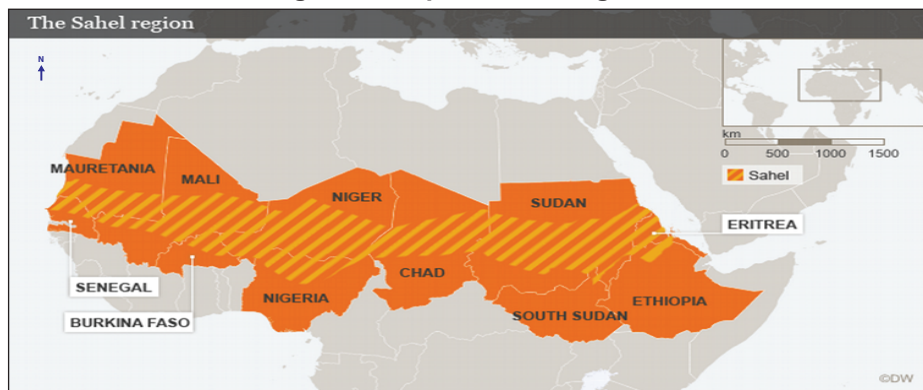
mediators, involve local communities in peacebuilding efforts, emphasise the national institutions' capacity building, address the conflict's root causes, and prioritise the early warning and rapid response mechanism.

Against this backdrop, this study will analyse the emerging security dynamics in the Sahel and the need for an adaptive peacebuilding approach. It will examine the factors contributing to the security challenges and explore the limitations of the current peacebuilding approaches. The study will also propose possible solutions and recommendations for an adaptive peacebuilding approach that can effectively address the emerging security challenges in the Sahel region. The paper has been developed through a qualitative study following descriptive research techniques. Most arguments are founded on content analysis of secondary sources, including pertinent books, research papers, trustworthy web content, and reputable journal articles.

### Defining The Sahel Region

The Sahel region is a vast territory stretching almost the entire breadth of the northern part of Africa. It is approximately 5,900 km long and 300 km wide on average, with a total landmass of 30,53,200 square km.<sup>2</sup> The word "*Sahel*" literally translates to "*edge*" or "*boundary*" in Arabic. Indeed, the region represents a physical and cultural boundary between the Sahara Desert to the north and the more fertile savannah region to the south. Due to its substantial length and breadth, the area also serves as a transitional zone or buffer between the regions of desert and savannah.

Figure 1: Map of Sahel Region <sup>3</sup>



Source: Deutsche Welle, 'US taps new envoy for Africa's Sahel region,' Deutsche Welle, 3 September 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/us-taps-new-envoy-for-africas-troubled-sahel-region/a-52687076>.

The area is generally rocky, semi-arid, and barren, with a tropical climate and scorching summers. The maximum mean temperature varies between 33°C to 36°C. The southern Sahel enjoys more rainfall than the north, with an annual average of 600mm. The dry season lasts from May to September, while the rest of the year remains wet.

Beginning from the west coasts of Senegal and Mauritania, this area passes eastward through Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, and Sudan; and enters Ethiopia and Eritrea before ending at the Red Sea coast. It also touches the southern tip of Algeria and the extreme north of South Sudan. In the past, several indigenous African kingdoms ruled this region, which is now home to numerous ethnic groups.

### **Genesis of The Sahelian Crises**

The fall of Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Al Gaddafi marked a turning point for the Sahel. The Libyan Civil War in 2011 and its resultant disintegration have flooded the Sahelian states with inexpensive weapons and munitions. First, many foreign fighters from across the Sahelian communities were recruited and amassed by the belligerents of the Libyan conflict. Then the Tuareg fighters, who previously served in Gaddafi's Islamic Legion, instigated the 2012 Malian civil war, which AQIM quickly picked up and exploited to further their agenda.

Practically, the collapse of Libya resulted in the emergence of a vast ungoverned space across the Sahel countries, where violent non-state actors filled up political and security voids by seizing economic opportunities, both legal and illegal while maintaining a semblance of political order. Much of the contemporary security crises in the Sahel are rooted in the competition among armed groups for control over profitable trade routes and nodes. The crisis is primarily based on structurally weak states, poverty, and inter-communal tensions, worsened by the emergence of religious extremist groups like AQIM and ISGS.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2001, international security forces have started counterterrorism operations in the Sahel under initiatives like the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership and the Sahel Plan. 'Operation Serval' and the Chadian Intervention in Northern Mali were launched in 2013. Later, during 'Operation Barkhane,' the G5 Sahel Joint Force, and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) were mobilised in 2014. Nevertheless, the situation has deteriorated, rendering the crisis a regional dimension. French forces' withdrawal from Mali in August 2022 has reportedly worsened the situation.

### **Emerging Security Challenges in The Sahel**

The Sahel region is characterised by a complex mix of security challenges, including terrorism, armed conflict, and organised crime. The current COVID-19 pandemic, the proliferation of illegal arms, transnational criminal networks, unprotected borders, human and drug trafficking, and climate change

are a few other aspects posing further challenges to peace operations. These are often interconnected, exacerbating each other with significant impacts on the region's development, stability, and human security. Characterised by asymmetric warfare and the emergence of local militias, non-traditional security threats have increased in scale, intensity, and complexity in recent years. Peace operations have become extremely challenging, due to increasing fatalities of peacekeepers as recently witnessed in Mali and Central African Republic (CAR).<sup>5</sup>

### **Evolving Terrorism**

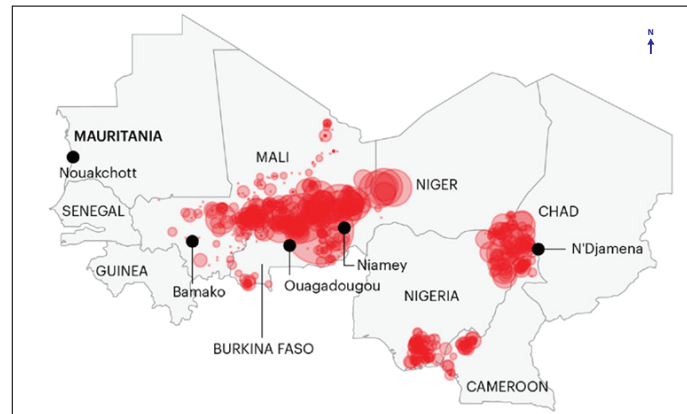
The weak Sahelian governments, were unable to provide adequate security which prompted the emergence of terrorist groups. There are three types of terrorist groups operating in the Sahel. Firstly, the transnational Jihadist groups linked to al-Qaeda, like AQIM, Boko Haram, Movement for Unity, and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam Wal Muslimin (JNIM); and groups linked to the Islamic State (IS) like Islamic State West Africa (ISWA) and ISGS.<sup>6</sup> The second group includes Ansar Dine, al-Mourabitoun, and the Katiba Macina, who carry out their activities through an ethnic-nationalist-religious paradigm. The third group emerges as self-defence militias, like Dan Nan Ambassagou Association (DNA), in response to the pervasive insecurity that forces the locals to defend themselves.<sup>7</sup>

All these groups have exploited the Sahel's poverty, weak governance, and porous borders to establish training camps, recruit fighters, and launch attacks across the region. They are responsible for numerous attacks on military and civilian targets, including government officials, aid workers, and peacekeepers, causing widespread fear and instability. Since 2019, terrorist incidents in the Sahel have increased by four times, with approximately 2,800 incidents in 2022. Around 48% of deaths caused by terrorist attacks globally occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the Sahelian countries like Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger bearing its majority.<sup>8</sup>

The increasing use of mines and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) by terrorists have become the most fearsome menace for the local populations, peacekeepers, and security forces. While most of them appear to target the security forces, they result in a heightened civilian casualty rate.<sup>9</sup> Since the inception of the MINUSMA in 2013, IEDs have killed 93 peacekeepers. Reportedly, in 2021 and 2022, there were 245 and 134 IED attacks respectively, incurring 103 and 72 deaths.<sup>10</sup>

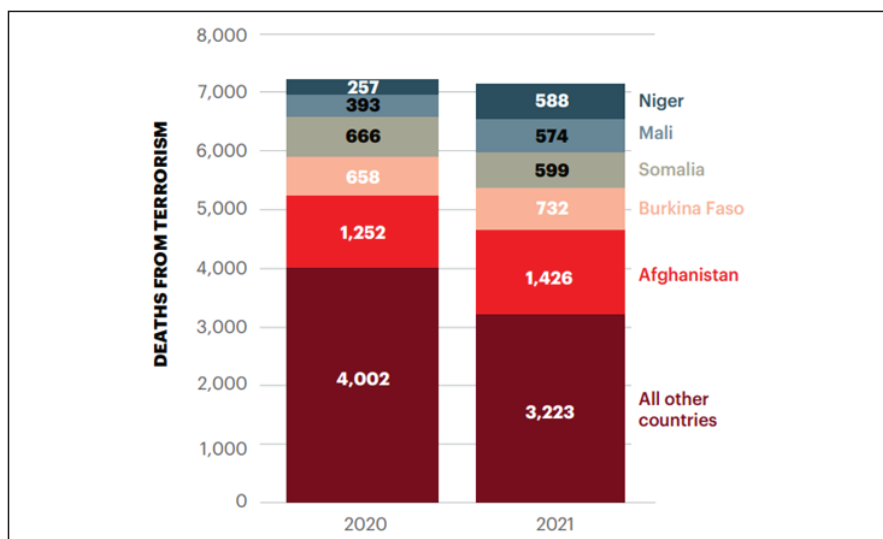


**Figure 2: Country wise Deaths due to Terrorism , 2020-2021**



Source: Global Terrorism Index, 2022, Institute for Economics & Peace, 2022, doi:10.4324/9780203731321.

**Figure 3: Country wise total Deaths Terrorism, 2020-2021**



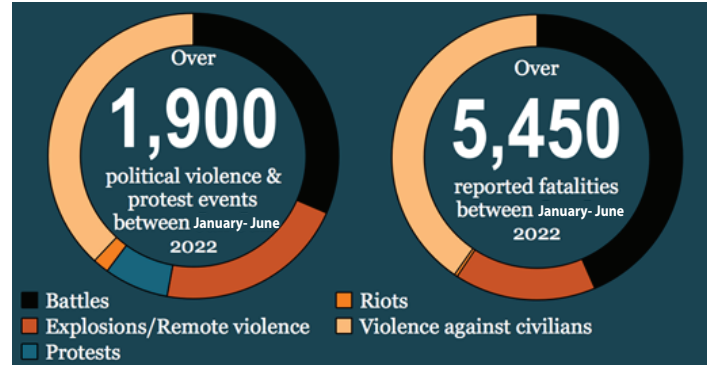
Source: African Centre For Strategic Studies, Five Zones of Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/five-zones-militant-islamist-violence-sahel>.

### Heightened Armed Conflicts and Violence

The leading causes of armed conflicts and violence include poverty, resource competition, political rivalry, ethnic and religious tensions, and the proliferation of armed groups. In 2022, armed conflicts in the Sahel caused around 9,000 fatalities, with the highest number of organised crimes in Burkina Faso and the highest number of fatalities in Mali. Militants and the federal government are at odds in the Niger Delta region over control of petroleum resources.



**Figure 4: Statistics of Armed Conflicts and Violence**



Source: Ian Davis, 'Armed Conflict and Peace Processes in the Sahel and Lake Chad Region,' *SIPRI Yearbook 2021*, Oxford University Press, 2021.

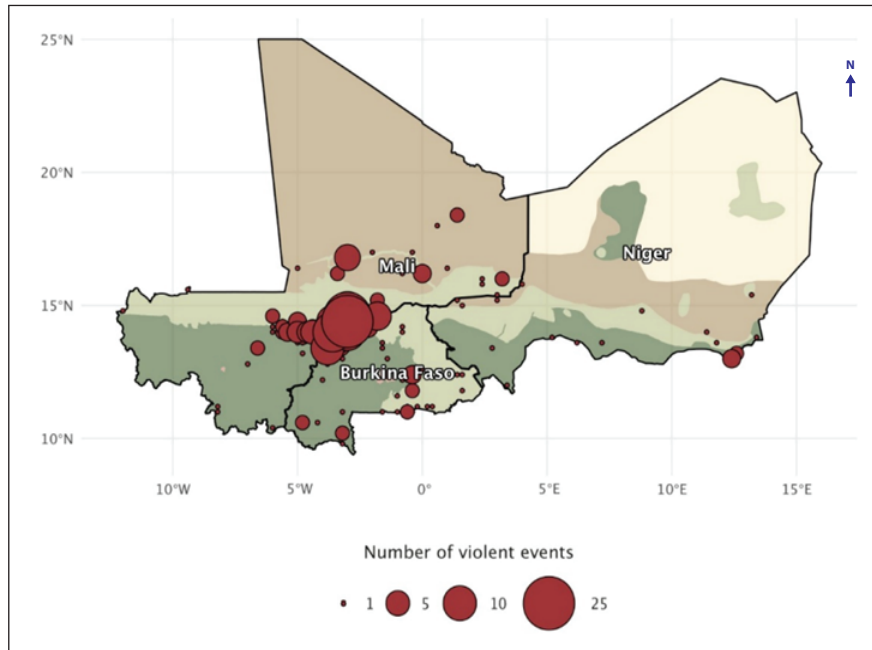
The entry of Wagner mercenaries and the exit of French forces from Mali in 2022 substantially changed the Sahelian conflict ecosystem. The IS was prompt to exploit this security void, as evidenced by their deadly onslaught against Tuareg armed groups in north-eastern Mali. The JNIM carried out around 50 attacks on the MINUSMA peacekeepers, killing at least 20.<sup>11</sup>

#### **Increased Inter-communal Violence**

The Sahel region's security challenges are directly influenced by tribalism and ethnic dynamics exploited by different actors, including central governments, criminal networks, separatists, and militant groups.<sup>12</sup> Emerging inter-communal violence is also rooted in ethnic and tribal differences, political rivalry, competition for control over natural resources, and trade/trafficking routes. The already precarious security situation has been worsened by terrorist groups' attempts to exploit these inter-communal conflicts, which have devastated communities in the region, causing displacement, loss of life, and the destruction of infrastructure. Despite efforts from the UN and other regional actors, the security situation remains unstable.

In Mali, JNIM has embedded itself as the defender of the Fulani ethnic group against their rival Dogon. Similarly, ISWA has exploited the intercommunal conflicts between the Fulani and Tuaregs in the Mali-Niger border area. By leveraging these tensions, both groups have successfully increased their recruiting. JNIM-affiliated Macina Liberation Front (FLM) has also exploited inter-communal differences to drive recruitment.<sup>13</sup> The snowballing effect of the Malian crises has exacerbated the Fulani-Dogon inter-communal violence in Central Mali, which has further spreaded inside Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, and Niger. In Nigeria, Boko Haram and ISWA have aligned with local communal conflicts to gain recruits by siding on the ethnic divisions.

**Figure 5: Communal Violence in The Central Sahel**



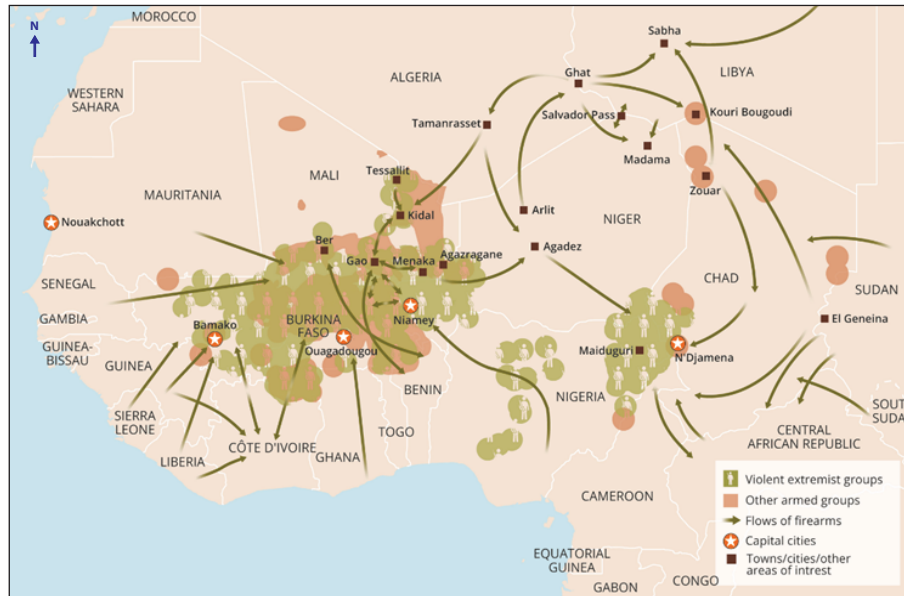
Source: Oriol Puig Cepero et al., *Climate Change, Development and Security in The Central Sahel*, June 2021, doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.34691.37922.

While claiming legitimacy as local security providers, the self-defence groups have been parties to several deadly communal conflicts in north and central Mali. Political disagreements and land disputes between indigenous and non-indigenous people have long been sources of inter-communal violence in Chad.<sup>14</sup>

### **Organised Crime and Illegal Economic Activities**

The Sahel region has become a hotbed for organised crime due to its strategic location and porous borders. Mali, Niger and Chad rank among the top 50 countries in the GI-TOC Organized Crime Index.<sup>15</sup> Trafficking of humans, narcotics, weapons, and kidnapping for ransom are the most prevalent types of organised crime in the Sahel. The region's vast and largely uncontrolled desert territories offer ample opportunities for criminal networks to operate and evade law enforcement agencies. Since few formal employment alternatives exist, illegal economic activity is considered socially acceptable and necessary for survival. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Sahel region generates an annual income of \$3.8 billion approximately from illicit economic activity, while drug trafficking alone generates an estimated \$1.25 billion annually.<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 6: Flow of Trafficking Firearms in The Sahel**



Source: UNODC, 'Transnational Organized Crime in the Sahel region - Maps, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,' January 2023, [https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/Tocta\\_Sahel\\_maps.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/Tocta_Sahel_maps.html).

### Lack of State Control

The current security situation in the Sahel is marked by political instability and lack of state control, which is rapidly deteriorating with eight attempted coups in Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, and Chad in the last two years. The underlying drivers include poor governance and public services, food insecurity, corruption, weak law enforcement, rapid population growth, and unemployment. The inability of Sahelian states to provide security beyond the urban centres has allowed non-state actors, including self-defence militias, to represent themselves as alternatives to the government. JNIM has attracted the locals to their ideologies by capitalising on their grievances against the government, political system, economic disparity, and social conditions, particularly in northern and central Mali. On the contrary, the endemic corruption and overwhelming focus on security by the Sahelian Governments have failed to deliver essential services and address systemic shortcomings. These resulted in the popular uprising as evidenced in Mali in 2020.<sup>17</sup>

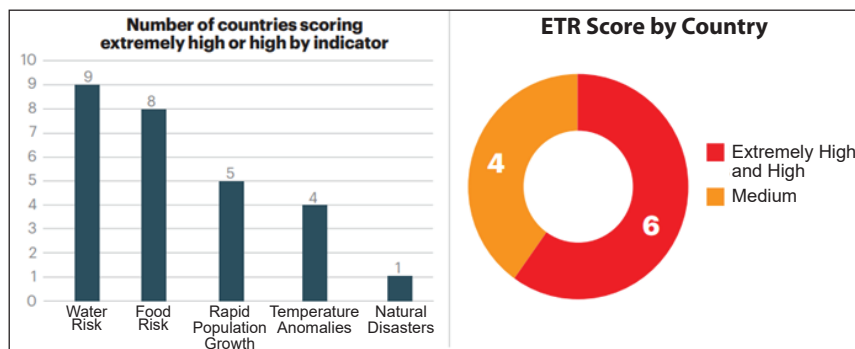
### Ecological Challenges

Climate change has significantly impacted the Sahel region, exacerbating the fragile ecological balance and aggravating security challenges. The region's population is highly dependent on agriculture, and the changing climate has

caused droughts, floods, and desertification, leading to food insecurity, increased poverty levels, displacement, and social unrest. All the Sahelian countries suffer from rapid population growth, with Niger having the highest projected population increase by 2050.<sup>18</sup>

Islamic State, Boko Haram, and al-Shahab have increasingly exploited food insecurity as their strategy. In the Lake Chad area, Boko Haram controls the water sources for imposing taxes and exploits poverty and unemployment to recruit combatants offering \$600-\$800 monthly.<sup>19</sup> In Central Mali, drastic ecological change is the primary driver for violence between Dogon, the sedentary farmers, and Fulani, the semi-nomadic cattle herders.

Figure 7: Ecological Threats in The Sahel <sup>20</sup>



Source: Osei Baffour Frimpong, 'Climate Change and Violent Extremism in the Lake Chad Basin: Key Issues and Way Forward,' *Africa Program Occasional Paper*, Wilson Center, July 2020, [https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Climate\\_Change\\_and\\_Violent\\_extremism\\_in\\_the\\_Lake\\_Chad\\_Basin\\_Key\\_Issues\\_and\\_Way\\_Forward\\_0.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/uploads/documents/Climate_Change_and_Violent_extremism_in_the_Lake_Chad_Basin_Key_Issues_and_Way_Forward_0.pdf).

### Failing Peace Accords

The 'Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali Resulting from the Algiers Process' has failed to fulfil its promise of national reconciliation. It is disintegrating because of three interrelated problems: (1) its failure to engage all actors fuelling instability; (2) its constrained geographic extent; and (3) the lack of political will and commitment from its signatories and guarantors. Moreover, the agreement only covered a portion of Mali's instability, concentrating on the 2011-2012 rebellion in Northern Mali, and failed to address the escalating Islamist violence, deadly inter-ethnic conflict, and ongoing insecurity in Mali's central regions. The parties and guarantors of the agreement lack the political will and capacity to put into practice the agreement's fundamental tenets, such as political decentralisation and the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants. It also excluded many important stakeholders, such as Islamist groups, civil society organisations, women's

groups, youth groups and other non-state actors, which has led to a lack of trust and support for the agreement. Similarly, in the CAR, the latest peace accord, signed in Bangui on 19 February 2019, has been continuously violated by belligerent armed groups.<sup>21</sup>

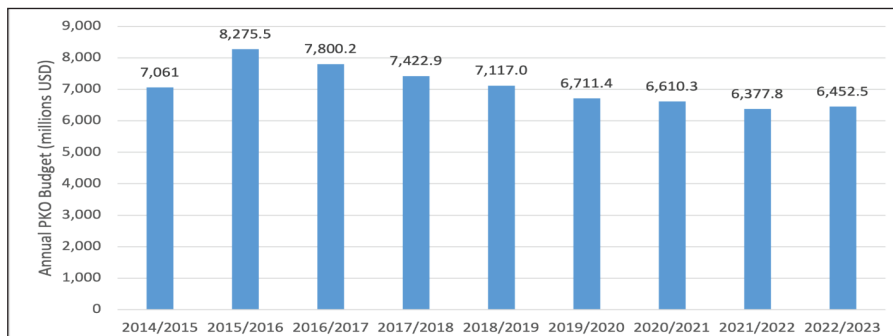
### Weaknesses of The Current UN Peacebuilding Approach

The UN has mainly two peacekeeping missions in the Sahel region, the MINUSMA and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). While these missions have made considerable progress, the current approach of the UN towards peacebuilding in the Sahel has several weaknesses, including inadequate resources, lack of coordination, limited focus on addressing root causes, flaws in the mandate, and lack of community engagement.<sup>22</sup>

### Inadequate Resources

The UN peacekeeping missions operate with a shortage of human resources and equipment, which limit their ability to carry out the mandated tasks and respond to emerging security threats. The gradual budget cut has forced the missions to adopt many innovative means to squeeze the strength and limit the use of resources.<sup>23</sup> As opposed to the growing security challenges, the missions also face difficulties incorporating sophisticated outfits.

**Figure 8: The UN Peacekeeping Annual Budget (2014-2022)**



Source: Daniel Forti, 'The 2022 UN Peacekeeping Budget: Signs of Progress or a Fleeting Moment of Consensus?', IPI Global Observatory, 20 July 2022, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2022/07/2022-un-peacekeeping-budget/>.

### Lack of Coordination

Coordination and cooperation among UN peacekeeping missions, regional organisations, and national security forces in the Sahel are often weak. In Mali, the French Barkhane force used to operate independently from the MINUSMA, while FAMA itself is often convicted for atrocities. With the French withdrawing from Mali and Mali withdrawing from the G5 Sahel and FAMA

operating in collaboration with the Russian Wagner Group, multilateral coordination aspects have become very challenging for the MINUSMA. Due to the shrinking resources and budget allotment, it has become further tricky for the MINUSMA to support other regional forces. On the contrary, both MINUSCA and the Government of CAR have put additional emphasis on regional and international cooperation and multilateral coordination.<sup>24</sup> However, it is yet to yield any significant result.

### **Limited Focus on Addressing Root Causes**

The UN peacekeeping missions in the Sahel often focus on addressing the symptoms of conflict rather than the underlying causes. According to a report by the International Crisis Group, while MINUSMA has reduced violence in some areas of Mali, it has not done enough to address the underlying political and economic grievances that drive conflict.

### **Weaknesses in The Mandate**

The mandate of UN peacekeeping missions in the Sahel is often limited, which can restrict their ability to respond to emerging threats. For example, MINUSMA's mandate primarily focuses on providing security and supporting the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement in Mali, but it has limited capacity to address the growing threat of terrorism.<sup>25</sup>

### **Lack of Community Engagement**

UN peacekeeping missions in the Sahel often lack meaningful engagement with local communities, limiting their understanding of local dynamics, priorities, and needs. Although the UN has recently emphasised community engagement by including an 'Engagement Team' in the military contingents and highlighting its importance in the mandates, peacekeeping missions, specially MINUSMA, is yet to achieve the desired result in building trust and cooperation with local communities. However, since 2019, MINUSCA has shown some visible efforts in this regard.<sup>26</sup>

### **An Adaptive Approach Towards Peacebuilding**

The UN has been involved in peacebuilding efforts in the Sahel region for several years, but the evolving security landscape requires a comprehensive and adaptive approach that considers emerging security challenges and addresses the root causes of the conflicts. An adaptive approach to peacebuilding also involves adjusting to changing circumstances and emerging threats to ensure peacebuilding efforts.

### **African Solutions to African Problems**

Despite resource limitations, African mediators have greater legitimacy in the Sahel than non-Africans, which play an essential role in mediation. The notion of African unity strengthens the African mediators to push other actors for concessions. While non-African actors also must have direct and vital involvement, their role would be better served in supporting and monitoring the peace process, allowing African actors to take the lead. The UN should focus on a collaborative approach towards regional mediation involving the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), African Union (AU), G5 Sahel and other state and non-state actors. The UN should also increase the involvement of these regional bodies in designing and implementing effective peacebuilding strategies.

### **Need for Regional Cooperation**

Despite the regional nature of security challenges, the Sahel countries lack a proper regional peacebuilding strategy and are left with fragmented regional collaboration in security, conflict resolution, political transition, and governance. Hence, the UN peacekeeping missions should work closely with the Sahelian Governments and regional organisations to increase multilateral collaboration in respect of building the state's capacity, promoting good governance, enhancing border security, countering criminal and terrorist activity, socio-economic development and limiting environmental impacts. The UN should also work on mediating the diverging interests and conflicts among the regional actors, like the rivalry between Algeria and Morocco and tensions between Algeria and ECOWAS, which will likely hinder any such multilateral, regional effort.<sup>27</sup>

### **Community Engagement and Local Mediation**

The UN should prioritise community engagement in its peacebuilding efforts in the Sahel to build deeper relationships with local communities and work closely with them to address the root causes of conflict in areas where Sahelian Government organs usually have a limited presence. Civil society organisations and community/religious leaders should actively participate in peacebuilding. The traditional rituals and cultural bonding among the local communities should be utilised to yield meaningful discourse in the conflict resolution processes, notably in the case of intercommunal conflicts. The UN missions should conduct extensive community outreach under CIMIC (Civil-Military Coordination) programmes tailored to the needs and priorities of local communities. Military Observers (MILOBS) and Engagement Teams (ET) of the military contingents should be specially trained to engage in dialogue with the obscure rural population in the remotest areas.



### **Reform and Implementation of The Peace Agreements**

In Mali, to increase acceptance and credibility of the Algiers Peace Accord, the UN should engage with its stakeholders to promote greater inclusivity by incorporating the non-signatory armed groups, Islamist groups, political parties, civil society organisations, women and youth groups, and other non-state actors. It is worth mentioning that the Islamist groups have large population support bases in Northern Mali and are closely linked to the signatory armed groups. MINUSMA should also ensure the DDR process maintaining transparency and it needs to be accelerated to fully integrate the former rebels into the national forces and mainstream national economy. Regarding the CAR, the UN should focus on local and regional mediation to enforce dialogues among the conflicting armed groups.

### **Strengthen Intelligence-Gathering and Early Warning Mechanisms**

An adaptive approach towards peacebuilding requires strong intelligence-gathering and early warning capabilities to identify emerging threats and adjust peacebuilding strategies. It demands investing in acquiring modern Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI), and digital data analysis. Advanced AI can be utilised for massive data optimisation, predictive intelligence, systems behavioural analysis, and anomaly detection. Apart from technological breakthroughs, the UN should also work closely with local communities, civil society organisations, and national governments to identify early warning signs and develop effective prevention strategies.

### **Rapid, Coordinated and Flexible Response Mechanism**

The UN should focus on building a rapid and well-coordinated mechanism to respond to any crisis within the shortest possible time. It requires effective intelligence gathering and sharing capabilities; advanced ISR, communication, and Electronic Warfare (EW) units; and military and police contingents with superior mobility and force protection. Besides, the UN field missions should develop the Joint Operation Centres (JOC) as coordinating hubs of the overall response mechanism encompassing all UN and non-UN elements. Engaging with local communities will also be critical to develop a rapid and coordinated response mechanism where communities can serve as a source of intelligence and support security forces to combat security threats. Responsiveness among the local population can be instilled by addressing the root causes of insecurity, such as poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Capacity building of the military and security forces in the Sahel will also significantly contribute to this aspect.



### **Capacity Building of The Sahelian Security Apparatus**

While European Union (EU) Training Mission in Mali (EUTM Mali), EU Capacity Building Mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali), EUCAP Sahel Niger and G5 Sahel are working for almost a decade now, they have seen little success in terms of capacity building of the national and regional institutions. As such, the UN may emphasise upon implementing the 'UN Support Plan for the Sahel' that involves:

developing local infrastructure for peace and strengthening the capacity of national institutions and communities to prevent conflict and violence, combat terrorism, crime, and violent extremism, through education, development programmes, and intercultural and interreligious dialogue.<sup>28</sup>

The UN peacekeeping missions may provide training and resources to local security forces and support the national institutions to promote good governance, human rights, and the rule of law.

### **Conclusion**

The vast and sparsely populated Sahel region has long been known for its drought and food insecurity vulnerability. In recent years, it has become a hotspot for violent extremism, organised crime, and inter-communal violence. Moreover, poor and non-inclusive governance, weak and corrupted state institutions, political instability, and economic fragility have worsened the security landscape. The drastic climate change in the Sahel, with more than 80% of the population dependent on agriculture and pastoral activities, has increased food insecurity and heightened inter-communal conflict. The conflict dynamics also include irregular migration, illicit trafficking and transnational organised crime, especially in the remote and bordering areas where the Sahelian governments have their weakest presence. With the prevailing security trend in the Sahel, all these challenges will likely evolve with new dimensions and continue to undermine the peacebuilding efforts of all regional and international actors.

The Sahel's complex security challenges demand an adaptive peacebuilding strategy that combines political, economic and security measures. It should be grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the root causes of conflict in the region and should be tailored to address local communities' specific challenges and needs. With the international community's support, regional governments must address the root causes, including poverty, weak governance, and intercommunal tensions. G5 Sahel Joint Force, alongside the UN, should

work hard to improve border security, combat the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and counter violent extremist groups. The UN should also focus on inclusivity and arbitration through the important regional actors and closely coordinate with other regional and international bodies. It should also prioritise early warning and prevention, flexible and responsive deployment, community engagement, and capacity building. Only by taking a holistic and long-term approach in coordination with all regional, extra-regional, communal, ethnic, and social actors the Sahel region can be stabilised.

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### **Brief Biography**



**Lieutenant Colonel Syed Md As-Sazid, afwc, psc**, was commissioned on 27 December 2001. He has completed MSc in MDS and MSS in Security and Development from Bangladesh University of Professionals and an EMBA from American International University, Bangladesh. He attended Intelligence Staff Officers Course and Nuclear Security Training in India, International Intelligence Analysis Training Course in the UK, and an online Certificate Course on Terrorism Studies at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, UK. He served in several infantry regiments, headquarters, and institutions. He commanded the 10 Bangladesh Infantry Regiment and The Interim Response Force at Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant. As a peacekeeper, he served in UNOCI, Ivory Coast as a contingent member and later as a Military Staff Officer in MINUSMA, Mali. As a Subject Matter Expert (SME) on peacekeeping intelligence, the officer co-authored the 'UN Peacekeeping Missions Military PKISR Unit Manual'. He has to his credit publications in the *Army Journal* and *NDC E-Journal*. He has been decorated with both Operational and Non-Operational Chief of Army Staff's Commendation due to his distinguished services in the Army and achieved IGP's Exemplary Good Service Badge for his services in RAB. Presently, he is posted as the General Staff Officer (Grade1) at the Overseas Operations Directorate, Army Headquarters.

## **Dichotomy between Guarding Vulnerabilities of Women in Armed Conflict Under Peacekeeping Perspective: A Ground Reality**

Colonel Mohammad Masud Parvez, afwc, psc

### **Introduction**

Vulnerability of women and children is a much-talked subject in today's society. It gets much flowery attention if it is under conflict prone area, particularly if it is under the umbrella of UN peacekeeping environment. There are policies and conventions at strategic level and action plans for safeguarding their vulnerabilities at operational level which aims to have better output in field at tactical level. Policies and strategies are taken by the various actors like host nations, warring parties and the meditating organizations and agencies like UN and other regional organizations.

In reality, there is a far cry between policies in vogue and situation in the field. The oppression and repression to women and children continue to remain in the conflict prone areas. Judith delineates that women experience armed conflict in much more different ways than men based on the existing culture and societies.<sup>1</sup> They appeared to be the easiest prey of the conflict and often act as bargaining tools to the belligerent parties. Thus, despite having policies in vogue, women and children continue to remain as highly vulnerable group. There is saga of tales about their miseries through the ages in past and no significant progress are noticed even today in modern days post world war conflicts of 21<sup>st</sup> century where there are involvement of 3rd parties like UN and other agencies as important actor in peacekeeping mission areas.

An in-depth study reveals the moderate level of priority to safeguard vulnerable group by UN in the domain of peacekeeping. Yet, it is assumed that actions plans are not seemingly effective enough to protect the rights of vulnerable group in this civilized society. Even gender streaming in peacekeeping organizations and outfits appears to be challenging in manifold aspects due to tokenism against representational counts and long carried traditional mind set as well as approach. As such, a thorough retrospect study is required to analyze the prevailing situation and make an account of progress in empowering the rights of women and children. An intriguing introspective analysis through empirical practices will portray the women's rights and vulnerabilities in the conflict zone which will help to make an opportunity for revision of study in this regard. It will enable to focus in pragmatic way forward at different levels by different stake holders.

### What is Vulnerability of Women in Armed Conflict?

In general vulnerabilities can be termed as inherent weakness and limitations of any individual, any group or sect of population who are susceptible to be harmed, belittle and negative outcome. Commonly it indicates the lack of capabilities or resilience to cope up with the stress, shock or any adverse situation poised to them. It can be influenced by the factors of age, gender, health, education, poverty, social exclusion etc.<sup>2</sup> It can be manifested in the form of protection, health, social paradigm, economic fields and traditions and culture.

In any armed conflict, women and children are found to be the most vulnerable group.<sup>3</sup> They are subjected to various forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. In general, the vulnerabilities of women and children in any armed conflict under peacekeeping environment comes in manifold domains in the area of deprivation to basic needs, access to facilities, protection issues, sexual exploitation and abuses due to their inherent inability and being feeble in nature.

**Figure 1: Women's Vulnerabilities: What Women Peace and Security (WPS) means to people**



Source: UNSCR 1325 at 20 Years

### Contextual Policies and Realities

Fundamental human rights are constituted in the 30 articles known as 30 universal declaration of human rights including rights to life, education, expression, movement, thought, religion etc. Beside those declaration, rights of

women are emphasized by other declaration specific to women and children through international humanitarian law, UN resolution of Women, peace and security and mission mandate including policies. These exorbitant policies are discussed in details as contextual policies about protecting rights of women particularly under the paradigm of armed conflict environment.<sup>4</sup>

**International Humanitarian Law (IHL):** It defines broad spectrum of humanitarian law as it contains a set of rules that aims to limit the effects of armed conflict. IHL articulates laws to protect people who are not or are no longer participating in hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare.

There are forty-three provisions of the Geneva Conventions and Protocols which particularly deal with women and the impact of armed conflict. They described the women's relationships with others in their own rights. These were enacted to deal sexual offenses, women's dignity and honour. Kaptan, rightfully argued that IHL is mostly focused on rights concerning sexual attributes where chartering features as seen important for men, namely the chastity and modesty of women.<sup>5</sup> They elucidated provisions protecting combatants and civilians mostly in the form of "Protection" than that of "Prohibition."

Judith, pointed out that women are affected distinctively differently than men.<sup>6</sup> Women may already receive special protection under IHL, for example when women are pregnant or prisoners of war. But those rules relate only to the sexual and reproductive issues of women's lives which only could be viewed from a male perspective. The failure to address these problems faced by women in any armed conflict can remain out of the boundaries of IHL.

#### **WPS Resolution 1325 and so on**

The key policy issues regarded as lynchpin of UN on WPS agenda was passed through resolution 1325 but appeared into a rhetorical expression without much positive account. Same has been accounted and audited by Kaptan where resemblance is found between flamboyant expressions and high sounded policies for WPS issues.<sup>7</sup> UNSCR 1325 had following 09 resolutions up to 2019 as sequel to other for protecting rights of women and reducing abuses and SEA cases.

Although WPS is a special initiative in protecting the rights of women focusing on to the domain of armed conflict, yet scrutinized audit of the initiative highlights some rudimental drawbacks. Echoing with Kaptan holistic implementation, policy coherence, localization of WPS agenda and lack of accountability are the challenging dimension of these policies.



### **Crux of Mission Mandate: Protection of Civilian**

Protection of civilian is the embedded mandate in all peacekeeping missions now a days although it is specified separately in most of the peacekeeping missions. It received special attention for immediate protection of civilian in Sierra Leone in 1990. Peacekeeping missions are conducted to support the overall political objective for settling political issues of parties of host nation. Whatever may be the political aim and strategic objective to be achieved, protection of civilian must stand in the forefront of agendas where protection of women and children gets special attention due to their vulnerabilities. This dogma is widely practiced in the peacekeeping mission's environment.

Now questions arise about ground realities of vulnerabilities of women having prevailing mission mandate. It demands recount of auditing about effectiveness of such mandate in protecting the rights of women in any armed conflict. A reality check is felt necessary how much mission mandate along with WPS agenda could achieve its stance about rights of women and children in peacekeeping environment.

### **Women's Vulnerabilities in Conflict Zone**

Women's vulnerability mostly includes dearth of secure physical environment, conducive prevailing situation to function women meaningfully in public sphere out of harm, fear. It also adds any potential danger of sex based violence, upgradation of security values of women over men but not limited to physical or material wellbeing which can be categorized under following broad heads:-

a. **Sexual Violence:** The easiest and heinous tool being used in any armed conflict is making the women prey to the conflict. They are sexually violated, harassed and put under torture and oppression.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the ages, it was noticed that men fight in the war but women suffer most. They remain highly vulnerable to sexual harassment and exploitation like rape, forced marriage, abortion, torture, trafficking, sexual slavery, STDs including HIV/AIDS. Bureau of International Information Program, US rightly highlighted in their report on Women in Armed Conflict that women are victims of genocide and enslaved for labour. Women and girls are viewed often as culture bearers and reproducers of "the enemy" and thereby become prime targets. According to a report by the United Nations, an estimated 20,000 to 50,000 women were raped during the Bosnian War. In Rwandan Genocide in 1994, it was reported that there was an estimation of 250,000 to 500,000 rape case during the crisis. In DR Congo on going crisis, it is feared that the estimated cases of rape and sexual violence committed by Congolese soldiers and rebel groups may surpass hundred

thousand cases. UN Report in 2020 reveals 236 cases of sexual violence in DR Congo, 242 cases in South Sudan 315 cases in Central Africa Republic, 120 cases in Mali and 69 cases in Haiti. It is assumed that non reported case would be in high count.

b. **Forceful Displacement:** In any armed conflict women not being part to the conflict are heavily affected due to forceful displacement. Crisis get worsen, when they don't find any safe place for shelter to live in. Besides, coupled with the family burden of managing her entire family with kids, it makes her highly vulnerable to continue to live on with the basic standard level of dignity and security. The impact of family disintegration is mostly faced by women during and post conflict time.

**Figure 2 : Somalian Women Gather at The Dadaab Refugee Camp in Eastern Kenya**



Source: Women in the world today@bnccampus.ca

**Figure 3 : Displaced women, driven by Janjaweed militia, refugee camp in Darfur, Sudan**

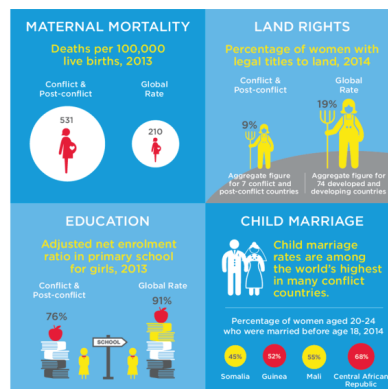


Source: Women in the world today@bnccampus.ca

c. **Forceful Recruitment:** With the changing nature of armed conflict, conventional war falls behind the unconventional conflict. In the era of asymmetric threat, women are forced be part of the conflict and join war to compensate the deficient status of fighting capabilities. Due to the derogated ethics in war and void of conventions in asymmetric and unconventional conflict, women are forcefully dragged in and make them vulnerable to hostilities and torture. Following different reports of UN like Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, released in 2020 and others, it was reported that girls were subjected to forced recruitment in Central Africa, Mali, DR Congo, Somalia, Syria and South Sudan.<sup>9</sup> Even few of the countries tried with their national armies too like Chad, Somalia and South Sudan. Notable women were forced for recruitment in Liberia, Sierra Leon and Uganda during their conflict.

d. **Denial to Basic Needs:** In present days world, most women live in low or middle-income countries whereas only 15% of the world's 3.3 billion females living in high-income countries. More than one woman in three lives in a low-income country. It is presumably appeared that women have more distressful condition in low or middle income countries in general to have access to basic needs under the situation of armed conflict. Moreover, this also can be argued for relatively developed countries too while women were entrapped in conflict areas like Conflict of Bosnia, Georgia and Chechnya. Conflict environments are compounded with full of fog and friction where uncertainty soars in the sky, survivability becomes very much challenging. Here the entire wrath of conflict is being mostly faced by women as they remain devoid of even basic needs. Thus, they need to pay heavily in conflict environment even in modern days. Aolain stated that women suffer most in armed conflict being devoid of basic needs like education, healthcare, security and most essential needs which are shown in Figure 4 below:-<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 4: Women devoid of basic needs in UNPK**



Source: unwomen.org

e. **Child Soldiering:** In parallel with the abuse of women, irony of modern days armed conflict is the abuse of children and forceful recruitment for child soldiering. In many peace keeping mission areas, it was noticed that belligerent parties involved themselves in child soldiering. Children gets trapped in the conflict and become easy prey to illicit activities. According to United Nations, currently there are an estimated 250,000 child soldiers around the world those involved in armed conflicts in at least 20 countries.<sup>11</sup> Children who are very poor, orphaned, or displaced are particularly vulnerable to recruitment as child soldiers.

### **Functional Dimensions of Peacekeeping Operations for Guarding Women's Vulnerabilities**

When outcome is the derivatives of causes, then functional dimensions are of paramount importance to outline the challenges of guarding vendibilities of women in peacekeeping operations. These initiating factors act as catalyst in scrutinizing the broader domain and help to address proactive measures than analyzing physical outcome as discussed in the subsequent paragraphs:-

a. **Host Nations Initiative:** The deepening roots of armed conflicts are mostly pertaining to political issues. Any conflict in any areas is mostly governed by the factors like power game, ethnic conflict, communal violence, national, regional or international politics, ideological dominance, illicit access to natural resources etc. For all the cases, actors are worrying parties within the state, regional and international players, where women and children sect of the population generally remains innocent. But ironically, they become the worst sufferer of these conflicts. As the conflicts are mostly revolving through the political process, as such responsibilities of guarding vulnerabilities of women in armed conflict are primarily vested to host nations responsibilities in peace keeping environment. Women and children must be kept away from their political agenda so that impact of their political process cause least hamper to women and children. Host nation's policy should be empowering women even they belong to opposing parties instead of making them vulnerable. The warring parties must at least work in common conscientious environment where UN can act as an active watch dog in monitoring and ensuring the proper rights of women.

b. **Reporting and Uncovering Realities:** The very sad part of the story is presumed as nature of non-reporting climate. Women by nature are made marginalized and discriminated in the prevailing culture of male dominated society. When stigma of abuse put in the courtyard of women instead of men, they become naturally sidelined. It is being compounded by other social norms,

taboo etc. This inherent injustice to women throughout the world shrinks them more to surface the abuses to the victims. Consequently, a general tendency prevails about non-reporting of incidents of abuses. Besides, it is aggravated by intimidation, segregation and application of force by different means. This also indicates the scenarios that statistical projections are the nominal outcome or to some extent fallacy against the incidents happens on ground. The lack of projectability, empowering to voice out the abused women and abilities of the society to unearth the actual cases and dysfunctional media reporting are the existing realities of vulnerabilities of women particularly under armed conflict environment.

c. **Reach of UN in Protecting Women's Vulnerabilities:** Peacekeeping operations are generally carried out in realm of agreed negotiations between the worrying parties. Nature of conflict differs between country to country. There can be main three functional fields of reporting, action and feedback where UN can assist host nations in protecting women and children under the broad umbrella of protection of civilian. These components are mainly Human rights organization who act as watch dog for violation of human rights and abuses, Humanitarian organizations who can render assist with humanitarian needs to the people in need and last element is the peacekeepers who are deployed for peacekeeping or peace building who consist of military and police both to provide appropriate feedback in the chain.

**Figure 5: Functional Group of UN Working on Women's Vulnerability**



Source: Author's self-construct

**d. Human Rights Agencies:** Human rights organization basically work for preservation of human rights and fostering security in peacekeeping environment. They are namely the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN Development Program (UNDP), the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNCHR), the UN Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Program (WFP) etc.

Human rights organization act as watch dog for the preservation of human rights as described in their policy. They also need to work under challenged scenario. Their challenges are aggravated by the policy and priorities of host nation, culture of the conflict areas, outreach of their agencies, access to accurate information and last but not the least logistical support. Human rights agencies may be very much vigil in in executing their roles, yet it's not possible to portray the real picture of human rights violations unless they are equally supported by action plan of host nation. In any conflict prone areas, it is difficult to obtain unbiased reporting. There are instances of manipulation of information by host nation or the parties operating there.

Human rights organizations need to work in complex landscape. The behaviours or conflict prone areas are subjected to cultural sensitivities. Their behaviour are governed by traditions, communal practice, cast, sect, religion, social taboo. What is being considered as abuse, same might be even accepted by victims too like women and children as social norms or tradition. Judith criticizes that reality in protecting women's' right by IHL is under question in modern days conflict.<sup>12</sup> Social taboo is another dominant factors which outplay the execution of preservation of human rights. It is found that victims themselves don't have the enough courage to disclose their oppression and miseries. It is mostly applicable for sexual abuse and exploitation incidents in most of the parts of the world.

Another reality that poses challenges in human rights issues is the outreach of UN. Although Peace keepers are deployed sparsely around the conflict zone considering the security needs, yet there exists far flung area where arm's length of UN agencies can not cover effectively. Reporting human rights abuses on those situations becomes extremely difficult by UN agencies or even the peace keepers. Case of Bosnia, Rowanda, DR Congo could be glaring instances on it. This situation is heavily influenced by logistic needs. In many peace keeping missions, due to poor infrastructural back up, logistics of mission remains mainly supported by air. In those areas, regular functioning becomes mere a wishful thinking. Beside the situation would worsen due to the present trend of budgetary decrease of UN which ultimately hamper the overall effectiveness of UN operating in a particular area.



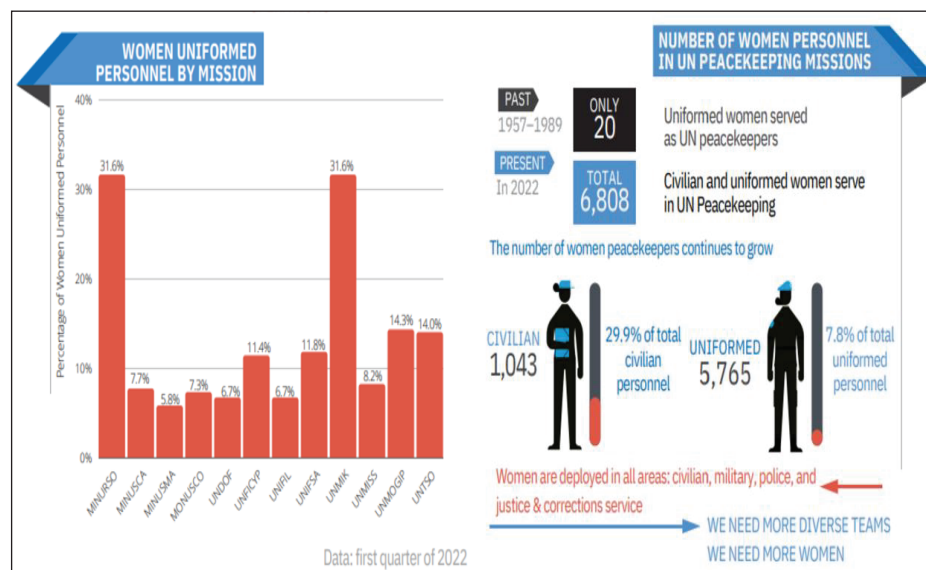
e. **Humanitarian Organizations:** No plan is a plan unless it is executed. While human rights agencies act as watch dog, humanitarian agencies can appear as saviour to mitigate the distress of people. They basically function under the broad mandate of "Protection of Civilian" with special emphasize to the vulnerable group in particularly women and children. There had been a tale of saga for peacekeeping operations. Lots of strategies were adopted, action plan and policies were formulated. Now, it is time for making an audit of support system UN could provide to the women and children and their effectiveness at different parts. Problems once identified must be addressed according to the needs. Under the broad umbrella of UN, they are committed and actively involved in ensuring rights of women. So, it is to be assessed that in exercising those support function, what resources they have in line with their policy option and how effective were those in addressing the needs.

f. **Peacekeeping Force:** Peacekeepers are the nucleus element of peacekeeping force. Second Secretary General of UN, Dag Hammarskjold (1953-61) remarked, "peacekeeping is not the job of soldiers but only soldiers can do that." As such, peacekeepers are the facilitator in the overall peace efforts. They help in each process and all functional entities like human rights agencies and humanitarian efforts in the overall process which ultimately help reducing gender vulnerability. They conduct extensive patrol in different kinds like long range patrol, escort patrol, force protection, specialized gender-oriented task patrol etc. Peacekeeping could be effectively conducted with strong women participation in the peace efforts. It is another dimension where peacekeepers masculinity turns into abuser as discussed subsequently. It is noteworthy that peacekeeping efforts lack addressing the needs of post conflict issues too. Judith rightly pointed that women are also excluded in the reconstruction phases too.<sup>13</sup>

g. **When Protector is Abuser:** Peacekeeping missions while protecting the rights of victims sometime suffer from maintaining the set standard and its core value as few peacekeepers join the violators in the form of sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA). The cumulative negative impact it poses not for the number of incidents but due to its departure of stance as protector. UN has issued several regulations and took up stern action policy to guard those, yet the overall security dynamics, masculinity, void in taking actions by troops contributing countries and other factors still make things challenging to address through WPS agenda. In 2017, a report by Associated Press documented more than 2,000 allegations SEA cases by UN peacekeepers and other personnel over a 12-year period (Associated Press, 2017). According to UN Secretary Generals reports in 2018, there were as many as 54 allegations of SEA cases against UN personnel in first three months of one year

**h. Women in Peacekeeping:** To mitigate the impact of SEA cases and strengthening the women's empowerment and outreach, participation of women in UN peace keeping and gender mainstreaming appeared as corner stone in peace keeping climate. UN has taken efforts of employing female peace keepers who can be deployed with their outfit in far flung. They can act as watchdog, can monitor and render support to the victims, particularly women and children. At tactical level they can work as first line support to women although their inherent disadvantage is the nominal presence. United Nations has taken an important initiative through Security Council Resolution no 1325 (UNSCR1325) along with an action plan called Action Plan for Peacekeeping (A4P) as declaration for shared commitment. The A4P was signed by 152 member states where few countries came forward to champion implementation of A4P's commitment like Bangladesh, Finland, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Norway, South Africa and United Kingdom. This initiative mostly focusses support to women in full participation including key posts.

**Figure 6: Action Plan for Peacekeeping (A4P)**

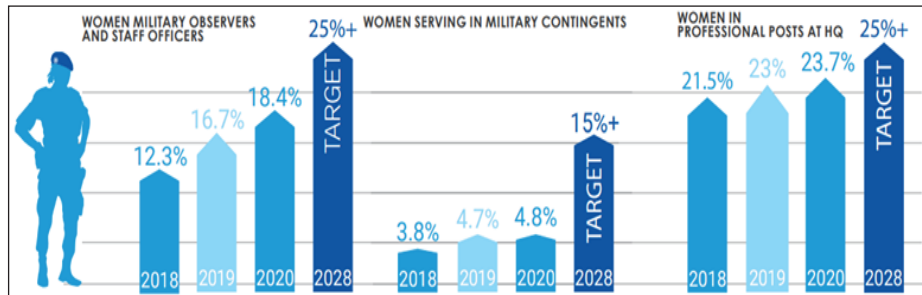


Source: Action for Peacekeeping @un.org

**i. Tokenism:** Although employment of women in peacekeeping is heavily sounded, yet it suffers from the notion of 'Tokenism.' Women are present everywhere but not in numbers and in positions are the true reality of tokenism. So long tendency of 'tokenism' continues to prevail as used as a tool of participation, no effective stature can be built in empowering women as well guarding their vulnerabilities.<sup>14</sup>



**Figure 7: Projected Military Record Number of Women in Peacekeeping Missions**



Source: Action for Peacekeeping @un.org

j. **Gender Activities in UN Peacekeeping Operations:** Against the realities of tokenism, UN persuades for maximization of participation and gender mainstreaming. Gender perspective in UN peacekeeping operations itself is maintained mostly in the form of participation, decision making, representation. Besides, functionally it is to widen the outreach through different activities. It aims to give voices to the women, ensure proper representation, protects the right through legislation, supports the implementation through administrative and societal structure, reaches to marginalized society in the fields and lastly empower women and children in ensuring their due rights. Marginalized women and children who are susceptible to have worst impact of armed conflict should be reach through different engagements activities of UN organizations, agencies and NGOs. Accordingly, various watch dog of humanitarian agencies and human rights organizations with their own representatives work to reduce vulnerabilities of women against odds and challenges.<sup>15</sup>

### **Challenges of Gender Mainstreaming**

These challenges are highlighted below:-

- Denial of existence of gender discrimination and voids.
- Political dimension and downplay of gender issues against other political interests.
- Dearth of legal and constitutional framework in support of equal rights of women in practice.
- Rhetoric expression in gender mainstreaming while not matching the action plans in addressing the realities.
- Perspective of relegating the gender issues and sidelining it as a women issue.
- Clear pragmatic strategies and policies direction in decision making process and executing it to the root level.

- g. Most importantly financial support and allocation of budget in support of action plan.
- h. Exercising “Tokenism” in highlighting gender issues and perspective.
- i. The cultural practices contradictory to gender mainstreaming even violating international humanitarian law (IHL).<sup>16</sup>

### **Ways Forward**

Women vulnerabilities arising from armed conflict are the byproduct of political process. The very issue is political as such at strategic end, host nation, regional actors, UN and its agencies including civil society must come into play to mitigate the issues. There are varying interests of each actor at strategic level, but the overall political process must function and remain proactive in making other actors accountable whosever be it host nation or regional actors try to dilute the issue for their own interest. Besides, political process must engage civil societies to work in the perspective international standard of human rights even raising it above the domain of cultural paradox.

Political instruments should facilitate the awareness process too. Awareness is only possible when outreach is extended, voicing out of women about their issues are ensured, human rights organization can act as true watchdog and local media is strengthened to appropriately project the deviations, needs and outcome. Resultantly peacekeepers with gender perspective, human rights activists and media can work in a well knitted landscape for making the issues into accountable through enactment.

Enactment and accountabilities regulate the proper execution of legislation and conventions. While enactment through IHL, WPS and mission mandate and other conventions seems apparently enough but cannot be meaningful unless effectively executed on ground in protecting the rights. Although agendas of WPS were reviewed periodically but diverse practice of participating nations to be streamlined according to their legal structure to bring into proper justice of SEA cases. Most importantly ICRC, ICC and ICJ could be effectively brought into play for ensuring accountability through justice against the cases of abuses, genocide, crime against humanity in conflict environment. Severe punitive steps can come as alternative in ICC for cases like forceful recruitment of women and children and their abuses. This means of accountability to be supported by capacity building.

When question comes about capacity building, developing institutions, structural change of peacekeeping force by increasing women's participation is of paramount importance. Human rights agencies, and Humanitarian support system to be further widened to increase their outreach as well as capacity building.

Last but not the least, humanitarian support system is costly affairs too. For developing overall logistic support system, structural change, strengthening humanitarian efforts, peace building efforts are closely interlinked with budgetary aspect. Budget cutting approach will surely have reverse impact on output. Accordingly, reviewing of UN budget system and prioritizing the allocation areas against these issues should move in parallel. Post conflict issues must not be overlooked and to be financially supported too in peace building approach.

### Conclusion

Vulnerabilities of women in armed conflict is an age-old issue but demands special attention in the paradigm of conflict of 21st century. With the evolving civilized society many conventions, regulations and societal norms have come into play and mediating efforts by institutionalized organization like UN and other agencies have come into existence. Since the inception of UN, decades have passed away but progression did not move forward as expected. When rights are imprisoned inside textual context, women and children are also imprisoned in the form of abuses and exploitation in armed conflict. Thus, this study made an endeavour to bring a contextual reality check through empirical practices and make it a textual audit for guarding vulnerabilities of women in armed conflict. Addressing the issues will automatically come up as way forward steps when predominately autopsy is done against human abuses and violation of human rights for women.

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14. See *Associated Press Report*, 2017.
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16. [https://www.hrw.org/topic/childrens-rights/child-soldiersWILPF\\_UNSCR-1325-at-20-Years\\_Web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/topic/childrens-rights/child-soldiersWILPF_UNSCR-1325-at-20-Years_Web.pdf)

### Brief Biography



**Colonel Mohammad Masud Parvez, afwc, psc** is an ex infantry officer who was commissioned with 37 BMA Long Course in December 1997. He has completed his Masters in Military Science from Bangladesh University of Professional (BUP) and achieved Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from University of Dhaka. Currently he is undergoing M Phil programme in Security and Strategy from BUP. He is a graduate from Defence Service Command and Staff College and National Defence College. He has served in three infantry units and commanded 33 Bangladesh Infantry Regiment (BIR). As extra regimental employment, he served in Army Headquarters, Overseas Operations Directorate as General Staff Officer, Grade-2, (GSO-2). As GSO-1, he also served in 10 Infantry Division, Army Training and Doctrine Command and Defence Service Command and Staff College respectively. He is the incumbent Colonel Staff (civil military relations) in Prime Minister's Office, Armed Forces Division. Under blue helmet, he served in DR Congo in an Infantry Battalion (BANBAT-4), MONUC from 2006 to 2007 and in Force Headquarters of United Nations Mission in Ivory Coast (ONUCI) between 2013 - 2014.

## **A Comprehensive Approach to Counter Improvised Explosive Devices from MINUSMA Perspective and Takeaways for Bangladesh Army**

Lieutenant Colonel Md Mamunur Rahman Siddiqui, psc

### **Introduction**

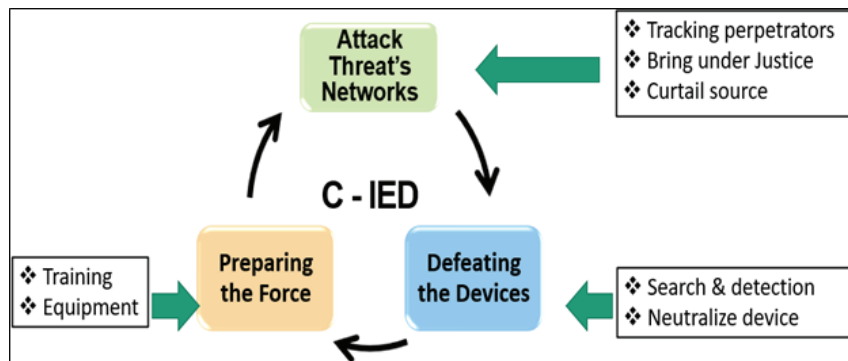
United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is often referred to as the most dangerous UN Mission on earth. Since its establishment in 2013, a total of 168 peacekeepers sacrificed their lives in various hostile acts.<sup>1</sup> Such statistics testify to the complexity of Mali's security situation and its operational environment. Despite encountering the multidimensional security challenges, Bangladeshi Contingents have been deployed in Mali since 2014, and they have earned the laurels of a 'Role Model' in MINUSMA through their utmost dedication, professionalism, hard work, and adaptable attitude. Besides, the achievements of the peacekeepers is often recognized as exemplary by the MINUSMA leadership also.

Bangladesh peacekeepers are performing their tasks under multiple security threats like Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks, indirect fire attacks, complex attacks, ambush, harassing fires, organized demonstrations and blocking of UN patrols. However, among all the security threats, IEDs remain to be the major threat to our forces operating in Mali. Various active Terrorist Armed Groups (TAGs) in Mali are frequently adopting new IED emplacement tactics and techniques. As such, the success of the contingents in MINUSMA significantly depends on our ability to correctly assess the IED threat and implement a feasible counter-IED (C-IED) strategy. In order to identify gaps and propose a comprehensive approach to C-IED with mitigation measures focusing on Bangladeshi contingents deployed in UN missions, an in-depth analysis of current IED threats, historical IED incidents, and existing C-IED mitigation measures have been examined in this article.

### **What is Counter IED (C-IED) Effort ?**

IED is an unconventional explosive weapon which is commonly used in asymmetric warfare as insurgent tactics across the world with Mali being no exception. On the other hand, C-IED effort is the domain of military and law enforcement agencies. C-IED effort is not only against the device itself but also against the IED networks. As such, any comprehensive C-IED strategy requires close coordination between different agencies. Besides, any successful C-IED strategy has three fundamental pillars. These are attacking the threat's network, defeating the devices, and preparing the Force.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1: Fundamental Pillars to Counter-IED**

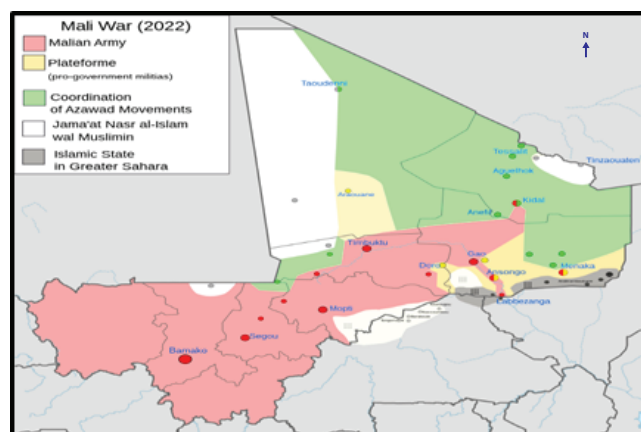


Source: Author's self-construct

### Background of The Mali Crisis

After the independence of Mali from France in 1960, the people of the northern region of Mali directly confronted the new government's authority. The northern area is mostly resided by Tuareg and Arab communities. As a result, so far there were four uprisings by Tuareg and Arab communities in 1963, 1991, 2006 and 2012.<sup>3</sup> In January 2012, the Tuareg rebellion under the National Movement for Azawad launched a series of attacks against the camps of Malian Defence Forces and government offices located in the north and northeastern part of Mali. Since 2012, Mali is facing both political and security challenges. On the one hand, a significant part of the central and northern parts of Mali is dominated by different Terrorist Armed Groups (TAGs) and on the other hand, the Malian Defence Force has seized the power in Mali.

**Figure 2: Map Showing Conflict Areas in Mali**



Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mali\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mali_War)

### The Present Situation in Mali

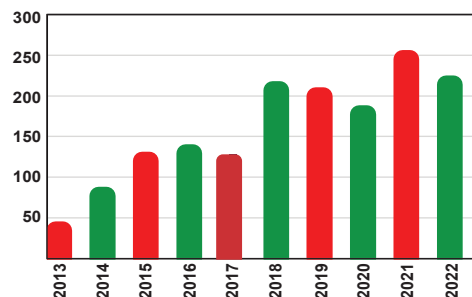
The present military government is enjoying popular support as its main political objectives are to infuse a sense of nationalism, fight against terrorism, eradicate corruption from society and most importantly get rid of foreign influences, especially former colonial power French. As a result, the present government has compelled the BARKHANE force (French troops) and TAKUBA force (French-led European Task Force) to withdraw from Mali by September 2022. The departure of the BARKHANE and TAKUBA forces has significantly reduced the means of area dominance and aerial vigilance which is likely to provide increased freedom of action to TAGs and more opportunities for IED attacks. However, the Malian government is now trying to fill up the security vacuum by inviting the Russian Private Military Company to operate against TAGs. Besides, Mali is also receiving military equipment and training from Russia to counter TAGs. However, the strength of Malian Defense and Security Forces (MDSF) is only 21,000 as of 2022<sup>5</sup> and they lack in adequate equipment which are the major challenges of MDSF. But, the size of Mali is eight times larger than Bangladesh. So, it is a very daunting task for MDSF to fight against the TAGs and ensure their dominance over entire Mali.

### IED Threat Analysis through Statistics

This is briefly described below:-

a. **IED Incidents of Mali:** Since the deployment of MINUSMA in 2013, a total of 1530 IED incidents have been recorded by United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in entire Mali till 2022.<sup>6</sup> The year 2021 was the deadliest year of IED attacks, with an average of 20 IED attacks per month. In 2022, there was 13% less IED attacks in comparison to 2021. However, considering the rising IED threat in the neighboring countries (Burkina Faso and Niger), the overall IED threat is increasing in the region. Besides, Malian Forces faced the most IED attacks in 2022.

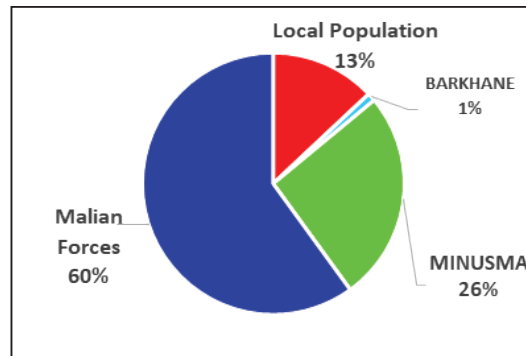
**Figure 3: IED Incidents in Mali 2013-2022<sup>7</sup>**



Source: UNMAS Mali IED Threat Overview 2022



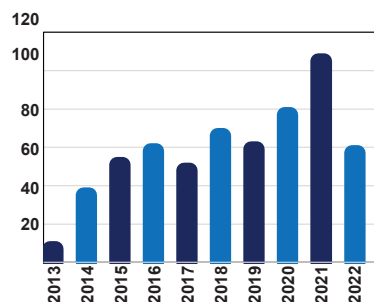
**Figure 4: Distribution of Affected Actors (2022)<sup>8</sup>**



Source: UNMAS Mali IED Threat Overview 2022

**b. IED Incidents Involving MINUSMA:** A total of 563 IED incidents have been recorded against MINUSMA from 2013 to 2022.<sup>9</sup> In 2021, MINUSMA saw a maximum of 105 IED attacks with an average of 8.75 incidents per month. However, in 2022, total 57 IEDs were encountered by MINUSMA which is 45% less in comparison to 2021.

**Figure 5: IED Incidents Against MINUSMA from (2013-2022)<sup>10</sup>**



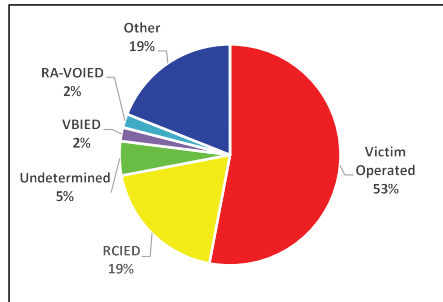
Source: UNMAS Mali IED Threat Overview 2022

**Table 1: Percentage of all IEDs Against MINUSMA<sup>11</sup>**

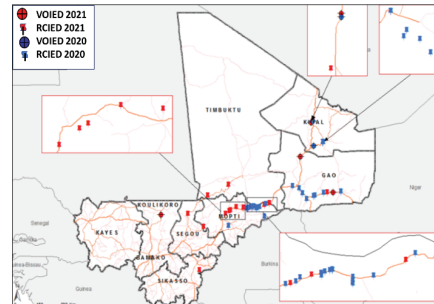
44.8%	2014
42.8%	2015
41.7%	2016
36%	2017
30.8%	2018
30.4%	2019
43.7%	2020
42%	2021
26.6%	2022

**c. IEDs Affecting MINUSMA by Category:** In 2022, MINUSMA was mostly affected by Victim Operated IEDs (VOIED) and Remotely Controlled IEDs (RCIED). However, RCIED threat in Sector Centre remains highly likely as the main supply routes are also shared by civilians. It is also to be noted that the use of Mines in preparation of IEDs is mostly limited to Sector North areas.

**Figure 6: IED Affecting MINUSMA by Category in 2022<sup>12</sup>**



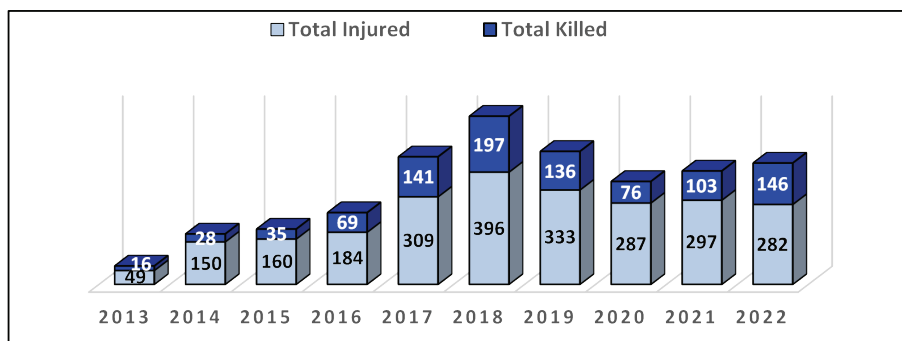
**Figure 7: RCIED and VOIED Incidents in 2020 vs 2021<sup>13</sup>**



Source: IED Threat Analysis Report of U2 CIED, FHQ, 2022

d. **IED Victims of Mali:** Since 2013, a total of 1530 IED incidents have been recorded causing 3691 casualties till 2022.<sup>14</sup> Out of the total casualties, 947 were killed in action. The year 2018 has been the deadliest year with 197 fatalities. Logistic convoys, convoy escorts, security patrols and quick reaction forces have sustained the highest casualties.

**Figure 8: IED Victims of Mali from (2013-2022)<sup>15</sup>**

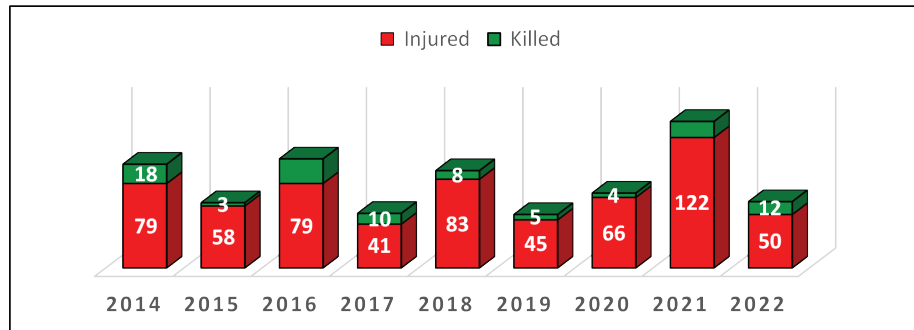


Source: UNMAS Mali IED Threat Overview 2022

e. **IED Victims of MINUSMA:** MINUSMA peacekeepers have also taken a heavy toll of 623 casualties by the IED attacks with 98 death cases till 2022. The year 2021 saw the highest number of MINUSMA casualties with 137 peacekeepers. In 2022, the ratio of killed per IED was 1:34 and injured per IED was 2:59.<sup>16</sup> The majority of attacks have occurred on main supply routes and access routes to UN camps. The fatalities have increased primarily due to the following reasons:-

- Accurate targeting by using Remotely Controlled IEDs.
- Increased MDSF operations due to which TAGs are retaliating desperately.
- Lack of jammers and MRAP vehicles. Besides, poor physical protection of Mine Protected Vehicles.

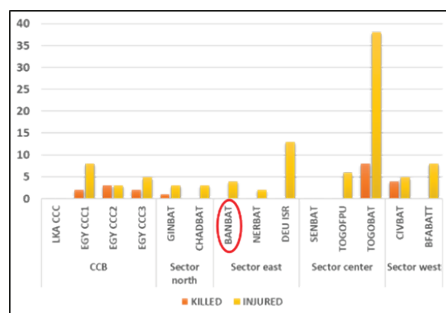
**Figure 9: MINUSMA IED Victims from 2014-2022 <sup>17</sup>**



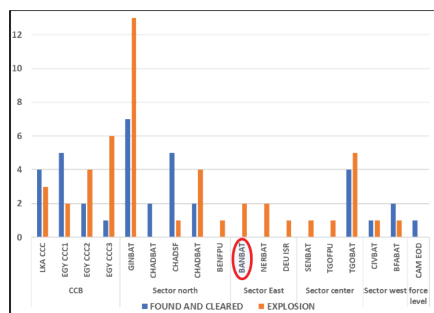
Source: UNMAS Mali IED Threat Overview 2022

**f. IEDs Encountered by Contingents:** The C-IED capability and IED attacks against a contingent depend on a few factors like standard of contingent C-IED training, the intensity of operational activities of the contingent, state of contingent C-IED equipment, general IED awareness and focus of the contingent, efficiency of the search and detection team, IED threat level of the contingent's area of operation and efficiency on IED threat assessment by the contingent. Comparing the operational intensity versus encountered IEDs and casualties, the performance of BANBAT is very encouraging. The inclusion of jammers and Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles in BANBAT's inventory has paid a significant role to enhance the C-IED capability of the contingent. However, there are scopes to improve further by focusing on the above-mentioned factors.

**Figure 10: Contingents IED Victims (Jul 2021-Aug 2022) <sup>18</sup>**



**Figure 11: Contingents IED Detection vs Explosion (Jul 2021-Aug 2022) <sup>19</sup>**



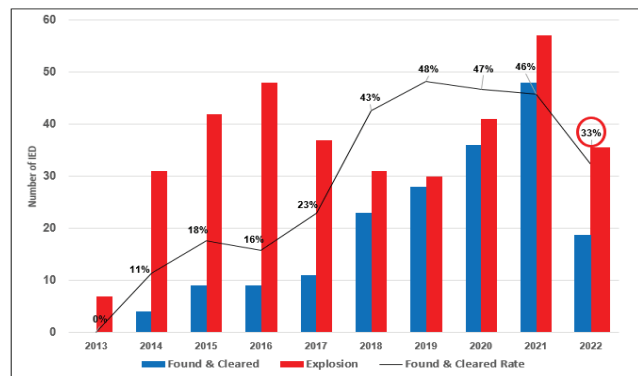
Source: IED Threat Analysis Report of U2 CIED, FHQ, 2022

**g. IEDs Detected and Cleared by MIUSMA:** It is encouraging to note that the number of detection vs explosions by MIUSMA forces is gradually improving since 2013. In 2022, 33.3% of all IEDs encountered by MINUSMA

were detected and cleared safely which potentially prevented the deaths of 6 peacekeepers, injuries to 25, and the destruction of 19 vehicles.<sup>20</sup> However, peacekeepers are found less effective in finding RCIEDs than VOIEDs. The overall improvement is contributed by a few factors:-

- a. Improvement in following drills and procedures in accordance with the threat.
- b. The effective employment of search and explosive ordnance disposal (S&EOD) assets as per their roles and capabilities.
- c. Planners at all levels are now planning operations with special emphasis on the prevailing IED threat and improved awareness among commanders.

**Figure 12: Detected and Cleared Rate by MINUSMA (2013-2022)<sup>21</sup>**



Source: UNMAS Mali IED Threat Overview 2022

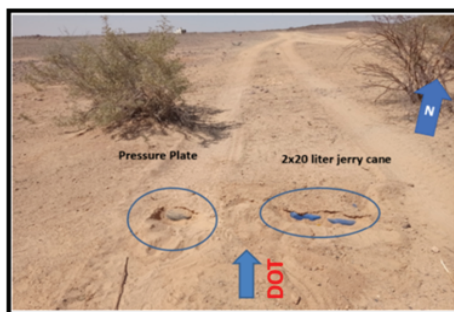
### **New IED Tactics and Techniques of Terrorist Armed Groups (TAGs)**

A current trend of evolution and innovation in TAG's tactics and techniques on IED emplacement has been observed. Some of the new IED tactics and techniques of TAGs are highlighted below:-

- a. The use of multiple IEDs in the same tactical area has emerged as a new technique to increase accuracy.
- b. The use of Suicide Vehicle Borne IEDs (SVBIEDs) against MINUSMA Temporary Operating Bases (TOBs) has been observed on two occasions in 2021.<sup>22</sup>
- c. The use of improvised grenades and breaching charges intended to use during the attack against the MINUSMA camp in AGUELHOK on 02 April 2021 has been observed for the first time.<sup>23</sup>
- d. TAGs utilize mostly rudimentary devices with detectable pressure plates. However, remotely controlled IEDs are also made by using low-cost commercial transmitters and receivers.

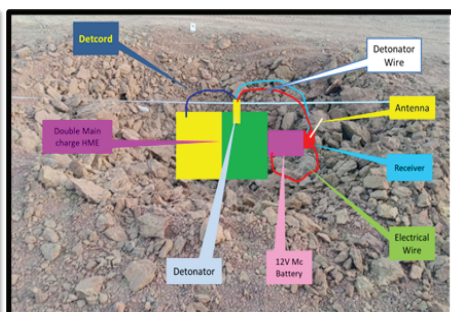
- e. The average weight of main charges used against MINUSMA has increased from 12kg to 30 kg HME (Homemade Explosive).<sup>24</sup>
- f. Where conventional mines are not used as IEDs, commercially produced ammonium nitrate is used in IED construction.
- g. The technique of double-stacked mines as IED is followed to ensure maximum destruction of the target.
- h. In 2021, it was observed that 52 out of 107 IED attacks against MINUSMA were designed and emplaced in a way that the main charge can be exploded under the vehicle hull.<sup>25</sup>
- j. Currently, TAGs generally target the last vehicle of a convoy so that convoy gets less reaction time to retaliate after any IED attack.<sup>26</sup>
- k. Roadside vehicle wreckages are used to emplace IEDs as booby traps to inflict casualties on the search and detection teams.
- l. In 2022, it is observed that TAGs are placing the receiver of remotely controlled IED about 50-70 meters away from the road with the help of extended wire so that jammer cannot jam the frequency of IED due to its range limitation.<sup>27</sup>
- m. In 2022, for the first time, there were 5 incidents of targeting MINUSMA search and detection (S&D) teams by IEDs containing metal fragments.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 13: Layout of a Victim Operated IED<sup>29</sup>**



Source: IED Threat Analysis Report of U2 CIED, FHQ, 3rd Quarter 2022

**Figure 14: Layout of RCIED from Post Blast Investigation (PBI) report<sup>30</sup>**



Source: PBI Report, IED Incident on TOGOBATT Convoy, 08 December 2021

### Existing C-IED Training Process

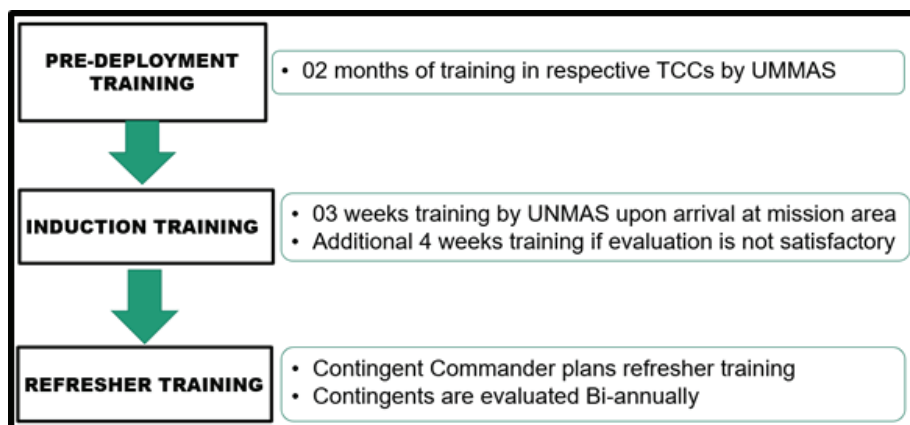
As per the guidelines of Force HQ standard operating procedure on Training and Evaluation 1/2018, there are three tiers of C-IED training: pre-deployment training, induction training and refresher training which are briefly described below:-

a. **Pre-Deployment Training:** Pre-deployment training is imparted in the home country of Troops Contributing Countries (TCCs). Presently, UNMAS trains troops of different countries prior to deployment for 4-8 weeks. However, few countries do not avail the UNMAS training on C-IED issues, rather they rely on their own resources.

b. **Induction Training:** Upon arrival of contingents at MINUSMA, an evaluation on C-IED skills by UNMAS is carried out after which the next phase of training is determined. Presently, a unit is trained for a maximum of three weeks during Induction Training on Explosive Ordnance Disposal Training, search and detection training and Convoy Commanders Course. If the evaluation is not satisfactory, UNMAS provides an additional four weeks of training.

c. **Refresher Training:** As per MINUSMA SOP on training and evaluation, refresher training is the Contingent Commander's sole responsibility to ensure that troops are maintaining desired standards laid down by UN. The contingents in this regard are evaluated bi-annually.

Figure 15: Existing C-IED Training Process<sup>31</sup>



Source: Author's self-construct

### Existing Challenges of MINUSMA IED Threat Mitigation Framework

These challenges are briefly discussed below:-

a. **C-IED Training Challenges:** Few of the TCCs are found deploying in MINUSMA without any UNMAS pre-deployment training package. According to UNMAS analysis, some contingents have been evaluated as weak in expected search and detection procedures. Furthermore, it is also found that troops sent for C-IED duties lack sufficient knowledge and operational experience. For such a scenario, UNMAS organizes additional training for contingents in the mission area. As a result, a contingent takes more time to become fully operational after deploying in the mission area. Such a situation creates an additional operational workload for other contingents.

b. **Existing C-IED Equipment and Challenges:** To develop an effective C-IED strategy, emphasis on carefully selected C-IED equipment cannot be ignored. Presently, MINUSMA is operating two types of jammers, vehicle-mounted and man-packed. As per Annexure B of Statement of Unit Requirements (SUR) of an Infantry Battalion, 18x Vehicle Mounted Jammers per Infantry Battalion (6 per mechanized Infantry Company) are authorized.<sup>32</sup> However, the overall state of vehicle-mounted jammers is very less in MINUSMA. Here, most of the infantry contingents are not equipped with required number of jammers as per their memorandum of understanding (MOU) and SUR. Besides, many of the contingents are not equipped with required number of Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles also. As a result, MINUSMA forces are suffering more fatalities than expected rate. Moreover, few of the contingents are still using first-generation mine detectors which is significantly affecting the capability of search and detection teams.

**Figure 16: Man-packed Jammer**



**Figure 17: Vehicle-Mounted Jammers**

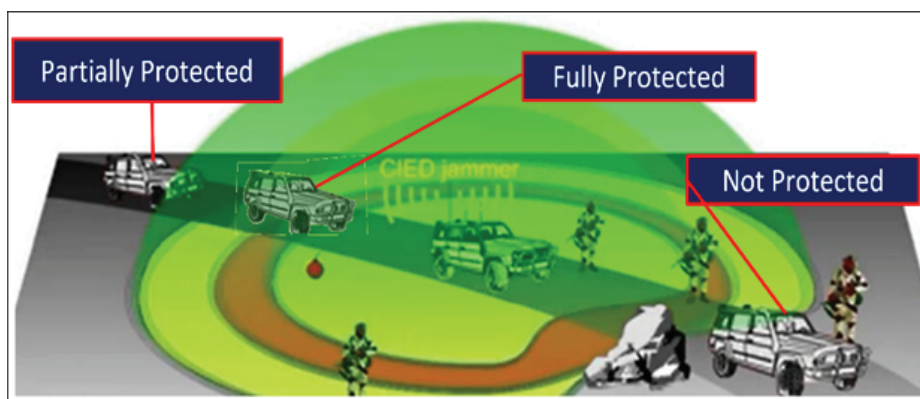


Source: G-3, C-IED Cell, Sector Centre Headquarters



c. **Limitations of ECM Jammers and Challenges:** The use of ECM jammers reduces IED threat levels significantly. However, an ECM jammer does not provide absolute safety. The performance of a jammer depends on a few factors like operating temperature, IED transmitter's power, the distance between transmitter and receiver, the distance between jammer and remotely controlled IED, and amount of electromagnetic interference. Therefore, it is very difficult to calculate actual protection radius of a jammer. It also requires extensive training to operate at its optimum capacity. For longer convoys, multiple jammers need to be used to ensure that all vehicles are protected under the protection bubble. For example, if a single vehicle-mounted jammer provides a 100-meter radius bubble, then the number of jammers must be placed in a way that they overlap with each other covering complete convoy. However, in MINUSMA generally, a logistic convoy consists of 45-65 vehicles extending up to 2-3 km. So, it becomes really challenging to ensure a protective bubble for the entire convoy. Even, convoys were also found switching off their jammers to communicate with their Headquarters. However, these limitations can be overcome by ensuring an effective balance between systematic use of search and detection assets and jammers. Such a technique is likely to eliminate more than 90% of threats.

**Figure 18: Illustration of ECM Jammer Protection Bubble Concept**



Source: G-3, C-IED Cell, Sector Centre Headquarters

d. **EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) Assets and Its Challenges:** Considering the operation environment of Mali, the role of EOD assets is very crucial. At present, there are only 12 EOD detachments deployed under MINUSMA. The number of EOD assets is very less in comparison to the IED threat and operation areas. Furthermore, EOD Teams are not rationally distributed as per sector-wise IED threat. As a result, other than logistic convoys, most of the patrols are conducted without any ground EOD cover which is not at all recommended under the prevailing threat. Even some of the EOD operatives lack on-ground experience also.

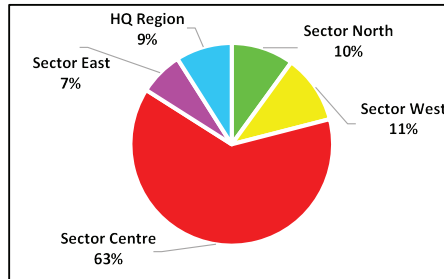


**Figure 19: Distribution of EOD Teams (2022)**<sup>33</sup>

Sector	No of EOD Teams
Sector North	03
Sector West	02
Sector Centre	02
Sector East	05
HQ Region	-
Total	12x EOD Team

Source: IED Threat Analysis Report of U2 CIED, FHQ, 3rd Quarter 2022

**Figure 20: IED Incidents as per Sector (2022)**<sup>34</sup>



Source: UNMAS Mali IED Threat Overview 2022

### IED Incident Analysis vis-à-vis Mitigation Measures and Takeaways for Bangladesh Army

After analyzing the recent IED trends and incidents of Mali, some findings are derived and based on which a few mitigation measures are also suggested focusing on Bangladeshi Contingents deployed in UN missions.

**Finding-1:** Victim Operated IED, mine and Remotely Controlled IED are the three most commonly encountered IED hazards in Mali in 2021-22.

**Mitigation Measures:** IEDs can be effectively countered by:-

- Following effective search and detection (S&D) drills and procedures and equipping the S&D teams with 3rd generation mine detectors and jammers.
- Accurate identification of hotspots/ vulnerable points (VPs) en route.
- Identification of TAGs crossing places from one commune to another as potential IED hotspots.
- Effective surveillance of routes by ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) flights, patrols etc.
- Effective intelligence sharing through local sources.
- Establishment of overnight Temporary Operation Bases at identified hotspots to dominate surroundings before the movement of any convoy.
- Equipping units with effective and secured communication equipment which can still work with ECM jammer.

h. Use of Mine Protected Vehicles which offer protection against minimum of 10 kgs of TNT equivalent net explosive quantity under the hull and each wheel.

**Finding-2:** As per Post Blast Investigation reports, most IEDs are made from homemade explosives where components like ammonium nitrate, detonator, hydrogen peroxide and Urea nitrate are used as the main ingredients. These components mostly come from fertilizers, local limestone and granite mining fields. Besides, in Sector North, mines are commonly used as Main charges. These mines are extracted from abandoned minefields along the Malian border. Besides, PRB-50 anti-tank mines are also smuggled from North African region.

**Mitigation Measures:** Components used for the manufacturing of homemade explosives need to be regulated by the Malian Govt. Besides, east and north-western Malian Borders need to be controlled in coordination with neighbouring countries to stop the smuggling of mines and IED materials.

**Finding-3:** In remotely controlled IED (RCIED), the low-cost Chinese receiver TAD-T80/81 is used. It operates within the frequency range of 400-500 MHz which is easily susceptible to any low-cost stage-1 jammer.

**Mitigation Measures:** To counter RCIEDs, the following measures can be adopted:-

- a. Adequate number of man packed jammers, vehicle-mounted jammers and mine rollers need to be included in the MOU of all the Infantry/Quick Reaction Force/Special Force/Transport Company contingents.
- b. An arrangement may be there to provide jammers by UNMAS, if TCC cannot provide the required number of vehicle-mounted Jammers.
- c. Jammers by Allen Vanguard are mostly used in MINUSMA which are effective, but it is the most expensive option. Alternate cheaper brands may be explored by TCCs so that more number of jammers can be used as TAGs use low-frequency receivers.
- d. The TAD-T80/81 receiver is available in the local market which needs to be banned by government or it may be regulated.

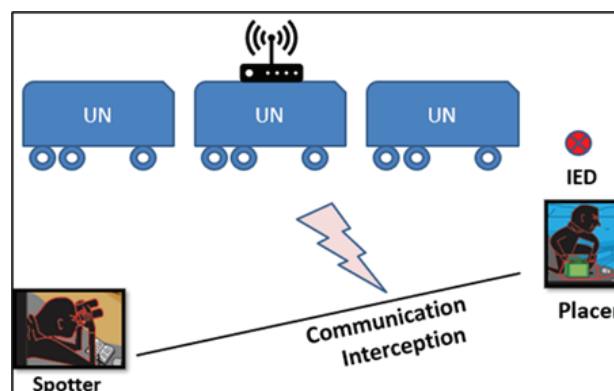
**Finding-4:** At present, MINUSMA is lacking in its intelligence collection effort, especially regarding the early detection of IEDs. Most IEDs are detected during convoy move by ground troops, rather than by credible intelligence sources. In 2021-2022, no operations were launched by MINUSMA aiming at neutralizing high-value IED related networks and no caches were found by

security forces,<sup>35</sup> leaving TAG's access to resources unchallenged.

**Mitigation Measures:** Following measures can be adopted to gather intelligence on IEDs:-

- a. Formulation of an intelligence network by incorporating the local population.
- b. Emphasis on WHAM (Winning Hearts and Minds) techniques by enhancing Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) projects in the Identified IED hotspots.
- c. Informatory pamphlets/leaflets can be distributed among the locals to develop awareness.
- d. Enhanced coordination effort with local security agencies for sharing information on IEDs.
- e. MINUSMA may incorporate intelligence collection means like Signals Intelligence, Long-Range Reconnaissance Groups, Electronic Warfare systems etc. For example, in 2021, BARKHANE force discovered 2 IEDs using their signals intelligence system.

**Figure 21: IED Identification by Signals Intelligence**



Source: Author's self-construct

**Finding-5:** To use the T80/81 receiver, the triggerman needs to remain within 150-200 meters from IED. However, during most IED incidents, the MINUSMA force has failed to identify and apprehend the triggerman. The lack of apprehension and punitive action against perpetrators has offered unchallenged freedom of action to TAGs.

**Mitigation Measures:** Following measures can be adopted by MINUSMA:-

- a. Timely and decisive ground action must be taken through prompt hot pursuit

or cordon and search drill to apprehend the triggerman from the IED site.

- b. Use of drones to detect IED triggermen and spotters.
- c. Perpetrators to be hunted down and brought to justice to create a deterrence effect.
- c. Apprehension of miscreants with accountable proofs so that they can be convicted after prosecution.

**Finding-6:** It is observed that few contingents are using the same C-IED equipment like jammers, mine detectors etc which are also used by UNMAS. As a result, these contingents receive better training and technical assistance from UNMAS. On the other hand, UNMAS cannot provide effective training and technical support to the contingents who use different equipment than the UNMAS, and they mostly rely upon their vendors which is very challenging to manage in mission areas.

**Mitigation Measures:** Contingents should standardize their C-IED equipment which are already used by UNMAS, so that contingents can take full advantage of the UNMAS expertise.

**Finding-7:** As per SOP of Training and Evaluation, contingents must appoint a designated C-IED officer which is not practised by few contingents. Currently, the operations officer/assistant operations officer of the contingents is performing this duty. As a result, basic IED threat mitigation measures are not consistently observed, including in terms of planning as well as basic principles. Besides, it is also observed that the IED threat assessments and takeaways which are shared by Force Headquarters and Sector Headquarters with contingents are not utilized properly and not disseminated among ground troops because of the absence of a designated C-IED officer in the units.

**Mitigation Measures:** Following measures can be adopted by the contingents:-

- a. C-IED effort will be more effective if a designated C-IED Officer is appointed at the contingent Headquarter level.
- b. The appointed officer should have independent communication means (email address, phone number etc) for easy coordination and information sharing.
- c. Contingent CIED refresher training to be supervised by a contingent C-IED officer in coordination with Headquarter staffs and UNMAS Threat Mitigation Officers.

d. Besides receiving IED threat assessments from Force Headquarters and Sector Headquarters, contingents should also prepare their own IED threat assessments with minor ground details of their operation areas.

**Finding-8:** As per the latest post-IED investigation, it is observed that Search & Detection activities were performed without ensuring systematic ground domination to deny the presence of triggermen and often without effective ECM protection. Besides, as per the after-action review reports, a few contingents are also found lacking in basic casualty evacuation drills.

**Mitigation Measures:** Following measures can be adopted by the contingents:-

- a. During planning and execution, maintain the highest level of vigilance regarding IED threat mitigation measures and drills by conducting rehearsals and arranging threat-based scenario trainings.
- b. Avoid unnecessary and predictable tasks. Plan operations through adequate planning and IED threat assessment.
- c. Conduct operations with a strong posture, including ground domination and systematic search procedure.
- d. Provision of explosive ordnance risk education and awareness among the troops by arranging awareness programs, training sessions, seminars, and exercises.
- e. Finally, a policy of zero tolerance by UN must be adopted on C-IED training matters and casualty evacuation drills.

**Figure 22: MINUSMA IED Threat Awareness Flyers**



Source: United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

## **Conclusion**

Bangladeshi contingents in UN Missions are performing at their best and uplifting the image of the country as a role model in the international platforms. However, the complex and deadly IED threat is continuously challenging the freedom of movement and freedom of action of the forces and inflicting considerable losses on the men and materials while executing duties in the field. As such, proper implementation of IED threat mitigation measures is essential for any BD contingent deployed in UN Missions. IED threat mitigation measures are a set of measures that are interdependent and, when employed together, are designed to protect the Force. If any of the elements of measures are removed, not carried out or simply not present, the whole system is much less effective and the risk to the Force increases significantly. So, commanders at all levels must strive to employ all IED threat mitigation measures wherever practicable.

As IED is the simplest weapon in asymmetric warfare, it will remain as a potential threat against the forces for the foreseeable future. As such, the United Nation's C-IED strategy and action plans may be revisited with special emphasis on attacking the network which is the proactive pillar of any C-IED Strategy. Although significant progress has been duly made within the domains of defeating the device and preparing the force through rigorous training and provision of essential C-IED equipment. However, the most important pillar of the CIED Strategy i.e., attacking the network is still to be targeted. Until and unless this pillar is dwelt upon, the fight against the IEDs threat will continue to be a firefighting effort, rather than a comprehensive strategy. Besides, effective solutions can be found by addressing the underlying causes of Mali conflict.

## **Recommendations**

The recommendations are as follows:-

- a. All BD contingents need to be deployed in the mission area with the required number of good standard MRAP vehicles, jammers, drones and other C-IED equipment. Besides, before acquiring any C-IED equipment, Bangladesh Army should check the feasibility of the equipment based on specific mission environments, requirements, and compatibility with UNMAS equipment.
- b. Proper functioning of the C-IED equipment needs to be ensured by extensive training and a systematic maintenance process.
- c. Emphasis on scenario-based search and detection (S&D) training and convoy movement tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs).
- d. Contingents to develop their effective intelligence network and capacity of

conducting accurate IED threat assessments with minor ground details. Besides, contingents may also develop digital maps of their area of operations with IED histories to facilitate quick and factual analysis.

e. Contingents may incorporate signal intelligence and other electronic warfare systems to collect intelligence.

f. Contingents may constantly analyse the newly adopted IED emplacement tactics and techniques of TAGs to review their own C-IED tactics, techniques & procedures (TTPs) as and when necessary.

g. Bangladesh Army should constantly analyze the latest C-IED equipment and technologies to determine the future acquirement plan.

h. Along frequently traversed routes, CIMIC activities may give invaluable indication or information to avert IED threats.

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#### **Brief Biography**



**Lieutenant Colonel Md Mamunur Rahman Siddiqui, psc**, was commissioned on 28 June 2004 with 50th BMA Long Course. He served in various Armoured Regiments namely 12 Lancers, 4 Horse and 7 Horse. Besides, he also commanded an Armoured Regiment. Apart from the regimental appointments, he served as an ADC to General Officer Commanding, 19 Infantry Division. As an Instructor, he served as a Platoon and Term Commander at Bangladesh Military Academy. He also served as Brigade Major at 93 Armoured Brigade. He participated in the UN mission as a contingent member in Liberia (UNMIL) and Military Staff Officer in Mali (MINUSMA). He has attended a number of courses both at home and abroad. He is a graduate of Defence Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur and has obtained Masters in Defence Studies from Bangladesh University of Professionals. He is also a graduate of Army Command and Staff College, Nepal and obtained Masters in Strategic Studies from Tribhuvan University, Nepal. Presently, he is serving as the General Staff Officer Grade-1 (Training) in National Defence College, Mirpur.

## **DDR in War-to-Peace Transition: Examining the Case of Kosovo for Wider Peace and Security Building**

Mohammad Tarequl Islam

### **Introduction**

The transition from war to peace is a multifaceted process manifested by the necessity to establish peace and security in the country through demilitarization, reintegration of the displaced population, protection of civilians, including war victims, restoration of the rule of law, and stabilization of the economy. Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme is widely considered the key component for the effective transition from war to peace. Moreover, Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) have emerged as the foundation for present international norms of peace and security building in post-conflict countries. "DDR aims to help build security, reconstruct social fabrics and develop human capacity for ex-combatants and associated members who otherwise pose a significant risk to the stability and security of post-conflict environments."<sup>1</sup> DDR is a complex process where the ex-combatants, rebels, armed groups and their supporters lay down their arms and go back to civilian life. Regarding international norms of peacekeeping, DDR creates an environment where a peace process, political and social reconciliation as well as sustainable development can take place.<sup>2</sup> According to the United Nations Peacekeeping, the aim of the DDR is to contribute to security and stability in post-conflict situations so that recovery and development can begin. DDR facilitates the creation of an enabling environment for political and peace processes by dealing with security problem that arises when ex-combatants are trying to adjust to normal life, during the vital transition period from conflict to peace and development.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, peacebuilding covers a vast concept; peacebuilding refers to a "range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development."<sup>4</sup> Peace and security building is the long-term process that comprises DDR, SSR, protection of civilians, political process, state economy and infrastructure development and promotes local ownership and good governance which create the necessary conditions for sustainable peace. In the post Second World War period, United Nations has been playing a crucial and significant role in peacebuilding in volatile conflict situations, especially in Africa and Europe.<sup>5</sup> Besides, DDR is the key component that creates a stable and

secure environment in the post-conflict environment so that other peacebuilding components can initiate efforts to recover the country from war to peace.

This study focuses on the DDR case in Kosovo due to its dynamism and complexity, where UN and international actors implemented DDR in a volatile conflict situation and had a considerable impact on Kosovo's peace process. On June 12, 1999 peacemaking in Kosovo started with the entry of North Atlantic Alliance / North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) forces followed by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) peace mission with the approval of the Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). UNMIK started its peace journey by initiating the landmark DDR, since then DDR has been closely associated with the establishment of the state security sector, the formation of the government machinery, the management of inter-ethnic dialogue, and the encouragement of local ownership and rule of law towards peace process in Kosovo.<sup>6</sup>

This article considers the post-conflict situation in Kosovo and, in particular, during the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1244.<sup>7</sup> In conjunction with the understanding between DDR and peacebuilding in Kosovo it highlights the importance of the reintegration of ex-combatant who are the principal considering factors in DDR process. The study aims to investigate the justification of the DDR's byproduct, the KPC (Kosovo Protection Corps.), a civil force where the majority of the combatants of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) were recycled, as well as their contribution to the ongoing peacebuilding process. The impact and influence of DDR in Kosovo peace and security building, especially the formation of the Kosovo Police, creation of the Kosovo Security Force and the promotion of governance have been all highlighted. Based on qualitative literature review which includes scholastic writing and academic articles this piece develops contextual understanding of UN norms of DDR and unveils the fact of the Kosovo case. Further, the research uses relevant information from United Nations, NATO, UNHCR and some other authentic websites.

### **Understanding DDR and Peacebuilding Nexus**

The United Nations was established to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and one of its major principles is to sustain global peace and security. Despite the fact that it is not explicitly mentioned in the Charter, peacekeeping has evolved into an important tool for the United Nations to achieve its goals.<sup>8</sup> Peacekeeping materialised at some stage during the Cold War(1946-91), when United Nations' (UN) actions were mostly limited to security

observers, maintaining ceasefire and providing some political support to solve the conflict in peaceful means to maintaining peace and security. However, in the post- Cold War UN peacekeeping entered a new dimension. The new global order dynamic of the Security Council engaged the UN in a more robust mandate of peacekeeping operations. As Trevor Findlay mentions, “after the Cold War era the UN holding operation was suddenly superseded by the multi-functional operation linked to and integrated within an entire peace process”.<sup>9</sup> From Namibia to Burundi, Afghanistan to Sudan, Sierra Leone to Liberia, and the Balkans to Northern Ireland, the the most numerous settings have been observed in this study. DDR was and still is a prime part of multi-faction peacekeeping operations. DDR not only contributed to the disarmament, consolidation, and stability of the peace agreement, but it also resulted in open rule of law and a democratic process roadmap for long-term liberal peace. In the disarmament (D), demobilisation (D) and reintegration (R) process, both ‘DD’ and ‘R’ strongly depend upon each other and instigate one after another. DDR is also known as DDDR or DDDRR, where “Rs” stands for “Reintegration” which includes “Resettlement/Rehabilitation,” “Repatriation” and “Reinsertion.”<sup>10</sup>

This is shown at a glance in the box given below:-

**Box-1:**

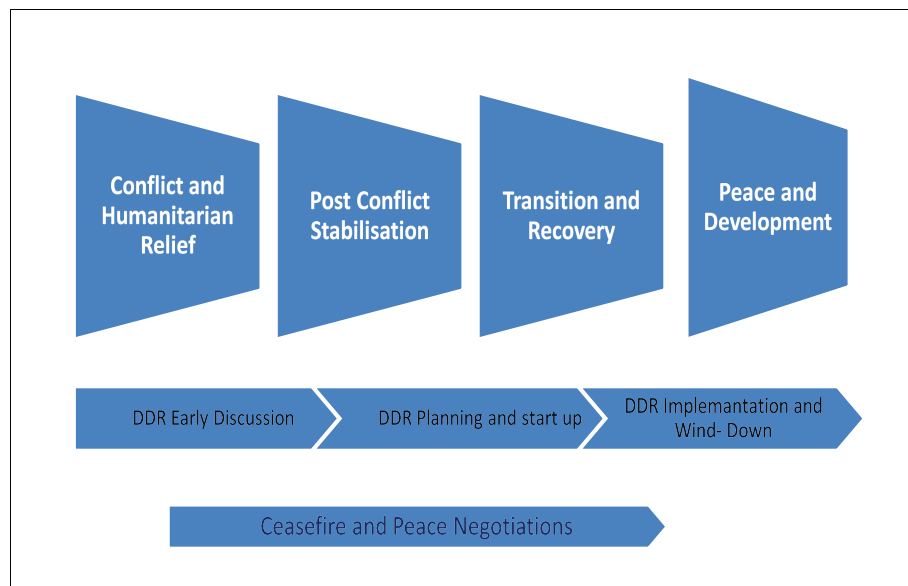
According to Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations’ explanation on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)<sup>11</sup>

- *Disarmament “is the collection of small arms and light and heavy weapons within a conflict zone. It frequently entails the assembly and cantonment of combatants; it should comprise the development of arms management programs, including their safe storage and final disposition which may entail their destruction.”*
- *Demobilization “refers to the process by which parties to a conflict begin to disband their military structures and combatants begin the transformation into civilian life. It generally entails registration of former combatants, some kind of assistance to enable them to meet their immediate basic needs, discharge and transportation to their home communities. It may be followed by recruitment into a new unified military force.”*
- *Reintegration “refers to the process which allows ex-combatants and their families to adapt, economically and socially, of productive civilian life. It generally entails the provision of a package of cash or in-kind-compensation, training and job and income-generating projects. These measures frequently depend for their effectiveness upon other, broader undertakings, such as assistance to returning refugees and internally displaced persons, economic development at the community and national level, infrastructure rehabilitation, truth and reconciliation efforts and institutional reform. Enhancement of local capacity is often crucial for the long-term success of reintegration.”*

Source: Author’s self- construct

Experience shows that successful demobilization and reintegration of former fighters are vital factors for a sustainable recovery after the war. Without a successful post-war recovery in general, the feasibility of DDR work might be uncertain.<sup>12</sup> According to Collier, unsuccessful reintegration poses a threat at the inclusive level because ex-combatants may remobilize and resume warfare if their dissatisfactions and grievances with socioeconomic and political structures motivate them to engage in conflict again. The fear of macro-insecurity, the state being overthrown by insurrection, can be exacerbated by an unsettled disagreement.<sup>13</sup> By lessening former fighters' impulses and requirements to engage in violent conflict to settle disputes, demobilization and reintegration can successfully allay these worries.<sup>14</sup> Further reintegration is actually projected to restore combatant-community relations, which ultimately add to promotion of social capital and improve social cohesion, which is crucial to consolidate peace; and this process is vital in peacebuilding.<sup>15</sup> The failure of the DDR in South Sudan in 2011 is a good example where the DDR advocates routinely fail to meet the program's eligibility criterion and the major ex-combatants remain significantly disengaged and dissatisfied with the enduring DDR process.<sup>16</sup> Therefore DDR is considered a key element of initiating peacebuilding process, and thus, in order to capitalise on its impact, it is obligatory for DDR to be implemented in concurrence with other peacebuilding essentials, such as, security sector reform (SSR), initiating political process, socio-economic recovery strategies, rule of law and governance.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 1: Implementing DDR during Transition**



Source: <http://unddr.org/uploads/documents/Operational%20guide.pdf>

Researcher and analyst Anatole Ayissi conducted research on the DDR programme in the past three decades in Africa, where he reported “DDR of ex-combatants has emerged as a major pillar for post-conflict peace consolidation which contribute to a secure environment and help to build the foundation of longer-term peace building.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the need to respond rapidly to the challenge posed by ex-combatants following conflict is based on “DDR programs are essential in helping to prevent the recurrence of war in post-conflict situations.”<sup>19</sup> Between February/2000 and March/2006, six peacekeeping operations in Western Sahara, the Central African Republic, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Darfur, and Abyei included DDR as part of their mandate. As of 2020, 13 peacekeeping operations were active around the world, with the majority of them incorporating DDR components.<sup>20</sup> During the 2020 Peace Missions of Western Sahara (MINURSO), the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Mali (MINUSMA), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Darfur (UNAMID), Abyei (the border between Sudan and South Sudan) (UNISFA), and South Sudan (UNMISS) strongly included DDR in their peace building process. DDR was the leading concern for all of these operations. According to research, DDR has a strong imperative contribution to the timely implementation of peace agreements.<sup>21</sup>

‘Responsibility to Protect (R2P)’ is an emerging concept by 2001 that legitimizes international humanitarian interventions. In 2005 United Nations World Summit adopted this signpost agenda the ‘responsibility to protect’ and institutionalized the international legal framework for the prevention of and response to the gravest violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. This normative framework supports shoring up the UN’s post-conflict peacebuilding initiatives.<sup>22</sup> Knight noted that “the R2P norm is the premise that the international community has a responsibility to protect innocent lives in countries where governments are either unable or unwilling to provide that protection. In that sense, R2P is linked conceptually with DDR.”<sup>23</sup>

According to UN Secretary-General “the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has repeatedly proved to be vital to stabilizing a post-conflict situation; to reducing the likelihood of renewed violence; and strengthening the confidence between former factions and enhancing the momentum toward stability.”<sup>24</sup> Izumi Nakamitsu, UN Under Secretary General and the high representative of disarmament affairs underlined the crucial need for DDR to sustain the global peace process over the last three decades. She noted that DDR emerged as an essential component of international peacekeeping missions and contributed significantly to the prevention of violence, stabilization, and support of the political practice. She stated, “This

crucial contribution to the maintenance of peace is reflected in successful DDR programs, as witnessed in Central America, Angola, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire.”<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, DDR creates backward and also forward linkages for the peacebuilding process and the capacity for long-term peace, security and development. Successful DDR is the pre-condition of post-conflict peacebuilding which is applicable to the post-conflict DDR in Kosovo. DDR in Kosovo produced the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), a civil force where the ex-combatants of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) were reintegrated. The research chronologically illustrates this issue and explores the association of DDR towards peacebuilding.

### **Background of Kosovo Conflict**

Situated in the Balkans region of Europe, Kosovo is a landlocked country bordered by Serbia toward the north and east, North Macedonia toward the south, Albania toward the west, and Montenegro toward the northwest (Figure-2). Kosovo was under the Ottoman Empire from 15th to 20th century. During this time, Muslims (ethnic Albanians) formed the majority of population. After the First World War (1914-18) Kosovo was forcefully integrated into Serbia (Yugoslavia). Kosovo had a special status within the former Yugoslavia federation up until 1989. When the Serbia suspended the special status of Kosovo, then the majority people of Kosovo violently protested it. In 1996 the clashes broke out between the Albanian Muslim and Serb when majority ethnic Albanians formed Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA/UCK). The tension between the two ethnic groups converted into open conflict when Serbian Government aggressively attempted to gain control over Kosovo. In 1998 due to brutal and aggressive military operation in Kosovo resulted in 1500 death. Over 400,000 Kosovar Albanians were forced to flee their homes and 850,000 became refugees.<sup>27</sup> In late October 1998 the situation turned into humanitarian catastrophe in Balkan region and increased the risk to spread the conflict over the border.<sup>28</sup> In early 1999, when international actors feared possible genocide against Kosovo Albanian then NATO intervened over the situation to control.<sup>29</sup> Later on UN Security Council (UNSC) passed resolution 1244 (1999) and United Nations peacebuilding mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) started its journey for peace in Kosovo. NATO's military operation avoided the humanitarian disaster in Kosovo and succeeded in peace action under UN guidance, which opened the window of post-Cold War multidimensional peace operations. Under international pressure, Serbia finally agreed to withdraw its forces from Kosovo in the Peace Accord of 1999, which was followed by the deployment of KFOR (the Kosovo Force, a NATO led peacekeeping force), and UNMIK and the international community began the peace mission.<sup>30</sup>



Figure -2: Political Map of Kosovo



Source: <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/Kosovo-map.htm>

### DDR Process in Kosovo and Formation of KPC

DDR was an integral part of the Kosovo peace agreement (Kumanova Agreement) which was mentioned in Articles 9.b and 15 of the UNSC Resolution 1244 "Demilitarizing and demobilizing the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and other armed Kosovo Albanian groups." <sup>31</sup> According to the resolution adopted on



20 June 1999, KATO and KLA agreed to disarmament and demobilization (DD). In November 1999, between 8000 to 10,000 KLA members were disarmed, and over 250,000 combatants were registered to demobilize. Initially, DDR resulted in laying down 10000 small arms and 5.5 million rounds of ammunition/weapons from KLA which promoted the security situation of the country. After the background check, 16229 disarmed KLA combatants were chosen for reintegration. Furthermore, in response to the serious demand and influence of Kosovo Albanians, as well as the on-the-ground hot situation and to avoid further conflict, UNMIK and NATO agreed to end the disarmament and demobilisation and formed a new civilian security force, the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). In fact, KLA was transformed into KPC for assisting with civilian crisis, disasters, and humanitarian support.<sup>32</sup> The formation of the KPC was a watershed moment in Kosovo's DDR as well as the most enlightening and debatable chapter in the Kosovo peace process. Initially, KPC declared 4552 positions and was open to all, but in the real ground, 97.67% (4446) were chosen from the ex-combatant of KLA.<sup>33</sup> DDR in Kosovo did not reform the security sector; rather, it was a process of building the security sector which was more exclusive from other peace missions.<sup>34</sup> The Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), a group that included the majority of ex-combatants, was formed as a result of DDR in Kosovo, which contributed to the new political configuration in Kosovo. UNSC Resolution 1244 mentioned that Kosovo ought to respect Yugoslavia's sovereignty. In reality, however, the KPC grew beyond a civil force and became a source of power for UCK leaders, eventually supporting Kosovo's independence in 2008.<sup>35</sup> Another criticism was that minorities were not taken into consideration when the KPC was formed, and gender parity was completely absent from the process. Out of a total of 3030 KPC, minority representation eventually increased to 5.4% in 2005 and 7.4% in 2006.<sup>36</sup>

According to European Parliament policy, "DDR refers to the process whereby former combatants are disarmed and discharged from (principally) armed rebel groups and are subsequently integrated into the national armed forces. The success of DDR programs has been tied to their integration into a broader SSR process."<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the study observes the disarmament and demobilization of KLA and the formation of KPC as the main elements of DDR in Kosovo. Members of the KLA were, in fact, absorbed into the new civil force KPC.<sup>38</sup> Then again, international entertainers acknowledged KPC for that volatile moment because of defeating further hostility. The chief of the IOM mission in 1999 Dr. Pasquale Lupoli rightly claimed that any delay in addressing the needs of former KLA combatants would have had severe consequences in the establishment of peace in Kosovo. Considering the volatile situation in mid-1999, when the ex-combatants returned and observed heavy war damage,

huge rape, and massive harm in life and property, then there was a likelihood of Albanian revenge (KLA) on the minority people. During that unstable time establishment of security and stability was of the utmost importance. Consequently, former combatants' immediate involvement in the reconstruction of their lives and livelihoods is essential for securing their support for the peace process.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, reintegration in Kosovo's DDR program benefited a large number of dependent ex-combatants, accounting for 10% of the total population, thereby improving the country's social security and economic stability. Besides in order to create a stable environment for peace, an increased number of ex-combatant should be engaged in nation building process through the reintegration mechanism, otherwise, frustration may cause the recurrence of grouping and conflict. Weiss-Fagen, provided the example of El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique and Nicaragua, where dissatisfied ex-combatants started banditry after demobilization.<sup>40</sup> As a result, dealing with ex-combatants in a conflict is a critical issue for the peace process to the greatest extent possible. The study appears to regard KLA combatants as a distinct beneficiary group under the DDR program, which is a well-justified approach by international communities. Subsequently, the study finds the effort of KFOR, UNMIK and other international actors in DDR in Kosovo has been done in the right way, which resulted at the end of violence, upheld security, increased local ownership and trust, and forwarded the rebuilding of Kosovo.<sup>41</sup>

#### **DDR in Relation with Peace and Security Building in Kosovo**

DDR in Kosovo had a significant impact in security and peacebuilding and to forward the country to sustainability as discussed briefly below:-

a. **Security Sector Building-Kosovo Police:** Kosovo Security sector building was one of the key mandates of UNMIK. Primarily KFOR was responsible for maintaining law and order in the capital Pristine and other cities. In 2000, UNMIK and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) began working together to establish the Kosovo Police Service (KPS).<sup>42</sup> The international community has a 'hands-on' approach to the formation of the Kosovo Police. Even though the KLA initially demanded that the KPS be made up of KLA members. UNMIK, KFOR, and the KLA eventually agreed that half of the KPS members would be recruited from the KLA. However, in the end, KPS recruited fewer KLA than KPC did. 15% of seats were reserved for the minorities and women in KPS formation under the guidance of the international actors.<sup>43</sup> After a series of selection processes, vetting and training about 6000 recruits were appointed to KPS.<sup>44</sup> The UNMIK police supervised KPS while they were in service. At first, they played a supporting role in public safety and crime prevention. Law enforcement, individual patrolling, police station management,

road traffic duties, border policing, and police administration were all gradually taken over by KPS from UNMIK police. KPS's performance was initially better as a result of improved recruitment, training, and ethnic diversity.<sup>45</sup> However, following the immediate declaration of independence in 2008, the Kosovo National Assembly adopted the Laws of Police, which renamed KPS, Kosovo Police (KP) and transferred oversight responsibilities to the Police Inspectorate (PIK) within the Ministry of Interior. In 2009, KP had 7070 members, 15.41% of whom belonged to minority groups.<sup>46</sup>

**b. National Security Building:** Formation of Kosovo Security Force (KSF): Following Kosovo's declaration of independence on February 17, 2008, a new security structure and Kosovo's new status was established. The state created the Ministry of Security Forces and formed Kosovo Security Force (KSF) under the control of both the Prime Minister and the assembly. According to Kosovo's constitution, the KSF was a professional, ethnically diverse, light-armed national security force with the responsibilities of civil emergency response, explosive disposal, and emergency management. The KPC was permanently disbanded in July 2009, and the KSF took its place with 2,500 members and 800 reservists. KFOR was in charge of selecting and instructing KSF. By July 2010, KSF had enrolled 2008 individuals, around 1500 of whom were KPC individuals.<sup>47</sup> With benefits for the short term, the remaining KPC members were released. KSF maintained the ethnic diversity of the state which included 8.2% from minorities.<sup>48</sup> The research observed, DDR in Kosovo produced KPC and finally, KSF was the descendant of KPC. DDR enabled the KLA to be disarmed and integrated into the KPC for the interim period, which was necessary to prevent further violence and ensure local ownership, and uphold security and stability in the country. Finally, UNMIK and KFOR constructed another security structure KSF for the national security and integrity of Kosovo.

**c. Promotion of Governance and Security:** Democracy, governance and political reformation were the three major components of the UNSC Resolution 1244 (1999). To achieve this goal UNMIK conducted a free and fair general election in 2001 to establish a multiethnic national parliament. The assembly consisted of 120 seats, and 20 positions were reserved for ethnic minorities. It has been noticed that DDR in Kosovo provided a relatively safe setting for the first general election in 2001 which led to democracy in Kosovo.<sup>49</sup> The conflict destroyed the economy and infrastructure and most people remained relatively poor due to the discriminatory policy of Yugoslavia. Moreover, the scattered KLA combatants were a pressing threat to peacekeeping. In Kosovo, DDR took into account the actual situation; KLA combatants were disarmed, demobilized, and reintegrated into the KPC to escape the additional

conflict, which assisted to regenerate the Kosovo economy.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, “since 1999, KPC has played a critical role in balancing the post-war arrangement in Kosovo; as a proto-army, the KPC has, in the eyes of most Kosovars, lent body and soul to achieving sovereignty.”<sup>51</sup> Initially, KFOR was a 50000-troop force (1999), but it is now only 3700 troops,<sup>52</sup> indicating the capacity and efficiency of KP and KSF in terms of security services sufficiently increased, and in the meantime, local authorities have taken over the majority of responsibilities such as security, justice, customs, border, and foreign affairs.

### **Conclusion**

Kofi Annan, ex-UN Secretary General (1997-2006) aptly observes, “Successful implementation of DDR processes is exceedingly vital for ensuring sustainable peace.”<sup>53</sup>

The study shows that DDR in Kosovo has kept a significant contribution to wider peace and security building in the country. DDR officially dissolved the KLA and then disarmed and demobilized more than 35,000 former combatants of the KLA; approximately 4552 KLA members were reintegrated into the newly formed security body KPC, and 16229 KLA members received benefits. KPC quickly became the symbol of Kosovo’s security pillar, and the KLA was eventually replaced as the guardian of national security and integrity by the Kosovo Security Force (KSF). Furthermore, DDR supported the formation of the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), and approximately 2000 KLA were recruited into KPS; KPS was later renamed Kosovo Police. According to the UN, DDR-Peace building Guideline, “DDR constitutes Disarmament and demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants to support ex-combatants with the tools and means to return to civilian life economically, socially, and politically, allowing them to participate in the peace process and become mainstream members of society.”<sup>54</sup> Despite challenges and limitations, DDR in Kosovo has improved overall security situations, aided ex-combatant reintegration into security sectors and society, built security sectors, promoted democracy and political reformation, and aided overall peace building in Kosovo, resulting in Kosovo’s statehood and sustainability. The study considers that the joint DDR policy and effort of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the EU and KFOR (NATO force) in Kosovo is well justified and shows a mixture of success.

However, in the 23-year journey to peace in Kosovo, international communities should go on to the next phase, especially with regard to the minorities and gender issues, intra-ethnic relations, mutual relationship with Serbia, good governance and independence issues, which are very important for stability in Kosovo as well as the region. Most of the countries of the world have

recognized the independence of Kosovo. Still, Serbia considers Kosovo as its autonomous province, so the independence issue is the prime conflicting factor in the Balkan region. Therefore, the United Nations, international actors, Serbia and the government of Kosovo should work collectively in a comprehensive way for wider peace and security building in the region.

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### **Brief Biography**



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## **Digital Transformation of UN Peace Operation: Challenges and Options for Bangladesh**

Lieutenant Colonel Md Wadud Ullah Chowdhury, psc

### **Introduction**

In the wake of the failure of the League of Nations<sup>1</sup> to avoid the Second World War, (1939-45), the United Nations (UN) came into existence in October 1945. It revised the Charter of the League of Nations for 'Collective Security' and improved it further by including the clause 'Uniting for Peace.' As such, the UN Charter lays down its resolve to unite the strength of member nations to achieve global peace. In doing so, the United Nations has adopted a different strategy based on situational and global demands. But peace operation has been its main tool for keeping peace and stability within the nations of conflict and stability. The spectrum of UN peace initiatives stretches over a wide range.<sup>2</sup> It includes measures/actions taken to restore hope or peace, humanitarian assistance, or even multi-national operations. Technology is playing a key role while implementing these. Technology can be defined as 'any innovation that improves efficiency in communication or information processing'. The use of technology affects a number of different fields, including business, education, health care, and government. The advent of technology has dramatically changed many different aspects of society. It has allowed people to communicate with each other more easily, as well as to process information more quickly than ever before. Societies have traditionally used a number of different methods to communicate. However, even traditional methods of communication can be improved by the use of technology. This can be done by using technology to transmit messages more quickly or to receive information more securely.

Technological advancement around the globe encouraged the UN to adopt a new strategy for use of technologies. The Secretary General (SG) of the UN adopted the 'SG's Strategy on New Technologies' in 2018. This strategy intends to boost the capability of the UN to use new technologies.<sup>3</sup> The UN appeals for the usage of new technological tools to encourage transparency within the secretariat and towards member countries, while the reform of the UN development system calls for the strengthening of the capacity for data knowledge, technology, collecting, and analysis. Technological advancements are created and deployed for the benefit of all, to allow people who are impacted by new technologies a voice, and to improve each member state's ability to make challenging policy choices. With the direction of the Secretary General of the UN, the Departments of Peace Operations (DPO), Operational Support (DOS), and

Management Strategy, Policy, and Compliance (DMSPC) – have jointly formulated the ‘Strategy for the Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping’ in September 2021.<sup>4</sup> The strategy epitomizes an operative stage towards augmenting the protection of peacekeepers and empowering further effective mandate implementation through the use of digital technologies.

Bangladesh, being a digital country and also the top contributing country to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO), had been continuously adapting to the changing global requirement. Bangladesh integrated numerous technologies in peace operations to comply with the digital transformation strategy for peace operations. Bangladesh deployed well-equipped contingents and personnel with digital tools and data to support mandate implementation in different remote parts of the world. This paper will first highlight digital peacekeeping and digital transformation in peace operations. The paper will then discuss the principles guiding the strategy followed by a look at how technology can support peace operations. Finally, the challenges will be discussed which will be followed by a few proposed options.

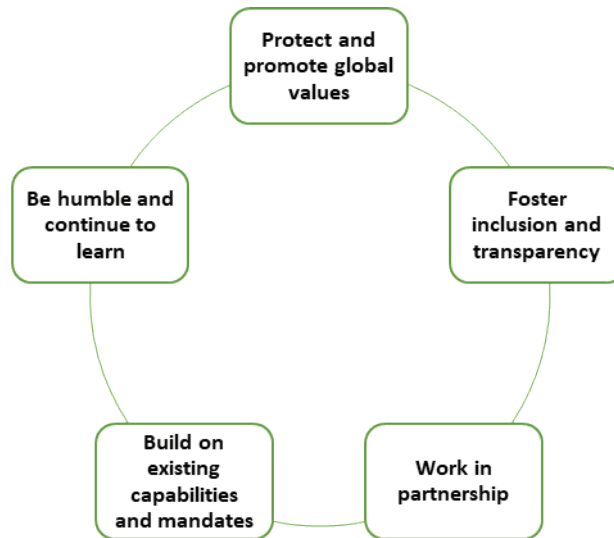
### **Digital Peacekeeping**

Peacekeeping operations (PKO) are an indispensable yet challenging apparatus for conflict prevention and resolution. UN peacekeepers are waging peace with primitive or outdated approaches whenever they are deployed. However, digital technologies hold massive promise to support peacekeepers realize their mission objectives. Cost-effective technologies are accessible to enhance the efficiency of peace operations so that they can better attain their aspiring objectives.<sup>5</sup> The new era of “network-enabled” or “net-centric” peacekeeping has the potential to improve the intelligence and impact of UN operations. Additionally, it might make it easier to connect with nearby residents and UN facilities.

Peacekeepers, including military, police, and civilian personnel, can be outfitted with technology and connected to networks beyond missions as a whole, as illustrated by the idea of the ‘digital peacekeeper’ from the United Nations Panel of Experts on Technology and Innovation in UN Peacekeeping report.<sup>6</sup> The information technologies envisioned in this concept are doable, even though some of them are highly complex and only available in prototype form or to the most technologically advanced militaries and police agencies in the world. The representation of the ‘digital peacekeeper’ gives an idea of what the most cutting-edge militaries in the world are capable of and what future peacekeepers might be able to do.<sup>7</sup> The military ‘digital peacekeeper’ is depicted as having a ‘head-up display monitor’ to access real-time situational information, visual data, and media streams from surveillance systems or body cameras.<sup>8</sup>

Through integrated sensors on their person (body technology), as well as on remote platforms, uniformed peacekeepers, whether troops or police, can achieve superior situational awareness. The information-sharing interface allows for quick access to enormous data resources in tailored information streams and can be used as a tablet or worn as a visor (including with flexible screen armbands). With the help of such connectivity, peacekeepers can also communicate their own data, including images, with both nearby commanders and faraway headquarters. For instance, peacekeepers' body cameras can continuously transmit images for a support office's real-time processing. A peacekeeper's head-up display can display images from backward-facing cameras to help them identify someone approaching from behind. The results of manual internet searches or voice-activated database requests can also be shown on demand by the visor. As an alternative, voice answers produced by computers can be used to communicate information. Pictures taken by sensors on distant platforms, such as UAVs, can also be viewed on portable tablets or smartphones that fits in a peacekeeper's backpack. In order to lessen the carbon footprint of peacekeepers, eco-friendly solutions are required as all of these devices depend on electrical power. Compact energy sources, like solar power packs and fuel cells, along with high-efficiency cells on backpacks and tents, could be utilized to power the electronics on individual suits.

Peacekeepers require specialized tools for specialized situations. Thermal sensors and image-intensifying cameras are necessary at night. To find poisons in the environment in regions where there are chemical risks, they could need chemical sensors. Special chemical protective suits are required for decontamination. Physiological sensors on a body suit for peacekeepers in danger of injury or dealing with other medical issues could inform both the peacekeeper and medics (near or far) of concerns, allowing a more precise and accurate medical response, if necessary. The UN police could deploy mobile forensics kits and crime-scene investigation tools, including equipment for illumination and DNA sample collection and analysis, for investigations into atrocities or crimes.

**Figure-1: Elements to Strengthen the UN System's Engagement with New Technologies**

Source: The UN, 'SG's Strategy on New Technologies,' 2018

### Digital Transformation in Peace Operations

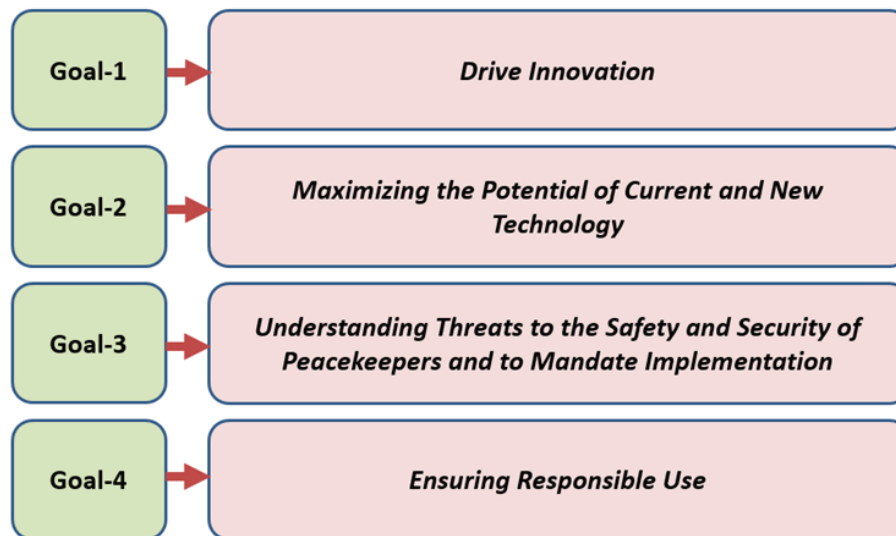
The United Nations formulated the 'Strategy for Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping' in September 2021. It emphasizes how crucial digital technology is in our increasingly complicated conflicts. The approach advocates for data-driven, technologically advanced, and innovative peacekeeping. The peacekeeping architecture, member states, the UN system, and outside partners are among its many target audiences. The strategy calls for multi-dimensional demand-driven processes, and their transparent non-intrusive implementation, with due caution on data protection and privacy, and emphasizes a deliberate and systemic approach to achieving digital transformation in the field.<sup>9</sup> It is built on the basis of four objectives: encouraging innovation for the geographical and cultural environment, maximizing the prospects of new and existing technology to increase their capacity, comprehending threats to the protection of peacekeepers, and ensuring ethical and effective use.<sup>10</sup>

By coordinating global technological and inventive capacities, 'Partnerships for Technology in Peacekeeping' seeks to increase participation and collaboration in UN peacekeeping. Partnerships provide a new DPO-DOS technology-sharing arrangement for member nations, regional organizations, and friendly coalitions. However, safeguards would be required to make sure that powerful technological nations or corporations do not introduce their own agendas into the UN's economic and security spheres. UN peace mission

leadership can identify risks and the steps needed for preemption and/or reduction by knowing the political backdrop and its link to the mission. As a rule, UN peacekeepers must always remember that their mission is to assist the host nation. Many nations view digital technologies as an encroachment on their sovereignty and cultural traditions. Civil society involvement and cross-government communication are crucial for fostering technology acceptance. The messaging needs to persuade the hosts that new technologies are advantageous for their governance and development and are compatible with their local skill sets and infrastructure.

The Secretary-General of the UN launched Action for Peacekeeping+ (A4P+) in March 2021. It is the execution strategy of the A4P initiative for 2021-2023, which intends to emphasize strategic priorities that are designed to enhance the missions' impact. In addition to the seven priorities, A4P+ includes two cross-cutting themes-women, peace and security, and innovative, data-driven, and technology-enabled peacekeeping, including through the Digital Transformation Strategy of UN peace operations.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure-2: Objectives of Strategy for the Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping**



Source: *The UN Strategy for Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping*, 2021, p.15

### **Principles Guiding the Strategy**

These principles are discussed in brief below:-

a. **Accessibility:** As per the UN strategy, everyone must have access to all digital information and other associated policies and documents. This ensures

equal rights for everyone in society.<sup>12</sup>

b. **Data protection and privacy:** The strategy has ensured the confidentiality and privacy of the data used as per the UN policy. The data is solely utilized for mandate implementation.

c. **Demand-driven:** Peacekeeping missions deployed around the globe utilize various technologies as per the ground requirement. The technology is also updated as per the demand. The mission modifies or develops the technology to ensure the implementation of the mandate.

d. **No harm to anyone:** Digital technologies in PKO are not utilized for any harm to anyone. Technologies will only concentrate on attaining the objective given to peacekeeping missions.

e. **Gender perspective:** The strategy and utilization of digital technology will consider the gender perspective as well. Dissimilarities in access, literacy, and bias will be considered while planning and using the technology.

f. **Human-centered:** Technology utilized in various peace operations is kept easy, simple, and usable by all peacekeepers from diversified backgrounds and deployed in remote corners of the world.

g. **Human rights compliant:** Technology is also designed and utilized to ensure human rights and other legal obligations. The legal framework governing UN peace operations is kept into consideration while planning and using the technology.

h. **Inclusion and transparency:** Transparency and inclusiveness have been adhered to while adopting the technology by the peacekeepers in various peace operations.

i. **Multi-disciplinarity:** Technology designed for peace operations adopts various skills, knowledge, and standpoints. This ensures the effective use of technology designed for peacekeepers.

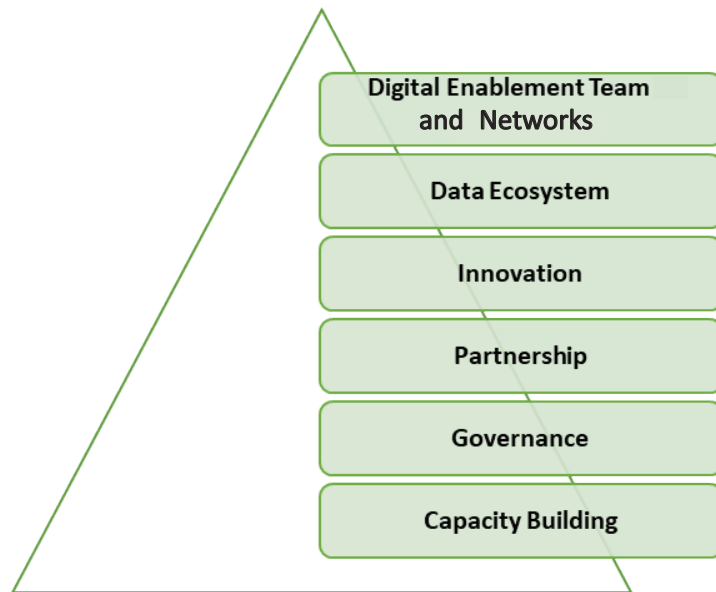
j. **Partnerships:** To intensify and share collective knowledge and encounter challenges, peacekeeping seeks to collaborate closely with a variety of associates as part of a multi-stakeholder approach, including member states and other international organizations.

k. **Realistic expectations:** Technology is used as an enabler to operational challenges. Fundamental strategic challenges need to be resolved by the peacekeepers and technology will work as an aid to that.



I. **Sustainability:** The technology being used is interoperable with other systems already in use, builds on previous successes and lessons learned, is durable over time, and is adequately adaptable to be quickly deployed to various field missions in order to maximize operational requirements.

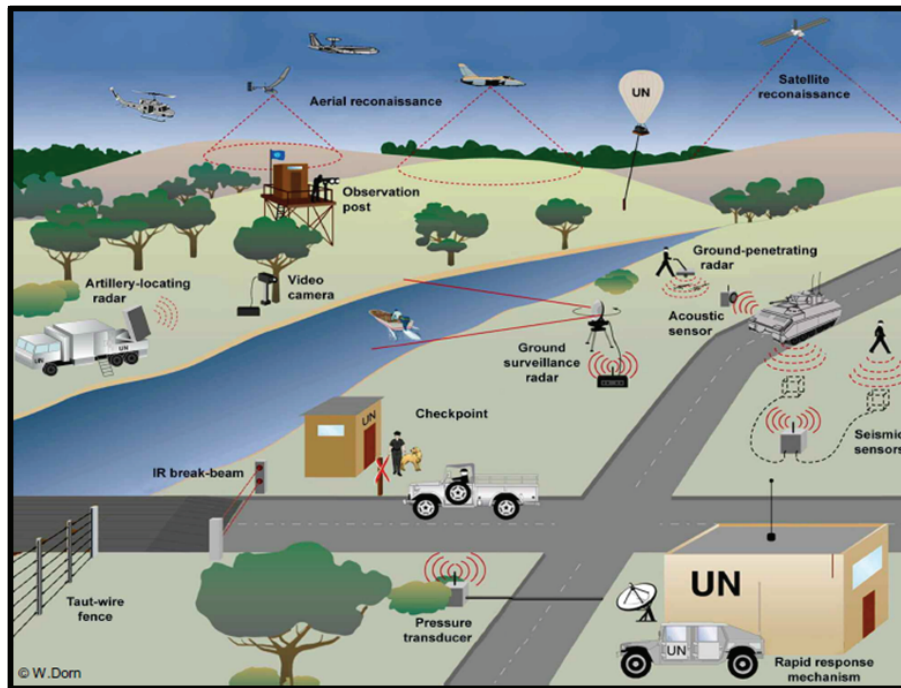
**Figure-3: Key Priorities of Digital Transformation Strategy**



Source: Author's self-construct<sup>13</sup>

### **How Technology Can Support Peace Operations?**

Technology has the potential to revolutionize the way the United Nations peacekeeping operations are conducted. From the battlefield to the boardroom, the use of technology can help to improve communication, streamline processes, and improve operational efficiency. By harnessing the power of technology, the United Nations can help to ensure that peacekeeping operations are conducted in a more effective and efficient manner. Technology can be used to enhance communication, improve the accuracy of intelligence, and streamline the logistical processes of peacekeeping operations, etcetera, and many more. With the right technology, the United Nations can help to ensure that peacekeeping operations are conducted in the most effective manner possible which are focused below:-

**Figure-4: Monitoring Technology for Peace Operations**

Source: A. Walter Dorn, *Smart Peacekeeping: Toward Tech-Enabled UN Operations*, New York: International Peace Institute, July 2016, p. 6

**a. Enhanced Communication:** Communication is the key to any successful peacekeeping operation. Effective communication between peacekeepers and host communities can help to build trust and prevent conflict. Technology such as video conferencing can be an effective option for connectivity. Using video conferencing allows peacekeepers to connect directly with the host community, while also preventing the transmission of any harmful interference. By providing an effective method of communication between peacekeepers and host communities, the United Nations can significantly reduce the likelihood of conflict. Communication can also be assisted by the effective use of various social media platforms. This allows peacekeepers to stay connected with their command and host communities while operating in remote areas.

**b. Improved Accuracy of Intelligence:** Technology can enhance the correctness of intelligence. This includes the use of sensors to provide a greater level of situational awareness. Combining data from various sources, including local communities, advanced information, and intelligence-sharing platforms can give peacekeepers a thorough understanding of the security situation and the

threat posed by terrorists. New technologies such as drones can provide a significant amount of data, which can be used to improve the accuracy of intelligence.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) can help to automate the analysis of data, reducing the reliance on human analysis. AI can be particularly useful in scenarios where there is a significant level of data, such as in urban environments.<sup>15</sup>

**c. Streamlined Logistical Processes:** The use of technology can help to reduce the time taken to move personnel and equipment. This can be done by using technology to streamline logistical processes. This leads to an efficient transfer of assets, while also increasing the likelihood of success. The use of technology can also help to reduce the risk of human error during the movement of assets. This can be achieved through the use of GPS, which allows assets to be tracked and controlled. The use of technology can also help to reduce the time taken to transfer assets, which helps to reduce the risk of a peacekeeping operation being delayed.

**d. Situational Awareness Enhancement:** Technology helps to gather info about survivability, mobility, force protection etc. It reduces the employment of forces with greater protection and detection as well. It also helps to analyze available information and enables one to anticipate how an incident will develop and change. Technology helps to share the information with the stakeholders in due time to take timely decisions. Finally, it turns situational awareness into a situational advantage. The UN has made appreciable progress with tools like the Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE) and the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAPS).

**e. Countering Abuse by Terrorists:** Technologies such as digital data mapping, digital data cloud, smartphone tracking, and use of UAVs, recce drones, and ground surveillance radar can be quite handy to strengthen the operational capability of the peacekeepers. Besides implementation of robotic technology for the identification, detection, and neutralization of IEDs can play an effective role.<sup>16</sup> All these modern systems can aid the UNPKO forces mainly in the pre-operation stage while planning. It will also reduce sudden IED threats against our men. By identifying patterns and trends in terrorist activity, predictive analytics tools enable peacekeepers to proactively respond to threats and take action to stop the abuse.<sup>17</sup>

**f. Early Identification or Detection:** By using technology in the surveillance system, early identification or detection of incoming threats can be done. Any particular place can be kept under observation 24/7 by installing IP cameras. Moreover, by using drones, the task of early identification or detection

can be accomplished. There are radars of different types and different ranges that can very easily detect or identify incoming threats early. High-end surveillance devices can help peacekeeping missions in a variety of ways. Peacekeepers can monitor and track terrorist activity by using cutting-edge surveillance systems and technologies like unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), ground sensors, and satellite imagery, allowing them to take preventative action to stop abuses.<sup>18</sup> These can be used to monitor potential trouble spots, detect suspicious activity, and provide intelligence that can help to prevent conflict.

g. **Protection of Peacekeepers:** Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles are designed to provide increased crew protection and vehicle survivability against current battlefield threats, such as IEDs, mines, and small arms. MRAP will provide added protection to the peacekeepers deployed around the world.

h. **Rescue the Injured:** Recovery is a crucial responsibility, and modern technology has enhanced the recovery team's potential. Drones can be used to quickly identify injured soldiers, and each soldier is equipped with a GPS chip that can be used to determine their location and state of health. Modern Infantry Gadgets (MIG) items, such as night vision goggles, can also be used for search and rescue operations at night.

i. **Enhanced Medical Facilities:** Technology can be used to give medical staff portable and cutting-edge medical equipment like ultrasound machines, defibrillators, and ventilators. Medical professionals can access real-time medical knowledge and assistance from experts in other parts of the world thanks to telemedicine technology. Technology can be used to identify and treat complicated medical issues as well as instruct medical staff on the ground. In remote or hazardous locations, drones with cameras and medical supplies can be used to reach injured peacekeepers.

j. **Decision Support:** Technology can give peacekeepers the resources they need to make wise choices. Using artificial intelligence, machine learning techniques, and predictive analytics to evaluate data and give recommendations. Remote sensing and geospatial analysis can give peacekeepers instantaneous knowledge of the environment, terrain, and goings-on in the operational area. This data can be utilized to spot potential security threats, keep track of people and resource movements, and support peacekeepers in making wise choices.

k. **Training and Capacity Building:** Peacekeepers can be trained with technology to improve their ability to react to various situations. This may involve the use of e-learning tools, virtual training environments, and simulation software.

I. **Cyber Security:** As terrorists use technology more frequently to carry out their operations, peacekeepers must possess advanced cyber security skills in order to defend their own systems and thwart cyber-attacks.<sup>19</sup>

### **Challenges**

Although there are many opportunities for digital innovation for peace operations, there are a few challenges also. Possible challenges regarding the inclusion of digital technology in peace operations are discussed briefly in subsequent paragraphs:-

a. **Skills:** The absence of basic digital and computer literacy among the peacekeepers is a significant challenge in the digital transformation of peace operations. Acute deficit of requisite digital skills and capabilities for peace operations poses difficulties in the inclusion of digital technology. Sometimes abuse and misuse of new technology such as social media also come up as an impediment to digital transformation.

b. **Environment:** Ensuring an appropriate environment for the peacekeepers to be equipped with the knowledge of digital technology may not be possible all the time. Access to the internet, electricity, qualified trainers, training centers, approved syllabus, policy framework etcetera may not be possible to be made available all the time.

c. **Participants' Shyness:** Participants' shyness to use digitally advanced devices hinders the effective digital transformation of peace operations. If the peacekeepers are not accustomed to the use of digital devices, they may not feel comfortable when asked to use those in peace operations.

d. **Non-availability of Required Digital Infrastructure:** Many countries don't have an adequate technological infrastructure for training or equipping peacekeepers. Thereby, peacekeepers lack the knowledge of digital technologies which create hindrances in the digital transformation of peace operations.

e. **Managing Expectations:** Integration and proliferation of contemporary technology into any mission could cause few onlookers to form irrational anticipations about a mission's capacity to provide outcomes within irrational timeframes. The UN needs to strike a balance between actively sustaining high-tech operations and not alienating traditional or new donors who do not possess comparable capabilities. Additionally, under extreme political pressure, prompt, accurate, and discrete action will be prioritized in rare scenarios such as sudden, urgent deployments, delicate talks, or other special

conditions. The world expects high-quality crisis information management in these circumstances; when one is unable to communicate, support arrives too late.<sup>20</sup>

**f. Understanding the Real Cost:** The UN needs to make sure that professionals with the required capabilities are employed in order to advance in more use of technology and bridge implementation. For this, it will be necessary to include specifications for more advanced technological knowledge and skill sets, in the job opportunities. Recruitment of qualified personnel also demands additional money, which becomes difficult for developing countries.<sup>21</sup> The fundamental skill of technology awareness may not always be sufficient for the job at hand. In practice, this implies that employees must have access to reliable computers with sufficient connectivity, be given enough time to complete training, and have the support of their management.

**g. Building a Culture of Innovation:** Peacekeeping at all levels needs to develop into an inventive endeavor to make the best use of enablers.<sup>22</sup> Innovation is the process of putting good ideas together with the resources, goods, people, and processes needed to address a problem in a fresh, novel, and clever way. Nevertheless, there are numerous institutional and administrative obstacles to creating an innovative culture within the UN. The most notable of them is the obvious absence of institutional accountability for innovation.

**h. Legal Considerations and Response from Host Country:** The UN Charter, its rules and regulations, the international law of armed conflicts, and international humanitarian and human rights law all impose obligations on UN peacekeeping missions and its personnel. They must also adhere to the rules and laws of the host nation. The utilization of modern surveillance and monitoring equipment may be provocative and perceived as a form of espionage by the host nation.<sup>23</sup> As peace operations become more data-driven and rely on a variety of sources, including monitoring and surveillance technologies, it is crucial to make sure that robust procedural safeguards. Appropriate data protection and privacy need to be ensured based on local law.<sup>24</sup>

### **Options for Bangladesh**

Bangladesh, being one of the key contributors to peace operations, is continuously adopting various technological innovations and playing a key role in implementing mission mandates in various remote areas of the world. However, a few proposed efforts to counter the challenges while harnessing the benefit of digital innovation in peace operations are briefly discussed in subsequent paragraphs:-<sup>25</sup>

a. **Formulation of Effective Policy:** The peacekeepers providing countries may formulate targeted policy and incorporate institutional frameworks – that succinctly stipulate required capabilities as well as mechanisms for accountability and regulation of digital transformation of peace operations throughout the world.

b. **Capacity Building:** Robust investment in research, training, capacity building, and infrastructure need to be implemented – that underscores the development of requisite skills, capabilities, and interdisciplinary research to ensure knowledge transfer as well as bridge existing gaps between tech specialists and mandate implementers.

c. **Multinational Cooperation:** Commitment to multilateral cooperation and partnerships need to be ensured - that targets equitable access to requisite digital skills and capabilities for peace operation as well as the harmonization of regulations in view of enhancing interoperability and overall mission efficiency.

d. **Encourage Technological Advancement:** UNHQ or digitally sound countries may assist TCCs by offering them training to develop their technological skills, offering them financial and other incentives to bring in efficient modern equipment, and more.

e. **Using Online Platforms for Distributing Resources:** Using online platforms for distributing resources will enhance the digital transformation initiative. At the same time, online platform is the most effective and fastest means of distributing resources. This may expedite the e-learning initiative as well.

f. **Enhancing Accessibility to Effective E-Learning:** E-learning is the most effective means of education in the present day. E-learning can ensure effective learning for a significant number of people within a very short time. Various online training courses can enhance the capacity building of the peacekeepers. Effective e-learning will definitely foster the digital transformation of peace operations.

g. **Peacekeeping Simulation (Scenario-based Training):** Peacekeeping simulation can organize scenario-based training and situational exercises for the peacekeepers. Situational exercise is an effective means of rendering practical oriented training to the peacekeepers. Various scenario-based training can give real-time experience to peacekeepers. The use of this kind of digital technology will ensure the effective digital transformation of peace operations.



**Figure-5: Leveraging Technology for Uniformed Peacekeepers**

<b><i>Enhancements to Existing Systems</i></b>	<b><i>• Upkeep with evolving requirements, integration</i></b>
<b><i>Process Reengineering and Simplification</i></b>	<b><i>• Single-source data entry, integration, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning</i></b>
<b><i>Piloting Emerging Technologies</i></b>	<b><i>• Weaponized UAVs; robotics for counter IED, CubeSat, Open Source Intelligence</i></b>
<b><i>Increasing Pre-Deployment Preparedness</i></b>	<b><i>• Hybrid training programs, e-learning</i></b>
<b><i>Institutionalizing Uniformed Peacekeeper-driven Innovation</i></b>	<b><i>• Innovation labs, training</i></b>
<b><i>New partnerships / structures</i></b>	<b><i>• Regional post-blast labs, hybrid teams, industry-teams</i></b>

Source: Author's self-construct

**Conclusion**

As peace operations step into a digital era, it must be ensured that the UNPKO takes appropriate action on the strategy for digital transformation at the peacekeeping. The strategy focuses on embracing new developments in information technology to provide a more organized and structured approach to the increased use of digital technology in UN peacekeeping. Digital transformation in peacekeeping aims to enhance situational awareness capabilities and provide real-time information on the operational environment. It will also build a Peacekeeping data system that will provide deeper information sharing and enable data-driven decision-making. The strategy recognizes the importance of member states in contributing to a collective approach to strengthen performance as well as safety and security. This is critical to enhance security and protect civilians. As improvised explosive devices in various theaters of operation increasingly injure and kill civilians and UN peacekeepers, all must step up their own efforts to counter them and mitigate the risk. Peacekeepers need to level the playing field among troop and police-contributing countries and ensure that Peacekeeping Operations are well-equipped. The well-equipped contingent and personnel with digital tools and data will support mandate implementation, situational awareness, and safety and security. The achievement of the key mandate of the protection of civilians will be enhanced by



the use of various technological equipment for identifying, analyzing, and prioritizing threats to inhabitants. Additionally, Action for Peacekeeping Plus or A4P+ places accountability at the heart of the shared efforts of all.

The move towards more innovative, data-driven, and text enable peacekeeping will have implications for peacekeeping training developers and training centers. Each member state has a different level of technological capacity and different equipment. The approach to training must take these into account. All should ensure that the approach to technology in peacekeeping does not limit the geographical diversity in troop and police contributing countries. This may require some adaptation in the way in which all approach contingent-owned equipment and the United Nations owned-equipment. Peacekeepers must also ensure that their approach supports the greater inclusion of women in peacekeeping. Lastly, all stakeholders must address the responsible use of data but grades to infrastructure and the establishment of a culture of data and innovation.

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#### **Brief Biography**



**Lieutenant Colonel Md Wadud Ullah Chowdhury, psc, Inf** was commissioned with 50 BMA Long Course. He is a graduate of Defence Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur, Bangladesh and Army Command College, Nanjing, China. He has also attended Junior Command Course at Army War College, MHOW, India and completed Master's in Military Studies from Bangladesh as well as Master's in Military Command from China. He has commanded a Mechanized Infantry Battalion and also served as Platoon Commander at Bangladesh Military Academy and Scenario Developer at Army War Game Center. He has also served under blue helmet as contingent member in United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) and Military Observer in United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Presently, he is serving at DGFI as GSO-1.

## **Bangladesh Air Force Aviation Contingent in Central African Republic (CAR): Experiences as a Pioneer Contingent Commander**

Air Commodore Md Asadul Karim, GUP, afwc, acsc, psc, GD(P)

### **Introduction**

Bangladesh is one of the few nations who has respectfully recognized the UN Charter in the national Constitution. Glorious participation of Bangladesh uniformed personnel in the United Nations Peace Keeping Operations (UNPKO) bears the true testimony of the country's promise and commitments of the constitution. Bangladesh joined the 'Blue Helmet' family by deploying her uniformed personnel to serve with the UN in Iran and Iraq in 1988. Since then, contribution and sacrifices of Bangladesh Peacekeepers have achieved enormous admiration all over the world. Today, Bangladesh is the leading troops contributing country in UNPKO.<sup>1</sup>

Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) has a magnificent history of UNPKO. BAF started her journey in UNPKO in 1993 by sending 26 peacekeepers in United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), Bosnia-Herzegovina. Since then, BAF peacekeepers have gained huge applaud by displaying their professional excellence and attitude towards humanity. The first BAF aviation contingent was deployed in 1995 to United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), Kuwait along with 02 x Bell 212 helicopters. BAF contingents are now deployed in 03 different UN missions. These include one Medium Utility Helicopter Unit with Mi series helicopters and one Air Transport Unit with C-130B aircraft in DR Congo (MONUSCO), one Airfield Support & Management Unit in Mali (MINUSMA) and one Armed Medium Utility Helicopter Unit with Mi series helicopters in CAR (MINUSCA).

Following the legacy, BAF deployed three Mi-171SH armed version helicopters in MINUSCA, CAR on 29 May 2020 naming BAF Aviation Unit (BANAVN). BANAVN-1 consisted of 125 members which was the first aviation contingent from Bangladesh in CAR. It was deployed to augment the aviation capability of MINUSCA in support of its mandate under Chapter VII. When all other rotation/movement of UN was at halt, amidst COVID-19 challenges BAF deployed BANAVN-1 to stand with the international peace. In this article there is an attempt to focus on the experiences gained in many unique challenging situations confronted while performing duty as a pioneer contingent commander.

### **Violence in CAR**

CAR is one of the poorest countries of world despite of having huge natural resources. It is a landlocked nation within the interior of the African

continent. It is bordered by Cameroon, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, DR Congo and Republic of the Congo. The country has been unstable since its independence from France in 1960. It is rich in diamonds, gold, oil and uranium, but has one of the world's poorest populations.

Bush War in CAR began in 2004. Despite peace treaty in 2007 and 2011, fighting broke out between government, Muslim and Christian factions in December 2012, leading to ethnic and religious cleansing and massive population displacement in 2013 and 2014. Remaining under decades of instability and fighting, the poor population of CAR witnessed a massive violence in December 2012 when the Armed Group (AG) mainly Muslim Séléka (meaning 'alliance' in the local Sango language) rebel coalition launched a series of attacks, seized power in the majority Christian dominated area and the country fell into turmoil. A peace agreement was reached in January 2013, but the rebels seized the capital, Bangui in March, forcing President François Bozizé to flee. A transitional government was established with an aim to restore peace. The conflict, however, took increasingly sectarian overtones by December as the AG mainly Christian anti-Balaka (anti-machete) movement took up arms and inter-communal clashes erupted in and around Bangui.<sup>2</sup>

**Map 1: Central African Republic with The Location of Neighbouring Countries**



Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography\\_of\\_the\\_Central\\_African\\_Republic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_the_Central_African_Republic)

**Table 1: Associated Problems of CAR with Neighbouring Countries**

<b>Neighbouring Countries</b>	<b>Associated Problems</b>
CHAD	Terrorism, Transhuman, Poaching, Refugees
SUDAN	Intercommunal Violence, Political Crisis, Transhuman, Poaching
SOUTH SUDAN	Political Crisis, Transhuman, Poaching, Refugees
DR CONGO	Political Instability, Poaching, Refugees, Arms Trafficking
CONGO	Relative Political Stability, Poaching, Refugees
CAMEROON	Terrorism, Poaching, Refugees

Source: Briefing from Force Headquarters, MINUSCA

Months of violence led to wrecked state institutions, leaving millions on the brink of starvation and threatened to suck in the wider region. Thousands of people were killed and 2.5 million, more than half of the entire population, needed humanitarian aid. As of March 2014, more than 650,000 people were internally displaced with more than 232,000 in the capital, Bangui which included 70,000 people who were living at a site for internally displaced persons (IDPs) at the airport in 'appalling' conditions. Over 290,000 people fled to neighbouring Cameroon, Chad, the DR Congo and the Republic of Congo.<sup>3</sup>

#### **UNPKO in CAR**

Since the beginning of the crisis, the UN as well as other international and regional actors including the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU) and France tried untiringly to find a peaceful resolution of the conflict. On 08 January 2008, the then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon declared CAR's eligibility to receive assistance from the Peacebuilding Fund. Three priority areas were identified: first, the reform of the security sector; second, the promotion of good governance and the rule of law; and third, the revitalization of communities affected by conflicts. On 12 June 2008, the CAR requested assistance from the UN Peacebuilding Commission which was set up in 2005 to help countries emerging from conflict avoid devolving back into war or chaos. Initially the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in CAR (BINUCA) was deployed in January 2010. Later as situation deteriorated, the UN authorized an African Union (AU) led International Support Mission in CAR (MISCA) and French backed peacekeeping force (Operation Sangaris) to quell the spiraling violence. However, violence and widespread human rights violation continued to take place throughout the country despite their presence.



### **Mandated to Protect Civilians and Support Transition Processes in CAR**

Concerned with the security, humanitarian, human rights and political crisis in CAR, the Security Council authorized deployment of a Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) on 10 April 2014. MINUSCA subsumed BINUCA on the date of the establishment. On 15 September 2014, MISCA transferred its authority over to MINUSCA, in accordance with resolution 2149 (2014). MINUSCA's initial tasks included facilitating humanitarian assistance; promotion and protection of human rights; support for justice and the rule of law; and disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, and repatriation processes.

### **How Did BAF Step in MINUSCA?**

BAF deployed in MINUSCA on Rapid Deployment Level (RDL)<sup>4</sup> concept. This was the first contingent from Bangladesh which was deployed under such concept in any UNPKO. UN representative visited Bangladesh on 07-08 November 2019 for Pre-Deployment Visit (PDV) to inspect the Contingent Owned Equipment (COE). Based on their satisfactory report a recce team from BAF visited MINUSCA, CAR on 03-07 December 2019 and then also visited UNHQ, New York. Based on this recce report and UNHQ requests, BAF started her preparation to deploy in MINUSCA as soon as possible.

### **Challenges during Pre-Deployment Phase**

As this was the first deployment, so initial preparation was a big challenge. Professional conduct, safety, security and above all comfort of all members would depend on effective pre-deployment preparation. Notwithstanding the shortfalls, the working principles were prioritized to complete the tasks.<sup>5</sup> However, pre-deployment preparation went on with lot of challenges as briefly focussed below:-

a. **Preparing the Aircrew:** As BAF planned to deploy armed helicopter in MINUSCA, so aircrew selection, training and preparing them to meet UN requirement was a big challenge.

b. **Preparing and Sending COE:** The contingent started preparing the COE from 13 January 2020. Meanwhile, the UN coordinator Mr Rocky came to Bangladesh in 2nd week of January 2020 and inspected all the COE and containers, checked the seaworthiness of the containers and requested to load the containers for immediate dispatch. On 04 February 2020, the COE containers and vehicles (total 36 containers and 22 vehicles) were dispatched and finally the items were loaded in the ship at Chattogram Port on 24 February 2020. The ship left Chattogram Port for Douala, Cameroon port on 25 February 2020. With

this the first major barrier was over and then concentration was shifted on preparation of the members.

**Photo 1: Inspection of COE Items by UN Coordinator and Loading for Shipment**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

### **Preparation of the Members and COVID-19**

In February 2020, the biggest challenge was the outbreak of COVID-19 all around the world. The pandemic started spreading in Bangladesh at the beginning of March 2020 and government declared lockdown envisioning the consequences which seriously hampered preparation. Initially deployment was estimated in the last week of March 2020 but due to outbreak of COVID-19, it was postponed. After lot of hiccups, deployment date was re-estimated at the end of May 2020. On 10 May 2020, all the members did the RT-PCR test for COVID whose result revealed that a total 39 personnel, out of 125, were confirmed as COVID positive. From there, 29 persons were sent to isolation and other 10 were admitted in Combined Military Hospital (CMH), Dhaka.

### **Effect of COVID on The Morale of The Members before Deployment**

When the result of Covid test of a big number of contingent members was positive, it straightway affected the morale of all. Most of them were uncertain whether they would be able to go to the mission or not. To overcome the situation, video call was given to all members in those who were in isolation. This was pursued every day by talking to them in group to ensure their comfort



and started taking care of their family members left at different bases of BAF. All the contingent members had to work hard to deal with such a problem. Things started getting better and finally by 26 May 2020, all 29 members became COVID negative. Rest 10 in CMH were replaced from standby list. This situation taught that addressing the pandemic like COVID-19 requires critical preparedness and a coordinated response which helped a lot for subsequent action plan in mission area.<sup>6</sup>

### **Final Deployment**

**The 'D' Day:** On 28 May 2020 was the 'D' Day as the final departure was done by the national carrier Biman. In the morning, Chief of Air Staff briefed all the BANAVN-1 members and gave his guidance. Thereafter, one member became sick and was transferred to hospital and before final immigration at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) another member became sick who had to be dropped as there was no time to get the standby. Finally, the journey started with 123 members instead of 125.

**National Carrier in UN Deployment:** This was the first time in Bangladesh history when the National Carrier, Biman, was used for deployment of any Bangladeshi Contingent in UN. Thus, it was a memorable beginning for the country as well.

### **Photo 2: National Carrier BIMAN - for the First Time in Bangui M'Poko International Airport, CAR**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

### **Welcome to Bangui, CAR**

It is worth mentioning that BANAVN-1 deployed in MINUSCA when all UN troops rotation and deployment was postponed by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres till 30 July 2020 to mitigate the risk of transmission of the coronavirus. However, due to immediate requirement of the mission, deployment of BANAVN-1 was urgent and was given special clearance. Despite the COVID threat, Bangladesh could successfully and very professionally complete the deployment of BANAVN-1 showing due respect to the UN demand. The contingent landed in Bangui, CAR around 0900 hours (LT) on 29 May 2020. It was not much surprising to see the surroundings and feel the unfriendly welcome from the local population. The contingent members were accommodated in Bangui M'Poko Transit Camp for quarantine where heavy rain welcomed the contingent in CAR.<sup>7</sup>

**Photo 3: Arrival in M'Poko Camp, Bangui: Welcome by Heavy Rain**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

### **Quarantine, COVID and Challenges in Bangui Camp**

As per the CAR Government Policy, all members were under 21 days compulsory quarantine. But the overall arrangement made by MINUSCA was not good enough to handle such situation. They really failed to visualize as to how an aviation unit does their initial operational set up in UNPKO. Number of accommodation and ablution facilities were very limited and compromising with the social distance staying had to be continued.

**Photo 4: Accommodation during Quarantine in M'Poko Camp, Bangui**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

As deployment was done under COVID situation, importance was put on maintaining health and security of all members during this pandemic. Because of splitting of the containers, there had been shortage of daily cleaning materials and also items needed for COVID handling. However, notwithstanding these shortfalls, the working principles were prioritized.

The contingent members actually worked hard to deal with a problem that was beyond imagination. After arriving in Bangui Quarantine Camp, a number of compulsory steps were taken like use of mask, taking steam of hot water, drinking warm water with lemon and honey, taking herbal tea, washing hands with soap, maintenance of social distance, carrying out physical exercise under light sun, etc. Despite such cautious approach, there was no respite from COVID. A week later few members started getting symptoms of COVID and they were shifted to separate isolation camp. The number started getting high everyday and by next two weeks, 11 members from BANAVN-1 were in isolation. Again, in isolation camp the arrangement was very poor. In one room number of persons from different contingents were accommodated. There was no UN doctor available in the isolation camp to look after the people. Under the prevailing situation, one of the soldiers became mentally and psychologically upset. Special care was taken of him through motivation and his superiors of same trade were instructed to be with him. Through dynamic leadership and by continuous counselling the affected soldier started improving and finally could successfully complete his tour of duty.<sup>8</sup>

### **Arrival of Helicopter from Bangladesh to Bangui, CAR**

The contingent completed quarantine on 19 June 2020 and on the following day a UN chartered Cargo Flight (AN-124) landed in Bangui with three Mi-171SH helicopters of BAF along with spares and equipment. With limited manpower (many were in isolation) and with the support of other UN agency/contingent, the helicopters and spares/equipment were successfully off-loaded without any mishaps despite many challenges. It was an arduous challenging task, for the reasons shown below:-

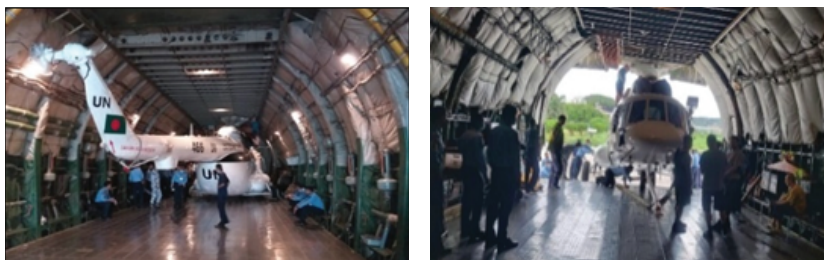
a. **Absence of Supporting Vehicle:** All supporting/special vehicles, which was needed for off-loading, were in Bouar. Those had to be shared with others.

b. **Inadequate Space:** Space for parking the helicopters in the tarmac was a critical issue. Only one tarmac where all UN aircraft/helicopters were parked together compromising safety and security.

c. **Inadequate Storage Facilities:** Items had to be stored in different places like FACA hangar, tarmac area, inside containers, inside camp, etc. which was a very non-professional arrangement by MINUSCA.

During recce team visit, it was agreed by MINUSCA that BANAVN-1, after deployment, would be accommodated in Bangui inside the former Senegal Aviation (SENAVN) Camp. So, loaded the container was loaded on volume and weight basis, not functional basis. Surprisingly after arrival in MINUSCA, there was terrifying experience as it was found the Mission Support Centre (MSC) section had split the COE without notice. Some containers were off-loaded in Bangui, while some were in Bouar. As loading was done on volume and weight basis, items for same purpose were scattered. Items for helicopter assembly maintenance had to be looked for in numerous containers. Thereby on subsequent days, lot of challenges were faced. This situation has proved that functional loading is always better and effective.<sup>9</sup>

### **Photo 5: Helicopters Loading in Bangladesh and Off-loading in CAR**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

**Photo 6: Loading inside AN-124 (HSIA, Bangladesh )**



**Photo 7: Off-loading from AN-124 (Bangui, CAR)**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

### **Helicopter Assembly and Attainment of Final Operational Capability (FOC)**

Assembling the helicopters for further flight test became a challenge for the contingent due following reasons:-

a. **Preparation by Mission:** It appeared that the MSC didn't have enough knowledge/idea as to how an aviation contingent would assemble the helicopters and would carry out subsequent test flights. For this BANAVN-1 suffered a lot during helicopter assembly phase.

b. **Availability of Necessary Equipment:** Anonymous decision of MINUSCA to split our COE (containers, vehicles) without knowledge created a huge challenge both operationally and administratively. Special equipment required for helicopter assembly also got split. The crisis was somehow managed by bringing few of the containers and vehicles from Bouar to Bangui. UN paid heavy toll for poor decision of MINUSCA.

c. **Requirement of Daily Commodities:** Besides operational need, in order to run daily life kitchen items , cleaning materials, toiletry items, etc.were needed which were not available as those containers were also in Bouar. This resulted in heavy sufferings during initial days.

Despite all odds, BANAVN-1 members displayed their utmost sincerity and professional competency. They successfully completed the assembly of all three helicopters by 09 August 2020. It was much before the expected time of FHQ.



**Photo 8: Helicopter Assembly by BANAVN Technicians**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

On successful inspection by MINUSCA Aviation expertise, the maiden helicopter flight of BANAVN-1 took place on 04 August 2020. Completing the crew orientation flying, finally BANAVN-1 attained the FOC on 26 August 2020.

**Photo 9: Helicopter Inspection by UN Inspectorate Team from MINUSCA Air Ops**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

### **Visit by MINUSCA Senior Leadership**

To welcome consecrated effort, on 26 June 2020 the seniormost leadership of MINUSCA, Mr. Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of Mission, along with Deputy Special Representative Denise Brown, Force Commander Lieutenant General Daniel Sidiki Traoré and other MINUSCA leadership visited the newly deployed BANAVN-1 helicopters in Bangui. SRSG expressed his deep satisfaction on our deployment amid COVID-19 situation and respectfully appreciated the efforts of the Bangladesh Government.

**Photo 10: Visit by SRSG, Deputy SRSG, Force Commander and others from MINUSCA to See BANAVN-1 Helicopters**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

### **Redeployment to Bouar Camp**

For the development of Bouar Camp the advance team left Bangui for Bouar on 28 July 2020 to set up the BANAVN-1 Camp. It was surprising to find a small area which was provided for the contingent. MSC, MINUSCA put all accommodations in a cramp situation. The contingent was accommodated in an area which was almost 1/10th in size compared to other contingent area. MSC even didn't have prior discussion about overall accommodation plan, which they were supposed to do. They made everything anonymously. Facing all odds in smiling face, the team started developing camp in Bouar while air operations continued in full swing. Many utility facilities were developed like Office Complex, Officers' Mess, Airmen's Mess, Generators' Shed, Water Treatment Plant, Kitchen, Mosque, Ablution Units, Security Posts and Unit Guard Room, Armament Cell, Gymnasium, NDB Station, Battery Charging Section, Barber Shop, Laundry Shop, Walkway inside the camp area (mentionable, in Bouar it rains a lot and after rain the soil becomes very soft and difficult to walk). At the end things became comfortable for all.<sup>10</sup>

**Photo 11: BANAVN-1 Camp Before Construction Work**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

**Photo 12: BANAVN-1 Camp After Construction Work**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

### **Handling COVID-19 in Bouar Camp**

Though the COVID situation in Bouar was better than Bangui, but the efforts to safeguard contingent members were never relaxed. The importance of maintaining sound health of all members was truly realized. While ensuring safe and effective air operations, a well thought plan was chalked out and executed a series of mitigation measures inside the contingent to promote safety and security of all members. In fact, COVID-19 had essentially changed the daily working style. The main challenge was to carry out air operations involving UN and non-UN staffs. MEDEVAC had to be conducted for patients having COVID symptoms. The aircrew who all were involved in operating such flights were in strict adherence of COVID protocols. The concerted efforts of all BANAVN-1 members and effective implementation of the protocols led to satisfactory outcome and by the end of the mission none of our member in Bouar was found COVID positive. It was a great achievement for BANAVN-1 indeed.

### **Challenges Faced by BANAVN-1 in MINUSCA**

Many operational challenges were faced. FOC was attained on 26 August 2020, but our air operations in MINUSCA was delayed due to delay signing of LOA. However, after finalization of LOA, BANAVN-1 started supporting MINUSCA both day and night which was the only aviation contingent in MINUSCA which could perform both in armed role and utility role. Quickly BANAVN-1 became the imperative tool of MINUSCA leadership. Though air operations in MINUSCA started more than 6 years back, but many challenges remained for safe air operations, as shown below:-

a. **Air Operation in Bangui:** In Bangui, MINUSCA aircraft/helicopters operate from the tarmac which belongs to CAR Armed Forces (Forces armées centrafricaines; FACA). A small area where too many aircraft/helicopters operate



compromising flight safety in great extent. The whole tarmac is full of pebbles. All helicopters/aircraft remain outside. Only one hangar available which belongs to FACA. It appeared that MINUSCA did not give enough attention on infrastructural development for safe air operation.

**b. Air Operation in Bouar:** Bouar air operation seriously lacked in facilities like Air Traffic Control (ATC) Service, Meteorology (Met), Emergency Crash Rescue (ECR) etc. There was no professional ATC support and the concept of Meteorology in Bouar. A small fire truck with very limited facility was the only means to support flying.

**c. Infrastructural Facilities for Air Operations:** Air operations in MINUSCA started since February 2014, better infrastructural facility is expected by the year 2020. There are airfields where air operations are going on with a lot of compromises. There are even MOBs where RW surface is very poor. No hangar was built for MINUSCA aircraft/helicopters.

**d. Flight Safety:** During the entire TOD, no flight safety activity was found from mission side. To ensure safe air operations, own flight safety programs had to be chalked out. Aviation Safety Officer was more concerned on Contingent's LOA fulfillment rather than ensuring the availability of required facilities for safe air operations.

#### **Maintenance Challenges**

These challenges are as follows:-

**a. Helicopter Maintenance:** BANAVN-1 was operated from MOB Bouar but helicopter maintenance flying was done from Bangui. More so, getting space inside the only hangar for maintenance was a great challenge as it remained occupied most of the time.

**b. Supply of Helicopter Spares:** Due to uniqueness of weather, initially there were many exceptional problems in helicopters. Though sufficient spares of the helicopters were carried, yet there was shortfall. The logistic chain was almost down due to COVID-19 and getting required items from local market was almost impossible. Thus, BANAVN-1 had to suffer a lot just to clear one spare item.

#### **Logistics Challenges**

These challenges are as follows:-

**a. Last Moment Change of MOB and Splitting of COE Containers:** Due to last moment unnoticed changed of MOB location, numerous operational, maintenance and admin difficulties had to be faced. The situation aggravated because of anonymous splitting of BANAVN-1 containers. Extreme difficulties

were confronted during quarantine days, helicopters assembly, test flight and orientation flying.

b. **Ration Supply:** All the rations in MINUSCA were supplied from Cameroon. The matter became almost impossible when the movement through Main Supply Route of CAR was closed due to security reasons (threats/attacks from Armed Groups). At times the contingents were suffering due to shortage of ration.

#### **Achievement of BANAVN-1**

Despite all challenges the achievement of BANAVN-1 was very significant because team spirit had been maintained from day-1 and no stone was left unturned to uphold the morale of contingent members. Within a short time, we a very professional team could be developed by overcoming together all odds in smiling face. Thus, end state was something for which each member can be proud of. Few of the major achievements are highlighted in subsequent paragraphs:-

a. **Achieving Full Operational Capability (FOC):** MINUSCA leadership requested to prepare the helicopter as soon as possible after arrival. This was the first professional challenge. Taking all members on board, the tasks could be completed well before the expectation of MINUSCA leadership. SRSG and Force Commander personally thanked the BANAVN-1 members as MINUSCA was in immediate need of the helicopter support. It was great achievement indeed.

b. **Preparation of Field Defence Store (FDS):** BANAVN-1 was the first contingent which deployed in Bouar CAR in armed role. Thus, FDS was a necessity for storage of ammos and rockets. Albeit, it was a new concept but the contingent could successfully modify the containers into FDS both at Bouar and Bangui and develop the area demarcated for that purpose.

#### **Photo 13: Container Modified into FDS and Inspection by UN Inspector**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

c. **Preparation of The Helipads:** Before deployment of BANAVN-1, there was only one helipad available in Bouar which was in very poor condition. BANAVN-1 took extra initiative and with the help of Peru Engineering Company and MSC Bouar, could successfully develop three helipads with necessary facilities, which finally came up to be the best of its kind in the UN. Security of helipad area was a big concern which BANAVN-1 ensured through development of earth hump, positioning security lights and barbed wire fencing all around the area.<sup>11</sup>

**Photo 14: BANAVN-1 Helipads: Before Deployment and After Construction Works**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

d. **Development of Facilities for Air Operations in Bouar:** BANAVN-1 operated from MOB Bouar, a small city located in the SW sector of MINUSCA. There was only one air strip with minimum facility. There was no competent ATC, Met, ECR services to support safe air operations. The facilities had to be developed from the scratch. At the end safe ATC, Met, ECR facilities for safe air

operations in Bouar could be successfully established. The contingent formulated total 12 x SOPs and 53 x FOBs for safe conduct of flying in MINUSCA. Flight Safety was a much-neglected area in MINUSCA. BANAVN-1 conducted number of events to generate safety awareness among the members of Sector West.

e. **Conduct of Air Operations:** Professional excellence of BAF pilots is well recognized as BAF Aviation Contingents have outstanding records of flying achievement in different UN Missions. BANAVN-1 started with the same legacy in CAR. BANAVN-1 supported MINUSCA in carrying out different tasks both in day and night. Helicopters were employed in armed role against the armed group in numerous occasions. Once MSR was closed due AG threat, BANAVN-1 conducted armed escort mission over MSR almost whole day and for about one month. Our overall performance was applauded at all levels.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 2: Statistics of Flying Operations of BANAVN -1**

	<b>Achievement</b>
Total Flying Hours	946:55 hours
Total Sorties Flown	596
Total Passengers Carried	1979
Total Cargo Carried	65241 kg
Total Patient Carried	13
Total Close Air Support Mission Conducted	22
Total NVG Operation	03

Source: Information collected from BANAVN-1 Operations Room

f. **Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) Activities:** BANAVN-1 had very limited opportunity to mix up with the local population as our main effort was in air operations. More so, due to COVID going out for interaction was restricted. However, once situation improved, BANAVN-1 carried out number of CIMIC activities in and around Bouar city maintaining the COVID protocol. BANAVN-1 donated note books, pen, pencils, etc. in local schools to the underprivileged children, conducted free medical camping, donated different medicines in local hospitals, supplied cloths to the local people, offered foods in different occasions to the poor local people, etc. The efforts of BANAVN-1 were highly appreciated by senior leadership of MINUSCA.<sup>13</sup>



**Photo 15 : CIMIC Activities by BANAVN-1 Members**

**BANAVN-1 Commander distributing pencils & note books in Bouar Primary School**



**Free Medical Campaign by BANAVN medical team in Bouar**



Source: BANAVN-1 Photo Archive

**Conclusion**

Role of Bangladesh in UNPKO is well known to the whole world. Following legacy of the predecessors, BANAVN-1 was deployed in CAR under the COVID-19 situation. Despite numerous challenges in CAR, BANAVN-1 continued operations supporting UN day and night. Professionalism, sense of humanity, transparency, dedication and commitment are the yardstick for success. The contingent carried out tasks under lot of challenges both in terms of security threat and logistics support. This pioneer contingent faced multifarious challenges which were overcome by unique team spirit and dynamic leadership of the pioneer Contingent Commander. BANAVN-1 created opportunities to expand the presence of BAF in MINUSCA through professional display of operational conducts which has upheld the image of the nation and enhanced the prestige of the country in international arena.

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### Brief Biography



**Air Commodore Md Asadul Karim, GUP, afwc, acsc, psc** was commissioned on 22 June 1993 in GD(P) branch from BAF Academy with coveted 'Sword of Honour.' He also received 'Osmani Gold Medal' for best in academics and 'Commandant Trophy' for best in General Service Training. He is a fighter pilot by profession. He holds the highest-flying category 'A' along with Flying Proficiency Wing. He has attended numerous courses both at home and abroad. He has successfully completed the Flying Instructors' Course from Flying Instructors' School, BAF where he topped the course and received the prestigious 'Mofiz Trophy.' He is a proud alumnus of Defence Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur where he also served as Directing Staff Air. He has attended the Air Command & Staff Course in the Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, USA and successfully completed Armed Forces War Course from National Defence College (NDC), Bangladesh with distinction where he has also served as Directing Staff in AFWC Wing. The air officer has held various staff, instructional and command appointments in different levels of BAF. Under blue helmet, he has served twice in DR Congo and once in CAR. Mentionable that, he was the pioneer Contingent Commander of BAF Armed Aviation Unit deployed in CAR. Despite numerous challenges in CAR, he successfully led the Aviation Unit and performed distinctly raising the image of Bangladesh in international arena. In recognition of his meritorious service, he was awarded with Chief of Air Staff Commendation and Gourab Uzzol Uddoyon Podak (GUP). Presently the Air Officer is Director of Air Operations at Air Headquarters. of Bangladesh Air Force.



## **The UN Peacebuilding Missions and Bangladesh: Contemporary Challenges and Future Outlook**

Abu Salah Md. Yousuf and Nahian Reza Sabriet

### **Introduction**

When Johan Galtung introduced the world to his three famous concepts related to peace in 1975,<sup>1</sup> the conceptual bedrock of peacebuilding was established. Even though all three concepts still pertain, the weight and relevance of their different elements are constantly debated and revisited by scholars. In this writing, Galtung highlighted:

Peace has a structure different from, perhaps over and above, peacekeeping and ad hoc peacemaking... The mechanisms that peace is based on should be built into the structure and be present as a reservoir for the system itself to draw up... More specifically, structures must be found that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur.<sup>2</sup>

This article entails the phrases “reservoir for the system” and “alternatives to situation” which, the authors believe, indicate holistic and sustainable approaches toward peacebuilding. In the post-Cold War period, myriad forms of ethnic conflicts sprang out across the world and the international community was unsure of means that could address the situation. In addition, some countries found it difficult to construct the administrative edifice of the state after peacekeeping missions ended, while the adversaries in the area had been threatening the operational environment with the propensity of escalating the war.<sup>3</sup> In this situation, the idea of peacebuilding became increasingly important to the United Nations (UN) peace operations.

Bangladesh's legacy of contribution to UN missions since the late 1980s bespeaks the knowledge and expertise required in both the theoretical and practical facets. In light of this, the current qualitative study aims at understanding where the idea of peacebuilding stands right now in the broad umbrella of UN peace missions as well as identifying contemporary challenges with UN peacebuilding efforts. The paper's conclusion will provide policy recommendations for Bangladesh on how the country could be better equipped in terms of contributing more to the UN peacebuilding missions.

Initially, building institutional frameworks for managing the system and promoting amity between opposing parties was the crux of the concept. The idea, nevertheless, evolved over time and now encompasses a wide range of complexities, from maintaining law and order to the formation of new states and

institutions. Even though UN missions made substantial contributions to the process of creating peace, it is believed that a number of concerns still need to be resolved. At the practical level, it is quite difficult to apply the indigenous format of peacebuilding. Although Western scholars put emphasis on promoting democratic values and creating institutions as the core components, dynamics among different actors and elements related to peacebuilding have become more intricate than ever, and these are the places where Bangladesh can play a substantial role.

There are six sections in the paper, including the introduction and conclusion. In sections two and three, the elements of peacebuilding in UN missions and the history of the notion of peacebuilding have been discussed. Section four provides a list of the challenges facing the ongoing peacebuilding initiatives. In the fifth section, Bangladesh's resources and capabilities are analyzed along with ideas referring to how Bangladesh can take part in UN peacebuilding missions more successfully. The research is finally summarized in the concluding chapter.

### **The Idea of Peacebuilding: Structural and Liberal Perspectives**

In the post-World War II stage, the UN's first concentration was on "peacekeeping," which involved the placement of lightly armed military personnel to monitor neutral or conflict-free zones between former combatants.<sup>4</sup> The first significant peacekeeping operation was launched when Israel, Britain, and France attacked Egypt in 1956. Finally, the new fangled concept of peacebuilding was outlined in the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (Brahimi Report), parallel to its transformative agenda. The study defined "peacebuilding" as actions taken by the opposing side of the conflict to patch up existing peace agreements and give the means for constructing something "more significant than merely the absence of violence on top of those agreements."<sup>5</sup>

In the present context, perhaps a further interesting insight can be brought by looking at the broader rubrics under which the concepts of peacebuilding are situated. Among the academicians, a core theoretical debate is taking place over the structural and liberal formats. According to McCandless structural perspective frames conflict in terms of unequal power relations and uneven development cycles.<sup>6</sup> It also sees peacebuilding as a process of transforming systems and structures in line with this understanding over the years. According to them, in order to address the structural legacies depending on the inequalities in North-South relations, achieving peace requires changing national and international social structures.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, liberal peacebuilding works under the presumption that the best path toward peace is

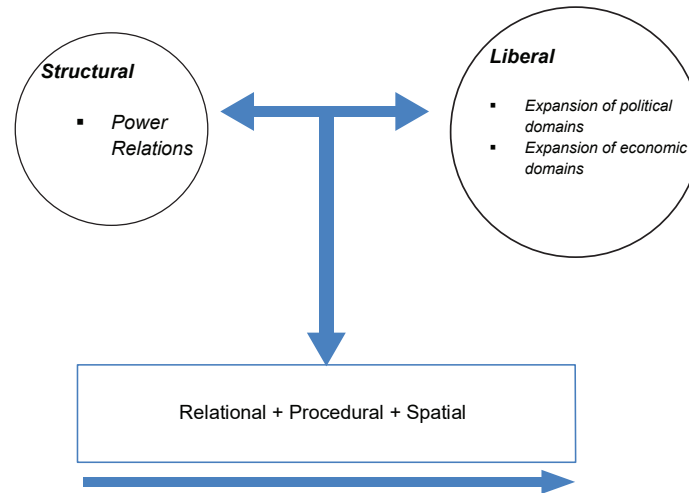
expansion and deepening of the political and economic domains.

Liberal peacebuilding has come under growing scrutiny while having dominated the field. A prime criticism of liberal peacebuilding is its overdependency on top-down approaches. Similarly, it incorporates, yet delimits local actors as inferior to rational governance.<sup>8</sup> This idea has drawn accusations of ethnocentrism from influential Western stakeholders. One could compare a liberal strategy for peacebuilding to a linear model. At the same time, it is often seen to have deviated from originality of the “peace” concept. Some scholars say that hegemonic ideas originating in Africa had not emanated from minimalist concerns like absence of physical violence.<sup>9</sup> Since it is based on the notion that liberal peace is the undeniable basis for a globally sustainable peace, liberal peacebuilding has been employed as a strategy to create lasting peace in a range of post-conflict contexts.

The majority of liberal academics hold the assumption that peace and development are inextricably linked. Even though conflict is a complex and non-linear phenomenon, the introduction of democratic governance, human rights, market economy, and centralized government structure would lead to the creation of a permanent and stable peace in any kind of post-conflict society.

Hence, Bangladesh’s experience in the development, security, and state-building fields can be used to considerably improve the field of postmodern peacebuilding (Figure 1). In this context, Bangladesh can provide a non-linear concept beyond structural and liberal formats based on human rights and sustainable peacebuilding. At its core philosophy, peace is the promotion of human ability for qualitative differentiation and transformation, which broadens the meanings of reality and generates new knowledge as per the surroundings. It is an exploratory process that explicates or unfolds new values and meanings between individuals involved in peacebuilding in order to generate and preserve interdependent, mutually liberating, and transformative relational dynamics.<sup>10</sup> The elements of this model incorporate relational, procedural and spatial elements from both structural and liberal formats. Subscribing to an integrated approach from a country like Bangladesh ultimately leads to appreciating creativity, and a rational shift toward coordinating capacities that are meaningfully achieved.

**Figure 1: Integrated Model for The Future of Peacebuilding**



Source: Author's self-construct

### **The Evolving Components of Peacebuilding**

The American version of peacekeeping initially came into being during the 1990s and 2000s as a means of resolving political conflicts. But the increasing number of intra-state conflicts in many parts of the world led to a substantial change in multilateral peace operations. In response to the evolving challenges on practical grounds, the UN Security Council (UNSC) moved towards increasingly multi-dimensional and large-scale operations to facilitate comprehensive peace arrangements. In 1992, the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was founded to meet this change. Eventually, traditional military operations began to contain an increasing number of non-traditional components in order to ensure durable peace.<sup>11</sup> Despite the fact that some UN peace operations, such as those in El Salvador and Mozambique were undeniably successful, others, such as the killing of civilians in the former Yugoslavia, and the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) met some criticisms. A group of international experts working under the guidance of the former Foreign Minister of Algeria, Lakhdar Brahimi, henceforth, referring to the name Brahimi Report,<sup>12</sup> brought several elements as part of the scope of peace operations, i.e. rule of law, civil administration, economic growth, and human rights.

The Brahimi Report backed "integrated missions," where military operations were complemented with aid for humanitarian relief and development.

Additionally, during that time, comprehensive criteria for offering development aid to countries suffering through various stages of conflict became more and more popular. The many uses of development aid include rebuilding governmental institutions, encouraging the revival of civil society, ensuring food security, reenergizing social services and generating administrative competence.<sup>13</sup>

Peacebuilding, by nature, is a challenging task. It involves a variety of actors, not just the team that the Security Council has mandated but also other UN agencies and programs, as well as regional organizations and NGOs. Following are the components of peacebuilding:-

a. **Reconciliation:** Scholars stress the importance of reconciliation between political stakeholders as a foundational step in establishing peace. According to theories of political reconciliation, it is also crucial in the process of simultaneous transitions of democratization and peacebuilding.<sup>14</sup>

The Nigeria-Biafra conflict and other intra-African crises have manifested a shared future in reconciliation. But the state accomplished this by enforcing a regime reconstruction, or partial or official recollection, which amounted to outright suppression or eradication of individual and collective memories.<sup>15</sup> To some scholars, Nigeria's reconciliation was based on a flawed understanding of statehood and state legitimacy and contributed to a crisis of citizenship and national identity. On the other hand, an opposite situation can be seen in Liberia. In this case, decentralized policymaking and dispute settlement mechanisms helped in establishing a stabilized regime while solving supplementary issues like land ownership for women.<sup>16</sup>

b. **Promoting Value-Based System:** A value-based system can be useful to address different societal constructs and associated elements. Economic incentives can frequently help in building peace where there is a conflict of interest over economic values between groups; however, where conflicts over cultural and political values are embedded in protracted social conflicts, more intense reframing are needed as shown in Table 1 below:-

**Table 1: Value Based System for Efficient Peacebuilding**

Value Type	Constructor	Element
Social	Experience	Culture, History, War
	Links and Relations	Family, Education
	Trust/Distrust	Mass Media, Social Media
Economic	Policymaking	Law, Justice, Customs
	Market	Employment, Corruption
Structural	Violence/Non-Violence	Peace within communities, Religious Peace, Social Cohesion

Source: Author's self-construct

c. **Social Institutionalization:** Establishment or reinforcement of stable and effective governmental structures, legal frameworks, and social institutions can address the underlying causes of conflict and foster lasting peace. For post-conflict nations, institutions like the rule of law, judiciary, police, and security forces are essential to remain stable. Alternatively, likelihood of new wars may arise. Tangible institutions also boost public trust and confidence in the government when they are well-designed, inclusive, and efficient. For peacebuilding initiatives, this legitimacy is essential since it can lessen grievances and encourage reconciliation.<sup>17</sup> Government leaders can be held accountable for their conduct with the support of institutions like the legislature, judiciary, and independent media. This can work as substantial aid against corruption, the abuse of authority, and other types of wrongdoing that might exacerbate conflict. Furthermore, fostering an atmosphere that facilitates economic expansion and development requires strong institutions. Institutions may attract investment and generate jobs by offering a stable and predictable legal and regulatory framework, which will lessen poverty and foster social cohesion.

d. **From Economic Development to Economic Sustainability:** The involvement of government in the spatio-economic distribution of post-conflict aid can be a crucial factor. Community-based methods aim to support the rebuilding of state-society relations and promote economic sustainability. The states also finance local governments in a number of ways. These include financing them directly through a central fund, forming a direct collaboration with communities, through local government acting as an intermediary as well as forming a partnership with communities, through NGOs and private companies acting as intermediaries, or through all of the above.<sup>18</sup>

For community-based initiatives, setting up the procedures and going through all the required mechanisms is time-consuming and may cause a significant delay until the benefits seem obvious. As a result, stakeholders also feel discouraged and lose interest. Many post-conflict peacebuilding programs entail the rapid allocation of a small, discrete sum of money from the overall block grant outside of the usual procedural procedures to enable the quicker realization of some initiatives.

**e. Ensuring Law and Order:** Coordination of efforts aimed at promoting peace in post-conflict settings depend on keeping the law and order. The idea of law and order is typically thought to promote social justice, individual freedom, and social stability. Fundamental laws are typically outlined in constitutional legislation to uphold law and order in a nation.

Democracy, as an ideological capital, is considered as the standard of political governance for establishing law and order. Hence, the construction of democratic, inclusive, and legitimate modes of governance came to be seen as the solution to violent internal disputes.<sup>19</sup> Programs promoting the rule of law have consequently become integral parts of a larger peacebuilding agenda.

Rule of law violation is a prevalent characteristic of post-war societies. In addition, institutions related to the rule of law may be destroyed, broken, or unreliable, which leaves a security-void in post-conflict communities. The experiences of the past ten years in similar situations have demonstrated that a lasting peace cannot be established without the confidence of the populace, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the impartial administration of justice. The increased vulnerability of people like women, children, inmates, detainees, displaced people, and refugees also adds a sense of urgency to the requirement for the restoration of law and order.

**f. Hybridization between Western and Non-Western Ideas:** Non-western nations have recently made important contributions to discussions about the UN peacebuilding strategy for conflict-affected nations as well as expanding the discourse and practice surrounding the idea of establishing a lasting peace. Developing nations' focus is currently on the prevalent UN peacebuilding principles in order to make a more adaptive model for practical environment and durable peace.<sup>20</sup> Organizations like Peacebuilding Commission, International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS) etc. are viably contributing to these thoughts.

Replicating the Westphalian notion of statehood based on centralized state authority in failed states has been the most effective approach undertaken



by erstwhile Western mandates. The argument made by Western nations was that peacebuilding should represent a liberal-democratic tenet that has its historical roots in European civilization.<sup>21</sup> The “security-development nexus” is another name for these kinds of efforts by the Global North to promote peace.<sup>22</sup> It asserts that a state may only fully participate in this international society through statehood in a liberal democracy.

On the other hand, non-western nations focus on helping to some other components of conflict resolution and stabilization. Their peacebuilding strategy includes a number of initiatives in the pre, during, and post-stages of an armed conflict. These nations sometimes do not devote their institutional and human resources to reform the entire nation. Since the elements of post-conflict societies deviate from the Eurocentric concept of statehood, typical or rapid liberal democratic transition of the entire nation cannot ensure the entire process of peacebuilding.<sup>23</sup> Hence, day by day, peacebuilding is no longer seen as a driver of transformative state construction and democratization in non-western countries.

A “Global South” approach is applicable for meeting local demands due to their ideas regarding peace initiatives. At present, the UN committees are much more open to discussion and are looking for common grounds. The UN has also been looking at a lasting engagement with regional organizations as a crucial instrument to ensure inclusion of representatives from developing countries.<sup>24</sup> These types of occurrences have led to a hybridization of the UN peacebuilding process and a change in the dynamics surrounding UN peacebuilding discourse and practice.

### **The Challenges of Contemporary Peacebuilding**

Contemporary peacebuilding is a complex and ongoing process that requires sustained engagement and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. At the same time, as the previous section has explained, the practical and theoretical approaches to peacebuilding are now undergoing a pragmatic turn by advocating prevention, stabilization and pacification approaches.<sup>25</sup> As a result, modern peacebuilding faces a number of challenges to maintaining sustainable peace in conflict-affected societies. Here are some of the key challenges:-

a. **Understanding Local Culture:** In recent years, the peacebuilding field has taken what is often referred to as a “local turn.”<sup>26</sup> As a result, local cultural dimensions of a conflict cannot be overlooked, where violence may be driven by actors and motivations that are distinct from those found at the national and transnational levels. If local dimensions are excluded, they can subtly derail efforts made in the establishment of peace and stability or create further serious problems.

**b. Coordination between Policymaking and Ground Level Inputs:** In the present years, coordinating various entities involved in peacebuilding operations has become more difficult. For example, the UN was unable to utilize its mandate for lasting peace in Kosovo as there was insufficient coordination between the actors at policy and field levels.<sup>27</sup> As a result, the goal was not achieved.

**c. Exigent Objectives:** The post 1990s nature of large-scale violent conflict fundamentally shifted from one characterized by “inter-state warfare” to one characterized by intricate political exigencies.<sup>28</sup> Hence, numerous parties with conflicting interests and objectives are now involved in many modern wars, making them more complicated. Due to this, it can be challenging to come up with solutions that will please everyone. Modern conflicts are not discrete occurrences with distinct origins and endings; rather, they are part of a larger social change process that is tumultuous and involves a variety of situational elements.<sup>29</sup>

**d. Governance-Institutionality Complex:** Building peace requires robust institutions that can advance democracy, rule of law, and human rights. However, many war-torn countries have underdeveloped institutions that are unable to provide the needs of their citizens or essential services. Due to the absence of democratic institutional reforms during the culture of reconciliation, peacebuilding is still problematic in many conflict-prone societies. Many countries rank among the most corrupt in the world because of weak institutions that may serve as breeding grounds for corruption.<sup>30</sup> Long-lasting peace will always be a pipe dream as long as institutions are frail. However, weak institutions make it challenging to come together after a battle.

**e. Resources Scarcity:** Significant financial and human resources are needed for peacebuilding. Funding for peacebuilding is frequently insufficient or erratic. The scarcity prevails either because of the inherent limitations of aid organizations, or weaker resource management process.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the aid cycle cannot transfer its rearmost linkages to other socio-political areas. As a result, the resource conjecture remains exclusively economic and hampers a sustainable peace process.

**f. Inclusion and Participation:** To establish durable peace, all parties involved in the peacebuilding process must have equitable share or access. Grassroots activism does play a key role in sustaining peace in post-conflict cultures.<sup>32</sup> However, disadvantaged groups—including women, young people, and members of racial and ethnic minorities—frequently are not included in decision-making process.

g. **Transitional Justice:** Addressing past grievances and promoting reconciliation is an important part of peacebuilding. However, implementing transitional justice mechanisms, i.e. reparations, truth commissions and prosecutions can be politically challenging and controversial. There are successful transnational justice mechanisms, i.e. Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) in Kenya that adopted a number of tools as a peace-building strategy.<sup>33</sup> However, not all post-conflict societies have such a conducive environment to adopt transnational justice which is one of the major challenges of contemporary peacebuilding.

h. **Unyielding Security:** It is challenging to put any initiatives for peacebuilding into action without security. But in societies that have experienced a conflict, security is frequently elusive because of persistent threats from armed groups and criminal organizations. For instance, the presence of armed groups like Boko Haram and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in nations like Nigeria and Uganda consistently undermines peacebuilding efforts.<sup>34</sup>

### **Policy Recommendations for Bangladesh**

Bangladesh should place a high priority on long-term participation in post-conflict societies with an emphasis on establishing lasting peace and addressing the root causes of violence in order to effectively build peace in those nations. For Bangladesh, the following ideas are provided:-

#### **Category 1: Structural-Relational Paradigm**

a. To assist local governments and civil society organizations in their efforts to promote peace, capacity building in the negotiatory field should be a priority. In order to do this, it may be necessary to foster the expansion of regional training institutions, cultivate diplomatic skills, and boost capability through training based on transnational good practices.

b. The root causes of conflict must be addressed if long-term peacebuilding has to be achieved. Bangladesh should support initiatives that deal with social disparities, political exclusion, economic injustice, and other elements of conflict. This will address both structural and liberal forms of peacebuilding effort.

c. Durable peace in post-conflict societies depends on reconciliation. Bangladeshi peacekeepers can engage in simulation dialogue projects with diverse communities including interfaith and interethnic communities to adopt community-based conflict resolution techniques. Moreover, a specific expert team of peacebuilders can be created and trained. Reenergizing the Peacebuilding Centre hosted by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), hence, is a pertinent and pragmatic option.

d. It has been stated in numerous sources that in addition to professionalism, Bangladeshi peacekeepers' utmost moral integrity throughout their service in UN missions also helped the country build a positive global image. In addition to professional advantages, it has political and diplomatic dimensions. Therefore, peacebuilding should also be treated as part of nation branding process.

e. In order to ensure long-term peace in communities affected by war, gender equality needs to be addressed. Bangladesh has already been prioritizing initiatives that promote gender equality, such as incorporating women in peace negotiations and tackling gender-based violence along with providing medical services in post-conflict areas. However, Bangladesh's efforts in ensuring women's empowerment at home can be brought to the international platform. This may include legal and administrative progresses like the development of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP-WPS) launched in 2019.

#### **Category II: Liberal-Procedural Paradigm**

a. Bangladesh can take its own experience of rapid economic growth and utilize it for supporting economic development initiatives like job creation in post-conflict societies.

b. To establish long-lasting peace in post-conflict communities, Bangladesh can take actions by enhancing the capacity of the security and administrative forces of the affected country. The peacekeeping force can also take policy inputs from experts of diverse fields. In this regard, research and remote consultancy are important.

#### **Category III: Spatial Paradigm**

a. Since top-down peacebuilding tactics have limitations in post-conflict nations, it is crucial to highlight community-based initiatives. Hence, Bangladesh can promote neighbourhood efforts, such as neighbourhood peace initiatives and neighbourhood policing programs.

b. Regional cooperation is essential to the establishment of enduring peace in post-conflict communities. Bangladesh can work with regional organizations and necessitate peacebuilding efforts as a key concern. It can also be a vital element aligned with the regained importance of the Indo-Pacific region.

#### **Conclusion**

As the dominating option for maintaining peace, "peacekeeping" has been serving for a long time. Peacebuilding represents a substantial advancement about issues of human insecurity and subsequent responses in the development of long-term solutions in the way it is thought of. Its goal is to

create instruments for addressing the underlying causes of violence and laying the groundwork for a foundation for stable peace. Taking this argument as the vantage point, this article suggests that peacebuilding is the more viable option in the evolving context. It has tried to build a combination of structural and liberal perspectives and suggest areas where Bangladesh can make contributions.

Human rights, improved infrastructure, economic revival, administrative reform, the abolition of structural inequities, and global social justice are all topics that must be discussed in order to achieve peace. Given the difficulties in establishing lasting peace, both the UN and ground forces must adopt a sophisticated strategy that makes use of local resources, strengthens local constituencies, and establishes legitimacy in specific cultural and even religious contexts. Given its promising image in global peacekeeping, it is undoubted that the country has good potential in leading successful peacebuilding efforts. It will not only help Bangladesh make further global contributions but also make a bridge between traditional and non-traditional perspectives.

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### **Brief Biography**



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### Brief Biography



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## **One Era of BN Ships in UNIFIL: Glorious Achievement of Bangladesh Navy in Multinational Maritime Operation**

Captain M Mizanur Rahman, (G), afwc, psc, BN

### **Introduction**

United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) was established in 1978 under United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701. The UNIFIL mandate was originally based on Security Council Resolutions 425 and 426 of 19 March 1978. UNIFIL was established to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli Forces from southern Lebanon, restore international peace and security and assist the Lebanese government to ensure the return of its effective authority in the area.<sup>1</sup>

Subsequently, with the withdrawal of the Israel Defence Force (IDF) from Lebanon in 2000, Security Council Resolution 1559 was adopted in September 2004 calling for the withdrawal of all remaining foreign forces with the disbandment and disarmament of all militias (Lebanese and non-Lebanese). After the Hezbollah-Israeli war of 2006, Security Council Resolution 1701 was passed on 17 August 2006, extending and strengthening the UNIFIL mandate. During the hostilities in July 2006, Israel declared a naval blockade around the Lebanese coast.

On 06 September 2006, the then Lebanese Prime Minister Foud Siniora (2005-2008) initiated an official letter to the UN with a request to provide a Naval Task Force to assist the Lebanese Navy in preventing the unauthorized entry of arms or related material through the sea into Lebanon. It also said that the assistance will continue until the Lebanese naval and security forces are able to fulfill the same tasks at their own.<sup>2</sup> Then Maritime Task Force (MTF) was deployed to support the Lebanese Armed Forces Navy (LAF-N) in monitoring its territorial waters, securing the Lebanese coastline and preventing the unauthorized entry of arms or related material through the sea into Lebanon. The deployment of MTF was a landmark move that prompted Israel to lift its naval blockade. It is the only Naval UN Mission in the world and is highly professional in nature. Bangladesh Navy Contingent (BANCON) started participating in the MTF from 06 May 2010 with one Frigate and one PC (Patrol Craft) which was downsized to one corvette on 01 January 2018.

### **Security Situation of Lebanon**

At present, three strategic drivers influence the operational environment of Lebanon as well as UNIFIL. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iran's relationship

with regional and international actors, and the Syrian crisis are making the environment more complex day by day. At the same time, the current political and economic crisis in Lebanon after the Beirut Explosion of 04 Aug 2020 has destabilized the situation. In the recent past, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) has made several accusations regarding blue line violations and stockpiling of arms and explosives in the southern part of Lebanon. On the other hand, frequent air-space violations by the IDF were reported, and UAV surveillance over the UNIFIL Area of Operations (AO) was observed. The firing of flares, sound grenades, rockets, and even Air to Surface missiles by the IDF and different armed groups in Lebanon is frequently observed.

Sometimes the security situation becomes tense, specially in the southern part of Lebanon, because of internal clashes amongst the Palestinian formations, unwanted activities of Hezbollah along the Lebanese border, and conflict between the small religious parties and Hezbollah. However, the security situation is constantly monitored by UNIFIL HQ and reported to the MTF units. MTF ships always need to maintain a high level of vigilance against any possible threat both at sea and in harbour.

In the south, the main issue is the disputed zone between Israel and Lebanon and the Line of Buoy (LoB) unilaterally deployed by the former. While Israel treats the line of buoys as a maritime boundary, Lebanon has never recognized the line of buoys. Violations of Lebanese Territorial Water (LTTW) and airspace are very sensitive issues, not only because they represent a breach of UNSCR 1701, but also because of their potential to quickly escalate tensions. Even though airspace violations are more common, the government of Lebanon claims its maritime border with Israel to be further south of the LoB.<sup>3</sup>

In Area of Maritime Operations (AMO), IDF warships, as well as others from countries involved in the Syrian conflict, can be seen transiting through international waters. The following threats are prevailing in the maritime sector of Lebanon:-

- a. The presence of the IDF Naval Forces in the outer AMO.
- b. Israeli over-flights of the AMO to conduct air to surface attacks.
- c. Surface to surface (shore to sea) anti-ship missiles of Hezbollah and other groups.
- d. Use of Iron Dome from Israeli border.

### **Operation of Maritime Task Force**

The concept of operation of UNIFIL MTF is the implementation of UNSCR 1701 and 1884 through two main lines of action. The first is the conduct of maritime interdiction and surveillance operations, and the second is to provide training support to LAF-N to enhance their operational capabilities. The following tasks are assigned to MTF:-

- a. Conduct Maritime Interdiction Operation (MIO) in order to prevent the flow of illegal arms and related material into Lebanon via sea.
- b. Conduct recce in the Area of Maritime Operation (AMO) and the surrounding area of the AMO in order to assist Lebanese authorities in fulfilling their security responsibilities in their own TTW.
- c. If requested by LAF-N, MTF is to conduct boarding operations against suspected vessels in Lebanese TTW.
- d. Conduct common training and exercises with naval units from the LAF in order to enhance and maintain mutual understanding and facilitate the LAF-N to execute on their own the sovereignty-related tasks in order to enforce UNSCR 1701 and 1884.
- e. Contribute to UNIFIL Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR).
- f. Contribute in the scope of capabilities and on a non-interfering basis with tasks related to the UNIFIL air picture over the south of Lebanon.

In order to accomplish the assigned mission, MTF Units operate in AMO which extends up to 110 nm along the entire coastline of Lebanon and stretches seaward up to 48 nm into the Mediterranean Sea. The first 12 nm from the Lebanese coastline is LTW, beyond which is International Water. MTF Units conduct continuous surveillance of merchant traffic, particularly along the approach corridors to the three main harbours i.e. Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon. From an operational point of view, the whole AMO is divided into 4 zones.

**Photo 1: Area of Maritime Operations with Different Zones**



Source: Author's self- collection

The Mediterranean Sea remains moderate to rough during winter (from November to March) and remains calm during summer (from April to October). Though the area is generally non-cyclonic, “gale” is a common phenomenon all over the season when the sea remains rough. Ships usually seek shelter at ports during rough weather. However, in the summer, sea remains good that is approximately 60% of the whole year.

#### **MTF Organization: Command and Control**

The MTF organization consists of CTF 448, which has operational control of 03 Task Groups. TG 01 is usually composed of three ships from Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Türkiye. TG 03 is made up of the flag ship and a ship from the Greek Navy. At present, there are no ships assigned to TG 02. However, the Naval Equipment and Training Centre (NETC) is formed by the National Support Element (NSE) of Germany and is assigned as TG 02. So far, a total of 15 countries have contributed their naval units to MTF. However, at present, 04 ships are operating in MTF, which are from Bangladesh, Greece, Indonesia, and Türkiye. Few days back German ship left MTF. Indonesia also withdrew its ship in 2022 and again joined within few months at the request of UNHQ. To facilitate smooth communication and coordination amongst MTF ships, MTF and UNIFIL HQs, six important appointments/vacancies in UNIFIL and MTF HQ have been filled by five BN officers, and one BN JCO. Presently, MTF Comd and key staff of MTF HQ are from Germany and are likely to continue until June 2023. Thus, appropriate diplomatic persuasions may give an opportunity to BN to acquire the post of MTF Comd and other HQ staff.

The command structure of the MTF is also unique in nature. The Force Commander has operational command over the MTF, and under him, the Commander MTF retains tactical command over the ships of the MTF. He independently deploys ships and conducts operations at sea as he deems appropriate depending on the situation in the AMO. He reports the maritime situation to the Force Commander through the Maritime Operations Centre (MOC). MAROPS acts as an adviser to the Force Commander and formulates policy for MTF.

Last year, the MOC was placed under MTF HQ with downgraded status, which was earlier under Force Comd as a part of Joint Operations Centre (JOC). It ensures the liaison between MTF, LAF and other relevant Lebanese authorities and acts as a contact cell for the IDF. MOC maintains a functional link with the Maritime Operations (MAROPS) Branch. At sea, one MTF unit is always given the charge of MIO Comd duty. MIO Comd can directly liaise with LAF-N by exchanging email and VHF or phone calls. The Maritime Cell is under the Chief of Staff (COS).

#### **Activities of MTF Ships in AMO**

The AMO covers an area of approximately 5000 square NM and extends westward approximately 45 NM (12 NM of TTW included) from the Lebanese coast. It was designed in such way to provide early warning and enough reaction time to the MTF units to prevent any possible hostile vessel from crossing at high speed and entering the Lebanese TTW. Considering a timeframe of about 1 hour 20 minutes to carry out the whole process of detecting, locating, hailing, classifying, identifying, and MTF Commander's decision/action taking (diversion, boarding etc.), the AMO dimensions would prevent a potential smuggling vessel, with an average speed exceeding 20 kts, to enter Lebanese TTW. Different activities of MTF ships are mentioned in subsequent paragraphs.

#### **Maritime Surveillance**

At sea, the main task of the MTF ship is to carry out patrol and surveillance in the designated patrol zone. This is done in coordination with the Lebanese Coastal Radar Stations (CRS), other MTF ships, and the LAF Navy Quick Reaction Force (QRF). Upon detecting a surface contact, it is shadowed and tracked by the ship. The surface picture is constantly updated and shared between the MTF ships operating at sea. Then the report is sent to MIO Comd following specific format.

#### **Maritime Interdiction Operations**

When the contact enters the Maritime Zone, it is challenged and hailed by ships at sea. To classify a contact, some of its information is forwarded to MIO



Comd via Microsoft Teams in the prescribed format. Upon receiving this report, the contact is classified as “Clear” or “Suspect.” If any vessel is classified as suspect, the LAF-N Quick Reaction Force (QRF) is tasked with boarding operations and carrying out inspection. Upon inspection, if the vessel is cleared, only then it can enter the designated port.

Lebanese Navy maintains a constant watch over its territorial waters and beyond, up to 25 nautical miles, using its coastal radar stations (CRS). A total 08 CRS are established over 110 nautical miles of the Lebanese coast and are integrated into their central operation room at LAF Navy HQ. BN ship carry out MIO in the designated patrol zones in the AMO. Most of the time, BN ship is usually placed in Zone I centre or north where there is the maximum density of traffic. Thus, the highest number of hailings is done by deployed BN ship.

### **Training to LAF (Navy)**

Training support for the LAF-Navy is the second pillar of the MTF mission. The aim of this training is to make the LAF-Navy able to conduct Maritime Surveillance and Maritime Interdiction Ops on their own. Accordingly, BN ships have to impart regular training to Lebanese coastal radar stations (CRS) through ‘INTRUDEX’ where one ship acts as an unknown merchant ship with a false identity and carries out both overt and covert approaches to penetrate the patrol barriers.

### **Exercises with other MTF Units**

In order to maintain the operational standard and synchronize the operation procedure, BN ship regularly participates in various exercises in AMO. Significant exercises are RAS/Mail Bag Transfer, Anti Asymmetric Warfare Ex (against surface and air threats), BOARDEX, Tactical Publications Communication Ex, Air Plotting Ex, etc. BN ship is also participating in various other exercises such as TACEX, MANAVEX, TOWEX, QUIZEX, etc. on a regular basis with other MTF ships.

### **Ship’s Maintenance in Mission Area**

Defects found during the mission period are rectified locally by purchasing spares, holding spares in containers, by ship's staff or taking help from outside agencies/workshops, and the ships are kept operational throughout the mission. The workshop facility at Beirut is not sufficient to carry out repairs of some major equipment, i.e. air-conditioning plants, missile systems, radar, W/T sets, galley equipment, guns, etc, as their spares are not locally available. For any reason, if a BN ship has to be docked in the mission area, the nearest possible place is Türkiye. The docks available in Lebanon and Cyprus are not at all suitable for BN ships. The present warm relationship between BN and the

Turkish Navy is very conducive to meeting the docking requirements of BN ships deployed in UNIFIL.

#### **Logistics Function on Board**

The ship is deployed in UNIFIL under a wet lease arrangement for the first time in BN history, and all essential items and services were purchased/supplied through the Ship Chandler/Ship's purchase committee as per Logistic Order issued by NHQ. Diversified logistics arrangements always remained a challenge in the mission area. Various committees are working to ensure the smooth flow of the entire logistics management. Operating a ship under a wet lease arrangement about 6500 NM away was never felt to BN. Rather, it has become a topic for many developed navies to research how BN is maintaining her sustenance far away.

#### **Meeting Communication Requirement of MTF**

Internet based communication is a primary requirement in UNIFIL. Communication between the MTF ships and UNIFIL HQ is now maintained by Microsoft Teams and is subject to change from time to time. The ship has to maintain continuous communication and chat with the CTF, MIO Commander, MTF units, and Naval Operation Center (NOC) at Naqoura. All types of formal orders and real-time data are shared on this net within the force. For this purpose, VSAT is a mandatory requirement of all MTF ships. Besides, UHF, VHF, and HF communication are also regularly used within the MTF. BN ships never faced any problem with communication during their entire deployment.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Ships' Inspection by OIOS Team**

As per the MOU, arrival inspection and operational inspection are supposed to take place soon after joining ships in MTF. The purpose of the inspection is to assess whether the ship is in compliance with the force requirement. The team inspects the self-sustaining capability as per the MOU. According to the standard practice of the UN, COE inspections take place quarterly by the UNIFIL HQ COE team. Each BANCON completed four COE inspections successfully. The inspection team always expressed their deep satisfaction after inspecting the equipment, self-sustainment arrangements, and capability onboard. MTF staff also conducts an evaluation every six months. Each BANCON also completed a successful evaluation twice. The evaluation team also expressed their high satisfaction with the professionalism displayed by the crew of all BANCONs.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Beirut Port Explosion and Damage to BN Ship**

A devastating explosion, along with a fire, took place near a Food Grain Silo at Beirut Port on 04 Aug 2020 at about 1805 hrs. The explosion shook the entire

city of Beirut, resulting in significant human casualties and material damage. At that moment, BNS BIJOY was berthed at pier number 6 of Beirut Port which was within 400m of the explosion site. The massive shockwave of the explosion caused significant damage to the materials and fittings on the upper deck, the hull and superstructure, and several sensors outfitted on the ship. The explosion and sudden shock wave caused injuries of varying degrees to 36 officers and sailors. The patients were evacuated to local and UN designated hospitals for treatment. The ship was taken to Aksaz Naval Dockyard at Mersin, a large port on the Mediterranean coast of Turkiye under tow by a Turkish Navy Tug for onward repair and docking work. After inspecting the underwater hull and structure, the ship was found intact and could sail back to Bangladesh safely.

### COVID Impediments

The COVID-19 pandemic situation has added a new dimension to the operations of MTF as well as BN ship operating there. The MTF Comd disembarked from the ship and permanently established his HQ ashore in UNIFIL HQ. The rented BANCON house has significant role in managing suspected COVID cases with quarantine facilities. However, the challenge of balancing health safety and MTF operations, including ships' maintenance, was successfully met by all BANCONs during the pandemic without any mentionable incident.

### Reimbursement, Expenditure and Gain of Country

Generally frigate size ship gets following reimbursement from UN for one year deployment which is shown in Table 1 below:-

**Table 1: Reimbursement from UN for One Year Deployment**

S/N	Breakdown	US \$
1.	Daily Reimbursement for ship	83,68,720.00
2.	One way transit	3,43,920.00
3.	MSA	31,08,672.00
4.	Self Sustainment	11,85,930.00
5.	Personnel Clothing	2,19,000.00
6.	Specialist Allowance	90,900.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,33,17,142.00</b>

Source: Author's self - construct

For one year of TOD, total expenditure of a frigate size ship which is shown in Table 2 below:-

**Table 2: Total Expenditure of a Frigate Size Ship for One Year**

S/N	Breakdown	US \$
1.	Expenditure for one year	23,41,486.04
2.	20% MSA	6,78,821.61
3.	80% MSA upon return BD	27,15,286.44
<b>Total</b>		<b>57,35,594.09</b>

Source: Author's self-construct

Therefore, from a frigate, the net annual gain for the country was US \$  $(1,33,17,142.00 - 57,35,594.09) = \text{US } \$ 75,81,547.91$ . It indicates that Bangladesh earned significant amount of foreign currency in initial 8 years of BN deployment in UNIFIL. However, due to budget constraint of UNIFIL, MTF has demand of a corvette since 01 January 2018 and the amount of income is much less. Furthermore, the recent fuel price hike in Lebanon has incurred a huge amount in POL expenditure on the ship and has made the mission economically less viable but operationally more rewarding.

### **Achievements**

Keeping the ship operational throughout the mission without adequate shore repair/workshop facilities was a big challenge for BN. The decision of NHQ to send ART from BN Dockyard to work along with the ship's staff was very pragmatic. Operating various equipment and machinery without any major breakdowns during the entire mission is highly appreciable. Thus, at a distant port, maintaining optimum operability is considered the biggest achievement of BN. Our ships have been successfully carrying out maritime interdiction operations in the Mediterranean Sea for the last 12 years. Experience gained by BN ships through various international exercises contributed to their ability to cope with NATO standards followed in UNIFIL. Out of all the participating units, BN ships hailed the highest number of merchant ships so far. Other achievements of BN ships are mentioned below:-

a. BN ships have been training LAF-Navy and Coastal Radar Stations (CRS) regularly for more than 12 years and earned confidence of LAF. Maintaining a very friendly relationship BN offered officers training to LAF-N and they sent two officers for Bridge Watch keeping Course in 2019. BN may offer a wide range of training to LAF-N personnel.

b. UNIFIL HQ and UN high officials are always concerned about the morale of the crew and their comfort. The OIOS team is also concerned about the same. They were always highly impressed by the standard of morale and welfare

arrangements made for the ship's company by BN ships.

c. The regular conduct of various sea exercises with other MTF units has enhanced the confidence level of officers and sailors to participate in any multinational maritime operations.

d. During the UNIFIL deployment, BN ships could operate with Brazilian, German, Greek, Indonesian, and Turkish frigates and corvettes. The effectiveness of their platforms was a great source of learning in terms of capabilities, tactical procedures, and endurance at sea.

e. The MTF operates in accordance with NATO's peacetime naval operational procedure. Participation of BN in the international arena is also the first of its kind on a major platform.

f. Overseas logistic sustenance is an important factor for prolonged deployment. The sustained capability of BN has been proven through this prolonged deployment. This has immensely broadened the image of the Bangladesh Navy in the international arena.

g. The main requirement of MTF is the availability of the ship throughout the deployment period. Therefore, keeping the ship operationally available at all times is very important, and all BANCONs have achieved it successfully.

h. Number of military and civil high officials visited BN ships on different occasions. This type of social gathering helps to enhance cooperation and foster friendship between navies/countries.

i. Brazil and Germany have discontinued sending ships to UNIFIL, where Bangladesh was proposed to send her second ship. The non-availability of an organic helicopter, the political and economic condition of Lebanon, and other operational commitments of BN were some of the important considerations for not accepting the proposal. However, this mission is progressing successfully, bringing laurel to Bangladesh.

j. BN was highest troop contributor in MTF for eight years and passed more than an era in UNIFIL. There is only one officer in DPO of UNHQ, which is not a standing post for BN. Thus, endeavour may be made to get the appointment of a senior maritime liaison officer in DPO.

k. More than 3000 BN personnel completed their mission in UNIFIL which allowed them to get acquainted with the Mediterranean Sea including NATO operating area and gave opportunity to visit countries like Türkiye, Cyprus and Lebanon.

## **Conclusion**

The MTF in UNIFIL is a unique mission for the UN and it is also the first such deployment for BN. Land and air missions are age old, but the deployment of ships by the UN started in 2006 through the UNIFIL MTF. BN, being one of the pioneers, may take advantage of it if appropriate ships are deployed and given due importance. By now, UNIFIL-MTF has proved to be an essential part of the UN system, and it is unlikely to be terminated within foreseeable years as LAF-N is still in its formative stage.

The deployment of BN ships under the Maritime Task Force in UNIFIL was a historic and challenging decision by NHQ. With the commitment of officers and men, all BANCONs had managed to perform MTF tasks very successfully. Through this deployment, BN ships have proved their sustained capability under the UN and have earned prestige for the Bangladesh Navy. Thus, this mission has immensely improved the image of Bangladesh amongst other participating NATO and non-NATO countries in UNIFIL.

It is a prestigious event for BN to participate in the only naval mission of the UN, alongside the stronger navies of the world. With this mission, BN has strongly footed its position amongst world naval community and at the same time uplifted the image of Bangladesh. Due to political and economic interests, a large number of countries have expressed their interest in contributing ships to this mission. Therefore, we need to pay special attention at all times to maintain our presence in UNIFIL in the future. If required BN's position and capabilities may be reassessed from time to time and select appropriate ships and personnel to uphold the image of BN.

## **Recommendations**

The following are recommended:-

- a. Efforts may be made to acquire an organic helicopter to meet the force requirement like Indonesian Navy.
- b. Diplomatic persuasion may be made to get the command and related staff appointments of MTF by BN.
- c. BN may request proportionate staff officer appointments in MTF and UNIFIL HQ.
- d. Endeavour may be made to send a senior maritime liaison officer in DPO at UNHQ.

### Notes and References

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4. Interoffice Memorandum from the Force Commander to the DHoM and the MTF commander re "Task organization on maritime security issues," 05 April 2012.
5. Mission Report of BANCON 1-12.

### Brief Biography



**Captain M Mizanur Rahman, (G), afwc, psc, BN** was commissioned in Bangladesh Navy on 01 July 1998 in Executive Branch. He completed his specialization course on 'Gunnery' from BNS ISSA KHAN. Captain Mizan became Honour Graduate of International Surface Warfare Officers' Course from ISWOC, San Diego California in 2003. He served onboard various ships and bases of Bangladesh Navy in different capacities. Some of his appointments include Commanding Officer of BNS JAMUNA, CGS TOWHEED, CGS PORTE GRANDE and BNS MADHUMATI, GSO 2 DGFI, Gunnery Officer BNS ISSA KHAN, Staff Officer (Operations) to COMKHUL, Executive Officer of Bangladesh Naval Academy and Executive Officer BNS SOMUDRA AVIJAN. He was the Gunnery Officer and 1st Lt of BNS OSMAN from 07 Jun 2010 to 09 Jun 2011 while the ship was under MTF of UNIFIL. The officer has also performed the duty of Chief of Naval Operations Centre under UNIFIL HQ in 2021. At present, he is serving as the Commanding Officer of BNS SOMUDRA JOY.



## **A Contemplative Study on Fourth Generation United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Operations: Endeavouring for Peace in a New Cycle**

Colonel Md Kamal Uddin Komol, psc

### **Introduction**

The persistent regional and global problems and political turbulence have significantly hampered the efforts of the current peace operations. One of the well-known missions of the United Nations (UN) is peacekeeping. The 'Fourth-Generation Peacekeeping' approach has developed as a comparatively new and evolving concept in the changing landscape of Peace Support Operations (PSO). Today, peace operations are implemented as a mechanism for conflict resolution under the UN Charter, which also supports arbitration, negotiation, and settlement.<sup>1</sup> The framework based on which the UN has been established guides the creation of peace operations. The UN Charter's first article clearly specifies the objective of the UN's stated goal "to maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of peace."<sup>2</sup> Yet, the UN Charter makes no indication of UN peacekeeping.

As a legacy of more than 50 years of expertise, the concept of modern UN peacekeeping is evolving to reflect the current situation of world politics. International and regional peace is still being challenged by the continuous shifts in post-Cold War security and politics. As a result, mandates for peace operations are also altering to meet the situation. This paper seeks to examine a concise yet thorough overview of fourth-generation UN peacekeeping operations, as well as Bangladesh's role and difficulties in this area. In discussing the features and structures of fourth-generation UN peace operations, this paper discusses the perception of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, the notable progression of UN peacekeeping, generations of the peace operations, challenges of fourth-generation UN peace operations, assessing Bangladesh's achievements and inadequacies in fourth-generation UN peacekeeping with suggested recommendations.

### **Perception of Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding**

The vital aspects are discussed briefly below:-

a. **Peacekeeping:** The creation of the UN led to an evolution in the idea of peacekeeping. UN peacekeepers help a conflict-ridden nation achieve peace by offering security, political support, and peacebuilding initiatives. Today's

peacekeeping missions are multifaceted and required for both security and political progression, along with the safety of non-combatants, the enforcement of stability, the facilitation of free and impartial elections, and most notably, the restoration of peace and order.<sup>3</sup>

b. **Peacebuilding:** The paradigm of peacebuilding was created with the understanding that it was critical to safeguard the capacity for upholding tranquility and settling disputes by addressing their underlying causes. Peacebuilding was described as “activities undertaken on the other side of the conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war” in the Brahimi Report (formally the study of the board on UN peace operations), published in 2000.<sup>4</sup>

Peacebuilding efforts have emerged as crucial instruments in establishing stability and controlling conflicts as the dynamics of wars have moved from intra-state to inter-state. Promoting security, assisting in infrastructure development, offering humanitarian aid, assisting in the establishment of an efficient governing structure, sustaining the economy, upholding adolescents' and gender-based activities, and preserving the legal system are all part of peacebuilding activities.<sup>5</sup>

### **Notable Progression of UN Peacekeeping**

UN peacekeeping operations have undergone four generations so far, and they are constantly evolving. Assuring that state sovereignty was not compromised and that the UN did not use power since it is not a participant in the conflict, instead a participant in the resolution process for it, the first-generation operation outlined in Chapter VI of the UN Charter was conducted with the host countries' consent. The transition from conflict to peace was aided by second-generation missions, in contrast to first-generation peacekeeping endeavors. Chapter VII of the UN Charter describes third-generation peacekeeping or peace enforcement as a result of the failure of second-generation peacekeeping in the 1990s, as demonstrated in Rwanda, Somalia, and Bosnia. Due to limits of these missions' it became clear that using just humanitarian assistance and refraining from using force would not be sufficient to address the evolving nature of conflicts, as was the case in the 1990s in Somalia and Yugoslavia. The UN created a fourth-generation operation after studying and evaluating the achievements and shortcomings of earlier peacekeeping missions.<sup>6</sup>

### **Generations of Peacekeeping Operation**

The main methods of dispute resolution used in peacekeeping operations include two or more of the following: arbitration, conciliation, mediation, and/or third-party involvement. The approaches used in practice and based on conflict-resolution techniques can be divided into four, and according to many academicians, five generations. Despite the lack of distinct beginning and end points for its predecessor generation(s), these operations in practice can commonly be divided into generations which are focused briefly below:-<sup>7</sup>

a. **First-Generation Peacekeeping Operations:** First-generation missions were the conventional kind of peacekeeping operations. These interposition missions, which were most significant between 1948 and 1990, had three main objectives: observe, monitor, and act. The execution of peace accords and mediation between parties were significant methods of resolving conflict, and supervision became a crucial response in these situations. Here, peacekeeping operations were conducted without weapons and by 'military diplomats.'<sup>8</sup>

b. **Second-Generation Peacekeeping Operations:** The second-generation peacekeeping missions are of multi-layered compelled nature. The first-time civilian forces were used, they were equipped only for self-defense and called for distinct combatants and peacekeeping forces in pre-formed formations. Second-generation peacekeeping operations are always governed by Chapter VI of the UN Charter, which forbids any modifications to the rule of engagement. This means that the parties' goodwill was absolutely necessary for these operations to succeed. Only a few effective examples of this kind of operation worth mentioning are the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (UNOMOZ), the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia, and the United Nations Observer Group in El Salvador (ONUSAL).<sup>9</sup>

c. **Third-Generation Peacekeeping Operations:** In line with the UN's capabilities, third-generation peacekeeping operations began to reduce in size, became more sophisticated, and heavily relied on Chapter VII of the UN Charter, as well as became multifaceted and primarily focused on peacebuilding operations.<sup>10</sup> The primary risks at the time were armed attacks or invasions, civil war, human rights violations, and terrorism. By then, the struggle resulting from the Cold War and the post-Cold War had started to influence schools of thought and global leaders. As a response, the objectives were national and global stabilization, cease-fires, peace accords, conflict management, and resolution. It placed a greater emphasis on civil-military operations, enforcing cease-fires, and reestablishing failed states. The robust approach meant that the consent of the disputing parties was not necessary.

d. **Fourth-Generation Peacekeeping Operations:** Fourth-generation peacekeeping has developed certain unique traits and qualities to increase its effectiveness and sustainability which is known as Robust Peacekeeping. The fourth generation of UN peacekeeping is frequently referred to as 'robust peacekeeping,' where there is an agreement of using force to expand civil rights. As seen in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, where there was a widespread violation of human rights, the nature of peace operations has changed fundamentally. As a result, international human rights laws and rules acknowledge the importance and value of a robust approach as a protective measure for peacekeepers. It is sometimes argued that the Security Council's objectives to uphold international peace are not served by the authority to use force granted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter during peacekeeping missions.<sup>11</sup>

e. **Tenets in Peacebuilding:** One of the main tenets of fourth-generation peacekeeping is 'peacebuilding.' The fourth generation is battered toward creating sustainable peace even after taking away peacekeeping forces. Political institutionalization and economic liberalization are the two steps that peacebuilding initiatives aim to take in order to reach their conclusion.<sup>12</sup> The progression of peacebuilding is implemented through modifying government institutions and processes such as enforcement agencies, academic facilities, and hospices referred to as 'state building.'<sup>13</sup> The objectives of international intervention have also changed in some way as a result of these excessive nation-building initiatives. Fourth-generation operations aim to end the conflict's underlying issues and firmly endeavour to set the stage for a durable peace.

f. **Gender Equality:** Fourth-generation Peacekeeping operations place the highest importance on the issue of gender equality. The mandates set out in the UN Security Council's (UNSC) rules on females, stability, and safety must be followed by all UN peacekeeping missions.<sup>14</sup> The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) encourages gender parity by ensuring the assignment of qualified female military personnel or civilian personnel for areas in admin, leadership, or secretariat. In fourth-generation diplomacy, gender consultants are also sent to ensure that the gender viewpoint is effectively incorporated into diverse peacekeeping operations.<sup>15</sup>

g. **Common Language:** Fourth-generation peacekeepers must be proficient in an official UN language, which is often the same as the country's native language depending on the location (e.g., English, French, Arabic, etc.). Lack of a common language could lead to miscommunication and distrust among the local populations who are experiencing a crisis. Additionally, several

battalions, brigades, and sector headquarters are cooperating and depending on one another in an environment where compliance is required. As a result, such language learning tasks have become essential to be a vital part of pre-deployment training.<sup>16</sup>

h. **Hi-tech Technology:** The UN must maintain the speed with hi-tech advancement to offer peacekeeping with technologies. Consequently, 'smart peacekeeping' is another name for fourth-generation peacekeeping.<sup>17</sup> This effort supported low-tech, typically developing countries that provide military or the police, with their technological initiatives. Using GPS, smartphones, internet-based tools, drones, or satellite photos, the UN peacekeepers have been able to engage local populations in novel ways while maintaining security and ensuring protection from mines and other hazardous war remnants.<sup>18</sup>

i. **Hybridization:** A crucial aspect of fourth-generation peacekeeping is 'hybrid' in character, which refers to the deployment of police and military contingents under a combined command structure. In hybrid operations, in supplement to UN personnel, different regional organizations send forces on the same mission under different command structures to carry out different responsibilities. In these hybrid missions, UN peacekeepers collaborate with deployed forces from other regional organizations.<sup>19</sup> Such hybrid operations have frequently failed because of conflicts of interest that may arise from their duties as UN peacekeepers and other regional organizations. A classic example of a hybrid operation is how NATO deployed the Kosovo Protection Force (KFOR), which worked on the safekeeping part of a hybrid mission in Kosovo while OSCE<sup>20</sup> handled the institutional-building aspect.<sup>21</sup>

j. **Civilian Components:** There is a majority of civilian and police troops in fourth-generation peacekeeping. Fourth-generation peacekeeping has a greater emphasis on non-military peacebuilding using NGOs and civilian peacekeepers since it aims to create lasting peace even after UN soldiers withdraw. The role of civilian peacekeepers is becoming increasingly significant because the military does not always possess the necessary knowledge for peacebuilding efforts and the capacity to collaborate with local government. If military peacekeepers leave the mission or declare it close, these civilian peacekeepers continue to monitor and uphold the peace.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, certain situations call for UN police peacekeepers as well as troops to deal with serious political disturbances and riots. When necessary, UN police peacekeepers assist in preserving the rule of law.

h. **Insufficient Personnel:** It's also crucial to keep in mind that fourth-generation peacekeeping generally has fewer personnel in the field.

Precise military needs, such as intelligence gathering, are obtained by satellite imagery or hi-tech operations, which were earlier ensured physically but are easily implemented with drone assistance. The civilian components would also be given higher prominence in fourth-generation peacekeeping missions. Many of the responsibilities usually carried out by ground troops will be replaced by machines as humans are replaced by technology.<sup>23</sup> There will be much fewer soldiers deployed on the ground.

j. **Logistical Support:** Due to the significant integration of machines and advanced equipment, the kind of logistics offered on the field will be radically changed.<sup>24</sup> As a result the logistical support will vary significantly. In many cases, the logistical assistance delivered to the troops and ground would not be solitary as some of the advanced equipment, such as satellites, will be owned by other nations.

#### **Challenges of Fourth-Generation UN Peacekeeping**

These are highlighted in brief below:-

a. **Costly:** As the activities at the moment are high-tech and equipment-heavy, the fourth generation faces difficulties with costs in the field. As a result, the price of bearing equipment increases significantly as well.<sup>25</sup> The connection between achieving goals and employing methods will present a challenge for the peacekeepers. Regarding the necessities, the overall costs of operations and the countries providing troops will be significant. Funding for the activities becomes a problem in this environment because the reliance on the latest tools and know-how such as drones, satellites, robotics, etc. requires significant investment and makes the tasks very costly.

b. **Unverified Latest Technology:** In terms of the nature of operations, the technology being used in the field has not been verified. The stability of highly sensitive sensors, such as satellite imaging, geo-satellites, etc. in the field during operations has not been confirmed.<sup>26</sup> The location varies as much as the mandates do. However, fourth-generation peacekeeping tends to use the same technology and equipment without making any adjustments. Therefore, it is essential to thoroughly consider the current technology's adoption and test it.

c. **Reliance on 1st World:** Many Third World countries will struggle to equip the battalions due to the high expense of the missions. Additionally, many of the personnel from the Third World have never used these kinds of operational tools. Even if they can manage the money in that situation, the battalions are not prepared to use this kind of equipment. Most importantly, reliance will increase on the forces of first-world countries, who have the necessary technical know-how and financial resources to support such missions. The largest issue is that

first-world nations don't send troops, but the nations who contribute troops don't comprehend the former two abilities, so there will always be a discrepancy.

**d. The Necessity of Human Factors for Conflict Negotiation:** Negotiation and conflict resolution are activities that require human interaction and cannot be automated. The capacity to mediate and facilitate using human desires will be impacted by the shift from human reliance to machine reliance. Despite the fact that machines have been shown to be more effective, there are some difficult situations that call for human judgment.<sup>27</sup> Humans still play a bigger part in the fourth-generation UN peacekeeping operations because peacebuilding is a part of it.

**e. The Neutrality of Regional Troops:** The local troop contribution might be a powerful factor in some operations. Regional forces in peacekeeping missions offer several advantages, but because they are from the same region or continent, they might have a preconceived perception of the war. As a result, regionally preferred peacekeepers frequently spend more time defending their own views than the mandate that has been given to them. Regional forces have been observed joining the conflict in the African context, as in the scenario of the Central African Republic (CAR). The essential objective of impartiality won't occur in many instances. Consequently, a new set of proposals that combines regional and non-regional peacekeeping forces is beginning to arise.

**f. Lack of Synchronization between Civil and Military Forces:** The general population, NGOs, and civil officers will play a prominent role in the missions. Still, there is a deficiency of functional knowledge of how the military and civilian components work together.<sup>28</sup> Building up the connectivity will become more challenging as the ratio to these inconsistencies continues to change. Provided that the military's nature of operations is not entirely well-matched with the noncombatant component as they operate under separate rules, the two components' operational doctrines are highly dissimilar. Operational cohesion and coordination will be the biggest challenge.

**g. Cyber Security Threat:** Due to the employment of satellite-based equipment and sensors, the deployment of high-tech equipment on the battlefield will increase the sensitivity of cyber security, putting the operation's security at risk. High-tech equipment is easily accessible by malware and bugs, which puts the operation at risk. Another level of vulnerability will be introduced to the operations as a result of the development in cyber strength on the battlefield.<sup>29</sup>

**h. Difficulty in Intelligence Gathering:** Automation will be used for most of the intelligence collecting and compiling. The intelligence-gathering



operations in this field will be replaced by satellite photography, satellite sensing, etc. It has not been sufficiently demonstrated how the method of gaining intelligence using a sentient and a machine-based method is related. Another discrepancy in the operations will arise in this situation.

i. **Digital Solutions to Analog Problems:** Considering the war does not take place behind a military barrier, conflict scenarios tend to be more complex. The nature of complexity may include components of a societal, traditional, resource-related, religious, financial, political, etc. The conflict might include a combination of all these components. These aren't actual battles that are fought solely to apply military tactics and procedures. These develop into difficult social situations, or slow-moving analog issues, necessitating a further analog method to their resolution than the quick-moving digital resolution that operations typically use.

j. **Modification in Command Framework:** The foundation of the UN command framework is traditional peacekeeping. The command and control may not be evident in the dynamics of such operations, making it difficult for the fourth generation to handle the challenges in terms of robust peacebuilding. To ensure that the command-and-control function perfectly in the near term, the operations, and its processes must be reoriented.<sup>30</sup> For effective operations, the command framework must be properly introduced to the knowledge of battle settings.

k. **Logistics Setback:** The use of numerous sophisticated tools and apparatus is necessary for robust peacebuilding. Regarding the logistics needed to support this high-tech equipment and resources, the operations face another problem. In this regard, logistical support has not yet been developed to the necessary standard.<sup>31</sup> For instance, it is absolutely natural for any third-world state participating in peacekeeping to lack the technical know-how necessary for satellite maintenance on the field.

l. **Difficulty in Ground Deployment:** Deployment on the ground will be a difficult process during operations. Deployment was less complicated before the fourth-generation module because only simple tools and weaponry were being used. However, the use of sophisticated instruments on the ground will influence how operations are carried out, which will influence how they are deployed.<sup>32</sup> In order to accomplish their goals, peacebuilders will need to effectively deploy both manpower and equipment because many conflict-prone regions are remote and low-tech.

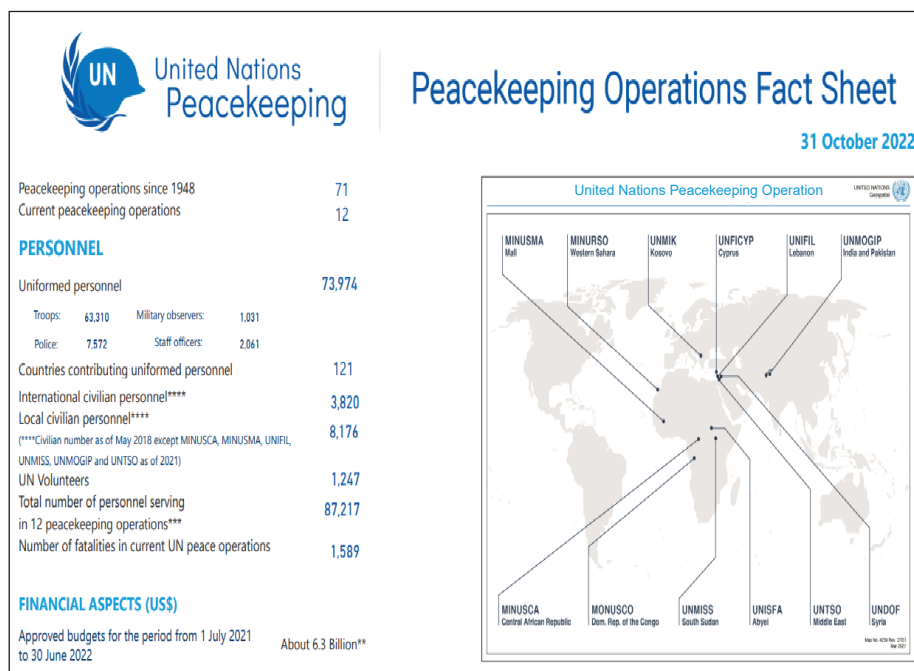
m. **Gender Heaviness:** There will be a gender disparity in 4th generation peacekeeping operations. The majority of conflict-ridden areas are

not yet prepared for operations of this nature, where female peacekeepers will be deeply engaged in terms of gender equity.<sup>33</sup> The UN is deploying numerous battalions made up entirely of women.

### Contribution and Shortcomings of Bangladesh in Fourth-Generation UN Peacekeeping

**Contribution of Bangladesh:** Bangladesh has been participating in UN peacekeeping assignments for almost a quarter-century. The Bangladesh Armed Forces and police contingents have consistently sent their personnel for peacekeeping, in a timely manner in response to UN requests to strengthen global peace and solidity. 1,62,584 peacekeepers from the Bangladesh Armed Forces and 20,794 peacekeepers from Bangladesh Police have participated in 54 peacekeeping operations.<sup>34</sup> Till date Bangladesh has successfully completed peacekeeping missions in around 40 different nations.

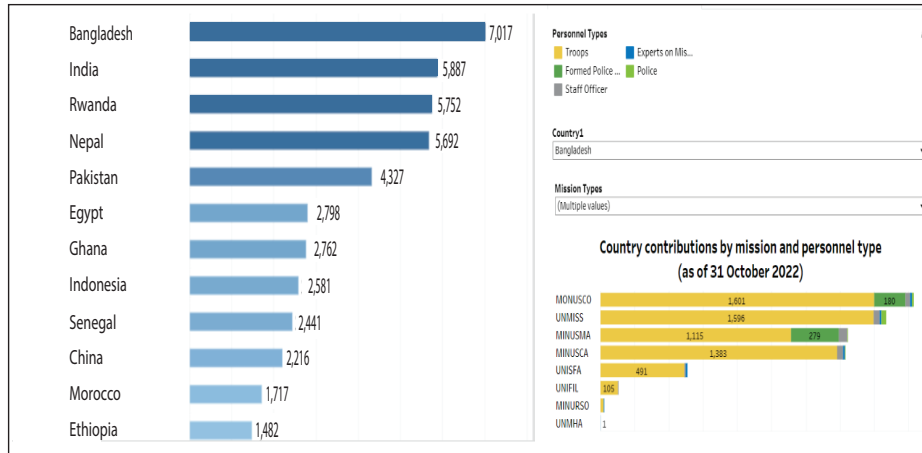
**Figure:1 Ongoing UN Peacekeeping Operations and Fact Sheet**



Source: [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping\\_missions\\_fact\\_sheet\\_october\\_2022\\_english.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/peacekeeping_missions_fact_sheet_october_2022_english.pdf)

It is important to mention that in 2011, 2014, 2015, 2021, and 2022 Bangladesh has been one of the top countries providing troops and had been the leading troops-contributing country with a total of 7,017 peacekeepers deployed in 08 countries.

**Figure:2 Contribution of Bangladeshi Peacekeepers-Troop and Police (as on 31 October 2022)**



Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>

Bangladesh participates in peacekeeping missions like a country that values peace and performs under international law. Bangladeshi forces are defending territory in some wars throughout the world, such as those in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the Darfur region of Sudan. In the face of adversity when confronted with 'unknown opponents on foreign soil,' Bangladeshi peacekeepers have never retreated. Working in challenging and dangerous situations frequently puts peacekeepers' lives in jeopardy. 167 peacekeepers of Bangladesh have already made supreme sacrifices for the peace effort, while 259 have suffered serious injuries.

**Figure:3 Fatalities of Bangladeshi Peacekeepers (as on 30 November 2022)**



Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/fatalities>

The Bangladesh Armed Forces have made a significant contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment by using women as peacekeepers during challenging field deployments. The UN peace operation has so far included 701 female peacekeepers from the Bangladesh Armed Forces. Presently, 371 female members of the Bangladeshi Armed Forces are participating in various peacekeeping missions abroad. In the past, Bangladesh had sent two female combat pilots to the DRC and a fully female armed police force to Haiti. 18% of staff officers and military observers are to be deployed in UN peacekeeping operations, according to the UN's goal. Bangladesh is already close to 18% and will eventually surpass 18% in terms of women's participation. Additionally, starting in January 2019, the Bangladesh Army began integrating the 'Female Engagement Team' into the battalion and will be continued in all ensuing major contingents participating in UN peace campaigns.

The Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT) is considered to be a renowned, top pre-deployment peacekeepers training facility. This highly regarded institution offers courses on a variety of topics, including women, peace and security, sexual violence, English and French language instruction, and the Multinational Peace Operation Exercise known as 'Shanti Doot.' In keeping with current international standards, BIPSOT also aims to give participants who are military, police, and civilians from both national and international organizations specialized multidimensional training.

**Challenges Experienced:** Due to the complexity of UN peacekeeping missions, traditional paradigms of maintaining peace are changing and the conflict has taken on a more complex pattern. As the scope of peacekeeping expands and due to the changing nature of UN peacekeeping operations and global politics, Bangladesh is also facing some challenges which are highlighted below:-

a. As wars become less between states and more inter-state, as in Mali and South Sudan, where Bangladeshi soldiers are presently deployed, various parties receive help from other governments or non-state actors, making the situation incredibly complex and difficult to resolve.

b. UN missions now focus on the resilience of armed groups, which has shown to be a growing component of the mission; these aspirational missions for the future are set by richer countries who are not ready to forfeit such a threat or willing to back with technology and funding.

c. Bangladesh should be concerned as a key contributor to peacekeeping operations after the democratic American administration's announcement that

payments to UN peacekeeping missions will be curtailed and the US ambassador to the UN's proposal for restructuring of the ongoing missions.

d. By drastically scaling back its operations in Africa, the UN may reduce its reliance on South Asian troops. Due to a preference for local troops and the fact that the majority of continuing interstate disputes are in Africa, there may be fewer Bangladeshi peacekeepers. On the other end, peacekeepers may have serious reservations about their ability to perform effectively in multifaceted peacekeeping assignments. Additionally, it might be challenging for the upcoming peacekeepers to wage battle and build peace.

### **Recommendations**

a. The UN should establish an expert committee to assess the whole idea of peace operations and recommend important and long-lasting adjustments because fourth-generation peacekeeping is bringing some fundamental changes to the concept of peacekeeping.

b. All troops contributing nations must be necessarily conversant and educated for adaption to this generation of peacekeepers. UN must derive a tangible pre-deployment international training system because standardized peacekeepers aren't still prepared enough to familiarize themselves with the process of robust peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities.

c. The issue of funding peacekeeping operations must be taken into account because factually troop-contributing nations are unable to continue due to the increase in the operation's cost.

d. A different type of command, control, and patterns of communication will be required for fourth-generation peacekeeping, sometimes referred to as 'Smart Peacekeeping.' These techniques of operation are implemented in many of the traditional features of command and control which will undergo radical variations, requiring a set of practical alterations to the command structure.

e. The significance of people in conflict mediation should not be undervalued, and it is crucial to have humans behind the robots for decision-making as the nature of conflicts changes and the usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in peacekeeping operations rises.

f. It is crucial to have a clear policy to inform civilian personnel, police, and troops of their roles and responsibilities, which should be carried out in accordance with a predetermined plan that will help to reduce deployment issues in fourth-generation peacekeeping.

## Conclusion

Peacekeeping operations for maintaining peace have been one of the main methods for resolving disputes among nations, as demonstrated during the past 60 years. In a conflict environment, fundamental change is occurring, and in order to deal with this active change, the perception and preparation of peacekeeping are adapting and altering. Living in an atmosphere where society's complexity, the contesting parties, and the international system are linked with the nature of the current conflict. Thus, it presents further difficulties for the UN's conflict resolution procedures. However, modern science and technology have created a wide range of new capabilities and powers. This capability, which when correctly used, has the potential to be a force multiplier, is starting to be exploited by the shifting character of peacekeeping assignments, notably in the fourth generation.

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### **Brief Biography**



**Colonel Md Kamal Uddin Komol, psc** was commissioned with 32 BMA Long Course on 16 June 1995. He is a graduate of the Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC), Mirpur. He has completed MSc in Water Resources Engineering (WRE) from BUET. He served as GSO-2 in the Engineer Directorate, Army Headquarters, GSO-2 in DGFI, Instructor Class 'A' in BMA, and Project Director of the 'Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) Project' in Bangladesh Election Commission Secretariat. He commanded the 5 Riverine Engineer (RE) Battalion and served in UN Peacekeeping Missions as a member of the Engineer Contingent in Liberia. At present, he is serving as Chief Instructor/Deputy Commandant of the Engineer Centre and School of Military Engineering (ECSME) located at the Qadirabad Cantonment in Natore, Rajshahi division.

## **Challenges for Peacekeepers and Ways Ahead: In Light of the Anti-MONUSCO Movement in Late 2022**

Dr. Ashik Mahmud, BPM-Seba

**Picture 1: Congolese policemen walk outside a United Nations Organization Stabilization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) Compound as Residents Protest**



Source: IPS/Stephanie Jansch

### **Introduction**

The conflict in DRC (Democratic Republic of the Congo) has different forms and layers that vary across time, space and origin. The Rwandan genocide in 1994 resulted in a large number of Rwandan Hutu refugees moving in the eastern region of DRC. These refugees made the eastern DRC situation more volatile. These refugee camps assisted DRC President Mobutu in capitalising against war perpetrators of the Rwanda. The illegal mineral extraction in eastern region and lack of decentralisation in DRC by the President Mobutu developed a structural conflict among internal actors of DRC. Thus, in order to divert the DRC people and to take advantage against Rwanda, President Mobutu utilised the refugee camps against Rwandan army who were responsible for genocide. These situations resulted in increasing violence in Eastern region. Moreover, it led to the birth of some rebel groups in DRC. The conflict escalated more when radical Hutu nationalists added themselves into the dynamics of ethnicity by entering DRC and standing with local Tutsi and Banyamulenge. Consequently, more groups of people joined the conflict and created more sub-groups and rebel groups.

### **Background of The Conflict**

There are two parties in the ongoing conflict in DRC such as internal and external . After the Congo Wars in 1996-1997, 1998-2003; both the internal and external factors were involved in the conflict. The conflict in DRC has been highly damaging for the local civilians. Some NGOs and researchers have

estimated that 5.4 million civilians lost their lives for war-related cause.<sup>1</sup> It also led an estimated number of 541,000 refugees in DRC from neighbouring countries and 4.5 million internally displaced persons. These figures show the worst humanitarian crisis in Africa as 10% of the total population are in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>2</sup>

### **United Nations in DR Congo**

The approach of the UN in DRC over the past two decades has followed traditional state building approach.<sup>3</sup> This was one of the major issues mentioned in 2002 peace agreement. However, this strategy obscured local power and created complexity among local actors as the strategy tends to bypass the interests of local actors and national actors who are responsible for running the state. Often a strong government may be present in a weak state, which will eventually make the state strong. However, considering the state only without caring about the government for the peacebuilding process was not a sound strategy.

The history and economic distribution tell us that most of the wealth and finance in DRC are captured and controlled by a narrow elite group. Thus the struggle by other locals is for survivals only and this phenomenon threatens the never-ending process of national conflict, which eventually made the elite forego initiating the institutional reform and maintaining patronage networks for national security. In addition, those elites have been using the government security forces such as army and police for their personal gains. Such mixture of neo-patriotism results in capacity deficits of the structure in development of the country. In addition to the weak educational system, both the security forces Police Nationale Congolaise (PNC) and the Forces armées de la république démocratique du Congo (FARDC) have very low pay grade. This under payment often makes them negligent in their work against the rebel groups.

All these scenarios have a direct impact on MONUSCO's activities. More specifically, strengthening the state institutions and structural building of government for future development by MONUSCO is hampered as the state institutions are weak and local actors are manipulated.

### **Mandate, Security and Protection and Deployment**

The mandate has been updated for MONUSCO in different dynamics in DRC. In 1999 UN started their function in DRC with 500 military observers as a monitoring mission. The number of peacekeepers increased manifold in 2013 as 21,485 uniformed personnel and 3,944 civilians were assigned by UN for peacekeeping in this region.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in 1999 the mandate was limited to three pages only while in 2018 it has become 17 pages.

### **Operation in MONUSCO**

MONUSCO which is previously known as MONUC has a successful period in its operational timeframe. According to the Pretoria Agreement, the Security Council decided in Resolution 1493 dated 28 July 2003 security institutions and government functions should give priority to UN. UN through MONUC wanted to re-establish the rule of law with new constitution drafting and prioritize the general elections.

MONUC fully supported the referendum in the new Constitution and the elections. But going through this phase was critical because it aimed to establish rule of law and good governance. In doing so, UN Security Council Resolution 1484 dated 30 May 2003 authorised the deployment of French troops and some South African, Swedish, and Canadian elements for "Operation Artemis." This deployment in Bunia was highly appreciated by the local populations as they recall that force even after fifteen years.<sup>5</sup>

The present anti-UN movement is not new in Kinshasa but in 2003 there were a violent riots and demonstration in Kinshasa as well. That demonstration came very close to UN compound and after that security around all UN compound in DRC got increased especially in Bukavu. During that time, based on the situational experience, UN created a divisional headquarters in Kisangani. After that under its command, operations with Special Forces and attack helicopters in disarming rebel groups was in function across the Kivus.<sup>6</sup>

Continuing the structural building and operations against rebel groups helped DRC during the elections in 2005. These initiatives by UN helped DRC organise free and fair election that year.<sup>7</sup> This election experience was first in 46 years of DRC history. The way MONUC and CIAT dealt with the election process was deemed credible by the "international community."

At present in 2023, the upcoming election might be another chance for UN to win the hearts and minds of the local people with credibility from the international community because it can resolve the anti-MONUSCO sentiment among local civilians by helping build political structure for future development of the country. More liaisons with national actors and co-operation with the political leaders might help MONUSCO to achieve more trust among civilians.

However, UN should remember the experience as well, such as the never ending conflict in Kivus in 2006. Besides, local people there did not experience any elections before.<sup>8</sup> But this situation worked in favour of MONUC as Security Council decided to increase the political diplomacy and put greater emphasis on

protection.<sup>9</sup> This happened because the real autonomy for DRC was not there with regard to operating the security forces. Thus, UN through MONUC decided to update its mandate to accommodate 50 different tasks. Given the present scenario in DRC, Security Council needs to do similar initiative to win people's hearts and minds in order to resolve anti-MONUSCO sentiment. The previous lessons learned might be an effective tool to apply on behalf of MONUSCO.

### **The Protest**

There were several protests in the late 2022 against MONUSCO in DRC. Approximately 36 civilians and 4 peacekeepers were dead, and 170 persons were wounded since July 25 2022 in the eastern region of DR Congo.<sup>10</sup> This is because of the ongoing conflict in the DRC. But the fact is this conflict is not between rebel groups and the government or civilians but civilians against the peacekeepers. This is a rather alarming situation with respect to safety and security of UN peacekeepers in this country. Moreover, in June 2022, MONUSCO had to take up arms against violent civilian protesters and used live firing rounds against them. Those demonstrators with violent civilian protesters attacked and looted UN buildings and ration store. In another incident two UN soldiers were accused by the civilians as they opened fire at a border post between Uganda and the DRC. In that shooting incident, 15 civilians were injured while 2 persons were killed.

### **The Situation**

It has been observed during the peacekeeping mission and regular patrolling that the locals are not friendly with the UN personnel. To achieve sustainable peace or help the country to grow better from conflict, activities of UN need to be supported by locals. The locals for somewhat reasons believe that UN peacekeeping is lagging behind to ensure security and as a result, challenges for UN peacekeepers in the field have increased.<sup>11</sup>

From the very beginning of the intra country conflict, DRC has been trying to use all its resources and techniques to terminate those rebel groups but not been successful. It has been grappled with militia violence from decades and state has not been able to rein in rebel groups. More specifically, the M23 rebel group, which is the most prominent among all groups against the government, holds the control of the eastern DRC where many people left the zone and many died. Local people are tired because the M23 or other rebel group activities are still active thus they have an inherent feelings that UN has not done its best to stop those rebels and the overall security situation has not changed as expected for the last 20 years. M23 rebels killed 23 civilians in June and July 2022.<sup>12</sup> Moreover in eastern region named as North-Kivu, the deadly militia controls several towns and villages.



Thomas Fessy believes that the violence in eastern region, which has been unending and escalated, raised the demonstrations against UN mission. Some of the spokesperson believe that UN forces do not have enough equipment to fight against M23. Although the government of the DRC replied these statements are to raise the conflict between MONUSCO and Congolese people, the situation arose as the eastern region's security has deteriorated due to insane operation by M23 and other armed groups. This operation led by those armed groups targeted the civilians of their own country. Besides, blue helmets stay right beside those civilians thus UN mission's capacity is questioned. In addition, the fact as some sources said that M23 has such firepower and has the capacity of shooting down enemy flying objects with accuracy, threatens the UN directly. Thus, the question arises whether UN's peacekeeping is harming the local peace? If not, then why the rebels are posing direct threat to the blue helmets by regular coordinated attacks which are frightening to civilians and has raised the tensions and challenges to UN field missions in DRC.

### **The Mind Game**

The Security Council in 2015 has updated the mandate for MONUSCO and divided it into two major parts. One of the priorities was the protection of civilians based on comprehensive analysis for MONUSCO military and civil responses and another one was the support for the election process.<sup>13</sup> Based on these two points the mission has elaborated its benchmarks. Thus, MONUSCO established favourable security conditions where no tangible threat is there and peace remains way even after the mission's departure.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, around the 2018 elections there was high risk over the period. This political uncertainty resulted in significant human rights abuse with sexual violence and massacres in Kasai, Ituri and Beni regions.<sup>15</sup> At that time some of the armed groups attacked the mission personnel. This caused casualties of MONUSCO in significant numbers in 2016-2018 which was highest in the history.<sup>16</sup> Near Beni in 2017 December, about 15 Tanzanian peacekeepers lost their lives.<sup>17</sup> Very similar situation is currently in action against MONUSCO in DRC. Several casualties happened in the border camps of MONUSCO. The lesson learned from 2016-2018 including the electoral process may help the Security Council to decide and update its mandate in stabilizing the mission. Helping the upcoming election process and building good relationship with local actors might help MONUSCO to earn appreciation. In addition, the mission should try its best to stop any violence against civilians by the rebel groups. The UN Secretariat conducted an "independent strategic review" in 2019. This helped the Secretary-General to task MONUSCO in political context with presidential elections<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the current scenario is quite similar and steps from the UN

headquarters might reduce the threat against MONUSCO by helping the political stakeholders for election.

### **The Puzzle**

Peacekeeping mission in DRC is almost two decades old. During this era MONUSCO faced exacerbated national and regional political manoeuvring. MONUSCO clearly told that it is very difficult to stand against the rebel group M23 that is active against the government.<sup>19</sup> It is clearly understood from the field scenario that after the M23 defeat in 2013 by UN and Congolese forces, M23 has re-emerged in November 2012 with the support from neighbouring countries.<sup>20</sup> Due to the attacks of M23, UN troops were re-deployed in the active M23 areas thus it created a security vacuum against other armed groups in Ituri and North Kivu provinces.<sup>21</sup> As there were attacks upon MONUSCO and there created a security vacuum, the MONUSCO's exit-based achievement might be hampered and certain benchmarks might be under-achieved.<sup>22</sup>

Above all, the dissatisfaction of Congolese population has risen as MONUSCO seemingly fails to tramp down the violence and curb down the rise of security threats.<sup>23</sup> The situation has become worse when four MONUSCO peacekeepers and about 29 civilians were killed in different riots in Beni, Butembo and Goma.<sup>24</sup> This led the local people to loot several UN offices and supply based warehouses as a part of the anti-MONUSCO movement.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the situation became volatile as MONUSCO opened fire at Kasindi border post situated in Uganda-DRC border in 31 July 2022 where three civilians were killed.<sup>26</sup> The political leaders this time acted on behalf of their civilians and asked MONUSCO to leave DRC.<sup>27</sup> Following the incident, the DRC President requested a meeting with MONUSCO and wanted to know about the exit schedule.<sup>28</sup> After coming under several attacks the UN peacekeeping forces found that MONUSCO has limited capacity in order to fight against these highly trained rebel groups when tension escalates.<sup>29</sup> It hampered the peacekeepers' stay and situations became much more volatile in DRC. The attack against peacekeepers and the peacekeepers firing against civilians made the situation more complicated. Moreover, civilians' action of looting ration supply of UN made the staying of peacekeepers more vulnerable and challenging than in previous times.

With the unrest in eastern DRC, MONUSCO may suffer in several dynamics. It is because when local population opposes stay it is difficult to survive in a foreign land. One of the causes for the tension among FPU members and the UN personnel is the UN authorization of force usage. The civilians attacking UN supplies and compound are unarmed that is why UN cannot use the force against them until extremely necessary.

Meanwhile the anti-MONUSCO sentiment in this upcoming political context has made UN more vulnerable to decide on attacking the civilians. If there is a context such that peacekeepers are charging the civilians, then it might create a good chance for rebel groups. Rebel groups might utilise the chance of UN unrest against civilians to act against government. These nexuses among MONUSCO, civilians, DRC politicians and rebel groups made the MONUSCO vulnerable in maintaining inner peace in peacekeeping mission. Only some strategic political liaison might solve the issue in favour of MONUSCO. Otherwise, the violence might escalate in DRC and MONUSCO might be made liable for that by international community. Therefore, this unrest in east is clearly putting MONUSCO's future in doubt.<sup>30</sup>

The paradox of peacekeepers' peace or the civilians safety has become more complicated as the East African Community (EAC)'s leaders have agreed with the DRC President to establish a joint force to stop the violence. This will surely hamper the credibility of MONUSCO in the region. Moreover, one of the political decisions which might go against MONUSCO, is these EAC leaders have already established a headquarter in Goma, which is led by a Kenyan commander. It has been decided that this headquarter will operate in four Congolese provinces such as Haut-Uele, Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. This force will change their mandate within six months, and it will be renewable.

As the government decided to seek help from others to keep peace in DRC in the presence of MONUSCO, the decision might go against MONUSCO. Because it seems that despite the presence of the UN, DRC needed another actor to maintain peace in eastern region. And they have already established a headquarter with the consent of DRC President. Besides, Burundi, Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda all agreed to provide troops to fight with Congolese soldiers against rebels. With the presence of UN, the involvement of foreign actors to restore peace surely poses a threat to the MONUSCO's credibility in the mission area. In addition, Congolese authority has formally announced that participants will start to enter DRC. The authority also mentioned, among the participants the Burundian contingent will act first and enter into DRC under the East African Community (EAC) auspices while other contingent's entry schedule is yet to be announced.

It may seem that participation of neighbours might solve the problem as DRC have political clearance in their activities but as the region is full of natural resources there might be a future 'conflict of interest' in the region. And this EAC plan might turn the conflict more violent than previous. In this context, MONUSCO may have to update their mandate according to the development of the EAC activities.

At present MONUSCO is serving in such a complex situation that UN Security council should think about the mission credibility and continuation in the region. It should continue to back MONUSCO from the region.<sup>32</sup> If the actors under EAC enter the region, it will surely have a conflict of mandates of all the actors and the civilians will be in vulnerable situation. As MONUSCO is already there and playing a similar role, it should not be wise to let the EAC actors enter the region. With the public sentiment against MONUSCO, it will be wise to continue achieving the mandated benchmarks and to make future strategic plan for field missions.

In this context, the Security Council needs to address the challenges from rebel groups, who are supported by neighbour countries. As the neighbouring countries Rwanda and Uganda are supporting M23 rebel groups, the Council should make DRC aware that this might pose a threat to the sovereignty of the DRC. Since it can grow to a regional conflagration, in response to the conflict the Council should use the Great Lake regional leaders in order to avoid a resurgence of proxy conflict.

Meanwhile to ensure peace for peacekeepers UN officials should make necessary liaison with President Tshisekedi to ensure EAC should not be active until MONUSCO achieved its benchmarks according to the mandate. Militias may run only after MONUSCO's leaving the regional area. Although without MONUSCO in the region, DRC will have their fate in the hands of other external actors where most of the countries will surely try to achieve their own interest after entering. Moreover without the help of MONUSCO, it will be difficult for Tshisekedi to run the presidential election in 2023. Thus, the election tool may be useful for MONUSCO in establishing internal peace for peacekeepers and civilians alike.<sup>31</sup>

### **The Supply Crisis**

There was a budget cut in 2017-2018 for MONUSCO as the peacekeeping contributors reduced their contribution. Meanwhile the upcoming presidential election was scheduled for December 2018. Moreover, the mission had to deal with the outbreak of violence in South Kivu (Uvira). Another violent outbreak happened in the early 2018 in Ituri by militia forces where support across Uganda border is suspected. In the mid 2018 the Ebola outbreak slowed down whole country's activities along with MONUSCOs.<sup>32</sup> The scenarios are quite similar as with global outbreak of coronavirus pandemic stopped all activities drastically. These inactive situations helped the rebels to plan for their future whereas the MONUSCO peacekeepers had been busy with looking after this humanitarian crisis along with ensuring protection of them in the pandemic.

Currently MONUSCO is facing a quite similar situation with upcoming election as the anti-MONUSCO sentiment is active with different types of crisis. During the anti-MONUSCO sentiment, different world dynamics led MONUSCO to experience ration crisis for the peacekeepers. Such as the Russia-Ukraine war has led various financial crises and slowed down the world supply chain which had an adverse effect in UN personnel's routine ration supply in DRC.

### **Conclusion**

Struggle by UN peacekeepers in DRC has continued for decades. Present scenario has escalated it further with more conflict in eastern region. Besides this, the past President Joseph Kabila in 2010 demanded the complete withdrawal of blue helmets meanwhile the current President Felix Tshisekedi is also working to build self-sustained DRC army against rebel groups and formulate UN withdrawal plan.

With all these different nexus in place, the mission should protect itself from all the electoral politics. Because it is believed that the recent unrest and demonstration against MONUSCO were pinned up by politicians of DRC who are aspirant candidates for election and are showing off to prove their stand against all external or foreign actors to protect DRC. This is a bid to win the hearts and minds of the local population for the upcoming election. Only the investment by MONUSCO in conveying the mission's value to the local and national actors may protect the mission against all odds of peacekeeping.

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### **Brief Biography**



**Dr. Ashik Mahmud BPM-Seba** joined Bangladesh civil service (Education Cadre) in June 2012 as Lecturer under the supervision of Ministry of Education, Bangladesh Secretariat in 30th BCS batch. Later, in 33rd BCS batch he joined as Assistant Superintendent of Police in August 2014. Prior to his current post, he served in Police Headquarters and Dhaka Range DIG office respectively. Because of his dedication and effective service towards people with courage, dignity and honesty, Bangladesh Government has adorned him Bangladesh Police Medal (Seba) in the year 2020. He is a post-graduate in Economics from University of Dhaka. Moreover, he completed Masters of Police Science from University of Rajshahi. With his keen interest in research works and in criminology and criminal behaviour, he also post-graduated in Criminology and Criminal Justice from University of Dhaka. During his post-graduate study in counter-terrorism from Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia he received extensive academic training under counter-terrorism specialists Julian Drogan and Lise Waldek. There he acquired skills of designing, analyzing and evaluating social harmony based counter-terrorism policy. He was conferred Doctor of Philosophy in Archaeology from Jahangirnagar University. Currently, he is serving in UN peacekeeping mission in MONUSCO (DR Congo) as a Platoon Commander of BANFPU-1/15.

## **Significance of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and Humanitarian Assistance: A Passive Methodology to Attain Mission Mandate**

Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Tauhid Ali, psc, G

### **Introduction**

Conflict dynamics in the present multidimensional environment present unprecedented challenges to Host and International communities in terms of conflict management and peace resolution. War in Ukraine, conflict-torn Sub-Saharan and African regions, and persisting sufferings in Syria, Middle East (ME) and Afghanistan are the wake-up calls for strengthening compliance with IHL and recognizing the weaknesses in the present operational environment for proper dissemination and implementation of norms and principles of Humanitarian Law. More so, the resultant of these interlinked political, social, and military factors often poses the threat of becoming a fragile or failed state, creating a complex and annexed humanitarian emergency both in terms of IHL and humanitarian assistance.

Since the end of Cold War era (1946-91), UN Peacekeepers have been the nuclei of peace and security in peace restoration strategy. Preservation of Human Rights is the core pillar of the UN, which binds each of its members. Being the global leader in upholding human rights, the UN is also responsible for promoting and protecting human rights violations in its deployed missions. More so, allegations against peacekeepers in involving violation of human rights damages the reputation of the UN. It is now time- demanding to have a more competent operational paradigm to reduce human rights violations in UN missions. On the other hand, humanitarian assistance is a critical tool in protecting IHL and human rights law. At some point, it is also important to distinguish the political, military and humanitarian agendas of international actors. None the less, in situations like conflict or displacement, access to humanitarian assistance can be a lifeline for those affected.

To effectively secure human rights and humanitarian assistance in a conflict-prone area, it is necessary for UN personnel to have a solid understanding of IHL. By doing so, they can provide explanations of human rights concerns to local population, understand the concerns of different groups, and work to allay any fear or suspicion that may exist. Additionally, effective humanitarian assistance requires a clear understanding of the human rights context within which it is being delivered. By having an accurate understanding of the law, UN personnel can monitor and review the humanitarian assistance they are providing to make sure it is being delivered in a manner consistent with

human rights norms. By understanding IHL and the human rights context in which humanitarian assistance is being delivered, UN personnel can foster greater local popular support for the humanitarian effort.

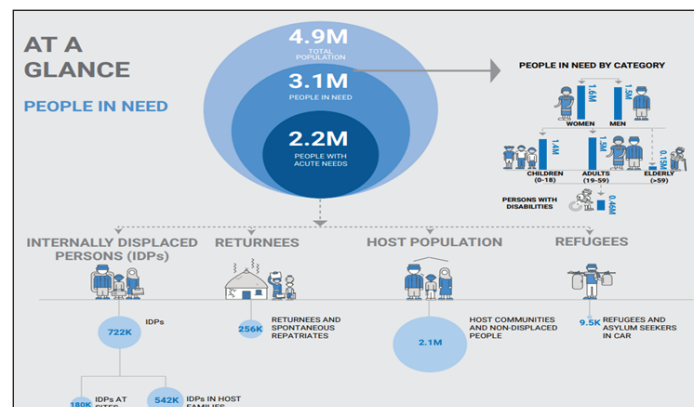
This paper will explore the significance of understanding IHL and humanitarian assistance by UN peacekeepers. It will argue that this passive methodology can be a powerful tool for gaining local popular support. This support can be vital in ensuring that UN peacekeepers are able to effectively fulfill their mandate to protect civilians and promote peace.

### Humanitarian Threats Caused by Present Global Conflicts

In 2022, world has seen another year of grave abuses of IHL in Ukraine, the Middle East, the African region and other conflicting parts of the world where parties to the conflicts have deliberately violated IHL and human rights law by using weapons of mass destruction, causing damage to life and infrastructures, targeting hospitals/schools/civilian population etc.

Outside infrastructure destructions and human casualties, IDPs and refugees across the globe are one of the fatal and heartbreaking consequences of armed conflict and violence. According to UNHCR data, by the end of 2020, there were 82.4 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, more than double the number a decade ago. In 2022 the world has seen a mass exodus from Ukraine. As per IDMC, Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) 2022, in 2021, the world has observed a record 14.4 million of displacement. Due to the attack on the IDP camp, IDPs had to shift their locations even more. Ukraine, the Sahel region, DR Congo, Afghanistan etc had to face severe displacement events. The outbreak of the Russo-Ukraine War on 24 February 2022 caused the largest IDP crisis after WWII (1939-45) in 2022.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure-1: Central African Republic- People in Need**



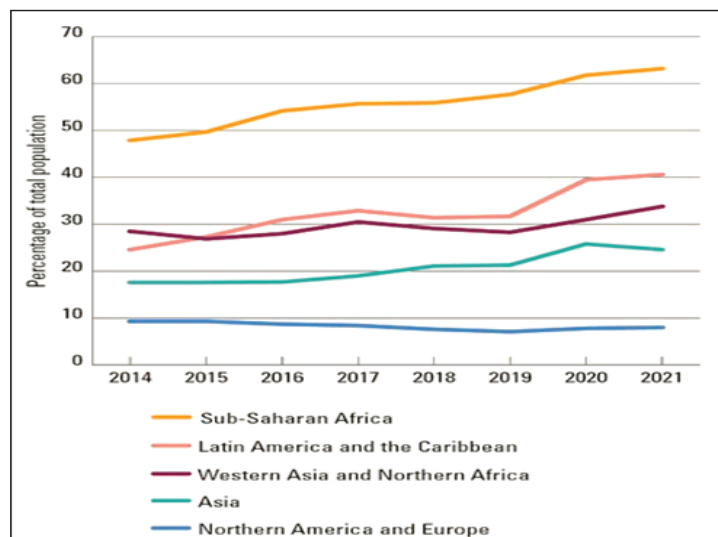
Source: *Humanitarian Needs Overview*, UNDP, Central African Republic, 2022

Children and Women are the most vulnerable in any violent conflict. Sexual violence continues to be systematically used as a tactic of war, with long-lasting devastating consequences for people and communities.<sup>2</sup> In 2021, Gender based violence ranked at the top due to nonadherence to IHL by non-state actors and extremist groups. It is of great concern that SEA cases have increased in 2021 among the 20 countries deployed in peace operations.<sup>3</sup>

According to the Report of the UN Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, A/76/871 S/2022/493, 23 June 2022, the UN could identify about 24000 severe violations against children. It also recognizes violations in the form of SEA cases, abductions, forced marriage, child marriage, sex slavery and attacks on schools. Among them, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, DRC, Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territory had the highest number of verified grave violations.<sup>4</sup>

The world had to face another grave shock in the global economy due to the Ukraine crisis mingling with ME and African armed conflict by various state and non-state actors. The agricultural and food grain chains of the whole world were disrupted due to pre-existing inflationary price hikes, resulting in poverty, inequality and food insecurity. Inevitably, these will add fuel to the indexes of fragile countries which will ultimately force them to violate IHL and basic human rights laws of millions of people. Moreover, unprecedented humanitarian crises and reconstruction needs created by recent conflicts may limit/restrict international humanitarian aid in Global South.

**Figure-2: Food Insecurity by Region from 2014 to 2021**

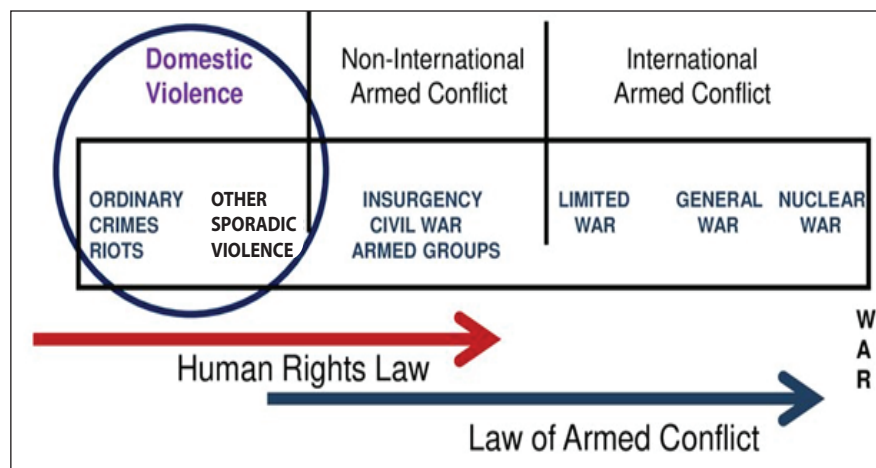


Source: Retrieved from <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/FS>

### IHL, International Human Rights Law and Humanitarian Assistance vis-a-vis Conflict Management Cycle

Keeping the core value of “Protecting Human Dignity” IHL and IHRL are complementary, though they are applicable in different phases and circumstances. IHL, sometimes called the Law of Armed Conflict, is a set of guiding rules in the face of armed conflict to protect and regulate the atrocity of war (against persons not involved in war, civilians, POW, safe targeting etc).<sup>5</sup> IHRL is widespread, covering each and every member of a state at all times to protect human rights from any concern. Human rights law, therefore, continues to apply in times of armed conflict.<sup>6</sup>

**Figure-3: International Law and Spectrum of Conflict**



Source: David R. Smock, *Humanitarian Assistance and Conflict in Africa*, US Institute of Peace, 2005

Humanitarian Assistance refers to the logistics and material assistance given to vulnerable groups in need. This is a make-shift arrangement to save lives, alleviate suffering and preserve human dignity until we receive structured, long-term assistance. Humanitarian principles are bounded by four pillars viz. Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality and Independence. Derived from international humanitarian law and accepted by UNGA Resolutions 46/182 and 58/114, it allows the rapid unconditional transfer of Humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable groups. Their global recognition and relevance are further underscored by the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability.<sup>7</sup> Thereby, actors and parties in a conflict should not, under any circumstances, refuse humanitarian aid on arbitrary or unlawful grounds.

Due to the present dynamics of Peacekeeping Missions, humanitarian assistance has become a major catalyst and integrated part of the mandated operations. Since humanitarian aid aims to alleviate the sufferings of vulnerable groups/distressed people, seems to be always beneficial in terms of peace operations and upholding IHL. However, all actors in humanitarian aid support, both from civilian pillars and military peacekeeping forces, should respect the law of the land and security requirements in vogue.

### **Should UN Peacekeepers Learn about IHL and Humanitarian Assistance?**

DPKO has its own clear instructions on “UN peacekeeping operations principles and guidelines (2008),” considering 1949 Geneva Conventions, Additional protocol of 1977, and “Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property-1954,” in the Event of Armed Conflict. As such, recent agreements are signed as binding on “principles and spirit” and “principles and rules”. More so, UN Secretary General’s Bulletin “Observance by United Nations Forces of IHL” clarified all confusions.<sup>8</sup> The text states that the rules and principles of humanitarian law apply to UN forces when they directly participate in hostilities during an international or non-international armed conflict. The bulletin also recalls that peacekeepers are required to comply with humanitarian law instruments to which their countries are the parties.

On the other hand, IHL narrates that humanitarian assistance is to be delivered to those groups or populations of a state affected by armed conflicts.<sup>9</sup> It also regulates and illustrates the method and types of assistance to be delivered, like food items, lifesaving medicine, baby and women’s items etc.

Above mentioned realities flash that, UN peacekeepers work in a legal framework where the core jurisdiction lies with the host country, yet they are under operational command of the UN. Here peacekeepers need to be warned that any violation of IHL or IHRL will remain under the law of host nation. However, some UN amnesties are there basing on the act of crime. Knowledge of these issues assists in planning and subsequent action plan of the UN peacekeepers. More so, fair knowledge of humanitarian assistance, mentioned above, will help in performing mandated task as a peacekeeper.

### **Adherence and Implications**

Adherence to international human rights law by UN peacekeepers is a critical factor in restoring peace and stability in societies affected by conflict. It brings conceptual change to the local people by providing them with the assurance that their basic human rights will be protected and respected. International human rights law is based on the recognition that human beings are equal and have fundamental freedoms and equal rights that must be protected in every situation.

In post-conflict societies, UN peacekeepers are often called upon to carry out a comprehensive range of responsibilities. These include the establishment of the rule of law, the organization of elections, the provision of humanitarian assistance and the monitoring of human rights violations. The observance of international human rights law is essential in the discharge of such responsibilities. For example, UN peacekeepers often monitor and intervene in human rights violations, ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice. They also work towards preventing further violations by informing local people of their rights and by creating an environment in which human rights law is upheld.

Peace agreements followed by UN mandate are the guiding principles for UN peacekeepers. As such, emphasizing IHL and adherence to humanitarian assistance definitely maximize the probability of success since they ratify and ensure the protection of civilians by adopting peace-building efforts and provide supports to vulnerable groups by OCHA and other aid agencies. Human rights initiatives mingled with integrated immediate humanitarian calls take the UN peacekeepers close to vulnerable groups. Since they act as the first-hand responder, gain the primary trust of the host population. More so, a skillful, planned, communicative and supportive operational environment with the local actors in line with the IHL and IHRL proceeds to a steady humanitarian platform. The call of R2P also legally supports providing security to civilian lives.

Furthermore, being guided by the principle of UN Charter (Humanity, Neutrality, Impartiality and Independence) and safeguarding the Humanitarian rights of all local people without discriminating against any groups will ensure that ordinary citizens will not be subjected to arbitrary actions by host law enforcement agencies in situations where the violence and insecurity are the results of criminal activities as a result of widespread conflict and poverty. As such, contemporary mandates of UN peacekeeping are quite robust to assist and provide the Peacekeepers required tools, authority and flexibility in applying IHL in the face of Human rights violations by the actors. For example, to protect and prevent human rights violations, MONUSCO authorizes to “carry out targeted offensive operations through the Intervention Brigade ..... to prevent the expansion of all armed groups, neutralize these groups, and disarm them”.<sup>10</sup>

**Case Study-1:** Time 1991.<sup>11</sup> During the first Gulf war, military intervention was not clearly defined by UNSC resolution 688; yet provided a passage to a humanitarian corridor and call all states to support the initiatives. The decision paved the way for coalition Forces to create a “Safe Zone” in northern Iraq to provide relief to people who could not obtain asylum in Turkey. Later, in June 1991, UNHCR along with Peacekeeping forces took over the Humanitarian operations from the coalition forces.



**Assessment:** Adherence to IHL and subsequent humanitarian assistance paved the way for host population support after the ground offensive.

**Case Study-2:** Time 1992.<sup>12</sup> Location Bosnia Herzegovina. On June 29, 1992, UNSC mandated UNPROFOR to ensure the security and functioning of Sarajevo and Sarajevo airport in coordination with humanitarian functioning. UNPROFOR was in consent with the parties concerned. Furthermore, protection of humanitarian assistance was supported by UNSC resolution 776 under Chapter VII of UNPROFOR. Later, UNSC passed four subsequent Resolutions 819, 824, 836, 844 under chapter VII to designate six Safe Zones for civilians with required air support by UNPROFOR.

**Assessment:** The route of UNPROFOR humanitarian convoys were very challenging due to minefields, obstructions, hostile fire and deliberate refusal by the actors on the ground. Despite all, UN peacekeepers could deliver 34,600 tons of relief in 110 locations between November 1992 to January 1993, among 8,00,000 beneficiaries.

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that UN peacekeepers need to adhere to a clear strategy considering the legal obligation to protect the vulnerable groups drawn from the UN mandate, IHL and IHRL. Above all, the provision of humanitarian assistance to the host population and sustainable development activities will build an environment for lasting peace.

### **Challenges Faced by UN Peacekeepers in Implementation**

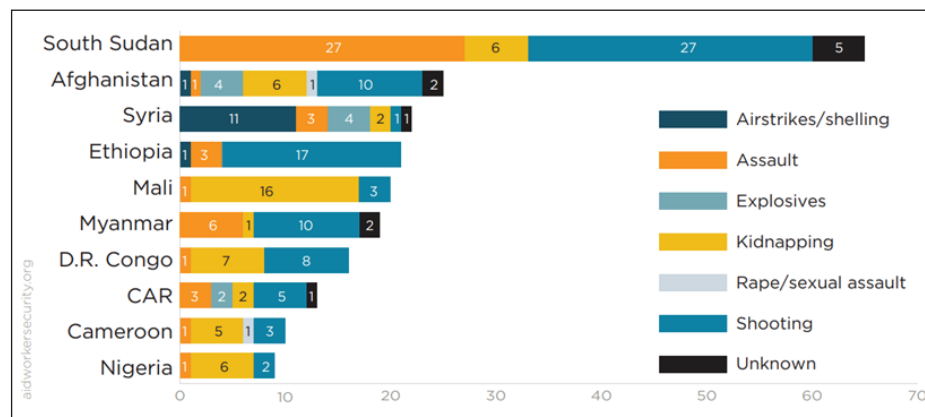
The UN Peacekeepers, humanitarian aid organizations and parties in the conflicts are facing a multitude of challenges in implementing IHL due to the changing nature of warfare in the 21st century. Political sensitivities can present additional challenges to UN Peacekeepers attempting to ensure human rights law compliance in conflict-prone areas. For example, local governments might be hostile to UN reviews of their human rights record and be unwilling to cooperate in any investigations into the violation of human rights by either the government or other parties.

UN Peacekeepers must also be prepared to confront direct threats of violence. In some cases, parties involved in a conflict might use force to deter peacekeepers from carrying out their duties. A total of 4280 UN peacekeepers died since 1948; among them, 2629 have died in the last 20 years.<sup>13</sup> The peacekeeping effectiveness is restricted by the restriction on freedom of movement, a hindrance on efforts of protection to civilians, harassment on an investigation of human rights violations, undermining safety and security by blocking resupply and life-saving objects and lastly threat to life and property by

an attack on operations or Base camps. Thus, UN Peacekeepers must be both well-trained and adequately equipped to protect themselves and civilians in cases of hostility.

Since humanitarian assistance is designed to alleviate the sufferings of innocent noncombatants, considered to be beneficial and perceived to be independent of political, religious and other biased fractions. Again, from the viewpoint of a combatant of civil war, Humanitarian assistance has rooted political and military significance. Providing aid to some fractions may alter the balance of power, and add fuel to others. More so, politicization and polarization on “Humanitarian Relief on cause” make the aid workers/volunteers or the UN peacekeepers vulnerable. 268 deliberate attack were carried against aid workers in 2021 where 141 died than that of 117 in 2020. Among them, 98% were national staff. Medical personnel and facilities also became target. In 2021, in 17 countries 493 medic facilities were compromised with 219 health care worker's death.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure-3: Top 10 Most Violent Countries and Means of Attack, 2021**



Source: Retrieved from <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/fatalities>

### Measures to Ensure Adherence to IHL and Humanitarian Assistance by UN Peacekeeping Missions

The recognition of IHL and IHRL by UN peacekeepers also serves to bring about a greater level of understanding between local populations and peacekeepers. All these efforts tie all ends on a platform of trust and mutual respect. Since the UN Peacekeeping Forces are responsible for ensuring adherence to IHL and humanitarian support assistance in the deployed missions, the following measures would be taken as a guideline:-

- a. Robust implementation of Mandate, to ensure preventive activities against any violation of IHL, resulting that people are not forced to flee their homes.
- b. Monitor, report and documentation of IHL and aid support and any violation of human rights law. UN Peacekeepers should be role models in this aspect. Zero tolerance acceptance in SEA cases to be followed strictly.
- c. Provide protection to the civilians as per the guidance of R2P.
- d. Engagement with the parties in conflict to assist them implementing IHL and creating safe passage for humanitarian aids.
- e. Ensuring freedom of movement and assist normalization. To ensure humanitarian assistance to vulnerable groups and emergency preparedness for any displacements.
- f. To protect IDP sites/facilities in order to assist and pursue a safe return to home.
- g. Implementation of planned and coordinated quick implementation projects to support humanitarian assistance of the local people. Medical campaigns by the military assets during their operation will definitely add greater value.
- h. Training and capacity building of UN Peacekeeping Forces. The systematic approach of imparting structured training on human rights law and humanitarian assistance to UN peacekeepers goes beyond mere instruction and reinforces key concepts through interactive activities and simulations. Dedicated resources and seasoned trainers ensure that the course is both substantive and accessible. The resulting knowledge is then applied through interactive workshops, which help participants to assess and address potential human rights abuses.

The benefits of such an approach are evident. Informing and training peacekeepers in human rights law and humanitarian assistance offers them an understanding of their obligations and a baseline of knowledge for effectively addressing human rights violations. Furthermore, the use of interactive training facilitates the development of critical thinking skills, which can help prevent human rights abuses from occurring in the first place.

### **Conclusion**

Over the last 75 years peacekeeping has proved to be the most essential tool for creating lasting peace in conflicting societies. However, 21st century brings enormous challenges in terms of adherence to IHL and humanitarian assistance in many folds. In the last decades, non-adherence to humanitarian laws in conflict brought unfathomable suffering to Mankind.

IHL and IHRL are compatible to uphold human dignity in war. Adherence conditions in conflict-prone areas vary significantly depending on the actors involved and the conflict itself. The United Nations, along with its affiliated organizations, have sought to improve the human rights law adherence conditions in these areas. This is done through the deployment of peacekeepers, conflict mediation and monitoring, and the enforcement of international laws and regulations.

Humanitarian assistance is one of the nuclei to safeguarding vulnerable groups from “humanitarian catastrophe.” However, in all situations, it is essential for the UN peacekeepers or aid/relief coordinating organizations to maintain neutrality in mandates. The recognition of IHL and humanitarian assistance by UN peacekeepers also serves to bring about a greater level of understanding between local populations and peacekeepers. It creates an environment of mutual respect and trust, where local people can freely express themselves without fear of reprisal or exploitation. This in turn helps to foster a deeper understanding of human rights issues among the local population and reduces the likelihood of further human rights abuses.

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### **Brief Biography**



**Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Tauhid Ali, psc, G** was commissioned in the Corps of Artillery with 45 BMA Long Course. He is a graduate from Defense Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) and also obtained MSc (tech) degree from Chattogram University. He attended “Civil Military Co-operation Staff Officer Course” in Canada. He served as the Brigade Major of 11 Artillery Brigade. The officer commanded 28 Medium Regiment Artillery in Cumilla cantonment and served as General Staff Officer-1 (Protocol and Ceremony), Civil Military Relations Directorate in Armed Forces Division. He participated as Peacekeeper of United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Ivory Coast and presently is posted as G-1 Chief, Sector HQ, MINUSMA, Mali. The officer has obtained Masters in Peace, Conflict and Human Rights Studies from Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) and Post Graduate Diploma in Development Planning from National Academy for Planning and Development (NAPD).

## **The Evolving Conflict Environment and the Future of United Nations Peace Operations: Natural Resources, Environment and Climate in Perspective**

Sajid Karim and Ayesha Binte Towhid

### **Introduction**

In the present world, the nature of conflict is evolving, which is becoming multifaceted and complex, involving a wide range of factors and actors with varied interests and motives.<sup>1</sup> The risks and insecurities that fuel such conflicts are now propagating from diverse sources, ranging from political, military, economic and social to environmental.<sup>2</sup> Though political and military motives still dominate the sphere of conflicts, emerging issues like competition over natural resources, environmental degradation and climate change (CC) impact are now becoming major concerns, propelling instability in many regions.<sup>3</sup> Besides, all these factors influence one another, hence amplifying their impacts and creating a complex conflict situation that is difficult to resolve.

For a long, the United Nations (UN) has been the prime entity to resolve crises and establish peace worldwide. Through its peace operations, it has been working to facilitate the peace process in conflict-ridden regions, negotiate peace agreements, establish the rule of order and protect civilians. The ultimate aim of UN peace missions is to create a conducive environment so that sustained peace can be achieved and the return of conflicts can be avoided.<sup>4</sup> Being the largest troops contributing country to UN peace operations, Bangladesh has been playing a crucial role in global peace and security, and the country's involvement can be traced back to 1988 and 1989 respectively when it participated in two UN peacekeeping missions viz United Nations Iran–Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIIMOG) in Iraq and United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia.<sup>5</sup> Since then, the peacekeeping forces of Bangladesh have been actively participating in different peacekeeping deployments around the globe with great success.<sup>6</sup>

The changing nature of conflicts, coupled with emerging concerns like environmental stress and CC is posing a serious threat to the effectiveness of UN peace operations. Since the conflict landscape is changing due to the evolving risks, the demand to incorporate the new risk factors in the mission's mandate is increasing. According to reports, six out of the ten largest UN peace operations in terms of international personnel are located in regions highly susceptible to the impact of CC.<sup>7</sup> Though, the environment and climate still cannot be entirely blamed for instigating violent conflicts, but, these issues have already gained traction in the discussion of the future of UN peace operations, especially, in regard to post-conflict peacebuilding scenarios.<sup>8</sup>

The UN has already recognised conflicts due to the exploitation of resources, environmental degradation and CC as severe concerns.<sup>9</sup> According to a report produced by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), at least 40 per cent of internal conflicts in the last 60 years had some connection with natural resources, and since 1990, eighteen conflicts have occurred due to the mismanagement of resources like minerals, land, and water.<sup>10</sup> Taking these into account, the UN passed a resolution in 2016 on sustaining peace,<sup>11</sup> thus establishing a more comprehensive approach to tackling conflict. Besides, in December 2021, the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO) joined the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM), a programme that brings together UN bodies like the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UNEP and UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) to address security risks related to CC. The DPO is in the process to increase missions' ability to integrate environmental and climate-related issues into their mandated activities as part of this initiative. This will include the deployment of climate security advisers in the missions and the development of climate security training for mission staff. These efforts illustrate the UN's growing focus on integrating environmental and climate considerations into its overall peace operations, including conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. Therefore, the troops contributing countries need to visualise how peace operations in the future will evolve and how systemic risk from various sources will impact the mandates of the missions. It is now clear that the integration of natural resources, environment and climate into peacekeeping endeavours is no longer a choice, but rather a security obligation.<sup>12</sup>

Given the context above, the aim of this paper is to understand the future of conflict and peace operations in the context of the evolving security and risk landscape, with a particular focus on natural resources, environment, and climate. The paper will offer suggestions for Bangladesh to adapt better peace operation efforts to these evolving circumstances more effectively. The question this research paper will ponder upon: How do the natural resources, environment, climate and security dynamics impact the conflict environment and the future of UN peace operations, and what steps should Bangladesh take to adapt its peace efforts to these evolving circumstances? The paper is divided into six sections. Following the introduction, section two explains various concepts associated with UN peace operations. Section three offers an overview of UN peace operations from a global and Bangladesh perspective. Section four examines the evolving nature of conflict in reference to the natural resources, environment, climate, and security dynamics. Section five puts forward suggestions for Bangladeshi peacekeepers to adjust with this changing conflict environment. Finally, section six concludes the paper.



### **Conceptual Clarity: From Peacekeeping, Peacemaking to Peacebuilding**

The concept of peace operations evolved over the past decades and their purpose varied based on their mandate and scope.<sup>13</sup> With the changing nature of conflict and the expanding role of peace operations, different terms have been coined to identify different natures of this process, for example, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Peace operations are rarely confined to a single activity and don't usually take place in a sequential or linear manner. In general, peacemaking corresponds to bring conflicting parties to an agreement through diplomatic negotiations and peace agreements. In peacekeeping, armed personnel are deployed to retain peace and prevent a relapse of violence after the conclusion of an agreement.<sup>15</sup> The International Peace Academy defines peacekeeping as "the prevention, containment, moderation and termination of hostilities between or within states through the medium of third-party intervention, organised and directed internationally, using the multinational military, police, and civilian personnel to restore and maintain peace."<sup>16</sup> This definition comprehensively incorporates different notions of peacekeeping application in the diverse context of the missions. Peacebuilding, on the other hand, refers to a broad set of actions aimed at shifting the relationships between former conflicting parties towards sustainable reconciliation. Initially, it was focused on the state and organisations but later evolved to include actors from all levels starting from the grassroots to international organisations. The timeframe of such involvement has also expanded to include prevention, de-escalation and post-conflict situation.<sup>17</sup> The issues addressed as part of such efforts have also expanded, for example, the inclusion of environment and climate.

Although environmental factors are very rarely the sole cause of conflict, intra-state conflicts linked with the exploitation of scarce or high-value natural resources are frequently visible. With the growing population and increasing demand for scarce natural resources, there is potential that the conflict emanating from the use of natural resources will intensify and increase in number. In addition to these existing problems, adverse impacts of CC have the potential to aggravate existing tensions and generate new conflicts.<sup>18</sup> Thus CC has been identified as a "threat multiplier" that has the potential to prolong the impact of conflict in post-war areas even after the active combat phase is over.<sup>19</sup> These issues have affected peace operations, especially peacebuilding by changing the social, political and economic landscape, inhibiting development, weakening fragile institutions, deepening existing fault lines and reducing the ability to prevent conflict.<sup>20</sup> For example, there are pieces of evidence that climate-related environmental change in Somalia is hampering the successful implementation of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia's (UNSOM) mandate of

peace and security.<sup>21</sup> Drought and scarcity of agricultural land have increased intergroup competition and tension. The increase of internally displaced people due to loss of livelihood from flash floods has made many of these people vulnerable to insurgent group recruitment. Studies have also found a correlation between extreme weather events and organised crimes.<sup>22</sup> Such issues related to the environment and climate have created additional responsibilities for peace operations as well. For example, in addition to the ethnic tensions in Sudan, addressing underlying land and water-based competition has become a critical factor in sustainable peacebuilding efforts in that country.<sup>23</sup> All these have led to the development of a new aspect of peacebuilding termed “environmental peacebuilding” in the late 1990s.

The connection between peace, sustainable development and the environment was reflected in the 1992 Agenda for Peace. Since then, this concept has evolved to address CC-induced complexities and challenges. Security concerns emerging from CC and environmental degradation were reflected in the Strategic Plan 2020-2022 of the UN DPPA.<sup>24</sup> Recognising this as the defining issue of the present time, DPPA identified strengthening local, national and regional partnerships to respond to new and emerging risks like CC as one of its strategic objectives. As part of the process, the CSM was established to strengthen analytical capacity and response strategies to climate-related security issues.<sup>25</sup> All these have made environmental peacebuilding an important area of academic discussions.

Since environmental peacebuilding is an interdisciplinary topic, there are several definitions and interpretations. There are both narrow and broad views regarding this topic. The narrow perspective denotes it as the sustainable management of resources in conflict-ridden and post-conflict areas for the creation of socially, economically and politically resilient peace.<sup>26</sup> In the broader view, environmental peacebuilding indicates the approaches and pathways of managing environmental issues to support the prevention, mitigation, resolution and recovery of conflict.<sup>27</sup> In this broader view, environmental peacebuilding works along three dimensions, i.e. politics and social relations; economy and livelihood; and, security. This approach is focused on cooperation to manage the environment and natural resources and the resolution of resource-induced instability.<sup>28</sup> This paper shall adopt the broader view and explore ways to equip Bangladeshi personnel efficiently to contribute better to this evolving aspect of peace operations.

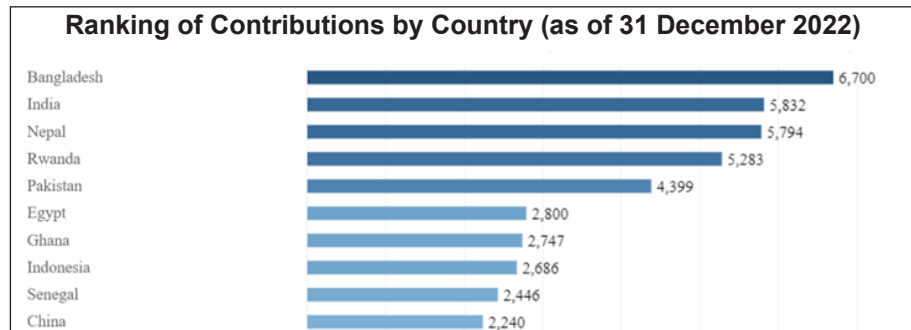
### **UN Peace Operations: Global and Bangladesh Perspective**

This important aspect is discussed below:-

a. **Global Perspective:** The history of the UN peace operations is more than seven decades old. Since the first mission in 1948, the UN has deployed more than 70 missions, comprising thousands of military personnel, police officers, and civilians from more than 120 countries.<sup>29</sup> The UN DPO is currently leading 12 peacekeeping operations in the Middle East, Europe, Africa and Asia addressing a wide range of mandates.<sup>30</sup> In Africa, there are six missions, Western Sahara (MINURSO), South Sudan (UNMISS), Mali (MINUSMA), Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Central African Republic (MINUSCA), and Abyei (UNISFA). In Asia, there is currently one operation, i.e. India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). In Europe, there are two operations: Kosovo (UNMIK) and Cyprus (UNFICYP). In the Middle East, Middle East-UNTSO, Lebanon (UNIFIL), and Golan (UNDOF) are the three ongoing missions. The work of these peace operations includes advancing political solutions of conflict, building the rule of law and security institutions, preventing conflict, promoting human rights, protecting civilians, providing operational support and include women and youth in peace and security. The UN DPPA is also leading separate special political missions and assignments in the Middle East, Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Africa.<sup>31</sup> In different areas of these regions, the DPPA works for providing early warning, preventing conflict, managing crises and conflicts, enhancing partnerships, engaging in peace making and sustain peace.<sup>32</sup> It also addresses the environment and CC as emerging issues.

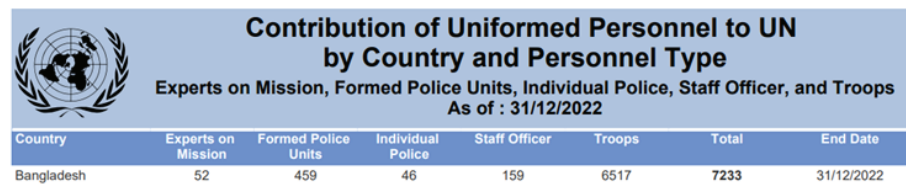
b. **Bangladesh Perspective:** Bangladesh is globally recognised as one of the leading police and troop-contributing countries in UN peacekeeping.<sup>33</sup> Since the beginning of its engagement in such operations in 1988, Bangladesh has actively responded to the UN's call for ensuring peace and stability in different conflict-ridden regions of the world. Till now, Bangladeshi personnel have completed deployment in around forty countries.<sup>34</sup> Figure 1 shows that at present, Bangladesh is the top contributor to UN peacekeeping operations. As of December 2022, a total number of 7,233 uniformed personnel deployed in the capacity of experts, formed police units, individual police, staff officer and troops in different missions as shown in Figure 2. A breakdown of the current Bangladeshi deployments is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 1: List of Top Ten Police and Troop-Contributing Countries**



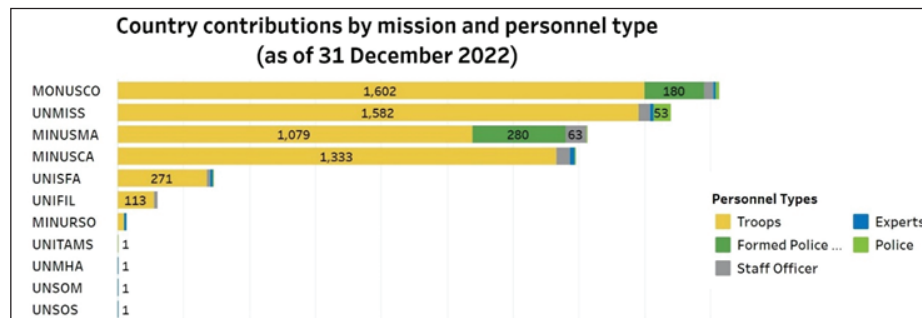
Source: United Nations Peacekeeping, 'Troop and Police Contributors,' available at: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/troop-and-police-contributors>, accessed on 15 February 2023.

**Figure 2: Bangladesh's Total Contribution of Uniformed Personnel Till December 2022**



Source: United Nations Peacekeeping, *Ibid.*

**Figure 3: Bangladesh's Contribution by Mission and Personnel Type**



Source: United Nations Peacekeeping, *Ibid.*

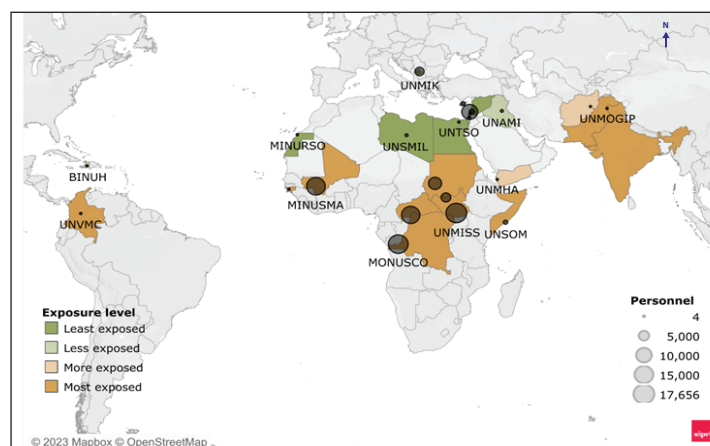
## The Changing Conflict Environment: Understanding The Dynamics among Natural Resources, Environment, Climate and Security

The discussion surrounding the connection among natural resources, environmental stress, climate and security has become more widespread and prominent in recent years since environmental and climatic factors are now considered threat multipliers with the ability to compound existing vulnerabilities. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) sixth

assessment report (AR6), “CC does contribute to increasing conflict, but along indirect pathways and via intermediate factors.”<sup>35</sup> After the Conference of Parties (COP27) in Egypt, there has been a wider recognition that environmental and climate stresses not only aggravate the cause and effects of conflict but also impact the community and institutions.<sup>36</sup> Among the recent twenty-one UN peacekeeping missions, ten of them are situated in countries that are considered to be most exposed to the negative impact of CC (Figure 4).<sup>37</sup>

The negative consequence of CC and environmental degradation puts pressure on available natural resources, which in turn may cause socio-economic instability, hamper water, food and energy security, impact people's livelihoods and limit governments' ability to offer basic services. Such a deterioration in socio-economic conditions could amplify pre-existing causes of violence by intensifying inequalities and tensions between and among different groups.<sup>38</sup> There are many countries around the globe which are confronting instability and conflict, and at the same time, experiencing the most severe environmental, climate and resource-related intricacies. Darfur in Sudan can be a glaring example in this regard, which has been labelled by many experts as the “first CC conflict” due to the presence of both environmental and political elements.<sup>39</sup> Besides, there are other instances, namely Somalia, Mali, the Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where intense droughts, floods, natural disasters and other severe weather conditions coupled with environmental degradation and ecological changes have instigated or amplified rivalry over land and other natural resources, leading to conflicts and instability.

**Figure 4: UN Peace Operations and Country Exposure to CC Impacts (December 2020)**



Source: Florian Krampe, *Why United Nations Peace Operations Cannot Ignore Climate Change*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 22 February 2021

There is now a growing realisation that the impacts of natural resource conflict, environment and climate have broad and far-reaching consequences. These issues are not just a matter of national security nowadays, but a global security concern that can threaten the “viability and survival of nations.”<sup>40</sup> This growing recognition has resulted in the formation of different platforms like the Group of Friends of Climate Security to promote global actions on CC. The UN Secretariat formed CSM in 2018 to integrate the climate and security agenda more comprehensively into the secretariat’s operations. The introduction of the post of Climate Security Adviser is another positive step in addressing the environmental and climate issues in UN peace operations. The UN missions are now integrating these growing concerns into their strategies. At present, the four largest peacekeeping missions, i.e. MINUSCA, MONUSCO, MINUSMA and UNMISS, have mandates that recognise the detrimental impact of CC and related factors on the humanitarian situation and stability of the region where they are currently deployed.<sup>41</sup>

In addition to the UN, several other organisations, like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union (EU), African Union (AU), etc. are working to accommodate environmental and climate issues into their conflict and security strategies. For example, the AU organised ten meetings of its Peace and Security Council to discuss the effects of CC on the prevention and management of conflicts in Africa. NATO recognises the environmental challenges due to CC and has been trying to address those for a long time. The progress made by the EU is also notable in this regard, which has incorporated conflict-sensitive language into its policies and programmes related to CC. This indicates the growing attention of relevant stakeholders regarding the evolving environment, climate, peace and security nexus.

### **Recommendations**

It is now evident that the management of natural resources, environment, climate, and conflict have a reciprocal relationship. On one hand, addressing these issues is crucial to facilitate and sustaining peace, and having an environment and climate lens in UN peacekeeping mandates is now the need of the hour to make the missions more effective and relevant. On the other hand, peace efforts with an environment and climate lens can enhance communities’ capacity to adapt to a changing climate as well. A list of suggestions that Bangladesh might consider in order to better equip its peace operations efforts to adapt to the changing conflict environment is given below:-

a. **Changing the Mindset:** The initial step in regard to resource, environment, climate, and security dynamics is to broaden peacekeeping mindset and apply a climate and environment lens to the mission's mandates. It is crucial to train and equip the peacekeepers, keeping in mind the evolving risk factors, as well as conduct simulations and drills, to ensure they are well-prepared for new conflict situations. Factoring environmental and climate considerations into the entire gamut of peace operations will allow peacekeepers to understand, evaluate, and address environment and climate related security risks more effectively and competently and come up with adaptive solutions to different conflict settings.

b. **Integrating Environment and Climate-related Actions in the Whole Process of Peace Operations:** Though at present, undertaking climate actions does not fall under the mandates of UN peace operations, considering the current scenario, it can be suggested that the missions need to take into consideration environmental and climate-related factors in their work as part of their mandates. This is primarily applicable when assessing possible causes of conflict and understanding the early warning, preparing for protection efforts and achieving sustained peace. To effectively incorporate environmental, climate, and natural resource concerns in all aspects of peace operations, it is important to note that these issues should not be addressed in isolation but rather should be integrated from the very beginning of the missions' interventions.

c. **Increasing Female Peacekeepers' Participation in the Missions:** Women and children are the worst sufferers when it comes to violent conflicts. They are also more vulnerable to environmental stress and the adverse impact of CC, which can intensify and worsen the existing gender inequalities, resulting in further alienation, marginalisation and discrimination against women and children in impacted regions. The deteriorated situation also has a negative consequence on their capacity to respond to or adapt to the environment and climate-related crises, which puts their livelihoods at a disproportionate risk.<sup>42</sup> In this regard, female peacekeepers from Bangladesh can play a vital role by implementing gender-sensitive programmes that might provide a sense of security to women and children in the affected regions. Bangladesh has been a leading advocate and strong voice for recognising the vital role of women in all aspects of UN peace operations. This has been evidenced by the country's leadership in promoting the landmark resolution of UNSC 1325<sup>43</sup> on women, peace, and security. Both Bangladesh Armed Forces (BAF) and Bangladesh Police (BP) have played a formidable role in mainstreaming female participation in peace operations, and from 2009 to 2021, 564 female members of the above-mentioned BAF and 2,147 female members of BP have participated in different UN peace missions.<sup>44</sup> The UNEP, Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO),



UNDP, and UN Women have forged partnerships to enhance understanding of the complex relationship between women and natural resources in areas affected by conflict.

**d. Training and Capacity Building of the Peacekeepers:** Providing training to peacekeepers on environmental and climate security is essential to increase their understanding of the security risks associated with these factors and equipping them with the necessary tools to integrate environment- and climate-related factors into their assessments, planning, and implementation processes. Hence, Bangladesh, especially the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT) may consider including environmental and climate-related factors in the training process of the peacekeepers. Organising staff education and awareness training is needed for developing the sectoral risk communication strategy along with the mitigation system and contingency plan to respond quickly and reduce the risk propagated from natural resources, environment, and climate. Besides, it is also crucial for the peacekeepers to be cautious towards the natural environment and civilian objects in times of conflict, and for that, they need to be aware of and educated on international protection measures for the environment with regard to armed conflicts, like the International Law Commission's Draft Principles for Protecting the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflict<sup>46</sup> and the International Committee of the Red Cross's guidelines on protecting the natural environment during armed conflict,<sup>46</sup> as well as the UN's Climate Security Mechanism Toolbox.<sup>47</sup>

Bangladesh needs to utilise the CSM-supported capacity-building efforts to improve the skills and preparedness of its peacekeeping forces, which will enable them to carry out their duties in a changing environment and climate more effectively. Besides, the country needs to develop expertise on the environment, climate, peace, and security nexus so that it can assume higher positions, like environment and climate adviser,<sup>48</sup> in UN peacekeeping endeavours. Another critical aspect of the training could be the development of skill sets to analyse complex technical data from sources such as the UNEP Strata platform, IPCC, Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT), and others in order to provide technical guidance for different climate modelling and recognise early warning signs that could lead to violent conflicts. This capacity building is essential to gain a thorough understanding of the various environmental and climate stressors in the mission area as well. Finally, there is a growing need for an understanding of eco-specific adaptive knowledge and nature-based solutions to the various conflict environments of different missions deployed in climate-vulnerable regions.

e. **Promoting Environmental Peacebuilding and Mediation:** The prime goal of environmental peacebuilding is to promote cooperation centring on environmental issues, with the objective of preventing violence and resolving conflicts. This approach is rooted in the belief that managing natural resources and responding to CC and environmental problems in a collaborative manner can lead to mutual benefits and prevent conflict. Therefore, the fundamentals of environmental peacebuilding could be incorporated into the mission strategies so that a basic understanding of environment-climate-resource dynamics can be developed across the conflict cycles and a durable peace can be achieved. Since developing adaptation measures and minimising vulnerability to natural disasters are important components of environmental peacebuilding, Bangladesh is in a unique position to contribute in this regard through both uniformed personnel and civilian peacebuilders. The country's extensive experience in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations would help uniformed personnel taking on these newer responsibilities.

f. **Tackling Environment and Climate Migrants:** CC and environmental stress can cause situations where people are displaced and become environmental or climate refugees. This can happen mainly due to the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as floods, droughts, cyclones, wildfires, etc. Besides, rising environmental pressures may force people to migrate in search of better livelihoods and living conditions, which might result in conflicts over scarce resources like land, water, and food. Given the potential for natural resource scarcity, CC, and environmental stress to be major drivers of displacement, it is essential for peacekeepers to have the knowledge and expertise to address such situations, particularly in the event of a massive environmental or climate refugee outbreak.

g. **Reducing the Environmental Footprint of Peace Operations:** UN peace operations themselves have a significant impact on the environment. They are considered among the main contributors to the overall environmental footprint of the UN and were responsible for more than 44 per cent of the total carbon emissions produced by the UN system in the year 2020.<sup>49</sup> UN peace operations run the risk of adversely impacting the local environment due to poor environmental practices, which has resulted in long-term environmental degradation in the mission area as well as causing disruption of local life and livelihood, hampering the organisation's status and achievements. Bangladesh, being the largest troops contributor to UN peace operations and a strong advocate of environmental conservation, needs to take the responsibility for promoting sustainable environmental practices within the mission area. The country was one of the pioneers to fulfil its promise of reducing its environmental

footprint by installing solar panels in UNMISS, which was praised by the UN Department of Operational Support (UNDOS).<sup>50</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Conflicts associated with natural resources, the environment and climate are on the rise and will be a catalyst for violence and a serious concern for sustained peace in the coming days. These issues have the ability to influence every stage of the conflict cycle, thus fuelling tension and violence, and hindering the peace process. Even after the end of a conflict, mismanagement of resources and environmental stress can increase the likelihood of a return of conflict and deteriorate the situation. Hence, there is an urgent need for devising strategies, considering natural resource use, environment and climate to manage conflicts sustainability and promote peace. Besides, in order to protect civilians, UN peace operations need to take into account environmental and climate security factors during their evaluation, planning, and execution of protection-related activities. This should be done in a comprehensive way across the entire mission, in collaboration with the mission team, national authority and the local community. Although some missions are currently implementing measures related to these issues, their efforts need to be integrated and mainstreamed into the mission's core activities.

Being the largest and one of the most influential contributors to UN peace operations, Bangladesh remains committed to its efforts to promote global peace and stability. The country always invests a significant effort to prepare its peacekeepers to effectively contribute to UN peace operations. However, the country needs to take into consideration the evolving nature of conflicts and the concurrent intricacies of contemporary peace operations emanating from natural resource management, environment, and climate and better adapt to the situation. It is high time to change the mindset and integrate environment- and climate-related actions into the whole process of peace operations. It is of paramount importance to provide training to peacekeepers on environmental and climate security to increase their understanding of emerging security risks. However, one thing needs to be made clear that incorporating environmental and climate perspectives does not always mean expanding the mandate of UN peace missions. It means that peacekeepers need to recognise the impact of environmental and climate stress, as well as the gravity of resource conflict, on their primary responsibilities and adjust their plans and actions to effectively carry out their existing mandates despite the environment, climate and resource-related disruptions. At the same time, the missions need to be aware of their own environmental footprint and make efforts to reduce it so that their achievements are not questioned by its adverse impact.

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**Brief Biography**



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**Brief Biography**



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## **Ceasefire Dynamics in Sudan and Its Implementation by UN**

Lieutenant Colonel Md. Shamim Iftakhar, PBGMS

### **Introduction**

The history of war and ceasefires is entwined. Ceasefires are unique and context-specific, defying a rigid blueprint in favour of adhering to an adaptable set of technical, thematic, and political limitations. Since inception, the UN has been deeply engaged in conflict resolution in different corners of the globe. The ceasefire committee is a group of individuals who are appointed to ensure that peace and stability are maintained in a conflict zone. This committee is responsible for implementing a ceasefire agreement between conflicting parties. It is evident that the provisions of the ceasefire are interrelated and should be handled as a whole. If one term is neglected, every other one will be impacted as a result. As such, the committee's role is crucial to conflict resolution. While monitoring the implementation of a ceasefire agreement, it is also responsible for ensuring that both parties adhere to the agreement. It provides a platform for dialogue between the conflicting parties and helps to build trust between them. The committee also ensures that humanitarian aid reaches the affected population.

According to Martin Griffiths, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Sudan has reached a potentially perilous tipping point in its fall toward bloodshed. He demanded security guarantees from the opposing factions in order to permit the entry of humanitarian aid.<sup>1</sup> The UN issues a warning that the conflict may cause a large number of Sudanese to leave their homes. At this juncture, this paper tries to explain the ceasefire dynamics of UN and to conceptualize how it is being implemented in Sudan. It also offers a framework of fundamental building blocks that can be customized to any specific situation, taking into account the great range of conflict scenarios present around the world. It refrains from passing judgment on the success or failure of any particular peace process by using examples from around the world.

### **Concept of Ceasefire**

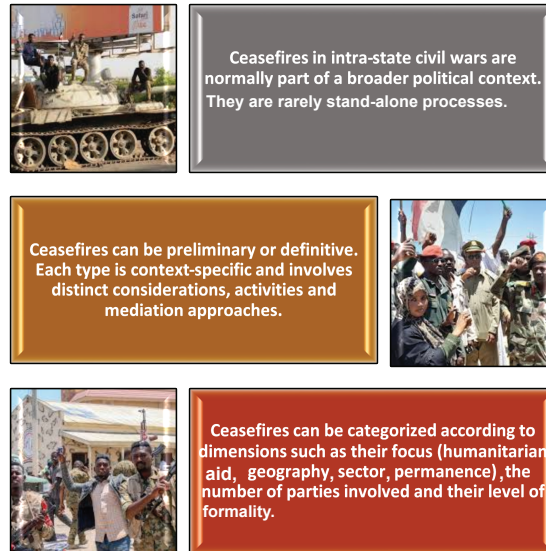
Whether they are inter-state or intra-state, armed conflicts where two or more conflict parties are involved, both of these may be armed (or military) and also political. It's common to use both "ceasefire" and "cessation of hostilities" interchangeably. Ceasefire agreements include more specific stipulations on

objectives, timetables, arrangements on security aspects, then keep under regular observation and also an authentic as well as reliable verification systems, agreements while the latter are typically thought of as being less structured. To deal with any ceasefire agreement, it is imperative to know different types of ceasefires.

A preliminary ceasefire often aims to lessen hostilities, ease a humanitarian crisis, promote an environment more favorable for discussions, and build the groundwork for a permanent ceasefire. Although it is not a requirement for a sustainable peace process, a preliminary ceasefire may start before, concurrently with, or may be after the beginning of a larger and a formal peace process. In most cases, a successful political process where both or all the parties have come to an agreement on all facets of the peace negotiations leads to a definitive (or permanent) ceasefire. It need not be preceded by an initial ceasefire. Local or geographic ceasefires are restricted to a certain geographical area, which may be a province, a town or city, a region, or an entire state. While they may be intended to manage a hotspot, deescalate a specific conflict, or defend a particular population, they can also show goodwill and a party's capacity to effectively command and control their forces.

The viability of a wider ceasefire can be ascertained with the use of geographical ceasefires. Sectoral (or partial) ceasefires typically involve unilaterally proclaimed or mutually settled restrictions on the use of specific tactics or weapons, such as aerial bombardment or launching system like artillery, mortars, missiles, or landmines, as well as the targeting of specific populations (which may include women and children, civil population, law enforcing agencies and other public service organization like the police, fire service or religious institutions), infrastructure (such as the water or electricity supply, schools, hospitals, or transportation hubs), or both. Unanimous agreements between parties to a dispute are not required for a unilateral ceasefire to be declared by one of the sides. Such cease-fires may be permanent or only last for a set time, with the option for one party to request an extension. The opposing party or parties may announce unilateral ceasefires that are reciprocal and are subject to their own conditions. Ceasefires between two sides, known as bilateral ceasefires, can be temporary or permanent and may have features in common with other ceasefires. Parties mutually agree to specific commitments during temporary ceasefires, which are often negotiated for a short period of time and inside a specific geographic area. As the parties negotiate a more extensive truce, such agreements can increase confidence between them.<sup>2</sup> The dynamics of ceasefire is briefly illustrated in Figure-1 in the next page.

**Figure-1: Ceasefire Dynamics**



Source: Guidance on mediation of ceasefires by DPPA

Ceasefires aim to halt hostilities amongst all parties involved. Effective cease-fire agreements safeguard civilians and allow aid to reach populations at risk. Ceasefires present a significant political opportunity to set the stage for inclusive and thorough peace negotiations. Besides civil society, conflict parties, all mediators and other stakeholders can be benefited from their acquired technical knowledge as they develop, execute, and monitor ceasefire agreements in the event of hostilities, whether they be a traditional war between two-party or any chaotic conflict environment including several armed groups. Even though each ceasefire mediation is different, the strategies and instruments learnt from one can help in every situation to fortify agreements, halt hostilities and foster a more durable peace process.

### **Geopolitics of Sudan in Brief**

Africa's largest country by area is Sudan. It is situated in northeastern Africa, along the Red Sea, and is bordered by Egypt, Chad, Uganda, and four other nations (Figure 2). Khartoum, the nation's capital, is located in the northeast. An area about the size of Spain makes up the Darfur region in western Sudan. Darfur is home to 7 million people, according to estimates. Tensions between the neighboring countries of Chad and the Central African Republic have risen as a result of the turmoil in Darfur as large numbers of refugees have crossed their borders to flee the carnage.

**Figure-2: Sudan and the Surroundings**

Source: British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) <https://www.bbc.com>

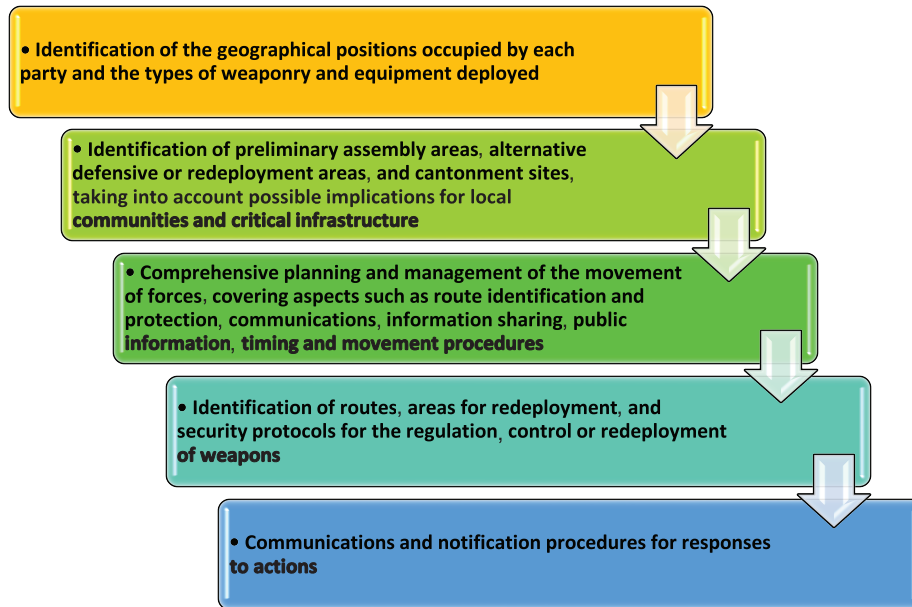
On the Conflict in Darfur in 2004 the Humanitarian Ceasefire Agreement was signed by the Sudanese government, the Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army along with the Justice and Equality Movement, an opposition group in 2004.<sup>3</sup> It was a 45-day contract that may be renewed to maintain access for aid organizations. The parties signed it as a part of a bigger peace initiative. As part of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005, the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement agreed to a long-term truce.<sup>4</sup> Since the beginning of 2019, with the fall of Omar al-Bashir, the Sudanese government has established and maintained a transitional administration. Despite agreeing to hand over Al-Bashir to the ICC, it was still unclear how that administration would become a permanent one.<sup>5</sup> In October 2021, after a military coup orchestrated by Sudan's top general Abdel-Fattah Burhan, the government was overthrown, the transition to democracy became uncertain and Sudan descended into turmoil. Since then, the already shaky economy of Sudan has further destabilized due to persistent food and fuel shortages and lack of international aid.

### **Key Functions of the Committee**

The ceasefire committee has several key functions which are briefly discussed below:-

Firstly, the committee is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. This involves ensuring that both parties adhere to the terms of the agreement, such as the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of troops. The committee also monitors the implementation of any other agreements that may have been reached, such as the release of prisoners of war. As long as the parties to the dispute are in agreement, the withdrawal and redeployment of forces can include few sequential actions as mentioned in Figure-3 in the next page.

**Figure-3: Steps for Withdrawal and Redeployment of Forces**



Source: Guidance on mediation of ceasefires by DPPA

Secondly, the committee provides a platform for dialogue between the conflicting parties. This is crucial in building trust and confidence between the parties. The committee helps to create an environment where the conflicting parties can discuss their differences and work towards a peaceful resolution. At the beginning of a process, when donors and other supporters might be less confident about participating, efforts to raise money and to get commitments in favour of a ceasefire tend to be more challenging. By performing ongoing negotiations, mediators can control expectations by frequently updating current and potential donors, and evaluating the cost implications with regard to the negotiating process as well as the projected implementation requirements.

Thirdly, the committee ensures that humanitarian aid reaches the affected population. In many conflict zones, civilians are often the most affected by the violence. The committee ensures that aid is delivered to those who need it the most, regardless of which side of the conflict they are on.

Lastly, the committee plays a crucial role in preventing the escalation of violence. By monitoring the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and providing a platform for dialogue, the committee helps to prevent further violence and loss of life. As long as the parties to the dispute are in agreement, the withdrawal and redeployment of forces can include few sequential actions.

Since inception, the ceasefire committee has played a significant role in resolving conflicts in various parts of the world. For example, in 1995, a ceasefire agreement was reached between the warring factions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The ceasefire committee was responsible for monitoring the implementation of the agreement and ensuring that both parties adhered to its terms. The committee played a crucial role in preventing further violence and paving the way for a peaceful resolution. Another example is the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas in 2014. The ceasefire committee was responsible for ensuring that both parties adhered to the agreement and monitoring the situation on the ground. The committee helped to prevent the escalation of violence and provided a platform for dialogue between the conflicting parties.

### **Contribution of PCC to Conflict Resolution**

The Permanent Ceasefire Committee (PCC) has continued to actively monitor, verify, and investigate ceasefire violations in the Darfur region whilst also working to better establish itself, to the extent that the Committee has begun to operate beyond its Initial Operational Capacity. The arrival of more UNITAMS PCC staff has enabled the PCC to make considerable progress in the operationalization of the five Sectoral Committees. Whereas these are now all functioning, the arrival of the sector chairs in Zalingei and Ed Daien has been delayed due to delays in issuing their visas. No Field teams' staff have been deployed in any of the sectors. This development is delaying field activities like preventive monitoring.

During the reporting period, PCC efforts in line with its mandate were focused on three areas: monitoring and resolving ceasefire violations (CFV); building the PCC's capacity to effectively carry out its tasks at HQ/Sectoral level, and outreach to local/international stakeholders, Civil Society Organizations, and communities to develop and consolidate its so-called "ears-on-the-ground" communication networks that enhance its ability to gather information about alleged ceasefire violations across the region.

The PCC continued to address CFV. Between 21 August and October 2022, the Committee received 2 complaints against some parties to the peace agreement and launched preliminary assessments into ceasefire violations. None of these reports were dealt with at HQ level as both the complaints were efficiently handled by the Sectoral Committees in Darfur. This demonstrates the Sector Committee's considerable potential and a growing capacity to work at their level to successfully leverage the tripartite system within the PCC and local knowledge to engage in dialogue, negotiation, and mediation with a view to



preventing, de-escalating, and resolving alleged ceasefire violations. The joint structure has allowed for swift interventions to de-escalate potential crisis situations between armed movements which could otherwise have spilled into violence by providing forum at which the parties have together addressed volatile security situations that might otherwise have escalated. For example, on 10 August 2022 the Sectoral Committee North mediated over parties where the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) accused Sudan Liberation Movement Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM) of allegedly deploying forces in Al serif area in North Darfur. The PCC also mediated over allegations made by SLM-MM, who complained that an RSF member had burnt a SLM-MM flag. The first case was amicably resolved without intervention or referring them to PCC Headquarters, the second mediation process, however, is still on-going.

On 5 October 2022 the North Darfur sector resolved a complaint lodged by Justice Equality Movement (JEM) in relation to an officer lieutenant Younes Bakhit who went missing since 15 July 2022 while at Zamzam camp during his holiday period. SPCC investigations revealed that the alleged suspects did not belong to a signatory party. Sudan Police Force (SPF) is investigating the issue as a criminal act. The case was not considered as a Ceasefire Violation. It is worthy of mention that the case did not escalate due to prompt intervention of Sectoral Committee. On 6 October 2022, the North Darfur Sector discussed an allegation received from the community, who reported that RSF intended to attack Sarton camp in North Darfur because of the alleged involvement of IDPs in the theft of RSF 4X4 vehicle. After discussions it was established that it's a non-signatory party which is escalating the issue. RSF and SAF were engaged to diffuse tension in the camp.

The PCC's outreach effort cut across a broad spectrum of national and international stakeholders. The PCC chair briefed the US Ambassador HE John Godfrey on PCC's mandate, progress, and achievements. On 20 September, the PCC Chair also briefed ambassadors of Sudan's friendly countries with members of the JHMC in attendance. The main aim was to update the ambassadors on the structure, activities, challenges, and the way forward for the PCC as well as to request support for its joint work. A total of 33 interactions took place with different stakeholders at all levels reaching out to about 30 stakeholders with information about the PCC and Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) among others across Darfur. A total of about 350 people were reached. Specifically, the PCC interacted with Internally displaced persons (IDP) leaders, State Security Committees, Native Administrators, Commanders of 21st and 16th division of Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), members and leadership of the 5 signatory Armed Struggle Movements across the region. Additionally, the PCC also engaged with OCHA, SUDO,

Pro-Mediation, UNFPA, WFP, UNICEF, UNDSS, UNHCR with a view to establishing a nexus between the PCC as it concerns supporting and facilitating humanitarian efforts in the Darfur region which is in line with the JPA.

Capacity building activities to enhance team building and cohesion between PCC members was also the focus of the PCC during the reporting period. The PCC successfully conducted basic PCC trainings for Sectoral Committees in Nyala and El Geneina and the Workshop on PCC SOPs in El Fasher and Nyala sectors. Nyala (southern sector) conducted the Basic PCC training from 21 -24 August and El Geneina (Western sector) is to conduct the basic training from 17 - 19 October. Nyala conducted the SOP training workshop from 21-22 September and El Fasher (northern sector) conducted SOP workshop from 26 -27 September. The workshops are a replication of the ones conducted at headquarters level in June. The SOP training workshops covered the six PCC SOPs including Investigations, Reporting, Complaint resolution, preventive monitoring etc. The basic training among others introduced the participants to ceasefire monitoring mechanisms, types, gender and ceasefires, investigations, team building, PCC working modalities, Security arrangements, PCC and assembly areas, PCC and POC, JPA articles relating to PCC including PCC role in JPA prohibited and permissible acts. The training workshops enhanced the mutual relationships of the PCC members. They also facilitated common understanding of the PCC's mandated tasks, fostered comradeship amongst Committee members and provided capacity building to enable the PCC to conduct their activities effectively.

In view of the PCC's initial teething challenges in terms of inadequate staffing and need for logistics to effectively carry out its tasks, UNITAMS continues to provide support to the PCC. Accordingly, efforts are well underway to provide office space for the Sectoral Committees in all the five Darfur States. PCC is fostering its responsibility as it plays in contribution to the JPA and future security arrangements in Darfur.

### **Present State of Ceasefire Implementation**

The 72-hour truce that the United States arranged on 24 April 2023 is still in effect in some areas, according to Volker Perthes, Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the UNITAMS. However, the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces have each charged the other for violating the agreement. Fighting has resurfaced in some areas of Darfur, where the situation is very tense, and thousands of people have been internally displaced. A total of 744 United Nations officials and diplomatic personnel or close to 1,200 people moved to Port Sudan. He emphasized that the

Organization will maintain a moderated involvement while ensuring a long-lasting ceasefire with a monitoring mechanism, the restart of political talks, and the relief of human suffering.<sup>6</sup>

Joyce Msuya who is the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator emphasized that the Organization is still committed to delivering whenever and wherever it is feasible despite this incredibly perilous scenario. The people of Sudan need an immediate cease-fire and a long-term solution to the crisis. Sudan should not be a place where geopolitical interests conflict. All stakeholders must adopt a cautious strategy to uphold coherence, assist neighboring States, and give top priority to initiatives that put a stop to hostilities, defuse the situation, and safeguard people.<sup>7</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Processes for a cease-fire that involve mediation or facilitation need a lot of resources and frequently go on for a long time, occasionally with no apparent conclusion in sight. Ample resources are required to facilitate mediation processes (including costs of travel and rent for venue), provide childcare and other family support for delegates, hire experts, arrange capacity-building for the parties and other stakeholders, and establish and maintain an operational office. The mediators need effective support groups, including subject-matter experts and operational logistics advisors who can do routine evaluations and forecasts, handle procurement, and manage resources, in order to remain focused on their main duty.

It is a challenging, multifaceted endeavour to pursue the ceasefire in Sudan, whether the objective is to lay the foundation for a larger peace process or to reach the conclusion of the ongoing one. It might last for days or even months, interrupted by varying conflict dynamics, false hopes, delays, and unsuccessful attempts. The ceasefire committee is essential in averting the proliferation of violence and the loss of lives. The difficulties brought on by the conflicts' growing complexity and asymmetry, should be examined deeply counting all regional or global aspects. Given the present situation of Sudan, this committee has a crucial function to instigate the cease-fire, ensuring that all stakeholders are following the regulations set forth. It must also pay special attention to the technical factors that influence the mediation processes, both conceptually and practically, keeping in mind that this ceasefire is intrinsically political in character.

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### **Brief Biography**



**Lieutenant Colonel Md. Shamim Iftakhar, PBGMS** was commissioned from Bangladesh Military Academy with 36th BMA Long Course in the Corps of Engineers on 12 June 1997. Apart from mandatory courses, he accomplished his BSc in Civil Engineering from MIST and MSc in Transportation Engineering in Civil from BUET. In his professional career, he served in a number of units and institutions of Bangladesh Army in different capacities. Besides army he served in BGB and commanded three (4, 26 and 49) BGB battalions. In 2015, he was awarded with President Border Guard Medal “Sheba” for his special contribution. He also served in Bangladesh Navy as CMES. He participated in the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia and Cote-de-Ivory with Bangladesh Engineer Contingent. Presently he is serving as GSO-1, Engineer Directorate at Army Headquarters.

## **Civil War in Syria-Challenges of UNMO's and Recommendations for Bangladesh Armed Forces**

Colonel Sahidur Rahman Osmani, OSP, psc

### **Introduction**

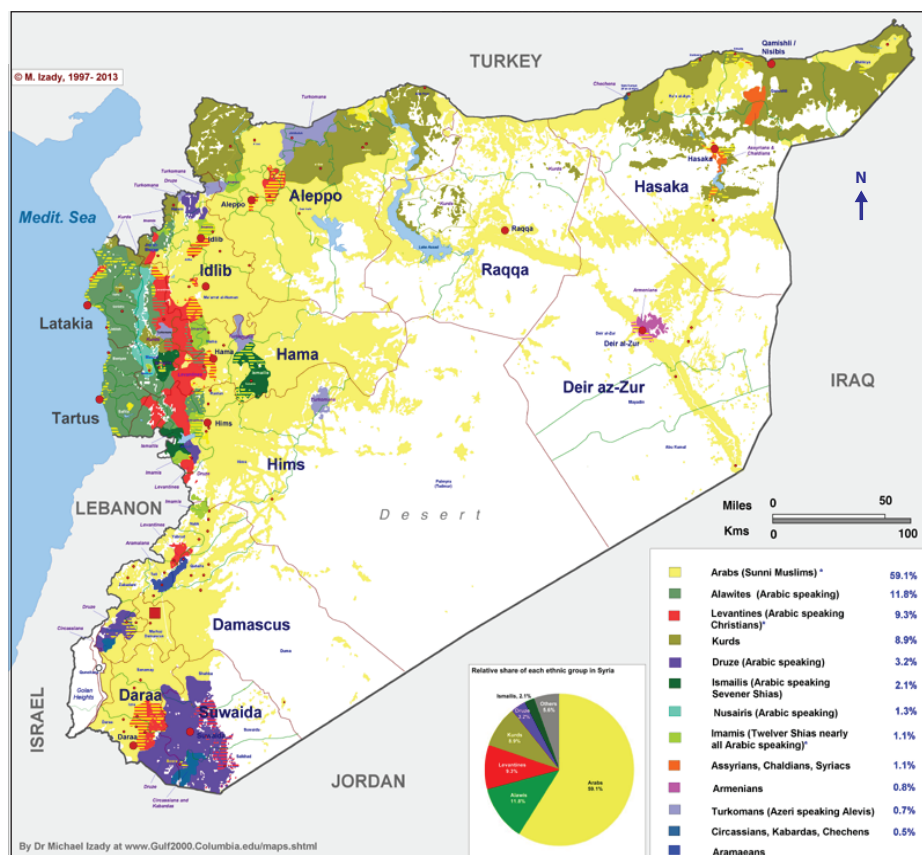
In the yore Syria was named 'Sham' which consists of Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Syria was recognized as the third most important place for Muslim community. Prophet Muhammed (SM) used to trade in Syria from Medina. In the history of mankind Syria is often described as the cradle of civilizations since many of the greatest achievements that later spread to encompass the world had their beginning here. The borders of Syria extended from the Taurus mountains to Sinai and the Mediterranean to the Euphrates.<sup>1</sup> Syrian civil war started in 2011, which caused millions of deaths, and disharmony among the different rebel groups, religions, and governments. Almost 606,000 people have died, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based monitoring organization, since the crisis started in 2011. Although it warns that the exact toll may be greater, the United Nations places the death toll at over 400,000.

Due to the enormous chaos and mass armed movement between the government and rebels inside the country, the UN had to deploy its representatives to observe the overall situation and for the protection of its civilians. Accordingly, Bangladesh also participated and provided by sending 15 UNMOs to this UN Mission which was named as United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS). The mission was deployed on 11 May 2011 and ultimately withdrew its UNMO on August 2011. This deployment of UNMO's faced tremendous challenges to perform their assigned task inside the country. Nevertheless, the Government forces provided security to the UNMO, yet there was mistrust between the security forces and rebels in terms of activities and assignments of UNMOs. There were a lot of challenges faced by the UNMO inside Syria during its assignment. UNMOs were fired by the rebels and also ambushed to stop their activities inside. This research will highlight the background of civil war, the causes of civil war, the UN mandate, international influences and difficulties faced by the UNMOs. This research will also analyze the experience of the author and the secondary resources of various stakeholders. This paper aims to identify the challenges of UNSMIS and find out likely recommendations for Bangladesh Armed Forces to assess before committing its forces in such civil war situations.

## Location of Syria and Its Border

Syria is a strategically important country in the Middle East and has drawn the attention of various external powers due to its geopolitical significance. The Middle Eastern nation of Syria has a population of about 18.5 million. The population of the nation is made up of a wide variety of ethnic and religious groupings, with Arabs making up the majority. In addition, there are sizeable populations of Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians. Alawites, Druze, and Christians are among the other religious groups in Syria but Sunni Muslims make up the majority of the population. The official language of the nation is Arabic, while several ethnic groups also speak Kurdish and Armenian. Syria is situated in Asia along the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea. It has a 180 km coastline and is bordered by Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Palestine and Israel to the southwest, Jordan to the south, Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea to the west.

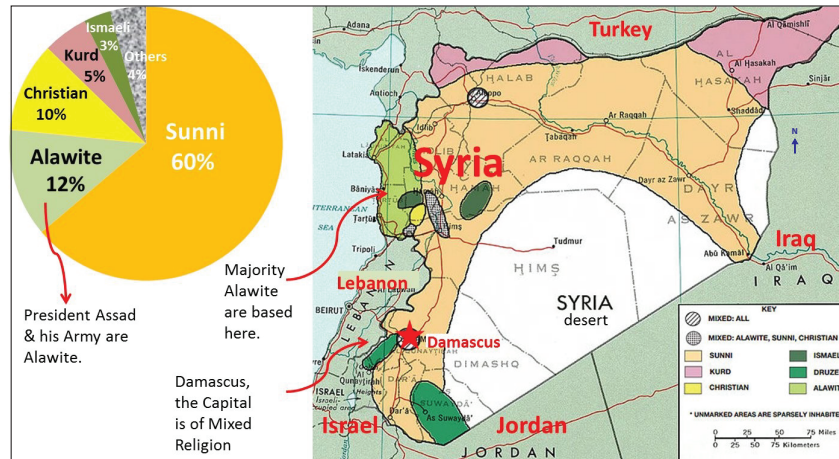
**Figure-1: A Map Showing International Border with Syria**



Source: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/cc/8b/d7/cc8bd7de3ee4a0e4d6be99c506ad4f92.png> accessed on 04 April



Figure 2: A Map Showing Various Ethnic Groups in Syria



Source: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/cc/8b/d7/cc8bd7de3ee4a0e4d6be99c506ad4f92.png> accessed on 04 April

### Background Study

In 2011 the commencement of Arab Spring was observed initially as a peaceful demonstration, but it gradually grew into a full-blown warfare. When anti-government protests erupted in the southern city of Daraa in March 2011, President Bashar Al- Assad initially appeared to be unsure how to respond, but it was not long before force was used against the demonstrations.<sup>2</sup> In Daraa for the above incidents fifteen Syrian kids were detained because of writing graffiti that was influenced by the Arab Spring and they were subjected to torture. One of the children was put to death. The arrests triggered anger and rallies across Syria. Citizens urged the release of the remaining children, in addition to increased levels of freedom for them. In response, the government killed dozens of protesters and detained hundreds of them. Shock and outrage started across Syria, with many calling for Assad to step down as President. As a result of his refusal, conflict erupted everywhere among different groups, believers and individuals.

From that onwards anti-government protest grew strong and security forces raided Syria's third largest city, Homs, where thousands of people were killed in April 2011. In summer also fighting speeded up at Aleppo, Idlib and Hama.

The complexity of the Syrian crisis and the difficulty in finding a settlement are exacerbated by the involvement of several armed factions and international government. The spread of armed groups and the distribution of weapons and supplies to various factions have resulted in a protracted struggle that has

wreaked havoc on the Syrian people. The Syrian Arab Army (SAA), a trusted organization of the Assad regime is one of the primary government-supported organizations in Syria. Military actions by the government have been conducted against armed opposition formations and groups, including those backed by foreign governments, have been carried out by the SAA. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which are mostly made up of Kurdish militants and are assumed to be backed by the US, are one of the most potent resistance forces in Syria. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have been crucial in the war against the Islamic State (ISIS) and have helped to drive the group out of many of its strongholds in Syria.

Throughout the civil war, the UN has conducted several missions in Syria. The first of them was the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), to keep an eye on a truce between the Syrian government and opposition troops. The overall scenario of the Syrian civil war is discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

#### **Armed Rebel Group in Syria**

Several different armed groups make up the opposition in Syria, from secular militias to Islamic organizations. They are Free Syrian Army (FSA) which was founded in 2011, and the FSA is made up of defected Syrian military members and civilians. Al-Nusra Front, represented in Idlib and Aleppo is a terrorist group connected with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq, and Syria (ISIS) are present in Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and other Syrian cities. It was widely discussed in media that many strong countries support some of the opposition parties, while neighbouring states among other nations, support the rest.

#### **Causes of the Civil War in Syria**

The Syrian Civil War first surfaced in 2011 as part of a larger wave of upheavals and rallies that spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa, known as the Arab Spring. Many Syrians were motivated by the Arab Spring to call for more political and economic freedom, and the conflict heated up as a result of the Syrian government's repressive response to these demonstrations. With the arrest of the teenage boys at Derra the movement against the government started. It soon devolved into bloodshed as the protestors and government forces clashed, news of which spread like wildfire amidst the heady days of the Arab Spring, protest and clashes began to pop up in other Syrian towns. Apart from the aforementioned reason, a variety of political, economic, and social variables have contributed to the complexity of the Syrian civil war. The major factors causing the dispute are briefly highlighted below:-

a. **Political Repression and Authoritarianism:** The Syrian government, headed by President Bashar al-Assad and the dominant Ba'ath Party have long been charged with committing numerous human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and political repression. Almost 6.6 million people have been displaced as a result of the violence.

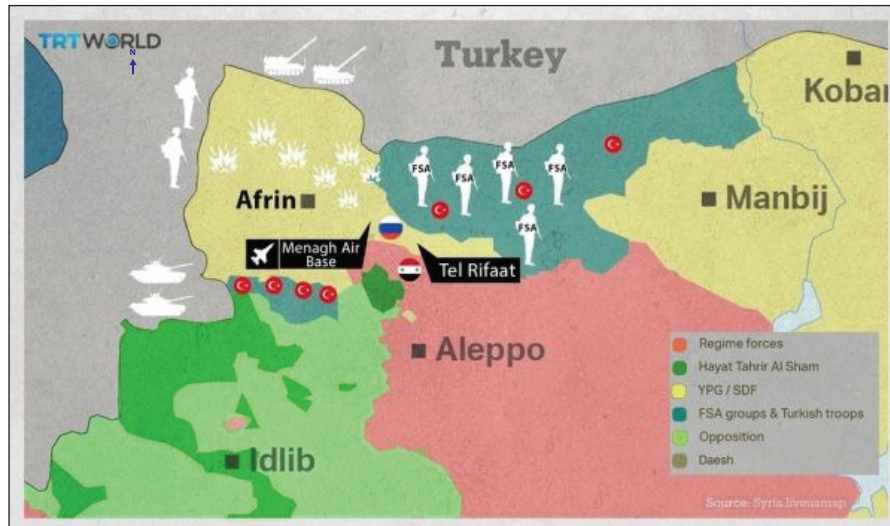
b. **Economic Inequality:** Many Syrians, especially those who do not belong to the ruling class, have recently faced severe economic hardships, including increased levels of poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity.

c. **Regional and Sectarian Strife:** Syria, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation, is marked by intense hostilities between the Alawite minority, who now hold power, and the Sunni Muslim majority. Since numerous nations in the region (such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey) compete for influence in Syria, there are also wider regional conflicts at play.

d. **Foreign Intervention:** It was widely discussed in media and assumed that several nations as external supporter have offered military, financial, and diplomatic support to various sides of the conflict in Syria. " Starting in 2000 Syria aligned itself more and more with Russia, continuing to buy military jets, weapons, and equipment from Russia. Russia would be establishing a naval base in Syria, the only Russian naval base on the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the conflict has also been impacted by international actors. Moreover, Israel is a close neighbor and for its sustainability besides the large Syrian Army, always intends to reduce the armed capability of Syria. Very frequently Israeli air strikes inside Syria, violates Syrian air space, and destroy different targets, clearly expressing its interest. It was also assumed that Israel frequently took chances to curb Syrian defense capability in different forms as civil war inside the country. A variety of outside parties have supported various parties and factions in the Syrian crisis. However, several other armed organizations are fighting in Syria that are backed by other nations and have had a sizable influence on the conflict's development.

e. **Disintegration of State Institutions:** Syria's state institutions had been damaged by years of authoritarian rule, economic stagnation, and political upheaval, making it challenging for the government to properly tackle the unrest that first surfaced in 2011.<sup>4</sup> Because of the shortage of resources, numerous armed groups and factions have been able to seize control of various regions of the nation, further exacerbating the battle.

**Figure 3: Disposition of Foreign Fighters and Regime Forces**



Source: <https://www.trtworld.com>

### **Relation with World Community especially China, KSA, Iran, USA and Russia**

The Syrian Civil War has been significantly influenced by Bashar al-Assad's connection in the international community. Many Western nations and their allies, including the United States, demanded that Assad leave office in the early stages of the conflict due to his government's use of brutality against demonstrators and civilians. But Assad continues to enjoy the backing of several significant international figures of China, Iran, and Russia.

Russia has been a key friend of Syria throughout the civil conflict and has given the Assad regime great military and diplomatic support. A key point in the conflict was the Russian military intervention in Syria in 2015, which helped shift the balance of power in favour of the Syrian Government troops. At the UN Security Council, Russia has also used its veto power to thwart attempts by Western nations to impose sanctions on the Syrian Government. The Assad regime has received maximum cooperation from Iran, another key friend of Syria.

China has maintained good ties with Syria and persistently resisted Western attempts to intervene. In the subsequent paragraphs the paper will elaborate the mandate of UN and how it helped to solve the conflict.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Mandate of UNSMIS and Its Expectations**

One of the most important and difficult missions is the UNSMIS. To monitor the end of violence in Syria and to aid in the implementation of the six-point peace plan put forward by Kofi Annan, the joint special envoy of the UN and the Arab League for Syria, resolution 2043 was passed by the UN Security Council on April 21, 2012. UNSMIS was made up of civilian workers from several nations and unarmed military observers. UNSMIS, which operated from 2012 to 2014, received military observers and personnel from 58 different nations in total. Under the terms of resolution 2043, the Security Council established UNSMIS, for an initial period of 90 days, under the command of a Chief Military Observer, comprising an initial deployment of up to 300 unarmed military observers as well as an appropriate civilian component to fulfill the following mandate:-

- a. To monitor a cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties;
- b. To monitor and support the full implementation of Envoy's six-point plan.<sup>6</sup>

The Council called on the Syrian government to ensure the effective operation of UNSMIS by facilitating the expeditious and unhindered deployment of its personnel and capabilities; ensuring its full, unimpeded, and immediate freedom of movement and access as necessary to fulfill its mandate; allowing its unobstructed communications; and allowing it to freely and privately communicate with individuals throughout Syria without retaliation against any person as a result of interaction with UNSMIS.<sup>7</sup>

### **UNSMIS and Its Operation**

This important operation is discussed in the following paragraphs:-

The bloodshed that has continued in Syria is one of the biggest obstacles for the UN mission and still instability exists there. The UN mission was attempting to assist people, but the situation was challenging because of the continued fighting. Accessibility issues in several parts of Syria provided a serious obstacle. The conflict has been exacerbated in many areas, it was difficult to support and contribute to full resources. Security Battalion was not deployed, UNMOs from different missions in Africa were moved to Damascus and detailed to observe the initial stage of the cease fire. From 10 May 2012, UNSMIS conducted primary training on demography, UN mandate, and the social and economic condition of Syria. From 13 May 2012, UNMOs started deployment at Hama, Homs, Idlib, Aleppo, and Damascus. UNSMIS HQ was operating from Damascus and other bases were located at local hotels of respective provinces. While moving from Damascus to Hama patrols were halted twice due to the ambush on government forces and civilians by the different rebel

groups. UNMOs were halted at HOMS for a while and started for Hama once the route clearance was given by Security forces. By night observers could reach their destinations. The mission was provided with Armored Jeep which was 5 tons and bulletproof and brought from the other mission area. The mission's objective is to act as a mediator to bring about a peaceful end to the disagreement and offer support to those in need. The challenges faced during the mission has been discussed below:-

### **Challenges for UNMOs**

There have been many obstacles in the task encountered since its commencement in 2012, like the ongoing civil conflict in Syria which has caused severe infrastructural destruction, the eviction of millions of people, and violations of human rights. UNSMIS mission was exposed to a variety of security risks, such as assaults by both government and rebel troops, kidnappings, and carjackings. In some instances, armed groups targeted UN officials on purpose, while in the others, they were caught in the crossfire between combatants.

During their deployment in Syria, the UN military observers faced significant challenges, including mistrust by security and rebel forces, Communication due to lack of maps and guides, engagement of UNMOs by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), conducting operations by the government forces on to rebel-held territories, limited access to war zones, regular attacks by armed groups, and a lack of cooperation from both the Syrian government and opposition troops. Furthermore, the mission was hampered by a shortage of finances and logistic assistance, as well as movement limitations imposed by the Syrian government.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Dilemma of The Syrian Government for The Entry of UNMOs**

While the Bangladeshi UNMOs started for Syria and were stopped at Dubai by Syrian Airlines, crews demanded return tickets for all UNMO's and airlines expressed that, they were not permitted to receive the UN personnel without a return ticket. By seeing the condition of air crews, it was clear that the prohibition of receiving foreigners from airlines was tasked and briefed to restrict foreigners from entering. If any situation occurred after arrival for returning the UNMOs from Damascus, a return ticket will be an aid for the airlines. As no other airlines were flying to Damascus due to war, it was ultimately managed to board and reached safely at Damascus. All electronic gadgets were seized and checked strictly by the security at Airport.



### **Lack of Confidence by Security Forces and Rebels with UN Operations**

The persistent bloodshed presents the United Nations operation in Syria with one of the most serious difficulties. Security forces remain suspicious regarding the movement of UNMOs and remain reluctant to provide any information on particular areas of the incidents. Again, if UNMOs reached a Place of Occurrence (PO) rebels consider that UN personnel may leak their information to the government forces. Other reasons for such suspicion were the heavy bombardment that used to take place once UNMOs returned from the incident places. This may be intentionally done by the government forces to create confusion between rebels and the UN. Security Forces used to escort the UNMOs up to certain places near the PO and leave the UNMOs for their task over there. Lack of confidence by security forces and rebels was crystal clear. Rebels clearly expressed that they don't like to rely on foreigners and incidents of bombardment by government forces increase the suspicion of rebels regarding the leakage of information by UN personnel to government forces. If UNMOs visit any place and locals of that area remain afraid due to bombardment on civilians. This was one tactic of government forces to create mistrust in the activities of UNMOs.<sup>9</sup>

### **Lack of Communication and Absence of Internet**

Communication was a tremendous challenge for the UNMOs. Internet access was very limited and the speed of the internet was also very slow, which reflects the control of communication medium by the regime forces. Communication and dissemination of reports to the UNSMIS HQ was another challenge. Often it used to take 2/3 days to reach UNSMIS HQ in Damascus. The inability to go to specific regions of Syria is yet another big obstacle. The conflict is responsible for it. It was difficult to deliver assistance to those who were in danger in any locations, and the United Nations mission had been obliged to adapt. Even the satellite phone of UNMOs used to get weak access to communicate. The dangerous incident faced in Khan- Sheikun area of Idlib by UNMOs could not be communicated in time due to lack of communication. Later on, UNMOs coordinated with the locals and communicated with the base with alternative means like phones. A trusted link was absent and due to the control measures, it also disrupted more.<sup>10</sup>

### **Lack of Local Maps and Limited Gadgets for The Operations**

Though UNSMIS authority was fully employed with the available resources, constraints of resources influenced the operations. There were no maps of the mission area due to paucity of time and UNMOs had to conduct operations due to ongoing conflict and the killing of so many rebels by government forces.



UNMOs collected tourist maps from the hotels and used those for reaching the POs in addition to the personal GPS of a few UNMOs. Damascus to Aleppo towards north 351 km, Damascus to AR Raqqa 648 km, Damascus to AL Hasakeh towards east 815 km. Roads were blocked and controlled by different rebel groups. Sudden operations by different rebels make communication more vulnerable and uncertain for all. Communication among the civilians also seemed to be restricted. UNSMIS in Syria had a lot of difficulties, but there were lots of imitative by the HQ and UNMOs to stand beside the civilian. The willingness and tenacity of UNMOs were praiseworthy to uphold the prestige and honour of Blue Helmet.<sup>10</sup>

### **Non Cooperation by Civilians due to The Presence of Regime Security Forces**

As UNMO's security was the prime responsibility of regime forces, rebel forces and the citizens used to be in dilemma regarding the communication with the UNMOs and also for the safety of the citizens. This was another challenge for the UNMOs to receive appropriate information from the ground. In addition to this, there is an absence of Access restrictions in certain parts of Syria which makes it difficult for the United Nations to deliver aid to people who need it. The mission has been compelled to operate with restricted access to resources and funding.

#### **Frequent Firing and Assault on patrols**

On 14 May 2012, UNMOs conducted patrols from Hama to Idlib to send the new members to the bases. while returning UNMOs were performing their task at Khan Sheikun of Idlib and a mass of civilians along with rebels confronted and fired on by Regime forces, UN vehicles were also fired, Again Rebels also fired on UNMOs. Almost all the patrols used to receive fire on vehicles. Many times, the UN personnel were attacked by the rebels and civilians out of anger, mistrust, and lack of confidence. This type of incident influenced the mental and physical condition of UNMOs to carry out the assigned task. This had a clear indication to hinder the UN assignment by both forces.

### **UN Finance and Logistics**

Due to the Civil War there was rise in the cost of essentials and inflation influenced the daily expenditure of UNMOs. The allotted money, accommodation fare, and food prices were tremendous low which were another challenge. Moreover, due to continuous armed movement, shelling, and bombardment, the movement was at risk and it was sometimes difficult for the UNMOs to arrange the daily meal due to the disruption of the Line of Communications. Purchase of essentials used to be suspended due to security problem.

### **Absence of UN Security Battalion for The Protection of UNMO**

Though there was less time yet planning for the deployment of the UN security Battalion would have been greater assistance for the smooth conduct of UN Operations to observe the mandate. Like many other missions, it would reduce the vulnerability of UNMOs. When UNMOs conducted patrol or operations in any local areas, vehicles used to be fired by rebels or unidentified gunman.

### **Deployment of UNSMIS after The Political Agreement by The Regime and Opposition**

As the UN personnel were attacked by the rebels and regime forces, it clearly expressed the breach of agreement with the UN and violation of the Syrian Regime Forces. For deployment in civil war, confident and reliable agreement with both forces may reduce the risk of UNMOs.

### **Political Climate Coordinating Efforts and Working Together**

The political environment in Syria and the regions immediately next to it can present difficulties for the UN operation. There is typically a lack of consensus among the many different groups and nations over the method that should be taken. Especially regional countries like Israel, Syria, Turkey and Iraq have to stop their regional power play for peace. UNSMIS had to suspend its activities owing to an intensification of armed violence across the country. On 20 July 2012, the Security Council extended the mission for 30 days and said that any further extension could be possible only "if the Secretary-General reports and the Security Council confirms the cessation of the use of heavy weapons and a reduction in the level of violence sufficient by all sides" to allow the UNSMIS monitors to implement their mandate. As those conditions were not met, the UNSMIS mandate came to an end at midnight on 19 August 2012.<sup>11</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The Syrian people have suffered terrible effects from the civil conflict, including great displacement, fatalities, and extensive destruction. The main player against the Syrian regime, ostensibly in support of various Syrian opposition groups were the United States and its European Allies, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. While the violence and death toll increased, along with the number of Syrian refugees crossing the borders into Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, the United Nations arduously worked for a cease-fire. There were some cease-fires on the ground negotiated by the UN (its special envoy, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan), but they were too small scale and inevitably broke down, especially as the increasing fragmentation of the armed opposition made it almost impossible to implement a truce of any breadth or duration.<sup>12</sup>

The battle has raged on despite numerous diplomatic efforts to resolve it, including those spearheaded by the United Nations, and there is no apparent end in sight. Addressing the core causes of the conflict and making sure that the voices and needs of the Syrian people are at the centre of any upcoming peace negotiations or agreements will be crucial if we are to put a lasting stop to the conflict. The UNMOs faced challenges in terms of mistrust by the actors, Communication gadgets and maps, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), bombardment by the regime forces at the visiting site, limited access to war zones, regular attacks by armed groups, and a lack of cooperation from both the regime and opposition troops. In such cases, political agreement by all actors and being well-prepared before deployment give a proper dividend to the missions. In that case, any security battalion may be deployed from the commencement to provide security instead of security given by the government security which always remains challenging. The UN may influence the international community to be in a consensus situation to end the conflict. Bangladesh Armed Forces leadership was positive to establish peace in Syria and to send the UNMOs to assist the UN peace process within very short notice, however, the political agreement of the host country may be taken into consideration for better output, safety and security of the UNMOs as well. Despite all challenges, Bangladeshi UNMOs performed very well during the civil war. Bangladeshi UNMOs may be provided with a satellite phone to meet unforeseen situations. On 15 June 2012, UNSMIS suspended its activities owing to an intensification of armed violence across the country. On 20 July 2012, the Security Council extended UNSMIS for a final period of 30 days. UN has shown its courage and wisdom for deploying UNMOs with a short possible time in order to observe ceasefire. It will be further appreciable if the ground safety and security can be ensured strictly. UN had an excellent initiative to solve the conflict from the beginning of the crisis. UN may be more involved to solve the conflict amicably which will lead to peace and harmony in the region.

### **Recommendations**

From the above discussion, the following recommendations may be applicable for the Armed Forces of Bangladesh to assess before the deployment of its forces under a blue helmet.

- a. UNMOs may be deployed once the political government and rebels have a clear consensus for the implementation of the peace process through an MOU between rebels and the Government of the host country is well-focused and disseminated by the UN.

b. UNMO's deployment may be considered once the Security Battalion has been deployed on the ground before the commencement of the Mission or simultaneously basing on the conflict having adequate understanding and control on rebels and government forces.

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### Brief Biography



**Colonel Sahidur Rahman Osmani, OSP, psc** was commissioned on 07 June, 1996 with 34 BMA Long Course. He is a graduate from Defence Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur, attained Masters of Science in Defence Studies from Bangladesh University of Professionals, and Masters of Business Administration from South East University. Apart from mandatory courses he earned diploma from Shizuazuang Military Academy, China, Senior Management Course from Diraja Royal Police College, Malaysia and Battle Group Commander's Course from Land Warfare Center, UK. He commanded 30 East Bengal Regiment at Jashore Cantonment and also served as Sector Commander BGB Rangamati Sector in 2021. For three terms he also served in Chattogram Hill Tracts. He was Deputy Commandant of Border Guard Training Centre College, served as Instructor at School of Infantry and Tactics and Non-Commissioned Officers Academy, as General Staff Officer-2 (Intelligence and Monitoring) at Prime Minister's Office, Armed Forces Division and General Staff Officer-1 (Admin) at Defence Services Command and Staff College, and in RAB Forces Headquarters. He participated in the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Ivory Coast (UNOCI) and also served as Observer in South Sudan (UNMISS) and Syria (UNSMIS). He was awarded with RAB Forces DG's commendations and Force Commander's commendations from UNSMIS for outstanding performance and 'Osammany Sheba Padak'(OSP) for his operational performance. He has a number of publications in national dailies and AFD Journal. Presently he is the Principal, Dhaka Cantonment Girls Public School and College.

## **Peacekeeping to Cyber Peacekeeping: The Changing Dynamics of UN Peacekeeping and the Future**

Mujtaba Rafid Rafa

### **Introduction**

Global peace and security upkeep has benefited significantly from UN peacekeeping missions. Nearly one million peacekeepers have embraced hardships, dangers, and threats to execute their responsibilities and carry out their quest for peace under the aegis of the United Nations, bringing peace and stability to conflict areas and illuminating peace and hope for the rest of the world. From Congo River Basin to the Balkans, South Asia to the Sahara Desert, the UN Peacekeepers have left their footprints as a symbol of peace in the last seven decades. The dynamics of UN peacekeeping have been evolving in line with the changing nature of the conflicts and people's perceptions regarding safeguarding peace. However, the world is currently undergoing numerous events catalyzing change and instability. As a result, in recent years, peacekeeping has been more focused than ever before on addressing the root causes of conflict, such as poverty and inequality, and promoting sustainable development. However, the number of unstable and unpredictable factors contributing to violence and conflicts is increasing, including but not limited to cybersecurity, economic collapse, and climate change posing their challenges and requiring innovative strategies to overcome the challenges.

With the emergence of the 4th Industrial Revolution and the continuous breathtaking innovations taking place in the cyberworld such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing, it is imperative that UN peacekeeping operations adapt to the needs of this era. But to what extent are cybersecurity issues related to the goal of UN peacekeeping operations which is to help countries torn by conflict create the conditions for lasting peace? To have a deeper understanding of the relevance of incorporating 'Cyber' in peacekeeping, one must comprehend that conflict arising from cyber attacks or other methods of breaching cyber security is not a standalone event; rather, it is a part of a larger strategy to infuse violence holistically.<sup>1</sup> As a result, cyber security needs to be incorporated into the holistic peacekeeping strategy. The peacekeepers, therefore, need to be able to handle both digital and physical spaces and coordinate or conduct activities in both spaces to ensure peace.

Scholars are becoming increasingly skeptical about the possibility of cyber conflicts as the number of cyber-attacks continues to rise. This is expected to increase as countries rapidly advance their offensive and defensive cyber

capabilities. Kleffner and Dinniss<sup>2</sup> predicted that peacekeepers may encounter cyber incidents during, after, or even in the absence of traditional hostilities due to the increasing frequency of conflicts and crises involving cyber elements and the use of complex peace operations. They noted that cyberspace has become a weapon in recent years, especially in inter-state hostilities. The potential for including a cyber component in future UN peacekeeping operations, though acknowledged its implementation, would depend on the operation's type and mandate.<sup>3</sup> However, there are currently no provisions in the UN Charter or other relevant documents for creating cyber peacekeeping missions. This lack of attention to the cyber dimension could reduce the effectiveness of contemporary peacekeeping operations that may require cyber intervention in various scenarios.

Using a thematic analysis, this article discusses the importance of Cyber peacekeeping in the current era of advanced technology and highlights the three major challenges faced in establishing it. The UN's reactive approach towards the issue is highlighted, and suggestions are given for equipping peacekeepers and developing a comprehensive legal framework. The article stresses the need to increase public awareness about cyber security and urges major stakeholders to develop legal frameworks for protecting critical infrastructure. Finally, further research is recommended to evaluate ongoing efforts in the cyberspace.

### **Literature Review**

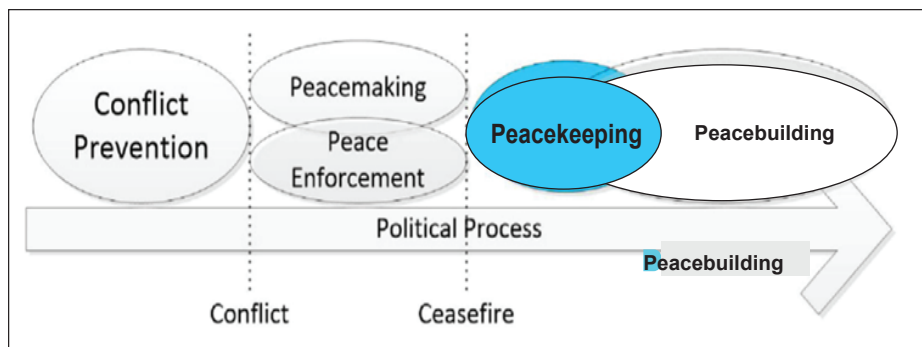
The UN defines peacekeeping as, "Action undertaken to preserve peace, however fragile, where fighting has been halted and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers."<sup>4</sup> Although the focus is on UN peacekeeping, it's important to acknowledge that various other entities are involved in peacekeeping efforts. For example, the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) is an illustration of an organization other than UN with a mission to carry out peacekeeping duties in the Sinai.<sup>5</sup>

Having an understanding of the origin and history of UN peacekeeping is essential for gaining a comprehensive idea about it in the present day. The purpose of UN peacekeeping was established to assist the UN in fulfilling one of its main objectives, which is to maintain global peace and security, as stated in the UN Charter. In 1948, the UN established its first peacekeeping operation due to fears about conflicts in the Middle East. MacQueen notes that the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was deployed as an unarmed mission to observe the Armistice Agreement among Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria.<sup>6</sup>



During the 1980s, the aspirations of UN peacekeeping continued to increase, both in terms of scale and scope. The newer missions extended beyond traditional peacekeeping duties and took on more intricate tasks such as monitoring elections, providing humanitarian aid, and constructing democratic institutions. While earlier UN missions were typically successful, it was during this era that the organization experienced several high-profile disappointments.<sup>7</sup> Some of these failures, like the ones in Bosnia and Rwanda, led the UN to reassess its peacekeeping approach, resulting in the recommendation of several reforms in 2000.<sup>8</sup> It was recognized that peacekeeping was not a panacea and had limitations, only being appropriate when certain criteria were satisfied.

**Figure 1: UN Peace Operations**



Source: United Nations Data, 2008

The UN has categorized its peacekeeping operations into two categories-Traditional and Multi-Dimensional. Traditional operations are focused solely on observation, monitoring, and reporting (OMR). In contrast, multi-dimensional operations are more complex and include peacebuilding, such as rebuilding a nation's security sector and demining. These UN peacekeeping operations are carried out in four stages: Conflict Prevention, Peacemaking, Enforcement, and Peacebuilding, which often overlap, as illustrated in Figure-1, and are self-explanatory.<sup>9</sup>

After understanding the stages and operation procedure it is important to grasp the notion where does Cyber peacekeeping fit in the peacekeeping agenda. According to Chapter I of the UN Charter, one of the primary goals of the UN is to uphold international peace and security. Bellamy et al. argue that one way of achieving this objective is through peacekeeping operations, which are often cited as a justification for establishing such missions.<sup>10</sup> If cyber warfare could potentially endanger international peace and security, the UN may need to undertake peacekeeping operations in response. Therefore, we need to determine whether cyber warfare could realistically pose a threat to international

peace and security. The answer to this question depends on how we define the term. Originally, it referred to conflicts between nations.<sup>11</sup> Considering the existence of threats to global peace and security, including state failure, violations of human rights, and humanitarian crises, it is possible that peacekeeping initiatives may be necessary in the cyber realm. Cyber attacks have the potential to initiate, exacerbate, or prolong such circumstances. For instance, a cyber attack can contribute to state collapse by causing critical national infrastructure to malfunction. Countries are increasingly dependent on cyber-based systems to sustain essential services, such as power grids, water supplies, communication networks, transportation, and financial transactions.<sup>12</sup> If a cyber attack were to trigger blackouts, disrupt water supplies, make travel unsafe, or destabilize a national economy, it would jeopardize a country's stability, and therefore threaten international peace and security, which could justify the deployment of a peacekeeping mission.

The cyber realm can also serve as a platform for violating human rights, with potentially severe consequences. For example, a widespread blackout or a contaminated water supply could endanger people's right to life. The right to access information and share it through any means, regardless of borders, is also an important aspect of human rights, even if it is less severe than threats to the right to life. For instance, the UN's condemnation of the government of Cameroon's decision to cut off internet access to English-speaking regions illustrates the organization's acknowledgement of the potential for human rights violations in the cyber domain. The UN specifically condemned this action as a violation of the affected population's freedom of expression, reinforcing the idea that cyber threats could potentially constitute a threat to international peace and security.<sup>13</sup>

Scholars have differing views on the need for cyber peacekeeping. While some argue that maintaining peace in the cyber realm, safeguarding civilians, averting the escalation of cyber conflicts, offering arbitration, and fostering trust all hinge on the criticality of cyber peacekeeping, according to Phneah, some argue that cyber peacekeeping is presently unnecessary since the hazards of cyber warfare are not yet comprehensively understood.<sup>14</sup> However, the latter perspective can be challenged by the argument that cyber peacekeeping is necessary due to the experimental nature of cyber warfare, which could unintentionally cause indiscriminate harm to civilians, posing a threat to international peace and security, as noted by Robinson et al.<sup>15</sup>

The need for cyber peacekeeping is a topic of debate, with arguments for and against. However, the balance of arguments favours the need for cyber

peacekeeping in the future. The reasons for this can be categorised in three broad categories which are:(i) the potential for cyber warfare to cause unintentional harm to civilians,(ii) the potential for cyber attacks to threaten international peace and security, and(iii) the possibility that some cyber attacks may exceed the responsibility to protect (RPI) thresholds.<sup>16</sup>

### **The Current Status of Cyber Peacekeeping**

Cybersecurity is becoming increasingly important in standard peacekeeping operations since UN missions are vulnerable to cyber attacks and espionage. Therefore, the UN needs to take measures to prevent conflicts from escalating and to protect its mission-critical data from adversaries. At present, the United Nations is working on establishing the requisite infrastructure and protocols to secure sensitive information and forestall breaches.<sup>17</sup> However, adopting a cyber peacekeeping role would be more proactive in this aspect.

The term “digital peacekeeper” is discussed by the United Nations, referring to physical peacekeepers in conflict zones who are equipped with advanced digital equipment. The proposed concept of a “cyber peacekeeper” involves an authorized individual carrying out tasks in cyberspace that are similar to those of a physical peacekeeper.

The United Nations has expressed interest in playing a role in cyber peacekeeping, and this is evident from the recent introduction of the term “Digital Blue Helmets” (DBH), which is similar to the physical peacekeepers known as “Blue Helmets.” The UN’s Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) is currently leading the initiative to “enhance cybersecurity preparedness, resilience, and response.” However, their efforts are currently focused on protecting the organization itself, rather than the world as a whole. If member states call upon the UN to provide cyber defense services, this may change in the future. According to OICT, the program's primary goal is to support the UN's efforts in various areas, including peace and security, sustainable development, international law, human rights, and humanitarianism. OICT has conducted initial research on cyber threats to the Sustainable Development Goals, and they have a plan to establish “DBH Operations Centres” that will serve as interdisciplinary cybersecurity support and training centers. These centres will bring together experts from different parts of the world to tackle various IT-related problems.<sup>18</sup>

Further, the United Nations is considering taking action against cyber terrorism, with the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre planning to assist member states in preventing and mitigating the effects of terrorist cyberattacks. However, these efforts are in their early stages. NATO, on the other hand, has made significant progress in the field of cyberdefense through the establishment of a

Center of Excellence on Cooperative Cyber Defense in Tallinn, Estonia, which acts as a hub of cyberdefense expertise for NATO members.<sup>19</sup> The significance of protecting online rights has been underscored by the UN Human Rights Council, and the UN has embraced seven principles for action on cybersecurity and cybercrime. The objective is to standardize policy throughout the UN system and encourage UN programs to aid member states in meeting their cybersecurity and cybercrime needs.<sup>20</sup> Overall, the situation of Cyber Peacekeeping is still at a very early stage.

### **Methodology**

Thematic analysis is a useful method for conducting qualitative research, as it allows researchers to identify patterns and themes within large amounts of data. Through cross-referencing, researchers can determine categories and themes that help to understand various concepts related to a specific topic, such as Cyber peacekeeping. Additionally, this approach allows for the possibility of further research and comparative analysis, as certain studies may be more compatible in a qualitative discussion. The six-step framework provided by Braun and Clarke for conducting thematic analysis involves familiarizing oneself with the data, systematically coding important features, figuring out themes and combining codes, ensuring coherence and relevance of themes, identifying the main point of each theme, and carrying out analysis and writing the report.<sup>21</sup> This method has two main advantages viz. it allows for an understanding of the dynamics of coding and analyzing qualitative data and it offers flexibility in terms of the ways it can be conducted.<sup>22</sup>

The analysis and interpretation of the phenomenon and factors in this paper heavily rely on existing data, which raises ethical concerns regarding the data collection methods. The paper utilizes literature to support the reasons for conducting research, but it can be unethical to duplicate research that has already been done. When conducting systematic or literature reviews, researchers may face difficulties in identifying procedures such as consent from other researchers whose work has been used in the data collection process. To address these concerns, the researcher has limited data sourcing to publicly available resources or institutional logins and has properly referenced all works in the report to avoid plagiarism. However, the qualitative nature of this research introduces subjectivity, which may lead to biased findings presented based on the author's arguments and opinions.<sup>23</sup>

## **Results**

This section discusses the outcomes of the thematic analysis that was conducted. The results of the search strategy revealed three major themes concerning the difficulties of creating a cyber peacekeeping initiative which are discussed below:-

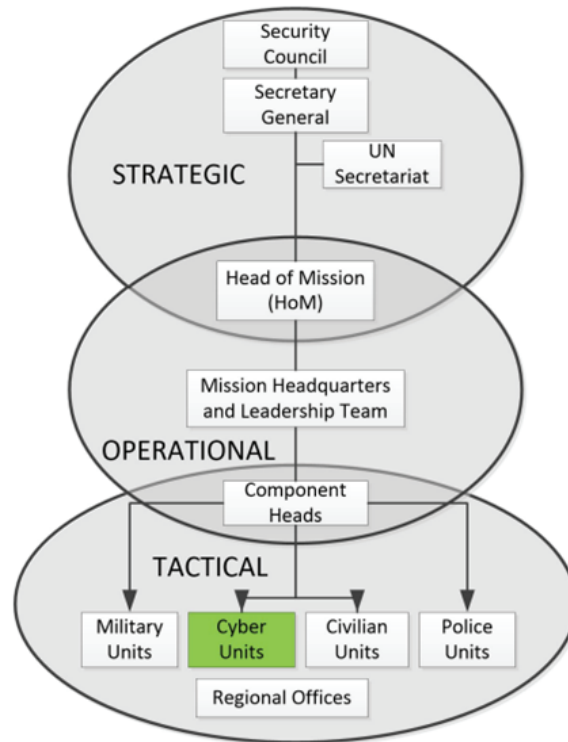
a. **Organisational Structure:** There is a lack of written work suggesting a comprehensive framework for the Cyber Peacekeepers that encompasses all of their duties, not just a single activity. A comprehensive framework is necessary to define the expectations of UN member states regarding the Cyber Peacekeepers. It is important to note that studies on international organizations tend to neglect their organizational structure and instead focus on political dynamics, issues, and case studies. However, the structure of an organization has a significant impact on its learning, behaviour, and growth, and therefore requires thorough examination. Jones et al. explore the practical aspects of implementing and carrying out a cyber peacekeeping operation, with a specific focus on cyber OMR. The study highlights the importance of carefully selecting cyber-related terms in peace agreements, as well as the need for securing cyber expertise. It also emphasizes the value of cyber OMR in safeguarding critical national infrastructure and the benefits of a virtual collaborative environment. Importantly, the authors note that their proposals align with the established UN peacekeeping principles based on the 2008 doctrine.<sup>24</sup>

In their article, Jones et al. propose that once the UN has recruited cyber experts, the next challenge is to determine how to organize and integrate them into the existing UN structure in the best possible way. The current UN structure has military, police, and civilian components, each led by a component head who reports to the mission headquarters leadership team. The question arises as to whether cyber peacekeepers should be classified as military, police, or civilian units. Given that cyber peacekeepers may come from diverse backgrounds, including military, police, and civilian, one possible solution is to assign them to the unit that corresponds to their background. Another alternative is to assign them to military or civilian units based on their background, which has the advantage of potentially arming military cyber peacekeepers and providing them with infantry support. However, this approach could harm communication and coordination among cyber peacekeepers.<sup>25</sup>

Hence, it is recommended to establish a distinct unit, referred to as cyber units, dedicated solely to cyber peacekeeping, which would foster coherence among cyber peacekeepers, irrespective of their background. This would also introduce a new position, known as the head of the cyber component, who would

supervise the operational cyber aspects of an undertaking. Although this person would report to the leadership team and mission head for tactical planning and communication, cyber specialists would also be available at the strategic level to provide advice on strategic cyber-related matters.

**Figure 2: Proposed UN Peacekeeping Organisational Structure**



Source: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/1710.09616.pdf> [Accessed 29 Mar. 2021].

On the other hand, to better address the functions of Cyber Peacekeepers, Almutawa suggest the creation of two departments: conflict operations and stabilisation affairs.<sup>26</sup> The conflict operations department would handle tasks related to conflict prevention, supporting peace agreements, and other conflict-related functions. The stabilisation affairs department would handle tasks related to economic, social, and governmental stabilisation after a conflict has occurred. To enhance the effectiveness of conflict resolution and stabilization efforts, it is recommended to split the conflict operations department into two sub-departments - one dedicated to conflict prevention and the other to peace agreement implementation. Likewise, the stabilisation affairs department should be divided into two sub-departments, one focused on social and economic affairs,

and the other on state and security affairs. This division would allow for a more targeted approach to addressing the various facets of conflict resolution and stabilization. The sub-department handling social and economic affairs would assume the responsibility of stabilizing situations following a ceasefire, fostering economic growth, safeguarding human rights, and supporting social and economic recovery and development. Meanwhile, the sub-department dedicated to state and security affairs would concentrate on establishing democratic principles and good governance, implementing security sector reforms, providing electoral assistance, addressing mine-related issues, and reinstating and expanding state authority in countries that have undergone conflict.

**b. Insufficient Capabilities:** Acquiring a suitable number of skilled cyber peacekeepers for UN missions may be challenging. The UN presently depends on a blend of its own personnel, as well as troops and police contributions from member states, for peacekeeping operations. Possible providers of cyber peacekeeping services could include military cyber units such as the US Cyber Command from member states and cybersecurity specialists from the private sector. However, the issue of obtaining the required expertise in large enough numbers and at a cost that the UN can afford for its operations will need to be explored, and this should be the focus of future research.

Nicholson et al. point out that securing Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) presents technical challenges due to their unique features. CNI facilities, such as water facilities and power plants, require specialized monitoring and surveillance techniques that go beyond standard network monitoring. This is because these systems use proprietary protocols, require constant availability, and often have air-gapped systems, which make implementing OMR or a cyber buffer zone more complex. As a result, securing these facilities requires a specific skill set that is in high demand globally.<sup>27</sup>

The UN currently lacks the required knowledge and capabilities to form a cyber peacekeeping force, which would need expertise in areas such as national cyber warfare capabilities, spear-phishing schemes, advanced viruses, and the “dark web.” Therefore, member states must provide their own cyber experts with the appropriate capabilities and expertise. However, this transfer of expertise may prove challenging due to concerns about impartiality and national interests. Furthermore, states themselves are facing a shortage of cybersecurity professionals, with an estimated 3.5 million cybersecurity vacancies projected for the future. According to Dorn in the future, the rising involvement of states in cyberspace will necessitate the establishment of an international cybersecurity regime to regulate such activities.<sup>28</sup>



c. **Legal Basis:** The doctrine of implied powers suggests that an organization can exercise powers that are not explicitly stated in its founding documents but are necessary to fulfill its stated objectives. This means that the UN can engage in cyber peacekeeping activities as long as they are necessary to fulfill its mission of maintaining international peace and security. However, the lack of explicit legal framework for cyber peacekeeping also raises important questions regarding accountability and transparency, which will need to be addressed in future discussions on the topic.<sup>29</sup>

Legal issues have emerged and will continue to arise in relation to the actions of a cyber peacekeeping force. The absence of clear criteria for distinguishing cyber attacks that qualify as acts of war from those that do not is creating difficulties, which can impede their operations. Once the threshold for armed conflict has been surpassed, the peacekeepers become involved in the conflict, posing various challenges. Questions arise as to who should be regarded as a party to the conflict, including the troop-contributing nation, international organizations such as the UN, NATO, or the African Union, or both. Another issue concerns the duration of time that the peacekeepers will be involved in the conflict. The regulations and legal basis for each type of peace operation are determined by a complex mix of international laws, human rights laws, international humanitarian laws, and the domestic laws of the host and troop-contributing nations. However, the key factor in determining the relevant international legal framework depends on whether the peace operation falls below or above the threshold of armed conflict. If the operation is below the threshold, the primary legal framework governing the operation, including any cyber operations, is human rights law. Conversely, if the operation is above the threshold, the law of armed conflict may be applicable.<sup>30</sup>

According to Article 39 of the UN Charter, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) possesses the power, as per international law, to decide whether cyber-operations, either in a particular circumstance or as a general concept, present a danger to international peace and security. This article mandates that "The Security Council shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security." "The Security Council is also responsible for monitoring the vague concept of digital borders/boundaries." In other words, any cyber activities, whether it is for intelligence gathering, preventing conflicts, or stopping the spread of hateful online content, must comply with human rights law, which includes protecting privacy, freedom of expression, and association. Kleffner and Dinniss explain that peacekeeping operations can encompass a range of activities, including monitoring peace

agreements, safeguarding civilians, establishing a secure environment, and providing training. Additionally, under Article 41 of the UN Charter, the UNSC has the authority to approve non-violent measures to address situations that it considers a threat to peace, a breach of peace, or an act of aggression.<sup>31</sup>

In the context of peace operations, there is a debate among scholars regarding the application of the law of occupation, which may or may not be applicable in certain situations either by legal interpretation or analogy. However, it is crucial to emphasize that the law of occupation only applies to territories that are actually under the control of the occupying force and where the force can exercise its authority. Cyber operations, while potentially used to enforce the authority of an occupying power, are not sufficient to establish an occupation. Hence, utilizing cyber operations to expand the peace operation's mandate into areas beyond its physical control, such as monitoring communications, does not extend the application of the law of occupation to those regions.

### **Discussion**

Technologies around the world are changing faster, passing through the era of 4th Industrial Revolution, and experiencing technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Big data and Blockchain, it is imperative that cyberthreats, cybercrimes, cyber-terrorism and cyberwarfare will continue to increase in the upcoming years. Therefore, the agencies who are in-charge to keeping peace through lawful intervention in the cyber-world need to be proactive to deal with such scenario.

However, the literature review and thematic analysis suggest that the UN is rather reactive in such scenario. Although UN's reactive approach to establish cyber peacekeeping mechanism is a result of some institutional and legal mechanism which are, to a large extent, resistant to sudden change. Put it differently, the mechanisms that are required to be developed will not be able to keep in pace with the advancement of technologies. Considering the challenges mentioned above, developing a fully-fledged cyber peacekeeping force under the UN currently appears to be a long-term goal rather than a near-term possibility. In the near future, it is more likely that units comprising cyber specialists from countries providing troops, non-profit organizations, tech companies, and volunteers will be integrated into UN peace operations. These units will be employed for both defensive and offensive cyber operations.

According to the literature, it is widely agreed that having a long-term plan and a workable mechanism for dealing with cyberspace is necessary, and countries can benefit greatly from it. Almutawa suggests that creating an epistemic community focused on cyber peacekeeping would be beneficial for UN member states by providing them with expertise in cyber-peacekeeping while reducing costs associated with obtaining such expertise.<sup>32</sup> This would also

prevent duplication of peacekeeping-related work among UN countries. Schiff and Winters contend that collaboration among nations is crucial when it comes to sharing common resources such as fishing grounds, rivers, rail connections, hydroelectric power, or the environment. Since cyberspace is a shared resource among all UN members, creating a UN cyber peacekeeping team would be a manifestation of the neoliberal notion that countries can safeguard their shared interests through international organizations.

In terms of the legal framework, peace operations can conduct cyber operations under both the law of armed conflict regime and the human rights regime. The significance of cyber capabilities is expected to grow due to their operational effectiveness and efficiency. The specific type of cyber operation that will be allowed legally, and to what extent it can be intrusive, disruptive, or offensive, will ultimately depend on the particular mandate of the peace operation. Therefore, though the existing legal framework poses a significant challenge, it can be dealt on a case by case basis, however, would require a more specific guideline. However, to effectively establish cyber peacekeeping, it is crucial to promote understanding of the concept among all nations within the United Nations and beyond. To achieve this, further study and discussions will be necessary to clarify the definition, execution, and implementation of this undertaking.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This article highlights the necessity and evolution of Cyber peacekeeping and focuses on three major challenges based on a thematic analysis of the existing literature. In the near future, it will become imperative to utilize these measures to prevent cyberattacks. Achieving and maintaining peace will be challenging, but an increasing number of organizations, besides NATO and the UN, will become accessible for safeguarding peace in the digital realm. However, as mentioned multiple times in the above discussion, UN is yet to become proactive in this matter and things are rather slow at present. Dorn may have put the situation of UN perfectly as he argues significant advancement may only occur after a major cyberattack affects multiple countries, prompting them to recognize the importance of collaborating towards global solutions for worldwide issues. The idea of employing armed peacekeepers was not embraced by UN member states until the Suez Crisis in 1956, which was proposed by Canadian Foreign Minister Lester Pearson. This inaugural peacekeeping force allowed powerful nations such as the United Kingdom and France, as well as a regional power like Israel, to retreat from Egyptian land instead of escalating the conflict.<sup>33</sup>

UN should consider taking several measures to equip the next batch of peacekeepers who will be able to keep peace in the cyberspace. UN should invest in capacity building of personnels (i.e. Military, Police) of the countries which send the highest number of troops in peacekeeping mission such as Bangladesh.

To successfully carry out its demanding tasks, the UN can collaborate with teams from think tanks and institutes specializing in artificial intelligence, and establish a working relationship with DBH. This would enable these teams to utilize the information and resources of over 50 UN agencies and organizations, as well as their subject matter experts. Next, UN should focus developing a proper and comprehensive legal framework. Although it would take time, but UN should start the process keeping in mind the rapid advancement of technologies worldwide.

The discussion about the feasibility of a cyber-peacekeeping force is ongoing, but it is essential for governments, non-profit organizations, tech companies, and academia to increase public awareness about the risks associated with cyberspace. By promoting awareness and encouraging citizen action, around 80% of daily cybersecurity threats can be resolved.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, major stakeholders should develop legal frameworks that punish cybercriminals and provide cybersecurity measures to protect critical infrastructure and commercial entities. Further study from research organisations and academia should be carried out to critically evaluate the ongoing endeavours of UN in the cyberspace.

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### **Brief Biography**



**Mujtaba Rafid Rafa** joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as an Assistant Secretary with the 40th BCS Cadre. Prior to joining the Ministry, he served as a Lecturer in the Department of Finance and Banking at Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) for one and a half years. He also has experience in the corporate sector as he worked at United Finance Limited and IDLC Finance Limited in different capacities after finishing his undergraduate. A BBA graduate (with a finance major) from the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka, he completed his MSc in Finance from the University of Manchester as an awardee of Prime Minister Fellowship granted by Governance Innovation Unit-Prime Minister's Office, GOB. Moreover, he holds an MSS in Economics from East West University. He also completed training on Faculty Skills Development at BUP. He is very enthusiastic about research, and his research interest lies in the field of International Economics and Political Economy.



# **INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPERS JOURNAL**



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- ৫। ১৯৪০ সালের ২২ মার্চ শিলাইদহে অনুষ্ঠিত নিখিলবঙ্গ পল্লীসাহিত্য সম্মেলনে কুঠিবাড়িকে জাতীয় সম্পদ হিসেবে সংরক্ষণের প্রস্তাব গৃহীত হয়। বাংলাদেশের একজন শিল্পী-সাহিত্যিকের উদ্যোগে এ আয়োজন হয়েছিল।

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