

*Md. Kamrul Hassan***EMERGING STRATEGIC ISSUES IN UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR BANGLADESH ARMED FORCES****Abstract**

United Nations (UN) peacekeeping activities have seen an exponential growth in both size and scope since their inception in mid-1950s. These operations are now seen as the core activity of the international community's effort to establish peace in conflict-torn countries around the world. Operational environment and nature of threats in the UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) area are continuously changing. UN also had to evolve and adopt new strategies to cope up with the operational environment. Changes in the operational strategy of UN are a continuous process. Troops Contributing Countries (TCCs) need to remain fully abreast with the strategies of UN to prepare their armed forces accordingly. The landmark Brahimi Report has manifested a renewed vision for UNPKOs to make them more effective and comparatively cost-efficient. It includes several important recommendations for enhancing capacity and effectiveness of UNPKOs. UN has already implemented some reforms according to the recommendations of the report in various areas of PKOs such as peacekeeping policy and strategy, structure of peacekeeping department, conduct and discipline etc. The reform agendas and other evolving strategic issues demand in-depth analysis by TCCs. This paper highlights important evolving strategies of UNPKOs along with an analysis to reveal their implications to the Bangladesh Armed Forces. Apparently, it is felt that Bangladesh Armed Forces may struggle to continue its current share in troops contribution if appropriate measures are not taken to face foreseeable challenges. The paper also recommends few measures which may help Bangladesh Armed Forces take benefits of the opportunities and minimise effects of the perceived challenges resulting from the evolving strategies.

**1. Introduction**

The concept of Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) was introduced by the United Nations (UN) in 1947 when the world was recuperating from the dismays of the World War II. Its noble objectives have been maintenance of international peace and security, adoption of collective measures for prevention of hostilities and removal of threats to peace in conformity with the principles of international law.<sup>1</sup> UNPKOs also provide necessary space and support for development to

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/>, accessed on 26 September 2015.

countries emerging from conflict. Over the years, it has evolved new strategies to meet the demands of different conflicts and changing global political landscapes. At the beginning, the so-called traditional peacekeeping was planned to meet the challenges of the Cold War era. The end of that era considerably expanded the space available for the multilateral management of peace and security.<sup>2</sup> UN Security Council (UNSC) was able to achieve renewed consensus at the end of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> Thereby, traditional first generation peacekeeping gave way to the second generation multidimensional peacekeeping to contain internal conflicts spawned by the termination of the Cold War.

Since inception, the UN had lot of successes such as in Namibia, Cambodia and Mozambique. It has contributed to preventing and managing violent conflicts between and within states, supported national actors in protecting and building peace after conflict. But it could not continue for long and painful setbacks, like the ones in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia brought the necessity to re-define the modalities of UNPKOs. Today, the scale and complexity of PKOs are straining its personnel, administrative and support machinery.<sup>4</sup> In 2000, the Brahimi Report<sup>5</sup> manifested several important recommendations to enhance capacity and effectiveness of UNPKOs. The landmark report chartered a renewed vision for UNPKOs that aimed at making peacekeeping activities more effective and comparatively cost efficient.<sup>6</sup>

The Brahimi Report initiated number of reforms within UN and generated discussion on many other new issues to make PKOs more vibrant and cost effective. These issues demand in-depth analysis by the TCCs so that they can prepare their armed forces accordingly to continue their existing share in troops contribution to UNPKOs. Bangladesh being one of the top TCCs also needs to keep an eye on the evolving strategic context in UNPKOs. This paper provides a comprehensive picture of the evolving strategic context along with an in-depth analysis to find out answer of following questions. What is the likely overall impact of emerging strategic issues in UNPKOs on current share in troops contribution of Bangladesh Armed Forces? How should Bangladesh prepare its Armed Forces to deal with the opportunities and challenges created due to emerging strategic issues so that it can continue its current level of activity in UNPKOs?

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<sup>2</sup> S. Neil MacFarlane, "Charter Values and the Response to Terrorism", in Jane Boulden and Thomas G. Weiss (eds.), *Terrorism and the UN before and after September 11*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, *A More Secure World: our Shared Responsibility*, New York: United Nations Department of Public Information, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Marco Bianchini, "UN Peacekeeping Operations: Overview, Current Situation and Challenges", paper presented in the panel discussion on *International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers*, organised by Belgian Royal Military Academy, Brussels, on 29 May 2012.

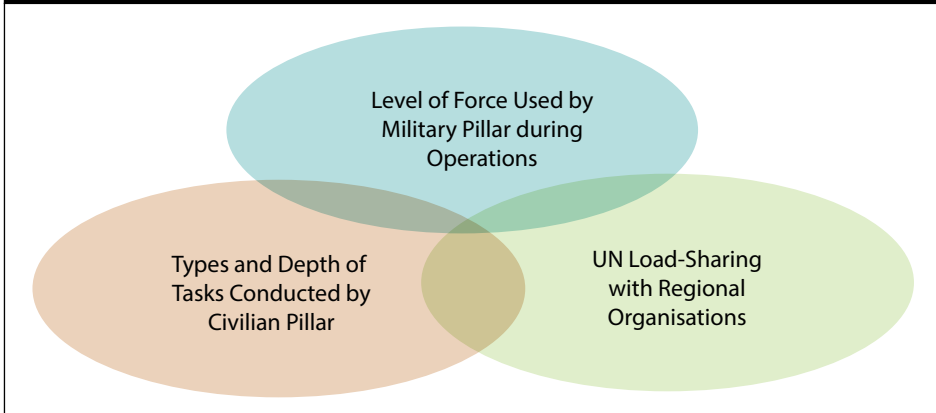
<sup>5</sup> Available at [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/55/305](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/55/305), accessed on 30 August 2015.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, *A New Partnership Agenda Chartering a New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping*, New York: UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, 2009.

## 2. Emerging Strategic Issues in UNPKOs

UN had to evolve and adopt new strategies to keep pace with different generations of PKOs. Since inception, UNPKOs have passed through the generations, moving from a reactive stance that seeks to freeze or palliate conflict to one that is proactive and seeks to influence its outcome.<sup>7</sup> In order to feel the necessity of evolving strategies, it is important to know the factors which resulted evolution of different generations of PKOs. These factors are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Basis of Dividing Evolution of UNPKOs into Different Generations**



Source: Kai Michael Kenkel, "Five Generations of Peace Operations: From the 'Thin Blue Line' to 'Painting a Country Blue'", *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional Journal*, Vol. 56(1), No. 122-143, 2013, p. 124.

Today, UNPKOs are engaged in diverse sectors such as governance and civil administration, protection of civilians, rule of law, electoral support, disarmament and reintegration of combatants and post-conflict peace building.<sup>8</sup> Over the years, the UN has established numerous multidimensional PKOs to carry out a broad spectrum of activities which go far beyond traditional peacekeeping.<sup>9</sup> These necessitated changes in operational and administrative strategies. The latest changes and point of focus in UN's strategic context are discussed below.

### 2.1 Robust Peacekeeping

In 2009, UN officially coined the concept of robust peacekeeping through a document titled "A New Partnership Agenda Chartering New Horizon for UN Peacekeeping". The report was an outcome of the discussion that generated from

<sup>7</sup> Kai Michael Kenkel, "Five Generations of Peace Operations: From the 'Thin Blue Line' to 'Painting a Country Blue'", *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional Journal*, Vol. 56(1), No. 122-143, 2013, p. 124.

<sup>8</sup> Mohamed Osman Awad, *The United Nations and Peace Enforcement: Wars, Terrorism and Democracy*, Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002, p. 224.

<sup>9</sup> Marco Bianchini, *op. cit.*

review of UN's apparent failure in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) suggested an interim definition of robust peacekeeping as a posture by the PKOs force that would demonstrate willingness, capacity and capability to deter and confront, including through the use of force when necessary, an obstruction to the implementation of its mandate.<sup>10</sup> Robust peacekeeping demands better mobility, modern intelligence gathering equipment, credible fire power and adequate air support.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2 *Broaden the Base of TCCs*

Apparently, it may appear that UN has a long list of countries to contribute in its peacekeeping effort, but contributions of these countries are unevenly distributed.<sup>12</sup> Recently, UN has focused to broaden the base of TCCs. It is trying to increase contributions of the countries that are already in the list and also at the same time looking for new TCCs. UN has identified two options to broaden the base of TCCs such as:<sup>13</sup>

- Countries that are already “committed contributors” to UNPKOs but could contribute more (Argentina, Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nigeria and Philippines).
- Countries that have been “committed contributors” to western-led non-UN operations but not contributed significantly to UN, especially North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries.

Available statistics show that UN could achieve reasonable success in its attempt to increase the number of TCCs. In 2013, it could include seven new/returning TCCs in its inventory.

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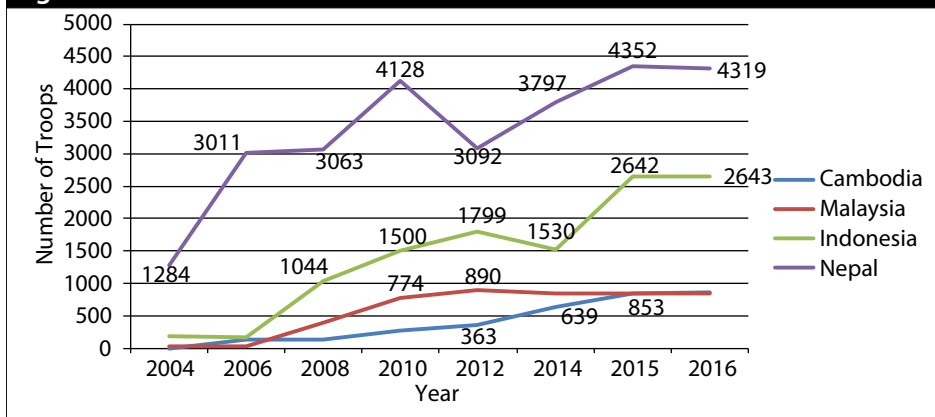
<sup>10</sup> Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT) paper on “Robust Peacekeeping under United Nations Chapter VII - A Challenge for Bangladeshi Peacekeepers”, 2011.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Adam C. Smith and Arthur Boutellis, *Rethinking Force Generation: Filling the Capability Gaps in UN Peacekeeping*, New York: International Peace Institute, 2013, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams, *Broadening the Base of United Nations Troop and Police Contributing Countries*, New York: International Peace Institute, 2012, p. 2.

**Figure 2: Number of TCCs Contributed Uniformed Personnel in UN PKOs**



Source: Compiled from “Troop and Police Contributors”, *United Nations Peacekeeping*, available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>, accessed on 30 May 2016.

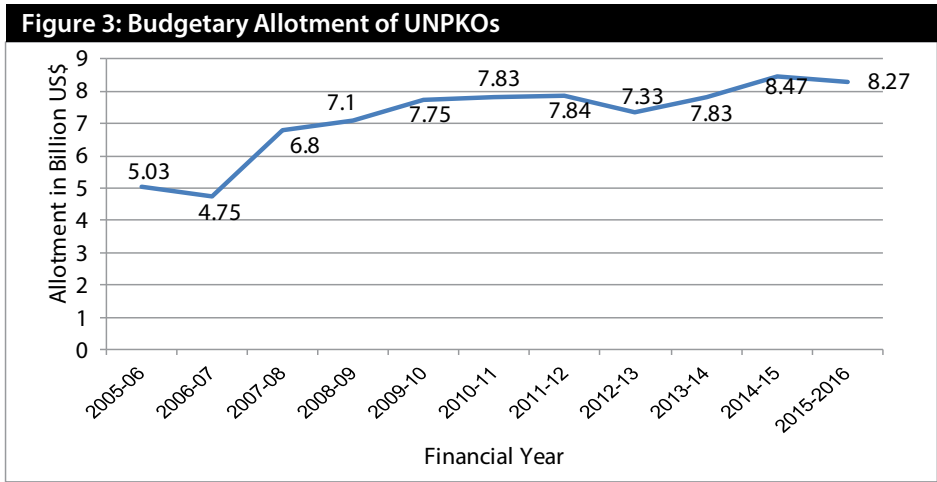
### 2.3 Challenges to Large Troops Deployment

Several efforts have been put into place to strengthen UN’s institutional foundations to ensure that it is capable to perform its expected roles.<sup>14</sup> However, few factors are creating challenges for UN to continue its current level of activity and likely to affect number of uniformed personnel in UNPKOs in future such as financial constraint, capability driven approach, resistance from host country, etc.

- Fiscal austerity due to protracted global financial crisis is generating a renewed emphasis on “value for money” or cost effectiveness.<sup>15</sup> A trend shown in Figure 3 reveals stagnancy in budgetary allotment for peacekeeping activities since 2008-2009.

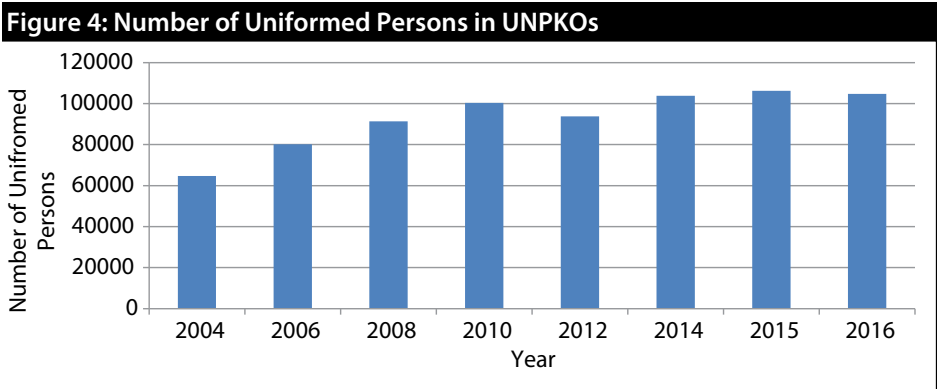
<sup>14</sup> Claes Nilsson and Kristina Zetterlund, “Revamping UN Peacekeeping for 21st Century”, available at <http://www.foi.se/sv/Sok/Sammanfattningssida/?rNo=FOI-R--3833--SE>, accessed on 26 December 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Katharina P. Coleman, *The Political Economy of UN Peacekeeping: Incentivizing Effective Participation*, New York: International Peace Institute, 2014, p. 2.



Source: Compiled from "Troop and Police Contributors", *op. cit.*

- The most recent series of initiatives indicate an attempt to change the culture of UN peacekeeping from what has been characterised as a "numbers driven approach" to a more "capability driven approach." Echoing calls by other member states, in the 2013 opening session of the C-34, Japan implored the UN to "do more with less and do it better."<sup>16</sup> Latest documents published by UN underlined the need to focus on the results, effects of PKOs rather than simply on generating adequate numbers of troops, police and equipment.<sup>17</sup> Such pressure from the major stakeholders is preventing any notable increase in the total number of uniformed personnel in PKOs since 2010 as shown in Figure 4.



Source: Compiled from "Troop and Police Contributors", *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> Adam C. Smith and Arthur Boutellis, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

- In some cases, resistance from host country government to large scale troop deployment on their territory is affecting number of uniformed personnel in UNPKOs.

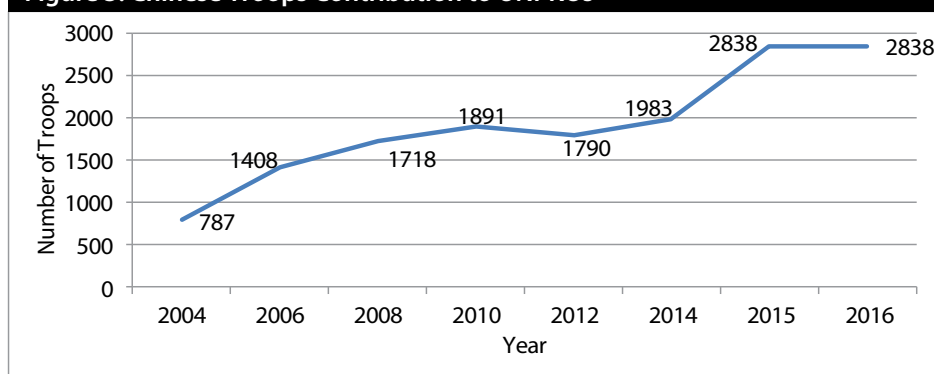
## 2.4 Rapid Deployment Capability

The need to improve UN's ability to rapidly deploy in PKOs is driven by twin pressures: responding to complex emergencies and organisational reforms. At present, numbers of initiatives from different stakeholders are underway (mentioned in Appendix 1), which are likely to enhance rapid deployment capability of UN. When such initiatives will get matured, UN will have more flexibility and improved ability to respond to crises with better speed.

## 2.5 Interest of Rising Powers and Asian Countries to Participate

Nowadays, peacekeeping is considered as a very important tool of global geo-politics.<sup>18</sup> Positive engagement like UNPKOs helps rising powers project a more benign and 'harmonious' image beyond their borders, reassure neighbours about their peaceful intentions and softly balance influence of other superpowers while gradually but more firmly establishing their acceptance as great powers.<sup>19</sup> As such, rising power like China is getting more interested to contribute in UN efforts as shown in Figure 5. The trends of China's contribution to PKOs reflect its desire to become more involved in international events and make tangible contributions to global peace and security.

**Figure 5: Chinese Troops Contribution to UNPKOs**



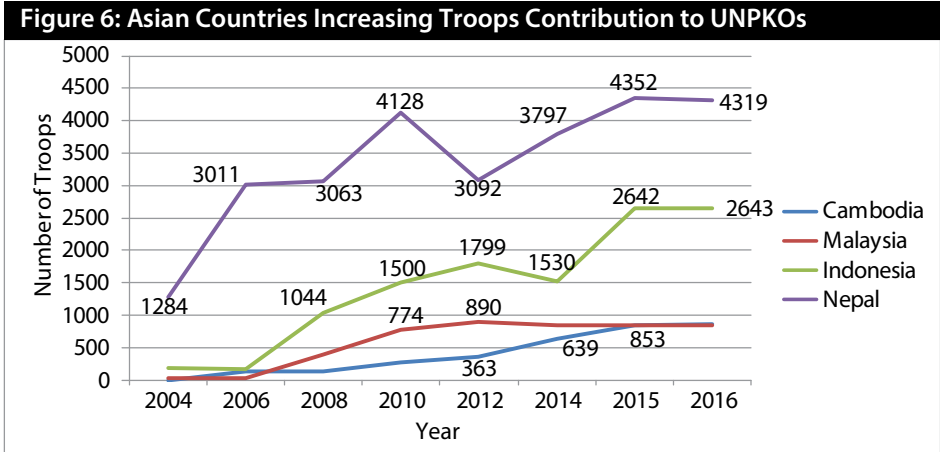
Source: Compiled from "Troop and Police Contributors", *op. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> Sharon Wiharta, Neil Melvin and Xenia Avezov, *The Geopolitics of Peace Operations: Mapping the Emerging Landscape*, Sweden: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Bates Gill and Chin-Hao-Huang, *China's Expanding Peacekeeping Role: It's Significance and the Policy Implications*, Signalistgatan, Sweden: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2009, p. 4.

India has also focused on enhancing its participation in UNPKOs in last few years. As on 30 April 2015, India is holding the second position in military and police contributions to UN operations.<sup>20</sup> If these rising powers desire to increase participation, they will be able to do it with relative ease due to their dominance and influence in the world affairs.

Besides these rising powers, there are few countries from Asia who have gradually become more interested to contribute to UNPKOs. For example, Cambodia, Nepal, Malaysia, Indonesia etc successfully increased their participation in last few years as shown in Figure 6. Such interest of the rising powers and Asian countries to enhance participation in UNPKOs will surely pose competitive environment to the TCCs.



Source: Compiled by the author from “Troop and Police Contributors”, *op. cit.*

## 2.6 African Solutions to African Problems

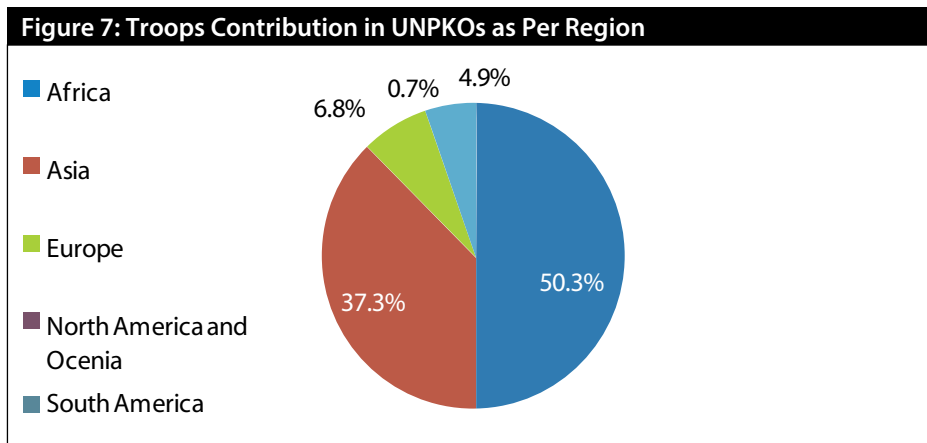
At present, nine out of sixteen UNPKOs are in Africa. UN considers its partnership with the African Union (AU) as very significant for conducting effective PKOs in Africa.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, UN encourages more participation from AU nations. On the other hand, leaders of AU are also demanding more dominant role in dealing with regional problems. The phrase “African solutions to African problems” is often coined by them in various international forums to rationalise their desired increased involvement in various issues of the region. Such demand from them seems to be logical and natural. Since, AU leaders are in a better position to evaluate regional problems which is the most important prerequisite for developing appropriate mitigation plan to solve the issues.

<sup>20</sup> Ethiopia is topping the list contributing total 8321 persons. India is in the second position with 7696 personnel.

<sup>21</sup> Available at <http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12370.doc.htm>, accessed on 01 June 2015.

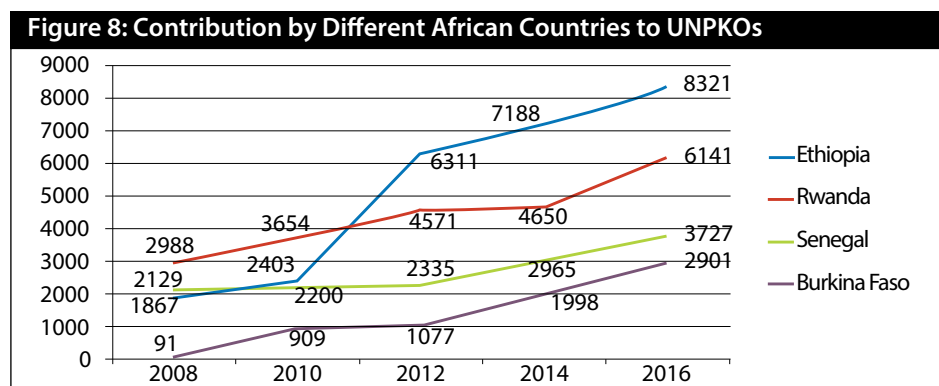


In this context, AU has gradually increased their political and military engagement in various issues of Africa. Recently in Darfur and Somalia, AU forces were deployed with UN backing. When UN took over from the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) in Darfur, bulk of the troops of AMIS was re-hatted with blue berets; out of 19 infantry contingents, 18 were from African nations.<sup>22</sup> Figure 7 shows AU leaders are already successful in getting their due importance.



Source: <http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/peacekeeping-data-graphs/>, accessed on 30 May 2016.

Figure 8 shows that there is rapid rise in the number of troops from few African countries since 2008. It is obvious that their effort to increase share in troops contribution will continue in future and create more competitive environment for TCCs from outside Africa.



Source: Compiled from "Troop and Police Contributors", *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> Ilyas Iftekhar Rasul, "Bangladesh's Contribution to United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in Africa", paper presented in the national seminar on *Look Africa: An Emerging Foreign Policy Option for Bangladesh*, organised by BISS, Dhaka, on 02 December 2010.

## 2.7 Partnership with Regional Organisations

The UN is opting for closer partnership with regional organisations, most significantly with European Union (EU), AU and NATO. These partnerships have grown in response to the growing complexity of the crises that have erupted.<sup>23</sup> Recently, other regional organisations e.g., Arab League and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have also shown willingness to take on a more prominent role in addressing peace and security challenges in their respective regions. UN also prefers to get engaged with these organisations since they can ensure political patronage and tangible support for UNPKOs therein.

## 2.8 Use of Modern Gadgets/Equipment by the Peacekeeping Force

UN is turning to the 21<sup>st</sup> century tools to meet challenges of modern peacekeeping. Modern gadgets are integrated to different UNPKOs to have better situational awareness for peacekeepers and better protection for civilians. Few such examples are:

- In 2013, DPKO received Security Council approval to deploy drones for the UNPKOs in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).<sup>24</sup>
- UN has also employed Global Positioning System (GPS) in Mali to help identify new water sources for the mission that will not deplete local water tables, long-range counter battery radar in Lebanon to locate artillery fire and forward-looking infrared systems in aircrafts in the DRC to monitor rebel movements at night.<sup>25</sup>
- A number of other technologies are in the process of being incorporated like motion-sensitive perimeter lighting, hand-held biometric devices, infrared systems, weapons locating systems and thermal imaging equipment etc.<sup>26</sup>

Modern gadgets and equipment are needed to enhance security of peacekeepers in mission areas. UN is committed to ensure appropriate reimbursement for providing modern gadgets to the TCCs who need to remain prepared to equip their contingents with modern gadgets for keeping pace with latest technological developments. Such requirement may result in significant financial burden for armed

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<sup>23</sup> Marco Bianchini, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Jessica Sun, "Equipping a UN Peacekeeping Force for the Future", *Stimson*, 10 July 2014, available at <http://www.stimson.org/content/equipping-un-peacekeeping-force-future-0>, accessed on 27 December 2015.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Available at <http://www.performancepeacekeeping.org/offline/download.pdf>, accessed on 05 June 2015.

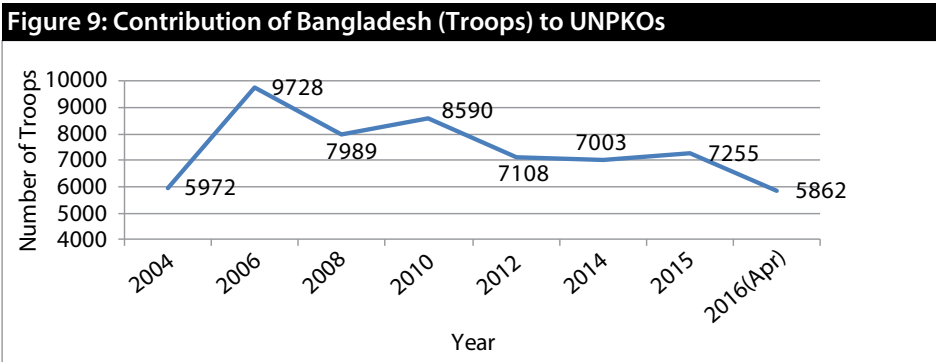
forces of TCCs and the forces will need additional funding from their respective governments. It may appear as a challenge for some armed forces as well. However, in the long run such investment may prove profitable due to high rate of reimbursement offered by the UN.

### 3. Implications of the Evolving Strategies for Bangladesh Armed Forces

Evolving strategic context of UN is likely to have impacts on Bangladesh as it is a major contributor in UNPKOs. It is likely to affect both the nature of operational role to be performed and the level of dominance of Bangladesh Armed Forces in UNPKOs.

#### 3.1 Challenges and Potential Measures

Due to new and returning TCCs, Bangladesh is likely to face more competitive environment to continue its current share in troops contribution.<sup>27</sup> Interest of influential countries to contribute in UNPKOs, as mentioned before, will bring in further challenge for Bangladesh. Moreover, there is a gradual decline in the total of Bangladeshi troops in UNPKOs since 2010 as shown in Figure 9.



Source: Compiled from “Troop and Police Contributors”, *op. cit.*

UN will always encourage new TCCs since it helps to enhance credibility of the PKOs. Therefore, Bangladesh should take preparation to continue its existing share in troops contribution through effective diplomacy and displaying outstanding professionalism.<sup>28</sup> Currently, crises are escalating very quickly and the UN needs to

<sup>27</sup> A survey was conducted among present and previous contingents commanders (49 participants) of Bangladesh Armed Forces in 2015. Among the participants 78 per cent opined that in future Bangladesh Armed Forces will face more competitive environment to continue its current share in troops contribution.

<sup>28</sup> Compiled from interviews by the author in 2015. The author interviewed Director Operations and Planning at Armed Forces Division, Acting Commandant BIPSOT, Director General (UN) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Research Director -1, BIIS, previous and present UN Sector Commanders, General Staff Officer Grade-1 (Logistics) at Army Headquarters and General Staff Officer Grade-1 (Foreign Affairs and Protocol) at Armed Forces Division, previous and present contingent commanders and few other senior officers having number of experiences of participating in UN PKOs.

respond fast. Thus, rapid deployment ability will become a deciding factor for the UN to select TCCs in the near future. Such ability does not mean only the ability of the forces for quick deployment but also includes quick decision making mechanism of TCCs to respond to UN request. Though Bangladesh is very quick to take decision in these regards (deployment in UNPKOs), it needs to enhance its ability to prepare a battalion that can quickly put the boot on ground.<sup>29</sup> Now, it takes about three to four months to prepare a contingent which may not be seen as a credible option in future when other TCCs will acquire ability to deploy with better speed. Necessary steps need to be taken to reduce the time required for preparing a battalion for deployment in UNPKOs.<sup>30</sup>

Few incidents show Bangladeshi peacekeepers apparently failed to demonstrate desired robustness in critical situations (one each in United Nations Organisation Mission in Democratic Republic of the Congo and United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire). Future peace operations environment is likely to be increasingly complex where peacekeepers will have to operate with robust attitude, as it is happening in Mali. With the present state of psychological build-up and attitude, Bangladeshi peacekeepers may face difficulty to operate in such complex and intricate environment.<sup>31</sup> Training modality and overall mindset about participation in UNPKOs need to be changed to meet current demand. Robustness cannot be enhanced with three to four months of training. It needs to be developed over a long period of time and should remain as a focus of all training activities.

UN has identified some assets as "Hard-to-Generate-Key Enablers" such as aircrafts, engineering assets and logistics support components.<sup>32</sup> TCCs contributing to these sectors are likely to enjoy better bargaining power during selection in other categories such as military, police or experts. UN is also considering increasing financial benefits for providers of these key enablers. However, Bangladesh is yet to generate required capability to exploit the opportunities created due to increased demand in these areas.<sup>33</sup> Recently, the country could not accept a UN offer to provide a Combat Logistics Battalion due to non-availability of the required equipment.<sup>34</sup> If not properly planned, Bangladesh will not be able to take these advantages UN is likely to offer to providers.<sup>35</sup>

Selections of TCCs and nomination in important appointments of UN are now highly influenced by global politics. These are political decisions and as such countries need to continuously pursue these aspects through proactive diplomatic efforts. Bangladesh has made remarkable contribution in the PKOs but most peacekeepers

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Nancy Soderberg, "Enhancing U.S. Support for UN Peacekeeping", *Prism*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2011, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> Compiled from interviews by the author in 2015.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Opinion of the participants of the survey conducted by the author in 2015.

are deployed at field levels.<sup>36</sup> So far, Bangladesh could not achieve its due share in the appointments at the policymaking and strategic levels. Appropriate diplomatic efforts at various levels have remained as a challenge for Bangladesh that has resulted in failure to achieve expected share in appointments at strategic level. Bangladesh, without more dynamic and persuasive diplomacy, is unlikely to get due share in higher positions at UN Headquarters.<sup>37</sup>

Media can be used as a very effective force multiplier to the diplomatic effort. It can play an important role to highlight contribution of armed forces to UNPKOs in national and international platforms and that can help rally popular domestic support for armed forces. In international fora, media may be used to highlight operational achievements of armed force members to build positive image. It may also be utilised to raise the demand for appropriate share in appointments at strategic level.

At the beginning, participation in UNPKOs was seen as welfare by the members of Bangladesh Armed Forces due to financial benefit it offered to participants.<sup>38</sup> Focus remained on ensuring participation of as many members of the armed forces as possible. The selection criteria were also set accordingly. However, for the command echelon, these were modified later to ensure appropriate persons to be selected and lead contingents in highly volatile and fluid operational environment of PKOs. At present, environment in the PKOs areas is no less dangerous than a warzone. It is more dangerous due to existence of non-traditional threats. Therefore, selection criteria for all participants need to be reviewed to focus on operational proficiency, fitness and attitude.<sup>39</sup> Participation in UNPKOs may no more be seen as welfare.

Decision making capability and interpersonal skills are very important for every participant in PKOs, especially for commanders. Complex and multidimensional operational environment demand quick decision making capability of commanders on ground. Emergence of multidimensional threats, especially non-traditional ones, makes quick decision making ability more important for them. In the past, few incidents in the operational area of Bangladeshi contingents revealed these setbacks that were the results of delayed and inappropriate decisions of respective commanders.<sup>40</sup> Post-incident analysis of these events identifies the need for improvement in decision making capability and interpersonal skills of commanders.

Language skill is a vital tool for conducting successful PKOs. Most African nations where conflicts prevail are either Francophone or Anglophone towing their colonial legacy. For example, there are some nations in the north speak Arabic.<sup>41</sup> Members of Bangladesh Armed Forces are good in English communication but lack

<sup>36</sup> Md. Farid Uddin and Abu Salah Md. Yousuf, "Evolving Trends of UN Peacekeeping: Challenges for Bangladesh and Its Responses", *BISS Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2014, p. 121.

<sup>37</sup> Opinion of the participants of the survey conducted by the author, in 2015.

<sup>38</sup> Compiled from interviews by the author, in 2015.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Ilyas Iftekhar Rasul, *op. cit.*

significantly requisite skill in French and Arabic.<sup>42</sup> If measures are not taken to improve the standard, in future, it may become a major barrier to get expected share in troops contribution when more Francophone or Anglophone nations will get interested to contribute.

Besides, UN is now focusing on deployment of modern and technologically advanced equipment and gadgets. It also needs highly specialised personnel, e.g., air planning and movement specialists, information analysts, chemical weapons experts, security sector and defence reform specialists etc.<sup>43</sup> The organisation is facing challenge to arrange these enabling assets and specialised capabilities from traditional TCCs. Thus, it is looking to European partners, who have sophisticated and modern militaries with resources difficult to find elsewhere.<sup>44</sup> It is likely to appear as a major challenge for Bangladesh to prepare its peacekeepers with modern equipment and gadgets if long-term procurement plan is not developed to ensure availability of required budget.<sup>45</sup>

### 3.2 Opportunities Which May Help to Continue Current Activity Level

UN's effort to broaden the base of TCCs is likely to face various challenges. Due to domestic pressure, many traditional, returning and new TCCs would be extremely sensitive to taking casualties.<sup>46</sup> Some potential contributors are facing legal or political hurdles within their own territory. In addition, lengthy parliamentary approval process in developed countries such as in South Korea will result long delay in case of any deployment.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, UN is likely to prefer contribution from countries that have long experience of participation in UNPKOs and well-versed with UN working guidelines. If so, as a TCC, Bangladesh will continue to remain as a preferred option to UN in near future.

A major portion of Bangladesh Armed Forces is deployed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Negotiation, crisis management and dispute resolution are regular activities for anybody deployed therein. Operational environment and UNPKOs areas are quite similar due to presence of non-traditional threats. Consequently, negotiation skills and other expertise gained from service in CHT provide an added advantage to members of Bangladesh Armed Forces for operating confidently in UNPKOs.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, experiences of conducting, monitoring or directing post-disaster

<sup>42</sup> Compiled from interviews by the author, in 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Gowan and Megan Gleason-Roberts, "UN Peacekeeping: Next Five Years", available at [http://cic.es.its.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/cic\\_un\\_fiveyears.pdf](http://cic.es.its.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/cic_un_fiveyears.pdf), accessed on 06 July 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Marco Bianchini, *op. cit.*

<sup>45</sup> Interview with General Staff Officer Grade -1 (Foreign Affairs and Protocol) at Armed Forces Division, in 2015.

<sup>46</sup> Roméo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: the Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2005, p. 240.

<sup>47</sup> Adam C. Smith and Arthur Boutellis, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup> Ali Reza Mohammad Ashaduzzaman, "Features Helping Bangladesh to Become Top Ranking Troop Contributing Country in Global Perspective and Corresponding Challenges", *Armed Forces Day Journal*, 2015, p. 113.

rehabilitation or pacification programmes are important requirement for effective participation in PKOs and members of Bangladesh Armed Forces will always enjoy an edge over others in this regard.<sup>49</sup>

Bangladeshi troops are known to be highly disciplined, well-trained, hardworking and personally committed. Their conduct and discipline have been much better than those of other TCCs. They have received lot of appreciation from the top of hierarchy at mission headquarters. This aspect is well communicated to DPKO by concerned persons. As a result, if focus is given to “capability-driven” approach and selection of TCCs is done basing on professional standard of troops, Bangladesh will enjoy priority over most other TCCs. Bangladesh does not pursue any hidden power agenda in other continents when it joins PKOs. Its troops do not interfere in domestic politics of the nations concerned, nor do they antagonise any factions by displaying arrogance.<sup>50</sup> That is why, they are considered acceptable almost everywhere in the world. This image is likely to help Bangladesh Armed Forces to receive recurring request to contribute to UNPKOs.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) cases are significantly less in the case of Bangladeshi peacekeepers. Cultural and social values help them remain away from these. They have earned reputation for adapting to local exigencies and demonstrating a caring attitude towards the local people in the countries concerned.<sup>51</sup> Where many TCCs follow the ABC formula (A = Abstain, B = Be Faithful and C = Use Condom), Bangladesh strictly complies with the UN’s zero tolerance policy in this regard.<sup>52</sup> Any case of SEA seriously affects reputation of UN and the world community is highly critical of such incidents. Hence, UN always tries to prevent these issues. To avoid SEA issues, Bangladeshi soldiers will remain as a preferred option to UN.

There is a political consensus in Bangladesh in favour of participation in UNPKOs.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, national strategy relating to this is likely to remain unchanged under all circumstances. When many countries are struggling to participate in these missions due to lack of political consensus within themselves, Bangladesh Armed Forces is privileged to have full support of political leaders.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, many new TCCs are facing hurdle within their own national domain as bureaucratic process takes long time to finalise decision on deploying troops in UNPKOs. Legal procedures and constraints also delay decision making in some countries.<sup>55</sup> Top leadership of

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>50</sup> Mohammad Humayun Kabir, “Global Benefits, National Motives”, available at <http://www.dandc.eu/en/article/why-bangladesh-sends-troops-un-missions-and-how-world-benefits-such-engagement>, accessed on 06 July 2015.

<sup>51</sup> BIPSOT paper, *op. cit.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> “Country Profile-Bangladesh”, available at <http://www.providingforpeacekeeping.org/2014/04/03/contributor-profile-bangladesh/>, accessed on 15 July 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Compiled from interviews by the author, in 2015.

<sup>55</sup> “Enhancing European Military and Police Contributions to UN Peacekeeping”, available at <https://www.ipinst.org/2013/02/enhancing-european-military-and-police-contributions-to-un-peacekeeping>, accessed on 31 December 2013.

Bangladesh develops a very responsive mechanism that can generate quick decision in this regard. In some cases, when the situation escalates very quickly, UN needs immediate response from TCCs and smooth bureaucratic process allows Bangladesh to meet that requirement.<sup>56</sup> Bangladesh will be able to continue this trend in future which will provide further advantage to exploit fleeting opportunities. Besides, Bangladeshis do value the participation in UNPKOs very positively<sup>57</sup> considering it as an image building tool for the country. Continuation of any activity requires popular support which Bangladesh Armed Forces is likely to receive for all times.

### 3.3 Impact Analysis of the Evolving Strategic Issues

Through survey and interview, an effort was taken to carry out a possible impact analysis of the identified challenges and opportunities. Outcome of the survey and interview is shown in the following tables:

| Serial No. | Challenges  | Severity of impact on Bangladesh, if appropriate measures are not taken |                         |            |                      |
|------------|---|---|-------------------------|------------|----------------------|
|            |   | High  | To some extent (medium) | Negligible | Yet to be determined |
| 1.         | Bangladesh will face competitive environment due to new or returning TCCs                 |   |                         |            |                      |
| 2.         | Demand to enhance rapid deployment ability will put Bangladesh in back footing            |   |                         |            |                      |
| 3.         | Maintenance of robust posture is a challenge for Bangladesh                               |   |                         |            |                      |
| 4.         | Ability to provide “Hard-to-Generate-Key Enablers” (helicopters, engineering assets etc.) |   |                         |            |                      |
| 5.         | Effectiveness of diplomacy  |   |                         |            |                      |
| 6.         | Mindset (welfare driven)  |   |                         |            |                      |
| 7.         | Decision making capability of the contingents/commanders in critical situation            |   |                         |            |                      |
| 8.         | Language skill  |   |                         |            |                      |
| 9.         | Technological expertise   |   |                         |            |                      |

Source: Compiled from interview and survey by the author, in 2015.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with General Staff Officer Grade -1 (Foreign Affairs and Protocol), Armed Forces Division, in 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Opinion of the participants of the survey conducted by the author, in 2015.



**Table 2: Impact Analysis - Opportunities**

| Serial No. | Opportunities   | How far these opportunities may help to continue current share in troop contribution? |                |            |                      |
|------------|---|---|----------------|------------|----------------------|
|            |   | High  | To some extent | Negligible | Yet to be determined |
| 1.         | Experience and expertise of Bangladesh Armed Forces in PKOs   |   |                |            |                      |
| 2.         | Experience in counter insurgency operations in CHT  |   |                |            |                      |
| 3.         | Expertise in post-disaster rehabilitation and pacification programmes   |   |                |            |                      |
| 4.         | Discipline and professional standard  |   |                |            |                      |
| 5.         | Acceptability of Bangladeshi peacekeepers   |   |                |            |                      |
| 6.         | Cultural and religious values matching UN principles (zero tolerance against SEA)                               |   |                |            |                      |
| 7.         | Political consensus about participation in UNPKOs   |   |                |            |                      |
| 8.         | Quick decision at strategic level to respond to the request of UN for deployment of troops                      |   |                |            |                      |
| 9.         | Popular support within country  |   |                |            |                      |
| 10.        | AU countries will take time for necessary capability development that will act as cushion period for Bangladesh |   |                |            |                      |

Source: Compiled from interview and survey by the author, in 2015.

From the analysis of possible impact of challenges and opportunities, it can be understood that Bangladesh is likely to face difficulty to continue its current level of activity in UNPKOs if appropriate measures are not taken. Because, effects of challenges are likely to be more dominant than overall advantages offered by opportunities. On the other hand, if UN gradually reduces total number of military troops deployment in PKOs, Bangladesh is likely to lose its share in troops contribution proportionately.<sup>58</sup>

#### 4. Options to Deal with Evolving Strategic Issues

Instead of being self-satisfied, however, Bangladesh Armed Forces should take some measures to enhance its potential to remain as a major player in UNPKOs.

<sup>58</sup> Opinion of the participants of the survey conducted by the author, in 2015.

Following are recommended for ensuring continued participation in UNPKOs:

- Bangladesh Armed Forces may enhance its capability to provide more “Hard-to-Generate-Key-Enablers” to meet increased demand of the UN. Long term (three years) procurement plan may be formulated so that the required budget may be provisioned gradually. Due to very high rate of reimbursement for these assets, it would be a viable option for the economy of Bangladesh. The plan should include enhancing ability to provide these enablers like aircrafts, engineering assets and logistics support system (equipment for combat logistics battalion, escort company etc).
- Bangladesh may support UN’s effort to enhance rapid deployment capability through two options such as:

**Option-1** Other than the normal rotation plan, Bangladesh Armed Forces may keep one additional infantry battalion as standby and ready to be deployed within seven to ten days. The standby battalion, if not deployed on emergency demand may be deployed as part of normal rotation plan and another one may be put as standby. As a result, at a time other than the normal rotation plan, one additional infantry battalion may be kept ready to fly on short notice.

| <b>Option-2</b> Developing a permanent task force as follows:  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Composition</b>   | <b>Characteristics</b>   |
| 1. Two Infantry Companies<br>2. Two Engineer Companies<br>3. One Advance Dressing Station<br>4. One helicopter | 1. Ability to deploy within seven days and self-sufficiency for sixty days<br>2. Ability to perform multi-dimensional role |

- A 5-year perspective plan may be developed by Bangladesh Armed Forces to train selected persons on few subjects like air planning and movement, information analysis, chemical weapon, security sector and defence reform etc.
- Steps should be taken to incorporate modern gadgets such as motion-sensitive perimeter lighting, hand-held biometric devices, infrared systems, weapons locating systems and thermal imaging equipment in the organogram of all types of contingents.
- Diplomatic efforts by the permanent mission of Bangladesh at the UN Headquarters need to be more proactive to get involved in the decision making process of the UN so that present state of troops contribution may continue.

- Necessary steps must be taken to get proportional share in higher appointments of UNDPKO and also in the expert category. Bangladesh Armed Forces may arrange required training and administrative support to the potential candidates so that they can prepare themselves to effectively compete for these appointments. Bangladesh should try to get the important appointments like Under-Secretary-General (USG), Military Advisor to Secretary General (MILAD) and more number of Force Commanders.
- Any breach of discipline in operational areas or lacking in professional competencies should be dealt seriously. Nobody should be allowed to defame the country and degrade the reputation earned over the years.
- Participation in UNPKOs needs to be viewed as an operational activity. Competency based selection system may be introduced for participation in UNPKOs. Selection criteria for PKOs should be set after conducting in-depth analysis of operational requirements in the mission area.
- Bangladesh has one of the most vibrant and recognised PKOs training institutes of the world namely Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT). Bangladesh Armed Forces should take maximum advantage of this institute to train potential/selected contingent commanders in decision making process and interpersonal skill.
- Members of armed forces need to focus on acquiring workable knowledge on French and Arabic language.
- Bangladesh Armed Forces should intensify its media campaign, keep people informed about their contributions and success stories in UNPKOs to ensure continuation of existing popular and political support.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

In order to keep pace with changing security environment, over the course of six and a half decades of their existence, UNPKOs have undergone a series of fundamental transformations from their original nature and purposes. The UN has brought changes in its operational modalities to make it more dynamic and cost effective. Besides, the changing nature of threat that peacekeepers are now facing also compelled the UN to bring robustness in its operational procedures. It is also trying to incorporate modern equipment and gadgets to facilitate intelligence gathering and decision making process. There is an increasing pressure from the key financial contributors to increase operational efficiency of the forces. Some influential countries

are becoming interested to contribute to UNPKOs to enhance their global image. Regional organisations are also showing their increased interests to become partners in UN peacekeeping efforts. On the other hand, security environment of operational areas of UNPKOs has undergone rapid changes making it multidimensional, complex and fluid. All these factors and issues will directly influence UN's decision regarding selection of TCCs and expectation about professional standard of the troops in the near future. Bangladesh Armed Forces has long experience of participation in UNPKOs with some successes. In the past, Bangladeshi peacekeepers did successfully counter the threats of rebels and militants and therefore Bangladesh was considered as one of the preferred TCCs for UN whenever necessity for a new deployment came up. However, Bangladesh Armed Forces need to take necessary measures to cope up with the evolving strategic contexts so that they can meet global standard and remain as a preferred option for the UN.

| <b>Appendix 1: Efforts to Enhance Rapid Deployment Capability</b> |                               |  |   |
|---|-------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Serial No.</b>   | <b>Identification</b>         | <b>Contributors</b>                            | <b>Important Features</b>   |
| 1.  | EU Battle Group <sup>59</sup> | EU   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Planned for 18 battle groups<sup>60</sup></li> <li>2. One battle group includes an army battalion with command and support element (1500 troops)</li> <li>3. Ability to deploy within 15 days</li> <li>4. Self-sustained for 30 days in operations not to exceed three months</li> <li>5. Every six months two battle groups are rotated into high readiness</li> <li>6. Battle groups are designed to operate independently and not intended to be combined in a formation<sup>61</sup></li> </ol> |
| 2.  | EU Gendarmerie Force          | France, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal and Spain | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Flexible, heavily equipped and highly trained police formation</li> <li>2. Ability to manage every aspect of various phases in a crisis</li> <li>3. A field headquarter includes both operational and crime fighting components</li> <li>4. Ability to be mobilised within 30 days</li> </ol>   |
| 3.  | African Stand-by Force (ASF)  | AU   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Outcome of concept "African solutions for African problem"</li> <li>2. Five regionally based stand-by forces</li> <li>3. Each group is comprised of multinational brigade group, civilian and police component</li> <li>4. Ability to deploy within 90 days for a complex multidimensional peacekeeping operation involving low-level spoilers to 14 days for a crisis involving genocide or crime against humanity</li> </ol>  |

<sup>59</sup> H. Peter Langille, *Improving United Nations Capacity for Rapid Deployment*, New York: International Peace Institute, 2014, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> Gustav Lindstrom, "Enter the EU Battle Groups", Chaillot Paper No. 97, Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 2007, pp. 9-12.

<sup>61</sup> Deaglan De Breadun, "Value of EU Battle Group Plan Stressed by Annan", *The Irish Time*, Dublin, 15 October 2004.

|    |   |  |  |
|----|---|--|--|
| 4. | Rapid Development Capability (RDC)                        | AU   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capable of responding within 14 days</li> <li>2. To be deployed in cases of genocide and gross human rights abuses</li> <li>3. Planned 2500 troops per regional stand-by forces</li> <li>4. Deploy as a precursor to a large multidimensional mission</li> </ol> |
| 5. | African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crisis (ACIRC) | Algeria, Chad, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A reservoir of 5000 troops in three tactical battle groups</li> <li>2. Ability to deploy within 10 days and self-sufficiency for 30 days</li> <li>3. Interim measures likely to be phased out when ASF is fully operational</li> </ol>                           |

Source: Compiled from various documents.