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## Issue Brief

# UN Peacekeeping Missions: Pakistan's Soft Power

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Joseph S. Nye, in his article published in *Foreign Policy* in Feb 2006, argued that military power is a hard power asset but the context in which this asset is used can turn it into a soft power asset.<sup>1</sup> In UN Peacekeeping missions, competence of the peacekeeping troops win admiration from the international community. Admiration and attraction create soft power. In this way, United Nations Peacekeeping missions are a source of soft power. They provide an opportunity to enhance a state's participation, presence and influence in framing issues of international importance and, particularly, issues related to humanitarian crises. UN peacekeeping missions are, indeed, an invaluable soft power asset for a leading troops contributor like Pakistan. By contributing immensely and consistently to the missions, Pakistan has established one fact: Pakistan stands for peace not for war and, therefore, it has the potential to establish itself as an international peacekeeping and peace building facilitator.

Since 1960, Pakistan has sent more than 160,000 troops to 42 missions.<sup>2</sup> Currently, Pakistani men and women are serving in seven UN peacekeeping missions.<sup>3</sup> With over 8,000 troops in these missions, Pakistan becomes one of the highest contributors to UN peacekeeping Missions.<sup>4</sup> An overview of the peacekeeping missions in Latin America, the Balkans, West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, and Southeast Asia reveals Pakistan's persistent commitment to international peace and security. In these missions, Pakistani troops went beyond the call of duty in providing humanitarian assistance and even laid down their lives for rescuing people.

In Haiti, Pakistani troops provided assistance in repairing roads, reconstruction of schools and installing lights in parks and streets for facilitating study at night. In recognition of the Pakistani troops' efforts, a school was named "Pakistan School." Mr. Enrique Ter Horst, United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative in Haiti, recognized the invaluable role Pakistani troops played in the mission and predicted the successful completion of this mission.<sup>5</sup> In the Balkans, Pakistani troops helped in maintaining peace on ground, provided food and medical assistance to the conflict-stricken people. The success of UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone owes a great deal to the efforts of Pakistani troops. In Cambodia, Pakistani troops undertook an extensive programme to help the locals repair a village road, dig wells and set up medical camps. In East Timor, they played an instrumental role in reconstructing the country, its peaceful transition to an independent country and maintaining lines of communication.

In Somalia, the Pakistani peacekeepers were assigned the task of recovering unauthorized arms to ensure safety of humanitarian efforts and peacekeeping. Effective handling of the security situation and

escorting of food convoys, soon, won the hearts and minds of the locals. These efforts resulted into a slogan, "*Pakistan and Somali Walal Walal*" which means *Pakistani and Somali are brothers*.<sup>6</sup> On 3 Oct, 1993, the tragic Olympic Hotel Incident took place. This incident got 75 US soldiers stranded, who were rescued by joint mission of the US, Pakistani and Malaysian troops. After eight hours long fierce battle, it was the steadfastness, courage and valor of the Pakistani troops that rescued the US soldiers who, otherwise, might have perished. Maj. Gen. Thomas. M. Montgomery, Deputy Commander of the United Nations Force in Somalia, said that many of the soldiers were alive because of the Pakistani troops that worked in most difficult and dangerous combat circumstances. He also thanked the people of Pakistan and army for sending such splendid troops.<sup>7</sup>

The kind of recognition the Pakistani troops achieved has proved that they are capable of even better projection of Pakistani society, its norms, its culture and its value system. And that they are capable of proving that Pakistani society is keen to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security. Pakistan UN peacekeeping missions projected the image of Pakistani society which has been clouded due to the terrorist onslaught against Pakistani after its inclusion in War on Terrorism as a frontline allied state.

An interesting question arises: What kind of soft power does Pakistan exercise through UN Peacekeeping missions?

The UN Peacekeeping missions have proved a connective tissue in forming friendly ties with other countries. When Iran's UN peacekeeping mission came to an end, the Indonesian President Soekarno said, "It was because of Pakistani troops that Indonesia and Pakistan came close together, they were Pakistan's best ambassadors."<sup>8</sup> The Peacekeeping missions presented themselves as a productive platform for getting a state's voice heard in the United Nations. Former Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, Ambassador Masood Khan outlined the importance of the peacekeeping missions in his speech, he said, "As a leading troops contributor, Pakistan has a vital stake in the effectiveness of strategic, operational and tactical decisions that influence the United Nation's intercessions to make, keep and build in conflict and post-conflict-zones."<sup>9</sup> Peacekeeping missions are also a means to explore new avenues of cooperation with regional organizations and their affiliated countries. Based on Pakistan's extensive experience in peacekeeping, Pakistan's Ambassador to UN, Dr. Maleeha Lodhi<sup>10</sup> offered to assist African countries in enhancing their peacekeeping capabilities and sought to seek more cooperation with African Union. These missions are also significant in dispelling the long-held notion that Pakistani women are kept backward. In these missions, Pakistani women served

on all fronts in international peacekeeping missions as doctors, nurses and police officers. It's a matter of immense pride for Pakistan that a female police officer, Shehzadi Gulfam, was awarded International Female Peacekeeper Award. These missions are helpful in informing the world that Pakistani women are empowered enough to mark their name at international level.<sup>11</sup>

But it would be more interesting to ask, to what end does Pakistan need this soft power? There are three major objectives: First, to promote international peace and security and to assist the UN in these efforts; Second, to dispel the misperceptions about Pakistan to project it as a peace-loving nation; Third, to enhance its presence in both international and regional organisations. The UN peacekeeping missions can serve both these purposes. In fact, they provide us with the context where we can project our narratives effectively and the base from where we can exercise our influence adroitly. Pakistan has soft power and it exudes sufficient confidence to establish its reputation as an international peace facilitator. To this end, Pakistan needs to take three broader measures: First, it should publicize its peacekeeping missions; Second, it should develop institutions to record, analyze and archive its peacekeeping experiences; Third, it should supplement its peacekeeping missions with peace mediation efforts. In this regard, Centre for International Peace and Stability Pakistan has made commendable efforts to move Pakistan further on the way to professional and advanced training in keeping with international best practices. The following mentioned steps are proposed to further gain soft power from the peacekeeping missions.

- A campaign must be launched on social and traditional media to keep people aware of the peacekeeping efforts and sacrifices Pakistan made over the years.
- Pakistan's peacekeeping efforts need to be popularized by branding Pakistan as, "*Shandaar Pakistan*" (Spectacular Pakistan).<sup>12</sup>
- Pakistan celebrated the Golden Jubilee of its peacekeeping in July 2011 but to make its efforts more pronounced, June 5<sup>th</sup> should be celebrated with full fervor to pay tribute to our peacekeepers. On this day, the electronic media should run documentaries and air dramas to honor our martyrs and peacekeepers.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan and ISPR should create a separate tab on its website dedicated to Pakistan's peacekeeping missions.
- In order to institutionalize our peacekeeping missions, it is essential that there be strong collaboration between the foreign office, Military Operations Directorate-General and research institutes.

## Notes and References:

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- <sup>11</sup> Dawn Report. "Pakistan Proud of Women Serving in Peacekeeping Missions". Dawn. Oct 14, 2015  
<http://www.dawn.com/news/1213032>
- <sup>12</sup> "Shandaar Pakistan" was suggested by Ambassador Masood Khan, DG ISSI, for branding Pakistan in the Seminar, Pakistan's Soft Power, organized by ISSI.  
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