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Report – Book Launch

“UN Peacekeeping Operations in Somalia 1992-1995: A Pakistani Perspective”

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PICTURES OF THE EVENT



The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a launch of the book titled *UN Peacekeeping Operations in Somalia 1992-1995: A Pakistani Perspective*, on April 10, 2019. The book has been authored by Dr. Tughral Yamin, Associate Dean, Centre for International Peace & Stability, National University of Science & Technology (NUST). Commentators for the book included: Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Talat Masood, Defense Analyst; Dr. Arshi Saleem Hashmi, Head of Department, Peace & Conflict Studies, National Defense University (NDU) and Brig. (Retd.) Kamal Aziz. The launch was attended by foreign diplomats, scholars, journalists and students.

Welcoming the guests, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General, ISSI referred to the movie *Black Hawk Down* based on US operations in Somalia and said that the entire movie ignores the role played by the Pakistani peacekeepers in Somalia. While the movie is a work of fiction, however facts must remain facts. He said that Dr. Tughral Yamin has stepped up to tell the Pakistani story of how events unfolded in Somalia at that time. The book also illustrates how committed Pakistan is to making its own contribution to maintaining international peace and security. Having spent six years in New York, Ambassador Chaudhry said that he has seen first-hand how well Pakistan is recognized at the world stage for always contributing most professional soldiers and officers. Our armed forces make us proud by displaying for the whole world to see that our troops are capable of handling extremely dangerous situations at home and abroad.

The people of Somalia have suffered for decades from a fratricidal civil war. The country has been a battleground for proxy wars by major and regional powers. This book tells the tale of bravery and accomplishments of Pakistan peacekeepers who overcame all odds to keep peace under war-ravaged conditions. The book might well be the first attempt to articulate a Pakistani perspective of the herculean task of keeping peace in Somalia during the turbulent years of 1992-95, and must have involved a painstaking process of gathering primary source data. One such primary source, Brig. Kamal Aziz, is sitting at the panel today.

An important contribution of this book is that it exposes certain myths and sets the record straight about Pakistani role in rescuing besieged US troops in Mogadishu. As opposed to the Hollywood narrative in “*Black Hawk Down*”, the fact is that without Pakistani rescue US troops faced a certain massacre at the hands of besieging Somali militia loyal to General Farah Aidid.

Moreover, the events surrounding the ambush of Pakistani troops on 5th June 1993 that killed 26 Pakistani soldiers and injured 57 are also covered in great detail, something one cannot find in the Western narrative. He said that this intellectual endeavor by Dr. Tughral Yamin will encourage others in our academia to write about Pakistan's role in other UN peacekeeping missions, such as in Congo and Balkans for example, where similar tales of bravery and compassion remain to be explored and told. He concluded on the note that this book is a great tribute to the memory of all those Pakistan peacekeepers who lost their life in the Somalian mission. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

Introducing his book, Dr. Tughral Yamin acknowledged the contributions by the veterans of UNSOM I & II, and by all those people who had helped him during the course of writing this book. He dedicated this book to Pakistan Army and his regiment unit 7 FF. He said that the motivation for writing this book came from the need to record Pakistan Army's regimental history and to investigate Pakistan's foreign policy and motivation for sending troops to Somalia. Also, there was a need for a textbook on Pakistani peacekeeping.

Sharing some quick facts about peacekeeping operations in Somalia, Dr. Yamin said that Pakistan was the first country in the world to respond to the call of the UN to send troops to Somalia and the last to withdraw. Somalis were happy with Pakistani peacekeepers and welcomed them as brothers. American marines landed in Mogadishu on December 9, 1992. Things began to go bad as the Americans tried to exert pressure in war torn Somalia. On June 5, 1993, 24 Pakistani peacekeepers were killed in cold blood and Gen. Farah Aidid was blamed for the massacre. On October 3, 1993 American marines were trapped in an abortive raid on Olympia hotel where Pakistani QRF comprising a platoon of APC Borne 15 FF and 4 tanks of 19 L valiantly recued the marines. Immediately after the Black Hawk incident, the Americans decided to withdraw. Pakistan was among the few nations left behind until UNOSOM II was finally wrapped up in March 1995.

Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Talat Masood congratulated Dr. Yamin for producing such valuable literature on a very pertinent topic. According to Gen. Masood, the most important aspect of this book is that it has documented a highly significant contribution of Pakistan army in peace keeping operations. Another aspect of these peace keeping operations lies in the opportunity our officers

get to travel abroad and experience diversity. Their participation in peace keeping operations has brought about a better understanding about the country in these troops are operating and also helped in developing better foreign relations with host country and its people. Equally important is the opportunity of experiencing and interacting with other armies which helps in developing new skills under joint operations and to learn from each other.

Sharing her reflections on the book, Dr. Arshi Saleem congratulated Dr. Tughral for his book as a great addition to the discipline of peace and conflict studies. She said that this book has very rightly emphasized the theoretical shift that we see in peace and conflict studies, from a pure military and security driven approach towards a people centric, human development approach. The significance of military and security aspects to the situation in Somalia demands that the human aspect and social component should not be ignored, rather these need to be placed at the centre of any strategy towards peace and conflict resolution. She opined that this book raises questions on the role of United States and its policy towards smaller countries. It has provided an opportunity to critiques of US for highlighting how it has failed to handle complex situations under peace keeping missions. The book highlights coercive tactics of US which it tried to blanket under humanitarian peace keeping operations. Moreover, it had brought to limelight the difference in the relationship that US forces and Pakistan had with the people of Somalia, where Pakistan, due to religious proximity and professionalism towards peace keeping had a better understanding of people and enjoyed their support. One of the takeaways of this book is that how little the international press had covered Pakistan's efforts and contributions to UN peacekeeping missions. Another thing this book highlights is that there was no intelligence sharing between US and Pakistan on operational issues and the trust element hindered operational success. Pakistan's success in Somalia reconfirms the professionalism of Pakistan Army and its ability to develop a human connection.

Brig. (Retd.) Kamal Aziz shared a pictorial evidence of his experiences in Somalia. He said that the 7th Frontier Force Regiment was the first Battalion to land in Somalia in September 1992 for peacekeeping. Operations by the Battalion were unique in many ways. It was the only Battalion which took part in all three phases of peacekeeping operations in Somalia - UNOSOM 1, the US-led United Task Force (UNITAF) and UNOSOM 2. The UN had authorized 3500 troops for peacekeeping in Somalia. Many countries committed troops, but they went back on this

commitment. Pakistan was the first and only country to respond to the call of the UN. Normally, peacekeeping operations commence when proper political and administrative support is established by the UN in the mission Area. But in the case of Somalia, Pakistani peacekeepers were landing in a total vacuum, and therefore had to move with all their vehicles, arms and equipment, including rations and POL. On arrival, they were out of communication with GHQ for a long period of time and only relied on Second World War era Morse code communication. Both the officers and troops had insufficient idea about the organizational structure and rules of business in a UN mission Area, and had to learn on the go and learn it fast. Today, training is regularly imparted in well-structured peacekeeping courses at the Centre for International Peace and Conflict Studies at NUST and in training institutions of the Pakistan Army.

Through tactful and effective handling of the security situation, Pakistani troops soon won the trust and respect of the local population reflected in the slogans along with displays of victory signs wherever they operated. Goodwill gestures and humane behavior was the main cause of Pakistani peacekeepers popularity and security in the initial period. On the other hand, the arrogant and aggressive behavior displayed by the Americans isolated them from the Somalians.

Brig. Aziz paid tribute to all the officers, JCOs and NCOs under his command in Somalia, who displayed a very high sense of personal character, integrity and led from the front. He said that the successful tenure of duty of 7FF in Somalia was the result of team work and dedicated service of all officers, JCOs and men of the Battalion. He thanked Brig Tughral for preserving a golden chapter of his Unit's history for posterity.

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman Board of Governors ISSI congratulated Dr. Tughral Yamin for his splendid effort and also thanked the panellists for taking time out for this book launch. Ambassador Mahmood said that initially there was no mention of peacekeeping activity in the UN Charter. However, it was the necessity of peacekeeping that led to the formation and evolution of UN peacekeepers. The job of peacekeepers was to ensure a breathing space as the conflict ceased, ensure basic supplies and rehabilitation of facilities. Today, the activities of peacekeepers are very diverse and their scope now stands widened. They now not only supervise ceasefire, but also look after governance and rehabilitation. Also, initially

peacekeepers were sent with mutual consent of those involved, but now peace enforcement has led to blurring of lines which distinguished it from peacekeeping.

Today, Pakistan is one of the top contributors in terms of troops to UN peacekeeping missions. Pakistan has contributed 200,000 troops in 46 missions of peacekeeping in 28 countries. What is more, Pakistani women are also taking part in peacekeeping operations, and this is reflected in the honour given to Ms. Shahzadi Gulfam, who received the first ever UN International Peacekeeper award in 2010. Besides all the good, there are certain drawbacks to these missions. One of this major drawback is that peacekeeping missions tend to freeze the conflict as we can see in the case of Palestine and Kashmir dispute. He concluded on the note that more and more efforts should be undertaken on peace building rather than peacekeeping.