Chapter-V

Summary of Major Findings

Peacekeeping has proven to be one of the most important tools at the disposal of international community for ameliorating violent conflict. The UN Charter stated that maintaining international peace and security would be the primary responsibility of the UN and that the UN and its member states will strive collectively in accordance with the stated objectives as laid down in the UN Charter to ensure better and secure atmosphere and to root out any threat. The Security Council is the apex organ of the UN entrusted with this responsibility to oversee and initiate measures to solve conflicts through peaceful means. The fact that the record of United Nations Peacekeeping Operation is mixed, indicates UN’s inability to deal with certain kind of civil war and that there are a combinations of capability and contextual factors that can lead to the success of the UN peacekeeping mission in intra-state war.

With the end of Cold War, the once limited tasks of peacekeeping referred to as Blue Helmet operations went beyond the traditional peacekeeping operation to include expanded and large-scale operation. It became clear that peacekeepers were not limited only to the usual principles of monitoring ceasefire or peace agreement that is generally accepted by the belligerent. Instead peace operations became more robust that involved in several tasks including deterrent, protective engagement of civilians, peace-enforcer, supervising and overseeing of election and reconstruction etc. The post Cold War period, saw peacekeeping missions deal with intra-state conflict also where the host government is one of the parties in the conflict. The aim of these operations was to implement a political solution following or accompanying an end to military hostilities and establish basic state institutions.
Peace keeping missions therefore, involved monitoring of ceasefire, disarmament and demobilising, as well as creating and training of a new integrated national army or police forces, supervising or conducting national election with the aim of instalment of new government. The peacekeeping in Timor-Leste is one such example.


Reacting to the humanitarian catastrophe as a result of the intra-state war in Timor-Leste, the UN sanctioned the deployment of International Stabilisation Force (ISF). However, the violence continued. Responding to the grave situation the United Nations Secretary General through resolution S/RES/1704 of August 2006 recommended the establishment of a multi-dimensional integrated mission (UNMIT). The UNMIT was to support the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) to bring about a process of national reconciliation that gave it a multi-dimensional character.

The UN mandates was vast and aimed to reconstruct the state institutions as well as enhance their capacity to assist the government and the institutions to enhance their democratic culture, maintaining law and order, protections of human rights, facilitates humanitarian relief, to assist the GoTL in preparing the 2012 national election etc.
Unsurprisingly the fragile situation on the ground remained due to an unsecure violent environment that included gang violence and an attack on the President and the Prime Minister. As a result the UNMIT mandates was given additional tasks to strengthen the national institutions such as the justice sector, review the future role of security sector, including the Ministry of Interior, Policia Nacional de Timor-Leste (PNTL), Ministry of Defence and Falintil-Forcas de Defesa de Timor-Leste (F-FDTL) etc.

The UN objective to deploy UN mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) was meant to address the situation in Timor-Leste and the robust mandate given was crucial for UNMIT to establish perpetual peace, stability, democratic culture and facilitate political dialogue. Apart from facilitating dialogue and reconciliation between the groups engaged in the conflict. The deployment of UNMIT was in line with the request put forward by the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) to the UN.

UNMIT was successful in carrying out the mandate in supporting the Presidential and Parliament election that passed off peacefully and followed by the smooth formation of government. More than 70 per cent of the population went to the poll to vote in both the Presidential and Parliamentary election. Through a quota system women comprised 38 per cent of the parliament in 2012 election which was the highest representation in the Asia Pacific parliament.

The high voter participation and the fact that the result was widely accepted by all political actors demonstrated that United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) had been successful in bringing about considerable progress in dialogue and reconciliation. In this way the efforts made by UNMIT and Government
of Timor-Leste (GoTL) paid dividend, which ultimately saw the ushering of democratic governance in Timor-Leste.

While overseeing the election, assisting the GoTL and the Timorese electoral bodies in preparing the 2012 national election, UNMIT was able to provide public security, prevent the use of force against vulnerable groups, provided logistical support, helped in updating the voters list and in imparting training to Timorese electoral officials.

In the sphere of human rights, the Human Right and Transitional Justice Section (HRTJS) monitored and provided human rights protection especially for Internally Displace Persons (IDPs), women and children were sheltered in relief camps. The provision of human rights served as the fundamental responsibility to ensure that basic human rights are respected, promoted and supported by all groups engaged in the conflict.

UNMIT was also able to help in instituting the human right watchdog of Timor-Leste known as the Provedor for Human Rights and Justice (PDHJ). In addition, UNMIT was successful in imparting training to the national police forces on the essence of human rights protection as law enforcers. In terms of performance the PDHJ had maintained its independent and autonomy. In this regard, the PDHJ is accorded with ‘A’ status as per the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) accreditation released in May 2017. The PDHJ had consistently maintains the status since 2008 and retained the rank in 2013 during the re-accreditation.

Another important aspect was the deployment of women peacekeepers in February 2009. This step was taken in line with the UN Security Council resolution
S/RES/1325. UNMIT women peacekeepers were deployed in Internally Displaced Person’s (IDPs) camps, Vulnerable Person’s Unit (VPU) of PNTL, etc to aid Timorese officials in addressing their grievances. Together with UNMIT’s tough stance and zero tolerance on issue relating to misconduct helped in maintaining strict adherence to the UN code of conduct and discipline.

Maintaining law and order was one of the top priorities for the UN mission in Timor-Leste. The presence of UNMIT police helped in creating cordial and amicable milieu that provided conducive environment for the transportation of relief materials, essential items and speed up reconstruction work. The presence of UNPOL with an executive police mandate for the restoration and maintenance of public security was successful and in further strengthening of the national capacity for monitoring and promotion of human rights. With the restoration of law and order, and oversee the displace people returning to their home. With significant Timorese participation the UNMIT was able to contribute to the restoration of security in the country. Similarly the close relationship between UNMIT and the GoTL contributed to the success of the mission especially in the security sector. Over all UNMIT’s success can be largely attributed to the timely support of resources such as financial, troops and logistic and its ability to properly assess and respond in a timely manner to specific realities within the context of the UNMIT’s mission. The joint effort of UNMIT and the UN countries team were instrumental in providing coordinated policy, political, technical and financial support and aided Timor-Leste in accomplishing its goals.

However, UNMIT also had its share of shortcomings. Its failings cannot be attributed to the lack of resources but rather to the contextual factors and the inability to adeptly, delegate responsibilities. What was also missing in this age of information
and technology was that UN was not able to use technology as an educative tool to enable people to exercise their franchise while electing their representatives.

Similarly the UNMIT’s efforts to monitor human rights protection faced a setback during the declaration of the State of Siege from February-May in 2008. Due to the lack of local knowledge, unfamiliarity with the city etc hampered the effectiveness of the UNMIT police unit in maintaining law and order during the initial period of deployment.

The other important limitations relates to solving of un-accounted cases involving minor crimes, which were subjected to settlement within the traditional system of justice. The most serious incident that indicated failure during UNMIT period was the inability to prevent the assassination attempt of the then President Jose Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao in 2008. Finally, the UN attempts to reconstruct Timor-Leste by delegating responsibilities to the bureaucrats and soldiers who were not qualified to involve in the process of peace-building lead to a number of inadequacies, among them the failure to create internal security structures that contributed to the violence of 2006.

A unique aspect of the UNMIT was the high level of support for the UN mission, from the people of Timor-Leste. Just as the lack of opposition from the United Nations Security Council permanent members proved that the Security Council politics was not a major impediment in enforcing peacekeeping in Timor-Leste. In September 2011, the GoTL and UNMIT signed a transition plan to guide planning for UNMIT expected withdrawal by the end of 2012. The plan was first of its kind in peacekeeping that mark out the priorities and objective until UNMIT
departure. It identified 129 UNMIT’s activities to be completed by the end of December 2012.

It may be concluded that the UN was in a large measure successful when evaluated by criteria that measure humanitarian assistance, resettlement of the population, electoral assistance, building security and defence institutions in and in creating a secure environment. Beyond its border, Timor-Leste has transitioned from receiving peacekeeping assistance to contributing personnel to UN peacekeeping operation in other parts of the world.