REVIEW ARTICLE

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NATIONAL SECURITY OF BANGLADESH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Security has always been an absorbing field of inquiry and national security constitutes a mere facet of it. Notionally, security is very commonly used in day-to-day life of nation-states, as much as in international relations and strategic analysis, though its multilevel perspective is relatively more recent. The new perspectives have gained currency in the context of multilevel threat perceptions affecting state system internally and of its multifaceted human and environmental relations internationally (Ayub, 95; Alagappa, 98; Chibber, 90; Snow, 95; Shultz, 93; Klare and Thomas, 94; Kalam, 98; Job, 92; Buzan, 91). In recent years, it has indeed been almost fashionable to address security in its multilevel content and substance.

Consistent with the post-Cold War global trend discourses on security in all its dimensions and manifestations have also gained momentum in Bangladesh. Focusing on a sizeable book published by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), *National Security of Bangladesh in the Twenty-first Century* edited by Mohammad Humayun Kabir, (2000), the paper while treating the volume as a welcome addition to the wealth of knowledge

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on the subject in Bangladesh offers a critical reappraisal of the entire context of national security of the country in the light of recent perspectives and conceptual developments.

Bangladesh is known as one of the most insecure countries of the world. Hence, a security perspective of the nation's ills is indeed imperative. The book itself covers wide-ranging issue areas, including the thematic content of the country's insecurity concerns, conventional security threats, defense-development dilemma, the strategic and tactical lessons of the War of Liberation, the impacts of trade liberalisation, World Trade Organization (WTO) and external trade, energy security, political instability, proliferation of small arms and violence, poverty and social marginalisation, natural disasters and arsenic crisis.

Thematic Content

Thematically the book, in a thematic paper looks to the multilevel roots of security, tracing to the days of good governance during the rule of Ashoka (Khan, 2000: 12-13), though the ancient root seem irrelevant in the context of the Cold War perceptions, the threat of nuclear conflagration and the consequent emergence of the "realist" school of thinking. A change in the realist perspective has been ushered by the ending of the Cold War and the disintegration of the USSR. The emerging concerns included renewed commitment to co-operative relationship, dialogue and a reemphasis on interdependence, economy, balance of payments, technology transfer etc. Globally, there was an increasing reorientation towards the concept of security and a new approach needed to security planning following broadening of the concept, a linking of the "component-whole" relationship and interfacing national security with international security (Khan, 2000: 13-16).

However, such a non-traditional discourse has had little relevance for South Asia's strategic environment, either at inter-state or intra-state levels. While Bangladesh security context is identified in terms of military, political, economic, social and environmental areas of national security concerns, there is little logic shown how these may best be secured. Rather, the non-conventional reasoning gets somewhere lost between the jugglery of arguments raised over physical security, legitimate defense needs and the defense-development dichotomy (Khan, 2000: 16-19). Similarly, the example of the noticeable failure of Kuwait—with "all the attributes of a developed nation" to secure itself—does point to the necessity for a nation-state like Bangladesh, being in a comparable geopolitical predicament of maintaining traditional security vigilance against "a big neighbour's irredentist aspiration" (Khan, 2000: 19) as a very critical security determinant under difficult circumstances of geopolitics emanating from the immediate neighbourhood.

Conventional Security, Defense and Deterrence

The views on conventional security threats to Bangladesh in the first decade of the new millennium and necessary organisational and functional changes anticipated in the military forces enabling them to counteract those threats need serious rethinking. The logic concerning both the global and regional scenario of security in the age of globalisation and how the centrifugal and centripetal forces are likely to hamper Bangladesh security seem quite appropriate. The conventional security threats are listed as threats to the country's physical security emanating from two immediate neighbours, viz., India and Myanmar, though the view that a physical threat of an invasion from either of the neighbours as a "remote" possibility (Choudhury, 2000: 25) seems little agonising. For Bangladesh in its

thirty years' of existence has already faced physical threats from both the neighbours, though one may perhaps differentiate between large and relatively smaller-scales of threats. In case of India the harbouring of insurgent forces led by Kader Siddiqui in the late 1970s in particular, and those of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), even after signing of the 1996 CHT accords as well as continued political existence in that country of the mercenary groups of *Bangabhumi* set apparently to curb out a "separate homeland" in south-western districts of Bangladesh may be indicative at least of a potential, though not of an overt threat. There is an apparent reluctance to treat the un-demarcated land and maritime borders with India as a source of serious armed conflict with the latter, though the April 2001 Bangladesh-India border incidents did carry a legacy of high incidence of border violations by the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF) along the common borders. There is little effort to take into cognisance New Delhi's reluctance to implement the Liaquat-Nehru and Mujib-Indira accords (including the permanent leasing of *Tin Bigha Corridor*, although India's reluctance to implement them offers a hostility mindset. It hardly needs saying that the potential for an eruption of violence across borders with India is very high, so is the ongoing incidence of "push-in" and "push-back" game between the security forces of both the neighbouring countries involving the issue of so-called illegal migrants from Bangladesh.

The physical threat from Myanmar can hardly be ruled out either, given the recurrence of massive "push-in" of the *Rohingya* refugees, arising both from ethnic hatred and/or the political fragility of the military junta ruling that country (Choudhury, 2000: 26). What is not mentioned, however, is even the overt physical threat or of an attack, though in 1991 the Myanmar's forces did launch an attack deep inside Bangladesh. If the past behaviour of the regime offers any

indication Bangladesh cannot but remain alert about recurrence of similar attacks in future. After all, as the comparative figure of force strength given in the study offers any indication (Choudhury, 2000: 31) the potential for aggressive behaviour by the Myanmar's forces seems quite high indeed. From the political point of view, it may be right not to remain ever disenchanted from the eastern neighbour, the only "other neighbour" of the country, as there are scopes for co-operative engagement through organisation such as Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC); yet, the armed forces of the country as the guardian of the nation's border security and defense should remain in perpetual alert about any potential threat of aggression from an unpredictable regime enjoying little domestic political base of support.

As to the internal threats manifesting into insurgency and terrorism, drug and arms trafficking are mentioned as domestic insecurity concerns (Choudhury, 2000: 27-28), but critical areas such as children and women trafficking, an alarming nuisance affecting security of the people are hardly mentioned, nor does the study mention good governance as a prerequisite for national security, although the armed forces are called upon to look after even the trivial situations of civil administration such as easing of traffic jam. Most importantly, the study does not take into account the emergency roles played by the military during the period of recurring flooding and natural disasters facing the low-lying deltaic country, a role quite equivalent to any conventional/regular duty assigned to the armed forces so as to safeguard the nation.

Turning to the defense strategy of the country the study offers a curiously surprising proposition. It views that the nation's strategy has to be based on 'deterrence', meaning not "military parity with any of our neighbours," rather implying that "we have defensive

capabilities that would make an attack on Bangladesh by an aggressor militarily indecisive, economically unprofitable and politically unacceptable." The argument is carried further: "we should be able to inflict such attrition on the attacking forces that would deter them from attacking us in the first place. Of course should the deterrence fail and we go to war, we should be able to contain the enemy attack and inflict maximum damage on him" (Choudhury, 2000: 29). The line of analysis is seemingly impressive, but has little conceptual or practical relevance in the realm of military politics or strategic thinking.

Deterrence literature is now over five decades old and the doctrine of deterrence is just one of the few strategic theories that fittingly has practical relevance to inter-state politics, foreign policy and international relations. The theory of deterrence is technology based. It has developed, first of all, in a nuclear context or innovation and development of nuclear weaponry and missile system. While two South Asian powers have already gone nuclear and are engaged in the deadly game of nuclear proliferation Bangladesh, being a signatory to both the non-proliferation treaty (NPT) and the comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT), remains firmly committed not to go nuclear. Hence deterrence logic is hardly relevant to the country. Secondly, the theory contemplates arms building manoeuvre in a race equation of a competitive strategic advantage between two or more actors. A poverty-stricken country like Bangladesh can hardly afford or should at all get into a race for weapons of mass destruction. Lastly, deterrence also implies a power equation with a potential rival but also superior power status building so that a potential aggressor can be signalled about unacceptable risk of security or damage to its national interest. Given the current status or the future of its military potential one could hardly dare to suggest that Bangladesh should at all think in terms of a strategy of

deterrence when it comes to address the question of its conventional defense.

The views offered in the study on defense budget and defense decision-making are better considered, as it conceivably agrees with the need for transparency and people's participation in the issues of defense expenditures (Choudhury 2000: 30-32). The views on higher defense management, greater participation in international coalition and/or peacekeeping, a greater preparedness for the changing nature of warfare, including information warfare, the need for force upgrading and modernisation, consistent with the common principle of human resource development, recruitment of women in the military (that has already started) as future challenges for the armed forces also deserve serious rethinking (Choudhury, 2000: 32-36). However, the idea of regional co-operation in defense (Choudhury, 2000: 36) is a far-fetched affair that is inconceivable unless there is an umbrella regional security organisation offering guidelines and blueprint of action for that kind of force in a region of volatile politics where two of its major power players are already engaged in competitive power game entailing both conventional and nuclear force build up.

A serious lapse in the study is its inability to touch on aspects of command and control structure of the armed forces that has shown in recent years of being politicised and how that is likely to have ramifications on their coherence and effectiveness as a national institution of defense and security. It also failed to incorporate ideas and views appearing in contemporary literature, including those published within the defense establishments. After all this is not the only study written on an issue of critical importance to national security in the region. Stephen P. Cohen, for instance, has extensively written on conventional security concerns of both India and Pakistan

and the role of the military in both the countries. There are quotations in the study without citation, a clear violation of research norm.

Defense-development Dilemma

The defense-development dilemma highlighted by a paper in the study considers the nature of the dilemma, security environment of Bangladesh in 21st century and touches on regional/subregional and global milieu, the country's sectoral allocations in comparative perspective before drawing conclusions and offering policy recommendations. The linkage between defense expenditure and economic growth is seen tenuous at best. Structural incompatibilities between the defense sector and the civilian sector, with non-transparencies in the input-output relationship are also suggested (Khan and Barai, 2000: 55-56). Both optimistic and pessimistic options for Bangladesh in the new century are also considered, rightly re-emphasising in this context of either scenario the need for a good and standing professional army (Khan and Barai, 2000: 42-43, 49-50, 56), decrying the euphoric wish of those who tend to argue that a country like Bangladesh does not require a standing army. The external links to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) insurgency since the early years of the country's independence is also recognised, as the study mentions "a mini-explosion in the fissure when Bangladesh and India carried out a joint mopping up operation in the jungles of the CHT—India in search of northeast insurgents while Bangladesh in search of Razakars..." (Khan and Barai, 2000: 46). Concerns also remain as to how India is planning with the disgruntled segments of the Shantibahini, despite the helping hand that New Delhi offered in reaching the CHT accord.

However, the plea in the study for idle capacity utilisation, for greater peaceful use of military forces and the need for transarmament,

replacing offensive with defensive weapons (Khan and Barai, 2000: 55-56) deserve greater elucidation. For instance, it is technically quite difficult to differentiate between offensive and defensive weapons in an age of strategic versatility. At any rate, one may also question whether the policy recommendations in the study have anything to do with the analytical preview offered.

Operation Blitz and the Liberation War

The attempt to retrace the road map of the struggle against the milieu of insecurity created by the Pakistani military junta in March 1971 following the launching of the OPERATION BLITZ, as articulated in a paper, represents at least symbolically a significant effort. In this backdrop the paper also places the position of the neighbouring giant, "which was to reduce Pakistan to smaller size and strength," a politico-strategic aim that coincided quite well with the desire of the Bengali Nation to curb out a separate identity for themselves (Ibrahim, 2000: 63). The striking strategic features of the War of Liberation such as policy objective of 'a free and independent Bangladesh,' with a particular feeling of attachment and a sense of motivation is rightly viewed in the paper as "an investment" that ensured both national unity and popular participation enabling struggle of the people "on home ground." Externally, while from the rear the much-needed full support was provided by India to the aim of Bangladesh struggle, Pakistan banked on physical support from both China and the USA "that was never to come" (Ibrahim, 2000: 61-63), a point that was never placed by very many of analysts in its true comparative perspective.

Similarly, the retracing the events preceding the War of Liberation are well made, as they mentally or psychologically prepared "the nation...for it...like a "frying pan" warmed up ready

for the recipe of the pancake to be spread. Since the nation was already united, the organisers of the War of Liberation War and the Commanders did not have to spend much of their time in working for popular support" (Ibrahim, 2000: 62). The study relates the efforts that followed at the tactical level such as body bleeding by the self-sacrificing Bengali liberation fighters, damage to bridges and culverts, blow off pylons, exploding fuel stations and the like, with the objective "to make the life of the occupation forces difficult" (Ibrahim, 2000: 66).

However, readership looking for a more detailed perspective from a war veteran and powerful analyst on the organisation, command and control structure as well as strategies and tactics adopted by the *Mukti Bahini* during the Liberation War may naturally feel little disappointed. This is more so because everybody knew about inevitability of the coming struggle with the Pakistani junta, but there was no revolutionary command in place, either politically and/or organisationally when the Pakistani junta had launched its OPERATION BLITZ. It is no secret that, with the surrender of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the leader spearheading the political struggle being flown away to Pakistani custody by the junta, no strategic blueprint or action plan was at all known to be in operation, even though it was too obvious that the political dialogue carried by junta was no more than a cover up for reinforcement of Pakistani forces for the OPERATION BLITZ in the erstwhile East Pakistan.

In the current context of regional and global politics, as the study suggests, situation has been changing, while the strategic and tactical scenarios facing a nation are not static but dynamic, and they keep shifting in the changing context of time and altering scenario of international relations. The nation's image of friend and foe may be changing, too, and in an age of globalisation one has to keep in

perspective the fact that physical aggression may be out of fashion, the enemy may be more and more inclined towards indirect means; but emotionally and psychologically the nation must be prepared to make the country "a heaven for the defender" (Ibrahim, 2000: 67).

The pertinent question that arises in this context: should the country's leadership, when voted out of power and point to a popularly elected government as Taliban that deserves to be treated in the same coercive fashion by an aggressive international coalition as meted out to the erratic regime of Afghanistan whether such an apparently patriotic line of reasoning by a well-meaning analyst retains any sense or relevance?

WTO and the World Context

The reasoning covering the agenda of the World Trade Organization (WTO) that came into being in 1995 as the outcome of the 8th round of GATT, the so-called Uruguay Round is quite pertinent, however. The WTO is rightly conceptualised as "the third dimension of the World System" facilitating open market economy, free trade and the speed of globalisation. Bangladesh, though stands on the periphery of the global trading system is an early signatory and member of the WTO, and despite its 'dependency syndrome' cannot but accept the realities of the globalisation accelerated by WTO and similar global financial institutions (Islam, 2000: 108).

Outlining the salient features of GATT 1994, general agreement on trade in services (GATS) and trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) the study highlights the opportunities, challenges and pitfalls facing Bangladesh in its external trade under the aegis of bodies like WTO. It cautions against too fast speed of liberalisation that may turn Bangladesh into a candidate for 're-colonisation' or into a lucrative market for trade hunters from far and

near, being already "a hapless victim of the machinations of the World Capitalist System and the invasion of the deluge of foreign products about to capture our domestic market" (Islam, 2000: 125). In this context the study re-emphasises the point that the question of national security of Bangladesh should not be viewed only within the narrow ambit of securing territorial integrity against perceived foreign aggression, but the policies be so prioritised that the nation gets the most beneficial deals in international financial-trade bargaining. Similarly, efforts should be made to launch "gigantic investment program for human development" (Islam, 2000: 108) so that current perceived population liability may be transformed into a resource for higher development.

Energy Security

The views offered in the study on energy security highlighting the nature of energy insecurity as a notion, demand and supply situation in the country are quite illuminating (Asaduzzman, 2000: 136-142). Energy security concerns problems such as source of supply, questions of legal rights, demand and supply side and pricing. In th:s context the study discusses the biomass crisis, cr:sis arising from demand, exploration and supply of gas, oil and power, management and pricing of energy.

While the success rate in exploration of gas in Bangladesh is viewed as "one of the best in the world," offering "rays of hope in an otherwise depressing energy situation in the country" there are dark clouds due to lack of policy farsightedness and transparency in the set of business of allocation of blocks for exploration, nature of contracts or production-sharing rules. As a result there are pricing arrangements agreed by the energy mandarins in such a manner "that the country purchases its own gas with foreign exchange at a price

that she cannot sell, thus accumulating debts only to be subsidised by the national exchequer" (Asaduzzaman, 2000: 136). As to the export of gas, neighbours not excepting, the paper points out that there is no harm in having that option, keeping enough towards meeting the national demand of both energy and non-energy needs, should there be the best economic deal towards promotion of national interest (Asaduzzaman, 2000: 137). To all this there should be policy interventions based on integrated thinking how energy sources can be related to development of other economic sectors, considered pricing policy, generation of an income stream, even when gas is exhausted, being drawn to international mechanisms for activities implemented jointly (AIJ), clean development mechanisms (CDM), setting up plants on a pilot basis for generation of power using mature fuel technology etc. (Asaduzzaman, 2000: 141-142).

Having made all the commendable points on energy security one lapse in the paper is its inability to touch upon the politics and debates—national, regional and international—on the current proven and potential hydrocarbon reserves of the country before it could seriously consider export, make alternative economic uses and/or consider relevant technology transfer in the sector. This is the area that needs urgent and meticulous inquiry before the country could appropriately consider whether or not Bangladesh could indeed export its gas, should there be any surplus at all.

Stability and Security

The question of national security can hardly be completed without taking into cognisance the related political concerns of political stability. The study in a paper does consider two inter-linked issues of political instability and its security implications in the context of Bangladesh. The conceptual part defines the frontiers of

terms such as stability and security. Stability is exemplified by durability, acceptance of legitimacy, and effectiveness of government actions carried forward by effective ruling group, as against instability that is conditioned by the level and nature of aggressive political culture, of self-destructive nature causing internal civil dissension and leading to political decay (Husain, 2000: 146-147). Similarly, widespread political instability destabilises the socio-political and economic cohesion of weak countries of the Third World countries like Bangladesh, posing grave threats to their internal socio-political fabric and to the core values such as national independence and sovereignty (Husain, 2000: 147-148).

At the empirical level the paper sees the critical absence in Bangladesh of a political culture, with the level and quality of leadership that could ensure sustained growth and at the same time be conducive to stability. Rather politics in Bangladesh is viewed as "devilish," with features such as bickering, mutual abuse, intolerance, culture of boycott and hartals, money and muscle power, criminalisation and vandalism, absence of intra-party democracy, abuse of religion for political ends, lack of consensus. As a result, as the paper quite cogently argues, the internal dimension of the country's insecurity has now an edge over that of the external (Husain, 2000: 147-158). Unless the country overcomes such constraints it may fail to cope with the challenges of the new century. Up to that point the paper seem logical and rational.

The foregoing line of arguments appear absurd and blatantly partisan when in the guise of making a scientific-empirical point it cites both the Finance Minister and the Prime Minister of the erstwhile regime so as to measure the economic losses caused by *hartal* (i.e. TK 4 billion per day) (Husain, 2000: 155) one may wonder whether it kept in perspective the amount of losses caused to

the nation by the same party while in the opposition by resorting to *hartal* for a number of days incomparable in the recorded history of any country in peacetime. In similar vein, when citation is made of a presumable renunciation of *hartal* by the then Prime Minister of the Awami League government and blaming the opposition for not reciprocating or making it conditional upon a government undertaking not to create *hartal*-provoking circumstances (Husain, 2000: 155) did the author foresee that the leadership of the party would violate her promises and resort to *hartal* even under a stop-gap caretaker government, a system for which the erstwhile Prime Minister mesmerised the whole nation by going into continuous *hartals* during the period 1995-96? An apparently conceptually framed study by an eminent analyst and scholar may thus unknowingly appear to have been misplaced as a supportive tool of partisan politics in the country.

Societal Insecurity

Issues of societal insecurity are also addressed in a number of papers in the book in right earnest. Thus a paper in the study addresses the subject of societal insecurity in the context of flow of illegal proliferation of small arms and its impact on law and order, the mechanism through which such arms filter, the issue of arms-violence linkage, and it ends with some policy recommendations. The paper advances the hypothesis that societal insecurity in Bangladesh is perpetuated by an extensive flow of small arms causing recurring violence, fragility in law and order situation and in absence of rule of law. In all this it sees a triangular nexus involving "criminal underworld, corrupt police force, and power hungry politicians" (Husain, 2000: 164, 179). Worse still, it views that current arms-violence tripartite linkage is not a transient phenomenon, but may be taking a permanent shape affecting

Bangladesh economy, politics and society (Husain, 2000: 179). The paper thus projects a security destiny for the country of almost doomsday proportions. Recommendations offered in the paper for ensuring an "arms-free" society in the new century deserve some serious rethinking by all those who feel concerned about the overall insecurity concerns of people of the country.

With somewhat similar concern of societal insecurity concerns another paper offers a hypothesis that "pauperisation and/ or marginalisation is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for political instability." The processes may be potential source of instability, but they may turn real depending upon other attendant factors. Citing relevant international experiences it weighs the strength of the hypothesis in the particular context of political instability in post-independence Bangladesh, and also reflects on how to reduce the potentiality of political instability in Bangladesh (Akash, 2000: 182-92).

The paper categorises the post-independent Bangladeshi regimes into 'radical' (Mujib regime), conservative army regimes (Zia to Ershad) governed by what it calls Thatcher-Reaganite 'neo-liberalism' and apparently populist post-1990 regimes of the 'middle-of-the-road' parties (Akash, 2000: 182-83). However, the thesis of the paper becomes anti-thesis when the author fails to link the fall of the Mujib regime, despite an average trend of high growth rate, to the sharply increasing process of poverty (rural poverty reaching 73.3% during 1973-74), famine and marginalization that admittedly created a 'favourable ground' for subsequent political instability; on the contrary it blames ambitious army personnel and unfavourable international situation for the collapse of the regime (Akash, 2000: 184-85). Moreover, the author appear as an apologist of the Mujib regime as it views that it was "not even allowed to test it's policies for a reasonable period of time and, from the beginning, was under

fire from both the extreme right and extreme left wing from within the party and from without," even though he does acknowledges that the "experiences with the short-lived radical economic regime...was very pathetic" (Akash, 2000: 184-85).

Further, it totally ignores the political dimension i.e. of Communist Party Bangladesh (CPB)-inspired Moscow-type single-party Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL) authoritarian regime set up by an abandonment of the 1972 popular democratic constitution framed by the regime itself that really triggered the political crisis in mid-1975, facilitating "a bloody military coup" and an intra-party political changeover. The attendant factors here are then both economic (pauperisation) and political (a Soviet-type autocratic rule in an attempted democratic polity). It seems surprising that while in the conclusion the paper rejects authoritarianism not as "a real long-term solution to the problem of instability" (Akash, 2000: 192), analytically it turns out to be an apologist of an undemocratic, autocratic regime of the post-liberation period.

The so-called 'neo-liberal conservative army regimes' could not ensure stability either, as the paper argues, despite a significant improvement of the poverty situation. Here, however, the paper miserably fails to make the qualitative distinction between the Zia-Sattar regimes on the one hand, and the Ershad regime on the other, though the former not only restored multi-party democratic system in the country but also did indeed liberalise both political and economic systems, facilitating a broadened image of the country internationally. Ironically Ershad's autocratic take-over in 1981 overthrowing an elected government did find support among elements such as the Awami League that reincarnated itself from the ashes of the old BAKSAL and professedly were committed to democratic system of governance. One cannot be sure, without an

accurate comparable data, whether the Ershad regime had actually decreased the poverty level in the country, but one point is certain: the regime did turn the country into a beggars' bowl and internal resource mobilisation came almost to a zero level during the nine years of his autocracy. True that the post-1990 new democratic regimes could neither ensure stability, apparently because of their mutual   distrust and contradictory cultural outlook (Akash, 2000: 183-85).

Of course, as the figure provided by the paper suggests, politics itself in the country is indeed increasingly being influenced by the rich people (Akash, 2000: 188), but there are also cult allegiance and unhealthy, even corruptive and sometimes vicious family ties that may be crippling the evolution of a benign political system. However, it may just be fair to give a regime its due by a comparative perspective of the two post-1990 regimes in terms of their performance criteria. The Khaleda Zia regime of the earlier era deserved a little more credit at least for its performance in its first two years in office during which it had respite from politically-instigated violence and did mobilise the nation's internal resources to a record level, contributing to 43% of the nation's annual development program (ADP), whereas the subsequent regime of Sheikh Hasina not only failed to take it much further but by building a legacy of misgovernance, rent-seeking and extortion at its very fag end it also draw international headline in the corruption perception index (CPI) of the Berlin-based **Transparency International** (TI) the status of being the 'the most corrupt nation' in the whole world.

Environmentalism and Sustainable Resource Management

The logic of environmentalism and sustainable development gets somewhat blurred in the study when a paper on such issues develops a somewhat far-fetched conceptual framework of 14-pages combining

a multiplicity of socio-economic and cultural factors, cultural values, control over resources, economic incentives, philosophy, laws, and policies etc. The whole idea is apparently to analyse the CHT's sustainable resource management aspect as a case study, though there is little causal link established between the framework and the argument advanced. It sounds fallacious that the settlement policies of the successive governments "have invariably fuelled group-identity conflicts over availability of land resources" (Khan, 2000: 212). Rather one may argue that the settlement policies are part of the country's counter-insurgency measures and have direct links to an externally imposed insurgency, threatening the very integrity of the country. It is true that the 1996 peace accord should have at least offered some ground for enabling the concerned authorities to work towards resettlement of the tribals who chose to return and to contribute to a sustainable harmony between the two ethnic communities in the CHT, depending on what models of management of land, forest and water resources to be devised for an integrated pacification programme. However, a sustainable ethnic harmony seems still quite far.

More appropriate and relevant are the analytical perspectives offered on the issue of disaster management in the study. A paper on the issue looks backward and forward in order to offer a graphic description of the types of natural disasters that Bangladesh has to confront on a recurrent basis, the extent of damage that it has to suffer almost every year as well as of their ultimate ramifications on the national security concerns of Bangladesh. Greenhouse effect and global climate change are additional insecurity concerns for a low-lying deltaic country like Bangladesh. To overcome the adverse effects of recurrent natural disasters and the new insecurity threats the paper suggests a number of measures including appropriate

monitoring, greater vigilance by the security forces, striving for higher growth rate, food security etc. (Choudhury, 2000: 241-45). However, the needs for a national consensus, and strengthening of co-ordinated national decision-making so as to confront the recurrent dangers of natural disasters have not been emphasised.

Of still greater relevance are the succinct but brilliant thoughts offered in the study in this age of "globalisation of the environment" on the overall management of the non-conventional security threats facing Bangladesh and on the arsenic problem in particular. Bangladesh is one of the worst victims of the global environmental malignancy generated by the nature-induced and human created threats. In managing the new menace the paper particularly mentions the role being played by the state which "appears to be the greatest security threat to its own people, but the NGOs appear as "the poorer brother of the government," contrary to what is popularly believed that the NGOs are the saviours or represent the interest of the people (Chowdhury, 2000: 251, 258).

The volume editor returns towards the end to reappraise the conceptual aspects of national security, both horizontal and vertical. The various facets of the confronting security strategies of Third World countries like Bangladesh, highlighting global, regional, sub-regional and national concerns of insecurity, and identifying both military and non-military threats, emanating from within and without have also been reconsidered. At the level of security management issues such as standing military, 'nation-in-arms' concept, foreign policy as an instrument of security, neutrality, alliance formation—bilateral, regional and/or great power links, co-operative security, and finally sub-regionalism have also been touched upon. For Bangladesh the editor of the book recommends a security strategy that is "holistic

in approach and composition," combining autarkic efforts as well as assistance and co-operation from friendly neighbourhood and nations beyond (Kabir, 2000: 276). In a country that has fewer leaders who may be able to think and act with fortitude, vision and perspective such a policy prescription though well meaning seems almost a fanciful aspiration or at best represent a pious wish.

National security with its multilevel concerns and facets constitute the most burning issues confronting the humanity in the new century, and they can hardly be addressed in a single volume. Negative issue areas such as greenhouse effect and its ramifications for the country as well as issues concerning positive security such as education, gender and children development require greater scholarly attention. Yet, the volume that is focused in the paper did attempt to address it as comprehensively as possible, both conceptually and empirically. Despite some limitations the effort made in the book is superb, analysis has been quite thorough and thought provoking. Considering the quality of arguments raised as well as that of production, the price is incredibly cheap for readership interested to keep a personal volume. However, considering the multilevel security challenges and insecurity concerns facing the nation in the new millennium the specialists are well advised to keep themselves abreast and updated with newest thinking.

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