STRATEGY: A BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

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1. Framework for Analysis

Rationale

The origin of the concept of strategy may be traced back to the ancient history of Asia and Europe. The concept has traversed through well over two thousand years of chequered human history and has survived countless vicissitudes along the way. The concept, that began with the restricted meaning of ‘generalship’ or the ‘art of the general’ in war, has over time been widened beyond the realms of armed violence, politics, state, regional or global systems to include mundane concerns like business interests and trade matters. Such inordinate restriction and expansion in semantic and substantive contents has rendered the concept of strategy virtually purposeless and without much utility as an analytical tool. An attempt to give a modicum of respectability and useful meaning to the concept is in order.

Echoing with Francis Fukuyama’s controversial thesis of ‘end of history’, some strategists and security analysts tend to think that, with the end of the Cold War, strategic studies has become irrelevant and that security studies as a broader field has subsumed the narrower one of strategic studies. Such views are significant and need to be examined carefully. An attempt to this effect has been made in this chapter.

Understandably, the volume of literature on strategy, strategic thought and strategic studies developed over the millennia is literally so huge that it is almost Herculean to sift through all of it for a specific research purpose. I am tempted
to quote from one of the seminal works of Barry Buzan. In the Foreword of the book he refers to "the jungle of literature as well as ...the landscape of the subject". He elaborates the point in chapter one: "...a whole field of literature has grown up under the name 'Strategic Studies'. Paradoxically, this development has in some ways complicated rather than eased the problem raised by Carr. The literature of Strategic Studies is now so vast and so intricate that those wanting to understand it cannot easily find a place. Nor, having a start somewhere, can they know with much assurance how what they know relates to the rest of the field." Even so, it may be safely said that the literature has largely been wartime- and violence-related in scope and ethnocentric in focus. Critical omissions/commissions in the literature may be observed in terms of certain specificities relating to the national or regional political culture in the developing world, the conceptions and perceptions about nationalism and sovereignty, the stage of socio-economic development there, and the need for mobilizing the entire national resources for comprehensive well-being of the populace. There is, therefore, an academic and empirical imperative to contextualize strategy and redefine it, suiting non-Western situations. The intellectual challenge here is to attempt at a national strategy for Bangladesh and initiate a healthy national debate for academic and policy inputs.

Objectives

As such, this chapter aims at understanding the evolution of the concept of strategy and launching a discourse on the national strategy for Bangladesh, adapting to the specific political, economic, cultural and historical experiences and conditions of the country. The geo-strategic environment of Bangladesh is examined here, highlighting the country's strategic significance and vulnerabilities. The chapter goes on to examine Bangladesh's national security system and its management. A review of Bangladesh's options for securing, developing and maximizing her strategic resources is done.

here and suggestions made on the ways and means to overcome her strategic vulnerabilities.

**Methodology**

The analysis in this chapter is mainly based on review of the secondary sources of research materials. However, it also draws on occasional informal discussions over the years with scholars and practitioners in Bangladesh and abroad. The analysis has also benefited from the interactions the author has had in the course of the last many years with the Officers of the Bangladesh Military in the Military Academy, Chittagong, Defence Services Command and Staff College, Dhaka, and National Defence College, Dhaka. The epistemological bias in this study is more towards understanding things than explaining them. The analysis here follows a softer version of the neo-realist intellectual tradition. The analysis in the study is not strictly within a theoretical framework and the objective is not theory building; the approach is historical and analytical.

The key concepts used in the study are strategy, grand strategy, national strategy, geo-strategy, geo-politics, security, national security, defence policy, military strategy, deterrence, etc. Some of the questions raised in this chapter are what is the relationship between strategic studies and security studies? What is the relationship between strategy and planning? What is the difference between policy and strategy? However, the two principal research questions are do we need a non-Western approach to understand the issues of security, development, politico-socio-economic conditions, and geo-strategic environment in our part of the world? What is the usefulness of strategizing various issues and problems at the national level? It is argued in this chapter that there is indeed a need for contextualizing a different approach in non-Western conditions and that crafting a ‘new’ national strategy will better serve the cause of security and development of Bangladesh. A vigorous and creative intellectual discourse on Bangladesh’s national strategy will only be good for the state, and people - individually and collectively.
However, there are factors that impose limitations on this research. As one may feel lonely even amidst a crowd, the voluminous literature on strategy and strategic studies is rather scanty in source materials in respect of a good part of the present research needs. Another limitation is that the argument advanced in the study is bound to be controversial in both academic and policy worlds. Nonetheless, I pretend to be bold with the hope that controversy/confusion is the first step towards creativity and thus could be a building bloc.

Organization

The study is about the concept of strategy and that of the national strategy of Bangladesh, and not about strategic studies as such. Few words are in order about how the thoughts have been organized in the following pages. The chapter consists of seven sections, including this introduction. The second section deals with the concept of strategy and the history of strategic thought up to the nuclear age. The third section is devoted to the emergence and development of strategic studies in the Cold War period, while the fourth section briefly deals with the post-Cold War discourse. The need for Bangladesh national strategy is discussed in the fifth section. The parameters and objectives of the national strategy of Bangladesh are outlined in section six. Here national politics of Bangladesh, assessment of the strategic environment of the country, the strategic resources of Bangladesh, such as land, water, gas, and human resources, and the management of the national security system are also discussed. And some concluding remarks are made in the last section.

2. The Concept of Strategy and Evolution of Strategic Thought

The evolution of strategy ranges from the plan for battle to the military component of statecraft. In this section the two-and-a-half millennia-old history of the concept of strategy and strategic thought will be compressed into several pages.
2.1. Strategy: Ancient to the Modern Age

Ancient Period

The concept of strategy was not put in an articulated form in the ancient world, although strategy was in practice. As a matter of fact, the word strategy was not to be found in any of the European languages until about two hundred years ago. The word strategy is of Greek origin, having evolved from strategos and strategia. The former means a general and the latter means the art or business — literally the office — of a general or generalship. The history of strategic thought began with the isolated intellectual works in the form of war-related chronicles of some writers in China, Greece and India some two thousand five hundred years ago. The earliest of such chroniclers is thought to be Sun Tzu of China, who wrote his famous Art of War about 500 years BC. In the prosecution of war, Sun Tzu's emphasis was on 'brains rather than brawn' approach to winning it. It means avoiding engagements with the enemy in the battlefield as far as possible but nonetheless winning the war through employing other means. In other words, the idea was to rely less on raw military power and more on other means. Some of these means were: Deceive the sky to cross the ocean; Borrow another's hand to kill (Kill with a borrowed knife); Make your enemy work while you wait at leisure; Use the opportunity of fire to rob others (Loot a burning house); Display in the east and attack in the west; Create something from nothing; Knife hidden under the smiling face; Disturb the snake by hitting the grass; Defeat the enemy by capturing their chief; Remove the firewood under the cooking pot; Fish in troubled waters; Let the enemy's own spy sow discord in the enemy camp (Use double agents); etc. Clearly, the essential idea is victory without real-time battles and massive destruction of men and materiel, if necessary.


The works of classics pervade the individual and collective memory, consciousness, art and culture, values and even policies and statecraft. After the lapse of so many centuries, late Chairman Mao Tse-tung of China is said to have drawn inspiration for his revolutionary warfare from Sun Tzu's *Art of War*. In a lighter vein, in a relevant sense though, an interesting reflection of Sun Tzu's strategy may be observed in one of the films of Bruce Lee - *Enter the Dragon* - wherein he is seen to have successfully employed a strategy of 'fight without fighting' against one of his unchivalrous adversaries.

While we know Sun Tzu's *Art of War* as the oldest military manual, there are four other such manuals of later vintage in China belonging to Wu Tzu, Ssma-Fa, Chang Kou-Tse and Chang Liang. While Sun Tzu's work has been historically acclaimed far and wide, there are critical views too. These views highlight such elements in Sun Tzu's strategies as preference for plotting rebellion, scheming, deception, etc. One writer gives more value to Chang Liang's manual called *Grand Duke's Art of War*, in which he is credited with having "strong Confucian links with the ancient Chinese Classic "I Ching" (or Book of Changes) providing more effective leadership and management." However, Sun Tzu's *Art of War* has withstood the test of time and is widely studied in many military institutions around the world.

In ancient Greece and Rome, the names related to strategy are those of Xenophon, Herodotus and Thucydides. Although their works did not contain discourse on strategy, their military treatises included valuable strategic thought that often provided guide to strategy. Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War* is considered to be the first great history of war. "In this study are to be found many of the patterns and issues of international conflict that have characterized other periods since". The success of ancient Rome in preserving

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and expanding the empire made even one of our contemporaries think that the great Romans did practice strategy. Another notable name is Vegetius, whose work *The Military Institutions of the Romans* (c. AD 390), though related more to tactics than strategy, was used by commanders in the Middle Ages and even later.

Strategic thoughts are also found in the Hindu mythological epic of Mahabharata of sage Vyasa and in some other Sanskrit texts of Manu the Law Giver and the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya. Kautilya’s *Arthasastra* written between 321 and 300 BC is divided into fifteen books with one hundred and fifty chapters. It is a great work on the science of statecraft. Kautilya, a realist, makes a clear distinction between religion or morality and politics. Kautilya lived when northern India was being threatened internally due to maladministration and externally by the Greek invasion by Alexander the Great. Kautilya was thus a supporter of strong monarchy, and a stabilized strong state. *Arthasastra* deals extensively with such important topics as kingship, government, state, internal administration, *Dandaniti* (Rule of the Rod), war, peace, treaties, diplomacy and inter-state relations.

According to Kautilya, the circle of constituent elements is the basis of the six measures of foreign policy. Peace, war, staying quiet, marching, seeking shelter and dual policy constitute the six measures. Entering into a treaty is peace, Doing injury is war, Remaining indifferent is staying quiet, Augmentation of powers is marching, Submitting to another is seeking shelter, Resorting to peace with one and war with another is dual policy. These are the six measures of foreign

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policy. The Conquerer should employ the six measures of policy with due regard to his power. He should make peace with the equal and the stronger; he should make war with the weaker.10

The political and strategic ideas contained in the Laws of Manu (200 BC - 200 AD) can be divided under six heads: Divine Origin of the State, Importance of the State and Science of Politics, Administration of the State, Duties of the Ruler, Diplomacy, and Politics and Morals. According to Manu, the king should subdue his opponents by adopting four political expedients - Sama (sweet words and good gesture), Dana (gifts and bribery), Bheda (creating dissension and quarrel) and Danda (the rod of chastisement; kill, inflict pain, or application of power in order to achieve one's own objective). The king should constantly think of six measures of royal policy such as alliance, war, marching, battling, dividing the army, and seeking protection.11

The Mahabharata is the longest and greatest epic poem in Sanskrit language. Vyasa (200 BC - 200 AD), a sage and Sanskrit scholar of ancient India, is thought to be the author of this mythological text. Although mythology per se has little analytical value, the rich imagination and strategic thought in the profound text on such issues as polity and government, philosophy and the pursuit of salvation, religion and ethics, war and peace, etc. are real. It is evident from the discourse between the dying Bhishma, the great Kuru sage and warrior, and Yudhishthira, the eldest of the five Pandava brothers and King of Indraprastha and later of Hastinapur, at the end of the war at Kurukshetra, a place now in Haryana in India. How dependent Duryadhan, the Crown Prince of Hastinapur at war with his cousin Yudhishtira, was on the strategy of each of his generals, like Bhishma, Dronacharya, Karna, is only too obvious during the course of the war.12 Again the supreme

10. Ibid. pp. 34 & 36.
12. “Vyasa's Mahabharata - Shanti Parva” in Ibid., pp. 70-90; also see C Rajagopalachari, Mahabharata, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay. 1999
importance of the resolve of a general for war efforts has been forcefully driven home to Arjuna, the third of the Pandava brothers, by Lord Krishna in the Bhagwat Geeta.¹³

The concepts of strategy, strategic thought and military organization are products of the whole social system in a given era. While warfare became increasingly static and indecisive in the late medieval period, it changed fundamentally in modern times.

2.2. Early Modern Era

With fundamental change in political thought and the military revolution, the armor and influence of the knight came to a virtual end, and the military organization of the Middle Ages, in which knights had a decisive role, was doomed to disintegrate. Machiavelli is considered to have heralded the modern era in the development of political thought and cultural renaissance in the art of war. His most fundamental thesis, emphasized in all his writings like *The Prince*, *The Discorsi*, and *Art of War*, is that the military forces of a ruler or of a republic must be composed of the inhabitants of the state that the army is expected to defend. It was a revolutionary idea to have a 'national' army. He was extremely critical of the mercenaries, who he considered as dangerous and notoriously unreliable.¹⁴ Although he was criticized for his inordinate weakness for the Roman military organization and inadequate appreciation of the impact of the new economy and new weapons on warfare, Machiavelli gained prominence for his advocacy of conscription, with emphasis on training, discipline and classification. In fact, his influence spread far

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beyond the technical-military sphere. He, like Kautilya of India, developed the theory and practice of realpolitik or political realism that eventually served in the post-World War II period as the philosophical underpinning of international politics in general and strategic studies in particular.\(^{15}\)

Apart from the new political thought, the early modern era is characterized by the cultural renaissance, the recovery of the economy and emergence of merchant economy, and the development in science and technology. The discovery of gunpowder, invention of firearms and artillery, evolution of fortifications, rise of infantry, emergence of professional standing armies, etc literally constituted a military revolution. Some of the contributors of this time to strategic thought are Maurice of Nassau, Gustavus Adolphus, Raimondo Montecuccoli, Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bulow and Marshal Maurice de Saxe.\(^ {16}\)

This period also witnessed a fundamental transition from dynastic to national war. However, yet there was no single comprehensive treatise for the purpose of study or for the benefit of generals. There was no guide for strategy except the military leader’s own ingenuity. Marshall de Saxe aptly sums up the situation of the time as he says: “All sciences have principles and rules. War has none.”\(^ {17}\) The modern era in terms of conceptualization of strategy and strategic thought actually begins with the radical changes in warfare accompanying the French revolutionary wars in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century and the Napoleonic wars in the beginning of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century.


2.3. Modern Era

A good number of strategists – land, air and naval – have made their names in this period. They are Clausewitz, Jomini, Moltke, Schlieffen, Delbruck, Suvorov, Bugeaud, Gallieni, Lyautey, Du Picq and Foch, Julian Corbett and Raoul Castex, Alfred Mahan, Henry wager Halleck, R.E. Lee, U.S. Grant, W.T. Sherman, J.F.C. Fuller, Giulio Douhet, B.H. Liddell-Hart, Halford J. Mackinder, and Charles de Gaulle. But the most distinguished of them all are Clausewitz, Jomini, Mahan, Douhet Liddell-Hart, and Mackinder, as they stand out even in the galaxy of strategic thinkers and practitioners. Few words on some of them are in order here.

Antoine-Henri, Baron de Jomini (Summary of the Art of War, 1838): Jomini was the chief interpreter of Napoleonic wars and strategy. He defines strategy as the “art of making war upon the map, and comprehends the whole theatre of operations.... Strategy decides where to act; logistics brings the troops to this point; grand tactics decides the manner of execution and the employment of the troops.” “At the heart of Jomini’s strategic writing is the still valid precept that the military strategist must seek to bring the maximum possible force to bear against the decisive point in the theatre of operations, while assuring that the enemy can muster only an inferior part of his strength there. The bulk of Jomini’s strategic discussion seeks to explain how to accomplish this goal. The decisive point must be chosen; it might be the enemy’s flank, with an opening toward his line of retreat, or it might be a vulnerable centre the breaking of which would expose the enemy’s divided forces to defeat in detail”. Jomini would employ a series of diagrams to demonstrate geographically the various choices of lines of operation. Such conception has given rise to a perception of geometric aspect of his strategic thought.


19. Ibid., p. 60.
Jomini exalted the doctrine of the offensive. He states, "strategy is the key to warfare; that all strategy is controlled by invariable scientific principles; and that these principles prescribe offensive action to mass forces against weaker enemy forces at some decisive point if strategy is to lead to victory". Jomini is also famous for having coined the phrase "methods change but principles are unchanging". Although he has at times been understood/misunderstood to have simplified the concept of strategy, Jomini had far greater influence than Clausewitz, as the former lived much longer, wrote and published in lucid and more accessible French during his life time, unlike the latter's works in forbidding German published after his death.

**Karl von Clausewitz (On War, 1832):** Clausewitz (1780-1831), an interpreter of the Napoleonic wars, is considered to be the greatest of all the land strategists. He, together with Jomini, contributed most to the founding of the modern concept of strategy. Clausewitz defines one political and two military levels of war. He distinguishes between two military levels of war: strategic and tactical. He writes, "tactics teaches the use of armed forces in the engagement; strategy, the use of engagements for the object of war". According to him, fighting forces trained for combat are the "means" and victory is the desired "end". On the strategic level, the "end" of the tactical level (victories) becomes the "means". The "end" on the strategic level is concerned with the war itself and the "ends" may be those objectives that should lead directly to peace. In the sense of Clausewitz, peace is more likely to be an issue of the political level than of the strategic. As such, Clausewitz states that "War is merely the continuation of policy by other means". In this way he puts the responsibility for war itself on the political plane; he defines it expressly as an instrument of policy, as an act of force "to compel our enemy to do our will; hence war becomes the "means of the political level".

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Clearly, Clausewitz was a philosophical writer, primarily concerned not with guiding action but with understanding the nature of war. Jomini, in contrast, offered specific, practical advice for the working military leader. A basic Clausewitz thesis was the importance of destroying the enemy’s armed forces, a process distinct from capturing portions of his territory or cities or fortresses.

Clausewitz is often considered an adherent of total annihilation of the enemy, while Sun Tzu is not. It will then be interesting to compare the two. They have their differences and similarities. The disagreements pertain to the value of intelligence, the utility of deception, the feasibility of surprise attack, and the possibility of forecasting and controlling the course of events on the battlefields. As regards the quality of a military commander, Sun Tzu relies primarily on his skill in making calculated, rational choices, while Clausewitz considers the commander’s artistic intuition to be the critical factor. They also hold similar views on the primacy of politics in war; the need to preserve the professional autonomy of the military in action; the overall importance of numerical superiority; and the folly of not securing victory as rapidly and decisively as possible once war has become inevitable.

Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan: Mahan is often considered as the naval Jomini, as he brought to naval strategy an emphasis on decisive points, lines of communication, and the value of interior lines. Certain geographic points, according to Mahan, are decisive for naval strategy on a global scale, as they command the interior lines of communication for the whole world. The examples are Suez, Panama, Aden, Singapore, etc. Mahan championed the


concept of “command of the sea”. He said: one who controls the seas, controls the world. In attaining this he was more than a Jominian strategist. Having been influenced by the experiences of the American Civil War, he emphasized the destruction of the enemy’s armed forces as the first objective of strategy and massive battle as means of attaining such destruction. Mahan, unlike the French approach, rejected commerce-raiding naval warfare. According to him, in war, the strategic purpose of the battle fleet was to engage and destroy the enemy’s battle fleet thereby gain command of the seas, and from that command all the benefits of sea power would flow.

Giulio Douhet (The Command of the Air, 1921): He attempted to apply Mahan’s concept of command of the sea to air fighting. His strategy was that attack aircraft would take the war directly to the enemy’s vital centres and destroy his industries and economy; by “strategic bombing” the will of the enemy to fight would be destroyed and thus air power could force a peace.

Basil H. Liddell-Hart: He defines strategy as the art of allocating and employing military means in such a way that the ends of policy are achieved. He distinguishes strategy from grand strategy, which he understands to be a kind of policy of execution. Liddell-Hart assigns the term grand strategy to the political aim, and the term strategy to the military aim. His strategy of the indirect approach was meant to deprive the enemy of his freedom of action by deception, by a manœuvre, or by the application of strong psychological pressure but without direct violent conflict. More about grand strategy will be discussed later on.


Halford John Mackinder: Although a polymath, Mackinder is best known for his strategic thought encapsulated in the heartland theory, three versions of which were published in 1904, 1919 and 1943. He wrote: "The heartland for the purposes of strategical thinking includes the Baltic Sea, the navigable Middle and Lower Danube, the Black Sea, Asia Minor, Armenia, Persia, Tibet and Mongolia. Within it, therefore, were Brandenburg-Prussia, and Austria-Hungary as well as Russia – a vast triple base of manpower, which was lacking to the horse-riders of history. The heartland is the region to which, under modern conditions, sea power can be refused access"...."Who rules East Europe controls the heartland; Who rules the heartland commands the World-Island; Who rules the World-Island commands the World".

While Admiral Mahan's stress was on the importance of the sea power for the security of the world's great maritime states, particularly for his native America, Mackinder, a Briton, sought to interpret world history on the basis of geopolitical thinking. His contention was that the underlying theme running through world history was the conflict between land power and sea power, and the ultimate center of power, according to him, lay in the Heartland. Mackinder saw threats to the dominance of the maritime powers. As such, he proposed that it was up to the maritime states, led by the British Empire, to ensure that this nightmare scenario was never allowed to become a reality. Although some other


political geographers, including Karl Haushöfer, later on produced various versions of the Heartland theory and adapted them in different contexts. Spykman contended that the real centers of world power lay not in the Heartland but in a great belt around the periphery of Eurasia called the 'Rimland'. In the days of Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles and other high-tech weapons and delivery systems available, the validity of the Heartland theory has come under scrutiny.

What is clear from the preceding discussion is that, while the history of strategic thought is pretty long, the concept of strategy began to be defined only in the beginning of the 19th century. The definitions relate to external, armed conflicts. Clausewitz brings politics into the discussion on war but his definition of strategy still centres on war. We have also observed not only the impact of changes in the social system but also that of science and technology on warfare and strategic thought. Nuclearization of the world in 1945 fundamentally changed the world and revolutionized strategic thought. Details follow.

3. Post-Nuclear Era: Emergence of Strategic Studies

Atomic bomb heralded the beginning of an era of extremely rapid and costly technological development. Atomic bomb is considered to be the midwife of strategic studies, while its emergence was due to the convergence of the nuclear revolution and the Cold War. However, strategic studies had gained maturity only in the late 1950s. Several changes took place during this time – (i) Following World War II strategy extended beyond history to social science and also to the hard science of Mathematics, Physics, and Engineering. (ii) Unlike the pre-war time, when strategic thought was almost entirely a branch of military thought, strategic thought became increasingly an activity of civilians - scientists as advisors to military commanders and heads of government and others in academic pursuit. (iii) Strategic thought gave priority to the

formulation of strategies of deterrence because any nuclear exchange would mean annihilation of civilizations. “The study of nuclear strategy is therefore the study of the nonuse of these weapons.” Because of the advent of nuclear weapons, the study of strategy has developed a strong emphasis on the instruments of force themselves, on the use of threats, and on the problem of how to prevent the use of nuclear weapons. And the main concepts of strategic studies are arms racing, nuclear proliferation, defence, deterrence, arms control, disarmament, etc.

Strategic studies is concerned with understanding and explaining the military dimension of international relations. A somewhat similar definition of strategic studies was given by Halle. He writes that strategic studies is “the branch of political studies concerned with the political implications of the war-making capacity available to nations”. Strategic studies helped to channel superpower competition from outright war to more benign forms of competition, towards peaceful coexistence. Strategic studies developed theories, policies, and operations that reduced the risk of war.


Let us now briefly discuss the growth of academic strategic studies. This history may be divided into three temporal spans: early strategic studies, from the first atomic bomb to the 'massive retaliation' debate (1945-1955); the period of high strategic theory (1956-1985) when the subject claimed to have become a sub-field within International Relations; and the period of late strategic studies, defined by the Gorbachev era (1985-1991).

**Strategic Studies - Phase I, 1945-1955:** Two seminal works were produced during this period by two eminent strategists. Brodie’s book *The Absolute Weapon* lay the foundation of the theory of nuclear deterrence. Freedman deftly dealt in his book with the concepts of offence and defence, deterrence, aggression, massive retaliation, limited war, surprise attack, arms racing, etc.

This period heralded the beginning of the Cold War between the power blocs led by the United States, on the one hand, and the Soviet Union, on the other. The United States used Mackinder’s Heartland theory as a geopolitical underpinning in its ideological confrontation with and policy of containment of the Soviet Union. George Kennan’s containment theory helped define the U.S. Cold War strategy for keeping the Soviet Union within the heartland. Kennan wrote about the Soviet Union in 1947, first in a telegraphic message from Moscow to Washington and then in *Foreign Affairs* journal: “...In these circumstances it is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.”

President Harry S. Truman’s declaration, eventually known as

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the Truman Doctrine, outlined the U.S. foreign policy strategy of containment as a way to inhibit the Soviet Union's perceived expansionist ambitions and global designs. It also led the United States to recruit allies to support it in pursuit of this goal.43 The Containment Doctrine exerted much influence on strategic studies during the Cold War. Some other worldviews based on the geography of economic development also existed that manifested themselves through such expressions as 'North' and 'South', 'world centre' and 'world periphery'44 but these were not of particular relevance to strategic studies of the time.

Strategic Studies – Phase II, 1956-1985: This period has been labelled as one of 'high strategic theory' because of being extremely creative in terms of policy concerns and conceptual development of strategy and strategic studies. During this period, the framework of contemporary, mainly nuclear, strategy was set out in a number of books, articles and reports. These path-breaking works established the strategic agenda for the next thirty years. Garnett labelled the decade of 1955-1965 as the 'golden age' of strategic studies that was characterized by theoretical development in nuclear deterrence, arms control, crisis management and limited war.45 The main U.S. writers of this period were - William Kaufmann, Henry Kissinger, Albert Wohlsletter, Bernard Brodie, Herman Kahn, Thomas Schelling, Glenn Snyder, Morton Helperin, and Klaus Knorr. The names of Alistair Buchan, Hedley Bull, and Michael Howard in the U.K. and those of Raymond Aron, Andre Beaufre and Pierre Gallois in France are most notable. While some latter-day British writers


contributed to the development of strategic studies as an academic pursuit rather than as a policy science, the American 'strategic community' situated between education and policy-making was an enthusiastic source of strategic advice to the U.S. policy makers.\textsuperscript{46}

While this period has been almost totally ethnocentric, there were a few revolutionary theorists in some parts of the developing world, namely, Mao Tse-tung, Che Guevara, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Regis Debray.\textsuperscript{47} From the perspective of the mainstream strategic studies, the preoccupation was, of course, on how to counter revolutionary insurgency.\textsuperscript{48}

It may be mentioned that the emphasis on strategic studies waned during the détente between NATO and Warsaw Pact but waxed again with the renewed tensions between the power blocs in the early 1980s. The agenda of strategic issues of the early 1980s was set by the 'strategic fundamentals' of the Reagan administration in the U.S.A.\textsuperscript{49} While debates continued on issues such as limited nuclear war, nuclear winter, ballistic missile defence, nuclear blackmail, etc., there emerged a group of 'alternative' security thinkers. Some of them are Afdeldt, Forsberg, Kaldor and Palme, who brought

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ken Booth and Eric Herring, \textit{Keyguide to Information Sources in Strategic Studies}, Mansell Publishing Limited, New York, 1994, pp. 8-9.
\end{itemize}
out the ideas of common security, non-offensive defence, nuclear freeze, military confidence-building, democracy and disarmament, détente from below, alternative security orders, etc.  

Strategic studies as an intellectual enterprise became institutionalized and professionalized during the second phase. Courses on strategic studies have been introduced in relevant university departments like Political Science, History and International Relations, institutes and research centres established, professional associations floated, even government-funded research organizations set up for strategic studies and policy advice. However, while strategic studies claims to have become a sub-field of International Relations, it remains debatable whether it is an independent academic discipline in its own right.

Views that strategic studies is not a full-fledged academic discipline are pretty forceful. There are strong arguments that strategic studies cannot be regarded as a discipline in its own right. While it has a sharp focus on the role of military power, its parameters are diffused because of its reliance for ideas and concepts on very many other disciplines and fields of inquiry across intellectual traditions. Strategic studies is a

how to do it' study, which is an intellectual aid to official performance and thus policy relevant. In deed, it was the salience of the policy issues rather than intellectual curiosity that led to the growth of strategic studies. Nuclear weapons, the Cold War and arms race created the conditions for the development of the subject. Strategic studies began outside the universities and it is obsessed with conflict and force, insufficiently concerned with ethical issues, not scholarly in their approach, part of the problem and not solution, and state-centric. Shifting policy needs made it difficult to establish the academic study of strategy in universities. Tensions inevitably exist between the academic and policy worlds with their different responsibilities. Strategic reality is wide-ranging and inter-disciplinary and does not fit neatly into the narrow focus of most university departments. Strategic studies does not have its own methodology, and its academic traditions are short. It is not clear whether it should have a philosophical or scientific approach and whether the purpose of education in strategic studies should be empirical or normative. Strategic studies, with its focus on individual actors and the importance of deliberate political choice, poses problems for the social sciences, which emphasize wider patterns of behaviour and the limited opportunities for achieving change. Strategic studies can be seen as an intellectual approach to specific problems rather than a distinct field of study.  

The above paragraph reflects many of the views of critical researchers expressed in reaction to the theories, ideas and concepts of the golden age. Critical reaction came from the developing field of peace research. The golden age strategists were criticized for their faulty methodology (it was alleged to be pseudo-scientific), their limited understanding of the real world of politics (strategic 'realism' was said to offer an oversimplified view of actual political reality), their unscholarly conduct (academic integrity was said not to be

compatible with consultancy fees from governments and defence contractors, and semi-official status, their moral standpoint (strategists were criticized for generally leaving ethical questions out of account), and their ingrained ethnocentrism. Two names in the field of peace research in this respect stand out – Kenneth Boulding and Johan Galtung. The two other critical authors, who were not from the field of peace research, were Anatol Rapoport and Philip Green.

**Strategic Studies – Phase III, 1985-1991:** These were the Gorbachev years of new thinking resulting in the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of communism in eastern and central Europe and the eventual disintegration of the Soviet Union itself. Strategic studies came to a crossroads, prompting some scholars to dub the mid-1980s as its postmodernist moment. However, while they debated the boundaries of strategic studies in the unfolding scenario, the neorealists continued in their convictions in modified modernist principles. This is reflected in the works in the late 1980s of Barry Buzan like *People, States & Fear* and *An Introduction to Strategic Studies*. Some of the other scholars of the time are Gray, Clark, Lutwak, Mueller, Luard, Van Evera, Hyde-Price, McInnes and Pugh. And strategy continued to be defined in such terms: "...Regardless of temporal context,


effective strategy is always a calculated employment of force and statecraft for a political end...". Nevertheless, the momentous changes in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the central balance of power and the consequent newer sources and nature of threats have spawned intense debate, particularly in the non-western world, about the utility of strategic studies, its relationship with security studies, and the need for a well-thought-out national strategy.

4. Post-Cold War Discourse: End of Strategic Studies?

With the end of the Cold War and dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (1989 1991), the concept of strategy understood in conventional terms and hence strategic studies seem anachronistic. Suffice it to recall how Gray defined strategy: "Strategy is the application of military power to achieve political objectives, or more specifically, the theory and practice of the use, and threat of use, of organized force for political purposes". The post-Cold War realities have largely invalidated such a military- and force-oriented concept, President Bush's invasion and occupation of Iraq in April 2003 notwithstanding. Although force and military power remains an important instrument in international politics, world public opinion is vehemently against it and its application has considerably declined. Many of the theories, concepts and approaches related to the military dimension of world politics seem to have lost much of their relevance.

Some in the West were so euphoric in the late 1980s and early 1990s that they thought that human history had run its course and come to its end. Francis Fukuyama with his 'end of history' thesis created quite a stir. As he saw the Berlin Wall crumble, the East European communism collapse, and the Soviet Union disintegrate, he wrote: What we may be witnessing is just not the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of


history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.\(^6\) The subsequent human history, however, did not bear Fukuyama out.

Fukuyama's thesis was countered by Samuel Huntington's prediction that world politics would enter a new phase of conflict, with future "battle lines" coinciding with civilization lines in the world. This Huntingtonian thesis of 'clash of civilizations' provoked a debate not only among scholars but also among policy analysts. Ajami, for example, is of the view that states are and will remain primary, and that national interests, not civilizational ones, will prevail. Another critical view is that no other culture can offer a model of life and living that can rival Western model. However, Huntington remains convinced that his thesis reflects the obtaining realities in the world and that his critics could not offer better ideas to explain these realities.\(^6\) Again, such theses do not deal with the concept of strategy, but these do provide an understanding of the existing international environment.

In the western context, strategic studies has had a narrower focus than security studies,\(^6\) although not all of the


\(^{62}\) It is evident from an authoritative definition of security given by Harold Brown, a U.S. Secretary of Defence under the Reagan Administration in the 1980s. He writes, "National security...is the ability to preserve the nation's [meaning U.S] physical integrity and territory; to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms; to protect its nature, institutions, and governance from disruption from outside; and to control its borders". See Harold Brown, Thinking About
strategic community agree to this. An organic element in the relationship between strategic studies and security studies is that "security has always been the transcendent value in strategic studies". It is thus possible that strategic studies, under a less glamorous name and with necessary conceptual and methodological adaptation, may now be subsumed within the sub-field of security studies under the broader discipline of International Relations.

In any case, there has been little strategic studies in literal sense in most of the countries of the developing world, including Bangladesh, notwithstanding the establishment in Dhaka of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) about 25 years ago. First, strategic studies is not appropriate in the context of Bangladesh, viewed and understood in the light of the preceding exposition. Second, there is no strategic culture in Bangladesh in the sense that civilian strategists, as well as military ones, will provide inputs to the policy makers of the country on the military dimension of national policy. And third, there is no easy acceptance of strategic studies even to the country’s political elite and intelligentsia, let alone the wider informed public. It is even much less popular and hence not taught (except merely as a paper in the department of International Relations of Dhaka University) in the institutions of higher learning in the country. Even the pretensions of BIISS, which is actually a government-funded organization under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, about strategic studies are not particularly successful owing to the lack of appreciation of such intellectual exercise in the


country's socio-political context. What is more urgent and even essential for Bangladesh is security studies in a more comprehensive sense, in the overall perspective of the country's national strategy. Let us now turn to the question of national strategy of Bangladesh.

5. National Strategy of Bangladesh: The Need

While strategy is ancient, strategic studies is only about two generations old. Strategy is commonsensical, instinctive and enduring, strategic studies is time-bound. Strategic studies is amenable to change in spatial and temporal terms. Aron has aptly said, "Strategic thought draws its inspiration each century, or rather at each moment in history, from the problems which events themselves pose". Let us then go back to the basics in terms of revisiting strategy, grand strategy and national strategy, and then relate it to the case of Bangladesh.

5.1. Concepts

Strategy: Strategy generally means drawing up a plan and carrying it out, employing resources in a coordinated manner for fulfilling certain objectives. Strategy implies conscious manipulation of the environment for predetermined ends. It is thus means-oriented, purposive, manipulative, systematic and political. O'Neill puts it thus: Strategy is basically an optimizing exercise in an end-means relationship in which the salience of objectives and direction of resources


are preponderant. At the highest, that is, political level, national strategy deals directly with the creation, management, and orchestration of all the policy tools at the statesman's command. National strategy integrates various national interests and relates these interests to the nation's capabilities to protect and enhance them.

There are three relationships that are critical to national strategy and their trade-offs. The first relationship is between ends and means, that is, objectives and capabilities. The second is between interests and threats. And the last is the relationship between risks and costs. National strategy is multi-dimensional (political, economic, military, etc), multi-layered (at national, regional and global levels), and both horizontal and vertical. It is generally long-term, warranting occasional reassessment and re-evaluation of interests, goals, resources, domestic and international contexts, and strategic options. Notably, flexibility must somehow be reconciled with the constancy of purpose needed to bring any strategic enterprise to fruition. The key questions are: how resources are to be used to achieve established objectives and what mix of policy instruments can be made available to do the job, and how should they be applied?

Now, how is strategy related to policy? The primacy of policy determines the relationship between the two. The goals of strategy are determined by policy. Policy also determines the measure of the means necessary and the methods to be

applied. Kissinger has written elaborately on policy and strategy. According to him, strategy is based on the idea that policy is the art of leadership of a statesman in looking after the interests of a nation. He links policy and strategy by the demand that strategic doctrine must translate power into policy. Policy and strategy must be linked by the identity of wills: a disparity in the goals of the two is dangerous. Kissinger maintains, “the separation of strategy from policy can only be achieved to the detriment of both”. He, however, says that structurally and functionally policy has primacy.

Grand Strategy: Hart defined grand strategy as something that involves the coordination of “all the resources of a nation or a band of nations, towards the attainment of the political objectives”. There is a narrow meaning of grand strategy. According to this, grand strategy “specifies only the threats to a state and the military means to deal with them”. A bit broader view is that it “specifies the threats to a nation’s security and then details the military, political and economic means to meet them”. There is still a much broader view. It is “the art and science of developing and using the political, economic, and psychological powers of a nation, together with its armed forces, during peace and war, to secure national objectives.” The British refer to this as ‘grand strategy’, while the Americans call it ‘national strategy’. Indeed, grand strategy is something systemic; the prevention or promotion


73. For details see Henry A. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, Harper & Row, New York, 1957.


by a global or great power of something at the international systemic level. For example, during the Cold War the United States had containment of communism and Soviet power as its grand strategy. Currently it could be achieving the status of preponderant hegemony in the world, promotion of market democracy and human rights, and fighting international terrorism. Since a small country does not require the luxury of having a grand strategy, it is only appropriate for Bangladesh to design and implement a national strategy in the broadest sense for its survival, security and development.

5.2. The Need for National Strategy

Needless to say, Bangladesh is a developing country with myriad strategic challenges and opportunities that impinge on the country's survival, security and development. Under united Pakistan, East Pakistan suffered politically, economically, culturally, and psychologically. As the country was ruled for most part by military and authoritarian regimes, political socialization hardly took place and democratic governance, democratic political culture and practices could not flourish. The picture in Bangladesh since its hard-earned independence in 1971 is only marginally different. However, Bangladesh has made important strides forward in several fields of national life. But a lot of ground is yet to be covered in order to take off to a sustainable level of development and in terms of good governance. For this to happen, Bangladesh needs to get its act together in terms of governance, economic management, resource management, security and foreign policy. Since many countries in the neighbourhood have surged ahead, further delay in improving the lot of the common man in the country is fraught with danger, and there is a need to lift the status of the country to a respectable position, it has now become imperative for Bangladesh to telescope the timeline usually required for national development. In other words, the country needs to develop in a comprehensive manner fast and well. A well-formulated national strategy could greatly contribute to this end.

**Why strategize everything?** First is the general purpose of linking everything to the fundamental issue of survival,
security and development. Second is that this would help policy makers look at issues and problems from a national perspective. Third, national strategy creates linkages between and within government departments, and even between government and private sectors. Fourth, it provides a single framework for an integrated view of interests, issues and capabilities of the nation. Fifth, national strategy gives direction to optimization of national resources. Sixth, it helps avoid duplication of efforts and wastage of resources, and thus economizes. And seventh, national strategy makes the tasks of the government or the statesman a lot more goal-oriented, easier and simpler. The differences between national strategy and national planning thus need no further illustration. Let us now turn to the parameters of national strategy.


National strategy of Bangladesh should be an overarching plan of action. It should include everything that is dictated by national interests, national objectives and national policy. These interests and objectives need to be related to the country’s socio-economic-cultural development, good governance in all its facets and dimensions, national security, foreign policy, etc. National strategy will thus have sectoral strategies like national political strategy, national economic strategy, national security strategy, national foreign policy strategy, and national military strategy. All these will be designed to attain their respective national policy objectives. National policy guidelines are usually found in the country’s Basic Law, that is the Constitution, in the Declarations, Proclamations and Speeches of the Head of State or Government inside or outside the National Parliament, in the Party Manifesto of the ruling party or an alliance of like-minded parties, in the specific decisions of the Cabinet and Parliament, etc. National strategy may be formulated through a bottom-up or top-bottom process. The current practice is in its most rudimentary form. Hence, the process needs to be streamlined and institutionalized in order to be efficient and effective. The idea here is not to discuss everything related to Bangladesh’s national strategy but focus on a few thrust
areas only. These are: politics in Bangladesh; strategic resources of Bangladesh, and national security system in Bangladesh. A brief discussion will now follow on each of these issues. But first let us have a discussion on the geo-strategic environment of Bangladesh, in which it operates.

6.1. Geo-Strategic Environment of Bangladesh: Threats and Vulnerabilities

The point of departure here is that geo-politics is still valid in the age of ubiquitous globalization and information and communication technology (ICT).\(^7\) The analysis here is at two levels - regional and global.

The most significant is the ‘India factor’ for Bangladesh’s security. India’s size and power, its regional policy, outstanding bilateral issues of Dhaka with New Delhi, India’s capability and propensity to penetrate into the internal domain of Bangladesh, its relations with Washington and Beijing are factors to be reckoned with. Located right in the centre of the region, India is by far the largest country in South Asia with suspect regional political and security inclinations. Bangladesh is surrounded by India on three sides - west, north and east. Bangladesh’s maritime outlet through the Bay of Bengal in the south could be choked by Indian navy at times of crisis. India is thought to have the wherewithal to internally destabilize Bangladesh, while it has earned itself a negative image in view of its perceived preference for a particular regime in the smaller neighbour, although there are hopes that New Delhi may be more pragmatic in the years to come.

For most of the period since its independence in 1947, India has been making attempts to be hegemonic in attitude and policy towards its South Asian neighbours. India's attempts to transform its pre-eminence into pre-dominance, often threatened to be imposed if not voluntarily accepted by neighbours. Suffice it to recall here the India Doctrine that was enunciated by Bhabani Sen Gupta, and not contradicted by the government of Indira Gandhi, in the backdrop of the outbreak of Sinhala-Tamil ethnic violence in July-August 1983. Some excerpts from the Doctrine are in order. "India has no intention of intervening in internal conflicts of a South Asian country and it strongly opposes intervention by any country in the internal affairs of any other. India will not tolerate external intervention in a conflict situation in any South Asian country if the intervention has any implicit or explicit anti-Indian implication. No South Asian government must therefore ask for external military assistance with an anti-Indian bias from any country. If a South Asian country genuinely needs external help to deal with a serious internal conflict situation or with an intolerable threat to a government legitimately established, it should ask help from a number of neighbouring countries including India. The exclusion of India from such a contingency will be considered to be an anti-Indian move on the part of the Government concerned". 78 Implications of this Doctrine for both domestic and foreign policies of the neighbours of India, including those of Bangladesh, are only too obvious. A lot has been written on this Doctrine. 79

India was seen to have applied her doctrine in the cases of Sri Lanka in 1983 and 1987, and the Maldives in 1988. Bhutan and Nepal are already bound to India by their treaty obligations since 1949 and 1950 respectively in respect of


their security and foreign policies. India’s regional security policy is based on its assumptions that South Asia is a single strategic and civilizational unit; her neighbours are integral to it. The Indian policy objective is to establish that India is the custodian of the region’s security and that its neighbours are just to fall in line. The rise of fundamentalist, militant Hindu nationalism in India is a cause of concern in the rest of South Asia, particularly in Bangladesh for ethnic, religious and security reasons. The Sangh Parivar, including its BJP component (Bharatiya Janata Party – currently the leader of the ruling coalition in India), is known for its politically hawkish, militant and hegemonic statements and pronouncements not only with respect to India’s religious minorities but also in regard to her regional policy that purports to restore Akhand Bharat (‘undivided India’) covering most of South Asia on the basis of Hindu civilization. There are ideologues and leaders in the top echelons of the society with a large cadre-based following throughout the length and breadth of the country.

The foreign policy stalwarts in the BJP coalition explicitly recognize the significance of military and economic prowess as elements of national power; they are not inhibited about the use of force and are not concerned about upholding multilateral norms when it comes to India’s perceived vital interests. Obviously, Bangladesh is vulnerable to the designs and aspirations of such forces in the neighbouring giant. The power elite and the people at large in Bangladesh need to comprehend the short-term and long-term impact of such


81. For some of the significant intellectual works relevant to India’s foreign and security policies see, Girilal Jain, The Hindu Phenomenon, UBSPD, New Delhi, 1994; Jaswant Singh, Defending India, Macmillan, London, 1999. For an excellent work by a European author on Hindu nationalist movement see, Christophe Jaffrelot, The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics, 1925 to the 1990s, Penguin Books India (P) Ltd, New Delhi, 1999.
developments in India and formulate security-related policy and strategy accordingly. As one of the reactions against the rise of Hindutva ideology might be a corresponding increase in the extremist forces in Bangladesh, the government and civil society in Bangladesh need to keep a watchful eye on such foreboding developments undermining national security.

Insurgency has been going on for decades in several of India’s northeastern seven sisters (seven states). Bangladesh also had fought an insurgency in its Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) till the government signed a peace accord with the rebels in 1996. Three points are relevant here to our theme of discussion. (i) With the insurgency in India’s northeast, Bangladesh-India border cannot remain peaceful and stable. (ii) Bangladesh’s CHT is contiguous with India’s seven sisters. And they all are of the same Mongoloid racial stock, with natural kinship and affinity. (iii) And it should not be erased from Bangladesh’s collective memory that the CHT rebels were given political support, sanctuary, arms and training by India. Indeed, Bangladesh needs to keep in mind these geo-political realities in its immediate neighbourhood.

Another related issue here is New Delhi’s quest for transit facilities through Bangladesh territory to India’s northeastern states. Some in Bangladesh see it strictly as an economic opportunity that would arguably accrue benefits to Bangladesh and hence support it. There are many others who vehemently oppose it. For example, Talukder Maniruzzaman is of the view that Bangladesh will lose its sovereignty if it grants transit facilities to India, that India in that case will eventually gobble up Bangladesh and that Bangladesh should not be misled by Delhi’s promises. However, there are the

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83. (All in Bengali) Shaptahik Rashtra, 8 January 1997; The Dainik Manabjamun, 1 August 1999; Dainik Sangram, 6 August 1999 – all compiled in Talukder Maniruzzaman, Bangladesher Rajniete: Sangkat o
middle-of-the-roaders. According to this view, "Transit in the broad sense should be highly beneficial for both Bangladesh and India. The degree of benefit accruing to each other would, however, depend upon several factors such as unilateral transit or multilateral transit, whose vehicles would be used, modes of transport, i.e., whether the transit traffic will be confined to only water and rail passages or it will include road transport also, whether port use facilities will be granted or not, etc." Beneficial or not, the transit issue remains highly sensitive in Bangladesh because of a simple fact – India cannot be trusted as gleaned from the history of Bangladesh-India relationship. There should be a dispassionate bipartisan agreement on this cardinal issue in order to arrive at a national strategy to optimize benefits from this proposal, if any.

India and Pakistan have gone nuclear exactly five years ago - in May 1998. Although some would argue that this has helped stabilize security situation in South Asia, particularly the Indo-Pakistan relationship, nuclearization per se has actually heightened security concerns in the region. There have been dangers of nuclear brinkmanship between the two regional rivals and concerns of nuclear fall out in the other South Asian countries. There is an understandable view in the non-nuclear-weapon states of the region that they could be victims of nuclear blackmail, primarily by India. This is both a threat and vulnerability to Bangladesh. Bangladesh's national strategy needs to address such critical security concerns.

Myanmar is the only other contiguous neighbour of Bangladesh, with a border of about 176 miles in the southeast of the country, and maritime boundary. Myanmar occasionally poses both threats and vulnerabilities to Bangladesh, in a small scale though, as a result of its policy
and military action. Since 1978 there have been two waves of Rohingya Muslim refugees into Bangladesh, in 1978-79 and 1991-92, who had to flee their hearth and home in Myanmar’s Arakan (now called Rakhaine) state due to discriminatory and repressive policies pursued by the Myanmarese government towards them. On both occasions more than a quarter of a million refugees took shelter in the adjoining districts of Bangladesh, creating a number of socio-political and security problems. The Yangon government has been procrastinating over the issue of repatriating some 22,000 remaining Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh camps. The Myanmarese military overran an outpost of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR - Bangladesh’s paramilitary border security force) in 1992 and the two border forces were on the verge of a major escalation of border clashes. However, it is heartening that Bangladesh and Myanmar have considerably improved relations and are eager to take it to a new high in political and trade relations now and in the years to come. Recent exchange of Heads of Government level visits clearly demonstrates that there is a renewed interest.

There have been major changes at the global level, with reverberations at the regional and national levels. The post-Cold War era has abruptly ended with the terrorist attacks on New York’s World Trade Center and on the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. on 11 September 2001, resulting in a radically new perception of the U.S. about its own security and its relations with the world at large. This has manifested itself in its new grand strategy to prevent the emergence of any rivals to its global hegemony and to resurrect the doctrine of preemptive strike in meeting any perceived threats to


America or in defence of its perceived interests anywhere in the world.\textsuperscript{87} The run-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the resultant occupation of the oil-rich and ancient Middle Eastern country bear ample testimony to the new world order orchestrated by the Bush Administration.

The Bush Doctrine is relevant to Bangladesh for two important reasons. First, such U.S. policy or strategy tends to undermine more than ever before the sovereignty of nation states. And the second is the question of the security of small states. It is now widely held that the U.S. action in Iraq, sidestepping the United Nations and most of the world community, would encourage the regional powers to settle scores with their smaller neighbours with impunity. The message looms rather large in Bangladesh vis-à-vis India’s capability and past behaviour. Some of the leaders of India have threatened to launch attack on its arch rival Pakistan, a country much more powerful than Bangladesh and a nuclear power at that. The message has not been lost on Dhaka.\textsuperscript{88}


Indo-U.S. relationship is another aspect that needs to be factored into Bangladesh’s strategic matrix. Since the end of the Cold War India has increasingly been the “focus of American attention and support”, and “the peripheral country of secondary importance”.88 This relationship is being further cemented following 11 September 2001. Commenting on this relationship one analyst has said that pragmatism and the willingness of the major players in the Indian government to embrace the utility of force in international affairs will eventually carry the day. Whatever tensions arise over Iraq, the Indian government will not allow them to slow the momentum of the Indo-U.S. relationship”.90 Two points are worrying to Bangladesh. One is that there is a ‘China factor’ in the Indo-U.S. relationship,91 and secondly, there are reports that the United States is eyeing airbases in India.92 These regional developments must figure in Bangladesh’s national strategy, particularly in its foreign policy direction and orientation.

As far as globalization is concerned, two points need to be made here. The first is that the opportunities presented by globalization have not reduced Bangladesh’s conventional security threats and vulnerabilities. The second is that globalization itself has added to the country’s security concerns in the sense that Bangladesh, like many other


developing countries, finds itself in a position wherein it is
difficult to exercise its sovereignty. It is seen to be
encountering pressure from Western quarters in regard to the
issues of governance and economic policy. Bangladesh's
security concerns may also arise from the economic and
cultural consequences of globalization. Added to these
problems is the steady fall in external economic aid. The
problem before Bangladesh's national strategy is how to
prepare the country to meet the challenges of globalization.
Creating comparative advantage, effecting competitiveness
and autarchic measures might go some way to meeting them.

One scholar is of the view that competitiveness stems
from national capacity based on a complex mixture of
endogenous (social engineering and technological
development) and exogenous factors (global market
orientation, global pressures for democratization,
accountability and transparency, and global technology
orientation). However, the emphasis needs to be more on
indigenous exercise - national capacity building. For example,
the overall development of competitiveness in Ready-Made-
Garments sector is contingent upon the initiatives from
government, Industry Association (BMEA - Bangladesh
Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association), and the
firm itself. It is suggested that four critical components of a
new governance regime such as getting the rules right, public-
private cooperation, changing role of the government and
national information and knowledge system will enhance state
capacity that may have positive impact on domestic
governance in order to manage globalization syndromes in
Bangladesh.93

Let us now come closer to home in order to discuss in
brief the political situation and issues in Bangladesh with
relevance to the country's national security and strategy.

93. See for detail, Delwar Hossain, "Managing the Globalisation Syndromes
23, No. 1, January 2002, pp. 20-56; M. Tahill Azim, Nasir Uddin,
"Challenges for Garments Sector in Bangladesh After 2004: Avenues for
49-83.
6.2. National Politics and Governance in Bangladesh

There are a number of features in Bangladesh's national politics that stand out. (i) Unlike in the past, politics in Bangladesh does not seem to be public service-oriented but professionalized. (ii) The process of political elite formation is unhealthy, and thus expediency in political recruitment process paves the way for criminal and terrorist elements into politics. (iii) This spawns terrorist culture in politics and also criminalizes it. (iv) Influence of money and arms pollutes politics beyond redemption. (v) Politics in Bangladesh is highly intolerant. (vi) There is a palpable lack of democratic practice within political parties. (vii) There is little attempt on the part of political parties to uphold national values. (viii) Politics is factionalized and corrupt. (ix) Politics is either ad hoc issue-oriented or personalized and not programme-oriented. (x) And politics is rhetorical and populist, raising high expectations but not able to deliver on the pledges made to the electorate.

The effects of such political culture are almost devastating for the nation. (i) The nation stands divided and hence there is very little socio-political cohesion and no elite consensus on vital national issues. (ii) Without such consensus, 'national' policy or strategy does not truly become national. (iii) People with ill-gotten money and arms become more influential and respectable in the society. (iv) This situation is destructive of social fabric and value system and saps the nation's vitality, resolve and character. (v) What is more critical is that such political situation creates crisis of confidence of people in the national leadership and even in the efficacy of the state itself. (vi) And, consequently, the nation plunges into anarchy and becomes vulnerable to foreign penetration of all sorts.

Under the circumstances, good governance is of essence. It is not the responsibility of the government alone but also of the political opposition and civil society. While the government of the day needs to be more responsive to the needs, wishes and aspirations of the people and mindful of the pledges made to them, the opposition needs to be more responsible. The
government needs to be transparent and accountable, committed to eradicating corruption and upholding the rule of law. Civil society needs to be de-politicized in order to be properly functional. National consensus on core national values and on vital national issues must emerge as a result of elite cohesion and broad-based bipartisan understanding of these values and issues. The question of governance is important because the fundamental issues of growth and poverty alleviation are inextricably linked to it; hence the need for national (political) strategy in the political arena.

6.3. Strategic Resources of Bangladesh

Development, harnessing and protection of strategic resources are of critical importance in respect of not only economic strategy and security but also represent the cardinal elements of holistic national strategy and security. Neither enough thoughts have been devoted nor much studies carried out in relation to these aspects of national strategy and security. A national policy on strategic resources seems to be the need of the time.

Strategic resources of Bangladesh, as in the case of any other country of the world, can be broadly categorized into (i) Material strategic resources, and (ii) Non-material strategic resources. Before we go into the details of material strategic resources, let us have, in brief, some ideas about the non-material strategic resources of Bangladesh.

Non-material strategic resources are institutional and non-institutional. Institutional strategic resources include the entire government setup, including ministries and departments (particularly the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Home Affairs and Finance), the military, paramilitary and auxiliary forces, etc. Institutions and organizations at the non-government and civil society levels also assume strategic importance as and when their objectives, scope and role are critically related to the country’s security and development. Non-institutional strategic resources of Bangladesh relate to the socio-political cohesion, identity, ideology and psychology of its people, and the national leadership.
Ethno-culturally, Bangladesh is one of the most homogeneous countries in the world. More than 99 per cent of its people share the same language and same ethno-cultural origin, and nearly 90 per cent have the same religion. This vital strategic resource needs to be maximized in the interest of national security and development. National identity is another important strategic resource. When this identity is affected by competing strands of nationalism, the nation itself stands divided and becomes vulnerable from both within and without. Commitment of the people to national independence and democracy and their sense of patriotism represent a critical set of strategic resources. What is of crucial importance is the will of the people to become and remain independent. This was amply demonstrated during Bangladesh’s War of Liberation in 1971. Resilience of the people in adversity and their resolve for security and development are absolutely vital. Creative harnessing of these national endowments will enhance and protect national security of Bangladesh.

The role of national leadership in steering the nation forward can hardly be over-emphasized. National leadership is to be understood in all its dimensions, including political, bureaucratic (both civil and military), intellectual, academic, corporate, etc. The more well-versed in the problems and needs of the people, the more committed to ameliorating these, and the more mature and innovative the national leadership is at various levels, the better is the opportunity for the nation for security and development. Socio-economic development of a country considerably depends on the level of science and technology. As Bangladesh is still far behind the optimum level, high emphasis needs to be put on this sector for faster development.

Material strategic resources are divided into infrastructural and natural resources. Material endowments relate to environment, geography, transportation system, ports, marine domain, etc. It is only obvious that Bangladesh’s security and development depends to a large
extent on these factors. However, we shall now discuss some of the natural resources of Bangladesh.

A developing country like Bangladesh, with a population of over 130 million, is not entirely resource-strapped. Harnessing of its key assets like land, water, gas, and human resource assumes strategic importance for the country. These are directly related to its survival, security and development. Their exploitation and utilization requires strategic direction. It is particularly true in cases where cooperation of other countries is needed. Let us have a brief discussion on each of the four enumerated resources.

6.3.1. Land

The land-man ratio in Bangladesh is critical. Therefore, the questions of food security and political stability are of contextual importance here. The obvious options before the leadership of the country are grow more food and plan the growth of population. The land is mostly alluvial and thus fertile. Yet the food grown cannot feed so very many hungry mouths. On the other hand, food aid is also dwindling. So the thrust is on the development of the agricultural sector focusing on increase in the productivity of land by providing irrigation facilities and better seeds and fertilizer, non-farm activities, agriculture extension service, rural industrialization, self-help programme, etc.\(^{94}\)

Needless to say, land is a most important natural resource of Bangladesh. The need, therefore, is for an effective national land policy. Because (i) in terms of productivity rationale, its optimum utilization constitutes a key national priority. (ii) There is an equity rationale in that the benefits of land ownership and land use need to be redistributed amongst the rural poor who constitute the majority of Bangladesh's population. (iii) There is the rationale to contain rural violence and social instability arising from pervasive land disputes. (iv) And there is an ecology rationale in that

unplanned forest depletion, ill-planned alteration to land-water balance and over-exploitation of land and water resources lead to environmental degradation and weaken the prospect for sustainable development. It is, therefore, to be kept in mind while drawing up national strategy that land policy, particularly land reforms, poverty alleviation, and social stability are inter-linked.

A relevant issue here is agriculture that plays a vital role in the growth and stability of Bangladesh’s economy, as is indicated by its share in GDP, employment and export earnings. Notwithstanding the fact that the contribution of agriculture to the economy has been steadily declining, it continues to be the single largest contributor to income and employment of the rural population of Bangladesh. Over the last few years, the agricultural policy emphasis has been on both crop agriculture and non-crop agriculture. In fact, the policy thrust has been on developing an integrated agriculture including crops, along with food management, livestock, fisheries, forestry and environment through more efficient utilization of available land and water resources for sustainable agricultural growth. The task now is to improve upon the plan and its implementation.

6.3.2. Water

Bangladesh is a low-lying flood plain with innumerable rivers, tributaries, distributaries, streams and creeks criss-crossing its small, deltaic territory of about 144,000 square kilometers. Agriculture is the mainstay of the country's


economy. Irrigation facilities and fish production need to increase considerably. Ensuring safe drinking water is a problem in Bangladesh, particularly in view of the extent of the arsenic contamination of ground water in a good part of the country. The importance of navigation in riverine Bangladesh can hardly be over-emphasized, not least because waterways are the cheapest mode of transportation in the country.

Clearly, water is central to the way of life in Bangladesh. In a resource-poor country like Bangladesh, water is the single-most important resource for the well being of its people. The country's development as well as the sustenance of its natural environment largely depends on this natural resource. But contrary to popular perception in riverine and water-dependent Bangladesh, water is not an infinite bounty of nature. As such, it is crucial for the country and its people to address the issues of exploration, management and use of water resources in a comprehensive, integrated, equitable and sustainable manner. The problem of water management is two-pronged - domestic and international, particularly with India.

While flows in the dry winter months in the major rivers fall sharply, most small rivers are seen to dry up in Bangladesh. A paradox is too glaring to miss - abundance of water during the monsoon and its scarcity in the dry season. So the task is to control and mitigate floods and guarantee supply of water in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

There are as many as 57 rivers in Bangladesh, including the three major river systems - the Ganges, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna, whose headwaters are located outside its territory. Of them 54 are common rivers with India. Significantly, the inflow of waters from India into Bangladesh constitutes about 92 percent of the total surface flow, while only about 8 percent are generated within the country. As such, Bangladesh, being the lowermost riparian country, has hardly any control over the common rivers.
The National Water Policy of Bangladesh was adopted in 1997. It is a comprehensive document, including sectoral policy, institutional policy and emphasis on the need for a legislative framework. The Policy aims to provide direction to all agencies working with the water sector, and institutions that relate to the water sector in one form or another, for achievement of specified objectives. The policy has been for a comprehensive, integrated, equitable, decentralized and sustainable development, management and utilization of the water resources of Bangladesh.

However, there are several constraints for Bangladesh in regard to the utilization of her water resources. These are locational, management-related, technical-legal, financial, and the lower-most riparian status. While the National Water Policy and the concomitant legal framework would eventually redress some of these problems, these have not yet been put into operation. Basin-wide planning for water resources management and utilization would require long-term solution to common river water sharing disputes, cooperation among the co-basin states in the eastern Himalayan sub-region on harnessing and utilization of their water resources, and unequivocal adherence to the Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses and the other pertinent international legal instruments.

The Indo-Bangladesh history of negotiations over water sharing of the common rivers has been long, tortuous and often futile. A 30-year Treaty was signed between Bangladesh and India in 1996 on sharing of the Ganges waters at Farakka. Negotiations on the other common rivers are going on in a protracted manner as ever. Recently there

were some disquieting reports on India’s plans to unilaterally direct the Brahmaputra, Ganges, Jamuna waters to its northern and southern regions, threatening Bangladesh with serious consequences.\textsuperscript{99} Bangladesh’s national strategy on water management will have to take both domestic and international aspects into consideration. Let us turn to discuss the issue of human resource development in Bangladesh.

6.3.3. Human Resource Development

Before we delve into the question of human resource development, some beginner’s thoughts will be relevant about the debate that actually surrounds the concept of human development itself. In a nutshell, it is actually a means-ends debate – whether we are talking about humans as a means to greater development or whether it is about the development of human himself/herself. More fundamentally, who or what is at the centre of development, or whether we are dealing with economic development only and not development as a process and end goal.

Those who stress on the means and productivity aspect of human development are sometimes labelled as ‘human resource developers’ (an extreme form of whom are terms as human capitalists who adopt human capital approach) and those who put emphasis on human development as an end in itself are called ‘humanitarians’.\textsuperscript{100} The latter group tends to combine the productivity aspect with equity concerns. They stress the fact that many discrepancies in society are due mainly to different income distributions, that average income per head can conceal great inequalities, that the content and


access to social services varies, particularly in poor countries, and that the different ratios devoted to basic education and preventive primary health services are also important.\textsuperscript{101} An elaboration is summed up in these words: "A shorthand way of describing human development is a variation of Abraham Lincoln's definition of government. It is development of the people, \textit{for} the people, \textit{by} the people. Of the people implies adequate income generation through jobs and the generation of primary incomes, \textit{for} the people implies social services for those who need help and the generation of secondary incomes, and \textit{by} the people means participation. It could be interpreted as the economic, social and political dimensions of development.\textsuperscript{102}

Indeed, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines human development as the enlargement of the range of people's choice. It is essentially an extension, enlargement and deepening of the now somewhat outmoded basic needs approach. Good governance, freedom, human rights, the rule of law, etc. are now important aspects of human development. Reflections of this approach are seen in Human Development Reports of the UNDP. For example, Human Development Report 2002 states: "This \textit{Human Development Report} is first and foremost about the idea that politics is as important to successful development as economics. Sustained poverty reduction requires equitable growth – but it also requires that poor people have political power. And the best way to achieve that in a manner consistent with human development objectives is by building strong and deep forms of democratic governance at all levels of society".\textsuperscript{103}

However, we shall confine our analysis to the development of human resources, a concept that has been around in development studies parlance since the 1950s, insofar as it impinges on the economic development of

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid. p. 73.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid. p. 68.

Bangladesh. Economically, it is a developing country, still fitting the definition and status of 'Least Developed Country' (LDC). Even at the risk of repetition, it must be emphasized that Bangladesh is not endowed with many natural resources nor is its technological level satisfactory; rather the country is often ravaged by a variety of natural disasters. In order to cross the threshold of development, it is deemed essential for Bangladesh to convert the burden of its huge population to strategic assets or resources for the country.

We understand development as creation of wealth, more equitable distribution of wealth, and quantitative and qualitative change in economic, social and cultural fields. And human resource may be defined as a resource that has not only the physical fitness but also the mental faculty to develop skills, higher productivity and a proper outlook on life and work.\(^{104}\) Actually, there are several approaches to the development of human resources. We shall restrict ourselves to discussing two points as regards human resource development in Bangladesh – formation of strategic human capital and population management.

What is now essential for Bangladesh is not a plethora of unskilled and idle people but an army of skilled manpower, technologists and technocrats who will be properly educated and productive, and who will create wealth and bring about critical changes in the entire society. The accent of the national efforts here must be productivity by means of imparting skills and the short-term target must be poverty alleviation, while the medium-term objective is to be sustainable development. The long-term goal, however, must be creating a knowledge-based society. This vision is essential for charting a national strategy for socio-economic development.

Quality manpower must be created, for then only it becomes capital as it is currently productive and is an

investment in the days ahead. The system of education is important here. The system must not be elitist in character and in the medium of instruction. However, while the system needs to be universal in terms of access and facilities, there cannot be any compromise on quality. It must be remembered that the nation now requires specialists, not generalists. For this, the emphasis is on productive education.

Karim has made several suggestions in this regard. His views are for more of technical education and vocational training, interest-free loan to qualified students, schemes for jobs for school drop-outs and self-employment, youth training, establishing vocational and trade institutions, developing skill of manpower for export, etc. Moreover, there must be a minimum of wastage in the sector, and the system of education must be corruption-free. While wastage must be checked, budget outlays for education must be raised for reasonable infrastructure and quality education.

As mentioned, the other aspect of human resource development is population planning and management. The population of Bangladesh is over 130 million, with highest density in the world. The population has increased more than 13 times over the last 350 years. While political scientists continue to argue whether high population growth is

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106. Reports are in plenty on corruption in education sector. Only very recently there was a news report captioned "Corruption eats away education quality". See The Daily Star, Dhaka, 4 May 2003.

107. Over the last several years, budget allocations for education have been on top or amongst the top receivers. Even that has not raised the standard of education. The budget situation this year (the budget session of Parliament is to be summoned just in weeks) is still tighter. For a newspaper report under the caption "Shoe-string budget stifles quality of education" see, The Daily Star, 28 April 2003.

108. Bangladesh's population in 1650 was 10 million. See for a study, Robert Fox and Carl Haub, "Population Control in Bangladesh", Bangladesh Times, Dhaka, 19 March 1983.
necessarily an impediment to economic development or not, we hold the view that it is indeed the main obstacle to the country's progress. Although the rate of population growth has been brought down from over 3 per cent to 1.7 per cent earning acclaims from many quarters including the UN, it is still considered high and dangerous. It needs to be further brought down, because the impact of resources spent on sustaining such a huge population is a perennial drain on the country's resource base and investment opportunities. Since the opportunity costs are high in feeding, clothing and sheltering this population, the strategy on population control may be reviewed and streamlined for better and quicker results.

From the perspective of strategy and national security, human resources represent the most significant endowment of Bangladesh. This has been demonstrated clearly during the country's War of Liberation in 1971. Encouragement and development of human creativity and entrepreneurship should be among the central focal points of the strategy for national development and security.

6.3.4. Natural Gas

Nature has seldom smiled on Bangladesh. The discovery of gas in Bangladesh in the 1950s is one such rare occasion. Of late, the media, particularly in the West, has all been agog with curious reports that this poor South Asian country is literally floating on natural gas. It drew the attention not only of the International Oil Companies (IOCs) but also of the people of Bangladesh itself. The Bangladeshis had pinned their hopes on one of the few natural resources that could usher in a long-awaited change in their life and living. Prompt came the question: what would Bangladesh do with the reported vast reserves of gas underground - expand the network of domestic consumption including power generation or use it for domestic industrialization or export it for much-needed foreign currency? There has not been any clear answer in the last more than one decade or so. The debate on the use of a national resource has just begun.
In the 1990s, a number of Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) were signed between the then governments and some IOCs of the United States and Europe. The Bangladesh governments had agreed to pay high price to the IOCs for supply of gas and that too in US dollars. Since the government cannot raise the domestic charges for gas consumption for electoral reasons, it has become unbearable for it to pay its dues to the IOCs in dollars. The logical conclusion is: export the gas. Where? The cost-effective destination is, of course, neighbouring India. Now, can a Bangladesh government politically manage a deal for such export, given the sensitivity of the issue viewed through the prism of New Delhi’s regional ambitions and more particularly in the context of the often-bitter history of Bangladesh’s relations with India. The debate rages on.

Thanks to the pressure exerted by the IOCs on the Government of Bangladesh, the debate now has boiled down to the issue of gas export to India. Informed public opinion in Bangladesh is divided right across the board on the issue. It is thought that the immediate past government was initially, though not later on, amenable to a deal on export of gas to India. The political opposition and a good part of the civil society were vehemently against the very idea of such export. Now the table has turned. The incumbent coalition government, then in the opposition, is now widely believed to be on the verge of a deal to export gas to India through pipeline, which is being resisted by the opposition political forces as well as the civil society.

The Reports of the two National Committees on Reserve and Utilization of Natural Gas are important documents. The


Committee on Reserve mentions that the "Net recoverable reserves of natural gas (as of May 2002) lies in a range of 12.04 Tcf to 15.55 Tcf"; "natural gas demand up to 2020 is 9.9 Tcf to 17.4 Tcf" and "natural gas demand up to 2050 is 39.3 Tcf to 151.3 Tcf". Three points in the report of the Committee on Utilization are significant: (i) Taking the possibility of serious shortfall in not too distant a future, necessitating even 'import' of gas as a last resort if no discoveries are made into consideration, the Committee underscores first, the inadequacy of the current reserves for export of any volume; secondly, the need for extensive explorations; and, lastly, 'limited export' even from 'new discoveries' by the IOCs. (ii) In the event of adoption of a policy of 'limited export' on the basis of new discoveries, there should not logically be any reservations about funding by the donor agencies or investments by the IOCs. (iii) The Committee is of the view that the experiment with the PSCs had drawn only negatives and, therefore, recommends allocation of all remaining onshore gas blocs in favour of Petrobangla.  

Clearly, the reports are not quite favourable for export of gas. Nevertheless, the pressure on the government to do so is mounting. The government might hedge around the conditional 'limited export' part of the Utilization Committee Report in the event it is required to export gas to India. It is significant that the Finance and Planning Minister of Bangladesh, on his return from a two-day visit to India, made a statement at Dhaka's Zia Airport on 20 May 2003 to the effect that it was politics and not business that was a barrier to gas export to India.  

Actually, any decision on gas export should be taken on the basis of national consensus. The interests of Bangladesh should guide policy decision and not those of the IOCs on gas.


use options. Bangladesh’s domestic needs – household or value-addition activities – should weigh more heavily in taking any government decision. While the government should have an integrated view on the whole range of energy issues nationally, it should also develop a regional perspective on the use of energy resources. From national strategy perspective, “the dilemma for Bangladesh is to decide how best to use its natural gas resource endowment as a contributor to economic and social development.”

Let us move on to security aspect of Bangladesh’s national strategy.

6.3.5 National Security System in Bangladesh

Towards the end of the chapter here we shall briefly discuss the management of the security system of Bangladesh. This will include both security structure and policy. Let us first be clear about what we understand by national security.

There are ‘wideners’ who tend to expand a state’s security agenda horizontally and legitimate the levels of analysis below the nation-state level. The realist paradigm is another extreme. We think that a concept should be not too expansionist to be analytically useful and not too restrictive to be oblivious of the new realities. What is also to be kept in mind is that, as national security is a political value, phenomena like economic deprivation and environmental degradation must demonstrate the capacity immediately to affect political outcomes. Ayoob contends, “security or insecurity is defined in relation to vulnerabilities, both internal and external, that threaten to, or have the potential to, bring down or significantly weaken state structures, both


114. Mark Jaccard, Mujibur Rahman Khan and John Richards, Natural Gas Options for Bangladesh, CPR Commentary No. 1, IUBAT, Spring 2001, Dhaka, p. 5.
territorial and institutional, and regimes.... Other types of vulnerability, whether economic or ecological, become integral components of our definition of security only if they become acute enough to take on overtly political dimensions and threaten state boundaries, state institutions, or regime survival.**115** Essentially a neo-realist conception, this definition has the benefit of a compromise between the strictly state-centric definition and the all-inclusive non-traditional security analysis.

Broadly, two organs of the state – the Executive and the Legislature – deal with security issues in Bangladesh, unlike all three in the United States. The Constitution of the Republic says: Parliament shall by law provide for regulating the raising and maintaining of the defence services of Bangladesh and of their reserves; the grant of commission therein; the appointment of chiefs of staff of the defence services, and their salaries and allowances; and the discipline and other matters relating to those services and reserves. War shall not be declared and the Republic shall not participate in any war except with the assent of Parliament.**116** The Parliamentary Committee on Defence, constituted in accordance with Article 76 of the Constitution, exercises the power of overseeing certain defence-related matters like military expenditure, etc.**117**

While the Cabinet discusses and decides on overall security matters, it is the Prime Minister who is in charge of the Ministry of Defence.**118** Although the President is the

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117. It may be mentioned that the Jatiya Sangsad (National Parliament) appoints 50 Standing Committees – 39 on different ministries and 11 on parliament affairs.

118. In Bangladesh the defence portfolio has always been with the Chief Executive of the Republic, except for a brief period in the early 1970s.
supreme commander of the defence services of Bangladesh, the Prime Minister for all practical purposes exercises such power by means of an organization called Armed Forces Division that functions under the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). However, it should be mentioned that the Defence Ministry and the armed forces come under the jurisdiction of President during the period in which there is a Non-Party Care-taker Government under Article 58B of the Constitution.

Just a few words about the question of civilian supremacy over the military are relevant here. We have seen above the chain of command for civilian control of the military. This control needs to be more consolidated and civil military relations are to be rationalized and institutionalized further. Mention must be made that civilian control of the military implies control by the elected political leadership. Also to be borne in mind is that while the political leadership would seek from the military commanders operational competence and sound military advice, the military in turn expects executive competence and clear strategic guidance. The military also needs operational autonomy, while the rest is to be vested in the civilian superiors. 119 However, it is to be mentioned that the system and mechanisms of civilian direction and control and the coordination between and amongst various stakeholders with respect to national security matters are not always sufficiently transparent. This is essential for instilling a sense of security in public mind, which is very important.

Foreign policy of Bangladesh will be discussed here to the extent it relates to the defence of the country. For Bangladesh, foreign policy is actually the first line of defence. During the formative years of Bangladesh, the salience of India loomed a lot larger than is the case now. This was manifested in the signing in 1972 of the 25-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Bangladesh and India. It betrayed a tilt

towards the Indo-Soviet axis then. The Treaty was not universally welcomed in Bangladesh, although it was not renunciated by the successive governments. The foreign policy orientation was redefined following the change of regime in Dhaka in 1975. The country veered away from the Indo-Soviet orbit and closer ties were established with the United States, China and Muslim countries. The government’s special efforts to improve relations with the Muslim Ummah were reflected in an amendment to the Constitution of the Republic.  

As India is a major factor in Bangladesh’s foreign and security policy calculations, Dhaka has always been conscious of the need for balancing the power asymmetry. Also, in order to ameliorate the security environment and friendly cooperation in South Asia, Bangladesh envisioned a framework for multilateralism in the region and initiated the process of regional cooperation in South Asia. This culminated in the formation of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985. Dhaka’s relations with Washington improved further following the end of the Cold War and with the discovery of gas fields in Bangladesh by some western IOCs. As Indo-US relations are steadily deepening and expanding, Bangladesh must not ignore this development. Bangladesh’s ‘Look East Policy’ is fine as long as it is an attempt to diversify the country’s foreign policy and trade options and it does not appear to be at the expense of its commitment to South Asian regional cooperation. After all, a sustained mutually beneficial Indo-Bangladesh relationship can be an investment in Bangladesh’s security.

Bangladesh’s defence policy should be one of deterrence and holding off operation. This deterrence should be at the

120. Article 25 (2) reads: The State shall endeavour to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity.

political and economic level. The idea here is to strengthen the
country's economic prowess and to prevent war through
diplomacy and understanding between political leaderships.
Bangladesh cannot afford to have a military deterrence for its
costs are exorbitantly high. What is feasible is to have a
limited military preparedness for forestalling an advancing
enemy, with a view to holding it off until such time that is
required for enlisting the support of powerful friends and/or
mobilizing the United Nations and world public opinion.

All the above requires meticulous strategic planning at the
military, economic and political levels and then harmonizing
these. Defence strategy, as part of national security strategy,
will do the threat assessment and provide military advice to
the political leadership for discussion and decision in the light
of national strategy, that in turn will be viewed in accordance
with national policy and perceived national interests. National
strategy, with its integrated view and organizational
advantages, will thus help effect better management of the
national security system. A sound and transparent
institutional basis needs to be developed for planning,
coordination and implementation of national strategic and
security policy in a fast changing world.

7. Concluding Remarks

The concept of strategy has evolved from the art of the general
in the battlefield to the art and science of employing first
military force and eventually the entire gamut of a nation's
resources for achieving political objectives. While strategic
thoughts were there in ancient and medieval times, the
concept came to be defined in explicit terms only since the
early nineteenth century when armies had become national
and professional, unlike mercenaries before. Strategic studies
emerged following nuclear explosion in 1945 and the onset of
the Cold War immediately thereafter. Nuclear strategy,
deterrence, arms control, crisis management, etc dominated
the agenda of strategic studies. In other words, the military
dimension of international relations, the use of force, or the
threat of use, were the cardinal features of strategic studies.
This, in the post-Cold War era, has lost relevance even in the West and certainly in the countries of the developing world, including Bangladesh. There is hardly any strategic studies in the environment in which Bangladesh operates. What we have here is essentially security studies with a new problematic and agenda. National strategy makes a better sense in addressing the issues of national survival, security and development in an integrated manner. What is crucial is that there should be a sense of security in public mind and a reasonable hope for development and for a better life and living in the days to come. National strategy of Bangladesh, therefore, needs to be an outcome of the creative fusion of the ingenuity of the national leadership and the genius of the people at large. For this, more research needs to be undertaken and more academic and policy debates generated in this regard for designing an effective national strategy for Bangladesh.