ROLE OF SECURITY FORCES IN A DEMOCRACY

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Introduction

Bangladesh\(^1\) was born through a bloody War of Liberation. The objective of the war was to create an egalitarian, pluralist democratic, and prosperous sovereign country. Commenting about the war, the New Statesman of London wrote, "If blood is the price of people's right to independence then Bangladesh has overpaid it". The war brought in its trail the depredation that made it difficult to sustain itself economically which ultimately impacted on its democracy also. A fully functional pluralist democracy could not also be sustained for a long time; although it did in 1990s, after a mass upsurge that toppled an autocratic military dictator, it was constrained by many hiccups. Although perfect democracy is, in fact, a myth, nonetheless there was enough scope on the part of the political

\(^1\) "...the uniqueness of her grass-roots institutions set Bangladesh apart from the rest of South Asian sub-Continent. Her political experience and religious evolution differed significantly from the rest of South Asia. The distinct identity of Bangladesh region, however, lay dormant for a long time. Paradoxically, the very forces, which silently moulded her identity, delayed its public expression. The robust individualism, which characterized Bangladesh region, impeded the development of collective institutions, which are essential for nourishing collective consciousness. Bangladesh region was different from the rest of South Asia because political institutions in this region were weak." Akbar Ali Khan, *Discovery of Bangladesh - Explorations into Dynamics of a Hidden Nation*, UPL, Dhaka, 1996, p. 150.
leadership to make it more functional and perfect. Bangladesh’s core values are, directly or indirectly, affected by democratic way of governance. Bangladesh is placed disadvantageously geostrategically. It suffers from the tyranny of geography which gives rise to the concept of defense vulnerability. Such geographic tyranny is, at least, to some extent, responsible for its sordid political, social and economic state. Availability of Bangladesh’s resources especially its water - that is responsible for life sustenance and ecological balance - are determined by its geographic location. Bangladesh’s political culture and weak governance structure determine its internal national security whereas the unique geostrategic location directs its focus to its external national security.

Given these peculiarities as could be true to any other country and the context, Bangladesh’s security forces have been playing a somewhat right or distorted role, as perceived by different scholars and nations differently, actuated by its political culture and geographic location. Security, in its broader sense, concerns many dimensions in the spectrum where security forces have a lasting role to play. However, diplomatically Bangladesh cannot be ignored. Bangladesh can be called a geostrategic pivot\(^2\) in the South Asian sub-system where active geostrategic players like China and India will have to count Bangladesh in order to play their power game of

\(^2\) This is the idea given by an American strategist Brezeniski. Geostrategic players have the capacity and national will to exercise influence beyond their borders in order to alter the existing geopolitical state of affairs. The importance of geopolitical pivots is derived not from their power and motivation but rather from their sensitive location and from the consequences of their potential vulnerable condition for the behaviour of the geostrategic players. Most often geopolitical pivots are determined by their geography, which in some cases give them a special role in defining access to important areas or denying resources to a significant player. Geostrategy: Asia-Pacific; http://www.idis.gr/people/arvan.doc, accessed on 23 July 2007.
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geopolitics. Bangladesh cannot afford to play into such game of geopolitics mainly because of the following factors: overwhelming military and economic superiority of the players, economic, political and geostrategic vulnerability of Bangladesh, its lack of sophisticated military wherewithal, and the apprehension of disturbing the state of equilibrium. Bangladesh is further constrained by the degeneration of value system, which goes to make its political, economic, and governance system almost dysfunctional and imperfect.

Bangladesh’s security forces should also not be seen beyond the ambit of this degeneration, which has, in fact, infected the entire body politic of Bangladesh. However, they have a relatively cleaner slate than other institutions mainly because it has a more credible accountability system. It again receives accolades for two of its commendable jobs like containing insurgency in south eastern Chittagong Hill Tracts and participating in UN policing job of peace support operations around the globe. Both the jobs have the tinges of development, which is so vital for the sustenance of uninterrupted economic and social life of a nation. Another word of caution may be pertinent here: the military should be strong enough to protect a society; it should be sufficiently strong and properly oriented to meet any threat that a nation may face. The military should conduct its affairs to keep itself free from the corroding influence of the prevalent political culture so as to be able to protect the society; otherwise it may fail in this noble role with unpredictable consequences to the society and the nation at large.³

Given this backdrop, this paper attempts to delineate the role and contribution of the security forces - for convenience it would mean the defense forces only- in upholding democracy

and find out better *modus operandi*, in a holistic environment, to fit in the dispensation. The responses suggested would be confined to the methodologies that would better harmonize the societal values and the military values. Such methodologies, it is hoped, would optimize military’s role and contribution to nation’s development and security. Development has a very wide spectrum. It includes political development, institutionalization of civil and military systems, democratization, value regeneration, creative and innovative ideas and national security etc. Elite contradictions are but natural. This paper would, however, attempt to suggest measures that may minimize such contradictions. The paper covers areas like Democracy in Bangladesh Perspective, Attributes of Defence Forces, Adaptability of the Defence Forces and Response with emphasis on institutionalization of systems. The ideas given by the author are outline in nature and those need to be further scrutinized and validated by the concerned experts.

**Democracy in Bangladesh Perspective**

Democracy is one of the finest ways of governance in the modern day world. What it ensures is the defined method of succession after a regular interval. However, it has varieties. Even the Chinese have their own brand of democracy, which is, oftentimes, called democratic centralism or the democracy with Chinese characteristics. Confucianism might have probably impacted greatly in their way of governance. Be that as it may, Bangladesh has generally inherited the Westminster type of democracy; although it has also experienced controlled presidential type of democracy, which some scholars might call it, dictatorship under the garb of democracy. The important thing is that democracy may provide an outlet for the realization of people’s hopes and aspirations in a meaningful, creative and innovative way. Once it is stunted,
mass upsurge or military intervention takes over and tends to upset the normal economic and social life of the country. Bangladesh has experienced such episodes quite a number of times. Institution building has been neglected by almost all the regimes of Bangladesh polity.

The Government of India Act 1935 and the famous Lahore Resolution of 1940, mooted by the famous Bengali leader Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Haq, had foreseen parliamentary or Westminster type of democracy in the horizon for the post colonial India. Most of the political leaders in the then Pakistan had been clamouring for parliamentary system of government. The 1956 Constitution of Pakistan, where important political leaders from East Bengal especially Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy made immense contribution in its drafting, restored the basic structure of parliamentary form of government. However, both the military and bureaucratic elites were the stumbling blocks in operationalizing the concept. The famous six-point programme, mooted by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, talked about parliamentary system and practically all the political parties were committed to parliamentary system of government during Pakistan’s general election in 1970. Bangladesh started with parliamentary system of government but as an after effect of the War of Independence the country fell into a serious famine like situation when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman thought it prudent to impose one party rule in the country with almost all executive, legislative and judicial powers reposed in the person of the President of the Republic. The sad end of this episode was the military intervention where the country’s President was brutally killed. As a matter of fact, military’s command and control got greatly weakened as a follow up to this military putsch. One coup was countered by another and a chain reaction followed. This was a real critical scenario for Bangladesh’s existence, since military forces got disarrayed.
However, General Ziaur Rahman came up to face this challenge and he faced it squarely. He salvaged this nation, apart from giving a new vision, by reorganizing and revamping the military forces. He, however, followed a controlled presidential form of democracy where multiparty system was restored. Bangladesh started to move forward but inner contradictions within the military continued although at a much less scale. The President was again brutally assassinated in a coup by the military forces based in Chittagong in 1981. This was another stigma in Bangladesh’s political history where another sitting president was brutally assassinated.

Now the question arises: why is the country’s military, which spearheaded country’s military operations of the Liberation War that aimed at establishing democracy, is allegedly involving itself in the politics of the country time and again. Some of the reasons that could be ascribed are the lack of institutionalization, low political culture, divisiveness both within the nation and the military, and authorities not paying enough heed to military’s corporate interests resulting in their frustration. President Ziaur Rahman’s regime was followed by another coup, which was imposed by General Ershad in 1982. General Ershad was a dictator per se and he was finding it extremely difficult to gain political legitimacy in Bangladesh society. Ershad, however, carried out a lot of reforms for the development of Bangladesh’s military. Bangladesh military was getting more professional and a window of opportunity was opened for Bangladesh military to contribute in the First Gulf War, Kuwait Reconstruction and UN Peace Support Operations around the world. Bangladesh military was coming to good shape even in terms of acquiring higher military and civil education. Military officers got better exposed to values of modernity, security and democracy and requirement of uninterrupted peace and system for the country’s overall development. Military officers started
realizing that it was not the job of the military officers to rule the country. A kind of Huntington’s prescription of ‘objective control’ of military was being replicated in Bangladesh. With the fall of autocratic rule of President Ershad, as the politicians called it, an era of real democratic rule started to hold ground. As a matter of fact, Bangladesh military tacitly and positively supported the fall of Ershad regime and installation of a real democratic rule.

In the first tenure of parliamentary democratic government of 1991, the ruling elites used both the options of Huntington i.e. subjective and objective controls, in varying degrees, to exercise control over the military. The military, by and large, supported the democratic system of government. Such controls continued during the later two successive democratically elected governments. However, subjective control started getting an upper hand as the days passed by. During the tenure of 1996 Caretaker Government another coup attempt was made by the then Army Chief which was repulsed by the pro-democracy forces in the military. Military again, by and large, welcomed the democratic dispensation although all pervasive corruption and bad governance did draw the attention of the military elites and the ranks and file. Generally, military is not interested in running the politics of the country. Some of the strong reasons could be military’s strong professionalism, military’s better understanding of international globalized scenario, military’s deep commitment

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4 “Subjective control achieves its end by civilianizing the military, making them the mirror of the state. Objective civilian control achieves its end by militarizing the military, making them the tool of the state. Subjective civilian control exists in a variety of forms, objective civilian control in only one. The essence of objective civilian control is the recognition of autonomous military professionalism; the essence of subjective civilian control is the denial of an independent military sphere.” See, Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State - The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 83.
to UN Peace Support Operations and country’s overall general economic prosperity. The subsequent political imbroglio that almost crippled the normal life in Bangladesh in October 2006 was another tragedy in the political history of Bangladesh. The whole nation was awestruck and it could not expect the military to be a bystander. The political infighting tended to cross the threshold that had the potential to affect the security of the country, both internal and external.

Concept of Security

Security can be examined at different levels and dimensions. It can be viewed at individual, societal, national, international and global levels. At different levels are linked up different dimensions like human security, traditional security, cooperative security, collective security, environmental security and internal security etc. When the entire gamut of different dimensions of security is considered we may call it comprehensive security. One may think one dimension is different from other; it is altogether a misconception that one dimension of security can be delinked from the other. Today’s non-traditional or environmental security may turn out to be a traditional security - it might even turn out to be a vital national interest which would merit the employment of military forces; it might even take the shape of a total war.

Bangladesh’s security concerns are multidimensional as already indicated. Bangladesh’s vital national interests could involve its territorial integrity, political sovereignty, democracy, religious and social values, and economic and social progress. Bangladesh’s security forces fought a counter insurgency war in Chittagong Hill Tracts in order to preserve the territorial integrity of Bangladesh. Bangladesh’s security forces are usually employed by the Election Commission to conduct different types of elections, which facilitates in
restoring or consolidating democracy. Consolidation of democracy goes a long way in ensuring both internal and external security of Bangladesh. Over the last more than a decade democracy is the way of governance in Bangladesh; one would, however, say it is limping. Reasons for such limping could be many like confrontational politics, criminalization of politics, division of the nation on two party lines, all pervasive corruption, weak bureaucracy, weakness in the judiciary and Election Commission etc. Institutionalization of different organs or components of a nation ensures better internal security. But, sad enough, it did not work that way. It is mostly the partisan role of the political leadership in Bangladesh that is impinging on the sustenance of democracy in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh defense forces may not expand its role to cover varied aspects. Such varieties may not bring desirable results in the long run. "The expansion of the role of a modern army seriously impairs its military efficiency. Present-day military officers can indulge in politics only at the cost of their fighting skills." But in order to ensure comprehensive security of the country, Bangladesh’s security forces have to, at least, play a catalyst role. It may not cross the threshold. It should take lessons from the 1971 War of Liberation. As Prof Rounaq Jahan remarked, "it was because of Pakistan military’s recurrent overt involvement in the national politics that contributed in Pakistan’s failure in national integration". Talukder Maniruzzaman substantiates his hypothesis when he says, "Egypt’s total military fiasco is also generally attributed to the political role expansion of the Egyptian armed forces". He further shows, quoting Brown, "as core professionalism suffered, the large part of the Egyptian air force was destroyed on the ground and the rest was completely incapacitated by an

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Israel pre-emptive attack on the first day of the war (1967)."\(^{6}\) Indian democracy is a good model, which has contributed immensely in ensuring the territorial integrity of the country, which is otherwise plagued by insurgencies in many nooks, and corners of the country. Indian military's non-involvement in politics has ensured its better professionalism. Such professionalism also ensures better security for the country.

Attributes of the Defense Forces

Military, especially its officer corp is a profession which is characterized by its expertise, responsibility, and corporate ness. Defense forces are an organized body whose basic job as Lasswell said is the "management of violence". "Thus because of their centralization, hierarchy, discipline, inter communication and esprit de corps, armies are much more highly organized than any civilian bodies".\(^{7}\) It follows a hierarchical system of command and control. It follows a vertical organizational system, which is contrary to flatter organization that is generally followed in the present day corporate world. Military's war requirements preclude the introduction of flatter organizational system.

Military is a 'closed' society like that of a church, as the management specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. However, in the globalized world where information specialists brand it. 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\(^{6}\) Talukder Maniruzzaman, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

information at least about its routine day to day activities. The military is generally seen to be an elitist organization. Bangladesh's military has, these days, greatly come out of this point of reference. The military has entrenched corporate interests like bureaucracy. The government in power, in most of the third world countries, fails to make a balance between the corporate interests of these two vital institutions of the state, which creates fault line in the smooth functioning of the system.

Indian Ministry of Defense, staffed by the elite civil service, during the Kargil War, delayed the procurement of some vital equipment for mountaineering warfare for which Indian Army had to pay a very high price in terms of loss of hundreds of human lives. It really affected the morale and motivation of the soldiers who were in the battlefield to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the nation. Indian government realized the lacunae and formed an investigation committee called Mishra Committee to suggest remedies. Hopefully, Indian military has been given more initiative and freedom in the field of procurement of equipments. Wartime exigencies should be seen differently from than that of a peacetime requirement. During the First World War the German Military's General Staff Branch even used to control the foreign, propaganda and economic policies. Today Bangladesh's military, or for that matter any military in a democracy, may not even imagine running such policies although it may provide inputs. Military may, as part of bottom up approach and by devising certain methodologies, formally or informally put forward suggestions to the government especially when it relates to national security. And as already indicated national security entails both external and internal security.
Adaptability of the Defense Forces

Leadership is the product of diagnosing the environment, adapting to the environment and communicating it to the stakeholders. Leadership as practiced in the defense forces is to be judged in relation to different context where contingencies are mostly involved. It has to, however, fit into the holistic spectrum of the nation. Now this leadership should be seen differently from the political, business, civil society, press and media and donor agencies spectrum. This leadership tends to get embroiled with the political or economic mess of a third world country. But it is strongly inferred that military, in the long run, cannot be a change agent for the political and social development. Famous political scientist Janowitz said, “in all cases, military operates as incomplete agents of political change.” Many African countries, have miserably failed to practice interposing military leadership with political leadership. However, in those countries political leadership had also miserably failed. Now if somehow both systems fail, any country is likely to turn into a failed state.

This is ominous for Bangladesh also, which is, otherwise, called a soft state. Now one has to accept some imperfections in almost all strata of national life. Such imperfections - may be to a much lesser degree - are afflicting the military system also. Colonial legacy has really eaten into the perfectionists’ creativity in the systems. Southeast Asian countries had really accepted the challenge and made spectacular strides in modernization. Even India is suffering from this syndrome. Pakistan has continued to remain as a swing state orbiting from one end of the pendulum to other. It has hardly seen stability ever since it was created. Political stability and institutionalization of the systems are sine qua non for the ultimate development of a country. Veena Kukreja has shown “if the level of the institutionalization of civilian political
procedures, the level of military institutionalization, the domestic socio-economic and international environment showing level of social mobility and economic mobility are high, then there would be integrated boundaries displaying civilian control and if these are low then there would be fragmented boundaries displaying tenuous civilian control”.8 This is further reinforced by Dankwart Rustow who concludes, “in case there is a military intervention and it wants to withdraw, the ultimate success of a military regime depends on its skill in allowing or promoting the rise of effective civilian institutions that will render future military intervention superfluous.”9 This is also substantiated by Finer who says, “where civilian associations and parties are strong and numerous, where the procedures for the transfer of power are orderly, and the location of supreme authority is not seriously challenged, the political ambit of the military will be circumscribed.”10

In spite of such systemic requirement, the message conveyed here is that one has to accept the reality that perfect or puritan system may be difficult to obtain in a third world country like Bangladesh. Military's unity of command or chain of command hierarchy where everything lawful is implemented in an organized and controlled manner may be a misnomer in a messy political, administrative, social and economic life of Bangladesh. But still the country has to move forward like India is doing, Sri Lanka - heavily battered by decades' long insurgency- is sustaining and recently Nepal which is trying to settle its political scores. Military has to remain professionally vibrant, pulsating and progressive

10 S.E. Finer, op. cit., p.21.
organization as it is true to its counterparts in other countries. It cannot afford to get embroiled in the messy political affairs of the country for long. That may not bring any good both for the military and the nation as a whole. Ultimately, it is the military, which is the custodian or the last resort when country’s security or normalcy gets threatened or disturbed. Military can, under no circumstances, afford to slip out of its course even for a while. It should remain prepared with the latest technologies, as much as the nation can afford, and doctrines to face any eventualities that may be imposed like it faced in 1971, in Chittagong Hill Tracts counter insurgency warfare, UN peace support operations around the world and in assisting the government in ensuring internal security and national development and the Election Commission in conducting free, fair and peaceful polls.

Response

Political Culture: Finer has classified political culture into four categories like mature, developed, low and minimal.\textsuperscript{11} Bangladesh’s culture probably straddles between low and minimal. Since Bangladesh practiced parliamentary

\textsuperscript{11} The three criterions set by Finer are the following: 1. Does there exist a wide public approval of the procedures for transferring power, and a corresponding belief that no exercise of power in breach of these procedures legitimate? 2. Does there exist a wide public recognition as to who or what constitutes the sovereign authority, and a corresponding belief that no other persons or centre of power is legitimate or duty-worthy? 3. Is the public proportionately large and well-mobilized into private associations? i.e. do we find cohesive churches, industrial associations and firms, labor unions and political parties? Where all these conditions are satisfied the level of political culture may be said to be high: to be extent that they are not, it is correspondingly low. As long as the listed characteristics persist in such societies, the legitimization of military rule would be unobtainable in the first group, resisted in the second, fluid in the third, unimportant in the fourth. See, S. E. Finer, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 87-89.
democracy since 1991, it had the potential to graduate to a developed political culture but the politicians could not withstand the test. This, however, does not necessarily mean we can do away with the system. United Nations could hardly stop the outbreak of the major wars that impacted on the development of the world at large. United Nations itself is seriously thinking of reforming itself to make it more representative. United Nations has done spectacular jobs in humanitarian, development, human rights issues, and in restoring peace between warring parties in different parts of the world especially in Africa. Liberal democracy\textsuperscript{12} has many pitfalls but which other system of governance can supersede democracy? Pakistan is a good example where controlled democracy is nose-diving when even the Americans - who called Pakistan its most important non-NATO ally - were thinking of bombing Pakistan.

The message that is conveyed here is that Bangladesh by an inclusive method should devise ways and means to graduate to a higher level of political culture, which would give better legitimacy and representative character to the government in power. This would also keep the military engaged in its primary professional job. This goes in line with Huntington's prescription of objective control of the military. Intricately linked to it is the strengthening of democratic institutions. Military's role would then be customized and focused to professionalism.

**Strengthening State Institutions:** Presently, state/democratic institutions are in disarray. Political interference has really done a lasting damage to these institutions. Parliaments could not deliver adequately or even,

\textsuperscript{12} The freedom-based democracy seems to have arisen from the natural right individualism of 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} century philosophers, from Hobbes to Kant. Bentham's utilitarianism is also considered as theoretical base of liberal democracy.
at times, could not come up to the expectations of the nation. Political squabbling was the root cause. Parliamentary standing committees were not that effective mainly due to systems’ fault and political divisiveness. Parliamentary standing committees are merely recommending bodies. They lacked the teeth. And country’s bureaucracy is quite adept in hoodwinking the committees’, whatever, recommendations were forwarded to the ministries. Election Commission, Public Service Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission etc. should be made fully independent and be manned by competent and honest people. A set of clearer criterion or standards should be clearly spelt out for selection as chairman or members of such commissions. However, a *modus operandi* should also be devised where they may also be made more accountable. This would generate better credibility in ensuring legitimacy of the powers that would ultimately impact on the professionalism of the military forces. Bangladesh’s enlightened military today would like to see an enlightened forward looking Bangladesh. Bangladesh military would then habitually be subservient to such enlightened legitimate government in power. Bangladesh military’s training curricula cover areas like politics, economics, human rights, national development, rule of law, civil administration, international relations etc. Such education and awareness would better contribute in institution building, which would help consolidate democracy in the country.

**Complete Separation and Independence of Judiciary:** The nation has suffered tremendously by not making the judiciary completely separate and independent. Probably, the nation would not have been in such a mess had there been a truly independent and separate judiciary. The governments in power played ‘cat and mouse’ game in delaying the implementation of the famous 12-point directives of the Supreme Court in respect of separation of judiciary especially the lower judiciary. Corruption has also engulfed the judiciary especially, the lower judiciary, which has, in fact, smeared the
ethics, values and demand of the justice system. Political parties may think of devolving the power of appointment of all the judges of the Supreme Court with the President, of course, on the recommendation of the Chief Justice. Presently, the President can only appoint the Chief Justice without the advice of the Prime Minister. This power can be extrapolated to include all the judges. This would greatly preclude political interference in the judiciary including the lower judiciary. Even for the selection of the judges, a set of clearer and more enlightened criterion or standards may be spelt out in the Constitution. Let us, at least, make sure judiciary and military of the country remain far above petty party politics which would take care of much of the ills that the country is presently experiencing. Two repositories of last resort for the nation should be upheld in high esteem of the people. However, some kind of stricter methodologies may be worked out to make them accountable especially the judiciary.

**A Revamped Bureaucracy:** Professor Mohabbat Khan of Dhaka University has labelled Bangladesh bureaucracy becoming increasingly inefficient and incompetent. He posits that the bureaucracy suffers from tunnel vision thereby implying they would fail to perform as transformational leader. He is, rather, giving a total dismal picture, which is probably not fully correct. However, there are areas for improvement like efficiency and motivation level of the bureaucrats. They need to be trained and groomed like transformational leaders. They may be made better experts on the subjects they are handling. More dynamism, motivation, creativity, innovativeness, vision, commitment need to be instilled in the consciousness of the present day Bangladesh

bureaucracy. Their decision making power may be further sharpened to be able to deliver better goods. An efficient, capable, dynamic, committed bureaucracy would contribute greatly in ensuring a better political milieu in the country. This would also act as a restraining factor in politicizing the administration. This would also keep the military happy and thereby ensure better civil-military relations. Better civil-military relations are *sine quo non* for a functional democracy and national security. There would be better role clarity for the military. Military's role and contribution in 'Aid of Civil Power' would be more effective. Bangladesh military's expertise in disaster management is internationally acknowledged which would find meaningful manifestation in such relations. A word of caution may also be pertinent here. Laski sees bureaucracy as a threat to democracy since, as he sees it, the power of the bureaucrats continues to grow to the extent that democratic instruments cannot possibly control it.¹⁴ The answers could be: thorough motivational and attitudinal change curricula are crafted in the training institutes, more control from the judiciary and parliament and more inspection by the political masters and the senior bureaucracy.

**Better Military - Media Relations:** In Bangladesh military-media relation may not be called healthy, if not apathetic. The responsibility for the fault line lies with both the actors. Military, as already indicated, is relatively a closed society, would not like to share even its unclassified information with media, which makes it propitious for the media to speculate. Such speculations even go to the extent of damaging the image of the military. Media, on the other hand, is not well equipped to understand the nuances and technicalities of the military systems and culture. This serious communication gap needs to be bridged for both the media and military to contribute.

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effectively to the democratic dispensation. Military may be more forthcoming when media should be more positive and enlightened about military system of work. For better democratization of the polity bridging military-media communication gap is a necessity.

**Advisory Security Council:** An Advisory Security Council is suggested which can harmonize the requirements of democracy and security. This body would suggest the Cabinet on matters, which may impinge on different facets of security. The council should be headed by the Prime Minister with key Ministers, the Services Chiefs and Cabinet Secretary as members. Members from the civil society, media, and intelligentsia may also be co-opted as members as and when necessary. It is deliberately suggested that the Security Council should be advisory in nature in which case it would not conflict with the Cabinet decisions. This will also work as a feeder institution to the cabinet committee on security affairs.

**Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs:** Rules of Business of the Government permit creation of such a committee. If there are such committees for other ministries, there is a dire need, as practised in India, U.S.A and other countries, of creation of such a committee in Bangladesh. It would be an executive body dishing out security policies for the implementation by the concerned agencies. This committee can, as and when felt necessary, may call for the advice of the Services Chiefs, Chiefs of the Paramilitary Forces and Intelligence Chiefs. It should be headed by the Prime Minister with other concerned ministers as members. Its terms of reference should recognize security in its comprehensive sense.

**President be Directly Elected by the People with more Executive and Judicial Powers:** Although Bangladesh should basically continue with parliamentary system, a deviation may be made, as was done while introducing the Caretaker
Government, and as somewhat similarly practiced in France and Sri Lanka, to elect the president directly by the people. This would act as a kind of check and balance in the parliamentary system. As already suggested President will have exclusive powers of appointing all the judges of the Supreme Court on the recommendation of the Chief Justice. Constitutional experts may also think of extending president’s power in appointing the chairman and members of other constitutional bodies. President may take the support of a search committee for the selection of the chairmen and members of the constitutional bodies. In South Africa, it is the parliament, which first ratifies such appointments, and President then approves those. As supreme commander of the defense forces President’s consent may be made binding while selecting the Services Chiefs. Services Chiefs, however, would continue to be responsible to the Government for all their actions. President may meaningfully be consulted regarding appointments, transfers, and promotion of the officers not below the rank of Major Generals or equivalents. President would have the prerogative of declaring emergency in the whole or in parts of Bangladesh whenever the security and economic life of Bangladesh will be in jeopardy without being advised by the Prime Minister. President may also have the prerogative of sending subjects affecting national security for consideration by the advisory Security Council and the cabinet committee on security affairs. President

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16 Article 141A (1) of the Constitution stipulates,” If the President is satisfied that a grave emergency exists in which the security or economic life of Bangladesh, or any part thereof, is threatened by war or external aggression or internal disturbance, he may issue a Proclamation of Emergency: provided that such Proclamation shall require for its validity the prior counter signature of the Prime Minister.”
himself will head the Non-party Caretaker Government to conduct a free, fair and credible parliamentary election within six months with the help of a council of advisors as given in the Constitution. However, on all other matters President will act on the advice of the Prime Minister. Basic executive powers would continue to be wielded by the Prime Minister.

**More Professionalism and Modernization of the Military:**
The government should, in right earnest, try to make the military politically sterile and make it truly professional. Party political consideration should not influence the promotion of the military officers. Bangladesh military may need to be modernized especially in matters of procurement of state of the art equipments without which the military cannot be made truly professional. A professional military is generally seen to be more politically neutral, and subservient to the legitimate government as observed by Huntington. A truly modern professional military would greatly strengthen the bargaining power of the government in inter-state or multilateral negotiations. And when it is an elected democratic government, its legitimacy would provide the process a multiplier effect.

**More Legal Protection for the Military:** Security of jobs for the military personnel in a democracy is a long felt demand. A thorough reform of military laws, rules and instructions is a necessity for the 21st century in order to come out of the legacy of the British colonial system. Administrative disposal may occasionally be used in firing the military officers and men. In certain cases the aggrieved officers and men may be allowed to appeal to the Supreme Court. This is, as understood, practised in Indian military. However, its knitty gritties have to be worked out.
All Selective Ranks Promotions should be done through the Existing Recommending Boards: All promotions to the selective ranks—except three stars level in the army and two stars level in the other two other services—may be done through the Boards constituted by the respective Services Headquarters and as prescribed in the Rules. However, the government will have the option to approve the promotions up to certain level. This will greatly reduce political influence in selecting more professional, competent senior commanders for the armed forces. This will help the armed forces to be more professional and politically almost sterile. This would rather strengthen both security and democracy in the country. Military’s role clarity would be better crystallized.

Concluding Remarks

Legitimacy of the government in power, in the perception of the citizens, be it democratic, monarchy, dictatorship, is the greatest locus standi for continuance in power. Whenever this legitimacy is questioned by the people at large and the international community the country tends to slide towards crisis and disarray. In a scenario like this both the dimensions of security i.e. internal and external tend to get affected. It may lead to reaching the level of a failed state. Now this legitimacy has to be ensured in the system of succession of power by any means. President Ershad continued to suffer from the stigma of illegitimacy and the country paid a heavy price to restore legitimacy. President Ayub Khan, although was welcome in the initial days, even to the extent that an internationally reputed scholar like Huntington almost called him a semi-god, suffered from legitimacy crisis that resulted in high pitched political turmoil followed by an internal war where international powers got involved. President Parvez
Musharraf is in crisis, which even tends to impinge on country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Even a democratic dictator (for a certain period of time) like Indira Gandhi, after imposing an emergency in the country in 1977 was thoroughly routed in the election that followed. Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, a popular leader in Pakistan, could not sustain when the mass upsurge swept the country in 1977 after the election rigging allegations were levelled against him. Similar situation brew when Begum Khaleda Zia’s (another popular leader in Bangladesh) coming to power in 1996 in a one-sided election, which was perceived to be not legitimate. This legitimacy also helps in keeping the military under professional control and as already said a professional military remains subservient to a politically legitimate government. The final message is: Bangladesh may never lose sight of this legitimacy. Country is vulnerable in many fronts; and also it has many windows of opportunity. Legitimacy will take care and take advantage of both the strengths and weaknesses of the country and bring the country to a medium-sized economy in not-too-distant a future. Bangladesh, endowed with a huge politically conscious and patriotic people, potentialities and heir to one of the finest values, civilization and humanism, could be a model of tolerance, pluralism and vibrant democracy.
Discussant
Role of Security Forces in a Democracy
Dr. Abul Kalam Azad

The role of military in a democracy is an ever-relevant concern since the time of Plato. Given the fact that civil and military establishments are perceived as distinct entities with little or no common elements both have been kept in two separate impermeable compartments since long. In particular, military as an agency has been viewed totally outside the political realm. As Huntington remarks, 'Politics is beyond the scope of military competence, and the participation of military officers in politics undermine their professionalism ... The military officer must remain neutral politically ... The area of military science is subordinate to, and yet independent of the area of politics ... The military profession exists to serve the state ... The superior political wisdom of the statesman must be accepted as a fact". This presumed neutrality and separation of the military from politics is at best a Western concept, if not a complete fiction. Even Huntington's 'Third Wave of Democracy' that swept from the Caribbean to Afro-Asia via Eastern Europe witnessed few military interventions in response to the effective breakdown of democratic civil régimes – with the ostensible aim of restoring democracy and that too with substantial popular support. In few countries, even alternative models of democracy were espoused in which the military was seen as an integral part of the political system rather than an agency outside the political realm as formulated by Huntington. Judged in this light, what then is the current
political trajectory of Bangladesh after a recorded failure in establishing effective democratic governance in the country?

Bangladesh is now at a critical juncture of its political life. After the miserable failure of democracy, the country is currently being run by an army backed caretaker government whose reform program in political and professional institutions are now afloat in order to establish a well functioning democratic political system in Bangladesh. It can be called rather a road map for future peace, development and prosperity of the country. The relevant question is: what role would then the security forces play in the current democratic transition process of Bangladesh?

The author while mentioning about the contribution of security forces in upholding democracy takes only the role of the defense forces into account bypassing the role that the other security agents like the Police, BDR, and RAB etc. can as well play in similar mission in Bangladesh.

In the first section the author could have explained the effects, positive or negative, that the change in type of control during the past régimes had on the army establishment, and could have also identify the type of control that is ideal for civil-military relations. Then, in the same section, while explaining the reasons for military's apathy for further involvement in politics, the author also needs to take few critical factors into account like homogenous character of the people, peoples impatience for democracy, role of civil society, freedom of press, media and newspaper, ability of the political parties to campaign at the grass root level, privatization, role of NGOs, women empowerment etc.

Again, the catalyst role that the Bangladesh security forces are envisioned to play in realizing the myriad comprehensive
security objectives is not clearly explained in the paper. What would be the nature, color and texture of this role? In other words, what new approaches and strategies can the military adopt for addressing the security issues of Bangladesh as understood in a comprehensive sense?

In section titled ‘Attributes of the Defense Forces”, the author fleshes out few attributes that make the defense establishment a unique organization due its organizational structure, hierarchy, command and control system, adaptability, indoctrination with ideology and values etc. The query is how would such attributes, present in the army and absent among the civilians, facilitate reforms and transition to democracy in Bangladesh? Also, the example of Kargil that is cited in the section shows that the military and civil establishments may sometimes find themselves at odds to work together. In this connection, what does the author suggest for a more coordinated relationship between the civil and military establishments? Both have demands that will invariably require constant partnership. For example, the UN Peace Mission, which apparently appears to many as military oriented, is managed by a vast network of civilian components.

Finally, in the section entitled ‘Response’, the author comes out with certain measures for revamping democracy in Bangladesh. These measures are, in fact, reforms, which is the demand of time. The measures stated in the section are indeed valid when democracy needs to be given a face-lift, but then a question arises: what would be the nature and extent of military role in bringing out such reforms? The theme of the paper demands further reflection on this point.
Despite few weaknesses in the paper, the greatest strength of the paper lies in the author’s ability to project the wholehearted commitment of the security forces in upholding democracy in Bangladesh through its consolidation and legitimization. In this respect, the arguments put forward in various sections maintain linearity without any digression. The author has persistently argued that Bangladesh, in order to be politically and economically stable, needs to refine its democratic institutions, make them transparent and accountable and above all set and follow a democratic norm. Until such time, a proper functioning of democracy is ensured, the military and the civilian establishments would not be in a position to work in a congenial atmosphere of mutual trust, confidence and understanding among them. One must take cognizance of the fact that an *entente cordiale* between the two entities is a necessity in perpetuity for the very survival of a nation.
Discussant
Role of Security Forces in a Democracy
Colonel (Retd.) David Shanahan

- The present situation in Bangladesh is one of great tumult and opportunity. The country is facing a host of severe challenges and enormous opportunities.

- Underpinning the paper is the presumptive desirability of transitioning between Huntington's subjective control where the military mirrors the state and is indistinct from it, to one of objective control where the military has separateness and can operate as a tool of, rather than a undifferentiated part of the state.

- Legal protections as to tenure, and apolitical validation or confirmation of promotions and assignments of military personnel are requisite enablers that must be afforded by the government. The corrosive effects of political litmus tests or screens to promotion are evident in all societies that have employed them.

- Together with efforts to make the security forces distinct from the state itself a tandem effort needs to be pursued to ensure that they are not severed from the sovereign people. What connects the people to the security forces should be identified, assessed, and nurtured?

- The paradigm of military forces operating business operations for welfare and/or operational funding has been seen in other countries but has been winnowing over time. China, Indonesia and others who have depended upon such a construct in the past are making concerted efforts to wean themselves from such a paradigm. Of course, this transition must be accompanied by complementary recourses provided from public funds. The question that Bangladesh must wrestle with is whether running business operation is, in the long run, the proper role of forces and if not how to transition from their current use.