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National Security of Bangladesh: Thoughts on Security Strategies

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been a trend in the Western as well as non-Western official and academic circles to redefine the concept of security. This is reflected in the attempts to expand the scope of the concept in terms of the sources of threats - both internal and external - and the subjects/objects of security - the state, group/community and individual citizens. The nature of the threats, which now include non-military as well as military ones, has also come under academic and policy scrutiny. The tendency to re-conceptualize has, of course, been reinforced by the post-Cold War process of globalization of the democratic political values, the market-driven economic philosophy, and the trade and commercial practices. Also, the debate over the nature, constitution and role of the nation-state, the trans-boundary nature of the problems of environmental degradation, refugee flows, terrorism and drug trafficking, and the increasing salience of the intra-state problems, like ethnic and religious strife, poverty, and lack of social cohesion and political stability, have been some of the factors that have led some scholars and analysts to re-think the concept of national security and the other related issues.

In Bangladesh, as elsewhere in the world, there is a tendency to expand the concept of security, both horizontally and vertically, in order to make the security agenda much broader and to legitimize the levels of analysis below the nation-state level. But such broadening of the concept may render it less useful as an analytical tool, as this appears to
capture the whole spectrum of human activity. There is, therefore, an imperative to re-define the concept of security that would reflect the changed reality and, at the same time, serve as an effective and useful tool of analysis.

At the more practical level in the context of Bangladesh, there is also the need for identifying the security threats confronting the nation. To state the obvious, India remains a preoccupation that unfailingly needs to be factored in Bangladesh’s security consideration. The new regional security environment, created as a result of the nuclear testing by India and Pakistan in May 1998, needs to be properly assessed in Bangladesh with a view to discerning the security and policy implications for the country. It is also incumbent on the part of Bangladesh to comprehend the nature and extent of the impact of the ubiquitous process of globalization on the country in order to be able to grab the opportunities on offer and, at the same time, prepare itself for meeting the systemic challenges. It is also thought that security threats and vulnerabilities in Bangladesh may also emanate from the persisting political instability, chronic poverty, environmental degradation, and scramble over resource management, often with trans-boundary elements in it. Many of these security issues may be carried over into the next century, which then might assume different dimension. Therefore, there is a need for identifying both military and non-military threats, emanating from within and without and affecting and are likely to affect in the short-term future the security of Bangladesh.

What then ought to be the security policy Bangladesh needs to pursue in order to be able to meet its security challenges and create enough deterrent capability for securing its territory, the government and state institutions, and for improving the quality of economic, political and socio-cultural life of its citizens? What security options and approaches is Bangladesh to follow - military or non-military, self-reliant or cooperative, or all of them in judicious combination? Security is for what or for whom? Who provides security? Are economic, political and environmental problems national security threats? Can a small, developing nation pursue an autarkic or self-reliant security policy? A discussion on such security issues and options is well
merited, given the significance it bears for a weak, developing country like Bangladesh.

The paper deals with the concept of security in the light of the currently obtaining reality, both within Bangladesh and externally - regionally and globally. It attempts to identify the threats and vulnerabilities impinging on the security of Bangladesh and likely to do so in the near future. The paper goes on to highlight and discuss various options essential for maintaining and enhancing the national security of Bangladesh.

It is argued in the paper that, in order to be useful as an analytical tool, the concept of national security needs to be re-defined in a manner that maintains the essential link with power and the political, while it is broad enough to incorporate the domestic and non-military issues. It is also argued that Bangladesh requires to pursue a security policy that combines elements of the self-reliant option with cooperative security approach and also formulates and implements its defence policy in conjunction with the other instruments of national policy.

II. THE SECURITY PROBLEMATIC

Scholars and analysts have always found it difficult to come to a universally accepted definition of security, each as a result offering his or her understanding and definition of the concept. The difficulty seems to arise from the differences of opinion concerning a variety of factors, such as the sources of security threats, the constitution of the security agenda, the questions of “whose security”, and “who provides security”. There is, of course, the basic divide between the realist paradigm and the alternative discourse as regards formulating the security problematic. The realists have defined security in terms of military threats emanating from across the national frontiers. For example, Walter Lippmann wrote that “security rises and falls with the ability of a nation to deter an attack or defeat it”. He maintains that “a nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by such a victory in such a war”.\(^1\) Notably, Lippmann does not elaborate on what
constitutes core values. Maniruzzaman seems to attempt to remove the apparent 'vagueness' of Lippmann's reference to core values when he writes that "by security we mean protection and preservation of minimum core values of any nation: political independence and territorial integrity". Here, core values may be understood to be those fundamental interests of a nation for which it is prepared to go to war. And the referent subject/object and provider of security is, of course, the state.

However, even during the Cold War period, there had been those who had rejected the realist view of security and would attempt to broaden the concept by including non-military issues in the security discourse. With the end of the Cold War, the alternative paradigms have tended to gain in prominence in their efforts to reconceptualize security and also exert influence on matters of policy formulation and execution. They tend to favour expanding the concept of security, both horizontally and vertically. Ken Booth, for example, gives a broad definition of security as he equates security with 'emancipation'. He argues that "emancipation is the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from the physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do.... Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power, or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security." He maintains that "a more secure foundation for security is the pursuit of emancipation, since it encourages a focus on people, justice and change...Through emancipation comes lasting peace."

He goes on to argue that "human security is ultimately more important than state security. It thereby helps to dislodge the state as the primary referent: as a result, states become the means and not the ends of security." In another place he states that "the vertical expansion of the concept of security involves conceiving of it as a level-of-analysis problem.... [that] states are not the only entities: alternatives include individual human beings, nations, ethnic and kinship groups and, potentially, the whole global community of humankind" and that human rights and environment also raise security issues.
Another reformulated, broad view refers to what is called the common security. Here, the security of the citizens, who are outside the apparatus of the state—the poor, women, and children's security—is what is considered most important. According to this view, security is common when it ensures that the poor have access to resources, freedom from environmental degradation and the pollution of others' economic activities, and the assurances of these things into the foreseeable future. It is further argued that security needs to encompass the interests of people, rather than just states, in gaining access to food, shelter, basic human rights, health care, and the environmental conditions that allow these things to be provided into the long-term future.

The intellectual and practical problem with such indiscriminate broadening of the security problematic seems to obfuscate its meaning. While the realist paradigm is too restrictive, the critical theorists' view is too inclusive. In fact, such elastic, expansionist definition of the concept perhaps makes it less useful as an analytical tool. After all, a concept must be helpful in understanding and analyzing events, phenomena and processes occurring in human society or in nature.

Barry Buzan seems to position himself somewhere in between the two extreme views regarding security. He seems to attempt to transcend the limitations of the idealist approach to peace and the realist focus on power. He structures his analysis in terms of three levels—the individual, the state and the international system—and gives a wider security agenda categorizing it in terms of five sectors: political, military, economic, societal and environmental. While the security agenda with Buzan looks wide, he seems in the ultimate analysis to keep to the status quo in the sense that his views appear supportive of the idea that the state is the provider of security to its citizens. More importantly, while he incorporates non-military issues into his security discourse, he does not exactly say how they ultimately become security threats to the state and the regime.

Imtiaz Ahmed has altogether a different view about national security. He seems to see the threats to the national security of Bangladesh as emanating from the country's sub-
national groups and from those who feel insecure from various wants. In order to provide security to all, he therefore suggests that the very nation-state be reconstructed and a different development strategy be followed.

However, a state-centric definition of security still seems to provide a more useful analytical tool in an order that still remains essentially Westphalian with its three pillars of territoriality, authority and sovereignty. It means that security still remains a political value and the primary referent of security remains the state. Here, the author’s views are similar to those of Ayoob’s who argues that “it would be wrong to assume that such issues [economic, environmental etc] automatically form part of the calculus of national or international security. In order to do so, they must demonstrate the capacity immediately to affect political outcomes”. Ayoob maintains that “while retaining its primacy in the definition of security the political realm must be informed by these other arenas of human activity. Yet, the influence of the other realms on matters that pertain to, or have a bearing on, security must be filtered and mediated through the political arena and must be directly relevant to that realm. Phenomena like economic deprivation and environmental degradation should be analyzed as events, occurrences, and valuables that may be linked to, but essentially distinct from, the arena of security”.

Ayoob goes on to argue that “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 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”.

The reason for borrowing from Ayoob’s writings so extensively is that his definition of national security has the advantage of being analytically more useful as it goes beyond the realist restrictive nature and ‘reins in’ the critical theorists’ expansionist tendency in defining the concept. He redefines more realistically the concept of national security without obfuscating the issues involved and the discussion
about them. In the light of the above, attempts may be made to identify the security threats to Bangladesh.

III. SECURITY AGENDA OF BANGLADESH

Attempts will be made in this section to identify the sources and nature of security threats to Bangladesh. Let us first examine whether Bangladesh confronts any conventional threats to its security, i.e., military threats from across its borders. Bangladesh borders with only two countries - India and Myanmar. However, Bangladesh's geopolitical environment is not necessarily favourable, being bounded on three sides by India, which is vastly asymmetric in terms of size and power potentials. Although Dhaka's relations with New Delhi are close and friendly and the borders are generally peaceful, India's military intervention may not be altogether discounted in the event of any developments in Bangladesh considered prejudicial to the regional giant's perceived security interests. One would like to consider it a highly unlikely scenario, but no one exactly guarantees a nation's permanent friends and foes. The continuing insurgency in India's north-eastern states might impinge on Bangladesh's security in that the common borders might not remain peaceful and that India might attempt to use the Bangladesh territory to quell the armed groups. It must be appreciated that India has helped Bangladesh resolve its insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). However, celebrations ought to be circumspect by the mere thought that India could repeat its role by sheltering, arming and training the CHT rebels should they choose to launch another insurgency against Dhaka.

Although Bangladesh and Myanmar share a relatively small border, it has been pretty much eventful in the past two decades. Thanks to Myanmar's internal political dynamics, there have been two waves of the Rohingya refugees having crossed over into Bangladesh in 1978 and 1992-93 respectively. The refugee crises had not only cast dark shadow over the political relations between the two neighbours, there also occurred potentially dangerous border skirmishes on both the occasions. Although the Rohingya problems have been resolved peacefully through arduous
diplomatic means and with the refugees repatriated (only
about 20,000 are still to return to Arakan) to Myanmar, a
repeat enactment of the tragic refugee flow scenario in the
future cannot perhaps be ruled out.

The maritime boundary of Bangladesh has not been
demarcated either with India or with Myanmar. The Bay of
Bengal is now known to be a repository of minerals as well as
living resources. An eventuality cannot be discounted when
there could be scrambles over these resources between and
among the three maritime neighbours, with the involvement
of gunboat diplomacy that might not necessarily be palatable
to the national interests of Bangladesh.

Although it is often argued that the 'strategic parity'
between India and Pakistan, buttressed by their nuclear
capability, would stabilize the politico-security environment
in South Asia, the nuclear tests conducted by the two
regional antagonists have engendered a tremendous sense of
insecurity in the neighbouring non-nuclear weapons states.
The fear is not only psychological, it is also real in terms of
the physical fallout from the testing as well as the possibility
of an actual nuclear exchange between Islamabad and New
Delhi, accidental or otherwise.

It would be interesting to examine whether Bangladesh
faces any systemic security threats emanating from the
globalization process, including the World Trade Organization
(WTO) regime. Indeed, if and when the 'borderless'
information technology 'invades' Bangladesh, one could
argue that the country's territorial sovereignty has been
violated. Again, when Bangladesh is given 'lessons' in
democracy and human rights and when she is given the
'guidelines' for its economic policy and is unfairly subjected
to world trade rules, one could say that she is constrained in
exercising sovereignty in matters of policy planning and
policy implementation. This is an ongoing debate over the so-
called eclipse of the nation-state or over the redefinition of
the role of the nation-state. And one could argue in favour of
or against the subject.

The other important question is whether Bangladesh's
internal problems, like political instability, economic
depression and environmental degradation, are posing any
threats to its national security. Let us take the issue of
political instability first. It is true that, despite its ethno-linguistic homogeneity, Bangladesh cannot pride herself on her societal cohesion and, more importantly, on her political culture. It is too divisive in approach and too intolerant in attitude towards political opponents and the alternative views to create a long-term stable environment in the country. However, this may cause security threats only if external forces take advantage of the situation and intervene in any form, or the regime survival is at stake, or the state institutions come under attack. Although some of this type of scenario did take place in Bangladesh in the past, it is unlikely that the current political situation engenders any such security threats as understood in the light of the concept of security the present author adheres to.

As regards poverty, it may be considered a national security threat, if and when it leads to political and social turmoil threatening the ruling regime or any other state institutions or structures. Also, if and when poverty is seen to critically affect the budget allocation for defence and/or to impact on the recruitment process of the security forces of the country, it may be treated as a security threat. In other words, poverty as such does not constitute a security threat unless it leads to critical political upheaval or even revolution.

It is clear from the above discussion that Bangladesh faces several potential security threats of military and non-military nature that may emanate from both internal and external sources. The pertinent question now is how Bangladesh may go about dealing with these threats.

IV. SECURITY MANAGEMENT

Like any other country, the security objectives of Bangladesh are to defend its territory, safeguard the state structures and institutions, avoid intra-state and inter-state armed conflicts, maintain an efficient and stable democratic mode of governance and improve the standard of living of the common man in an environment-friendly ambience by means of policies pursued without any dictates from external source(s). Clearly, this calls for both military and non-military security strategies for the management of Bangladesh's security. Some of these strategies are discussed
Although Bangladesh is already seen to adopt some of these strategies, singly or in combination, the purpose here is to highlight the wide range of options available to her.

a. A large standing military

Bangladesh is a rim state bordering on a regional great power. As evidenced by history, a rim state is vulnerable to violation of its territory and independence by a neighbouring Goliath. As such, it is often suggested that Bangladesh needs a large and strong military to meet the exigencies of war or armed conflict with an external enemy, or even to fight an internal insurgency. However, raising and maintaining a large security force often tends to outrun state capacities. The question of guns-versus-butter comes into the security equation. The demand for budget allocation for the more pressing development sectors is so high that Bangladesh finds itself almost between the fire and the frying pan. A few pertinent questions can be raised here. For example, how large a military Bangladesh would require? What would be its force structure? What/whom would it be meant to fight with and for how long? All this calls for a meticulous threat assessment at the highest political level, to be then followed by a security doctrine and a defence policy. Again, all this has to be a part of the country's national security strategy as well as the overall national policy. However, a good deal of coherent, hard thinking regarding national security strategy and higher defence planning is still to be done by the policy makers and the relevant institutions and individuals.

There are other arguments constraining the expansion of the military. For example, it is suggested that the Bangladesh military does not need to go for enlargement in terms of manpower and that a small, well-trained force with smart weapons systems will do. Having a large standing military having only conventional weapons also comes under scrutiny in a regional context where the perceived adversaries may be equipped with nuclear weapons. The security experts as well as the concerned authorities in Bangladesh ought to think hard for meeting the potential nuclear threats to the country. One suggestion could be that Bangladesh come to bilateral arrangements with both India and Pakistan or to trilateral agreement about the no-first-use of nuclear weapons against
non-nuclear weapons states, or even discuss the possibility of seeking protection under the nuclear umbrella of a world-class power. This should, of course, be in addition to Bangladesh's continuing efforts to make South Asia a nuclear weapons free zone and for universal nuclear disarmament.

A relevant aspect here is the issue of civil-military relations. A healthy relationship between the military and the civilian population strengthens the morale and fighting capability of the defence personnel. What is required for this are closer and more extensive interactions between the two sides, beginning with more openness, on the part of the military, and better appreciation of the profession and role of the military in a nation's life, on the part of the civilian population. Where the enemy/adversary is hugely asymmetric in terms of conventional forces and other power attributes, scholars tend to offer several other strategies for a small country.

b. Strategy of Nation-in-Arms

Talukder Maniruzzaman prescribes this strategy for the defence of Bangladesh. He writes, “this is the strategy of total resistance by the nation-in-arms”. He quotes Clausewitz who said that “the nation itself rises and takes part in the war and a new force comes into being”, that the arming of a nation is “a great means of defence”, one that “awakens a thousand small sources of resistance which would remain dormant without it”. Maniruzzaman maintains that “preparing the nation for such resistance requires the training of every able-bodied male and female citizen in a defensive war.... It is manpower-intensive and less weapon-intensive. It is a strategy of maximum effectiveness at minimum cost”. However, this strategy is sure to meet with fierce resistance from the existing military establishment, as the strategy will result in their diminution in size and clout. Although this is more of a political strategy than a military one, Bangladesh's political establishment is not yet known to have given any serious thought to it. Given Bangladesh's geopolitical location, size and resource constraints, a good deal of meaningful debate over such a defence strategy seems to be a worthwhile proposition.
A distinguished African scholar suggests a similar security strategy under the name of "Graveyard Strategy". Imobighe argues that "since it is a strategy which commits a country to resist aggression to the last citizen, the grave-yard strategy satisfies the essential principles of an effective deterrence policy. This is because apart from maximizing the cost of aggression, the strategy seeks to deny the potential aggressor any possible gain by presenting the latter with the most likely option of perishing in the process of its aggression or inheriting a graveyard. The point is that the incentive for aggression will be diminished considerably the very moment it is understood that there is nothing worthwhile to gain". 14

The main objective of this strategy is to develop a resistance package that will render the entire nation completely inhospitable to any invading forces. This is particularly significant when the physical terrain of Bangladesh has changed for the worse from defence point of view. Brigadier Hafiz quite pertinently points out that Bangladesh is no more a defender's paradise or an attacker's nightmare. He goes on with his emphasis on that "the impregnable Maginot line protecting our vital ground is already breached. This reality will have to be the point of departure in evolving our new defence policy". 15

c. Foreign policy as a security strategy

Armed conflict is the last resort for a weak and small country. Its foreign policy is its first line of defence and security. The foreign policy of such a country ought to be prosecuted in a manner as to serve as a deterrent against any external forces, by cultivating most friendly and cordial relations with its immediate neighbours and with those countries located further afield but are economically, ideologically and strategically important to it, and by playing an active role in the United Nations and other multilateral economic and political forums. Bangladesh has, of course, been conducting such a foreign policy.

d. Policy of Neutrality

This policy means that a neutral country will not involve itself in others' wars and conflicts, nor will it let others get involved in its own crises of such nature. The policy of
neutrality is voluntarily declared by a state, while the others commit themselves to respect and uphold the status of the neutral country. Switzerland and Sweden are such neutral countries. It is important not to confuse a neutral country with a neutralized one. The latter is made by the outside powers (which may be even mutually antagonistic to each other) due to certain circumstances to declare itself neutral so that it is beneficial to those compelling it. Austria, for example, fell prey to such circumstances in 1955 when it declared neutrality by way of signing the State Treaty at the behest of both the East and West. Whether the policy of neutrality is suitable for Bangladesh remains to be seen.

e. Alliance with great power(s)

As alliance relationship is forged between two or more powers against a big, common threat, it is unlikely that either Bangladesh or China will see it fit to come into an alliance against the United States or India. Similarly, Bangladesh and Pakistan are not likely to forge an alliance relationship vis-a-vis India. It is also not a probable scenario that Bangladesh and the USA would agree to build an alliance against China and/or India. However, when Washington made a proposal to Dhaka in the beginning of 1998 for stationing American forces in Bangladesh for the purpose of limited humanitarian assistance (officially called Humanitarian Assistance Needs Assessment - HANA - and Status of Forces Agreement - SOFA), it was perceived in some quarters in the country to have been essentially anti-Chinese and anti-Indian. A few anti-Indian voices were heard in support of permitting US military bases on the Bangladesh soil as well as seeking US nuclear protection against India. These were lone voices, but many felt that the idea nevertheless merited serious debate. However, the government of Bangladesh has not yet agreed to honour the American request.

f. Bilateral approach: Bangladesh’s India policy

It is no secret that India has always been the prime concern in Bangladesh’s foreign policy and security calculus. This has been the case due to their asymmetry in size and power, the location factor, and New Delhi’s strategic
ambitions in the region. Given these dynamics in its relationship with India, Bangladesh seems to have several policy options in respect of its dealings with the regional giant: to follow a subservient policy, or a confrontational policy, or a non-conformist policy, or a 'pilot fish' policy. None of the successive governments of Bangladesh can be considered to have pursued either of the first two policies. Certain Bangladesh governments may be said to have pursued a pilot fish policy towards India, while certain other Bangladesh governments may be understood to have followed a non-conformist approach. The essence of the latter's policy has been to be non-accommodative to the interests and concerns of India and pursue a divergent but not necessarily a confrontational or deliberately troublesome policy. The pilot fish policy, essentially meaning keeping close to the shark to avoid being eaten, has been aimed at redressing the imbalance in size and power without provoking India. The policy might have elements of benign accommodation, while, at the same time, maintaining a strictly non-conformist posture and not prejudicing Bangladesh's core national values, interests and concerns. Such policy tends to relax tensions in the bilateral relationship and is well reciprocated by India. However, it would be a whole lot better for Bangladesh to develop and pursue a non-partisan policy towards India on the basis of sovereign equality for a peaceful, enduring and mutually beneficial relationship between the two close neighbours.

g. Regional cooperation as a security strategy

This is positive security, as it entails socio-economic aspects of development and threat perceptions. From regional cooperation arrangement in South Asia, Bangladesh essentially seeks to address at least two of its core concerns: the much-needed economic development and the 'India factor'. Apart from the expected economic benefits, Bangladesh tends to feel more secure in an asymmetric geopolitical and geo-economic situation by engaging India in a multilateral framework and thereby also deepening bilateral relations. This is indeed sensible from Bangladesh point of view. India is also appreciative of such regional arrangement, as it is not necessarily antagonistic to her core interests.
Therefore, regional cooperation needs to be expanded and deepened, particularly in the areas of intra-regional trade, investment and industrial cooperation, for equitable gains for all participating member states.

h. Cooperative Security

Cooperative security is a post-Cold War concept. While it has been gaining in currency in the West over the last few years in the security studies parlance, it was not fashionable in the security vocabulary in South Asia until recently. Basically, the idea is to ensure security from cooperation with another one or more countries and not from competition with it or them. The concept of cooperative security emerged from the writings and pronouncements of analysts and practitioners like William Perry, Ashton Carter, Wolfgang Reinicke and John Steinbruner. According to them, "cooperative engagement is a strategic principle that seeks to accomplish its purposes through institutionalized consent rather than through threats of material or physical coercion. It presupposes fundamentally compatible security objectives and seeks to establish collaborative rather than confrontational relationships among national military establishments. The basis for such collaboration is mutual acceptance of and support for the defense of home territory as the exclusive national military objective and the subordination of power projection to the constraints of international consensus. A fully developed cooperative security arrangement embodying these principles would set and enforce appropriate standards for the size, concentration, technical configuration, and operational practices of deployed forces. Reassurance would be the principal objective, as distinct from deterrence and containment, although as a practical matter both of the latter objectives would be securely accomplished.... At the practical level, cooperative security seeks to devise agreed-upon measures to prevent war and to do so primarily by preventing the means for successful aggression from being assembled.... Cooperative security is a model of interstate relations in which disputes are expected to occur, but they are expected to do so within the limits of agreed-upon norms and established procedures."
Clearly, cooperative security is not synonymous with collective security. While the former is designed to ensure that organized aggression cannot start or be prosecuted on any large scale, the latter is an arrangement for deterring aggression through military preparation and defeating it, if it occurs. However, both the strategies are mutually reinforcing. 18

Cooperative security is essentially military security, as it pertains to the relations and contacts between the military establishments of two countries or more. The objective is also primarily military since this strategy is meant for setting and enforcing various standards for the deployed force. In fact, this strategy has been a result of the altered security environment following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, which demanded revisions in security concepts and security planning. The West, particularly the United States, does not now require keeping the options open for massive ground assault or for deliberate nuclear attack. Cooperative security appears to be a strategy of those who have emerged triumphant from the Cold War rivalry. It seems to be designed to freeze their military superiority over the vanquished as well as over any other new sources of trouble and to carry on unhindered the globalization of the values of the winners in the ideological struggle.

Cooperative security, understood in such essentials, may not be quite replicable in the context of South Asia as a whole. However, Mattoo has suggested the strategy of cooperative security in an attempt to address the Indo-Pakistan rivalry. In addition, he has done a commendable job of creatively broadening the concept. He seems to add a new meaning to it, as he argues that cooperative security is a "political climate in which there is little danger of war [which] can allow policy establishments to give their undivided attention to non-military threats and the other---still largely ignored---dimensions of security". And that is how he builds a cooperative security model for the whole of South Asia, with military, political and socio-economic elements of cooperation in it, in the short-, medium- and long-term perspectives. 19 It is now worthwhile to consider cooperative security as a security strategy for Bangladesh.
i. Cooperative Security as a security strategy of Bangladesh

Bangladesh tends to subscribe to this concept, but only in its economic sense. In fact, she plays a pioneering role in multilateral economic cooperation arrangements. Mention has already been made about regional cooperation in South Asia within the framework of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Bangladesh is one of the member states of the group of D-8, launched in June 1997 in Istanbul, Turkey, for economic cooperation among eight Muslim countries widely dispersed in physical location. Closer to home, an economic cooperation arrangement, called the BISTEC (Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation), has been floated also in June 1997 among the Bay of Bengal rim nations. The grouping has been renamed as BIMSTEC as a result of Myanmar joining in later on. However, an idea more potent for Bangladesh has been around over the last several years, and this is about sub-regional cooperation in eastern South Asia involving Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. From a Bangladesh perspective, it may be seen as a cooperative security strategy in so far as it has the potential to promote and deepen relations with three other SAARC countries, particularly with India, to bring economic benefits to the country and to prevent social and political instability in it.

South Asian Growth Quadrangle (SAGQ): The concept had been mooted in December 1996 by the governments of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India, with a view to expediting the pace of economic cooperation by linking the first three sovereign, independent nation-states with the north-eastern federating states of the latter. There seem to be adequate potentials for growth and cooperation among the four countries, several serious impediments notwithstanding. Bangladesh could meet some of its economic needs and security concerns by doing the following. Bangladesh’s Chittagong and Mongla ports, particularly the former, ought to be developed into major seaports for the entire sub-region. They could thrive on various allied service industries, while Chittagong ought to turn itself into the commercial capital of the proposed sub-regional economic
zone. Bangladesh, having further developed these two and established few other new seaports, would be in a position to use the rest of the sub-region as its hinterland. Transit facilities could be granted to India's northeastern states to use the Chittagong port. And Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, has the potential to become the financial and air transportation hub in the proposed sub-region.

In the regional context, Bangladesh could promote its cooperative security strategy by initiating ideas for restructuring the political relationships between and among the SAARC member states. Some of these ideas might be to include bilateral and contentious issues in the SAARC Charter, discuss confidence and security building measures (CSBMs), including resolution of outstanding issues, non-aggression pact, arms control and guarantees from India and Pakistan for the security of the non-nuclear weapons states in the region.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

While it is true that the term 'security' has many meanings and uses, attempt has been made in the paper to redefine the concept in a manner that is more reflective of the reality. It can perhaps claim to have struck a balance between the restrictive realist position and the attempts to indiscriminately widen the concept, not for the sake of projecting just a different view but for the concern for getting at a more useful analytical tool. After all, the purpose of the concept of security is certainly not to explain the entire gamut of human or human-related activity.

The paper is a quire mix of security studies and strategic studies. While the former is essentially an academic enterprise or intellectual activity, the latter is a policy science, dealing with analysis and policy advice respectively. As such, the paper has ventured to combine analytical approach with indulgence in policy prescription. As Bangladesh potentially faces both military and non-military threats internally and externally, her security strategy ought to be holistic in approach and composition. It needs to combine her autarkic efforts to maintain and enhance its security with assistance and cooperation from friends in the neighbourhood and further afield. The defence-development
dilemma needs to be approached prudently and judiciously. Bangladesh must have peaceful borders, socio-political stability, economic development, internal and external policy freedom, and generous and genuine friends abroad. Her security policy is required to contribute towards the realization of these goals.
Endnotes


4. Ibid. p. 319.


11. This strategy is variously called, such as nation-in-arms, national resistance, people’s war, militia system, territorial defence, etc. See for


16. For details on pilot fish policy see Erling Bjol, "The Small States in International Politics" in August Scholu and Arne Olav (eds.), *Small States in International Relations*, Almqvist and Wiksell, Stockholm, 1971, p.33


