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CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS IN DEMOCRACY: BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

Civil-Military relations are an age-old phenomenon. It involves a multiplicity of relationship between civilian authorities and military institutions of a country. Since the 20th century, civil-military relations have been developing as an important area of study to understand the interactions between the two entities. Many scholars like Samuel P. Huntington and Morris Janowitz have tried to analyse civil-military relations in the context of political approaches and social fabrics of a country. The theoretical developments to understand civil-military relations are also noteworthy. The Post-Modernist Theory as well as the Democratic Peace Theory is relevant to understand civil-military relations in the context of contemporary developments. In modern democratic societies, civil-military relations are considered as a *sine qua non* for proper functioning of democratic institutions where military establishment remains under the full control of civilian authority and contributes in aid to civilian administration when necessary. However, the experiences of civil-military relations are not same in all the countries. Developing an effective civil-military relation still remains a challenge for many countries. Since independence in 1971, Bangladesh has experienced a lot of challenges to develop an effective framework in this regard. In this backdrop, the present paper is an endeavour to understand civil-military relations in the context of democracy as well as to make an assessment regarding the civil-military relations in Bangladesh. The findings of the paper are that the idea of civil-military relations is still evolving and to maintain a democratic order, a country needs to develop cohesive relations between civilian authority and military administration. Bangladesh has achieved a lot in the civil-military relations, but still faces a number of challenges in this regard. The country needs to address such challenges to ensure effective democratic functioning of the country.

1.   Introduction

Civil-Military relations represent the interaction between the two most important elements of the society – civilians and the military. The military, as an institution, acts as the guardian of a country's sovereignty. On the other hand, civilians exercise their control over the military to ensure the professional growth of the latter. The theory of civil-military relations took its formal epistemic form at the turn of the

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20th century. Since then, there has been a profusion of literature on the subject. The main reason has been, despite the universally acclaimed uniqueness of the militaries, they are also the product of their societies' traditions, ethos and proclivities. But following the end of the Cold War and the mighty vindication of democracy as a tool of governance, the concept of post-modern soldier has gained eminence cemented by technological dominance in military profession. Transformations of the societies have also influenced the mould of civil-military relations model. This has also influenced the civil-military relations in Bangladesh where transition to durable democratic values has led to hypothesising this relation in a new light.

Effective civil-military relations based on mutual respect and understanding is important for promoting democracy and good governance. Over the period, the issues involved in civil-military relations, both in Western democracies and developing countries have changed largely. Till now, the debate over autonomy of the military and the nature of civilian control remains a major area of civil-military relations study. A large number of research works were carried out to explain the political role of the military in Asia, Africa and Latin America. These studies included the motives and the environments for political interventions, the types of military regimes and the impacts of the interventions on political development.[1] Although the Cold War era lacked the civil-military relations attributes, concurrent proliferation of democratic practices in place of authoritarian and military regimes took place in the post-Cold War period. During that time, many countries across Latin America, Eastern Europe, South Asia, the Pacific Rim and the erstwhile Soviet Union inaugurated mechanisms for civilian supervision of their militaries through rewritten and refurbished constitutions.[2] In a democratic state, the military accepts civilian political supremacy whereas political leadership agrees on not to politicise the military. A strictly apolitical military acts as a pillar of democracy rather than a threat. The role of the military in the areas of national and regional security seems to be very much important for overall development of a country. Thus, the focus is more on to what extent does the military help to develop democracy.

Since its independence, Bangladesh experienced civil-military relations with notable ups and downs in the relation. As the country faced a number of authoritarian regimes including periods of military rule, it has developed a mixed experience of civil-military relations for the people. Although Bangladesh faced several challenges regarding civil-military relations, its military has also made notable positive contributions which played a role in creating better democratic environment. Bangladesh military has created a place in the UN peacekeeping operations becoming the largest troops-sending country at present and securing an important decision making role in peacekeeping missions. It played a key role in restoring democracy in war-torn Haiti

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[1] Aurel Croissant and David Kuehn, "Civilian Control of Military and Democracy: Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives", in Paul Chambers and Aurel Croissant (eds.), *Democracy under Stress: Civil-Military Relations in South and Southeast Asia*, Bangkok, Thailand: Institute of Security and International Studies (ISIS), 2010, pp. 21-25.

[2] Syed Anwar Husain, "Identifying and Promoting Goals to Build Confidence and Trust in Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh", paper presented in the Workshop on *Civil-Military Relations: Trust Building*, organised by BIISS and Defense Institution Reform Initiative (DIRI), USA on 22-23 June 2010 at Dhaka.

and Sierra Leone. In the domestic scene, Bangladesh military played a leading role in disaster management and many nation-building development activities.

Against this backdrop, the objective of the paper is to identify the challenges regarding civil-military relations in Bangladesh and find out possible solutions in this regard. To do so, the paper will review the concept of civil-military relations and its importance in a democratic state. It will look for the challenges of civil-military relations in Bangladesh and attempt to suggest possible actions to attain effective civil-military relations. Apart from the brief introduction, second section will conceptualise the issue of civil-military relations. The role of civil-military relations in a democratic state will be discussed in the third section. The overall situation of civil-military relations in the context of Bangladesh will be assessed in the fourth section with outlining the achievements and challenges of civil-military relations. The fifth section will try to come up with applicable policy suggestions to tackle the challenges. Finally, the sixth section will summarise and conclude the paper.

2.   Understanding Civil-Military Relations

Conceptually, civil-military relations refer to relations between the civilian authority and the military establishment of a state. In a normative assumption, civil-military relations underline civilian control over military where the civilian government takes the major security policies and military implements the directions of civilian authority. Samuel P. Huntington explains civil-military relations as the whole gamut of interaction of military and political forces in a given state. His book, titled, *The Soldier and the State* is considered as a classic work to understand civil-military relations.[3] He produced a rational theory about civil-military relations. Morris Janowitz's book, titled, *The Professional Soldier* is also considered as one of the influential works for understanding civil-military relations. Therefore, this section tries to review the significant efforts of Huntington and Janowitz along with the assessment of the contribution of Post-Modernist Theory and Democratic Peace Theory in the context of civil-military relations.

Huntington, in his book, *The Soldier and the State*, describes five types of civil-military relations along with their features.[4] First type of civil-military relations is found in the primitive societies. This is based on "anti-military ideology, high military political power and low military professionalism" situation. More primitive societies offer this type of civil-military relations where military professionalism is neglected. This scenario is also observed in more advanced countries where there is sudden eruption of security threats and the military rapidly rise to political power. It was the characteristic of Turkey and Italy in the first quarter of the 20th century. In modern times, this pattern is followed in many oil-rich countries. Second pattern of civil-military relations is seen in societies where there is a strong political influence on the

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[3] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957.
[4] *Ibid*.

military. This is based on the situation of "anti-military ideology, low military political power, and low military professionalism". Authoritarian rulers in modern totalitarian states produce such behaviour. Syria or modern day Russia is example of this type.

Third type of civil-military relations is made upon the situation of "anti-military ideology, low military political power and high military professionalism". A society which suffers few external threats is likely to produce this type of civil-military relations. The rise of professionalism after the Civil War in the United States (US) exemplifies this kind of behaviour. Fourth type of civil-military relations is made upon the situation on "pro-military ideology, high military political power and high military professionalism". A society with continuing security threats will obviously produce an ideology sympathetic to military values with concurrent high military power in politics as well as high level of military professionalism. The most outstanding example of this type of civil-military relations is found in Germany during Otto Von Bismarck. The last type of civil-military relations is found in a society where civil-military relations are dominated by strong mutual respect of each other between political masters and military commanders. This is made upon the situation of "pro-military ideology, low military political power and high military professionalism". This is a model for modern democracies. Britain has tended to this variety as a unique example.

Huntington closely observed the dynamics of power struggle between the two groups with the change in patterns discussed earlier. Power is essentially a symbol of strength. It is also an index of character. People with strong physical features often display weak personality. For politicians, it is also an indication of their ability to control or influence things according to their will. Therefore, political control over military establishes a kind of authority that guarantees a smooth and stable form of submission. However, mishandling of the military by the politicians can cause great damage to the institution and therefore, to the state also. He also mentioned about the concept of "objective civilian control". This ensures civilian control over the military which increases security at the same time. Regarding this, Huntington argued that, "in practice, officership is strongest and most effective when it most closely approaches the professional ideal; it is weakest and most defective when it falls short of that ideal".[5] He also argued that an officer corps is professional to the extent it exhibits the qualities of expertise, responsibility and corporateness. In addition to enhancing effectiveness, these traits also enhance civilian control because a professional military seeks to distance itself from politics.[6]

Morris Janowitz, another classic theorist, with brilliant ideas on the subject differs from Samuel P. Huntington. His book, titled *The Professional Soldier* showed that the professional military officer has changed a lot under the tremendous technological change. Morris Janowitz argued that the two World Wars have effectively blurred the distinction between civilian and military affairs. He welcomed the

[5] *Ibid*.
[6] *Ibid*.

supposed "civilianisation of the military". He was pro-military and favoured a societal integration and recommended for a small but of high quality military professionals based on merit and competence. Civilian control of the military must be seen purely from organisational perspective. As an impersonal organic being, personal conflicts between military and political masters are neutralised by military's absorption into society as a normal phenomenon. He focused on normative assumptions related to the theory of democracy. Janowitz used a methodology which included content analysis. He conducted a survey of 760 Generals and Admirals and 576 military officers from the Pentagon and interviewed over 100 high-level officers.

Like Huntington, Janowitz focused on military elites. He demonstrated the changing nature of organisational authority based on personnel management that promised similarities between the military and civilian spheres. This means that military's new dimension of activities is shaped by corporatism. This is the consequence of professional pressures and conditions tending to make soldiers more technical and proficient in discharging their functions. More civilian participation is required to meet the specialised technical and scientific capacities of the military equipment and weapons. This has also led to narrowing the gap between the military and the civil in the broader sense. Janowitz found that the military commanders in the US, despite being professionally meritorious and competent, were drawn into politics in terms of policy formulation in national security. Politicians decide whether a state should go to war or not; and when the decision is in the affirmative, they look for support elsewhere for they know that they are not professionally qualified to prosecute the operational and tactical tasks of war-fighting. In that regard, a General or an Admiral is the most competent person to bring on board his specialised knowledge for which he has been trained and educated for long years. War and national security are the two most vital components in state life that a state cannot afford to ignore.[7]

Both Huntington and Janowitz produced an impact in the minds of the public and the soldier. Distinguishing features of their works have provided us with an episteme about an essential phenomenon of social existence. The anthropological perspectives of social divisions produce cultural differences that are rooted in the attitude, behaviour and organisational make-up. The role of social sciences is to dig deep into the causes of differences and make distinct the points that can bring togetherness amongst groups with rational pontification. Both forwarded alternative theories to fears of politicisation of the military as well as militarisation of politics. They were both civic and liberal in their approaches to find a role of the military in the society. Huntington's "objective civilian control" or Janowitz's "civic-republic order" was emphasising upon an objective realisation of the civil-military relations in terms of enjoying public sanction.

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[7] Suzanne C. Nielson, "Civil-Military Relations: Theory and Military Effectiveness", *Public Administration and Management*, Vol.10, No. 2, 2005, pp. 61-84.

Apart from Huntintong and Janowitz's contribution to civil-military relations concept, other approaches such as Post-Modernist Theory and Democratic Peace Theory also offer significant knowledge about the concept of civil-military relations. The post-modernist approach offers the philosophy to understand human condition and the term is applied to a host of movements in the arts, architecture and criticism that is a departure from modernism. As a general theory for a historical movement, it was first used in 1939 by Arnold J. Toynbee: "Our own Post-Modern Age has been inaugurated by the general war of 1914–1918."[8] Toynbee's approach to associate the start of a social movement with the profession of soldiers is illuminating. In true sense, post-modernism's most well-known interpretation is "deconstruction". Developed by French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, the notion looks for the interpretation of social relationship within the meaning of values created by the text. By text, Derrida signified the power of language. In line with this conception, the language which the military communicates should be called "Military Language" and may be treated as different from the one used by its civilian counterpart. This privileged position of the language carries with it several obligations. The post-modernist view of language coincides with current post-modernist notion of the military.

The term "post-modern" as applied to the military must imply some significant departure from earlier forms of military organisation. Drawing heavily on the historical experience, a three-fold typology of the military is worth recounting. The first is the modern type, which can date from the 19th century to the end of World War II. The second is the late-modern type, which prevailed from the mid 20th century into the early 1990s and is essentially co-terminus with the Cold War period. The post-modern type is the kind in the present age and is postulated to continue so into the indefinite future.[9] Not in the distant past, a civilian had a discrete image of the military expressed in such terms as "uncivilised brute"; similarly, a military man when annoyed with the society would accost his civilian counterpart as "bloody civilian". This trend was more or less in vogue all over the world. This linguistic recrimination amounting to exchange of offensive language between the military and the civil only increased their distance.

The discourse on traditional threats to national security is giving way to that of non-traditional threats where the place of 'man' as the yardstick of human security occupies a higher position than man as a component unit of nation-state system. In this climate of pre-eminence of man's existence, it is useful to reflect on the proper role of the military. This role originates from the understanding that the military must educate themselves in liberal arts, while the civilians must educate themselves about defence issues and military culture. The intellectual challenge both to the society and the military as forming the essential organism of a structural process is the result of the mass movement towards advancement of human condition since the end of Cold War and remodelling of democratic ideals. Military is, no longer, considered to be

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[8] Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Volume 5, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 43.
[9] Keynote Address delivered by Air Vice Marshal Mahmud Hussain at CIRDAP Auditorium on 17 February 2008.

merely a safe parcel of land to take shelter in cyclone. It is the legitimate tool in the hands of the state to be used not only in war but in peace as well. This changing view of the military emanates from a newer form of political society that takes inspiration from the traditions of democracy.

The latter approach, Democratic Peace Theory, explains the foreign policy behaviour of democratic states and the driving forces behind such behaviour. Democracies do not fight wars - this hypothesis has been validated in the post-modern era. Democratic peace is rooted theoretically in the writings of Immanuel Kant. His work, titled "Perpetual Peace" is still a source for citing the strong points of republican form of governments in ensuring peace and stability amongst states. Kant advocated for a 'citizens army'. He believed that such an army could realise the citizens' true inclination towards peace and assure the integration of the armed forces into the democratic system. Kant's tract appeared more than two centuries ago and cannot be approved at face value without strong opposition. Much has changed in international relations since then. Kant's perception that standing army increases the chances of war has not stood the test of time. He was speaking against the imperatives of "Westphalian" concept of nation-states built upon the importance of preserving states' territorial and sovereign integrity. Standing armies are trained soldiers and no state will accept its territorial boundaries to be left to the complexities of mobilising citizens for war only during conflict. The political and cultural diversity of the world makes absolute integration of human species into one unit of nation-state system a utopian prospect.

Military profession, in recent times, has become highly specialised and meritorious. Its greatest utility may subsist in its non-use for purposes of war and acting as deterrence to any offensive action by the enemy. This instills a sense of urgency for obligations other than war. In domestic arena, military's involvement in humanitarian crisis finds appropriate logic. Military is, no longer, confined to domestic functions. Its global outreach through the sanctions of the United Nations makes international peace and security an interdependent transaction amongst nation-states. This transition from statist to global role of the military which can be conceived as one aspect of Kantian doctrine of "perpetual peace" is indeed, a function of nation-states adopting democracy in greater numbers and becoming members of the United Nations, a world body whose appeal cannot be ignored in an anarchical society.

3.   Civil-Military Relations in Democracy

For the promotion of democracy, healthy civil-military relations based on mutual respect and understanding is important. In the democratic system, the military provides security whereas the civilian authority provides the moral, financial and infrastructural support. In democracies, military service is voluntary but is signified by characteristic professional distinctions. Technological and scientific advances make

states suspicious of each other's motives. The age-old paradigm of security dilemma comes back to warn states to recast their military spirit. The institution which is now called upon to do the bidding for the state is the military itself and if needed hundreds of soldiers ought to die in order to protect the life of a single civilian - this is a normative truth which the military must embrace as a democratic ideal. Thus, in a democratic ideal, the military is faced with a serious challenge of keeping its position secure and institutionally balanced to meet its multi-faceted missions. The problems are acute with countries that have developed fast but still view democracy with impatience.

Despite democracy's development-deficit notoriety, for military leaders, the test is how to keep up with global standards of military professionalism and effectiveness. The reason is global requirement for the military to participate in UN-sanctioned missions where civil-military cooperation is the *sine qua non* for success. This preparedness of the military for external commitment helps in improving its capacity for internal duties. Military's involvement in national crisis and development activities depends on the civil-military "problematique". It is a real challenge for military leadership how it reconciles a military subordinate enough to do anything that the civilians ask them to do but strong enough to do it effectively without jeopardising its popular image. For the political leadership, it is equally a performance of competence to control the nation's military without damaging its professional effectiveness. Military activity occurs at multiple levels: political, strategic, operational and tactical. At all levels, there could be civil-military cooperation but it is the military hierarchy at political level that matters most for stabilising the relation. This level is identified with the positions of Chiefs of Staff, Area and Divisional Commanders. In fact, what is important to understand in a democratic environment is that a nation's military could become more effective without any loss of civilian control.[10]

The other challenging area where military skills are enhanced is the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Over the past sixty years, United Nations Peacekeeping has evolved into one of the main tools used by the international community to manage complex crises that pose a threat to international peace and security. Since the beginning of the new millennium, the number of military, police and civilian personnel deployed in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations around the world has reached unprecedented levels. Not only has the United Nations peacekeeping grown in size but it has become increasingly complex. Beyond simply monitoring cease-fires, today's multi-dimensional peacekeeping operations are called upon to facilitate the political process through the promotion of national dialogue and reconciliation, protection of civilians, assistance in disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration of combatants, support to the organisation of elections, protection and promotion of human rights and assistance in restoring the rule of law.

The ability to function in a multi-cultural environment under the command of different nationalities is both innovative and challenging. Soldiers of one country

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[10] Suzanne C. Nielson, *op. cit*.

learn to listen to the directives, instructions and orders of a commander belonging to another country. This helps in building mutual respect for cross-cultural values. The very notion that as a soldier his noble task is to materialise peace in the crisis area has a long-enduring value in his psyche which he carries back home as a good citizen. A peacekeeper is a harbinger of stability and tranquillity in social life. All these activities with which peacekeepers are involved are promotion towards democracy and as such, strengthen civil-military cooperation. It may be mentioned here that in a UN Peacekeeping Mission, a democratic structure is maintained like that in a well-defined political state. The Force Commander (FC) who is the military boss, functions under the authority of the Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) who is the political boss of a mission. Peacekeeping missions offer very good example of articulation and meaningful exploitation of multi-national military assets under the clearly defined political objectives with overarching civilian control on military hierarchy. In a democratic society, military's role is rather conditioned by the expectations of society at large. Some of these expectations include political neutrality, professionalism, social responsibility and constitutional obligation.

Political Neutrality

The democratically elected politicians represent people of the country. Political involvement of the military runs the risk of seizure of popular mandate by military leaders. This may lead to military coercion of popular will and breakdown of social values like freedom, rule of law and good governance. In a democracy, politicians instinctively abhor military leaders for their adventurism that usurps their power base. The attitude of political power must subordinate the military in an 'inclusive" manner that gives enough space for mutual respectability and cohesion. In the liberal world of democracy, the military's position is not one of "isolationism" but of "interdependence". The society, which gives its communal structure an equilibrium through allocation of duties and commitments, finds harmony in proper and ethical subjection of one's position to higher order of the state. This higher order belongs to politics which can be true to its spirit only by being apolitical. The words of Samuel P. Huntington apodictic:

> "Future problem in civil-military relations in new democracies are likely to come not from the military but from the civilian side of the equation. They will come from the failures of democratic governments to promote economic development and maintain law and order. They also will stem from weak political institutions and ambitious political leaders who may enlist the military as their accomplices in undermining or destroying democracy, as Alberto Fujimori did in Peru and as Boris Yeltsin, Lech Walesa, and others might be tempted to do in their own countries. The new countries have been more successful in dealing with civil-military relations than most of the other major challenges they face. Sustaining that success now depends on their

ability to make progress in dealing with the ills that lie outside their militaries and within their societies at large."[11]

The political involvement of military undermines democratic principles as well as the political desire of military hampers its professional excellence. However, as Huntington mentioned, sometimes elected governments involve military officials in the political affairs to use military for political purposes which challenges proper functioning of democracy. In a democratic system, military's political neutrality is essential for proper functioning of democracy. When any government engages military for political purposes, it challenges democratic structure of a country.

Professionalism

All societies respect the military as the guardian of their country's border. They wish to see military as an image of heroism and excellence. The society expects that soldiers should be model of integrity and unflinching obedience to higher political command. Professional education and training through rigorous discipline and comprehensive methodology inculcates aspirations for higher ideals of life. Samuel P. Huntington notes, "The intellectual content of the military profession requires the modern officer to devote about one-third of his professional life to formal schooling, probably a higher ratio of educational time to practice time than in any other profession."[12] The task of a professional military officer is very complex as he deals with human beings as well as he needs to be prepared for combating. He needs a deeper understanding of both natural and social sciences. The state regulates all professions to some extent but in case of the military profession, the state reserves the exclusive power of monopoly.[13] In earlier times, recruitment of mercenaries was a common practice but in modern democratic polity, there is no alternative to professional military apparatus. When he climbs up to the higher position, he needs more professional expertise in the strategic levels. Bernard Brodie makes a scintillating observation about the unique status of military professionalism in relation to politicians' dilemma:

> "It does not teach us that civilians are normally better informed on things military than the military themselves, or any other such nonsense. It simply tells us that there always has been and probably will always continue to be far too much pontification and posturing on the commodity called military judgement, which taken in itself, without supplemental inquiry and rumination, can be extremely limiting thing. It is also to say that war is not only too important to be left to the generals but too important and far too complex to be handled adequately by any one profession. And so far as concerns responsibility, the civilian leader who has the constitutional authority and obligation to control should have no fears

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[11] Samuel P. Huntington, "Reforming Civil-Military Relations", in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds.), *Civil-Military Relations and Democracy,* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 11.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] *Ibid.*

or diffidence about his inherent competency, given suitable advisers, to do so. Naturally, it helps to have a sharp and judicious mind, which a President or a Secretary of Defence or of State ought to have anyway, and it is always necessary to take the trouble to acquaint oneself with the problem."[14]

In democracies, the businessman may command more income; the politician may command more power; but the professional man (the army general) commands more respect.[15] The professional values must be secured for the proper functioning of the military institutions and strategic policy making. Nevertheless, the professional lacuna of military can challenge democratic institutions and in the long term it may affect the governance structure of the country. The professionalism in military is, by and large, interlinked with the sovereignty of the country. An unprofessional military may not be able to fight when they are called. Moreover, in modern world sometimes military takes responsibility in the peacetimes also. When government engage them in any types of development activities, lack of professionalism will affect their efficiency and sincerity to serve the nation.

Social Responsibility

There are often confusions about military's peacetime role in society; whether its involvement in civilian tasks is justified or not. This is contrary to popular will. In moments of national crisis, people want military by their side and it renders unrequited humanitarian service. The military capabilities to support other agencies such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Inter/Intra-Governmental Organisations and local bodies when called upon in aid of civil power are well established. Military, probably, is the strongest social unit. The bond between officers and soldiers is the most durable of any social groupings. Examples of soldiers sacrificing their lives to preserve those of their "buddies" abound through ages. There is a distinct social image of the military in historic literatures that creates a special emotional feeling for soldiers and officers. The literary image of the officer is the conscience of a man who is split between carrying the obligation of organised violence upon orders from the state and bearing a heavy burden of guilt for killing and maiming fellow human beings. The inhuman face of war has a compassionate and solemn effect on the soldier's spiritual content that wills to make up for the mental dogmatism by substituting it for strong social responsibility in times of societal crisis. Military is a tool in the hands of the state. Post-modern societies serve well by drawing the military closer to the social bondage.

Constitutional Obligation

Constitution is the substance of national will and philosophy. The musings of constitution often calls upon the nation to rise above the pettifogging chicaneries of narrow politics. Military officers, on being commissioned, have to invoke the

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[14] Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc., p. 473.
[15] Samuel P. Huntington, 1996, *op. cit.*

constitution to remind themselves of their duty to the state. It decrees them to remain within constitutional obligation. In a way, the military by remaining within constitutional principles becomes its true guardian. It is important for military leaders to give their political masters sound advice and specialised knowledge. Great military commanders have shown exemplary acumen in upholding the values of democracy and safeguarding the cause of common man.

In a democracy, effective civil-military relations are essential to achieve national goals. Military can play necessary role if it can remain far from political alignment and the military officials need to be professional and loyal to the constitutional obligations. It is expected that military authority should be loyal to the civilian and implement the decisions that are forwarded by the civilian authority. The civilian authority can engage them in the state affairs where the government needs the role of military.

4.   Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has its own experience regarding civil-military relations issues. It faced a number of undemocratic regimes directly under military rule or civilian government under the control of military. These mixed practices have shaped the nature of civil-military relations in Bangladesh over the years. The civil-military relations in Bangladesh mean the relationship between defence forces and the people of the country. The term 'people' include the established government of the country elected by the people, business community, the intellectual and cultural communities, the students of higher educational institutions and the politicians.[16] Like other developing countries, civil-military relations in Bangladesh are still in an evolving pattern rather than being a fixed and preconceived idea.[17] In Bangladesh, civil-military relations emerged since the Liberation War where young and patriotic Bangladeshi soldiers revolted and joined the freedom fight and set one of the finest examples of civil-military relations even in a war situation.[18] Bangladesh was born through nine month long Liberation War. It was a people's war in which the contribution of the military personnel in fighting along with civilians creates the proud history of Bangladesh. The unique pattern of civil-military relations was formed during that period. On 04 April 1971, some of the Bengali military officers who had revolted against Pakistani military crackdown formally organised the *Mukti Bahini*.[19] After a bloody war of nine months, Bangladesh emerged as a new nation in the global map.

The subsequent history of civil-military interaction in Bangladesh is one of alternate shifts of turmoil and convergence. Bangladesh army was the lineal

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[16] Major General (retd.) Syed Muhmmad Ibrahim, "Civil Military Relationship", *Dhaka Courier*, Vol. 20, Issue.23, 2004.
[17] *Ibid*.
[18] Syed Anwar Husain, *op. cit*.
[19] Golam Hossain, *Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh: A Comparative Study*, Dhaka: Academic Publishers, 1991, pp. 37- 45.

descendant of liberation struggle. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman enjoyed consummate acceptance as the unchallenged leader after his return from prison in Pakistan. He set himself to the task of building a strong and pro-people army as was often reflected through his speeches to army officers during his visits to military establishments. The officers who formed the top echelon of the military, proclaimed their commitment to a democratic society. Under the leadership of Bangabandhu from early 1972, Bangladesh military committed itself to professionalism and loyalty to political leadership. But this traditional and accepted pattern of civil-military relationship did not continue for long; soon great national tragedy befell Bangladesh. A handful of army officers and few errant politicians masterminded the killing of the father of the nation. It was a national catastrophe of colossal magnitude.

From 1975 till 1981, it was the military ruler Ziaur Rahman and his Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) which administered the country. General Zia's death was the result of factionalism within army. He founded BNP as an independent political entity but failed to keep army safe from political wrangling. His death demonstrated the harmful side of a general's involvement in politics without completely detaching himself from military affairs.

Upon the death of General Zia, Justice Abdus Sattar succeeded him as the President. He lacked both popularity and leadership skill to control the party. His falling health also aided continuous infighting within BNP. The party created highly volatile situation in politics encouraging army generals' strong desire for political power. The circumstances fitted strongly into civil-military relations' security paradigm of civil-civil conflict with poor management of democratic norms, thus creating opportunities for a strong probability of military influence in politics. His lack of political command and authority gave opportunity for General Hussein Mohammad Ershad to proclaim, "The army should be directly associated with the governance of the country which might fulfil the ambition of the army and might not lead to further coups."[20] Meanwhile, the law and order situation deteriorated with the concurrent worsening of the economic condition. Within the prevailing circumstance, President Ershad found an excellent opportunity to take over power. On 24 March 1982, he took over the government by a bloodless coup and declared martial law.[21]

In order to give legitimacy to his political ambitions, Ershad formed Jatiyo Party (JP) in January 1986.[22] His rule of nine years is characterised by suppression of other political parties by manipulation. He used military and civil bureaucracies as tools for perpetuating his political control of state apparatus. For the first time in practical sense, the military got actively involved in politics. Military generals competed with each other to secure the President's favour to obtain ministerial positions. The involvement of military generals in politics, directly or indirectly, had resulted in negative effects on

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[20] *Ibid.*
[21] *Ibid.*
[22] *Ibid.*

military profession. Military was no longer an apolitical institution at top echelon. The feeling that politics gave power and power guaranteed privileged position in society was the enticement. The idea of politicians being public servant was largely subsumed by the power of power-politics of the military top brass in search of political career. Politics was, no longer, the domain of a stable political condition. But such a state of politics could not last for long in Bangladesh. Ultimately, his fall came as a result of popular demonstration by the two political parties - Awami League and BNP.

The fall of Ershad foretold a new era of democratic political revival in Bangladesh. It was also a message for the Generals to go back to the barracks and infuse their institution with age-old ideals of professionalism, duty and integrity. From 1990 till 2007, the country saw military's complete withdrawal from politics. In 2007, the country again plunged into a political chaos. The military-backed caretaker government between 2007 and 2009 was its follow-on. Both civil and military bureaucracies appropriated the role of politicians.

After the election of 2009, the elected government kept the military out of politics by avoiding political intervention in the military. The government's focus was to maintain a thoroughly professional standing army, navy and air force. Its use of military tools has been apolitical. It has displayed extra-ordinary wisdom by involving military in development and social activities that has given military its professional pride and prestige. The consequence of such civil-military relations is positive and has encouraged military to situate its proper role and functions in a democratic society.

Although Bangladesh has faced several ups and downs regarding civil-military relations, its military has also made notable positive contributions in creating better democratic environment and assisting in the development of Bangladesh. Bangladesh military has created a place in the UN peacekeeping operations, becoming the largest troops-sending country at present and securing an important decision making role in peacekeeping missions. At present, the total number of Bangladeshi contributors to UN Peacekeeping Missions is 7,051.[23] It played a key role in restoring democracy in war-torn Haiti and Sierra Leone. Bangladesh joined the Blue Helmets in 1988. Since then, Bangladeshi peacekeepers set values and proved their professionalism. For their outstanding contribution to the war-torn Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone government announced Bengali language as an honorary official language.

In the domestic scene, Bangladesh military played a leading role in disaster management and many nation-building development activities within the country.[24] Till now, the Bangladesh army has been involved in a number of notable development works and the Prime Minister has stressed the importance of military involvement

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[23] "Contributors to the UN Peacekeeping Operations", available at http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2016/apr16_1.pdf., accessed on 12 May 2016.
[24] Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, "Civilian Control of the Military in Bangladesh: Moving towards a Democratic Tradition", *BIISS Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1999, pp. 78.

in pro-people civil and infra-structural works. The government has demonstrated great confidence in army by entrusting it with the responsibility of supervising the construction of the Padma Bridge. The armed forces had been actively engaged in water supply management, preparing national voter ID cards, providing free medical treatment and providing food to the deprived people etc. The Bangladesh Army has also been engaged in distributing winter clothes to poor people and constructing roads and highways across the country.

The tragedy of Rana Plaza in 2013 and its aftermath has demonstrated civil-military coordination-cum-cooperation at its best. Within 20 minutes of the catastrophe, the "Government Initiative Rescue Operation" got momentum and started at its full swing. About 1132 people lost their lives in the catastrophe. The death toll could have been much more but the heroic efforts of Bangladesh Army, Fire Brigade, Bangladesh Garments Manufacturing and Exporting Association (BGMEA) and above all, the brave souls of rescue workers managed the whole rescue operation successfully. Rana Plaza rescue operation is a unique example of civil-military interface, a symbol of national cohesion and unity. The example of Rana Plaza demonstrated that "discipline" which is so much an instrument of the military can also be made national. It is during this crisis that military as an institution and society as the living organism of a state came to represent the power of nationality. This shows that the civil-military relations, at present times in Bangladesh, probably, enjoy the most resilient canon of democratic practice. These non-warlike development activities played a vital role in bringing the military into greater contact with the society at large.

As a democratic country, the civil-military relations in Bangladesh are always an important area to accomplish government activities. After 1975, military intervention in politics challenged a proper functioning of democracy and the role of military was not in line to develop a healthy democratic order. However, after return to democracy, the government took different initiatives to strengthen civil-military relations. It has shown a positive direction of civil-military relations, but the desired level needs more policy initiatives. Military's role in the UN peacekeeping operations and its active contribution to build some of the war torn countries enhanced the image of Bangladesh in the international arena. Moreover, Bangladesh armed forces are active in the disaster management of the country as well as they are engaged in the different mega structures of the country. Engaging military in the development activities within the constitutional framework can help the country to achieve desired goals.

5.   Addressing Future Challenges

Although Bangladesh Army gained lots of achievements over the years, it also faces many challenges which ultimately disturb the making of civil-military relations more effective. Therefore, seminal challenges that have negative impact on civil-military relations need a proper understanding. There is no complete national accord about the structure of

the army for the purpose of making the best use of military. Bangladesh Army originates out of the colonial tradition which makes the institution exclusive from the rest of the society. Various endeavours have been undertaken in many countries to bring the army closer to the society. For example, in Senegal, a new military code was adopted in May 1994 to facilitate civil military interaction.[25] This was made to ease the process of engaging military more in democracy. A comprehensive defence and security policy is a crucial need for proper direction of overall development and maintenance of better civil-military relations in Bangladesh. Experts, researchers, scholars and members of academia should come forward with implementable ideas to develop a national defence and security policy. Examples can also be drawn from other successful countries to develop a sustainable defence and security policy. The country is in need of a comprehensive defence and security policy which will act as a guideline for national development and making democracy successful.

Good governance is still lacking in Bangladesh. Corruption, lack of political commitment, lack of transparency and accountability, inadequate public participation, weak bureaucracy and lack of effective political leadership make the governance weak which largely hampers civil-military relations. Developing good governance is a prerequisite for attaining better civil-military relations. To obtain good governance, several steps such as reforming civil administration, improving selection procedures for all constitutional posts and autonomous recruitment for all constitutional bodies, increasing parliamentary oversight of the executive, strengthening anti-corruption commission, establishing rule of law, improving transparency in public procurement, relaxing restrictions on the freedom to vote in parliament and preventing boycott of parliament etc. are important to deal with. Such improvements would facilitate civil and military organisations to work together.

For making a better civil-military relations, understanding of the whole process and its respective stakeholders are very much important for all to know. Bangladesh's educational curriculam will largely help in this regard. But the educational curriculum lacks the information of the military and is not up-to-date about it. For that reason, the civilian largely remain uninformed about the military matters. An updated educational curriculum is vital to disseminate accurate and effective information about the military. There should be constructive discussion in the text books on the Bangladesh Army like the same way as other different organs of government are discussed. It will make military closer to the people.

Access of media in military affairs is not in a satisfactory level. In a democratic country, military should also be subject to examine on the ground of transparency and accountability. Therefore, media's access will ensure transparency and liability of the military. The role of media is a crucial one regarding civil-military relations practice in Bangladesh. For that reason, strengthening media's capability is very important. Monitoring media agency which provides media oversight and strengthening the press council are crucial. Decentralisation and depoliticisation are important in this regard.

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[25] Technical Support Division, Culture, Gender and Human Rights Branch, UNEP, *Enlisting the Armed Forces to Protect Productive Health and Rights: Lessons Learned from Nine Countries*, 2013.

Isolating military in remote, fortress-like cantonments is no longer an option. This situation in some ways hampers civil-military relations process. A need for greater civil-military interaction still requires huge attention. A mutual trust is very much important between the civilian administration and the military. But Bangladesh is still experiencing trust gap between the two. Politicians and political parties' role in this regard are still not very strong. Insufficient information sharing, lack of openness, lack of interaction and negative public branding of the military are major obstacles in the making of mutual trust between the two. Improving mutual trust and confidence between civilian people and the military is very important for upholding civil-military relations. This could be done by establishing national oversight mechanism, establishing training programmes between civil and security sectors, sensitising national leadership to challenges, ensuring recruitment, promotions and postings based on only competence and merit.

Recruitment, promotions and postings should be free from political influence. Exchange programmes can play crucial role in mitigating gaps between civilian organisations and the military. Conducting of orientation, advocacy and awareness programme are also important. Improving military's ability to relate with civil society is another important part. Improving public relation capacity of the military, relaxing restrictions on military's interactions with the civil sector, upgrading authority and responsibility of Inter Services Public Relations Directorate (ISPR) as an institution and appointing an ISPR spokesperson can help to achieve such goals. Development of the capacity of civil support agencies, police and NGOs to limit military involvement is another important step to improve mutual trust between the two. This could be done by enhancing professionalism through career development programmes, proper material and fund resourcing, and increasing participation between stakeholders etc.

Although Bangladesh has a parliamentary committee on defence, it is only limited to certain supervisory role. Major appointments are always made by the Prime Minister but there is no such rule of parliamentary ratification for finalising the appointments. Parliamentary supervision is important regarding civil-military relations. Bangladesh Judiciary also has almost no role in the military affairs. Bangladesh judiciary cannot oversee the military including safeguarding the rights of the members of the armed forces from executive excesses. Engaging parliament and judiciary in the military affairs are necessary to uphold democratic principles in the civil-military relations. Moreover, political parties in Bangladesh lack democratic values. A good politician can better understand the value of democracy and democratic practice in each and every institution including military. Political parties of the country need to play important role in making civil-military relations a success. But the political parties of Bangladesh are still lacking democratic values. As a result, to democratise political parties, implementing agreed political party reform is very important. The organised democratic political parties can play crucial role in upholding civil-military relations concept.

As discussed earlier, civil-military relations imply subservience of military under civilian authority. The relation becomes problematic when it is violated. It is proved from the discussion earlier that, stable and established civil-military relations are important for any democratic state. Recently, Bangladesh is enjoying stable democratic environment and this situation is suitable for promoting civil-military relations to improve at its best. It is important that proper and effective policy initiatives should be taken into consideration as early as possible for attaining good civil-military relations. Civil-military interaction is clearly a need for nourishing civil-military relations attributes. Large scale professional and social engagement between the two will be helpful for developing closer interaction. Regarding this issue, joint seminars, workshops on national issues will act as the platform for sharing views and experiences.

6.   Conclusion

Civil-military relation is a highly sensitive and politically complex affair. It brings within its fold society's two most significant elements and shapes them in need of viable social structure. While the military is conservative in its character and would very much like to remain within its defined professional boundaries, the politics, on the other hand, follows an open system subject to the popular will of the masses. The civilian chief controls the military chain of command. Thus, the relation becomes problematic when it is not well in order. As a result, stable and established civil-military relations with the establishment of military subordination to the elected representatives are important for any democratic state. Political neutrality, professionalism, social responsibility and constitutional obligation are some of the important elements which make civil-military relations to grow in a democratic state.

Bangladesh, as a democratic state, faced lots of challenges regarding civil-military relations since its independence. The country is still facing notable challenges like lack of good governance, absence of defence and security policy, absence of national consensus about the structure of the military, mutual trust between the two and so on. But despite negative experiences, Bangladesh can also be a model of good practice as the country has already observed the role of civil-military relations in nation-building development activities, disaster management works and notable contribution in the UN peacekeeping.

To move forward, the country needs to take effective action to tackle the challenges related to civil-military relations. Several implementable recommendations regarding this have been suggested in the earlier discussion such as developing good governance, improving mutual trust and confidence, democratisation of political parties, active role of media, effective role of the judiciary, parliamentary supervision, updated educational curriculum, comprehensive defence and security policy etc. Undertaking collaborative projects and increasing policy level prioritisation of the issue among policy makers and practitioners will largely play role in implementing these recommendations.