NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL FOR BANGLADESH: DEBATES AND ISSUES

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INTRODUCTION

Concern for security has been universal. The phrase in Thucydides epic, "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must", remains a classic instance of hard realism even today.[1] Though the UN Charter is supposed to pursue peaceful causes, it has failed to refrain parties from bloody conflicts. Tens of millions of people have died after the emergence of UN and even now nearly half of the world's population wrestles with hunger triggering new subjects of conflicts.[2] It has gradually become clear that the overall economic scenario as well as political concern beyond borders and ideological differences are key to the security of a nation.

The security rubrics of these times have been essentially complex. Experts like Clausewitz and Alvin Toffler have stressed on adopting national policy and assuring at the right mix of national power elements to achieve security objectives. National institutions are accordingly seen to have emerged to integrate response mechanisms to suit security needs. Of these institutions, the concept of National Security Council (NSC) is one that has been widely discussed.

Bangladesh's security is fraught with complex challenges and dangers. Although it has not experienced any major conflicts except the insurgency in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and few border skirmishes with India, recent incidents of internal insecurities have led to a national emergency. The accelerating pace of terrorism unfolding in the last few years has posed a serious threat to its security system. The nation's economy has also struggled to support the huge population because of extreme poverty. Lack of good governance and justice, intolerant and unstable politics, etc have retarded people's emancipation, threatening the security of the nation in the process.

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1. Thucydides' epic, written in 416 BC, indicates that the Athenian Generals put to death every male citizen of Melos and carted off women and children into slavery in punishment for not surrendering in the first place, though historians have doubt about the actual incident. However, the Melos claimed that they had rights to remain neutral in the war between the Athenians and the Spartans, but the Athenians denied their rights as they were strong.

2. Centre for Study of Civil War Database at www.prio.no/cscw/battle_deaths/UppsalaPRIO_YearlyBD.xls and Anup Shah, "Poverty Facts and Status" at www.csmonitor.com/2004/ 0617/p16s01-cogn.html visited on 24 June 2007.

Why are the existing mechanisms in Bangladesh are unable to handle the situation and how can it be tackled in the coming days. Establishing a NSC is now being discussed as a solution to the problem, but some people are sucpicious about its military components. While few doubt the need of an enhanced security platform, the concept of NSC is perceived to be threatening to democratic precepts. Hence, it must not be thrust upon people; its causes are to be espoused by all, including politicians. Keeping these points in view, this study incorporates insights from different democratic models for security planning and attempts to design a practicable one for Bangladesh to suit its security environment.

AIM

The aim of this study is to analyse the national security environment and examine the concept of NSC as an option for Bangladesh and to suggest an appropriate and effective policy planning and coordination structure in the 21st century perspective.

NATIONAL SECURITY DIMENSIONS AND BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVES

Concept of Security - The Gradual Evolution

National security has been traditionally taken to have military connotations intimately linked to the idea of external threats. Talukder Muniruzzaman has argued that the foremost element of national security should be "the protection and preservation of the minimum core values of any nation: political independence and territorial integrity".[3] Consequent to the formation of the UN, incidents of external aggressions have reduced drastically but conflicts amongst newly decolonized states and non-state groups have surfaced because of ethnic, ideological and other internal issues. A study of these conflicts reveals that Third World countries in Asia and Africa are the main areas of conflict, while Europe and North America have largely remained outside the theatre. The differences between these two groups of states are mainly democratic practices, economic strength, good governance and security conscious policies.

Reinforced by post-Cold War developments including globalisation, Barry Buzan has come up with the idea of four novel domains of security in 1991 in addition to military conflicts, namely, political, societal, economic and environmental domains.[4] The terrorist attack on USA on September 11, 2001, to which the US responded with the strategy of pre-emptive retaliation, leading to immediate attack on Afghanistan and subsequent invasion of Iraq in 2003, has given rise to a more complicated notion of security.

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3   Talukder Muniruzzaman, "The Security of Small States in the Third World", Papers No.25, Canberra, 1982, p.15

4. Buzan Barry, People, States and Fear, Lyne Publications, Colorado, USA, 1991, Pp.19-20

Meanwhile, Robert McNamara, the former World Bank President, has viewed security as linked to development and he feels that without development there can be no security. Andrew Mack of the University of British Columbia notes, "in much of the poor world, root cause drivers of armed conflicts are weak state capacity, economic decline, political instability, and horizontal inequality".[5] Ken Booth has also equated security with emancipation of people; the pursuit of emancipation encourages a focus on the welfare of people, justice and change.[6] The concept of security in essence thus extends above the nation-state.

Bangladesh's Security Environment

Bangladesh's security is framed by the multitude of issues described above. The fundamental principles enshrined in Part II and III of Bangladesh's Constitution also reflect people's will and well-being in terms of economic and social justice, freedom and equal rights and a vision of democracy that constitutes its national core values and interests. Table 1 reveals the politico-economic situation of the country and the way it can be aimed at consolidating national security.

Bangladesh is achieving some progress, but what has been achieved is not enough for the large number of people still in poverty. Whatever is being done is vitiated by weak policies and anaemic implementations. Garment workers fight against inhuman working conditions and low irregular payment of wages. Foreign investments have had little impact. The incident at Kansat, in January 2006, is an example of bad governance that led people to challenge the administrator when they were denied justice.

Democratic politics is key to stability and development, but in Bangladesh it has undergone negative transformations. Use of black-money, muscle power, illicit arms and manipulation of communal sentiments has been endemic. Politics is characterized by hartals, violence and unrest; these cause loss of life and serious damages to the education, economic and social system. In October 2006, the political situation was so traumatic that Bangladesh was almost thrown into the vortex of civil war.

National institutions including the administration and even the judiciary were reduced to compliant instruments of those in power. Reportedly, 671 teachers and 350 employees were appointed in Dhaka University during the last 5 years on political considerations.[7] Such arbitrariness incites lawlessness, corruption and crimes like human, drugs and arms trafficking. Moreover, the environmental

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5. Andrew Mark, "Coping with Crisis", a working paper for International Peace Academy, 2007.
6. Booth Ken, "Security and Emancipation," Review of International Studies, Vol. 17, No.4, 1991, Pp.313-326

			Table-1
Politico-Economic Attributes of Bangladesh			
Attributes	Bangladesh Score	Reference/ Target	Remarks
Population Density	1090 per sq km	To reduce growth to total fertility replacement rate	Highest in the World except the microstates
HDI Rank and Score	139 and 0.53 (UNDP, 2004)	As better as possible	Human Development Index, out of 177 States
Poverty	49.6 % (2005)	↓ 29.4 %	As per MDG by 2015
GDP - Per Capita	US$ 476.00 (BBS, 2006)	↑ 4500.00	Medium level country like Malaysia
GDP Rank	174 (2006)	World Fact Book by CIA	out of 229 Countries
Governance	Poor	↑ As better as possible	One of the Worst
Corruptions	Highest	Transparency International Annual Survey	From 2000 to 2005
Research and Technology	Poor (scored '0' in most areas)	↑ As better as possible	Important attribute for development
Source: World Development Indicator 2007 (World Bank) except otherwise mentioned.			

conditions in Bangladesh are ominous. It is believed that due to global warming by 2050, 16 percent of the land will be inundated displacing 13 percent of the population.[8] Some of these displaced people would look for inter-state migration, creating new causes for concern about security.

The US and her allies believe that Islamist terrorist groups have links with the Muslim states. The West as such has been keeping an eye on Bangladesh, particularly after the nearly 500 coordinated bomb blast in 2005. The Daily Star, referring to a Jane's Intelligence Review article, reports that Bangladesh is being dragged into the global war on terror by becoming a sanctuary for extremist organisations.[9] Extremism especially in the student sections of Quomi madrassa is a cause for concern in Bangladesh. Isfaq Ilahi feels that the government needs to control these madrassas before things get even worse.[10]

In the geopolitical calculus, Bangladesh has numerous issues of disagreement/

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7. The Daily Star, June 27, 2007

8. Banglapedia at http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/HT/S_0166.htm visited on July 10, 2007.

9. Zayadul Ahsan, The Daily Star, August 21, 2005.

10. Isfaq Ilahi, "Madrassa Education in Bangladesh: Its Genesis and Growth and its implication on the Society and Politics", Master of Philosophy Thesis at Bangladesh National University, June 20, 2006.

contention with her mighty neighbour, India, involving alleged spreading of radicalism, insurgency support, migration and disputes over water sharing and borders at sea and on land. With Myanmar, there are disputes over Rohingya and the maritime boundary. Bangladesh is also affected by the characteristics of the regional sub-system that include relationships amongst the nuclear-bombs equipped countries of India, Pakistan and China and their relational matrix with the only superpower USA. Besides, the insurgency in CHT is another issue continuing for long that needs delicate politico-military handling.

Figure- 1

Security Sphere of Bangladesh
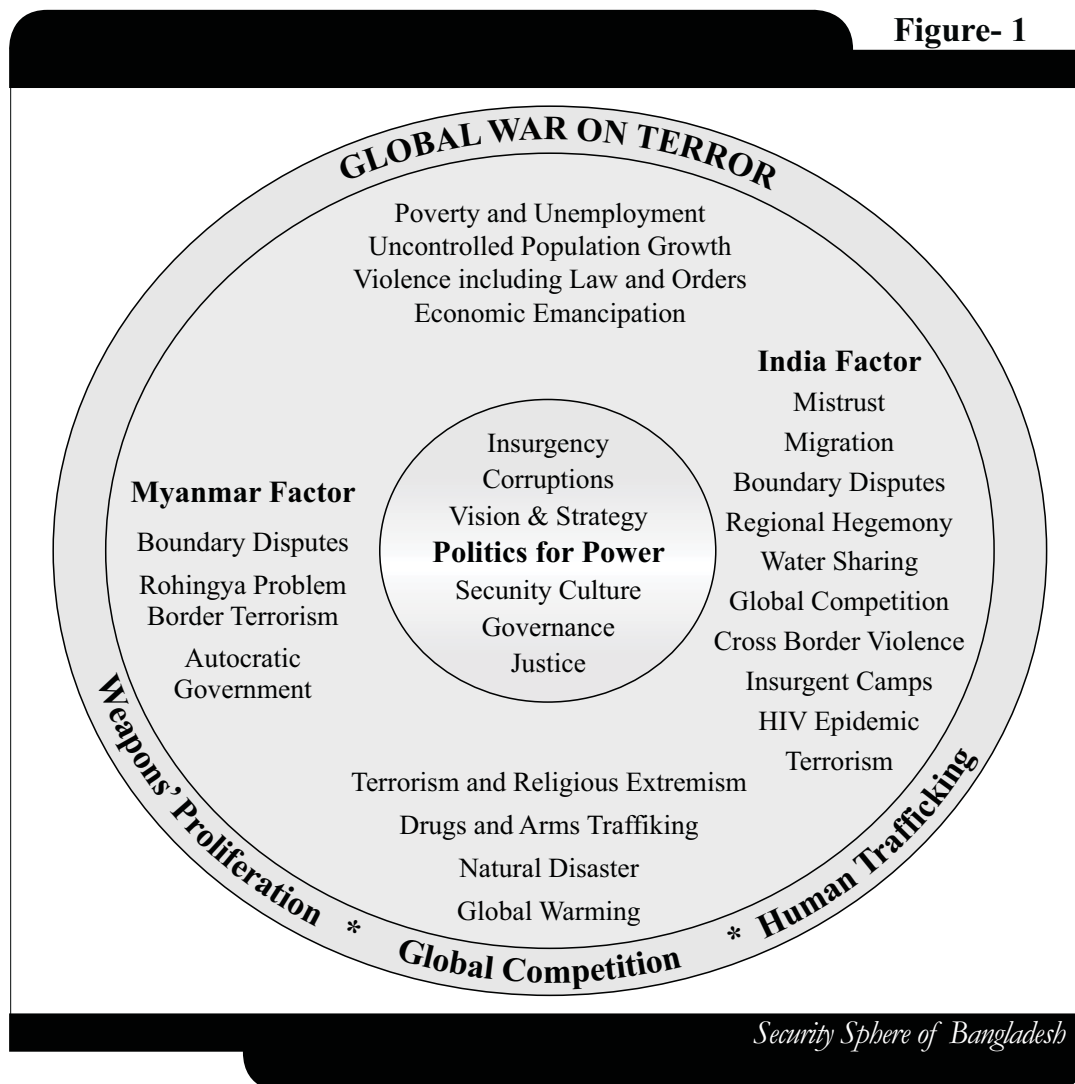
Bangladesh's national interests, involving people's well-being and establishment of a stable democracy as per its constitution, transcend military issues. A holistic security sphere with elements of concerns is shown in Figure-1,

but it may not be quite exhaustive. Here, the conflicting politics and consequential elements have found place in the center to indicate the gravity of the situation.

BANGLADESH'S SECURITY POTENTIALS AND POLICY SYSTEM

Constituents of National Power

National security hinges crucially on the power and capability of a nation and its rational pursuit of national interests. Alvin Toffler views power as an inescapable aspect of every human relationship involving the use of violence, wealth and knowledge.[11] The first two of the Toffler's trinity can be equated with military and economics, while knowledge is related to human resources, leadership, vision, etc. The use of aggregate power base is dependent on adoption of appropriate policy, in accordance with the famous 'ends-ways-means' strategic paradigm.[12]

Bangladesh as a nation-state draws its power mainly from its people and their coherence; 98.8 percent are homogenous ethnic Bengalis.[13] The Language Movement and Liberation War confirm their common concern about language, culture and democracy. The remaining 1.2 percent consists of small ethnic groups, the majority of whom live in CHT comprising nearly 0.5 percent of population. They too have grievances about their identity and rights but these are being managed with politico-military efforts.

Bangladesh as a developing nation has inherent weaknesses in military and economic capability. However, the armed forces have endeavoured to draw strength from its professional corps of officers and hard working men through rigourous physical training and innovative tactics of asymmetric warfare. The forces are now properly trained and have developed a culture of shunning state affairs. Bangladesh Armed Forces have been very successful in UN peace keeping missions and thus, have scored a huge political mileage in the world.

Intellectual leadership and security vision and statesmanship are important for national security. Professor John Kotter of Harvard Business School says," the challenges faced by strategic leaders in implementing complex and long-range consequential decisions demand that they be sophisticated with respect to issues of leadership".[14] Dr Subhash Kapila defines vision in national security plane as imaginative insight and statesman like foresight, including political

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11. Alvin Toffler, "Power Shift", Bantam Books, New York, 1991, Pp.3-14

12. Like many strategists, Arthur F. Lykke of US War College explains ends for objectives, ways for concept and means for resource in his article "Defining Military Strategy", US Military Review 69, No. 5, May 1989.

13. "Background Note: Bangladesh", http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3452.htm visited on Mar 21, 2007.

14. Strategic Leadership and Decision Making, National Defence University, USA at http://www.au.af.mil/au/ awc/ awcgate/ndu/strat-ldr-dm/pt4ch17.html visited on August 18, 2007.

sagacity.[15] He points out that vision leads to a national strategy to adopt vertically and downwards a set of security policy. In Bangladesh, political leaders with blurred or no vision continue to politicise national organs for partisan interests.

Civil-Military Relations

Professor Huntington views civil-military relations as the principal institutional component of security policy.[16] In his analysis, civil-military relations have been placed at the centre of security dynamics. Civil-military relations in erstwhile East Pakistan had been negative due to people's experience of social injustice at the hands of military rulers. After independence, Shiekh Mujib and Ziaur Rahman were killed by groups of army officers in 1975 and 1981. Although the higher military command was not apparently involved in 1975, they ultimately became the main beneficiary of the coup. In 1982, General Ershad annoyed people due to his direct involvement in the coup and his long autocratic rule.

After Ershad, common people gradually developed trusts on military due to their withdrawal of support from Ershad, their role in the 1996. Constitutional crisis, CHT insurgency and the part they played during emergencies/ disasters. Civil-military relations are still evolving and the armed forces have again been called in to aid civil power after the declaration of emergency. People in general are still happy, but rumblings of suspicion amongst some are emerging. It is worth remembering that though military involvement in state affairs was welcomed when lawlessness and poor-governance crossed the people's endurance, its continuation for long would not be desirable.

Security Policy and Planning Mechanism

Regarding security policy planning, there is no effective platform in Bangladesh. All major policies appeared to have been decided by the PM in a "Kitchen Cabinet" consisting of a few selected civil-military bureaucrats.[17] The Planning Commission and other agencies deal with economic policies but are subject to partisan influences from politicians and donors and lack coordination. A National Committee on Security Affairs (NCSA) was set up in 1992, but it was never that active. The PM is the Convener and its members include ministers and government officials. The NCSA has no legislative basis and its activities are subject to the absolute desire of the PM.

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15. Kapila, Subhash, "India's National Security and Defence Prescriptions" South Asia Analysis Group Paper No.1118, September 16, 2004.

16. Huntington S, "The Soldier and the State", Harvard University Press, Cambridge, England, 1985, Pp.3-4

17. Harun Ur Rashid, "Foreign Relation of Bangladesh", Rishi Publications, India, 2001, p.38

The National Security Intelligence (NSI) is responsible for collecting foreign intelligence and monitoring internal affairs. It was created by a cabinet decision in 1972 but had no statutory basis.[18] The pivotal intelligence agency is the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) manned by armed forces personnel as well civil. The heads of the NSI and DGFI are usually the closest advisers of the PM. There is no known central coordination agency like the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) between these two to avoid overlapping and to ensure that complementary collection and analysis paths are followed.

The major weaknesses of Bangladesh's security planning lie in its weak leadership and highly bureaucratic practices. Attributes like security consciousness and ability to make own decision have not been nurtured. Often a strong Chairman becomes a lone decision maker while others just keep nodding heads to display predetermined loyalties. Henry Kissinger's views on Indians can be apt here, "neither education nor exposure nor incentives existed for the Indian political leadership nor civil bureaucracies to think in strategic terms or appreciate military matters".[19]

The busy PM as nodal point for all decision making has definite limitations. Following the Falkland War in 1982, a committee was convened in the UK with Lord Franks to investigate its causes. Franks attributed the failure to the absence of a full-time adviser on national security. Since then, the UK has instituted a full time Chairman of the JIC.[20] Then in absence of a strong organisation, the PM is not bound to consult anyone for decision making. Hence, she/he sometimes cannot avoid, even if she/he wants, the undue requests, lest the party members and friends become unhappy.

We can summarize the fault lines in the security sphere of Bangladesh under the following heads:

a. Politics for power and money, divorced from ethics and morals.

b. Death of two Presidents due to weaknesses in civil-military relations.

c. Rise of radical extremists from 1999 and expansion of their capacity for violence.

d. Inadequate human resource development and endemic poverty. Though the number of poor has started to fall slowly, poverty is still evident across the society

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18. Adilur Rahman Khan, "Bangladesh: National Security Laws, Security for Whom? at http://www.hrsolidarity.net/ mainfile.php/1998vol08no01/1304/ visited on June 23, 2007.

19. Kapila Subhash, "India's National Security Council- A Critical Review", South Asia Analysis Group Papers, May 10, 2000.

20. Frontline, Volume 16 - Issue 17, Aug, 1999 at http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl1617/16170200.htm visited on December 23, 2006.

and regions. Most of the economic gains have been in Dhaka, while Rajshahi and Khulna have large pockets of poverty.

To tackle these problems, Bangladesh needs her own vision of security and institutional mechanism. Bangladesh should adopt new measures to ensure human security in the future.

SECURITY POLICY AND COORDINATION AGENCIES IN THE WORLD

Amongst the many models of security agencies current now, the concept of NSC is the most common. However, its organizational models and roles vary from state to state. Two different systems from four different countries have been considered for this study. The relevant security parameters of these countries, USA, the UK, Pakistan and India, are diversified and sometimes contrasting and thus have been helpful for own purposes.

The US Model of NSC

The NSC in USA was established vide the national security act of July 26, 1947 during Truman's presidency to assist him in policies relating to national security.[21] Events like the formation of NATO, Soviet detonation of atom bomb, etc. around the 1950s dramatically changed the functioning of NSC, making it the principal arm of security matters under the next President Eisenhower. In the 1960s, NSC was somewhat side-lined due to President Kennedy's preference for informal advisory arrangements which was also shared by President Johnson.[22] Under President Nixon, NSC was revamped to acquire more interdepartmental information and to generate foreign affairs ideas. In early 1990s, President Bush restored collegial relations amongst departments and structured it with eight Policy Coordinating Committees. For last 60 years, NSC has been a forum to initiate new policies for the President of the US so that he can take decisions effectively.

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21. History of the National Security Council, 1947-1997, at http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/history.html, visited on May 23, 2007.

22. Endicott E John, "The National Security Council: Formalized Coordination and Policy Planning", at "National Security Policy, The Decision Making Process edited by Pfaltzgraff and Ra'anan Op Cit Pp.177-187

The NSC is under the chairmanship of the President; its statutory members include the Vice-President, the Secretaries of State, Defense, and Treasury, the NSA, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), and the Director of Central Intelligence Agency. The CJCS also acts as the military advisor to the Council. The NSA is supported by the NSC staff, which comprises of civil servants lent out by other agencies, political appointees and other personnel. The NSC structure includes means to cover national and international interests, and research and thinking mechanisms.

While the exact role of NSC in the US has largely depended on the role of the President, the general features involving national security has remained most consistent. The main role of NSC in USA may be enumerated as follows:[23]

a. NSC is a platform for coordination of all security policies for advising the President and enabling him to execute policies having the NSC 'stamp of approval'. This endorsement acts to move his policy out of the realm of partisan politics.

b. NSC has dealt with budgets and budgetary recommendations with varying degrees of success.

c. NSC has contributed to security education and communication for officials and specialists in and out of governments.

The NSA in NSC generally acts like its manager and facilitator to integrate foreign and defence policies. While working as NSA under President Nixon, Henry Kissinger acquired enormous clout which tended to stifle departmental initiative and innovation in policy-making. Most NSA members except a few came from a non-governmental background; they were always experts on foreign policy matters. Since 9/11 incident, they have been criticized for their tendency to over-focus on foreign policy issues, leaving other aspects of national security to their subordinates. Condoleezza Rice has come under serious criticism for not being able to act as expected during the post and pre 9/11 disaster.[24]

The US Congress has oversight of national security issues. The Government Accountability Office supports Congress in overseeing federal programs and operations to ensure accountability to the American people.

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23. Endicott E John and Roy W Stafford Jr (eds), "American Defence Policy", The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1977, Pp.314 -319

24. Doug Bandow,"Failure Personified: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice" January 5, 2007 http://www. Antiwar .com/bandow/?articleid=10266 visited on 20 May 2007.

The US also enjoys a vibrant 'think tank' community comprising thousands of highly trained and experienced professionals, engaged in discussions/ criticisms on national security issues. The NSC in USA encourages exchange of data amongst civilian specialists and sometimes media which contributes to the development of a security conscious society. Decisions of the NSC are sometimes declassified for publications after certain interval of time.

The United Kingdom Model

Security policy and decision-making in UK is decentralized amongst different departments. Of key importance is the role of the PM, the Cabinet office, the Foreign and Commonwealth office, the MOD and the Home office. The Chairman of JIC, Security Intelligence Coordinator and other executive actors are brought together by a variety of inter-departmental ministerial and secretarial committees focusing on different aspects of security policy making. The Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR, popularly pronounced as Cobra) is their official meeting place. COBR is highly organised and it remains on 'one hour' notice during day and night. In fact, when considering national security issues, the Cabinet Office structures are mostly like a NSC.

The JIC in the Cabinet office analyse the intelligence received, and provide their assessment to COBR, Security and Intelligence Coordinator and Ministerial Committee for PM's perusal as and when felt essential. The Cabinet office assessments staff in JIC, consisting of staff from various departments, are in fact the heart of that analytic engine. Traditionally, the decisions of the Ministerial Committees are not opposed by the Cabinet. This, therefore, would appear to be a general British government policy that permeates both civilian and military sectors at different levels in decision making.

The UK has an active community of think-tanks, academics, and NGOs. Traditionally, central government policy-making has only selectively brought in advice from "outsiders" but the national security policy-making system has become more inclusive and transparent in the recent years. The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), a renowned think tank, plays an important role in security research and policy planning.

NSC in India

The Indian NSC came into existence through an executive order on November 19, 1998.[25] Activities of NSC include intelligence assessment, generation of intellectual input and watch over the implementation process. At the

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25. Karim A T, "Securing the Nation: Pros and Cons of NSC", The Daily Star, March 22, 2007.

apex, India has a six-member body with the PM as Chair and the NSA, Ministers of Defence, External Affairs, Home and Finance and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission as members. Others may be invited to attend its scheduled monthly meetings as required.

Other organs of NSC include a Strategic Policy Group (SPG), a National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) and a JIC. The SPG is the first level of the three-tier organisation stated to be responsible for inter-ministerial coordination. It is a 17 member bureaucratic body that forms the nucleus of the NSC system comprising the Cabinet Secretary, three Service Chiefs and Secretaries of core ministries. The NSAB is a 32 member body comprising basically of eminent retired officials and economic experts that acts as the think tank for NSC. The JIC in India has evolved in line with the British after the 1962 War with China for evaluation of data from Intelligence agencies. It has been re-designated as the NSC Secretariat, a role it has embraced along with its traditional role as JIC. Indian NSC has a NSA and a separate Adviser to the PM on Internal Security. As with the US system, the NSA has direct access to the PM and plays a key role in the NSC.

The working of NSC during the last seven years has come under criticism mainly regarding military components that have no direct access to the apex body. Analysts view the JIC as secretariat of NSC that may not be effective in handling the intelligence component. The NSAB with its staffs from outside the government may also not be effective because the Indian bureaucracy may be reluctant to share intelligence information to them, especially with people who have never had any association with the government. NSC's creation by an executive order has also been criticised in India.

NSC in Pakistan

The NSC in Pakistan has a long history starting from the era of President Yahya Khan. Pakistani Columnist Altaf Gauhar believes that it was aimed to control the general elections of 1970.[26] Then President Zia-ul-Haq established an 11 member NSC in 1985 but was disbanded soon due to overwhelming pressure.[27] Within 18 days of his assuming power, General Musharraf, established the new NSC on October 30, 1999. Subsequently, the NSC underwent several re-shuffling, and finally got established by an Act of the Parliament in April 2004.

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26. Altaf Gauhar: "How Intelligence Agencies Run Our Politics" at http://www.fas.org/irp/world/pakistan/isi/politics .html visited on May 04, 2007.

27. Rizvi H A, "National Security Council: A Comparative Study of Pakistan and Other Selected Countries", Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development And Transparency, August 2005.

The NSC of Pakistan comprises of the President (Chairman), the PM, CJCS Committee, 3 Services Chiefs, Leader of the Opposition and few others. It is a consultative body constituted to deal with matters of national security, including crisis management. Meetings of the NSC may be convened by the President either at his discretion, or on the advice of the PM within the time frame indicated by him. The NSC Secretariat, headed by a Secretary to be appointed by the President, is under the control of the President.

NSC in Other Countries

After 9/11, security organisations in the world have undergone thorough reforms. Recently, the Canadian Government has spent over US$ 6 billion to address key security gaps. A 15-member Advisory Council on National Security with eminent specialists from civil society has been established in 2004.[28] Newly democratic countries like Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia etc. and other countries in East Europe like Czech Republic, Romania and Slovenia have developed their NSC mostly in line with the US. The Turkish NSC was established in 1961; in it people with military background constitute the majority.

In Asia, countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Korea, Indonesia, Japan and others have gone for the NSC system. The Malaysian NSC was established in 1971 where the Chief of Defence Forces is the statutory member while the Chiefs of Services are called as required.[29] In Africa, countries like South Africa, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and others also have NSC. The South African system is structured to deal with threats from internal stability which include poverty, hunger, corruption, economic crime, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Generally speaking, South Africa does not perceive any 'hard-security threats' such as military aggression.[30]

Synthesis of the above NSC Models

The above studies reveal that the fundamental roles and missions of the NSC in different countries are mostly similar. The UK exercise centralised decision-making in a very flexible structure based on deep rooted democratic values. However, these overarching organisations function as forums for debate, but are not generally involved in the decision- making and implementation process. The Council formalises a continuing relationship between those responsible for security policy planning. The matrix below captures some of the generic aspects of those NSCs.

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28. Advisory Council on National Security at www.pco-bcp.ga.ca visited on July 23, 2007.

29. National Security Division at www.bkn.gov.my/index.php?module=h_carta, visited on July 11, 2007 and interview of a Malaysian Armed Forces officer.

30. "National Security Decision-Making Structures and Security Sector Reform", RAND Europe (UK), June 2005 at www2.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/security-decision-making.pdf visited on 30 May 2007.

Table-2

Involvement of NSC in Different Fields

Country	Body	Security Management	Interaction with Decision Makers	Decision Making	Military Personnel	Legislative Basis	Oversight	Coordination	Advice	Integration	Implementation	Assessment	Emergency Planning
USA	NSC	X	X		01	X		X	X	X			
	NSC Organs	X			*								X
UK	Cabinet Office	X	X	X	01*		X	X		X	X	X	
	Committees		X		*		X	X	X				
India	NSC	X	X		-	X							
	NSC Organs				03			X	X	X	X	X	X
Pakistan	NSC	X	X		04	X			X	X			

* Invited or detailed as required

NSC AS A MODEL FOR BANGLADESH

People's Perception of NSC in Bangladesh

The concept of NSC is not new in Bangladesh; Ershad first promoted the idea in 1979, but politicians and bureaucrats misperceived the concept then as a ploy adjusted for militarisation of politics.[31] Subsequently, both the Awami League and the BNP Governments established NSC but never pursued it further. Now, during the Caretaker Government, the old agenda has got a new illumination, but people's perception of NSC is again mixed. They feel that the voices of three Services Chiefs will carry weight out of proportion and decisions may be military-biased. Some have raised questions about its viability in a poor nation; powerful nations may need it because they have global and regional interests to protect and manipulate but does Bangladesh need it? They also feel that NSC may not be able to deal with the deep-seated problems of governance and may fail to tackle the issue of poverty reduction in the country.

There are opinions in favour of NSC as well; some feel that NSC is now required to combat terrorism and threats that are coming from different fault-lines. Some scholars opine that NSC may only be acceptable if it is not prejudicial to democracy. Other analysts would like to see the President as Chairman of NSC and draw some sort of balance of state power between the President and PM.

Politicians, the main stakeholders, are not very vocal on the issue of NSC. However, on July 12, Mannan Bhuiyan of BNP issued a 13-point reform program that includes, among others, a plan for including an NSC to ensure national security.[32] Dr Kamal Hossain and Serajul Alam Khan have also expressed their views in favour of NSC.[33] Recently, a report published in the weekly magazine 'PROBE' claims that analysts also feel that a mature political reaction would be to accept the formation of such a council in good spirit, as it would solely begin functioning in the national interests.[34]

Arguments and Rationales

Establishing a NSC in Bangladesh is possible only after successful negotiation of some obstacles. In this perspective, the important attributes are identified below:

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31. M Sakhawat Hussain, "National Security Council: Need of the hour" at PROBE News Magazine, January 26 - February 01, 2007.

32. Mumtaz Iqbal, "Never say die", The Daily Star, July 20, 2007.

33. National Daily, The New Age, 12 January 2007.

34. "The need for a National Security Council", PROBE, January 26 - February 01, 2007.

a. A form of NSC that is working in other democracies should not be incompatible with democracy in Bangladesh. Regarding military components, Bangladesh, like others, can create a post of CDS/ CJCS who will represent the entire services, keeping the armed forces away from the NSC apex body. As long this is not done, the Chiefs of Services can work as statutory advisers and not as members in the NSC.

b. The Chief Executive of the country is also the head of NSC in the rest of world. Since the PM in Bangladesh, as per article 55(2) of the Constitution, exercises the executive power of the Republic, she/he should lead the NSC as well. It is particularly important since the Chief Executive is ultimately responsible to the nation for the total affairs of the state.

c. Some people believe that that the formation of NSC during the present government could send a wrong signal to society. Others opine that the name 'NSC' should be changed to 'Public Security Council' or 'National Security and Development Council' to make it acceptable. While there is no reason as to why these matters cannot be discussed, the main focus should be on its performance. Under the present government, NSC may also be instituted as a pilot project, the output of which could be analysed before it is given any permanent shape. Finally, NSC's ability to address political conflicts, poverty alleviation, etc. may be debatable, but discussion on these issues at the apex national organisation can be expected to influence positively.

The NSC or a similar institution should also be viewed in the historical and political context of the state. The NSC in Pakistan may not have worked due to its military domination there year after year. But Bangladesh is now in a far different situation; the armed forces of the nation are a more professional body and are aware of the implication of military rule in the present world. Moreover, an operating NSC with democratic parameters should only play a limited advisory role accepting the primacy of the government. For instance, the NSC in USA or Malaysia has never created any opportunities for the army to take over state power. In contrast, the Turkish experience is quite different; the country has seen a number of coups although it has a military-heavy NSC in existence.

Suggested Model of NSC for Bangladesh

While no other country can be an exact model for it, Bangladesh may consider the experience of other democratic nations in the evolution of its own NSC. In addition to a comparative study of different countries, Bangladesh can utilise the experiences of USA and India while keeping in mind its own requirements. Bangladesh may keep in view broad areas such as, external threats and internal

insecurities like terrorism, insurgency, political instability etc. in delineating the area of responsibility of its NSC.

NSC can maintain its integrity if it is not involved in implementation and decision- making. As a matter of practice, it should only have few basic objectives. First, it should be a mechanism of thinking, forecasting and strategic planning; second, it should represent a link between the civil-military elites, including the Chief Executive; and third, it should act as an administrative body only in an emergency. Though this is not common practice in other NSCs, the Leader of the Opposition may be included in its workings to tackle the prevailing distrust between the government and the opposition in Bangladesh and to develop a national consensus on security issues. The broad roles and functions of NSC like security policy planning and prioritisation, coordination, etc. should be ascertained at the beginning.

Taking socio-economic aspects into consideration, Bangladesh may not go for a heavy-weight structure like the ones in USA or India. The following table may be considered and may of course be restructured as and when felt essential:
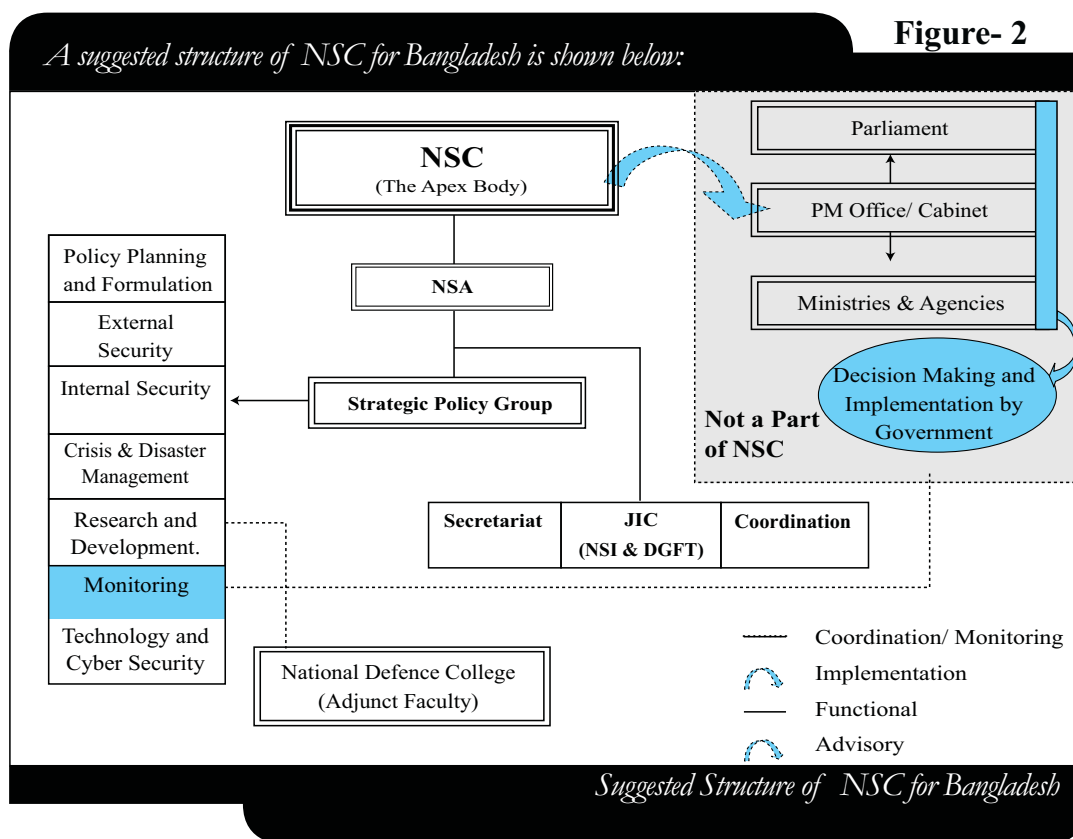
a. The structure of the apex body could be as in Table - 3 shown below:

Table-3

	Suggested Composition of NSC in Bangladesh		
(1)	The Prime Minister/ Chief Advisor	-	Chairman
(2)	Minister/ Advisor of Defence, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Home Affairs.	-	Statutory Members
(3)	Leader of the Opposition		Statutory Member
(4)	National Security Advisor	-	Member Secretary
(5)	Chiefs of the Armed Services		Statutory Advisors (Vice Chairman, Planning Commission may be a Statutory Member when not acting as Finance Minister)
(6)	Cabinet Secretary		
(7)	Member Secretary of Planning Commission	-	
(8)	3 x Representatives of Civil Society with expertise on Economics, Foreign Policy and Technology.	-	Advisor and they may be the members of the Strategic Policy Group in the next tier as well.
	Note: Other Ministers and Heads of Organisations may be invited to attend as required.		

b. There may be two other second tier organisations. First, a SPG under the Chairmanship of NSA with government high officials at the level of Secretary and members of civil society with expertise in economics, environment, foreign policy, technology and other areas as recommended by the NSC. Secondly, a JIC, again under the NSA including Heads of Intelligence Agencies, is to be formed and it should act as the Secretariat of the NSA as well. The Secretariat of the NSA should also include experts to handle the media effectively.

c. The NSA and other advisors may be selected taking into account the weaknesses of our bureaucrats and partisan political practices. Some of the criteria to be set may include : non-political background; experience in security and intelligence matters; etc. The status of the NSA should be reasonably high to ensure his role as the coordinator.

Figure- 2

A suggested structure of NSC for Bangladesh is shown below:

Suggested Structure of NSC for Bangladesh

For legitimacy, NSC would need a legislative basis and people's support that is possible through transparency and accountability. Legislative safeguards are particularly essential to ensure that NSC can meet at regular intervals, and so that the Chairman is made to consult it on security issues. All NSC matters should be properly recorded and be declassified after a certain interval so that decision-makers remain careful about its future implication. Provisions for occasional

press briefings may also be considered. Finally, decisions within the NSC should be taken on the basis of consensus and voting should be considered only when such effort fails after repeated attempts.

Implementation of NSC in Bangladesh is subject to many activities. In the absence of a Parliament, the formation of an NSC has to be promulgated through an Ordinance; in that case it should be discussed beforehand with civil society and other political parties. Most importantly, the matter should be studied in details with the help of experts drawn from other related fields. For instance, India in 1998 set up a special Task Force led by K C Pant to study NSC mechanisms and to submit recommendations in this regard.[35]

CONCLUSION

Security is one of the widely traveled domains where the humans have been involved in their quest for survival. Traditionally, national security has been defined largely in military terms, but contemporary analytical perspectives posit that continued long-term effective security is predicated on the political, economic and societal bases of the state. Particularly in the context of developing countries, it has been seen that political instability, abysmal poverty, extreme socio-economic disparities, etc. are serious sources of national insecurity even surpassing external threats.

Bangladesh has had to face insecurity issues of huge dimensions on many occasions. It has had to suffer due to weak civil-military relations, terrorism, lack of security consciousness and inappropriate policies. In fact, security matters in Bangladesh have been traditionally side-lined. The concerned agencies do not work in a coordinated manner. The PM, wearing many hats and burdened with official and political responsibilities and interests, is the nodal point of security but cannot deal with the situation properly.

The concept of NSC and its military components is also not clearly understood in Bangladesh. A NSC designed under democratic premise can relegate the military to a distant advisory role. This idea corroborated by experience shows that NSC does not facilitate military participation in political affairs elsewhere in the world. What it can do is establish a watchdog system for security matters and create a platform for interaction between the military and civilians, including politicians that can help improve the civil-military relations and strengthen the national security mechanisms.

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35. B Raman, " National Security Mechanism", South Asia Analysis Group Paper No. 1228, January 24, 2005.

To have a NSC in Bangladesh, we need to analyse every aspect of its working from pragmatic perspectives. While some generic aspects of different NSC models may be considered for Bangladesh, the 'one size fits all' approach will not be effective. A high power committee should examine all existing models for ensuring optimum outcome. It is likely that a blended model mainly combing elements of the Indian and the US systems and incorporating arrangements like the inclusion of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and eminent personalities of civil society could prove to be suitable for Bangladesh. To make the NSC truly effective, a legal mandate with oversight mechanism should also be required. Finally, people with patriotic and independent mindset would be required to manage it to pursue the security interests of the nation and lead it towards a secure future.

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