

ASYMMETRIC WARFARE: BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

The vital interests of a nation always need protection from both internal and external threats.¹ Nations prepare and fight war to ensure national sovereignty and territorial integrity. In war, insignificant differences between the belligerents have little or no bearing on the outcome; whereas significant differences between opponents place one in a position of advantage and the other at a disadvantage.

The Bangladesh Armed Forces is of moderate size and doctrinally presuppose that it must follow a defensive posture and hence limited offensive capability. Thus, military conflict between Bangladesh and an aggressor is likely to be asymmetric. Bangladesh's security threat does not so much emanate from external sources. Indeed, in recent times, internal threats have increased manifold. Leftist movements in the southwestern part of the country, unrest in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), resurgence of religious extremism, repeated large scale arms haul and serial bombings pose great threats emanating from different non-state actors from within.

Considering the importance of the security scenario discussed in the foregoing, 'capacity building' effort against an aggressor as well as to tackle non-state actors has led Bangladesh to resort to a strategy of asymmetric warfare, often termed as the 'fourth generation warfare'. To predict possible doctrinal compulsions for Bangladesh for asymmetric warfare at the strategic level, an in-depth analytical examination and intellectual exercise has become increasingly inevitable.

1. Threat is an act of coercion wherein a negative consequence is proposed to elicit a response.

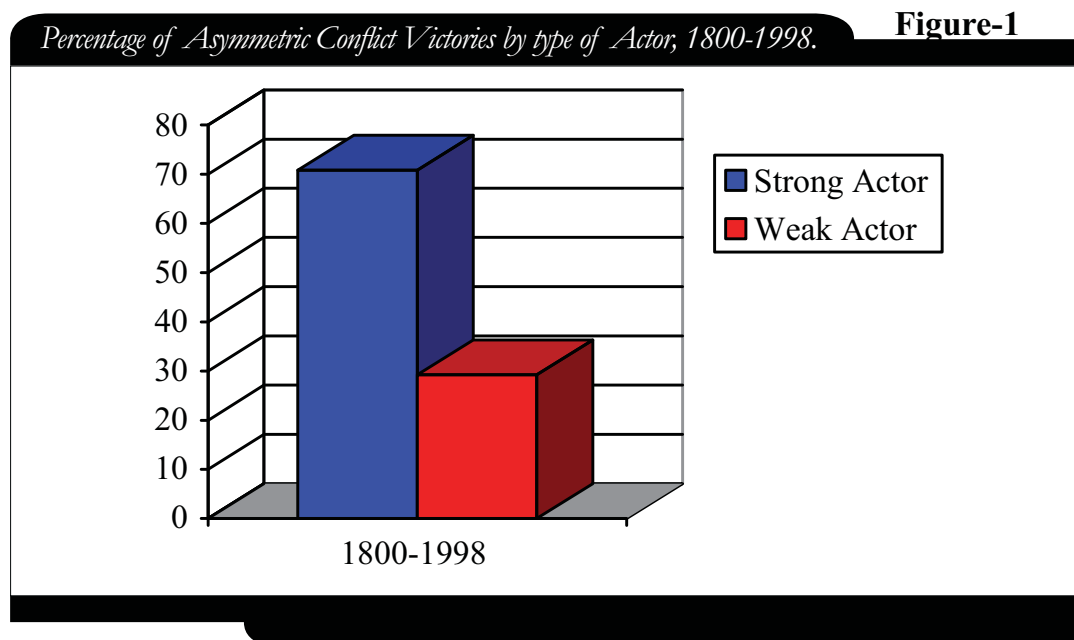
ANALYSES OF ASYMMETRIC CONFLICT

General View

Asymmetric warfare can be defined as a military situation in which two or more actors² or groups of unequal power interact and attempt to exploit each other's characteristic weaknesses.³ Such struggles often involve strategies and tactics of unconventional warfare, in which “weaker” combatants attempt to use strategy to offset deficiencies in quantity or quality.

Asymmetric Conflict Outcome – Historical Perspective

If we look at the 200-year period covered by Singer's Seminal Correlates of War data, we discover that “strong actors” i.e., those with anywhere from a 5:1 to 10:1 asymmetric advantage have lost more and more asymmetric conflicts.⁴ Again according to the international relations theory, power implies victory in war.⁵ Thus in asymmetric conflicts, strong actors should almost always win.⁶



2. ‘Actors’ here mean states or coalitions of states, although the same dynamics would apply to Governments fighting against rebels.
3. Wikipedia, *Asymmetric Warfare* at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asymmetric_warfare.
4. *Four Questions and Answer on Asymmetric Warfare* at www.ndc.nato.int/download/research/asym_war_comments.pdf.
5. The term international relations theory refers to a simple version of realist theory with three key elements: (1) there is no authority above states that is capable of regulating their interactions; (2) all states have some capacity to harm other states; and (3) states therefore seek to increase their relative power, which can deter other states from launching attacks, intimidate them into making concessions, or defeat them in war.
6. Toft, Ivan Arreguin, *How the Weak Win War: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict*, International Security, Vol 26, No. 1 (Summer 2001), at www.samlwarjournal.com/ref/counterinsurgency.htm.

In contrast, the military history of the last 200 years, suggests,⁷ weak actors were victorious in nearly 30 percent of all asymmetric wars and has won with increasing frequency over time.



Logic of Strategic Interaction

In an asymmetric conflict between state actors, indirect defense via Unconventional Warfare (UW) is in most cases the only sensible strategy for the weaker side to follow because a direct defense in all probability may lead to a defeat. The weaker side relies on delay and steady infliction of casualties and other war costs to subvert the stronger opponent's political will to continue fighting.

While considering any threat from a non-state actor, it is to be remembered that most insurgencies fail without decisive external assistance. The weaker side's possession of superior will and strategy is hardly a guarantee of success.

Conflict Outcome – the Hypotheses

There are two defence strategies for a weaker side, i.e. direct defence and indirect defence/guerrilla warfare and two offensive strategies for the stronger adversary i.e. direct attack and barbarism. The interaction between these strategies yield following hypotheses:⁸

7. Ivan, Ibid, p.4

8. Ivan, Ibid, p.107

Serial (a)	Strategies		Result (d)	Hypothesis (e)
	Strong Actor (b)	Weak Actor (c)		
1.	Direct	Direct	Strong Wins	1
2.	Direct	Indirect	Weak Wins	2
3.	Indirect	Direct	Weak Wins	3
4.	Indirect	Indirect	Strong Wins	4

These hypotheses describes either same-approach or opposite-approach strategic interaction. It follows that all four may be tested as a single hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5: Strong actors are more likely to win same approach interactions and lose opposite-approach interactions.

Use of Asymmetry in Recent Wars – Case Studies

Iraq War

While capturing Baghdad, coalition forces realized that they were being drawn into a long protracted war as Iraqi guerrillas started engaging them from roadsides and every nook and corner of Iraq's cities. They used low-tech counter measures, guerrilla tactics, Built-up Area (BUA) battle and fought with man-portable weapons. The Iraq campaign then shifted to a different type of asymmetric warfare where Coalition Forces casualties rose over time, making it look like a costly venture to the people of the US and its allies.

Israel – Lebanon War of July 2006

In this asymmetric conflict a strong actor, Israel, adopted the direct strategy and a weak actor, Hezbollah, adopted a blend of direct and indirect strategy. The important features were preparation of strong point entrenchment, guerrilla tactics and mobility. Hezbollah launched attacks through small, well-armed units equipped with anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) causing serious problems for the Israel Defence Force.⁹

9. Jane's Defence Weekly, *op.cit.*

The Economist¹⁰, concluded that by surviving this asymmetric military conflict with Israel, Hezbollah emerged victorious militarily and politically.

Battle of Grozny

In this asymmetric conflict the then Russian adversaries, Chechen fighters were better motivated and were familiar with the terrain. They were divided into combat groups consisting of 15 to 20 personnel, each group subdivided into three or four-man fire teams. To destroy Russian armoured vehicles in Grozny, five or six hunter-killer fire teams were deployed at the ground level, in second and third stories, and in basements. Snipers and machine gunners pinned down the supporting infantry while anti-tank gunners engaged armoured vehicles aiming at the top, rear and sides of vehicles. Unable to either crush or contain the rebels, Russia was forced into a humiliating peace deal in August 1996.

Types of Asymmetric Threat

A country is likely to face asymmetric opponents at two levels, namely external by state actors and internal by non-state actors.

- a. **External Threat** – Geographically a small state has common borders with many countries. Some have almost equal military strength and capabilities as their neighbours. Again comparing others military and economic potentials, a state may find huge asymmetry amongst themselves.
- b. **Internal Threats** – A small state faces numerous vulnerabilities such as political instability, social-economic unrest, age-old judicial system, religious fanaticism, yellow journalism, irredentism etc. The end state of the non-state actors can be classified into two broad categories. For example, the armed struggle of ethnically diverse people and political agitation in the name of autonomy or independence, such as, Swadhin Bangabhumii Andalan is a classical example of a non-state actor who wants independence and thus wants a change in the map of Bangladesh. The second group intends to impose passionate ideologies, such as, Islamic or Sharia law¹¹ in Bangladesh, bringing in ideological changes in society.

10. "Hezbollah's Shallow Victory", The Economist, 19 August 2006.

11. 'Sharia' deals with many aspects of day-to-day life, including politics, economics, banking, business, contracts, family, sexuality, hygiene, and social issues. There is no strictly static codified set of laws of Sharia. Sharia is more of a system of devising laws, based on the Qur'an, hadith, ijma, qiyas and centuries of debate, interpretation and precedent.

USE OF ASYMMETRIC STRATEGY AGAINST CONVENTIONAL ADVERSARY – A SMALL STATE PERSPECTIVE

Current Concepts

Offensive Strategy

The likely strategy of a big and strong state will be to shape up the battlefield, create superiority in ‘points of decision’ and ensure momentum in the war effort. In order to bring enemy forces to the ‘point of culmination,’¹² it must target enemy’s ‘centre of gravity,’¹³ within minimum possible time. To generate impetus, it must avoid surfaces and exploit gaps based on the terrain and own dispositions.

To achieve surprise through unexpected presence in unexpected areas, threat force is likely to undertake specialized operations such as airborne, air mobile and amphibious assaults. The whole campaign will be supported by air and naval operations to create overall strategic advantage in all dimensions of warfare.

Defensive Strategy

- a. **Conventional Approach.** Defence strategy of a small state will entail reduction of enemy strength to achieve a more balanced correlation of force. Maximum advantage of terrain and weather should be made to maximize the ‘ground friction’¹⁴ to combat the threat forces. Knowledge of enemy intentions, movement and marshalling of forces will allow vital time to own forces for preparation of advantageous ground positions including time for fall-back positions on identified enemy ‘thrust lines’.¹⁵ The mechanics of defence would be to destroy the attackers when they expose themselves during the process of attack. As the battlefield environment turns favourable, own forces could launch counter-offensive with a view to restoring the territorial integrity of the country.

12 ‘Culmination point’ principally relates to the direct application of combat power, which is normally reduced if not regenerated in timely fashion during battle.

13 ‘Centre of gravity’ is the point where the enemy is most vulnerable and an attack on it will have the best chance of being decisive.

14 ‘Ground frictions’ are the constant streams of obstacles thrown in the way of planning and the governor of progress. Armies encounter unpredictable obstacles in any number of situations. Each friction requires a different solution.

15 ‘Thrust line’ is the general axis of advance that extends toward the enemy.

- b. **Blending of Conventional and Unconventional Warfare.** Blending of conventional and unconventional warfare will be made from very outset of hostilities. An Unconventional Warfare Force (UWF) will receive mission-orientated order and contribute towards achieving synergy while remaining within operational concept of dependent field formation. They will relentlessly harass and disrupt enemy C³ systems.¹⁶ Their effort should be to try to upset the decision cycle of the enemy through widespread disruption of force facilitation and violation of scheduled 'time lines'.¹⁷ They will not involve themselves in any decisive battles rather they will break clean to reorganize and strike elsewhere.

Analysis Between the Strategies

From a historical perspective of conflict outcomes, it is assumed that a strong actor should almost always win. However, a study of 200 year period war data suggests that a small state has at least 30% chances of winning.

A strong actor has options of adopting direct or indirect attack, while a small state has choice of direct or indirect defence i.e. UW strategies. The study of the hypothesis gives us the following result:

Serial (a)	Strategies		Result (d)	Remarks (e)
	Strong State (Attack) (b)	Weak State (Defence) (c)		
1.	Direct Attack	Direct Defence	Strong Wins	
2.	Direct Attack	Indirect Defence	Weak Wins	
3.	Indirect Attack	Direct Defence	Weak Wins	
4.	Indirect Attack	Indirect Defence	Strong Wins	

16. C³ stands for command, control and communication. It is an integrated system comprised of doctrine, procedures, organizational structure, personnel, equipment, facilities and communications which provide authorities at all levels with timely and adequate data to plan, direct and control their activities.

17. 'Time line' is the graphical representation of the movement of forces or the flow of an operation over time. It usually represents the location of forces at various increments of time.

Bangladesh defence strategy calls for UWF to operate alongside the conventional force. This is a blend of direct and indirect strategy instead of direct or indirect alone. War of Liberation 1971 teaches us that the power generated by participation of the entire mass i.e. indirect defence strategy crippled the Pakistan Army and contributed to the victory of the allied force. On the contrary, if the Bangladesh approach is fine-tuned with experiences of indirect strategies like Iraq war, Israel-Lebanon war etc. there are possible chances of gaining asymmetry in the forms of *method, will, organization, morale, and patience*.

Use of Asymmetry – Bangladesh Perspective

- a. Bangladesh Armed Forces should develop the capability to withstand overwhelming odds and yet fight back. Own forces should confront the adversary following the conventional war doctrine as a principal means of seeking decision and unconventional war as its adjunct. In the event of diminishing conventional capability, the unconventional war should assume the major role with conventional war in its support.
- b. If the whole of Bangladesh is considered as a theatre of operation and is divided into different operational sectors, then there may be a 'time and situation' when conventional forces will predominate and continue fighting in some sectors while due to an adverse situation, transition to unconventional warfare may be deemed necessary in other sectors. This implies that a reverse situation in one sector will not influence or affect the forces fighting in a favourable situation in another sector.
- c. The numerical disadvantage of Bangladesh can be offset by the use of UWF. The UWF may be employed to interdict adversary's follow up echelon and degrade its key capabilities such as logistic installations, C³ centers, bridging equipments, gun positions, troop and armour concentrations. This fluidity of UWF allows them to operate in nonlinear fashion and can synergize the efforts of the conventional force fighting battle along the traditional front line.
- d. UWF provides greater security for the conventional force by increasing the depth of the battle space. It provides a significant effect as they operate behind enemy lines and carry out destruction and neutralization of threat forces such that its decision cycle is disrupted and time plan upset.

- e. The advantages offered by terrain and the weather of Bangladesh must be maximized and fully capitalized by its forces. Counter-mobility will be vital to separating threat fighting echelons from its supporting and logistic echelons.
- f. Own forces should exploit the defence potential of the Built-up Areas (BUAs) falling within 'Avenues of Approaches'¹⁸ and turn them into fortresses. With mutually supported strong point BUA defences, own forces can upset any attacker's efforts by causing out of proportion damage to its human resources, reducing its tempo of operational progress and upsetting its timetable, and restricting its freedom of action.¹⁹
- g. Own forces will have to use both passive methods and electronic warfare capability to protect C³ systems. All civil communication facilities should be integrated and be used as alternative means of communication.
- h. During adverse air situation, forced infiltration and limited offensive can be achieved by raids, ambushes and infiltration attacks on key logistic installations of the enemy instead of engaging it from the traditional defensive line.

DEMAND FOR AUTONOMY/INDEPENDENCE: ASYMMETRIC THREAT FROM NON-STATE ACTOR

General

On the pretext of religious differences and/or deprivation of privileges in Bangladesh, two notable separatist movements have been experienced by the country; firstly, Swadhin Bangabhumi Andalan and secondly, the CHT issue.

18. 'Avenues of approach' are the air or ground route of an attacking force of a given size leading onto its objective or to key terrain in its path.

19. Interview with Moen U Ahmed, Chief of Army Staff, Bangladesh Army, 27 September 2007.

Swadhin Bangabhumi Andalan

‘Bangabhumi’, meaning the land of Bengal, is the proposed name of a homeland for Hindus who had migrated to India from East Bengal in the past.²⁰ Bangabhumi movement was announced on August 15, 1977.²¹ The area proposed for Bangabhumi comes to 20 thousand square miles, which is more than one-third of the total area of Bangladesh.

Even though no violence has so far been reportedly committed by these groups and their activities are dormant at this point in time, yet they may create disturbances, terrorism and communal disharmony in the south-western part of Bangladesh at any moment favourable to them.

CHT Issue

The CHT is about 13,184 sq km, which is approximately one-tenth of the size of Bangladesh.²² In 1960, the construction of a hydro-electric dam at Kaptai submerged about 54,000 acres of fertile and cultivable land and displaced nearly 0.1 million people. Lack of substantial compensation gave rise to intense resentment among the affected hill population.

The perceived sense of deprivation and the quest for autonomy led the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) to launch an armed struggle. Due to integrated approach by the government and tenacious Counter-Insurgency Operations (CIO), the Shanti Bahini (SB) was made to declare unilateral cease-fire on 10 August 1992 which later culminated in a peaceful solution through signing of a ‘Peace Accord’²³ on 02 December 1997. United People’s Democratic Front (UPDF) opposed the treaty outright.

20. *Bangabhumi*, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bangabhumi>

21. Hussain M. T. *Opinion: No to sovereignty of Bangladesh?* at <http://nation.ittefaq.com/artman/>

22. [exec/view.cgi/ 38/22292 http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/HT/C_0215.htm](http://banglapedia.search.com.bd/HT/C_0215.htm)

23. <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/document/actandordinances/CHT1990.htm>.

Significance of the Accord

The peace accord views to uphold the political, social, cultural, educational and economic rights of all the citizens of CHT. It led to official end to the CIO through democratic negotiation and without international intervention. PCJSS stepped aside from its demand for full regional autonomy and complete withdrawal of the Army and the Bengali settlers.²⁴ It has facilitated the establishment of potentially strong and effective local government institutions in the region and the growth of tribal leadership.

Dichotomies of the Peace Accord

Despite many positive features, the peace accord is not without its limitations and constraints. Many clauses like 9, 26(1), 29 and 32 of part B²⁵ are contrary to article 122, 143, 144 and 80 of the constitution²⁶ of Bangladesh and challenge fundamental citizen rights. The accord undermines the existence of non-tribal population with clauses such as the one that mentions ‘CHT will be treated as tribal inhabited area’.

Present Status of the Peace Accord

The accord was signed between the National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts formed by the Government and the PCJSS but still needs to be ratified by the parliament. Thus it remains susceptible to changes in future. Some important provisions like withdrawal of temporary camps, transfer of land, law and other matters related to the district council and transferring important subjects to Hill District Council are yet to be completed.

An Evaluation of the Present Situation

Ten years have elapsed after the signing of the treaty, but the overall environment in CHT is still not conducive to durable peace and sustainable development. The PCJSS is trying to intensify the movement for full implementation of the accord, whereas the UPDF agenda²⁷ include demand for the full autonomy of CHT.

24. Dowla, Rokon, *Strategic Management of Insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts*.

25. Chittagong Hill Tracts Treaty, 1997, *op.cit.*

26. Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 4th Nov 1972.

27. <http://www.updfcht.org/menifesto.html>

To ensure equal rights, distressed Bengali settlers started ‘Somo Odhikar Andolon’ in 2004. Until now, this party rarely has had left any impact in the wider political front of CHT. A group of elderly tribal elite tried to remove the differences between PCJSS and UPDF, but failed to do so due to huge ideological differences. If the unification succeeds, the combined pressure may force the GOB to succumb to the demand for full implementation of the peace accord or as an extreme option they may initiate fresh insurgency as a unified entity. Either situation will not be supportive of the peace and development of Bangladesh in general and CHT in particular.

Challenging and Neutralizing the Non-State Threats

Swadhin Bangabhumi Andolan has never really taken off as a movement. However, it does have the potential to turn into an active catalyst for communal disharmony leading to involvement and influence of external forces. As the movement is based on the issue of religion, it can be assumed that good bi-lateral relations with India and communal harmony in Bangladesh can tackle it. Besides, own intelligence agencies must be able to detect, identify and preempt any attempt made by any group to revive the struggle.

In contrast, the solution to CHT problem may not come in one go. In order to find a permanent solution to the CHT problem, the following major issues are to be settled:²⁸

- a. What will happen to the ‘Bengali’ population?
- b. Who will be the voters?
- c. What is the extent of Khas land and how will it be distributed?
- d. What will be the power of the Regional Council?
- e. What would be the role of the military in ensuring that insurgency is not revived?

Unless these issues are managed strategically, keeping the national interest always in view, the development in CHT would be problematic and incapable of fulfilling the aspirations of the different communities living there.

28. Interview of Retired Major General Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, Bir Protik.

ARMS STRUGGLE TO CHANGE THE POLITICAL SYSTEM – ASYMMETRIC THREAT FROM NON-STATE ACTOR

Religious Extremism

General

The off-again and on-again bomb attacks by religious extremists have posed a serious threat to public safety, security and economic activities. It allowed both local and international propagandists to portray Bangladesh as the next Afghanistan. This worrisome situation is therefore, a great challenge for the peace and stability of the country.

Reasons for Religious Extremism in Bangladesh

Distorted Political Leadership and Culture

Critics say that the GOB failed to thwart the uncertain situation when it was in its embryonic form. Allegedly, they provided undue patronage to religious extremists for minor political gains.

Unequal Growth of Various Types of Educational Systems

The education system in Bangladesh is characterized by the co-existence of vernacular-based secular education system, a religious system of education and English as the medium of instruction. The differences in quality have reinforced divisions rather than facilitated social mobility.

Economic Disparity, Poverty, Overpopulation and Unemployment

Economic disparity in Bangladesh has taken quantum jumps mainly in the last three decades or so. The enormous problem that exists is continuing to aggravate because of an ever growing population and soaring unemployment.

Effects

There is no scope for viewing religious extremism issue with any degree of complacency because it is localized and has been well-taken care of by recent tough actions by law enforcing agencies. In effect, internally, there can be threats to national security, democracy, secularism, economy and development, impacting on law and order. At the regional level it can create mistrust, lead to migration and impact on bi-lateral relation, while at the international level there can be image crisis, loss of credibility, adverse media coverage, economic boycott, uncertainty in cooperation and other unforeseen external response.

Suggestive Measures

The Bangladesh Enterprise Institute in its strategy paper ‘Countering Terrorism in Bangladesh’ (July 2007) has suggested four principal responses to terrorism, namely to prevent, pursue, protect and prepare. Applying a similar response, rise of fundamentalism/extremism can effectively be addressed.²⁹

‘Prevent’ includes determining the causes of grievance and pursuing better ways of addressing other than using indiscriminate violence and extremism. This calls for identification of causes for gross deprivation, grievances, sense of injustice, alienation, inequality, discrimination, youth unemployment and problems in democratic and electoral institution and addressing them with due importance.

‘Pursue’ should aim at determining the magnitude of threats and adopting all possible measures to minimize risks. It calls for good coordination between intelligence and law enforcing agencies to identify and track fundamentalist/extremist activities and destroying their command and support infrastructure. Identification and freezing fundamentalist/extremist sources of financing and putting an accountability system in place will curb transactions of illegal money in support of terrorism. Extradition treaty and regional and international co-operation with partners and allies will strengthen the process of preventing fundamentalist/extremist threats.

‘Protection’ can reduce vulnerability by focusing on key utility areas such as airports, power stations, government offices and crowded places. Strict border control will deny access to new recruits, discourage financing, check arms, explosives and equipment smuggling, and provide information about terrorists. Additionally, effective, efficient and continuous law enforcement, pursuit of fundamentalist/extremist organizations and increasing awareness can reduce the vulnerability from attacks.

‘Preparation’ is concerned with ensuring that the nation is ready for the consequences of fundamentalist/extremist attack. Identification of potential risks, assessment of impact and building necessary capabilities to respond any attack will have good effect and help stabilize the situation in Bangladesh.

29. Interview with Brigadier General A T M Amin, Director Counter-Terrorism Bureau, DGFI, 27 September, 2007.

OPTIONS FOR BANGLADESH

Doctrinal Thoughts

A military doctrine suitable for Bangladesh should succinctly express the collective wisdom on the subject and show how Bangladesh Armed Forces can conduct future military operations successfully. Historian J.F.C. Fuller has written that “the central idea of an army is known as its doctrine, which to be sound must be principles of war, and which to be effective must be elastic enough to admit of mutation in accordance with change in circumstance. In its ultimate relationship to the human understanding this central idea or doctrine is nothing else than common sense, that is, action adapted to circumstance.”³⁰

The implicit premise is that asymmetric warfare deals with unknowns, with surprise manoeuvres in terms of ends, ways and means. The more dissimilar the opponent, the more difficult is to anticipate its actions. If we know in advance how an opponent intends to exploit our dissimilarities, we will be able to develop specific doctrine to counter its actions. Against asymmetric opponents, doctrine should provide a way of thinking about asymmetry and an operational philosophy that can take asymmetry fully into account. Unfortunately, uncertainty is inseparable from the nature of warfare, and asymmetry increases uncertainty. Those who expect only doctrine and tactics, techniques and procedures to provide solutions and checklists for action are soon disabused of that notion during actual operations. Doctrine must therefore prepare military forces to have the mindset to deal with uncertainty quickly and effectively.

Developing Bangladesh Doctrine - Recommendations

Indirect defense or UW is in most cases the only sensible strategy for Bangladesh, because a direct defense is an invitation to swift defeat. The principal elements of UW are protraction, attrition, and camouflage. Protraction requires willingness to trade space and resources for time, because attempted territorial defence plays to the conventional enemy’s strength in firepower. Camouflage or the capacity to dissolve into the local population and terrain shields UWF from the potentially catastrophic consequences of the enemy’s firepower superiority and compels the threat forces to inflict politically self-defeating collateral damage on the civilian population.

30. U.S. Military Review, *Doctrine for Asymmetric Warfare*, July-August 2003.

In contrast, non-state actors posing asymmetric threats can have a spill-over effect on domestic policy initiatives. Poor governance, law and order situation generally aggravate conflict situations. For Bangladesh, a holistic approach to the problem can address and take care of contentious issues. In fact, for GOB, understanding the grievances that give rise to fundamentalism/extremism/secessionist movements is of prime importance. There is no alternative to targeting the mind as the mind in all cases can influence and dominate decisions and actions of the non-state actors. Social, cultural, religious and economic equity works as solace to the mind and hence must get priority in the overall effort.

The present thinking of blending conventional and UW with modification and versatility seems to fulfill most requirements enumerated above. The modification needed will be in the areas of task organization in order to maximize both mobility and firepower. While the doctrine will call for blending conventional and UW from the very outset of any military campaign, the switching of the mode by the regular forces would be 'off and on', depending of course on the battlefield situation. This transition has to be well synchronized as only perfect coordination can possibly allow the units and formations to retain combat effectiveness so much essential to achieve ultimate victory.

To solve the CHT problem, the political leadership of 1996-97 was in a hurry to reach an agreement. In the process, a number of issues remained unattended or inadequately attended. The expectation of the people of CHT may be much higher than what was offered. More important than the offer is the sincerity of the implementation of the offer. If the GOB and the political leadership are sincere in their approach to the problem, the situation in CHT may improve over a period of 5 to 6 years. The whole issue should be reviewed accordingly to make it acceptable to all interested quarters. Sincerity and concerted effort of all agencies of the government and political leadership can lend to success in tackling/defusing other forms of secessionist/extremist movement waged by other non-state actors. To meet the challenge of non-state actors and address contentious issues, Bangladesh needs an integrated approach at the local, national, regional and international level.

Local Approach

The experience of the 'Bangladesh liberation War' is something so unique that it should always be taken into account in developing our doctrine. In line with the organization of the Freedom Fighters of 1971 war, the UWF in essence will be drawn from the local population. Their determination and morale will hinge upon the love they have for their own country.

In case of non-state actors, adopting local approach will basically mean tackling them at the very root level. The causes of grievance, dissatisfaction and hatred are to be identified and analyzed and measures are to be taken on ground to defuse the tension locally. The following may pay dividend:

- a. Local population should be motivated to identify the difference between what extremists offer vis-à-vis the efforts of the government. All efforts must be made by the government through implementation of developmental projects and activities necessary to win the support of the population which can effectively separate the extremists/insurgents from the common mass, making it easy for security forces to hunt and destroy them.
- b. There should be provisions for strict monitoring and deterrent action must be taken against radical leaders to disrupt their command and support structures. A profiling of the type and nature of extremist/insurgent activities at the local level should be made which will serve the purpose of background information in planning and conducting any military/security forces operations.

National Approach

It is important that the issue be not viewed as a military matter and left to the military leadership. Comprehensive study and analyses should be carried out to determine the dimension of the threat that emanates from both state and non-state actors to ascertain specific responsibilities of different organizations and establishments of the government. The following may be considered:

Against a State actor

- a. Force restructuring and reequipping should be considered to allow for mobility and firepower. Lack of geographical depth should have to be compensated by leaving “stay behind” parties in the enemy occupied territory. UWF should attack the overstretched threat forces from multiple directions, forcing it to dissipate strength for rear area and other security duties.
- b. In a limited or total war situation, there will be inevitable requirement of integration of civil resources to support military operations. A national policy defining the process and modality of integration will facilitate the process in time of crisis and take care of confusions or contradictions which are likely to happen.
- c. Intelligence preparation of battlefield (IPB) should always be updated. This would necessitate dynamism in intelligence operation. Both conventional and indigenous methods are to be adopted randomly to turn the terrain of Bangladesh into a spider web, which is otherwise known to be a defender’s paradise.

- d. Bangladesh's foreign policy should be able to effectively deal with contentious issues with the neighbouring countries and conflict diffusions must be attempted by vigorous diplomatic initiatives.

Against a Non-State Actor

- a. A national strategy should be formulated and persuaded to combat secessionist movement, fundamentalism and extremism. The strategy would address structural problems, and address grievances and sense of social injustice.
- b. The education system of the country should be reviewed to bridge the yawning gap that exists between mainstream and Madrassa education. Besides, tribal population must be offered the same standard of education and their higher education should also be facilitated. Efforts may include provision of vocational training to turn them into a skilled or semi-skilled labour force that has demand in the international job market.
- c. Intelligence and law enforcing agencies capability should be enhanced through good coordination. There should be arrangement to have good border control, while border security system should be reviewed periodically to prevent all kinds of illegal cross-border movements.

Military training should be aimed at developing and promoting officers and men with the skills necessary for success across the full spectrum of military operations both against state and non-state actors.

Regional Approach

Regional forums like SAARC and BIMSTEC should be used for an integrated regional approach which can handle state and non-state threats. The success of poverty reduction initiative will automatically take care of the aspirations of the common people, resulting in regional harmony.

Regional connectivity should be given priority to enhance movement, trade, education and people-to-people contact. Such interaction both at the official and private level will lead to a solid foundation of trust and amity between the countries of the region.

There should be regional co-operation to strengthen intelligence and promote efforts to curb terrorism in the region. Extradition treaties should be signed to curtail cross-border movements of extremists/secessionist groups.

International Approach

Ever-expanding spread of terrorism/extremism has turned into a prime cause of international concern. Bangladesh should opt to be a member/party to any international resolution adopted to deal with conflicts/terrorism/extremism. It should always voice its opinion resolutely in United Nations General Assembly, negating military hegemony as well as terrorism. Bangladesh should be a strong proponent of international co-operation to strengthen the intelligence and other related issues for capacity building to offset conflicts/extremism at international, regional, national and local levels.

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of asymmetric warfare is to constrain the ability of the stronger opponent to intervene rapidly and at a relatively low cost. It is important, however, to note that asymmetric threat in the present context can and in all probability will emanate from both stronger and weaker actors.

Having a doctrine suited to the contemporary operational environment is not sufficient. Where we need to improve is in our understanding of the importance of asymmetric threats and their implications for national security. Considering the ramifications of increasingly asymmetric threats, a holistic approach to education, professional development, and assimilation is still necessary. This must happen at the highest political and military level.

Military victory is a beginning, not an end. Fighting power is a combination of measurable factors like force composition and strengths, weapon counts, available number of sorties; and intangible factors such as generalship, organizational quality and morale. It seems reasonable to conclude that no amount of outside assistance could redeem the fortunes of a weak-willed and strategically incompetent force. Hence, we cannot afford to be slow to formulate a doctrine that will take care of the impending asymmetric challenges of our nation. In the ultimate analysis, military conflict has two dimensions, 'winning wars and winning the peace'. If we can plan, prepare and excel in the first, we can obviously be victorious in the second.

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