

ROLE OF CIVILIANS

Defence Policy formulation in Bangladesh

BRIG. GEN. SHAFAT AHMAD,
ndc, psc (Retd)

Introduction

The Bangladesh Armed Forces were born through a national armed struggle for independence. On one hand they inherited the traditions of the British defence forces, on the other hand they were battle inoculated right at birth. After independence the armed forces did not have any major responsibility. The circumstances were ideal for framing a defence policy for the country and also to organise the armed forces in a progressive manner. But unfortunately that was not to be. After independence the military in Bangladesh became a second fiddle to a para-military force named Jaty Rakshi Bahini (JRB). Some political leaders and elites even raised questions on the necessity of having an armed force for Bangladesh. Thus, the question of formulating a defence policy for the country was never given a serious thought. With the military takeover in 1975, the matter did not change. Rather, the political leaders and the elites continued to treat the defence matters more or less like the way it was handled during the Pakistani period.

There were great hopes and aspirations in the minds of the people that with the ushering in of the democratic governments, policy formulations at the national levels would take a turn for the better. But alas, Bangladesh is a very unlucky country. We have democratic governments for the last 15 years; we had two different political parties who ran the administration, but the results have been the same. Finally, last year the Parliamentary

Committee on Defence asked the Armed Forces Division to formulate the defence policy. We are back to the 1950s!

Defence policy refers to a variety of continuous activities, which a country undertakes to ensure its national security. National security encompasses the integration of all aspects of domestic, foreign and military policies, which ensure the protection of territorial integrity, sovereignty, national core values and interests. National security would also include concern for basic human needs like food, shelter, health, education, environment, preservation of culture and historical, ethical, moral and religious values. National security of a country revolves around its foreign policy, economic potential, defence policy and political environment.

National Security

Objectives of Bangladesh Bangladesh is a developing country, which is not member of any military alliance, and pursues an independent foreign policy. Bangladesh seeks a peaceful security environment in which it can concentrate on economic growth, social justice, and scientific and technological development to meet the challenges of the twenty first century.

Bangladesh's national security objectives in the light of its security environment could be:

- To safeguard Bangladesh's sovereignty and territorial integrity including exclusive economic zone.
- To preserve the democratic and pluralistic character of Bangladeshi society.
- To protect the national core values, which incorporates the

historical, cultural, ethical and moral values.

- To protect the natural resources and critical infrastructure.
- To ensure a secure and stable environment conducive to unhindered socio-economic growth to fulfill the aspirations of the people.
- To be able to play a constructive and meaningful role in the regional and global forum for maintaining peace and stability in the region.

The crux of the national security objectives of Bangladesh is to prevent armed aggression or coercion against the country and to protect its decision making power.

Number of policies will flow from the above national security objectives. These policies will endeavour to make best use of the resources and opportunities that the country has. Foreign policy, economic policy and defence policy are the three main policies, which will take specific actions to attain the objectives. These policies are inter-related and inter-dependent, as such no single policy can be formulated in isolation. Even if any of the above policies are formulated in isolation, there is bound to be clash or contradiction.

Formulation of Defence Policy

Defence policymaking is not a one-time act; it is a continuous process. Similarly, defence policy cannot be formulated in isolation or in a vacuum. Defence policy once formulated needs to be updated keeping in view the geo-political situation, strategic intelligence and own economic potentials. The process of defence policy formulation begins with ascertaining

both external and internal threats. The measure of external threat emanates from the physical ability and intentions of the perceived enemy. It is easier to establish enemy's physical abilities but it is difficult to find out enemy's intentions. Diplomacy and foreign policy helps to gauge enemy's intentions. The internal threat emerges from political instability, ethnic or religious issues and at times from economic imbalance. After analyzing the threat, a broad policy is formulated to counter it. This broad policy concentrates upon assessment of the strategic environment, diplomatic capability to offset the threat, internal and economic compulsions. This broad policy is then translated into specifics and is implemented by the defence forces.

In the past few decades formulation of defence policy has undergone a qualitative change. A sound appreciation of the strategic environment and a comprehensive knowledge of the scientific and technological development are considered essential for formulating an effective defence policy. This requires civilian experts who specialise in different fields pertaining to economics, sociology, and international relations, regional and strategic studies. It is this category of specialists who help the government and agencies in collection, collation, evaluation and analysis of multifarious defence related data. It is here that the civilians get involved in the defence plan formulation.

The overwhelming majority of intellectual talents of a country are civilians. It is they who provide the inputs on diplomacy, technology,

strategic threat assessment, economic capability and budgetary planning. The military provides correct tactical threat perception, capabilities of the weapons available and own capabilities. It is the proper meshing of civilian and military inputs that brings out a sound and effective defence policy.

Defence Policy Formulation in Bangladesh

Bangladesh had been independent for over 34 years and as yet we do not have any defence policy. Since independence the chief executive of the government had held the post of defence minister and the defence had been made an exclusive domain of the chief executive. The people in uniform assisted him or her. Neither the government nor the opposition ventured to discuss matter's related to defence in public. This has become a taboo in Bangladesh.

Since the reintroduction of parliamentary form of government, there had been a Parliamentary Committee on defence. This body has been acting as a rubber stamp to the government policies. We have a very peculiar higher defence organization (HDO). We have Ministry of Defence (MoD), headed by a Secretary to the Government and manned by civil bureaucrats except one Joint Secretary and an officer from Judge Advocate's Branch from the Army. The bureaucrats are capable officers, however, their posting to MoD is on rotation basis rather than their expertise in defence matters. Then, we have the Armed Forces Division (AFD) under the Prime Minister's Office, headed by the Principal Staff

Officer (PSO), a Major General from the Army. This Division is fully manned by military personnel. Neither of the organisation has any research cell. Our HDO is working on a day-to-day basis. The AFD is the coordinating agency on military matters, while MoD looks after the financial and legal matters.

Unfortunately the country's political institutions are not matured enough to give desired political guidance, as a result defence policy planning has been taken over by the military. There are limited research facilities available on defence related matters in our country. The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) is the only institute that carries out work on defence related matters on regular basis. In addition, few other institutes also carry out research on defence related matters at times. Our universities also do not have any facility to do research on defence matters.

The major lacunae with regard to defence policy formulation in Bangladesh are:

- Lack of research facilities on matters related to defence.
 - Lack of knowledge and expertise on defence matters both in political and bureaucratic spheres.
 - Lack of integration between the civilian intellectuals and the military agencies.
 - Complete military domination in the defence policy formulation.
- National security in the modern environment is all encompassing. There is certainly a need for larger participation of the civilian experts in the formulation of defence policy. Subjects like defence economy, diplomacy, budgeting, strategic

intelligence are some of the specific subjects to be handled by the civilian experts. Civilian scientists man research and Development organizations, which are the lifeline of a country's technological growth.

Defence policy formulation is a heterogeneous activity, which is becoming complex day by day, and many factors are influencing it. It is no more a matter to be left alone in the hands of men in uniform. Some of the factors that influence the formulation of defence policy are the domain of civilian experts. These areas are:

- Defence Economics. Modern political system is deeply tied with economics. There is now direct relationship between defence and civil spending and their impact on national life. Defence economy experts can help government in proposing system to reduce the defence expenditure without compromising on the defence capability.
- Accountability of Defence Expenditure. Accountability of defence expenditure promotes respect of the armed forces. There has been news from time to time on misappropriation of defence budget. Transparency of defence budget will help dispel many misconceptions among the elites.
- Role of Media. Media can play a great role in helping formulating national policies pertaining to defence and national security. The media is the best forum to build consensus on major national issues.
- Role of Think Tanks and Elites. Think tanks in the shape of various institutions where the intellectuals of the country can

interact on national issues are the breeding ground of the different policies. It is the proper meshing of the political and bureaucratic elites of the country with these think tanks that will give us the best policies

Conclusion

The civil military interface is considered extremely critical for the formulation of defence policy all over the world. The increasing complexity of the defence technology, defence economy and the employment of the military assets have compounded the defence policy formulation. The developed countries have institutionalized the defence policymaking process. They have employed a sizeable number of civil intelligentsia in the field of defence policy formulation. This is guided by strong political system.

Here in Bangladesh, we have made the defence policy a 'sacred cow.' We have a political system that has failed to give any direction in matters of defence. It is time that the defence policy formulation in Bangladesh is institutionalised. The civil intelligentsia along with the bureaucrats and the military should be fully involved in defence policy formulation. Matters related to defence should be made transparent so that the media can play its due role. Transparency in matters related to defence will force other sectors to be transparent also. It is only then that the dreams of an independent and democratic society in Bangladesh will be fulfilled.

The author is a free lancer.

Conflicting US and Pakistan strategic interests

BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

MANY lawmakers in the US have raised the question whether Pakistan has been sincere in fighting anti-terrorism war together with the US. They are asking questions as to why Al-Qaeda chief Osama Bin Laden or his number two, Al-Zawahiri have not been captured while they are alleged to be hiding in Pakistan.

It may be recalled that it was the Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) which allegedly masterminded in creating Taliban with students of madrassas in Pakistan, most of the students were drawn from Afghan refugees and Pakistani nationals. Since most of them are Pushtuns (Pakhtuns), some say that the entire foot soldiers of Taliban constituted Pakistani Pushtun nationals.

Some believe the Al-Qaeda leaders have been hiding either in the border tribal areas in Pakistan or well inside Pakistan. Many observers believe they cannot be captured because some sections of Pakistan's powerful military establishment support the ideology of Taliban and their leaders. Military establishment lent its support to the Taliban for many years and suddenly they cannot stop like a machine when they are ordered to do so.

Political observers believe that Taliban movement was created by ISI to gain control politics in Afghanistan through them. Past history demonstrated that Pakistan and Afghanistan had maintained frosty relations. For example, at the time of admission of Pakistan at the UN in 1947, Afghanistan was the only country which voted against its admission. This demonstrates Afghanistan had not been friendly to Pakistan.

The reason for voting against Pakistan was primarily due to the fact that Afghanistan never accepted the international boundary (Durrand Line) between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Afghanistan always argued that it was artificially drawn and imposed by the British for their strategic reasons. Some of the border tribal territories in Pakistan grabbed by the British were in fact belonged to Afghanistan.

Furthermore the artificial border divided the Pashtun tribe between the two countries. At one stage Afghanistan advocated an independent state of Pakhtunistan for Pakhtun tribe similar to that of Kurdistan for Kurds.

Afghanistan's relations have always been close to India. In the past, its trade was dominated by Indian Sikhs. Many Afghans from the elite class continue to study in the Indian universities (current President Karzai and Foreign Minister Abdullah were educated in India). One of the issues in foreign policy of Pakistan was how to control political class in Afghanistan or how to distance Afghanistan from the close embrace of India. Finally in 1996 ISI succeeded in controlling Afghanistan through Taliban.

Even now the Karzai government in Afghanistan suspects that the resurgence of Taliban in southeast of the country has been due to active support of some elements of Pakistan's military and its intelligence. President Karzai cannot say much against Pakistan because Pakistan has been strongly ally with the US after 9/11.

Politics is an art of possible and can bring strange fellows together. President Bush during his election campaign in 2000 could not recall Pakistan President's name when asked by a journalist. Now President Bush knows his name very well and has become his close "friend" and was invited to Bush's ranch in Texas, a rare treat for President Pervez Musharraf (even French President Jacques Chirac was not invited to visit

Texas ranch because he opposed Iraqi war).

Given the closeness between the US and Pakistan, why is it that the lawmakers in the US suspect that Pakistani President has not doing enough to capture Al-Qaeda leaders?

There could be many reasons for Pakistan's alleged half-hearted action in capturing the Al-Qaeda leaders and some of them deserve mention as follows:

First, Sunni Muslims constitute about 77 percent of Pakistan's population and the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda leaders including Osama Bin Laden belong to Sunni sect. This being so, majority of population have a natural tendency to be sympathetic to them. Furthermore the Iraqi war that has been primarily directed against the Sunni Muslims has negative impact on Pakistani Sunni people and this war has alienated the US in their eyes. They are not in a mood to provide clues to whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden to any one else.

Second, Pakistan government does not allow US soldiers to go to border areas. This has led the US lawmakers to come to a view that Pakistan has not been fully cooperating with the US in war on terrorism. That was why on 13 January the US bombed the remote border areas (Damadol area) suspecting the presence of prominent Al-Qaeda leaders including Al-Zawahiri. However, the strike missed them and 18 innocent civilians were killed.

The US air strike has embarrassed the Pakistan government because they had no inkling of such an attack by the US. Loud protests have been made by Pakistani population against the US attack. President Musharraf had to make a statement stating that the air strike was tantamount to breach of sovereignty of Pakistan to calm the protesters.

Third, political observers believe that once Osama Bin Laden is captured, the US may lose its interest on Pakistan. Pakistan has learnt a bitter lesson from the US in the 80s as it lost interest in Pakistan after the Soviet soldiers had left Afghanistan. This time Pakistan wants to "milk the cow" as long as it takes, meaning that Pakistan will continue to receive massive financial assistance from the US until Osama Bin Laden remains free.

Conclusion

Both the US and Pakistan are placed in a dilemma. While the US cannot pursue war against terrorism in Afghanistan without the support of Pakistan, Pakistan at the same time does not want to annoy the US by being totally uncooperative because the US is getting closer to India day by day in pursuit of their regional strategic interests. The US needs Pakistan for capturing Al-Qaeda leaders while the US needs India for its broader strategic reasons, that is containment of China in the Asia Pacific region.

Currently the US has been maintaining a delicate balance of its relations between Pakistan and India. Pakistan, on the other hand, has been keeping the US under suspense on the whereabouts of Osama Bin Laden for its own interests. It provides a lesson in the distinction between "ought" and "is" in politics. So this is where US-Pakistan relations stand.

The author is Former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

Bangladesh's inadequate cyclone warning systems

COMMODORE MD KHURSHED

ALAM *ndc, psc, BN (Retd)*

THERE are seven tropical cyclone "basins" where storms occur on a regular basis - Atlantic basin, Northeast Pacific basin, Northwest Pacific basin, North Indian basin (including the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea), Southwest Indian basin, Southeast Indian/Australian basin and Australian/Southwest Pacific basin. Tropical storms in the Atlantic are known as Hurricanes and those of the Pacific are called Typhoons. The 2005 hurricane season broke all previous record, out of 26 tropical storms, seven of those including Hurricane Katrina were the deadliest, category three or higher. The frequency of cyclones in the Bay of Bengal is much greater than that of the Arabian Sea. The Indian total for the Bay of Bengal is 285 ordinary and 107 severe cyclones and for Bangladesh/Myanmar coast, it is 115 ordinary and 56 severe cyclones in the last 124 years (1877-2000).

In the Bay of Bengal, cyclones occur between latitudes 50N and 150N and a sea surface temperature of 270C is considered most favourable for this process. These cyclones mostly occur during pre-monsoon (April-May) and post monsoon (October-December) seasons. A full sized cyclone is 100 to 150 km across, with winds of 120 km/hr. It takes the shape of a spiral with a core or body of very low pressure and an eye of 30-50 km wide and moving over the warm waters of the Bay at speeds typically of 5 to 15 m/s. It has been possible to track cyclones fairly accurately since the introduction of weather satellites in the early 1960s, but even today, it has been difficult for our forecasters to predict the correct pathways that would be followed by a cyclone mainly because of expertise, equipment/satellite and the ability of cyclones to quickly change direction and intensity etc. The map below shows some of the routes followed by the cyclone from 1989 to 2000 after being originated near the Andaman Sea/Bay of Bengal.

In the Northern Hemisphere, the winds caused by a low-pressure system rotate in counter clockwise direction and the reduction in atmospheric pressure causes a rise in sea level. Where coastlines converge, in a bay or estuary, an incoming surge becomes more and more constricted in the cross-direction and its amplitude is forced to increase. Gradually shoaling water produces a similar effect. These conditions occur on several coasts around the Bay of Bengal, which explains why some of the cyclone surges which occur there are among the most severe in the world. Simultaneous occurrence of a high

tide can aggravate the effects of a storm surge. Tidal ranges of 4 metres and more occur in some parts of the Bay of Bengal, which means roughly that in such places, surge height may be reduced or increased by about 2 metres, depending on whether peak surge occurs at low or high tide. Clearly, the state of the tide can make all the difference between a surge, being contained by coastal defences or producing extensive damage and inundation.

An average of about five cyclones

while these are at sea. The radar can detect the eye, the body of the cyclone, its outer periphery, the rain shield and the precipitation spiral band. The Bangladesh Meteorological Department is responsible through the Storm Warning Centre at Agargoan, Dhaka for providing cyclone warnings to the Government, Seaports, airports, inland river ports, armed forces, fishing boats and trawlers and the general public.

Terms like "danger" and "great

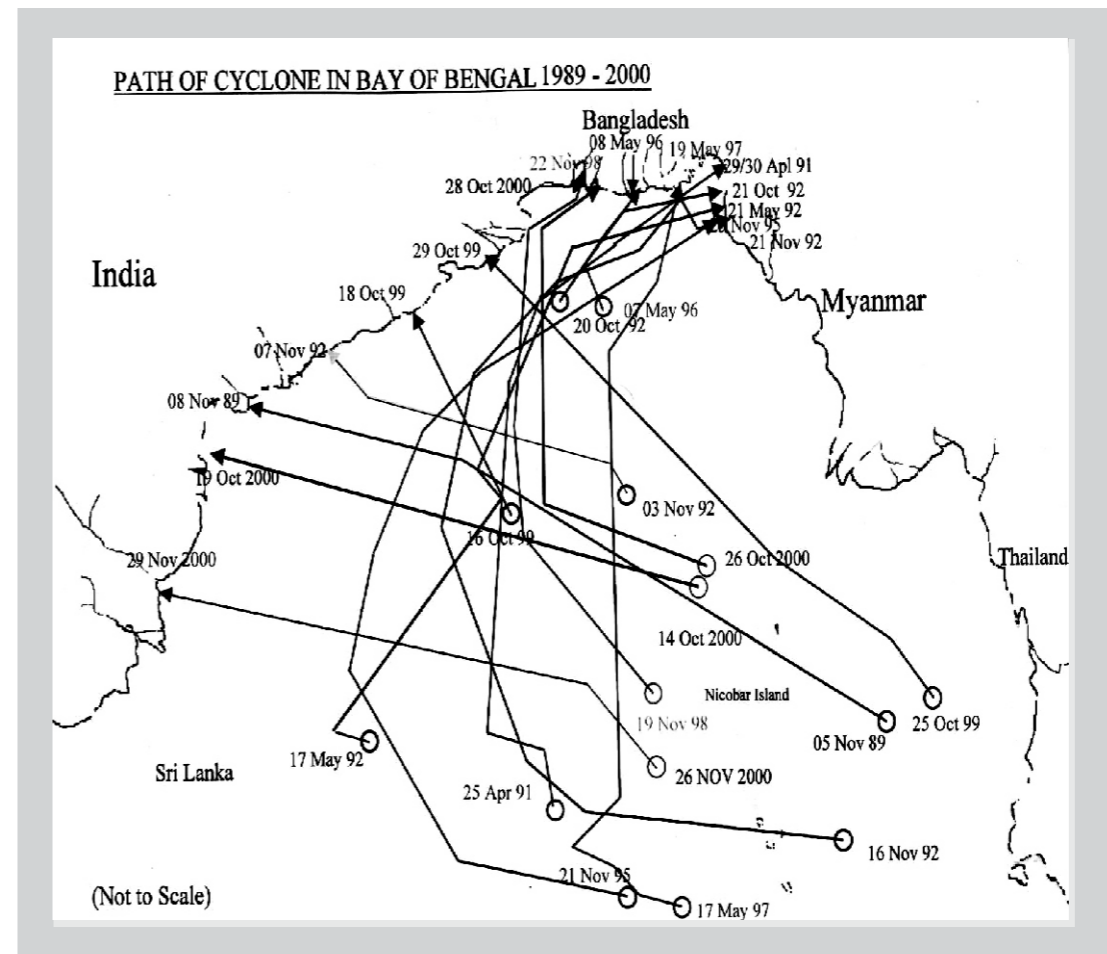
great danger signals were only meant for port authorities and some did not believe the warning because the number 10 GREAT DANGER signals had been issued on several occasions prior to this event. Even though Great Danger signals were issued well in advance of the cyclone but when it increased in intensity and a new more urgent warning needed to be broadcast, the imminent arrival of the cyclone could not be communicated to the public. The Dhaka radio station ceased

303 people died in the coastal areas and offshore islands of Bangladesh with in the last 230 years (1775-2005) time, only due to cyclone and storm surges. The main causes of these huge casualties were-weak and old cyclone warning and forecasting system, often no cyclone/storm came, despite of high warning signals and no disaster awareness programmes were taken in before. The coastal people take their preparation depending on the bulletins issued against the two ports. Our warning and cyclonic classification system must be overhauled to bring it in line with the requirements of coastal people. Classification system must be publicized and we should get the help of Indian purpose built satellite INSAT 3A and Kalpana-1 instead of waiting long hours for the western satellite. Using the high technology available today in the world, it is possible to detect a cyclone right from its genesis on the high seas and follow its course right through its life history and it would not be difficult to give at least 48 hours warning.

About 15 million people live in the vulnerable areas, covering 21, 000 sq. km in the coastal and offshore islands. And only about 3.3 million people can take refuge in the cyclone shelters, school and office buildings and the remaining 11 million people are still unsafe. We also need a much better system of warning linked with the evacuating the population to safe places. The existing procedure of "Disaster Plan" or the "Cyclone Preparedness Plan" in the coastal districts of Bangladesh needs considerable strengthening because the general experience has been that most of the proposed actions fail when the emergency arises. The government took some initiatives after 1991 to change the cyclonic warning system but the effort as usual did not see the light at the end of about 15 years.

We had the worst devastation of cyclones in 1965, 1970, 1985, 1991, and another one may not be very far away yet we are not prepared with the best of monitoring and warning system. For a better Bangladesh tomorrow, we need to develop monitoring facility for observation and surveillance of cyclonic behaviour of the Bay of Bengal in such a way to get the best advantage of the technology and also update the classification of cyclone and warning systems, develop the mechanisms to disseminate the updated warning systems from Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Barisal/Mongla at the earliest time by radio, television and information media at frequent intervals in a language and a way which will be understood by the people at risk.

The author is a former Chairman of Mongla Port Authority.



a year with wind speed of 87 km per hour and over form in the Bay of Bengal which hit the coast anywhere between India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. However, the frequency of occurrence in Bangladesh is highly erratic. There were 13 in the 11 years between 1960 and 1970, but over 18 in the period 1971 to 2001. Most of the cyclones die out at sea but some cross over to the land causing enormous devastation to Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and the islands of Kutubdia, Bhola, Hatiya, Sandwip and other areas like Gazaria, Kukri-Mukri, Patila, Dhal, Nijumdwp, Urir char, etc. Along the Bangladesh coast, there are two and along the Indian coast, there are 10 cyclone detection radars. With the help of these radars, the cyclones can be detected as far out as 400 km away

"danger" actually convey with what fury the cyclone is going to hit the particular ports and the adjacent coastal areas. People living in about 700 km long coastlines of Bangladesh except few km of Chittagong and Mongla port area should actually be concerned with the above mentioned 8 cyclonic disturbances and their consequential damage and not the "Danger" signals meant exclusively for ports. Yet the coastal people are very ignorant about the cyclonic terms rather they only understand Danger and Great Danger Signals issued for the ports, which in most cases will have no bearing at all on their locality.

Analysts of the 91 cyclone concluded that the warning system in place was not really designed to convey real warning to local people. Some understood the danger and

broadcast at midnight just before the cyclone struck and on being hit by the cyclonic force the Chittagong radio station also ceased to function. The residents on the direct path of the cyclone had never been told about the actual impending size and force of the SUPER CYCLONE on the radio. In fact if our forecasters used the term SUPER CYCLONE instead of Great Danger signal, more people would have visualised the intensity and heeded the warnings. In the past cyclone warnings were all broadcast as Great Danger events, TV warnings were issued and sometime forced evacuation was also done but the cyclone did not strike with full force, making it quite difficult for the local people to respond next time even if there is a real danger.

It is estimated that a total of 7,75,