

# National Security Council for Bangladesh

BRIGADIER GENERAL SHAFAT AHMAD, ndc, psc (Retired)

I wrote an article in the Daily Star in May last year titled "National Security Mechanism in Bangladesh". My purpose was to generate some discussion on the subject. However, it was not to be. Now again the topic has come to the fore, not because we want to have any discussion but rather in response to the idea of establishing "National Security Council" (NSC) by the present Caretaker Government. From the news published in the media, it gives an impression that the NSC will consist mainly of the uniformed people. Probably in response that of Barrister Harun-ur-Rashid who has asked the question on the need for NSC. In my article last year I had tried to give an overview of the National security Mechanism in the USA, the UK and India and its rationale for Bangladesh.

National Security is commonly understood as means safeguarding territorial integrity and national sovereignty. This is however a very limited explanation of the term. This limited meaning restricts national security to the application of military against an external aggression. However, there is much more to this when we come to think of national security. One writer defined national security as the "development of confidence amongst citizens of a nation that their territorial integrity, sovereignty, national core values and interest will not be attacked by any hostile forces." National security would also include concern for education, health, culture, environment, values, and provision of basic needs like shelter, food and preservation of ethical, moral, religious and historical values. National security is an absolute value, and all other values and resources are subservient to it.

National security normally has five traditional components; they are- diplomatic, military, internal security, economic potential and strategic intelligence. In recent times some additional sub-components like disaster management, disruption control management have made impact on the

national security mechanism. But it is the unconventional threats to the national security such as insurgents and terrorists, trans-national criminals, narcotic smugglers, counterfeiters etc, which have forced state actors to reevaluate their national security mechanism. These unpredictable adversaries have brought in new dimension to the security perception of countries. The old concept of threat analysis has been supplemented by risk analysis and vulnerability analysis. These have further underlined the importance of integrated approach to national security. The speed, with which these threats emanate and are at times executed, necessitates the need of a comprehensive system of national security policy formulation, implementation and coordination.

#### US System

The US was the first to realize the importance of such an integrated and well-structured approach. National Security Council (NSC) was established in 1947 with a dedicated national security staff. With the passage of time the NSC has transformed itself to be the apex policymaking body of the USA. In 1953, President Eisenhower revamped the NSC and the NSC staff mechanism and re-designated the head of NSC as the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. This post has come to be popularly known as the National Security Adviser (NSA). The NSA performs two roles, firstly, as adviser to the President on matters concerning national security, secondly as the coordinator of the functioning of the national security mechanism on behalf of the President. To perform these tasks, he or she has dedicated NSC staffs who are specialist on various aspects of national security. At the beginning of his term, every President issues an order specifying the duties of NSA.

#### British System

In the UK, the Cabinet Secretary was the linchpin of the national security mechanism. He used to coordinate the functioning of the national security apparatus. He had very limited role in the formulation of



the foreign and defence policies. The respective political and professional heads in their respective offices mainly managed these. But after 9/11, the British Government revamped the national security mechanism. The British Prime Minister has three senior officials assisting him on matters relating to national security. They are Adviser on Foreign Policy; the Security and Intelligence Co-coordinator in respect of intelligence, internal security, crisis Management and disaster management, and the Chairman Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in respect of assessment of intelligence.

#### Indian System

In India, until 1999, the Cabinet

Secretary has been the lynchpin of the national security mechanism. He performed his roles in national security matters with the help of the Committees of the Secretaries and the JIC. But the Indian Cabinet Secretary did not have operational control over the intelligence agencies. Operational controls used to be divided among ministries/divisions. Important decisions on foreign and national security matters used to be taken by the Prime Minister of the day in consultation with a small group of confidantes, with the Cabinet Secretary playing very little role.

On assuming office of the Prime Minister of India, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee set up a special Task Force headed by Mr. K.C. Pant to study the

national security mechanisms prevalent in other countries and submit recommendations to revamp the Indian national security mechanism. Based on the recommendations of the Task Force, National Security Council (NSC) was formed as the apex agency looking into the political, economic, energy and strategic security concerns of India. Besides the National Security Advisor (NSA), the Ministers of Defence, External Affairs, Home, Finance of the Central Government, and the deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission are members of the NSC. The NSC is chaired by the PM. Other members may be invited to attend its meeting when required.

NSC is a three-tiered organiza-

tion; it has Strategic Policy Group, the National Security Advisory Board and a secretariat represented by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC).

#### Pakistani System

The National Security Council in Pakistan is a consultative body and is chaired by the President of the country. Besides the President, the other members of the Council are the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Senate, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, the Chief Ministers of the Provinces, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and the Chiefs of Staff of the Pakistan Navy and Pakistan Air Force. (President

is also the Chief of the Pakistan Army).

The Council serves as a forum for the consultation for the President and the Government on the matters of security including the sovereignty, integrity, defence, and security of the State and crisis management in general. It may also formulate recommendations to the President and the Government in such matters.

#### Bangladesh Perspective

It is heartening to note that the present Caretaker Government has decided to form a National Security Council. Bangladesh's national security decision-making processes so far have been archaic and anarchic.

National Security decisions cannot be made in isolation or in vacuum. Features like public debates, free press, consensus of opinion on major national security issues and above all some dominant national values are the prerequisites for the national security mechanism to function. Once the mechanism starts working it is the political leadership who has to nurture it.

No other country can serve as a full model for NSC. However, we can study the US and the Indian system and then evaluate our own. I would humbly suggest that we have something like these:

National Security Council, chaired by the PM. Its members could be ministers of Defence, Home, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Chiefs of the three Services and the National Security Advisor (NSA). Other members may be invited to attend its meeting when required.

- Appointment of National Security Advisor (NSA).
- Setting up of a permanent NSC Secretariat under the NSA.

To give permanency to the Council, it should have legal cover like other constitutional bodies i.e. Election Commission or the Anti Corruption Commission. The Council has to address both strategic issues as well as day-to-day affairs of the tactical issues of foreign policy, internal security and other crisis management. The Council to be effective has to have a

good organizational set up, where an integrated system will carry out threat analysis, risk analysis and vulnerability analysis, than formulate policies, implement and coordinate those policies. The Council has to provide a strategic long-term approach to the policy and decision-making. It should be responsible for:

- Facilitating and coordinating the policy and decision-making in respect of national security encompassing the wide spectrum of national security matters.
- Monitoring and coordinating the functioning of the intelligence agencies.
- Maintaining close liaison with foreign ministry, incorporating inputs from diplomatic channels into the national security policy and keeping the foreign ministry abreast with the national security situations.

Some legislative safeguards should also be incorporated so that the (1) PM is bound to consult and be advised by the NSC; (2) preparation of NSC directives is mandatory once PM has given final decision and (3) where possible the directive is debated in the parliament. However, the Government should form a committee, which should evaluate and recommend the organizational set up of the NSC.

The cause of concern is neither its composition nor its timing of formation. What concerns me most is that how will our political leaders react to it; and when they come to power how they will use this organization. It is evident from the past record that our political leaders are averse to such organizations. We hope and pray that we do not land up with an organization, which may die its own death even before making any recommendation to the government.

The author is a freelancer.

# India's burgeoning aspiration in space

BILLY I AHMED

INDIA'S launch of its Space Capsule Recovery Experiment (SRE-1) in January generated a jubilant response in government and military circles. Hailed as an "impeccable success," it demonstrated the ability of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to send a capsule into space, safely return it to earth and retrieve it. The project is a key step toward a manned space flight and for India to play a greater role in the global satellite launch business.

The SRE-1 test is yet another sign of India's ambitions to make its token in space. As well as holding out the prospect of lucrative commercial profits. Beside, space technology plays an increasingly crucial military role, not only in the development of missiles, but also in providing sophisticated intelligence, communications and navigation. In the midst of growing great power rivalry, India is making its bid to join the US, Russia, the European Union, Japan and China in the arena of space technology.

The SRE-1 capsule was launched atop a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) from the southern city of Sriharikota on January 10 and remained in orbit for

12 days. The PSLV-C7 carried four satellites aloft for the first time two belonging to India, one from Argentina and a German-Indonesian joint venture satellite. The SRE-1 orbit was first altered to an elliptical one on January 19, and then on January 22 an on-board motor was fired to commence descent. The capsule splashed down in the Indian Ocean 140 km east of Sriharikota and was recovered by the Indian Coast Guard and Navy.

The experiment was a calculated attempt to boost the country's technological image after two failures last year: the launch of a heavy communications satellite and the test firing of an Indian ballistic missile. The Agni III ballistic missile, which uses the same Indian PSLV technology, was expected to be able to hit targets as far away as 3,000 km. The test fell short of the target after the second stage of the rocket reportedly failed to separate.

ISRO director Madhavan Nair declared that the successful SRE-1 test meant "a humble step towards sending an Indian into space". An "indigenous" space craft to orbit the moon, Chandrayaan-1, is scheduled for launch within the next two years. It will accommodate instruments from other space agencies,

including NASA, on a data-sharing basis. ISRO has ambitious plans for a manned moon mission by 2020.

ISRO also has more immediate, commercial aims.

"The [SRE-1]

recovery was a big boost to India mastering re-entry and recoverable technologies and building a reusable launch vehicle," Nair commented. India is planning to build a reusable launch vehicle (RLV) to reduce the cost of space launches by as much as 10 percent and attract new customers. Current costs range between \$12,000 and \$15,000 to place a kilogram of payload in orbit.

Pierre-Eric Lys, the managing director of satellite insurance business Space Co, told Asia Times: "The Indian space industry is opening to the international market. Two recent examples of this growing cooperation are the involvement of India in the Galileo positioning system and the next generation of the Eutelsat (European Telecommunications Satellite) which will be partly manufactured and integrated in India." Six Indian satellites are already in orbit with a wide range of instruments.

Space launches are a burgeoning business, with more than 200 scheduled this year for a variety of purposes from telecommunications to mapping and weather forecast

ing. ISRO is due to conduct its first fully commercial launch next month of the Italian scientific satellite "Agile" for a reported price tag of \$US10 million. Other contracts with Germany and Russia concerns are in the wind. The business is a boon for Indian corporations such as Tata, Larsen & Toubro, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Godrej, which are all involved in supplying components for the launch vehicle.

It is no secret that India's investment in space technology is related to its ambitions to become a major regional power economically and also militarily. New Delhi certainly aims to eclipse traditional rival Pakistan, but increasingly it is in competition with China the other rising Asian power. China's first manned space flight in 2003 acted as a spur to ISRO. As ISRO director Nair commented on New Delhi Television: "The Chinese have declared their [space] plans and in that process it is not right for India to be lagging behind."

The Indian ruling elite is preoccupied with catching up with its Chinese counterparts. India is in direct competition with China as a cheap labor platform (with Beijing attracting 10 times more foreign direct investment) and for energy resources. China's leaps in space technology have shown that India has a long way to catch up to its rival. China's advantage in the military sphere was underscored by its successful test in January of an anti-satellite missile, which destroyed one of its own aging weather satellites.

Reacting to the Chinese anti-satellite test, India's air force chief Shashi Tyagi announced that India had plans to build an aerospace defence command aimed at preventing possible attacks from space and to "protect both Indian territory and assets". He added that India was an aerospace power with "trans-oceanic reach" and it was vital it should be able to exploit space.

India is seeking assistance from the US as part of the growing "strategic partnership" between the two countries. The Times of India underscored the role of the joint space ventures in developing closer relations. "If Chandrayaan-1 were to become a flag-waving opportunity for India in space, then a US role in facilitating its mission should go down well and augment ties at the popular level too. The possibilities for future collaboration in space are immense," it declared.

At the same time, the Indian political establishment is concerned that the US is seeking to exploit India as a

military counterweight against China.

The Bush administration has been wooing New Delhi by sealing an unprecedented agreement that permits India to retain its nuclear arsenal, in breach of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. Nevertheless, India has been careful not to put all its eggs in one basket in any arena, including space technology. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reaffirmed close ties with Russia during the visit last month of Russian president Vladimir Putin. The two countries have substantial economic and defence relations, including the joint construction of the supersonic cruise missile, BrahMos.

The author is a columnist and researcher.



# Peace in the Middle East is sine qua non

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

EVERY sensible human being, whether Palestinian or Israeli, wants tranquility to live peacefully and conduct business as usual. Neither political nor military leadership need peace for their ulterior motive. Had there been peace in the Middle East, the American administration could never have played a dirty game there. It has begun exploiting the huge mineral resources to serve its interests. Access to oil has always played a dominant role in shaping the foreign policy of US, since the industrial revolution. Oil played a significant role for intensive intervention economically, politically and militarily in Saudi Arabia, Iran and later Kuwait and Iraq.

Against this backdrop, we may assess the situation in the present day Middle East. US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice has been to the countries in the Middle East two times in a month, last from 16 to 22 February, 2007 to revive the peace process on line of the road map of the Quartet the grouping of the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United



Nations that guides the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. She succeeded to arrange tripartite meeting of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and herself on February 19 for the first time since President Bush assumed presi-

dency in 2001. This tripartite meeting, which took place in Jerusalem ended with little progress except that two warring parties met and

discussed after a long time. At a press conference she spoke alone briefly. Neither Israeli Premier nor Palestinian Authority President was present.

That the meeting would not be fruitful was evident from Condoleezza Rice's observation that unless Hamas recognizes Israel, which is forming coalition government with Fatah following recent agreement reached between Hamas and Fatah brokered by Saudi Arab King Abdullah in Riyadh, there would be no negotiation towards achieving two states. Rice's spokesperson recently said that Secretary of State remains as committed as ever to isolate Hamas. Having been elected democratically to form the government, Hamas accepted two state solutions for achieving peace in the Middle East, which implies Hamas recognizes Israel.

The Bush administration did not buy the idea of Russian call for a lifting of international isolation on Hamas when the Quartet met in Washington DC on February 02. Last year, the quartet has committed isolating Hamas until it recognizes Israel, renounces terrorism and pledges to respect past peace agreement made by Palestinian Authority with Israel. Meanwhile, the last US Congress passed the Palestinian Anti- terrorism Act, which will oversee the assistance given to the Palestinian Authority. Secretary of State, Rice has pledged to Mahmoud Abbas \$ 85 million as long as it is governed by Hamas. The US has encouraged holding free, fair legislative elections in Palestinian territories. When Hamas won the elections US has initiated a campaign to push international donors to cut off all, but humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian authority.

Instead of encouraging Hamas, which is doing good social work in Palestinian territories, US undermines the democratic norm of politics. On the other hand, the US has been patronizing Mahmoud Abbas, President of Palestinian Authority whose political party: Fatah is corrupt. As of now the Bush administration is not doing good job in the Middle East, which is evident from the tactics adopted by this administration in funneling money to Fatah group to train them. This is Condoleezza Rice's ninth trip to the Middle East without any tangible results. Apart from these trips, Ariel Sharon, immediate past Premier of Israel, had been to Washington 6 times and the present incumbent Premier Ehud Olmert twice. In Israel, the present premier is facing investigation of corruption charges. Also, he is under attack by

lawmakers of Israel to resign because of his failed policy on Lebanon war that was waged last year. His chief of armed forces has already resigned.

Therefore, the trip of Condoleezza Rice is looked upon as a routine consultation with closest allies, particularly in view of the tense situation in the region as the preparation of another war is in the offing. Bush administration's commitment to a two-state solution is seen as rhetoric. If Bush administration has serious desire to resolve the problem, it can do so bringing two warring parties and major players in the Middle East in Washington, DC as did Jimmy Carter in 1978, instead of paying several visits with taxpayers money for photo opportunities. If no serious effort is forthcoming, present road map will be thrown into the dustbin of history like that of Reagan plan, Fahn Plan, Oslo peace treaty or Camp David plan. Enough is enough. Peace in the Middle East is sine qua non for Israelis, Palestinians and Arabs alike.

Mohammad Amjad Hossain, former Bangladesh diplomat writes from Virginia.