

The challenging interface of democracy and security

In my opinion, the issues of security and democracy are inextricably linked. In the same way that democratic reforms are dependant on sustained economic growth, security is similarly dependant on the reform agenda. Democracy itself requires a secure environment for it to thrive and spread its roots. I perceive that both democracy and security are complementary features of the system now being put in place by the current initiatives.

LT. GEN. MOEEN U AHMED

THE 21st century began with new hopes of international peace, security, and democracy, particularly for countries aspiring to meet the Millennium Development Goals. But the path to freedom and development is not an easy one as the nations strive to overcome the burdens of history, conflicts of interests, economic inequalities, entrenched social divisions, and cultural differences.

The new era of globalisation marked by technological revolution and economic interdependence and democracy has brought people closer across the globe. On the other hand, it has also led to assertion of diversity and recognition of identities of nations and groups. This changing political landscape in the new millennium leads us to rethink the paradigm of human interactions and governance in the national as well as global contexts.

A new wind is, therefore, blowing now, a wind that is changing the leadership climate around the world to achieve the desired goals of security and democracy.

On a regional plane, if we look at our South Asian region, countries by and large represent similar system of values, regulative principles of life and a common heritage of struggle for emancipation. We share with each other, similar concept and convictions, similar tradition and experience. But we have also differences in terms of language, religion, race, and ethnic identities. We have axes of conflict as well as avenues of cooperation, we have unity as well as diversity with renewed sense of history and destiny. But we all aspire to free-

dom and development in a peaceful and stable regional framework. In fact, such a complex of shared goals and diversified strategies inspire our united efforts as well as sense of national dignity.

Now, focusing on Bangladesh, I must say we are a new nation with a long history. We can trace our history back to 12th century, when Bengal came under Muslim rule. In 1947, this part of British India became the eastern wing of Pakistan as a Muslim majority area. After two and half decades, this part of Pakistan became an independent state after a bloody war of independence.

In fact, the independence of Bangladesh was a great historical episode that drew its inspiration from the high ideals of participatory, democratic, and exploitation-free society. But it is ironic that in the past thirty-six years, we could not realise those objectives and the full potential of Bangladesh.

I believe the aspiring democratic process of Bangladesh and the current transition period allow us an opportunity to develop a new concept and find a new sense of direction to the future politics of Bangladesh. By its own merit, the country has a principle to live by and a purpose to strive for, and this needs rethinking so that we can reinvent a system of governance with new leadership at all levels.

The development of this concept is a challenge for political scientists -- particularly in the post-9/11 global order. Today, we must build up our vision of freedom, peace, dignity and justice for the people of Bangladesh.

While the governance through a "caretaker" system is a very apolitical idea, yet we have to accept the

reality in view of the poor governance and corrosive corruption that almost destroyed the fabric of our society. We must examine the pitfalls of our political democracy in the context of the reports of Transparency International.

On the other hand, we have to read the resolute character of Bangladeshi people that enabled us to overcome the perpetuation of dynastic rule for a transparent and accountable Bangladesh. Bangladesh has chosen its freedom by its own choice and its history of 36 years reflects that it has been successful in dealing with any unholy alliance against its citizens.

The World Bank fact sheet 2005-2006, suggests Bangladesh to be the tenth most rapidly growing economy among 31 large developing countries. The income poverty has declined by 1% point per year since 1990 -- faster than almost all other developing countries. Primary school enrollment is almost 100% -- one of the highest rates in the developing world. The ratio of girls to boys in primary school is higher than most developing countries. Bangladesh is also the only country to have eradicated polio in South Asia.

Other sources indicate that Bangladesh is rapidly becoming a good home for global investment, with proposals from foreign investors in the telecommunications, infrastructure, energy, garments, banking, gas, and coal sectors.

Goldman Sachs economic researchers have placed Bangladesh among the "Next 11" countries after Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC), which have the potential to be substantial economies in the coming decades. In my own analysis I would add the follow-

ing points towards Bangladesh's democratic and economic potential:

- Continuous GDP growth at a yearly rate of 6.7% with every possibility of breaking the 10% threshold and advancing even further in the coming decade.
- Success in Micro-credit programs, recently given recognition to by the Nobel Committee.
- Overall increase in the literacy rate.
- Empowerment of women who are now the bedrock of our garments industry and the main breadwinner in many families in Bangladesh.
- Democratic aspirations amongst the people.
- Internationally recognised as a moderate Muslim country with communal harmony.
- Continuous reduction of poverty and a continuous augmenting in our position in Human and Social Development Indexes.
- Success in birth control.
- International peace support operations under the auspices of the United Nations.

The idea underlying the development politics and democracy must take into account the need and requirement of a particular country. We cannot copy, we must deliberate and reinvent our own style in the light of our social dynamics and economic potential. We do not want to go back to an "elective democracy" where corruption in society becomes all-pervasive, governance suffers in terms of insecurity and violation of rights, and where political "criminalisation" threatens the very survival and integrity of the state.

I must argue that the democratic ideal established by the ancient Athenians and successively modified by Cleisthenes and Pericles of direct democracy could be achieved in a small city state but such a system is not remotely achievable today. While Pericles' reforms to the democratic system which introduced the criteria of merit and efficiency and not wealth for public office was highly commendable -- very few democracies

today have successfully emulated this ideal and further innovation and modifications have had to be made in order to suit the requirements of the particular society.

My contention is that had corruption not been a persistent factor, the full economic potential of Bangladesh could have been realised at a much faster rate and the benefits dispersed widely and more evenly throughout the population rather than to a corrupt and favoured few. This could not happen in an oligarchic and plutocratic governmental system in the guise of a democracy.

This analysis corroborates the country's informal economy that rose by 4.5% points on an average annually in the last decade and reached 34.9% of the official Gross Domestic Production (GDP) in 2000-01. The idea of an informal or shadow economy represents unreported income and unregistered economic activity.

One can only imagine the extent of the shadow economy in the years subsequent to 2000-01. Had poor governance not been a conspicuous phenomenon in our democratic politics, the per capita income would not have stagnated to its current level of \$482 but reached a more respectable \$920 with every possibility of breaking the \$1,000 barrier in the coming years -- a goal that is still attainable once democratic norms are institutionalised through the reforms being initiated by the interim government.

I reckon Bangladesh will have to construct its own brand of democracy, recognising its social, historical, and cultural conditions, with religion being one of several components of its national identity. Unfortunately, in light of the "Clash of Civilisations" thesis and the advent of a uni-polar world, the debate on democracy has introduced new conflicting categorisations with the most recent being an "Axis of Democracies" in Asia. Bangladesh will try to promote a democratic system tolerant of other governing systems prevailing in the region with no hostile intent or purpose. In this respect,

Bangladesh is a model of a progressive and tolerant South Asian state.

Looking into the economic advances made by Bangladesh over the last two decades, the despondency reflected through corruption and the new form of micro-terrorism visible in this millennium -- my ideas of new order will revolve around ground realities. These are deliberated in the promising strides you see in economic development in Asia and South East Asia in particular -- a case in point that is not too distant future for Bangladesh.

This resilience is seen with Bangladesh and can be directly attributed to the perseverance and determination of our common mass, bureaucrats, business community, judiciary, expatriate populace, law enforcing agency, women folks, conscious citizens, remittance earners and civil society, who have laboured under considerable stress and hardship. The road map to democracy lies, I presume, with objectives as envisioned by the government through anti-corruption drive and reform packages, within affordable time frame that will steer the country away from escapism and build strong foundation of validity on democracy.

The substance of discussion has corresponded to and grappled on the proclamation of emergency as inconsistent with a democratic development. I want to profess with certainty and without any reservation, since the Armed Forces stood as silent partner to the people, the intention of the introduction of this device is to safeguard our democracy, ensure economic stability, and also to provide a security environment where the political and administrative reforms can be implemented without the fear of intimidation or threat. Bangladesh is well on its way to accomplishing its democratic and economic mission that will emphasise:

- Transparency, responsiveness and accountability in government.
- Appropriate development strategies for sustained economic

- Promoting the Rule of Law.
- Fostering friendly relations with global and regional partners.
- Support global and regional activities in security matters and counter-terrorism.

This neatly brings me on to the wider issues of security in the South Asia region. While the security threat to western industrialised societies can be easily defined, the situation in South Asia is far more complex. Terrorist organisations spread throughout the sub-continent have widely differing objectives and agendas. The causes behind the rise in terrorist movements in South Asia appear to be related to sectarian violence, ethnic tensions, religious, communal and ideological motivations. The sophistication of terrorist groups has also changed, with the 1990s witnessing indiscriminate killing and high mass casualty counts as a defining feature of international terrorism in this period.

Another advance over previous decades was in the technological sophistication of terrorist groups and their utilisation of modern communication systems to disseminate their ideologies and programs as well as in managing complex financial and logistical networks at "micro level." The innovative tactics and methods employed by such groups now also include asymmetric warfare and the use of " sleeper cells" that are crucial features for the present day government under non-lethal environment.

Bangladesh stands at the crossroads of a cultural and societal wave, more practically, as a bridge between South West Asia and South East Asia. As a moderate Muslim country and aspiring democracy, I emphatically express this to be a fortress country against any wave of terrorism on the southern hemisphere. The interconnectivity of migration across the borders into the West, in search of a better livelihood, work and nourish in the developed countries, the country can only serve to



remind its significance of respect for others' culture, religious rights, respect, and pluralist society. Here Bangladesh will pursue peaceful means to international and regional disputes. True to its commitment, Bangladesh will continue to engage constructively with Asian countries and contribute to peace efforts throughout the world.

Bangladesh is aware and prepared for the challenges posed by security concerns facing the region. In my opinion, the issues of security and democracy are inextricably linked. In the same way that democratic reforms are dependant on sustained economic growth, security is similarly dependant on the reform agenda. Democracy itself requires a secure environment for it to thrive and spread its roots.

I perceive that both democracy and security are complementary features of the system now being put in place by the current initiatives. There is a tide of new aspiration in our people; both on the political expectation and socio-economic arena, and the new order will be visible on the upsurge of new social forces and emergence of a new Bangladesh that can contribute to development of world community with hope, a sense of accomplishment, and pride.

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Optimal use of our natural gas

In the context of increased demand for a depleting resource, there is no alternative but to conserve energy through conservation as well as mandated/enforced enhancement of efficiency in power generation. Making use of what is normally waste exhaust heat through combined heat and power systems, co-generation efficiencies of 70% and above are attainable. That would yield most attractive economic returns on additional investment. Use of co-generation plants in certain industries, like textile where process heat is also necessary, is very profitable.

AHMADUL AMEEN

WITH the dramatic rise in energy cost in recent years, energy conservation has become a dominant issue all over the globe. For countries dependent on imported energy, it is an even more important issue. Natural gas is the fuel of choice everywhere in the world, because of its cleanliness, ease of control and handling, and low sulphur content. For the same reasons, in the markets of Europe and North America, gas displaces fuel oil at prices above their thermal parity value. It is also a suitable raw material for the petrochemicals industry.

Bangladesh is relatively lucky as it has a reserve of natural gas of very high quality. However, its optimum use is essential, firstly for the fact that energy consumption is growing rapidly against a finite reserve and, secondly, because other types of energy sources like oil, hydroelectric, nuclear, wind or solar energy are virtually non-existent, except for a limited capacity hydroelectric project at Kaptai. If energy is not conserved on an urgent basis, and an indiscriminate supply of gas is continued irrespective of efficiency of usage, the consequences are likely to be disastrous.

With progressive industrializa-

tion, consumption and demand are bound to go up rapidly. A time will come when gas supply will have to be strictly rationed, based on sectoral priority. Even now, the desirability of supplying/allocating gas to prospective big consumers like Tata has become a debatable issue.

There are two ways of addressing the forthcoming energy crunch:

- A knee-jerk reaction when the crisis unfolds.
- Planned pre-emptive measures adopted well ahead of such development.

Obviously, the latter would be a more desirable option. However, long term planning does not appear to be the forte of Bangladesh planners. The possible reasons could be:

- Indifference of politicians toward such issues.
- Absence of a planning culture.
- Dearth of experts and expertise.
- Indifference toward the opinions of experts.

Lack of planning thus compels the parties concerned to react to the events unprepared. A glaring example is the current power shortage. In this particular case, however, the fault did not lie with the planners -- rather, the debacle was universally attributed to their political masters. If there was transparency and accountability in the decision-

making processes, this pathetic situation could have been averted.

A similar situation is inevitable in the gas sector if no efforts are made to:

- Improve the supply situation.
- Realistically predict different supply-demand scenarios.
- Put in place a practical policy framework to ensure optimum allocation/usage of scarce gas resources.

- Make decisions regarding priority sectors.
- Formulate and implement energy conservation regulations.

It is a matter of time when the government will have to be selective in supplying gas to more efficient thermal power projects. In extreme circumstances it may have to divert allocated gas from inefficient to more efficient thermal power projects for making optimal use of the limited indigenous resources.

The biggest sources of energy wastage are:

- Low efficiency power plants and conventional boilers.
- Inefficient utility power plants with conventional design having efficiency of around 30%.
- Large air-conditioned commercial premises consuming enormous energy without considering energy conservation codes and practices.

Current usage scenario

Currently, the major use of natural gas is for generating power. Natural gas of Bangladesh is of very high quality, having very low sulphur and high methane content. Consequently, it is desirable that the gas be used for high value added products like petrochemicals, fertilizer, steel, ceramic products etc., rather than generation of power.

However, in the absence of other sources of energy, gas had to be used for generation of power. It is likely that the thermal efficiency of the conventional power plants in Bangladesh is no higher than 35% -- far below that of modern power plants.

The most unsatisfactory use is the unmetred supply of natural

gas to the domestic consumers. This has resulted in unnecessary wastage of gas in many households, where the burner is kept lit in order to save a matchstick. Meters for domestic gas supply are used in other countries and, hence, it is high time to seriously consider their introduction here. This should not be an expensive proposition. Another reason for unsatisfactory use is the proliferation of small capacity gas generators having low thermal efficiencies.

Efficient modes of energy usage

In view of the seriousness of the issue, efforts have to be made to focus on the power plant efficiencies. Two of the most efficient processes of power generation are: **Combined cycle power plants:** Combined cycle power plants are those, which have both gas and steam turbines supplying power to the network. The cycle efficiency is thus improved by utilizing waste heat from exhaust gas. By combining the two cycles, both efficiency and power are increased. Generally, combined cycle power plants are 50% more efficient than conventional steam power stations and, hence, these have the potential of supplying power at reduced tariff.

Co-generation: Co-generation is the simultaneous generation and use of both electric and thermal energies from a single fuel source. In many industrial plants, energy transfer as heat, called "process heat," as well as electric power is needed. A balance between these two loads is an important factor in determining the cost of the total energy needs.

An ideal steam-turbine co-generation plant utilizes high-availability steam to generate power, and low-availability steam leaving the turbine for process heat. As a result there is no waste energy and no need of condensers.

Recommended policy decisions

The following recommendations are made for consideration of the authorities towards establishing a policy framework in respect of optimal gas usage and energy conservation.

- It is imperative that, prior to supplying gas to a power project, the projected plant efficiency be vetted to ensure that it is above a certain mandated threshold (say 50%).
- A mandatory energy audit should

be introduced for both existing as well as future power plants. Should it be necessary, remedial measures through retrofitting and/or design alteration must be considered to enhance plant efficiencies.

- The requirement of high thermal efficiency should also be strictly applied to industrial power generation. New gas connection may not be given to a bulk industrial user who does not opt for co-generation, or a combined cycle power plant, for his industry.
- Supply of gas should be considered only when consumers have energy conservation measures in place.
- Gas companies should conduct energy audits to demonstrate to the industries that saving gas and reducing costs will create a win-win situation.
- Feasibility of introducing domestic meters should be considered on an urgent basis. It would have dual benefit, increased revenue and reduced gas consumption.
- Packaged gas turbine generators are to be preferred over gas engine configuration for efficient co-generation by independent users.
- Feasibility of using alternative energy sources will have to be explored to divert gas usage.

In the context of increased demand for a depleting resource, there is no alternative but to conserve energy through conservation as well as mandated/enforced enhancement of efficiency in power generation. Making use of what is normally waste exhaust heat through combined heat and power systems, co-generation efficiencies of 70% and above are attainable. That would yield most attractive economic returns on additional investment. Use of co-generation plants in certain industries, like textile where process heat is also necessary, is very profitable.

Thus, there is no compelling excuse for not adopting more efficient systems which will enable the utilities to lower tariff, benefiting the customers, and increase the ratio of power availability versus power demand.

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FOCUS ON MOSLEM WORLD

Nigeria: The oil curse

Nigeria remains on or around the top of the list of corrupt countries, by the Transparency International rating. Not that one believes the TI rating to be the gospel, or that one agrees with their yardsticks, but the magnitude of corruption is hardly a secret. One has to pay 120 Naira (\$1) for every petty issue, from buying an airline ticket to registering one's vote, in Nigeria. Over \$100 billion are believed to have been earned through corruption since the return to democracy in 1999.

SAAD S. KHAN

NIGERIA is population-wise the largest country in Africa. It is also the largest oil producer in the continent, save for Libya. Oil had been, at best, a mixed blessing for Nigeria as a whole, but an outright curse for the common people of the country. One may include everyone except the ultra-rich in the term common citizen.

If a country produces two million barrels per day (selling at \$40 billion per annum) and still there are unending queues at all filling stations even in the commercial capital Lagos, how would one characterize it? What a paradox that everyday fuel is the energy-rich country's scarcest commodity! This is what Stanford political scientist, Terry Karl, calls the "paradox of plenty," and the Cambridge economists call the "Dutch disease." This owes to the "venality, waste and corruption fuelled by petro-capitalism," as one analyst puts it.

The oil accounts for 90% of Nigerian exports and 80% of the total government revenues. However 85% of the oil revenues accrue to 1% of the population. If this is not enough, there are several more eye-opening facts. Over the past three decades, \$100 billion from oil revenues, a quarter of total earnings, has simply disappeared. In 2003 alone, according to the country's anti-corruption chief, Nuhu Ribadu, 70% of the country's oil wealth was stolen.

Little wonder that the number of people living below poverty line has doubled in absolute terms, from 36% to 70% of the population, in the past three decades, i.e. since Nigeria became a major oil exporter. In nominal terms, the number of people living below one dollar a day has risen from 19 million people to a staggering 91 million.

Lagos, whose horrible slum world defies description, has expanded 40 times since 1960, mostly because of the sprawling slums. Lagos had slums even during the colonial era, but now it has been submerged into a wider ocean of slums with a population of anywhere between twelve

to sixteen million. Mind it, census is a very sensitive topic in Nigeria.

Because dividing Nigeria into Muslim North with Hausa ethnic group, and Christian South with Ibo and Yoruba communities is too simplistic.

Nigeria is composed of 250 ethnic groups -- and the fault-lines are not only ethnic but also linguistic, religious and geographic. Although the country has a decidedly Muslim majority, how does one convince the Christians about this.

Similarly, because of a federal constitution, the resources and the civil service jobs are to be distributed on the basis of relative population of the various ethnic and linguistic groups. The vested interests in statistics remaining vague are so strong that many a government has failed to conduct a reliable census.

If oil resources are not being distributed evenly, then how do the poor make a livelihood? Vandalizing and stealing the exposed and insecure oil pipelines, of course. Although around one sixth of the oil is stolen before it reaches the ports for being shipped for export, the issue is not merely economic.

The charred human carcasses of five hundred or so killed just after Christmas day 2006, in the Abule Egba slum area, due to a pipeline explosion are a horrifying reminder of the perils involved. The vandals who hot-tap the pipelines remain apathetic to, and oblivious of, the misery that his exercise has left behind in the form of ten major accidents in as many years.

But the crime seems less dreary and more explainable, even if not excusable, for the poor when juxtaposed with the rich who are also involved in it. A whole oil mafia, patronized by influential politicians, bureaucrats and military officers, works to hire unemployed youth to scoop oil into jerry cans, and to run oil barges through creeks to smuggle them to the off-shore loading stations. This cannot happen without the complicity of multinational oil companies.

So the local discontent in the Niger Delta is not without reason. Although the Movement for Emancipation of

Niger Delta (Mend) has not reached the proportion of Biafra's secessionist bid in the mid to late 1960's, hardly a month goes by without the news of blowing up of an oil pipeline or abduction of a foreign oil companies' workers.

The worst effect of the Nigerian oil crisis in the whole region is environmental. The theft of oil, the spillage, the explosions, the burnings -- all are destroying the soil and eco-system of the region. The legendary activist Ken Saro Wiwa became an environment martyr of the Delta region in 1995, but the aims he espoused for eradicating pollution and getting a fair share in oil revenues for his Ogoni people are far from being realized, even 12 years after his barbarous hanging by Gen. Sani Abacha's regime.

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Nigeria accounts for 9% of all US imports, and is a major pillar in the future strategy of the United States for the region, both for promotion of democracy and for war against terror. The total import bill of the United States from the Gulf of Guinea is expected to rise to 25% of the total imports by 2015, of which Nigeria's will be a lion's share. It is in Washington's interest to invest in good governance in Nigeria.

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