

National Security and Civil-Military Relations in Bangladesh

Final Report:

Priorities, Challenges and Responses

19 November 2009

Dhaka

Preamble To Report

- This workshop on National Security and Civil Military Relations was primarily aimed at improving and strengthening civil-military relations as a part of the evolution of good governance in Bangladesh. A robust debate occurred between the security sector and the civil sector representatives on current challenges of good governance.
- A unique methodology was used with the full participation of the attendees from the security institutions and civil sector for bringing out a consensus on issues relating to improved civil-military relations and good governance. The participants of the workshop also had a consensus that good governance can be ensured through the creation of the right political will and commitment.
- A fundamental element of this whole exercise was to ensure the supremacy of the political leadership in any policy decision relating to the form and the structure that will contribute to developing good governance in the country.
- After threadbare discussions, the participants came to identify 5 important issues which are vital to the creation of a stable government that could deliver good governance and bring about better understanding between different groups in the society especially the civil and the military.

Top 5 National Security and Civil-Military Relations Priorities

1. Good Governance
2. Democratization of Political Parties and Strengthening Local Governments
3. National Security- Terrorism
4. Improve Trust and Confidence between Civ-Mil
5. Responsible Media

Challenges to Top 5 Priorities

1. Good Governance

- a. Lack of political commitment
- b. Politicization of administrative offices and security forces
- c. Corruption in society at large
- d. Lack of transparency / accountability
- e. Lack of efficient and effective political leadership
- f. Weak bureaucracy
- g. Lack of observance of rule of law
- h. Lack of policy continuity and mutual confidence
- i. Inadequate public participation
- j. Lack of resources (i.e. IT, pay, etc.)
- k. Poverty / inadequate socio-economic conditions as root cause
- l. Demographic pressures
- m. Inadequacies with political system
- n. Lack of quality in education system

1. Good Governance

Response 1

What: Reform Civil Administration

How: Increased emphasis on merit, capacity building and enhancement of service delivery, including implementation of Civil Service Reform Commissions' recommendations

Who: Ministry of Establishment

When: To be considered as a Top Priority

1. Good Governance

Response 2

What: Improve selection procedures for all constitutional posts and autonomous recruitment for all constitutional bodies

How: Constitute an all-party special parliamentary committee for appointment to constitutional posts through parliamentary as well as public hearings. Independent hiring of officers and staff by the constitutional bodies.

Who: PMO, Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs

When: Before next selection process

1. Good Governance

Response 3

What: Increase Parliamentary oversight of the Executive

How: Strengthen all Parliamentary Standing Committees through adequate and competent staffing

Who: Speaker of Parliament

1. Good Governance

Response 4

What:

1. Relax restrictions on the freedom to vote in Parliament.
2. Prevent boycott of Parliament

How: Review Art. 70 and Art. 67(1)(b) of
Constitution

Who: Ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs

1. Good Governance

Response 5

What: Strengthen Anti-Corruption Commission

How: By ensuring administrative and financial independence, adequate and own competent manpower, autonomous recruitment of routine staff.

Who: PMO, Ministry of Law

1. Good Governance

Response 6

What: Improve Transparency and Accountability
in Public Procurement

How: Simplify public procurement rules, tender
procedures through electronic means

Who: Ministry of Planning and other relevant
Ministries

When: A Top Priority

1. Good Governance

Response 7

What: Establishment of Rule of Law

How: Create independent investigation department, create government prosecution service, corruption free judiciary, access to legal aid, and judicial accountability

Who: Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Law

When: Immediately

Challenges to Top 5 Priorities

2. Democratization of Political Parties and Strengthening of Local Governments

- a. Lack of democratic values in political parties
- b. Lack of decentralization and devolution
- c. Inadequate democratic representation at district and sub-district levels
- d. Lack of adequate support system

2. Democratization of Political Parties and Strengthening of Local Governments

Response

What: Party reform including financial transparency

How:

1. Implement agreed political party reforms in spirit and actions
2. Create district councils
3. Build consensus among pressure groups (civil society; business and professional sector; development partners; relevant international actors; etc.)
4. Advocacy programs via media resources

Who: Election Commission, Political Parties and Local Government Ministry

Challenges to Top 5 Priorities

3. National Security - Terrorism

- a. Need to Construct Comprehensive National Strategy for Combating Terrorism
 - 1. Need for Educational Reform
 - 2. Need for terrorists reform programs
 - 3. Need to address terrorist financing
- b. Need to define roles of security forces and their coordination
- c. Need for regional and international cooperation to combat Terrorism

3. Responses to National Security- Terrorism

Response 1

What: Construct Comprehensive National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism

How: Establish government inter-ministerial committees to meet/liaise with established public and private institutions

Who: PMO

When: A Top Priority

3. Responses to National Security-Terrorism

Response 2

What: Implement regional and international cooperation mechanisms

How: Implement SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism and the Additional Protocol and consider other mechanism such as South Asian Regional Task Force as proposed by the PM

Who: PMO, Ministries of Home and Foreign Affairs

Challenges to Top 5 Priorities

4. Improve Trust and Confidence between Civ-Mil
 - a. Insufficient information flow/sharing between civil and military
 - b. Lack of openness and transparency
 - c. Media reporting increases mistrust between sectors
 - d. Lack of interaction and engagement
 - e. Ministry of Defense not adequately serving as bridge between civ-mil sectors; ISPR practices archaic
 - f. Negative public branding/image of the military and heroic exploits not adequately communicated
 - g. At times negative perception of DGFI
 - h. Lack of clarity/attention regarding role of police which involves military in policing roles

4. Improve Trust and Confidence between Civ-Mil

Response 1

What: Prevent undue political interference and improve professionalism

How :

1. Establish national oversight mechanism
2. Establish training programs between civil and security sectors (per existing developmental programs)
3. Sensitize national leadership to challenges
4. Ensure recruitment, promotions and postings are based on only competence and merit, free from political interference

Who:

1. Parliament / Executive leadership
2. Civilian and security sector training institutions
3. Media, academia
4. Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Division

4. Improve Trust and Confidence between Civ-Mil

Response 2

What: Identify and promote common goals

How :

1. Conduct appropriate orientation, advocacy, and awareness programs
2. Develop and implement exchange programs

Who:

2. Participants should be all stakeholders (i.e. urban middle class, etc.)
2. Implementers should be appropriate civil, military, academic, professional, and media organizations

4. Improve Trust and Confidence between Civ-Mil

Response 3

What: Provide adequate legal protection to military personnel (serving and retired).

How: Review Military Laws, Rules and Regulations. Create redress options and promote access to Civil Laws for fundamental rights. Create Review Board to study and review existing laws and enact new laws

Who: MOD and MOL

4. Improve Trust and Confidence between Civ-Mil

Response 4

What: Develop capacity of civil support agencies, police and NGOs to limit military involvements in civil affairs

How :

1. Enhance professionalism through career development programs and mechanisms
2. Proper material and fund resourcing for each agency
3. Enhanced participation between stakeholders
4. Reinforce observance of the rule of law

Who:

1. Respective civilian and military organizations
2. Government
3. Respective authorities and agencies
4. Government

4. Improve Trust and Confidence between Civ-Mil

Response 5

What: Improve military's ability to relate with civil society

How:

1. Improve PR capacity of the military with professional assistance that contributes to appropriate branding
2. Relax restrictions on military interactions with the civil sector
3. Upgrade authority and responsibility of ISPR as an institution
4. Appoint an ISPR spokesperson

Who: Ministry of Defense, with support from the Ministry of Information

Challenges to Top 5 Priorities

5. Responsible Media

- a. Lack of professionalism, training/education
- b. Lack of ethics, values and media regulation
- c. Lack of civ-mil engagement with media sector
- d. Lack of media freedom; unstructured censorship of the media
- e. Inadequate accountability and redress mechanisms
- f. Inadequate pay which results in not attracting the best talents into the media profession
- g. Ownership's influence over what gets published
- h. Lack of proliferation of electronic media

5. Responsible Media

Response

What: Strengthen the role of responsible Media

How: Improved and enhanced media training

1. Formulate and implement code of ethics/conduct
2. Adopt clear policies and criteria / certification programs
3. Monitoring agency which provides media oversight
4. Strengthen the Press Council (decentralized and depoliticized media)
5. Deregulate media licensing (in particular electronic media)

Who: National Press Council

Workshop Next Steps

1. Sensitize the political leadership and society; workshop organizers take lead role in achieving this; this must be a collective effort
 - a. Stakeholders are business community, media, think-tanks, Bangladeshi diaspora, religious institutions, youth organizations
 - b. Implementers are Ministry of Religious Affairs and Parliamentary Standing Committee;
 - c. Form network from Workshop alumni (working group; coordinators are Mr. Mahi Chowdhury, Mr. Enayetullah Khan, Brig Gen Latiful Haider, Air Cdre (Retd) Ishfaq I. Chowdhury); also, empower APCSS alumni
 - d. Conduct public and educational institution debates
2. Future workshops which focus on each individually identified priority
3. Follow-up workshop within a year to review implementation of recommendations