

BG Nat'l Security and Civ-Mil Relations Workshop Closing Rmks
19 Nov 09, Dhaka
Ed Smith

- Your excellencies, workshop co-hosts, participants and observers, and friends. I am honored to join you today. I have only a few simple thoughts to offer.
- First, congratulations on your work this week. Your dialogue on national security and civil-military relations in Bangladesh appears to have set conditions for a continuing, focused and comprehensive addressal of this important dimension of national security-capacity.
- You attempted something difficult over the past couple days, and my sensing is that the effort was worth your time and the outcome can be helpful as you continue your dialogue.
- I think two important things have happened here:
 - First, an open, active, respectful and facilitated opportunity to review and reflect on the current status of your thinking about the relationship in Bangladesh between national security effectiveness and efficiency and civil-military relations—today, and likely ahead. And,
 - Second, a mature discussion about next steps needed for the common good of all concerned and impacted.
- A year or so ago when we first discussed this potential workshop, I offered some brief thoughts about this thematic challenge in all nations, now and historically.
- At that time I cited Dr. Muthiah Alagappa, editor of the book, Coercion and Governance, 2001, and Military Professionalism in Asia, stating that the influence of the military rises and declines with the weight of coercion in governance, and that the weight of coercion in governance is a function of the legitimacy of the nation-state

and the ability of government to rule effectively, as well as the level and success of economic development in the nation.

- I also quoted Peter Feaver, author of the book, Armed Servants, saying that “even if the military is best able to identify the threat and the appropriate responses to that threat...only the civilian can set the level of acceptable risk for society.” And, I cited Feaver’s suggestion that civil-military relations remains a “game of strategic interaction” with civilian and military leaders making moves based on preferences over outcomes and expectations of how the other side is likely to act. That’s the real world in which we work together, effectively, or not.
- In your deliberations this week, I suspect you have confirmed that, but also identified ways to translate interface challenges into opportunities for high-payoff collaboration. And that’s the continuing real-world challenge of advancing national security via better coordination and collaboration among responsible uniformed and civilian officials.
- I hope that we from APCSS have demonstrated a method and process of critical thinking, recording your findings and recommendations along the way, to help you bring into clearer focus what’s important to you.
- We did not bring any unique expertise about Bangladesh, as we knew you had that. Our contribution was to help you coherently outline what you believed. And that simple step, alone, often enables potential steps forward.
- Our purpose was not to critique or lecture or provide samples on “how to,” but rather to help you think critically, and perhaps a bit more comprehensively, about your current national security and civil-military relations challenges, as well as recommend next action-planning steps needed here at home.
- As near as I can tell, workshop objectives this week were accomplished, or at least advanced. I know you can use what

you have done here if you commit to stay engaged in your own internal analyses related to the workshop theme.

- I suggest you keep in mind some good advice that many of us have learned repeatedly, and that is, “When we emphasize our differences, we are separated by our ignorance...but when we celebrate our diversity, we are united in our potential.” I also suggest your next steps emphasize that the only true measure of success, in anything, is benefit to people; that leaders influence success, always; and that continuing development of leaders as partners enables progress, long term.
- We feel privileged to have worked with you and stand ready to continue our long-term educational relationship with your key security-practitioner leaders.
- Congratulations again on this week’s work. Aloha!