



# Transnational Security

## Threats Facing Bangladesh

### Introduction

Transnational security issues have been of concern to policy makers for quite some time now. Global terrorism, human trafficking, small arms proliferation and other forms of transnational security threats have raised concern among policy makers for several reasons. First, the negative impacts of such transnational issues do not remain confined to the territorial boundary of a state; rather these spill over and affect other countries. Second, in recent times, transnational security threats have caused serious damage to the economic, social and political development at the systemic level. For instance, drug trafficking in Latin America or transnational terrorism in South Asia have created significant economic, social and political instability. The third reason is equally noteworthy. Limitations of national-level legislation and an absence of adequate transnational collaborative mechanisms or legal regimes have made it quite difficult to decisively deal with most transnational threats.

Bangladesh faces a host of Transnational Security Threats- starting from terrorism, arms- and drug smuggling, human trafficking, climate security, and financial crime to transnational organised crime- that jeopardize its already fragile economy and impede social and political development. Bangladesh is geo-strategically significant for a number of reasons: It is world's 7th most populous nation with more than 150 million people. It is also the third largest Muslim nation in the world in terms of demographic strength. Bangladesh sits in close proximity to two "would be" superpowers- China and India. Hence, if unchecked, the transnational problems facing Bangladesh will have serious consequences for this entire region. In this regard, this paper identifies the major transnational security threats facing Bangladesh, analyses how severe the threats are and recommends measures to effectively address these challenges.

### Transnational Security Threats

Transnational security challenges are threats to the security of nations "characterized by an event or phenomenon of cross-border scope, the dynamics of which are significantly (but not necessarily exclusively) driven by non-state actors (e.g., terrorists), activities (e.g., global economic behavior), or forces (e.g., microbial mutations, earthquakes)."<sup>1</sup>

Authors have also defined the parameters of transnational threats. According to James Cockayne and Christoph Mikulaschek, "international terrorism, transnational organized crime, climate change and climate-related migration, as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and small arms and light weapons (SALW), are among the most salient transnational security challenges on a global scale."<sup>2</sup>

Paul J. Smith defines transnational security issues as the "nonmilitary threats that cross borders and either threaten the political and social integrity of a nation or the health of that nation's inhabitants."<sup>3</sup> Unlike traditional security threats "such as a nuclear

standoff between India and Pakistan, or Serbia's military campaign in Kosovo—transnational security threats do not have a crisis "focal point". The absence of a focal point makes it difficult for policymakers and government leaders to direct their attention and energy effectively.<sup>4</sup>

According to the US Department of Defense, transnational threats are major security threats for the 21st century. These threats are characterized by their global nature—which means, by definition, that these threats straddle both the domestic and foreign spheres.<sup>5</sup>

Transnational security threats have also redefined the role of the military. Previously, the US military was primarily responsible for ensuring national security, while domestic security was in the province of law enforcement agencies. After the emergence of transnational security threats, these clear-cut divisions no longer exist. This poses some profound constitutional and security challenges to nation-states.<sup>6</sup>

What compounds the scenario is the fact that transnational threats are difficult to deter, detect, and control. National boundaries are not effective barriers, and are often used to an adversary's advantage. With little or no tie to national identity, attribution can be difficult in the event of an attack, and retribution may not be possible.<sup>7</sup>

Experts believe that the advent of globalisation has rendered unprecedented economic growth, commerce, and international migration. Easier communication has expanded the global, national and regional horizons creating new opportunities for most countries. However, at the same time, globalisation has also opened the floodgates to more sinister elements, i.e. Transnational Security Threats.<sup>8</sup>

## Transnational Security Threats Challenging Bangladesh

The transnational security threats challenging Bangladesh which this paper has focused are: Terrorism, Arms trafficking, Drug trafficking, Human trafficking, Climate change, Water security, Financial Crime and Infectious diseases.

### Terrorism and Religious Militancy

Terrorism and religious militancy have become a major concern for Bangladesh. Terrorism and religious militancy in Bangladesh have caused severe damage to the moderate image of the nation. Terrorism has threatened people's lives, the country's economy, and Bangladesh's political establishment and religious pluralism. Terrorism, amid its lethal manifestation, has generated insecurity and instability within the state and society.

A number of Islamist Militant Groups and their off shoots have sprung up in the country over the course of last two decades. Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B), Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), Hizbut Touhid, Islami Samaj, Hizb-ut Tehrir, and Alla'r Dal are under the radar of the law enforcement agencies of the country. To make it even worse, these terror outfits maintain and harbour linkages with other trans-national/international terrorist groups.

### Major Terror Attacks in Bangladesh

Major terrorist attacks in Bangladesh took place in the post 9/11 dateline. Notwithstanding Bangladesh's Muslim-majority status, the people of this land have traditionally sustained close affinity with Bengali language, culture and heritage. Their distinct Bengali identity has been a source of religious harmony and peaceful co-existence among different confessional communities in Bangladesh for many centuries. Extremist and religious militants oppose the Bengalis' secular image, and targeted the traditional Bengali new year cultural festivities on April 14, 2001. Bomb blasts at a crowded festival, on the morning of the Bengali New Year, claimed nine lives, injuring many others.<sup>9</sup>

The terrorist groups planned and executed their terror plots in a sequential manner within the country and society. After targeting symbols of Bengali culture, the militants attacked Bangladesh's judicial system. Nine people including two lawyers and a police constable were killed, and 78 others injured on 29 November, 2005, in two suicide bomb attacks by the JMB, on Chittagong and Gazipur court premises.<sup>10</sup>

The JMB targeted the judiciary as a part of its attempts to replace the current legal system of Bangladesh with Sharia-based Islamic law. Militants also attacked the administrative components of the government. The most noteworthy of these, serial blasts in August 2005, rocked 63 administrative districts (out of a total 64) of the country within just 30 minutes. Government establishments were targeted in the attack.<sup>11</sup> The country's democratic political parties too were targeted. With an attempt to assassinate the chief of the then main opposition party and present Prime Minister, Mrs. Sheikh Hasina, militants launched grenade attacks on a political rally. More than 16 people were killed and over 200 people were injured in the attack.<sup>12</sup> Even foreign diplomats serving in Bangladesh were not spared. Two people were killed and the then British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Mr. Anwar Choudhury,

was among about 70 injured in a powerful bomb blast at Hazrat Shahjalal's Shrine in Sylhet.<sup>13</sup>

## Transnational Linkages of Terrorism in Bangladesh

Intelligence sources reveal that the militant groups active in Bangladesh have established links with international and regional terror groups and receive support, assistance, training and funds to carry out activities within and beyond the national boundary. It is alleged, for instance, that the HuJI-B was formed in Bangladesh drawing inspiration from Al Qaeda and the group continues to maintain active links with the Al Qaeda network and remnants of the Taliban militia.<sup>14</sup> The police in the neighbouring Indian state of Assam suspect that JMB is also trying to expand its operations in Indian Territory.<sup>15</sup>

The HuJI-B, for its part, is believed to have links with terrorist groups based in Pakistan. According to sources, HuJI-B also has connections with insurgent groups operating in Northeast India. Some recent developments have generated more shocks. According to reports, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operatives of Indian and Pakistani nationalities are active in Bangladesh, and are working to build a strong militant network here. While investigating the alleged LeT plot to attack the Indian and US embassies in Dhaka, the intelligence agencies have gathered information that the Pakistan-based militant group is recruiting cadres from Rohingya refugees in Chittagong.<sup>16</sup> Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque told journalists that a good number of Lashkar operatives are on a covert campaign to carry out subversive activities in Bangladesh.<sup>17</sup>

Indian security analysts report that the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), an ethnic insurgent group from North East India, maintains linkages with terrorist groups operating in Bangladesh. It is also reported that ULFA established its camps in the territory of Bangladesh and that ULFA operatives received training at various camps of the HUJI-B. Indian analysts depict an interesting alliance between Indian Hindu ethnic separatist groups and Islamist terrorist organizations such as the HUJI-B and the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen.<sup>18</sup> It must also be mentioned that Bangladesh has facilitated the arrest of a number of top ULFA leaders and subsequently handed them over to India.<sup>19</sup>

## Government Response

Bangladesh Government has made serious efforts to thwart the menace of terrorism. A special force (Rapid Action Battalion) was raised to curb terrorism in 2004.<sup>20</sup> Since then, law enforcement agencies have been able to disrupt the command

and control structure of several terrorist groups. Top leaders of the JMB were apprehended, put on trial, convicted, and executed.<sup>21</sup> Many operatives of HUJI-B and JMB are still on the run. In terms of legislative responses, special laws and ordinances were enacted to curb terrorism and terrorist financing in Bangladesh.<sup>22</sup> Recent statistics show a dramatic decline in the number of fatalities resulting from terrorist attacks in Bangladesh.

**Table 1: Fatalities-Islamist Terrorism, 2005-2010<sup>23</sup>**

Year	Civilians	Terrorists	Total
2005	26	9	35
2006	6	6	12
2007	1	7	8
2008	1	0	1
2009	0	0	0
2010 *	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>57</b>

\* Data till February 1, 2010

### Exhibit Box

Major provisions of Anti-terrorism Ordinance (2008) are:

- Penalty for offences like:
  - arms running,
  - financing terror attacks,
  - committing murders and
  - creating panic and endangering national sovereignty.
- Maximum punishment is death sentence.
- Punishment for being associated with proscribed organizations.
- Financing of terrorism has become a subject of punishment.
- Creation of special tribunal to put terrorists on trial.

However, considering the trans-national nature of global terrorism, Bangladesh cannot act alone effectively against terrorism; it needs institutionalization of regional/trans-national cooperation, or the adoption of a collaborative mechanism by the South Asian countries.

## Arms Trafficking

Illegal firearms trafficking is a serious trans-national problem for Bangladesh. Bangladesh is now increasingly being used as a transit route by trans-national militant and insurgent outfits for smuggling weapons. According to intelligence sources, North, South and South-eastern parts of the country, especially Chittagong, Khagrachhari, Bandarban, Sandwip, Haluaghat and emerging Char islands are being used for transportation of illegal small arms.

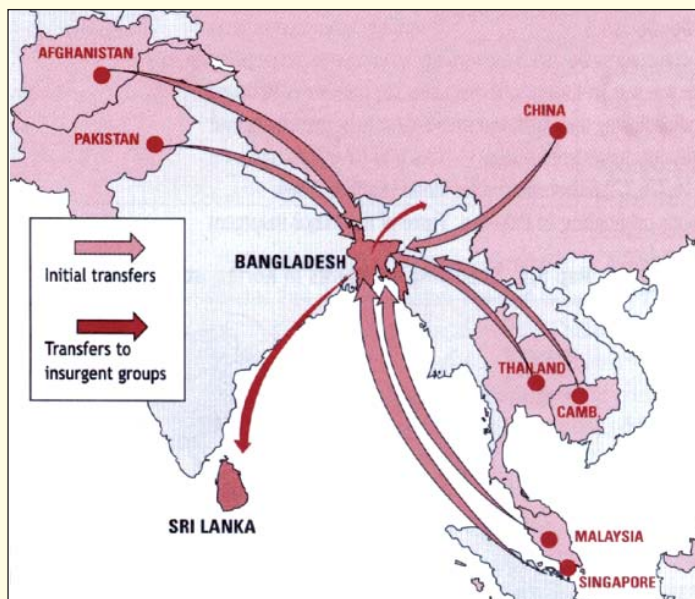
Illegal arms trafficking has also alarmingly picked up in the South-western Bangladesh. Law enforcement agency sources have identified 29 points in six border districts where arms traffickers are active in carrying out the illicit trade. The districts are Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Jessore and Satkhira. The smugglers use at least four points on the Kushtia border, five in Jhenidah, four in Chuadanga, three in Meherpur, six in Satkhira, and seven in Jessore.

### Transnational Connections in Bangladesh

The smugglers operate across the India-Bangladesh border and local (Bangladeshi) gun-runners keep close linkages with their Indian counterparts. The illegal firearms being trafficked through Bangladesh are mostly made in China, the USA, the Czech Republic and India. They include eight-shooter guns, sawn-off rifles, light machine guns, pistols and Indian-made arms like pipe guns, one-shooter guns, and revolvers etc. Sources say the demand for Indian-made firearms is particularly high due to their low price and wide availability.<sup>24</sup>

Because of its geographical location, porous border and poor border management, Bangladesh has become a desired transit route for arms trafficking in South Asia. Easy availability of firearms has given rise to different criminal groups which have created serious social problems for the country.

The traffickers adopt various operational strategies to avoid detection. They usually do not smuggle firearms in bulk; rather it is done in piecemeal fashion. They often dismantle or knock down the arms into small parts for easier trafficking into the country. Later, the arms are assembled and dispatched to the sales point.<sup>25</sup> According to a report published by the



Map 1: Arms trafficking routes through Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Development Partnership Center (BDPC), at least 400,000 illegal and 25,000 licensed guns are used across the country for criminal activities.

South Asia Partnership (SAP) Bangladesh and International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) jointly organised a conference in Dhaka as part of marking Global Week of Action Against Small Arms in 2006.<sup>26</sup> Major General Syed Muhammad Ibrahim (Retd.), who presented the keynote paper in the conference, said that around 128 syndicates in the country were engaged in criminal activities including gun running, human trafficking, extortion, prostitution, illegal occupation of land, smuggling of contraband items, drug peddling, drug dealing and money laundering etc. He also said that more than six hundred thousand operatives (of whom 40% were under 18 years of age) used four hundred thousand unauthorised weapons to carry out illegal activities across the country. Religious militants groups and insurgent outfits of neighbouring countries use Bangladesh's south- and south-eastern regions as a transit route for arms smuggling business.<sup>27</sup> The government of Bangladesh and its law enforcement agencies, because of their limited resources and other constraints, have failed to take decisive action to curb the illegal commerce in lethal weapons in the country.

### Major Arms Haul

On 1 April, 2004, law enforcement agencies of Bangladesh recovered 10 truck-loads of arms and ammunition from the jetty of the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Factory (CUFF), in the port city of Chittagong. This was the largest arms haul in the country's history. 1, 290 SMGs, 100 Tommy guns, 400 semi-automatic rifles, 150 40mm rocket launchers, 2,000 grenade launchers, 840 rockets (40mm), 25,020 hand grenades, 6, 392 magazines for SMGs, and 184 million rounds of ammunition were recovered.<sup>28</sup>

Table 2: Number of registered cases under Arms and explosive acts in Bangladesh from 2003 - 2007<sup>29</sup>

Name of offence	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Arms Act	2,293	2,370	1,836	1,552	1,746
Explosive Act	499	477	595	308	232

Reports said that this huge quantity of arms and ammunition was smuggled into Bangladesh from a third country and was intended for being illegally trans-shipped to recipients in North-eastern India. The incident showed up the scale of Bangladesh's vulnerability in terms of transnational arms trafficking.

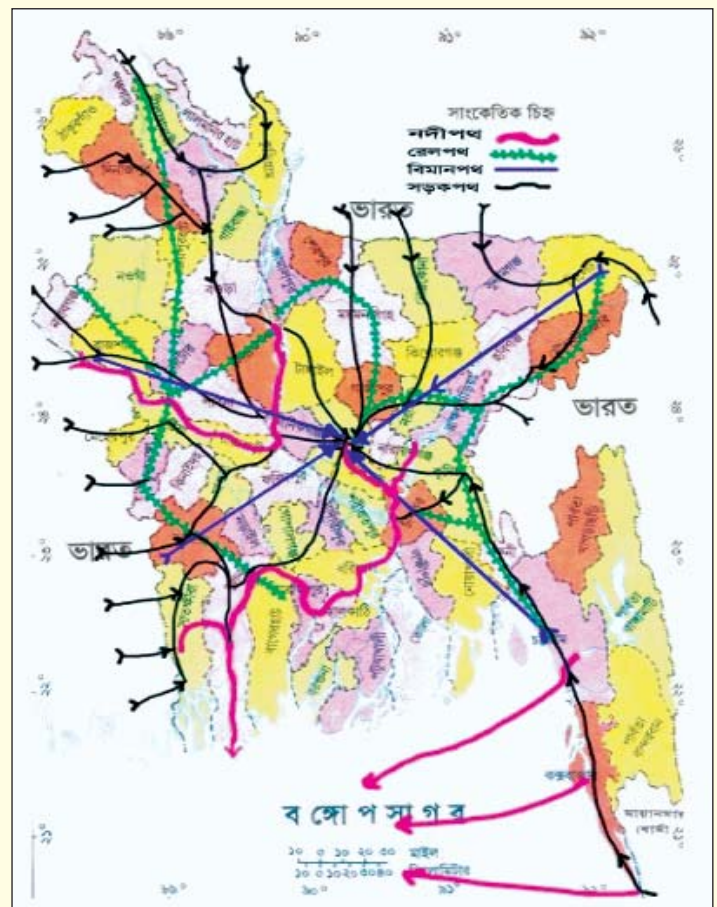
## Major Challenges to Bangladesh

Arms trafficking pose serious challenges to the Bangladeshi state. It challenges the democratic practices, governance and development. The national security of the country is also significantly compromised because of this ominous phenomenon. It is also a big challenge for regional security and stability. Many security analysts believe that the internal factors and sub-systemic dynamics of South Asia have contributed to turn the region into a large illegal arms trading centre. It may be difficult to stop this illegal trafficking completely. However, observers suggest that law enforcement agencies must take into account the supply and demand equation in order to devise effective mechanisms to arrest these lethal contraband flows.<sup>30</sup> Brigadier General Shahedul Anam Khan ndc, psc (Retd.) has identified two important factors relevant to curbing arms trafficking: First, to realise the universality of the problem. Individual states in isolation cannot combat the menace of arms trafficking; they will require collective effort and global response mechanisms. The second factor is to establish a synergy between development and security. Development will eradicate the sense of insecurity of the groups/individuals who otherwise would resort to violent means.

## Drug Trafficking

Bangladesh has become an attractive transit point for narcotics destined for international markets. Bangladesh's long and porous borders have made the country vulnerable to trans-border smuggling. Drug trafficking—mainly of heroin, hashish, opium, phensidyl, pathedine or other psychotropic substances like methamphetamines and precursor chemicals like acetic anhydride—poses a real challenge to the nation. A host of factors have contributed to Bangladesh becoming a lucrative narco-transit-zone for the transnational drug trade. Easy access to international air and sea links, and modest detection and interdiction capability are responsible for large-scale drug trafficking activities in the country.<sup>31</sup>

Bangladesh customs officials seized 23.5 kg of low-quality heroin at Dhaka's international airport on November 12, 2007. A month earlier, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) recovered three kg of heroin from a village in Sylhet district. The heroin, according to RAB, came from an unknown location in India to Bangladesh. In October, 2007, RAB made one of the largest drug busts in the country. In a raid, RAB seized about 130,000 yaba tablets, with a street value of more than \$1 million. Large



Map 2: Drug trafficking routes through Bangladesh<sup>32</sup>

amounts of drug-making equipment and raw materials were also recovered.<sup>33</sup>

Table 3: Narcotic seizure statistics in Bangladesh<sup>34</sup>

Name of Drug	Unit	2006	2007	2008	2009 (April)
Heroin	Kg.	16.288	20.856	29.013	21.190
Charash	Kg.	0.26	-	0.125	240
Popy Plant	No.	-	60038	-	1450210
Illicit Distillation	Litre	23582.200	22959.400	23597.600	22671.050
Codeine (Phensidyl)	Bottle	46995	28241	53239	58875

December, 2009, a joint team of RAB and the Department of Narcotic Control (DNC) seized a kilogram of heroin and arrested four suspected drug traffickers, including three foreigners, at Uttara in the capital. These instances demonstrated that drug trafficking in Bangladesh has direct transnational connections.<sup>35</sup>

According to the latest report (annual report 2008) from the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), in 2007 anti-narcotic agencies in Bangladesh made a record seizure of more than 70,000 tablets containing codeine. India is the main source of tablets containing codeine and codeine-based cough syrup (under the brand name Phensidyl) smuggled into Bangladesh. The report

also stated, "Pharmaceutical preparations diverted from licit manufacture in India continue to feed the widespread abuse of such products in South Asia."

"Yaba" is currently one of the most popular forms of methamphetamine abuses in South Asia, including Bangladesh. "Yaba" contains a mixture of caffeine and about 30 per cent methamphetamine. Law enforcement agencies have reported large seizures of "yaba" tablets in Bangladesh. This drug is smuggled into Bangladesh from neighbouring countries such as Myanmar. According to UNODC, 1.2 million methamphetamine tablets originating in Myanmar were seized in Bangladesh in 2007.<sup>36</sup>

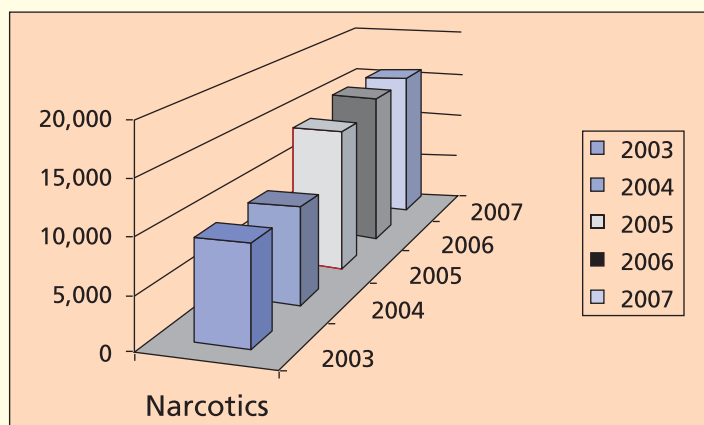


Figure 1: Narcotics related cases registered in Bangladesh.<sup>37</sup>

INCB also blamed a lack of resources and training of law enforcement agencies for Bangladesh's failure to 'properly implement' its drug control policy. INCB has identified the Chittagong seaport as the 'main exit point for drugs leaving the country', while the remainder is smuggled out through Sylhet and Chittagong airports.<sup>38</sup>

According to Bangladesh's DNC, international drug barons and the mafia network often find "Bangladesh as a safe and alternate trafficking route when the Indian and Myanmar routes become risky". Bangladesh has a long, remote and porous border with India on three sides and with Myanmar to the southeast. The three border routes for drug smuggling are as follows<sup>39</sup> :

**The western routes with India:** Darshana and Jibannagar in Chuadanga district, Hili and Birol in Dinajpur district, and Moghulhat, Aditmari, Durgapur, Fulbari, and Nageshwari in Kurigram, and Nawabgonj, Rajshahi, Meherpur, Debhat and Kaliganj in Khulna district, and Benapole and Chowgacha in Jessore district.

**Eastern Routes:** Akhaura, Jhautala, Sadullahpur, Nawagaon, Singer bil, Col. bazar, Gangasagar and Kasba in Brahman Baria district, Bibirbazar, Chagalnaiya, Maharajganj and Gutuma in Feni district, Barkal and Baghaichari in Rangamati district, Chittagong,

Teknaif in Cox's Bazar district, and Dighinala, Panchari, and Matiranga in Khagrachari district.

**Northern Routes:** Haluaghat (Telikhali/Karaitali/Surjyapur/Bandarkata/Munsirhat/Munshipara) in Mymensing district, Durgapur (Bijoypur and Bhabani area) in Netrokona district, and Bangla Bandha, Bhurungabari, Jhenaigati, Sunamgonj and Tamabil.

<b>Golden Triangle</b> > Bay of Bengal>India>Sri Lanka > Middle East-Africa > USA>Canada (air and sea).
<b>Golden Crescent</b> > Pakistan>India>Middle East>Mediterranean region > Europe>USA>Canada. (Air, sea and land).
<b>Golden Crescent</b> > Pakistan>Middle East>Africa>Europe-USA-Canada.
India > Bangladesh > Middle East > Indian Ocean> Europe-USA-Canada.

Figure 2: Major International Drug Trafficking Routes.<sup>40</sup>

Since drug trafficking in Bangladesh is a transnational issue, Bangladesh cannot fight against this in isolation. A joint and collective (both multilateral and bilateral) mechanism and legal regime are equally important to stopping drug trafficking in this region. India and Bangladesh have recently signed an agreement on fighting terror, organised crime and drug trafficking.<sup>41</sup> Similar instruments should also be adopted between and among countries in South Asia to effectively fight drug trafficking and drug abuse.

## Human Trafficking

The term "human trafficking" is used to denote "a wide variety of crimes and human rights abuses associated with the recruitment, movement and sale of people into a range of exploitative or slave-like circumstances."<sup>42</sup> The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines trafficking as follows:

"*Trafficking in persons*" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs."

Human trafficking is a crime against humanity. This is a global problem and Bangladesh is one of the worst victims of human trafficking. The US released the

ninth annual "*Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP)*" on 16 June, 2009. TIP's Bangladesh section has identified Bangladesh as a source and transit point for men, women and children trafficked for forced labour and sexual exploitation. Experts have identified several forms of human trafficking in Bangladesh; the most common forms are: trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, domestic servitude, forced labour and other forms of exploitation.<sup>43</sup>

The figures give a gloomy picture of Bangladesh in terms of human trafficking. Studies have uncovered that over a million women and children have been trafficked out of the country in the last 30 years. According to a UNICEF report, approximately 400 women and children in Bangladesh are victims of trafficking each month. Another study reports that approximately 300,000 Bangladeshi children and women between the ages of 12 and 30 have been trafficked to India alone in the last 10 years. Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid, an organization based in Pakistan, in its annual report reveals that around 200,000 Bangladeshi girls and women were trafficked to Pakistan over the period.<sup>44</sup>

#### Exhibit Box

UAE compensates 879 Bangladeshi camel jockeys<sup>45</sup>

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) handed over to Dhaka compensation worth \$1.43 million for 879 Bangladeshi children who once had been used as camel jockeys in the Gulf kingdom. A UAE government delegation called on Bangladesh Home Minister Sahara Khatun and handed over to her the compensation package in May 2009.

The money will be spent for the education, treatment and housing of the children who were once trafficked to the Gulf country and returned home in phases in the last decade as a result of vigorous anti-trafficking campaign around the world and Bangladesh's own efforts against human trafficking, she said.

It is often reported that traffickers use 20 main points in 16 southern and south-western districts of Bangladesh along the Indian border to run their illicit trade. The main cross-border trafficking route is the Dhaka-Mumbai-Karachi-Dubai route.<sup>46</sup> Experts also believe that without devising meaningful collaborative mechanisms among the countries in South Asia, it would be impossible to stop cross-border flows of human trafficking. Joint efforts are to be made for effective prevention, rescue, and repatriation of the victims, and prosecution of traffickers.<sup>47</sup>

## Climate Change and Security

In the academic arena, Climate Change is now regarded as a major human security challenge. Climate change is a complex phenomenon and it affects many aspects of human life-politics, economics, migration, human rights, development, trade, and health. Analysts predict that Climate Change can

trigger conflict, instability and cause humanitarian crises. On the top of that, Climate Change consequences may spill over state borders, and thereby result in possible trans-national tensions or worse.

Against the backdrop of globalization, unabated climate change is likely to overstretch the capacities of a still insufficient global governance system. According to a Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) study, climate change can heighten existing social and political tensions or can lead to new ones. State institutions already overstretched will come under additional pressure, and will find it increasingly difficult to perform elementary state tasks. Combined with growing environmental stress, this will impact the adaptive capacity of societies adversely and will thus also limit their capacity to engage in peaceful conflict resolution.<sup>48</sup>

## Security Dimensions

Climate Change would ultimately impact the availability of fresh and safe drinking water, impose adverse affect on human health and challenge food security around the world. Climate Change has is now becoming a contributing factor to poverty and forced migration. Similarly, scarcity of water and food shortage would lead to displacement of population. Many fear that the cumulative impact of poverty, displacement, competition over limited resources and societal stress may go beyond the already limited government capacity to deal with deteriorating conditions and might ultimately lead to conflict.<sup>49</sup>

## The Case of Bangladesh

Because of its unique geographic, topographic, demographic and socio-economic characteristics, Bangladesh is regarded as one of the most vulnerable countries in the world facing the adverse impacts of Climate Change.

Many believe that the anticipated adverse affects of climate change (sea level rise, higher temperatures, enhanced monsoon precipitation, and an increase in cyclone intensity etc) will exacerbate the existing stresses that already hinder development in Bangladesh.

The consequences of Climate Change- increased natural disaster, loss of agricultural productivity; shortage of safe drinking water, sea level rise, territorial, loss, salinity intrusion- may result into state's inability to function and to provide services to its citizens. Then, the worst-case scenario would be the meltdown of the state machinery and the consequences would be catastrophic. The impact of climate change on the national security of Bangladesh was envisioned in a report published in the New York Times, on August 8, 2009:

According to the Fourth Assessment Report of IPCC following changes have been observed in climate trends, variability and extreme events in Bangladesh:

- In Bangladesh, average temperature has registered an increasing trend of about 1°C in May and 0.5°C in November during the 14 year period from 1985 to 1998.
- The annual mean rainfall exhibits increasing trends in Bangladesh. Decadal rain anomalies are above long term averages since 1960s.
- Serious and recurring floods have taken place during 2002, 2003, and 2004. Cyclones originating from the Bay of Bengal have been noted to decrease since 1970 but the intensity has increased.
- Frequency of monsoon depressions and cyclones formation in Bay of Bengal has increased.
- Water shortages has been attributed to rapid urbanization and industrialization, population growth and inefficient water use, which are aggravated by changing climate and its adverse impacts on demand, supply and water quality.
- Salt water from the Bay of Bengal is reported to have penetrated 100 km or more inland along tributary channels during the dry season.
- The precipitation decline and droughts have resulted in the drying up of wetlands and severe degradation of ecosystems.

▫An exercise last December at the National Defense University, an educational institute that is overseen by the military, explored the potential impact of a destructive flood in Bangladesh that sent hundreds of thousands of refugees streaming into neighboring India, touching off religious conflict, the spread of contagious diseases and vast damage to infrastructure. ▫It gets real complicated real quickly,▫ said Amanda J. Dory, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy.<sup>50</sup>

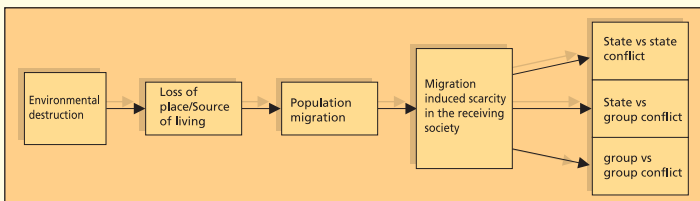


Figure 3: Environmental Destruction, population migration and types of conflict<sup>51</sup>

Considering the scale and magnitude of the problem, it is assumed that Climate Change and its consequences would pose serious threats to the Bangladeshi state. Neighbouring countries would face the brunt of the spill-over impact, i.e. mass migration, conflict etc in the event of such environmental catastrophe in Bangladesh. Therefore, Climate Change has become a transnational problem and countries should be united to address the negative consequences of this problem.

## Water Security in Bangladesh: Transnational Perspective

Water security of Bangladesh too has emerged as a transnational issue in recent times. Bangladesh's water security concerns have two dimensions▫ internal and external water security dimensions.

The internal source of water insecurity of Bangladesh include; salinity encroachment, arsenic contamination, drawing down of underground fresh water reservoirs etc.

Table 4: Dependency of major South Asian countries on trans-boundary surface water<sup>52</sup>

Country	Basin	Percent of total river flow originating outside of border
Afghanistan	Indus, Tarim	15%
Bangladesh	GBM	91%
Bhutan	GBM	0.4%
China	GBM, Indus, Tarim	1%
India	GBM, Indus	34%
Kazakhstan	Tarim	31%
Kyrgyzstan	Tarim	0%
Myanmar	GBM	16%
Nepal	GBM	6%
Pakistan	Indus, Tarim	76%

Bangladesh is an overly-populated country. Its huge population size and extreme population density have made it difficult to sustain even a modest economy. Bangladesh also has an agrarian economy although statistics show that its GDP dependence on agriculture has gone down over the past few years. However, agriculture remains a key accommodating sector to its huge rural labour force. The entire agricultural sector of the country is highly dependent on fresh water for irrigation.

The Himalayan River Basin countries-China, Bangladesh, India and Nepal▫share a common ecology and river system. Being a lower riparian country, availability of river water in Bangladesh depends much on the flow of water from the upstream countries. Fifty four rivers enter Bangladesh from India carrying water. The availability of river water in Bangladesh, both during the monsoon and the dry season, is determined by the level of water flow from upstream. Unilateral withdrawals of river water by up-stream countries will have severe impacts for Bangladesh.

Various Indian reports reveal that the Government of India (GOI) is actively planning to build a water dam on the Barak River in India.<sup>53</sup> If the GOI goes ahead and implements the proposed plan, it will generate severe ecological consequences for Bangladesh. Analysts believe that the dam, popularly known as the Tipaimukh dam, on the Barak River would result into the drying up of the Surma and Kushiara Rivers.<sup>54</sup>

The GOI is also implementing its ▫river linking project▫ to link up major rivers to hold up water in



reservoirs and to channel it from the Northwest to northern and southern India.<sup>55</sup> This is already a concern for Bangladeshis as many believe it would further divert the current flow of water entering Bangladesh from India.

The proposed dam and the river linking project will render negative ecological and environmental changes. There is a high probability that if the South Asian states do not address the water sharing issue conclusively, it will eventually trigger intra/inter-state conflict across the region. The scarcity of water may generate movements of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Bangladesh and these IDPs may try to seek refuge and a livelihood beyond the state boundary. Since India virtually encircles Bangladesh from three sides, India is likely to experience an *en masse* influx of IDPs from Bangladesh.

It would be important to examine another aspect of the problem—whether the scarcity of water in this region will lead to inter-state conflict. Since all the countries in this region are facing acute water scarcity and are having disputes over sharing of common river-water, there is an increased probability that the crisis may escalate into conflict.

## Transnational Financial Crime in Bangladesh

Many believe that Bangladesh is often considered as a safe haven for financial crime. Hundi (also known as hawala), or a black market money exchange procedure, is a commonly used mode of transaction for cross-border money transfers. Bangladesh has a large number of expatriate communities living in Gulf countries, Europe, other parts of Asia, and elsewhere. A segment of these wage-earner expatriates use the unofficial channel of Hundi to remit money back home. Hundi is also a popular mode for fund transfers to terrorists, as such fund transfers most often leave no trace. Because of Hundi, the Government each year loses a huge amount in potential revenue earnings. Other common financial crimes in Bangladesh are<sup>56</sup>:

1. Corruption— Abuse of public power or position for personal/group gain.
2. Tax evasion— Remaining outside the tax net, non-disclosure of actual income, non-payment of income tax, underhand agreements with the tax authority, gross abuse of the tax holiday provisions etc.
3. Loan defaulting— Intentional defaulting, siphoning off money from the authorized ventures for which the loan was taken, etc.
4. Regular fraud— Pyramid savings schemes, misleading overseas job seekers (recently local job seeking has

also come under the net). Counterfeit notes are also an area of concern.

5. Smuggling— An estimated amount of US Dollar 1 billion worth of dutiable goods are smuggled each year into Bangladesh from India alone.

An appropriate legal framework is essential to stop financial crime. Bangladesh has a number of legal regimes in place.<sup>57</sup> The Bangladesh Penal Code, Foreign Exchange Regulations Act, 1947 (FERA), Income Tax Ordinance, 1984, Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2002 (MLPA) and Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Act, 2004 are the laws designed to prevent such crimes. The cumulative impact of globalisation and technology has made financial sector very much susceptible to financial crime. Therefore, trans-national collaboration is important in this regard.

### Quick fact

#### What is a financial crime ?

The term Financial Crime expresses different concepts depending on the jurisdiction and on the context. In general, financial crime refers to any non-violent crime which results in a financial gain to the perpetrators and loss to others or the state. It includes a range of illegal activities such as:

- Corruption (bribery, speed money, kickbacks etc.)
- Financial fraud (accounting, check, credit card, mortgage, insurance fraud, counterfeit notes, securities or investment fraud, computer fraud etc.)
- Money laundering
- Tax evasion
- Circumvention of exchange restrictions
- Illegal cross-border fund transfers or capital flight
- Abuse of the financial system/institutions etc.

Money laundering has become a serious concern for Bangladesh in the current period. Terrorist groups use the means of money laundering for financing terrorist and militant activities. It is reported that every year huge amounts of funds are raised in the Gulf countries in the name of charitable organizations and the fund raiser, often sympathizers to terror groups, have recourse to money laundering for bringing the funds to Bangladesh. The Money Laundering Prevention Act-2002 came into force on April 5, 2002 with the aim of preventing money laundering.<sup>58</sup> Some key aspects of this law are:

- Central Bank of Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Bank, can conduct investigations into any alleged crime of money laundering.
- Bangladesh Bank will observe and supervise all financial activities.
- Establishment of a money laundering court.
- Legal seizure of property.
- Provision of punishment for violating the law.
- Government can enter into agreements with a foreign country.

## Infectious Disease

In today's world epidemic diseases are considered as serious threats to national and international security. A study conducted in 1995 revealed that emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, especially AIDS, constituted a national security threat and a foreign policy challenge. However, when the UN Security Council held a session on AIDS in Africa and proclaimed that it posed a serious threat to regional stability and security, the linkages between infectious disease and security came to forefront.<sup>59</sup>

**Table 5: H1N1 in South Asia: Death Rate per Infection**

Country	Cases	Deaths	% Dead	Frequency
Bangladesh	371	4	1.08%	1 in 93
India	7012	220	3.14%	1 in 32
Nepal	31	1	3.23%	1 in 31

Source: www.flucount.org

Bangladesh is considered a low HIV/AIDS prevalent country. WHO estimates that there are 13,000 HIV-positive people in the country and that HIV prevalence rate among adult population is less than 0.01%. Nevertheless, the country is highly vulnerable as it has in India a neighbouring country which hosts over 2.5 million HIV positives (UNAIDS estimate). According to WHO, the presence of covert multi-partner sexual activity and denial, the low level of knowledge and low condom use, unsafe professional blood donations, lack of a desirable environment and violation of Human Rights, all may lead to an outbreak of HIV in Bangladesh.<sup>60</sup>

Bangladesh is one of the world's most densely populated countries. The high population density means rapid spread of infectious diseases in case of an outbreak. Moreover, the high frequency of natural calamities like floods and cyclones in Bangladesh makes it more susceptible to pandemic outbreaks. Many believe that in case of any large-scale movement of internally displaced people, fleeing from the affected area of the outbreak, Bangladesh will lack any strategic depth (owing to its small size) to accommodate such people internally.<sup>61</sup> Naturally, the IDPs would in that case try to enter India. Again, it would be reasonable to assume that, in the face of such an event, India might not allow people from Bangladesh to enter its territory en masse. This impasse may lead to violent conflict and bloodshed in the region.

## Transnational Criminal Organisations

The dynamic phenomena—globalisation, trade liberalisation, faster connectivity and communication age have played a critical role to the development

of Transnational Criminal Organisations (TCO). The notion of the "global village" in the twentieth century has fundamentally changed the context in which both legitimate and illegitimate businesses operate. This has created immense opportunities for transnational criminal activity.<sup>62</sup>

TCOs from countries all over the world have formed strategic alliances to traffic in drugs, arms, intellectual property, humans, archeological treasures and a number of other lucrative but illegal trades. In Bangladesh, for instance, a well-organised criminal network exist that traffics women and children to India, Pakistan and the Middle East for prostitution and domestic work, while children are sent to the Middle East to become camel jockeys.<sup>63</sup>

TCO and national security of a country have a close relationship. Though it does not pose direct military threats or challenges to the state, drug trafficking and arm smuggling can cause serious problems to a state.

## Conclusion

In 1997, the US Defense Science Board Summer Study Task Force prepared a report for the US Department of Defense on DOD Responses to Transnational Threats. Although it looked into the problem primarily in the context of transnational terrorism, the Task Force identified three advantages that the transnational actors have: 1) they can have ready access to resources they need; 2) they cannot easily be deterred as they have no specific homeland; and 3) they respect no boundaries, whether political, organizational, legal or moral.

The task force recommended that the DOD should address transnational security threats, an increasingly important class of threats, as a major DOD mission, and should use existing national security structures and processes to face the challenges. It shows that the transnational security problems are serious threats to nations. Because of the transnational nature of the problems, no single state can fight unilaterally against such threats.

In recent times, transnational security problems have been burgeoning in Bangladesh and also across South Asia. Thanks to a weak economy, fragile democracy and social fragmentation, it has become quite difficult for Bangladesh to get rid of these transnational security threats on its own. The transnational nature of the threats also demands a collective and comprehensive approach to face the challenges posed. In this regard, policy planners can adopt the following measures to establish a common platform to counteract the transnational security challenges facing Bangladesh.

*Capacity building of the states:* The South Asian states do not have the institutional capacity to face the ever evolving challenges posed by transnational actors. States should emphasize building and strengthening institutional capacity with a view to facing the challenges effectively.

*Regulatory framework:* A regional regulatory framework is essential to stop trans-boundary movement of illicit goods and infiltration of terror groups. A regulatory framework is also indispensable to face the challenges of trans-boundary water sharing.

*Integrated Regional Approach:* To combat transnational security threats not only in Bangladesh but also in the whole region the need for an integrated regional approach is vital. In this approach a common threat and common ground of interests among the countries should be identified and an extradition mechanism should be introduced to enhance the opportunity of mutual cooperation.

*Political will and cooperation:* Owing to the lack of political will and cooperation, South Asian countries have repeatedly failed to fight transnational security

problems successfully. Political will and cooperation between and among states in South Asia will bring about the necessary changes in this regard.

*Intelligence sharing:* Countries must share intelligence to prevent such threats from posing inordinate risks. The process will also generate confidence building measures among and between countries.

*Legal regimes:* An absence all-encompassing regime to counter transnational security threats remains a critical challenge for the states. Countries should join hands to plug the legal loopholes in the existing system and to introduce effective laws.

*Social awareness and global consensus:* Creating social awareness and developing a global consensus against transnational security threats will prove to be a big leap forward to face the challenges. International organizations also have an important role to play in bringing states to a common platform to address the challenges and in developing effective and comprehensive solutions to those challenges.

**BIPSS Research Team**

## End Notes

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