NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY IN BANGLADESH: FRAMEWORK AND ISSUES

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1. Introduction

Since the early 1980s, there has been proliferation of attempts at redefining security, so much so that a scholar described the trend as 'something of a cottage industry'. The trend in terms of both deepening and widening the security agenda was simply reinforced with the end of the Cold War. The attempts shared certain common features. First, they inevitably pointed out the inadequacy of the traditional state and military centric definition of security in capturing the existential concerns of bulk of the populations, states, groups and individuals on the globe. Secondly and logically, strong arguments were put forward in terms of broadening the ambit of security discourse by giving high priority to such issues as socio-economic and political development, issues of


governance, human rights, environment, drug trafficking, epidemics, crimes and such other mainly non-military issues. The plea for broadening the concept came as endemic political violence, decay in democratic norms and practices, rampant corruption in public offices, ethnic, sectarian and communal violence, terrorist activities, acute water crisis, conflicts over resource depletion, deforestation and river erosion, cross-border population movements and their repercussion on domestic politics and inter-state relations—all in varying degrees of intensity and scale combine to create complex matrix of conflicts, instability and sense of insecurity to states and regions, groups and individuals. Thirdly, the arguments have been buttressed mainly by a mixture of normative pleas and empirical evidence. The normative arguments concerned prioritization of these issues as prime or core values, while empirical arguments centred on how values, survival or physical well-beings were at stake around these issues. But the frameworks and formulations of the newer security issues have been so diverse and so little effort has been made in terms of offering a solid conceptual foundation, that there is no way of consolidation of achievements in the field of what one may call non-traditional security (NTS) discourse.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a framework of discussion on non-traditional security issues in the context of Bangladesh. A study of Non-traditional Security in the context of Bangladesh is justified on two grounds. First, a critical appraisal of the nature and sources of various non-traditional security issues will complement traditional security discourse from policy perspectives. Discussion on traditional security will be beyond the scope of the present paper. Secondly, the related conceptual discussion and the manner in which the NTS issues are brought into security discourse would provide a framework and methodological insights which would be helpful for future research in the related field.

2. A Framework of Non-traditional Security Discourse

Over the past decades, there has been a constant search for re-defining security because of fast changing national,
regional and global milieu. In the process, it is being realized that the traditional state-centric, militaristic security paradigm can hardly address the security threats currently being faced by states, societies and individuals. Threats to survival and well-being of states, societies and individuals come - often in contradictory fashion - from non-state sources, mostly from within states, but also from extra-territorial sources. Certainly traditional security concerns like border and territoriality, power rivalry and arms race are not extinct. They are very much present in the developing world. Indeed, challenges to territorial sovereignty, sovereignty over resources, challenges to state autonomy in decision making in affairs of the state come from more variegated sources than traditional security experts can imagine. The problem is compounded by the almost incomprehensible speed at which changes are taking place in the domain of information flow and information technology. That means, traditional tools for dealing with even those areas which are considered traditional security concerns will have to be continually re-evaluated and re-designed. Thus, the need for a non-traditional approach to traditional militaristic security makes the task of interfacing between the two domains very pertinent.

An example will make things clear. Ethnicity and ethno-nationalistic insurgencies are traditional challenges to state authority and territoriality that cropped up mainly in the post-War decolonization period. What is new and non-traditional is the scale and frequency with which they are occurring in different parts of the globe. Although external linkages and assistance to insurgencies are also traditional problems, what is non-traditional is the degree of autonomy and scale at which insurgencies today have access to resources, technology including sophisticated conventional weaponry. What is non-traditional is that not only states are failing in dealing with the insurgencies, the very state structures are collapsing, a phenomenon we are calling failed state. There is an increasing realization that traditional counter-insurgency measures will not do. Whether the United Nations Peace Keeping Operations are only a transient phase giving way to peace building and social reconstruction efforts, only time will say.
There is also another non-traditional element in insurgencies. Earlier but not always, there were clear cut lines between insurgencies and ethnic conflicts, on the one hand, and various terrorist activities and trafficking in small arms, gems, valuable resources, even human beings. The borderline has become too thin to deal with traditional instruments. So much for traditional security issues.

In the domain of non-traditional security concerns, the catalogue is almost endless. States, societies, groups and individuals are frequently afflicted with ethnic, racial, religious/sectarian and group conflicts and violence. Environmental issues at global, inter-state and domestic levels are not only affecting the life support system in a slow but certain manner, but many of them are giving rise to violent conflicts. In a sense, what happened to Somalia and Rwanda may be traced to environmental issues – degradation of life supporting soil and water system. Along with these, there are questions of food and energy security, large-scale movement of population across the borders giving rise to environmental refugees. Malnutrition, hunger, epidemics are killing millions of people.

At another level, there is the problem of direct threats to human security and human rights violation. Civilians including women and children are the victims of wars, ethnic insurgencies, counter-insurgencies and gang fighting in increasing numbers. State is supposed to ensure security and well-being of the citizens but in the name of internal order and stability, state apparatus itself resorts to violence and repression. Very often connivance and coalition of interests develop between the law enforcing agencies, on the one hand, and gangs and criminals, on the other, because of rent seeking and extortionist interests. Consequently, common people are subjected to torture, repression and physical threats.

Then there are extra-regional sources, some more crude and brutal, linked with poaching, piracy, trans-national crimes like smuggling, arms, drug and human trafficking. Others are subtle but sure sources like money laundering,
marginalization and pauperization resulting from forces of globalization, WTO and aid conditionalities of the multilateral donor agencies.3

2.1 Scope of Non-traditional Security

All these are usually considered as non-traditional security issues. Question is: how to grapple with them analytically? Greg Mills a South African scholar takes a comprehensive approach when he identifies four types of non-traditional threats usually confronted by the developing countries. These are: **territorial threats** (some in traditional sense but mostly in the sense of sovereign incursions by population groups, resource extractions, fishing, diversion of waters), **economic threats** (economic globalization and the sheer weight of international financial transactions provide opportunities to financial criminals to play fools that affect developments and macro-economic stability, marginalization of the geographically disadvantaged countries, intellectual property rights, demographic issues, pandemic threats of AIDS, malaria and water borne diseases), **political threats** (corruption, piracy, illegal narcotics and small arms, extra-parliamentary agitation and street violence, money laundering), and **environmental threats** (transboundary pollution, global warming and nuclear waste, depleted natural resources including water, prospecting of transboundary mineral and marine resources).4

But a functional approach such as this misses the very perspective: whose security are we talking about? Unless we define that, contradictory conclusions and policy propositions will follow. A hierarchical approach has been suggested by Bhaskar when he identifies three tiers of security: macro, meaning security in the context of power relations among the

3. An excellent discussion on the inclusive nature of the concept of security in the post-Cold War era may be found in C. Uday Bhaskar, "Post-Cold war Security", *Strategic Analysis, Monthly Journal of the IDSA* [New Delhi], Vol. XXI, No. 8 (November), 1997: 1136.

major powers - USA, EU, China, Japan and; traditional and non-traditional. The last category encompasses 'issues and factors that impinge on the security/stability of the state or individual and has become more noticeable after the demise of the Cold War. The hierarchical approach such as this cannot address the question of co-existence of traditional and non-traditional issues at the same level of analysis. The two sets of security issues may indeed coexist at the same level of analysis. For example, at the bilateral plane, conflict over Kashmir between India and Pakistan entails the non-traditional security issues of insurgency, involvement of foreign Mujahideens, and flow of small arms, at one end of the spectrum, and traditional security issues like the possibility of conventional confrontation and use of nuclear weapons, at the other.

A very pioneering and useful concept has been propounded by the UNDP in 1994: Human Development which for the first time and in a systematic manner, brings the people, the citizens, the individuals under focus. By focusing on human development, UNDP made a comprehensive approach to cover food security, energy security, environmental security, sustainable development and human rights.

In the context of security discourse, a slightly modified concept is human security. One operational value of the concept is that it readily brings out the tensions and contradictions between state security and human or societal security into sharp focus. The argument is: any attempt at enhancing state security, which at times, means nothing more than regime security and empowering the state apparatus, at the cost of well-being of the people, the citizens, cannot be considered to be bolstering even national security because the regime loses its legitimacy, the citizens are deprived and underdeveloped. Having said that, it should also be recognized that the state is likely to remain as an organizing socio-political unit in the developing societies in the

5. See, Bhaskar, op. cit., p. 1143.
foreseeable future because of their remarkable degree of adaptability. Therefore, minimum defence requirement will remain, and along with it, will remain the classical debate in civil-military relations: how minimum is optimum? Not only that, the debate cannot be confined to this point only, because these are assumed or in-built character of the state apparatus to because self-perpetuating and self-empowering, and to that extent repressive and violator of human rights. So the tensions between state security and human security become a legitimate agenda of security discourse.

The question is: What to include and what not to include in security discourse. If we bring in every single problem that affects human welfare under its rubric, then the concept itself will be unmanageable, and therefore, devoid of any useful meaning. Such an all-inclusive agenda will obstruct the development of a coherent conceptual and analytical framework and hence no useful policy proposition will logically follow.

One may, of course, argue, that if an issue or a phenomenon affects human welfare, it should be on the priority list and by incorporating such an issue or the phenomenon in security discourse, a sense of priority or heightened stake is attached to it. Thus, securitization of an otherwise important issue helps attracting policy attention, one may argue. But the counter-argument is no less weighty. Attaching high priority to such disparate issues as food, environment and human rights, for example, is one thing, and bringing them within a coherent paradigm is another thing. On the contrary, such issues as sustainable development, food security, energy security, global environmental issues, have their own disciplines, concepts, analytical tools and policy frames. The problems are best approached within their existing paradigmatic framework rather than reinventing one. The reason these problems often persist despite intellectual advancement on them have to be traced to problems of governance - lack of an accountable and democratic governance. Not only securitization will not solve the problem, securitization will have its own baggage, and therefore, securitization involves stretching issues. Secondly,
securitization in the absence of established methodology may lead to militarization. For securitized issues, state perspectives take precedence over other individual and citizen perspectives providing a perfect pretext for state repression and human rights violation. And one ends up with traditional security concerns of the state.

The point we are making is that in order to have a meaningful concept, we need a dividing line so that the concept of security is not rendered bereft of its essence: core value or interests threatened arousing heightened degree of fear with less reaction time. So, security is freedom from fear, violence and torture. So, one demarcating line that is proposed here is the use of force, violence involving a heightened degree of fear and less reaction time.

What is proposed here is basically a scaled down version of the concept of traditional security. By doing that we are deviating from the UNDP concept of freedom from hunger or want. This is justified because the actors - both state and non-state - so easily and so extensively use the instrument of violence that possibly the main reason people cannot get rid of poverty today is the fear of violence. Demand for just wages, food, habitat and rightful share of resources is met with force and violence. It is true that there are more deaths from hunger, malnutrition and diseases, but fear and violence are more overcoming, conspicuous and debilitating.

The state retains huge coercive power, at the same time, other non-state actors - individuals, groups and gangs in both organized and unorganized sectors - have increased access to instruments of violence, so that the combined effect becomes enormous, and individuals, groups and different societal segments are subjected to violence and fear almost on a day-to-day basis. Violence and fear originating from it are so salient in their lives that unless this core human security concern is addressed, issues of sustainable developments and empowerment will carry less meaning to the insecure populace. This is perhaps true more for South Asia, a peculiar region where nuclearization, conventional arms build up go hand in hand with flow of small arms, drugs, insurgencies,
sectarian and communal violence, extra-parliamentary political violence and instability. In the context of India-Pakistan relations, one would find that insurgency and very high stake inter-state confrontation, small arms and sophisticated nuclear weaponry, form a continuum so that traditional and non-traditional security issues become enmeshed. Even freedom from want and freedom from fear, the two variants of human security discourse, are enmeshed when one observes that poverty and deprivation, environmental degradation are mixed with unorganized but endemic class, caste and group violence; political process is linked with black money, extortion and rent seeking. This is a region where protracted conflicts like Kashmir and Sri Lankan ethnic conflicts, continue and at the same time, newer types of conflicts have emerged. Even moves for regional and sub-regional cooperation are subjects of controversy and deadlocks originating from security paranoid.

Non-traditional security discourse is an offshoot of attempts at redefining security that began in mid-1980s. The most prominent redefinition is one that remained focused on “threat, use, and management of military force and closely related topics” but recognized the need for incorporating economic, environmental issues, culture, values, non-military instruments of power and influence, new actors and environmental issues.

Some scholars object to the indiscriminate broadening of the concept of security so as to render it a useless analytical tool and suggest positing the concept in a “subaltern” perspective that is sensitive to the dynamics of state formation. This need not necessarily be the case. On the contrary, one may argue that what we term as non-traditional sources of insecurity, like poverty, hunger, malnutrition, degradation of land, water and habitat, social, ethnic and sectarian violence, dislocation in economic activities, all these do affect the core of human existence – to paraphrase the conventional definition of security – are manifest most often in physical terms, and allow in relatively

shorter period of reaction times. The state apparatus, on the other hand, do not have the capacity and willingness to face these challenges in a manner that ameliorate people's sufferings arising out of them. Moreover, the state machinery displays an easy tendency to employ its coercive force to suppress dissent and discontent.

2.2 A Review of Existing Non-traditional Security Discourse

As indicated earlier, while there has been profusion of materials in deepening and widening of security discourses in the post-Cold War era, the branching out syndrome remains. Most works have been done under the rubric of redefining security, newer security or broadening security. Not much has been done within the framework of what we call NTS. However, credit must be given to the Ford Foundation which for the first initiated a major series of studies in the name of Non-traditional Security in the three sub-regions – South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia during October 1, 1999 to September 30, 2001. It was implemented by three institutions, Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo, for South Asia, UN University, Tokyo, for North eastern Asia, and the Institute for Defence and Strategic Studies(IDSS), Nanyang University of Science and Technology, Singapore, for South East Asia. The project structured more or less similarly for the three sub-regions, had three components: Globalization, Governance and Environment. Of course, there has been sub-regional focus. For example, the works in South East Asia and East Asia focused on the economic globalization and the recent experiences of the financial crises found prominence. In the like manner, traditional geo-political issues also found prominence. The first phase of the project has led to a series of publications.

Just to provide the flavour of discourse within the rubric of NTS, mention may be made of some of the works under the first phase of the Ford project. One major aspect of the South Asia component of the project was nexus between security and governance. By way of scrutinizing the linkages between

misgovernance and insecurity, the project addressed a wide spectrum of issues ranging from role of armed forces in decision making to the crumbling of democratic institutions, alienation of minority population to the politicization of ethnic and religious minorities, from the nexus between corrupt politicians and bureaucracy in South Asia to the need for meaningful evolution of financial and administrative authority to the imperative of privileging human security and the requirement of a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic political culture. By way of looking into the nexus between globalization and non-traditional security in the region, the project viewed globalization eclectically to mean economic liberalization/market integration in economic sense, the dialectics between global capitalism, state and the local elite, in political sense, the overarching tendency toward cultural homogenization, in the cultural sense, and the inexorable momentum of technology that leads to market expansion and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, in its technical sense. As far as non-traditional security was concerned, the focus was on state autonomy, macro-economic stability and poverty alleviation, ethnicity and identity politics and preservation of cultural identity and indigenous values.

Although more or less similar issues have been dealt with in the context of the other two sub-regions, the financial crisis of 1997 provided the larger context, especially for South East Asia. As a result, impact of globalization on security, governance and need for regional institutions to manage regional economic crises received much attention. Similarly, growing concern over environment, resource sharing conflicts among neighbours, fishery disputes, problems associated with the development of the Mekong river and the contentious


issues of the ownership of marine resources in the South China sea have been taken up.\textsuperscript{13}

While much remained to be desired in terms of more coherent conceptual and policy discourse on a pan-Asian scale, the project has certainly set the conditions for widening and deepening the discourse on non-traditional security issues in their theoretical and policy ramifications. With this end in view, the Ford Foundation has launched the second phase with a view to catalyzing the mainstreaming of discourse on NTS and promote policy planning and practices in such fields as governance in plural societies, human security, migration, terrorism.

Although not exactly and expressly under the banner of NTS, a good number of security studies focusing on non-state and non-military dimensions have been undertaken in South Asia.\textsuperscript{14} The Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS), a Colombo-based regional think-tank has made significant contribution in undertaking and promoting studies in NTS areas like refugee and regional security, ethnicity, sectarian violence, internal disorders, small arms proliferation, economic dimensions of regional security, gender violence, impact of defence spending on good governance and the like.\textsuperscript{15}

3. Non-traditional Security Issues in Bangladesh

3.1 Confrontational Politics as a Source of Insecurity

The first thing that one encounters is a puzzle regarding the political culture of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is a country of largely homogenous population in linguistic and ethnic terms. An overwhelming 88\% are Muslims. Moreover, Bangladesh inherited a social structure without any sharp economic cleavages”.\textsuperscript{16} Yet so many conflict formations marked its body

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{15} For details, see www.rcss.org

\textsuperscript{16} See, Talukder Maniruzzaman, Group Interests and Political Changes : Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh (New Delhi : South Asian
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political and society. Why is that the elite groups are divided along ideological, group and factional lines? Why cannot the political parties agree on the fundamentals like nationalism and national identity and the paths of national development? A few general remarks may be made to begin with. Firstly, Bangladesh witnessed some ideological divides exerting profound influence on the polity. Compared to that, the ethno-linguistic and religious homogeneity factor has not been able to bring the dynamics of socio-political relations within a manageable limit. The nation could not sort out some basic issues and the legacy of dissension continues. No interest articulation and mediation mechanism could be developed. Admittedly, national bonds are strengthened through common socio-cultural, political and economic experiences. That has not been the case in Bangladesh. A self-(and group) centric exclusionist approach became all too pervasive in the post-independence period.

Regarding political dimensions of conflicts and feuds in the civil sectors, agitative political culture, lack of democratic culture, lack of practice of democracy within the major political parties themselves, intense power struggle, sheer scarcity of resources and opportunities are the factors responsible for these conflicts. An understanding of the elite formation and political culture of the country will make the point clear. In present Bangladesh, the society is characterized by significant elite-mass gap. A very tiny segment of the society, whose number in 1947 could be counted on fingers,\(^\text{17}\) forms a distinct class by itself in terms of income, wealth, power and privileges. Even if they are not directly in control of political power, their influence on decision making, allocation and distribution of resources - aid, investment or local resources - is enormous.\(^\text{18}\) Who are

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these elite? Rahman argues that there has been metamorphosis in the composition of the elite in Bangladesh. Initially land was the basis of elite formation in pre-1947 Bangladesh. The land tenancy policy of the colonial rulers created landed aristocracy who had vested interests in continuation of the British rule. Land combined with rural trade to amass wealth, while land combined with education created the first indigenous urban middle class like lawyers, doctors, teachers etc., who in turn, constituted the reservoir of politicians in the country. While rank of this class swelled in the post-1947 period, a significant addition was the emergence of the Muslim commercial and business elite as a conscious policy of President Ayub to create a support base in the nascent bourgeoisie. It was also intended to act as countervailing force against peasants' and workers' movement which traditionally were anti-establishment.

But for all practical purposes, the effective role in power politics was played by the civil and military bureaucracy which had, in the meantime, taken an entrenched position in the politics of Pakistan. The share of Bangladesh in civil and military bureaucracy was admittedly low. Yet, sufficient indoctrination among the small but gradually rising bureaucracy had taken place so that failure of democratic experimentation in Bangladesh in the initial years of independence led to a succession of military and quasi-military rule by a coalition of the higher echelon of the military and civil bureaucracy. Political leaders joined to complete the alliance but in the "coalition of convenience" the military dominated and the other two constituted the junior partners. The three rounds of democratic elections - 1991, 1996 and 2001 - have possibly restored the supremacy of political leadership but the damage in the political culture of

20. Ibid.
21. As seen in Raunaq Jahan, op. cit.
Bangladesh has come from another related direction, that is, corruption, criminalization and and commercialization of politics of the country. But before taking up that point, let us refer to the conclusion of Rahman in which he says, “today [1989] the country has a configuration of power elite, namely, military elite, civil-bureaucratic elite, political elite and business elite who play mutually supportive role in promoting corporate interests”. The conclusion is only partially true if one argues that the composite elite in Bangladesh have the same class character, they are basically rent seeking class and to an extent, they tend not to be fundamentally opposed to each other. But then, there should not have been any elite conflict, and for that matter, extra-parliamentary agitation and street violence in Bangladesh. In this context some points may be made. The first one is penetration of business interests in politics which was initiated in the 1960s but got a boost in the post-independence period when political consideration worked in the distribution of state-controlled trading system. Same policy of distribution of political patronage, bureaucratic support continued on a wider scale during the successive military and quasi-military rules. Consequently, the emerging business class not only attempted to control politics through donation to party coffer, they showed a greater readiness to join politics themselves. More strikingly, there will be very few politicians and parliamentarians who do not have some kind of business interests. This is what is called commercialization of politics. Politics - position and opposition both - became the safest and convenient vehicle of achievements. Stake in politics and power rose concomitantly. When obstacles to power was an autocratic regime in the 1980s, there was semblance of

23. Ibid.

24. For a very candid accounts and glaring examples of how fluid is the game of position-opposition is in the culture of breakaway politics, see, Motlur Rahman, “Politics of Corruption and Corruption of Politics”, The Independent, October 10, 1997.

cooperation but when that goal has been achieved, old rivalry set in even at the cost of total disregard to democracy. That is one explanation of conflicts in politics. The second explanation is that Bangladesh has been a fertile land for factionalism in politics. It is again difficult to give a precise sociological explanation of why this is so. Tentatively, it may be argued that the Bengalees have been politically conscious even if less advanced in education, they are susceptible to penetration of ideologies, and they are highly individualistic often verging on selfishness. The tendency of carving out a niche for self or group in politics and business leads to fierce competition which possibly has linked politics to the underworld violence. Ideological susceptibility and politics of patronage of the past regimes in an atmosphere of intense scarcity possibly explain the ideological divisiveness of the society which became profound at the time of and immediately after liberation.

The third point concerns the culture of opposition politics, again a colonial legacy. The politicians crave for Westminster model of democracy but they have combined the colonial agitational politics with the role of the opposition. This is the mindset of both position and opposition. That the opposition is part of the establishment politics and has a significant role to play, more so because the people have elected them for the role, is forgotten by both. Everything the ruling regime says or does has to be opposed, dismantled or destroyed even if it is something the opposition initiated while in power is the 'rule of the game'. Both become trapped in stand taken and either do not find or are not willing to find an exit from the stand. One cries for maintenance of law and order, protection of national interest while the other fights for democratic rights of the people in relentless agitation, work


28. See, Mariruzzaman, Group Interests and Political Change, op. cit.
stoppages and violence. Thus, policies, postures, statements and actions of the political parties and ruling regimes have significant role in conflict aggravation and its transition from one phase to another.

A point was made in the context of political culture about ideological susceptibility for which Bangladesh has been a fertile ground of extreme left politics. With independence and the adopting socialism as a state principle, the leftist forces began to fall into disarray. The process was accelerated through changes in Chinese policy and later, the collapse of Soviet Union. But because of failure of the leadership in mobilizing the highly charged youth force into constructive purposes, the youth population began to be attracted to the corrupted version of extreme leftist campaign, that is, extortion, terrorism and rent seeking. It affected different parts of Bangladesh at different times, but in the 1980s, it has settled in southern and south-western Bangladesh. Political patronage and use of the terrorist gangs in local politics and in election campaigns, as well as weakness of the administrative machinery in dealing with them ensure the survival of the gangs. But the fact remains that these acts of violence are random, frequent though, and do not constitute a major threat to Dhaka. One of the reasons is that the campaigns do no have any ideological content or political goals. One may bring in here the role of the leftist campaigns of the socialists (revolutionary people's force of the opposition political party, JSD which had a political content and hence more organized, and a cause of major worry for the then ruling regime.

As far as the political fall out of the leftist violence is concerned, several factors need to be brought into sharp focus. Firstly, it is related to some of the politico-security issues like smuggling which is a major activity in the border areas, transfer and spread of small arms. More importantly, they are also linked to national politics. The outlawed parties involved in these areas are intimately involved in smuggling activities in close collaboration with another fellow. Internecine conflict with the associate led to formation of armed cadre for both survival and control of respective
However, in order to reinforce positions they resorted to two more alignments: one with two opposing underground leftist organizations, second with two mainstream national parties. Evidently, one who will be dominating and the other cornered or holed up will be determined by the party in power. A fallout of this alignment with mainstream parties is the role of the law enforcing agencies who are either coerced or tempted to connivance or inactivity in the face of open acts of terrorism by these forces. The most serious dimension of the leftist violence is its links across the borders. Land borders are porous and as such any combing operation, often with much publicity, and no sealing of the borders leads to crossing of the borders and taking sanctuary over there. In the process, national security is compromised. Campus violence is an outcome of degeneration of student politics and national politics. Easy accessibility of arms and growing drug addiction lead to further degradation of student politics and consequent threat to security.

The interface between the political feuds and intense power struggle, on the one hand, and violence of different intensities, on the other, is provided by the underworld to which the political leaders of different statures are connected in a shady way. A report from a well-connected source suggests that there are 250 'godfarthers' across the country who have been controlling criminal and terrorist activities. Of them 90% are Dhaka based. The godfathers belong to both the ruling and opposition parties. It was further disclosed that nearly 100 godfathers were the mid-level leaders of political parties.

To sum up the discussion, Bangladesh polity, due to its inadequate nation building and state building processes, failed to forge national cohesion on fundamental values. Lack of mutual trust and prevalence of hostile political attitude resulted in weak political institutions and weak political capacity to deal with national issues. National values remain far from being formulated. Organizational weakness

30. Ibid.
and systemic incompetence lead to improper and indifferent decision making. Thus, the political process in the country has direct relevance to national security of the country.\(^{31}\)

### 3.2 Threats to Societal Security

**Inflow of Small Arms and Drug**: This is an external or transnational source. Estimates of the flow of small arms in Bangladesh differ and perhaps will be less than what is happening in the context of India or Pakistan. But it is causing security threats to the state and the society, for at least two reasons: first, the rate is increasing at an alarming pace; second, Bangladesh is a soft state and a soft society, the impact is easily felt.\(^{32}\) Use of small arms, use of drugs are gaining autonomous proportion in the sense the administration and law enforcing agencies have practically little control over the trafficking and use. In fact, proliferation of small arms has gained a territorial dimension in south-west Bangladesh, despite the apparent success of the combing operation by law enforcing agencies. There is a third reason, which is less realized at policy level, related to the mechanism for the inflow. Evidence is galore that valuable domestic products like urea fertilizer, imported products like electronic equipments, domestic resources like *Hilsa* fish, even gold smuggled in from other sources like Singapore and Dubai are smuggled out of the country across the borders and payment from the other side is made in terms of arms and drugs.

**Law and Order and Social Violence**: The south western districts are again becoming restless following increase in the number of incidences of killings and overrunning of police posts by the outlawed and extremists who seem to be reemerging from the banned parties like Purba Banglar Communist Party and Biplobi Communist Party in the

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32. For more details, see, Neila Husain, “Proliferation of Small Arms and Violence in Bangladesh: Societal Insecurity?” in *ibid*: 163-180.
southwestern districts.\textsuperscript{33} In particular, situation in Khulna, Bagerhat, Kushtia, Satkhira and Chuadanga is worse in recent months. Incentives to capture arms and ammunition lead to over-running of police and Ansar posts, as happened in Fakirhat in Bagerhat and Khalishpur in Khulna. The security force-outlaw nexus, thanks to the policy of recruiting the surrendered outlaws during 2000-2001, seems to have contributed to incidences of looting of firearms from these security agencies. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has reached a stage where as many as 6000 licensed weapons are not accounted for and it is assumed these are in circulation among the terrorists.\textsuperscript{34} Often, the weapons used by the law enforcing agencies are outdated compared to sophisticated weaponry of the extremists and terrorists.\textsuperscript{35} Another factor is infighting between the outlawed groups. And once such incidences are on the rise, the general crimes like murder, rapes, dacoity, etc. go up.\textsuperscript{36}

The northern districts in recent months have been subjected to terrorist attack.\textsuperscript{37} One of the horrendous crimes in recent times was the slaughtering of six persons in a village of Atra! in Naogaon. More than 100 outlaws invaded the village at night and raised party slogans.\textsuperscript{38} The spate of crimes and severe breakdown of law and order follows the local body elections that also witnessed significant amount of violence in the country. before that cinema and mela bombings in Mymensigh and Tangail respectively.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{33} The Daily Star, 29 April 2003

\textsuperscript{34} See, Jugantor [vernacular daily], 7 May 2003: 1.

\textsuperscript{35} See, "Police with outdated arms fail to face the terrorists", The Independent, 7 May 2003: 12.

\textsuperscript{36} See, Jugantor [vernacular daily], 6 May 2003: 10.

\textsuperscript{37} The Daily Star, 22 January 2003

\textsuperscript{38} The Daily Star, 29 April 2003

\textsuperscript{39} ds January 19, 2003
Another vulnerable area is the north-eastern haor and southeastern char areas where the pirates and dacoits hold the local people hostage.\textsuperscript{40}

We may explore the NTS implications of the above sources of insecurity. From state perspective, a major problem of internal security. Country may soon be overwhelmed with crimes and violence.\textsuperscript{41} The presence of self-styled clandestine parties, which go by their own rules in politics has been a source of source of threat to peace loving citizens. They commit crimes of every denomination in a vast area but the law enforcing agencies failed to put any resistance, let alone root out the gangs.\textsuperscript{42}

Transit of Arms, Drugs across Bangladeshi Lands - Coastal areas, Cox’s Bazar in particular, are used in arms transit; ports reportedly used as transit routes for drugs from the so-called golden triangle. Alleged arms transit to NE India is a constant sore point in Bangladesh-India relations.

Use of Bangladesh Territories by Insurgents and Outlaws: This includes the NE insurgents, outlaws like Rohingya refugees who reportedly undergo arms training in the jungles of Cox’s Bazar, Ramu, Ukhiya. The borders are very porous and resource crunch does not allow Bangladesh to patrol the borders rigorously. A bewildering array of coalitions and conflicts take place in the north east sub-region and Bangladesh’s security will be jeopardised if it is sucked into the vortex of north east insurgency. CHT straddles the Mongoloid ethnic belt ranging from China, through NE India, Myanmar upto SE Asia. Bangladesh will automatically be drawn into the conflicts if a pan-Mongoloid movement takes place in an age of globalization and IT. Presently at least, Bangladesh figures quite frequently and prominently in any Indian official or academic discourse on insurgency in the NE. It is also on this count that Bangladesh is alleged to have become the cross-roads of foreign intelligence agencies.

\textsuperscript{40}. See, Jugantor [vernacular daily], 7 May 2003: 13.


\textsuperscript{42}. \textit{The Daily Star}, 26 April 2003.
Human Security issues: Several sources of threats to human security may be identified. These are: repression by state apparatus, death in custody; law and order problem and rise of social violence – rising extortions and rent seeking activities at all levels and layers - social, political and administrative; gender violence, women and child trafficking; land related violence; disaster, drought and river erosion resulting in destitution and rural-urban migration; plight of the border and enclave population, plight of the minorities and settlers in CHT, and other tribal population.

Minority Issue: One may mention of the residual insurgency problems in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: The strategic aspects of the problem of a low level but prolonged insurgency in the CHT has been removed by the 1997 Peace Accord. These were: return of refugees from Tripura, surrender of arms by the insurgents and de facto acceptance by the tribal leadership of the Bengali settlers by the Hill leadership. But problem of implementation, particularly, rehabilitation, land dispute settlement and functioning of the political process in terms of the Regional Council seem to linger. Then there is an armed dissident group who are finding shelters across the borders. Sporadic violence between tribal people and the Bengali settlers continues continue, undermining security situation in that part of Bangladesh.

3.3 Threats to Economic Security of Bangladesh

Threats to economic security in the context of Bangladesh emanate from both internal and external sources. The internal insecurity in the economic domain comes mainly from massive poverty and while the external ones emanate mainly from the process of globalization, more specifically, from WTO related issues. But substantial dependence on external assistance, and smuggling are two other important sources of economic insecurity.

3.3.1 Mass Poverty and Marginalization as Source of Insecurity

Poverty in Bangladesh has been historically overwhelming. Although development strategies in the past
have been geared to alleviating poverty, much remained to be desired in terms of outcome of the efforts. Poverty is measured both in income and human terms. In what follows, trends in income and human poverty are depicted on the basis of available data.

**Trends in Income Poverty**

Income poverty trends based on Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2000 of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) show a declining trend in the 1990s. Between 1983-84 and 2000, the incidence of national poverty, measured in terms of threshold income adequate for 2122 kcal declined from 62.6% to 44.3% indicating a modest reduction of one percentage point per annum. Over this period, rural poverty declined from 61.9% to 42.3%. Urban poverty fell from 67.7% in 1983-87 to 52.5% (Table 1). On a comparative basis, reduction in urban poverty was slower than rural poverty, and for that matter, national poverty. There has also been a consistent decline in hardcore poverty, but again rural hardcore poverty declining faster than urban hardcore poverty. Over a period of about 17 years, hardcore poverty has declined from 36.8% in 1983-84 to 20% in 2000. While rural hardcore poverty has declined more than half over this period, urban hardcore poverty starting with a higher base at 37.4% in 1983-84 has come down to only 25.0% in 2000.

Looking at where Bangladesh stands in terms of international poverty line of US$1 per day per, it may be seen that for the period 1983-2000, the percentage of population below the international poverty line was 29.1 whereas the comparable figure for poverty at US$2 per day stood at 77.8% during the same period.

43. A host of factors may be said to be responsible for the urban-rural differential. For one, the reinforced poverty alleviation measures by the Government combined with micro-credits and other programmes targeted for the poor by the NGOs reduce rural poverty faster than rural. But this is also a fact that there has been continuous rural to urban migration, thanks to improved transport and communications, which off-loaded a sizable segment of rural poverty to urban areas.
In addition to Household Income and Expenditure Survey, BBS further developed and employed the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) methods to estimate the extent of poverty at two levels – higher (Absolute) and lower (Extreme or Hardcore). Following CBN method, the HIES 2000 data show that percentage of absolute poverty stood at 49.8% and that of extreme poverty stood at 33.7%.

In a recent study (1996), BIDS found that in the rural area, more than 50% of the population are poor while percentage of extreme poverty was 22.5%. However, the study mentioned of improvement in the living standard in the rural area in terms of income, education, shelter and cloths, so that rural areas displayed better progress in reducing depth and severity of poverty, as captured by trends in poverty gap and squared poverty gaps, respectively.

The results of the HIES 2000 further show that the progress in poverty reduction has been faster in the 1990s

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The results of the HIES 2000 further show that the progress in poverty reduction has been faster in the 1990s.
than in the 1980s and this is explained by accelerated consumption expenditure (income). While the comparative progress was uneven between urban and rural areas, the pace of rural poverty reduction was slower in the 1980s but it became faster in the 1990s. The reverse was true for the urban areas. Alongside faster income increase in the rural areas possibly because of micro credits, public sector rural infrastructure projects and also sustained agricultural growth for about a decade spanning 1980s and 1990s, it is also plausible to argue that there was a shifting of some of the incidence of poverty from rural to the urban area through the process of rural-urban migration. It is notable that during the 1980s and 1990s, urban population grew at much accelerated rate than the national and rural population growth rates. Urban population of Bangladesh was 9.9% in 1975 which grew to 25% in 2000 and is projected to be 34.4% in 2015.

**Trends in Human Poverty**

The BIDS conducted a pioneering study to prepare national human development index of Bangladesh. Their

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findings reveal that there has been considerable improvement in poverty measured in human development terms. The human poverty index which stood at 61% in the early 1980s declined to 35% in the late 1990s. It is also significant that the index of human poverty declined by 2.54% per year compared to a reduction at 1.45% per annum in national head-count ratio for income poverty. If we look at the UNDP Human Development Report 2002, it says that Bangladesh ranked 145th among 173 countries and the value of human poverty index stood at 42.4%.

A disaggregated picture of human poverty in terms of health, education and nutrition, may be presented. Infant mortality rate stood at 153 per 1000 live births in the mid-1970s but recent estimates suggest that the rate has gone down to 62 in 2000. While rural-urban gap in infant mortality rate has declined, thanks to improvement in transport and communication and decentralization of health services, significant gender gap remains, as female mortality was about one-third higher than male. There exists significant socio-economic differential in child mortality. Infant mortality is about 70% higher for the poorest quintile than for the richer group. Situation of maternal mortality is disconcerting, as indicated by the fact that during 1997-2001, maternal mortality was 320 per 100,000 live births and the poorer families suffered more than the richer ones. Although life expectancy has gone up from 47 years in the mid-1970s to 59.7 years in 2000, there is still a high degree of morbidity in the country with unfavourable gender and socio-economic situation. The female folks and poor are more prone to illness and disease than the male folks and non-poor.

With respect to education, no doubt, impressive progress has been made in school enrolment at primary and secondary levels and the gender gap in education is also closing at a faster rate. However, dropout among the poorer section is quite high. A second aspect is the qualitative difference between the education received by the poor and that received

by the richer children. This duality has serious social and human development implications.

Food security and nutrition are important determinants of human poverty. Currently, there is an estimated 10-15% shortfalls in domestic food grain production which is met through food import and food aid. To ensure that the poor, the hard core poor, in particular, have access to food, the Government with assistance from the development partners, takes various distribution measures and safety net initiatives. However, there are seasonality factors and efficiency issue in targeting food aid for the poor. Frequent natural disasters in the country also affect food availability and food price situation in the country.

Available data suggest that there has been improvement in nutritional situation of children both in urban and rural areas but rich-poor gap is quite pronounced. Moreover, female disadvantage in malnutrition is reported to have increased in recent years. In particular, maternal malnutrition is a matter of concern. It is estimated that about 80% of the children under five years, 74% of adult females, 40% of the adult males suffer from iron deficiency anaemia. Furthermore, iodine deficiency disorders affect half the population and every year, some 30,000 children become blind due to vitamin A deficiency.

To sum up the discussion on trends of poverty, it may be said that overall poverty reduction has been rather slow. This is a matter of concern because one has to remember that poverty is being continually reproduced in the country through population growth, social dynamics of landlessness and other forms of deprivations, and the physical processes of environmental degradation. Therefore, more precise understanding of poverty as a process is needed to stem the tide of poverty.

Now one obvious impact of poverty has been felt on human resource development. Bangladesh ranks quite low in terms of HDI. The other question whether the level of poverty is associated with political instability and rising social violence. Some counter-intuitive findings have been put
forward by M.M. Akash who argues that pauperization and marginalization is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for political instability in the country. The argument may be true at a very macro level where political instability may be ascribed to elite conflict for power and privileges. However, at the middle range and micro level, social violence and conflicts may be related to land scarcity and other poverty related issues. As viewed by another social scientist:

> Vulnerability to violence and harassment appear to be due to poverty situation in Bangladesh. In the rural context, both the intense competition for dwindling resources among the very poor as well as the maintenance of the existing power structures results in random as well as systematic intimidation, harassment, violence and murder of which it is the relatively powerless that are most often victims. Threats to personal security relating to class-based antagonisms (property feuds, police harassment, false litigation, etc.) has been well documented. Such violence - both systematic and random - will be related to the condition of overtly in so far as poverty is associated with relative powerlessness, and the poor are least able to protect themselves or to remove themselves from threatening situation.

3.3.2 WTO Related Issues

The other major economic insecurity originates from Bangladesh's participation in the WTO process. Bangladesh is

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at the receiving end of the WTO legal system. The episodes regarding child labour in Bangladesh’s readymade garments sector, the hitch over sanitary and phytosanitary measures are issues that Bangladesh needs to take into consideration in order to avoid being affected in the export sector. Withdrawal of agricultural subsidies will increase costs of agriculture, countervailing duties on Bangladesh’s exports of clothing and leather goods in near future, use of hybrid seeds will make agriculture sector highly dependent on imported seeds.51

3.4 Environmental Security of Bangladesh

3.4.1 Climate Change and Natural Disasters

Bangladesh ranks one of the most disaster-prone countries of the world. Environmental disasters like tropical cyclones, storm surges, floods, norwesters, tornadoes and droughts ravage the country almost every year, even several times a year. During the last 38 years, the country was visited by 38 cyclones of varying intensities. Flooding from upstream rivers is another natural disaster that cause havoc in the country.52 The geophysical condition of the country is said to be highly disadvantageous. Rivers in Bangladesh numbering more than 50 originate in upstream countries, pass through India before draining in the Bay of Bengal. So Bangladesh is at the receiving end. Fortunately, there has been an accord with India with regard to sharing the waters of the main river, namely, the Ganges. But similar agreements are needed with regard to other rivers. More importantly, there is the need for multi-pronged cooperation for harnessing the waters of the common rivers, not only for agriculture and sustenance but also for early warnings and mitigating natural disasters. Unduly prolonged floods in 2000 particularly in the northern and southwestern parts of Bangladesh demonstrated that cross-border cooperation was vital in developing mutual coping capability. Secondly, the shape of the Bangladesh


coasts is concave making Bangladesh most vulnerable to tidal cyclones and surge. Here also the need for early warning and sharing of meteorological information was crucial.

3.4.2 Flooding

For a riverine country like Bangladesh, flooding is a natural phenomenon and normal flooding is a blessing for flora and fauna of the country. Four-fifths of the country are floodplains and one-fifth to one-third of the country is annually inundated by overflowing rivers during monsoon. However, when it occurs in excessive scale and intensity, flood causes havoc and loss of human lives, livestock and crops. Flood occurs for mainly two reasons: (i) siltation in the river beds which reduces the carrying and containing capacity of the rivers; (ii) excessive rainfalls and pressure from the upstream waters, and (iii) high tides in the Bay of Bengal. When the three river systems – the Padma (Ganges), Brahmaputra and the Meghna – cannot bear the excess water, the two sides and extensive adjoining areas get submerged. Floods coincide with monsoon time. Major and devastating floods in Bangladesh take place when there are excessive rainfalls in the upstream areas in the Himalayan areas, there is tidal pressure from the bay of Bengal and more importantly, there is some sort of simultaneity in the peak levels of waters in the three river systems. This is precisely what happened in 1998 floods when the gap in the peaks in the three rivers was only three days. The regions with severe flooding are the Meghna depressions of Sylhet and Mymensingh, and along the Meghna floodplains from Bhairab Bazar to the confluence with the Padma. (Gain, P., 1998:16)

A comparison of the three last major floods – 1987, 1988 and 1998 – would reveal sustained increase in the depth of inundation and duration of floods, although causes and circumstances of the three episodes were different. The 1987 flood was the result of heavy rainfall from July to September over northwest Bangladesh and in West Bengal immediate to the north. It caused severe flooding in many minor rivers in the northwest, aggravated by the highest peak ever recorded in the Ganges and exceptionally high floods in the Teesta.
The 1988 floods were caused by intense rainfall during the last ten days of August in north and northeast Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Bhutan. The flood peak in the Brahmaputra was the highest ever recorded and so was that of the Ganges. When the two peaks coincided, the result was devastating floods in the downstream of the Brahmaputra-Ganges confluence. The 1998 floods witnessed not only intense rainfall during June, July and August but also the added factor of high tides in the sea which resulted in very slow recession of the flood waters, and hence, prolonged duration of the floods.

A perusal of flood statistics, in particular, inundated area and monetised value of flood damage shows that damage during large floods has increased considerably over time. Of course, increase of population and large number of physical infrastructures causing obstructions in water flows are largely responsible for increased damage. While flooded area has possibly decreased because of construction of large number of flood control projects since early 1960s, year to year fluctuation in inundation area has increased and magnitude of devastation has also gone up.

Table 3. Extent of Flooding and Damage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Inundated Area (sq.km)</th>
<th>Percentage of Land Area</th>
<th>Damage (Million Taka)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>36,778</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>38,850</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>1,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>35,883</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>2,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>37,296</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>1,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>35,224</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>37,296</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>1,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>36,260</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>38,332</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>38,850</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>25,900</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>54,390</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>83,994</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Zohra, F., 1999
3.4.3 Water Logging/Drainage Congestion

Water, so essential for Bangladesh economy, becomes a big concern when logged in a particular area for longer time. It disturbs normal agriculture production system, disrupts communication and makes life difficult for those who live on day labour to earn their living. Water logging also affects vegetation and the natural environment. While water logging is ubiquitously distributed all throughout Bangladesh, the problem is particularly acute in the southwestern districts, namely, Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira. Beel Dakatia which has been under water for fifteen years, is a prominent case. But many more areas in this region have gone under water for a long time causing environmental damage and human sufferings. According to one estimate, 32 beels have been under water for many years. (Gain, 1998:38) Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) estimates that at present 110,000 hectares of land with 900,000 people in nine thanas in Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira districts are waterlogged. In October 1995, it created a serious problem at the confluence of Dumuria, Keshabpur and Tala thanas when standing crop fields went under water and the crops could not be recovered because of stagnant waters. (Gain, 1998:38)

Water logging has long term impacts on the local environment and local economy – it has particularly affected the landless and marginal farmers. The estimated loss is about Tk 220 million per year. Impact on local vegetation has been colossal. Trees and plants have withered. Cooking fuel has become scarce, women are finding it very difficult to fetch drinking water as most of the tubewells have gone under water. Local people have lost 90% of their livestock. Surface water has become contaminated with salinity, human excreta and other pollutants.

3.4.4 Arsenic Crisis

Bangladesh has been exposed to arsenic poisoning of its ground water on an ever increasing scale. A report suggests that Bangladesh is confronted with the risks of poisoning of
85 million of its 130 million population. People in the rural areas have been affected with various skin diseases, lungs cancer, liver dysfunction, vascular disturbances leading to gangrene. The problem is already alarming and is likely to aggravate further because of privatization of the ground-water based irrigation system in the country.

Over the last three to four decades, the people of Bangladesh in general became habituated to drinking tubewell waters. Besides, presently almost all of the irrigation activities depend on extraction of ground waters. But over dependence on ground water, because of geo-morphological reasons, has resulted in extraction of a chemical substance known as arsenicosis, which is poisonous, especially for sustained or continuous use. High level of arsenic in ground water cause serious human health problems over time (5 to 15 years), including skin ailments, damage to internal organs, skin and lung cancer, heart diseases and eventual death. Human beings are exposed to arsenic through ingestion, inhalation and dermal-contact. Compounding the health problem from is the prevalence of malnutrition in the country. The poor happen to be exposed most to the contaminated water. The observed diseases believed to be linked to arsenic are: skin lesions and cancer, internal cancer (bladder, kidney, lungs) hyper tension, heart diseases, gangrene and diabetes.

It has been found that 59 out of 64 districts are contaminated with arsenic. The most contaminated districts

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54. Ibid.

55. There is an element of resentment in the civil society that the donor agencies and the Government did not make the people adequately aware about the danger. See, Afsan Chowdhury, "Arsenic Crisis, Security Concerns, the State and the People" in Humayun Kabir (ed.), op. cit. : 247-58.

56. About 35% of the arable land has come under irrigation, the rest depends on rain-fed conditions.

57. Probe, March 16-31, 2002
are Chandpur, Munshiganj, Madaripur, Gopalganj, Comilla, Faridpur, Sunamganj, Meherpur, Shariatpur and Satkhira. In another study, the most contaminated districts has been identified as Rangpur, Dinajpur, Kushtia, Jessore, Faridpur, Laxmipur, Narayanganj, Rajshahi, Pabna, Munshiganj, Meherpur and Dhaka.\(^5^9\) Another estimate puts the number of people actually exposed to arsenic contamination as they drink arsenic water at 29 million. In a recent seminar in Dhaka, it was pointed out that out of about 30 million affected by arsenic contaminated water, one in 10 is cancer affected and 3 have skin diseases.\(^5^9\)

People affected by arsenicosis become disabled socio-economically. Within the community, arsenic affected people are barred from social activities and often face rejection, even by their immediate family members. Cases are more tragic when women are the victims. Women with arsenicosis symptoms are unable to get married and some affected housewives are divorced by their husbands and even forcibly sent to their parental home with children. In some cases, in fear of social problems, people feel hesitant about expressing themselves about their illness. Children with symptoms are not sent to the school in an attempt to hide the problem, even their entrance to the school is also restricted because of their illness. Apart from these, arsenic problems have some end-results in the economic deprivation of the affected people, some effect directly and some indirect impacts.

Although at the first stage of arsenic symptoms people take part in the regular economic activities but as time passes they lose strength to keep themselves at work, whether it is business or job. Even they are not allowed to work together by their fellows with arsenic symptoms. This compels the people to live in destitution. So arsenicosis leads directly to income poverty.

\(^{58}\) Daily Star, June 6, 2002

\(^{59}\) The Daily Jugantor, 3 September 2002
In addition to the direct impacts due to arsenic contamination, a number of indirect impacts also prevail in the arsenic affected society. After detection affected families/individuals one have to take a prolonged treatment of diseases. Sometimes, they sell their small amount of resources to arrange money to cope with the problem. Their neighbors, even by their immediate relatives, generally seclude the arsenic affected people. The children are not permitted to attend in the class by the teachers. They are forced to sell trees, livestock and agricultural lands to manage money for treatment and to take good diet as prescribed by the doctors. The social dimensions of arsenic problems like divorcing and leaving young women unmarried left the women enduring despondency. In Bangladesh, rural women remain illiterate and depend on their male counterparts for most of the aspects. In many cases in arsenic affected areas husbands left their wives with arsenicosis symptoms, causing enormous hardships. Here the impact on income poverty comes through human poverty.

3.4.5. Forestry related Environmental Degradation

The moist or desiduous forest, also known as Shal forest used to extend over the Madhupur Garh as well as the districts of Dhaka, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Rajshahi. The Madhupur Garh spreads over 122,000 ha of land, The forest is famous for Shal tree. Other commercially valuable trees are korai, chambal, jogini chakra, kaikha, sidah, bazna, amlaki, sonalu, ajuli and gadila. The undergrowth in the Shal forest also provides economically and environmentally valuable commodities such as sungass used as roofing materials for poor villagers. Gazari trees available in the forest in plenty are termite resistant and are used in general construction works, railway sleepers, props, brake blocks and barrels.  

Most of the Shal forests have been denuded, degraded and encroached upon by people or taken over by rubber plantation and commercial fuel species, only patches of the

60. Holiday, March 29, 2002:12
Madhupur Garh now remain. Mindless exploitation, illegal harvesting, lumbering, tendency for clearing jungles for conversion into agricultural lands, logging, commercial farming, human encroachment and woodlot blocks are responsible for rapid deforestation. According to a report of the Forestry Master Plan, the Shal forest has shrunk to only 1000 ha in 1990 from 20,000 ha in 1970. With the disappearance of the natural forest, rich natural biodiversity has also disappeared. Most of the wild animals have become extinct. Leopard, bear, deer, monkeys, wide variety of wild birds including peacocks, reptiles like pythons, lizards etc. have vanished.

The first major blow came through change in legal status. The enactment of the East Pakistan Private Forest Act of 1949 and the East Pakistan State Acquisition and Tenancy Act 1950 acted as incentives for felling of trees indiscriminately. It is also believed that transfer of the forests to Forest Department ironically caused deforestation.

The second major blow, again ironically, came from Government sponsored afforestation programme in terms of woodlot plantation. In 1987, Government initiated rubber plantation project with assistance from the Asian Development Bank. A little over 7000 acres of forest lands were brought under rubber plantation. Rubber monoculture has led to several ecological disasters. Commercial rubber plantation through clearing the natural forest had led to damaging the biodiversity. Experts opine that mixed forests in natural condition is more suitable for conservation of the environment than monoculture.

Over the last two decades about 84,000 acres of sal forestry (out of a total of 1.2 lakh ha of sal forestry in the country) have been forcibly and illegally occupied. These include woodlot forestry with supposed participation of the poor. These lands have been converted into banana and pine apple plantation by the local influentials.

61. Holiday, March 29, 2002:12

62. Holiday, March 29, 2002:12

63. See, Jugantor [vernacular daily], 7 May 2003.
Commercial fuelwood plantation by the Government has threatened the habitat of the indigenous population like the Garo people. In addition, clearing the coppices of Shal forest and other indigenous species of plants has to destroying the possibility of regeneration of the forests in many places. Both local people and forestry experts think that long term benefits of traditional Shal forestry are higher than commercial woodlot forestry because the natural forests are so diversified that they not only supply timber and fuelwood but also sources of medicinal plants and habitat of wildlife. The coppices, if protected, can regenerate natural forests, thus protecting the biological diversity and natural habitat.

The poor fringe people – both tribal and Bengalis – had their share in the deforestation process, however. The poor cleared the jungles for crop farming and horticulture purposes. But they cannot undertake such ventures without bribing the local forest officials.

Deforestation in the reserve forests is basically a case of limitless greed and influence peddling and basically ignoring the officialdom. This is observed in all the reserve forests of the country. But most serious was the cases in Cox’s Bazar North and Lama in Bandarban districts where in the last one year valuable timbers worth billion Taka have been smuggled out by syndicates of the rich and influential. (Prothom Alo, June 2, 2002) Apart from teak, they are learned to be smuggling out about a 1000 garjan trees daily. The smuggling out takes place through the highways in an organized way through the connivance of law enforcing agencies and local administration.

One immediate consequence of the deforestation of reserve forests in the hilly area is that the hills are becoming barren resulting in top soil loss, which, in turn, affect the life and livelihood of the forest fringe population, who, in this case mostly happen to be indigenous people.

64. Holiday, March 29, 2002:12
65. Prothom Alo, June 2, 2002
A word about massive deforestation in the country through burning firewoods in the brick kilns. Maximum woods are burnt in northern districts like Tangail, Mymensingh, Rangpur and Dinajpur. We would give an account of the Tangail district. In the 11 Upazilas of the district, about 225 brick kilns are there which annually burn 61,000 maunds of firewoods. The firewoods come mainly illegally from the reserve forests. The influential wood traders get Gajari woods from Government forests in collusion with the forest officials at the rate of Tk 10 per maund and they sell to brick kiln owners at a rate of Tk 50 per maund. These are basically shal coplices which maintains biodiversity, supports subsistence activities of the fringe area poor. Daily consumption in one brick kiln is 150 maunds. So, daily consumption in the district is 33,900 maunds with a value of Tk 16.95 lakh. Brick burning season is for 6 months, October to March, which require a total of Tk 30.61 lakh worth of firewood. It was learned that firewood from Tangail are also transported to northern districts of Bangladesh. This is a clear case of environmental degradation from power greed and influence of the elite. Of course, some poor find employment in cutting, sizing and transportation of the woods upto truck loading from the forests. But the gains in employment for the poor are far less than the loss they suffer from loss of opportunity of collecting by-products which are important source of subsistence.

Nearer Dhaka, in Gazipur district alone, there are 500 brick kilns which consume about 5 lakh tons of fuelwoods and about one lakh ton of coal with high sulphur contents. Since, the exhaust pipe(chimney) of the kilns are nearly half of the standard requirement of 42 ft, the thick clods of smokes and ashes make life of the villagers difficult for long six months during which the kilns remain on fire. The fuel wood consumption leads to deforestation. Pattern of vegetation is

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67. *Maund* is local weighing unit equivalent to 37.5 Kg widely used in Bangladesh before the introduction of metric system. In local measurements, the unit is still used in some cases.

68. *The Sangbad*, May 28, 2002
also changing with fruit trees becoming less productive. Moreover, the villagers suffer from various diseases like cough, lungs and respiratory problems.69

3.4. 6. Fishery related Degradation

Poverty leads to over exploitation of natural resources in turn leading to unsustainable use of natural resources, as has been the case with collection of fries for prawn (Galda Chingri) in the coastal area of Bangladesh, Galachipa thana in particular. Unplanned extraction of prawn fries in the coastal area is causing rampant devastation to biodiversity. A *bagda* prawn releases about 8-10 hundred thousand eggs in the coastal area. Shrimp farming is done on about 1.5 hundred thousand hectares of land for which 5000 m fries were needed per annum. One-fifth came from hatchery, the rest from open natural sources. About 2000m fries are collected from 710 km of coasts of Bangladesh. But the poor people collect fries from the coastal area in crude and unscientific manner. It has been estimated that to collect just one prawn fry, the collateral damage includes 212 fries and 1096 food grains for fish.70 The Fisheries Development Institute, Paikgacha Centre conducted a study in this regard during the period 1991-97. It looked into the techniques of extraction of fries and their impact on ecological balance. The study found huge number of fish and other species and planktons damaged by unscrupulous extraction of fries. About 5,00,000 people in the coastal areas of Bhola, Barguna and Patuakhali are engaged in this job using different types of tools and nets during December-April. The open water fries are better in quality and have lower death rate than the hatchery product, it has been gathered. They can survive in saline water. They fetch more revenue than the hatchery product. During the lean season in the coastal area and male, female, children and adults engage themselves in this job. But because of very crude and careless methods, they cause immeasurable damage to the environment. It has been gathered that out of 475 species of about 133 types of fauna in the coastal area, about 100

69. Prothom Alo, December 13, 2002
70. Daily Janakantha, March 17, 2002
species are already lost. The extinct species of fish are: gania, nandina, bata, sarputi, mohashol, pangas, gulsha, tengra, modhu pabda, bali, bash-pata, kajoli, batashi, rani, gutum, tarabaim, chirka, mani/bheda, napit-koi, kholisha, lal kholisha, lama chanda, kholla etc. About 29 including well-known Hilsha are considered threatened species. In 1999, a survey was carried out in five Upazillas of Barguna and Patuakhali - Kalapara and Galachipa of Patuakhali, Barguna, Patharghata and Amtali of Barguna under the Strengthening of Coastal Fishery Management Project. In that year, total number of people engaged in five UZs were 62,923 who collected 260.57 million fries. About 45% of them were from Galachipa. (Daily Janakantha, March 17, 2002) In another study, total number of fish species in Bangladesh’s territorial waters until 35 years ago were 148. Already the impact of over-extraction had started to be felt over the last five years. Trawlers and engine boats going to the Bay of Bengal are returning empty handed. Those making investments for fish catching are not getting proper return of their investment, the poor employed workers do not get paid. The fast declining fish stock situation may be assessed from the table below which gives estimated fish stock in the Bay of Bengal at different points of time.

### Table 4
Estimated Fish Stock in the Country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Estimated Fish Stock (000 tons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>2.64-3.3.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978-79</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-83</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884-86</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Daily Janakantha, April 2, 2002.

Another natural resource being depleted fast because of the unscrupulous activities of commercial fishermen is jatka.

71. Daily Janakantha, March 17, 2002
72. Daily Janakantha, April 3, 2002
that is *Hilsha* fish fries. Hilshas are a sea fish available in the Padma, Meghna and Jamuna. Jatkas are caught in Bhola, Barisal, Cox’s Bazar, Bhagyokul(Munshiganj) and Goalanda(Faridpur). It is estimated that on average 5,000 maunds of jatkas are caught everyday and in the process, prospect of getting good crop of Hilsha is diminished. There is law prohibiting *Jatka* to be caught but the law is not respected. Now, *jatka* catching probably generates economic activities and also employment for the poor. But the long term impact is self-accentuating. For example, last year, the fishermen did not have a good business because they did not have a good harvest of *hilsha*. Now that they are catching *jatka* to compensate for the loss. So, they are catching as much *jatka* as they could. No doubt that will impact on future main harvest and hence, future employment of the poor fishermen who mainly sell labour in the fish catching enterprises.

3.4.7 Shrimp Farming and Loss of Mangrove Forestry

Export of shrimp is the third largest foreign exchange earner (about $200 million per year, on average) of the country after readymade garments and remittance. It constitutes about 50% of Bangladesh’s primary export items. Bangladesh is the 7th largest exporter of shrimp to combined US and Japan market. It also employs sizable population in the coastal area of Bangladesh. But this particular economic pursuit has economic costs. Shrimp farming in saline waters by cutting mangrove forestry and converting paddy fields into shrimp farm (locally *gher*, meaning enclosure or empoldering for retaining saline waters) has significant direct and secondary impacts on both poverty and environment itself.

A total of 375,000 acres (150,000 ha) of lands have been brought under saline water shrimp cultivation. About half of this lands lie in Greater Khulna covering Satkhira, Bagerhat and Khulna districts while another about 30% are concentrated in Cox’s Bazar area. There are two types of shrimp cultivation in the country: (a) paddy cultivation alternating with shrimp farming in Khulna region, and (b) salt

73. The Independent, March 20, 2002
production alternating with shrimp farming in Cox’s Bazar area. However, this rotational system, particularly in the context of the Khulna region does not work so smoothly because with intrusion and retention of saline water for a substantial part of the year, salinity sink into soils and salinity contents gradually rise to the extent that lands become totally unsuitable for paddy cultivation.

In the like manner, shrimp farming in Cox’s Bazar area is leading to direct destruction of mangrove forestry (paraban) planted in the 1960s for protection of the coastal area from the onslaught of tidal upsurge and cyclones. The mangrove plants grow well in saline wet conditions with strong and long roots which are helpful for protection of the soil from erosion and the trees are good for protection against wind. These are helpful for maintaining ecological balance in the coastal areas over long stretches of land from Satkhira, Khulna upto Teknaf via Patuakhali, Bhola, Noakhali, Chittagong and Cox’s Bazar. About 2.4 million ha lands were covered by mangrove forestry. In the 1980s, shrimp cultivation began in the coastal areas and the shrimp lord’s eyes fell on the mangrove forestry as potential lands for shrimp farming. They began to take thousands of acres of mangrove lands for shrimp farming. In the process, the mangrove forestry over about 40,000 acres in Maheshkhali, Kutubdia, Teknaf, Chakoria, and Ukhia of Cox’s Bazar were total destroyed. The Forestry Department is the owner. However, the Revenue Department leases out the land and in doing so, they allegedly do not consult with the Forest Department. In some cases, the lease is done with connivance of the Forestry officials who certify that there is no mangrove forestry on the concerned piece of land. Even in recent times 50 acres of nursery lands in Chakoria have been leased out for shrimp fishery. Besides in Sonadia island of Maheshkhali, mangrove forests reserved for eco-tourism are being leased out with connivance between local influentials and corrupt officials in both the departments. In recent times, about 30,000 acres of lands in 6 Upazilas of Chittagong have been leased out and more are being leased out. The lease is

74. The Independent, May 29 and 30, 2002
75. Holiday, March 29, 2002
considered as a prize for the party activists of the winning party in general elections. About 23-25 thousand acres are leased out in the process. Then about 50,000 acres are in illegal occupation. These are mostly in Cox’s Bazar and Satkhira. The concerned quarters feel that the Forest Act should be amended for adequate penalty provisions and their enforcement.

To sum up the discussion on environmental degradation, we may identify basically three clusters of environmental hotspots: the north and northwestern districts, affected mainly by drought conditions caused mainly by exogenous factors; the central zone covered by the Madhupur Shal forestry where extensive man-made deforestation has taken place; and the south-east and southwestern coastal zone where shrimp farming by the rich and the influentials leads to pauperization of the marginal and small farmers and causes extensive damage to the mangrove forestry.

This is not to trivialize the critical role played by flooding, water logging and river bank erosion. These water-related problems singly as well as in combination cause tremendous damage to life and property of the common people. These natural disasters also pauperise and displace with severe social and economic consequences.

We have also tried to argue that while poverty causes environmental degradation, the flow of causation is mainly the other way round. On the other hand, most of the incidences of environmental degradation – in terms of creation of the environmental hotspots and critical environmental problems – are man-made and behind most of them lie power, greed and wealth of the influentials. Relatedly, we have instances of market failure, institutional and policy failure.

Finally, it should be pointed out that most of the environmental degradations do not occur in vacuum. The originate and/or are modified/manipulated by man-made interventions in physical infrastructure development. Thus, when we talk about flooding, we have to take into consideration that flooding inspite of or because of certain

76. *Ajker Kagoj*, April 10, 2002
flood control measures or road development projects. Thus, real life situation may be more complicated than such linear analytical line of causation as poverty flowing from environmental degradation and vice versa. Indeed both may flow from exogenous forces like physical infrastructures.

4. Management of Non-traditional Security in the Context of Bangladesh

On the basis of the discussion in the paper, a number of policy suggestions may be made in order to address the non-traditional security issues. Firstly, while the issues fall into so many sectoral areas, there should be a set of comprehensive policy framework providing guidelines as to how to address them. In the like manner, there should be efforts to create institutional mechanisms to implement those policies. Certain specific mechanisms may be suggested here. One, much of the problems of NTS could be addressed through civil society initiatives. Society’s capacity to deal with the issues may be enhanced through making different checks and balances as well as watch dogs effective. Where the issue areas pertain to inter-state dimensions, Track II diplomacy rather than formal diplomatic means may be pursued.

Secondly, security discourse should be humanised and state centricity should be de-emphasized. It has been shown that focus on state-centric military-based security may lead to double insecurity: more state insecurity and jeopardising human security.

Thirdly, choice between coercion/counter-force, on the one hand, pacification and cooperation, on the other, depends not only situation but also on the nature of measures. Inadequately and hurriedly designed peace making may worsen the situation, as may be seen in the context of the Assam situation in North East India. A diversionary tactic of coaxing second tier or third tier or faction leadership keeping the mainstream leadership in tact may also not pay off, as has been evident in the case of LTTE-led insurgency in Sri Lanka.
Fourthly, an important consideration of dealing with incipient insurgency which eventually snowballs into full-fledged insurgency is the inter-temporal cost of mitigating the root causes of insurgency. It is possible to head off an incipient insurgency at a lower costs than if allowed to linger and harden. Often it is characteristically convenient to pass an incipient insurgency as a law and order issue and in the process rub the wound in the wrong way.

Fifthly, borders in the post-Cold War era has become porous and with flow of information and easy access to technology, cross-border movements of insurgencies, arms and drugs, even trafficking of women and children makes a prima facie ground for cooperative security. The current trend in South Asia is quite the opposite. On the one hand, one is talking about cooperation and interaction. On the other hand, politics are turning out to be increasingly security states with heightened degree of security paranoid. Visa restrictions are stringently applied, costly physical barriers are placed to stop movement across borders. Construction of barbed wire fencing along the Bangladesh-India borders is a case in point. It is submitted that openness and free flow of information, rather than closing the doors is the best remedy for intrusion of unwanted elements.

Sixthly, environmental security, especially issues like flooding, natural disaster, presents another logical basis for thinking in terms of cooperative security among the neighbours.

Seventhly, further institutionalization of democracy, even if slow and painful, should continue to sort out vulnerabilities the non-traditional security areas, and a policy suggestion will be to resist temptation of any short cut and allow the political process to continue even if the process turns out to be traumatic. If there is a choice between the so-called good governance and democratic governance, the choice should be for the latter because the former is state centric and does not allow popular participation. A vibrant local government system should be in place to allow democratic participation and in the process, dissent and grievances may be ventilated.
And finally, in order to check against violation of human rights, independence of the judiciary, judicial activism and a strong civil society are needed.

5. Conclusions

Non-traditional security is a very nascent and under-researched area. Further research is needed in a number of issue areas. One area could be impact of non-traditional security on the role and relevance of instruments and institutions of traditional security, like the state itself, armed forces, R & D, role of private institutions and civil society in managing the security apparatus. A second area of suggested research area will be sourcing and locating indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms available in South Asian societies and profiling them in a comparative framework. A third area will be to evolve early warning and capacity building to deal with the conflicts.