Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) decided to bring out an annual survey of Bangladesh’s national security landscape starting from the year 2007 with the intention that every year there would be a report to the nation on this very important subject. The present volume, which is the third in the series titled ‘Bangladesh National Security 2009’, is a collection of papers dealing with developments in the year 2009, in the area of non-traditional security of Bangladesh. It may be mentioned that the previous two volumes in the series\(^1\) dealt with both traditional and non-traditional security issues. The present volume focuses exclusively on issues of non-traditional nature. The book contains altogether five chapters with each chapter dealing with a specific non-traditional security issue that impinges on the national security of Bangladesh. All the five issues are identified as non-traditional both in terms of sources and the way they impact on the society and human beings. All these issues operate at different levels of collectivities, starting from the state, through communities down to individuals.

Non-traditional security does not deny the necessity of traditional security. However, it contends that national security, if solely based on traditional security or military conception of security, fails to capture many vital areas of national security. Non-traditional security recognises the need for incorporating economic, environmental issues, culture, values, non-military instruments of power and influences and actors.\(^2\) Until the 1990s, national security was synonymous with territorial integrity and remained focused to ensuring the security at the level the state only. As a result, the concept of national security ignored the security of the individual or the citizen of the state. Following the end of the bi-polar world order, there were changes in security thinking and alternate approaches to security were debated. It was argued that a state cannot be secured
unless its people are secured too. The security of an individual in terms of his physical safety, dignity and development is as important as the security of the state. The military conception of security was, thus, thought to be highly inadequate. Especially in the context of the underdeveloped and developing countries, the security concerns were found to be entirely different. It was increasingly realised that it is poverty, not the lack of military hardware that is responsible for insecurity across the 'southern half of the planet'. The stupendous problem that these countries face today is purely politico-economic and social in character, and they constitute legitimate security concerns. Thus, while the state-centric security is not extinct, the new security agenda dubbed as non-traditional security came to include within its fold issues as diverse as intra-state conflict, ethnic and religious violence, terrorism, drug, small arms and human trafficking, gender, environment, cross-border population movement, energy and the like. The inadequacy of the state-centric security to address the multifarious nature of security threats and their diverse sources and severity compelled the security thinkers to move beyond even the most influential arguments of Stephen Walt which he made in 1991 that security studies should focus on the threat, use and control of military force, and they called for a broadening and deepening of conception of security in non-statist terms. In fact, a process of securitisation of a wide range of issues came to the fore.

Simultaneous with this transformation, security discourse in South Asia has also undergone noticeable change. Till recently, security thinking in South Asia has always remained centred around military build-up and strength. As such, these elements have been perceived as instruments of self-assertion, status and power. This narrow conception of security has brought South Asia to a sorry state of affairs where people starve and arms accumulate, social expenditure falls while military budget rises. In 1994, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in its report stated that 'the concept of security has for too long interpreted narrowly, as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation-states than to people'. It has been observed that the more security arsenals the states have built up, the more they have made their populations insecure in terms of human security. Hence, it is not surprising to
see the countries of South Asia at the bottom rung of the table of the UNDP Human Development Report. There is hardly any doubt that militarisation and nuclearisation has added more insecurity and instability in South Asia than ever before.

In Bangladesh too, the security discourse remained hostage to the very traditionalist view until recently. Of late, a growing number of studies on Bangladesh’s national security reflect a transition from conventional security to an alternative thinking to view its security concerns and problems from a much wider angle—protection against all major threats to human survival and well-being, not just military threats. The transition has been facilitated by a few positive political changes in Bangladesh’s international, regional and internal milieu and by a grim realisation that economic, social, political, demographic and environmental issues have the potential to threaten the country’s existence in the future. It may be mentioned that the focus of non-traditional security is primarily on non-military challenges to security. While it is true that most of such challenges originate at the national level, there is perhaps no denying the fact that many among them are transnational in character with regard to their origins, conception and effects. Most importantly, non-traditional security not only incorporates the state as a primary referent object of security in both analytical and policy terms, but also goes beyond it by bringing other referent objects like human collectivities.

The year 2009 brought forth new hopes and aspirations among the people with the assumption of office by the elected government of Awami League led ‘Grand Alliance’ on 06 January 2009. However, it witnessed a different kind of threat to state security. On 25-26 February 2009, members of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) carried out a brutal attack on army officers and their families at its headquarter at Pilkhana, killing 74 people including 57 Army officers. On the following day, a section of BDR personnel initiated rebellion in most of the BDR units all across the country. The nation was shocked and was gripped by insecurity of unusual kind. The timing of the incident within one and half month of the newly elected democratic government was a major challenge for the government.

Another challenge that the new government had to face after coming to power was in its external front. Myanmar’s mobilisation of its forces along the Bangladesh-Myanmar borders was an alarming
development. In mid-March 2009, tension raised high as Myanmar started erecting barbed-wire fences unilaterally on its side of the land borders with Bangladesh. Tension flared up again in the first half of October 2009 on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border when Myanmar augmented its forces in the border area with tanks, artillery guns and warships in the adjacent waters. Bangladesh also reinforced its troops along the border following repeated provocative acts by the Myanmar military forces including violation of international border and illegal construction of barbed-wire fences along the frontier. It may be mentioned that in November-December 2008, Myanmar's naval warships, escorting oil and gas exploration vessels had incurred into Bangladesh waters in the Bay of Bengal.

Nevertheless, the year 2009 also saw the launching of democracy anew. A ‘Charter for Change’ was proposed with specific policy targets. Steps were taken to bring the skyrocketing food prices under control. Food production improved as a result of which overall inflation fell from 10 percent annual rate in July 2008 to around 5 percent by October 2009. Immediately after assuming office, the new government which won a landslide victory in the recent poll, faced two challenges in its economic front stemming out mainly from the global recession. First, manpower export to the Southeast and Middle East countries shrank and remittances from migrant workers also declined because many labour intensive projects in the construction sector were hit by the global recession in the Middle East. It may be mentioned that in 2008, the Middle East supplied 60 percent of the remittance that Bangladeshi workers sent home. Secondly, US$12 billion worth of garment shipments to America and Europe also suffered badly. However, diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East were undertaken to reduce the layoffs of migrant workers which helped increase the remittances, compensating for losses in ready-made garments (RMG) exports. Bangladesh expects its gross domestic product (GDP) to grow from 5.5 to 6 per cent in 2010.

Thus, a new era of fresh prospects and opportunities has ushered in the history of Bangladesh. This provided an opportunity to deal with foreign policy of Bangladesh with a focus on the crucial challenges. The present book is an endeavour to deal with these challenges. Chapter 1 of the book titled, “Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: Reflection on Some Crucial Challenges” thus attempts to probe into
some of the crucial foreign policy challenges. These include developmental challenges and economic diplomacy, demarcation of maritime boundary and environmental threats to security. These issues, therefore, received specific attention. The country's foreign policy challenges in general including the three crucial challenges have been explored in details in the regional and global context. Finally, in this regard, an attempt has been made to envision an outlook for the future.

For the past several years, the world has been going through crises, one after another—fuel crisis, food crisis and recently economic crisis. In 2009, the world witnessed a global turmoil in terms of collapse of financial institutions, shut down of industries, loss of jobs and growing sense of insecurity among the people worldwide. The crisis, considered to be the worst since the Great Depression of 1930, threw millions of people throughout the world, from developed to developing countries, into a vulnerable situation. More significantly, it raised a lot of dispute about the present global economic system. Hence, the need was felt to look at the impacts of the crisis on the country's economy to take remedial measures. Side by side, this examination will also help to find out the loopholes of the present economic structure of the economy, addressing of which will enhance the economic security as well as the socio-political stability of the country. It is in this context that Chapter 2 of the book on “Global Economic Crisis and its Impact on Bangladesh” attempts to examine the effects of global economic crisis on the economy of Bangladesh.

Manpower export from Bangladesh declined in 2009 by almost half compared to 2008. This decline is a function of both global and domestic causes. In contrast, since 1976, the highest inflow of remittance amounting to US$10,720 million occurred only in 2009, placing Bangladesh as the 10th remittance earning country in the world. Decline in unemployment owing to manpower export from Bangladesh has remained steady. Manpower export has contributed to reduce unemployment by 0.88 per cent solely in 2009. Thus, manpower export has provided a necessary safety valve for millions of Bangladeshis who would have otherwise crowded the local job market. Contribution of remittance to GDP and export has assisted to meet increasing trade deficit of Bangladesh by maintaining a stable foreign currency reserve. Although remittance has been
continuing to play a key role in both macro and micro economic development of Bangladesh, the role of remittance in investment has not been significant because of either ineffective utilisation or frequent investment of remittance in the unproductive sectors. Against the preceding backdrop, Chapter 3 of the book on “Migrant Labours, Remittance Inflow and Economic Development” addresses the causes that led to the decline of Bangladesh manpower export in 2009 and explores the role that manpower export and flow of remittance played in the economic development of the country. It is in the vital interest of Bangladesh to guarantee uninterrupted inflow of remittance in the country and also uninterrupted outflow of migrant labours to the countries of destination. If these cannot be adequately assured, economic development of Bangladesh is bound to suffer. So will its economic security which will directly affect the wellbeing of the people.

The global climate is changing, and it is likely to change further over the coming decades due to increasing concentration of ‘greenhouse gases’ in the earth’s atmosphere caused largely by human activities of the industrialised countries. Bangladesh has been recognised as one of a few countries most vulnerable to climate change. The World Bank listed it as one of the 12 countries most at risk for climate related problems. Climate change is threatening to obliterate much of the land areas of Bangladesh. It is time to wake up to this existential security threat. Chapter 4 of the book on “Climate Change and National Security” argues that livelihood contraction due to the depletion of natural resources would be the major threat for human security. It also argues that both long term and short term human insecurity may lead to conflict and limit the capacity of the state, already overwhelmed with problematic political and economic situation, to adapt to climate change which eventually threatens the national security.

Transnational actors have often used Bangladesh as a transit country for illicit trafficking of weapons intended for the insurgency-ridden areas of Southern Asia. However, over the last two decades, a small but significant shift has taken place in the trafficking patterns. A considerable bulk of these weapons, technically known as small arms is finding its way to the black markets of Bangladesh. Evidence lies in the recovery of increasing number of weapons, by the law enforcing agencies, ranging from hand guns to military style
introduction

Weapons such as AK47, AK56, M16, hand grenades, rocket launchers, etc. Their indiscriminate use is also evident from the sudden countrywide rise in violence, crime and terror attacks carried out by using arms and ammunitions that are smuggled from outside. In fact, experts believe that one of the major contributing factors for the recent rise of terrorism and violence in Bangladesh has been the easy availability of small arms and light weapons. Reinvestigation of arms haul cases especially about ten trucks of arms seized from Chittagong Port in 2004 was one of the most talked about issues throughout the year 2009. It was a grim reminder that how vulnerable the country can become due to smuggling of small arms. It was also a well talked about issue throughout the year 2009, as the new government embarked on reinvestigating the arms-haul cases on various occasions including ten trucks of arms seized from Chittagong Port in 2004. Chapter 5 of the book on “Small Arms Trafficking in Bangladesh: A Threat to National Security” attempts to examine the current trend of arms trafficking in Bangladesh and its effects on state and human security. It analyses the nature and magnitude of illicit trafficking of small arms in Bangladesh, and identifies the threats it poses for national security. It also aims to discuss dispassionately the challenges that undermine effective small arms control, as well as explore options for effective management and capacity building of the state security agencies of Bangladesh.

The wide range of issues and challenges covered in this volume have introduced and analysed some of the most pressing non-traditional security threats to the national security of Bangladesh. It draws on a rich set of events, facts and examples of what has and has not worked in the security realm of Bangladesh during the year 2009 and as such provides an overview and understanding of the various non-traditional security issues within the given time frame. It is hoped that it will contribute to a better and deeper understanding of and approaches to non-traditional security concerns in Bangladesh. It is also hoped that the volume will provoke scholars and readers in the field to undertake additional research and refine his/her observations, thus further strengthening the body of knowledge in this important but relatively less explored field of Bangladesh’s national concern.
Endnotes


6 The Daily Star, 09 October 2009.