The burden of any discourse on security centres mainly on defining the concept itself, addressing the questions of whose security, who provides security, security from what, etc. The mainstream or dominant security discourse, which is state- and regime-centric and threat-based, is concerned with the geopolitical and military formulations of security – in terms of spatial exclusion of threats by military means and ensuring a stable political order internally. This security discourse, which actually flows from the realpolitik paradigm of the 1940s, deals with war, violence and conflict, and security of the state or the regime in power is defined in terms of the absence of such threats. Since such conventional or traditional security discourse does not quite capture the ever-changing realities within and between nation-states, there has been an alternative or critical security discourse since the 1970s pursued by peace researchers and post-structuralists. The post-modernists and the post-Cold War theorists have added momentum to this security discourse in the 1990s.

Within the alternative security paradigm, there are those who hold the view that the states are only history-specific political formations and, as such, tend to offer a counter-nation-state discourse. However, there are many others in the alternative camp who remain within the nation-state paradigm but would like to broaden the levels of analysis by including the security of the individuals and communities and deepen the concept by bringing in the non-military concerns like economic security, human security and environmental security.

Although it is not yet fully delineated whether national security includes both state security and non-state security, or whether human security, economic security, and environmental security are security concepts independent of
the concept of national security, it is clear that security in the post-Cold War era is no more understood in terms of only military threats emanating from across the border. Indeed, insecurity to the individual, community and state may be caused due to internal as well as external threats of non-military nature, such as political instability, poverty, environmental degradation, etc. Insecurity could also emanate from the globalization process. The concept of security has thus become comprehensive in terms of its nature and scope, including non-state security. As such, the transition from conventional security to comprehensive security needs to be comprehended and the newer security threats identified and discussed, and security strategies/options explored and suggested.

Apart from its domestic security concerns, Bangladesh has to operate now in a regional scenario that has arguably changed qualitatively after the nuclear explosions by India and Pakistan in May 1998, and in a world context that has been experiencing a ubiquitous process of globalization since the beginning of the 1990s. As such, the ongoing security discourse was contextualized in a concrete case of Bangladesh by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS), Dhaka, by way of having organised a national seminar in Dhaka on National Security of Bangladesh in the Twenty-first Century on 29-30 November 1998.

As many as thirteen papers were presented in the five working sessions of the seminar that spread over two days. The working sessions, thematic in their arrangement and focus, addressed the sub-themes of conventional security, globalization and security, socio-political security, environmental security, and security strategies and options for Bangladesh. Three papers were presented in each of the first four working sessions, while there was only one paper in the concluding session.

As mentioned, this volume is an outcome of the above-mentioned national seminar. The book probes into the sources of threats to the national security of Bangladesh and identifies the likely challenges to its security in the twenty-first century. It also discusses and suggests some possible strategies and options for Bangladesh to meet such security challenges. The first purpose of the publication of this volume
is to contribute to the ongoing debate over the concept of national security and to offer food for further deliberations on the security of a rim country like Bangladesh operating in the context of the post-Cold War globalization process. And the other objective is to sensitize the concerned policy and decision making community in Bangladesh to the insecurities the country is facing and is likely to confront in the days ahead, with a view for them to adopting appropriate policy instruments.

It is in order here to highlight some of the salient points raised in each of the thirteen papers accommodated in the present volume. Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, in his paper entitled *Conventional Security Threats to Bangladesh in the 21st Century: The Role of the Armed Forces*, reminds us that while diplomats continue to seek peaceful resolution of conflicts, the military forces back the diplomatic effort by actual or threatened use of force. He asserts that a look at the map of Bangladesh will reveal that any invasion, however remote may be the possibility, can originate either from India or Myanmar. He maintains that our defence strategy is based on "deterrence" that is supposed to make an attack on Bangladesh by an aggressor militarily indecisive, economically unprofitable and politically unacceptable. Choudhury argues that our forces will have to be modernised continuously if we want to stay in step and we also need to exercise with forces of friendly nations to be able to operate in combined or coalition force environment. He also argues that as we step into the next century, we might start thinking about regional defence cooperation. He maintains that there are deep-rooted mistrust and divergent strategic interests in the region that would preclude meaningful defence cooperation between the countries of the region, but if our aim is to secure a peaceful neighbourhood, defence cooperation should be on the agenda too. Terrorism, drug and arms smuggling know no frontier. If we wish to fight these scourges in the region, the armed forces of South Asian nations will have to cooperate at the operational level, the author suggests.

In the second paper, entitled *Defence-Development Dilemma: The Bangladesh Context*, Abdur Rob Khan and Munim Kumar Barai first refer to the pertinence of the debate on defence and development in the context of Bangladesh.
Then they examine the nature of the defence-development dilemma by means of cross-country evidence that is followed by a portrayal of Bangladesh’s security environment in the twenty-first century. Khan and Barai move on to give a sectoral profile of the defence of Bangladesh and show the trends and comparative perspectives in the country’s defence expenditure.

The authors argue that linkages between defence spending and economic growth are tenuous at best and that there are structural incompatibilities between the defence sector and the civilian sector and the input-output relationship is not always clear-cut. They go on to argue that the crux of the problem is to look at whether the defence spending is becoming too much of a burden on the national exchequer. And they suggest that one way of measuring that is to look at the trend and proportion in a comparative framework taking the critical sectors of the national economy into consideration. Khan and Barai have put forward certain recommendations. The first is that some reduction in defence expenditure is possible through trans-armament - replacing offensive weapons with defensive ones. The second area where emphasis should be given, according to them, is training and skill development. The third is that great circumspection is to be exercised in the peaceful use of the military force (PUMF). And the fourth is that hidden financial transfers from other sectors to the defence sector should be stopped.

The next paper, written by a war hero of Bangladesh, Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, is on *Strategic and Tactical Lessons of the War of Liberation in the Context of the National Security of Bangladesh in the 21st Century.* The author first lays out the features of the Liberation War the people of Bangladesh fought against (West) Pakistan in 1971. He states that the state and people of Bangladesh began their independent journey in a state of insecurity, having been occupied by external forces right from the moment Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared the country’s independence on 26 March 1971. The country had to be liberated. The threat to national security was from within and the people had to fight it out from without as well as from within. It was more of a guerrilla war with an element of conventional war. The War of Liberation was, as the author
says, a historic event of colossal significance that was both political and military. He maintains that the liberation war was a physical action assisted by psychology, emotion and foreign relations. He attributes the success of the liberation efforts to the near-total national involvement, the physical and geographical disadvantages for the enemy, the mental readiness and cooperation of the population, their unwavering will to gain independence, the support from India and many other countries.

The author is of the opinion that any future physical threats to Bangladesh are likely to come from outside Bangladesh, that there has to be a national consensus in identifying such threats and meeting them, and that, given the advancement in military technology now and later, the advantages the freedom fighters derived from the local terrain and population in 1971 will be denied to a considerable degree in any future conflict. So the strategic and tactical lessons to be derived from Bangladesh’s liberation war are, according to him, to be found in these conclusions as well as in a critical appreciation of the factors contributing to the ultimate victory in 1971 in the context of a similar conflict scenario in the future.

The paper written by CAF Dowlah is on *Agricultural Trade Liberalization under the Uruguay Round and Beyond: The Perspectives of the Developing countries with Special Reference to Bangladesh.* Dowlah contends that one of the greatest achievements of the Uruguay Round (UR) has been that it succeeded in bringing agriculture - one of the most ‘sensitive’ and ‘distorted’ areas of global trade - under the rules and disciplines of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). However, he argues that the UR Agreement on Agriculture (URAA) does not bring an end to the distortionary trade regime in agriculture, although significant progress has been made in establishing new rules for tariff bindings, market access, export subsidies and domestic supports. The author also argues that although the developing countries, especially the least developed ones, are not seriously affected so far - thanks to ‘green box’ policies and the special and differential treatments granted to these countries - the challenge of the URAA nevertheless would remain formidable for them. These countries, in his opinion,
eventually stand to lose out as world prices of many basic foodstuffs they import, such as wheat, maize, beef and dairy products, will increase, while the prices of the temperate agricultural commodities they export, such as coffee, cocoa and cotton, will fall to uncompetitively low levels.

Muinul Islam, in his paper entitled *WTO and Bangladesh’s External Trade: A Scenario of Opportunities, Perils and Pitfalls*, states that the WTO is fast emerging as a powerful institution and a far-reaching agreement as well as a market in which members agree on the rules of the game. He is of the opinion that the Marrakesh Agreement tends to curb the sovereign authority of the member states by constraining the ability of the government of a country to take actions that might distort trade flows, either directly or indirectly. From this perspective, he maintains, the WTO has been emerging as the third dimension of the World System along with the IMF and the World Bank, based on the philosophy of the open market economy, free trade and globalization. The author points out that the opportunities that should come Bangladesh’s way are related to its vast reservoir of potential skilled human resources, which will be the determining factor in the future specialization pattern underlying Bangladesh’s exports in the 21st century. He, however, cautions that the real dangers of too rapid liberalization of Bangladesh’s import regime may transform the country’s economy into a lucrative market for traders from far and near, the signs of which are already quite evident. Bangladesh, he maintains, in that case will be a prime candidate for ‘re-colonization’. The pitfalls, as he highlights, lie in issues like the MFA, product standards, process standards, labour standards, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, environmental, health and safety regulations, national treatment of the FDI, local content and performance requirements, rules of origin, agricultural subsidies, government procurement, TRIPs, GATS and TRIMs.

M. Asaduzzaman, in his paper *Energy Security of Bangladesh: Issues, Perspectives and Prospects*, analyses the level of energy security of Bangladesh and its future prospects. He holds the view that while the demand for and the supply of energy, particularly the fuel-based, are increasing fast, the real crisis has two particular dimensions –
the biomass crisis and the power crisis. And he argues that lack of foresight and transparency has been the major reason behind such crises. The author maintains that while there are good prospects for future energy supply, the key elements in any energy security have to be efficiency in both end-use and supply. He goes on to discuss how the roles of demand management (through a rational pricing policy), popularizing efficient end-use technologies (if necessary through manipulation of relative prices), and encouragement of investment in efficient energy-supply technologies are important.

Syed Anwar Husain, in his paper *Political Instability in Bangladesh: Security Implications*, considers two interlinked issues in the context of Bangladesh: political instability and its security implications. And the paper has two parts: conceptual and empirical. In the conceptual part political instability and security are defined, and the inter-linkages between the two are suggested. Following Harry Eckstein, stability has been characterized by durability, acceptance of legitimacy, and effectiveness of government actions. And much of this political stability is predicated upon the level and nature of political culture. On the other hand, endemic political instability undermines the social, political and economic cohesion of a country, posing grave threats to its internal political and economic stability as well as to its core values -- independence and sovereignty. The author draws an alarming conclusion in that political instability in Bangladesh, if not redressed with a qualitative change in the political milieu, is likely to be a major source of multi-dimensional insecurity for the country in the days ahead.

Neila Husain, in her paper on *Proliferation of Small Arms and Violence in Bangladesh: Societal Insecurity*, discusses (1) the nature and trend of proliferation of illegal small arms in Bangladesh; (2) the linkages between violence and small arms and its effect on societal security; (3) the fundamental rights of the citizen and the rule of law; and (4) finally, the dangers that lie ahead and how to overcome them as we move into the 21st century. The main finding of the empirical study the author conducted in Dhaka and elsewhere is that societal insecurity in the country is perpetuated by the
extensive use of illegal small arms in violence, coupled with ineffective/fragile rule of law.

M. M. Akash's paper is on *Poverty and Marginalization in Bangladesh: Potentials for Instability*. The central thesis in his paper is that pauperisation and/or marginalisation is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for political instability in a country. Even if one recognizes these processes as a potential source of instability, they may or may not turn into real instability, depending upon other attendant factors. In his view, political instability is an end state that results from an interaction of a host of economic, political, social and cultural factors. It is true that any one factor can trigger instability but, as he contends, the depth and spread of that instability will be considerably determined by the role of the other attendant factors. Thus each case of political instability will have its own special historical configuration of forces behind it and has to be studied historically and case by case. In the paper, the author attempts to prove this general thesis with reference to the actual historical examples of political instability in post-independence Bangladesh. In the end he offers some useful indications about what to do for reducing the potentiality of political instability in Bangladesh.

The paper of Mizan R. Khan is entitled *Towards a Framework of Sustainable Resource Management: The Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh*. Apart from delving deep into the debate over the concept of environmental security, Mizan Khan, in the empirical part of his paper, focuses on the management of land and forest resources in the three districts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. He argues that communal systems of land management and customary rights of tribal groups clash with the government approaches to land titling in the CHT. The latter contributes to differentiation both within the tribals and between tribals and Bengali settlers. Since the upland tribals *en masse* were not used to the culture and regime of private ownership in land, the lowland Bengali settlers/encroachers tend to win in the zero-sum game. The result is, in his view, intensification of both conflict and environmental stress. The author is of the view that the solution lies not in a management regime either by government agencies or through private property rights,
but in a cooperative approach to resource management based on human ecology.

A. M. Choudhury, in his paper *Natural Disasters and National Security*, discusses in depth the frequent occurrences of natural calamities and the extent of damage wrought by them in Bangladesh, a country that ranks as one of the world's foremost disaster-prone countries. He states that disasters cause immense loss of crops affecting the food security of the country unless adequate measures are taken to replenish the loss. This puts lots of stress on the society, ultimately affecting the national security also, the author maintains. He also cites the example of the considerable loss of military hardware in the cyclone that hit Bangladesh in 1991, in which a good number of Air Force aircraft were damaged and several naval ships sunk. The author maintains that disastrous weather is always a problem in operational activities. He expresses the view that proper monitoring of disasters and adequate measures to deal with them are of utmost importance to the country's national security. And he indeed suggests certain measures to deal with the natural disasters that frequent Bangladesh.

Afsan Chowdhury, in his paper on *Arsenic Crisis, Security Concerns, the State and the People*, presents an interesting study on the fast spreading arsenic problem in Bangladesh. As he tends to glamourise the problem as a security threat, the state and the others involved in addressing the widespread and grave health hazard also come in for his biting criticism. He raises doubts about the validity of the restricted concept of conventional security and urges to broaden the security agenda by incorporating the aspects of human security. His understanding is that the basic premise of traditional security is the protection of the state and those who manage it. In his view, the main objectives of this expanded concept are: (i) to protect the interests of the state and those who wish to protect, (ii) to limit as far as possible the decision making process to national and international governing constructs incorporating administrative and political bureaucracies, and (iii) to facilitate the growth of intermediaries who also can access resources and act as a buffer between the people and the state and reduce security threats to the state.
In the context of the above, the case study on the arsenic crisis looks into three main issues. The author raises them in question form as the following: (a) Did the decision-making apparatus - the state - display meaningful concern? Was it transparent in its actions that ultimately could be considered accountable? What were the security implications for the state and the people? (b) In planning mitigation measures, did the state, as it is undertaking a process of consultation with the people, set up mechanisms for public information/feedback and establish processes for accountability to the people? (c) What kind of security threats may be generated in the 21st century by the present handling process of the arsenic crisis by the state/government and its allies?

Mohammad Humayun Kabir has written the last paper in this volume, entitled *National Security of Bangladesh: Thoughts on Security Strategies*. In its conceptual part, the author attempts to re-define security in a manner that reflects the changed reality and, at the same time, is meant to be an effective and useful tool of analysis. The paper identifies the threats and vulnerabilities that impinge on the security of Bangladesh and are likely to do so in the near future. The paper focuses on and discusses various strategies and options considered essential for maintaining and enhancing the national security of Bangladesh. It is argued in the paper that Bangladesh's national interests would be better served if its security policy and strategy could combine its own national endeavours with selective elements of cooperative security arrangements to be forged with the neighbouring countries. It is also argued that Bangladesh's defence policy needs to be crafted in a way that it fits in well in the combination of her all other instruments of national policy with a view to maintaining and enhancing the county's national security.

At the risk for the Editor himself of unusually being the first to fire the salvo of criticism, I may point out here that the discourse on security, particularly on the concept itself, has been far from being adequate in most papers in the book. While the authors have identified the current security threats to Bangladesh, few of them have taken the pains to look into the future and comprehend the nature and extent of the threats that might lie in store for the country. The debate on Bangladesh's security strategies and options could also be a
lot fuller and more incisive. Be that as it may, I only hope that some of the more thinking readers would find in the book some ideas for further research and debate on the subject in Bangladesh and elsewhere. All in all, if the purpose of this publication is even partially fulfilled, the efforts will have been worthwhile.