Proliferation of Small Arms and Violence in Bangladesh: Societal Insecurity?

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I. Introduction

In recent years, two alarming trends are increasingly receiving attention in different quarters of our society. On the one hand, there is an increase in the proliferation of illegal arms in Bangladesh, and on the other, there is a sudden rise in violent crimes in the society. News reports indicate a linkage between the two trends in which small arms are increasingly being used in violence. If this is the case, one needs to raise a few pertaining questions. Who are the users of small arms? Are they the same persons involved in violence? What is their source of illegal arms? In the light of deteriorating law and order situation due to increased armed violence, what is its impact on the security of the individual, and the society as a whole? Is the current trend of "armed violence" a transient one, or will it be carried over to the new millennium? If it is the later, are any measures being taken to curb armed violence? A more probing question would be who or what is responsible for societal insecurity? Hence, with these questions in the back of the mind, the present paper will deal with 1. The nature and flow of illegal proliferation of small arms and its impact on law and order situation in the country; 2. The mechanism that is allowing terrorism to sustain within legal and constitutional framework; 3. An insight into the impact of the arms-violence linkage with reference to a few case studies; and finally, 4. A set of recommendations as how to have an arms and violence free society. As part of the methodology, three daily newspapers - The Daily Star, The Daily Inqilab, and Bhorer Kagoj - have been scanned for three consecutive months. Scanning results
brought out the common features of the nature and trend of violence in Bangladesh. Following are the findings.

II. Findings

1) The nature and types of violence can be categorized into two broad groups, although in most cases the same group of terrorists are involved: (1) socio-economic violence like hijacking, extortion, theft etc; and (2) political violence, such as political crime, violence during hartal (total work stoppage), violence in polling centres, and so forth.

2) In almost all of the types of violence, with the exception of domestic violence, illegal small arms and ammunitions are used.

3) The users of illegal arms are mostly professional thugs and goons, university and college going student-cum-cadres, members of outlawed political parties, refugees, and insurgents.

4) In most incidences of violence or terrorism, the terrorist enjoys political shelter.

5) There are no strict criteria of individuals who are victims of terrorism or armed violence. Failure to comply with terrorist's demand usually results in risking one's own life or those of his/her family.

6) In most cases, the police are ineffective in arresting the terrorist.

Based on the above findings, two major assumptions can be made: First, there is a close linkage between violence and small arms. The second assumption is that “organized crime” operates within a triangular framework where a nexus prevails between the criminal underworld, corrupt police force, and power hungry politicians. The paper argues, with reference to a few case studies, that the impact of this nexus is ‘societal insecurity’ in the country.

III. First Assumption: Violence and Small Arms Linkage

The first assumption that small arms and violence are interlinked is based on the reports that in most of the incidences of violence, irrelevant of the cause, the threat or
actual use of small arms is evident. What does one exactly understand by small arms and how is it so easily available in Bangladesh?

(1) Small Arms in Bangladesh

There is perhaps no single, acceptable definition of small arms. Even then, the most acceptable one is given by NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) which defines small arms as "all crew portable direct fire weapons of a caliber less than 50 mm and a secondary capability to defeat light armour and helicopters." The Dictionary of Weapons & Military Terms defines small arms as all arms, including automatic weapons, up to and including those of .60 cal. and shotguns.' In World War II, the caliber of small arms were limited to 12.7 mm. Due to advanced technology that improved the accuracy, lethality, rates of fire of these man-portable weapons, NATO extended its WWll definition in 1983. The destruction power is very low in intensity compared to that of a conventional weapon. Yet, revolvers, rifles, explosives and like are the means of violence in most of the conflicts of the world.

Small arms are by no means `small' and `light' as the names suggest. These weapons are major in effect, even though minor in physical terms. The wide range of small arms includes pistols to assault rifles, rocket launchers, and even anti-tank weapons and rocket propelled grenades. Studies carried out by different non-governmental organizations and humanitarian groups working in the relevant field have led the UN to acknowledge that most modern conflicts are fought largely with small arms and used indiscriminately by both the state and the non-state actors, including ex-combatants, terrorists, drug smugglers, and ordinary criminals.

There is very little accuracy in the data on the quantum of small arms in Bangladesh. According to one former Home Minister, the number of illegal weapons in Bangladesh is a little more than one lakh, yet not even one percent of the arms had been recovered, and those that were, were usually the ones that were old and rusted. Heavy and modern weapons were rarely recovered. There is one estimation that in Dhaka alone there are allegedly 15 to 20 thousand illegal arms.
In Bangladesh, the technology of such illegal crew portable weapons ranges from locally made to highly sophisticated imported weapons. As to the sources of arms procurement, various reports suggest that they are smuggled from abroad, stolen from government arsenals, provided by licensed arms dealers, supplied by or stolen from members of the security forces. Vested interest groups including politicians also use their influence to provide their party workers and activists with arms and ammunition. Another source of illegal weaponry is the local production of small arms in Bangladesh. In 1998 alone, 1300 arms were recovered of which one-half were locally made. Cross-border insurgents, refugees from neighbouring countries, outlawed political parties are also suppliers of arms and ammunition. For example, in one incident, an activist of the National Liberation Front of Tripura was arrested with arms in Bangladesh, while in another, one Rohingya refugee was caught with a gun.

Illicit small arms are trafficked into Bangladesh through air, land and sea routes. International smuggling groups use the porous India-Bangladesh borders extensively for arms trafficking. The most frequently used land borders by the underworld network of smugglers are the country’s southwest borders of Shatkhira, Bhadiali, Madra, Keragachi, Hijoldi, Borali; Jessore’s Shikarpur, Mashila, Jennidah, Mahshpur; Chuadanga (Jibonnagar) Meherpur (Ganguni) and Kushhtia (Daulatpur). The international airports in Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong are increasingly becoming popular air routes for smugglers to flow arms and ammunitions into the country. There are allegations that international smuggling rings collaborate with corrupt customs officers. Among other contraband items, they manage to bring in innumerable pistols, revolvers and bullets. In the case of seaway trafficking, consignments of illicit arms are occasionally seized at the Chittagong and Khulna ports. Not always are they meant for the local markets. The concerned quarters are well aware that the Chittagong port is used as a major transit point to ship illegal arms from one place to another.

Some of the types of small arms that have been recovered from the criminals and terrorists are US-made pipe guns, Chinese sub-machine guns, air guns, Indian made hand
Small Arms and Violence in Bangladesh

According to the scanning results, the nature of violence falls into two broad categories: 1. socio-economic and 2. political. Over the years the nature and intensity of violence have taken a horrific shape. Extortion, dacoity, robbery, hijacking, abduction, rape, pick pocketing, ransacking, acid throwing, violence over land, violence in refugee camps are some of the common forms of social violence that came out from the scanning. Domestic violence is another form of social violence that seems to be threatening the security of women and children, the cause being related to dowry, *fatwa* (Islamic decree), family dispute, rape and child labour. According to a recent report of the United Nations, an intimate male partner in any relationship has physically assaulted forty seven per cent of the adult woman populations in Bangladesh. However, the assault does not include sexual abuse or rape.

The other type of violence, broadly falling into the category of political violence, includes inter and intra-party clashes, clash between police and student activists, political killings, vote-rigging at polling centres during elections, political violence during *hartals* and strikes, violence between insurgents and the state security forces, and so forth.

Irrespective of the types of violence, there is a growing tendency to use small arms in almost all kinds of violence, with the exception perhaps of domestic violence. According to one report, the rise in anti-social activities has recently destabilized the law and order situation in different cities and towns. Scanning results again showed that from January to March 1998 there were more than 120 reported cases of crime...
in which small arms were used. In Dhaka City more than 15 were killed in September alone, while the rate of extortion and theft was not less than 70 on the average. The law and order situation was perhaps the worst in the Southwest of Bangladesh, where its people were kept literally hostage to local thugs and goons. In the same month (i.e. September 1998) in the town of Kushtia, 23 people were allegedly murdered, 10 people were kidnapped, while the number of cases of intra-group clashes were 25.

IV The Second Assumption: The Triangular Nexus

The first assumption immediately raises a fundamental question: what is the prevailing mechanism that allows violence, terrorism and illegal arms to sustain in the manner it is today. And this leads to the second assumption: a triangular nexus among the criminal underworld, corrupt law-enforcing agencies and the power hungry political elite must be there in order for terrorism to sustain.

**The Triangular Nexus**

![Diagram of the Triangular Nexus](image)

- TERRORIST
- POLICE
- POLITICIAN
- ORGANIZED CRIME
- SOCIETAL INSECURITY
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(1) Terrorism in Bangladesh

According to police sources, there are now 100 terrorist groups operating in Dhaka city alone. Another report suggests that there are 60 “Top Terrors” in Chittagong. While unemployed street urchins were traditionally lawbreakers, the ‘new’ breed of terrorist comprises of college and university going students. In the name of ‘student politics’, the armed cadres engage in all kinds of anti-social activities, including being hired for political killing.

The illegal spread of small arms has also changed the structure of terrorism for now the terrorists appear more organized. They act as a force and move in a group of more than two. Each group has one leader and at least one will have a firearm. Moreover, every terrorist group has a selected area under its control which makes violence more localized. The terrorists have their own conveyance that increases their mobility. At the same time they maintain liaison with the police and influential people, including local politicians.

(2) Weak State Functioning Organs

a. The Police Department

There are strong allegations about the effectiveness of law enforcing agencies in this country. These allegations have been further substantiated by the Report submitted by a Police Inquiry Commission. Following are some of the major comments of the Report:
- Political interference and corruption have made the police department ineffective in ‘protecting people and public property’.
- Corruption is perhaps the most outstanding cause of police ineffectiveness.
- Some of the leaders of the ruling party not only tend to interfere in police functioning but also victimize those who fail to oblige them.
- Powerful quarters manage to initiate proceedings on fabricated charges.
- As a result, the chain of command in the police is substantially broken.
Only 38% of the total force are actually involved in duties like prevention, detection and investigation of crimes, prosecution of criminals and maintenance of the law and order situation, which concern the common man. The rest (62%) are engaged in various other activities, such as protection of VIPs and dignitaries, key point installations, escort and other miscellaneous functions.

b. **Justice Department: Are All People Equal Before Law?**

In one of the recently held seminars in Dhaka, Justice Habibur Rahman said that the “Judiciary cannot be a part of the government, but a part of the governance... government, society and law are inseparable.” But the reality in Bangladesh depicts a different, if not contrasting, picture where the fundamentals of the rule of law are distorted. There are some people who are above the law. **Mastans**, criminals, student leaders, armed cadres who have political coverage belong to this category.

Moreover, there are legal loopholes in our laws that the godfathers take advantage of. Many of these laws enacted during the British period still remain in operation, even though the social values and other underlying realities have changed. Some are obsolete in terms of serving our social needs. As one legal expert rightly puts it, “Taking advantage of the non-efficacy of such laws, many crimes are committed with impunity.” On average 50 files are filed against criminals every day with 15 police stations in the city. Hardly 5% of the crimes recorded end in conviction. The common man knows that without money or influence, justice will be delayed. The result is “Justice delayed, justice denied.” Hence, even if there is ever-increasing numbers of laws, but not the rule of law. Why?

1. Cases of illegal arms are dismissed because of lack of evidence.
2. Accused murderers are also set free due to lack of evidence.
3. Known terrorists get free from custody and all cases against them are withdrawn because of connections with powerful persons in the ruling regime.

(3) **Destructive Politics**

One of the main allegations about Bangladesh politics is that it has chosen the path of destructive politics, which can be summed up as being apolitical, violent and commercial. While it would be an overstatement to say that all politicians are corrupt, at the same time it would be an understatement to say that politics of this country is constructive. The political elite tends to see politics as an end to its means. Lust for power and wealth is so strong among some, if not majority, that ‘constructive’ politics becomes destructive and dirty. Politicians themselves tend to lose faith in the system. Since re-election cannot be guaranteed in a free and fair election, some politicians depend on muscle power.

Increasingly, political “patronage”, direct or indirect, is given to terrorists and criminals. However, there is no academic study on the correlation between arms and politics in Bangladesh, as the subject is still regarded as one that is taboo. But, politicians directly or indirectly support and sponsor terrorism or engage in criminal offense to the highest degree in order to remain in power, come to power, to take revenge or simply to get rid of an adversary. Hence, the politician’s personal or party interest demands link with the criminal underworld. Today, there are strong allegations that the mainstream political parties in Bangladesh have their own armed cadres.

The nexus between professional thugs and goons and politicians is mutually beneficial. The criminal is ensured of political cover to his mischief, while the politician’s power base is assured in a number of ways. For example, contact with local mastans will make it less difficult to hold political meetings. Not only his personal safety, but also his future votes are taken care of. The ‘hired’ professional thugs and goons make sure their godfather ‘wins’ the election by intimidating the political rival, ‘buying’ votes, stealing ballot boxes and so on. Hence, the mutual benefits that one can derive from the other is a driving force to form a relationship
in which the underworld elements would provide muscle-power in exchange for political coverage.

Financial benefit is another compulsion that links the politician with the criminal underworld. In fact, there are those who would argue that economic gain is the first priority for the politician. In contemporary Bangladesh politics, many politicians have chosen politics as a profession and such politics is their source of bread earning.

V. Impact: Societal Insecurity

Armed violence has become a social menace that is jeopardizing individual and societal security. In the context of this article, societal security would refer to the safety and protection of the life and property of a group of individuals living in a community. The Constitution through its provisions guarantees the security of the citizen, while the State ensures that there are authorized organs to carry out the provisions. Hence, the citizen’s constitutional rights, legal rights, police protection are his sources of security. It can be rightly assumed here that by ensuring citizen’s security the state is providing “societal security”. At the same time, the absence of such security can be termed as a state of “societal insecurity”.

In Bangladesh, there is a general apprehension that there is not enough of individual security. Such fear is obviously not unfounded. The recent rise in crimes, terrorism, and violence is the principal cause for such anxiety. The feeling of insecurity is further enhanced by the individual’s fear of not being adequately protected by the concerned state organs. Thus, the individual’s insecurity is two-pronged: On the one hand, one is exposed to criminals most of whom are equipped with firearms and, on the other, one receives very little legal protection or support from the law enforcing agencies. When the majority of those living in the neighborhood feel the same vulnerability and insecurity, one can assume that in that particular environment there exists “societal insecurity”.

Today, the majority of the people are vulnerable to ‘organized’ violence. The scanning results indicate that there is no single, strict category of people who are victims of ‘organized’ crime. Sometimes, terrorists are themselves victims of their own misdeeds. While it is true that the prime targets are political opponents, businessmen, industrialists
and entrepreneurs, today’s terrorists also target the common man, such as the poor trader, the ‘feriwalla’ (vendors), the boatman (majhi), the hawker, the passer-by and so on.

The long-run impact of the triangular nexus among the underworld, politicians and police is, in a nutshell, societal insecurity. How are the people insecure? As pointed out earlier, the absence of security in the community creates societal insecurity. Under the circumstances, the term insecurity implies vulnerability, helplessness, defenselessness and unprotectedness. On the one hand, the society is armed to the teeth with small arms and, on the other, those are the same people whom the major political parties and law-enforcing agencies try to cover. For obvious reasons, this reduces their chances of being protected by the police. For example, in a case of extortion, the extortionist is well protected by the politician and police. In a situation like this, the victim will call for unnecessary trouble by reporting to the police. There are many cases where one may find his/her life under threat after a case is filed with the police, not to mention the fact that the police is given a further opportunity to harass the victim and draw more money from him. The consequence of the refusal to bow down to the demand of the extortionist has been depicted in innumerable reports, the extreme situation occurring when s/he looses his or her near and dear ones.

Hence, the combination of factors, like the possession of small arms by terrorists, the reluctance or failure of law-enforcing agencies to protect the individual, the consequence to be faced if one does not comply, acts together to make one feel insecure in the society. The scanning results show the areas surrounding which ‘armed’ violence or terrorism normally occurs. These are industrial areas, areas adjacent to slums, shopping complex, bazaars, commercial areas, areas within and outside the premises of educational institutions, (e.g., Dhaka University and its surrounding) restaurants, agriculture, cultivation fields, as well as tender rights, development programmes, airports, riverways, highways, bus-stands, and resource areas (e.g. forest)
Case Studies

The following case studies are to highlight the present situation of societal security in the framework of the triangular nexus between armed violence, political patronage and ineffective state functioning organs.

1. Violence during Elections: In Bangladesh, elections are often marked by violence. According to the Fair Election Monitoring Agency (FEMA) of Bangladesh, the Union Parishad (UP) election of 1998 was marked by violence, fraud and various other irregularities. In one of the UPs, at least 25 people died during the election. Post-election violence also took place, resulting in the killing of newly elected chairmen allegedly by the thugs and goons of the rival candidate. For example, on 4th January 1998, 10-12 armed terrorists murdered a newly elected UP Chairman in Keraniganj, a place not far from the country's capital. No arrest was made in this connection.

The police confirmed the fighting between the competing parties. In all cases lethal weapons were used. It is tragic that the government after spending about 26 crore Taka for the UP elections had to close down a significant number of polling centers because of violence and other related irregularities. It was alleged that candidates of the UP elections 'hired' mastans from the cities. It must also be noted here that the voters' turnout in the election in some Upazillas was quite low because of the fear of violence and fighting. This is not only curbing one his or her right to vote, but also obstructing the growth of democratic practice in the long run.

2. Violence in Educational Institutions: Universities in Bangladesh perhaps best illustrate the triangular nexus among terrorism, corrupt politician and ineffective law enforcing agencies. In the name of student politics, armed cadres with political patronage and 'above-the-law' status have held the campus hostage. The recently exposed happenings at the Jahangir Nagar University (JU) came as a shock to every citizen. The JU incident has revealed, among many things, how terrorism can survive in educational institutions with the political backing of the ruling party. In this particular event, student leaders committed crimes that included rape of innocent girls. Armed with illegal firearms
and backed by a political party, they considered themselves above the law. Otherwise how do we explain the fact that one of the student leaders of J.U. was openly celebrating his 100th rape case?

3. Violence in Trade Unions: The armed clash between two trade unions at the Adamjee Jute Mills near Dhaka is a case of armed violence infiltrating into industrial areas. Sophisticated arms were allegedly used during the two-day fighting. In this connection, a naval steward was arrested for stealing weapons worth Taka four hundred thousand from the warehouse. The clash left four dead and 200 injured.

4. Violence and Deaths in Police Custody: According to article 35(5) of the Bangladesh Constitution, “No person shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment.” But according to one NGO, Manobodhik Commission, 38 persons died in 1997 in police custody.” Although the Home Minister did not agree with the figure but he did say that he was aware of the deaths in jail and police custody. The example of the death of one young man, named Rubel, in late 1998 in police custody brought the issue of violation of human rights to everyone’s attention.

VI. Recommendations: How to Ensure an “Arms-Free” Society in the 21st Century?

In a country where law enforcing agencies are politicized, government is weak, justice is arbitrary, economy is foundering, and crime is rampant, the proliferation of small arms lights a match to gasoline. Unfortunately, Bangladesh is a case in point. As such, if there is a vision to have an arms-free-society in Bangladesh in the 21st Century, the process has to start now. But vision alone is not enough: A combination of political will, community service and a strong judiciary can turn the vision into reality. The following recommendations are suggested to reduce societal insecurity:

(1) Control Inflow of Small Arms: Although there are no data on the quantum of illegal weapons in Bangladesh, it can be safely assumed that a large portion of these enters the country from across the borders via land, air and sea routes. Thus, one of the first tasks would be to control the influx of
arms by taking stringent measures at the borders and other entry points.

(2) Controlling Influx of Cross-border Insurgents: Insurgents and infiltrators, whether local or foreign, have been active carriers of small arms and light weapons. During the insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, hundreds of arms have poured in from neighbouring countries. Some of them were even sophisticated arms. The occasional arrests of insurgents and guerrillas with arms from Myanmar and Northeast India are examples of the linkage between cross-border insurgents and illegal spread of small arms.

(3) Tightening Security in Malkhanas: Government arsenals or warehouses often lack tight security. The criminal waits for the right opportunity to steal arms and ammunition from the malkhanas. Sometimes they only have to lure the security guard with money to get either access to the warehouse or get the arms delivered to them. Ammunitions are mostly in demand as they are not manufactured in the country and imported through licensed dealers. The prevailing system of the security of the Mankhanas (armory) thus needs to be redesigned. Proper and up-dated stockpiling should be considered with utmost seriousness.

(4) Reorganizing Police Force: The police department needs major reorganization in terms of manpower, supply, equipment and, above all, restoration of its morale. One of the complaints that came out from the informal conversations with some of the members of the police force is that they are ill supplied in terms of both manpower and equipment. According to them, the criminals have more sophisticated weapons than they do. The recent replacement of 303-rifles with pistols is a positive step towards modernizing the police department. Police are easily lured into taking bribes from law-breakers in the first place. In the long, corruption becomes a permanent practice. A corruption-free police department is essential if crimes in the society are to be curbed.
(5) **Free and Fair Trials:** There are many allegations that criminals do not get punished in the existing judicial system. In order to make the system work, new laws are not essential. Rather, the state should ensure that the existing ones are carried out without prejudice and discrimination. Whether the criminal belongs to the ruling or opposition party should not be the law enforcing agency’s concern, rather they should investigate whether the defendant is guilty or not in the concerned crime.

(6) **Policy of ‘Zero Tolerance’:** The policy of ‘zero tolerance’, first introduced by the Mayor of New York, Rudy Giuliani, turned out to be quite a successful measure to curb violence in that city. “This concept maintains that by refusing to tolerate tiny infraction of the law-dropping litter, spray-painting walls - the authorities can create a climate in which crime of more dangerous kinds finds it impossible to flourish.” The willingness to take such stern measures is the need of the hour.

(7) **Eviction of Slums:** It has become a recent phenomenon to allow slums to grow in any vacant area of the city. While the sufferings of the slum dwellers are genuine, recent police discovery showed that slums are criminal dens for storing illegal arms and drugs. So while the idea of slum eviction may sound inhuman, letting it grow will be far more dangerous. However, slums should not be destroyed overnight. Rather prior notice should be served and in-depth studies on the rehabilitation of slum dwellers and their options need to be undertaken.

(8) **Employment Generation:** In a country where almost one third of the youth are unemployed and more than half of the population live below poverty line, the rise in crime is not a surprise. Unless efforts are taken to generate employment, these youth will be lured by the underworld elements that are always on the look out for taking advantage of their vulnerability. In this connection, the government, in cooperation with the private sector and non-governmental organizations, can take up special initiatives to deal with the problem of unemployment.
(9) Community Policing: In societies where crime is rampant, communities can have a parallel system of policing. Each community will have its own ansars and security force. Similarly, in the commercial areas the business community could take necessary steps and means to ensure the safety of themselves and their property. However, this is not to encourage citizens to take law into their own hands. Rather the people living in the same community could act as a force and put pressure on the local politician and local thana to improve the law and order situation in their area. In fact, the essence of community policing is to encourage cooperation between the residents and the police. The two advantages of community policing are described here: "A strong police presence can deter crime, or get officers speedily to the crime scene; and the police themselves get to know their patch thoroughly enough to prevent crimes, not just pursue the criminals."

(10) De-politicizing State Functioning Organs: One of the fundamental problems in the Bangladeshi society is the tendency of every government to politicize state functionary organs. This attitude and policy cripples efficiency and, as a result, the ability to run a good administration suffers. De-politicizing state functionary organ is a long and cumbersome process that will take years for it has become a part of the political culture. However, unless the process starts now, the virus that is spreading quickly will soon devour the whole society.

(11) Moratorium on Student-cum-Armed Cadre Politics: There has been much hue and cry whenever the question of banning student politics has been raised, particularly after it was first officially raised by President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed. While the prospect of banning student politics may be regarded as too radical a step, some measures have to be taken, and that too immediately. In the name of student politics, illegal arms dealing, drug trafficking, terrorism, and crimes, including those demeaning to any human being, are taking place in the educational institutions. A moratorium, for example, for ten years will give time for the dirty acts to be cleaned up. In the process, our leaders who
leaders who nurture the armed cadres may learn to be more responsible politicians and reduce their dependence on muscle power.

VII. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to assess the present day societal security in the context of the rising rate of crime and illegal proliferation of small arms and ammunition in Bangladesh. In carrying out the study, the findings led to the assumption that the link between small arms and violence has given birth to “organized crime”, that in turn is sustaining because of a “triangular nexus” among the criminal underworld, power-hungry political elite, and corrupt law enforcing agencies. The case studies, in fact, depicted the near-absence of the rule of law in various segments of the society. The case studies also pointed out the terrorist-politician-police liaison and to some extent confirmed the popular belief that a state of societal insecurity exists in this society. The set of recommendations, given at the end of the paper, is an attempt to show how there could be a terrorist-free, arms-free, and violence-free society in Bangladesh. More importantly, it stressed the need to replace corrupt administrations with effective state functionary organs, and dirty and destructive politics with constructive politics.

The arms-violence linkage does not appear at the moment to be in a transient phase. Rather, it is assuming a permanent shape in our politics, economy and society. Even in terms of strategic security, it has emerged as an internal dimension of Bangladesh’s security concerns. Although there is a way out, unless there is non-partisan political commitment, it will be a difficult, if not impossible, endeavor to root out terrorism from the society. Armed violence is even tarnishing Bangladesh’s image in the outside world. Today, donor countries are raising issues like law and order, good governance as pre-conditions for development aid. There must be a realization that societal security is not just about individual security, but security of the future.
References


