Chapter 4

The Impact of the War on Terrorism on ‘Small States’: The South Asian Context with Special Reference to Bangladesh

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4.1 INTRODUCTION

The War on terrorism defies modernist structures; it is certainly a desperate attempt to resolve issues arising out of post-modern realities. While it is a war waged by the empowered state (the United States) against the relatively disempowered non-state (the terrorists), it is also a war at a precise moment of history when the relatively disempowered non-state has become as global as the empowered state has attained an empowering status. The global nature of the thing has some other interesting consequences as well. Not only does it shun off the linearity between the empowered state and the relatively disempowered non-state, it also carries with it the burden of encompassing or even devouring the other states of the world, including the relatively weak and disempowered small states, in the empowered state’s fight against the non-state terrorists. In this sense, understanding or critiquing the impact of the war on terrorism on Bangladesh is a justifiable case. But then the argument might as well be that Bangladesh’s case is justified for qualitatively different reasons. Let me explain.

That Bangladesh is a ‘small state’ is contentious, and this is more so in the era of globalisation and post-geopolitical phase of international relations. The contention itself has far reaching implications insofar as the issue of war on terrorism is concerned. To wit for a moment, Bangladesh is territorially and, no doubt, economically ‘small’ but
demographically and civilisationally it is a 'large' country. And it is the latter than the former that has now put Bangladesh on a different plane and that again both regionally and globally in the business of combating terrorism. This could be further concretised. I will limit myself to two.

First, is the recent case of Bangladesh being categorised as 'high-risk' by the United States in its war against terrorism. That religion or the notion of Bangladesh being a 'Muslim state' played a part cannot of course be denied here. It may be pointed out that save North Korea all the 24 states that have been labelled so far as 'high-risk' by the United States in its war against terrorism are conspicuously 'Muslim states'! Armenia, though predominantly Christian, was also dubbed 'high-risk,' but the United States later withdrew the labelling allegedly at the request of the Armenians. I guess the American fear is that civilisationally elements in Bangladesh would join hands with extreme Islamic groups operating at the international level on issues ranging from the Palestinian cause to countering Muslim bashing in the West. The American categorisation itself however is bound to alienate the Bangladeshis with many even becoming disinterested in the very campaign against international terrorism. But then there are other more practical reasons for the American fear of Bangladesh harbouring international terrorists, something to which we shall return later.

Secondly, the speed with which Bangladeshis are seeking job abroad and migrating there, and that again both legally and illegally, has created apprehensions in the minds of many scholars, politicians and policy makers both within the region and beyond. Indeed, when Bangladesh is viewed in terms of demography and as the 8th largest country in the world, it does have the effect of creating tensions in migrant-receiving societies, particularly those having lesser population and communal-cum-racial political structures. Indeed, one aspect of the tension is that a newer and formidable Bangladeshi diaspora is in the making, and that it ought to be snubbed at its infancy. What is worse with this scenario is that the more the war on terrorism seeks to invest on military means and starts diverting funds from economic or social development the more the members of over-populated, less developed economies become restive and decide to migrate. The current war on terrorism, given its military and violent content, has
the potential of creating further economic and social ruptures, which
indeed may go on to defeat the very objective of the war, that is, rooting
out terrorism. Such contentions, however, need further explorations if
we are to take them as theoretically tenable and empirically valid. The
paper attempts to do precisely that.

The paper is divided into five sections. The first section examines
the ‘grounds’ responsible for what has come to be labelled as US-led
war on international terrorism. This sets the stage for the second
section that makes an attempt to understand as to why South Asia or
more precisely Bangladesh becomes a recognisable entity in the war
on terrorism. The third section deals with the real face of contemporary
terrorism, with particular reference to South Asia and Bangladesh.
Section 3.5 then highlights the ‘hyperpowered’ status of the United
States and the impact its war on terrorism is having on the lives and
living of the people of Bangladesh. The concluding section deals with
the issue of what is to be done.

4.2 WHY THE WAR ON TERRORISM?

9/11 (11 September 2001) has often been cited as the raison d’être for
the current war on terrorism. There is an element of truth in this, but
then it cannot be stretched very far. Indeed, it gets a bit fuzzy when
one starts critiquing the more recent American-led invasion of Iraq.
The state of ‘fuzziness,’ however, has some solid circumstantial or
more precisely conjunctural basis. In the case of the United States, and
this may sound puzzling to many, it is related to the arithmetic of
reproducing democracy. Mahatma Gandhi, if we remember, once
noted that democracy is a ‘heartless doctrine’ because what it means
is that 51 per cent can impose its will on the 49 per cent of the
population. But that was Gandhi’s way of critiquing majoritarianism.
Things have now moved to a pathetic level, even in some developed
countries, when it comes to reproducing democracy and state power.
Indeed, electorally speaking, the United States is currently a
‘democracy deficit’ society. This is because in the presidential election
of 2000 in the United States, and this has been the pattern for
sometime, less than 50 per cent of the voters turned out to vote, out
of which Bush Jr. barely managed half. That presidency otherwise
was mandated by a quarter of the voters, the bulk of which came as
‘block votes’ from the more organised, albeit conservative, section of
the population.
Keeping aside the fact that the presidential election of 2000 was a controversial one, with messy counting and the intervention of the Supreme Court, some explanation is still required as to why a quarter of the votes were solidly conservative. Voters' frustration with the mainstream political parties – Democratic and Republican – is often held responsible for the lower turnout on the Election Day. This may be true to some extent but then as a point of contention it remains too simplistic, with little or no parallel manifestation of such frustration elsewhere in the society. My understanding is that there is actually a more complex process contributing to the lower voter turnout, and this has to do not so much with the frustration of the population as with the relative success of the United States in bridging democracy with opulence overtime. And it is the latter more than anything else that has nurtured societal values of a precise nature in the United States, one bordering on disinterestedness beyond the immediate. Not surprisingly, we find that more and more Americans are increasingly disinterested with the rituals of democracy, however critical they may be.

Let me at this stage reflect on a survey comparing Asian values with that of the United States to further clarify my point. Noordin Sopiee undertook an interesting survey under the title "Asian Values and the United States: How Much Conflict" and found out that for the Americans the five most important societal values were – free expression, personal freedom, individual rights, open debate and 'thinking for oneself.' On the other hand, the top five societal values for the East Asians were – orderly society, social harmony, official accountability, new ideas and respect for authority. I have no intention of dwelling on the differences between the two sets of values, and that again at a continental level, but would like to reflect on the precise nature of the American societal values and how these impact upon electoral politics.

If we take cue from the top five societal values of the Americans it is easy to comprehend that for a common person in the United States the 'right to vote' is as critical as the 'right' not to vote. In this respect, one could very well say that the more the society ends up with freedom lovers, individualists and liberals the more it is exposed to the possibility of having fewer people attracted to the rituals of democracy, including getting up and voting on the Election Day. The
conservative equation is quite different from this. There is almost an ideological zeal of reproducing the conservative agenda on issues as diverse as ‘abortion,’ ‘gun control,’ ‘military expenditure,’ and even ‘religious freedom,’ and that again noisily and collectively. The net result is sticking together and when required even voting together locally as well as nationally. In any close call election with lower voter turnout, as it has been the case with the 2000 presidential election, the chances of having a conservative President becomes greater for the sheer reason of ‘block votes’ by the conservative section of the population. The bulk of the liberals, while failing to get up, register and vote, soon find their liberalism at stake by actually being liberals! And this is the irony now facing liberalism and democracy in the United States.

The conservative agenda, including some aspects of the current war on terrorism, was well laid out long before Bush Jr. became the President of the United States. Indeed, as part of ‘Campaign 2000,’ Condoleezza Rice, the foreign policy advisor to the Republican presidential candidate wrote a piece in Foreign Affairs where she made it clear that,

Foreign policy in a Republican administration will most certainly be internationalist.... [It] will also proceed from the firm ground of the national interest, not from the interests of an illusory international community (emphasis mine).  

In fact, Rice even went on to use the term ‘911,’ saying that the United States cannot continue to be “world’s ‘911’” as it will degrade its capabilities, instead it ought to decide unilaterally where, when, how and what to attack.  

In this regard, and particularly with reference to Iraq, Rice bluntly said:

Nothing will change until Saddam is gone, so the United States must mobilise whatever resources it can, including support from his opposition, to remove him.

Indeed, the conservative agenda of unilateralism and militarism or what could be referred to as the current nature of the war on terrorism was well laid out long before 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq, although it must be quickly admitted that 9/11 did help accelerate the process.

There is otherwise a precise nature to the current internationalism of the United States. No doubt, it has to do with the conservative agenda but in the midst of a precise and qualitatively different
international or global reality. The current internationalist thrust of the United States and that again at the hands of the conservatives came about when globalisation significantly displaced the post-Bretton Woods international relations. That is, the United States must now deal with the power of the non-state as much as it has to deal with the power of the state. And here lies the irony. When the United States following the demise of the Soviet Union and its own recourse to unilateralism and militarism attained the status of ‘hyperpower,’ it found itself threatened by a bunch of relatively less powerful rogue states and non-state terrorists.

There are critics, both American and non-American, who would go even further in ‘grounding’ the current internationalist thrust of the United States. The conservative stand on the peace dividends from the post-Cold War era has always been shrouded in a mystery if not laid down with suspicion that the idealists and liberals are trying to make the United States militarily and economically weak! To support their argument the critics fall back on President Eisenhower’s warning, very forcefully outlined at his farewell speech, that the American nation must guard itself from the growing power of the ‘military-industrial complex.’ There is certainly an element of truth in this, particularly when it comes to operationalising the war on terrorism, indeed, with rising military expenditure and hefty profits to arms manufacturers and other concerned partners. One could certainly cite the close relationship between the Bechtel Group or Paladin Capital Group and the members manning the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq. But lest we suffer from an essentialist argument it must be quickly noted that the military-industrial complex does not go on to create the global reality. Instead the global reality creates a space for the military-industrial complex to creatively reproduce and profit. And it is from this standpoint that we find some merit in critiquing South Asia or Bangladesh as a recognisable entity in the US-led war on terrorism. Let me reflect on this issue at some length.

4.3 BANGLADESH: SOFT BUT CERTAINLY NOT SMALL

I have already referred to the fact that it is contentious to call Bangladesh a ‘small state,’ and this is more the case if we consider its demographic and civilisational aspects. This, however, is based on a precise theoretical understanding of both geography and culture, an
understanding of which would provide weight to our contention and make clear as to why Bangladesh is so relevant to the US-led war on terrorism. But before delving on it further let me take recourse to the technical meaning of ‘small state’ and see whether Bangladesh is characterised as such. The Commonwealth Secretariat and the World Bank, while working on the issue of small states, used a threshold of 1.5 million people. But more importantly, these two well-respected international organisations prepared a joint report on small states in which they noted the following:

There is no single definition of a small country because size is a relative concept. For instance, Simon Kuznets in ‘Economic Growth of Small Nations’ used an upper limit of 10 million - by this measure, 134 economies are ‘small’ today. Other indicators such as territory size, or GDP are sometimes used. But population is highly correlated with territory, size as well as with GDP; therefore, use of population as an indicator of size helps highlight small states’ limited resources.

That is, population is a critical factor in determining whether a state is ‘small’ or not. If between 1.5 - 10 million is the range for defining a small state, I am afraid even the city of Dhaka (which incidentally has a population of over 10 million) would fail to get a membership if it ever decides to apply! In fact, from South Asia only Bhutan and the Maldives fulfill the Commonwealth-World Bank criteria of small state, and these two are included in the list of another 45 developing countries referred to as small state. Population, however, brings other issues as well. After all, unlike territory, population is a mobile concept, which includes not only the movement of people from one place to another but also their allegiance to things and ideas beyond fixed geographical locations and boundaries. But then the question becomes, why is Bangladesh with a population of nearly 120 million referred to as ‘small state’? When did this all begin?

My contention here is that there is an element of Indo-centricism when we refer to Bangladesh as a ‘small state.’ I am reminded of a BIIS (Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies) seminar in August 1979 on the theme, “Security of Small States in the Contemporary World,” in which the then President of Bangladesh, Ziaur Rahman, also spoke. This is probably the first of a series of seminars on that theme in Bangladesh. The theme, in fact, soon caught the attention of many. In 1982, Talukder Maniruzzaman published his monograph, entitled The Security of Small States in the Third World, in
which he argued that the small states, including Bangladesh, must develop "complex diplomatic repertoires to counteract the moves of much larger states," presumably in Bangladesh's case the author had India in mind. It may be mentioned that Maniruzzaman categorised 'large' and 'small' states in terms of quantitative and traditional war capabilities.

Two years later in 1984 came an edited book, in which I also had a piece, with an interesting sub-title, *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh: A Small State's Imperative*. I guess this was the first concrete attempt to depict and formalise Bangladesh as a small state, although the idea of the book, at least to the editor, Emajuddin Ahamed, was similar to that of Ziaur Rahman and Talukder Maniruzzaman and that was to get Bangladesh out of the Indian nexus. It was otherwise a politically thought-out intellectual intervention in so far as defining Bangladesh was concerned, albeit devised at a critical moment of history when political pressures at home demanded so. That is, Bangladesh as a 'small state' required external support, extending from the Muslim states to China and the United States, to contain 'Big Brother' India! Ironically, while India remained where it was, Bangladesh got stuck into the idea of being 'small.' But in so far as it was an attempt to win over the minds, that is, Bangladeshis would be more resolute and externally focused even beyond South Asia to guard their independence; it did carry some sense beyond the notion of territoriality and 'smallness.' But this has to do as much with the immediate sense of security as with the changes that have come about in organising security. Let me explain.

*Security* in the traditional sense of the term has always been understood in geo-political perspectives, that is, either in the sense of having domination over the oceans and the seas or the land. Although this has been the core thrust of European or Western security doctrines as well as their practices to a considerable extent, it did have significant impact on the question of organising security in post-colonial or developing societies. In the aftermath of World War II and more concretely towards the end of the Cold War the geopolitical understanding of security gave way to what is best referred to as the multidimensional approach to security. That is, population, ecology, food production, finite natural resources, even the effects of El Nino and La Nina, came to be recognised as no less important in
the consideration of national security. This is also referred to as the phase of geo-economics.

But then towards the end of the eighties, the understanding of security took a major turn towards what may be called *psychogeography*, the consideration of space (be it of land, water or habitation) from the standpoint of culture and psychology. In fact, as one critic pointed out, instead of considering a place in its absolute, old-fashioned latitude-longitude sense, the place (more as mental maps) is now being considered for its relative location. Howard Stein is more emphatic on this:

> There is nothing mysterious or esoteric about psychogeography: it is part of our everyday experience of ourselves and our world. The close fit, if not fusion, between one’s sense of self ("who-ness") and one’s sense of place ("where-ness") can be seen throughout the range of the imagery of large groups such as nations to smaller groups such as corporations and medical departments, and in the personal symbolism of individuals as well. The term "psychogeography" refers to people’s shared psychological representation or "map" of the natural and social world, the developmental antecedents of that map, the group dynamics which forge and revise that common map, and the consequences in group and intergroup action of living according to that map.\(^\text{16}\)

This is particularly critical at a time when *globalisation* has redefined not only our understanding of the national and the nation state but also the international and the global. The concept of Bangladesh, to give an example, can no longer be contained or limited within the 55,126 sq.miles of its territorial boundary but must also include the Bangladeshis living in increasing number in different parts of the world. Similar is its content of having been identified by both friends and critics as an Islamic state. The latter allows Bangladesh, whether willingly or unwillingly, to align itself with the Islamic population worldwide, which at times could create serious security concern, as was the case in the post-9/11 period. And here lies the relevance of Bangladesh in the current war on international terrorism. However, there is something else involved here.

The ‘softness’ of Bangladesh comes not only from a psychogeographical reading and the advent of globalisation, something to which we will return in some details in the next section, but also from the practice of *polarised politics* at home, including inter-party rivalry on the issue of terrorism. The following editorial of a national daily of
Bangladesh captured this point well:

If UNB report last Thursday is correct then the former prime minister in a lecture on “Democracy, Human Rights and Security Threats” held last Tuesday in Brussels said that the last general “election results were manipulated through planned fraud, vote rigging and unfair practices.” “If the election process is betrayed, if a fundamentalist alliance assumes power through conspiracy the country might become a hotbed of terrorism, it can become a safe haven for terrorist network as the government of fundamentalist alliance will morally and physically help so-called fundamentalist terrorists through under cover” she said....

What we find extremely regrettable is that [the former prime minister] seems to want to use the present global concern, Western anxiety and US hysteria about terrorism, and especially its link with Muslim fanatics in some countries to discredit her political opponent in Bangladesh. What she is not realising is that in attempting to do that she is harming the country much more, of which she is a leader, than her political rivals.17

But lest the party-in-power suffer from disrepute and be outmanoeuvred on the issue of terrorism, the incumbent prime minister called the main opposition party “al-Qaeda and Taliban of Bangladesh.”18 My issue here is certainly not with the ruling party or with the opposition but with polarised politics, which further exposes Bangladesh to dubious elements and shadowy activities, including the active and empowered terrorists. It is this to which we will now turn and discuss in some details.

4.4 REAL FACE OF CONTEMPORARY TERRORISM IN SOUTH ASIA

We have already referred to psychogeography and how the issue of national security gets redefined with globalisation. But then globalisation, mainly because of its birth from a complex combination of multiple interactions, has given rise to a multiversity or multiple universes of knowledge and practices. As a result we are faced with several versions of globalisation, but then one particular variant – subaltern globalisation – is critical in understanding the nature of contemporary terrorism. A closer exposition will make this clear.

Economic globalisation or globalisation from top is something we are all familiar with.19 What it means is that in addition to the internationalisation of trade, finance and investment we now have the internationalisation of production as well. That is, multinational or rather transnational companies now collect resources in several countries,
process them in another several countries and finally, export the finished products to the rest of the world. A fully finished product, therefore, no longer has one single birthmark; it has multiple birthmarks since several countries have gone to produce it. A Compaq Computer, in that sense, is no longer entirely American, or a Toyota car fully Japanese. The final product of both these items will have components made in several countries of the world. Put differently, unlike the previous internationalisation of things, in the globalisation phase of capitalism the thing itself is the product of the international or global market. In this newer configuration, the non-state enterprises are often more critical than the state-oriented or state enterprises in the reproduction of capitalism. The need for safeguarding the non-state enterprises, therefore, is as vital as protecting the state enterprises. The outcome has been greater policing and diffusion of illicit weapons, which often for reasons of pilferage and structural leakage end up in the market as illicit commodities. I will return to this issue shortly.

There is yet another type of interaction informing and reproducing globalisation. In fact, critics have already referred to the mushrooming of global networks resisting economic globalisation as 'globalisation from below.' The latter includes a diverse group of people – environmentalists, NGOs, religious groups, small farmers, labour unions (incidentally of both the developed and developing countries), women's movement, consumerists, African debt relief campaigners, anti-sweatshop activists, and the like, all one way or another either critical of or directly suffering from and struggling against the impact of economic globalisation. The subaltern nature of the resistance movements, particularly the networking, can hardly be minimised.

But then, there is a further subaltern variant to the whole notion of globalisation from below. This refers to the deepening of relationship between and amongst the 'dubious groups' and 'shadowy activities' ranging from smuggling of goods and people, illicit production and trading of small arms, money laundering, narco-production and trading, terrorism, and the like, and that again, across and beyond national, ethnic, racial, and even religious affiliations. The subalterns, particularly the poverty-ridden and marginalised population, become easy target of such groups and activities, but more importantly the state of being itself becomes a factor for certain groups of (relatively
well off) people to rally support and even clandestinely work for their cause. A protracted nature of poverty and marginality and a lack of substantive global concern also push them to seek informal or even criminal means to reproduce their lives or redress the situation. The complex networking at this level and in combination with the resistance movements against economic globalisation could be best referred to as *subaltern globalisation*. Here the subalters, including their ardent supporters and sympathisers, are no less creative and empowered when it comes to organising and reproducing their activities at the global level, and that too often by challenging the overly empowered forces of economic globalisation.

The element of subalternity in the resistance movements against economic globalisation cannot be denied. The anti-globalisation protests in Seattle, Rome, Prague or Washington all tend to indicate that the subalters or marginalised forces have been put into a dire situation because of economic globalisation. The protests are otherwise meant to highlight the grievances of the subalters worldwide.

The resistance movements however in and by themselves do not reproduce the life and living of the subalters. Mittelman has already indicated that 'where poverty is severe, criminal gangs flourish.' The link between poverty and criminality is less linear than what is seemingly suggested here. A state of subalternity in fact creates conditions that make people disinterested in the business of reproducing the power of the state. Misgovernance otherwise becomes the (dis)order of the day. People, particularly the subalters, increasingly start depending on informal, often criminal, means for reproducing their livelihood. Even when requiring business or personal security they fall back on the power of the 'godfathers,' hired goons, *mastans*, and the like, than on the otherwise inept, often corrupt, governmental machineries. A shadowy network of things and transactions get reproduced and in the process destabilises not only the power of the state but also the power of the subalters, indeed, making them more vulnerable and disempowered. This further creates grounds for fresh recruits and creative but demonic ventures for organising and reproducing subaltern globalisation. The complex structure is somewhat demonically intriguing. I will limit myself to three areas, with particular reference to terrorism.
4.4.1 Narco-Terrorism

Narco-production and trading is a lucrative business in this region. In 2001 Myanmar surpassed Afghanistan as the largest producer of illicit opium and heroin in the world. To provide some knowledge of the amount, 865 metric tons of opium was produced in Myanmar in 2001, almost all of which were processed into heroin and sold to the illicit market both within and outside the region. This is more than double the amount of illicit opium that is available in other heroin-producing countries, such as India, Columbia, Mexico, or Laos. It may be mentioned that there exists a vibrant but complex relationship between opium growers and heroin producers, drug dealers and consumers, security and custom officials, high-risk investors and money launderers, and that again, not only nationally but also regionally and globally. As the following US Drug Enforcement Agency report suggests:

Opium poppy cultivation and heroin refining take place in remote, mountainous border regions. Armed ethnic groups such as, the United Wa State Army, the Kokang Chinese, and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army control the cultivation areas, refine opium into heroin, and also produce methamphetamine. Associates of these organisations from other Asian nations have shipped tons of heroin from Burma to the United States within the past decade. The largest single heroin seizure in the United States consisted of 486 kilograms of Burma-produced heroin that the US Customs Service discovered in a containerised shipment of plastic bags from Southeast Asia, via Taiwan, en route to a warehouse in Hayward, California, in May 1991.

But Myanmar, apart from being a member of the infamous ‘Golden Triangle’, is also close to yet another major narco-producing region, the ‘Golden Crescent.’ In smuggling heroin from Myanmar beyond the region and the continent both India and Bangladesh are used as transit points. This further exacerbates problems related to narco-terrorism in the region. In fact, one critical problem arising out of the confluence of two major narco-producing and trading regions is the cementing of a diabolic relationship between insurgent groups, arms dealers and narco-terrorism. Such a relationship is quite common in and around Thai-Myanmar, Indo-Myanmar and Bangladesh-Myanmar borders. Not that all the insurgent groups engage in narco-production or narco-trafficking but it has been found that almost all of them have
regularly taxed and exhorted money from the traffickers while providing protection to the latter for conducting trafficking in drugs. There are several critical implications of this.

Firstly, the transnational narco-networks, now backed by armed insurgents, make anti-narco-production or anti-narco-trafficking drive immensely difficult. And given the terrain (both physical and topographical) in which the insurgents and the traffickers operate there is now all the more reason to believe that the nationally-organised military or coercive solutions may not be the correct way of overcoming the menace of narco-terrorism.

Secondly, weapons, particularly small arms, in the hands of both the insurgents and traffickers become more rampant, indeed, to the point of threatening the law and order situation in the vicinity. A large portion of the money received from taxing and extorting the narco-traffickers goes on to purchase small, at times sophisticated, arms for the insurgents. I will have more to say about this issue later.

Finally, subaltern aspirations get entwined between insurgency and narco-terrorism, almost to the point of blurring the distinction between the two. While this becomes handy for the state machineries in the strategy of depicting the insurgents as narco-traders and winning back the support of the members of the dissenting communities, it often leads them to quick-fix remedies with little or no results. As the World Bank-sponsored study on Indo-Bangladesh border smuggling once pointed out that "Ordinary men, women and even children participate in smuggling as couriers, porters and rickshaw pullers," which only indicates that the subalternity of smuggling or even narco-terrorism is far more complex than what is readily understood. There is therefore no guarantee that the narco-menace would discourage the subalterns from joining the trade.

4.4.2 Money Laundering

Narco-terrorism would not make much headway without the practice of money laundering. It is the latter that provides the required funds for the production and, later on, shipments of the narcotics across regions and continents. The weakness and corruption prevalent in the banking system of the region remain easily susceptible to money laundering. Often drug traffickers invest their drug profits in the
country’s infrastructure and legitimate businesses.\textsuperscript{29} The drug trafficker-cum-money launderer otherwise with the connivance of the bank and the state end up running legal businesses! When such a structure comes into being it becomes impossible to eradicate narco-trafficking and all the corroborating agencies, including money laundering and terrorism, unless and until the state itself goes through a sustained period of reforms and restructuring.

At times certain other structural factors are also responsible in reproducing money laundering, as is the case with the 	extit{stateless} but relatively well off Rohingyas living abroad. As stateless and few licit areas to invest, these Rohingyas have no option but to launder money to various Rohingya nationalist or insurgent groups, mainly to fulfill their subaltern aspirations in the northern Arakan region of Myanmar. That a part of this money would be used in purchasing arms and later on in insurgent or terrorist activities can never be ruled out.

Let me at this stage clarify one point. Once a subaltern struggle takes a military or violent turn, it cannot escape from being linked to the various networks of subaltern globalisation. This is because in order to sustain the subaltern movement through \textit{military means} there is a dire need for both cash and arms, indeed, over and above the committed recruits of fighters. Often the funds as well as the arms come via the network of dubious groups and shadowy activities. In recent times, more so in the post-cold war era, this has been the case practically with all the militant groups, including those directly involved in subaltern movements. Tamil Tigers is a good instance, which despite having being funded by the Tamil diaspora, did not hesitate to enter into the business of selling heroin and hashish for financing arms purchases.\textsuperscript{30} Again, take the case of Kachin Independence Organisation, a militant group fighting for the interests of the Kachin people within Myanmar, which with five thousand regular ‘armed’ soldiers remains ‘heavily involved in the heroin trade.’\textsuperscript{31} This is not something unexpected in view of the protracted nature of these movements and the cost that is involved in sustaining them.

Even a modest costing will show that the need for cash is quite substantial. For instance, if we take that a militant group is made up
of 3000 fighters or terrorists and that each is paid a monthly allowance of Rs. 5000, the need for cash just for paying the terrorists every month comes to Rs. 15,000,000 (or US$ 319,148 at the current exchange rate), which is quite substantial in local standards. Often the militant groups, for the sake of maintaining their freedom and this is more so in the aftermath of the cold war, shy away from a particular source of funding. Instead, they now prefer diversifying fund-raising, which at times includes money from taxing the narco-traders or even joining in the business of selling drugs and arms. The following report is a good indicator of the militant groups' involvement in arms trafficking and making money from it:

Around 100 AK-47 rifles reached different gangs of criminals in the port city (of Chittagong) and its surrounding areas from the insurgents of Arakan state of Myanmar staying in deep forests across the Bangladesh border.... Arakan insurgents sold the rifles and some other sophisticated weapons to these gangs through a clandestine channel of local kingpins of arms dealers and smugglers on various occasions in the past few years.

This brings us to the third and final area, the issue of illicit small arms.

4.4.3 Illicit small arms

If anything that has empowered the terrorists and mastans lately, it has been the proliferation and use of illegal small arms. In April 1996 the Bangladesh military seized the following weapons from the vessels off Cox's Bazar in the Chittagong District, a place incidentally not very far from the Bangladesh-Myanmar border:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of Illegal Small Arms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(April 1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. AK-47 Rifles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Machine guns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Rocket launchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Grenades</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But this is nothing compared to the most recent seizure on 2 April 2004, and that again from the Karnaphuli coast in Chittagong. The seized cache included:
It is difficult to imagine that these weapons, including many in the pipeline, enter Bangladesh without some connivance of the state machineries, particularly police and customs departments. But even the knowledge of possible ‘helpers’ does not provide a clear picture as to who received the arms and more importantly who supplied them. The best we can do in this kind of circumstances is consult Jane’s Infantry Weapons, a book of notable distinction, and find out the names of the countries manufacturing these weapons. According to Jane’s 1996 edition, the following countries, both developed and developing, were listed as the main producers or suppliers of small arms: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Britain, Chile, China, France, Germany, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, USA, Venezuela and many more.

But this does not help much unless we identify the birthmark (i.e. the original manufacturer) of the small arms that are found and used in terrorist activities. But since the public had no access to the seized weapons mentioned above, there was no way to find out the birthmark of these weapons. But then a survey conducted at Dhaka University in 1995-1996, supplemented by various newspaper reports, helped to trace the type, birthmark and cost of small arms found in the hands of student political cadres and in-campus mastans. The following is the list:

### List of Illegal Small Arms
(April 2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Weapon</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sub-machine Gun (7.62 mm)</td>
<td>1290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Tommy Gun</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Semi Automatic Spot Rifle (.9mm)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Rocket launchers (40mm)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Grenade Launcher</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Rocket (40mm)</td>
<td>840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Hand grenade</td>
<td>25020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Magazines of SMG &amp; others</td>
<td>6392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Bullets</td>
<td>18.40 lakh rounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Small Arms Used by Mastans in Dhaka University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Birthmark/Manufacturer</th>
<th>Price (Taka &amp; in Thousand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saddam Pistol</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>40-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 mm bore pistol</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>50-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 bore pistol</td>
<td>Spain, Italy, Brazil</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.65 mm bore pistol</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese rifle</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>303 cut rifle</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.45 revolver</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German revolver</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.324 revolver</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>15-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pipe gun</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shutter gun</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The type and birthmark of the small arms indicate that the bulk of them were produced in developed countries but then it does not tell us how they made it to the university. It is unlikely that these weapons were directly shipped or airlifted from the manufacturing countries to their destination in Dhaka. What is more likely is that these weapons entered Bangladesh from various border points (Bangladesh-Myanmar as well as Indo-Bangladesh) via a vibrant subaltern network (both dubious and political) that possibly included at various stages of their shipments members of both developed and developing countries.

On this issue, a national daily of Bangladesh reported:

Sixteen northern districts of the country, especially the frontier ones are flooded with illegal arms and ammunition, posing a threat to law and order situation. These arms are mostly possessed by political activists, outlawed extremists, terrorists, extortionists and miscreants. The illegal arms include both foreign and local sten gun, SMG, sawed-off rifle, SLR, revolver and pipe gun. Most of the firearms are in the hands of activists of ‘three political parties’ who have separate hideouts in different places in this region including frontiers of Natore, Pabna, Sirajganj and Bogra districts.
The subaltern nature of the network cannot be denied, although the flow of small arms has gone beyond those adhering to some form of subaltern aspirations. In fact, the flow has become so acute and extensive that even the former Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Deb Mukherjee, publicly noted, "It is possible that firearms are among the items smuggled from India into Bangladesh." Put differently, without an extensive subaltern network, it is impossible to imagine the flow of small arms, whether to Cox's Bazaar or Dhaka University. At times, however, not only the arms flow but also the network could prove deadly. Let me cite an example by quoting Jasjit Singh:

A large number of terrorist groups are believed to be in possession of man-portable SAMs now.... The whereabouts of the unaccounted 560 Stinger missiles (out of the stock supplied to Afghan Mujahideen) are unknown, and all efforts to recover them have failed so far. A few had appeared in Iran, having been sold by the Mujahideen. Another 312 were reportedly sold in the open market at Landi Kotal (Pakistan) in January 1993. Earlier this year (1995) the LTTE shot down two Sri Lanka Air Force aircraft carrying passengers.

What we have here is a subaltern network consisting of Afghans, Iranians, Pakistanis, and in so far as the missiles making it to the hands of the Tamil Tigers, Indians and Sri Lankans. But then, an American made weapon changing hands in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, India and finally reaching Sri Lanka can only make everyone culpable when the said weapon is finally used against the Sri Lankans. Similar is the case with the weapons that are used in Bombay, Karachi, Dhaka, Delhi, Colombo or any other place in South Asia. Indeed, if there is an element of subaltern bonding among the users of small arms, there is also a bonding, albeit more social, among those killed by these weapons. This is because most of the victims turn out to be disempowered, marginalised subalterns! In this context, can we bank on the state for ridding South Asia of illegal small arms, particularly when the network of small arms itself is subaltern, regional and global? Few, I believe, would have the nerve to answer this in the affirmative.

If we take a critical and holistic stock of narco-terrorism, money laundering and illegal small arms, it becomes easy to comprehend the art and skill of contemporary terrorism. When it comes to the issue of organising and reproducing the latter, it has certainly ceased to remain 'national' or 'statist.' Instead it has now become 'transnational,'
making the best, if not creative, use of globalisation, particularly of the subaltern variant. Added to all these, however, has been the horrifying phenomenon of suicide bombing. The latter is now regarded as "the most feared weapons in the arsenal of political activists." And as indicated earlier, once the subaltern aspirations get intertwined with the dubious elements of subaltern globalisation, the result could be deadly. Suicide bombing, in this context, could create havoc on an unprecedented scale. This is mainly because suicide bombings far from being acts of loonies and the macabre "are initiated by tightly run organisations that recruit, indoctrinate, train, and reward the bombers." And it is this aspect of terrorism that has come to haunt not only South Asia and Bangladesh but also the United States and the West, for the subaltern network, at times aided by suicide bombing, could play havoc not only nationally and regionally but also globally.

4.5 HYPERPOWER, HYPERTENSION

Hypertension is on the rise in the United States. I am of course referring to a medical study recently completed at the universities of South Carolina and Wisconsin that claimed that "Almost one in three US adults had high blood pressure at the end of the last decade." This had reversed a downward trend and raised another warning flag about Americans' health. What is equally surprising is that at the same time the US Department of Health and Human Services warned the Americans about the dangers of obesity, which also showed a marked increase. One can in this respect easily make a correlation between 'gigantism' and hypertension, although the linearity may not always hold true for many of the individuals. The significance of this study can hardly be minimised; it has implications that are social, political, and even psychological.

The hyperpower status of the United States seems to have reproduced hypertension, not only for itself but also for others. As one critic pointed out:

America is not just the lone hyperpower – it has become the defining power of the world. America defines what is democracy, justice, freedom; what are human rights and what is multiculturalism; who is a 'fundamentalist,' a 'terrorist,' or simply 'evil' (emphasis in original).

Not surprisingly but somewhat ludicrously, in the wake of US invasion of Iraq and anti-war sentiments in France, the food courts in
US Congressional buildings in Washington DC redefined ‘French fries’ and ‘French toast’ and started calling them ‘Freedom fries’ and ‘Liberty toast’ respectively. What happened to the ‘French wine,’ however, remained a mystery! The hypertension soon became contagious even to those serving the government of the United States abroad. A news reporter of a mainstream daily in Bangladesh told me that the US Embassy had sent a note of concern to the Editor for letting a ‘teenager’ publish something humourously on how to make a (fictitious) bomb! Bangladeshi students are also facing difficulty in getting admission in the American universities, and some students, with very good credentials, have also complained to the author that getting admission in the Department of Physics has become particularly tougher now. But more importantly, in the wake of America’s hypertension, Bangladesh found itself redefined by the United States – from a moderate, Islamic, democratic polity to ‘high-risk’ terrorist-prone society. Far from helping Bangladesh overcome its polarised politics, the labelling further hardened the respective positions of the political groups, with each ceremonially blaming the other. War on terrorism otherwise contributes newer and refined fuels to ‘warring’ factions at home.

But let me go back to the contention that I made earlier. The 9/11 incident may have accelerated the process, but in so far as terrorism is concerned Bangladesh came under the watchful eyes of the United States long before that event took place. One is reminded here of Clinton’s visit to Bangladesh and how his movements were restricted to the US Embassy at Dhaka, allegedly for reasons of security. The post-9/11 ‘high-risk’ labelling of Bangladesh only confirmed what seemed an aberration at the time of Clinton’s visit.

Two immediate factors seem to have readily contributed to the United States almost overnight redefining of Bangladesh. The first is the recovery of the Rohingya files in Afghanistan by the Americans. The following report filed by Bertil Lintner is a telling one in this respect:

Among the more than 60 video tapes that the American cable television network CNN obtained from the al-Qaeda’s archives in Afghanistan in August this year, one is marked ‘Burma’ (Myanmar), and purports to show Muslim ‘allies’ training in that country. While the group shown, the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), was founded by Rohingya
Muslims from Myanmar’s Rakhine State and claims to be fighting for autonomy or independence for its people, the tape was, in fact, shot in Bangladesh. The RSO, and other Rohingya factions, have never had any camps inside Myanmar, only across the border in Bangladesh. The camp in the video is located near the town of Ukhia, southeast of Cox’s Bazaar, and not all of the RSO’s ‘fighters’ are Rohingyas from Myanmar.  

Although the report falls short in identifying the main reason for RSO’s militancy, that is, protracted statelessness of the Rohingyas within Myanmar, it raised one issue that merits some attention: locating the Rohingya militants and the RSO within Bangladesh. In so far as this report is concerned, the hypertension of the United States vis-à-vis Bangladesh is understandable. For the Americans there is now evidence (!) that the ‘dubious elements’ and ‘shadowy activities’ within Bangladesh have come to reproduce themselves beyond the national boundaries, and more frighteningly, linking themselves up with networks that stretches from Myanmar to Afghanistan, if not beyond.

Secondly, the Right and Left political distinctions within Bangladesh got blurred as a result of the war on terrorism, particularly following the US-led invasion of Iraq. This requires some explanation. In earlier times, particularly during the Vietnam War, the Left forces within Bangladesh (then part of Pakistan) opposed the US policy in the Southeast Asia region. On the other hand, the Right, including the so-called ‘Islamic forces,’ sided with the Americans. Even later, save on the issue of Palestine, the Left forces remained aloof when the United States got militarily involved in countries with Muslim majority population. In recent times, Bosnia and Afghanistan are good examples. Only with the invasion of Iraq do we see for the first time that the Left and Right forces within Bangladesh campaigning together against the United States. There is also a global side to this, but that need not bother us here. What is, however, important in this radical realignment is that the position of the moderates also got blurred. And that is something very worrying, for it only confirms that more and more people have become disinterested, if not hostile, to the US-led campaign against international terrorism. For the hyperpower, this is bound to reproduce hypertension!

The prescription, and this could only happen when things are over-tensed, is to seek an easy way out. The ‘soft state’ is being repeatedly told to gear up and become ‘hard’! But given the weak nature of Bangladesh’s economy and the psychogeographical concern
of the majority of the people, this amounts to a tall request. In fact, the only place where it had some effect is at the visa counters and international airports! But restrictions on the movement of people, as anyone familiar with its history knows, invite all kinds of desperation. Some even would not hesitate to join the dubious networks of subaltern globalisation to reach the desired destiny. At times, such restrictions tend to empower the very network against which the war on terrorism is launched.

Elsewhere in South Asia, the war on terrorism provides a 'model' for some countries to at least take up the rhetoric of violence, if not to boost up their military strength. Advani's (former Deputy Prime Minister of India) language of coercive diplomacy and Musharraf's (President of Pakistan) equally forceful retort in post-9/11 period is one aspect of it. Needless to say, not only does this divert developmental funds towards the coercive sectors, including the military and police, but also creates a hyper-tense milieu within the region with frightening prospects.

4.6 CONCLUSION: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Getting a grip on the situation is first. It is in fact too early to provide some evidential impact of this war, for elements of it got fused with something that had a birth parallel, if not prior, to economic globalisation, namely, the subaltern variant of globalisation. Contemporary terrorism and the US-led war against it only tell that the 'national' resolution of the problem is not possible. If that is the case, it is important that we take up research agendas, including policy initiatives, which are not only fresh and creative but also transnational or multinational in nature. Two could easily be cited in this context. One is the reform of the police, without which the 'dubious groups' can never be contained. But given the complex, if not creative, network of the latter in South Asia, it is worth pursuing police reform regionally and not just nationally. This would not only require cross-national confidence-building but also newer kinds of training, certainly beyond the conventional ones.

On this issue, and this brings us to the second example, I would go a little further and propose the creation of a South Asian Civil-Police Force. This is because in this region, policing has been an absolute prerogative of the government and the coercive forces, namely the
police and the military. There has been virtually no role for the civic population or civil society on matters related to security. But there is more civil content than military when it comes to narco-terrorism, money laundering, and even illegal small arms. Indeed, these are critical sectors in the nexus that is responsible for reproducing contemporary terrorism. Mentionable is the fact that there are precise structural reasons for money laundering, particularly when it comes to illegal migrants/stateless persons who are otherwise barred from transferring money through official channels. Beefing up the power of official scrutiny or that of the police or the military to contain and resolve these issues, including contemporary terrorism, would take us nowhere. A combined civil-police force and that again, South Asian in scale, would have the effect of not only degovernmentalising and subsequently denationalising but also depolicing security issues, indeed, to a point where the (post-national) civil authority would be engaged in the task of combating the dubious elements of subaltern globalisation, including terrorism, both within and beyond national borders.

Secondly, only massive reconstruction, indeed, of the Marshall Plan type, could make a difference to those ‘failed states’ which are otherwise engaged, not necessarily knowingly but structurally, in the business of reproducing both ‘dubious elements’ and terrorists. The bottom line, of course, ought to be that states, including the hyperpower, must resist the temptation of depicting or making ‘the other state’ a failed state. A continuation of the latter, even without serious military excursions, makes reconstruction work, even of meagre nature, very difficult. BRAC’s role in Afghanistan is a good case in this context. Not only does its work remain limited to the periphery of the cities, mainly for reasons of security, but at home also there is little motivation to carry out the task. A greater participation of the United Nations could make a difference, and this includes sending peacekeeping forces as well. In this connection, it may be pointed out that India has already formally notified the United States that without the participation of the United Nations no Indian peacekeeping troops would be sent to Iraq. Bangladesh, more because of domestic pressure, has already voiced the same. If anything, this further creates ruptures and delays the critical role of reconstruction in the war against terrorism.
Thirdly, there is a serious need for the hyperpower to overcome its hypertension and replace it with what could be referred to as 'hyperresponsibility.' There is a Chinese proverb that says that the tallest tree attracts the most dangerous winds during a typhoon. Indeed, as the 'tallest tree' it is quite natural that America would be the target of resentments and criticisms. But to contain them what the United States requires is not arrogance and a display of firepower but greater understanding backed by a greater sense of responsibility. In fact, at this stage a hyperresponsibility towards the Palestinian people would overnight change the resentments and criticisms against the United States not only in Bangladesh but also globally. I can almost guarantee that if such a thing happens those who are now silent spectators of the US-led war on terrorism would voluntarily join the latter to rid the world of the specter that has come to haunt the lives and livings of the people.

Finally, war on terrorism brings home the point that reproducing democracy, including its rituals, is as critical as having democratic institutions keep an eye on its practice. This factor is as important to the United States as it is to South Asia and Bangladesh. Indeed, in post-modern times, election results no longer remain contained within the national boundaries but inform and shape ideas and activities, often global in nature. In this context, if 'democracy deficit' is an unacceptable outcome, requiring urgent reforms and rectification, so is 'democracy surplus' devoid of democratic institutions. Both could distort things and make war on terrorism a difficult vocation altogether.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Since like all concepts 'terrorism' too is a dynamic and ever transforming concept, I have resisted the temptation of defining it. The following discussion, particularly in the light of a critical but precise understanding of subaltern globalisation, makes it clear as to where the concept of terrorism in contemporary times is located.

2 This is precisely the reason why concepts like 'state terrorism' and 'counter-terrorism' remain inadequate as both are 'statist' in nature and somewhat futile in containing the power of non-state terrorism. There is no denying however that critical features of 'state terrorism' are present in the US execution of war on terrorism. The recent US aerial bombing of Afghanistan and the US invasion of Iraq are good examples of 'state terrorism.'


Ibid.


Ibid, p. 60.


This definition of size was agreed by the Commonwealth Advisory Group in producing its report, A Future for Small States: Overcoming Vulnerability, Commonwealth Advisory Group, 1997.


This is well documented in the magazine, BIUSS Silver Jubilee, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Dhaka, June 25, 2003.


The Daily Star, Saturday, November 2, 2002.

New Age, Tuesday, July 1, 2003.


Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello and Brendan Smith, ibid., p. 10.


India Country Brief, Drug Intelligence Brief, DEA Intelligence Division, Office of International Intelligence, Europe, Asia Africa Strategic Unit, Washington DC, May 2002, p. 2.

Ct. from Burma Country Brief, op. cit.

Ibid., p. 4.


Money laundering here is understood as changing the form and ownership of monies generated from illegal sources. In South Asia it is also called hawala or hundi. For a detailed exposition, see Giri Raj Shah, Encyclopaedia of Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances, Volume 2 (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1998), pp. 491-511.

Burma Country Brief, op. cit., p. 11.

Giri Raj Shah, op. cit., p. 515.


Abdullah-al Shams, “Campus Terrorism.” Research conducted under the supervision of the author, Department of International Relations, University of
Dhaka, September, 1996; and Neila Husain, “Proliferation of Small Arms and Politics in South Asia: The Case of Bangladesh,” RCSS Policy Studies 7, Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo, May 1999.

37 The Daily Star, October, 19, 2000, p. 10.

38 Ibid., p. 12. Also see, Neila Husain, op. cit.


40 John Daly, “Suicide bombing no warning, and no total solution,” Jane’s Terrorism & Security Monitor, 17 September 2001.


42 New Age, Thursday 10 July 2003, p. 7.

43 Ibid.


46 Ct. in Ziauddin Sardar and Merryl Wyn Davis, op. cit., p. 197.