



CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES
WORKING PAPER 1
2010

Security Challenges to India-Bangladesh
Relations

DR MANSI MEHROTRA-KHANNA

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, is an autonomous think tank dealing with contemporary issues of national security and conceptual aspects of land warfare, including conventional and sub-conventional conflicts and terrorism. CLAWS conducts research that is futuristic in outlook and policy-oriented in approach.

Centre for Land Warfare Studies
RPSO Complex, Parade Road, Delhi Cantt
New Delhi 110010

© 2010 Centre for Land Warfare Studies

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without first obtaining written permission of the copyright owner.

The views expressed are the personal views of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of CLAWS. This is a working draft. Comments, questions, and permission to cite should be directed to the author at mansime@gmail.com

About the author

At the time of writing, Dr Mansi Mehrotra-Khanna was an Associate Fellow at CLAWS. Her areas of research interest include ethnic and security studies in South and Central Asia.

About this series

CLAWS Working Papers are unedited works in progress. Disseminated online, the final version of this paper may nevertheless appear in future CLAWS publications, peer-reviewed journals, or edited volumes.

Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	5
CHAPTER 2: INDO-BANGLADESH BORDER ISSUE.....	12
Security Concern from India-Bangladesh Border.....	14
Illegal immigration.....	14
Trans-border terrorism and movement of insurgents	15
Establishment of madrasas.....	17
Border Management	18
Difficulties to Border Management	20
Unresolved Maritime Borders	26
CHAPTER 3: BANGLADESH: THE NEW HUB OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM	31
Political Radicalisation	31
Bangladesh in Turmoil.....	34
Main Islamist Groups in Bangladesh.....	36
Sanctuary for Indian Insurgent Groups	39
Madrasas as the Breeding ground for terrorist.....	45
Links.....	46
Financial Sources	49
CHAPTER 4: BANGLADESH ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION: EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES	54
Historical Background	54
Indira-Mujib Agreement of 1972.....	58
Illegal Migrant (Determination by Tribunal) Act.....	59
Implications of Illegal Immigration	62
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	70
Border management	70
Tackling Terrorism.....	72
Illegal immigration.....	73

This page is intentionally blank

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Conventional definition for security refers to conditions that result from the establishment and maintenance of protective measures that ensures a state of inviolability from hostile acts or influences. In the present times, security is directly related to globalisation due to growing interdependencies in all aspects of our lives. On one hand progress has created suitable environment to achieve economic affluence, spread of political freedom and has promoted peace and on the other hand it has led to social fragmentation and implanting the seeds of hostility and conflict.

At the root of threat to security lies a variety of forces that have become global in scope and more serious in their effects. It is due to the result of the spread of knowledge, the dispersion of advanced technologies and the movement of people as manifested in the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the recent terrorist attacks in India in 2008. These attacks demonstrated the use of advanced technologies, global financial networks, transnational linkages and the easy movement of people due to lacunae in the security system. At the same time greater economic interdependence is likely to create political, social and ethnic tensions between and within nations as the communities will try to exploit or resist competition. It is expected that economic pressures may lead to resurgence of anti-capitalist ideologies due to resentment arising out of perceptions of injustice among those whose expectations are not met.

The present boundaries of Bangladesh were carved in 1905 when the province of Bengal, of British India Empire, was divided into two zones by the British government. The independence of India was followed by the partition in 1947. Bangladesh became part of Pakistan as a province called East Pakistan, with its capital Dhaka due to its religious affinity. Frictions between East Pakistan and West Pakistan started to erupt in the early 1950s when Punjabi was made the national and official language of Pakistan. Soon issues related to economic, cultural and power sharing led to demand for autonomy by East Pakistan. The situations got complex after the massive cyclone that hit East Pakistan and denial of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman to take office followed by his arrest. However, Mujibur Rehman formally declared independence. It led to violence by the West Pakistani resulting in many civilian deaths and about ten million refugees fled to India.¹ Indian Armed Forces supported the Mukti Bahini, who conducted massive guerilla war against the Pakistani Forces.

¹ Rudolph J. Rummel, "Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1900," ISBN 3-8258-4010-7, Chapter 8, table 8.1. Rummel comments that, In East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) [General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan and his top generals] also planned to murder its Bengali intellectual, cultural, and political elite. They also planned to indiscriminately murder hundreds of thousands of its Hindus and drive the rest into India. And they planned to destroy its

In fact, India played a major role in the establishment of an independent Bangladesh in 1971. However, since then, New Delhi's relations with Dhaka have neither been close, nor free from irritants and disputes. Soon after independence Bangladesh began to move away from language to Islam as the binding force of Bangladeshi nationalism. The emphasis on Islam, Bangladeshi concerns over India's military build-up, bilateral disputes over shared water resources, smuggling, attacks on Hindu minorities and religious places in Bangladesh, and drug trafficking has been influencing fluctuations in Indo-Bangladesh relations and threaten the security of the region. In recent years, New Delhi has blamed Pakistani and Bangladeshi militant groups for attacks on religious sites, public venues and public transportation in India.

The potential transnational threats from Bangladesh are from trans-border terrorism, illegal immigration, weapon proliferation, ethnic violence, global crime, drug trafficking, environmental degradation and food security. However, the present research deals with the issue of terrorism, illegal immigration and border security.

After Bangladesh became a sovereign nation, the Jamaat-i-Islami and its supporters were branded as traitors by the ruling Awami League (AL). Since the Jamaat was declared an illegal organisation in Bangladesh because of its anti-liberation activities and supporting Pakistan Army during the war, and could not operate under its own name, therefore it began organising local-level Islamic youth circles, mosques councils, and religiously based cultural, social welfare and educational associations. The main aim of its activities at this phase was to regroup its scattered forces, to link Bangladeshis with its Islamic heritage.

The informal links of international terrorist groups run through financing, gun-running, training and providing shelter to the terrorists. There are frequent reports of state indulgence in the acts of terrorism, directly or indirectly by dispatching mercenaries across the borders, aiding, abetting or providing logistical support to the terrorists of other states. The purpose of cross-border and state-sponsored terrorism is either to promote certain strategic or political interests or weaken so called "enemy states" across the border. The emergence of this transnational terrorism involving terrorists of different nationalities planning and training for, and executing acts of terrorism has increased particularly since the end of Cold War.

The development in South and South East Asia in last few decades has altered Bangladesh's long tradition of inclusive political culture and moderate Islam that is increasingly under threat from

economic base to insure that it would be subordinate to West Pakistan for at least a generation to come. This despicable and cutthroat plan was outright genocide, <http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/SOD.CHAP8.HTM>, accessed on 12/1/2010.

extremism. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan led to the rise of religious warriors who were initiated as professional that led to the emergence of a new security threat. 9/11 and the United States War on Terror brought many extremist outfits under the American scanner. These extremists found Bangladesh a soft country to establish their base due to unstable social, political and economic setup along with poverty, unemployment and easy money laundering. It has also provided ideal conditions for generating a breeding ground for recruits, support, and safe haven for international terrorist groups. Bangladesh has emerged as a new hub of international terrorism particularly because of its links with al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden's International Islamic Front (IIF), funding from Saudi Arabia and influence of Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

The Indian insurgent groups have been misusing Bangladeshi territory for sanctuary, training camps, transport of arms, and transit for last many years. The Indian government has notified Dhaka about the presence of insurgent groups' camps located along the border areas of Chittagong Hill Tracts and Sylhet Division. New Delhi has repeatedly asserted that these insurgents are being supported by Bangladeshi civilian and military intelligence agencies.

It is estimated that at one point, more than 120 militant groups operated in India's northeast.² Various army operations against the militants and negotiations by the government, led to a relative stability in the North Eastern region of India. However, it continues to be a tinderbox. Some of the top Indian militants, active particularly in northeast India, seeking sanctuary in Bangladesh belong to the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) in Tripura, United National Liberation Front (UNLF), the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA), the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and the Kanlei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL) etc. The Bangladeshi extremists groups have also been providing support to the Muslim groups of the north-east India.

An Indian army assessment highlights the renewed activities of several fundamentalist organisations in Bangladesh and their impact on the region's overall security. Among others, the report (which report, please give a footnote) names Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Chhatra Shibir, organisations which have maintained an anti-India stance.³

² Monjib Mochahari, "Militancy in India's Northeast needs a healing touch," *Assam Times*, 3/2/ 2009, <http://www.assamtimes.org/blog/2665.html>, accessed on 4/2/2009.

³ Taken from the letter written by the Assam Governor Lt General Ajai Singh to the PMO cited in Saikat Datta, "Meanwhile, In The East Bangladesh conducts mock exercises...a new flank?," *Defence Talk*, 9/6/2005, <http://www.defencetalk.com/forums/archive/index.php/t-3802.html>, accessed on 14/4/2009.

Inter-regional linkages of these groups have further aggravated the internal security situation in India. For instance, beyond its intra-regional linkages, ULFA is also reported to maintain connection with Nepalese Maoists and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of Sri Lanka. Maoists have links with various Naxalite groups alleged to be working towards a compact revolutionary zone from the forest tracts of Adilabad district in Andhra Pradesh to Nepal, traversing the forests of Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Orissa. Besides, there are also reports of use of the north-eastern territory by Islamist groups as a transit to infiltrate into Jammu & Kashmir and carry out attacks in different parts of India.

The list of criminals/insurgents was handed over by the Indian government to Border Security Force (BSF) to Bangladesh Rifles that are supported by Bangladeshi extremist outfits sponsored by ISI, with money coming from the Gulf. These groups are also said to be cooperating closely with the Directorate General of Foreign Intelligence (DGFI), the military intelligence agency of Bangladesh and ISI. India has also received periodic reports regarding ISI misusing the territory of Bangladesh for their anti-India activity.

India has been regularly taking up these security concerns with Bangladesh at different levels, through diplomatic channels and institutional mechanisms existing between the two countries. Until recently Bangladesh continued to maintain a policy of complete denial without reportedly verifying the details given to them at the same time Dhaka counter alleges that anti-Bangladesh elements are operating out of India. However, the recent arrest of the Chairman of ULFA, Arabinda Rajkhowa, coincided with the three-day talks between home secretaries of India and Bangladesh. After the talks, the two sides announced they have finalised three crucial accords, including one for combating terrorism and the transfer of prisoners. They also agreed to resolve the issues relating to their land boundary.⁴ These are stepping stone for building strong security scenario in the region.

The other security concern emitting from Bangladesh is unchecked illegal migration of Bangladeshis, particularly into the north-east that has led to massive uprising and has altered the demographic balance of the region. It is one of the main reasons for the rise of militancy in the north-east. Better economic prospects, shortage of local labour and absence of sufficient mechanism have always been the reasons for this influx. The spurt in official action against illegal Bangladeshi migrants and anti-foreign activism led political crisis in the northeast. There are also

⁴ "India, Bangladesh finalise 3 pacts as ULFA chief held," *Sify News*, 2/12/2009, <http://sify.com/news/India-Bangladesh-finalise-3-pacts-as-ULFA-chief-held-news-jmku4cgcbcf.html>, accessed on 14/12/2009.

fears that the Pakistanis are taking shelter and are applying for voter's card. In Assam, state authorities have stepped up their drive to arrest and push back Bangladeshi immigrants and Assamese student groups have actively been assisting in identifying suspected foreigners and handing them over to the police⁵. Further, unabated illegal immigration of Bangladeshis into Nagaland is emerging as a major problem in the state. Despite their serious demographic, economic, security and political ramifications in the north-east, these developments continue to remain substantially outside the dominion of the security discourse in the country. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh government claims that there is not even a single Bangladeshi migrant in India.

The contentious issue between India and Bangladesh arises also from its riparian borders. The Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) signed between India and Bangladesh in 1974, has been implemented, except for three issues: demarcation of 6.1 km. border in three sectors, namely, Lathitilla-Dumabari (3 km in Assam sector), South Berubari (1.5 km in West Bengal sector), and Muhuri river/ Belonia sector (1.6 km in Tripura); exchange of adverse possession; and exchange of enclaves. There are 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in India. Two Joint Boundary Working Group were set up in 2001 to resolve these pending LBA issues. Article 3 of the LBA provides for the people in these enclaves to be given the right to stay on as nationals of the state to which the enclaves are transferred. Therefore, the government has requested for a joint survey/census of the enclaves. According to Bangladesh, however, any joint surveys are extraneous to the LBA provisions and are not a pre-condition to the exchange of the enclaves.

India emphasises on fencing of border within and up to 150 yards of the international border but Bangladesh stresses the need to conform to the 1975 border guidelines and to avoid any action that may adversely impact peace and stability in the border areas.

Other security threats emitting from India's eastern neighbourhood arises due to food shortage; health problems; unemployment as well as shrinking farmland and water bodies; and depleting forest resources. India, being an immediate neighbor has been providing huge food and other relief aid to Bangladesh in the time of crisis. In fact, both poverty and unemployment have been forcing the Bangladeshis to migrate to India. It has been a major irritant between the two countries.

According to Germanwatch, an international nongovernmental organization that works on environment and development issues, Bangladesh tops the 2009 Global Climate Risk Index, a

⁵ Report on Illegal Migration into Assam Submitted to the President of India by the Governor of Assam 8 November, 1998, RAJ BHAVAN, Guwahati, P. O. No. GSAG.3/98/, 8/11/1998, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/documents/papers/illegal_migration_in_assam.htm, accessed on 21/12/2009.

ranking of 170 countries most vulnerable to climate change. The nation is particularly at risk because it is a vast delta plain with 230 rivers, many of which unstably swell during the monsoon rains. The land in Bangladesh is either below, at, or barely above sea level. This geology, combined with river water from the melting Himalayan glaciers in the north and an encroaching Bay of Bengal in the south, makes the region prone to severe flooding. The situation is made worse by the prevalence of intense storms, a marker of climate stresses. And if it is true that sea levels will rise in the next 40-50 years, then half of Bangladesh will be under water. It will create millions of refugees from Bangladesh who will likely move across borders in neighbouring countries, i.e. India and Myanmar. The situation is complicated by the fact that the population of the country is the highest in the world. According to US Davis, approximately 75 million (half) of Bangladesh's population would emigrate due to sea level. It will impact not only Bangladesh but all the South Asia and Southeast Asia for many generations.

To overcome the security concerns arising from the border, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had constituted a Group of Ministers (GoM), to review the national security system in its entirety and in particular, to consider the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee and formulate specific proposals for implementations. The GoM was led by L.K. Advani, then Minister of Home Affairs. The report came out with significant recommendations to safeguard national security against any armed intrusion, entry of narcotics, illegal migrants, terrorist movement and arms smuggling. The recommendations of the Task Force were accepted by the GoM, which decided that some of the recommendations that required greater deliberation should initially be addressed by four Task Forces, one each in the area of Intelligence Apparatus, Internal Security, Border Management and Management of Defence. While some recommendations have been implemented, much more needs to be done to make border management more effective. The present study takes a look at some of the suggestions made by GoM in its report entitled "Reforming the National Security System: Recommendations of the Group of Ministers (India)".

Under the circumstances where India is busy calming its western borders, the eastern border could suffer from greater instability. Since much of the illegal cross border activities take place at the behest of the Pakistani Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) which has also spread its nefarious activities in Bangladesh, India needs to build closer cooperation with Bangladesh at political, diplomatic and economic level. In reality the BSF and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) on their own cannot workout modalities and strategies to deal with organised criminal activities in the border areas.

The present study examines the India-Bangladesh security relationship with a view to analysing the nature of security threats emanating from Bangladesh, particularly the issue related to terrorism,

illegal immigration and unresolved border, and to recommend suitable policy options and preventive measures to successfully counter emerging threats and challenges.

The monograph takes a historic-political and analytical approach with special reference to the contentious issue. The second chapter studies the difficulties concerning India-Bangladesh border management and the possible solutions to overcome it. The third chapter critically studies the development of the extremist organisations within Bangladesh and their linkages with Indian extremist outfits. The fourth chapter examines the causes and consequences of the illegal migration from Bangladesh particularly in the north-eastern states of India. The final chapter concludes by examining and assessing the possible solutions to deal with the border security, preventing illegal immigration, infiltration and terrorism emanating from Bangladesh.

CHAPTER 2: INDO-BANGLADESH BORDER ISSUE

India's nation building challenges and internal security are linked with border security and border management. Apart from preventing and containing inter-state conflict on the borders, border security and border management involves: thwarting illegal border crossing; preventing smuggling of contraband goods like arms, drugs and explosives; and stopping cross-border terrorism and infiltration. This has made border management a complicated and challenging task requiring resolute and concerted actions on the part of intelligence, administrative, security and regulatory agencies. Such an undertaking requires serious and committed political will. Thus it is necessary to adopt a holistic, multi-disciplinary and integrated approach in formulating a comprehensive strategy towards improvement of border management for national security in times of war and peace. This chapter deals with the challenge of border security as arising from the threat of terrorism and infiltration.

India's land border with Bangladesh as per the Ministry of Defence is 4351 km.¹ running through five states, viz., West Bengal (2217kms), Assam (262 kms), Meghalaya (443kms), Tripura (856 kms) and Mizoram (318 kms), including nearly 781 kms of riverine border. The border traverses through 25 districts.² It is the longest land border that India shares with any of its neighbours.

India-Bangladesh border, which is also a contentious quandary between the two countries, is due to the unresolved issues concerning undemarcated border; problem of enclaves and adverse possessions; and the difficult terrains that keep the border porous thus making the task of infiltrators, smugglers and illegal immigrants that much easy. The concern remains unresolved due to political sensitivity towards the importance of potential voters.

The dispute regarding the undemarcated land border spring from the Radcliffe Line that was never demarcated on ground. There is also difference in the point of reference, while Bangladesh is citing a document of 1937, India is relying on land records of 1914 to sustain its claim. In 1958, the issue of eastern border was discussed between the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan during the latter's visit to Delhi. This led to the signing of the Nehru-Noon Agreement on India-East Pakistan borders in New Delhi on September 10, 1958. The agreement addressed border disputes related to West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. The Agreement also covered the Murshidabad, Rajshai, Hilli,

¹ Gurmeet Kanwal, India's Borders, *India Defence Review*, Vol.231, <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/2008/10/indias-borders.html>, accessed on 8/10/2008.

² R.N.P. Singh, *Bangladesh Decoded*, (India First Foundation: New Delhi, 2002) p.145.

Berubari Union No.12, 24-Parganas-Khilna and 24-Parganas-Jessore boundary, Bholaganj, Piyain and Surma rivers, Feni river and Cooch Bihar enclaves.³

Soon after Bangladesh won its independence from Pakistan, Delhi and Dhaka signed Indo-Bangladesh Border Agreement in 1974. The 1974 agreement states that the enclaves should be exchanged expeditiously. It was subject to ratification by the two governments. According to official figures, there were 125 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and 75 Bangladeshi enclaves in India. The September 1974 agreement received much criticism by Bangladesh opposition particularly the transfer of Berubari to India in exchange of Dahagram and Angarpota. However, Bangladesh ratified it in November 1974. India is yet to ratify. New Delhi argued that the ratification needed parliamentary approval, which could not be obtained until the entire border has been demarcated and the areas to be exchanged be identified on the ground.⁴ However, Avtar Singh in his book argues that under the constitution of India, ratification of an agreement or treaty is an executive prerogative and no legislative approval is required.⁵

Nevertheless, the agreement has been implemented except for three issues pertaining to: (i) demarcation of 6.1 km of the border in three sectors, namely: Lathitilla-Dumabari (3 km in Assam sector), South Berubari (1.5 km in West Bengal sector), and Muhuri river/Belonia sector (1.6 km in Tripura sector); (ii) exchange of adverse possessions; and (iii) exchange of enclaves.⁶ The agreed list of enclaves was signed between the officials of the two countries in 1997.

It is alleged that the issue of non-demarcated 6.1 km. of land stretch along Comilla-Tripura is unresolved primarily due to the India's reluctance to resolve the border because of the concerns of the Hindus living in the lands that is likely to go to Bangladesh after demarcation.⁷

With regard to the enclaves and adverse possession, the ownership of 65 enclaves in the West Bengal-Bangladeshi border is disputed. Out of them 35 are adverse possessions and 31 are reverse possessions.⁸ Indian land under adverse possession of Bangladesh includes West Bengal 2,062.23 acres; Assam & Meghalaya 791.10 acres; and Tripura 0.17 acres. Total land under Bangladesh possession is 2,853.50 acres. While Bangladesh Land Under Adverse Possession of India include

³ Avtar Singh Bhasin, *India-Bangladesh Relations 1971-1994 Documents*, Vol.1, (Siba Exim Pvt.Lts.: Delhi, 1996), pp.1467-1705.

⁴ N.S.Jamwal, "Border Management: Dilemma of Guarding the India-Bangladesh Border, *Strategic Analysis*, Vo.28, No.1, Jan-March 2004, p.8.

⁵ Avtar Singh Bhasi, pp.1467-1705.

⁶ Border Dispute with China and Bangladesh, Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No.811, 22/10/2008, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, <http://mea.gov.in/searchhome.htm>, accessed on 23/6/2009

⁷ Alok Kumar Gupta and Saswati Chanda, 'India and Bangladesh: Enclaves Dispute,' *Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies*, <http://www.ipcs.org/issues/articles/493-ban-alok.html>, accessed on 14/12/2008

⁸ Ibid.

West Bengal 1,437.60 acres; Assam 7.00 acres; Meghalaya 548.00 acres; and Tripura 161.90 acres. Total land under India's possession is 2,154.50 acres.⁹ The enclaves in Assam-Meghalaya-Bangladesh border remains unresolved due to 520 acres of 755 acres remains with India and 235 acres with Bangladesh.¹⁰

Two Joint Boundary Working Groups (JBWG) were set up in 2001 to resolve these pending Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) issues, signed between India and Bangladesh in 1974. Article 3 of the LBA provides for the people in these enclaves to be given the right to stay on as nationals of the state to which the enclaves are to be transferred. Therefore, it has been suggested that there should be a joint survey of the enclaves. According to Bangladesh, any joint surveys/ census in the enclaves are extraneous to the LBA and should not be a pre-condition to the exchange of the enclaves.¹¹ JBWG has met thrice; the last meeting of the JBWG was held in Dhaka on July 15-16, 2006. During the meeting both sides agreed that a joint visit to the enclaves of both the countries would take place at an early date.¹² The contentious issues are yet to be resolved.

Security Concern from India-Bangladesh Border

The notoriously porous India-Bangladesh border is referred to as the 'problem area'. The recent developments in the South Asian region has linked India's nation building challenges and internal security with border security and border management particularly from Bangladesh due to illegal immigration; trans-border terrorism and movement of insurgents; emergence of non-state actors like terrorist organisations, religious groups and illegal immigrant groups aided and abetted by Bangladesh; nexus between arms and narcotics smugglers as Bangladesh has close proximity to the 'Golden Triangle'; establishment of *madrassas* particularly in the border areas, that has become the recruiting place for the terrorist outfits; smuggling of contraband; and human trafficking.

Illegal immigration

Large scale immigration of Bangladeshi, particularly into north-east, has led to massive uprising and altered the demography of the region. In 2003, the Union Home Minister has stated that over

⁹ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2007

¹⁰ J.N.Dixit, "Bordering on danger," *The Indian Express*, 23/4/2001, <http://www.indianexpress.com/res/web/ple/columnists/jndixit/20010423.html>, accessed on 6/12/2008

¹¹ "India-Bangladesh JWGs on border demarcation," *India News Online*, 18/5/2001, <http://news.indiamart.com/news-analysis/india-bangladesh-jwg-5677.html>, accessed on 16/12/2008

¹² Indo-Bangladesh Border Dispute, *Rajya Sabha*, Unstarred Question No.1691, 7/12/2006, <http://mea.gov.in/searchhome.htm>, accessed on 7/11/2008

20 million illegal Bangladeshi immigrants are residing in the country, of which above 10 million are in Assam and West Bengal alone.¹³

According to S.K.Ghosh, migration is almost institutionalised in India's eastern border through a well-organised gang with sufficient support from the local administrations, often including the police and security forces by bribing them. He further writes that the importance of the problem lies in the fact that many of the infiltrators are smugglers and prone to crimes such as dacoity, cattle lifting, peddling of narcotic drugs, gun running, trafficking in women and girls and is actively helping terrorist activities in our bordering States. They also run missions of their intelligence agencies and many of them have been known to settle down as Hindus in India and are involved in espionage work for their countries. The problem of untraced Bangladeshi and Pakistani nationals become serious as they merge with the local people and pass off as Indian citizens.¹⁴

The illegal Bangladeshi immigrants have not only changed the demography and disturbed the ecology of the north-east but have also encouraged them to exercise their political rights in India as citizens. It has been one of the key reasons for the rise of insurgent groups in the north-east as some of the insurgent groups like Assam Gana Sangram Parishad started, and got support of the masses, because of the issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh. At the same time the immigration laws (Illegal Migrants [Determined by Tribunal] (IMDT) Act 1983) followed in Assam has aided illegal immigrants' settling in the north-east easy. While expressing his concern towards illegal migration, Minister of State for Home Sriparakash Jaiswal mentioned that illegal immigration from neighbouring Bangladesh is posing the biggest threat to India's national security.¹⁵ However, recently Supreme Court has set aside the IMDT while delivering its judgment on an appeal that was made against IMDT.

Trans-border terrorism and movement of insurgents

Trans-border terrorism and movement of insurgents, particularly in the light of the 2008 terrorist attacks on the major cities of India involving one common point of having its base in Bangladesh, is one of the major security challenges India faces from its eastern border. The territory of Bangladesh

¹³ Raj Kiran, India aims to deport 20 million Bangladeshis, *Independent Media Centre*, 9/01/2003, <http://www.india.indymedia.org/en/2003/01/2730.shtml>, accessed on 17/12/2008

¹⁴ S.K. Ghosh, *Unquiet Border*, (Ashish Publishing House: Delhi), 1993, pp. ix-x

¹⁵ "Illegal immigration from Bangladesh biggest threat: Jaiswal," *Thaindian News*, 12/5/2009, http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/illegal-immigration-from-bangladesh-biggest-threat-jaiswal_100191607.html, accessed on 14/12/2009

is aggressively used by the north east insurgent as a safe haven for, training and transit point for the terrorist to keep Indian security fragile.

The extremists and the terrorist organisations are able to establish themselves firmly in Bangladesh. Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is using Bangladeshi territory to execute its nefarious activities in India. The role of ISI in funding and arming these groups is fairly documented. There are also reports of the use of the northeast territory by Islamist groups as a transit to infiltrate in Jammu and Kashmir.¹⁶

The insurgent groups of the northeast India are also using Bangladesh as their safe haven. In Assam there are over 15 Islamic extremist groups and more than a dozen of north-east insurgent groups that are provided safe haven, support and training in Bangladesh. ULFA has reportedly been running training camps and several income generating projects from Bangladesh. "It has set up a number of firms in Dhaka, including media consultancies and soft drink manufacturing units. Besides it is reported to own three hotels, a private clinic, and two motor driving schools in Dhaka. Paresh Barua is reported to personally own or has controlling interests in several businesses in Bangladesh, including a tannery, a chain of departmental stores, garment factories, travel agencies, shrimp trawlers and transport and investment companies."¹⁷ NSCN-IM is also using Bangladesh territory to procure arms and ammunition and has established its base and training camps in Bangladesh. NLFT has its camps at various locations in Bangladesh with its headquarters in Saajak as well as a camp in the Khagrachari district of Bangladesh. ATTF maintains eight base camps in Bangladesh with its headquarters located at Tarabon.¹⁸

The porous borders are exploited by the insurgent groups of the north-east to procure arms and ammunition. The then Union Minister of State for Home, I.D.Swami in July 2001, said in the *Rajya Sabha* that Thailand, Myanmar and Bangladesh are the countries from and through which illegal flow of arms to the Northeastern States is taking place.¹⁹

National highways in the north east India are used by the insurgent and terrorist groups to forcibly collect 'patriotic tax' from the residents and movement of narcotic trafficking.²⁰ The tri-junction of

¹⁶ Praveen Kumar, 'Bangladesh as India's internal security concern', *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*, Article no. 1255, 18/12/2003, http://www.ipcs.org/article_details.php?articleNo=1255, accessed on 11/12/2008

¹⁷ "United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) - Terrorist Group of Assam," South Asia Terrorist Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/terrorist_outfits/Ulfa.htm, accessed on 21/12/2009

¹⁸ For details see *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, India; Tripura; Terrorist Outfits; NLFT; www.satp.org.

¹⁹ Minister of State in the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, I D Swami, *Rajya Sabha*, Unstarred Question no. 356, July 25, 2001

²⁰ For details see Vikram Nongmaithem, 'What Lies Beneath?', *Manipur Online*, 01/10/2002, www.manipuronline.com/Features/October2002/whatliesbeneath01_1.htm, accessed on 21/12/2008

the India, Bangladesh and Myanmar border near Lawangtlai in Southern Mizoram is used for the biggest concentration of clandestine arms in South Asia. Weapons from Russian Kalashnikovs to Chinese AK-47s, American M-16s to German HK-33s are easily available in the market. The place is important because of its proximity to Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh, one of the biggest arms market in South Asia.²¹

Establishment of madrasas

Establishment of madrasas particularly in the border areas, that has become the recruiting place for the terrorist outfits. According to the study conducted by the Border Security Force (BSF), in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, with the population of 14 million there are 131 seminaries and 67 mosques while the small border town of Krishananagar in Nadia district had 404 seminaries and 368 mosques.²² Most of these madrasas are not registered and their syllabus include fanatic and misinterpreted religious teachings. Intelligence agencies in India have long claimed that subversive groups in the border districts were being sheltered in Muslim places of worship to avoid the public eye. In 2002, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Buddhadev Bhattacharya, said that illegal Muslim seminaries were being used to provide sanctuary to terrorists at the behest of Pakistan's ISI.²³

The main informal trading centres on Indo-Bangladesh border are Assam (Fakiragram, Mankachat, and Karimganj); Meghalaya (Lichubari and Dawki), Mizoram (Tlangbunj); Tripura (Kailashahar, Agartala, Sonamora, Bilonia and Sabroom) and West Bengal (Petropole, Bagdha, Mejdia, Lalgola, Mohedpur, Radhikapur, Kaliagang and Hilli). Availability of a large market and railways near the border make it easier and attractive for the smugglers to indulge in informal trade. However, the illegal trade is carried out mostly on headloads, bicycles, rikshaw vans and boats.²⁴ The main towns where the illegal trade is carried out include: Dawki, Muktapur, Nayabazaar, Lynkhat, Bholanganj, Shella, Rengku, Balaat, Dalu and Baghmara.²⁵

The reasons for the informal trade are due to: evasion of tariff and non-tariff barriers; differences in the rates and high demand; nature of the border terrain; porosity of the border; habitation of the population; and connivance of the officials. Informal trade also takes place due to domestic policy

²¹ Kanchan Lakshman* & Sanjay K. Jha, India-Bangladesh: Restoring Sovereignty on Neglected Borders, *South Asian Terrorism Portal*, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume14/Article7.htm>, accessed on 4/1/2009

²² Kritivas Mukherjee, "Madarsas being used to provide shelter to ultras", *The Pioneer*, Delhi, 24/1/2002, <http://www.hvk.org/articles/0102/113.html>, accessed on 24/1/2009

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ N.S.Jamwal, "Border Management: Dilemma of Guarding the India-Bangladesh Border, *Strategic Analysis*, Vo.28, No.1, Jan-March 2004, p.13

²⁵ E.N.Rammohan, *Insurgent Frontiers: Essay from the Troubled Northeast*, (India Research Press:New Delhi), p.98

distortions. A large number of commodities that fall under administered pricing are siphoned off from the public distribution system (PDS) in India into Bangladesh. An adequate transit and transport system often results in high transport costs, which in turn create a strong incentive for trade to take place through informal channels. Also if there is an absence or a shortage of warehousing facilities then the informal channel would be preferred.²⁶

Border Management

Operationally, BSF is responsible for the border security and border management on Indian side. There are approximately 45 battalions of the BSF, about 725 Border Observation Posts (BOPs) at Bangladesh border. BOPs (normally comprising 20-25 persons) are constructed all along the border to promote a sense of security amongst the border population and prevent trans-border crimes.²⁷ The front wise average distance between BOPs is as South Bengal- 5.2 kilometers; North Bengal 5.9 kilometers; Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagalan- 5.1 kilometers; and Tripura, Cachar and Mizoram- 6.1 kilometers.²⁸ In other words, the inter-BOP distance is 5 to 7 kms. Consequently, each battalion has to look after a large segment of the border. For example, in West Bengal, where the problem of illegal migration is acute, each battalion of the BSF looks after more than 100 kilometres of the border. Similarly in Meghalaya, each battalion is covering up to 80 kms. The distance between two BOPs is considered excessive. According to the BSF Director General, Ajai Raj Sharma, "Ideally, the distance between one BOP and another should be 3.5 km. But at present, the distance is five to six km because we do not have the desired manpower."²⁹

At the same time there were reports of frequent clashes between BSF and the erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles (BDR is being reconstituted after the February 2009 revolt) over encroachment, enclaves and adverse possessions. It is stated that there were 370 incidents of firing during the period from April 2002 to March 2003 in which 95 persons were killed (Indian-28, Bangladeshi-63 and Unidentified-4).³⁰

To check infiltration, illegal immigration and smuggling of the contraband from the Indo-Bangladesh border, the Union Home Ministry in 1986, undertook a project for the construction of a

²⁶ Vandana Upadhyay, "Cross-border Trade of north-east India", in S.Dutta (ed.), *Northeast India and Informal Trade: Emerging opportunities for Economic Partnership*, Hope Inida Publication, Greewich Millennium: New Delhi 2002, cited in N.S.Jamwal, "Border Management: Dilemma of Guarding the India-Bangladesh Border, *Strategic Analysis*, Vo.28, No.1, Jan-March 2004, pp.13-14

²⁷ N.S.Jamwal, p.9

²⁸ I D Swami, Minister of State in the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, *Rajya Sabha*, Unstarred Question no. 2197, <http://164.100.24.219/rsq/quest.asp?qref=11324>, 15/3/2000

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ R.N.P Singh, p.148

jeepable road and erection of barbed wire fencing over 4000 km long stretch on the Indo-Bangladesh international border that covers the state of Assam [262 km], Meghalaya [443 km], West Bengal [2216.7 km], Mizoram [318 km] and Tripura [856 km].³¹

In 2004, the Assam government was quoted in *Indian Express* that the target year for completing the fence, which had initially been fixed at 2003, had to be postponed to the end of 2006 for lack of funds. During 2001-2002 and 2002-2003, the Centre had released Rs.50 million to Assam and the state had spend Rs.162.9 million to keep the work going. In a statement in the Assam Legislative Assembly in December 2003, the Minister in charge of the state's Public Works Department said that the Centre had, till 2000-2001, sanctioned a total sum of Rs.1,236.11 million for the fence and a road along the India-Bangladesh border. In the financial year 2003-2004, it had allocated Rs 16.70 million for the project's second phase, aimed at completely ending illegal trans-border immigration. Rs.150 million had already been released to the Assam government.³² However, the work of the border fencing and management remains incomplete. It may be noted that Bangladesh has been persistently resisting India's decision to barricade the borders. Clashes between the border forces of the two countries over the issue have been occurring regularly in the past.³³

Moreover, out of a total of 268 pillar positions covering Bagge Sheet No. 1-18 in the Murshidabad sector of Indo-Bangladesh border, 57 pillars have been found missing or demolished during the Ganga-Padma erosion due to the monsoon season. In the 157th and 158th Boundary Conference between India and Bangladesh for West Bengal sector held at Dhaka in August 2006 and at Kolkata in November 2006, it was decided that the missing or demolished boundary pillars in Bagge Sheet No. 1-16 numbering 52 would be constructed under the responsibility of India, for which an amount of Rs. 5,85,688 was allocated to the Government of West Bengal. While the remaining missing pillars in Bagge Sheet no. 17-18 numbering 5 were to be constructed by Bangladesh. The construction work of missing or demolished pillars in this sector was likely to be completed by May 2007.³⁴

India is also planning to set up seven integrated check-posts or checkpoints before 2012. The so-called check-posts would have the facilities for cargo handling, immigration, customs clearance, warehousing, banking, housing, border security and parking.

³¹ R.N.P Singh, p.145

³² Hiranmay Karlekar, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan*, (Sage Publication: New Delhi), 2005, p.87.

³³ Avtar Singh, *India-Bangladesh Relations: Documents-1971-2002*, Vol.-1, Geetika Publishers: New Delhi, p.XCVI

³⁴ Pillars on Indo-Bangladesh Border, Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No.2242, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 14/4/2007, <http://mea.gov.in/searchhome.htm>, accessed on 11/12/2009

Difficulties to Border Management

The BSF remains substantially ineffective as it has to deal with the tension arising out of the unresolved border issues and they have to perform their duties under severe bureaucratic and administrative limitations, with operational procedures poorly defined as there is overlapping of jurisdictions with other agencies. The security personnel have to deal with inflow of migrants on a daily basis on an ad hoc basis due to bureaucratic complexity. Thus it deals with the problem of management of the border on a day-to-day basis due to political and diplomatic failure to resolve the dispute. At the same time the frequent routine transfer of the BSF men leads to lack of knowledge of the area, people, and language thus hampering operational ability. The inadequate BSF forces on the border due to their frequent deployment in the counterinsurgency and other security duties elsewhere and lack of coordination between various security agencies makes the management of the border a difficulty. The widespread corruption involving local people, security forces and the politicians keeps the border security and border management challenging.³⁵

The Government's decision to fence the entire India-Bangladesh border came after seeing the positive results of fencing on the Indo-Pakistan border in Punjab borders that checked illegal immigration and infiltration. The India-Bangladesh fencing project was executed in two phases: Phase I in 1987 and Phase II in 2000. The details are:

PHASE-I

Name of the State	Length of the border(in kms.)	Sanctioned length of the fencing(in kms.)	Work completed(in kms.)	Expenditure incurred so far(Rs. in million)
West Bengal	2216.7	507	505	921.1
Tripura	856	-	-	-
Assam	262	152	149	192.9
Meghalaya	443	198	198	283.9
Mizoram	318	-	-	-

³⁵ For details see Report of the Group of Ministers on National Security, 2001; Kulbir Krishan, "Policing the Indo-Bangladesh Border," *Strategic Analysis*, Delhi, vol. xxv, no. 5, August 2001; Gurudas Das, "Immigration into North-East India: The Security Dimension", in C. Joshua Thomas, ed., *Dimensions of Displaced People*, Delhi: Regency Publications 2002; Partha S. Ghosh, *Migrants and Refugees in South Asia: Political and Security Dimension*, Shillong: North Eastern Hill University

PHASE-II

Name of the State	Length of the border(in kms.)	Sanctioned length of the fencing(in kms.)	Estimated Expenditure (Rs. in billion)	Expected year of completion
West Bengal	2216.7	1021	4.40	2006-07
Tripura	856	736	2.13	2006-07
Assam	262	71.5	0.25	2006-07
Meghalaya	443	201	0.58	2006-07
Mizoram	318	400*	1.11	2006-07

Source: "Border Management", Annual Report 2001-02, Ministry of Home Affairs, Delhi, Government of India, www.mha.nic.in/annual%20report-3.htm#BM

The phase-wise progress of fencing and roads as on 31st December 2007 is as under:-

FENCING

(Length in Km)

Name of the State	Border Length	Fencing in Phase-I (completed)	Fencing in Phase-II (sanctioned)	Fencing in Phase-II (completed)	Total Completed in Phase I & II
West Bengal	2216.7	507	1021	674.05	1181.05
Assam	263	149.29	71.5	51.42	200.71
Meghalaya	443	198.06	201	180.19	378.25
Tripura	856		736	668.04	668.04
Mizoram	318		400	107.75	107.75
Total	4096.7	854.35	2429.5	1681.45	2535.80

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2009, p.65.

BORDER ROAD

(Length in KM)

Name of the State	Roads in Phase-I (completed)	Roads in Phase-II (sanctioned)	Roads in Phase-II (completed)	Total Completed
West Bengal	1616.57	-	-	1616.57
Assam	176.50	77.50	61.70	238.20
Meghalaya	211.29	204	200.85	412.14
Tripura	480.51	269	210.14	690.65
Mizoram	153.06	246.50	139.98	293.04
TOTAL	2637.93	797.00	612.67	3250.60

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2009, p.66.

An expenditure of Rs.2904.72 crore has been incurred for construction of fencing, roads, bridges and floodlighting of Indo-Bangladesh border. 277 km. of floodlighting has been completed in West Bengal as a pilot project. Government has decided to undertake floodlighting in 2840 km. along the entire length of Indo-Bangladesh border, in the stretches where the fencing has been erected, at an estimated cost of Rs.1327.00 crore. The flood lighting works are expected to commence during the year 2007-08 and would be completed by the year 2011-12. The Government of India has decided to replace the entire 861 km. of fence constructed under phase -I in West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya at an expenditure of Rs.884.00 crore, as most of this fence has been damaged due to adverse climatic conditions, repeated submergence etc. The replacement work has already commenced in the States of Assam and West Bengal. 193.70 km. of fencing has been replaced so far.³⁶

There is a slow pace of fencing which reflects that there are flaws in the project and a lack of purpose by the administrators and bureaucrats. For instance, in West Bengal, the acquisition of land took years and even today, it is held up in litigation in several sections. In Assam, partial diversion of funds released for fencing work to other works by the Government of Assam has resulted in extraordinary delays of fencing work in that State.³⁷

³⁶ Ministry of Home Affairs, *Government of India*, 2009, p.66.

³⁷ Minister of State in the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, Maqbool Dar, *Rajya Sabha*, Unstarred Question, no. 2420, 13/8/1997, <http://164.100.24.219/rsq/quest.asp?qref=38901>, accessed on 1/8/2009

There are also difficulties to clearly demarcate and manage the border as the rivers change course with each monsoon making the fencing tricky. The river border, mostly in Dhubri district in Assam and southern West Bengal, presents peculiar problems, as it is difficult to locate permanent Border Outposts (BOPs) in the area due to swelling of the Brahmaputra and other rivers that increase the depth of the river by about 30 feet.³⁸ According to Sreeradha Datta, “a maritime border of 180 km which poses serious problems because the shifting river routes, soil erosion or frequent floods which make it difficult to demarcate borders, especially when they form numerous islands and *chars* in the Sunderbans delta region. River-line borders tend to change course periodically leading to a host of disputes, associated with the difficulties in establishing ownership of the newly created territories.”³⁹

According to E.N.Rammohan, a former Director General of the BSF, the issue of India-Bangladesh border is complicated by the fact that the border cuts through the middle of Bengal, for instance, there are more than 100 villages right on the zero line, and in many villages there are houses where the front door is in India and the rear door opens into Bangladesh. For instance, Hilli in the Malda district of West Bengal is located right on the border and a row of houses in this town have their front doors in India and their rear doors opening on to the railway platform of Hilli in Bangladesh.⁴⁰ More than 200 villages, situated right on the borderline are opposed to the project. If the fencing is erected the fence may pass through the houses and villages, thus infringing international regulations. The villages claim that erecting a barbed wire along the border would make them refugees in their own land.

The Indian side emphasises the requirement for border fencing within and up to 150 yards of the international border where topography compels it to do so. While Bangladesh stresses the need to conform to the 1975 border guidelines and to avoid any action that may adversely impact peace and stability in the border areas. The 1975 Indo-Bangladesh Border Agreement prevents offensive or defensive construction of any kind, e.g., a wall, an embankment or a canal, within 150 yards of the border⁴¹ as it would physically isolate and psychologically harm by making the world believe that Bangladeshis are just eager to flee their own country.⁴² According to Bangladeshi researcher, “although India might win the short term tactical battles by constructing the fencing but it lead to long term strategic war against misperception and insecurity in the neighbourhood.”⁴³

³⁸ N.S.Jamwal, p.8

³⁹ Sreeradha Datta, *Bangladesh a Fragile Democracy*, (Shipra: Delhi), 2004 pp.127-128

⁴⁰ E N Rammohan, "Uneasy Borders Distant Neighbours", *USI Journal*, Delhi, vol. C xxxii, no. 550, October-December 2002, p. 496.

⁴¹ Chandrika J Gulati, *Bangladesh: Liberation to Fundamentalism*, (Commonwealth Publisher: New Delhi), 2003, p.145

⁴² R.N.P Singh, p.152

⁴³ Personal interview with Bangladeshi researcher, Identity withheld, telephonic conversation, 25/7/2009

The government of Tripura is against fencing 200 km on Bangladesh-Tripura border, claiming that some of the 938 villages in this region are in Bangladesh's territory. No doubt though India rejects this claim but there is some dispute on the issue.⁴⁴

The major encumbrances that have rendered border management ineffective are: security personnel have no coherent system to deal with massive inflow of migrants and their arrest and prosecution is also rare. Dual immigration laws (Illegal migrants [determined by Tribunal] Act 1983) followed in Assam makes it easy for illegal immigrants to claim their rights in India. Also lack of understanding among the decision makers about the military issues; and deployment of multiple forces in the same area of operation keep the management of security on the Indo-Bangladesh border fragile. Absence of coordination amongst military, para-military and police forces that are involved in border management has led to lack of accountability towards encroachment. Other issues include poor intelligence due to absence of institutionalised information sharing arrangements; absence of information sharing mechanism between army, air force and navy; disputed and unsettled boundary issues; porous borders; difficult terrain; insufficient strength in terms of equipments and manpower; lack of pro-active approach by decision makers; and minimal presence of Coast Guard on coastal areas. These difficulties have kept the borders vulnerable and have, in turn, facilitated problems of infiltration, illegal immigration, drugs and arms smuggling, cross border terrorism, supply of counterfeit currency and support to the internal separatist movements by external actors.

Local law enforcement agencies and the civil administration will have to play a greater role in effective border management. However, certain practical problems limit the degree to which State and local police authorities have been involved in combating the problem. First, the responsibility for border management lies in the Union Government's jurisdiction. Consequently, the State police, more often than not, are not clear regarding the extent of their authority concerning such violations. There is also a lack of common data bases and an efficient interface with agencies directly involved in border security, the local police lack timely access to specific information regarding migrants who they could, otherwise, detect, detain or interdict. Further, there are also constraints of limited resources in terms of available manpower and material resources and jail space.⁴⁵

Commandant N.S.Jamwal, Border Security Force, identifies some other issues that keeps the border management tricky: difficulty in identifying Bangladeshi nationals; indifference of administration

⁴⁴ Ved Prakash, p.800

⁴⁵ Ajay Sahani, The Locus of Error: Has the Gravity of Terrorism 'Shifted' in Asia, *South Asia Terrorist Portal*, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume13/Article1.htm>, accessed on 1/12/2009

towards the border population; over-population of the border areas with approximately 700-800 persons per square km on the Indian side and about 1,000 persons on Bangladesh side; administrative and technical difficulties in deportation of Bangladeshi nationals; incomplete fencing due to slow progress in acquisition of land, resistance by the locals, flaws in conceiving the project, lack of sincerity and difficult topography; cutting of barbed wire by smugglers; criminal-administration-police nexus; change in the demography of the border areas; cheap labour for India; circuitous international boundary keeps the trespassing easy; poaching of natural resources; cultivation in 'adverse possession land'; claims and counterclaims over *char* lands; missing border pillars; firing across the border; lack of development on the border area; and legal constraints due to ambiguity of jurisdiction on the border, non-availability of witness, easy exit across the border and loopholes in legal system.⁴⁶

The poor law and order situation particularly in Assam and generally in other states proves the poor performance of the Indian law enforcing agencies. According to the media reports, many workers of these agencies are in close links with the terrorist groups. They are so inefficient that they mostly depend on incomplete "intercepted" messages of Bangladesh police wireless. Regarding the poor performance of the law enforcing agencies, the Assam government had suggested sometime back that intelligence personnel both from the Intelligence Bureau and Research and Analysis Wing and various state governments need to be modernised.⁴⁷

There are also concerns about environmental security, especially issues like flooding, natural disaster in Bangladesh presents a security challenge for India. Despite their serious demographic, economic, security and political ramifications, the issue of immigrants continues to remain substantially outside the realm of security discourses of India. In Assam, state authorities have stepped up their drive to arrest and push back Bangladeshi immigrants and Assamese students groups are busy identifying suspected foreigners and handing them over to the police. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh government claims that there is not even a single Bangladeshi immigrant in India.

The resolution of the Indo-Bangladesh border remains difficult as Dhaka has a host of demands vis-à-vis Delhi concerning the border question that include: ensuring free movement of enclave people; permitting exchange of enclave people; speedy demarcation of the border; refrain from pushing Bengali speaking Indian nationals into Bangladesh territory; adopting methods to check violation of the border by Indian civilians and BSF members; ban smuggling of Phensidyl (an intoxicating

⁴⁶ N. S. Jamwal, Border Management: Dilemma of Guarding the India-Bangladesh Border, January 2004, <http://www.idsa.in/publications/strategic-analysis/2004/jan/Jamwal.pdf>, pp.23-30, accessed on 12/1/2009

⁴⁷ Ali Sukhanver, Once a paradise: Assam, *Al Arab Online*, <http://english.alarabonline.org/print.asp?fname=2008\12\12-09\zopinionz\961.htm>, 12/12/2008

chemical) and drugs; and Indian ratification of the 1974 Indira-Mujibur Agreement to facilitate the demarcation of the remaining part of the border.⁴⁸

The Nehru-Noon Agreement of September 1958 tried to resolve the issue of Berubari Union in two equal parts horizontally, the southern part going to East Pakistan. However, most of the inhabitants of the southern Berubari were Hindu refugees who had settled there after being uprooted during the partition in 1947. In post-independence of Bangladesh, the issue of southern Berubari along with other enclaves was resolved. In return India offered Bangladesh a lease of an area of 178 meters by 85 meters called 'Teen Bigha' corridor⁴⁹ to connect the Muslim Panbari 'Mouza' (Ps-Patgram) of Bangladesh.⁵⁰

Unresolved Maritime Borders

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982 has expanded India's jurisdiction as a coastal state through the concept of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 2.013 million sq kms. After the delimitation of the Continental Shelf, the area of responsibility of maritime agencies will increase to 2.9 million sq kms, which would be almost equal to India's entire landmass.⁵¹ However, India is yet to ratify its maritime boundary with Bangladesh and Pakistan. If the sea borders are not properly demarcated and protected, well financed and internationally supported illicit elements can exploit the porous borders and drugs and arms smuggling, movement of terrorist, sea bunkering, counterfeits currency traffic, poaching human trafficking and the illegal migration can threaten national security. The nexus between drug trafficking, arms trade and terrorism runs deep as it provides logistical infrastructure and works on established routes. Moreover, the smuggling of contraband material through the sea route is regarded as the safest means. In this regard, there is evidence to suggest that Pakistan has been using Gujarat and Maharashtra coast for clandestine infiltration and arms drop.

India's maritime security has assumed a new dimension in the post 26/11 era. It demonstrated the maritime capability of the terrorist elements for transporting arms, ammunition, explosives and men for facilitating land-based terrorist operations.

⁴⁸ Sreeradha Datta, p.129

⁴⁹ The ratification of the 'Teen Bigha' transfer took two decades to lease as it got stuck because of the court cases, centre-state relations, and intra-party politics.

⁵⁰ R.N.P.. Singh, pp.117-118

⁵¹ Group of Ministers Report, *Ministry of Defence*, 2001, <http://mod.nic.in/newadditions/chapter-v.pdf>, accessed on 12/12/2009

Bay of Bengal has become very important after the discovery of 100 trillion cubic feet (tcf) gas and oil in the past few years. The World Court has refused to hear maritime dispute on the grounds that there was no binding international covenant for apportionment of seabeds. It suggested that the issue should be resolved on the basis of equality.⁵² However, India and Bangladesh still need to resolve the maritime boundary issue as neither has yet claimed their marine boundary in the United Nations (UN). According to the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea, Bangladesh must demarcate its sea boundaries by July 27, 2011, India by June 29, 2009 and Myanmar by May 21, 2009.⁵³ Since the International Law allows each country to have its sea rights up to 200 nautical miles from its coast to the sea, therefore it remains tricky in case of Bay of Bengal as there is an overlapping of territorial claims due to the curve on the landmass.⁵⁴ The customary practice followed under these conditions is to inform the neighbours and reach a mutual understanding before using the water for exploration or commercial purpose.

Covering an area of about 2 to 12 km, depending upon the receding and rising tides and located in Bay of Bengal, the New Moore islands are located about 5km. from the nearest Indian coastal point and about 7km. from the Bangladesh coastal point. The Island was discovered by India in 1971. Subsequently, India erected a number of concrete pillars and put up a board depicting Indian flag and a map on the island. The West Bengal Government named this Island 'Purbhasha' (Hope of the East) and extensively circulated the information regarding India's ownership of this Island. In March 1980 the Indian flag was hoisted. This alarmed the Bangladeshi government who in turn declared that the island belonged to Bangladesh and named it 'South Talpatty'. India unilaterally conducted a survey and provided mass data on the island's location and features. Subsequently, India sent a ship 'Sandhayak' on the island. The act was condemned by Bangladesh and was regarded as an act of aggression on her territory.⁵⁵

Non-traditional maritime security on Bay of Bengal include threats of maritime terrorism, piracy, smuggling of contraband, humans trafficking, illegal fishing, maritime insurgency, mercenary activities, sabotage of maritime trade etc. Maritime security has assumed a new dimension in the post 26/11.

⁵² Marcus Franda, American University Field Command Reports, September 1975, p.7 cited in Chandrika J Gulati, *Bangladesh: Liberation*, (Common Wealth Publisher: New Delhi), 1988, p.171

⁵³ Rahees Ejaz, 'Maritime boundary disputes: Dhaka set to take its case to UN,' *New Age*, 12/5/2009, <http://www.newagebd.com/2009/may/12/front.html#2>, accessed on 12/5/2009

⁵⁴ Mang Hau Thang, 'Issues Related to Delineating the Outer Limits of Myanmar's Continental Shelf in the Context of Article 76 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,'

http://www.un.org/Depts/los/nippon/unff_programme_home/fellows_pages/fellows_papers/thang_0607_myanmar.pdf, accessed on 14/12/2009

⁵⁵ R.N.P Singh, pp.128-130

Since 1970s, the coast passing along Kendrapara, Orissa was hit by the illegal influx of Bangladeshis particularly in the month of May- September in order to settle near the coast. Today, areas like Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur coast have become mini-Bangladesh as the migrant population keeps inflating every year. It has posed a serious problem to the local administrations in Kendrapara. Experts strongly feel that the said migrants are the baseline informers for their native perpetrators behind transgression.⁵⁶

On Several occasions, fishing vessels from Bangladesh had been seized by the forest authorities or the coast guard of India. The local police had, in the past, arrested some Bangladeshi immigrants on the alleged charge of circulating counterfeit currency notes and some printing machinery etc., which were used for the making of the counterfeit currency note of Rs 100 and Rs 500 denomination in Jamboo, Kharanashi, Talachua, Dangamal and Rangani areas. In 2001, the Rajnagar police had also unearthed six illegal radio stations, which operated in the sea-side hamlets of Rajnagar block. Through this radio station, the Bangla infiltrators had allegedly sent some valuable information about defence to their country.⁵⁷

Presently the border management is not simply a matter of policing along the border due to growing realization that border management must broadly include a comprehensive package which involves defending the border in times of war, securing the borders in times of peace, ensuring that there are no unauthorized movements of humans, taking steps against smuggling of arms, explosives, narcotics and other kinds of contraband items, using sophisticated technological devices to supplement human efforts to these ends, coordinating intelligence inputs from various agencies and ensuring the socio-economic development of the border areas.⁵⁸

The major obstruction to maritime security arising from terrorism and infiltration is that currently there is a plethora of organisations, lack of firm policies and legal and enforcement measures relating to maritime security issues. Consequently there is overlapping of jurisdiction and an inability to provide quick decisions or respond effectively to fast evolving situations. Currently, as many as 12 ministries and eight departments of the central government are involved in maritime-related policy formulation and implementation, as are nine coastal states and four Union Territories, with defence left to the Navy and the Coast Guard. Thus, the major challenges to maritime security will not only include the well coordinated surveillance and security of the extended maritime zone, an increase in domestic shipping tonnage, enhanced effective

⁵⁶ Rajesh Kumar Behra, Bangladeshi infiltration: threat to coastal security, *Merinews*, 2/1/2009 <http://www.merinews.com/catFull.jsp?articleID=154848>, accessed on 2/1/2009

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Prakash Singh, "Management of India's Borders", *Dialogue*, vol. no. 3, January-March 2002, Delhi, p. 59

administration of both major and minor ports, but also the strengthening of regulatory and enforcement mechanisms in India's maritime zones.⁵⁹

According to Vice Admiral P. S. Das, to overcome the shortcomings arising from maritime security, India's maritime doctrine must encompass four basic capabilities, i.e., maximisation of power in the littorals; control of the battle space; command, control, surveillance, reconnaissance, intelligence and communications; and sustainment of forces at sea.⁶⁰

Presently, the Indian Navy and the Coast Guards are responsible for maritime security. The Coast Guard came into being on February 1, 1977 to ensure safety of life and property at sea. Prabhakaran Paleri defines "The term coast guard is strictly a misnomer in maritime security affairs. It is not a guard on duty along the coast. The duty of the coast guard is ideally to prevent a threat from reaching the shore. A serious study into the concept of borders will indicate that the concept is different at sea. The duties of the coast guard are generally seaward of the coastline and extend up to 200 nautical miles perimeter of the EEZ where the maritime zones terminate, unless extended further in future."⁶¹ The Coast Guard assists the Indian Navy in surveillance of the maritime zones that include Palk Straits, the Gulf of Mannar, the coast of Maharashtra and Gujarat and other island territories. The Coast Guards are also responsible to curb the influx of refugees, terrorist, prevent poaching and smuggling of contraband goods.

The Indian Navy also has a Marine Commando Force (MARCOS), with a total strength of around 2,000 which guards the coastal areas.⁶² The MAORCOS can sabotage enemy vessels, harbour installations, conduct recon naissance, raids and even counter-terrorist operations in a maritime environment.⁶³ They can operate in beaches, coastal, jungles and ravines areas. Being divers, they can reach hostile shores swimming underwater.

India has been spearheading a multilateral naval exercise, designated MILAN, since the mid 1990s, which is conducted every year off the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In addition, bilateral and multilateral exercises involving search-and-rescue drills, exchange of information, anti-submarine

⁵⁹ Dimensions of National Security: The Maritime Aspect, Excerpted from the 11th Admiral R D Katari Memorial Lecture conducted by the Delhi Charter of the Navy Foundation, <http://mod.nic.in/samachar/dec15-01/html/ch2.htm>, accessed on 22/11/2009

⁶⁰ P.S.Das, 'A View from the Sea', in Jasjeet Singh (ed.), *Air Power and Joint Operations*, (Knowledge World: New Delhi), 2002, p.243

⁶¹ Prabhakaran Paleri, *Role of the Coast Guard in the Maritime Security of India*, (Knowledge World: New Delhi), (2004), p.129

⁶² V.P.Malik, The role of the army in maritime counter-terrorism, in Parashar, Swati (ed.), *Maritime Counter-terrorism: A Pan-Asian Perspective*, (Dorling Kindersley: New Delhi), 2008, p.20

⁶³ "Maritime Commandos," *The Indian Navy Today*, <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/NAVY/Marines.html>, accessed on 26/12/2009

warfare, advanced mine countermeasures and anti-terror tactics have been held between regional navies from time to time. In December 2002, the MALABAR series of exercises with the U.S. Navy and the IN were revived. The exercise is carried out each year and has also involved ships from Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Mauritius as well.⁶⁴ The last such exercise was held off the coast of Japan in April-May 2009 where the Japan Maritime Self Defence Forces also participated along with Indian Navy and the US Navy.⁶⁵

Under the circumstances where India is busy calming its western borders, the eastern border could suffer from greater instability. In 2005, BSF Director General R.S.Mooshahary said “Bangladesh will soon pose a bigger problem than Pakistan... The India-Bangladesh border is more difficult to man than the India-Pakistan border. At the Pakistan border, both the army and the BSF are deployed, whereas the India-Bangladesh border is manned solely by the BSF.”⁶⁶

To overcome the impediments to border security, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had constituted a Group of Ministers (GoM), to review the national security system in its entirety and in particular, to consider the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee and formulate specific proposals for implementations. The GoM was led by L.K. Advani, then Minister of Home Affairs. The report came out with significant recommendations to safeguard national security against any armed intrusion, entry of narcotics, illegal migrants, terrorist movement and arms smuggling. The recommendations of the Task Force were accepted by the GoM, which decided that some of the recommendations that required greater deliberation should initially be addressed by four Task Forces, one each in the area of Intelligence Apparatus, Internal Security, Border Management and Management of Defence. While some recommendations have been implemented, much more needs to be done to make border management more effective.

⁶⁴ P.K.Ghosh, “Maritime Security Challenges in South Asia and the Indian Ocean: Response Strategies”, A paper prepared for the Center for Strategic and International Studies – American-Pacific Sealanes Security Institute conference on Maritime Security in Asia, Honolulu, Hawaii, 18-20/01/ 2004, <http://www.southchinasea.org/docs/ghosh,%20maritime%20security%20challenges%20in%20Asia%20&%20Indian%20Ocean.pdf>, accessed on 19/4/2009

⁶⁵ For details see The Indian Navy, Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) and U.S. Navy expanded their maritime partnerships during exercise MALABAR 2009, held off the coast of Japan April 29-May 3, <http://www.defencetalk.com/india-japan-us-foster-relationships-during-malabar-18716/>, accessed on 11/5/2009

⁶⁶ “Bangladesh bigger worry than Pakistan,” *Indian Express*, 30/11/2005, <http://www.expressindia.com/news/fullstory.php?newsid=59194>, accessed on 1/7/2009

CHAPTER 3: BANGLADESH: THE NEW HUB OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

The word “terror” finds its origin in the Latin word meaning “to frighten”. The word terrorism is politically and psychologically charged with no set definition. It is used as an instrument by political organisations for furthering their objectives. According to Bruce Hoffman “On one point, at least, everyone agrees: terrorism is a pejorative term. Terrorism involves acts of violence that may include riots, war, organised crimes or simple assault; psychological impact of fear; targeting non-combatants or soft targets; carrying out unlawful or illegitimate acts like bombing or hostage taking.

The basis of the creation of East Bengal, later East Pakistan, was on the principle of religion, the “Two-Nation Theory” and hatred towards Hindus. However, the freedom struggle of East Pakistan in 1970s was driven by Bengali language and culture leading to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971 founded in secularism as one of its foundational principles. Presently, Bangladesh’s long tradition of moderate Islam has increasingly been under threat from Islamic extremism that is one of the catalysts for the growth of menace of terrorism and is seen as propagating and maintaining anti-Indian posture. In fact, Bangladesh has presently been termed as the ‘base of Taliban’¹ and ‘cocoon of terror’².

Political Radicalisation

The role of religion in the politics and society of Bangladesh gained a thrust when Bangladesh adopted Islam as a “state religion” during Hussain Mohammad Ershad’s regime (1982-1990). Earlier, President Zia-ur Rehman (1977-1981) initiated the process of cultivating religious parties for political support who in turn are presently alleged for patronising terrorist groups in Bangladesh. The trend to seek political support of the extremists was sprightly encouraged by the successive governments.

The fundamentalists and *jihadi* elements were the notable allies of Begum Khalida Zia’s, Bangladesh National Party (BNP). During her regime she reportedly manipulated the Islamists in weakening the then opposition Awami League and its allies as well as destabilising India. The *Jamaat-e-Islami* of Bangladesh (also called Jamaat), which is the leading Islamist political party of Bangladesh and the largest Islamic party in South Asia, formed part of the government during

¹ Bangladesh-Terrorism- News and Latest Information (2004), <http://www.einnews.com/bangladesh/frames/frames.php3?wid=34877673>, accessed on 1/11/2008

² Far East Economic Review, 4 April 2002

Zia's second tenure as Prime Minister (2001-2006). Jamaat had as many as 16 members elected to parliament.³ Leaders like Motiur Nizami Rahman and Ali Ahsan Mujahedi, who fought against Bangladesh's liberation and took over Jamaat-e-Islami in late 2000, were made ministers during her regime. Azizul Huq, the Chairman of the Islamic Oyikko Jot (OIJ) a radical Islamist party and a member of the advisory council of Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B), Bangladesh's main terrorist group (banned in February 2005), formed part of the coalition government of Begum Khalida Zia.⁴

It should be noted that Jamaat-e-Islami was banned until 1979 due to its support for the Pakistani army during the liberation war. The party has never apologised for its role and has been a target of the wrath of secular nationalism.⁵ According to Lt.General Yogendra Bammi, the Jamaat has now claimed that they are nationalist to the core. They maintain that during the Indo-Pak war of 1971, Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan so they opposed the anti-Pakistan Bangladesh liberation movement that was backed by India. Their policies have not changed and that they will continue to support any movement that is anti-nation or anti-Bangladesh.⁶

The main motto of the Jamaat is: Allah is our Lord; The Quran and the Sunnah is our ideal; Jihad is our means; and Salvation is our end.⁷ The objectives of Jamaat-e-Islami, as per its constitution, is to establish peace in Bangladesh and in the world; to achieve grace of the Almighty Allah through efforts to establish Islamic way of life for the greater well being of mankind. It has four-point programmes: Purification of thoughts through Dawah and Tabligh; Organisation and training; Social reform and service; and Reform in governance.⁸ Jamaat-e-Islami has even facilitated the terrorist groups with financial assistance and providing manpower. For example, November 2001 witnessed one of the most recent high-profile murders of Gopal Krishna Muhuri, principal of Nazirhat College in Chittagong and a leading secular humanist. He was killed by four hired assassins, who reportedly belonged to a gang patronised by Jamaat-e-Islami.⁹ HUJI has also been responsible for the attack on poet Shamsur Rehman. Terrorists like Bangla Bhai and Jangi Bhai now send death threats in the name of Islam together with kafan (shroud) to those they declare as murtad (apostate). Professor Humayun Azad, who wrote a book on the pro-Pakistan elements

³ Abu Kala, The challenges of terrorism: Bangladesh response, in S.D.Muni (ed.), p.157

⁴ Hiranmay Karlekar, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan*, (Sage Publication: New Delhi), 2005, p.84

⁵ Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, (Routledge: London; New York), 2008, p.30

⁶ Interview with Lt.General Bammi, *USI*, 3/8/2009

⁷ Hiranmay Karleka, pp.136-137

⁸ Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, http://www.islam-bd.org/jamaat/jamaat_home.html, accessed on 21/12/2009

⁹ Amnesty International, December 2001

titled Pak Sarzamin Shad-Bad, was also sent death threats, but the government plays down the strength of terrorist organisations.¹⁰

The other party that formed part of Khalida Zia's government was IOJ. It has openly been vocal about its support for the Islamist militants, the Taliban and the al-Qaeda.¹¹ IOJ is not a single political party but a conglomeration of six smaller radical organisations namely, Khelafat Majlis, Nezam-e-Islam, Faraizi Jamaat, Islami Morcha, Ulama Committee Bangladesh, Bangladesh Farayazi Jamaat, Bangladesh Nizam-e-Islam Party, and Jamiyate Ulama-e-Islam. Some of which have previously expressed solidarity with the Taliban regime.¹² Both IOJ and Jamaat promote anti-Indian and pro-extremist Islamic policy which provides ideal breeding ground for the growth of militants.¹³ Their presence in the political power structure encouraged the extremist elements to act without any fear as they enjoyed the patronage of the authorities. Some other well-known Islam-based political parties that are also based on anti-Indian posture are Jamaat-e-ulema-e-Islami; Muslim League; Nizam-i-Islami; Islamic Democratic League; Islamic Republic Party; and Bangladesh Republic Party. They have well disciplined cadres among youths and students.

In fact, the political environment of Bangladesh had changed. Even Sheikh Hasina Wajed, during the latter half of her tenure as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh (1996-2001), promoter of secular ideology, changed her attire by wearing dress of a Haj pilgrim and wearing the Black Muslim headgear. She was even accused of not taking any actions against the Islamic extremist involved in the killing of the ethnic minorities like chakmas and Hindus. It was speculated that the reason for the change was to obtain their support for the 2001 elections. The pro-Islamic extremist political environment offered Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) a ready ground to prepare its operational base in Bangladesh.

According to Bertil Lintner, a Swedish journalist, the importance of Islam grew as the Awami League fell out with the country's powerful military, which began to use religion as a counterweight to the League's secular, vaguely socialist political policies (many hard-line socialists who are radical left and who termed Bangladesh as unfinished revolution, however, were opposed to the idea of a separate Bengali state in Bangladesh, which they branded as 'bourgeois nationalism').¹⁴ Ali Riaz, in his book *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh* identifies the main cause for the rise of Islamism as

¹⁰ Khaled Ahmed, "Bangladesh: Pakistan's blowback in a looking-glass", The Friday Times, Lahore, 18-24/ 3/2005 <http://74.125.153.132/search?q=cache:nybMEVpzx14J:www.hvk.org/articles/0305/69.html>, accessed on 21/12/2009

¹¹ Kanchan Lakshman, Islamist Extremist Mobilization in Bangladesh, Terrorism Monitor Volume: 3 Issue: 12, 17/6/2005, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=507,7/10/2008

¹² Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, (Routledge: London; New York), 2008, pp. 1, 31 and 42)

¹³ R.N.P.Singh, *Bangladesh Decoded*, (India First Foundation: New Delhi, 2002), p.249

¹⁴ Bertil Lintner, "Bangladesh Extremist Islamist Consolidation, *Faultline*, Vol.14, (The Institute of Conflict and Management: New Delhi), 7/2003, p.2

apolitical ideology as: the crisis of hegemony of the Bangladeshi ruling classes—both civilian and military; the crisis of legitimacy of the military regime post-1975; the politics of expediency of the secularist parties; and the ineffective resistance of civil society.¹⁵ Political radicalisation of Islam in Bangladesh provided an ideal platform for the escalation of activities of Islamic extremists and terrorist groups pursuing a pro-active Taliban agenda.

However according to Partho Ghosh Islamic politics and extremism is confined to the cities. It has not yet reached the small towns or villages. People in the towns and villages are more concerned about their basic needs than religious fanaticism. They are themselves concerned about the rise of extremism that is affecting their security. The very victory of Awami League is a good reflection of the support of the local masses to the secular forces in Bangladesh.¹⁶

Bangladesh in Turmoil

In 2001, two simultaneous events in the South Asian region—the formation of Begum Khaleda Zia’s government (2001-2006) in Bangladesh and the United States (US) led “War on Terror” that led to the invasion of Afghanistan, redefined India’s regional security scenario. As the security threat, which until then existed primarily from India’s western border, has also extended to its eastern border. The 9/11 and subsequent “War on Terror” brought many extremist outfits in Afghanistan under the US scanner. These terrorist outfits required an alternate place for abode. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service in its July 2003 report noted that the (Islamist) radicals in Bangladesh established links with al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden’s International Islamic Front (IIF). Also, the October 2002 Bali blast resulted in the shifting of some of the Indonesian and Malaysian terrorist groups bases to Bangladesh.¹⁷

The unstable social, political and economic setup along with long absence of democratic polity made Bangladesh a soft country for the extremists and terrorist to establish their base. Easy money laundering provided ideal conditions for making it a breeding ground for recruitment, motivation, support, infiltration and safe haven for international terrorist groups, gunrunners, smugglers, pirates and ethnic insurgents. Ali Riaz, Associate Professor at Illinois State University, recognises certain internal factors that contribute to the rise of Islamic militancy in Bangladesh that include: favourable socio-political environment; coercion as an acceptable mode of governance; criminalisation of politics; absence of state institutions in certain geographical areas of Bangladesh;

¹⁵ Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, (Routledge: London; New York), 2008, p.30 and 43

¹⁶ Partho Ghosh

¹⁷ R.N.P.Singh, p.265

a sympathetic civil administration, particularly at the local level; and mobilisation of popular culture for Islamist objectives. He also points out four regional factors that contribute to the rise and proliferation of Islamist militancy in Bangladesh as: Indo-Bangladesh relationship; cross-border cooperation among the militant groups of Myanmar, north-east India and Bangladesh; easy availability of weapons; and the “proxy-war” between India and Pakistan.¹⁸ According to Hiranmay Karlekar, a journalist, “One of the reason that makes Bangladesh an ideal base for their operation is that it has soft state with ineffective governance and an inefficient police force, which fundamentalist Islamist organisations like the Jamaat, IOJ, and HuJI-B, with their highly organised, trained and armed cadres, can dominate without much trouble since they already have a foot in the government.”¹⁹ According to Professor Sayeed, these Islamist controlled vast stretches of the country with the help from the Jamaat and a section of the BNP. Islamist militants had their people in all government departments and sections of society, including mosques, madrasas, educational institutions, the Secretariat, the judiciary, civil society, mass media and even the armed forces. Islamists had also developed a strong countrywide network to capture power through Islamist revolution.²⁰

In this respect it may be noted that the 2005, serial bombing, where more than 400 small bomb blasts within a span of half an hour rattled the capital and towns across Bangladesh, demonstrated a steady increase of the terrorist activities in the political and social setup of Bangladesh.²¹ Although there are no reports of suicide bombing, there are worries about the rise of suicide bombing carried out by Bangladeshis in the region including India and diffusing their area of influence across borders.

The extremists in Bangladesh have been able to establish themselves firmly also because they are receiving support of the security agencies within Bangladesh. Furthermore, they have infiltrated these agencies and institutions of governance. It is reported by the intelligence sources within Bangladesh that February 2009 Mutiny by Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) had revealed some possible links with the Jamat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), an extremist group banned in 2005.²²

¹⁸ Ali Riaz, p.44-80

¹⁹ Hiranmay Karlekar, p.76

²⁰ News report, ‘Cops seize books from Abu Sayeed’s house’, *The Daily Star*, 19/2/2005 cited in Hiranmay Karlekar, p.157

²¹ *Jamaat-ul Mujahideen* took the responsibility for the blasts. *Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen* is a sister organization of the *Jamaat-e-Islami*, which was the coalition partner of the government between 2001-2006 (Sashank S.Banerjee p.158)

²² Ali Riaz, p.1

Main Islamist Groups in Bangladesh

There are reportedly above 20 Muslim militant organisations operation in Bangladesh. However, only a few of them have been reported by the news media. Security agencies in Bangladesh have reportedly identified 48 training centers across the country of some of the Islamic organizations.²³ Some of the terrorist organizations in Bangladesh include: Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen (Bangladesh); Islamic Brothers Cell; Muslim Ummah Sanghati Parishad; Islamic Markaz Party; Jagrata Muslim Janata-Bangladesh (JMJB); Zaker Party; Shahadat-e-al-Hikma; Khadimul Islam; Bangladesh Khilafat Majlis; Jaish-e-Mustafa; Lashkar-e-Jihad; Jamaat-e-Yahia Trust; and Islami Shasantantra Aandolan. Amongst them JMJB is considered as one of the most feared Islamic outfit. Its operational commanders are commonly known as ‘Bangla Bhai’ (Bengal Brothers).²⁴ Another terrorist group Sahadat-i-Al-Hiqma was banned in February 2003.²⁵

It is also stated that Sheikh Abdul Salam Mohammad alias Fazlul Rehman, leader of ‘the *Jihad* Movement in Bangladesh’, signed the official declaration of al-Qaeda’s ‘holy war’ against US on February 23, 1998. In fact, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami of Bangladesh (HuJI-B) was formed in 1992 with the aid of Osama bin Laden. Incidentally, HuJI-B also included Bangladeshis who had fought as volunteers in war against the Soviets in Afghanistan.²⁶ HuJI-B is headed by Shawkat Osman alias Sheikh Farid in Chittagong and, according to the US State Department, has “at least six camps” in Bangladesh.²⁷ According to *Bangladesh Assessment 2003*, HuJI-B has 15,000 members of whom 2,000 are ‘hardcore’. The survey further stated that “Bangladeshi Hindus and moderate Muslims hold them responsible for many attacks against religious minorities, secular intellectuals and journalists.”²⁸ Amnesty International has also reported in December 2001 that Hindus—who now make up less than 10 percent of Bangladesh’s population of 130 million- in particular have come under attack. The Hindu places of worship have been ransacked, villages destroyed and scores of Hindu women are reported to have been raped.²⁹ It is also involved in attacking US establishments in the region, supporting terror attacks and aiding terrorist organisations outside Bangladesh. In 2000, it was also suspected of an assassination attempt on the then Bangladeshi Prime Minister

²³ Abul Kalam, The challenges of terrorism: Bangladesh response, in S.D.Muni (ed.), p.188

²⁴ R.N.P.Singh, p.256

²⁵ Ali Riaz, p.1

²⁶ B.Raman, Bangladesh & Jihadi Terrorism—An Update, *South Asian Analysis Group*, Paper No.887, 7/1/2004, <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers9/paper887.html>, 12/1/2009

²⁷ Pattern of Global Terrorism, 2001, cited in Bertil Lintner, “Bangladesh Extremist Islamist Consolidation, *Faultline*, Vol.14, (The Institute of Conflict and Management: New Delhi), July 2003, p.2

²⁸ *South Asian Terrorism Portal*, <http://www.satp.org>

²⁹ Bangladesh: Attacks on Members of the Hindu Minority, Amnesty International: London, December 2001

Hasina, who is considered friendly towards India and a secular leader. It was alleged that they were supported by Jamaat.³⁰

In its 2005 report, submitted to US Congress last April 29 mentions that the mission of HuJI-B is to establish Islamic rule in Bangladesh. It has connections with the Pakistani militant groups like Harkat-ul-Jihadi-al-Islami (HuJI) and Harkat ul-Mujahidin (HUM), who advocate anti-Indian propaganda in Pakistan and Kashmir and have been responsible for attacks in cosmopolitan cities of India.³¹

Jamaat-e-Islami and its students wing Islamic Chhatra Shibir (ICS) have maintained an anti-India stance and are supporting the insurgent groups in the north-east India. Like the Jamaat, the Shibir blames 'a secular society' for Bangladesh's wild decadence. The Shibir maintains close links with terrorist outfits operating in South Asia³² and Afghanistan, acting on their behalf in Bangladesh, mainly by helping them to recruit and indoctrinate fanatical youth and provide shelters for stockpiling weapons and their supplies in Bangladesh. A significant number of the ICS members were reportedly sent to Pakistan and Afghanistan during the reign of the Taliban regime where a large number of fanatic youth came under the direct command of Osama bin Laden. The members of the ICS are involved in murders and terrorist attacks inside Bangladesh.³³

ICS is also reportedly involved in the bombing within Bangladesh. In fact, Maulana Mirza Nurul Huq, Convener of the Bangladesh Madrassa Teachers Association (BMTA) in a press conference has said that "the Jamaat-e-Islami and its student front Islami Chhatra Shibir are involved in terrorist activities in educational institutions using the name of Islam".³⁴ However, no serious steps have been taken to curb its activities. Other terrorist groups which are also quite active in Bangladesh include—Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh and Purba Bangla Communist Party. Amongst them Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh (HTB) is emerging as a distinct Islamist organization. It is active particularly in the universities of and is having international connections.³⁵

³⁰ B Raman, "Goons or terrorists? Bangladesh decides", *Asia Times Online*, 10/3/2005, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/GC10Df04.html, accessed on 10/11/2008

³¹ Ibid.

³² International links of ICS include links with Rohingya Solidarity Organisation, World Assmebly of Muslim Youth and International Islamic Federation of Students Organisation

³³ Islamic Chhatra Shibir, *South Asian Terrorism Portal*, 2001, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/ics.htm>, accessed on 10/12/2008

³⁴ Islamic Chhatra Shibir, *South Asian Terrorism Portal*, 2001, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/ics.htm>, 1/3/2009

³⁵ Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, (Routledge: London; New York), 2008, p.31

The recruits of these militant organisations, referred to as “Bangladeshi Taliban”, are students of Deobandi *madrassas*³⁶ that have mushroomed throughout the country including the border areas of Bangladesh and Assam and West Bengal in India. “Meetings have been reported in the bordering madarsas, such as Jagadal Dakhila Madarsa, Distt. Panchgarh of JEI-Bangladesh where local leaders discussed motivating of Muslims in the areas on both the sides of the border to arouse the feeling of Jihad. A number of such bordering madarsas are reported to have been visited by JEI-Pak leaders who have utilized the opportunity to criticize India on the Kashmir issue and to give calls for sending mujahids to India and other non-Islamic countries. JEI-Bangladesh and ICS-Bangladesh have also been noticed delivering lecture on the need to liberate the bordering villages in West Bengal from India and merging them with Islamic Bangladesh. Indian Muslims are urged to take up arms to defend their faith and are assured of training and supply of weapons.”³⁷

It is also reported that the members of HuJI-B easily crossover to India and hide in *madrassas* and mosques in West Bengal and Assam. Thus, it is important for India to become conscious about security of the north-eastern region and prevent it from becoming like Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan which is nominally controlled by Islamabad and a safe haven for Taliban particularly when connectivity with the north-east India remains a challenge and border between India and Bangladesh remains porous.

In May 2002, nine Islamist fundamentalist groups, including HuJI-B, formed the Bangladesh Islamic Manch (Association) at a camp near the small town of Ukhia south of Cox’s Bazaar. The Munch included Rohingyas,³⁸ a Muslim minority in Burma, and the Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA), a small militant group operating in India’s north-east. Members of MULTA were reported to be trained by the Bangladeshi veterans of the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan of 1980s, in at least two camps of southern Bangladesh. The surrendered MULTA cadres revealed in interrogation that most of them crossed over to Bangladesh and took military training there, mostly in private *madrassas* located in three adjoining districts of Bangladesh, i.e., Kutigram, Jamalpur and Sherpur, very close to Meghalaya and Cox Bazar. The trainers were tall sturdy and Urdu speaking men who appeared to be Pakistanis.³⁹

Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), classified as a terrorist organisation by Dhaka, is an Islamist group based around north-western region of Bangladesh. It is regarded to having links with

³⁶ During Begum Khalida Zia’s reign approximately 45,000 Islamic *madrassas* all over the land, feeding the supply chain of the militants and the suicide bombers, were established in Bangladesh. (Sashanka S.Banerjee, *India’s Security Dilemmas: Pakistan & Bangladesh*, Anthem Press: New York, London, 2006, pp.156-57)

³⁷ R.N.P. Singh, p.150

³⁸ Rohingaya recruits were paid \$525 on joining and then \$1,750 (R.N.P.Singh, p.265)

³⁹ Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed, p.188

Taliban and al-Qaeda and espouses the ideals of the Taliban. There are significant reports that suggested that JMJB was supported by the members of BNP as the former Deputy Minister for Land, Ruhil Kuddud Talukder Dulu, was reportedly having close links with outfit. Besharat Ullah, the BNP Joint Secretary, purportedly addressed the first rally of JMJB.⁴⁰

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), founded in 1998 is a banned Islamic extremist organisation that gained prominence in 2001 when bombs and documents detailing the activities of the organisation were discovered in Parbatipur in Dinajpur district. JMB's youth front al-Mujahideen that began working in mid 1990s remains obscure even today. It is also said that JMB is another name for the vigilante Islamist group, the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh.⁴¹

Sanctuary for Indian Insurgent Groups

The radicalisation in Bangladesh determines the intensity of its indulgence in extending support to the northeast insurgents and terrorist activities in India. However, the links of the insurgent groups fall into three categories, namely: links with Islamic terrorist groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir; links with Indian insurgent groups, including Islamic groups, operating in the north-east; and links with umbrella organizations to synergies the activities of the fundamentalist and terrorist groups in Bangladesh and India.⁴² There are substantial reports of use of India's north-eastern territory as a transit route to infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir by the Islamist groups of the region. There have also been apprehensions about occasional and potential strikes by the extremists and separatist groups targeting West Bengal, Assam and other cosmopolitan cities of India.

In fact, Nagas and Mizo insurgent groups of India's north-east were able to establish their base in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) immediately after the partition of India.⁴³ Presently there are two armed militant groups in Nagaland, 39 groups in Manipur, 37 groups in Assam, 30 groups in Tripura and four groups in Meghalaya. Most of these groups are aided and provided safe havens in

⁴⁰ Top Bangladesh militant captured: Police, *Reuters News Report*, <http://www.reuters.com/>, 6/3/ 2006; Eliza Griswold, *The Next Islamist Revolution?*, *The New York Times*, [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/23/magazine/23BANG.html?_r=1&ex=1107463938&ei=1&en=40a2becb0f7ba9ca,23/1/2005; Jagrata Muslim Janta Bangladesh \(JMJB\), South Asian Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/JMJB.htm](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/23/magazine/23BANG.html?_r=1&ex=1107463938&ei=1&en=40a2becb0f7ba9ca,23/1/2005; Jagrata Muslim Janta Bangladesh (JMJB), South Asian Portal, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/JMJB.htm)

⁴¹ For details see, *Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh*, *South Asian Portal*, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/JMB.htm>; *Terrorism: A Tragic Tale of Continued Denials*, New Age, 27 September 2005; Julfikar Ali Manik, 'Bangla Bhai active for 6 years', *The Daily Star*, Vol.4, No.338, 13/5/2004, <http://thedailystar.net/2004/05/13/d4051301022.htm>

⁴² R.N.P.Singh, pp.224- 225 and 229

⁴³ For details see R.N.P. Singh, pp.169-215

Bangladesh.⁴⁴ It was under the regime of Begum Khalida Zia (2001-2006) that the number of the extremist groups of the north-east increased.

In 1956, after the Indian Army called out to fight Naga insurgency, A.Z.Phizo, the leader of the Naga movement, crossed over to Bangladesh (then East Pakistan). He established his base in East Pakistan from where he armed his group and mobilised international support.⁴⁵ In fact, with the birth of Bangladesh, the sanctuaries of the north-east groups in Bangladesh were eliminated for a short period. However, after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, Mizo rebels regained some of the lost grounds in Chitagong Hill Track (CHT) as collaborators of the local authorities, helping them in settling Bengali Muslims in CHT and ensuring their own safe refuge in return.⁴⁶

In 2005, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India had prepared a list of 172 Indian insurgent group camps⁴⁷ located particularly in Dhaka, Chittagong Hill Tract, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Sherpar, Moulawi Bazar, Sunamganj, Rangamali, Khagrachari, and Bandarban. Cox's Bazar in Chittagong District is particularly used for the transshipment of weapons and explosives. The route adopted is Cox's Bazar, Alikadam, Kasalang Reserve Forest, Mizoram, Silchar, Jiriban, Tamenglong and Paren.⁴⁸ BSF had submitted a list of 79 militant camps in Bangladesh to the BDR officers during a meeting at Shillong on October 22, 2003.⁴⁹

A more detailed involvement of Bangladesh extremists support to north-east insurgents was disclosed in a 10 page press note released on the occasion of BSF Raising Day in November 1995. The note disclosed that most insurgent outfits in the north-east were acquiring sophisticated weapons from Thailand with the active connivance of Bangladesh intelligence.⁵⁰ The facilities enjoyed are broadly the same as those available to the Islamic terrorist groups.⁵¹ In fact, links between Bangladeshi militants with India's radical militant groups is one of the major security challenges to reckon with.

⁴⁴ Vijendra Singh Jafa, *Insurgencies in north-east India: dimensions of discord and containment*, in S.D.Muni (ed.), *Responding to Terrorism in South Asia*, (Manohar: Colombo), 2006, p.21

⁴⁵ Prakash Singh, *Nagaland*, New Delhi, National Book Trust, 1972, p.119

⁴⁶ *The Times of India*, New Delhi, 1 October 1984, cited in Krishna Gopal, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Bangladesh and its role in north-east insurgency*, in Depankar Sengupta and Sudhir Kumar Singh, *Insurgency in North-East India: Role of Bangladesh*, Authors Press: New Delhi, p.184

⁴⁷ Terrorist Camps in Pakistan and Bangladesh, Lok Sabha Unstarred Question no.1192 Ministry of External Affairs, *Government of India*, 2/8/2006, <http://mea.gov.in/searchhome.htm>, accessed on 12/1/2009

⁴⁸ Rammohan, 146

⁴⁹ Ved Prakash, p.1731

⁵⁰ Krishna Gopal, "Islamic Fundamentalism in Bangladesh and its Role in north-east insurgency", in Dipankar Sengupta and Sudhir Kumar Singh (eds.), *Insurgency in North-East India*, Authors Press, New Delhi, 2005, pp.70-71

⁵¹ R.N.P.Singh, p.228

The Bangladeshi extremists groups have extensive contacts with the Muslim groups of the north-east India like Muslim Liberation Tiger of Assam (MLTA); Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI); Students Islamic Organisation (SIO); Islamic Liberation Army (ILA); Liberation of Islamic Tiger Force (LITF); Muslim Liberation Army (MLA); Muslim United Liberation Tiger (MULTA); People's United Liberation Front; Harkat-ul-Mujahideen; United Muslim Liberation Front of Assam (UMLFA); Muslim Liberation Army (MLA); Muslim Security Council of Assam (MSCA); Muslim Security Force (MSF); Muslim Tiger Force (MTF); Muslim Volunteer Force (MVF); Harkat-ul-Jehad (HUJ); Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM); Islamic Liberation Army of Assam (ILAA); Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS); Islamic United Reformation Protest of India (IURPI); Islamic Revolutionary Front (IRF); Islamic National Front (INF); United Islamic Liberation Army (UILA); United Islamic Revolutionary Army (UIRA); and Zomi Revolutionary Volunteer (ZRV).

The Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, a banned terrorist organisation in India, has also reportedly been using Bangladesh as an important transit point for its cadres. The Tehrik-ul-Mujahideen (TuM), which has close links with Ahle Hadis, has been using Bangladesh for the outlet of its cadres by exploiting the sectarian feudalism prevailing along the route. Top TuM terrorists, Ahmedullaj Nahami alias Ahmed Jan (arrested in 1997 in Delhi) and Mohammad Yousuf Rather (arrested in 1998) made disclosures about the Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM) network in Bangladesh. Reports of the top Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) leaders visiting Bangladesh to converse with the leaders of the JEI (BD) and its student's wing, the ICS, have also been received from time to time. In June 1999, Abdullahil Arman and Mohammad Yaqub Ali of LeT (Pakistan) visited Bangladesh to meet Motinur Akand, President of the ICS and requested him to send volunteers to join the Kashmiri militants. Again in July 2000, Maulana Abu Faiyaz of the LeT (Pakistan) met Maulana Abdul Rauf and Mufti Nizamul Qadir (both leaders of HuJI-B) and formulated plans for launching suicide attacks on Indian security forces.⁵²

In October 12, 2005 the Hyderabad Police Special Task Force revealed a massive network of subversions, recruitments and radicalisation in Andhra Pradesh as investigators discovered that as many as 500 Hyderabad youth had undergone arms training in Bangladesh and Baluchistan through HuJI-Bangladesh network. Other prominent joint operations involving Bangladeshi cadres have included the March 7, 2006, serial bombings at Varanasi, executed by HuJI-B and Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) conspirators; the Delhi blasts of October 29, 2005, involving HuJI-B and LeT cadres; and the December 28, 2005, attack at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, attributed to HuJI-B and JeM cadres. While investigations are still to establish the

⁵² R.N.P.Singh, pp.231-232

linkages in the Mumbai blasts of July 11, 2006, preliminary investigations do suggest that Bangladesh was used for transit and facilitation operations.⁵³

According to the Indian intelligence reports, leaders of various militant outfits of the north-east are based in Chittagong and Sylhet, both these regions having international airports which can be used to flee within a short notice. Some of the insurgent group leaders are living with their families in Bangladesh. These include Paresh Barua (C-in-C of ULFA), Ranjan Daimary (President NDFB), Julius Dorphang (Chairman, HNLC), Dilesh Mark (Chairman, ANVC), Bishwamohan Debbarma (President, NLFT), and Ranjit Debbarma (President, ATTF).⁵⁴ It is reported that Paresh Baruah and Arabinda Rajkhowa, are having fake Bangladeshi passports and travel documents and are working under Bangladesh's direct 'diktat'. Until recently, Bangladesh has maintained a policy of complete denial without verifying the details given to them. In fact, Dhaka counter alleges that anti-Bangladesh elements are operating out of India. Now the government in New Delhi and Dhaka seems committed to take on actions against the terrorists and insurgent groups in the north east India and Bangladesh.

NSCN (IM) had its camps in Jorhar near Cox's Bazar with the strength of 250 cadets; Vaital camp near Rangamati with a strength of 300 cadets; Galilee camp near Alikadam with a strength of 50 cadets; and H.Q. of NSCN (IM) at Dhaka, in a four storied building near New Market.⁵⁵ The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) as well as an intelligence agency in the Cachar district has stated that there are approximately 25 training camps in the area with full knowledge of Bangladeshi authorities. Outfits operating in these camps are United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) etc.⁵⁶ It is widely reported that the ULFA is a constituent of the Bangladesh Islamic Manch, a united council under HuJI's leadership.

⁵³ Ajay Sahni, "Bangladesh has become a safer haven than Pakistan, Affording invisibility and deniability", *Tehelka*, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/ajaisahni/Tehalka010806.htm>, 1/8/2006

⁵⁴ R.N.P.Singh, p.228

⁵⁵ Rammohan, p.146

⁵⁶ NSCN (IM) had their bases at Maudaung (NOM), Nghalphum, Sumsong, Salopi, Pantmapara, villages Nandari and Po-Longia in the district of Maulvi Bazar and at Ujjainpara in Bandarban area. ULFA had its camps at Maijdi, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Mohangaon, Bhairab Bazar, Pulchari, Adampur, Banugashi, Jyantipur, Jaydevpur, Shrimangal and Cox's Bazar. The two Tripura groups, ATTF and NLTF, have preferred Bandarban Khagrachari districts contiguous to Agartala. PLA had a small Manipuri settlements scattered over CHT. It had its base in Sylhet and Chittagong as well. Cited in Krishna Gopal, *Islamic Fundamentalism in Bangladesh and its role in north-east insurgency*, in Depanker Sengupta and Sudhir Kumar Singh, *Insurgency in North-East India: Role of Bangladesh*, Authors Press: New Delhi, p.186

In 1995 a consignment of arms, A.K.47, A.K 56 and R.P.D 7.62 L.M.G and ammunition arranged from China was delivered from a Chinese naval ship of the coast of Cox's Bazar and transhipped in the hired vessel.⁵⁷ The goods were meant for the insurgent groups of the north-east India.

In 1998, it was reported that "The ISI has set up a training camp about 30 km from the Indo-Bangladesh border, between the hamlets of Chattak and Jaintipura in Bangladesh. About 315 ultras from different outfits of the NE states divided into 14 batches are undergoing three months of intensive training under the Camp Commander Major Meer Muammar Mushtaqeen."⁵⁸

There was a massive arms seizure at Chittagong port on April 2, 2004. It included rocket launchers-150; rockets-840; ammunition rounds-over a million; grenades-2500 and assorted assault rifles over 1700. According to Dr.Subhash Kapila, "The unloading of this over-sized arms consignment at a Bangladesh government owned jetty indicates that the Bangladesh Government, its intelligence agencies and administrative machinery would be in the know of it... The arms consignment loaded on dozen trucks or so was headed for Maulvi Bazar in proximity to the Indian border and where Bangladesh permissively tolerates the anti-Indian insurgents safe havens and training camps... The type of weapons like rocket launchers and grenade launchers and hundreds of rockets and thousands of grenades indicate that they were intended for anti-Indian insurgents being hosted in Bangladesh and equip them to launch devastating fire-power attacks on Indian Army regular forces posts, camps etc."⁵⁹ He further writes that there were significant proof to suggest that the then Bangladesh's ruling party BNP was involved in this arms haul as "Salauddin Qader Chowdhury figures as the biggest name not only in the present seizure but also in his involvement in the past in such activities; Chowdhury is a Special Adviser to the Bangladesh Prime Minister and a leading BNP MP from Chittagong; Chowdhury owns a shipping line and the shipping vessel that brought the arms consignment to the Chittagong outer anchorage is either owned by him or facilitated by him; The two trawlers which off-loaded the arms consignment from the outer anchorage and brought to the Fertilizer factory jetty are reported to be owned by Haji Abdul Sobhan, a local BNP leader with proximate links to Chowdhury. Local BNP leaders and party functionaries along with the local police were present at the Chittagong Port to oversee and facilitate the transfer of this large consignment of illicit arms consignment and its onward movement. In a country where police and intelligence surveillance are as intense as that of the ISI in Pakistan, it is inconceivable that the Bangladesh Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia would be unaware of the involvement of ruling party MPs in such anti-Indian activities. More so, when the king-pin happens to be her political

⁵⁷ Rammohan, p.62

⁵⁸ *The North East Times*, 24/8/1998, cited in Vivek Chadha, p.253

⁵⁹ Subhash Kapila, Bangladesh's anti-Indian gun running and insurgent havens persist, *South Asian Analysis Group*, Paper No.978, 29/4/2004, <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers10/paper987.html>, accessed on 26/3/2009

Special Advisor. Earlier, on April 10, the Mayor of Chittagong, Mohiuddin Ahmad Chowdhury (AL) made the following observations: Arms shipment was sent by USA and Pakistan. It was intended for anti-Indian insurgent groups operating from Bangladesh.”⁶⁰

There was also arrest of NSI DGs--Maj Gen (retd) Rezzaqul Haider Chowdhury and Brig Gen (retd) M Abdur Rahim-- in connection with the sensational Chittagong arms haul case. Referring to the confessional statement of arrested former NSI director (security) Sahab Uddin, the public prosecutor said both the former NSI chiefs helped transport the deadly consignment through Bangladesh from China before it was hauled at the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Company Ltd jetty in the early hours of April 02, 2004. Sahab Uddin in his confessional statement said former NSI DG Brigadier General (retd) Abdur Rahim held several meetings with the UAE-based ARY group that is involved in firearms business, in Dhaka and Dubai. According to former NSI director (security) Sahab Uddin Sahab Uddin's confessional statement, Rahim received a Mobile Monitoring System and also commitment from ARY group for help in setting up a private TV channel. The then DGFI director (Counter-Intelligence Bureau) Rezzaqul Haider, who later succeeded Abdur Rahim as the NSI chief, also had close links with United Liberation Front of Assam (Ulfa) operational wing Chief Paresh Barua who used the name 'Ahmed' to hide his identity. Rezzaqul took Paresh (Ahmed) to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka to meet Sahab Uddin, P.P. Kamal Uddin told the court quoting Sahab Uddin's confessional statement.⁶¹

Lintner cites an internal document from HUJI which mentions “lists no less than 19 ‘training establishments’ all over Bangladesh, but it is uncertain how many of them actually offer military training. What is certain, however, is that since a new coalition government led by the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) took over in October 2001, Bangladesh Islamist militants have become more vocal and active.”⁶² The training includes both indoctrination and handling of weapons and explosives.⁶³

Earlier in November 1999, former Director of the CBI, S.K.Datta, wrote: “Abu Nasir, a Bangladeshi Laskar who was arrested in West Bengal revealed names of many Laskar who were operating in the country. The Siliguri corridor has been targeted by the ISI through Laskar for establishing bases... [Chief of L-e-T] Prof. Saeed visited Bangladesh in 1998 and managed to recruit Bengali Laskars. Incidentally, Bangladesh in 1998, has been the favorite shelter for ISI operatives,

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ “Political partners in crime to be caught,” The Daily Star, 18/5/2009, <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=88718>, accessed on 21/12/2009

⁶² Bertil Lintner, “Championing Islamist Extremism”, South Asia Intelligence Review, vol. 1, no. 9, September 16, 2002; South Asia Terrorism Portal; www.satp.org/satporgtp/saitr/Archives/1_9.htm, accessed on 17/3/2009

⁶³ R.N.P. Singh, p.148

ULFA activists and other militants of the northeast.”⁶⁴ It was reported in April 2000, Mohammad Nasim, Home Minister in Sheikh Hasina’s government, admitted that with the help of an unnamed foreign intelligence agency Indian separatists had long been provided training on Bangladeshi soil. He also accused India of encouraging and training the Chakmas.⁶⁵ Islamist militants in Bangladesh have established bases in India and are provided sanctuary by their counterparts as well as Indian rebels they help.⁶⁶ However, Nasim declared that after Sheikh Hasina came to power in 1996 both countries agreed not to shelter each other’s separatist groups. Sheikh Hasina government also signed a peace accord with the CHT insurgents to contain insurgency in CH.⁶⁷

Details of the data obtained by Assam Police on the activities of the ISI and the different Muslim groups were laid on the table of the Assam assembly by the Chief Minister of Assam on April 6, 2000.⁶⁸ This document clearly details the ULFA leader’s regular movement to Pakistan from Bangladesh and of the training imparted to them in Mujahideen camps in Peshawar. Prior to this the Assam Police had arrested four persons on suspicion on August 10, 1999 in Gauhati. The role of Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), the military intelligence agency of Bangladesh, in all these transactions remains shadowy. Throughout they have been the go-betweens or intermediaries in the operations of the ISI with the northeastern militant groups.⁶⁹

Madrassas as the Breeding ground for terrorist

The *madrassas* fill an important function in an impoverished country such as Bangladesh, where basic education is available only to a few. Today, there are an estimated 64,000 *madrassas* in Bangladesh, divided into two kinds (Aliya and Quami). The Aliya *madrassas* are run with government support and control, while the Dars-e-Nizami are totally independent. Aliya students study for 15-16 years and are taught Arabic, religious theory and other Islamic subjects as well as English, mathematics, science and history. They prepare themselves for employment in government service, or for jobs in the private sector like any other college or university student. In 1999, there were 7,122 such registered *madrassas* in Bangladesh.⁷⁰ These are also the main recruiting place for the terrorist outfits.

⁶⁴ Savita Pande, “Pakistan ISI activities in Bangladesh and India’s north-east”, in Depanker Sengupta and Sudhir Kumar Singh, *Insurgency in North-East India: Role of Bangladesh*, Authors Press: New Delhi, pp.266-267

⁶⁵ Sreeradha Datta, *Bangladesh a Fragile Democracy*, (Shipra: Delhi), 2004 p.142

⁶⁶ Hirenmay Karlekar, p.198

⁶⁷ Abdul Kalam, The challenges of terrorism: Bangladesh response, in S.D.Muni, p.169

⁶⁸ ISI activities in Assam, Statement laid on the table of the house of the Assam Legislative Assembly under item No.12 dated April 6,2000 by the Chief Minister of Assam, cited in Rammohan, p.106

⁶⁹ Rammohan, p.106-107

According to the Bangladeshi intelligence agencies, in their initial assessment, identifies 323 *madrassas* where training of the terrorist take place.⁷¹ The investigation by the Bangladeshi intelligence agencies zeroed down on 323 quomi madrassas, where militant training was taking place.⁷²

There are 5,230 Quomi madrassahs with about 14 lakh students.⁷³ The assembled clerics, mainly belonging IOJ. It was given official recognition in 2006 by the Zia government. Official recognition of these educational establishments were resisted because of fears that this would lead to a spurt in religious extremism in the Muslim-dominated country rocking its fragile democracy.⁷⁴ The education of these madrassas is restricted to the teaching of Holy Quran, Arabic and little else. Samina Ahmed, South Asia project director for the International Crisis Group the education of Quami madrassa is not well equipped to fit in the modern learning but can be clerics. However, Bangladesh will not need so many clerics. According to Communist Party leader Mujahidul Islam Selim, "They create an unemployed youth who have no capacity to be employed in the productive sector of the economy. They are being lured into becoming carriers of bombs."⁷⁵

Links

The end of Soviet occupation in Afghanistan led to the unemployment of many Jehadis or mujahideen (Islamic religious warriors). Their Pakistani leaders motivated them to move to Bangladesh to operate against India.⁷⁶ The BSF Director General Ajai Raj Sharma in 2002 stated that there were "firm reports" that Pakistan's ISI had set up new training centres for terrorists in Bangladesh. "The terrorist groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir are also being trained there... It [ISI] is now fully concentrating in Bangladesh,"⁷⁷ Pakistani President General Musharraf's visit to Dhaka in 2002 led to the strengthening its links with Bangladesh army, the BDR, the DGFI, the

⁷⁰ *Probe*, March 1-15, 2002 cited in Bertil Lintner, "Religious Extremism and Nationalism in Bangladesh", Religion & Security in South Asia – An International Workshop, Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, 19-22/8/2002, http://www.asiapacificms.com/papers/pdf/religious_extremism_bangladesh.pdf, accessed on 12/12/2008

⁷¹ "New Qoumi Madrassahs under vigil over Aug 17 blasts", *New Age*, 5 September 2005; "Militant training continues in 250 madrasshas", *Jonokantah*, 29 August 2005, cited in , Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, (Routledge: London; New York), 2008, p.40

⁷² Dhaka brings madrassas under watch, *The Money Times*, 14/4/2009, <http://blog.taragana.com/n/dhaka-brings-madrassas-under-watch-28696/>, accessed on 14/4/2009

⁷³ Farida Majid, WB Report on the goodness of Qoumi Madrassas, *Mukto Mona*, 6/6/2009, <http://mukto-mona.com/wordpress/?p=328>, accessed on 6/6/2009

⁷⁴ Bangladesh gives recognition to militant Muslim madrassas, *South Asia News*, 22/8/2006, http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/southasia/news/article_1193143.php/Bangladesh_gives_recognition_to_militant_Muslim_madrassas, accessed on 2/12/2008

⁷⁵ Simon Denyer,'Concern mounts over Bangladesh madrassas after bombs,' *Daily Times*, 29/9/2005, http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_29-9-2005_pg4_23, 9/12/2008

⁷⁶ R.N.P.Singh, pp.223-224

⁷⁷ Prothom Alo, 17/11/ 2001, cited in Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed, p.129

NSI, important bureaucrats and political leaders including anti-Indian leaders and extremist parties. It also led to the increase in the strength of Pak High Commission in Dhaka including some additional ISI personnel.⁷⁸ By 2006, at the end of the BNP's regime, madrassas supplied nearly 35 percent of the Army recruits.⁷⁹

It is reported that India even views the Pakistani High Commission in Dhaka as the 'nerve centre' of ISI activities in promoting terrorism and insurgency in India.⁸⁰ Institutionalisation of terrorism in India's eastern neighbourhood has facilitated India's north-eastern insurgent groups to incessantly misuse Bangladeshi territory as headquarters, sanctuaries, training camps, arms procurement and storage facilities, and transit route. In fact, "Since 1950s, erstwhile East Pakistan has been facilitating, encouraging and supporting various Northeast insurgent groups. In *The Myth of Independence*, former Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto laid claims to Assam and suggested that he wanted some areas of India's Northeast to be included in Pakistan."⁸¹ In 2005, the MEA prepared a list of 307 north-east insurgents⁸² supported by Bangladeshi extremist outfits sponsored by ISI, with money coming from the Gulf. The list was handed over by the BSF to the erstwhile BDR. In fact, these insurgent groups, who are using Bangladeshi territory, are said to be cooperating closely with the erstwhile BDR, DGFI and ISI for their anti-Indian activity.⁸³

It is important to note that it was after 31 years, the military dictator of Pakistan visited Bangladesh in 2001 after a few months of 9/11 and almost immediately after the US invasion in Afghanistan. Subsequently, links between Pakistani ISI and DGFI, became evident in late 2001 after the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan when a ship carrying several hundred Taliban and al-Qaeda cadres along with arms and ammunitions arrived in Chittagong port.⁸⁴ This was made possible by the Islamists extremist friendly government at Dhaka. They were moved to the southeastern border area of Bangladesh. This could not have been possible without the knowledge and support of the security agencies within Bangladesh. According to Colonel Anil Bhatt, almost all groups of India's north-east were reported to have met the al-Qaeda seniors and pledged their support to them.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ R.N.P.Singh, p.235

⁷⁹ Stemming the rise of Islamic extremism in Bangladesh, *Harvard International Review*, 24/11/2008, <http://www.harvardir.org/articles/print.php?article=1784>, accessed on 24/11/2008

⁸⁰ Abu Kala, The challenges of terrorism: Bangladesh response, in S.D.Muni (ed.), p.157

⁸¹ Sreeradha Datta, p.140

⁸² Terrorist Camps in Pakistan and Bangladesh, Lok Sabha Unstarred Question no.1192 Ministry of External Affairs, *Government of India*, 2/8/2006, <http://mea.gov.in/searchhome.htm>, 2/11/2008

⁸³ K.M.A.Malik, BDR, Indo-Bangla Border and the Barbed Wire Fence (BWF)', 8/3/2009, <http://ishakhan.wordpress.com/2009/03/08/bdr-indo-bangla-border-and-the-barbed-wire-fence/>

⁸⁴ Sumon K. Chakrabarti, Bangladesh: The Shift in the Balance of Terror in South Asia, *International Assessment and Strategy Centre*, 13/3/2006, http://www.strategycenter.net/research/pubID.96/pub_detail.asp#, accessed on 24/11/2008

⁸⁵ Anil Bhat, ISI's eastward operations-old links in North-East India and new ones in South-East Asia, in Depanker Sengupta and Sudhir Kumar Singh, *Insurgency in North-East India: Role of Bangladesh*, Authors Press: New Delhi, p.245

Sayed Abu Nasir, a Bangladeshi national who had worked for the international Islamist charity outfit established by Osama bin Laden, was picked by the ISI and posted to Dhaka and worked with DGFI. According to the Indian intelligence sources, he was also involved in coordination and providing assistance to India's north-eastern secessionist and sending them to training camps in Pakistan.⁸⁶ It is also believed that there are as many, if not more, terrorist training camps in Bangladesh territory as there are in Pakistan and that more Indian fugitives wanted for their involvement in acts of terrorism in Indian territory have been given shelter in Bangladesh than in Pakistan.⁸⁷

“Three ATTF undergrounds, who surrendered before the Security Forces on October 2, 2002, revealed that the ISI had arranged six-month training for eight ATTF undergrounds at Kandhar (Afghanistan) and that they were flown to Kandhar from Dhaka. Two senior leaders of the NDFB, Dhiren Boro (Vice-President, arrested on December 1, 2003) and Gobinda Basumatary, General Secretary (arrested on December 5, 2002) disclosed the instrumentality of the ISI in training of NDFB cadres in Pakistan. A number of ULFA leaders including Pradip Gogoi (Vice-Chairman) and Lohit Deori revealed that several batches of ULFA cadres were flown to Pakistan from Dhaka for training, which was arranged by the ISI.”⁸⁸ Nazir Ahmed Sodozey, a Pakistani terrorist, disclosed the hidden facts of Bangladeshis undergoing training in the HuA camps in Afghanistan, provision of shelter to HuA cadres in Bangladesh, involvement of Bangladeshis in terrorist activities/ kidnappings of foreign tourists etc. Abu Baker Siddiquei, another terrorist, revealed that he had motivated and assisted recruitment of Bihari Muslims to undergo arms training at the RIF training centre in Arakan hills near Chittagong.⁸⁹ Thus, the rogue elements of Afghanistan and Pakistan possibly want Bangladesh to be an important base, if not headquarters and a staging center of their globalised terrorist activities.

The recruits of the terrorist outfits are taken to Pakistan mostly via Nepal. In Pakistan these recruits are trained and subsequently sent to military camps in Afghanistan. It is not known how many people from Bangladesh, including Rohingyas, have fought in Afghanistan. According to *Pratham Alo*, a Bangla daily newspaper, in 2004 reported that 3000 Bangladeshis fought along with the Taliban fighters in Afghanistan.⁹⁰ They have even served in Kashmir and Chechnya.

⁸⁶ See Hiranmay Karlekar, pp.70-71 and B. Raman, “Sayed Abu Nasir believed to be close associates of Osama Bin Laden”, *Sapra Indian Foundation*, 2/1/1999, http://www.subcontinent.com/research/sapra_documents/tr_1999_01_002_s.html, accessed on 12/1/2009

⁸⁷ Abdul Kalam, *The challenges of terrorism: Bangladesh response*, S.D.Muni (ed.), p.158

⁸⁸ R.N.P.Singh, p.238

⁸⁹ R.N.P.Singh, pp. 230-231

⁹⁰ Pratham Alo, 22/12/2004 cited in Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed, p.106

In this respect it may be noted that in certain quarters it is believed that entire ULFA leadership has shifted its base to China. In 1960s, China was providing training facilities to the insurgent groups mostly in the Sajek range of Hills of CHT in late 1960s.⁹¹ According to the recent investigation in Bangladesh, Hafiz Rehman, one of the accused of March 2004 weapons offloading consignment from China for ULFA, confessed before Metropolitan Magistrate that Paresh Barua was helped by Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited, Coast Guard, the then chiefs of the Directorate General Forces Intelligence and National Security Intelligence to offload weapons and ammunitions which were enough to arm a whole military division.

Financial Sources

With huge funds coming from Pakistan,⁹² Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Jeddah, Qatar, Kuwait⁹³, and United Arab Emirates the Jamaat-e-Islami and the group of related extremist organisations turned into a formidable political force and became strong in countryside as a result of being instrumental in setting up Deobandi *madrasas*. Deobandi *madrasas* are the main recruiting institution for the terrorist outfits.

Other sources of funds include huge revenues and profits from investments and enterprises; institutionalised extortion; regular contributions of the members and associate members; Zakat (religious tax); profit from the sales proceeds of its literature. Jamaat has also set up a dozen of trusts, welfare and financial organisations like Islamic banks throughout the country. According to Professor Abul Barakat “the net profit from fundamentalist economy in Bangladesh is approximately Taka 12,000 crore.”⁹⁴ These organisations are almost entirely manned by Jamaat and Shibir members.

⁹¹ RNP Singh, p.184 and 190

⁹² “By the early mid-1990s, Pakistan Army, ever ready to cause trouble for India, decided to establish and promote liaison with the Bangladesh military, the police and the other security forces. The justification for such an alliance were: (1) Islamic solidarity (2) Past history (3) Promoting enmity with India and destabilize it, a common objective for both. Gradually a firm alliance took shape between Pakistan ISI and the entire gamut of the security services in Bangladesh. It was during this period that a whole lot of separatist militant outfits fighting India in its north-eastern region began setting up their bases on the soil of Bangladesh, aided and abetted by Pakistan’s ISI, who had already established itself as a significant force.” Sashanka S.Banerjee, *India’s Security Dilemmas: Pakistan and Bangladesh*, Anthem Press: London, New York, 2006 pp.153-154

⁹³ It is reported that one Kuwait-based organization named “Islamic Heritage Society of Kuwait” and “Revival of Islamic Societies” with branches in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates are the funding sources from where the Islamic militants secure huge grants to ‘promote Islam’. “Jongira Taka Pai Kothai?” (Where from the militants get money?), *Sangbad*, 20/8/2005, cited in Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed, p.133

⁹⁴ Abu Barakat, *Bangladeshe Maulobader Orthhaniti*, (Fundamentalist Economy in Bangladesh), (Mukti BhawanL Dhaka), 2005, cited in Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed, p.135

The terrorist groups of Bangladesh are reportedly been receiving financial assistance from *madrassas* and several Muslim Non-Governmental Organisations in West Asia⁹⁵ and Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, Adarsha Kutir, Servants of Suffering Humanity International (SSGI), al Faruk Islamic Foundation, Hatadin, Rabita Al-Alam Al-Islam, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, the International Islamic Relief Organisation, the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS), and the Ishra Islamic Foundation, International Islamic Relief Organisation, Revival of Islamic Heritage Society⁹⁶ are the main financing NGO's. Saudi Arabia, Gulf countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan also provide the *jihadis* with logistic support. The DGFI revealed that the militants were involved in the arms-trafficking and arms training at a madrassa in Dhaka sponsored by a Saudi organization called al-Haramin, which is known to have links with Osama's money distributing infrastructure, operating in 37 branches in different parts of Bangladesh.⁹⁷

Conclusion

India has regularly been taking up its security concerns with Bangladesh at different levels through diplomatic channels and institutional mechanisms existing between the two countries without much success. In fact, in March 2004, while speaking to the media in Dhaka, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Morshed Khan ruled out the possibility of handing over ULFA leader Anup Chetia, presently in Bangladeshi jail, to Indian authorities.⁹⁸ However, India and Bangladesh has no extradition treaty signed between them.⁹⁹ It should be noted that in May 1998, within six months of Chetia's arrest, Khalida Zia had told during an interview at the BNP headquarters in Dhaka that her party would like to regard the ULFA cadres as 'freedom fighters' just as the Mukti Bahini were freedom fighters.¹⁰⁰

Ali Riaz suggest that to curb militancy it is important to improve law and order situation, rounding up the known militants, dismantling the support infrastructure, investigating any links with the local administration, bringing the patron of justice, identifying the sources of weapons of the militants, commitment to education, balanced social and economic development, and human

⁹⁵ R.N.P.Singh, p.150

⁹⁶ Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, (Routledge: London; New York), 2008, p.83 and 84

⁹⁷ Alex Perry, "Deadly Cargo", *Times*, 21/10/2002, pp.22-25

⁹⁸ Chronology of major events 2004, *National Security Research Foundation*, <http://www.nsrff.com/chronology/chr2004.htm>, accessed on 20/12/2008

⁹⁹ Haroon Habib, "India ready to hand over criminals", *The Hindu*, 20/10/2008

¹⁰⁰ Wasib Hussain, "Friendly neighbour, unfriendly act," *The Hindu*, Chennai, 23/11/2002

right. International pressure, particularly from the investors or developmental partners, can also check the militancy in Bangladesh.¹⁰¹

According to E.N.Rammohan, a former Director General of the BSF, for counter-insurgency there are certain lessons that needs to be taken into account includes: first is to find the cause, analyse it and take drastic steps to effect remedial measures. Secondly, it is important to ensure that in operations the people are not alienated. In a situation where there has been economic discrimination and corrupt governance, it is important to ensure that there is good clean governance, can wean the people away from the insurgent.¹⁰²

According to Yashwant Sinha, former Minister of External Affairs, the irritants between India and Bangladesh cannot be resolved overnight but by being patient as the issues are complex and there is no clear road ahead. But India should make it clear to Bangladesh that while we are willing to resolve the irritant, we will not be able to tolerate any threats emitting from Bangladesh. It is also important for Bangladeshis to change their mindset towards India.¹⁰³ According to Partho Ghosh, familiarity breeds contempt and India matters to Bangladesh but China do not. So it will be hard for Bangladesh to compare the unequal relationship she shares with China than to India.¹⁰⁴

The present government at Dhaka, however, seems committed to work with Delhi in its efforts to drive out the militant groups from its soil. In this regard, Bangladesh has recently accepted India's proposal to set up a Joint Task Force to deal with militancy and other anti-national elements. However, modalities of the Joint Task Force are yet to be evolved. As of now, India will mainly be assisting Bangladesh with intelligence inputs. But Indian troops will not be involved in any joint military operations to flush out militants taking shelter in Bangladesh.

Dhaka is also showing its desire to sign several agreements with India and the US on the formation of a "South Asian Anti-Terrorism Taskforce" (SAAT), the purpose and modality of which are not clearly known to the public.¹⁰⁵ It should be noted that efforts towards joint anti-terrorist or security operations between India and Bangladesh started soon after Sheikh Hasina came to power. In this regard, a joint counter terrorist military exercise took place in Jorhat, Assam and West Bengal's Jalpaiguri in February-March 2009 despite of February 2009 Mutiny by the BDR. Moreover, joint patrolling by border personnel has always been in operation on both sides of the borders. These

¹⁰¹ Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, (Routledge: London; New York), 2008, p.104- 108

¹⁰² Rammohan, pp.125-126

¹⁰³ Yashwant Sinha, interview with the author, Delhi, 4/8/2009

¹⁰⁴ Partho Ghosh

¹⁰⁵ K.M.A. Malik, South-Asian anti-Terrorism Taskforce, a trap to involve Bangladesh in the US-India's war on terror?, *Sonar Bangladesh*, <http://www.sonarbangladesh.com/article.php?ID=569>, accessed on 7/12/2009

developments are stepping stones for re-building strong regional ties and trust between the two countries.

However, Bangladesh's opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia has strongly opposed the setting up of the task force to combat terrorism, alleging that Prime Minister Hasina was using it as an excuse to bring foreign troops into the country. Begum Zia asserted at a May rally that "There is no militancy in Bangladesh" and claimed that her government (2001-06) had successfully eliminated it.¹⁰⁶

The decision for the establishment of Joint Task Force came at a very appropriate time for India particularly when Delhi is becoming increasingly concerned about its security from its eastern border principally since the attacks in major cities of India in 2008 as most of these terrorist attacks were having their links in Bangladesh.

Islamist and extremist forces in Bangladesh are on rise. According to a foreign diplomat in Dhaka, "In the 1960s and 1970s, it was the leftists who were seen as incorruptible purists. Today, the role model for many young men in rural areas is the dedicated Islamic cleric with his skull cap, flowing robes and beards."¹⁰⁷ The Jamaat and fundamentalists have been successful in managing the support of the people in their acts against the secular intellectuals; Non Government Organisations (NGO); and in their aggressive policies against women emancipation, which forced many women to commit suicide. However, despite organised efforts of the Jamaat-e-Islami against women emancipation, it is important to note that amongst Bangladesh's most powerful people include two women who became the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, i.e., Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed. Additionally, due to a long history of moderate Islamic culture, there is a large section of population that is not inclined towards fundamentalist bigotry. Nevertheless, if the works of Jamaat and the terrorist groups are not checked and links with Pakistani ISI are not contained the day is not far when Bangladesh will become next Pakistan or even Afghanistan (a launch pad and base for the Islamist militants).

Also, the recent mutiny in Bangladesh has made border security on India's eastern border vulnerable for infiltration, illegal migration and smuggling of contraband due to absence of the security forces on Bangladesh side. Thus, it becomes necessary for India to guard its eastern borders. This will require temporary permit for the migrants on humanitarian grounds and

¹⁰⁶ Hasina plotting to get foreign troops to fight militancy: Zia, *SamasHits.com*, 5/3/2009, <http://news.smashits.com/NewsPrint.asp?nid=279748>, accessed on 5/3/2009

¹⁰⁷ Bertil Lintner, "Is religious extremism on the rise in Bangladesh?", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, London, May 2000

complete fencing of the border. It is important to give clear directions to the BSF to stop infiltration (BSF has been given clear direction. There is two tier security in the border: fence and patrol). Above all there is a need to take appropriate steps to contain illegal immigration from Bangladesh that has not only changed the demography in the north-east India but has also been the cause for the people of the north-east to have taken to arms. It is also important to check mushrooming of Deobandi *madrassas* that are the main recruiting place of the militant groups.

The future of Islamist militant groups is linked to the overall political and economic environment of Bangladesh and the role of political actors and other international Islamist organizations.

Joint Task Force can help contain and finally eliminate the militant groups in the country by sharing of intelligence and, if possible, conducting joint anti-insurgency operations. Such endeavors can be a major development to facilitate both countries in dealing with insurgency and militancy as well as building strong bilateral relations.

CHAPTER 4: BANGLADESH ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION: EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Migration has now come to be regarded as one the new “security threat” as it involves not only human and personal security and human rights issues but also has internal and international security implications. Illegal immigrants are referred to those migrant across national borders in a way that violates the immigration laws of the destination country. Myron Weiner, a social scientist, identifies five broad categories of situations where refugees or migrants are perceived as a threat - to the country which produces the emigrants, to the country that receives them, and to relations between sending and receiving countries. The first is when refugees and migrants are regarded as a threat - or at least a thorn - in relations between sending and receiving countries, a situation which arises when refugees and migrants are opposed to the regime of their home country; second is when migrants and/or refugees are perceived as a political threat or security risk to the regime of the host country; thirdly, when immigrants are seen as a cultural threat; fourthly, as a social and economic problem for the host society; and finally—a new element growing out of recent developments in the Gulf—is when the host society uses immigrants as an instrument of threat against the country of origin.¹

Officially recognised as a separate category of states, north-east refers to the easternmost region of India consisting of the contiguous Seven Sister States. The presence of illegal Bangladeshi nationals in India remains the contentious issue that undercuts India-Bangladesh relations and is detrimental to security of India.

Historical Background

When the British occupied the north-east, it was largely uninhabited due to rivalries amongst the local tribes and massacres. Initially, under the British, the immigrant population from neighbouring regions like Bengal, Bihar and Nepal etc. were welcomed by the local people and were considered useful for the development of the region. But soon immigrants were seen as encroachers on their lands and reserve forest that affected demography and ecology of the area. Subsequently, in 1873, British introduced Inner Line under the East Bengal Frontier Regulations of 1873 to restrict the immigrants, particularly Bengali Muslims.² However, it remained ineffective. In fact, better

¹Myron Weiner, *Security, Stability and International Migration in International Security*, Vol.17, No.3, Winter 1992-93, pp.14-15, http://18.48.0.31/ssp/Working_Papers/Working%20Papers/WP-90-2.pdf, accessed on 17/11/2008

² The explicit but self-contradictory, British reasons for segregating the hill tribes were to protect the plains from raids and plunder from the hills tribes (1873-1900); protect the hill tribes from exploitation by the plainsmen (1900-28); and to foster an enlightened public policy aimed at the cultural survival of the hill tribes (1928-47). Vijendra Singh Jafa,

economic prospects, shortage of local labour and absence of insufficient mechanism have always been the reason for this influx.

After the partition of Bengal in 1905, the over-populated Muslim peasantry from East Bengal started crossing over to the fertile lands of thinly populated Brahmaputra and Surma valleys in the Northeast corner of India. The formation of the All India Muslim League in Dhaka in 1906 encouraged the migration to increase the Muslim population in Assam for political reasons.³

In late nineteenth century, Bengali's became the dominant class in Assam particularly in the southern districts like Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Nogaon, Cachar, Karimganj and Hailkandi, that led to Bengali being made state language and the medium of instruction and Assamese language was labeled as the dialect in 1937.⁴ Thus the illegal immigration and the policies of the government thereafter were responsible for the rise of separate distinct ethnic identity amongst the locals and the local immigrants. The rise of distinct ethnic identity was also responsible for the hostile attitude towards each other. A large influx of Bengalis during the late 1900s resulted in the dominance of Bengali culture and language in the north-east. leading to anti- Bengali sentiment and anti-Bengali riots in 1960s which caused death, destruction and fleeing of Bengali population from the north-east.

When the British left India, the north-east was not affected by the communal riots during the partition. However, there was uncertainty due to influx of refugees who found themselves on the other side of the border. The north-east was suddenly surrounded by countries, each of which was competing for a share of the geo-political space.⁵ According to Professor Partho Ghosh, the illegal immigration from Bangladesh remains imbibed in the system due to the border demarcation done by Redcliff because the terrains remain complex and wishy-washy. This has led to the bad blood between Hindus and Muslims in the region. Both Hindus as well as Muslims were dissatisfied with the demarcation because suddenly they found themselves in a foreign land. He further notes that while illegal immigration was inevitable the security of the region remained fragile.⁶

According to Professor Partho Ghosh, the illegal migration can be divided into three broad categories based on the phases. First phase of migration was immediately after the partition that was the result of security. The second phase of illegal immigration was due to the Bengali revolt

Insurgencies in north-east India: dimensions of discord and containment, in S.D.Muni (ed.), *Responding to Terrorism in South Asia*, Manohar: Colombo, 2006, p.78

³ R.N.P.Singh, *Bangladesh Decoded*, (India First Foundation: New Delhi, 2002), p.132

⁴ Ved Prakash, *Encyclopedia of North-East India*, Vol.2, (Atlantic: New Delhi), 2007, p.685

⁵ Vivek Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflict in India*, (Sage Publication: New Delhi; Thousand Oaks; London), 2005, p.231

⁶ Interview with Professor Partho Ghosh, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 6/8/2009

against the language law that was passed in Pakistan which made Urdu the national language in the country with more than 60% of Bengali speaking population. The third phase was related to economic opportunities as East Pakistan was an impoverished state as compared to West Pakistan. In the post-independence of the Bangladesh, impoverishment, ethnic persecution and political situation have induced illegal immigration.⁷

Soon after the partition, the Hindu minority of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) started migrating to India as the social fabric torn apart, economy shattered and administration paralysed. Many East Pakistanis found themselves in economic denial and started migrating to India. Subsequently, the Immigrant (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, was passed in the parliament which mentioned that only the people who were displaced because of civil disturbances in East Pakistan could migrate to India. The deportation of people, caused much antipathy in Pakistan, and finally in a conciliatory gesture, the Nehru-Liaquat Ali Khan Agreement of 8 April 1950 was signed which allowed the return of those people to India who had been deported till 31 December 1950. "This led to mass exodus of the minorities both ways."⁸

However, during the Sino-India War of 1962, it was reported that some infiltrators were seen with Pakistani flags. This resulted in adoption of Prevention of Infiltration from Pakistan to Assam Plan (1964).⁹ But atrocities in East Pakistan by the Punjabis (West Pakistan) in early 1970s led to unchecked entry of a large-scale Bangladeshi (then East Pakistanis) refugee into India. Subsequently, the Indira-Mujib Agreement of 1972 redefined the status of illegal immigrants in India as it declared that all those who had come before 1971 were declared non-Bangladeshis.

The arrival of immigrants which continued even after the independence due to ethnic persecution of minorities and economic opportunities has changed the demography, culture, economy and ecology of the region. The constant change of the boundaries of Assam also led to demographic imbalance. In 1895, the North Lushai Hills were made part of Assam; this was soon followed by the inclusion of the South Lushai Hills and the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which had earlier been a part of Bengal. Then East Bengal was merged with Assam in 1905, reducing the Assamese to a minority in their own land. It led to the reversal of those decisions in 1912.¹⁰ It had a political, social, economic and environmental implications leading to the people of north-east voicing their concerns that soon took explosive dimension, which the state and the centre failed to tackle with desired results.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ved Prakash, p.753

⁹ Vivek Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflict in India*, (Sage Publication: New Delhi; Thousand Oaks; London), 2005, p.234

¹⁰ Ved Prakash, pp.523-527

Economically, the unchecked migration has increased the pressure on land, depletion of forest wealth, forcible occupation of government lands and host of other issues that has generated serious problems. However, according to Professor Partho Ghosh, the illegal immigration is not so much an economic problem as the people who are coming to India are contributing in the gross domestic production. But the illegal immigration is a political problem as they are affecting the vote bank and destabilising the demography.¹¹ According to a Bangladeshi researcher “The close proximity can be used to the best advantage of both countries. It can create greater economic interdependence between Bangladesh and India which in my opinion will be an important force multiplier in bringing us closer. In the Financial Year 2007-2008 Tripura imported goods worth 150 Crore taka from Bangladesh, imagine if the trade can be enhanced how much benefit it can bring to the areas close to Tripura and the country as a whole. Similarly, despite the proximity there is little people to people contact between Bangladeshis and the people in the NE states, there is an opportunity to increase that as well.”¹² The massive migration of Hindus in 1960s resulted in agitation against the Marwaries on the Republic Day of 1968. It was due to the rice shortage. The hoardings by the Marwaries, who had exclusive control of all trade in essential commodities and extensive smuggling of rice to East Pakistan. It was observed that in Hojai, which was the rice bowl of Assam, had 0 percent collection of levy rice, while North Lakhimpur, constantly under floods had a 100 per cent figure for the same.¹³

Chakmas, who also migrated from East Pakistan due to ethnic persecution, were treated as second class citizens in the north-east. They migrated to India due to lack of economic opportunities, under-developed social economic and health care facilities, ethnic killing of Chakmas by Bangladeshi extremists, displacement due to the construction of a dam across the Karnaphuli river at Kaptai in the CHT in late 1970s as well as deteriorating conditions of the minorities in Bangladesh. They were absorbed with the local population as they were scattered, small in number and the ethnic consciousness was still not assertive among the people of the north-east. In 1960s the Chakma refugees were rehabilitated in Tripura and Mizoram. However, the Mizo insurgency led to their rehabilitation in the then North East Frontier Agency (NEFA, presently Arunachal Pradesh).

¹¹ Interview with Professor Partho Ghosh, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 6/8/2009

¹² Telephonic interview with a Bangladeshi researcher, identity withheld, 19/12/2008

¹³ E.N.Rammohan, *Insurgent Frontiers: Essay from the Troubled Northeast*, (India Research Press:New Delhi), pp.12-13

Indira-Mujib Agreement of 1972

The Indira-Mujib Agreement of 1972 redefined the status of Chakma refugee in India as it declared that all those who had come before 1971 were declared non-Bangladeshis. In the subsequent years, Bangladesh denied the presence of its nationals including Chakmas in India thus, refused to repatriate. Subsequently, there was return of a large number of Chakma refugees to Bangladesh after various diplomatic exchanges between New Delhi and Dhaka. On their return, Chakma found their land occupied by the Bangladeshi settlers. In 1990s, the attacks on Chakmas made them flee to Assam.

As per the 1972 understanding between India and Bangladesh, Bangladeshi nationals who came to India after March 25, 1971 would be sent back for resettlement. The Agreement had also put illegal infiltration under three categories: (a) the person convicted by court; (b) apprehended in the process of inadvertent or deliberate crossing over and; (c) all other categories of illegal entrants, i.e., identified as such in areas far from the border and in other states of India. The Indian security side has, however, been complaining that in reality the Bangladeshi side has been receiving the persons in category (b) only. With regard to persons in category (c), Bangladesh has been insisting on the complicated procedure of deportation through consular channels.¹⁴ The Agreement legalised the illegal entrants who had committed an offence under the Indian Citizenship Act.¹⁵ The Agreement was highly resented by the natives of the north-east which resulted in a large scale agitation led by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). The agitators pressurised the Assam government and Government of India to make arrangements to stop it by putting permanent barricades on the borders; detecting and deporting the foreigners out from the country; their names be deleted from the electoral rolls; the possibility of the inclusion of their names in the electoral rolls be eliminated by building up an adequate and strong election machinery; and the Indian voters in Assam be issued identity cards with photographs. Several rounds of talks between the student's union leaders and the government representatives were held with regard to the issue of detection and deportation of illegal immigrants.¹⁶ The matter remained unresolved due to the differences over the cut-off year. The AASU favored the use of the National Register of Citizens of 1951 as the basis for establishing citizenship, whereas the Prime Minister insisted that 1971 be taken as cut-off year.¹⁷ The rebel movement in Assam was finally launched in 1979.

¹⁴ R.N.P.Singh, p.146

¹⁵ E.N.Rammohan, p.27

¹⁶ R.N.P.Singh, pp. 136-137

¹⁷ Vivek Chadha, p.240

Illegal Migrant (Determination by Tribunal) Act

Consequently, enactment of Illegal Migrant (Determination by Tribunal) Act or IMDT Act came into force in 1983. The Act was meant to detect and deport illegal migrants through tribunals. As against the Foreign Act of 1946, which confers upon Central Government certain powers in respect of entry of foreigners into India, their presence therein and their departure there from and which is applicable to the whole country, the IMDT Act is referred as “Illegal Migration (Protection by Tribunal) Act” by Hiranmay Karleka as it makes the determination of illegal status most difficult given to the fact that illegal immigration from Bangladesh was actively promoted by important political figures in Assam. Second, the complaint against a person for being illegal immigrant could only be filed by someone who lives within a 3 km. radius of the residence of the accused and that the complaint’s affidavit had to be supported by that of another person who also lived within a range of 3 Km from the residence of the accused. Third, the Act is applicable only to those arriving in India after 25 March 1971. Finally, the definition of illegal immigrant was mentioned as one without being in possession of a valid passport or any other travel document or any other lawful document. This made conviction difficult because one could always claim the loss of passport, and the responsibility to prove again fell on the litigant.¹⁸

The Home Ministry informed the AASU delegation in 1980 that 9,67,000 immigrants had entered Assam during 1961-71; 2,14,000 being displaced persons in the wake of 1965 Indo-Pak War and subsequent communal riots. The breakdown of the remaining 7,53,000 illicit immigrants was given as Hindus- 631,000; Christians 30,000; Buddhist- 65,000 and Muslims-27,000.¹⁹ In 1974, Indian Border Security Force (BSF) detected a large number of people entering India with permits issued by the Bangladesh district authorities. The Indian High Commission in Dhaka contested the authority of the district officials to issue such permits. The Bangladesh Foreign Office, dismissed such contention and mentioned that Bangladesh was allowing the return of Indian nationals who had migrated to Bangladesh under special permits.²⁰

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs admits that the functioning of the IMDT Act has been "unsatisfactory", and in a presentation in mid-1999, in connection with a court case, disclosed that action under the Act had been taken as follows: Total enquiries (against suspected illegal migrants) initiated: 3,02,554; Enquiries referred to the Screening Committee: 2,96,564; Enquiry reports referred to the IMDT Tribunals: 31,264; Persons declared as illegal migrants by the IMDT

¹⁸ Hiranmay Karleka, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan*, (Sage Publication: New Delhi), 2005, p.85-86

¹⁹ Ved Prakash pp.768-769

²⁰ Avtar Singh, *India-Bangladesh Relations: Documents 1971-2002*, Vol.1, (Geetika Publishers: New Delhi), 2003, p.XC

Tribunals: 9,625; Number of illegal migrants expelled: 1,461.²¹ According to Sreeradha Datta, “due to ethnic, linguistic, cultural, physical and social similarities, Bangladeshi nationals tend to merge easily with the local population making it impracticable to identify them.”²² This is particularly true of West Bengal where they speak same language and have same facial features.

According to Wasbir Hussain, “There is need to make a clear distinction, here, between indigenous Assamese-speaking Muslims and Bangladeshi migrants before analysing the demographic and security implications of such population growth. Aside from Guwahati, Assam's capital (that is part of the Kamrup Metro district), the heartland of the indigenous Assamese Muslims—whose origins can be traced to the forays of the pre-Mughals in the 13th century—is located around the tea growing eastern districts of Jorhat, Golaghat, Sivasagar and Dibrugarh. In Jorhat district the Muslims comprised just 3.89 per cent of the total population in 1971, rising to 4.32 per cent in 1991. The growth rate was 48.04 per cent between 1971 and 1991. In Sivasagar, Muslims accounted for 6.65 per cent of the population in 1971, climbing to 7.63 per cent in 1991; in Dibrugarh from 3.66 per cent of the total population in 1971 to 4.49 per cent in 1991; and in Golaghat, Muslims comprised 5.17 per cent of the population in 1971, rising to 7.11 per cent in 1991. It is interesting to note, in this context, that the growth rate of the Hindu population in Jorhat, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh and Golaghat was between 32 and 49 per cent over the 1971-1991 period closely comparable to the rates of growth for the indigenous Muslim population. Evidently, the Muslim growth rate in areas dominated by indigenous Assamese-speaking Muslims, located far from the Bangladesh border, have been registering marginal increases, as compared to areas located close to the border.”²³

According to the report of the Intelligence Bureau presented to the 38th Conference of Directors General and Inspector General of Police held in Delhi on 4-5 November 2003, there were 375,000 illegal Bangladeshis even in Delhi. The division bench of the Delhi High Court was formed comprising Chief Justice B.C.Patel and Justice A.K.Sikri, directing Delhi Police, on 22 September 2003, to identify and deport 3,000 illegal Bangladeshi immigrants per month.²⁴ The Delhi government, however, told the court on 8 September 2004 that only 3,147 had been deported since February 2004.²⁵

²¹ Wasbir Hussain, p.176

²² Sreeradha Datta, *Bangladesh a Fragile Democracy*, (Shipra: Delhi), 2004, p.137

²³ Wasbir Hussain, *South Asian Intelligence*, Vol.3, No.10, 20/9/2004, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/archives/3_10.htm, accessed on 2/12/2008

²⁴ News Report, “High Court Raps Centre on Bangladeshi Migrants’ Issue”, *The Pioneer*, (New Delhi), 23 September 2003, cited in Hiranmay Karlekar, p.89

²⁵ News Report, “HC Indicts Delhi Government for not Evicting Aliens Faster”, *The Pioneer*, (New Delhi), 23 September 2004, cited in Hiranmay Karlekar, p.89

The IMDT Act could not resolve perennial immigrant problem in the north-east. Subsequently, Assam Accord of 1985 was conceded, which fixed the cut-off date to determine illegal migrants in Assam as March 25, 1971, the day Bangladesh was born.²⁶ The Accord mentioned that all those migrants who had come and settled in the state on or before this date shall be regarded as citizens and those illegal migrants who are found to have arrived in the state after this date are to be detected and expelled in accordance with the law.²⁷ With the signing of Assam Accord, the rebel groups launched a militant struggle against the government as they asked government to revoke the Accord and instead enact a law that deports all illegal immigrants irrespective of their time of immigration.

In 2001, the IMDT Act was challenged in Supreme Court by Sarbananda Sonowal, a former President of the AASU seeking a declaration that the IMDT Act was unconstitutional.²⁸ It led Supreme Court of India to set aside IMDT Act in 2005.²⁹ The Court mentioned that IMDT Act “has created the biggest hurdle and is the main impediment or barrier in the identification and deportation of illegal migrants.” It directed the State Government to constitute sufficient number of tribunals under the Foreigners Act to deal with the situation effectively. The decision was seen as detrimental to the interests of millions of Bangladeshi immigrants in the country.³⁰

In February 2006, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, dropped the idea of enacting a legislation in lieu of the controversial IMDT Act and decided to amend the Foreigners Act to ensure that anybody whose citizenship is in doubt gets a ‘fair hearing’. In fact, it means that tribunals would be set up in Assam under the Foreigners Act, 1946, as was the case when the IMDT Act was in force, to examine the veracity of complaints against suspected Bangladeshi migrants. A tribunal hearing is, however, not mandatory anywhere else. This decision by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs was reportedly taken after a recommendation from the Congress Government in Assam. Subsequently, the Supreme Court in

²⁶ While the cut-off date of Foreigners Act is 1946

²⁷ For details see Assam Accord, *South Asian Terrorist Portal*, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/documents/papers/assam_accord_1985.htm#Assam_Accord, accessed on 27/12/2008

²⁸ D.N. Bezboruah, “Illegal Migration from Bangladesh”, in BB Kumar (ed.), *Illegal Migration from Bangladesh*, (Asha Bharti: Delhi), 2006, p.53

²⁹ Responding to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) the Supreme Court of India had asked the Centre and the governments of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura to file affidavits on the repatriation of illegal Bangladeshi migrants. The PIL filed by the All India Lawyers Forum for Civil Liberties had alleged that over 10 million Bangladeshi migrants have allegedly crossed over into India and were causing severe strain on the resources of the poor Northeastern states as well as West Bengal. It has sought a direction from the Court to the Centre to identify these Bangladeshi nationals and repatriate them with the help of Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and other agencies. *Assam Tribune*, 13 July 1999, cited in Sreeradha Datta, p.137

³⁰ D.N. Bezboruah, “Illegal Migration from Bangladesh”, in BB Kumar (ed.), *Illegal Migration from Bangladesh*, (Asha Bharti: Delhi), 2006, p.53

December 2006 held that the Foreigners (Tribunals for Assam) Order 2006, which puts the onus of providing a person a foreigner on the complainant as unconstitutional.³¹

Implications of Illegal Immigration

The illegal immigration is one of the main reasons for the beginning of the insurgency in the north-east. The South Asian Terrorism Portal website has listed 38 insurgent groups in Assam. Prominent among them are the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), Dina Halim Daigah (DHD), United Liberation Liberation Front of Barak Valley (ULFBV), and Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO).³² Many of the small groups are the offshoot of major groups. The objective of most of the groups is independence from the India which is the stumbling block for peace in the region. Most of these groups are not just terrorist groups, they are organisations, having a rigid and clear cut philosophy and a well coordinated system of action. According to Professor Partho Ghosh, for ULFA the illegal immigration is no more an issue. They now want independence as they feel Indian government is responsible for their economic, social and political deprivation and for a step motherly treatment. However, their demand is irrational because even if Assam becomes independent, the population pressure of Bangladesh will engulf them in no time. They are no match to Bangladesh's demography and military. At the same time, ULFA has no experience of establishing a state within a state like LTTE and cannot challenge the Indian state. The very fact that ULFA is not even active beyond its own region shows the limited potency of ULFA.³³

As a matter of fact, soon after the signing of the Assam Accord, the Bangladeshi Muslims who had initially identified themselves as Assamese speaking started registering themselves as Bengali speaking. It is alleged that the political leadership has supported illegal immigration of Bangladeshi because they constitute themselves as committed voters for such leadership. These immigrants were clandestinely provided with ration cards and their names were included in the voters' list. "Their ability to obtain ration cards and also to enroll themselves as voters not only gives them a back-door entry to Indian citizenship but also provides them with a political clout that facilitates the settlement of more Bangladeshi illegal migrants in India."³⁴ However, according to Professor Partho Ghosh, the Assamese Muslims, who had assimilated themselves with rest of the Assamese

³¹ D.N. Bezboruah, "Illegal Migration from Bangladesh", in BB Kumar (ed.), *Illegal Migration from Bangladesh*, (Asha Bharti: Delhi), 2006, p.53

³² Assam Assessment 2009, *South Asia Terrorism Portal*, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/index.html>, accessed on 12/12/2008

³³ Partho Ghosh

³⁴ R.N.P. Singh, pp. 145-146

population, has not identified themselves with the Muslims of Bangladesh due to the ethnic cleansing organised against Muslims.³⁵

Earlier the large scale of infiltration and illegal immigration was highlighted during the Mangaldoi constituency of Darrang district by-election. As the voters list of the constituency was updated, it was found that out of the list of 600,000 voters, objections were raised to the inclusion of 70,000 voters, on the grounds that they were foreigners. This led to the setting up of a tribunal by the Chief Minister, Gopal Bora. The tribunal declared that 45,000 of them to be foreigners leading to the postponement of the Mangaldoi elections till the mid-term poll. This accentuated the problem and led the chief minister to direct deletion of the names of foreigners from the voters list; however, his directions could not be implemented as his government fell on September 4, 1979.³⁶

Subsequent election results, that have brought in considerable Muslim population in the state legislative assembly reflects the growing clout of the Bangladeshi immigrants in the political process of the region. Recently Assam's former Governor, Lt Gen.(Retd.) S.K. Sinha mentioned that if unabated infiltration of foreigners is allowed to continue, the situation in Assam will be worse than that of Kashmir in days to come and one should not be surprised if a Bangladeshi national manages to become the Chief Minister of the State. He was even quoted as saying that "The influx of these illegal migrants is turning these districts into a Muslim majority region. It will only be a matter of time when a demand for their merger with Bangladesh may be made."³⁷ Any attempt to delete the names of illegal immigrants from the electoral rolls and their subsequent expulsion from India raises ever louder howls in the name of "protection of minorities rights" and on humanitarian grounds.³⁸

The overall Muslim population of the north-east has grown from 16 to 18 percent in 1950s and 1960s to over 40 percent now. The demographic imbalance in the north-east can be understood by comparing the annual and decadal population growth rate of India and Assam which reflects an astonishing figure.³⁹

The Muslim population in Assam is 30 per cent which is next to Lakshdeep and Jammu and Kashmir. While a line of demarcation between the Hindus and the Muslim living in upper Assam in terms of education and economic development could not be drawn because of social setting,

³⁵ Partho Ghosh

³⁶ Vivek Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflict in India*, (Sage Publication: New Delhi; Thousand Oaks; London), 2005, pp.238-239

³⁷ "Bangladeshis have no business to be in India," *The Economic Times*, 12/1/2009

³⁸ Ved Prakash, p.755

³⁹ Ved Prakash, p.745

However, the Muslim population living in lower Assam, most of these immigrants from Bangladesh, are backward economically and educationally. Their children study in private madrassas which are unregistered and which do not have a uniform and regulated curriculum. Some of these madrassas are based on hate campaign against other religious communities.⁴⁰ In January 2009, the then Union Home Minister, P.Chidambaram said that “I don’t regard a Bangladeshi as a Muslim or a non-Muslim. He is a Bangladeshi. He has no business to come to India unless he has a visa. He has no business to live here unless he has residence permit. He has no business to work here unless he has a work permit. He is a Bangladeshi. His religion is completely irrelevant.”⁴¹

Tripura has a different type of infiltration problem. A large number floating Bangladeshi population crosses the border at daybreak for work and return home at sunset. They go for work each morning—men are mostly rickshaw-pullers; women are mainly maids, and children as rag-pickers—and return to Bangladesh in the evening.⁴² “Tripura is the only state in the North-East where the indigenous people (read ‘the sons of soil’) have been outnumbered after India’s independence by the exogenous group! The uncontrolled post-1947 influx of Hindu migrants from East Pakistan outnumbered the tribal majority population which consequently has been declining gradually, and sometime steeply, from 1931 Census onwards till 1981 Census. The 1991 Census proved a turning point⁴³ because the tribal population percentage registered an increase for the first time since 1931. It rose from 5,83,920 (28.44 percent) in 1981 to 8,53,245 (30.95 per cent) in 1991. But earlier, the reduction of tribal population from 50.09 per cent in 1941 to 28.95 per cent in 1971 had posed a threat to state’s tribal identity.”⁴⁴

In 1999, Nagaland set up a Committee of Officials to examine the influx of “suspected Bangladesh migrants into the state and devise measures to deal with it”.⁴⁵ It was formed in response to the concerns expressed by various organisations and individuals, including the Governor, on the alarming rise of illegal immigration to the state. Unofficial figures put the influx of such persons at over 60,000, mostly settled in and around Dimapur, working as agricultural labourers in the foothills and plains area, besides doing other manual jobs. It is also noted that the State Chief Electoral Officer had directed the officials to ensure that no bogus names were included in electoral rolls during the then ongoing process of special roll revision. He also pointed out that “there has

⁴⁰ Abu Nasair Said Ahmed, pp. 191 to 193

⁴¹ Bangladeshis have no business to be in India, *The Economic Times*, 12/1/2009

⁴² Ved Prakash, p.792

⁴³ S.Sailo, “The Growth of Tribal Population in Tripura: 1991 Census—A Turning Point”, in *Tu*, a Quarterly Research Journal, June-August 1993, Vol.II, cited in Ved Prakash, *Encyclopedia of North-East India*, Vol. 5, (Atlantic Publisher: New Delhi), p.2265

⁴⁴ Ved Prakash, *Encyclopedia of North-East India*, Vol. 5, (Atlantic Publisher: New Delhi), pp.2265-2266

⁴⁵ PTI, 4/7/1999 cited in Ved Prakash, *Encyclopedia of North-East India*, Vol. 5, (Atlantic Publisher: New Delhi), p.2166

been an ‘abnormal increase’ of more than 3 per cent in the electorate during the special revision in most of the constituencies, contrary to the national average annual increase of 2.5 per cent.⁴⁶

Besides, sections of border population are being subverted with the circulation of anti-India and fundamentalist propaganda originating from Bangladesh. According to Bangladeshi researcher, “the wall of mistrust that been gradually erected over the years needs to be brought down. Both countries have concerns which need to be addressed. We need to identify what are the irritants that are causing problems and then look at a fresh approach to get rid of them. There needs to be more dialogue between Bangladesh and India at all levels. If we can identify very specifically what those problems that has led to trust deficits, then we can make headway.”⁴⁷

During Oct-Nov.2001, calendars iconising Osama-bin-Laden were found in circulation in Karimganj district of Assam. Police also seized CDs and audiocassettes in Tezpur in November 2001 propagating fundamentalism. Again in Nov.2002, Karimganj police discovered a large number of audio cassettes containing inflammatory anti-India speeches of Moulana Dilawar Hussain Syeedi, a JEI-BD MP. Apart from the material glorifying Osama-bin-Laden, a large number of cassettes glorifying Saddam Hussein have been in circulation on both the sides of the border.⁴⁸

There are also security threats due to the rise of Islamic militancy that has started consolidating itself particularly because Bangladeshi infiltration remains unchecked and illegal immigration continues to be sensitive issue that is misused for political purpose. There are a dozen Muslim extremist organisations working in the region like: Muslim Liberation Tiger of Assam (MULTA); Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam (MULFA); United Muslim Liberation Front of Assam (UMLFA); Muslim Liberation Army (MLA); Muslim Security Council of Assam (MSCA); Muslim Security Force (MSF); Muslim Tiger Force (MTF); Muslim Volunteer Force (MVF); Harkat-ul-Jehad (HUI); Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM); Islamic Liberation Army of Assam (ILAA); Islamic Sevak Sangh (ISS); Islamic United Reformation Protest of India (IURPI); Islamic Revolutionary Front (IRF); Islamic National Front (INF); United Islamic Liberation Army (UILA); United Islamic Revolutionary Army (UIRA); and Zomi Revolutionary Volunteers (ZRV). It is reported that HUM and HUI are directly raised by ISI and thus are the most fanatical in their ideology. The purpose of these organisations is to spread Islamic fundamentalism in the entire north-east. Among others, the report names Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Chhatra Shibir, organisations which have maintained an anti-India stance are supporting the insurgent groups.

⁴⁶ Ved Prakash, *Encyclopedia of North-East India*, Vol. 5, (Atlantic Publisher: New Delhi), p.2166

⁴⁷ Interview with Bangladeshi researcher, Identity withheld

⁴⁸ R.N.P. Singh, pp.149-150

There is also a rise of madrasas in the border areas. According to the BSF survey, while Kolkata, the state capital and a city of 14 million, had only 131 seminaries (read madrasas) and 67 mosques, the small border town of Krishnanagar in Nadia District had 404 seminaries and 368 mosques. Many of them, particularly those recognized by the government, stick to their students, who are often from deprived backgrounds.⁴⁹

Wasbir Hussain succinctly notes that “The population explosion in Bangladesh, with 2.8 million added every year in one of the poorest and most densely populated countries in the world, creates the push factors for this silent demographic invasion. These are, however, compounded by an expansionist political ideology, implicitly or explicitly supported in the corridors of power in Bangladesh: the idea of *Lebensraum* ('living space'), which has been variously projected by the country's leadership for a long time, though the use of the expression itself is relatively recent.”⁵⁰ “Bangladesh can hardly de-link itself from its neighbourhood and the wider milieu of nations. The Bengalis of Bangladesh thus have been developing what Howard Stein calls a sense of ‘psycho geography’ a mental map of belonging, even though spatially they may be situated in other countries of the world.”⁵¹ Even pro-Indian President of Bangladesh like Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rehman had once said “East Pakistan must have sufficient land for its huge population and Assam will give it full scope for expansion”.⁵²

Bangladesh, one of the world's most densely populated and poorest countries, has suffered an increase in the intensity and frequency of climate-related problems. The United Nation Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has predicted that Bangladesh could lose nearly one-fifth of its land by 2050 because of rising sea levels due to global warming.⁵³

The issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh has been brought to the notice of Bangladesh Government over several occasions. The Government of India has also taken a number of steps including tightening of border security, deploying a large number of paramilitary forces and intensifying patrolling to stop illegal infiltration. However, the illegal immigration of people from across the border still continues.⁵⁴ Efforts by Indian security agencies to push back illegal

⁴⁹ Hiranmay Karlekar, p.80

⁵⁰ Wasbir Hussain, *South Asian Intelligence*, Vol.3, No.10, 20 September 2004, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/archives/3_10.htm, accessed on 18/12/2008

⁵¹ Howard F.Stein, *Development Time, Cultural Space: Studies in Psychography*, London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987, p.3 cited in Abdul Kalam, *The Challenges of Terrorism: Bangladesh Responses*, in S.D.Muni (ed.), p.147

⁵² Ved Prakash, p.756

⁵³ Ruma Paul, “Thousands of Bangladeshi urge action on climate change”, *Reuters*, http://www.reuters.com/articleID=USDHA310924_CH_2400, 24/11/2008, accessed on 6/11/2008

⁵⁴ R.N.P. Singh, p.151

Bangladeshi migrants have been until now obstructed by erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and the Bangladeshi Government refuses to acknowledge that these are Bangladeshi migrants and propagates that India is pushing back Bengali speaking Indian Muslims.⁵⁵ According to Professor Partho Ghosh, “Illegal immigration is an issue we have to live with but it is important for us to manage it.”⁵⁶

At the same time there is a decline in the Hindu population in Bangladesh since the partition. There was about 31% of Hindu population in 1947⁵⁷ that dropped down to 19% in 1961. By 1974, the Hindu population further declined to 14% and in 2002, it was estimated that the Hindu population in Bangladesh was only about 9% of the total population.⁵⁸

According to Sreeradha Dutta, “The question of influx of Hindu refugees from Bangladesh into India has been closely intertwined with the larger issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh. Despite the absence of statutory regulations, it is essential to differentiate ‘refugees’ from ‘illegal immigrants’. People who flee Bangladesh due to persecution and seek refuge in India such as Bangladeshi Hindus and Chakmas are treated as refugees. Those Bangladeshis who cross over into India seeking livelihood or economic migrants are treated as ‘illegal migrant’. There is another category of Bangladeshis who commute daily to their jobs in India but do not stay over.”⁵⁹ Thus the layered and complex issue of illegal immigrants and refugees, backed by political interests, has in fact made the migration of Bangladeshi immigrants easier.

There are also fears that foreign agencies including the ISI of Pakistan are using this easy practice of migration from Bangladesh to set up cocoons of terrorists in India to destabilise the political systems and create instability in the country.⁶⁰ It is widely believed that Islamic militancy has been consolidating because of unabated Bangladeshi immigration. There are a dozen extremist organisations working in the north-east. Some of these organisations are directly raised by Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), thus, are the most fanatical in their ideology and are maintaining anti-Indian stance.

⁵⁵ R.N.P.Singh, p.146

⁵⁶ Partho Ghosh

⁵⁷ Assessment of Hindus in Bangladesh” Centre for International Development & Conflict Management, 31/12/2000, <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/assessment.asp?groupId=77102>, accessed on 1/12/2008

⁵⁸ S.K.Datta, “The Recent Plight of Minorities in Bangladesh: A Post-election Perspective”. Paper presented by the former Director, Central Bureau of Investigation, India in an international seminar organized by the Centre for Research in Indo-Bangladesh Relations, Kolkata, 28 Jan 2002, cited in RNPSingh, p.89

⁵⁹ Sreeradha Dutta, p.138

⁶⁰ R.N.P. Singh, p.142

“The Army has identifies villages with ‘curious’ population mix, in and around Siliguri that provide safe haven for the ISI operatives. Chapra is one such village, 55 km from Siliguri, with the population of 25,000, the nerve centre for illegal border trade and fake currency racket of Saudi *Riyals* and other currencies. There is Islampur, a town 70 km from Siliguri, with a population of 1 lakh, a known ‘stronghold and hub of ISI functionaries’. The town has a skewed demographic mix: some 2,000 Pushto and Baluchi settlers from Afghanistan, engaged in moneylaunders and ‘suspected ISI activists’; 6,000 Iranians who settled here in late 1960s, all of them without any vital documents and involved in narcotics smuggling; and some Saudis who ‘indulge in smuggling and other illegal activities’.”⁶¹

The interrogation of Md.Nurul Haq by the BSF in Cooch Behar district in September 2003, revealed that there were camps of the MULTA being run in Bangladesh with the help of Pakistani instructors, to train Muslim youths for creating an independent nation. The training includes both indoctrination and handling of weapons and explosives. Haque further revealed that MULTA had been inducting weapons into India for the last two years, and those were being coached at different locations in Barpeta district. The recruitment was done mainly from amongst the poor and illiterate migrant Muslims. The trained recruits were told to await instructions after which acts of violence would be launched targeting, in particular, the security forces.⁶²

To conclude, despite their serious demographic, economic, security and political ramifications in the north-east, these developments continue to remain substantially outside the realm of the security discourse in the country. Bangladeshi infiltration remains unchecked and illegal immigration continues to be sensitive issue that is exploited by vested political interests. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh government claims that there is not even a single Bangladeshi migrant in India. Additionally, deportation policy may seem ‘un-implementable’ and can be regarded as ‘inhumane practice’ raising international criticism particularly when the deported population is not accepted by the Bangladeshi government which demands them to prove their Bangladeshi nationality.

A decade of agitation by the rebel groups, both peaceful and violent over the illegal foreign national issue, has not brought concrete success. Further, unresolved border problem of enclaves and adverse possessions along with the difficult terrain keep the border porous and open for easy infiltration. Additionally, recent mutiny by Bangladesh Rifles has also made the borders porous and unguarded on the Bangladesh side and thus enabling illegal migration from there much easy.

⁶¹ Ved Prakash, p.784

⁶² R.N.P. Singh, p.149

Illegal migration and their settlement will remain a security challenge for India if no immediate concrete actions are taken that would involve deporting and checking illegal immigration. In fact, the deportation of the illegal Bangladeshi migrants has the potential to create a major political and communal problem particularly the people involved have the support of the politicians.⁶³ Border security and border management on India's eastern border needs to be looked upon as an important national security issue. This issue of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants should be taken up seriously by the security forces and the political leadership without any vested interests

⁶³ R.N.P. Singh, p.143

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The smooth progress in South Asian cooperation is hampered by disparities among the countries within the region and by non-traditional security issues that transcend national boundaries. Terrorism, illegal immigration and border management permeated the significant trans-border national security problems facing India. It involves the identification of the security lapses and development and implementation of policies, standards, procedures and guidelines. Management tools such as risk assessment, risk analysis and information classification are used to identify threats, rate systems weaknesses and classify assets so that effective management policies can be implemented.

Border management

Indian borders are regarded as 'hot borders'. India shares its longest borders with Bangladesh. The unresolved issues concerning undemarcated border; problem of enclaves and adverse possessions; and the difficult terrains that keep the border porous, thus are making the task of infiltrators, smugglers and illegal immigrants that much easy. It is also responsible for the skeptical relations between the two countries. The concern remains unresolved due to political sensitivity towards the importance of potential voters. Also the unresolved border issues and a high level of distrust between India and Bangladesh makes it mandatory to develop effective and efficient land border management since not taking adequate measures would create sufficient space for anti-national forces to expand its area of influence.

Border security and border management requires India to have a pro-active policy rather than a reactive policy to the issue. It is only through a serious dialogue at the political and diplomatic levels that one can resolve the issue of contentious border. In this regard there is a need to demarcate land and maritime borders with our neighbours. It is also important to have a separate department for border management to be created within the Ministry of Home Affairs that deals with border security and border management. Additionally, separate and exclusive forces need to be created for border management and code of 'one border one force' and the 'single point control' may be adopted that will enforce the principle of accountability. Consequently, all para-military forces managing unsettled borders should operate directly under the control of the Army and there should be literal induction from the army to the para-military forces so as to enhance their operational effectiveness. However, the Border Security Force (BSF) should have the responsibility for all the settled borders and the Border Guarding Forces should have the responsibility bearing on

internal security like preventing illegal immigration, carrying out anti-smuggling activities, checking infiltration and collection of intelligence. This will help in clearly demarcating the work of BSF and is likely to reduce the pressure of border management. It is important to give clear direction and authority to the BSF to stop further infiltration. Strict measures need to be adopted to deal with the entry of narcotics, illegal immigrants, terrorists and arms by making stringent laws to punish the criminal, by sanitising the border and by setting up border fencing along with motorable roads close to the fence.

In addition India is situated at the centre of “Golden Crescent” and “Golden Triangle”, the two famous drug peddling routes. Terrorist groups often work hand-in-hand with drug cartels. There is a need for advancement in surveillance technology, particularly satellite imagery, which can help maintain a constant vigil and record along the Indo-Bangladesh border. In this regard, the integration of all national radar resources of the Army, Navy and Air Force civil radars must be progressed at a faster pace. In addition, it is mandatory to upgrade the country’s technical, counter-intelligence, economic intelligence gathering and electronic capabilities, including coastal radar and interceptor boats. It is advantageous to setup a Specialised Marine Police in all Coastal States and island territories. The police force should be appropriately trained and equipped with boats and weapons. There is also a need to strengthen the BSF Water Wing in West Bengal. Fisherman watch groups may also be set up in each of the coastal states. Further, close cooperation and coordination between Navy and Coast Guards, in both war and peacetime, is required.

Coastal security was also addressed by the GoM in its report. Its recommendations included the upgradation of the Coast Guard and the establishment of specialised marine police in all coastal states and island territories. These are currently under implementation. Also the implementation of GoM recommendations on the creation of a separate Maritime Police Wing is long overdue.

Navy and Coast Guards may set up Joint Operations Rooms at regional levels and compatibility between Navy and the Coast Guard in terms of weapons, equipment and training must be ensured. Worldwide system of tracking and monitoring the movements of all ocean-going ships and larger navies should train the smaller navies to be able to do their bit for maritime counter-terrorism. Maritime operations are basically commercial activities, and, therefore, the security regime has to factor this into its operations. Sanitising the coastal waters at least up to a distance of 200 nautical miles from the coast if not more will thwart insurgency.

There is a need to increase the number of personnel along with the raise in pay, allowances benefits and other amenities. Prevention will also include: information networking; port security;

coordination and joint patrol; regional cooperation; gathering and collation of information; notification of relevant organisations; promulgation of anti-piracy law; actions on interception; and criminal investigation against the offender.

Security measures call for appropriate force structures and procedures to deal with the entry of illegal immigrants, terrorists and contraband goods. In addition, there is a need to establish closer relation with the border population to protect them from subversive propaganda.

It is also significant to establish closer relations with the border population to protect them from subversive propaganda. It is imperative to prevent unauthorised settlements along the borders and to initiate special development programmes. However, removal of settlements along the fencing and on the zero zone is significant. The shifting of population is tricky particularly at the stretch between Islampur in the Kishenganj district and Malda in West Bengal, while most Hindu villages along the border have reportedly shifted willingly. However, the Muslim villages have resisted relocation. There is a need for proper compensation to all such villages that are relocated. The compensation needs to be within a clearly defined time frame. At the same time temporary permits needs to be given to the migrants from Bangladesh on humanitarian grounds.

Tackling Terrorism

The struggle of Bangladesh independence was based on its language and cultural identity. However, soon after it got independence from Pakistan, the role of religion in the politics and society of Bangladesh gained a thrust. It became visible when the trend to seek political support of the extremists was actively encouraged by the governments at Dhaka. The main purpose was to weaken the then opposition (pro-Indian) Awami League and its allies as well as destabilising India. The development of Islamic extremism and militant Muslim groups is due to their links with international terrorist groups; military ties with the militants; religious intolerance; the mushrooming of Islamic schools churning out radical students; middle-class apathy towards the extremist forces; poverty and lawlessness. All these factors are combining to transform Bangladesh that promised to follow the path of secular democracy at the time of independence in 1971. Also the development of some armed underground fundamentalist outfits in the border region has a spillover effect on India's northeastern region that shares borders with Bangladesh.

The recent escalation of Islamic militancy in the north-east has made security of India a challenge to deal with particularly when India had been facing illegal immigration and problem of border

management in its northeastern regions, since the liberation of Bangladesh. The smuggling of contraband due to absence of the security forces on Bangladesh and the recent mutiny in Bangladesh has made eastern border of India vulnerable. The Government of Bangladesh has lately accepted India's proposal to set up a Joint Task Force to deal with militancy and other anti-national elements. However, modalities of the Task Force are yet to be decided. As of now, India will be assisting Bangladesh with intelligence inputs only without any direct involvement in any joint military operations to flush out militants taking shelter in Bangladesh.

Thus, the Joint Task Force can help eliminate the militant groups in the country by sharing of intelligence and, if possible, conducting joint anti-insurgency operations. Such endeavors can be a major gain for both India and Bangladesh in days to come as this will facilitate both countries in dealing with insurgency and militancy and is also likely to build strong bilateral relations between them.

Since much of the illegal cross border activities take place at the behest of the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) which has also spread its nefarious activities into Bangladesh, India needs to build closer cooperation with Bangladesh at diplomatic and economic levels. It can be significant that the BSF and the Bangladeshi border security force work out strategies to deal with organised criminal activities in the border areas.

For regional security the regional organisations must work in close cooperation, coordination and commitment to uproot terrorist. It is important for Bangladesh to introduce and well and constructive anti-terrorism legislation. But before introducing anti terror law the government should first get away from political Islam. The spirit of secularism should be promoted that will be a step forward to a better and progressive Bangladesh.

India is looking forward to working closely with Bangladesh for combating terrorism in the region with the friendly Sheikh Hasina government now firmly in charge of Dhaka. In fact, Indian High Commission in Dhaka had earlier said that the two countries would work together against terrorism.

Illegal immigration

Unfettered migration can create security threats at the individual, national and international levels, such as exploitation of migrants, social tensions and economic and political instability. To check

illegal immigration establishing and maintaining adequate border controls is imperative. However, border control has to be strong enough to stop illegal activity, but not so strong that it impedes the flow of business and other legal travelers. States need to develop legislative and administrative mechanisms that stem the flow of irregular migration. It is important that Foreign Act 1946 is enforced in the northeast like the rest of India. However, control mechanisms must be balanced so that national security concerns do not override the human rights of the irregular migrant.

BSF and Bangladesh border security personnel need to work out strategies to deal with organised criminal activities in the border areas. Further creating awareness among the local population that the new groups could turn against them and harm their interests can check the illegal immigration. There have been efforts to design programs involving the local citizenry particularly the village elders in detecting illegal migrants by K.P.S. Gill, the then an Assam cadre Indian Police Service official. Also a comprehensive and continuous process of the proper mapping and movement of populations in the region is another essential aspect of any effective border management policy and checking illegal immigration. Detailed population profiles of the border areas need to be created, documenting ethnicity, attitudes towards terrorist and separatist groups, levels of interaction with mainstream politics, engagement in illegal and subversive activities, and attitudes towards security forces.

Illegal migrants must be denied all benefits flowing from the government, and their access to private sector employment, as well as acquisition of properties must also be curtailed. A process of gradually disenfranchising the illegal migrants needs to be initiated. A solution to the problems of illegal migrants also needs to factor in the easy employment opportunities currently available to them. To this end, once an effective identification system is in place, employers should face strong penalties for employing illegal aliens. Legislative changes also need to be brought about, making any transaction of immovable properties with illegal aliens void. These measures are imperative if the flow of illegal immigrants is to be curtailed, and if the existing system of incentives for such migration is to be dismantled.

Preventing unauthorised settlements along the borders and initiate special development programmes will restrict illegal migration. Promoting the concept of Village Voluntary Forces (VVF) in the border districts and facilitating legitimate trade between the two countries will aid border security and border management.

It is also important to strengthen local education, economic opportunities and training programmes and incentives must be offered to encourage people to stay in their country of origin. Bilateral cooperation and capacity building in can be seen as a key in achieving the desired end.

In case both countries wish to develop close bilateral economic relations, they have to not only allow cross-border investment and transfer of technology, but also to facilitate market access to a wide range of small and middle-sized businesses. Bangladeshi handicrafts, ethnic clothing, Jamdani Sarees, marine, poultry and dairy products, fruits and vegetables could then be easily exported to India. It is more convenient to buy goods and services from each other than from distant sources.

Finally, a twin approach, social and diplomatic and military-to-military Confidence Building Measures can go a long way in stemming the institutionalisation of terrorism in Bangladesh, which would have a direct effect on India's security. In fact, this could be a basis to a South Asian Task Force to deal with terrorism in the region, suggested by none other than Bangladesh Prime Minister when India's External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, visited Dhaka in February 2009. In order to check political and economic instability in Bangladesh, India needs to come up with proper and timely assistance. Politically, this can be done by assisting Bangladesh in state building. Economically, both countries can work towards establishing a free trade zone and transit facilities. Economic inter-dependence will ensure social, political and economic security.