Bangladesh
Combating Terrorism
Ensuring Peace
Introduction

In recent years Bangladesh’s commitment to combating extremism and terrorism has received glowing appraisal at both home and abroad. In particular, since the current Awami League government under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina came to power in 2009, Bangladesh ceased being a safe haven for national and transnational terrorists, a notoriety the country garnered during the first years of the 2000s.

Bangladesh has also been leading the global efforts to maintain peace and security in conflict-ridden parts of the world by being the highest contributor of troops to various United Nations Peacekeeping missions. Currently, from Somalia to Congo, a total of 9,380 Bangladeshi blue helmets are patrolling for peace.

In this report, we will be looking at the commitment and results demonstrated by the current government in Bangladesh in terms of playing a crucial role in maintaining peace and security in the world and being at the forefront of the fight against terrorism and violent extremism.
After assuming responsibility in 2009, the current government placed highest priority to the task of combating terrorism. In line with that policy, they formed a 17-member “National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention”, headed by the Minister for Home Affairs and comprising of representation from relevant ministries and security agencies, to tackle extremism and mobilize public opinion against such activities.

In the same year, the government also formed an eight-member “National Committee for Intelligence Coordination,” with the Prime Minister as the Chairperson, to co-ordinate the intelligence activities of different agencies. The committee was also charged with improving the campaign against extremism through exchanges between law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

The government has, in the last six years, banned five extremist outfits, namely, Jama’atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI-B), Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT), Shahadat-e-Al Hikma and Ansarullah Bangladesh Team (ABT). Apart from these known local groups, all terrorist groups designated as such by the UN Security Council Committee have also been banned.
CRACKING DOWN ON TERRORISM

- Formed National Committee for Intelligence Coordination headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina
- Banned six homegrown extremist outfits
- Formulated the National Counter Terrorism Strategy
- Banned all groups designated as terrorists by UN Security Council
- Formed 17-member National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention headed by Home Minister

COMBATING TERRORISM ENSURING PEACE
In 2009, Bangladesh enacted for the first time, specific legislation designed to combat terrorism: the Anti Terrorism Act 2009. To bring this anti terror legislation in line with the UN’s Action Plan on Counter Terrorism Strategy and other resolutions, it has been amended twice subsequently.

In the latest such amendment, the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act 2013, provisions were made for the courts to accept videos, still photographs and audio clips used in social media as evidence. The amended law also provides for capital punishment and stiff financial penalties for terrorism and subversive activities, depending upon the gravity of the crimes.

The broad language of the legislation provides several mechanisms by which Bangladesh can implement UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2178, which requires nations to address the foreign terrorist fighter threat.

In 2010, the government formulated a strong anti militancy National Education Policy, which highlights the need for reforming the Madrassa curriculum. The government also introduced anti extremism chapters in academic text books. Additionally, the Ministry of Education has been organizing awareness programs against terrorism in different schools and colleges. In 2011, the government formulated a “National Counter Terrorism Strategy”. In August of that year, Bangladesh acceded to the Palermo Convention against Transnational Organised Crimes.
Reforms have also been undertaken in the area of terrorism financing. In 2012, the government enacted the Money Laundering Prevention Act 2012, which is the first legislation in Bangladesh making specific provisions for money laundering and terrorism financing. The Financial Intelligence Unit of the Bangladesh Bank has taken effective steps to curb terrorism financing. They have already issued a circular to all state owned and private commercial banks regarding the procedure for handling money laundering and terrorism financing matters.

In 2012, Bangladesh also enacted the Mutual Legal Assistance Act 2012 which provides a legal framework for inter-country cooperation in carrying out enquiries, prosecutions and trial of criminal activities. This law empowers the government of Bangladesh to freeze properties of criminals and terrorists and their equipment used in criminal activities in line with the request of a foreign country.

In July 2013, Bangladesh secured membership of Egmont group, a global body of 131 member nations to combat money laundering, financing of terrorism and other financial crimes. Bangladesh also became a member of the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering, which is an autonomous and collaborative international organization consisting of 41 members and a number of international and regional observers.

In February 2014, owing to Bangladesh’s successful reforms to anti-money laundering and anti terrorist financing measures, the Financial Action Task Force (an inter-state organization comprising 34 developed countries and two regional organizations) removed Bangladesh’s name from their “grey list”.

TACKLING TERRORISM FINANCING
On January 28, 2013, Bangladesh and India signed an extradition treaty for disrupting the regional connections and networks among terrorist outfits in South Asia. Additionally, Bangladesh and India are implementing a Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP) and have increased the number of joint patrolling with a view to curbing criminal activities, including terrorism, along the long and porous border.

On 22 October 2013, Bangladesh signed an agreement with the USA which aims to enhance counterterrorism cooperation between the two countries in terms of capacity building, information sharing, and ensuring increased exchanges between law enforcement agencies.

Bangladesh and USA are currently undertaking multifaceted cooperation in terms of developing the former’s capacity to fight terrorism, which has resulted in enhanced security of its borders and land, sea, and air ports of entry. Bangladesh continues to participate with the US State Department, Department of Justice, U.S. Special Operations Command Pacific to capacitate its own personnel to apprehend, prosecute and fight terrorism and violent extremism.

In February 2015, Bangladesh actively participated in, and reiterated its zero tolerance policy on terrorism, at the high-level “Summit on Countering Violent Extremism” hosted by the White House in Washington, USA.

Bangladesh is party to various counterterrorism protocols under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and is bringing the country’s counterterrorism efforts in line with the four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.
Apart from the legal and institutional arrangements, the government has also integrated the civil society, NGOs and media in strengthening the campaign against terrorism and militancy. Apart from emphasizing the role of educational institutions to provide an effective counter-narrative to messages of hate and extremism, the current government has also been engaging the civil society sections, cultural organizations and social activists to raise public awareness about the dangers of radicalization, extremism and militancy.

In 2014, Bangladesh became a board member and pilot country for the Global Fund for Community Engagement and Resilience, a public-private global fund to support local, grassroots efforts to counter violent extremism.

The government is developing a standard national curriculum that includes language, math, and science; and minimum standards of secular subjects to be taught in all primary schools, up to the eighth grade, in order to make sure that students of all mediums receive the appropriate type of education. The government’s National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention is working with imams and religious scholars to build public awareness against terrorism.
In the US Department of State’s latest Country Reports on Terrorism 2014, Bangladesh’s efforts to counter terrorism and militancy has once again been vindicated. The report states that Bangladesh continued to make counterterrorism progress in 2014, with the current government once more demonstrating a commitment to counter both domestic and transnational terrorist groups. It notes that no major terrorist incidents took place in Bangladesh in the year 2014, and the Sheikh Hasina led Awami League government’s counterterrorism efforts have made it more difficult for transnational terrorists to operate in or use Bangladeshi territory.

The report especially mentioned that political will and firm commitment shown by the current government to combat domestic and transnational terrorist groups, and the accompanying counterterrorism efforts have made it harder for transnational terrorists to operate in or establish safe havens in Bangladeshi territories. The efforts by Bangladeshi law enforcers in arresting operatives and recruiters of ISIS, Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh, Harkatul Jihad al Islami-Bangladesh and Ansarullah Bangla Team was also mentioned specifically.

In 2013 too, Bangladesh received glowing reviews regarding its anti terrorism measures in the US State Department’s Country Report on Terrorism. It noted with recognition the “remarkable successes” Bangladesh has achieved in the task of combating national and transnational terrorism.

The Report stated that Bangladesh has made significant strides in the following aspects of counter terrorism: legislation, law enforcement, border security, terror financing, regional and international cooperation for combating terrorism, and social measures to address and fight the root causes of terrorism.

“The Government of Bangladesh has demonstrated political will and firm commitment to combat domestic and transnational terrorist groups, and its counter terrorism efforts made it harder for...terrorists to operate or establish safe havens in Bangladesh.”

US State Department Country Reports on Terrorism 2013
Under less friendly regimes, Bangladesh had been a haven for terrorist and militant groups that wreaked havoc in India. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s government has not just denied these groups shelter; it has actively intercepted them, arrested some of their leaders, and even handed wanted terrorists over to the Indian government. If terrorist bombs are no longer going off in the India state of Assam, it is thanks to the government in Dhaka.

Shashi Tharoor, former UN Under-Secretary General, and former Indian union minister and current MP and Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs

What’s the secret of your counter-terrorism success?

Wendy Sherman, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

January 2015

“You’ve made good progress and indeed serve as an example to other countries dealing with the menace of illicit financing”

Raymond W Baker, President of Global Financial Integrity (GFI) (April, 2015)

The uncompromising policy of Sheikh Hasina in establishing peace and security in the world has been widely recognized

Sergey A. Ryabkov, Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia, September 2014

Bangladesh is a leader in this region in rule of law and law enforcement efforts against counter-terrorism financing

William Brownfield, US Assistant Secretary for Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, December 2014
With 9,398 personnel on various peacekeeping missions globally, Bangladesh currently stands as the largest troops contributor to UN. Bangladesh Army started its journey in the UN peacekeeping mission in 1988 with 15 observers in UNIMOG (Iraq-Iran). Since then it is maintaining its dominance as a leading troop contributor country in UN peacekeeping. Bangladesh Armed Forces has so far participated in 54 peacekeeping missions in 40 countries. A total of 1,19,980 members from Bangladesh Armed Forces have participated in the noble task of peacekeeping.

Bangladesh Police is one of the top police contributing countries with remarkable commitments of 1302 personnel to date of its own to the UN Mandate. It all began in 1989 when they participated in the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia. Since then, Bangladesh Police has contributed a total number of 14901 personnel in 21 UN Missions.

Bangladesh is also the top contributor of female police officers to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, with 205 such officers being deployed currently. Bangladesh female peacekeeper has placed them as key driving force to reduce gender-based violence, conflict and confrontation, providing sense of security especially for women and children, mentoring female police officer in the local area and thus empowering women in the host country and promoting social cohesion.

To date, 124 peacekeepers of Bangladesh have given their lives in various UN peace missions and among them, six peacekeepers died from June 2014 to May 2015. Besides, 172 Bangladeshi peacekeepers were injured while performing their responsibilities in different UN peacekeeping missions across the globe.

### Types of Personnel

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Personnel</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>1221 Incl. 205 female officers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Military Experts</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Troops</td>
<td>8106</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>9398</td>
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Source: United Nations Peacekeeping
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has in May 2015, in a discussion to mark, International Day of UN Peacekeeping, promised to provide further facilities, equipment and provisions to police and army for further broadening and strengthening the country’s peacekeeping role in the world. Owing to such levels of commitment, the UN has offered some key appointments of peacekeeping to Bangladesh, including in the headquarters.

Bangladesh’s position in this regard is also exemplified by the fact that in September 2014, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina co-chaired a high-level summit on peacekeeping in New York along with the US Vice-President Joe Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and Rwanda President Paul Kagame. By the same token, Bangladesh hosted the regional consultation of “Secretary General’s High-Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations” in January 2015 in Dhaka attended by representatives and panelists from 31 countries.
BANGLADESH IN PEACEKEEPING

Top peacekeeping troops contributor in the world

Top contributor of female police

Currently 9,398 Bangladeshi personnel on various peacekeeping missions globally

124 Bangladeshi peacekeepers have given their lives so far

172 peacekeepers injured around the world

Bangladesh’s peacekeepers made highest sacrifice to the purpose of UN peacekeeping

UN Under Secretary General Amerah Haq, September 2014

It is really praiseworthy that facing their risk of lives, Bangladeshi peacekeepers are devoted to their peacekeeping duties. I thank the Bangladesh government for the contribution in keeping peace around the globe:

Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General, United Nations, January 2014

The nation can confidently say that its peacekeepers have created an outstanding image of Bangladesh and substantiated its stance for the cause of the world peace:

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, May 2015
Time and time again, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has reiterated her government’s zero tolerance approach to terrorism and militancy. Her personal conviction in this regard, and the successes achieved by her administration, has been lauded not only by the USA, but by most developed nations and such international bodies as the UN. The current government has also shown its commitment to maintaining and strengthening peace and security globally by continuing to be the top peacekeeping troops contributing country to conflict-ridden parts of the world.