BANGLADESH
PEACE AND SECURITY
Bangladesh Peace and Security
Introduction

Bangladesh is going through a transitional period with the rapid journey of growth. With technological advancement, high economic growth, adoption of automation, fourth industrial revolution, internet of things (IoT) and artificial intelligence; Bangladesh is buzzing with the impact of these happenings. The prosperous journey is not without challenges and threats. Violent extremism and terrorism are among the primary threats to peace and security in the country. The government has been watchful of the threats and is pro-actively addressing them in multifaceted ways.

As a result of the ‘zero tolerance’ policy adopted by the current government, headed by Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina since 2009, Bangladesh has seen commendable success in countering terrorism and violent extremism in the last decade. The success has also been internationally recognized and applauded by other countries. The civil society, comprising of international organizations and leading security think tanks, has also applauded Bangladesh in this regard. Bangladesh’s strong response to homegrown and foreign group-inspired terrorists following the 1 July 2016 terrorist attack at a bakery in Dhaka has been particularly noteworthy.
TACKLING ISSUES OF TERRORISM

Bangladesh remains committed to implementation of UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders at the national, regional and international levels. The present Awami League-led government, under prudent leadership of Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, underscores the importance of comprehensive and balanced implementation of all four pillars of the strategy together with the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE). The government’s zero tolerance policy is helping counter violent extremism.

The violent extremists are using wrong interpretation of the holy scriptures. To counter this, the Imams (religious leaders) are being consulted. The Imams are delivering lectures to sensitize the people about violent extremism. 100,000 fatwas (a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority) against violence was one of the most effective initiatives by the government.

100,000 Imams (religious leaders) have been trained in a variety of topics, including building awareness against terrorism and violent extremism.

The US State Department Country Report on Terrorism highlighted Bangladesh as an exemplary member of the Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering, with the central bank and the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) leading the government’s efforts to counter the financing of terrorism.
extremist organizations in the country. Moreover, the leadership’s ‘zero tolerance’ approach to terrorism has resulted in effectively defeating and dismantling the operational capacity of certain home-grown terrorist outfits claiming themselves to be affiliated with several international or regional networks. The US State Department Country Report on Terrorism highlights how Bangladesh is an exemplary member of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering, with the central bank and Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) leading the government’s efforts to counter the financing of terrorism.

The police are engaging religious leaders to counter terrorist propaganda with appropriate scripture-based messages and engaging Imams to speak to surrendered militants to explain that the Quran does not support terrorist violence.

US State Department Country Report on Terrorism

The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crimes (CTTC) Department is adopting research-based approach to curb terrorism. There are two kinds of terror-related threats in Bangladesh: traditional and non-traditional threats. According to the recent situational analysis of security threats, the year 2018 was the year of stability. In other words, the security apparatus successfully contained terrorism in 2018. The current security situation is better than 2016. Given the ever-changing patterns, the typology of security threats has been constantly changing across Bangladesh.

According to security apparatus stakeholders, other than the traditional threats, there is a new kind of security threats emerging. Cyber security threat is being considered as the new looming security threat in Bangladesh. Rumor mongering in social media to destabilize the peaceful coexistence in an area is being considered a potential security threat in the coming days. The government has also been underscoring the importance of timely exchange of information for tracking and intercepting movement of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs), especially those from the diaspora community.

The US State Department in its 2017 Country Report on Terrorism highlights the “zero-tolerance” policy adopted by the Bangladesh government to counter violent extremism and to prevent the country from becoming a terrorist “safe haven”. Highlighting the preventive measures on militancy and radicalization taken by Bangladesh, the State Department and the Bangladeshi civil society are cooperating through the Country Support Mechanism under the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). Several similar community engagement activities have been taking across Bangladesh.

NOTEWORTHY TRANSNATIONAL COUNTER TERRORISM COOPERATION PROGRAMS WITH

USA United Kingdom

India Japan Canada

According to Global Terrorism Index 2018, Bangladesh showed improvement in security, while terror impact on South Asia has worsened on average.

Institute for Economics and Peace cited Bangladesh as exemplary in fighting violent extremism through apt investment in national security.
Transnational cooperation in countering terrorism has been an ongoing venture for Bangladesh. Bangladesh is receiving enormous support from the friendly nations in terms of enhancing capacities of the security apparatus. The US and other friendly governments have been providing technical assistance to train the security personnel and law enforcement agencies. Recently, 100 special weapons and tactics (SWAT) members have been trained on modern tools and techniques of preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism. Currently, there are 8 FBI graduates who received training from state-of-the-art FBI institutes. The United Kingdom also provides technical assistance to special forces and intelligence units. Bangladeshi police agencies received training from Indian National Security Guard (NSG) on forensic and tactical issues. Japan and Canada have provided financial investments in the security sector.

Given the staunch approach to countering terrorism, Bangladesh witnessed a significant improvement on Global Terror Index in 2018 and 2019. Bangladesh climbed down four spots to the level of countries experiencing medium impact of terrorism, ranking 25th among 163 countries with a score of 5.697 out of 10. Bangladesh is among the four nations in South Asia that have experienced a decline in terror attacks. Meanwhile, cyber security threats have emerged as a new form of terrorism. According to Global Terrorism Index 2018, Bangladesh showed improvement in security while terror impact on South Asia has worsened on average. A report by Australian think-tank Institute for Economics and Peace has emphasized the need for global investment to ensure national security. In this regard it cited Bangladesh as exemplary in fighting violent extremism.

In Bangladesh, for example, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund is supporting training in digital literacy among madrassa students, helping promote critical thinking, and limit the traction and dissemination of online fake news and messages.
The Bangladesh government understands the need for increased and intense counter terrorism capacity building. The sustained investments made in capacity building of the concerned law enforcement, intelligence and border management authorities have also allowed Bangladesh to live up to its commitment of uprooting terrorism. This has been complemented by demonstrable progress in combating financing of terrorism, as recognized by the Financial Actions Task Force (FATF), the renowned intergovernmental body to combat money laundering. The recognized efforts have dismantled the nexus between terrorist groups and transnational organized criminal networks.

The existing legal regime in Bangladesh allows for giving effect to relevant Security Council Resolutions through a stipulated institutional mechanism. The government has shown interest in further replicating Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate’s (CTED) awareness building work involving judges, prosecutors and investigators at the national level for a wider outreach. The government has flagged its interest in further capacity building support from United Nations Office of Counter Terrorism (and its partners) in combating terrorist threats in cyberspace, addressing de-radicalization in prisons and enhancing aviation security.

Bangladesh received counter-terrorism training on evidence collection, crime scene investigation, infrastructure protection and crisis response. The security agencies have also received training in enhancing cyber and digital investigation capabilities.
Bangladesh is working to prevent violent extremism through undertaking a plethora of social, educational and religious measures. In 2010, the government formulated a strong anti-extremism National Education Policy, which highlights the need for reforming the faith-based education curriculum. The government has also introduced anti-extremism chapters in academic text books.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Religious Affairs, has been organizing awareness programs against terrorism in different academic institutions and places of religious significance. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and the National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention is working with Imams (Islamic religious leaders) and religious scholars to build public awareness against terrorism. Under the auspices of the Government-run Islamic Foundation, around 100,000 Imams have been trained in a variety of topics, including building awareness against terrorism and violent extremism. Anti-terrorism sermons are being delivered in mosques across the country since 1 July, 2016. The Awami League-led government, led by Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has launched a billion-dollar nationwide mosques and Islamic Cultural Center project, which will have both domestic and international funding. Under this project (which is being implemented by the Islamic Foundation under the Ministry of Religious Affairs) the Bangladesh Government will build 560 model mosques across the country to preach accurate and correct Islam and to counter the religious misconceptions which cause terrorism and violent extremism. The model mosques will have special features including research facilities, seminar rooms, and libraries, to foster religious knowledge and spiritual revival.

Recently, the Government of Bangladesh recognized the Dawah E Hadith qualification of Qawmi Madrasahs as being equivalent to Masters (MA) in Islamic Studies or Arabic. Qawmi Madrasahs are one of the two main types of Islamic faith schools in Bangladesh. The other being the government-regulated Aliyah Madrasahs. As a result of the recognition, graduates of Qawmi education can now apply for jobs meant for master’s degree holders for the first time.

This recognition has already yielded positive results for the Qawmi graduates. As on 5 March 2018, a total of 1,010 Qawmi Madrasah graduates joined the government service for the first time. The graduates joined as teachers of the Qawmi Faculty at Darul Arkam Ibtedaye Madrasha under a project titled ‘Mosque
Based Children and Mass Education Programme’ being implemented by the Islamic Foundation (IF). This was a big step from the current government in its efforts of mainstreaming Qawmi education.

The government is formulating the Bangladesh Qawmi Madrasa Education Authority Act. To that end, an Analysis Committee has been formed to properly draft this legislation. Qawmi Madrasahs are now working to ensure that apart from the core religious teachings of their institutions, they have formulated 60 textbooks on general education for students of classes 1 to 8. These books include subjects such as Bangla, English, Mathematics, Geography, Social Studies, General Knowledge and Grammar. Thus, steps such as recognition have resulted in the otherwise a very guarded Qawmi education system to open up to more general subjects of teaching, as opposed to only religious teachings.

The steps taken by the Sheikh Hasina Government in mainstreaming Qawmi education are crucial in terms of preventing any violent extremism among Qawmi graduates. According to a 2015 research by the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, there are around 14,000 Qawmi Madrasahs in Bangladesh with a total of around 1.4 million students. Every year, a large percentage of youth graduate from these institutions. Traditionally, their future roles have only been restricted to religious employment. Recognizing their highest qualification would help bring them into the mainstream society and ensure employment opportunities. The step is mend to prevent any sense of disenfranchisement for a large number of youths.

Since 1.4 million children and youths are being taught at these institutions, with the lack of employment and other opportunities following completion of their studies, they could fall prey to the violent extremists and terrorists who seek to radicalize youth. Recognizing their qualifications would also ensure that their educational system goes through further modernization, and thereby brought under more rules and discipline. The mainstreaming efforts also ensure that Bangladesh’s prosperity is inclusive and its future development is sustainable.

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As of June 2019, Bangladesh is the third largest personnel contributor to United Nations Peacekeeping missions. More than 6,600 Bangladeshi military and police personnel are deployed in nine peacekeeping missions in Abyei, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Lebanon, Mali, Sudan, South Sudan, and Western Sahara. Bangladesh has made 26 pledges to the United Nations Peacekeeping operations at the 2019 United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial meeting. In addition, Bangladesh has also pledged a unit for operational-level Unmanned Aerial Surveillance (UAS), in partnership with the United States.

Bangladesh’s contribution to the UN Peacekeeping is a story of glory and success. The footprints of Bangladeshi peacekeepers are now apparent in almost all the troubled areas of the world. Bangladesh had been the leading troops contributing country in 2011, 2014 and 2015.

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**POSITION OF BANGLADESH IN LAST 10 YEARS IN TERMS OF TROOPS CONTRIBUTION TO UN PEACE KEEPING**
Since its commencement to serve in different UN Missions, Bangladesh has become the 4th largest Police Contributing Country (PCC) in the world. Till 1 September 2019, a total number of 19,366 police personnel served in 22 UN Missions. With the utmost proficiency to ensure peace, Bangladesh Police sent specially equipped self-sufficient police units, called Formed Police Units (FPUs), to the Ivory Coast in 2005. Bangladeshi FPUs and United Nations Police (UNPOls) are currently working in 6 different missions, namely MONUSCO (Democratic Republic of Congo), UNAMID (Darfur, Sudan), UNMISS (South Sudan), UNMHA (Yemen), MINUSTAH (Haiti), and MINUSMA (Mali). Currently there are 51 Individual Police Officers (IPO) working in 6 different UN Peacekeeping missions; along with 3 Police Officers working in P-Level UN jobs and 599 FPU members working in 4 Formed Police Units. In total, 653 Police Officers are working in 6 UN Peacekeeping missions and UN Headquarter.

Responding to the challenges in implementing the UN Mandate in the field of gender issues, women and children affairs, Bangladesh Police has sent one Women FPUs in DR Congo (MONUSCO). Bangladesh, being of the top contributor of female police officers to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, has become a crucial partner in the peacebuilding. Bangladeshi female peacekeepers have placed themselves as key driving force to reducing conflict and gender-based violence. They are providing the sense of security to women and children, mentoring local female police officers, and thus empowering women and promoting social cohesion in the host communities. Bangladeshi female police officers have established themselves as the role model in the Peacekeeping Mission area. Consequently, the demand for Bangladeshi Female Police Officers is increasing for other UN Peacekeeping operations.

Bangladesh is one of the largest contributors to UN Peacekeeping operations. The South Asian nation first deployed uniformed personnel to serve with the Organization in 1988 when they were deployed to help monitor the armistice between Iran and Iraq. Over the past three decades, the contributions of these brave men and women in the countries in which they serve have been immense.

**United Nations**
Expertise of the Bangladeshi Police in the field of responsive policing, accountable policing, community policing, and electoral security maintenance has proven to be dutiful in the UN Peacekeeping operations. Bangladeshi peacekeepers have never retreated in the face of danger when confronted with unknown enemies on any foreign soil. Peacekeepers working under complex and dangerous circumstances are often in the harm’s way. Till date, 126 Bangladeshi peacekeepers made supreme sacrifices and 215 sustained major injuries for the noble cause of peace process around the globe. This year, in observance of the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, 12 fallen peacekeepers from Bangladesh were honored by the United Nations for their sacrifices in the line of duty.
Conclusion

In this age of digital connectivity, Bangladesh faces various security challenges including the threat of terrorism and violent extremism. Bangladesh is adamant to advance the security apparatus and the strategic framework and policies required to ensure security to everyone. Other than the government, the civil society and other stakeholders have their role to play in building a peaceful and progressive nation. To ensure peace and security, the Bangladesh government has taken systemic steps in countering the dual threats of violent extremism and terrorism. It is relentlessly continuing with its zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and violent extremism. The challenge is to shift the overall effort from a counter terrorism to prevention of violent extremism strategy. Meanwhile, countering extremist narratives is ever more essential.

Bangladesh is committed to being a peace promoting nation in the global community. The country’s commitment to international peace is conveyed by Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s personal commitment on Bangladesh’s readiness to contribute troops and police in United Nations missions for strengthening peace and stability. Bangladesh is providing full support to the UN Peacekeeping operations for establishing and safeguarding world peace. Bangladeshi peacekeepers have earned an unmatched reputation for their valor and services in the line of duty. The UN Peacekeeping has regularly acknowledged and appreciated Bangladesh’s vital role in peacekeeping operations.