

## Loopholes in the legal process

### Militants must not be allowed to escape

It is with shock that we read a report in this daily of how gaps between law enforcement and the prosecution process have led to suspected militants getting bail, allowing them to carry out militant activities again. According to police and court sources, at least 500 suspected militants have got out on bail over the last few years. This is a big number and a dampener in the efforts of all those forces working hard to catch militants and their masterminds. The reasons behind this gross anomaly that is nullifying all counter terrorism efforts are the loopholes created by inefficiency and negligence. The police, who through intelligence gathering and investigations manage to catch the suspects, are frustrated by the public prosecutors failure to establish a case to make sure they do not get bail. The public prosecutors blame the police for flaws in the investigations and in the filing of cases. And the judges complain about the poor performance of both the police and the public prosecutors since they have to go by the evidence produced in passing their order. There is also a lack of information sharing between the police and prosecutors in the lower courts and the Public Prosecutor.

Such shoddiness in a matter as crucial as the trial of suspected militants is unacceptable, given the horrific attacks we have had to endure. The law ministry should step in to ensure that a major overhaul in the legal process is made. The police must conduct thorough and fair investigations and file foolproof cases. Public prosecutors must be properly prepared in presenting the cases. Finally, the judicial process in militancy cases must not be processed promptly so that suspected militants do not find ways to escape the system.

## South City Corporation's roadside bins

### Lack of civic sense foil bid to keep roads clean

It was a welcome sight to see the Dhaka South City Corporation's roadside waste bins that were installed right before Pahela Baishakh this year. We thought this would end the dumping of waste, wrappers, tissues and packets on the sides of the roads. We thought better of ourselves, thinking, maybe it was the lack of roadside bins that was the reason behind our callous behaviour.

But three months on, it seems it was not the bins that were lacking, but our civic sense. A report published on Sunday showed the sorry sight of the bins today. Some upturned, some stolen, and many being used for the purpose of dumping household waste. That the small receptacles were placed to be used not for household waste but only litter bins, seems lost on us, even though city corporation-employed people are supposed to be collecting this from the houses themselves.

Is it that the garbage collectors are not reaching every house? Then the City Corporation should look into this. But, it must also try to raise awareness on why the bins were placed in the first place and how they should be used. If our civic sense cannot be appealed to, as the City Corporation had hoped it would, then the 6,700 bins will not do much to change the filth and pollution that characterise our public spaces.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Some suggestions

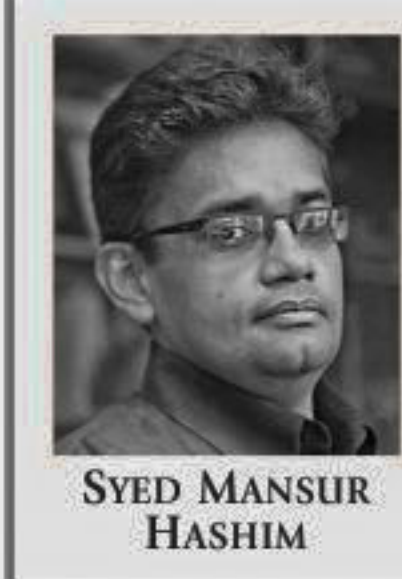
The followings measures may be adopted and implemented to combat, contain and destroy terrorist networks:

1. Committees are required to be formed at the lowest level, i.e. village, union and ward levels to report and monitor any unusual movement, activities, missing youth etc. Volunteers are to be recruited from all sections of people. Official intelligence network should be expanded and strengthened and they will act in co-ordination with the volunteers.
2. Students of all mediums will have to be taught about the language, culture, traditions, customs and rituals of Bangladesh. They should develop a sense of belonging to their motherland.
3. Moral values and all religions should be taught at the school level so that students know others' views, philosophy, develop love and tolerance towards adherents of all religions.
4. Parents will have to spend more quality time with their children.
5. Unbridled corruption has to be contained. Corruption is the mother of many evils. The rich-poor divide needs to be bridged. Social injustice and various forms of discrimination will have to be eliminated.

It's do or die. The people and the government will require patience, hard work, dedication and follow them up with well-planned actions. We have been pushed to the wall. We have no other alternative to winning the war against terrorism.

Dr. SN Mamoon  
Dhaka

# The importance of soft power



SYED MANSUR HASHIM

The world is at war with extremists. Developed and developing nations, whether it is France, the United States, Russia or China, the Middle East or countries in the sub-continent, we are all battling one form of Muslim militancy or another. And while alliances are being forged on a regional or trans-continental basis to fight outfits like the Boko Haram, Al Qaeda or the Islamic State (IS), and battles are being fought out on land in Iraq Syria, Libya or Yemen, on the streets of Paris or in Dhaka, every nation that has faced the onslaught of extremists who are connected to a global network of jihadists that is increasingly sophisticated, the realisation that they are now battling for the 'hearts and minds' of the populace is emerging.

The extremists' distortion of religion and their success in disseminating information has policymakers the world over going back to the drawing board and reassessing the threat – not just in military terms, but also incorporating a new strategy that makes use of media activity, to new school curricula, to effectively counter jihadist propaganda. It is the realisation that this is an ideological battle and the war must be fought on two fronts, both militarily and undermining extremist ideology that will put a dent in their recruitment efforts.

Taking the actual message of Islam to the schooling system is one approach being tried out in some countries. It is now obvious that if young Muslims are to be stopped being turned by jihadists,

something has to be done about teachings and preaching in mosques, seminaries and educational institutions. The use of religious text that prove that arguments put forth by extremists that mass killings are condoned by the Qur'an is false, that Islamists are toying with young impressionable minds – is essentially at the forefront of this new effort. Unless hard-line teachings can be countered, the "war on terror" will be a losing battle.

Adam Garfinkle of the *Foreign Policy Research Institute* put all this into context: "we face not an esoteric intellectual but a full-fledged sociological problem in the

on – and that set before fanatics these words are going to suddenly change their entire point of view – is a rationalist fantasy."

One approach that has worked to counter gang violence in developed countries is now being tailor made to go counterterrorism in developing countries. Tailor-made in the sense that experts take into account local conditions, but the success of such approaches largely depend on the willingness of local stakeholders that include the respective governments to cooperate to change their corrupt and abusive behaviour. The idea that

emerging differ from region to region.

For any effort to succeed, the respective governments must be open to ideas. The United States State Department has tried to find common ground with Bangladesh police to introduce 'community policing' that would help devise a strategy based on police-civilian partnerships. That initiative never went anywhere because local conditions and culture were not factored in. A country where the larger populace is in fact alienated from the police due to a myriad of reasons, and also corruption amongst certain elements of the citizenry provided the grounds for failure. No solution can be imposed from the outside. What works in El Salvador will probably not work in Bangladesh and vice versa.

What will work of course is bringing on board the religious leadership of the country who control the mosques and religious schools and the Islamic scholars to work with authorities. This will only work if the vast majority of the religious opinion leaders are convinced that it is time to forge a partnership with the State to counter a force that threatens their way of life too and not just that of the State's. The State for its part has to step back from wholesale suppression of any dissent which is giving rise to much of the anger that is being utilised by jihadists to reach their own end goals. At the end of the day, we have to realise that ideas must be fought with ideas. No amount of policing and counterterrorism will root out militancy. Only when the State takes into confidence the people can there be any meaningful resistance to the spread of ideals (no matter how distorted) amongst the youth – illiterate or otherwise.

The writer is Assistant Editor, *The Daily Star*.

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greater Middle East...The larger and deeper social context, which feeds off collective emotion rather than the tracts of Sayiid Qutb or the tape-recorded rants of Osama bin-Laden, explains why newly vogue US counter-messaging efforts are a waste of time and money. Those efforts are bound to fail because those messages are...disembodied from the social networks in which ideas are embedded and give life. The notion that a bunch of people on the fifth floor of the State Department are one fine day going to discover the perfect set of words placed in perfect order and translated perfectly into Arabic, Farsi, Urdu, Pashto and so

criminal gangs and terrorist outfits possess similarities in outlooks based on socioeconomic conditions is giving criminologists ideas to come up with programmes that may be implemented in various countries to counter the philosophies espoused by militants. Some basic elements are the same. The feeling of hopelessness in the face of police brutality, the need to belong to a club or a congregation of people who face similar identity crisis, the overwhelming hatred for the 'establishment', the need to feel powerful, proactive and invincible, etc. The counter-messaging efforts that are

## PROJECT SYNDICATE

# Turkey's Baffling Coup



DANI RODRIK

Kemal Atatürk's vision of a secular Turkey gain increasing power. Tensions rise, often accompanied by violence on the streets. Then the military steps in, exercising what the soldiers claim is their constitutional power to restore order and secular principles.

This time, it was very different. Thanks to a series of sham trials targeting secularist officers, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had managed to reconfigure the military hierarchy and place his own people at the top. While the country has been rocked by a series of terrorist attacks and faces a souring economy, there was no inkling of unrest in the military or opposition to Erdoğan. On the contrary, Erdoğan's recent reconciliation with Russia and Israel, together with his apparent desire to pull back from an active role in the Syrian civil war, must have been a relief to Turkey's top brass.

No less baffling was the almost amateurish behaviour of the putschists, who managed to capture the chief of the general staff but apparently made no meaningful attempt to detain Erdoğan or any senior politicians. Major television channels were allowed to continue to operate for hours, and when soldiers showed up in the studios, their incompetence was almost comical.

Planes strafed civilians and attacked the Parliament – very uncharacteristic behaviour for the Turkish military outside areas of Kurdish insurgency.

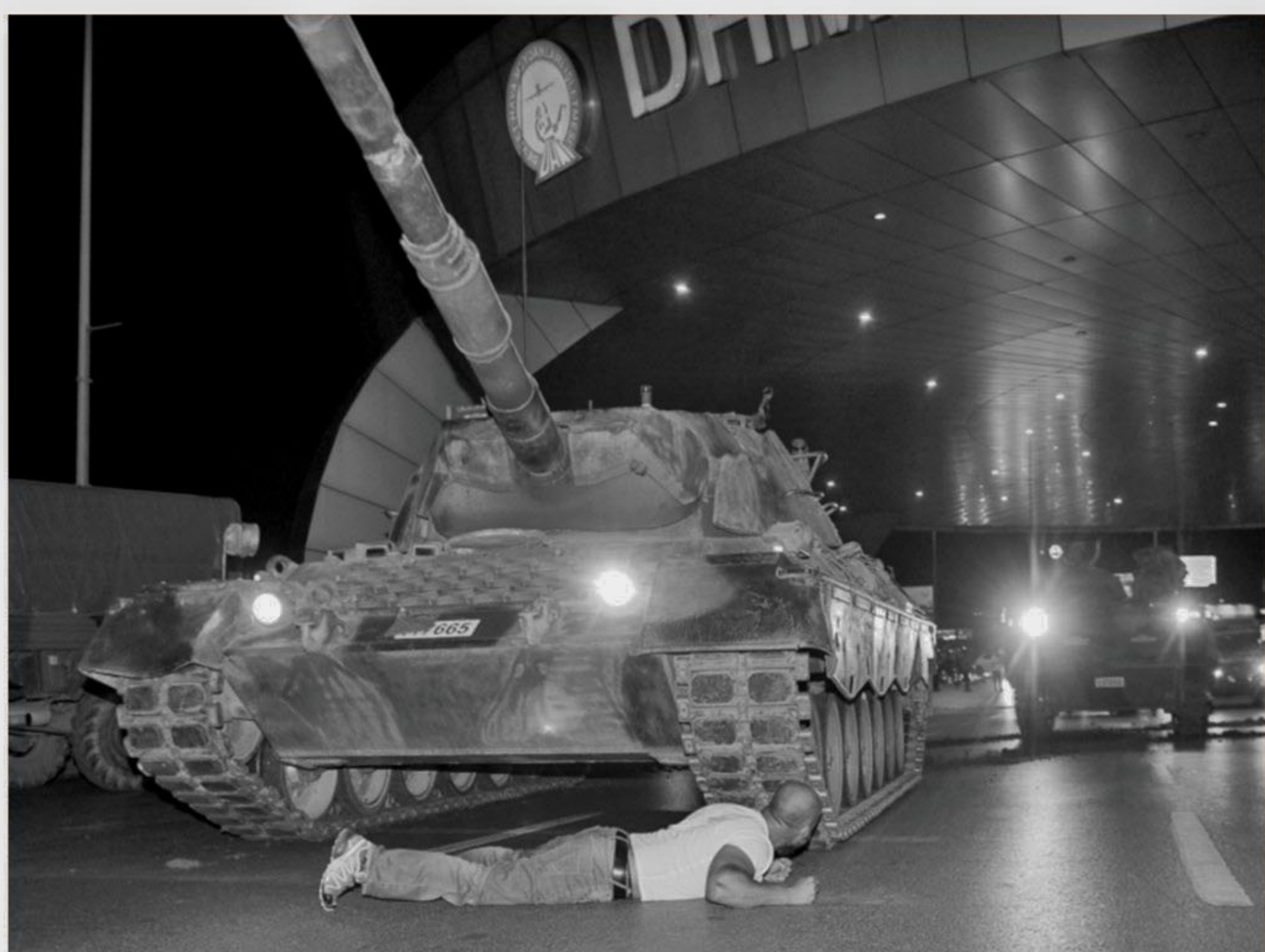
leads a large Islamic movement from outside of Philadelphia. There are obvious reasons for taking this with a grain of salt, but the claim is less outlandish than it may seem. We know that there is a strong Gülenist presence in the military (without which the government's earlier move against senior Turkish officers – the so-called Ergenekon and Sledgehammer cases –

it was rumoured that a large-scale purge of Gülenist officers was in the works for next month's meeting of the Supreme Military Council.

So the Gülenists had a motive, and the timing of the attempt supports their involvement. It is a supreme irony that the coup Erdoğan long feared from the secularists may have eventually come from his one-time allies – who

jeopardise all remaining due-process protections in Turkey.

The coup attempt is bad news for the economy as well. Erdoğan's recent, somewhat skin-deep reconciliation with Russia and Israel was likely motivated by a desire to restore flows of foreign capital and tourists. Such hopes are now unlikely to be realised. The failed coup reveals that the country's political



A man lies in front of a Turkish army tank at Ataturk airport in Istanbul.

PHOTO: AP

**Politically, the failed coup is a boon for Erdoğan. As he put it while it was still unclear if he was going to emerge on top, "this uprising is a gift from God to us because this will be a reason to cleanse our army." Now that the coup has failed, he will have the political tailwind to make the constitutional changes he has long sought to strengthen the presidency and concentrate power in his own hands.**

Social media were full of pictures of hapless (and apparently clueless) soldiers being pulled out of tanks and disarmed (and sometimes much worse) by civilian crowds – scenes I never thought I would see in a country that has come to hate military coups but still loves its soldiers.

Erdoğan was quick to blame his former ally and current nemesis, the exiled preacher Fethullah Gülen, who

could not have been mounted). In fact, the military was the last remaining Gülenist stronghold in Turkey, since Erdoğan had already purged the movement's sympathisers in the police, judiciary, and media.

We also know that Erdoğan was preparing to make a major move against the Gülenists in the military. A few officers had already been arrested for fabricating evidence in earlier trials, and

themselves were responsible for fabricating myriad coup plots against Erdoğan.

Yet a bloody military coup lies very much outside the traditional modus operandi of the Gülen movement, which tends to prefer behind-the-scenes machinations to armed action or explicit violence. The coup may have been a desperate last-ditch effort, given the prospect that they were about to lose their last stronghold in Turkey. But, with so many unanswered questions about what took place, the emergence of many strange twists and turns in the coming weeks would be no surprise.

There is less uncertainty about what is likely to happen next. The coup attempt will add potency to Erdoğan's venom and fuel a wider witch-hunt against the Gülen movement. Thousands will be sacked from their positions in the military and elsewhere, detained, and prosecuted with little regard for the rule of law or the presumption of innocence. There are already alarming calls to bring back the death penalty for putschists, which recent experience shows is a very broad category for Erdoğan. Some of the mob violence against captured soldiers portends a Jacobinism that would

divisions run deeper than even the most pessimistic observers believed. This hardly makes for an attractive environment for investors or visitors.

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The coup's failure will thus bolster Erdoğan's authoritarianism and do little good for Turkish democracy. Had the coup succeeded, however, the blow to democratic prospects surely would have been more severe, with longer-term effects. That provides at least some reason to cheer.

The writer is Professor of International Political Economy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He is the author of *The Globalization Paradox: Democracy and the Future of the World Economy* and, most recently, *Economics Rules: The Rights and Wrongs of the Dismal Science*.

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