

Proceedings

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE): The Global Experience

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Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) held a lecture session titled “Countering Violent Extremism (CVE): The Global Experience” on 04 February 2015 at the BISS auditorium. **Dr. Khalid Koser**, Executive Director, The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), Geneva, Switzerland was the keynote speaker of the session. **Major General A K M Abdur Rahman**, ndc, psc, Director General, BISS delivered the address of welcome while **Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad**, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS delivered the introductory remarks. **H.E. Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque**, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh, concluded the session with remarks.

Address of Welcome

Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc, Director General, BISS delivered the address of welcome. He said violent extremism besides taking huge toll on lives and properties, disrupts good governance and economic growth with global implications. And such violent trends are not confined to any single group, ideology or individual rather are global in character. The availability and sophisticated use of technology have further complicated the problem.



To successfully combat violent extremism and terrorism, any strategy must have four Ps: pursue violent extremists in order to stop attacks; prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting violent extremism, protect our population and finally, prepare to mitigate the impacts in case any such event occurs. As countering terrorism is different from traditional maintenance of law and order, we need to adequately prepare and effectively train our law enforcement agencies and other relevant stakeholders to build resilience. But in those efforts, basic human rights and the population must be protected. Here, General Rahman said Bangladesh's response to violent terrorism is based upon the respect for the rule of law. Criminals propagating extremism have been duly arrested and prosecuted. The government has been carefully addressing root causes by creating awareness and modernising education curricula. Reducing support for terrorism and preventing people becoming terrorists are also vital. Bangladesh has enacted new laws e.g. the Money Laundering Prevention Act—2012 and Anti-terrorism Act—2009, later strengthened through Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Act—2013. Besides government efforts, support from civil society, local communities and individuals would be essential to fight extremism. Extensive research could help identify and better understand the problem so that it could be dealt with more effectively and these in turn, will also help policymakers, law enforcement bodies and other stakeholders to stop extremist events before they happen.

Global partnerships are also crucial to combat violent extremism. But these partnerships depend on openness and mutual trust. Terrorists often cross borders to launch attacks. This is particularly important regarding a new threatening issue of foreign terrorist fighters. Therefore, countries must work in close collaboration and jointly pursue violent extremists.

In his introductory remarks, **Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad**, Chairman, Board of



Governors, BISS said that all acts of violence are not necessarily associated with extremism; conversely, the word extremism indicates the existence of specific ideas or ideologies or objectives as well as organised groups espousing these. Therefore, when such groups use violent means to attain their goal, that would be called violent extremism. Such acts could also be rightly, called terrorist

acts if civilians are targeted. Even, groups with legitimate grievances also use violence. Yet, all forms of violent extremism are harmful to security, law and order, political, and socioeconomic stability and must be appropriately addressed or countered. Countering violent extremism has several important aspects and there must be continuous efforts at different levels and coordinated closely among all stakeholders. For example, governance aspects are extremely vital but at the same time, education, socialisation, opinion building, support system for vulnerable groups as well as for rehabilitated perpetrators, socioeconomic aspects etc also deserve equal attention. All

relevant stakeholders must engage in continuous dialogues and focus on building appropriate partnerships as there is no single solution to this problem. It should also be noted that extremist groups do not have broad and firm support base and thus it is unfair to blame violent extremism on any specific religion ideology or community. Extremists come from all of these entities and the response therefore, must be sensitive to this reality.

Violent extremism, a very old phenomenon, has gathered unmatched severity in recent times having established linkage with global terrorism. These are being facilitated by global spread and availability of information technology and portrayal of violence in different forms of media. Albeit countries worldwide, including Bangladesh are affected by violent extremism and terrorism and have many limitations in adequately deal with those, several initiatives are going on globally as well. Bangladesh has a zero tolerance approach to combating terrorism and violent extremism, including new legislation, robust response by law enforcing agencies, educational and socialisation efforts involving religious and other community leaders. Yet, a more comprehensive approach involving all stakeholders is still to be achieved. Deradicalisation and rehabilitation aspects have yielded little results. Sadly, since the start of 2015, Bangladesh is facing a new spate of violence and terrorist acts waged by politically motivated groups; the government is still trying to devise appropriate and robust responses to this.

The ongoing global dialogue has close links with the UN-Global Counter Terrorism Strategy. One such initiative is the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) which recently brought out the Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for Multi-sectoral Approach to countering Violent Extremism. It could assist countries in forming effective comprehensive response to violent extremism. Countries do have their own needs and methods to meet those, but the need for broader international dialogue and cooperation remains also indispensable.

The Lecture



Dr. Khalid Koser, Executive Director, The Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), Geneva, Switzerland, said the presence of the audience in the seminar indicated the enthusiasm and sincerity of Bangladesh in combating violent extremism. Bangladesh is a primary country for the GCERF's work and the organisation was delighted to work here. Dr. Khalid wished to launch a debate about violent extremism and also wanted to show how it differs from terrorism. A shift in terminology regarding global fight against terrorism has taken place; nowadays, the previous term "Global

War on Terror" has become "Countering Violent Extremism". The Global War on Terror had a

militaristic overtone and was not a helpful concept as it spoke of war, terror and in fact, a very much US initiative which did not bring in positive consequences; many even felt uncomfortable with it. At present, whether in the US State Department, in the UK or many other European nations, the term now heard is countering violent extremism. Terminology matters a lot and therefore, an acceptable term must be developed so that there can be a broad consensus about effectively countering violent extremism. Shift in focusing on extremism from terrorism means the lens has been broadened; currently, there are initiatives being undertaken to focus on people as well who are not terrorists yet but may become so. The aim of this new focus thus is to save them from falling prey to extremist ideologies/thoughts due to poverty, marginalisation, disenfranchisement, discrimination or other grievances. Global war on terror wanted to confront those who are already terrorists or created armed terrorist groups while countering violent extremism focuses on people with a view to saving them from becoming terrorists beforehand. Another benefit of shifting the language is now a wide range of solutions can be thought of. Under this spectrum, on one hand, there are military, police, security, intelligence responses but



they cannot work alone and have to be launched in collaboration with several other responses; on the other, there are issues of prevention, development, education community empowerment to be stressed. The GCERF emphasises the latter initiatives. Yet, these may not also work alone and therefore, a holistic approach is essential. Regarding definition of violent extremism, there are differences. For example, in definitions provided by the US and Australia, the only similarity is the word “violence”. The first definition says “the use or support of violence to achieve ideological political goals” whereas the second says “individuals who support or commit ideologically motivated violence to further political goals”. These definitions disagree on purpose as can be seen in the first’s emphasis on ideological while the second emphasises individuals. Moreover, the term “countering violent extremism” itself still is debated among policymakers and academicians on different grounds with different interpretations. He urged all governments including the Bangladesh government to find an acceptable, common definition of

violent extremism. He then spoke about some approaches the GCERF has been working on. First comes the community engagement which according to him builds between government and people and also amongst different communities. Raising community awareness towards the threat of violent extremism is a useful tool in combating it. In addition, communities must be information driven so that the approach or solution to the problem is based on solid evidences while communities should be adequately empowered to intervene for stopping people from becoming extremists themselves, which is, stopping the recruitment. Building resilience means improvement of capacity of individuals, communities, and systems to survive, adapt, and grow in the face of stress and shocks, and even transform when conditions require it.

Dr. Khalid Koser then spoke about his organisation, the Global Community Engagement and



Resilience Fund (GCERF). It is a funding mechanism in the areas as suggested by the name. The organisation is an independent enterprise based on public-private partnership. It is adding value to global initiatives for combating violent extremism; it helps fill funding gaps, focuses on prevention enables communities to develop localised responses to promote resilience, emphasises sustainability for local organisations, strongly supports national strategies and convenes multiple stakeholders. The GCERF is a solution-oriented initiative and all its functions are performed in close collaboration with governments.

About funding contribution for the GCERF, Dr. Khalid said country support mechanisms are crucial. The organisation has an independent review panel which tries to keep donors satisfied about funds provided and also keep the fund accessible. For the first year, about US \$ 25 million has been donated from eight nations of the European Union (EU). Yet, the EU always stress very strong accountability concerning funds. On the other hand, private sector donors have also pledged contributions. The GCERF has undertaken pilot projects in five countries : Bangladesh, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria and Pakistan. On indicative projects, he said education is really vital. In this regard, he mentioned that education campaigns help spread the message of pluralism, diversity and tolerance. Workshops help promote critical thinking. GCERF works with victims of violent extremism survivors. They need to be trained for engaging with the media to develop the platform for their own stories. It has also undertaken initiatives for stopping the recruitment of youth into the ongoing Syrian War. He suggested that petty offenders and pre-trial detainees must have the right for pro-bono legal representation as jails are often found to be fertile grounds for radicalising people. The GCERF has had some success in limiting recruitments to violent extremism and promoting counter-radicalisation by providing positive alternatives to communities most at risk of radicalisation and recruitment to violent extremism. It has also success in assisting governments and civil societies in enhancing their capacity to countering violent extremism. Nevertheless, there remain significant challenges to deal with. For example, navigating the security-development nexus. It is a tough one and the gap between the

practitioners of these two phenomenon is quite profound; at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) of the UK, practitioners of these two did not even talk to each other. There is the challenge of translating the domestic concerns into transnational actions. Here, Dr. Khalid mentioned the case of Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in January 2015. He added that what happens in one country can certainly have impacts in another. The private sector has to be actively engaged; they believe extremism leads to poverty, destruction of talents, industrialisation and business, although whether extremism leads to poverty or poverty leads to extremism still is an interesting debate. Grassroot projects are to be identified. Here, he mentioned and praised the works carried out by the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) making GCERF's tasks much easier. Lastly, impact assessment has to be conducted. He genuinely believed that the GCERF could make a difference in combating violent extremism. But for that purpose, it would require collaboration with other organisations also, for a long-term, development oriented solution.

Discussion by designated discussants

Ambassador (retd.) Humayun Kabir, Vice President, Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) praised Dr. Khalid Koser for his informative lecture on countering violent extremism. Conceptually, the Global War on Terror was debatable. It was heavily reliant on using military might and failed in reality. It is however pleasing to see that the West is now focusing on using soft power approach. Prevention is always better than cure. On community based approaches, Bangladesh has witnessed significant success. On the other hand, the GCERF's purpose is to serve national strategies and global needs simultaneously. Here, ambassador Humayun said that in 1971, the Bangladesh government and people were fighting together. In socioeconomic approaches, the country's success is the result of cooperation between government and communities. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) success of Bangladesh is a glaring example of this. For the security-development nexus, Bangladesh can be a case study. He thanked Dr. Khalid for mentioning the BEI. The BEI has been undertaking two projects : refrain the media narrative to a positive direction, and encouraging the country's youth. The institute has visited 14 subdistricts of Bangladesh and everywhere they went, they found the youth pretty much optimistic about the country's future.

Major General (retd.) Md. Abdur Rashid, Executive Director, Institute of Conflict, Law and Development Studies (ICLDS) appreciated the GCERF and its activities regarding the soft approach of terminology and bonding the government and communities together to countering violent extremism. The amount of money put into financing terrorism however, is much greater than to combat it. The world is now very much concerned about the term "Islamic Extremism". But Bangladesh and Indonesia are Muslim majority nations and have long been able to keep the crisis of violent extremism at bay. Bangladesh has maintained a steady pace in achieving development, reducing poverty and hopefully will go much further. While poverty is blamed as a hotbed for extremism, Bangladesh also needs to engage the enlightened section of its society who actually support the extremism and create a perception thus give legitimacy to the death and destruction. Yet, it should be noted that Bangladesh has a number of lacks despite its democratic institutions and vibrant civil society. For example, with extrajudicial killings, murder of innocents is being encouraged and legitimised which is very wrong. The legitimacy of killing

innocents comes from people who are influential. If there is no addressing of these, that will be a big mistake. There has to be a multipronged approach addressing all groups of population in Bangladesh for combating violent extremism because community itself has a wide spectrum. Lack of democracy is often being blamed for justifying murder of innocents which is a wrong narrative whatever may be the nature of the conflict. But there is none going to address that. This is the problem Bangladesh now facing and we must face it in an appropriate manner. General Rashid differed on the notion that poverty is a root cause of people turning to extremism. He opined that most terrorists in Bangladesh are lurking within the enlightened society of the country. He lauded the GCERF's initiatives to combating violent extremism and concluded by stressing the need of multilateral cooperation in this regard.

M. Ashique Rahman, Research Fellow, BISS said a single, clear-cut definition of violent extremism is pretty difficult. He informed that when researching about the GCERF's works on violent extremism, he found terrorism has also been conceptualised as a variant of violent extremism. Therefore, a differentiation between these two is necessary because in terms of methods, the use of internet social media by terrorists/extremists is a recent trend whereas targeting civilians, kidnapping, suicide bombings, beheading are recorded throughout history. The international terrorism and religious extremism are recent phenomena too. How these should be defined will in turn help define the necessary counterstrategy or response at national levels. Because, when think this as a security problem, then our response will be one and when think as a political problem, it will be different. Thus, a mix of solutions should be thought about, i.e. negotiations as well as law enforcement mechanisms. Community based approaches are very important including for Bangladesh. A notable reason behind Bangladesh's success in combating violent extremism is its society is moderate, liberal and tolerant. He suggested the GCERF to target the youth when devising strategies to combat violent extremism because from the ISIS, Taliban or even in political violence or extremism, it is the youth who are targeted. Albeit education can be a very effective tool in developing counter-narratives, the employment aspect should also be considered. Here, he suggested that when GCERF takes any community based approach/projects, they should focus on employment aspects also and funding those in the partner nations. A comprehensive strategy to combat violent extremism should be developed; that does not mean inviting only various stakeholders but taking the whole society on board.

Open Discussion

Dr. M. Enamul Huq, former IG, Bangladesh Police, said that critical thinking and impact assessment are very crucial in combating violent extremism and should be spread to all countries of the world. But the question is when rule of law is discussed, is it rule of law or law for ruling? He suggested leaders should be more responsible in their pledge for stopping violence and subjugating bad tendencies in their societies. He urged the GCERF to do more in this regard.

Mohammad Fazlul Haque, chairman, National Youth and Social Welfare Council of Bangladesh, stressed the need of good leaders for combating violent extremism. He also suggested more attention to young people to make them good leaders for future.

Humayun Kabir Bhuiyan, special correspondent, *The Independent*, wanted to know as five countries have been selected for GCERF's pilot projects, what would be the criteria for Bangladesh in those projects? He said travelled almost everywhere in Bangladesh and thinks the country is not in a grave danger of falling to violent extremism. He suggested that inclusion of imams, headmasters of primary or junior schools, principals of colleges, then the problem will not be hard to overcome.

M. Abdur Rahman, deputy chief, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI), said the whole Bangladesh is now facing violent extremism. Although the GCERF began work in 2014, Bangladesh will be happy to work with the organisation. And the private sector of Bangladesh will also like to cooperate with GCERF in its ventures.



Lieutenant General Md Mainul Islam, awc, psc, Chief of General Staff, Bangladesh Army, said when the GCERF was formed, Bangladesh was not facing violent extremism and therefore, the country should not be linked to the violence going on here. Bangladesh is not an extremist country and has proved it number of times. General Mainul said he still respects his teachers of schools and colleges but was doubtful if the present system still respects them. He also informed that in earlier days, people in Bangladesh used to do “Kadambusi”, which means touching the feet of respectable elders, and the elders would also bless those who did it. But he lamented these elders and other people, architects of creating good, honourable humans in a country or society, find that their salaries are very low. These must be addressed properly. About criteria for countries for selection of GCERF pilot projects, he mentioned his UN peacekeeping mission experience in Ivory Coast. That country has many resources but the colonial legacy still lives on there. The UN, sadly, is supporting these legacies. French legacy is vividly alive in Ivory Coast. When UN peacekeepers open fire for even self-defence, there is enquiry but when French forces fire, there is no enquiry. An entire village was destroyed, yet no enquiry came. When General Mainul's own camp was attacked and his soldiers opened fire that resulted in some casualties, a big enquiry was undertaken. Thus, the UN is upholding the interests of former colonial powers in many cases. Ivory Coast was separated in some forceful manner but people were still together. In Mali, UN peacekeepers are fighting people who are fighting each other every day. Very recently in 2015, a number of rockets hit the Bangladesh camp there with no casualty fortunately. Yet, Bangladeshi peacekeepers provided first aid treatment to all, irrespective of whether they were government or rebel forces. Bangladesh, he believes, is not going to become vulnerable to violent extremism. He praised the idea of counter-narratives to combat violent extremism and

terrorism. This narrative is a big blow to the whole defence industry. When the Cold War was over, there was a need to create a new enemy to justify the production and stockpiling of massive arsenals. Before the War on Terror began, there were big bombs which would result in collateral damages and thus anger the common people. As a result, there came in precision guided weapon systems which are expensive as well as profitable. Difference between hard and soft powers may be very delicate. Hence, it would not be a good idea to keep up making sophisticated weaponry. An important area where GCERF could assist Bangladesh is the digital national identity card. People can check whether it is fake or genuine and some accountability will be assured. Another organisation that can be worked on by GECRF is the Bangladesh National Cadet Corps (BNCC) based in schools and colleges. He suggested GCERF could undertake some initiatives to develop them. General Mainul especially stressed the importance of critical thinking which is a new subject in Bangladesh and not taught or discussed on in most places here. However, books and other educational materials on this subject should be provided to students, so as to make them responsible citizens and help them apply that sort of thinking in their own capacity. Referring to Dr. Khalid's comment on inclusiveness of community, he said responsible political power can bond all communities together. Democracy has the strength to create the right platform for that. And on this issue therefore, there must be more initiatives.

Ambassador (retd.) Shahed Akhtar, referred to Dr. Khalid's comment on global experience. He said as every action has reaction, it should also be pointed where the action originated. The world is much more interlinked now and Bangladesh is also a part of this. Developed nations should play a more proactive role in bringing about what is happening throughout the globe. However, all nations should join together on country based issues instead of being very specific. Violent extremism is not going to be totally eliminated since it is as old as human civilisation.

Major General Md. Mashud Razzaq, ndc, afwc, psc, Senior Directing Staff (Army-2) opined that there must be clear definitions regarding what constituted violent extremism and what not. The magnitude should also be considered when forming definitions. He suggested the GCERF needs hard approaches besides its soft ones.

Ambassador (retd.) Dr. Afsarul Qader, said he emphathised with Dr. Khalid's thoughts. Violent extremism is a problem like global climate change. He asked him that when defining terrorism, attacks on civilians are brought in but what about those against states? On building institutions, should micro or macro intuitions come first? He also said that as GCERF's funding comes from eight states of the EU, that could reduce its freedom.

Kamruzzaman Bablu, planning editor, timenewsbd.com, said one of the main causes behind the recent violence going on in Bangladesh is extrajudicial murders by law enforcement agencies but Dr. Khalid has missed it.

Replying to queries and observations, Dr. Khalid said the GCERF is headed by Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The organisation's board has five seats and each has equal voting rights. The main criteria for choosing countries under pilot projects are : existence of a challenge of radicalisation, government cooperation, and funding gaps. GECERF is also in discussion with Kosovo, Indonesia and Kenya for launching

pilot projects. On GCERF's integration of strategies of different countries to combat violent extremism, he said for each country, a mechanism would be set up so that as many actors as possible could be included and there remains effective coordination among them. The GCERF will play facilitating role there. All of its works are conducted with total approval of respective governments. He praised the idea of leveraging Bangladesh's experience in fighting violent extremism and said that could be applied in other countries much more disturbed by this problem. Bangladesh, moreover, has a vibrant civil society which has helped a lot in fighting violent extremism through their cooperation with the country's government. But the scenario is not same in many other nations. About starting with whether micro or macro institutions in combating violent extremism, he opined both varieties should be necessary. On the query by a journalist about the link between extrajudicial killings and rise of violence in Bangladesh, Dr. Khalid said he himself is not an expert on Bangladesh and have been here for a few days only. Thus, he would not be able to elaborate on this. He thanked the representative of the MCCI for their proposal of cooperation with the GCERF.

Concluding remarks



H.E. Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs said he and Dr. Khalid shared many things in Italy and elsewhere about combating violent extremism strategies and approaches. There have been questions about why Bangladesh joined GCERF. The country's foreign policy is based primarily on peace and development and when there is any discussion of peace, there certainly come the issues of violent extremism and

terrorism. By definition, the country is committed to work on global initiatives concerning extremism, and other important issues. Nevertheless, there are two threats that can wipe out whatever progress Bangladesh has made so far; one is climate change and the other is violent extremism/radicalisation/lack of peace. We have been instrumental in almost all global norm-setting and non-norm setting issues. Why? Because, the country has valuable experience that could be shared with other nations in much greater need of looking at best practices. Therefore, Bangladesh's participation has been from day one to share its experience in combating violent extremism, terrorism and radicalisation. The GCERF is not what it is being seen today. The assumption of the organisation has changed with time; in a meeting participated by representatives from the Bangladesh Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and many other countries, it was realised that Bangladesh from its own perspectives could certainly bring in added value to initiatives like the GCERF. Therefore, the country has multiple reasons to actively join the GCERF not only for the funding, but also as Dr. Khalid has said, how the

narratives/debates have changed over the years, i.e. from War on Terror to more holistic or preventive approach. It may also be termed as counter-radicalisation versus deradicalisation. What to do with those who have already gone into and with those who are yet to join that path? These are some reasons the Bangladesh government decided to join the GCERF. He differed with Dr. Khalid that GCERF is a funding mechanism and not a think-tank. It may not be a think tank as such but is certainly trying to bridge the existing gaps in conceptualising as to how we address terrorism, extremism or before terrorism what we call as radicalisation. These are the stages a society goes through. The narratives in this context are extremely important also. Thus we, some of us in here who participated have seen how you brought the initial idea of the GCERF and know how the narratives have become more balanced. That is an added advantage when we bring in such kinds of debates and we get linked up with the global debates and that is the job of the Foreign Office. In debates about terrorism, violent extremism or radicalisation, one thing comes out very clearly, that is, is there any link between poverty and terrorism? May or may not be as it is a very contextual issue. Secondly, is the pattern same everywhere? For example, the way some people in France or some other countries have become radicals, would the same happen in non-European, non-developed countries too? Certainly not. Those are contextual issues and need to be focused. In the process however, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh has always been emphasising that “You cannot deal with terrorism unless you bring in the development component into the whole process”. That is why Bangladesh is involved in the process. Back in 2011, at the 66th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), when there was no talk on GCERF, no talk on changing the narrative of the War on Terror and it was said “You bring in the military, kill everyone and problem will be solved.” That was the paradigm or premise back then. Yet, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh said “In fact, my life experiences have inspired me to come up with a new peace model. It is multidimensional, championing democracy and people’s empowerment with six mutually reinforcing peace multipliers : 1) Eradication of poverty and hunger; 2) Reduction of inequality.” Here, H.E. Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque said inequality is a vital element in this model. Even in the post-2015 development discourse, it can be seen that not hunger or poverty, but inequality needs to be addressed. He began quoting again “3) Mitigation of deprivation; 4) Inclusion of the excluded people; 5) Acceleration of human development; 6) Elimination of radicalisation.” That is how the Prime Minister of Bangladesh looks at radicalisation/terrorism phenomenon. Secretary Haque then again quoted the Prime Minister, “I call it as a people’s empowerment and peace-centric model which reaffirms that all people should be treated equally and emphasises the scope of human capability that can be realised through peace.” This was later adopted into the UNGA through a resolution on 28 March 2012 when the people’s empowerment model was unanimously adopted containing these six elements. We cannot stop radicalisation/violent extremism unless we have a more comprehensive, development-centric way of approaching it. That is where the GCERF adds value to. The GCERF as Dr. Khalid said, has vast potentials to show the world that radicalisation and violent extremism can be stopped through a more peaceful, development-oriented approach rather than bringing in another violent means to counter it. That is the hypothesis based on which GCERF is working. Whether the organisation will eventually bring in a new paradigm in terms of looking at radicalisation and violent extremism, or not, remains to be seen. But even then, it is an impressive way of looking at and also challenging some of the current understanding we have in this field. That is another reason which made Bangladesh think to engage in the process, not that Bangladesh is a country of violent extremism. That is not the angle we thought of when we

made our policy vis-à-vis this. We had a lot to show and experiments with our own society. That is where we were coming from. Bangladesh is a member of not only the GCERF, but also number of UN-led initiatives. Moreover, there is another good thing about GCERF; it is a separate entity but draws its mandate and approach from the UN counterterrorism architecture and also the working group on violent extremism and radicalisation. Therefore, it is a very innovative method to address some of the issues we are currently assigned to address by the hard way, of course. The GCERF is also innovative as it brings in states, the private sector, NGOs, think-tanks together on the same boat where everyone has the equal voice, thus making it look like a corporate boat rather than an INGO sort of boat. Yet, there remain hotly debated issues. Powerful and influential countries often take a backseat as some of the hypotheses they began to address radicalisation/violent extremism with have terribly failed. They do acknowledge it but appreciate bringing some new ideas to light for addressing these threats. The debate will certainly go on. It is not something we can solve today or tomorrow, rather a long-drawn process. Secretary Haque concluded by saying Bangladesh has significant experiences in this regard to share globally and is recognised often with deep appreciation for that.

Summing up by the Chair



Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS thanked Dr. Khalid Koser for his detailed presentation, H.E. Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque for his insightful remarks, all designated panelists for their observations and discussion, and participants for their valuable contributions. He believed that quite a detail discussion has been held on violent extremism, responses, efforts to combat it in Bangladesh and worldwide as well. Commonalities and differences in these experiences have been spoken about. There is no last word. The problem is multifaceted, multidimensional and dynamic and thus requires similar methods to be dealt with at different levels with different stakeholders through appropriate partnerships, cooperation and coordination. Ambassador Ahmad

concluded by thanking Dr. Khalid Koser, H.E. Mr. Md. Shahidul Haque, civil and military officials, members of diplomatic corps, other think-tanks, members of academia, media, all staff of BISS for attending and enthusiastically participating in the seminar and thus making it a success.