all of society approach
gender perspective
extremist Financing
extremism
rehabilitation
violence
primacy of prevention
crime
youth radicalisation
religious
freedom
preventing violent extremism
radicalisation
preventing violent extremism
militancy
extremism
trends
narrative
drivers
prison
cyber radicalisation
role of media

National Conference
Prevention of Violent Extremism From a Gender Perspective

Conference Report

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies
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BIPSS
Towards a Secure World

National Conference

On

Prevention of Violent Extremism From A Gender Perspective

Organized by:

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS)

National Conference on Prevention of Violent Extremism From a Gender Perspective

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This report summarises the processing of the conference as interpreted by the rapporteurs and editor. This report adheres to a variation of the Chatham House Rule.

Term of use:

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies arranged a national conference on 'Prevention of Violent Extremism From A Gender Perspective' hosted in Lakeshore Hotel, Gulshan, Dhaka, brought together a cluster of intellects to discuss on the very significant issues of understanding radicalisation from a gender perspective, the trends and drivers of female radicalisation and enforcements regarding their prevention.

The inaugural session started off with the welcome remarks by the President of BIPSS, Major General A N M Muniruzzaman (Retd), where he emphasised that the vulnerability to radicalisation is not a concern of just men, however, females of the society are caught in its cobwebs as well. He mentioned how the process of female radicalisation is happening through cyber radicalisation, influence of peers and pressure from male members of the family. The role of females as mothers, sisters, wives and daughters give terror outfits an upper hand in tracing the stench of radialisation in their families, hence having an opportunity to play roles in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE).

The Working Session 01 held two renowned speakers. The first speaker was Dr Lailufar Yasmin, Deputy Director (International Affairs), Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs. In her keynote presentation, Dr Yasmin covered the conceptual framework of understanding radicalisation, mentioning that radicalisation process starts within actions and words of their everyday lives. She showed variations in the nature of radicalisation on a century basis, ensuring that the participants have a clear understanding of violent extremism and its contrasts with radicalisation. The second speaker, Ms Umme Wara, Assistant Professor, Department of Criminology, University of Dhaka, carried her presentation on the lines of the new trends of radicalisation and understanding the drivers of female radicalisation. Family drivers, personal drivers, patriarchal pressure, and so on, were extensively covered by the speaker as she explained the trends and factors through which more women are now being involved in the acts of terrorism and extremism.

The Working Session 02 contained keynote presentations made by two speakers, the first being Ms Ayesha Kabir, Consulting Editor, The Prothom Alo English, who covered the role of he media in the context of female radicalisation. She urged the issue of female radicalisation to be discussed separately, and that the role of females in society were very internal, greatly varying from that of males, which made females quite dangerous when it came to extremism and violence. The radicalisation process works through mainstream media, social media and the internet, and it was discussed in the context of female involvement in her speech. The second speaker, Mahfuza Liza, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Intelligence and Analysis) at the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, offered her knowledge on the female radicalisation through the perspective of Law Enforcement Agencies. She elaborated on the role of the police to bring outlaws into justice. She also stated that preventing female radicalisation has become a priority along with a holistic countermeasure strategies. She provided practical examples to understand the nature, pattern, recruitment processes and systems of various extremist groups of Bangladesh when it comes to recruiting female accomplices in their ranks. She emphasised on the sensitivity and potential of women to be involved in the preventive and counter roles against terrorism.

The closing remarks ended the lively discussion of the day, with words from Mr. Shafqat Munir, Research Fellow, BIPSS, Head, Bangladesh Center for Terrorism   Research(BCTR). Mentioning the complexity of the topic, Mr Munir focused on the factors behind female radicalisation were global to an extent. In order to find sustainable, holistic solutions, Mr. Munir urged a comprehensive approached with the involvement of government, civil society, think tanks and the media. Thanking the presenters for their enlightening presentations and finally thanking BIPSS team for organising the event, with these words, Mr. Munir concluded the National conference.

Welcome Remarks by President of BIPSS
Major General A N M Muniruzzaman (Retd)

Major General A N M Muniruzzaman (Retd), President, BIPSS, delivering his welcome remarks

Assalamualaikum, a very good morning to all of you. It's is my pleasure to welcome all of you to this very important deliberation in the National conference on 'PREVENTION OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE'. A special thanks to our honorable chief guest for accepting our invitation to inaugurate this conference thing morning, 'Thank you sir for coming'.

Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) is a concept that tries to bring peace, stability, inclusiveness and accountability among drivers of violent extremism who are bring actively engaged. The concept of PVE connects to individual, community with state level initiatives. According to The UN Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (UN Plan of Action) PVE "is systematic preventive measures which directly address the drivers of violent extremism". An important point I would like to mention is that the importance of 'preventive approach' while countering the violent extremism. Traditionally, what we have seen Countering Violent extremism (CVE) emphasized on 'hard security approach' which involves use of force, surveillance and policing. While the hard security approach cannot be ignored, the soft security approach is necessary in order to understand the causes of radicalisation. This soft approach provides an understanding of different drivers of violent extremism, whether it is social, cultural or political.

Firstly, what we need to understand is that the female population represents half the society. So, the female population is equally vulnerable to the process of radicalisation.

Secondly, often in Bangladesh what we are witnessing a trend of female radicalisation, which have added a new dimension to the threat of radicalisation in this country.

Thirdly, the process of female radicalisation is happening through cyber radicalisation. This alarming trend is driven by the male members in the family and also with peer pressure.

The female population of the society can be integrated in effective Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE). As members of society and members of family, females can form the effective vanguard in preventing radicalisation. Especially in the context of Bangladesh, our women are important members of the family as mothers, wives and sisters and they are the first to identify any symptoms of early warning in the process of radicalisation. Hence female population can be effective in prevention process of radicalisation in the family and among the peer groups.

Lastly, I would like to emphasise the importance of including the gender-responsive policies in PVE approach. Women and girls are often the first victims of violent extremism. They are often recruited forcefully or willingly and go on to play an important role in recruiting other men and women. Hence, attention should be given to the role of women in promoting social cohesion at community level and use women empowerment as a tool to counter gender based radicalisation. For example, according to 'UN Women' there are four key areas where gender perspective can strengthen any kind of response against violent extremism across Asia and the pacific region. Firstly, 'women empowerment', which will promote women's leadership, will lead to opportunities of economic empowerment. Secondly, there should be more participation of women in any PVE approach, so their perspective is heard and addressed accordingly. Thirdly, we have to conduct more data and evidence-based research on how violent extremism is influencing young girls and women. Lastly, Women should have equal 'policy influence' for any measure related to preventing violent extremism.

With those opening remarks, I hope today we shall be deliberating about various facts of violent extremism from a gender perspective. We have eminent speakers to discuss the issues and I hope with your participation from the floor we shall bring the best of the discussions. I am sure with your contribution; we shall establish this conference as a success. I thank you all for being with us this morning and I hope you continue to enjoy the deliberation for today.

Working Session 01

Chair: Mr. Shafqat Munir, Research Fellow, BIPSS, Head, Bangladesh Center for Terrorism Research (BCTR)

Opening remarks by Chair:

The first working session was chaired by Mr. Shafqat Munir, Head of Bangladesh Centre for Terrorism Research (BCTR). Mr. Munir opened up the session with a short introduction on the two distinguished

speakers who would present their papers in the session. He introduced the first speaker of the session, Dr. Lailufar Yasmin, Deputy Director (International Affairs), Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA). The chair also talked about the topic of Dr. Lailufar Yasmin, which would be focusing on the understanding of Radicalisation and framework regarding the classification of defining radicalisation, terrorism and extremism. Next, he introduced Ms. Umme Wara, who is currently Assistant Professor of the Department of Criminology at the University of Dhaka. The chair also talked about the topic of Ms. Umme Wara, which would be focusing on the understanding of drivers of Female Radicalisation and framework regarding the the ways it can be tackled through in Bangladesh.

Understanding Radicalisation:The Conceptual Framework
Dr. Lailafur Yasmin
Dr. Lailufar Yasmin, Deputy Director, (International Affairs)
Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA)

She started off by wishing a "Happy International Men's Day" to everyone present in the room addressing that this year's resolution for Men's Day is having men who will lead by showing and setting examples. The speaker then mentioned that it is very that the relationship of men and women is very important and very intricate.

The speaker moved to talk about her topic about Radicalisation, theoretical understanding of Radicalisation and some examples of these. She started her speech off with defining radicalisation and mentioned that at one of time, Martin Luther King Jr. was considered as a radical even though the people all over the world now know his contribution in the civil rights movement. She cited a quotation, 'Radicalism isn't a fever or a rash. You don't wake up with it one morning'

She mentioned how radicalisation is deep within all our actions and language and our practices. She mentioned that Radicalisation has a purpose where it states where the society is and where the society wants to be in years time. She cited Eric Hobsbawn noting that in his book he has said that people move from one ideology to the other and the fact that the twentieth century has been described as an age of Extremism. She mentioned that the rise of liberalism and the rise of Human Rights in the 20th century and our efforts are to go to back to that age and ensure proper implementation of these. She further talked about the two world wars, ethnic rivalries, genocide and rise of totalitarianism in Germany and all over Europe. She also mentioned how history witnessed the most heinous acts against humanity during this period. She said that there is a sharp difference between the 20th and 21st Century in terms of understanding and dealing with radicalisation. She mentioned that the geographical locations and other spheres actors on radicalisation have been changed drastically in these past years. She mentioned how state is not an only actor and it does not have the monopoly of violence anymore where in the words of Max Weber, it was mentioned how state has the right to create violence and also to minimise it, inflict it and and also pursue it. She said that we have shifted from this form of state sponsored violence to a state where a large number of actors are now working to cause violence and that there are multiple actors who have emerged to claim authority on violence. Instead of state asking us to do what to do and what not to do, we are now independent.

She then talked about violence and defined violence by moving to Johan Galtung's definition, 'Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisations'. She mentioned how peace is present in the current society. Peace is disrupted and is done when a particular society or members of the society feel that his/her achievements should or could be bigger.

She mentioned how economic factors play a huge role in want to change the situation of a person for instance her own self of being a professor whereas her friends are now in a more better place with more monetary benefits and amenities. For situations similar to this in cases of all spheres these forms are present to ensue and create violence within the community. For that taking hold of or taking an act which is not legal or extralegal then violence is created. She mentioned that in the 21st century, ´The crisis of ideology in the post-Cold War era led to the rebirth of religion in political scene to fill in the vacuum. She mentioned how the breakdown of Soviet Union created a crisis in Ideology in all spheres and religion and politics filled that in. She requested the policy makers to look into this form of ideology vacuum in spheres. Alsom, The nature of radicalisation, therefore, is often driven by religious logics—not answerable to the people but to the Deity.

She emphasised on how Islamism is not radicalisation and it's not the other way around as well. She mentioned by defining radicalisation that, general idea of radicalisation is to challenge established ideas the step to ensure to change in a person's own life. She cited the Oxford Dictionary which, about radicalisation, says the beliefs or actions of people who advocate thorough or complete political or social reform. She also said, we witnessed in the modern world, since the anarchists arguing for 'propaganda of the deed' is a recurring feature involving radicalism, revolution and extremism. She then cited Eric Hoffer (1951) who argued that all movements share many features—a framework accepted by other scholars as well.

She mentioned that these are imaginative ideas where these goals are mostly long term goals and not short term and in most cases where only the person who is talking about it and has the idea of a better world. The idea preached by AQIS is "All Muslims should be united" and in ISIS it turns to "My type of Muslim and my type of belief" getting more rewarded. In this form of terrorism it is vivid that, there is a change of terrorism and unification of people believing in these. She said that these sort of proposes a utopian-solution to present troubles/injustices depending on particular interpretation. She mentioned how important it was for us to dissect all the three terms—radicalism, revolution, and terrorism (extremism).

An organisational feature of radicalisation is that it distinguishes this with social movements. For example, Arab Spring. Connection with violence is the willingness and propensity to use violence but in most cases we have seen that means by which they want to establish their ideas is often made through violence. Broad definition of radicalism is contention that is outside the common routines of politics present within a society, oriented towards substantial change in social, cultural, economic, and or political structure, and undertaken by any actor using extra-institutional means.

She talked about the organisational structure once again noting that, the challenge to change the organisational structure of a society or a particular Geographic boundary is the reason why radicalisation stays within the general idea. She mentioned that radicalism is not politicalism. Outside of the common routine the people who are radicalised challenge the way that people live is more correct than the way that other people live. There is a distinct movement between a political movement and radicalised more than a political movement has the attention of not settling for an idea which is currently existing within the

political sphere that a person is living in. Social change is a change in the society which can turn into a social movement but not at all times radicalised but radicalised movements are not directly social movements. They can be political or social movement and they can even be just a radicalised movement. Radicalised movements are based on progressive or react to changes or action that are committed within the society at a particular juncture. Radicalised movements can be undertaken by anyone they can be in a group and they can even be an individual. Radicalism can also be carried out by a government. The government may impose radicalism through changing texts in text books, changing social norms, changing actions by law enforcement agencies. This can happen to change certain paths of the society. There are a number of radicalised stories in the modern history. One of the first radicalised movements that has been seen was done by democratic leaders when the workers were striking for rights.

The workers were saying they require 8 hours of sleep, 8 hours of work, 8 shillings a day. There have been more movements after this as well. The occupy wall street movement was the next wave. In some radicalised movements, radicalised people has killed innocent people saying that they do not simply need to live. The micro level the Boston marathon runner who was radicalised individual, the macro person osama bin Laden.

(The areas that radicalisation are ,terrorism and extremism are different, is seen in a picture.)

Slide from her presentation.
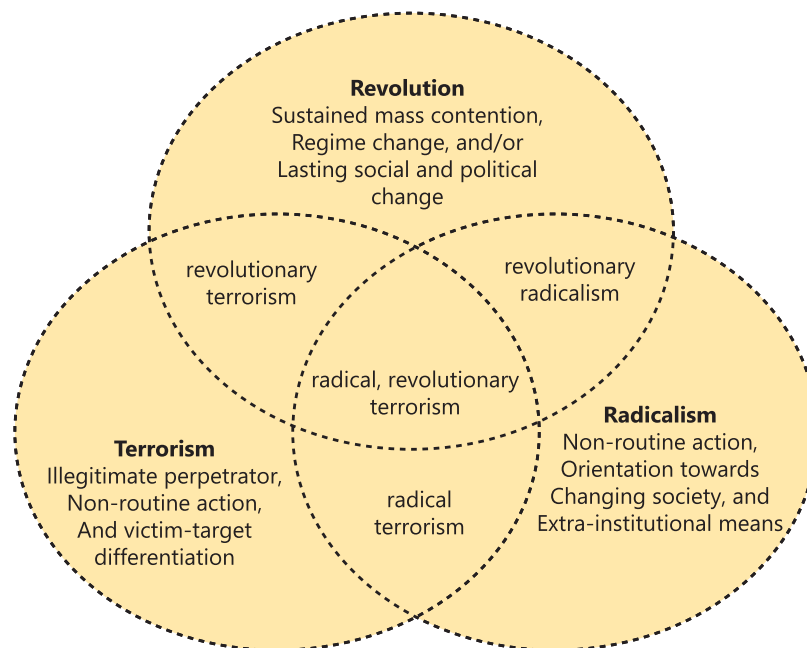
Radicalisation is different in all errors and all ages she said that citing, Oman Taspinar that it is common place to associate violent extremism which is now but terrorist organisation from recent history show that radicalism is not explained by religion. The concept of relative deprivation is key to understanding the roots of terrorism.

´Radicalism as perversity: After the Cold War ended, America rewrote [its Cold War] ideology into one that moved on from the Communist threat to the idea of promulgating democracy throughout the world in the belief that this could eventually put an end to global radicalism, terrorism and other international perversities.

In the words of Omar Taspinar: It is commonplace to associate violent extremism with Islam, but terrorist organizations from recent history show that radicalism is not explained by religion. The concept of relative deprivation is key to understanding the roots of terrorism.

In Belgium, in Paris, even in Bangladesh, this theory relates a lot to radicalisation ideas. In the current time Islam is used as a shield for terrorism whereas in the previous ages it was not seen as the radicalized or terrorists or even extremists did not have religion or religious ideology to make their terrorist ideas stand on. We can see the rise of Irish Republican Army (IRA), we can see the Tamil Tigers and and also various organisation which are propagating terrorist ideas now. We need to look at the way and reasons of the contemporary radicalisation. Every group is dissimilar.

Radicalised individuals or groups are in some cases just a very niche group as we can see in cases of Syria or even countries who have faced the situations like Syria.

There are scholars arguing that the ideological perspective is a more valid and more serious reason for radicalisation. Then there are scholars promoting that the radicalised factors are mostly of people who are deprived. Most terrorists today are different as they are neither poor nor very rich. And then there are people who are radicalised individuals because they lack materialistic things in world and there is a connection. Scholars have given different opinions in this regard, as one side believes that there is a connection between the two and the other believes there is not. Now we have to decide how these factors are different, whether there is a ideological vacuum or a socio-economic factor. She said that majority of terrorists are from middle class background.

The idea of relative deprivation, is more important as there are people who are driven by these socio-economic factors of monetary values and at times of social status. Then again the Holey Artisan attack, shows that a group of frustrated young overachievers, who are feeling that they have not achieved enough where as they had achieved a lot. The overachievers are well versed in technology and others social skills. They are also familiar to ideas such as soft skills and hard skills.

We need to have access to data and realize why 90 people are not radicalized and 10 people are and why some people are travelling from radicalized to terrorists and micro narratives and macro narratives are necessary too. Not all radicals are terrorist and there are huge factors of society. There are several factors and why these factors are responsible time and again. There is need for research and there is no society which can be called a terrorist society or a religion that can be called a terrorist religion. We need to look into, ´The prioritization of 'radicalisation' as a 'process' over terrorism provides a better paradigm and framework for a number of reasons. First, radicalisation more accurately reflects the political and ideological dimensions of the threat. No matter how diverse the causes, motivations, and ideologies of terrorist organizations, all attempts at premeditated violence against civilians share the traits of violent radicalism. Second, while terrorism is a deadly security challenge, radicalism is primarily a political threat against which non-coercive measures should be given a chance. There is nothing preordained in the potential transition from radicalism to terrorism. Most terrorists start their individual journey toward extremist violence first by becoming radicalised militants. All terrorists, by definition, are radicals; yet not all radicals end up as terrorists. ´Third, radicalism, unlike terrorism, has social dimensions involving large segments of society. One can identify radicalised societies where acts of terrorism find sympathy and even some degree of support. However, there are no "terrorist" societies.

Individual cases are significant but almost impossible to unearth. Therefore: we need an entirely new approach: before-and-after story involving the meso level. And understanding that this is not the task of

the security forces only. We should be looking at the social conditions that make dissident movements more likely to turn to terror and—more importantly—the circumstances under which such dissident movements receive popular support.

As far as the economic background of terrorists is concerned, it is important to remember that effective terrorist groups rely on a division of labor between young and uneducated "foot soldiers" and ideologically trained and well-funded elite operatives. Construction and dissemination of ideology is at the hands of 'frustrated achievers'. The poorest and least educated can be recruited and radicalised by terrorist masterminds. Yet, they would make ineffective terrorists in a complex operation. Indeed, the more complex an operation is, the greater security risks it entails, and the more likely the participants are to be elite—the result of a careful screening process.

In case of a radical, the before fact, the during fact and the after fact needs to be kept into ideas as these ideas will surely create a new perspective and make sure these radicalized process weak as the work is not of the security forces rather is of every individual of the society.

From history we have learnt a lot regarding how families need to act up and we are not all satisfied with what we have. We surely should know what to do.

The Moderator then talked about how this is a scene setter for the current ideas. He also mentioned how all radicalized individuals are not terrorists.

New Trends of Radicalisation : Understanding Drivers of Female Radicalisation

Umme Wara

Ms. Umme Wara, Assistant Professor, Department of Criminology, University of Dhaka

She started off her speech by saying, "Radicalisation is defined as a social and psychological process by which ordinary citizens become so aggrieve d that they are willing to sacrifice their lives and the lives of innocent civilians to make a political protest."

Recently, Bangladesh has witnessed an uptick in the participation of female jihadists in multiple roles as the country's militant landscape continues to evolve. Since the Islamic State-directed Holey Artisan Bakery attack in July 2016, Bangladeshi militant groups have become more assertive and violent, with a transnational outlook. Contrary to popular perceptions, terrorism in Bangladesh is no longer limited to the males. Women's roles in jihadism in Bangladesh have evolved from being wives of jihadists and raising their future generations to more prominent roles. For instance, they are increasingly participating in combat activities and facilitating the transmission of operational details. They are also contributing into social media to radicalise, mentor, and recruit other would be female jihadists. This has not been a new phenomena in the current society and it has been existing within the society for a long time. Generally, most of the female militants are family members of male operatives. However, the Jihadists also recruit beyond their members'

families; such women are then married off to a fighter. It is essential to point out that participation of females in militancy as combatants is not new to South Asia. Apart from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan have witnessed female militants in combatant roles during the civil war in Sri Lanka, the insurgency in Indian Kashmir, and the attacks in various parts of Pakistan. Female jihadists offer operational advantages such as their ability to get closer to targets without being suspected. Women are usually considered as soft and physically weak and are subjected to relaxed security checks as security forces are generally dominated by males who cannot always conduct rigorous physical checks on females. Furthermore, as they do not conform to any profile that would trigger law enforcement alarms, their radicalisation is less noticed by people in their social surroundings. At the strategic level, female attackers gain more publicity and media attention as they generate greater psychological impact on the adversary or the target audience. Male and females are both driven by these factors:

- Biological elements (a disruption of nature or the expression of a physiological abnormality),
- Psychological elements (emotional instability, individual condition),
- Cultural elements (practices specific to a culture, an ethnocentric response to an exogenous group),
- Feminist elements (victims of a greater (patriarchal) system, sign of freedom, appropriation of power).

According to Professor Mia Bloom,

Revenge, redemption/ restoration, relationship and respect were the driving forces behind female radicalisation.

She also adds a fifth: Rape. In some morally conservative societies, violent extremist groups take the advantage of the rigid concept of "honour" to recruit women, often so as to have them commit a suicide attack. Thus a woman who is a social outcast, for having been raped for example, is offered redemption by becoming a martyr. Her death by a suicide attack will not only allow her to restore her honor (and that of her family), but even to become a local heroine. But they do not work as well when it comes to women living in societies that are at peace, particularly when they are democratic and liberal. Sometimes only to experience adventure and even in sometimes to have some fun the females do it. The initial reason is thus in most cases just for being a part of sometimes to have a romanticism idea.

Patriarchal Family Structure: some women live in contexts where they are relegated to the domestic space, their only contacts being with family members. They cannot become politically radicalised in the same manner as men. Accordingly, such women would initially join extremist or terrorist groups through entrainment, by following a family member, subsequently progressing to political radicalisation and ideological justification after coming into contact with other women in such groups, or after being imprisoned. This idea too offers only a partial explanation of radicalisation trajectories in which women are not just followers. Among the girls that have been brought to the Centre de prévention contre les dérives sectaires liées à l'Islam (Centre for the prevention of sectarian violence related to Islam) in France, a common point emerges from interviews: a strong desire for social involvement, with a hint of altruism, that is a common thread in their paths to radicalisation.

A number of them had been approached by recruiters for terrorist organisations that took advantage of their desire for citizen engagement. They had also been approached by young men, older than them, who played the role of mentor and initiated them into radical Islam. Gender hierarchy is still very present then in jihadist organisation. In the jihadist discourse and psyche, women are primarily seen as auxiliaries of

jihad. Ideologues insist on the importance of women raising their children in the way of jihad, looking after financial and logistical matters, recruiting new fighters and female companions, collecting and disseminating information, providing medical assistance, glorifying the struggle and spreading the ideology across the Internet (Perešin and Cervone, 2015, p. 498). In sum, the functions reserved for women in jihadist groups are gendered: mother of future mujahideen (in the sense of fighters), wife of existing mujahideen. These gendered roles, widely discussed in jihadist literature and among the women themselves, offer women a "meaningful" role in the struggle, while not making them equal to men as armed combatants (Aaron, 2008, p. 93; Perešin and Cervone, 2015, p. 499). Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett (2015) report the words of Umm Ubaydah, a European who joined ISIS. Addressing her Twitter followers, she wrote: "the best thing a man can do is jihad, and the best thing for a woman is to be a righteous wife and to raise righteous children" (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett, 2015, p. 31). The motif of protection was another constant in jihadist images on the Tumblr and Facebook sites we examined. To persuade young women to leave home and travel to a country at war, propaganda must be able to offer them security. This is done through the promise of marriage with a jihadist combatant, along with the reassuring accounts of women who have already settled in Syria. A specific iconography is used to create a sense that the journey will be safe and calm: lions, flowers and peaceful landscapes. The lion has deep symbolic value in jihadist propaganda. The lion also symbolizes the male, evoking combatants and heroic figures in the jihadist movement, such as Osama bin Laden, whose first name means "lion" (Combating Terrorism Center, 2006). Lions appear often in propaganda images produced by ISIS and its sympathizers. Jihadist combatants are referred to as "lions", while children born under ISIS are called "lion cubs". The lion represents the man, the husband who protects his wife: dangerous and impressive with his enemies, yet majestic and gentle with his companion.

Virtual Sisterhood: The perception that there is a community of sisters, women who share the same social and religious identity, is a decisive factor in the identification of some women with the project of hijrat (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett, 2015, p. 13).

Virtual Media: ISIS's media projection has significant drawing power. For women who are vulnerable or in search of identity or spiritual meaning, the sense of alienation from their own society, and the feeling of being part of a real community that accepts them as they are, combine to make a powerful identification factor (Klausen, 2015, p. 17). Beyond their nationalities and personal stories, the great diversity of demographic characteristics among women involved online demonstrates the importance of social media in forging a community of collective beliefs that transcends borders and individual trajectories (Perešin, 2015, p. 26).

For most young people, adolescence is a period of deep uncertainty about existence and identity. In many cultures, it is also a time of contestation or negotiation over the norms and generational models of parents and social institutions (Steinberg, 2001, p. 7).

At this age, they like to vent out their energy in adventure, in creativity and heroic activity. The routine mundane life is their reality, but a colorful, adventurous world is their aspiration. So, internal urge to glorify their lives by doing something great for any reason is very important characteristics of youth. They like to do some heroic act for community, country, people, even for lover.

So, the need to establish their own identity to the people who show interest in them becomes much more important. Besides, adolescents feel closer to those who value and respect their views and they feel themselves respected as an individual.

Also a traumatic episode in adolescence can have significant consequences on a person's developing identity.

Ms. Wara stated that radicalisation into terrorism is not the product of relative economic condition, brainwashing, criminality, mental illness or deep Muslim faith. The potential for radicalisation is dependent upon seeking fulfilment of some psychological needs, which is met with a response of proper propaganda, presentation, and group psychology within extremist group as well as a lack of entertainment and cultural activities.

Clearly, the motivations and underlying causes of radicalisation are different for each woman, even if they are influenced by gender dynamics and gender-differentiated factors. So far, they have still received too little scholarly attention.

For example, Gartenstein-Ross and Grossman (2009) studied the radicalisation factors of 117 individuals, using variables such as education, income, conversion and international contacts, but paid no attention to gender and the overrepresentation of men in the sample.

So comparative research and analysis are needed to understand the drivers of female radicalisation in a proper way.

The chair then thanked the audience on behalf of Bangladesh Centre For Terrorism Research and Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies for being a part of this conference as he mentioned that to understand the idea of female radicalisation, it is important to talk, research, implement and check the cases specifically and act accordingly. He then opened the floor for questions.

Question and Answer Session for Working Session 01

Question from one of the speakers: A question about countering radicalisation and different aspects that can be used and the usage of nationalism to counter radicalisation and asked since nationalism itself is a tool for violence nowadays, how would the state and it's institutions use nationalism to fight violent extremism?

<u>Dr. Lailufar Yasmin:</u> She answered this question as she mentioned that the root of the people of a certain geographical juncture was to make sure that they have an identity and in the past many a times it was seen that the people of Bangladesh needed to remember their roots to understand where they belong and why they belong here eventually giving them a purpose. Starting from Pohela Falgun, Pohela Baishakh, International Mother Language Day etc as these things are components of a citizen of Bangladesh and this gives the people an identity as in most cases of identity it has been seen that the radicalised individual is lacking a sense of identity as patriotism and nationalism are two distinct ideas and nationalism is thus a trait that would surely make a person ask himself/herself if he/she is a bengali first or a muslim first. These ideas thus need to be highlighted more frequently and only then the people of the world will understand that they are a global citizen as well and they need to ensure their duties as one.

<u>Question from one of the BIPSS researchers:</u> A question to Dr. Lailufar Yasmin regarding how to mediate the terrorists of the current century and their extreme tendencies to cause violence when they are specifically a female in gender.

<u>Dr. Lailufar Yasmin:</u> She answered this question mentioning in the age of real extremist time, there is no one particular framework rather can explain this phenomenon. We need to evaluate and understand the relevance of the problem to a particular situation. The processes are changing as the missions are now changing their name as from peace-keeping it has become peace building, and for that very reason, we need to understand the relevance and importance of each of the situation and act accordingly as what may be true for Bangladesh may not be true for India and this way we will surely need to adopt and form more and more and also specific frameworks to counter radicalisation or terrorism.

<u>Question from one of the participants:</u> Asked two questions, one of them was if the psycho-analysis of the terrorists is done properly and if that is being done to understand the roots and causes of their actions and if the people who get radicalised have critical thinking abilities and at what point do we consider that these psychological factors have turned into a more social factor? He also asked about the procedure that is being used to figure out the drivers of violence as he mentioned that the drivers of female radicalisation that have been in history have only been adjusted and made to fall under pre-existing categories rather than asking if they have done any actions for a particular reason, it would be more fruitful if the authorities ask about the actions openly rather than asking the terrorists if any of the pre existing reasons were why they did what they did as the reasons are very different for each context and each country of the world.

<u>Ms. Umme Wara</u>: The idea of relative deprivation plays a huge role in changing the thought processes of a person as well as the changing his/her psychological stances on specific situations as it has been once reported that once a girl joined a terrorist organization after she saw another female wear a red shoe and she wanted to have that as such she joined the company. There are thus cases where women and children do not distinctly think that if they are doing anything wrong and thus they pursue an objective as they cannot differentiate between the ideologies and weigh the good and bad sides of their actions. Foot soldiers can be recruited very easily but the people who are making the calls and who are spreading the ideologies are recruited by being given strong ideological stances. Thus we need to look into these people as why they are declining to comply with the society and why they are moving into these actions.

<u>Question from one of the speakers:</u> Asked a question, if the societal marginalisation and society's effects on women were forcing the women to become radicalized and if there was a lack of policies which are needed to be implemented to reduce this rate of radicalisation.

<u>Ms. Umme Wara:</u> She answered this by saying that, laws are important and the function that they fulfil is sufficient to clear and make sure a person does not cause harm to the state or society but the responsibility falls directly upon the shoulder of social institutions like family, educational institutions and also religious institutions and also the form of society as the patriarchal form of society makes women become more dependent and not receive freedom that the women deserve, thus, we need to improve our laws, yes but also we need to change the thought process of the parents and the family members and this is important as the family members should make no distinction between a male child and female child within a family. We thus need to make sure that men and women are treated equally and the social institutions are also helping the society by allowing the women to be independent and solvent on their own. The education of the parents is also important.

<u>Comment from one of the chair:</u> The recruited people are not always socio-economically in a crisis and even in times they are not illiterate as the people in Syria are not economically un-solvent in most cases and they are also well educated. He also mentioned that Islamism and Radicalisation are two different things and that they are existing in a society as they are in cases not similar, the events in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and the genocide are not done by muslims and not in the name of Islam. These ideas are extremism of any "ism". It may be of any faith or culture. About the Myanmar refugee crisis of 2017 and the current camps are now becoming a breeding ground for the militancy, even though the counter terrorism team is a proactive team and their approach is noteworthy in this regard. He then asked, what the speakers think of the Rohingya refugee camp and the militancy threat it bears. He also asked about a list if any was made regarding the number of female that have been radicalized as of yet and there was any number. He also said that the radicalisation is a cause of excessive or no nationalist ideas.

<u>Comment from one of the participants:</u> said that the radicalisation of women have been existing in Bangladesh from the early 2000's and the women are being called in the name of jihad or islam and women in many cases are dependent on men and in many cases they are not and world are in many cases made to look like to win a fight and establish their words over others and these ideologies are harmful as they do not promote tolerance and they make the society violent towards ideas. Thus the idea, advent and definition is very important in this regard of violent extremism.

<u>Dr. Lailufar Yasmin:</u> She said in this regard that the idea that was presented here was more of an urban based idea and the recruitment of the people from the rural areas is much easier as they lack educational and many basic understandings. She also mentioned how there is an insensitivity among the general mass and it became visible when the Qawmi madrasa students came to Dhaka recently for a gathering and the University Of Dhaka students were not too pleased with their presence. The students of the University were considered to be Ultra Secular and the Madrasa Students were Ultra Radical. Even after that it did not create any problematic situations. Last November during her last visit to the Rohingya camp she saw how Rohingya population are being pushed to do activities and there were speculations about militancy and violent extremism yet there were none of these activities that she saw happening there. The law enforcement agencies are working brilliantly as she noted and mentioned how it is very effective. They have had understood from the very beginning about the activities what people with nothing to do and nowhere to go would do. She also mentioned that Islam does not create terrorism. She also mentioned how women are not peaceful at all times and not because they are "Maa er jaat" even though this understanding is very common within the society regarding how women are being portrayed. Women are not only in the house for serving the family and taking care of the children. She mentioned that women are deprived with many amenities and permissions yet a man is allowed to do the very same thing. There is need for men to come

forward and change this situation. Women are not as peaceful as they are portrayed, and neither should there be any barrier of rights and activities between a man and a woman.

Ms. Umme Wara: She mentioned that female radicals and a number of it cannot be kept without capturing them at first and it is very important and is needed to be done. She also mentioned that Islamism is very relevant to Bangladesh context and it is very important to note that the religious insensitivity of Buddhists towards this situation is also needed to be noted and there are also roles of the media and other participants and there is need to talk about them and that will be talked about late today and she is only focusing on the family and social causes. She mentioned that she encourages her students to talk about their ideas and their problems directly to counselling centres and they at times may feel insensitive and problematic to share their feelings with their families and friends yet they should surely talk about their ideas. This would make them have a clearer understanding of their surroundings.

The chair talked about an urgent need for all of us to work with the Law Enforcement Agencies and help them and there are many roles that we can play. Starting from national curriculum of education to biopsychological ideas.

The Chair then spoke about how there is immense need for research, seminars and a nexus of civil society, academia and law enforcement agencies to be created. Bangladesh Centre For Terrorism Research and Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies has the plan to understand this new phenomenon and do more on this topic. He mentioned how it is very different in each geographical, political and even sociological perspective and how there is immense need for more work to be done on this.

Concluding Remarks by the Chair:

The Chair of the session, Mr. Shafqat Munir, concluded with a small summary of key important points of the presentations of the two speakers. He spoke of how radicalisation needs to be defined thoroughly and it is an urgency to treat patients of radicalisation, terrorism and extremism differently and also how in a lot of the cases women are forced to become radical citing some examples. Likewise, women can either take the path to become radical, through choice or through force, or take the path to become a de-radicalizing, or a counter radicalizing force. The role of the family, educational institutions, religious institutions and other social institutions in radicalisation and counter radicalisation would very much depend on the strategy the state, according to the chair. The chair also talked on the analysis presented on the topics of radicalisation as a theoretical framework and drivers of female radicalisation. At the end he thanked the two speakers for their detailed and informative presentations regarding their respective topics.

Working Session 02

Chair: Brig Gen Shahedul Anam Khan, ndc, psc (Retd)
Associate Editor, The Daily Star

Opening remarks by Chair-

The second working session was chaired by Brig Gen Mohammad Shahedul Anam Khan, ndc, psc (Retd.), Associate Editor, The Daily Star. Mr. Khan opened up the session with a short introduction on the two distinguished speakers who would present their papers in the session. He introduced the first speaker of the session, Ms. Ayesha Kabir, Consulting Editor, The Prothom Alo English. Her professional career has taken her to Nepal, Pakistan, India, Hong Kong, UK, Switzerland, the Netherlands and many other countries, reporting on current affairs, attending international conferences and networking. Having done her Bachelors and Masters degrees in English from Dhaka University, Ayesha Kabir has worked for the weekly Dhaka Courier as assistant editor, PROBE News Weekly as associate editor and has also freelanced for an extended stint. Next, he introduced Ms. Mahfuza Liza. Ms. Liza is currently serving as the Additional Superintendent of Police to the Bangladesh Police. She also has the experience as the Deputy Commander of BANFPU, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. Prior to that she was serving as a judicial magistrate in Bangladesh Judiciary and had the experience of Legal Executive for Banglalink. She achieved her Bachelors in Law from University of Dhaka in 2003 and her Masters in Cyber Security, Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism from Macquarie University in 2017.

Female Radicalisation: the Role of Media

Ms. Ayesha kabir

Consulting Editor, The Prothom Alo English

Ms. Ayesha Kabir focused on the topic of the role of media in female radicalisation in her keynote presentation 'Female Radicalisation: the Role of Media'. She touched on the aspects of what media can do for reducing the racialisation of females.

She first addressed the need for separate focus on female radicalisation rather than keeping female radicalisation in the general issue of radicalisation. She spoke of overhearing a few gentlemen talking about what is the need for a separate discussion on female radicalisation earlier in the morning. Addressing the gender differentiation and the fact that "radicalisation is radicalisation", she went on to explain the invisible nature of women in the society. While she is at the heart of the family, even if not the head, takes care of the family takes care of its members, takes of colleagues and participates in society, she is still to some extent invisible. Much due to this reason, the radicalisation process of women is something that happens more subtly and more invisibly. In this background, Ms. Ayesha reinstated the special requirement of focus on the matter of female radicalisation separate from just radicalisation in general.

In the patriarchal society, a woman is the focal point as she is omnipresent through her responsibilities to her family, her colleagues at work and the society. Hence, she is the center. It is she who nurtures the family, the society, the community and looks after her children, her husband, her in-laws, her own parents and so on. Being at the focal point of the community gives her a lot of influence, despite being invisible to a certain extent. She can even have more influence than that her male counterpart because of the greater personal proximity to the members of the family and community. While the man is seen as the breadwinner, and plays a more prominent external role, the woman is seen to play a more internal role. Therefore, when a man is radicalised, he can force his family and friends to be radicalised too; however, when a woman is radicalised, she can convince the members of her family with the radical ideas and transform them into radicals. Her influence is more convincing and comprehensive as she upholds the radical ideology she believes in, rather than what is preached by use of force. It is more far reaching and sustainable.

Ms. Kabir, stating that it was not only the case in radicalisation, used the example of NGOs and the case of micro-credit, where it was the woman who was given the loan and she would use it on her children, her husband, the family, the future of the family and for the betterment of the community, rather than use it on herself. The radicals realised the idea and that radicalising a woman can radicalise the rest of the community much faster than a man.

A woman can also an influential agent for counter radicalisation, or prevention of violent extremist radical idea. She can use that use that power in her to neutralise the radical elements in the family and community, but in a subtle manner, using her influence in a, effective and invisible way.

The media's role in female radicalisation, just like its general nature, can be like two sides of the coin. The speaker uses the example of dynamite. The inventor of dynamite, Alfred Nobel, made it for constructive purposes, such as mining or construction. However, at the same time she also recognised that it had a destructive side too. Media, in the same manner, could be used for constructive purposes, as well as

destructive purposes too, and hence, is quite like a double-edged sword, according to the speaker. It could be used to promote various ways of preventing female radicalisation and de-radicalisation radicalised females, and it can also be used to promote female radicalisation if it is misused.

While media has a focus on violent radicalisation or violent extremism, as we see in one or two stories on the everyday news, it often fails to focus on female radicalisation. It is not completely ignored, but the focus, as Ms. Kabir says, is not quite there. At the same time, when it is covered by the media, there is a tendency that women are portrayed as a victim to radicalisation, which the speaker states to be partially true. She goes onto talk about the active and direct role of women in radicalisation, that in a society like ours, is ignored and requires highlighting, because such an invisible force is deadlier than perceived.

Media can be a strong determinant of role models. Women, as well as men, have the tendency to emulate the images that the media hands out. It is very pivotal to protecting the images of the role models it promotes. In this context media must be much more responsible regarding what it shows and promotes than it has ever has been before. It is especially important today, given the circumstances of violent extremism at hand.

Some might say that a secular media is a best form of media. However, the speaker pointed out the importance of a balanced media. She speaks of women who may be very religious, but not necessarily radical, and questions what the media has to offer them. Stating that they can not only be provided with messages conflictual to their belief, Ms. Kabir states how a responsible media has to address everyone's mindsets in a positive and constructive manner. It is, hence, important that the media disperses accurate and informed knowledge and understanding of the religion in the particular onset of ours and portrays women with Islamic values in a positive manner, instead of alienating them and compelling them to think in a negative way. It can differentiate between an Islamic woman and a radicalized woman, and promote that just because someone is Islamic, that does not mean she has to be an extremist or radicalised. And if the media continues to offer positive images, experiences and examples to show that even the most pious woman is a part of the mainstream, regardless of gender, races or any other forms of differentiation, then more extremist fanatics would not be able to use their propaganda to draw the women into their sphere.

The speaker again highlights the tendency to think that radicalized women are victims that have been forced to join radical extremist's outfits like ISIS or Al Qaeda to serve men and reproduce extremists, and that women have passive and submissive roles. Due to this demeanor they remain behind the scene, cooking cleaning, reproducing. That is not the entire picture, even though it is a part of the picture in some cases. Ms. Kabir then speaks of a personal experience of a friend of her son's, as an example of educated women who had direct affiliation in playing roles different from the general outlook of female radicalisation. She spoke of a young girl from an English-medium background, who would come to her home with the rest of her son's friends. She studied to become an architect and was a painter. Over the years, she picked up regular prayers five times a day, and would pray even when she was out and at someone else's home. Initially, it was taken by her parents and the parents of her friends in a positive manner, of course. Then she began doing hijab by covering her head and hair, and then her face. She stopped mixing with her male friends as well. Ms. Kabir calls these to have been cautionary signals, which were ignored by all, including her parents. The girl eventually married an important man, who would sing on the television. They went to honeymoon in Bangkok, Thailand, after which they both fell off the radar and were no longer accessible through contact. The next thing they knew was that the couple was in Syria, and that they had been recruited by ISIS, and she was the one who convinced her husband to become a part of the radicalized extremist group.

Again, coming back to the core topic, the speaker once again highlights the invisible and subtle nature of female radicalisation and her role at a radicalizing agent in the society. As extremist women are more active than perceived, they are also facilitators of extremism, financers, mentors, intelligence sources, messengers, propaganda agents and more. They are often the ones that convince the men to join the radical outfits like ISIS, Al –Qaeda, or closer to home, JMB and the like.

On the flip side, given that position of power, a woman also has the ability to detect growing radicalisation and report it. She has the power to counter violent extremist. As she is closely related the family, to the community, she is the one, perhaps, who connotes these cautionary signals, the changes of behavior and the changes in mindset, and, hence, she is the one who has to be more cautious than ever before. For this to happen, the women must also be promoted by media as agents of de-radicalisation and prevention of radicalisation, and as powerful forces to counter violent extremism. Mothers, daughters, sisters and partners can use their heart and mind to bring back their loved ones from the path of radicalisation and violent extremism and back to the right path. Again, it is the media's responsibility to portray this in a correct manner.

Nowadays, hundreds and hundreds are women are seen in the morning making their way to their workplaces in the ready-made garment industries. These women are seen mostly to have been covering their head. A particular media outlet described these women as conservative even though they are now working women, as they do 'hijab' and 'parda'. One the flipside there is another media outlet which portrays that these women were invisible and would not even come out of their houses before and nobody would even see them. They would be busy cooking, tending to the men and the children, but now they are on the street and earning their own money and playing a part in the family's decision-making process. This positive spin on the news would put the woman above and not pin her down for her religious habits and encourage her to be misled by radical extremist outfits. Using this example, the speaker depicts how the media can play a role in portraying news by either putting a negative spin, or a positive one, hence, influencing how it is perceived and what reactions will occur against it.

Media, in the past and present, has been seen as an outlet for news. However, given the present circumstances and given the growing extremism and violent radicalisation, the media has an increasingly responsible role to play to use its reach to prevent growing radicalisation. More importantly, it can be used as a tool to uncover such extremism, terrorism and violent radicalisation. Media is now a global phenomenon, just like radicalisation, and hence plays a more international role, rather than just domestic. Hence, while it must remain focused radicalisation in general terms, it must also focus on female radicalisation. It must cover, feature and story through television, plays, cinema, advertisements, journals, etc. the positive image of pious and religious women as belonging to the mainstream society and that they can play a more tangible role in the development and progress of the community. This would help curb female radicalisation and turn it into a constructive force.

Ms. Kabir speaks about how the terrorist and violent radical groups are also using media to mislead and recruit. There is 'Inspire' by Al Qaeda, 'Dabiq' of ISIS and 'Khilafat' of Hizb-ut-Tahrir and these are online English magazines, which are strong media outlets, that the radical factions are using to preach their misleading messages. The mainstream media, hence, has to counter them and also has to prevent radicalisation. She also went on to say that it is the mainstream media that should give the first narrative and let the radicalised factions counter, instead of countering the radicalised factions.

A woman in the media can play a vital role, as she not only has access to other women, but also understands the sentiments and psyche of women more. And hence, women in media should play an active role in de-radicalisation. Women, in general have the ability to counter radicalisation in a long-term manner. The speaker also adds the power and importance of social media. She recognizes that female radicalisation also takes place in these online media platforms. These platforms are used by terrorist's outfits for radicalisation, to spread propaganda, operations and more. Rather than shunning social media, it can also be used as a tool for de-radicalisation and prevention of radicalisation, as more young people are using it 24/7.

To conclude, Ms. Kabir appreciates BIPSS for organizing this conference and the focus of the conference as female radicalisation. It is often not focused upon and is rather put in the general category of radicalisation. But, separate focus is highly required in context of female radicalisation and the media also need to recognize this separate focus and work to towards prevention of radicalisation and de-radicalisation.

Preventing Female Radicalisation: Perspective of Law Enforcement
Mahfuza Liza
Additional Deputy Commissioner (Intelligence and Analysis) at the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police

The second speaker of the second session started off by providing recognition to the importance of the role of women in deradicalizing, counter radicalizing as well as prevention of radicalisation. Women bear the same importance in context of assisting terrorism and violent extremism as well. A woman plays a key role in her family no matter whether she is a housewife or a working lady. Their active participation can bring about any kind of change, whether positive or negative. Recently, the speaker pointed out, women are taking part in becoming recruiters, propagandists and activists in context of violent radicalisation, and the trend is increasing all over the world. That is why the gender stereotypes are now being challenged: the ideas of women being weak, the victims, the maternal figures used for just reproduction and that they are very much passive are all ideas that have come to now face much challenge.

The speaker then states the objectives of the presentation, which were to:

- Discuss the cause and consequences, and motivations of women to become radicalized and join terrorist factions,
- Identify the trends of women in radicalisation in Bangladesh,
- Analyze the scopes for women in counter-radicalisation, and
- Focus on policy development.

She spoke of the role of the police to bring those who breach the law into justice, but in the contemporary time, the force is reconsidering its sole role, and is taking upon it the responsibility of prevention of radicalisation, rather than just catch culprits belonging to the violent radicalised groups at times of crisis.

The causes for radicalisation were found out after interviewing the radicalised suspects. She notes the influence of family members to be the highest occurring driving force leading to radicalisation. In most of the cases the women are influenced by their family members, especially the male members to join radicalised extremist terrorist factions. She also speaks of the tradition of following and obeying the male members in our country, even if the females are educated and more aware. Next reason highlighted is the sense of belongingness that the women entering the path of radicalisation feel. This happens because the radicalised woman feels more in contact with the image of her according to her religion, obeying the rules and codes of conduct for the Muslim woman. This creates an idea of utopia in her mind because when she feels that in this secular and democratic society, she is being harassed for holding onto her beliefs, she is more prone to the ideas that are being injected into her by the radicals, and she will come to believe that she will be respected and seen as a sister and a mother in the society where religious norms sit at the pinnacle. The women may also take the part of radicalisation if she feels that her opinion will be more valued in radicalised factions. They may also join the factions to seeking the joys and gifts of afterlife. Another reason highlighted was the idea of becoming a 'jihad wife' and the motivation to produce the next khalifet of the extremist's faction. Women may also join radical extremist factions out of frustration and hence may choose an 'adventurous life'.

Another trend is noticed is the ideological shift regarding the participation of women in jihad. The salafi and the jihadist idea had shifted towards acceptance of women in radical extremist groups. The current leader of Al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri was against the idea that women should participate in jihad, because he thought that they cause temptation for many male jihadists. He felt this would make them weak and hence prevent them carrying out their jihadist duties. He also felt that women were physically weak and had low decision-making capabilities. It is now quite surprising to see that even Al Qaeda is employing women to carry out jihad and as suicide bombers, because of several tactical and strategic advantages that women have, such as creating more attention and more hesitation among the masses. The speaker also states that ISIS is employing more women and spreading the idea that the faction is working to build a state. The women are performing as teachers, on and off field activists and helping their jihadists brothers by playing the role of taking care of their families. In Bangladesh also, we see Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami Bangladesh, which was created in in 1992, to be skeptic about letting women participate in jihad; the same tone was maintained by Ansar-ul Islam. However, JMB has taken a different approach; they have invented their own idea to secure their network by introducing the marriage system. The women are married off to the males of the family members within the group, so that there is no outside breach into the organization and hence secure their network. This also increased the solidarity and loyalty of the group. Marriage was also the prerequisite for promotion in the organization. But in neo-JMB, a different pattern is followed. The speaker shared her experience of arresting Nabila, who was regularly financing Neo-JMB. Hence, in Bangladesh, too, the actions and roles of radicalized females in extremist groups is manifold and varies in nature. The benefits of having women join the terrorist factions include access to the rest of the 50% of the population. It also shows that a variety of people are working for the cause of the violent radical group, giving it more legitimacy and also challenge the government. The women are also often recruited as facilitators, thanks to the stereotype ideology that women are weaker than men; this helps them carry out a particular task more easily than men as they can get pass security checks and people's suspicions. Sometimes morality and norms and values prevent the law enforcement workers in our country to thoroughly check female suspects and hence, the radicalized women can get away with, for example, hiding weapons in their hijab.

Ms. Liza upheld the case of Raqqa in Syria, where the city only contains female soldiers of the faction group ISIS. They patrol the city with AK-47s, wearing the abaya. Hence, many women can see joining radical forces

as a scope of empowerment. The women serve as law enforcers as well as intelligence officers and serve in detention camps in the city. These women also feel that they are empowering their families as they are playing the same kind of role as their male counterparts.

The speaker then highlights the places of recruitment and the list includes family, in school, in study groups, in mosques and in universities. The Dhaka Police, according to the speaker, has intel regarding get-togethers of various female students coming together to discuss regarding the various issues containing radical content, and in most cases, they have ties with jihad and marry jihadists. If the trend of recruitment of women is considered in the country, it can be noted that they are mostly encouraged or compelled to join radical groups after being enticed, that the women lack decision-making capacity and that they are encouraged by friends and online propaganda. So far, the police has data from 85 terrorist suspects who were involved in various acts of terror, particularly in the past three years. They have also apprehended 11 more female terrorists or radical extremists, who died in different operations; among them one was the first female suicide bomber of the country, Shakira, who was apprehended in Operation Ripple 24 by DMP's Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit. In a few more operation, the force had come across a few more women who were ready to blow themselves up for their so called 'noble' cause. However, the speaker stressed that the role of women in extremism radicalisation is still limited to taking care of the male jihadists, assisting in recruiting and financing and such acts. The women in radicalised groups in Bangladesh do not have the training to fight for jihad, even though they may have the training of self-defending themselves.

Using a database of 41 radical women, the Ms. Liza also points that the age of the female radicalised persons are between 20 to 24 years of age is 26%, and 25-29 years has been found to be 17%. The females are mostly housewives, which consists of 63%; of them 14% are graduates and 20% hold Master's degrees. She added, 57% of the female terrorists are from low income family and 26% are from affluent families. Neo JMB is appointing 63% of the radicalised women, making it the violent radical extremists group with the highest number of female members in the country, and others like JMB are employing 23%. 46% of the radicalized females have been influenced by their male partners.

Two Case Study were presented, firstly, Abedat-ul-Fatema was the wife of Tanveer Kaderi. She was a graduate from University of Dhaka and was doing her job in USAID, and she was not willing to leave her job. She came to join the radicalised extremist group when her husband threatened to leave her should she not join him. She felt compelled by probable future social stereotypes she would face if her husband left her. Another driving force was that her husband assured her that she would be able to become a teacher at a school if she accompanied him. Hence both fear and greed were driving factors for her to join the radical extremist outfit.

Secondly, another Bangladeshi woman struck one of the Australian when she at Melbourne in February 2018. Just seven days after she arrived to Australia, she had stabbed her accommodation provider, Mr. Rogers. She had been radicalised by online radical content and had an intention of killing someone when she goes abroad. Hence, she was a lone wolf terrorist, and the CTTC has taken note that this kind of activities and self-motivation are actually on the rise.

The speaker moves onto talk about how females can also be a countering force. Women, being at the heart of the family and the society as they are, can be the ones to pick up the first signs of radicalisation and can, therefore, be the first responders. They can identify the person or the source spreading the radical messages or propogandas within their own societies and can disseminate counter-radical messages to those who

are slowly shifting to the track of radicalisation. They can also disseminate these messages in their homes, workplaces and schools. Ms. Liza compliments especially the influential position of women among youths. Women can counsel their children if they feel that they are following the path of radicalisation and bring them back to the right path. She can work as a buffer between two children: one who has already been radicalized and the other who is being influenced by his/her sibling. Women can also access victims of terror and can help their recuperation process and prevent them from being influenced to join radical groups. The success of women can already be seen in Syria, where women have negotiated ceasefire and secured the village of detainees and where the first to report. In Afghanistan women have also managed to directly negotiate with insurgent leader and bring about temporary peaceful situations. In Bangladesh, there are ongoing attempts to follow all the directives of women ascribed by the United Nations, which has stressed the importance of women in preventing and countering violent extremism or radicalisation programs. Other than that, the Bangladesh government has played an immense role in empowering women of the country, both economically and politically, so that they do not drift to radicalisation. Now, more than ever, there are more women employed in factories and offices, making them the main driving force of the country's economy. Women are also holding highest positions in politics and high ranks in armed forces. Women in Bangladesh are appreciated for their diversified roles and the speaker highlights this as the main weapon against violent radicalisation, since, as she believes, the radical groups want to reduce the role of women in confines of four walls, and hence attack the rights of women. And women can overcome the various barriers with their economic and political empowerment and take part in de-radicalisation and prevent violent extremism by weakening the radical extremist groups, thereby.

Particularly Bangladesh Police, the speaker adds, is recruiting more women in the force and in intelligence agencies to provide distinct insights and crucial information that the male officer may not have access to due to gender and norm barriers set in place in the country. Female police and intelligence officers can also improve the relationship between the force and the local communities, which can later help the force in its tasks to subdue radical extremist personals. They can also carry out other tasks that men cannot due to cultural barriers.

Ms. Liza also made some final recommendations to limit female radicalisation. She spoke of insufficient research first and stressed the need for more empirical research in the field of female radicalisation in order to be able to assess trends and reasons driving female radicalisation further and how to stop it. She, then, highlighted the need for promotion of role of women in counter terrorism strategy, where the women can also play a role as teachers in educational institutions, as social workers and in the country's defense and law forces, besides contributing to the society as they normally do. This would also exterminate the stereotypes in place in the country and hence encourage the voices of women in the country to be heard, giving another reason for them to stay away from violent radicalisation. Gender awareness is crucial in recruitment and retention of women in senior position is a must. Women should also be involved in evaluating the counter radicalisation policies. There is also the need to increase the position of women among the decision makers in counter terrorism professions. Recommendations to support the society to educate them about their cultural and political history to challenge violent extremist radical thoughts as well as gender stereotyped narratives is also essential. There is also more need for training to increase the ability of women to intervene in the radicalisation process and take steps for de-radicalisation, encouraging their participation as first responder and identifier. There is the need to create more platforms, where women can share their own ideas and experiences of becoming radicalised and why they did so. There is also the need to rehabilitate and reintegrate in the society.

Question and Answer session for Working session 02

Mahfuza Akther, SP, Bangladesh Police

<u>Question from one of the Participants</u>: The question was directed to Ms. Ayesha Kabir. He complimented the beautifully outlined the role of media in the context of radicalisation in her presentation and raised the issue that sometimes when a terrorist is interrogated, (s)he says that they learnt about operations from the media and the newspapers. He further added that sometimes these statements are recorded in court and found to have been published by the media and raised the issue that media can play a negative role in radicalising.

<u>Ms. Ayesha Kabir</u> : As a media person, Ms. Ayesha agreed with the statement made by Mr. Towfiq. She used the example of the Holey Artisan incident, which actually brought that problem to the forefront. WHen the Holey Artisan incident broke out, the media rushed to the spot to cover it. The problem was that it was giving a blow by blow account of what was happening from outside, which, little did they realize and also a part of the problem, was also being taken into account from inside the hostage taken café. Hence, the terrorists were completely prepared for whatever was coming, as they were aware of what the law enforcement forces were doing and what they were planning outside. It was actually hampering the law enforcement agencies' operations. At one point one of the members of the law enforcement agency stepped in and stopped the media and media, too, did cooperate, but perhaps a bit late. Ms. Kabir highlighted that while the law enforces have a responsibility, so does the media, and that there is a gap between the two agencies, which needs to be addressed. The doors to communication need to be opened further, in order to get rid of the idea of 'they' and 'us' between the media and the law enforcers in context of radicalisation; in context of

radicalisation 'they' should be the radicals and 'us' should be the combined force of the media and law enforcers. She also highlighted that the media has the right to know what is going on and hence stated that the law enforcers should not keep the media in the dark, while mentioning the line drawn to limit regarding how delicate security information should be demanded and given to the media. Both the law enforcers and the media have to be accountable to one another and the people.

Question from one of the Participants: She raised the concern that religious leaders in our country are mostly men and females are largely absent from the religious leading positions in Bangladesh. With this background, the question was raised whether this is one of the reasons for violent extremism influenced by the females of the society.

Ms. Mahfuza Liza : She answered the question, firstly addressing that in Bangladesh it is believed that in Islam a woman cannot say her prayers sitting behind a female imam. Most of the time, the imams are male and they are considered as religious scholars. The second point highlighted considered the many thoughts and interpretations of the same religious issues that it is very difficult to be sure of what to believe. While some believe that the literal meanings of the scripture and the messages should be accepted, some others believe that is not the case. With this background in place, there is a lot of confusion regarding which scholar to believe, because he might interpret the scripture in his own way. The third point was that of the fact that due to cultural norms of the country, the females practice religion within the four corners of walls. She spoke of the mass female gatherings in Dhaka and elsewhere, where women get together and talk about various religious issues. Perhaps they have the same or greater knowledge than that of the Bangladeshi imams, but because they are not allowed to practice outside the constraints of the four walls, their thoughts and interpretations go unnoticed and their knowledge goes unacknowledged.

Question from one of the Participants: The audience member raised an observation and a question. He states that he thinks that there has been an overly apologetic tendency in context of role of women in Islam. Calling out Islam a relatively young religion, he mentioned how no Judaism has no female rabbi and Christianity has no female pope. He highlighted that even in the rich accounts of Sufism, the most revered was a female, Rabia Basri. The maximum narrative of the Hadiths was given by Aisyah, who was again, the Prophet's wife. The first Muslim and the first martyr of Islam were both women. He concluded his statement by saying that these accounts are usually forgotten and used for extortions. Secondly, in terms of the media's role, and its role in shaping a narrative in countering violent extremism, Mr. Abbasi highlighted a question that he got from his students, that in this day and age of homogenisation of news in mainstream news in media, people often look for alternative sources, which is why people tend to give privilege to spurious news or fake news in Facebook or other social apps. This is a problem that takes place not only in Bangladesh, but all over the world. But the problem lies in the fact that once the news is uploaded, the people want the issue to be discussed in the mainstream media; however, they are still drifting more and more away from the credible sources of news. With this background, is the relevance of mainstream media on the decline?

Ms. Ayesha Kabir: She responded by saying that whether the relevance of media is actually declining is a million dollar question and that it is a big dilemma that the mainstream media is facing today. The way they perceive it today is that the relevance is not only declining but also the spurious or fake news thanks to the social media platforms are getting more attention. With the help of such platforms, now anybody can be a journalist spread fake news, which makes it a threat to credible mainstream media. The mainstream media is also trying to counter that with forms of non-print media. It is no longer the case that just because one newspaper agency may have the highest circulation means that it has the greatest number of news read. Even

in context of online newspaper, people do not tend to go to a particular website to see the news, but rather go to the social media and then follow the news of the particular website. Hence, the mainstream media now has to become more tech savvy, more internet savvy and keep up with the trends to appeal to the readership, especially the young readership, who are moving away from the conventional media. Hence, the mainstream media has to keep updating their news, countering fake news with credible news in a very convincing manner.

Ms. Mahfuza Liza: She responded by saying that the media is under constant pressure to attract more people and deliver news through truthful and unbiased means, and that, because of this, it has a right to know and so do the people, especially context of their security. It is very difficult to have a balance between these rights and responsibilities. She brings the example of the Holey Artisan incident once again, whereby she uses the narrative of how the law enforcers at the scene had time and again asked the media to stop their broadcasts regarding the incident and what was happening outside the café, saying that the terrorists are watching and they would know what the law enforcers are planning. A similar incident happened during the attack of Taj Hotel in Mumbai, when the media was reporting the news live and the law enforcement agencies were facing difficulties outside, as the terrorist were informed about what was happening outside. In context of the social media, Ms. Liza spoke of the troubles that are being faced by law enforcers regarding rumors and fake news. While various platforms of social media will protect the privacy of their subscribers and not let law enforcing agencies breach their privacy firewall, the speaker highlighted the need of balance between privacy and security for state, and that sometimes certain sacrifices of liberty must be made in order to ensure security.

Question from one of the BIPSS researcher: With the fact in the background that in Africa there are separate rehabilitation and recuperation facilities for women who had prior involvement in terrorism, the question posed by the audience member was regarding what the existing such provisions are to encourage the return of the women who have gone astray to the path of radicalisation to the mainstream society and the normal social life, in order to not be subjected in the future.

Ms. Mahfuza Liza: The second speaker of the session recognized the lack of such facilities in Bangladesh and that these are government initiatives that must be taken soon. She spoke of an experience of interviewing two women, Mou and Khadija, who were arrested from Norshindi. The two had been arrested in 2016 before as well, and Mou said that at the time of the arrest her faith in the radical messages preached to her was not that strong; however, as she spoke in the interview, she claimed that her belief was firm. This was a result of sharing the prison cell with two more radicalized females like herself, Khadija and Aklima, who was later killed in action. During their seven month stay the women continuously discussed their beliefs, their interpretations, and their narratives. The intimacy grew to a level that they would drink tea from the same cup and share a single Quran to read. Before they were a part of the radical group they belonged to, the three of them studied at Al-Manarat University, where, after their classes ended they had to go back home to their parents; however, at prison they were never free from the company of each other and the radical ideas each of them had to offer, allowing them to never disengage from those thoughts. And when they returned home, because there was no de-radicalizing program in place in the country, the girls, unable to enroll in the university, would spend all their time going through Youtube and searching for the same kind of radicalized ideas to enrich themselves. Using this example, Ms. Liza stressed the importance of talking to like these girls and promote de-radicalisation among such people, and take certain initiatives to re-admit them into the society once again. Programs for rehabilitation must be organized by the government and for this, the speaker also highlights that assistance from global partners can also be sought.

<u>Question from one of the Participants</u>: The audience member raised the raised an observation and asked a question. She states that the media has a very large effect on the world. The international media has always reflected Islam as a terrorist reasons. After 9/11, the Muslims had a hard time to live anywhere in the world especially USA. She also mentioned an instance of Christians involved in terror attacks, but the media never portraying the people of this or other religious groups as terrorists. With this background set in place, she went on to ask about the opinion of the Ms. Ayesha Kabir regarding the role of international media in encouraging jihadism or radicalisation. She then talked about the micro and macro level discussions and how the international media plays a big role in the macro-level, which also affects the micro-level in context of radicalisation. The media is used as an international tool against nationalities, she said, drawing example from the cases of Syria, Palestine-Israel, Iraq and Afghanistan. The second query was, thus, who are leading these terrorists and how much is it effective to just be talking about the micro-level?

<u>Ms. Ayesha Kabir:</u> The first speaker of the session responded by saying that she understands what the woman was saying and there are many reasons for the media for this kind of acts. Like any other media, the media has to play a responsible role and unfortunately, even in the mainstream media. The media have self seeking for the news and they do have the danger for printing about the terrorists and any other extremists. But there is a difference in a sense that the Islamic terrorists are doing this only in the name of islam but they are doing it for their own cause. The media is everywhere in the world and she think there is a big need for the understanding of the real terrorism. How a muslim person enters the organization and they try to kill people. Also in her country, the media jeopardizes terrorism as Islamic terrorism. So according to media all terrorists are the same.

<u>Ms. Mahfuza Liza:</u> She responded about the issues that is happening in Middle East. She said that the question is the objective of the people who are going there. Are they going there to solve the problem, or they are going there for their own interests. People have to see their actual motives. This modern world needs world leaders not for the individual countries for the entire world. So that they can fix the root causes of the problems and they can fix it.

Concluding Remarks by Chair:

The Chair of the session, Brig Gen Mohammad Shahedul Anam Khan, concluded with a small summary of key important points of the presentations of the two speakers. He spoke of how women had both the choice to become radical and were in a lot of the cases forced to become radical. Likewise, women can either take the path to become radical, through choice or through force, or take the path to become a de-radicalising, or a counter radicalizing force. The role of the media in radicalisation and counter radicalisation would very much depend on the strategy the state would take, according to the chair. The chair also commented on the analysis presented on the topics of role of media in female radicalisation and preventing female radicalisation. At the end he thanked the two speakers for their erudite presentations regarding their respective topics.

Conclusion & Closing Remarks

Mr. Shafqat Munir, Research Fellow, BIPSS, Head, Bangladesh Center for Terrorism Research(BCTR)

A mentioned in the morning BIPSS looks at Countering Violent Extremism, Preventing Violent Extremism and counter terrorism which are very important for us. Since 2007 we are relentlessly working on these and on 2008 we have established Bangladesh Center of Terrorism Research. We are working on these problems long before it turned out to be fashionable. It will be our constant endeavor in the coming days to dealt more into these issues, not only on female radicalisation rather inclusion of cyberspace, networks, youth radicalisation and etc. We are pleased to say we have an excellent working relationship with Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit and Bangladesh Police. We are also running number of capacity building workshops and focus group discussion across Bangladesh to have a comprehensive and holistic understanding of problems.

Ladies and gentlemen, the problems as we have heard from four excellent presenters since morning is a very complex one. I would particularly like to mention the presentation from CTTCU the way she was highlighted with statistics and case studies. We are facing a serious challenge, the aspect of violent extremism in Bangladesh is not only influenced by factors the influence the violent extremism globally, but there are some global factors as well. In order to find a comprehensive and holistic solution, we need to find solutions that relate to Bangladesh because the problem we have is somewhat unique. We need to find an approach which is comprehensive which includes whole government, civil society and there is an urgent need to work with media, think tanks like BIPSS and others. Collectively we need to work with Government of Bangladesh and help them to come up with proper solutions. Notably, Brig Gen Shahedul Anam Khan have

important mentioned the need for strategic approach probably an overly National Strategy, comprehensive counter terrorism/ CVE architecture for decision making that is very critical .We also need to constantly work building awareness. Ultimately Unless complete awareness people are aware of the problem of Violent extremism it would be never ending problem.

Before ending I would personally like to thank the presenters and the chair of this session. I would like to thank each one of the audience for being here. I would like to give a special thanks to Ambassador and our colleagues from the Embassy of Switzerland. Lastly, I would like to specially thank Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit for extending their support for us in organising this. Lastly but not the least thanks to team BIPSS for working hard for months in arranging this National conference.

ANNEX

Program Schedule

Programme

Working Session -1

Time	Session	Programme/Activity	Speaker
09:30am–10:00am		Registration	
10:00am–10:10am	Opening Session	Welcome Remarks by President BIPSS	Maj Gen A N M Muniruzzaman, ndc, psc (Retd) President, BIPSS
10:10am–10:30am		Opening Address by the Chief Guest	
10:30am-11:00am		Morning Tea & Refreshments	

Time	Session	Programme/Activity	Speaker	Chair
11:00am–11:05am		Opening Remarks by Chair		
11:05am–11:30am	Working Session 01	Key note Presentation: Understanding Radicalisation: The Conceptual Framework	Dr. Lailufar Yasmin Deputy Director, (International Affairs) Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA)	Mr. Shafqat Munir Research Fellow, BIPSS Head, Bangladesh Centre for Terrorism Research (BCTR)
11:30am–11:55am		Key note Presentation: New Trends of Radicalisation: Understanding Drivers of Female Radicalisation	Ms. Umme Wara Assistant Professor, Department of Criminology, University of Dhaka	
11:55am–12:55pm		Q & A Session / Discussion		
12:55pm–01:00pm		Closing Remarks by Chair		
01:00pm–02:00pm		Lunch		

Programme
Working Session - 2

Time	Session	Programme/Activity	Speaker	Chair
02:00pm-02:05pm		Opening Remarks by Chair		Brig Gen Mohammad Shahedul Anam Khan, ndc, psc (Retd) *Associate Editor, The Daily Star*
02:05pm–02:30pm	Working Session 02	**Key note Presentation:** Female Radicalisation: the Role of Media	Ms. Ayesha Kabir *Consulting Editor The Prothom Alo English*	
02:30pm–02:55pm		**Key note Presentation:** Preventing Female Radicalisation: Perspectives of Law Enforcement	Mr. Mohammad Monirul Islam, BPM(Bar), PPM(Bar) *Deputy Inspector General (DIG), Additional Commissioner and Chief of the Counter Terrorism & Transnational Crime (CTTC) Dhaka Metropolitan Police*	
02:55pm–03:55pm		**Q & A Session / Discussion**		
03:55pm–04:00pm		Closing Remarks by Chair		
Closing Session				
04:00pm–04:10pm		Conclusion & Closing Remarks by President, BIPSS		Maj Gen A N M Muniruzzaman , ndc, psc (Retd) *President, BIPSS*

CV of Speakers

Professor Lailufar Yasmin, PHD

Dr. Lailufar Yasmin is Professor at the Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. She is also a Deputy Director (Research, International Affairs) at the Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs, Dhaka, Bangladesh. She has undertaken her studies at the University of Dhaka, Georgia State University, Atlanta, USA, and Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. She has been a recipient of the US Fulbright, the British Chevening, and the Australian International Post-Graduate Research Scholarships. She has done her fellowship on peace and conflict issues in UK at the University of Ulster (Northern Ireland) and was a fellow of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing, China, working on China's national interest. She has published extensively on secularism in Bangladesh, maritime security issues, China's politics, and on South Asian issues. Her latest research involves issues relating to Bangladesh's foreign policy, regional connectivity and China's rise, and gender issues in conflict situations.

Ms. Umme Wara

Umme Wara is an Assistant Professor, Department of Criminology, University of Dhaka. After completing LLB and LLM from University of Dhaka with First class, she got AusAID's scholarship to pursue her second Masters on Transnational Crime Prevention from University of Wollongong, Australia. Later she completed another Masters from University of Torino on International Crime and Justice with scholarship. She has been the coordinator of the Center for the Study of Genocide and Justice, Liberation War Museum from 2014-2017 and organized certificate courses, winter schools, international conferences and other regular programs on issues of Genocide and Justice. She has talked about "Role of Social Institutions as a Strategy in Preventing Terrorism in Bangladesh" in the 1st international conference organized by Department of Criminology in 2017. Recently she has presented a paper on present Rohingya issue in a conference organized by California State University, USA. Presently, she is doing her research on War Heroines and Transitional Justice as a Junior Research Fellow of Center for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka. She aspires to contribute more on issues of terrorism, genocide and sexual violence in future.

Ms. Ayesha kabir

Ayesha Kabir is consultant editor of Prothom Alo's English online news portal. She has had around 20 years of experience in journalism. Her main focus of interest is politics and security, particularly that of Bangladesh and South Asia.

Her professional career has taken her to Nepal, Pakistan, India, Hong Kong, UK, Switzerland, the Netherlands and many other countries, reporting on current affairs, attending international conferences and networking.

Having done her Bachelors and Masters degrees in English from Dhaka University, Ayesha Kabir has worked for the weekly Dhaka Courier as assistant editor, PROBE News Weekly as associate editor and has also freelanced for an extended stint.

Given the present national, regional and global circumstances, Ms Kabir has also been focussing on the emergence of extremism and radicalisation, particularly in the context of Bangladesh.

Ms. Mahfuza Liza

Mahfuza Liza is currently working as Additional Deputy Commissioner (Intelligence and Analysis) at the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police. She has studied Master of Cyber Security, Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. She has undertaken training on Risk and Crisis Communication at University of Maryland, Washington DC. Earlier she has earned LLM and Bachelor of Laws degree from University of Dhaka. Before joining Counter Terrorism Unit she used to work at Planning and Research wing at Police Headquarters, Dhaka. In the year 2013-2014 she has served in UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti as Deputy Commander of Bangladesh Female Contingent (Rotation-3). She has also worked as Judicial Magistrate at Bangladesh Judiciary prior to joining Bangladesh Police in the year 2008. Her interest includes national security, intelligence, international relations and cooperation.

Abstracts of the papers presented by the speakers

Understanding Radicalisation: A Conceptual Framework

Lailufar Yasmin

'Radicalism isn't a fever or a rash. You don't wake up with it one morning'

Radicalism, as a political ideology, demands to alter an existing social order. Emerging in the context of 19th Century Britain and later spreading throughout Europe, the ideology was driven by the aim of changing the lots of regular people. Radicalism of today however is different. It has caught worldwide attention as this is generally conceptualized as holding extreme views and gradually leading towards terrorism for achieving and establishing such extreme views. In this presentation, I shall provide an overview of historical accounts of radical thoughts, its shifts in modern times and how this concept is associated with terrorism. In this connection, I also provide an account of changing faces of terrorism and where the concepts of radicalisation and terrorism converges. It must be noted here, however, this is both an uncharted territory as well as controversial in nature as there are no globally accepted definition of either of the terms. These two terms are often historical constructs, context-specific and spatially diverse. Therefore, keeping these vital constraints in mind, I shall offer a conceptual framework for understanding today's radicalisation.

New Trends of Radicalisation: Understanding Drivers of Female radicalisation

Ms. Umme Wara

The involvement of women in terrorist activities is more commonly perceived by the public eye as surprising, confusing and questionable. The usual questions come with paints of gender stereotypes and wonder why females, generally considered to be less prone to violence and apathetic towards rebellion, venture off into such extreme acts normally seen to be more masculine in nature. To what extent though is the phenomenon fueled by self-agency of the women engaged in such activities and what are some of the prime drivers? The paper assesses these integral questions and assesses experiences of women terrorists, accessed through secondary data and document analysis focused on the area of Bangladesh which has seen multiple cases of females engaged in terrorist activities as part of family structures and individually driven as well. Drivers identified within the region's context include position of women within family units, dynamics perceived to be regulated by religious norms, dominant religious identity, and sympathy for in-group fueled by perceived victimization globally.

Key words: Female radicalisation, dominant identity, self-agency, radicalisation in Bangladesh

Female Radicalisation and the role of media

Ayesha Kabir

This paper is to highlight the issue of female radicalisation and the role of media in this regard.

A woman, even in the most patriarchal society, is the pivotal point in a family. It is she who nurtures and tends to the needs of each and every family member, from the elderly to the infants. This gives her more proximity to individuals in the family unit and also in the community. It also gives her a lot of influence. She may seem to be an invisible factor, but she can have more impact than her male counterpart who, in conventional and conservative communities, plays more of an outside role as a provider.

If a man is radicalised, he can force the rest of his family to be radicalised too as his word is law. But if a woman is radicalised, she can convince her family more comprehensively about the radical ideology which she upholds. Her influence is more convincing and far reaching.

On the flip side, a woman is also an influential agent of counter radicalisation or counter violent extremism. She can use

that clout of hers to neutralise extremist viewpoints, but in a subtle manner, wielding her influence in an effective and invisible manner.

A woman is perceived as a victim of extremism, forced into joining outfits like IS where they are to serve men and produce more men. But as extremists, they are more active than perceived. They are often facilitators of extremism, financiers, intelligence sources, mentors, messengers, propaganda agents, and more.

Given that position, in countering violent extremism, a woman also has the power to detect growing radicalisation and report it. She has the power to counter it in her own way.

While media has focus on radicalisation and violent extremism, it often fails to focus on female radicalisation. If it does, it mostly portrays women as victims, as being utilised by the male counterpart. This is true, but only partially. The active direct role of women in radicalisation also needs to be revealed and highlighted as this invisible force is deadlier than perceived.

Women as agents of deradicalisation, as powerful forces to counter violent extremism must also be 'promoted' by the media.

Media no longer plays a role of simply meting out information and that's it. Given growing extremism and violent radicalisation, the media is more and more committed to use its reach as a tool to uncover such malevolence. If radicalisation has gone global, so has media. So with the growing pace of female radicalisation, the media must also prove itself to be an effective tool here.

Whether in hard news, features, interviews, TV, plays, stories, portrayals of role models, cinema, journals, all facets of media must come forward. After all, it is media that helped women come out from behind the scenes and play a tangible role in development and progress. The media must stand behind women now too, helping them to curb radicalisation of the community into a constructive force.

Women in the media can play a vital role here as not only have they more access to other women, but also understand more the sentiments and psyche of women.

Women radicalisation can be a focal point of further research. This conference and the choice of this topic is a step in the right direction.

Media Coverage

Female radicalisation and the role of media

Ayesha Kabir | Update: 14:33, Nov 24, 2018

Back in the seventies there was a young woman whose name became a sensation overnight, venerated by some, vilified by other. Many of the younger generation today may not have heard the name of this woman - Leila Khaled. She was the bold Palestinian young woman who hijacked a plane en route to Tel Aviv from Rome and diverted it to Damascus. The point here is not to say that she was radicalised or a fanatic or an 'Islamist' or extremist. It is not to judge her at all. It is just to point out that even back then, with no Internet, no online news portals, no Smartphones or social media sites, she became an internationally known woman overnight. It was the media - the television, radio and the newspapers—

that took her and her cause to the rest of the world. To some, especially young girls at the time, she was a role model, perhaps the most famous Palestinian after Yasser Arafat. Such is the power of the media. It can make or break you. Or it can cleverly be used as a means to an end. Or, more ideally speaking, it gives the facts and assists in making informed choices.

Coming to the topic of discussion—female radicalisation and the role of media. A woman, even in the most patriarchal society, is the pivotal point in a family. She is the centre. In South Asian society, whether she works at home or outside of the home, in most cases it is the woman who remains at the centre. It is she who nurtures and tends to the needs of each and every family member, from the elderly to the infants. Whether it is her husband, her children, her own parents, her on-laws, the domestic staff, her office colleagues and friends, there is a tendency for the woman to be the one who cares and shares. It is not that men are any less or that all women are like this, nor even that this is an ideal role for a woman. It is just that this is how traditionally women are in such communities. Roles are changing, admittedly.

Anyway, this position gives women more proximity to individuals in the family unit and also in the community. It also gives her a lot of influence. She may seem to be an invisible factor, but she can have more impact than her male counterpart who, in conventional and conservative communities, plays more of an outside role as a provider.

If a man is radicalised, he can force the rest of his family to be radicalised too as his word is law. But if a woman is radicalised, she can convince her family more comprehensively about the radical ideology which she upholds. Her influence is more convincing, far reaching and more sustainable. NGOs in the eighties recognised the power of women and their programmes, whether microcredit, advocacy or other such development tools, all targeted women. If a woman was given a microloan, they realised, it would trickle down to benefit the entire family - husband, children and everyone. Similarly, radicals realise if they can influence a woman with their beliefs, she will, in turn, influence the rest of the family and extended family.

On the flip side, a woman is also an influential agent of counter radicalisation or counter violent extremism or preventing violent extremism. She can use that clout of hers to neutralise extremist viewpoints, but in a subtle manner, wielding her influence in an effective and invisible manner. Being at the centre of the family unit, she can detect early warning signs of any family member or friend becoming radicalised.

Coming to the role of media, while media has focus on radicalisation and violent extremism, it often fails to focus on female radicalisation. If it does, it mostly portrays women as victims, as being utilised by the male counterpart. This is true, but only partially. The active direct role of women in radicalisation also needs to be revealed and highlighted as this invisible force is deadlier than perceived.

If we look at the role of the media and female radicalisation, here too we see a constructive and positive role of media, both in prevention of radicalisation as well as in deradicalisation.

Media is a strong determinant of role models. Media hands out a lot of images that women have a tendency to emulate. There is the long-suffering glamorous housewife of the Hindi serials who is carries the weight of oppressive in-laws and tons of gold jewellery, or you can have the strong minded woman of strong personality and a clear idea of integrity. There are so many other images and role models the media can portray. Even advertisements can shape the image and role of a woman. That is why the media needs to be responsible.

Some may then say a 'secular' media is the best media. That, of course, is a matter of opinion. Then again, what about the women with a religious bent of mind? Surely they need an intellectual input from the media. That is where media plays a responsible role, with accurate and informed knowledge and understanding of religion, in the present day context of ours we would be referring to Islam, so as to portray the woman of Islamic values. It can differentiate between an Islamic woman and an extremist or radicalised woman or, as the west tends to term it, an Islamist. If the media can offer positive and constructive images, experiences and examples to show that even the most pious Islamic woman as part of the mainstream, regardless of gender, them the more extremist fanatics will not be able to use their propaganda material and interpretations to draw them into the radical sphere. If media simply bashes religion and religious beliefs to appear 'progressive', this can be counterproductive.

In general, when we come to women who are already radicalised, there is a tendency to perceive such a woman as a victim of extremism, forced into joining outfits like IS where they are to serve men and produce more men, more 'jihadists'. [Closer home, Rohingya women in the refugee camps in Bangladesh, have a tendency to have one child

after the other, some saying they want more sons to fight back against their oppressors. This vengeance can turn into terrorist action.] In Syria, they were seen to remain behind the scenes, cooking, cleaning and reproducing. But that is not the entire picture.

As extremists, women are more active than perceived. They are often facilitators of extremism, financiers, intelligence sources, mentors, messengers, propaganda agents, and more. They are often the ones that influence the men folk into joining radical outfits like ISIS, Al Qaeda, or closer to home, JMB and the like.

Women can also constructively be projected by the media as agents of deradicalisation, as powerful forces to counter violent extremism. Mothers, sisters, friends, daughters, can use their heart and their mind to bring back their loved ones to the right track from the path of extremism. Is that an easy task? Certainly not. But when has a women's tasks been easy?

When it comes to projecting women's images, the example of women garments workers comes to mind. One section of media pointed out that these women streaming to work every morning, all have their heads covered, and so are becoming fundamentalists. But another section of the media points out that previously these women wouldn't even leave their homes. They would be restricted to the four walls of their home, tending to their family needs and that's it. Now they are out of their homes, marching confidently to work, earning a living and also becoming decision makers in their families.

Media no longer plays a role of simply meting out information. Given growing extremism and violent radicalisation, the media is more and more committed to use its reach as a tool to uncover such malevolence. If radicalisation has gone global, so has media. So with the growing pace of female radicalisation, the media must keep up and overtake, proving itself to be an effective tool here.

After all, the extremist outfits have their media networks too. Examples are Inspire, the Al Qaeda news magazine, AMAQ of ISIS, Khilafah of Hizbut Tahrir, etc.

Whether it is hard news, features, interviews, TV, plays, stories, cinema, journals, and all facets of media must stand behind women. It must work towards curbing radicalisation of the community as a whole.

Women who are working in the media can play a vital role here as not only have they more access to other women, but also understand more the sentiments and psyche of women, are sensitive to their sensitivities. There are more and more women in the media and they, along with their male counterparts, can actively play a role in deradicalisation. Whether they are producing a play, acting in a film, writing a report or a feature, whatever, they have scope to counter extremism in a long-term manner.

Apart from 'mainstream' media, there is an equally powerful or even more powerful tool - social media. This is used by the extremists for recruitment, radicalisation, operations and more. There are ISIS and Al Qaeda sites where much is said and seen, even beheading people. Social media can also be used as a tool for counter radicalisation. Then again, why should the people on the side of good, positive values, people against terrorism, have to counter extremism? The first task would be to promote moderate and positive and constructive values and come up with a narrative. It is up to the extremists try to counter that narrative. We should be ahead in the race, but also equipped with enough intellectual and moral ammunition to counter them too.

Women radicalisation can be a focal point of further research. Awareness of female radicalisation must remain within us so we keep our eyes and ears open. The world is not an easy place to live in anymore and the sooner we accept that, the sooner we can make take pragmatic and effective action to make it an easier and safer place to live.

This piece is a summarised version of a paper presented on the same subject at a recent international conference of Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies

https://en.prothomalo.com/opinion/news/186737/Female-radicalisation-and-the-role-of-media

Dhaka Tribune

What drives women to radicalisation?

'The factors that push women to join terrorist, extremist, and armed groups vary from economic, political, psychological, social, and ideological factors'

Women and girls' participation in violent conflicts can be a result of forcible recruitment and abduction or it can be a voluntary decision based on certain personal experiences and incentives provided to them, said experts at a conference on Monday.

In her keynote presentation "New Trends of Radicalism: Understanding Drivers of Female Radicalism", Umme Wara, assistant professor of the Criminology Department, University of Dhaka said: "A variety of different factors make women and girls willing and proactive agents in violent extremism."

"The factors that push women to join terrorist, extremist, and armed groups vary from economic, political, psychological, social, and ideological factors," she added during the presentation that focused on the drivers of female radicalisation such as the position of women in the family unit, dynamics perceived to be regulated by religious norms, dominant religious identity and sympathy for in-group perceived victimization globally.

She was speaking at "Prevention of Violent Extremism from A Gender Perspective" a national conference organized by the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS).

Rene Holenstein, Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh, who was the chief guest at the discussion, said violent extremism is a global challenge that tremendously affects women and girls in society.

"To deal with violent extremism, we should emphasize on incorporating gender aspects in prevention of violence extremism (PVE) strategies and action plans," he said.

President of BIPSS, Major General ANM Muniruzzaman: "There is a new trend of radicalisation among women in Bangladesh which is adding a new dimension to the threat scenario of violent extremism in Bangladesh."

"Since women form half the population, they have to be integrated in any response strategy for an effective PVE," he added.

The first presentation of the day was by Dr Lailufar Yasmin, deputy director (International Affairs) of Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs, on "Understanding Radicalism: The Conceptual Framework".

The presentation gave an overview of historical accounts of radical thoughts, its shift in modern times and how the concept of "radicalisation" is associated with terrorism and how it converges.

"Violent extremism is regarded as the willingness to use violence, or to support the use of violence, to further particular beliefs of a political, social, economic or ideological nature'' she added.

The second working session was "Female Radicalisation: The Role of Media" and the keynote presentation was given by Ayesha Kabir, consulting editor of Prothom Alo'sEnglish online paper.

She said: "Active and direct roles of women in radicalisation also need to be revealed and highlighted as this invisible force is deadlier than ever."

The conference ended with the fourth session: "Preventing Female Radicalism: Perspectives of Law and Enforcement" and the presentation was made by Md Monirul Islam, chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime.

https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/event/2018/11/20/what-drives-women-to-radicalisation

The Daily Star

Women Terror Suspects

66pc radicalised by family members

Reveal findings of DMP's counter terror unit, analysing profiles of 41 suspects in last 2 yrs

Rafiul Islam

Over 66 percent of the female terror suspects in the country got involved in militancy being influenced by their family members, mostly their husbands, according to findings of the counter terrorism unit.

The case of their involvement increased after the "Neo JMB" emerged in 2014. About 63 percent of the suspects belong to the militant outfit, which is responsible for the July 1, 2016 Holey Artisan attack.

Around 42 percent of female terror suspects are either graduates or doing their graduation and master's courses. About 46 percent were influenced by their husbands to join violent extremism.

A Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit official came up with the findings, analysing the profiles of 41 female militant suspects arrested in the last couple of years.

At least 85 females have so far been arrested on terror charges and 11 other suspects were killed in different anti-militancy drives, Mahfuza Liza, a CTTC additional deputy commissioner, said while presenting her keynote paper at a conference yesterday.

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) organised the event on "Prevention of Violent Extremism from a Gender Perspective" at a city hotel.

The exact number of the women involved in terrorism is difficult to estimate as they usually remain out of suspicion, she said.

Though the role of females was largely limited to assisting the males, recruitment and terror financing, some females were found to be equipped with suicide vests during anti-militant drives, said the CTTC official.

According to CTTC findings, more than half of the female suspects come from low-income families, which is 57 percent of the total samples, while 26 percent are from affluent families.

Influence of family members, having a sense of belongingness and empowerment, ideological commitment, hope of reward in the afterlife, frustration and fear of uncertainty and revenge for loss of family members are the major causes of females joining militancy, CTTC officials found.

In the latest drive in a militant den in Narsingdi, suspected female militant Aklima was killed along with a male militant on October 16, while two other female militant suspects -- Khadija Parveen Meghna and Israt Jahan Mou -- holed up in another den and they surrendered to police the next day.

In the programme, Lailufar Yasmin, deputy director of Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs, Dhaka University Assistant Prof Umme Wara of criminology department, Ayesha Kabir, consulting editor (English section) of Prothom Alo, also presented separate keynote papers.

The Daily Star Associate Editor Brig Gen (retd) Shahedul Anam Khan, Switzerland Ambassador to Bangladesh René Holenstein and BIPSS President Maj Gen (retd) ANM Muniruzzaman also spoke on the occasion.

The speakers said family members, especially mothers, sisters and wives, could play a vital role in preventing violent extremism as they could notice early signs of radicalisation of their near ones.

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https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/66pc-radicalised-family-members-1662943

About BIPSS

Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) is a leading institute in Bangladesh for informed analysis on all aspects of broad spectrum of peace and security studies in the region and beyond. It is a non-party, nonprofit organisation and independent think tank which provides significant platform for the leading strategic thinkers, academics, members of civil society, former members of the foreign and armed services and media persons to chalk out a comprehensive framework for peace and security issues. The Institute is headed by the President of BIPSS, Major General ANM Muniruzzaman, ndc, psc (Retd). He directs and coordinates all research and administrative activities of the Institute. A team of highly qualified full-time researchers with varied social science background conduct research activities. BIPSS also maintains a pool of affiliated experts whom we engage frequently for different assignments.

BIPSS has also established two specialised centres within its framework named Bangladesh Centre for Terrorism Research (BCTR) and Bangladesh Centre for China Studies (BCCS). BCTR is the first centre of its kind in Bangladesh dedicated to the study and research on terrorism related issues. The Centre is headed by BIPSS President who has been engaged with various specialized centres on terrorism in the Asia Pacific region as well as other parts of the world. BCTR has been working in partnership with a number of international centres on terrorism research in South Asia, South East Asia, Europe and USA. On the other hand, Bangladesh Centre for China Studies (BCCS) has been established to understand, study and analyse Chinese Foreign Policy and Chinese strategic and security posture. It also aims to study Chinese economic advancement with a view to advocating greater economic and development cooperation between Bangladesh and China as well as China and the greater South Asian region.

BIPSS maintains an interactive website to inform, share and exchange knowledge and ideas to enrich the people who have a greater stake in peace and security. You are cordially welcome to visit our website at www.bipss.org.bd. You can also write to us to express your opinion via email atatinfo@bipss.org.bd.