

## **Executive summary on the Roundtable discussion on Youth Radicalisation**

A roundtable discussion on Youth Radicalisation was held at the BIPSS office on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2016. The discussion was moderated by the President of BIPSS, Major Gen. ANM Munizzaman (retd.) and Dr. Julian Droogan, Director of the Terrorism Research Program, Macquarie University, Australia was present as the keynote speaker. The event highlighted the major issues that contribute to the spread of Youth Radicalisation as well as global militancy in general. The discussion was attended by representatives from several embassies, media agencies as well as the security and intelligence agencies in Bangladesh.

After the welcome speech by the President, Dr. Droogan started his presentation on the youth radicalisation. The presentation began with a detailed analysis of the ideology as well as the activities of ISIS. There was a clear annotation that the term “Islamic State” doesn’t really represent organizations like the ISIS. Dr. Droogan highlighted the major strategies of ISIS to promote themselves to the youth. Their declaration as a Caliphate has a significant effect on the people to be easily convinced. The rise and larger acceptance of ISIS has also made other militant organizations like Al Qaeda to resent them. Most of the people who get involved with the militancy have little to no knowledge about Islam. Thus, their only source of Islamic views happens to be the misleading information spread by the extremist organizations. The notion of the persecution of Muslims in the West is also used as an important tool to influence the people. In the West, the recruitment of the members of these militant organizations is mainly done through their social networks like friends. There is a lack of family discussion at home on issues like international affairs, global conflict etc., which makes the parents unaware of their children’s stance.

The use of social media has become a popular medium for the extremists to spread their ideology. The trend has received extensive attention among the experts who are actively trying to sort out a resolution. Experts have pointed out that it’s difficult as well as morally incorrect to restrict the use of social media. Besides, several nations previously tried to restrict the social media which brought more negative effects than positives.

In the Question/Answer session, guests have stressed on the role of the Western states in handling the spread of youth radicalisation . There was a general consensus that the initiatives taken by those states on this issue is not sufficient and have not been effective. The guests emphasized on the use of violence by the West in handling extremism which is actually helping the militant organizations to garner more support. The role of the Diasporas and the returned migrants on the radicalisation process was also brought into the discussion. In Bangladesh, this issue is prevalent in the cases of the British Bangladeshis and the returned Bangladeshi migrants from the Middle East.

At the later part of the discussion, Mr. Tipu Sultan discussed about his detailed analysis on the situation of extremism in Bangladesh. According to him, Bangladesh is currently going through the third generation of Islamic extremism. The first generation began through the Bangladeshi returnees from the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s. These men were the forerunners in spreading Islamic extremism in Bangladesh after participating in the war as part of the Mujahideen. In the 1990s, the emergence of the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) initiated the second generation of the extremism. The formation of the Ansarullah Bangla Team in 2008 was the beginning of the third generation. In the earlier generations, it was seen that most of the youth indulged in militancy belonged to the impoverished families with low education level. Most of them were recruited through the Qaumi Madrassas. In a stark contrast, the members from the third generation happen to be from the well-off families with higher education. Many of them are former employees in different MNCs with good positions. Mr. Sultan argues that internet has become the primary source of Islamic knowledge for the youth from the third generation.

The discussion stressed on several key issues that help spread radicalisation and came to a conclusion with some crucial recommendations.

- The alienation, discrimination and injustice of the youth from the Muslim community in the West must be prevented.
- It has been suggested that one of the best ways to combat radicalisation is to provide proper channels for the extremists to participate in the mainstream debates. They should be allowed to raise their opinions.
- Government, intelligence agencies, multicultural departments should work in community levels to make people understood of the differences between extremism and peaceful Jihad.
- Government should provide extra care on deradicalisation.

Overall, it has been recommended that efforts should be made more on the “soft approach” rather than the hard one which has been so far largely ineffective.