Ensuring and maintaining international peace have become much complex in the 21st century. Since the turn of the millennium, international community’s consolidated effort in promoting peace has not been limited to facilitating truce between warring parties or keeping peace through enforcement, but over the two decades it has expanded to incorporate building lasting peace. Hence, post-conflict peacebuilding, which consists of a wide range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation and societal transformation, is receiving a greater significance in UN-led peace operations. It is the concept of quality peace introduced by Peter Wallensteen that captures the post-conflict peacebuilding. The idea of quality peace aims to capture the conditions of a post-war peace that is lasting, reassures that conflict will not appear again and meets standards of quality of sustainable peace. It is composed of three standards: security, dignity, and predictability. This can be a way to overcome the traditional dichotomy of negative versus positive peace.
promotion. However, there are challenges of the notion of quality peace that include lack of interest in cooperation; reduced respect for agreements; the emergence of a world of tripolar conflict configurations; increased ‘autocratization’ of governments; reduced predictability in the pursuit of conflict resolution; managing global human migration and climate change, etc. With a view to achieving quality peace, certain conditions need to be ensured. There is a need to respect human rights as well as minority rights. Physical security needs to be ensured for all inhabitants. Economic security, i.e., jobs and a functioning economy, is essential. Besides, adherence to principles of non-interference with military means in the internal affairs of the opponent is indispensable. Border arrangements ought to be settled in a way that the parties can accept. Withdrawal of forces from border areas, reduction in armaments and avoidance of provocative positioning of new weapons can be seen as confidence-building measures among states that reduce fear of attack, in the same way as internal disarmament works within states. Ensuring predictability of the newly established peaceful conditions is necessary as well. Therefore, if these conditions are maintained over time and with accumulated experiences of solving new crises in peaceful means, it can be expected that peace will be sustainable.

Bangladesh has been very actively engaged in UN peace-related activities. The country’s remarkable contribution to UN Peacekeeping Operations speaks volume about its commitment to international peace and creating inclusive societies. It continues to be ranked as one of the top contributors to the UNPKOs. Bangladesh has the potential to become a leading actor in UN peacebuilding affairs. What justifies Bangladesh’s wider role within the UN peace-related activities is its hard-earned experience over many years of deep involvement in peace operations and, perhaps more importantly, its neutrality that is crucial to the success of peacebuilding activities. Bangladesh needs to take certain initiatives to increase the role of civilians in UN peacebuilding operations. Bangladesh needs to train its manpower. In this regard, national institutions, or training centres could play vital role. Recently, the Bangladesh Peacebuilding Centre has been established. When it becomes fully functional, it would also help prepare civilians to work in UN peacebuilding missions. Additionally, it is also necessary to take strong diplomatic initiatives to
make sure that the trained and qualified civilians are deployed in the UN in different capacities.

Given Bangladesh’s potential to augment its efforts in international peacebuilding, international cooperation has a vital role to play. Japan’s leading role in global peacebuilding endeavours can be an asset for Bangladesh to learn from. In recent times, the scope of peacebuilding is widening both in terms of actors who are engaged and the approaches they employ. This feature is strongly visible in Japan’s engagement in international peacebuilding. As it was evident in the deliberations of the conference, there are certain characteristics in the Japanese commitment to peace operations such as avoidance of enforcement, concentration on the social-humanitarian area, high respect for non-interference, Asian regionalism and less-value-oriented approach. Japan has been involved in peacebuilding through ODA in some countries. JICA has established four pillars of peacebuilding assistance, i.e., social capital, economy, governance, and security under the Japanese government’s policy. Keeping the concept of human security as the grounding principle, JICA has ventured into fields that were atypical for their development assistance expertise. Besides the Japan government and JICA, there are new actors such as Japanese universities, local governments and the private sector that are contributing to peacebuilding as well. The increasing awareness of corporate social responsibility in the private sector and the growing recognition of universities’ social responsibility may enhance peacebuilding activities by new actors. Besides, there are three key areas, i.e., technology, capacity development and partnership, where Japan might be able to proceed to advance its own interest in contributing to international peace operations. Japan can diversify its contribution to peace operations by providing technological. Intensive contributions by Japan in the areas of capacity development should be highly welcomed anywhere in the world. In addition, it is crucial to develop partnerships among the host country, international organizations, regional neighbours, collaborating countries, civil society actors, etc. to enhance efforts for international peacebuilding. Creativity, as well as analytical insights into reality, is required in forming various kinds of partnership. Thus, need for close cooperation with suitable partners would be critical. Japan has been the most important partner of Bangladesh in its peacebuilding endeavours.
There are some areas that both countries will benefit from deeper partnership and experience sharing. Through exchange programmes, Bangladesh can utilize Japanese experience to further enhance its involvement in international peacebuilding.

At the same time, it should be recognized that peacebuilding is no longer conceived as merely limited to post-conflict scenario. The need for peacebuilding is also felt in countries which currently are not witnessing any serious conflict but have the potential risk of conflict due to lack of inclusiveness and societal resilience. Therefore, to address the global trend of violence and societal tensions fuelled by rising inequality, shrinking opportunities for employment, anti-immigration attitudes, identity crisis, rise of populism, it is high time international community also considered revisiting the understanding of peacebuilding. Given the depth and breadth of the inclusiveness issue, peace has been included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. SDG 16 recognizes that peace, justice and accountable institutions are critical to sustainable, transformative and inclusive development. It also makes it clear that ‘governance’ and ‘development’ cannot be seen in isolation from politics, power and institutions. However, the SDG 16 faces several fundamental challenges. One of the challenges is that whether this particular agenda of security will be over securitized and becomes heavily militarized. Second issue is expanding the definition of peace and security. Political agenda prioritization and monitoring of these implementation remain as concerns and require constant improvement. Besides, reforms and changes within the institutions that offer services and deliver justice and security to the public are needed. Finally, stability depends on the state’s structure that has the empowerment capacity for the public or perhaps whether the state’s agenda remains intact. Therefore, isolation and alienation of the chunk of the population will be a major challenge. The way of measuring the indicators and data facts available in place over the period of time will determine a country’s success as well as the global success in implementing SDG 16, i.e., peace as a development agenda.

In addition to civil wars, the growth of violent extremism and terrorism is a major threat to peace in contemporary times. The global trend of terrorism shows that transitioning democracies have been more likely to experience domestic terrorism than other types of regimes. As such,
effective counterterrorism policies are required. Variation in organizational strategies of terrorist groups determines the scope for the government’s domestic counterterrorism initiatives. Governments face difficult choices in maintaining peace and stability because terrorist attacks are highly uncertain. It is not exactly known where the incident is coming from—whether it is coming from a centralized group, a local group, or a lone wolf kind. Therefore, it is necessary to know what kind of group it is for successful counterterrorism initiatives. But counterterrorism initiative sometimes suffers from democratic burden because as there are multiple agencies with multiple accountabilities and responsibilities resulting into different principles. When multiple agencies exist, coordination between and among them becomes a major challenge. If the coordination fails, governments will not only lose to the terrorists but also sacrifice the integrity of the people and the sovereignty of the country. Therefore, solutions to inter-agency coordination problems are key to the success of such initiatives. When facing centralized or network-based terrorist outfits, coordination pays off higher than non-coordinated efforts. Sustainable solutions are institutional in nature. Governments and policymakers all over the world must come up with a coordination mechanism to make counterterrorism initiatives reliable, efficient and legitimate.

Preference for traditional forms of counterterrorism involving the crime approaches known as Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) continues to far outweigh that devoted to preventive measures and tackling root causes known as Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE). Challenge remains not only in individual states, but also within the broader multilateral system, including the United Nations whose instruments and decision-making process remain tied to a reactive security-focused approach. The international community needs to look at it from the PVE perspective which has been done in many parts of the world. Utilizing peacebuilding approaches to counterterrorism is likely to yield better results because they address the root causes of the problem.

Peacebuilding in parts of Africa and even in Europe has become, in effect, an enormous experiment in social engineering—an experiment that involves transplanting Western models of social, political and economic organization in conflict-affected countries in order to control conflict and extremism. Some experts questioned on the effectiveness of Western
models in a non-Western setting. Good institutions alone do not naturally guarantee that bad practices will not occur in the society. Recent developments in the Western societies, e.g., increased societal tension, political uncertainties, the rise of right-wing parties and so on, are testimony to that. Nevertheless, institutionalization is needed before liberalization as argued by many peacebuilding experts. Peacebuilders should delay liberalization and limit political and economic freedoms in the short run, in order to create conditions for a smoother and less hazardous transition to democracy and durable peace in the long run. Peacebuilders should encourage the development of civil society organizations that cut across lines of societal conflict, and proscribe those that advocate violence. Reducing and regulating incendiary ‘hate speech’ should be given priority. Besides, promoting economic reforms through a process of gradual change in the society, developing effective security institutions, and a professional and neutral bureaucracy—all are essential.

Violent extremism is a global challenge. Therefore, nations need to incorporate peacebuilding perspectives into PVE. All stakeholders must collaborate to encourage sharing of knowledge, best practices and lessons learned to better understand the causes of violent extremism and to be able to prescribe its effective remedies. The responses of local civil society are crucial for both the analysis and the solution. Community-based peacebuilding approaches should be strengthened to ensure less dependence on hard power. Addressing the root causes of violent extremism should be emphasized by the peacebuilding community. Ensuring the involvement of women and youth is crucial in crafting and executing PVE policies. Besides, policymakers and civil society need to build partnership for supporting the marginalized youth as well. While designing reintegration efforts, the need of the community as a whole should be considered.

The application of peacebuilding is expanding and its necessity deeply felt due to the changing nature of conflict. International community must not curtail their efforts in post-conflict peacebuilding given that it has significantly contributed in promoting peace. At the same time, it is also important to take appropriate measures, in line with the target of SDG 16, to intensify concerted efforts for sustainable peace taking cues from the ideas of peacebuilding. In both cases, the significance of international
cooperation cannot be overemphasized. Bangladesh has the potential to play an important role in global peacebuilding endeavour which requires close cooperation with partners. In this regard, Japanese experience can be instrumental for the country to contribute more actively in the international peacebuilding arena.
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