INTRODUCTION

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Democracy may be understood as an approach to and a form of governance. While the former is a way of life and temporal code of conduct steeped in political and civil culture, the latter is just a concrete manifestation of it. But in South Asia, making democracy work and, more important, the creation and nurturing of democratic culture, institutions, norms and practices etc. remained a rather elusive goal. Causes are plentiful. Economic and political institutions of the societies are still underdeveloped. A large segment of the population remains illiterate. The level of their political consciousness and participation is also low. They live in abject poverty and are yet to be drawn to the modern economic parameters. Furthermore, crisis in governance, political instability, and military intervention in state affairs - all impact negatively on the maturation of democracy in the developing region giving rise to uncertain future for the people of the region. Bangladesh is experiencing suspension of democracy following a serious political crisis and consequent declaration of the state of emergency in January 2007. Undeniably, without restoration of democratic institutions, the essence of democracy and its gradual maturation will remain in the realm of expectations only.

Against this backdrop, BIIS in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), Honolulu, Hawaii, organized a Workshop on Democracy, Governance
and Security Reforms in Dhaka, from 12-16 August 2007 to address the following issues:

What are the key issues in the governance of Bangladesh that need priority attention?

What recommended steps are required to address these issues?

What reform steps are needed within the security forces of Bangladesh to enable democratic governance?

What follow-up mechanisms are required to address these reforms and to assess success/recalibrate subsequent efforts?

The present volume is a compilation of the revised and edited version of the papers presented in the workshop. However, one paper titled, Fundamentals of Security Sector Reform, presented by Dr. Rouben Azizian, Professor and Program Manager, Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies (APCSS), Honolulu, Hawaii, USA could not be included in the volume. The abstract and the discussion by the designated discussants have been included in the Annex. The designated discussants on the paper were Brigadier General Shahedul Anam Khan, ndc, psc, former Director General, BISSH and Mr. Nurul Huda, former Inspector General of Police.

The first paper titled Democracy and Rule of Law by Dr. Begum Asma Siddiqua, attempts to discuss the problems and prospects of democracy and the rule of law in Bangladesh in relation to law related matters and legal system. She avers that democracy is one public virtue, not the only one, and the relation of democracy to other public virtues and vices can only be understood if democracy is clearly distinguished from the other characteristics of political systems. Professor Siddiqua observes that, for Bangladesh and present
Government corruption is a serious national challenge and a key obstacle to development and poverty. She stresses on the necessity of fair legal framework for democracy and rule of law to be enforced impartially with full protection of human rights. Dr. Siddiqua suggests that the provision of the appointment of higher judiciary must be reviewed. Alternative institutions like, Ombudsman and Human Rights Commission should be established. Democracy in its true sense will be achieved if men of unimpeachable integrity and character, fearless, thoroughly impartial and not purchasable at any cost come up to uphold rule of law. The designated discussants on the paper were Dr. M. Enamul Hoque and Dr. Asif Nazrul, Department of Law, Dhaka University.

In his paper titled, Civil-Military Relationship: Bangladesh Perspective, Brigadier General A T M Amin focuses on the interdependence of both the civilians and the military particularly in terms of governance in this era of globalization. In the post Cold War era, the traditional role of the military as an instrument of a state’s policy for territorial expansion is substituted by an enhancement of its role as an element in support of civil power in disaster management and internal security. He emphasizes that an important issue for democratization is the reform of the armed forces and changing civil-military relations. Major General Shakil Ahmed and Professor Imtiaz Ahmed, Department of International Relations, Dhaka University, were the designated discussants on the paper.

Mr. Abul Haseeb Khan in his paper, Emergence of NGOs, Civil Society and Democracy in Bangladesh, argues that in the current crisis situation civil society could take a facilitating and a catalyst role in support of democracy. Mr. Khan
suggests the civil society actors can organize non-partisan opinions and promote civil society solidarity, provide research and knowledge support, explore innovation for reconciliation in political practices to diffuse confrontational behavior, and provide civic and political training supports for political workers. Professor Ataur Rahman, Department of Political Science, Dhaka University and Professor Shahiduzzaman, Department of International Relations, Dhaka University were the designated discussants on the paper.

Dr. Mizanur Rahman Shelley, in his paper titled Governance in Combating Corruption gives comprehensive deliberations about governance and corruption from the perspective of Bangladesh. In his paper, he analyses how bad governance increases corruption in public sector as well as in private sector, and how corruption hampers administrative efficiency vis-à-vis promotion of democracy in a country. He also identifies the core causes of corruption in Bangladesh and finally recommends some measures for combating corruption from politics, administration as well as from private sectors. The designated discussants on the paper were Barrister Manzoor Hasan Khan, Director, Centre for Governance Study, BRAC University and Dr. Elizabeth Van Wie Davis, Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies (APCSS), Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.

Major General Mohd Aminul Karim in his paper Role of Security Forces in a Democracy contends that a fully functional democracy in Bangladesh never sustained due to confrontational politics and lack of institutionalization of different organs. The upshot of politicization and corruption has also spawned a kind of value-deficient syndrome. He suggests the inclusion of such measures in the reform as
enriching political culture, strengthening state institutions, ensuring complete separation and independence of judiciary, a revamped bureaucracy, developing better military media relations, creation of an advisory security council and cabinet committee on security affairs, providing more powers to the institution of the President and ensuring certain protection and remodeling the military. The designated discussants on the paper were Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Senior Research Fellow, BIISS and Colonel (Retd.) David Shanahan, Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies (APCSS), Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.

The authors of the papers deserve to be lauded for their thought provoking and insightful contributions to the workshop. We extend our deep appreciation and thanks to all the learned session chairs, designated discussants, and the participants who through their contributions enriched the deliberations in the workshop. Most hearty thanks to officers and staffs of BIISS for their full cooperation and support. It may be mentioned that the individual authors are responsible for the views expressed in their respective papers. These views and opinions are not attributable to the BIISS. BIISS does not have particular position on any of the themes included in this compilation.