I have great pleasure in welcoming you all to the Seminar on Global War on Terror: Bangladesh Perspective, organized by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS).

Neither terrorism nor counter-terrorism is a new phenomenon. However, over the last several years, both have been gaining accelerated currency in the vocabulary of political science and international politics due to their unprecedented magnitude, international character and, more importantly, because of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States of America and its aftermath. As a matter of fact, following the 9/11, international terrorism has been brought to the centre of attention of the global community.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks were targeted at the selected but powerful icons of US military and economic might. The attacks were unprecedented with large-scale loss of life. This has also revealed the vulnerability of the mightiest power on earth to international terrorism. Following the events of 9/11, the Bush administration unleashed a Global War on Terror with three specific strategic objectives in Afghanistan. These included the destruction of terrorist training facilities, the capture of Al Qaeda's leadership, including Osama bin Laden and his senior Lieutenants, and the removal of the Taliban from power.
Subsequently, however, the Global War on Terror took a truly global character. In February 2003, nearly eighteen months after 9/11 and more than a year after the fall of the Taliban, the US administration published its anti-terrorism strategy entitled "National Strategy for Combating Terrorism". The US objectives outlined in the document like defeating the terrorists and their organizations and denying sponsorship, support, and sanctuary to terrorists at the global level expanded the scope for the Global War on Terror far beyond Afghanistan and, in fact, made it truly global.

Ultimately, some new acts of terror and US retaliatory measures against the perpetrators of terrorist attacks, coupled with a clearly defined and concerted counter-terrorism strategy, brought international terrorism and counter-terrorism to the centre-stage of international politics.

The 9/11 attacks and the consequential Global War on Terror have affected the world profoundly and it will continue to do so for some time to come, no matter how one looks at these. In fact, there are differing views/perspectives regarding both terrorism and the war against it. The concept of terrorism is essentially contested, value-laden, and open to multiple meanings located within broader cultural frames, so that, at least to some extent, terrorism is in the eye of the beholder. Groups can be regarded as 'terrorists' or alternatively as 'liberation movements', 'radical activists', 'armed rebels', 'urban guerrillas' or 'extremist dissidents', just as nation states can be labelled 'terrorists', 'revolutionary' or seen as 'repressive regimes', 'authoritarian systems', and so on.

Since labelling certain actions or actors as 'terrorist' carries strong normative overtones, the social construction of reality cannot avoid being an intensely political contest. Since conceptualization is intimately linked with theory, there can be no single 'correct' definition; instead concepts should be assessed in terms of the fruitfulness of the theoretical insights
that flow from the understanding. Any empirical measures derived from the concept should ideally be valid, reliable, and replicable. Unfortunately, the literature is plagued with partial and incomplete understandings of terrorism that often fit only a few particular cases, as well as the opposite danger, with long and verbose 'kitchen-sink' catalogues.

Differing views on terrorism and the ongoing Global War on Terror, their different aspects, global impact and prospective consequences, and so on are only natural. These are indicative of the vitality and significance of the Global War on Terror in shaping the prevailing international order.

For us in South Asia, the Global War on Terror and its impact on the region have been and will continue to remain very high for a long period of time. Both as a possible locale of its origin and the scene of the immediate war on terror, the countries of the region have experienced deeply the impact of these developments. Bangladesh also had to suffer some indirect consequences, setbacks in apparel export to the US, the country's largest market, being of serious concern to its policymakers. However, Bangladesh could soon recover from the post-9/11 shock, as its relations with the US have been deep-rooted, and the country soon appeared as an important ally of the US in its Global War on Terror. Nonetheless, from time to time in the subsequent period, attempts were made by different quarters to point finger at Bangladesh as a possible playground of the Islamic fundamentalist and/or terrorist forces. In this regard, certain forces and factors as well as developments within the country facilitated similar anti-Bangladesh propaganda.

It is in this backdrop that a whole set of questions looms large in our minds regarding the Global War on Terror itself and its impact on Bangladesh. In this regard, three sets of questions are of paramount importance. The first set of questions pertains to the 9/11 and international terrorism. The second set pertains
to the Global War on Terror and the third one to the implications of all these for Bangladesh.

In the light of the unresolved issues pertaining to all the three sets of questions mentioned, the topic of today's Seminar on Global War on Terror: Bangladesh Perspective is of significant academic as also practical importance.

Our main purpose behind organising the Seminar is to let the diverse ideas come into creative interactions so that the issues could be analysed from different perspectives and, finally, some policy recommendations could be made. The Institute looks forward to a very fruitful interaction and deliberation on the theme of the Seminar.

Before concluding, let me express my sincere gratitude to the Session chairmen, paper presenters, participants and all others who contributed to the Seminar. In this regard, I would like to record our special thanks to His Excellency Mr. Morshed Khan MP and His Excellency Mr. Reaz Rahman for finding time, despite their extremely busy schedules, to grace the Seminar as Chief Guest and Special Guest respectively.

I thank you all.