South Asia, long noted for its values of tolerance, coexistence and respect for pluralism is now a home to a myriad of extremist outfits who with their violent activities pose grave threat to peace and security not only at individual, but also at national, regional and international levels. Moreover, the region’s vast potential is also held hostage to a number of unresolved inter-state and intra-state conflicts and crises stemming from myopic attitudes of the largely illiterate masses and the lackadaisical approach of the ruling elites toward the resolution of such conflicts. It may be mentioned that a conflict turns into a prolonged crisis when it is marked by high tension and urgency and is fraught with serious consequences of not being handled timely and properly. In addition to such conflicts, the states of the region are engrossed in varying degrees of bilateral territorial disputes, as well as disputes over common resources, refugee and alleged migration problems.\(^1\) As a result, South Asian states continue to remain vulnerable to political instability, distrust and mistrust, tension and mutual suspicion among and between them. In fomenting such troubled relations between the regional states, more often than not it is extremism that shades its most pernicious effects in the region.

Merriam Webster Dictionary defines extremism as “a quality or state of being extreme, especially advocacy of extreme political measures”. Extremism is closely associated with terrorism as the rise of extremism can also lead to increase in terrorist agendas.\(^2\) However, one should note with caution
that although extremism and terrorism are used interchangeably, extremism may not necessarily lead to terrorism. As a matter of fact, the dividing line between extremism and terrorism is very thin. Terrorism is a physical act, whereas extremism is generally understood as a state of mind though not limited to it. It might filter or spill over if not taken care of at the initial stage. Terrorists resort to violence in order to achieve their objectives whereas extremists may preach and convince others to follow their thoughts and ideals not necessarily resorting to violence. Extremism is, therefore a very problematic as well as a complex phenomenon.

Extremism and terrorism with their respective political consequences have directly impacted the inter-state relations in South Asia. The various forms of extremist activities seem to have a perennial destabilizing effect on the regional politics. As one observer remarks, "With marked rise of extremism and increasing terrorist activities, particularly in the past decade, the South Asian region has the highest annual number of fatalities as a result of acts of terrorist violence in the world. Along with the deteriorating socio-economic conditions, ethnic, ideological and political conflicts have emerged as significant sources of threat to regional stability and inter-state relations." The processes of democratization and economic development in the region have equally suffered the damage that has been caused by extremism. The rise of extremism has also compelled the South Asian governments to enact laws and ordinances impinging on human rights of the people already groaning due to the absence of a number of human security issues like job, food, shelter, safe environment, freedom of religion and cultural practices etc.

What creates the rationale for linking human security with extremism considering the former as a panacea for the latter? Needless to say, complexities of post-colonial nation-building, transition to democratic political systems and market economy,
range of inter-state and intra-state conflicts and a number of intense geo-political changes in and around South Asia have had serious impacts on the political, economic, social and cultural aspects of people's lives. It is now widely recognized that extremism constitutes perhaps the most potent threat to human security. Evidences abound to show that the South Asian states have failed to provide their people with the basic minimum human security. Instead of redressing social malaise and addressing human security and development issues, the ruling elites of these states continued to clutch on to preserve their power and influence. As a consequence, no South Asian country has been able to extricate itself of discriminatory and exploitative policies, which increased insecurity and led to the rising number of communal and terrorist outfits. Despite the problems these outfits have created, no serious effort was made by the governments to contain the rise in extremist trends at the initial stage though the media and the academicians had been vocal about the rise of extremism due to the intolerance of the ruling elites and the political forces have been using extremism to achieve their own narrow political ends. As a result, all of the regional states are confronted with the menace of extremism and terrorism in one or other form. The challenge for the region is, therefore, to improve the human development indicators over the newly emerging poverty and unemployment, and increase the capacity of institutions, including civil society to maintain social cohesion and promote human security. There is clearly the need to establish a clear linkage between the lack of human security and the phenomenon of extremism in South Asia. Needless to state, for South Asia, the relationship between human security, human development and human rights and prevention of extremism should be further explored, causes and consequences further delineated and threats classified and prioritized for holistic approaches. In this respect, Japan's experience in dealing with
human welfare through human security approach can serve as a model. Japan has also experienced extremism in its soil, in particular from the groups such as New Left, Japanese Red Army and Right Wing Extremists. Japan dealt with the extremist activities of such groups within a constitutional and legal framework.

In contemporary world, any approach towards peacemaking involves eradicating the root causes of the problem/conflict/violence, etc. It includes a wide-ranging and strategic approach that addresses issues of security, the socio-economic foundations of peace, governance and the need for justice and reconciliation to recover from the wounds of violent acts whatever. An enlightened concept of peace, therefore, envisions nothing other than a full realization and fulfillment of human security issues for an all-round welfare of human beings. Japan’s culture of peace gets fructified through human security as it aims at fostering democracy and human rights and renounces war or even the use or threat of force as a means of resolving conflicts whatsoever. At the same time, Japan’s culture of peace envisages improving human capital by fostering personal freedom and dignity of the individual through education and ethical treatment. As Ambassador Takahiro Shinyo, Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN, stated, “Human security is what a society achieves by protecting and empowering every individual, ensuring they are free from fear and want. The goal of human security has much in common with the goal of a culture of peace, which is the satisfaction of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this sense, human security improves human capital. We are therefore, convinced that in order to build a culture of peace, human security is important.” Perhaps, it is now a well known fact that Japan, in particular since the 1990s, has been actively exploring the potential of human security as a new policy framework and has sought ways to translate the concept into
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concrete action. Towards this end, the contribution of Ms Sadako Ogata is acknowledged by the world community with great accolade.

Extremism in South Asia has been studied from different angles and is still in the laboratory of researchers and practitioners for discerning its new dimensions. In this connection, addressing the phenomenon from a human security perspective will be a new approach with much value addition. The cross-fertilization and networking across professionals and stakeholders in the region will accrue further value addition. Against this backdrop, BIJSS organized an International Conference on ‘Human Security Approach to Counter Extremism in South Asia: Relevance of Japanese Culture’ with the support of Japan Foundation during 24-25 November 2009. The objectives of the conference were as follows:

- To explore how the concept of human security, which is being conceptually and operationally further defined at the global level, is relevant in case of South Asia, in particular as a new approach to old problems in the region.
- To identify several common factors responsible for the declining social and human security and strengthening of extremist trend in the region. And also to find out the differences among the regional countries with respect to their stance on extremism.
- To propose guidance for the formulation of strategies and policy proposals that could influence action at the respective national levels in the regional countries and explore the possibility of integrating them for practical implementation in the region.
- To look at the concept of human security from Japan’s viewpoint that hints at the dual goal of freedom from want (which in the context of South Asia comes from the unexpected loss of job, healthcare, social welfare,
education and the like) and freedom from fear (emanating from violations of human rights, extremism, conflicts, displacement, etc.).

- To project Japan’s culture of peace through the human security approach as an effective mechanism for dealing with the issues that generate extremism with harmful effects on human life and wellbeing.

The conference spread over two days was divided into four working sessions (including the concluding session) over which altogether ten papers were presented. A good number of distinguished scholars, members of the academia, representatives of multi-disciplinary professional bodies and policy makers from Bangladesh, India, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka participated in the conference. To induce fresh thinking and further research in the area BISS has undertaken the task of publishing its proceedings. The present volume is a compilation of the revised and edited version of the papers presented in the conference.

The first paper in this volume entitled State of Human Security in South Asia is authored by Professor Dr. Moonis Ahmar. He contends that South Asia is still grappling with issues which impact on the lives of millions of people who still lack basic necessities of life. He attempts to examine the concept of human security in the context of South Asia from four dimensions: i) role of state actors ii) response of the marginalized group for their disempowerment iii) role of civil society and iv) contribution of conflict management and resolution process. Dr. Moonis argues that the potentiality of South Asia is hindered because of the improper leadership and failure to attach priority to human security at the grass-root level. The designated discussant on the paper was Dr. Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB).
In the second paper entitled **Mapping Extremism in South Asia**, Professor Sahadevan Ponmoni examines the factors that constitute extremism in South Asia, their implications for regional peace and stability and attempts to answer if there is a relevance of human security as an approach to end extremism in South Asia. Professor Ponmoni argues that since extremism is 'politics by other means', it is perhaps amenable to moderation but not to ending. Therefore, the possible democratic agenda should be one of ameliorating the conditions that have given rise to extremism rather than trying to defeat it. Brigadier General Shahedul Anam Khan, (Retd.), Editor, Strategic Affairs, *The Daily Star* was the designated discussant on the paper.

Professor Gamini Keerawella in his paper **Human Security and Extremism in Sri Lanka: Synergy and Conflict** argues that the failure of institutional power and governance to accommodate all ethnic identities in decision-making process gives rise to extremist political tendencies. He explains the dialectics of Sinhala and Tamil extremisms as a case of conflict and finds the collapse of the LTTE as an opportunity for Sri Lanka to move from conflict to post-conflict society. Professor Keerawella stresses on the evolving concept of human security which could provide the necessary guideline for a new security agenda for Sri Lanka. Mr. A. K. M. Abdus Sabur, Research Director, BIJSS was the designated discussant on the paper.

The paper entitled **Human Security and Extremism in India: Synergy and Conflict** authored by Dr. Anindya Jyoti Majumdar, illustrates the complex matrix of state relations and relations between the state and the individual. He points out that extremist violence of different brands, little realization of the magnitude of the task and the difficulties of implementation were the reasons for extremism in India. Dr. Majumdar suggests that human resources, which were India's best assets,
must be nurtured, developed, managed and used for greater benefits. The synergy emanates from the common ends where the government, NGOs and people are partners in the steps forward in the era of connectivity. The designated discussant on the paper was Dr. A. T. Salahuddin Ahmed, Senior Research Fellow, BIISS.

Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, in his paper titled Human Security and Extremism in Bangladesh: Synergy and Conflict explains the criteria of violence from the angle of different ideologies which were very strongly based and focuses on the causes of extremism. He avers that extremism in Bangladesh has a synergic effect as well. Dr. Azad points out that these conflicts and violence have forced many government and non-government actors to ensure sustained peace in the country through proper development process. Dr. M. Enamul Hoque, Former Inspector General of Police, and Member, Law Commission, Bangladesh was the designated discussant on the paper.

Professor Dr. Bishnu Hari Nepal, in his paper titled Human Security and Extremism in Nepal: Synergy and Conflict observes that the concept of human security is relatively a new phenomenon in Nepal. Nepal is developing the concept and practice of human security in amalgamation with Amartya Sen’s explanation. He observes that during the People’s War, Nepal’s human security was threatened both by the state and the insurgents in many respects. He argues that if the political security is not determined by the state, the socio-economic, ethno-cultural, religious, linguistic, and regional and also security relating to gender, class and modern civilization could not be imagined. Professor Nepal warns that if these variables are not met, political extremism, terrorism and violence will be on the increase. The designated discussant on the paper was Dr. Abdur Rob Khan, Associate Professor, North South University, Dhaka.
The paper titled **Human Security and Extremism in Pakistan: Synergy and Conflict** authored by Dr. Shaheen Akhtar explores the relationship between human security and growth of extremism in Pakistan. It attempts to analyze the socio-economic roots of radicalization of the youth in three regions of Pakistan – the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), South Punjab and Balochistan that have become breeding grounds for extremist and militant organizations. Dr. Akhtar argues that lack of human security has played decisive role in providing space to the growth of religious extremism and ethno-nationalist militancy in Pakistan. The designated discussant on the paper was Air Cdre Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury (Retd.), Registrar, Asia Pacific University.

In his paper titled, **Japan’s Contribution to Human Security with Special Reference to South Asia after the War on Terror**, Mr. Osamu Miyata describes Japan’s concept of human security which has become one of the diplomatic pillars of Japan since the end of the Cold War. He makes some recommendations on how to counter Islamic radicalism. Mr. Miyata concludes that terrorism can be eradicated only if the conditions which spurn it are identified and alleviated. Professor Imtiaz Ahmed, Department of International Relations, Dhaka University, was the designated discussant on the paper.

Mr. Katsuhisa Furukawa, in his paper titled, **Japan’s Concept of Peace and Policy on Human Security: Its Relevance to South Asia** explains how Japan’s concept and policy on human security has evolved since 1990s and how the concept has been applied in practice. He explores its relevance to address various challenges in South Asia. Stating that South Asia is emerging as one of the priority areas of concern for Japan, Mr. Furukawa hopes that there will be much closer cooperation between South Asia and other international community. The designated discussant on the paper was
The last paper in this volume entitled **A Comparative Study of the Solutions and their Practicability** authored by Dr. Shaheen Afroze, contends that while it is true that extremism in South Asia is country-specific and a complex web of factors peculiar to each of the South Asian states determine its shape, nature and intensity, it is the human security deficit that lies at the root of each of the extremist activities in the region. Dr. Afroze emphasizes that the state-centric approach towards addressing extremism in South Asia should lead its way to the human security approach. Professor Syed Anwar Husain, Department of History, Dhaka University, was the designated discussant on the paper.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Chief Guest Advocate Shahara Khatun, MP, Hon’ble Minister for Home Affairs, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh for inaugurating the conference, the Special Guest H. E. Mr. Tamotsu Shinotsuka, Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh, and the Chief Guest at the concluding session of the conference Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, Former Chairman, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and Member, Board of Governors of BIiSS. The financial support of the Japan Foundation in organizing the conference and the publication of the book is also gratefully acknowledged.

I extend my thanks to the authors of the papers they so richly deserve for their laudable and insightful contributions to this volume. I extend my deep appreciation and thanks to all the learned session chairs, designated discussants and all the participants who through their contributions enriched the proceedings of the conference. I would like to record my thanks to Major General Syed Fatemy Ahmed Roomy, psc, former Chairman BIiSS and Major General Abu Belal
Mohammad Shafiul Huq, ndc, psc, former Director General, BIISS for their guidance for undertaking the initiative. I express my deep sense of indebtedness to Major General Muhammed Firdaus Mian, psc, Chairman, Board of Governors of BIISS and Major General Sheikh Md Monirul Islam, ndc, psc, Director General of BIISS for their guidance and cooperation in organizing the conference. Most hearty thanks are due to officers and staffs of BIISS for their cooperation and support. Special mention should be made of Colonel AKM Nazrul Islam and Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, both Research Directors of BIISS. Thanks are also due to Ms. Segufta Hossain, Mr. Mohammad Jasim Uddin, Ms. Sufia Khanom, Research Fellows of BIISS and Mr. Mahbubur Rashid Bhuiyan, Mr. A. M. Faisal Uddin and Ms. Benuka Ferdousi, Research Officers of BIISS for accomplishing the arduous task of rapporteuring the proceedings of the conference. My thanks are also due to Ms. Neila Husain, Senior Research Fellow of BIISS and Mr. Abu Salah Md. Yousuf, Research Fellow of BIISS for preparing the index of the book.


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Endnotes


3. Ibid.


5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.