THE GENESIS OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IN BANGLADESH

©Sarwar Alam
Post Doctoral Fellow
Department of Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia.

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Between March 6, 1999 and January 27, 2005, militant Islamists killed at least 156 people in Bangladesh.[1] Bombs were thrown mostly at secular cultural gatherings, courthouses, and Sufi shrines. Worst among them were the bomb attacks at Udichi programs (a secularist cultural organization) programs, the Ahmadiyya mosque (a minority Islamic religious sect), Bengali new year celebrations, churches, movie theatres, the Bangladeshi born British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, and at the rally of the party of opposition.[2] The bomb attack that shocked the country most was the blast of August 17, 2005, where 459 bombs were exploded in 63 of the 64 districts in the country between 11:00 and 11:30 am. There were also several attacks on secularist NGO (Non-Government Organization) activists and newspapers. Two militant religious fundamentalist organizations, Harkatul Jihad al-Islam Bangladesh (HUJIB), and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), carried out these attacks. These two groups alone, exploded hundreds of bombs throughout the country during this period in order to establish an Islamic regime in the country. In addition to these two groups, other militant Islamist organizations, active in this period that were also involved in similar violent and terrorist activities included, Shahadat al-Hikma, Hizbut Tawhid, Bangladesh Islamic Manch, and Hifajate Khatme Nabuwat Andolon.[3]

It has been observed that throughout the world, there is a close relationship between religious fundamentalism and violence. Because of this, some scholars have raised the question, "Is extremist violence and intolerance inherent to fundamentalism?" They argue that when competing with other religious movements and secular institutions in order to protect and sharpen religious identity, fundamentalist movements tend to commit violent and intolerant acts.[4] This is especially the case in third world countries, where post-colonial secular political institutions and modern technology (particularly the electronic media), are believed to challenge conventional morality, which encourages some people to reaffirm religious ideals. Often, religion is the most visible and evocative vehicle of protest, and not only of political protest, but also of morality, dignity, and group identity.[5] In some cases, religion provides the moral justification for violence. According to Mark Juergensmeyer, "Religion has the ability to give moral sanction to violence, and because violence is the most potent force that a nonlegal entity can possess, religion can be a potent political tool."[6] Religious violence can empower people who have not had power before.[7] In developing countries, violent fundamentalist movements often have nationalist and anti-imperialist motives in addition to their religious ones.[8] At the same time, some argue, they may also be parochial and isolationist in their relations with the outside world.[9] Contrary to this opinion I will argue in this paper that fundamentalist movements

[1] A.M.M. Shawkat Ali, *Faces of Terrorism in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: The University Press Limited, 2006), 35
[2] The Daily Star, January 28, 2005, and March 31, 2007
[3] Ali 2006, 40-41
[4] See Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 17. See also Stephen J. Stein, "The Web of Religion and Violence," *Religious Studies Review* 28(2002):103-108, 103
[5] Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 240
[6] Mark Juergensmeyer, *Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 163; see also Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 191
[7] Juergensmeyer 2000, 167
[8] Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Quoted in Almond, Appleby, and Sivan 2003, 132
[9] Almond, Appleby, and Sivan 2003, 132

in Bangladesh are often parochial but are not necessarily isolationist. To prove my point I shall pay special attention to two of the most famous militant fundamentalist political organizations of Bangladesh, Harkatul Jihad al-Islam Bangladesh (HUJIB) and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). I will also argue that fundamentalist movements in Bangladesh such as these could not become violent without the support of the secular power elites of the country. Furthermore, militant fundamentalist movements in Bangladesh are both reactive and proactive in nature. They are reactive against the perceived aggression and hegemony of the West versus Islam, and proactive against the perceived corruption and immorality of the political elites of their own country. Both reactions derive from a combined sense of deprivation and humiliation.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS: FUNDAMENTALISM AND TERRORISM

In *Defenders of God*, Bruce Lawrence defines fundamentalism as "the affirmation of religious authority as holistic and absolute, admitting of neither criticism nor reduction; it is expressed through the collective demand that specific creedal and ethical dictates derived from scripture be publicly recognized and legally enforced."[10] Conversely, Gabriel Almond, Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan define fundamentalism as a "discernible pattern of religious militance by which self-styled 'true believers' attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors."[11] Both of these definitions, especially Lawrence's, overlook the importance of religious piety as a characteristic of fundamentalism. The second definition makes militancy part of fundamentalism, which, is not necessarily true. A person may become a religious fundamentalist without turning to militancy. As a way of correcting these oversights, I will use the term "fundamentalism" in this paper to describe *the activity of socially and politically marginalized or subaltern people who are inspired by the literal meaning of religious texts to protect their faith or group identity.*

If "fundamentalism" is a difficult term to define, "Terrorism" is even more so. Government agencies and academicians define the term in different ways, some of which contradict one another. For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of the United States defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives." The US State Department defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience." The US Defense Department's definition of terrorism is "the unlawful use of or threatened use of force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives." The US Defense Intelligence Agency defines terrorism as "premeditated, political violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine state agents, usually to influence an audience." The United Nations defines terrorism as the act of destroying or injuring civilian lives, or damaging civilian

[10] Lawrence 1989, 27
[11] Almond, Appleby, and Sivan 2003, 17

or government property, by individuals or groups in the attempt to effect some political goal.[12] The word "unlawful" used in the FBI and Defense Department's definitions makes the concept of terrorism confusing. Does it mean that the "lawful" use of (violent) force by a state against property or persons is not (state-sponsored) terrorism? The State Department and Defense Intelligence Agency's definitions are more similar to earlier definitions of insurgency than of terrorism. The UN definition rules out the existence of state-sponsored terrorism. In all of these definitions, any activity that creates a threat to the government or to civilian property is liable to be termed "terrorist" activity.

Some academicians also define terrorism in simplistic ways. For example, Robert Pape contends, "Terrorism involves the use of violence by an organization other than a national government to intimidate or frighten a target audience."[13] Jessica Stern defines terrorism as "an act or threat of violence against noncombatants with the objective of exacting revenge, intimidating, or otherwise influencing an audience."[14] Neither of these definitions draws any distinction between the terrorism of political and non-political organizations. Instead, the threat to noncombatant people is the common denominator. In this paper, the term "terrorism" will be defined as *the activity of a political organization that uses violence as a political strategy, upon noncombatant people and government forces, to convey its message*.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: RELATIVE DEPRIVATION AND HUMILIATION

In this paper I will use two theoretical approaches—the theory of relative deprivation (TRD), and the theory of humiliation (TH)—in analyzing the rise of militant Islamic fundamentalism in Bangladesh. Relative deprivation theory emphasizes individual and group psychology in the formation of social identity. It also highlights the responses to perceived disadvantage by both disadvantaged minorities and privileged majorities.[15] Walter Runciman, the most noted exponent of this theory, describes TRD as follows:

> A is relatively deprived of X when (i) he does not have X, (ii) he sees some other person or persons, which may include himself at some previous or expected time, as having X (whether or not this is or will be in fact the case), (iii) he wants X, and (iv) he sees it as feasible that he should have X.[16]

From this definition one can infer that the expectation of having something, the potentiality of having something, or the comparison of a situation where somebody has something with that of a person who does not have it are central to the notion of deprivation. As a result, the feeling of deprivation is a state of both psychological and social reality. Ted Robert

[12] The definitions of terrorism by the FBI, the US State Department, the US Defense Department, the US Defense Intelligence Agency, and the UN are quoted from Jonathan R. White, *Terrorism and Homeland Security*, Fifth Edition (Belmont, California: Thomson Wadsworth, 2006), 6

[13] Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (Paperback edition) (New York: Random House, 2006), 9

[14] Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), xx

[15] Iain Walker & Heather J. Smith eds., *Relative Deprivation: Specification, Development, and Integration* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), i

[16] Walter G. Runciman, *Relative Deprivation and Social Justice* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1966), 10

Gurr addresses this aspect of relative deprivation theory most clearly. He emphasizes human expectations and capabilities when analyzing TRD. Thus, he describes TRD in the following way:

> [Relative deprivation is] a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining, given the social means available to them.[17]

However, a point is missing in both Runciman's and Gurr's definitions. Neither of these definitions addresses the psychological state that derives from the perception of dishonor or the deprivation of honor, which may be imposed upon a person or a group of people by a privileged person or a minority group. This issue is addressed by the theory of humiliation. According to Evelin Lindner,

> Humiliation means the enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honour [*sic*.] or dignity.…Humiliation entails demeaning treatment that transgresses established expectations. It may involve acts of force, including violent force. At its heart is the idea of pinning down, putting down or holding to the ground.[18]

Lindner observes that feelings of humiliation are among the strongest emotions available to human beings. She argues, "Feelings of humiliation come about when deprivation is perceived as an illegitimate imposition of lowering or degradation."[19]

In this paper, I will endeavor to construct a bridge between relative deprivation theory and humiliation theory and consider how they can complement each other when analyzing religious fundamentalism and religiously motivated terrorism. Within this combined framework, I will attempt to explain the rise of the Harkatul Jihad al-Islam Bangladesh and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh in the development of Islamic political culture in Bangladesh. I will use relative deprivation theory in analyzing the political motivations of members of marginalized groups, such as the HUJIB and JMB. I will use humiliation theory to explain the justification by members of these groups for terrorist activities in Bangladesh. The sections that follow constitute a brief outline of the history of Islam in Bangladesh, the quest for a Bengali Islamic identity, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism after independence, the rise of Islamic militancy in the 1990s, discussion and analysis, and policy recommendations for government and development officials.

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[17] Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), 13

[18] Evelin Lindner, 2001. "The Psychology of Humiliation." Available at http://www.peace.ca/humiliation.htm retrieved on 01/01/2008.

[19] Evelin Lindner, *Making Enemies: Humiliation and International Conflict* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006), 171

ORIGINS OF ISLAM IN BANGLADESH

Present-day Bangladesh officially came under Muslim rule in the early thirteenth century CE, after the invasion of Bengal in 1204 by the Turkish general Ikhtyar Uddin Muhammad bin Bakhtyar Khalji.[20] Available historical artifacts show that the people of Bengal, especially those in the coastal areas of the region, were introduced to Islamic traditions before the Turkish invasion.[21] Arab traders had visited the coastal areas of Bangladesh as early as the eighth century CE.[22] In addition, historical evidence shows that some Sufis (Muslim mystics) visited and settled in parts of Bengal before the Muslim invasion. Many people embraced Islam following the example of simplicity, egalitarianism, and brotherhood that these Sufis established.[23]

The post-Bakhtyar period witnessed a large influx of Sufis in Bengal, who were engaged not only in preaching Islam but also in developing an indigenous Muslim culture. Richard Eaton observes that Sufis played vital roles in mass conversion by engaging themselves in public works such as forest clearing and land reclamation as well as by their reputation for charisma. In describing the authority of the Sufis, Eaton argues that between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, the authority of charismatic Sufis in Bengal rested on three overlapping bases: their connection with the forest, their connection with the supernatural world, and the construction of mosques by which they institutionalized the practice of Islam.[24] In his view, the Islamization of local beliefs involved a displacement of local superhuman agencies by Islamic ones. Eaton also observes that common elements in the superhuman agencies of both indigenous and Islamic cosmologies helped the Sufis become accepted in communities that were predominantly Hindu and Buddhist. Allah was perceived as the high God, followed by superhuman agents such as the Prophet Muhammad at the upper end of the spiritual hierarchy and various *Pirs* (spiritual preceptors), with their charismatic powers, at the lower end. According to Eaton, this hierarchy was so similar to that of the indigenous non-Muslim people that they did not perceive Islam as an alien belief system. He contends that the involvement of Sufis, along with the Muslim ruler's policy of expanding arable land, made Islam synonymous with agrarian growth. Thus, Islam was perceived culturally by the locals as a civilization-building ideology and not as an alien tradition.[25] "It is a testimony to the vitality of Islam, and one of the clues to its success as a world religion, that its adherents in Bengal were so creative in accommodating local sociocultural realities with the norms of the religion."[26] Other researchers have argued that, as Sufism spread in the Indian Subcontinent, it gradually lost its original Qur'anic flavor by

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[20] See Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal frontier, 1204-1760* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1993).
[21] Syed Murtaza Ali, *Saints of East Pakistan* (Dacca, East Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1971), 1
[22] For details, see Tofael Ahmed, *Jugey Jugey Bangladesh* [Bangladesh in Different Eras] (Dhaka,Bangladesh: Nawroze Kitabistan, 1992), 38-39; Syed Ali Ahsan, *Bangla Shahitter Itihas: Adi Parbo* [History of Bengali Literature: The Earliest Period] (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Shilpataru Prakashani, 1998), 6, 17; Ali 1971, 1
[23] Abdul Karim, *Social History of the Muslims in Bengal (Down to A. D. 1538)*, Second Edition (Chittagong, Bangladesh: Baitush Sharaf Islamic Research Institute, 1985), 46
[24] Eaton 1993, 218
[25] Eaton 1993, 310
[26] Richard M. Eaton. "Who are the Bengal Muslims? Conversion and Islamization in Bengal," in R. Ahmed Ed., *Understanding the Bengal Muslims: Interpretative Essays*, pp. 26-51 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 44

assimilating many Indian philosophical ideas.[27] Whatever the case, the development of coexistence and tolerance between Hindus and Muslims is one of the greatest achievements of the Sufis in Bengal.[28] The doctrines of the Sufis deeply influenced the masses, and their *dargahs* (tombs) are venerated not only by Muslims, but also by the followers of other religious traditions.[29] The accommodationist character of Bengali Islam continued until the coming of Islamic revivalist movements in the nineteenth century.[30]

THE QUEST FOR ISLAMIC IDENTITY

In the nineteenth century, after the colonization of Bengal and the rest of South Asia by the British East India Company, Muslims experienced two major challenges to their collective identity: anti-Islamic propaganda by Christian missionaries and the colonial government's categorization of local communities in terms of religious affiliation.[31] Christian missionaries such as William Carey (d. 1834) were active in the publication of anti-Islamic literature. In addition, the census reports of the colonial government categorized the native population in terms of religious affiliation, which listed Muslims as minority community in India. The colonial government's mistrust of Muslims after the Sepoy Mutiny as well as the war of independence of 1857 further isolated and marginalized Muslim communities. Feeling deprived and humiliated in their political, economic, and social lives, Muslims countered this situation in two ways. First, they initiated movements of religious reform, and second, they established educational institutions to promote a sense of Islamic identity. Examples of such institutions were Darul Uloom Deoband (established in 1866) and the Muhammedan Anglo-Oriental College (established in 1875 and subsequently developed into the Aligarh Muslim University). Some reformers of this period emphasized the performance of Islamic rituals and religious education while others tried to adapt the Muslim community to the changing situation through modern education. In either case, Islamic reform remained a central issue until the partition of India in 1947 and movements of reform transcended the traditional boundaries of class, ethnicity, and language.[32]

Educational reform movements were mostly centered in the urban areas, but the religious reform movements spread mostly in the rural areas. Prominent among the religious reform movements were *Farai'di*, *Tayuni*, and *Tariqa-i-Muhammadiyya*. The Farai'di and Tayuni movements were exclusively puritanical in nature, but the Tariqa-i-Muhammadiyya was radical

[27] Muhammad Enamul Haq, *A history of Sufi-ism in Bengal* (Dacca, Bangladesh: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1975), 52
[28] Haq 1975, 287
[29] Karim 1985, 160
[30] Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition of Bengal* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 251
[31] See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 131, and Peter Gottschalk, "A Categorical Difference: Communal Identity in British Epistemologies" in J.R. Hinnells and R. King eds., *Religion and Violence in South Asia: Theory and Practice*, pp. 195-210 (New York: Routledge, 2007), 197-198. See also William Sweetman, "Unity and Plurality: Hinduism and the Religions of India in Early European Scholarship," *Religion* 31(2001):209-224.
[32] See Sufia M. Uddin, *Constructing Bangladesh: Religion, Ethnicity, and Language in an Islamic Nation* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

and militant in nature.[33] Another movement similar to the latter was the *Ahle Hadith* movement. The adherents of the Tariqa-i-Muhammadiyya and Ahle Hadith movements were also loosely known as the *Wahhabis* in India (the Deobandis were also branded by some Islamic scholars as Wahhabis).[34] However, it has been argued that there was no apparent relationship between the Wahhabism of Arabia and so-called Wahhabism in India.[35] The basic difference between the Wahhabism of Arabia and Tariqa-i-Muhammadiyya was that the Arabian Wahhabis did not believe in the special power of the Sufis, whereas most of the prominent leaders of Tariqa-i-Muhammadiyya were followers of the Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya, and Chishtiyya Sufi orders. In addition, the Wahhabis of Arabia followed the Hanbali school, but the Tariqa-i-Muhammadiyya and Ahle Hadith did not recognize the authority of any single school of law.[36] The only meaningful similarity among all these groups was that they denied the authority of *taqlid* (acceptance of traditional interpretation of a single school of Islamic law). Among these reform movements, the Fara'idi and Tayuni were the most active in East Bengal. After the demise of these movements, another movement known as *Tablighi Jamaat* arrived on the scene in the 1920s. This movement, which also aimed at purifying Islamic practices, was created as a response to the aggressive campaign of the Hindu *Arya Samaj*.[37] Bangladesh has the largest organization of Tablighi Jamaat in the Muslim world and its annual *iztema* (congregation) is the second largest gathering after the annual *hajj* (pilgrimage) in Mecca. These revivalist movements deepened Islamic consciousness and shaped present-day Bengali Muslim customs and institutions.[38]

During the independence movement against the British colonial rule in the early 1940s, the quest for a separate political identity of Bengal Muslims gained momentum. India was divided into two independent states in 1947. The basis of this separation was the Muslim's desire for a separate political identity; the Muslims of India saw themselves as a separate nation with a distinct cultural and religious heritage. This theory was popularly known as the "Two Nations Theory" and was propagated by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, one of the founding fathers of Pakistan. The problem with this doctrine was that it defined Islamic identity in the context of communal tensions.[39] Furthermore, it was grounded in British policies that polarized the distinction between Muslims and Hindus and popularized the idea of an India with a Hindu majority and a Muslim minority.[40] The Two Nations theory became the basis of political identity

[33] For details, see Muinuddin Ahmad Khan, *History of the Faraidi Movement in Bengal (1818-1906)* (Karachi, Pakistan: Pakistan Historical Society, 1965).
[34] Uddin 2006, 54-58
[35] Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 250; see also Khan 1965.
[36] Uddin 2006, 55; also Khan 1965. For a general discussion on the difference between Arabian Wahhabis and Ahle Hadith, see Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremist* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 89-91
[37] For details, see Mohammad Rashiduzzaman, "Islam, Muslim Identity and Nationalism in Bangladesh," *Journal of South Asia and Middle Eastern Studies, 18*(1):36-60, 1994.
[38] For details, see Peter J. Bertocci, "Islam and Social Construction of the Bangladesh Countryside," in R. Ahmed ed., *Understanding the Bengal Muslims: Interpretative Essays*, pp. 71-85 (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[39] For details, see Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity*, Second Edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[40] For details, see Burton S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist Among the Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987); and also Peter Van Der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1994).

in all the Muslim communities of India, including Bengal.[41] Eventually, East Bengal became a part of Pakistan in 1947. Conflicts soon began between the two wings of Pakistan as the ruling elites of West Pakistan undermined the ethno-linguistic nature of Bengal's culture. Later, a separate Bengali nationalism emerged, centering mostly on the secular language issue. During the period between 1948 and 1970, ethnicity and language subsumed religion in Bengali nationalism.[42] Bangladesh emerged as an independent country in 1971 based on ethno-linguistic and socio-political issues.

THE RISE OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN BANGLADESH

After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, a new Constitution that was secular in character was adopted. Secularism, which originally meant religious neutrality, was understood as one of the basic principles of the constitutional separation between religion and the state. However, after the military coup d'état of 1975, secularism was replaced by the words "Faith in Almighty Allah" in the revised constitution. A new era of the relationship with Middle Eastern Muslim countries also developed during the military regime. This new diplomatic relationship opened up new opportunities for employment for Bangladeshi workers in Middle Eastern countries, especially in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. These workers later brought Wahhabi ideology back home from Arabia and created a social ground and support base for future fundamentalists in the country. In 1988, another military dictator declared Islam the state religion of Bangladesh by amending the Constitution. To create an aura of political legitimacy as well as to win support from the oil-rich Middle Eastern Muslim countries, military regimes rehabilitated and eventually collaborated with Islamic political organizations, some of which were radical and fundamentalist in nature. As Tazeen Murshid has observed, "Religion and politics do not necessarily come together only when political institutions are weak, but also when dominant authoritarian regimes feel threatened."[43] Both military regimes tried to overcome their legitimacy crises by manipulating the political issue of Islamic identity. In this way, the military regimes not only created the opportunity for the Islamists to be a part of mainstream politics in Bangladesh, but they also made Islamization an agenda of the state and Islam the *de facto* state ideology.[44]

Subsequent democratic governments could not overcome the religious ideology created by the military regimes. During the anti-military period of the 1980s, the two major political parties, the Bangladesh Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), continued to maintain tactical relationships with fundamentalist political organizations. The competition over "Who is more Islamic?", which started during the military era, still continues among the political parties of Bangladesh today. The party that won the general elections in 1991 and 2001 formed a coalition with fundamentalist political organizations. Such tactical

[41] See Khalid B. Sayeed, *The political system of Pakistan* (Boston, Massachusetts: Hough Mifflin, 1967), and also Kirsten Westergaard, *State and rural society in Bangladesh* (London and Malmo, Sweden: Curzon Press, 1985).
[42] See Syed S. Islam, "Islam in Bangladesh: A Dichotomy of Bengali and Muslim Identities," *Islamic Quarterly, 4*(3):221-36, 1997; and also Bhuian Md. Monoar Kabir, "The politics of Religion: The Jamaat-i-Islami in Bangladesh," in R. Ahmed ed., *Religion, Nationalism and Politics in Bangladesh*, pp. 118-136 (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1990).
[43] Tazeen M. Murshid, *The Sacred and the Secular: Bengal Muslim Discourses,1871-1977* (Calcutta, India: Oxford University Press, 1995), 370
[44] Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 103

relationships and coalitions have had an effect on public policy, and in the daily lives of ordinary people. For example, Bangladesh has not accepted all of the covenants of the Beijing Platform of Action for Women's Rights and has refused to ratify certain articles (Article 2 and 16.1c) of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.[45] The secular nature of these covenants did not fit with the religious principles of public policies pursued by recent governments. In order to increase their popularity before handing over power to a caretaker government (a non-partisan interim government responsible for conducting general elections), the Prime Minister and the Chairperson of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party declared in 2006 that the government would officially recognize the degrees awarded by the Qwami madrasas. In other words, the terminal *Dawra* degree of these madrasas would be considered equivalent to a Masters degree from a secular university.[46] A short time later, the Awami League, the main opposition party, signed a five-point agreement with the fundamentalist political organization Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish on the eve of the general election in January 2007. The AL agreed that it would recognize the degrees awarded by the Qwami madrasas, that no anti-Qur'an law would be enacted, and that *alems* (clerics) with madrasa degrees would have the right to issue *fatwas* even though the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh had declared the pronouncement of fatwas illegal in January 2001.[47] The AL further agreed that no derogatory remarks could be made against the prophets, and those who do not believe in the assertion that the Prophet Muhammad is the last messenger of Allah will forfeit their right to be known as Muslim; this was an oblique reference to the Ahmadiyya community of Bangladesh.[48] In such ways, the two major political parties have continued the policy of military governments in courting the Islamists and using the state apparatus to Islamize Bangladeshi society.[49]

As noted at the beginning of this paper, Islam is not a monolithic tradition in Bangladesh. In historical terms, it contains four overlapping traditions: (i) a Sufi-influenced accommodationist and tolerant tradition of coexistence of different faiths that influence one another on a religio-cultural basis; (ii) a scripturally literalist and socially active Islamic tradition derived from the influence of revivalist reform movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; (iii) a modern Islamist tradition mostly derived from radical and militant Islamist political parties and organizations; (iv) a secularized and modernist tradition of Islam derived from the European education system introduced by the British colonial rulers.[50] Despite the growth of non-Sufi Islamic traditions, Sufi ideologies still have a great influence upon the daily lives of most Bangladeshi Muslims. However, the political inertia of the tolerant Sufi-oriented tradition has been exploited by the second and third traditions with the support of the political elites. Ironically, these elites belong to the secularized fourth tradition and would not normally see themselves as supporters of militant Islam. The increasing militancy of Bangladeshi Islam fostered by political accommodationism has created a challenge to the religiously tolerant Bengali culture. By aligning with the militant Islamist organizations, the Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party undermined the influence of Sufi teachers and helped create the

[45] Sarwar Alam, "*For Domestic Use Only: Muslim Women's Perception of Power and Powerlessness in a Bangladesh Village*" (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arkansas, 2006), 235
[46] The Daily Star, August 22, 2006
[47] The Daily Star, January 02, 2001
[48] The Daily Star, December 24, 2006
[49] Riaz 2008, 103
[50] Alam 2006, 81

chaotic political situation that encouraged the military to extend its support to the caretaker government to declare a state of emergency on January 11, 2007.[51]

THE RISE AND ESTABLISHMENT OF ISLAMIC MILITANCY IN THE 1990s

After the demise of the second military regime by a mass upsurge organized by the Awami League, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, and their alliances in December 1990, Bangladesh experienced a major turning point toward militant fundamentalism in its political climate. Militant Islamic fundamentalists in Bangladesh are intolerant of other belief systems, Islamically supremacist in their political orientation, and rigidly literalistic in their scriptural orientation. Without considering the historical context of Islam, they follow a literal interpretation of the Qur'an and declare jihad against those who are against them. As befits a political ideology, their doctrines are framed in simplistic terms. In an interview with National Public Radio, Vincent Cornell termed this approach "radical superficiality."[52] In this section, I shall discuss two of the most prominent militant fundamentalist organizations, the HUJIB and JMB, in detail and their links with the two major political parties and with international Islamic organizations. Special attention will be paid to their relationship with the BNP-led four party alliances between the period of 2001 and 2006, their sources of funds, and their relations with private Islamic madrasas.

In the general election of 1991, the Awami League won 88 seats, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party won 140 seats, the Jama'at-i-Islami (JI) won 18 seats, and the Jatiya Party (JP) won 35 seats in the Parliament, which is comprised of 300 general seats. To form a government, a party or a coalition of parties must possess 151 seats in the Parliament. Since none of the parties secured a majority in the 1991 election, the JI became the kingmaker by extending its support to the BNP to form a government. Thus, the JI not only demonstrated its strength in forming a government, but also created an opportunity and support base for the proliferation of militant fundamentalist political organizations in Bangladesh in the near future.

In the general election of 1996, the AL won 146 seats, the BNP 116 seats, the JI 3 seats, and the JP 32 seats. The AL formed the government with the support of the ousted General Ershad's JP, against whom the AL fought to restore democracy for almost a decade between 1982 and 1990. Later the JP withdrew its support from the government and joined the four-party alliance led by the BNP. Other members of the alliance were the JI and Islami Oikya Jote (the United Islamic Front) or IOJ, which was an umbrella front of different smaller religious organizations. Some of its member organizations were militant in nature. During the 2001 general election, the AL won 62 seats, and the BNP-led four-party alliance won 230 seats, of which the BNP had 193 seats, the JI had 17 seats, the JP and its fraction had 18 seats, and the IOJ had 2 seats. The BNP awarded two ministries to the JI when it formed the government. During the BNP-led four-party alliance government, Bangladesh experienced a prolific rise of militant fundamentalist Islamic organizations.

The two of the militant fundamentalist organizations of this period that shocked the country the most were the HUJIB and the JMB. The mother organization of the HUJIB was

[51] For further information, see Maneeza Hossain, *Broken pendulum: Bangladesh's swing to radicalism* (Washington, DC: Hudson Institute, 2007), 6

[52] See Vincent J. Cornell's Interview with the National Public Radio in September 2004. Available at http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/2004/09/30_crisisinislam/index/shtml

located in Pakistan. The Pakistani HUJI had first appeared in the early 1980s as a group of supporters of the Afghan resistance against Soviet aggression, known as *Jama'atul Ansar* (Group of the Helpers). With the support of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI), the group renamed itself as *Harkatul Jihad al-Islam* (The Movement for the Islamic Jihad) in 1988.[53] In the 1990s it expanded its operations beyond Afghanistan, especially in support of the struggle of Muslims in non-Muslim countries.

Shafiqur Rahman, an Afghan war veteran, founded the Harkatul Jihad al-Islami Bangladesh in 1992. He gathered a group of militants who had participated in the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan in order to struggle for a *Shari'a*-based Islamic regime in Bangladesh. The organization officially declared its existence at a press conference at the National Press Club in Dhaka on April 30, 1992. However, it first drew serious attention when a group of armed militants of HUJIB attempted to kill one of the leading secularist poets of the country, Shamsur Rahman, on January 18, 1999. On July 20, 2000 HUJIB militants attempted to kill the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina by planting a bomb at a venue where she was scheduled to visit. On April 14, 2001 HUJIB militants detonated bombs at a cultural program celebrating the Bengali New Year in Dhaka. On May 21, 2004 HUJIB activists threw bombs at the Bangladesh-born British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Anwar Chowdhury, while he was visiting the shrine of the Sufi Shaykh Hazrat Shah Jalal in the Sylhet district; the High Commissioner barely escaped from this attack. On August 21, 2004, bombs were thrown at the rally of the party of opposition (the AL) in the parliament in Dhaka, targeting the leader of the opposition and former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Sheikh Hasina narrowly escaped this attack.[54] During this period, there were several reports that the BNP and Jama'at-i-Islami-led four-party alliance government patronized the HUJIB and its leaders.[55]

Earlier on, the HUJIB established several madrasas in Chittagong and in the Cox's Bazaar districts of southeastern part of Bangladesh. Some of these madrasas were reportedly used as bases for terrorist training. HUJIB also established a relationship with the Rohingya refugees. These are Muslim refugees from the Arakan region of Myanmar that entered Bangladesh in 1977 and again in 1991 to escape forced labor, rape, religious persecution, torture, and humiliation at the hands of Myanmar's military junta. Especially close ties were formed with the *Rohingya Solidarity Organization* (RSO). Today, HUJIB provides training for RSO activists.[56] In addition to Afghanistan and Pakistan, HUJIB also maintains connections with Islamic militants in Chechnya and Southeast Asia.[57] The relationship among these organizations is far more than tactical; it is driven by the ideological position of the HUJIB—to initiate a struggle for Muslim rights in non-Muslim countries.[58]

After the incarceration of 41 HUJIB militants in the southeastern district of Cox's Bazaar and the subsequent discovery of some of its bases by the law-enforcement agencies, HUJIB moved its remaining bases to the northwestern part of the country. To confuse the law-enforcement agencies, it changed its organizational name to names such as *Qital fi Sabilillah*

[53] Riaz 2008, 116
[54] The Daily Star, January 28, 2005
[55] The Daily Star, March 07, 2008; the Daily Ittefaq. June 12, 2008
[56] Taj I. Hashmi, "Islamic Resurgence in Bangladesh: Genesis, Dynamics, and Implications," in S.P. Limaye, M. Malik, and R.G. Wirsing eds., *Religious Radicalism and Security in South Asia*, pp. 35-72 (Honolulu, Hawaii: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2004), 63
[57] Bertil Lintner, "Beware of Bangladesh—Bangladesh: A Cocoon of Terror," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 4, 2002
[58] Riaz 2008, 66

(Fighting in the Way of God) and *al-Jama'atul Jihad* (Jihad Group) several times. Some observers have also speculated that HUJIB activists had also worked undercover with Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).[59] The HUJIB is comprised of military (jihad) and non-military wings; members of the military or jihad wings are responsible for providing training as well as carrying out terrorist activities. On the other hand, members of the non-military wings are responsible for motivating people to become members of the organization and create a support base through publication and other means. It is claimed that HUJIB has about 15,000 members. According to a report of the US State Department's counterterrorism wing, HUJIB was engaged in planning and preparations for possible future acts of terrorism, and intended to carry out such acts against US targets. The report states that the leader of the HUJIB signed the February 1998 fatwa by Usama bin Laden that declared American civilians to be legitimate targets for attack. Since then, HUJIB has been implicated in a number of terrorist attacks in Bangladesh and abroad. Executive Order 13224, signed by the US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, criminalizes the provision of material support to HUJIB by US citizens or people living under US jurisdictions, and freezes all HUJIB properties and interests in the US and in areas under US jurisdiction.[60] In addition, the government of Bangladesh banned HUJIB on October 17, 2005.

A former member of Jama'at-i- Islami, Shaykh Abdur Rahman, and Dr. Asadullah al-Ghalib, a professor at Rajshahi University of Bangladesh and the founder of *Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh* (The Ahle Hadith [People of Hadith] Movement of Bangladesh, AHAB), founded Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in 1998.[61] AHAB, out of which the JMB was developed, is different from the Ahle Hadith movement of nineteenth century India, which was not a political organization per se. Also, although AHAB declares itself a Salafi organization,[62] no apparent connection existed between Arab Salafi movements and the AHAB. However, one of the founders of the JMB, Shaykh Abdur Rahman, studied at Medina University and previously worked at the Saudi embassy in Bangladesh. Thus, he may have been influenced by Wahhabi ideology.

JMB's initial areas of operation were the northern and northwestern regions of Bangladesh. Later it expanded its area of operation to other parts of the country. Its supreme decision-making body was known as the *Majlis-e-Shura* (Consultative Council), comprised of seven members. Its membership was divided into three categories: the leadership, the *ehsar* (full time activists), and the *gayeri ehsar* (part-time activists). It claimed to have had training centers in 57 of the 64 districts of the country, with 20,000 active members. The primary goal of this organization was to replace the "evil and corrupted" secular political system of Bangladesh with a *shari'a*-based Islamic system.[63] In order to achieve this goal, JMB called for the unity of all Islamic forces in the country.

Like HUJIB, the JMB also had a military or armed wing known as *Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh* (the Awakened Muslim Masses of Bangladesh or JMJB), headed by Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai (Brother Bangla), who was reportedly trained in Afghanistan. Since the time it was formed, the JMB drew everyone's attention for its armed and violent activities. In 2004, with the support of a BNP minister and local police administration, it launched a combing

[59] The Daily Star, October 18, 2005
[60] The Daily Star, March 07, 2008
[61] Eliza Griswold, "The Next Islamist Revolution?" *New York Times*, January 23, 2005.
[62] For details, see its website at http://www.at-tahreek.com (retrieved on 06/13/2008).
[63] According to a Berlin-based non-profit organization, *Transparency International*, Bangladesh ranked as the most corrupt nation in the world between 2001 and 2005.

operation in three northwestern districts to eliminate underground Marxist organizations. Between April and May of the same year, the JMJB group abducted and killed at least 22 people.[64] On August 17, 2005, its activists detonated 459 bombs in 63 of the 64 districts of the country. Its activists killed two Senior Assistant Judges in the Jhalakati district on November 14, 2005. On November 29, 2005, two JMJB suicide-bombers blew themselves up at the courthouses in the Gazipur and Chittagong districts. This attack killed 9 people, including two lawyers and one policeman.

On August 17, the JMB left a pamphlet in several places addressed to the people of Bangladesh, the government of Bangladesh, judges, civil servants, armed and paramilitary forces and Muslims all over the world. It stated that willful sinners had composed the Constitution of Bangladesh. The Constitution is a challenge against the rule of Allah. In its view, the rulers of Bangladesh opposed Allah because the procedure of selection of the President and other functionaries of the state is un-Islamic. It called upon the people of Bangladesh to reject the judicial system that follows "*taghut law*" (tyrannical, i.e., secular law) in order to promote the implementation of Islamic law. Instead, it encouraged everybody to go to the *ulama* (clerics) for justice and to settle disputes. It asked the members of the Parliament to refrain from calling general strikes, and to implement Islamic law and an Islamic "*hukumat*" (regime) in the country. It further stated that those who are trying to give democracy an institutional form are enemies of Islam. It asked government employees, bureaucrats, and judges to work for establishing Islamic hukumat, or otherwise to quit their jobs. At the same time, it asked the military, paramilitary, and other law-enforcement agencies to help implement God's law, to join the soldiers of God, and to refrain from taking up arms against them. It stated that U.S. President George W. Bush is the greatest terrorist in the world for attacking innocent Muslims to make them lose their faith. The pamphlet appealed to Muslims to overthrow the secular rulers and establish Islamic governments in Muslim countries by armed jihad. It also appealed to Muslims to boycott the United Nations and make a separate United Nations comprised only of Islamic countries. It warned President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair to refrain from invading Muslim countries; if they did not stop torturing and humiliating Muslims, their security would also be in jeopardy. Finally, it warned anti-Islamic NGOs to refrain from Islam-destroying activities.[65]

Because of extensive media coverage and international pressure, the government banned both the JMB and its military wing on February 23, 2005. Shaykh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, along with five other JMB activists were arrested, tried, and finally executed on March 30, 2007.

During the rule of the BNP-led four-party alliance between 2001 and 2006, militant Islamic groups such as the HUJIB and JMB received significant material and moral support from Islamists within the alliance.[66] Despite media reports on the terrorist activities of HUJIB and JMB, the government denied not only such activities, but even the existence of such organizations. The Jama'at-i-Islami's inclusion in the alliance is especially perceived to have emboldened the extremists, who were protected from harassment by the authorities.[67] For example, the *Ameer* of the JI, Maulana Motiur Rahman Nizami stated several times that Bangla Bhai was the creation of the media.[68] On September 11, 2005, the JI lawmaker Riasat Ali

[64] Riaz 2008, 120
[65] Riaz 2008, 130-133; Ali 2006, 81-82; The Daily Star August 18, 2005
[66] Riaz 2008, 45; The Daily Star. April 9, 2008
[67] Ali 2006, 41
[68] The Daily Star, July 23, 2004

Biswas said in Parliament, "Reports of militant training of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harkatul Jihad to turn Bangladesh into an Islamic state is nothing but propaganda."[69] Forty-one armed men of HUJIB, who had been arrested in the Cox's Bazaar district in 1996 were later sentenced to life im Riaz 2008, 45; The Daily Star, April 9, 2008prisonment, were released on bail after the alliance government came to power. Some HUJIB leaders were also leaders of the BNP-led four-party alliance. Prominent among them were IOJ leader Shaikhul Hadith Allama Azizul Haq, *Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish* (Bangladesh Caliphate Council) second-in-command Muhammad Habibur Rahman, Ataur Rahman Khan, Sultan Jaok, Abdul Mannan, and Habibullah.[70] In this regard, Ali Riaz has noted, "The presence of the Islamists in government has not only helped the militants to operate freely but limited the ability of the government to act decisively."[71] It is also believed that the Jama'at-i-Islami was linked with the HUJIB and the JMB. Most of the top JMB leaders were former members of either JI or its student wing.[72] However, even the Awami League was not averse to maintain a strategic relationship with Islamic militant organizations either. It nominated six Islamists to contest the parliamentary election scheduled to be held in 2007. These included the Afghan war veterans Mufti Shahidul Islam of Narail and Muhammad Habibur Rahman of Sylhet. Habibur Rahman had visited Taliban militant camps and met Osama bin Laden in 1988 and later declared a bounty on the head of the feminist writer Taslima Nasreen.

Some foreign Islamic charitable organizations also provided financial supports to militant organizations including HUJIB and JMB, in addition to their support of Islamic NGOs in Bangladesh. Charitable organizations such as the Jeddah-based International Islamic Relief Organization and the Kuwait-based Revival of Islamic Heritage Society provided funds to JMB. The JMB also received funds from the Saudi-based NGO, *Hayatul Ighatha*. The South Africa-based Servants of Suffering Humanity and its operatives were reportedly involved with the HUJIB.[73] The Saudi-based Muslim World League (*Rabita al-Alam al-Islami*) is widely known to provide financial support for the JI. The police arrested seven foreign citizens of the Saudi-based *al-Haramayne Foundation* (AHF) in September 2002 for their alleged involvement with terrorist operatives, especially of the HUJIB. The arrested ideologue of JMB, Dr. Asadullah al-Ghalib, confessed during interrogation that he received more than four million dollars every year from the Middle East, especially from the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society of Kuwait.[74] He has also been reported that some militant organizations in the country have been running successful businesses, such as shrimp farms and cold storage businesses, leading them to become financially independent. Reportedly, they earned up to $185 million per year from these business investments. Militant organizations also receive private donations from home and abroad.

The al-Haramayne Foundation (AHF) reportedly spent approximately $40 million for the construction of 80 madrasas and 4 orphanages in Bangladesh between 1992 and 2004. When it was closed down in July 2004, the AHF had been operating in 38 districts and had a five-year grant of $3 million to Bangladesh in the pipeline.[75] Some of these madrasas and orphanages were being used to provide training for JMB militants in the manufacture and use of bombs. Quoting intelligence sources, *The Daily Star*, the Bangladeshi English daily, reported on August

[69] The Daily Star, October 18, 2005
[70] The Daily Star, October 18, 2005
[71] Riaz 2008, 61
[72] Riaz 2008, 45
[73] Riaz 2008, 84-85
[74] The Daily Star, August 22, 2005
[75] Riaz 2008, 86; The Daily Star, August 22, 2005

22, 2005 that militants received funds for madrasas from the UAE-based welfare organizations *al-Fuzaira* and *Khairul Ansar al-Khairia*, the Kuwait-based *Doulatul Kuwait*, and the Bahrain-based *Doulatul Bahrain*. The same daily reported that one arrested confessed to the police that he had distributed approximately $300,000 among 421 madrasas to train activists of HUJIB. He received this sum from a Pakistani citizen named Muhammed Sajid. Other militants said that Osama bin Laden had sponsored them to develop a madrasa infrastructure. However, most of the Islamic charitable organizations placed education at the top of their agenda and were involved in setting up Salafi-oriented madrasas in various parts of the country.[76]

There are two major categories of madrasas in Bangladesh: the government controlled *'Alia* madrasa system, and the independently run *Qwami* or Deobandi madrasa system. Unlike the degrees awarded by the 'Alia madrasas, the degrees awarded by the Qwami madrasas are not recognized by the government; thus, the graduates of these madrasas never get any jobs in the formal sectors. These madrasas follow the curriculum known as *Dars-e-Nizami*, introduced by Nizamuddin Sihalvi (d. 1747), a respected Islamic scholar of Lucknow, India.[77] All the Deobandi or Qwami madrasas in Bangladesh and elsewhere in South Asia follow this curriculum. It consists of twenty subjects of two categories: al-*ulum an-naqliya* (transmitted sciences), and *al-ulum al-aqliya* (rational sciences), which covers grammar, rhetoric, prosody, logic, philosophy, Arabic literature, medicine, mathematics, polemics, life of the Prophet, jurisprudence, Islamic law, Hadith, and exegesis of the Qur'an. It uses books written in the eleventh and fourteenth centuries CE. At present, there is no specific data available for the number of Qwami madrasas in Bangladesh or the students therein. It is estimated that there are as many as 10,000 Qwami madrasas imparting Islamic education to 100,000 students; however, these figures could be much higher.[78] These madrasas are supported by religious endowments and private donations. Most of their students come from poor families with rural backgrounds who cannot afford to send their children to modern schools. The newly founded and foreign-funded Qwami madrasas, popularly known as Ahle Hadith or Wahhabi madrasas, are believed to be the breeding ground of militant and terrorist activities. It is reported that there are as many as 700 Qwami madras in Bangladesh controlled by the Ahle Hadith organization and run by the financial support of the Hayatul Ighatha and Revival of Islamic Heritage Society.[79] It is alleged that these madrasas have been providing their students guerrilla training to realize their dream of establishing an Islamic state in Bangladesh. There may have been as many as 233 Qwami madrasas across the country where such training took place.[80] Thus it is revealed that not all madrasas, but only a small portion of Qwami madrasas run by the Ahle Hadith, provide shelter and training to the militants.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In this section, I argue that the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Bangladesh is rooted in the social and political dynamics of the country as well as in the perceived anti-Muslim aggression of the West. These internal and external factors have created a feeling of deprivation

[76] Riaz 2008, 83
[77] Rahman 1966, 232-233
[78] The Daily Prothom Alo, April 03, 2006
[79] The Daily Star, February 26, 2005
[80] The New Age, September 05, 2005

and a feeling of humiliation in the minds of certain people, which motivate them to become involved in militancy and terrorism. I will analyze (1) *the rise of fundamentalism* by employing the theory of relative deprivation (TRD), and (2) *the rise of militant fundamentalism* by employing the theory of humiliation (TH), in addition to the social and political dynamics described in the preceding sections. However, both TRD and TH overlap, as it is difficult to maintain a fine line between them.

(1) *The rise of fundamentalism*. Religiously motivated terrorism is a new phenomenon in Bangladesh, which started in the late 1990s. In the early 1990s, there was an upsurge in the issuance of fatwas by rural clerics. Fatwas were pronounced against NGO activists, social reformers, and feminists.[81] Some Western donor countries channeled their aids to Bangladesh through NGOs or put pressure on the government to spend aid money through NGOs. The intervention of NGOs in Bangladesh society in the 1980s especially challenged the rural power structure and social hierarchy. This was because the NGOs' prime goal was to empower rural women through literacy and by providing micro-credit programs. Literacy programs often emerged as an alternative to madrasa education. A poor child who would otherwise attend a Qwami madrasa would now attend an NGO-run school in certain areas of the country. Similarly, micro-credit programs emerged as an alternative to loans by *mohajans* (rural wealthy traders and money lenders). Thus, rural elites felt threatened by these NGOs. At the same time, rural clerics who used to earn their living as Imams (prayer leaders) of mosques and teachers of *maqtabs* (rudimentary religious learning centers) and madrasas felt threatened by NGO programs. Rural wealthy elites typically provided such clerics with salaries and residences. The increased influence of NGOs deprived the rural clerics of money, power, and influence. Thus, the increased issuance of fatwas against the NGOs can be viewed as the reflection of economic grievances, and perceived feelings of injustice. Most of the time, a fatwa was pronounced in a *salish* (a traditional rural arbitration council for dispute resolution) that was called by rural elites. The salish and the fatwa were used as instruments to ameliorate the grievance and injustice, and to restore the lost dignity and honor of the rural elites and clerics. In the early 1990s, these incidents were local and uncoordinated. However, the situation changed in the late 1990's, during which fundamentalist religious organizations started using fatwa in a coordinated way throughout the country.

Bert Hoselitz and Ann Willner have argued that the perception of deprivation is sometimes intolerable for certain individuals.[82] Deprived individuals seek a remedy, by whatever means are available to them, the material and psychic frustrations that they feel. At such times, deprivation may serve as a catalyst for revolutionary action. The most powerful means available to rural elites and clerics of Bangladesh against NGOs were fatwa. Rural elites and clerics felt, in Gurr's term, deprived of their "rightfully entitled" goods and conditions of life because of NGOs.[83] By paraphrasing Walter Runciman, the situation can be described as, A (rural elites and clerics) sees him, at some previous or expected time, as having X, he wants to restore X, and he sees it as feasible that he should have X.[84]

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[81] Shamsul Alam 1998, 429-461; Taj I. Hashmi, *Women and Islam in Bangladesh: Beyond subjugation and tyranny* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000): 96-133; and Elora Shehabuddin, "Contesting the illicit: Gender and the politics of fatwas in Bangladesh," *Signs* 24(4):1011-1044, 1999:1021-1022

[82] Bert Hoselitz & Ann Willner, "Economic development, political strategies, and American aid," in Morton A. Kaplan, ed., *The revolution in world politics* (New York: Wiley, 1962), 363

[83] Gurr 1970, 13

[84] Runciman 1966, 10

Grievance is a central theme of relative deprivation. According to the TRD, grievance derives from social comparison, which can be intrapersonal and interpersonal or both i.e., intragroup (egoistic), and intergroup (fraternalistic).[85] In this regard, Stephen Wright & Linda Tropp contend that in order to improve a situation, a group member engages in collective action as a representative of the group.[86] The collective action could be reflective of intragroup behavior because it represents the cohesiveness of the members of the same group, and at the same time it could be reflective of intergroup behavior because it involves the individual's response to his or her self-representation, as a member of a particular group. Thus, the events of *fatwa* can be viewed as both intragroup (rural elites) and intergroup (rural elites, and clerics) reactions against "others" (NGOs). In analyzing the motivational aspect of fatwa through the lens of TRD, Naomi Ellemers's observation is also relevant here. According to Ellemers, TRD proposes that perceived injustice of current outcomes is an important motivator of behavioral action, aimed at redressing this injustice.[87]

Some researchers argue that TRD is linked to the feelings of anger and frustration.[88] Gurr argues that the anger induced by frustration is a motivating force that disposes men to aggression, irrespective of its instrumentalities. If frustrations are sufficiently prolonged or sharply felt, aggression is quite likely, if not certain, to occur.[89] Following this line of argument, Marylee Taylor observes that the experience of deprivation entails frustration, anger, and resentment because the feeling of deprivation flows from a sense of entitlement,[90] just as Gurr had argued. Taylor also argues that feeling of deprivation may entail the perception that norms of fairness and justice have been violated, which is encouraged not only by personal and situational factors, but also by prevailing norms. Some researchers argue that relative deprivation is a sense of violated entitlement.[91] In order to restore the lost dignity and rights, people may become seditious, and employ violent means.

In describing the causes of sedition, Aristotle observed that men turn seditious when they suffer dishonor upon themselves and when they receive contemptuous behavior, especially from those who are politically stronger than them. He noted that the probability of sedition increases when persons of questionable loyalty to the Constitution are allowed to hold political offices. He also noted that small changes, if overlooked, bring about a great change in the whole system of

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[85] Marylee C. Taylor, "Fraternal deprivation, collective threat, and racial resentment: Perspective on White racism," in I. Walker, and H. Smith eds., *Relative deprivation: Specification, development, and integration*, pp. 13-43 (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15; Tom R. Tyler & Allen E. Lind, "Understanding the nature of fraternalistic deprivation: Does group-based deprivation involve fair outcomes or fair treatment?" In I. Walker, and H. Smith eds., *Relative deprivation: Specification, development, and integration*, pp. 44-68 (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 45

[86] Stephen C. Wright & Linda R. Tropp, "Collective action in response to disadvantage: Intergroup perceptions, social identification, and social change." In I. Walker, and H. Smith eds., *Relative deprivation: Specification, development, and integration*, pp. 200-236 (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 203

[87] Naomi Ellemers, "Social Identity and Relative Deprivation." In I. Walker, and H. Smith eds., *Relative deprivation: Specification, development, and integration*, pp. 239-264 (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 245

[88] Tyler & Smith, "Social justice and social movements," in D.T. Gilbert, S.T. Fiske, and G. Lindzey eds., *Handbook of social psychology*, Fourth Edition, vol. 2, pp. 595-629 (Boston, Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 597

[89] Gurr 1970, 37

[90] Taylor 2002, 17

[91] Fay J. Crosby, "Relative deprivation in organizational settings," in B.M. Staw & L.L. Cummings eds., *Research in organizational behavior*, vol. 6, pp. 51-93 (Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press, 1984), 51

institutions.[92] Aristotle's observation could be applied to the causes of the rise of militant fundamentalist movements in Bangladesh. Rural elites and ulamas were increasingly deprived of their power and honor because of the extensive socio-economic programs of NGOs supported by government policies. On the other hand, after winning the general election in 2001, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party offered two ministries to its coalition partner, the Jama'at-i-Islami, whose loyalty to the Constitution has always been remained questionable because of its collaboration with the occupation army of Pakistan during the War of Liberation in 1971. The JI never supported the secular character of the Constitution, as it wanted to establish an Islamic state. The BNP allowed the JI to hold political offices that increased the probability of seditious activities, and thus, created an opportunity for the rise of militant fundamentalism in the country. However, both AL and BNP ignored the fatwa and salish incidents in the early 1990s, which ultimately created an environment conducive to flourish a militant movement in the country.

(2) *The rise of militant fundamentalism*. As described earlier, militant Islamic fundamentalism appeared in Bangladesh in the late 1990s. In the beginning, fundamentalist sentiments were expressed through the events of fatwa and salish in the rural areas. But these haphazard quantitative events soon turned to qualitative events of organized violence, terrorist attacks, and suicide bombings after the arrival of militant fundamentalist organizations in the scene in the late 1990s. The HUJIB and JMB are the cases in point. The internal dynamics for the rise of militancy were advanced by the external dynamics, such as the war of Afghanistan against Soviet aggression, the attack on Iraq by the US-led coalition forces, and the US' double standard policies in the Middle East, humiliating conditions of Muslims in Myanmar, India, and elsewhere.

Both HUJIB and JMB manipulated the social and economic programs of the NGOs. They viewed NGO-programs as Jews-Christians' hidden agenda of converting the Muslims into Christianity. It is also a fact that some evangelic Christian organizations have been working, with a considerable success, in the tribal areas of the country to convert the indigenous people into Christianity. However, both of these organizations viewed the existence of the Muslim *umma* (community of believers) under threat by the aggression of the United States-led coalition forces. The perceived powerlessness, frustration, anger, and also fear and dishonor led them to adopt a violent and terrorist strategy to fight against the perceived threat of the "evil and corrupted" forces of Western ideals of democracy both at home and abroad. In the absence of resistance from the national governments, the militant fundamentalists viewed themselves as the alternative force to fight against this perceived hegemony. Thus, terrorism comes into being as the failure of other methods of resistance.

This frustration, anger, and feeling of humiliation also reflected in Osama bin Laden's fatwa against the United States in April 2001. In describing the background of the fatwa, bin Laden stated that America has occupied the holiest parts of the Islamic lands, humiliated its people, and terrorized its neighbors. The United States and its alliances have caused more than a million deaths in Iraq. By destroying Iraq, the strongest Arab state, the United States would fulfill its religious and economic purposes, serve the interests of Israel, and make the neighboring Muslim states, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan, into paper mini-states.[93] In an interview on October 20, 2001, bin Laden condemned the role of Arab states (for collaborating with the US and its alliance) and justified the 9/11 attack by stating that the attack was a self-defense,

[92] *The Politics of Aristotle*. Trans. Ernest Barker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 208-210
[93] *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden*, Bruce B. Lawrence, ed., and Howarth, James trans., (New York: Verso, 2005), 60

"defense of our brothers and sons in Palestine, and in order to free our holy sanctuaries. And if inciting for these reasons is terrorism, and if killing those that kill our sons is terrorism, then let history witness that we are terrorists."[94] The root cause of terrorism, which is reflected in bin Laden's statement, is difficult to explain by superficial psychoanalysis. For example, Jerrold M. Post argued, "individuals become terrorists in order to join terrorist groups and commit acts of terrorism."[95] This line of logic fails to explore the root causes of terrorism, such as why would a person in the first place join a terrorist group or commit the act of terrorism (instead of doing something else)? What is the role of ideology? Why does a person have to be inclined to a specific ideology? Why must someone sacrifice his or her life for the sake of community?

It may be argued that the theory humiliation has the answers to these questions. "Torture, humiliation, and loving empathy can link up with terrorism," argues Lindner,[96] which is also reflected in bin Laden's statement. In reference to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, Lindner argues that had there been not a pool of feelings of humiliation, bin Laden would not have found any followers; the feeling is so intense that intelligent young men willfully sacrificed their lives for the sake of their faith and community.[97] This is the kind of situation, which Durkheim called altruism that motivates a group member to sacrifice his life (altruistic suicide) in the service of the society or for the common cause.[98] "In cases of collectively perpetrated mayhem, 'humiliation entrepreneurs' 'invite' followers to pour their frustrations into a grander narrative of humiliation that uses retaliatory acts of humiliation as 'remedy',"[99] where "the individual strips himself of his personal interests in order to be engulfed in something which he regards as more important than his personal existence."[100] Juergensmeyer observes that violent action and terrorism inspired by, among others, the intimacy with which the humiliation is experienced and the degree to which it is regarded as a threat to honor and respectability.[101] Nevertheless, it can be argued that the suicide terrorism, or just the act of terrorism, is a willful choice displaying collective rationality; it is a reasonably informed choice among available alternatives,[102] not an irrational fantasy that Jerrold Post contended.

We have noticed that the HUJIB and JMB organized themselves against the perceived secularist forces of the country, and at the same time, against the perceived threat and fear of the non-Muslim countries against the Muslim umma. JMB's warning to Western leaders to quit the Muslim land particularly reflects this fear. Some of the organizers of both of these organizations fought against Soviet occupation in Afghanistan. They also helped organize the Rohingya refugees politically against the torture, dishonor, and humiliation perpetuated by the Myanmar government. These aids, provided for the Afghan Muslims and Rohingya Muslims, can be described as fellow feeling, the help of one religious group to another in order to rescue them

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[94] *Messages to the World*, 107
[95] Jerrold M. Post, "Terrorist psycho-logic: Terrorist behavior as a product of psychological forces," in W. Reich ed., *Origins of terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, and states of mind*, pp. 25-40 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1998), 35
[96] Lindner 2006, 113
[97] Lindner 2006, 174
[98] Whitney Pope, *Durkheim's suicide: A classic analyzed* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 976), 20
[99] Lindner 2006, 172
[100] Ernest Wallwork, *Durkheim: Morality and milieu* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), 50
[101] Juergensmeyer 2000, 195
[102] Martha Crenshaw, "The logic of terrorism: Terrorist behavior as a product of strategic choice," in W. Reich ed. *Origins of terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, and states of mind*, pp. 7-24 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1998), 7-8, 11

from an odious and humiliating situation. Because of the perceived contemptuous behavior of the Non-Muslim powers, the humiliation and dishonor of the Muslims in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, India, Myanmar, and elsewhere are viewed by the militant fundamentalists, such as the HUJIB and JMB, as sufferings and dishonor for themselves too, since they view themselves as a part of the umma. It has been argued that a Muslim has no nationality except his belief, which makes him a member of the Muslim community.[103] However, it can be argued that the feeling of humiliation as Muslims, among others, is the basic foundation of the militant fundamentalist organizations. It is likely that this feeling ultimately generates frustrations and helplessness, which in turn motivates them to adopt terrorism as a political strategy, as Crenshaw argues.[104] The transformation of collective action into militancy or terrorism is justified by utilitarian logic, the belief that terrorism will bring about desired change for the umma. However, the feeling of humiliation is probably the most important cause of terrorism by the militant fundamentalist organizations.

In conclusion, it may be argued that the internal political dynamics of Bangladesh society, such as the political use of Islam by the military dictators to legitimize their regimes and the politics of expediency of the two major political parties, created the ground for the rise of militant fundamentalism in Bangladesh. Rural clerics have always been poor in Bangladesh, but poverty did not lead them to militancy or terrorism. Nevertheless, the socio-economic programs implemented by the NGOs created a feeling of deprivation among the clerics and rural elites, which led them toward militancy. The external factors, such as the humiliation of Muslims in different parts of the world, expedited the rise of militant fundamentalism in Bangladesh.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Political stability is considered to be *a priori* for the socio-economic development of a country. Maintaining law and order is thus viewed as one of the basic functions of any government. But terrorism of any sort is detrimental to law and order, and also to the socio-economic and political development of a country. Terrorism not only destabilizes a country, but also makes the credibility and effectiveness of a government questionable. There is no doubt that terrorism and militancy are on the rise in Bangladesh. It appears that religious terrorism and militancy are rooted in the socio-economic and political conditions of the country. To fight against religiously motivated terrorism and militancy, the government of Bangladesh should consider the following policy recommendations:

(1) Madrasas established with the funds of Islamic charitable organizations should be incorporated into the mainstream madrasa education system of the country in order to supervise their curriculum as well as to establish governmental control over them;

(2) The government should establish a separate Qwami Madrasa Education Board, similar to the Madrasas Education Board for 'Alia madrasas, in order to establish administrative control over them;

[103] Seyyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Damascus, Syria: Dar Al-Ilm: n.d.), 118-119
[104] Crenshaw 1998, 7

(3) The government has been paying 80% of the salary and benefit of the madrasa teachers registered with the Madrasa Education Board. The government should introduce a similar system for the Qwami madrasa teachers in order to reduce their dependence on private endowment and donation and also to control the financial sources of these madrasas. Although it will be difficult for a poor country like Bangladesh to arrange necessary funds for such expenditures, the government should arrange this fund by shifting the budgetary preferences for the greater benefit of the country. It may help stop the use of the Qwami madrasa-premises as training camps by the militants;

(4) Like the "Governing Body" of the mainstream madrasas, which supervise the financial and general administration of the madrasas and to whom the principal/superintendent of the madrasas remain accountable, the government should introduce similar "Governing Body" for the Qwami madrasas, which may prevent other people to use the madrasa venues other than educational purposes;

(5) The government should give priority to modern education by rearranging program preferences and budgetary allocations. A modern education, in the long run, may create a core value that will prevent religious extremism and militancy from growing;

(6) The government should closely monitor the financial transactions and ensure financial accountability of the non-government and charitable organizations;

(7) The government should arrange extensive terrorism and counterterrorism training programs for the members of the law-enforcement agencies;

(8) The government should strengthen and ensure timely elections of all the local government bodies, such as the district, sub-district, and union councils as well as the municipalities. It will help empower the masses as well as help reduce the feeling of deprivation, even among the marginalized people. It will increase the possibility of creating a common ground and shared interest among the stakeholders to combat terrorism socially and politically;

(9) The government should launch social mobilization and motivational programs against terrorism through electronic and printed medias, and also by engaging local government and public officials, to make people aware of the evil sides of religious extremism and militancy;

(10) The government should make a coordinated and concerted effort with other countries to fight against terrorism. The government should be aware of public exposure of its involvement with the Western countries, especially the United States, as most of the people do not view the United States as a Muslim-friendly nation; and

(11) The mainstream secularist political parties should drop the politics of expediency as a strategy by aligning themselves with the fundamentalist organizations considering the fact that in the future, if the fundamentalists take over the country, they will not expire anybody from persecution.