



Facing Jamaat-e-Islami* in Bangladesh: A global threat in need of a global response

Summary

In an earlier policy brief on Bangladesh**, we argued for the assistance of the international community to democratic forces, including women and minorities; supporting the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) in bringing justice and peace; countering the rise of extremist violence and urging the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) to sever ties with the Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel).

In this policy brief we take an in-depth look at the significance of Jel within the global Jihadist movement and the need to answer it globally. Abul Ala Maududi, created the modern concept of Jihad in 1927 and he founded Jel in 1941. Jel is not a political party in the common understanding of the concept; it is an ideologically geared movement running several organisations. Its network includes numerous affiliate bodies (political, religious and cultural) and aims to transform the state and society of Bangladesh rather than merely win elections. Jel's agenda seeks to bring about a social and political transformation that is diametrically opposed to the founding principles of Bangladesh.

The rise of Jel is connected – directly, through individual members, or indirectly, through its affiliates – with the rise of violence and terrorism in Bangladesh, including its cross-border components. The organisation cultivates an anti-democratic notion of 'demos' and its rhetoric indicates that the only people that belong to the 'demos' of Bangladesh are those who fit their fanatic definition of a Muslim. Jel tries to replace parliamentary democracy with a theocratic Islamic state. Despite recent electoral and political setbacks, Jel is already so deeply entrenched into the institutional system of governance and public sphere that it can continue to function – even without being in power – and build-up its fanatic Islamist network. It risks turning Bangladesh into a major hub of terrorist activities.

Jel's connection to Western based Jihadist organisations – namely in the UK – shows that it is not just a regional phenomenon, but also an important international player. Whereas the international community has condemned violence in the country, it did not unanimously support the work of the ICT and the proscription of organisations linked to the 1971 genocide. We urge the international community to reassess its position regarding Jel and its partner organisations.

* Unless otherwise indicated, Jel refers to the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami in this policy brief.

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I. Abul Ala Maududi: creator of modern Jihadism

Politics in general, and war in particular, have been linked to religion from immemorial times, and this is also the case of Islam. Since the defeat of Turkey in the First World War – a Jihad, from the perspective of the Ottoman Caliphate – secularism temporarily had the upper hand, in Turkey as well as in most of the Muslim world. The revival of Islam as an instrument for politics and war has been an uncontroversial phenomenon in the last fifty years.

A seminal article written by Bernard Lewis in 1976³ – ‘The return of Islam’ – is widely seen as the earliest warning to the Western establishment that something dramatic was happening in the Muslim world. Since then, a wide variety of analyses have been dedicated to this phenomenon and have characterised it with expressions such as: ‘political Islam’ (as opposed to supposed ‘non-political Islam’), ‘Islamic fundamentalism’, ‘integrism’ (in analogy with the Christian fundamentalism and integrism), ‘Islamism’, ‘Salafism’, ‘Wahabism’, ‘Khomeinism’, ‘fanatic Islam’, violence or extremism. To characterise this phenomenon, ‘Jihadism’ (according to Martin Kramer,⁴ the term was popularised in South Asia in the late 1900s) became in our century ever more common among the academic community as well as within the public opinion.

Whereas religious inspirations and designations are common in political movements in the West and elsewhere, and while fanatic traditionalists are also common in every religion, we consider ‘Jihadism’ to have a specific, totalitarian, expansionist meaning which supersedes anything we have seen in other political movements claiming to be religiously inspired, including Islam and traditional Jihad.

Bernard Lewis focused his analysis specifically on Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East, and most of the studies of Jihadism – while referencing Maududi and other South Asian Jihadi ideologues – centre their analysis on this geographic and political context. But before the creation of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in 1928, there already was a movement in South Asia called the ‘Caliphate’ and Maududi published his revolutionary doctrine on Jihad in 1927.

In his youth, Abul Ala Maududi⁵ showed some interest for the All India Khilafat Committee (1919-1922) and was the editor of the newspaper of an important association of Muslim scholars, the Jam’iyat-i ‘Ulama-i Hind. From then on, Maududi opposed the partition of India, which is only consistent with his views on the global character of the Islamic revolution and principled opposition to any nationalist movement. However, this put him at odds with the mainstream All India Muslim League and its leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Jinnah was the unlikely founder of the then biggest Muslim nation in the world, a nation that had Islam as its only legitimating principle. With westernised education, dress and culture, with an Ismaili background and married to a Parsi (converted upon marriage), he was close to the British and disinclined to contest the Empire, even under the guise of the Gandhian peaceful resistance. He had no religious credentials and advocated for a sort of secularism within Islam. As such, he was completely at odds with the ideological archetype conceived by Maududi.

Maududi was also westernised, since after being brought up with a classic Islamic teacher he ‘was admitted in Madrasah Furqaniyah, a high school which attempted to combine the

³ L. Bernard, ‘The Return of Islam’, *Commentary Magazine*, 1 January 1976, <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/the-return-of-islam/>.

⁴ M. Kramer, ‘Coming to Terms: Fundamentalists or Islamists?’, *Middle East Quarterly*, 2003 pp. 65-77.

⁵ ‘Sayyid Abul A’la Maududi profile’, *Islam 101* [Website], <http://www.islam101.com/history/people/century20/maududi2.htm>.

modern Western with the traditional Islamic education'.⁶ Other than the Khilafat movement, Maududi was also particularly impressed by the Khaksar movement, a Muslim militia created in 1931 in Punjab, inspired by European fascist movements.⁷

He was fully aware of the importance of acquiring Western knowledge and was critical of Muslim intellectual disdain of it:⁸

In 1919... he became sufficiently competent in the English language to read books in English... Maududi turned to Western thought, and devoted a full five years to the study of major works on philosophy, political science, history and sociology. He bought the entire set of Encyclopaedia Britannica... To him the Jihad leaders disregarded the value of Western sciences that made the British powerful.⁹

He was particularly knowledgeable on Marx and Marxism, which he studied in detail.¹⁰ In 1927, in his own newspaper, he published 'Jihad in Islam'¹¹, a work which laid the foundation for the modern Jihadist movement.

For Maududi, Islam is intrinsically revolutionary:

In reality Islam is a revolutionary ideology and programme which seeks to alter the social order of the whole world and rebuild it in conformity with its own tenets and ideals. 'Muslim' is the title of that International Revolutionary Party organised by Islam to carry into effect its revolutionary programme. And 'Jihād' refers to that revolutionary struggle and utmost exertion which the Islamic Party brings into play to achieve this objective.¹²

He repeatedly calls for Jihad to destroy non-Jihadist governments:

Islam wishes to destroy all states and governments anywhere on the face of the earth which are opposed to the ideology and programme of Islam regardless of the country or the Nation which rules it. The purpose of Islam is to set up a state on the basis of its own ideology and programme, regardless of which nation assumes the role of the standard-bearer of Islam or the rule of which nation is undermined in the process of the establishment of an ideological Islamic State. Islam requires the earth—not just a portion, but the whole planet—not because the sovereignty over the earth should be wrested from one nation or several nations and vested in one particular nation, but because the entire mankind should benefit from the ideology and social welfare programme or what would be truer to say from 'Islam' which is the programme of well-being for all humanity.¹³

The universal character of this Jihad is unambiguous:

⁶ 'Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi', *New World Encyclopedia*, [Website], http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Sayyid_Abul_A'la_Maududi.

⁷ R. Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi and Political Islam: Authority and the Islamic State*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 60.

⁸ Jackson, *Mawlana Mawdudi and Political Islam*, p. 60; I. Ahmad, *Islam and Democracy in India: The transformation of Jamaat-e-Islami*, 2009, pp. 65-66.

⁹ Ahmad, *Islam and Democracy in India*, pp. 65-66.

¹⁰ Ahmad, pp. 53-65.

¹¹ The text was originally published in the journal Maududi directed in 1927. A second version from 1939 – reproducing a lecture he gave in Lahore – also exists, and it is the basis for the translation of 2006 we are using here. A. Maududi, *Jihad in Islam*, 2006, Lebanon, The Holy Koran Publishing House, http://www.muhammadanism.org/Terrorism/jihah_in_islam/jihad_in_islam.pdf.

¹² Maududi, *Jihad in Islam*, p. 5.

¹³ Maududi, *Jihad in Islam*, pp. 6-7.

It must be evident to you from this discussion that the objective of the Islamic ‘Jihād’ is to eliminate the rule of an un-Islamic system and establish in its stead an Islamic system of state rule. Islam does not intend to confine this revolution to a single state or a few countries; the aim of Islam is to bring about a universal revolution. Although in the initial stages it is incumbent upon members of the party of Islam to carry out a revolution in the State system of the countries to which they belong, but their ultimate objective is no other than to effect a world revolution.¹⁴

Many leaders of Jihadist organisations replicated this text, with variations, throughout history. Most notably, the Muslim Brotherhood network and its splinter factions – such as Al-Qaeda or ISIS – and, within Shia Islam, the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran¹⁵ faithfully transposed Maududi principles on Jihad. While the profound influence of his doctrines on Hassan Al-Banna, Syed Qutub and other fanatic Sunni leaders and organisations is well known, their effect on Shia Islam and the events that led to the Islamic Revolution and the constitution of an Islamic State in Iran are less well-known.¹⁶

Maududi’s political philosophy influenced Khomeini’s credo in the decades prior to the Iranian revolution of 1979, as can be observed in the latter’s first political tract (‘Kashf al-Asrar’, ‘Unveiling of Secrets’, published in 1943), in which Khomeini advocates for the establishment of an Islamic State and strict application of Sharia.¹⁷

The Muslim Brotherhood deeply influences Mojtaba Navvab Safavi, founder of the terrorist group Fada’iyan-e Islam (Devotees of Islam) and a close associate of Khomeini.¹⁸ Safavi’s deep links with the Muslim Brotherhood ultimately facilitated the dissemination of the latter’s ideology among Iran’s Shiite clergy, who initiated an extensive project in the late 1950s and 1960s during which adherents of Fada’iyan-e Islam translated many books of the Brotherhood in general and of Abul Ala Maududi in particular.¹⁹

At that time, the current Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, translated the writings of Sayyid Qutub, who had exhaustively developed concepts of Jihad and martyrdom in Islam.²⁰

Khomeini’s thesis ‘Velayat-e Faqeeh – Hokoumate Eslami’, ‘Governance of the Jurist – Islamic Government’,²¹ got his inspiration from Rashid Rida’s ‘Al-Imamat alUzma va al-

¹⁴ Maududi, *Jihad in Islam*, p. 22.

¹⁵ The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran says: ‘In the formation and equipping of the country’s defence forces, due attention must be paid to faith and ideology as the basic criteria. Accordingly, the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps are to be organized in conformity with this goal, and they will be responsible not only for guarding and preserving the frontiers of the country, but also for fulfilling the ideological mission of jihad in God’s way; that is, extending the sovereignty of God’s law throughout the world’. This is in accordance with the Qur’anic verse ‘Prepare against them whatever force you are able to muster, and strings of horses, striking fear into the enemy of God and your enemy, and others besides them’. See Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1979, [Website], https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Iran_1989.pdf?lang=en.

¹⁶ As Mehdi Khalaji of the Hudson Institute correctly points out: ‘Many commentators in the West still believe in the fairy tale that Sunni and Shia Islamists are at odds. Though most Sunni jihadists tend to see Shias as heretics and Hezbollah as a Zionist tool, the Muslim Brotherhood, by far the most popular of the Middle East’s fundamentalist Islamists, and the Shia Islamists’ history of mutual influence and collaboration traces back to the first Islamic revivalists of the 19th century and the political thought of the Brotherhood’s own founder.’ See M. Khalaji, ‘The Dilemmas of Pan-Islamic Unity’, *Hudson Institute*, 2009, <https://hudson.org/research/9859-the-dilemmas-of-pan-islamic-unity->

¹⁷ R. Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrar*, Los Angeles, ketab corp 2009, p.p. 229-231

¹⁸ Khalaji *Hudson Institute*; H. Khosroshahi and N. Mousavi, ‘Memories of a Historic Trip: Navab Safavi in Egypt (Part 1)’, *Vista News Hub*, <http://vista.ir/article/286060/>. Sayyid Qutb himself invited in 1954 Navab Safavi first for a conference in Jordan and then for another in Egypt.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

Khilafat al-kubra' published in the early 1920s, the Caliphate or the Supreme Imamate, in which Rida already propounds the idea of an Islamic government administered by Islamic jurists.

Khomeini was present at a lecture of Maududi in Mecca in 1963 and was very impressed.²² From this moment onwards, JeI openly campaigned for his cause. Maududi congratulated Khomeini on his victory during a trip to Tehran in 1979.²³ During the meeting, Khomeini emphasised to Maududi that: 'It is our obligation as Muslims to present the real Islam to the world. We should be all part of the same party, namely Hezbollah, and not allow different parties and factions to exist...' ²⁴ indicating his wish to supersede the Muslim Brotherhood with his authority.

The Jihad that Maududi and his followers refer to is quite different from the Jihad of the past. Whereas the parallel between the Jihad and the Crusades is clear, it is also true that the wars pursued in the name of religion are mostly history in Europe, whereas Jihad is an active and contemporary phenomenon. As we saw in the Balkan wars of the late 1900s, Jihad was explicitly declared, whereas Christianity and even the Crusades were also invoked however with a quite different geopolitical and ideological weight.²⁵

Overall, secularism – taking however in consideration how notions of secularism may differ – is a distinctive feature of modernism and is far less developed elsewhere, namely in the Muslim World. On this issue, there are several divergent points of view.

The most extreme one considers Islam to be an intrinsically warring religion, in contrast with others, such as Christianity. Therefore, the arguments of modern Jihadism are taken at face value. This view echoes Maududi's vision of Jihadism as a revolutionary, political, universal credo is a key feature of Islam and a non-Jihadist Islam is therefore purely non-Islamic. However, this view is overly simplistic and ignores a historical analysis in which this black and white worldview would not hold up.

A second point of view, while not conflating Islam with Jihadism, considers specific belligerent and extreme currents (such as Wahhabism or Deobandism) as the source of the problem. Both currents, and several others within Sunni or Shia Islam, are indeed prone to violence and extreme views. Jihadist strategies can certainly embrace these traditions and feed themselves on their historical deeds. However, these old extreme currents are not Jihadism as we know it today, that is, a universal, revolutionary and totalitarian ideology.

A third outlook, propagated by important Islamist organisations in the West, hides the expansionist and totalitarian aims of modern Jihad, claiming it is based in ancient or modern grievances of Muslims and supposed specific cultural extreme traditions such as the inferior role of women or the supremacy of religion on law.

Otherwise, conservative currents within Islam are also described as fundamentalism, integrist, Islamism or Salafism. This perspective also misses the main point. Orthodox and conservative Muslims do not necessarily have a contemporary Jihadist vision, even when their conservatism comprises the use of violence, which is not necessarily the case. As there is no

²¹ R. Khomeini, *Governance of the Jurist (Velayat-e Faqeeh) – Islamic Government*, Tehran, The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1970.

²² R. Nasr, *Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-I Islami of Pakistan*, Los Angeles, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1994.

²³ 'What did Imam Khomeini tell Maududi and his followers?', *Electronic Journal of Brotherhood*, 13 July 2015, www.goo.gl/ko8xpk.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The Norwegian mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik was mostly inspired by the Balkan wars, which he saw as crusades.

reason to expect Amish to kill unbelievers, there is no reason to expect a Salafi Muslim to do so, just because he is an orthodox Muslim.

What further complicates our understanding of the manipulation of Islam into a political totalitarian movement is the widespread use of ‘Taqiyya tactics’, that is, the normative use of deceiving tactics to ultimately hide intentions as a religiously justified means. In other words, those who present themselves as unassuming conservatives (using the Salafi designation or not) are often ideologues of Jihadism and prefer to conceal their ultimate political intentions under the guise of a purely religious philosophical stand.

Reading Maududi’s ‘Jihad in Islam’ inevitably reminds one of the ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’ in its rhythm, its revolutionary certainties and its uncompromising objective of overthrowing the existing order, the distinction between the faithful, the doubtful and the clear enemies, and above all, its messianic tone.

The main difference is all too obvious: Marx and his companions sought to write new pages on humankind in a different way from the past, while Maududi claims he is reading the revealed truth as written over a thousand years before him.

Still, while Marx ideas gave rise to Lenin, Stalin and Mao – to quote the most notorious of his followers – he also inspired social-democracy and a cohort of ‘travelling companions’ which cannot simply be equated with the aforementioned.

In terms of personal engagement, the differences are also striking. While Marx never headed any revolutionary movement in his lifetime (his personal influence in the 1848 European revolutionary movement or even in the Paris commune was insignificant), the same is not true of Maududi. He presided over the JeI during the Bangladesh Genocide, which is, to date, the worst crime against humanity committed by Jihadism.

To develop a full parallel between Marxism and Jihadism or indeed other global ideologies falls beyond the aim of this paper.

II. Early developments: JeI in Pakistan, Genocide and Bangladesh

Although he had globalist aims, Maududi explicitly committed himself to work for ‘revolution in the State system of the countries to which they belong’. Whereas in 1947 this was cause for suspicion towards a newly created State entity (founded by Muslims, but whom he did not consider ‘true Muslims’ but rather as secularists and therefore apostates), in 1970 the ‘nationalist’ claims were undoubtedly unacceptable.

Some authors dismiss the importance of the divergent visions of Jinnah and Maududi, while acknowledging Maududi was indisputably envious of Jinnah’s role:

After the 1937 defeat of the Muslim League at the polls, Maududi’s thinking took an increasingly communalist turn, and following the Lahore Resolution of 1940, when the League committed itself to Pakistan, the Jama’at was born as the “counter-League”.²⁶

On the eve of the 1945 elections – won by Jinnah – Maududi passed a fatwa that forbade Muslims to vote for the ‘secular’ Muslim League. Only after the partition, Maududi moved to Pakistan and accepted this as the status quo, ultimately giving rise to JeI’s first split in an Indian and a Pakistani branch (nowadays, many other branches exist).

Maududi’s initial vehement opposition to the partition put his party at odds with the mainstream logic that ruled the country, but did not prevent him from deeply influencing it. In

²⁶ Nasr, *Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution*.

the following decades, JeI would be the most important driver of sectarianism and fanaticism in the moulding of Pakistan, including the persecution and political ex-communication of the Ahmadiyya Muslims and the fierce opposition to all secular forces, namely the Bengali and Baloch autonomists and liberal-leaning parties.

In East Pakistan, JeI started its activities in the 1950s²⁷ and persistently build-up its organisational network and promoted Islamic ideology as well as the unity of Pakistan until the outbreak of the war in 1971.

When Pakistan held the first democratic elections in 1970, Maududi hoped he would see electoral success, but the results provided the Bangladeshi Awami League with an absolute majority and reflected a clear victory of secular forces in the other Pakistani provinces. Islamist forces appeared divided during the elections, but despite their overall failure, JeI was the Islamist political force that obtained most votes.

The military did not recognise the results of the 1970 election, which led to the secession of Bangladesh. Another group, the Balochs – unsuccessfully – sought independence, as they opposed the forceful accession of Kalat Khan in 1948. In the end, Pakistani rulers opted to respond with brutal force – that resulted in Genocide – to repress the democratic will of the people.

The historical introduction found in one of the most important cases tried by the International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh illustrates:

Atrocious and dreadful crimes were committed during the nine-month-long war of liberation in 1971, which resulted in the birth of Bangladesh, an independent state and the motherland of the Bengali nation. Some three million people were killed, nearly quarter million women were raped and over 10 million people were forced to take refuge in India to escape brutal persecution at home, during the nine-month battle and struggle of Bangalee nation. The perpetrators of the crimes could not be brought to book, and this left a deep scratch on the country's political awareness and the whole nation. The impunity they enjoyed held back political stability, saw the rise of militancy, and destroyed the nation's Constitution.²⁸

The Genocide was organised in the context of ‘Operation Search Light’ during which the Pakistani army and paramilitary forces fought unarmed Bangladeshi civilians. Joining this coalition, JeI created an ‘action section’ called al-Badar.²⁹

The operation was designed to disarm and liquidate Bengali policemen, soldiers and military officers, to arrest and kill nationalist Bengali politicians, soldiers and military officers, to arrest and kill and round up professionals, intellectuals, and students. Afterwards, actions in concert with its local collaborator militias, Razakar, al-Badar and the key pro-Pakistan political organisation Jamat E Islami (JEI) were intended to stamp out the Bengali national liberation movement and to mash the national feelings and aspirations of the Bangalee nation.³⁰

JeI’s formal structures were called ‘peace committees’; these were used to root out Bengali freedom fighters (Mukti Bahini). JeI further organised its members and supporters in auxiliary paramilitary forces called razakars, al-Badras and al-Shams, all of which supported the

²⁷ A. Kumar, ‘Jamaat and its Agenda of Islamic State in Bangladesh’, *IDSIA Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 33, No. 4, 2009, p. 542.

²⁸ *The Chief Prosecutor v Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid*, International Crimes Tribunal-2 (ICT2), Case No. 04, 2012, Point 5, p. 4,

²⁹ *The Chief Prosecutor v Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid*, point 15, pp. 6-7.

³⁰ *The Chief Prosecutor v Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid*, point 9, p. 5.

Pakistani army. Supplied with weapons and ammunition by West Pakistani forces and acting in coordination, the JeI helped to carry out one of the largest Genocides in recent history.³¹

The ICT goes on to quote a well-known researcher on Genocide, Rummel, in his book ‘Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1900’³²:

In East Pakistan [General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan and his top generals] also planned to murder its Bengali intellectual, cultural, and political elite. They also planned to indiscriminately murder hundreds of thousands of its Hindus and drive the rest into India. And they planned to destroy its economic base to ensure that it would be subordinate to West Pakistan for at least a generation to come.³³

Following an Argentinian report³⁴, the ICT gives a vivid picture of the events:

The extermination of the Jewish people by the Nazi regime, the atomic crime of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the massacre of Biafra, the napalm of Vietnam, all the great genocides of humanity have found a new equivalent: East Pakistan.... A pathetic view of the tragedy is given to us by the fact that in a single night in the city of Dacca were killed 50,000 persons by the invading army. Between 26 March—the date of invasion—and this moment, the dead reach more than a million, and every day 30,000 persons leave East Pakistan and take refuge in Indian territory.³⁵

The Bangladeshi Genocide is comparable to other major Genocides in history:

There was widespread killing of Hindu males, and rapes of women. More than 60% of the Bengali refugees who fled to India were Hindus... R.J. Rummel has stated that “The genocide and gendercidal atrocities were also perpetrated by lower-ranking officers and ordinary soldiers.” These willing executioners were fueled by an abiding anti-Bengali racism, especially against the Hindu minority. “Bengalis were often compared with monkeys and chickens.” Said General Niazi, “It was a low lying land of low lying people.” The Hindus among the Bengalis were as Jews to the Nazis: scum and vermin that [should] best be exterminated. As to the Moslem Bengalis, they were to live only on the sufferance of the soldiers: any infraction, any suspicion cast on them, any need for reprisal, could mean their death. And the soldiers were free to kill at will.³⁶

Anthony Mascarenhas discusses the logic that drove the government to commit Genocide:

The Government’s policy for East Bengal was spelled out to me in the Eastern Command headquarters at Dacca. It has three elements: (i) The Bengalis have proved themselves ‘unreliable’ and must be ruled by West Pakistanis (ii) The Bengalis must be re-educated along proper Islamic lines. The ‘Islamisation of the masses’ – this is the official jargon – is intended to eliminate secessionist tendencies and provide a strong religious bond with West Pakistan (iii) When the Hindus have been eliminated

³¹ I. Hossain and N.A. Siddiquee, ‘Islam in Bangladesh Politics: the role of Ghulam Azam of Jamaat-I-Islami’, *Journal of the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Society*, Vol. 5, Issue 3, 2004, p. 387.

³² R.J. Rummel, *Statistics of Democide: Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1900*, Munster, LIT Verlag, 1998, p. 153.

³³ *The Chief Prosecutor v Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid*, point 10, p. 5.

³⁴ ‘A Country Full of Corpses’, *SUMMA Magazine*, October 1971, <http://www.nirmanblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/12.pdf>

³⁵ *The Chief Prosecutor v Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid*, point 13, p. 6.

³⁶ *The Chief Prosecutor v Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid*, p. 173.

by death and flight, their property will be used as a golden carrot to win over the under-privileged Muslim.³⁷

There is a direct link between the ‘Jihad in Islam’ of 1927 and the Bangladeshi Genocide of 1971, and it runs through the JeI and its Jihadist ideology in the same way ‘Mein Kampf’ does with the ‘Final Solution to the Jewish Question’. Whereas Maududi’s initial doctrine has very few details on the methods by which it intends to achieve the goal of imposing Islam on the world, the political history of JeI has shown beyond any reasonable doubt what these methods might be.

The propaganda, fatwas or the elections are obvious means to achieve the ends espoused, but in case they do not attain the objectives, the choice of mass violence – and ultimately, Genocide – was made clear by the Bangladeshi events. Moreover, JeI has been an important part of the Muslim Brotherhood network, which never uttered any sign of disagreement or condemned the acts that unfolded in Bangladesh, quite to the contrary. In a press release of 12 May 2016, the Muslim Brotherhood confirms its complete solidarity with the criminal actors and the crimes committed:

The Muslim Brotherhood strongly condemns the heinous crime committed by the Awami League government in Bangladesh, headed by Ms Hasina... The Muslim Brotherhood extends its sincere condolences to Jamaat-e-Islami group in Bangladesh and the Indian sub-continent and to his family, students and supporters around the world, reaffirming its full condemnation of the Bangladeshi authorities' continued war on Islam and Muslims... Those continued campaigns rounded up 6,500 of the group's members and leaders, in order to make way for the vicious attack on Islam and Muslims, and empowerment of secular thought. The Bengali Secretary of State even explicitly announced that: “Bangladesh is a secular state. It is not a Muslim country” ...The Government of Ms Hasina and the Awami League, in early 2012, forced the country into secularism; with the abolition of the constitutional articles relating to the Islamic nature of the country... We are certain all these actions, crimes and practices will not weaken members or leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami or other patriotic groups, and will not discourage them from doing their duty in the service of their people, or endeavouring to rid the country of despotic rulers.³⁸

Whereas the Pakistani army and its associated JeI paramilitary organisations were ultimately defeated in Bangladesh by an armed intervention of India, an armed coup and the assassination of the founding father of the Bangladeshi Republic (Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) and his family in 1975 interrupted the course of justice and allowed JeI to reappear onto the Bangladeshi political scene.

III. Recent developments: JeI in Bangladesh

1. After the Genocide

The immediate post-liberation war years were difficult for the JeI³⁹; the organisation was banned in Bangladesh until 1979 because of its opposition to its independence and the horrific crimes that it committed during the Liberation War as a proxy for the West Pakistani military

³⁷ *The Chief Prosecutor v Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid*, point 587, pp. 186-187; A. Mascarenhas, ‘Pakistan's Genocide of Hindus in Bangladesh’, *The Sunday Times*, 13 June 1971, <https://archive.org/details/GenocideAnthonyMascarenhasDocx>.

³⁸ ‘Muslim Brotherhood Condemns Execution of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami leader Rahman Nizami’, *Ikhwanweb*, 12 May 2016, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=32536>.

³⁹ A. Dayal, ‘Deconstructing the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh’, *Tanqeed*, February 2013, <http://www.tanqeed.org/2013/02/deconstructing-the-jamaat-e-islami-bangladesh-anwar-dayal/>.

regime. Thus, most of its leaders fled to (West) Pakistan after Bangladesh's successful freedom struggle.⁴⁰

The remaining JeI cadres started to regroup its scattered forces on 6 June 1972 as an underground organisation⁴¹ and by the end of 1972, JeI could set up 120 local-level units.⁴² The JeI worked 'quietly'⁴³ for its fanatic vision of Islam until 1979 by holding 'regular weekly meetings and [providing] institutional resources' for its members.⁴⁴

The main operational goals of the JeI in this period were to 'relink Bengali Muslims with their Islamic heritage' and 'educate the people against the secular nationalism' that had been the ideological guidance of the Bangladeshi constitution and the newly established Awami League (AL) government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.⁴⁵

After the assassination of Mujibur Rahman in 1975, Lt. Gen. Ziaur Rahman assumed power and removed the 'prohibition of communal organisations and use of religion for political purposes' under the constitutional Article 38 (ban of religious parties).⁴⁶ However, the JeI was rehabilitated in 1976⁴⁷ and JeI members⁴⁸ had the opportunity to join the Islamic Democratic League (IDL) led by Mawlana Abdur Rahim.⁴⁹

Three months later, JeI finally re-emerged in its 'traditional form' when the withdrawal of the PPR took place.⁵⁰ The fifth amendment of the constitution in 1979 replaced the ideal of secularism as the state principle by the notion of 'absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah'.⁵¹ Furthermore, this amendment also ratified martial law proclamations including the de-secularisation of the constitution. This finally paved the way for the reinstatement of anti-secular parties like JeI⁵² and boosted the spread of Jihadism. As such, one can state that the JeI owes much of its growth to the surge of fanaticism in Bangladesh, especially of its political institutions, initiated by the military junta of Lt. Gen. Ziaur Rahman.⁵³

Following the death of Ziaur in 1981, Lt. Gen. Hussain Muhammad Ershad⁵⁴ seized power in 1982 in another military coup. Ershad pursued the process emphasising the Islamic character of the state.

⁴⁰ B. Lintner, 'Bangladesh Extremist Islamist Consolidation', *South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP)*, 2002, <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume14/Article1.htm>;

B. Lintner, 'Bangladesh: A Cocoon of Terror', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 April 2002.

⁴¹ A.M.M. Quamruzzaman, 'The Militia Movement in Bangladesh: Ideology, Motivation, Mobilization, Organization, and Ritual', PhD Thesis, Queen's University Kingston, 2010, p. 156, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/thesescanada/vol2/OKQ/TC-OKQ-5702.pdf>.

⁴² M. Islam, 'Limits of Islamism: Ideological Articulations of Jamaat-E-Islami in Contemporary India and Bangladesh', PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, May 2012, p. 236; M. Ahmad, "Islamic Fundamentalism in South Asia: The Jamaat-i-Islami and the Tablighi Jamaat of South Asia" in M.E. Marty and R.S. Appleby (eds.) *Fundamentalism Observed*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991, p. 501.

⁴³ A. Kumar, *Return from the Precipice: Bangladesh's Fight Against Terrorism*, IDSA, New Delhi, India, 2012, p. 20.

⁴⁴ Islam, 'Limits of Islamism', p. 501.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ 'Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh', *Banglapedia*, [Website], http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Jamaat-e-Islami_Bangladesh.

⁴⁷ At this time, limited party activities were allowed under the so-called Political Parties Regulation (PPR).

⁴⁸ Some of them took part in the general elections of 1979 as candidates of the IDL, and six of them were elected. See 'Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh', *Banglapedia*.

⁴⁹ S.K. Mitra, S.O. Wolf, and J. Schöttli, *A Political and Economic Dictionary of South Asia*, London, Routledge, 2006, p. 190.

⁵⁰ Kumar, *ISDA Strategic Analysis*, p. 542.

⁵¹ S. Mujumder, 'Secularism and anti-secularism' in A. Riaz and M.S. Rahman (eds.), *Handbook of Contemporary Bangladesh*, London, Routledge, 2016, p. 42.

⁵² Mujumder, 'Secularism and anti-secularism', p. 42.

⁵³ S.K. Sharma and A. Behera, *Militant Groups in South Asia*, IDSA, New Delhi, 2014, p. 7.

⁵⁴ At that time, Ershad was head of Army and Chief Martial Law Administrator.

To do so, Ershad enforced the eighth amendment of the constitution, giving Islam the status of state religion.⁵⁵ Even though JeI criticised this move⁵⁶ – claiming ‘that people wanted an Islamic state, not a declaration of Islam as the state religion’⁵⁷ – this added to a conducive environment for the growth of Islamist parties in the country. Religion was no longer taboo in the agendas of Bangladesh’s political parties.⁵⁸

To underscore its independence from its Pakistani mother organisation, it has been renamed Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. Despite changing its name from Jamaat-e-Islami of East Pakistan to Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami⁵⁹, JeI never apologised for its part in the Bangladeshi Genocide during the liberation war.⁶⁰ After its reformation, JeI campaigned to reject the narrative of Bangladesh’s 1971 freedom struggle and emphasised ‘that their anti-Bangladesh role in 1971 was not a mistake’.⁶¹ In other words, JeI continues to deny the concept of an independent Bangladesh.⁶²

Nevertheless, JeI successfully re-established itself, securing 10 seats during the 1986 Jatiya Sangsad (JS) elections and 18 seats during the 1991 JS elections⁶³, becoming an increasingly significant factor in the country’s political arena.⁶⁴ The political landscape of Bangladesh, especially since the 1990s, was determined by the intense rivalry between the Bangladesh Awami League (AL) and the BNP, the country’s two major political parties. While JeI secured only three seats in the 1996 elections, it re-emerged in 2001 as the third largest political party, securing 17 seats as a partner of the BNP-led Four-Party Alliance (including another Islamist party, the Islami Okiya Jote/IOJ⁶⁵) that formed the government under Begum Khaleda Zia (BNP) from 2001 to 2006.⁶⁶

Two leaders of JeI headed strategically important ministries (agriculture and social welfare) marking a peak of electoral performance of JeI. This was made possible by the unrestricted struggle between AL and BNP⁶⁷ and a consequent policy of coalition⁶⁸ building by effectively switching partners based on the best political opportunities either provided them with. While the party’s national voting share in polls has been relatively small, its coalition with the BNP enabled it to ‘play a disproportionately important role in politics.’⁶⁹

In the general polls of 2008, the AL-led Grand Alliance attained an absolute majority in parliament, marking a disastrous defeat for the JeI which only managed to secure two seats. Five years later, it experienced another major political setback when a High Court cancelled the party’s registration with the Bangladesh Election Commission (BEC) on 1 August 2013.

⁵⁵ Hossain and Siddiquee, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, p. 387.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Quamruzzaman, ‘The Militia Movement in Bangladesh’, p. 73.

⁵⁸ S. Datta, ‘Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh: The Threat from Within’, *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 30, Issue 1, 2007, p. 152.

⁵⁹ Quamruzzaman, ‘The Militia Movement in Bangladesh’, p. 156.

⁶⁰ A. Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, London, Routledge, 2008, p. 30.

⁶¹ S.A. Ahsan, ‘Islamization of the State in a Dualistic Culture: The Case of Bangladesh’, PhD Thesis, McGill, 1990, p. 185.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Mitra, Wolf and Schöttli, *A Political and Economic Dictionary of South Asia*, p. 190.

⁶⁴ Quamruzzaman, ‘The Militia Movement in Bangladesh’, p. 156.

⁶⁵ Along with a faction of the Jatiya Party (National Party, Naziur faction).

⁶⁶ Mitra, Wolf and Schöttli, *A Political and Economic Dictionary of South Asia*, p. 190.

⁶⁷ S. Datta, ‘Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh: The Threat from Within’ in P.R. Kumaraswamy. and I. Copland (eds.), *South Asia: The Spectre of Terrorism*, New Delhi, Routledge, 2009, p. 153.

⁶⁸ R. Jahan, ‘Political Parties in Bangladesh’, *Centre for Policy Dialogue & Chr. Michelsen Institute (CPD-CMI)*, Working Paper Series 8, August 2014, p. 14.

⁶⁹ S.T. Shehabuddin, ‘Bangladeshi Politics since Independence’, in A. Riaz and M.S. Rahman (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Bangladesh*, Routledge, 2016, p. 19.

The JeI was unable to submit a (revised) constitution to the satisfaction of the BEC, notwithstanding some ‘engineering’ of its basic statutes and programmes. The party changed its logo⁷⁰, deleted various provisions and incorporated others in its constitution⁷¹ to give the impression that the party accepted democratic norms and procedures, human rights and the rule of law.⁷² Nevertheless, the JeI was not able to convince the judiciary, who argued that JeI is unfit to participate in the general elections because its constitution (still) ‘puts God above democratic prove’⁷³. The Supreme Court confirmed this decision on 5 August 2013⁷⁴, and JeI was not allowed to participate in the tenth parliamentary elections.

2. JeI rebranding strategies

JeI projected itself as a ‘moderate Islamic political party’⁷⁵, but JeI is not a moderate party, or even a political party in the way it is commonly understood. It is a complex movement with a comprehensive socio-political agenda aiming to transform the state and society of Bangladesh according to its totalitarian vision.⁷⁶

JeI believes theocracy is the ultimate way to organise societies and seeks to establish an Islamic state in Bangladesh.⁷⁷ To achieve this, it goes to great lengths to camouflage the exclusive and anti-secular nature of an Islamic state by using modern state terminology and focusing on the social and economic concerns of the people.⁷⁸

However, to establish an Islamic state, JeI aspires to seize state power and implement its fanatic values in society. From its perspective, both dimensions – increasing its weight within the political-administrative system and reshuffling the social-religious structure of the country – are intertwined: ‘The Jamaat [JeI] in power would help Islamisation; Islamisation would help the Jamaat to come to power.’⁷⁹

JeI’s socio-political thought and action promotes modern Jihadism as an alternative to the notions of the nation-state, secularism and democracy (the guiding principles enshrined in the country’s constitution).⁸⁰ Moreover, it considers the participation in elections a ‘tactical necessity’⁸¹ and claims it ‘is the sole arbiter of what counts as Islamic’.⁸² To achieve this, JeI

⁷⁰ It contained Allah and Aqimuddin, as these were found to conflict with the Representation of the People Order (RPO), which demands the conformity of the party’s charter with Bangladesh’s constitution. See Jahan, *CPD-CMI*, p. 14.

⁷¹ JeI removed the phrases ‘establishing just rule of Islam through organised efforts’ and ‘bringing about necessary changes to the state system to ensure complete observance of Islam’ from its charter. Instead the JeI incorporated the passage ‘establishing just rule through democratic means’. See Jahan, *CPD-CMI*, p. 34.

⁷² ‘Introduction to Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami’, [Website], <http://www.jamaat-e-islami.org/en/category.php?cid=7>.

⁷³ ‘Bangladesh’s volatile politics: The battling begums’, *The Economist*, 10 August 2013 <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21583297-pendulum-swings-away-sheikh-hasina-and-her-government-battling-begums>.

⁷⁴ Bangladesh SC rejects Jamaat’s plea against disqualification, *The Hindu*, 5 August 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/south-asia/bangladesh-sc-rejects-jamaats-plea-against-disqualification/article4992375.ece>.

⁷⁵ A. Kumar, *IDSA Strategic Analysis*, p. 542.

⁷⁶ A. Ray, ‘Islamic Radical Ideologies and South Asian Security: The Case of Bangladesh’, *Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS)*, 27 October 2008, p. 30, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/islamic-radical-ideologies-and-south-asian-security>.

⁷⁷ Dayal, *Tanqeed*; Kumar, *IDSA Strategic Analysis*, p. 542.

⁷⁸ Kumar, *IDSA Strategic Analysis*, p. 542.

⁷⁹ Ray, *CSIS*, p. 30.

⁸⁰ Jahan, *CPD-CMI*, p. 13.

⁸¹ Ray, *CSIS*.

⁸² Dayal, *Tanqeed*.

seeks to manipulate public opinion and create the image of a religious, conservative, but ‘socially aware’ force.⁸³

The true objectives of JeI’s ‘social activities’ surface when the organisation underlines that all constitutional, legal, and social principles of a state and its society must derive from the Holy Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad.⁸⁴ It clearly aims to abolish democratic institutions and establish a theocratic Islamic state.⁸⁵

3. Structure, Organisation and Networks

3.1 Basic organisational-administrative structure

The JeI has organisational units at the central, district, upazilla/thana (sub-districts) and municipal levels. The central organisation consists of rukn/rokon (members) and an Ameer-e-Jamaat (or Ameer/chief).⁸⁶ Furthermore, the JeI recognizes five main institutions within its organisational structure: The Central Members’ (rokon/rukn) Conference (CMC), the ‘Ameer’, the Central Majlish-e-Sura (CMS), the Central Working Committee (CWC) and the Central Executive Committee (CEC).⁸⁷

The ‘Ameer’ is elected every three years by direct secret ballot in the CMC. The highest policy decision-making bodies are the CMS and the CEC (including the ‘Ameer’), giving the impression that the organisation respects intra-party democracy. However, the fact that it maintains the ‘Ameer’, emphasises its hierarchical, centralised leadership that undermines democratic practice.

JeI stands out in Bangladesh because of its noteworthy organisation and discipline.⁸⁸ It adapted to the political situation and power dynamics in the country, creating an image of incorruptibility.⁸⁹ It is selective and recruits only highly motivated and educated individuals, mainly through its student wing; its workers are reputed to be the most committed and indoctrinated of all political elements in Bangladesh.⁹⁰

Party leaders and workers at all levels are obligated to be well versed in the Quran, Hadith and Islamic literature, as well as to regularly attend discussion meetings, contribute to the Jamaat funds and recruit new workers.⁹¹

Its organisational strength is the main reason why JeI is the largest and most active Islamic political party in the country.⁹² Despite the fact they haven’t been part of the government

⁸³JeI’s constitution elaborates on its views of ‘Social Service and Social Reform: To strive to uplift the conditions of the people and the country through extensive social service and social welfare activities, to serve the suffering humanity, to introduce Islamic culture and reconstruct human character on the basis of Islamic values. And to organise people to resist anti-social activities through peaceful means.’ See ‘Introduction to Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami’, [Website], <http://www.jamaat-e-islami.org/en/category.php?cid=7>.

⁸⁴As such, the notion that Quranic law is the supreme authority to structure governance and to run the affairs of the state is incompatible with the concept of liberal democracy. See Kumar, *IDSAs Strategic Analysis*, pp. 542-543.

⁸⁵H. Karlekar, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan?*, India, Sage Publication, 2005; Kumar, *IDSAs Strategic Analysis*, pp. 542-543.

⁸⁶Mitra, Wolf and Schöttli, *A Political and Economic Dictionary of South Asia*, p. 190.

⁸⁷Jahan, *CPD-CMI*, p. 15.

⁸⁸Ray, *CSIS*, p. 30.

⁸⁹S.S. Pattanaik, ‘Ascendancy of the Religious Right in Bangladesh Politics: A Study of Jamaat Islami’, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 33, No. 2, March 2009, p. 276.

⁹⁰Ahsan, ‘Islamization of the State in a Dualistic Culture’, p. 226.

⁹¹Jahan, *CPD-CMI*, p. 13.

⁹²Hossain and Siddiquee, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, p. 384.

since 2008, JeI continues to strengthen its organisational capacities and expand its support base, especially through the recruitment of new Islamists at the grassroots level.

3.2 Domestic Network

JeI runs a large-scale network of different kinds of organisations to penetrate all spheres of social, economic and political life in Bangladesh; it has stakes in numerous businesses such as banks, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, transport, media, education, housing, and shopping centres.⁹³ Furthermore, it controls approximately 30 charities of various sizes and reach, most notably, the Al Hera Samaj Kalyan Foundation. Founded in 1982, it spreads JeI's ideology by preaching Islam, publishing religious books and journals, and managing madrassas.⁹⁴

JeI engages with other front organisations such as the Islami Yubo Shibir, the Bangladesh Masjid Mission or the Bangladesh Islamic Centre,⁹⁵ the Bangladesh Sramik Kalyan Federation (Bangladesh Labour Welfare Federation) and the Bangladesh Peasants Welfare Society (Bangladesh Chashi Kalyan Samity).⁹⁶ The most crucial affiliate of JeI is its student wing, the Islami Chattra Shibir.

3.3 Islami Chattra Shibir

The constitution of JeI does not refer to any official associate or front organisation. Notwithstanding, in practice, the student organisation called Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS or Shibir) is its closest associate.⁹⁷ Since its origin on 6 February 1988, it gained ground in traditional madrassas and modern institutions, such as public universities.⁹⁸ Today, the ICS is one of the strongest student organisations at the country's leading universities⁹⁹, infiltrating all layers of higher education in Bangladesh.¹⁰⁰ The ICS is already so deeply entrenched in the growing madrassa structure that it acts as 'a dominant and uncontested organization'.¹⁰¹

Following the radicalized Islamist ideology of JeI, the constitution of the ICS clearly emphasises the goal of the organisation:

The aims and objects of this Organization shall be to seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) by moulding entire human life in accordance with the code, bestowed by Allah (SWT) and exemplified by His Messenger (peace be upon him).¹⁰²

More concretely, the ICS programme includes (among other things):

- (1) To convey the message of Islam to the students to inspire them to acquire Islamic knowledge and to arouse in them the sense of responsibility to practice Islam in full;
- (2) To organise the students prepared to take part in the struggle for establishing Islamic way of life within the fold of this Organisation;

⁹³ S. Bhattacharya, 'JeI: Culture of Hate', *South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP)*, 10 June 2013, http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/sair11/11_50.htm#assessment1.

⁹⁴ Bhattacharya, *SATP*.

⁹⁵ A. Kumar, *Return from the Precipice: Bangladesh's Fight Against Terrorism*, New Delhi, IDSA, 2012, p. 22.

⁹⁶ Islam, 'Limits of Islamism', p. 237.

⁹⁷ Jahan, *CPD-CMI*, p. 30.

⁹⁸ Hossain and Siddiquee, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, p. 384.

⁹⁹ Ahsan, 'Islamization of the State in a Dualistic Culture', p. 217.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ 'Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)', *SATP*, [Website], <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/ics.htm>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

(3) To take effective steps to impart Islamic knowledge to the student members; to make them men of character, capable of braving all the challenges of Jahilyah and thus proving the superiority of Islam.¹⁰³

ICS not only operates through educational means and political action, but ever more through violence.¹⁰⁴ It counts among its members, ‘a band of armed activists who do not hesitate to engage in armed combat with the secularist student groups, both on and off campus.’¹⁰⁵

3.4 International Network

Bangladeshi Jihadists – including the JeI and its affiliated organisations – are not only a firm and integrated part of an international network, but also an alternative base, providing support for international Jihadist groups, such as training facilities, hideouts, man power and coordination.

In recent years, Bangladesh increasingly functions as a ‘terrorist pivot’ in South Asia, South East Asia, and Central Asia, from Thailand to Afghanistan. The resurgence of Jihadism in Afghanistan and Pakistan on the one hand, and in Bangladesh on the other, are intertwined.

The existence of firm links between the new Bangladeshi militants and the Al Qaeda were first proven when Fazlur Rahman, leader of the "Jihad Movement in Bangladesh" (to which HuJI belongs), signed the official declaration of ‘holy war’ against the United States on February 23, 1998. Other signatories included bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri (chief of the Jihad Group in Egypt), Rifa’i Ahmad Taha aka Abu-Yasir (Egyptian Islamic Group), and Sheikh Mir Hamzah (secretary of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan).¹⁰⁶

JeI is also embedded with international Jihadist organisations through its student wing. In 1979, it joined the International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation (IIFSO) and it is a member of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY).¹⁰⁷ ICS has close ties with similar groups in numerous Muslim majority countries in the Middle East, South East Asia¹⁰⁸ and India. It also has connections with the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI).¹⁰⁹

JeI is also active within the Bangladeshi European diaspora, especially in London.¹¹⁰

The transnational connection in Britain started in the late 1970s when former JI [JeI] activists established the Dawat-ul Islam. The leadership included Chowdhury Muinuddin, Abu Sayeed and Lutfur Rahman, all of whom were members of the Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan until 1971 and were allegedly members of the paramilitary forces which supported the Pakistani Army in 1971.¹¹¹

¹⁰³ ‘Bangladesh Islami Chhatrashibir, Constitution: Chapter 1’, [Website], <http://english.shibir.org.bd/page/item-11>.

¹⁰⁴ Ahsan, ‘Islamization of the State in a Dualistic Culture’, p. 217.

¹⁰⁵ Ahsan, ‘Islamization of the State in a Dualistic Culture’, p. 217; Quamruzzaman, ‘The Militia Movement in Bangladesh’, p. 79.

¹⁰⁶ Lintner, *SATP*; ‘Harkat-ul-Jihadi al-Islami’, *Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC)*, Stanford University, 11 July 2016, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/217>.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)’, *SATP*.

¹⁰⁸ Such as the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) or the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO). See Lintner, *SATP*.

¹⁰⁹ I. Ahmad, ‘Islam and Politics in South Asia.’ in J.L. Esposito and E. Shahin, (eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 325.

¹¹⁰ Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, p. 93.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

This historical connection between JeI and Dawat-ul-Islam is of great importance, as over time the Dawat-ul-Islam got deeply entrenched into the social and religious-cultural networks of the Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK (e.g. East London Mosque and its affiliate, the London Muslim Centre/LMC) and other likeminded organisations. It also contributed to the formation of other groups, e.g. a faction of Dawat-ul-Islam formed the Islamic Forum for Europe (IFE) in 1989.¹¹²

Interestingly, organisations like IFE or LMC not only maintain contacts with the JeI but also interact with the Muslim Brotherhood via new organisational apex bodies like the Islamic Society of Britain, the Muslim Association of Britain or the Muslim Council of Britain.¹¹³ This shows the integration of JeI within the Muslim Brotherhood network on the international level. A similar phenomenon takes place in the United States; here, JeI is supported by the Islamic Circle of North America¹¹⁴ among other groups (especially charity organisations), further integrating the JeI with the international Muslim Brotherhood network.

IV. Strategies, methods and activities

Since the emergence of JeI Bangladesh after the liberation war, Islamic fanaticism and violence in Bangladesh have been on the rise. This trend does not only appear in the parliamentary and political-administrative spheres, but also outside the institutional structure as more violent outfits emerge. JeI's strategy is threefold:

Firstly, it undermines the political system from within, using the opportunities offered by the democratic processes; this is the formal 'political front' of the JeI.

Secondly, it builds a network of 'social movement organisations' (including NGOs) to engage in social care, development and religious-cultural activities as well as media and educational centres; it penetrates all spheres of society ('societal front').

Thirdly, it engages in violence, using a network of members, associates and 'loosely-linked' groups and individuals. The 'violent action front' supports the political and societal fronts as a tool of last resort.

All three fronts – political, societal, and violent action – aim to build a state and society based on a narrow, literal interpretation of Islam. They systematically combine these strategies into a portfolio of multi-sectoral, multi-dimensional campaigns and subsequent concrete activities, some of which are described in the following sections.

1. Undermining democracy and influencing government institutions

JeI officially claims it seeks to establish 'just rule through democratic means'¹¹⁵, but in reality it rejects democracy and consensus-based political decision-making. It rigorously oppresses internal dissent within the organisation¹¹⁶; the expulsion of Maulana Jabbar and its faction¹¹⁷ is an example of how discord is dealt with by the central leadership, especially the 'Ameer'.

¹¹² Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, p. 94.

¹¹³ 'Muslim Brotherhood follows Maududi's ideology: UK report', *The Daily Star*, 9 January 2016, <http://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/muslim-brotherhood-follows-maududis-ideology-uk-report-199237>.

¹¹⁴ S. Bhaumik, 'Jihad or Joi Bangla: Bangladesh in Peril' in J. Saikia and E. Stepanova (eds.), *Terrorism: Patterns of Internationalization*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2009, p. 80.

¹¹⁵ Jahan, *CPD-CMI*, p. 14.

¹¹⁶ The ICS tried to distance itself from the JeI to portray themselves as independent (it even changed its name from Islami Chatro Sangha into Islami Chatra Shibir), the JeI could regain quickly control over restive elements within its student wing. See Pattanaik, *Strategic Analysis*, pp. 275-276.

The presence of strong, secular and moderate Islamic countervailing forces in Bangladeshi society challenges the collective identity of JeI, that is, its basic codes.¹¹⁸ This is another reason why it opposes democracy: it considers it an existential threat. JeI political strategy ‘is designed to use democratic means for undemocratic objectives’¹¹⁹. In order to establish a Sharia-based administration, it must deconstruct the country’s multi-party parliamentary form of government and its legal system.¹²⁰ To that end, JeI has been targeting the judiciary for years, not only to undermine the principle of secularism but also ‘to upturn the present legal system with obscurantist interpretations of religious law’.¹²¹

Due to the high level of polarisation within the executive branch (due to manifold social and political rifts, mainly between BNP-AL), JeI was able to indoctrinate members of all branches of government, even in the security sector.¹²²

2. Using government resources and social welfare programmes

The government’s inability to address the country’s social and economic needs (e.g. unemployment and poverty) created room for the JeI, especially in rural areas.¹²³ Using its network, JeI launched social action programmes in all 64 districts.¹²⁴ The socio-economic programmes of JeI cover items such as credit, subventions to agricultural equipment, legal assistance, charity hospitals, kindergartens, schools and colleges among other things.¹²⁵ Unsurprisingly, JeI enjoys considerable popularity in rural areas.¹²⁶ In exchange, JeI expects people to follow and spread their version of Islamic ideology¹²⁷ and to contribute to its consolidation and expansion.¹²⁸

3. Establishing control over the education sector

For JeI, ‘no political movement is more efficient than the one that concentrates on creating new leadership through moral, intellectual and political training in line with its ideology’,¹²⁹ and madrassas appear as a privileged instrument for this purpose. There are two types of madrassas in Bangladesh: Aliya and Qaumi. Unlike Aliya madrassas, Qaumi madrassas are outside the scope of government control and focus on providing religious education.¹³⁰ Due to

¹¹⁷ ‘Mujahid rules out split in Jamaat’, *BDNEWS* 24, December 2005, <http://bdnews24.com/politics/2005/12/24/mujahid-rules-out-split-in-jamaat>; Pattanaik, *Strategic Analysis*, pp. 275-276.

¹¹⁸ In social movement theory, codes are building blocks of collective identity. See J. Raschke, *Soziale Bewegungen: Ein historisch-systematischer Grundriß*, Frankfurt am Main, Campus-Verlag, 1985; S.N. Eisenstadt and B. Giesen, *The construction of collective identity*, Archives Européennes de Sociologie, No. 1, 1995, pp. 72-102; K. Eder, B. Giesen, O. Schmidtke and D. Tambini, *Collective Identities in Action: A sociological approach to ethnicity*, Aldershot/Hampshire, Ashgate Publishing, 2002.

¹¹⁹ Kumar, *IDSAs Strategic Analysis*, p. 550.

¹²⁰ Karlekar, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan?*, p. 135; Hossain and Siddiquee, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, p. 385.

¹²¹ Kumar, *IDSAs Strategic Analysis*, p. 550; Hossain and Siddiquee, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, p. 385.

¹²² Kumar, *IDSAs Strategic Analysis*, p. 544; Pattanaik, *Strategic Analysis*, p. 277.

¹²³ Kumar, *IDSAs Strategic Analysis*, p. 544.

¹²⁴ S. Datta, ‘Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh: The Threat from Within’ in P.R. Kumaraswamy and I. Copland (eds.), *South Asia: The Spectre of Terrorism*, New Delhi, Routledge, 2009, p. 157.

¹²⁵ Bhattacharya, *SATP*; Datta, ‘Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh’, p. 157; Kumar, *IDSAs Strategic Analysis*, p. 544; Pattanaik, *Strategic Analysis*, pp. 276-277.

¹²⁶ Bhattacharya, *SATP*; Datta, ‘Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh’, p. 157.

¹²⁷ Kumar, *IDSAs Strategic Analysis*, p. 544; Bhattacharya, *SATP*.

¹²⁸ Pattanaik, *Strategic Analysis*, p. 276.

¹²⁹ Quamruzzaman, ‘The Militia Movement in Bangladesh’, p. 132.

¹³⁰ Kumar, *IDSAs Strategic Analysis*, p. 543.

JeI action, in recent years, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of madrassas, especially of the Qaumi type.¹³¹ The organisation also increased its influence on the Aliya madrassas. The mushrooming of the madrassas is a fundamental aspect of the rise of Jihadism, as madrassas not only spend their funds on education but also on weapons and combat training.¹³² JeI is also present in non-religious educational centres, private schools, colleges, universities, and even English school and programmes.¹³³

Control over the education sector is a priority, and a particularly important target group are socio-economic disadvantaged students that show exceptional promise who are disappointed ‘with the state of affairs and inequality that is prevalent in the society’.¹³⁴

4. Reshaping the public sphere

In the late 1970s and 1980s, the military regimes undermined secularism in the constitutional and political spheres but were less successful in the domain of public opinion.

Liberal, secular thinkers were free to express their views on Islam¹³⁵: ‘The country’s intelligentsia, active civil society and press are secular and modern in their outlook and quick to oppose fundamentalist excesses and violence’.¹³⁶ This is no longer the case.

JeI contributed to this process through its own media¹³⁷, propaganda has been a key tool for JeI to influence society.¹³⁸ Nowadays, in order to indoctrinate and mobilise people, the JeI and its affiliated organisations also rely on the internet and social media. Most importantly, JeI violently suppresses critical voices, denouncing them as anti-Islam and blasphemous.¹³⁹ The attack on supporters of the secular oriented Shahbag movement¹⁴⁰ is a dramatic example of this tendency. Besides propagating a ‘silent Islamization’¹⁴¹, JeI uses the same violent tactics as Jihadist counterparts in Pakistan or Afghanistan.

5. Political violence and terrorism

The official rhetoric of JeI emphasises its dedication to a ‘peaceful transition to Islamic rule’¹⁴², even blaming other Islamist organisations for the increase in violent incidents. However, the reality on the ground is quite different. The JeI is the ‘visible face of radical Islam in Bangladesh’¹⁴³ and claims of support for a peaceful transition are contradicted by numerous testimonies of violence on behalf of members of its student wing.¹⁴⁴

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Pattanaik, *Strategic Analysis*, p. 276.

¹³⁴ They offer administrative guidance and academic tutoring (mentoring), financial supports for fees and books, winning the student’s confidence and trust. These students join courses and programmes of JeI or pro-JeI faculty members, are granted patronage and receive top marks. Furthermore, some of them are promoted to faculty positions, and later get into top positions in the bureaucracy, police, judiciary, and other important political-administrative institutions. See Pattanaik, *Strategic Analysis*, pp. 276-277.

¹³⁵ Pattanaik, *Strategic Analysis*, p. 282

¹³⁶ Karlekar, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan?*, p. 140.

¹³⁷ Kumar, *IDSIA Strategic Analysis*, pp. 549-550.

¹³⁸ Pattanaik, *Strategic Analysis*, p. 280.

¹³⁹ Al-Mahmood, ‘Bangladesh split as violence escalates over war crimes protests’, *The Guardian*, 23 February 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/feb/23/protest-death-penalty-bangladesh>.

¹⁴⁰ Al-Mahmood, *The Guardian*; M. Habib, ‘The Power of the Islamists in Bangladesh’, *Gatestone Institute*, 18 March 2013, <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3627/jamaat-e-islami-bangladesh>.

¹⁴¹ Kumar, *IDSIA Strategic Review*, p. 550.

¹⁴² Kumar, *IDSIA Strategic Review*, pp. 546-547.

¹⁴³ Ray, *CSIS*, p. 30.

¹⁴⁴ Quamruzzaman, ‘The Militia Movement in Bangladesh’, p. 142.

Firstly, ICS members are playing an active role in the country's violent student politics.¹⁴⁵ Secondly, ICS members are actively involved in attacks against security personnel and citizens alike to 'thwart the war crimes trials'¹⁴⁶ and enhance 'the Islamist opposition's street power.'¹⁴⁷ Thirdly, ICS has demonstrable links to domestic international terrorist networks.¹⁴⁸ It interacts with well-known terrorist organisations like Harakat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI), among others. ICS supports the build-up and maintenance of infrastructure like training camps, provides places for stockpiling weapons and supplies, and recruits new members for a global Jihad.¹⁴⁹ Jamaatul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), an active terrorist group in the country, originated from a faction of JeI and maintains close links with its senior members.¹⁵⁰

6. Patronising Islamic fundamentalism and violent groups

Jihadist groups assumed a high profile during the BNP-JeI alliance government.¹⁵¹ The government downplayed the existence of Islamist violence in the country and authorities – in particular those under the direct control of JeI – silenced reports of such violence¹⁵² and undermined the work of law enforcement agencies.¹⁵³ Government support for Jihadist violence also took the form of material and financial support¹⁵⁴ and there was a veritable surge of foreign Jihadist NGOs¹⁵⁵ registered in the country. Financial support to these organisations is well-documented.¹⁵⁶

The international community finally put some pressure on the BNP-JeI government after a nationwide series of terror attacks in August 2005. This pressure resulted in the ban of two Jihadist organisations¹⁵⁷, but most of the remaining ones continued to operate freely and turned Bangladesh into a 'terrorist exporting country, India being the main target'.¹⁵⁸

¹⁴⁵ Newspapers often report violent clashes between ICS members and activists of the Chhatra League, the student wing of the Awami League. See Jahan, *CPD-CMI*, p. 30; Quamruzzaman, 'The Militia Movement in Bangladesh', p. 142.

¹⁴⁶ Some reports state that JeI emerged in 2013 as a 'major actor involved in inter-party and police-party violence'. See Jahan, *CPD-CMI*, p. 30.

¹⁴⁷ 'Mapping Bangladesh's Political Crisis', *International Crisis Group (ICG)*, Asia Report N°264, 9 February 2015, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/bangladesh/mapping-bangladesh-s-political-crisis>.

¹⁴⁸ 'Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)', *SATP*.

¹⁴⁹ 'Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)', *SATP*.

¹⁵⁰ S. Datta, 'Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh: The Threat from Within', *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 2007, p. 154.

¹⁵¹ B. Roy, 'Bangladesh Politics and U.S. Intel's Questionable Position' Paper No. 6077, *South Asia Analysis Group*, 16 February 2016, <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1948>.

¹⁵² Datta, 'Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh', pp. 156, 160.

¹⁵³ Roy, *South Asia Analysis Group*; Lintner, *SATP*; Datta, 'Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh', pp. 156, 160.

¹⁵⁴ A. Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A complex web*, London, Routledge, 2008, p. 45.

¹⁵⁵ 'NGOs under scanner for 'funding militancy'', *The Daily Star*, 19 March 2009, <http://www.thedailystar.net/news-detail-80287>.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ 'Bombs explode across Bangladesh, BBC, 17 August 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4158478.stm.

¹⁵⁸ B. Roy, 'Ignoring Bangladesh Can Spell Disaster', Paper No. 5882, *South Asia Analysis Group*, 27 February 2015, <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/1722>.

7. Generating anti-Indian sentiment and support for cross-border terrorism

JeI ‘has never forgiven India for the help the latter rendered to the liberation struggle’.¹⁵⁹ In the last decades, the group was very active in feeding anti-India sentiments, manipulating bilateral conflicts (e.g. the issue over the Farakka dam) and portraying New Delhi’s foreign policy as anti-Islamic and anti-Bangladesh. Most of JeI’s writings and propaganda considers India as the main enemy.¹⁶⁰ Bangladeshi Jihadists are blaming New Delhi for whatever goes wrong in the country.

According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, members of the student wings of JeI are cooperating with Pakistan’s ISI in order to ‘support Islamist subversive agenda in many regions in India, particularly in areas bordering Bangladesh’; they also claim ISI finances ICS.¹⁶¹

8. Targeting Religious Minorities

JeI targets Bangladesh’s Hindu-minority as part of its anti-India strategy.¹⁶² This dates back to the liberation war when JeI claimed that AL and the local Hindu community were Indian agents seeking to turn East Pakistan into a ‘Hindu state’. Members of JeI and ICS are conducting ‘large-scale orchestrated attacks on the homes, businesses, and places of worship of minorities, as well as engaging in the abductions and forced conversions of Hindu girls’¹⁶³. The violence also targets Christians and Buddhists.¹⁶⁴

The Takfiri ideology of JeI founder Maududi explicitly permits and encourages the use of ‘extreme violence’ to stigmatise (and subsequently eliminate) people, states, and religious-cultural elements which are blacklisted as un-Islamic.¹⁶⁵

Many among JeI and their followers ...deem it as their duty to free Muslims from these anti-Islamic influences. So, what they call anti-Islamic ideologies, practices, organisations, and cultural programmes, all fall under their targets of attack. These targets are often symbolic and the attacks on them form the part of the overall Islamic movement to establish an Islamic rule in the country.¹⁶⁶

For JeI ‘traditional religious practices’ are also anti-Islamic¹⁶⁷, there are several examples of sympathisers and members of JeI attacking mazars (shrines of Sufi saints).¹⁶⁸

¹⁵⁹ Karlekar, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan?*, p. 114.

¹⁶⁰ Pattanaik, *IDSA Strategic Analysis*, p. 280.

¹⁶¹ ‘Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)’, *SATP*.

¹⁶² Quamruzzaman, ‘The Militia Movement in Bangladesh’, p. 79.

¹⁶³ ‘Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh: A Nexus of Terror’, *Hindu American Foundation (HAF)*, 2006, <https://www.hafsite.org/media/pr/jamaat-e-islami-bangladesh-nexus-terror>.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Another Hindu priest murdered’, *The Daily Star*, 2 July 2016, <http://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/another-hindu-priest-murdered-1249114>; ‘Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh’, *HAF*.

¹⁶⁵ ‘Muslim Brotherhood follows Maududi’s ideology: UK report’, *The Daily Star*, 9 January 2016,

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¹⁶⁶ Quamruzzaman, ‘The Militia Movement in Bangladesh’, p. 79.

¹⁶⁷ Quamruzzaman, ‘The Militia Movement in Bangladesh’, p. 79.

¹⁶⁸ Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh*, p. 30.

V. Impact of western policy on Islamist parties in general and JeI in particular

As a consequence of the international military engagement in Afghanistan, the US and most of its allies have neglected Bangladesh.

Overwhelmed with the complexity of the Afghan mission (and other involvements in areas of conflict, e.g. Iraq) and the political handling of related challenges and failures, the US and its allies have been unwilling or unable to focus on problems in ‘Bangladesh, despite great political volatility’¹⁶⁹ and a surge in Jihadist activity. Former president Barack Obama was convinced that participation in elections and especially the practical responsibilities of governing would dilute fundamentalist ideology of Islamist parties within the Muslim Brotherhood network, like the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt¹⁷⁰ or JeI in Bangladesh. Western inaction feeds the flawed notion that Jihadism will adopt and internalise democratic values when in power. This miscalculation stems from a complete failure to understand Jihadism. Instead of adopting democratic values, the Muslim Brotherhood network cracked down on pro-democratic civil society, systematically undermining related principles like freedom of speech, freedom of religion and gender equality.¹⁷¹ The bloody attack on Sheikh Hasina in August 2004¹⁷² – resulting in the deaths of many members of her opposition party during the BNP-JeI government – proves this point.

Western governments turned a blind eye to the activities of so-called ‘Muslim charities’ and ‘apex bodies’ (e.g. Muslim Council of Britain/MCB or Islamic Forum of Europe/IFE), ignoring the fact that these organisations serve as platforms for interaction between different Jihadi groups. This approach led to further misperceptions with dramatic consequences. E.g., the fictional differentiation between ‘good Taliban’ and ‘bad Taliban’. The ‘good’ ones were willing to take part in politics by entering processes of peace negotiations and reconciliation in Afghanistan. The ‘bad’ ones continued the armed struggle. This strategy ultimately resulted in the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the subsequent deteriorating security situation, and the failure of peace negotiations.

The political lobbying of the Muslim Brotherhood (and its affiliated network of Muslim charities and Islamic cultural centres) convinced western governments to follow an incoherent and lukewarm approach. Some of these groups did not only actively support violent groups like JeI in Bangladesh or in Pakistan, but also lobbied western governments in order to ensure they would consider Jihadist organisations as democratic political parties.

Despite JeI’s deeply entrenched anti-Western sentiment and aversion to the United Nations (a system open to infidels), it adopted a conciliatory approach and did not oppose military interventions in Iraq or in Afghanistan.¹⁷³ Here, JeI played its traditional double game: on the one hand, it did not express its views for tactical-political reasons; on the other hand, some of its senior members praised Jihad in Afghanistan and encouraged young Bangladeshi men to join the armed struggle against western forces.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ M. Kugelman, ‘U.S. Policy in South Asia: Imperatives and Challenges’, *Wilson Center*, 5 October 2016, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/us-policy-south-asia-imperatives-and-challenges>.

¹⁷⁰ L. Curtis et al, ‘Pursuing a Freedom Agenda Amidst Rising Global Islamism’, *The Heritage Foundation*, Special Report. No 159, 17 November 2014.

¹⁷¹ Curtis et al., *The Heritage Foundation*, p. 3.

¹⁷² The terror attack left 18 dead and hundreds wounded. See S. Datta, ‘Attack on Sheikh Hasina’, *IDSA Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 28, No. 3, Jul-Sep 2004.

¹⁷³ Pattanaik, *IDSA Strategic Analysis*, p. 279.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

VI. Recommendations

US and EU governments – as well as researchers and analysts – should reassess their view of Jihadist groups, and perhaps no other country deserves a closer analysis than Bangladesh. Most western governments assume so-called Islamist parties are willing and able to take part in democratic processes, this needs to be reconsidered. The concrete political developments – like adopting an autocratic style of governance to push an Islamist agenda after gaining a majority in elections – disproves the notion that Jihadists can function as stakeholders of democracy. Furthermore, it is essential that authorities fully understand the relations of these political actors with Jihadist networks, their complexity and, internal dynamics.

1. The West should not shelter Jihadist organisations

Political parties that directly or indirectly associate – either through individual members or third entities (Muslim Charity and cultural organisations) – with violent Jihadist organisations must be considered a part of the Jihadist movement, and the West must stop acting as their safe-haven, granting them freedom of movement, economic and financial activities that eventually destabilise non-jihadist Muslim countries. Western government must make sure their territory is not used by parties supporting terrorism (especially the provision of logistics, finances, and recruitments) in Bangladesh or any other country.

2. Cooperating with Bangladeshi authorities to counter Jihadism

It is necessary to engage strongly with the Bangladeshi authorities regarding the best way to combat fanatic indoctrination, terrorism and other forms of political violence. This should include material assistance, training, and information sharing mechanisms. The western authorities should encourage cross-border cooperation to combat terrorism in South Asia and beyond. In particular, the West should help the Bangladeshi authorities and actively develop its education sector, and particularly encourage secular education in public schools.

3. Promoting a culture of tolerance and combatting ‘ideologies of hate’

Western governments must support the Bangladeshi authority’s actions to promote civil society, to support economic and social development, and humanitarian action, whereas the government’s attempts to eliminate the spread of ‘ideologies of hate’ should be strengthened in a well-informed and intelligent way, taking into account the realities on the ground.

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