

I. Articles

Who are the Bangladeshi ‘Islamist Militants’?

by Ali Riaz

Abstract

Bangladesh has attracted international media attention for heightened militant activities in 2015, particularly after a series of killings of bloggers by a local militant group allegedly associated with Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and after murders of foreign nationals, responsibility of which was claimed by the Islamic State (IS). Islamist militant groups in Bangladesh which emerged in the 1990s have undergone several transformations. Originally grown out of the volunteers who joined the Afghan war against the Soviet Union, these groups have since then taken different shapes. Since the 1990s, five ‘generations’ of militant groups appeared on the scene. In some measures, the militant groups have come full circle: they began as a result of a global agenda fighting an ‘atheist’ Communist system (war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan) to now being part of establishing a global ‘khilafat’ (by joining the IS in Syria and Iraq) via pursuing a circumscribed local agenda for a period in the early 2000s. Despite such transformations, very little is known about the Bangladeshi militants. This article attempts to address this lacuna by examining the socio-demographic profile of Bangladeshi militants arrested between July 2014 and June 2015. The findings reveal a significant diversity among the militants. Contrary to public perceptions in Bangladesh, significant numbers of militants are well-educated and come from a middle class background.

Keywords: Bangladesh; Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS); Islamists militants; profiles.

Introduction

There has been a significant increase in militant activities in Bangladesh in recent years, particularly in 2015. Both Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and the Islamic State (IS) have claimed their presence in the country. The Ansar al Islam (also known as the Ansarullah Bangla Team, ABT) claimed to be the Bangladesh unit of the India-based militant group AQIS and has taken responsibility for the murders of four self-proclaimed atheist bloggers and the publisher of one of the atheist blogger’s book. [1] In a video posted online on 2 May 2015, titled “From France to Bangladesh: The Dust Will Never Settle Down”, AQIS claimed responsibility for six targeted killings in Bangladesh and Pakistan.[2] Additionally, between September and November, there were a total of fourteen attacks allegedly carried out by individuals or groups that claim to be followers of the Islamic State. These attacks have included the murder of two foreigners (and seriously injuring two others, shootings and bomb blasts at Shiite gatherings, attacks on other minority religious personalities, and death threats to missionaries.[3] Not only were the murders of foreign nationals claimed by a militant group unprecedented in the history of the country, but so were the brazen attacks on the Shi’a community in October and November 2015. It was reported by the SITE intelligence group that the IS claimed responsibility for these attacks immediately following the attacks. These claims were reiterated in the IS’s propaganda magazine named *Dabiq* (issue 12, Safar 1437), published in November.[4] The magazine also claimed that disparate militant groups in Bangladesh have come under the leadership of a proscribed militant organization named the Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). These incidents have been widely covered in global media and have stoked the fear that international terrorist groups, particularly the IS, have gained a foothold in the third largest Muslim majority country of the world.

Since 2013 government officials, including security and intelligence officials, have repeatedly claimed that they had arrested the “chief,” “recruiter,” or several “members” of IS and presented these actions as evidence of their success in addressing militancy. However, they abruptly changed their tune soon after the murders of the foreigners in September and October. Since then they have denied the presence of the IS in Bangladesh. Instead, the government has accused the opposition, particularly the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) for these attacks. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina blamed the opposition for conspiring to tarnish the government’s reputation.[5] She also suggested that militants might be carrying out attacks in retaliation for the war crime trials (i.e., trials conducted by the International Criminal Tribunal established by the government in 2010 to try those who had committed war crimes during the war of independence in 1971). [6] The BNP rejected the charge.[7] The Home Minister has echoed the Prime Minister: ‘there is no IS in the country, no way.’[8] The PM further stated that her government is under pressure to admit the presence of IS in the country which is intended to taint Bangladesh’s image and create a situation similar to those in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Libya, Iraq and Syria.[9]

These incidents took place at the heel of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI)’s assessment in early 2015 that the country is ‘vulnerable to high terrorism risk.’[10] The GTI score of the country was already on the rise from an historic low of 4.1 in 2012 to 5.47 in 2013 to 5.92 in 2014. However, this trend and recent increase need to be contextualized within the historical developments of militancy in the country and counterterrorism efforts pursued since 2006.

Although violence has been an integral part of the Bangladeshi political landscape since its inception in 1971,[11] religiously inspired violent extremism and militancy emerged in the country only in the mid-1990s. Almost a decade later, in 2004-2005, a dramatic rise of a vigilante Islamist group in the northwest part of the country followed by simultaneous bombings around the country and a number of suicide attacks brought the issue to the attention of the international community and international media.[12] Notwithstanding the initial refusal of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led government to acknowledge the presence of militant groups, it cracked down on such groups and proscribed four organizations.[13] Hundreds of militants, including the leaders of one of the groups, were apprehended in 2006, and faced a speedy trial. Six key leaders were executed in March 2007 when the country was being ruled by a military backed technocratic regime.[14] The interim government devised and began implementing a strong counter-terrorism (CT) strategy.[15] The Bangladesh Awami League (BAL), which was elected to office in late 2008, adopted the CT strategy, made changes to various intelligence organizations and formulated new measures to counter the threat of militancy.[16] The government also banned an Islamist organization in 2009 and blacklisted a number of other suspected organizations.[17] The regime’s commitment, political goodwill, and political stability combined with the international community’s assistance tamed the militant groups in the following years. Between 2007 and 2014, 478 members of the Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), one of the proscribed organizations, were tried in 177 cases. Of them, 51 top leaders of JMB have been sentenced to death, 178 were given life terms and 245 jailed for different terms. [18] However, the Bangladeshi militant groups, as elsewhere, remained potent, and continued to reorganize. New organizations have emerged since then. In some instances members of the banned organizations rallied under a different name. Some of the Bangladeshi militant groups reportedly have connections with Pakistan-based militant organizations [19] and have been implicated in the acts of terrorism in India.[20] Alleged Pakistani militants[21] and members of Al Qaeda’s branch in the Indian subcontinent (AQIS) have been arrested in Bangladesh.[22]

The gains in CT achieved since 2006 started to slide in 2013, as the domestic political situation became more volatile.[23] Not only did new militant organizations begin to appear on the scene but connections between local and transnational terrorist groups were found too. These signaled an urgency to revisit the CT

strategies, and examine the immediate causes allowing these groups to reclaim lost ground. The government responded with arrests of suspected militants in large numbers and claimed to have recovered their weapons. It also banned another militant group in 2015.[24] While the government continues to claim that it has adopted a 'zero tolerance' policy towards terrorism and that it is making progress in taming the tide, some critics have questioned the veracity of such a claim and argue that the government is also using the militancy as an excuse to crack down on its political opponents.[25] The statements of ruling party leaders and cabinet members characterizing the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) as a militant organization provides credence to this allegation.[26]

Despite significant developments over the past decade, there have been very few serious studies about militancy in Bangladesh. [27] Media coverage of incidents and sensationalized reactions often demonstrated a lack of in-depth understanding of the country's complex politics. Christine Fair and Seth Oldmixon noted, 'Islamist militancy in Bangladesh rarely draws the attention of scholars and policy analysts.'[28] As such, there are various lacunae in the extant literature. One of them is the absence of an understanding as to the identity of these militants.[29] In the absence of rigorous and systematic evidence-based study, public perception has been shaped by anecdotal evidence and the reproduction of clichés. For example, it has often argued by anti-Islamist activists that Bangladeshi madrassahs are the 'factories of the militants.'[30]

It is against this background that this article intends to examine the socio-demographic profile of the alleged militants. The primary objective is to gather four profiling data from the available information: age, occupation, level of education, and the organizations of which those arrested are part. This discussion needs to be contextualized; first within the various waves of militant groups, and secondly within the available discussions on the utility of terrorist profiles.

'Five Generations' of Bangladeshi Militants

The Islamist militant groups in Bangladesh, based on their transformations, tactics and objectives, can be divided into five generations.

The first generation of militants was the product of the Afghan War (1979-1992). Although geographically Bangladesh is located thousands of miles away from that battlefield, the connection was established in 1984 when a group of volunteers travelled to Afghanistan. An estimated 3,000 volunteers joined the war in several batches in the following four years, of which 24 died on the battlefield. Also a group of 'ulama' visited the country and reportedly met Usama bin Laden.[31] Between 1988 and 1992, Shafiqur Rahman, a returnee of the Afghan war, established contacts with a Pakistani Islamist organization called Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami and the Bangladesh chapter began its clandestine operations. On 30 April 1992, a week after the mujahideen emerged victorious in Afghanistan, the Bangladeshi participants of the war expressed their delight at a press conference in Dhaka where some of the speakers identified themselves as members of HuJI-Bangladesh (HuJI-B).[32] It is worth noting that the period was the expansionary phase of the HuJI-B.[33] In the first four years HuJI-B's activities were largely restricted to the southeastern hills close to the border with Burma, suggesting that their initial objective was to use Bangladesh as a launching pad to influence the Rohiyanga movement inside Myanmar.[34] The membership of the group was largely limited to those with connections to the Afghan War or links to organizations who had provided volunteers to the war. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the members of the leadership were older, mostly madrassah (particularly Deobandi) educated, and hailed from rural areas.

After 1996, the group moved its bases to the northern and northwestern parts of the country, and adopted the name "Qital fi Sabilillah" (Fighting in the way of Allah). The expansion of the organization came after

contacts had been made with Shaikh Abdur Rahman, son of a deceased Ahle Hadith leader, and Asadullah Ghalib, leader of the Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (AHAB, Ahle Hadith Movement Bangladesh). They joined forces in 1998 and established the Jaamatul Mujaheddin Bangladesh (JMB).[35] Thus the second generation of militants was born. The new group's focus shifted inward, as opposed to supporting militants outside. It defined its objective as transforming Bangladesh into an 'Islamic state.' The group and its affiliate Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), under the leadership of Shaikh Abdur Rahman and Siddiqur Rahman, alias Bangla Bhai, established a reign of terror in the northwestern part of Bangladesh. The organization also simultaneously blasted 450 homemade bombs throughout the country and conducted a number of suicide attacks. The information on JMB activists arrested since late 2006 reveal that youth educated in technical and vocational training colleges, and born and raised in urban areas, were being attracted to the organization and elevated to leadership.

As the JMB and HuJIB were gradually transforming, a new organization with international connections and a global agenda appeared on the scene: the Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT). The Bangladesh chapter of the HT was founded in 2001 by a university professor who had studied in the United Kingdom as a Commonwealth Scholar. This can be categorized as the third generation of militants. [36] The new generation is characterized by its technical skills, being students of universities, and well versed in global political events. The profiles of arrested activists in the past years indicate that they are largely from middle class backgrounds and more urban-based than any other Islamist groups, including the mainstream Islamist parties.

The arrests and execution of the JMB leaders in 2006–2007, followed by strong CT efforts, and the political stability in the early years of the AL government weakened the militant groups. At times, it appeared that the country has successfully tamed the menace of militancy. However, these groups, particularly the HuJI and the JMB, continued to reorganize. A new group named the Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), which can be described as the fourth generation of militant groups, emerged around that time. According to the Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC), the ABT surfaced in 2007 under the name of Jamaat-ul Muslemin. [37] The group was reportedly funded by external sources and 'ceased to operate when funding ended.' [38] Inspired by Anwar al Awlaki and led by local Mufti Jasimuddin Rahmani, the ABT began to attract new recruits in 2012 when its presence in cyberspace became prominent. [39] Originally the group used the 'Ansar al Mujahideen English Forum' (AAMEF), an Al Qaeda affiliated website, and later moved to another website, 'bab-ul-islam.net', launched in Pakistan. The group uses Bengali, Urdu, Arabic and English for the dissemination of its message. [40] "The group reflects a young generation of jihadist in Bangladesh, which uses cyberspace extensively in propagating jihadist ideology and training manuals to guide terror attacks". [41] One of the videos produced by the groups is entitled 'Eradicate Democracy.' [42] The ABT was thrust into the limelight in March 2013 after arrests of five university students in connection with the killing of blogger and activist Rajib Haider. Haider, a self-proclaimed atheist, was hacked to death in February. The students, according to police, confessed to the killing and creating this new organization. The group's leader Rahmani was arrested with 30 followers in August. [43] Members of the group are largely drawn from middle class educated youths.

With the announcement of Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in September 2014 that the organization was establishing a branch in South Asia, Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) came into being. [44] In February 2015, Zawahiri called upon the people of Bangladesh to 'launch a massive public uprising (intifada) in defense of Islam against the enemies of Islam.' [45] Yet there has been very little indication of an organized presence of AQIS in Bangladesh until mid-2015. In early July the law enforcing agencies arrested Maulana Mainul Islam, the alleged AQIS chief coordinator in Bangladesh, and his top advisor Maulana Zafar Amin, along with ten other AQIS activists. [46] The AQIS, as mentioned earlier, claimed responsibility

for the brutal killing of bloggers in 2015. Since the beginning of 2015, a number of individuals reportedly connected to the IS have been arrested. These arrests include the alleged Bangladesh Coordinator of the IS, Mohammad Sakhawatul Kabir. He was arrested along with three other suspects in January 2015 in Dhaka. In May, the police claimed that it had nabbed the 'Bangladesh Coordinator' of the IS, Abdullah Al Galib. Galib is a former member of Hizb ut-Tahrir, and a follower of Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), according to press reports. [47] Members and followers of the AQIS and the IS can be described as the fifth generation of militants in Bangladesh. The defining feature of the new generation is that they are inspired by, and connected to, the transnational terrorist groups, intend to pursue their objective of establishing an Islamic state in Bangladesh and participate in the global militant Islamist movements. This generation of militants is also founding their own local organizations. The most recent ones are the Shaheed Hamza Brigade (SHB) and the Bangladesh Jihad Group (BJG) that were identified by law enforcement agencies in 2015.

In some way, the militant groups have come full circle: they began as a result of a global agenda fighting an 'atheist' Communist system (the Soviet military in Afghanistan) to now being a part of establishing a global 'khilafat' (by joining the IS in Syria and Iraq). The circumscribed national Islamist agenda features only a part of the larger agenda.

The Elusive Profile of a Terrorist

Scholars of terrorism studies and policy-makers have long debated whether distinctive traits (psychological, or social, or demographic) of terrorists/militants can be identified and used for predictive purposes.[48] For almost two decades beginning in the 1960s, based on the assumptions that terrorists are not 'normal', some scholars hypothesized that some common psychological elements exist among terrorists and that psychology and psychiatry should be able to identify those traits; but empirical studies provided only very limited support for this hypothesis. Subsequently, the notion that there is a typical 'terrorist personality' came under close scrutiny. Walter Laqueur insists that a 'terrorist personality' is non-existent and therefore a search in this regard is bound to be fruitless,[49] a view to which Jerrold Post concurs to some extent.[50] Franco Ferracuti reached the same conclusion in his study of the Red Brigade in Europe.[51] Additionally, contrary to the basic assumption that terrorists are abnormal, some studies indicate that if there is anything that can be identified as a common characteristic to them, it is how normal they are.[52] Granted, these studies have not deterred scholars to look for the elusive 'terrorist personality' but they shifted the focus elsewhere.

The absence of an obvious psychopathology has turned the attention of scholars more to the socio-demographic aspects of the terrorists to probe whether common characteristics can be identified. The classic study in this regard is the one conducted by Charles A. Russell and Bowman H. Miller in 1977. Based on more than 350 urban terrorists of various national origins (i.e. Argentinian, Brazilian, German, Iranian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Palestinian, Spanish, Turkish, and Uruguayan) over a whole decade (1966-76), the authors drew a sociological portrait or profile of the 'modern urban terrorist':

In summation, one can draw a general composite picture into which fit the great majority of those terrorists from the eighteen urban guerrilla groups examined here. To this point, they have been largely single males aged 22 to 24...who have some university education, if not a college degree. The female terrorists, except for the West German groups and an occasional leading figure in the JRA and PFLP, are preoccupied with support rather than operational roles.[53]

A study conducted in 2008 by the British intelligence agency MI5's Behavioral Science Unit which was based on several hundred in-depth case studies of individuals in Britain known to be involved in, or closely associated with, violent extremist activity, concluded that a typical profile of the 'British terrorist' cannot be drawn; and that most were 'demographically unremarkable' and are simply reflecting the communities in which they lived. [54] Other studies (for example Bux, [55] and Horgan [56] have reached a similar conclusion.

On the other hand, some studies have pointed to similarities among the terrorists. These include studies conducted by Krueger,[57] Krueger and Laitin,[58] Laitin and Shapiro,[59] Richardson,[60] Kepel,[61] to name a few. These and other studies have provided ample data that were summarized by Guilain Denoeux and Lynn Carter in the following manner:

- A. There is no single "terrorist personality."
- B. Until recently at least, most terrorists have shared some basic attributes in terms of socioeconomic background and educational achievement. These similarities have tended to cut across cultures, regions of the world and time periods.
- C. The socioeconomic and educational profile of that particular sub-set of violent extremists represented by Salafi jihadists has experienced significant changes since 2003. The trend toward increasing diversity in the socioeconomic background of global jihadists is likely to intensify in the years ahead.
- D. While *violent extremists do not share a single profile* across countries and time periods, they may do so *in a specific country and at a particular historical juncture*. [62]

Therefore, available studies suggest that there is no catch-all 'profiling' of terrorists for global use, but one can be found in a specific country at a specific time, and that profile has analytical value. With this understanding, we gathered and examined the socio-demographic data of the militants in Bangladesh.

Profiling Bangladeshi 'Islamist Militants'

Method

Data of individuals arrested as 'militants' have been gathered from three daily newspapers: two Bengali and one English, for a period of one year, between July 2014 and June 2015. The newspapers are *Prothom Alo*, *Daily Janakantha* and *Daily New Age*. *Prothom Alo* is the largest in terms of circulation, and considered to be one of the most influential newspapers in Bangladesh. The paper was at the forefront of bringing the issue of rising militancy in 2005 to public attention. Since then it has paid close attention to the issue, and widely reported on various militant groups and measures against the militants. *Daily Janakantha* is one of the widely circulated newspapers of the country and politically leaning towards the incumbent Awami League regime. As the regime has insisted that counter-terrorism is one of its pivotal successes, the *Daily Janakantha* is expected to report extensively on the arrest and prosecution of militants. *Daily New Age*, an English newspaper, has earned admiration for its critical voice challenging the establishment.

As our primary goal is to understand the profile of the alleged 'Islamist militants' we only identified the news reports that described the arrested individuals connected with an Islamist organization. We are cognizant of the fact that these individuals can be falsely identified as 'militants', and that the law enforcing agencies may make arrests to boost numbers to demonstrate their effectiveness. Also, there are allegations that the

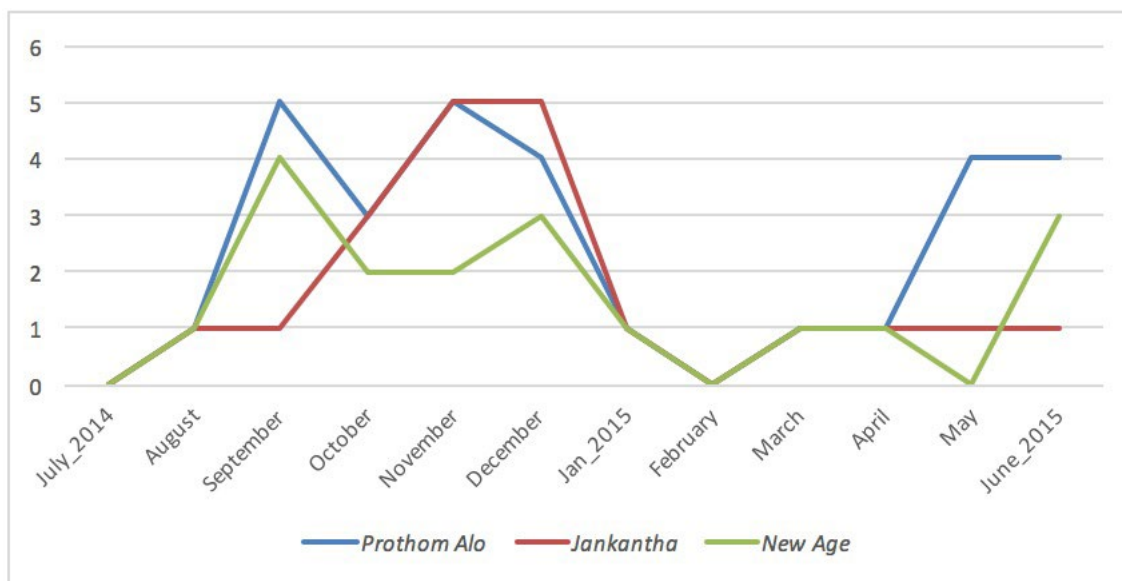
political situation and expediency serve as factors in arresting ‘militants.’ We tried to minimize the effect of such allegations by focusing on an entire year (2014-2015) that includes a period of relative calm (July 2014 through December 2014) and a period of heightened violence (January 2015- June 2015).[63] Despite these limitations, in the absence of any evidence-based study on Bangladeshi militants, these reports provide us with a rough picture as to who are perceived to be ‘Islamist militants’ in Bangladesh.

All these arrests were made by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), the elite law enforcement agency of the government. For ensuring the consistency of the information we have cross-checked all of the three newspapers and in case of any discrepancy, we have also checked the official website of the RAB (www.rab.gov.bd). [64] No arrests were double counted.

Data Sources

We identified 67 reports published during the period under study. Twenty-nine reports were published in *Prothom Alo*, 20 in *Daily Jankantha* and 18 in *New Age* (Figure 1). No arrest was reported in July 2014. Therefore, the number represents the arrests over 11 months. We have also included one report published in *Prothom Alo* that identified 12 individuals as “militants’ who were reported to have plans to travel to Iraq or Syria to join the Islamic State fighters although they are yet to be arrested.[65]

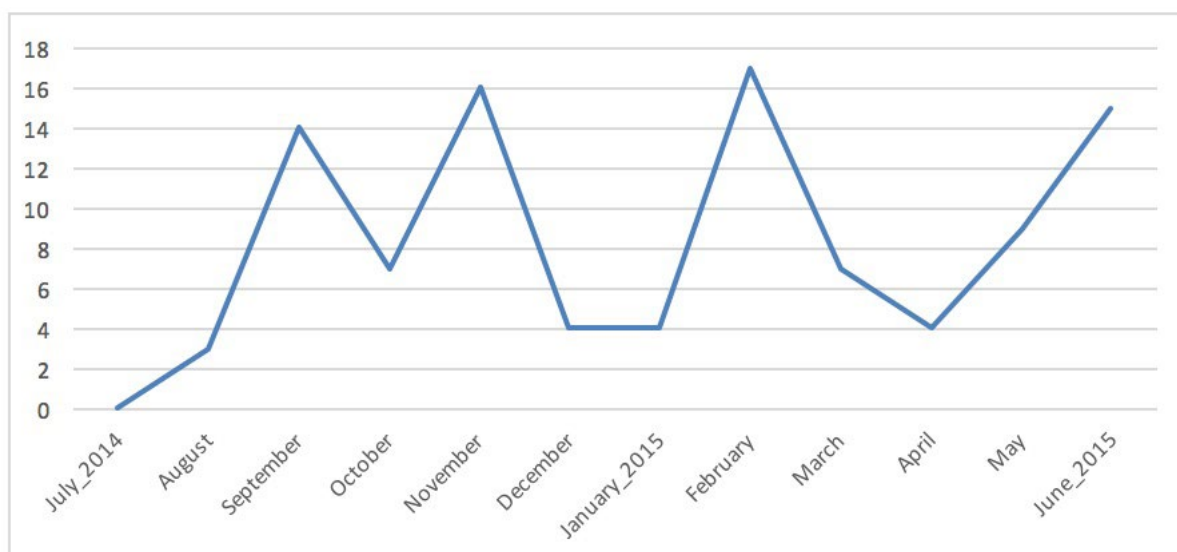
Figure 1: Reports of Arrests by Newspapers



Sample

During the period under review 100 individuals were arrested, and additionally 12 were identified as ‘militants’ by the law enforcing agencies and reported accordingly by these newspapers. As for arrests, most were made in February 2015; a total of 17 individuals were arrested that month. The second largest number of arrests was made in November 2014 when 16 were arrested (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Arrests by Month, July 2014 – June 2015



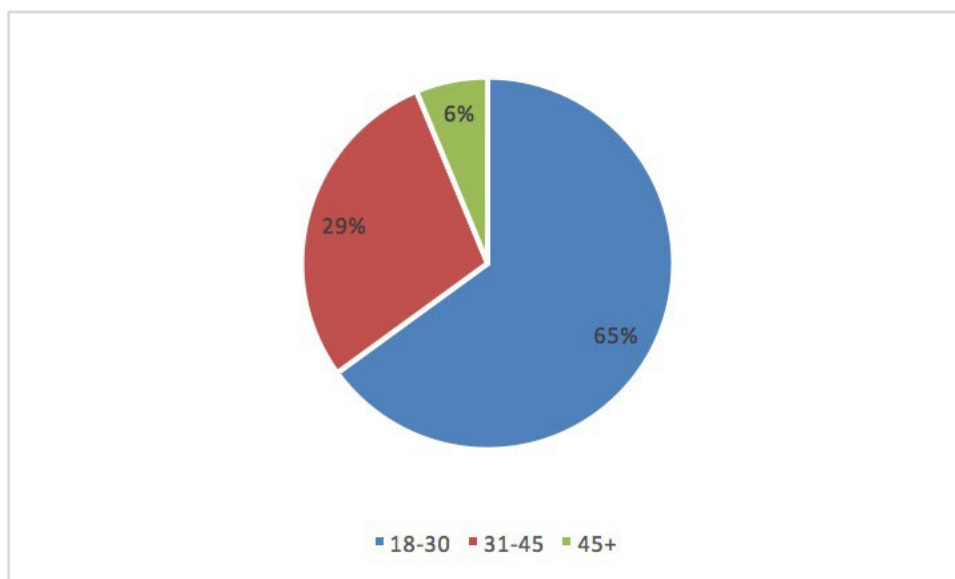
Findings

Findings are discussed in four broad categories: age, occupation, level of education, and the organizations with which those arrested were associated.

Age

Of the 112 alleged militants, only two were females—one of them is the wife of a leader of the Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) who is also identified as the head of the women’s wing of the organization, and the other is a student. [66] The age of 81 individuals could be gathered from the press reports.[67] We divided them into three groups: 18-30 years; 31-40 years; and above 41 years. Only one arrestee was below 18 years old. He was arrested with others of older ages. Fifty-two individuals were between 18 and 30 years of age (65% of the sample); 23 were between 31 and 40 years (28.39%); and 5 were above 40 years (6.17%). The oldest among them was 58 years old. These findings are consistent with anecdotal evidence and conventional wisdom that younger males are more likely to become militants than older ones (Figure 3). One of the suspected is a Bangladeshi-born British citizen. [68]

Figure 3: Age Distribution of Suspected Militants (n=80)



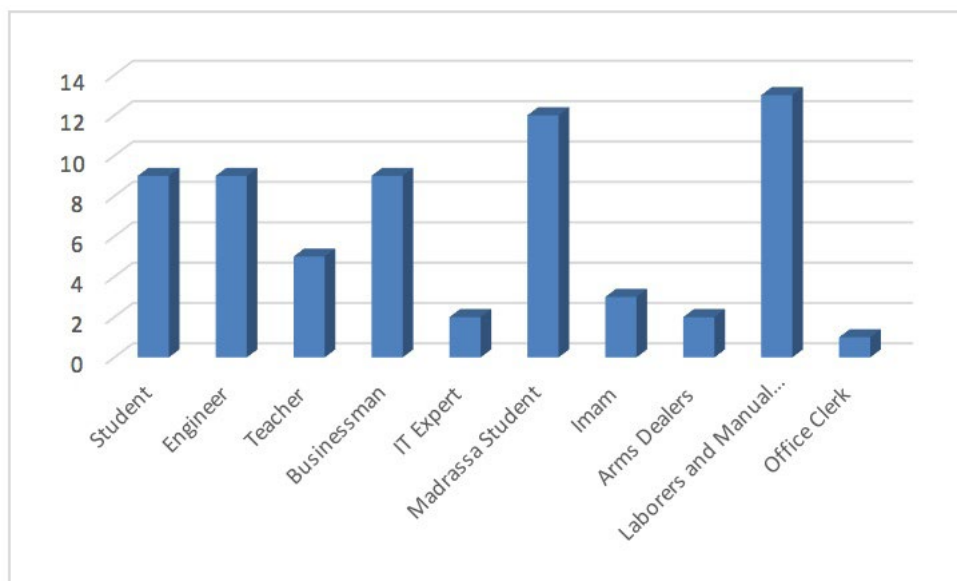
Occupations

Although available reports failed to describe the occupations of all suspected militants, there are 65 instances where references were made to their occupations. In one instance, 12 madrassa students were arrested from a madrassah making them the largest cohort in any one profession.[69] Of the remaining 53 individuals, 13 are engaged in various kinds of manual jobs and belong to the lower economic strata; the occupations include garment workers, laborers, security guards, rickshaw/auto rickshaw pullers, fruit vendors and bus drivers; nine are engineers, nine are businessmen, nine are students, five are teachers (including one madrassah teacher), three are Imams (one of them is also a madrassah teacher), two are described as IT experts, two are described as arms dealers, and one is an office clerk of a hospital (Figure 4).

In addition to the nine individuals identified as engineers who were employed in their respective fields, a school teacher who is currently teaching English was reported to be a graduate of the Military Institute of Science and Technology in Civil Engineering. Among the engineers was the head of an IT department of a multinational soft beverage company. The businessmen include owners of a transport company, a printing press, and a travel agency. Overall, except madrassah students and manual laborers (25 individuals; 38.4%), 40 individuals (61%) have come from at least either middle class or upper middle class backgrounds. It is worth noting here that six of the arrested individuals are sons of former high ranking public officials. Two are sons of former military officers, one is a son of a former navy commander, two are sons of high-ranking civil service officers, and another is a son of a former justice.

If the madrassah students are excluded from the computation (n=53), as we are unaware of their family occupational background, the share of middle and upper middle class jumps to a staggering 75.47% of the sample.

Figure 4: Occupations of Suspected Militants (n= 65).



Levels of Education

Those identified as students came from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. All of the students have completed at least 12 grades and are studying at the university level. One of them is a PhD candidate in Sociology; one is studying Electrical Engineering, one is completing a bachelor’s degree in Business, and another in Chemistry. Among the engineers, one received a degree from the University of Malaysia while others graduated from respected institutions within the country, including one in marine engineering. Most of the nine businessmen are well educated. One of them owns a printing press and has a Master’s degree in Soil Science, one has a Bachelor’s degree in English. Two businessmen are reported to be IT experts as well. One businessman is reported to have been educated in ‘English medium school’, a reference to the strand of mainstream education system that follows either a British or American curriculum. Of the two individuals who are described as IT experts, we found the academic qualification of one: he graduated from a reputed private university.

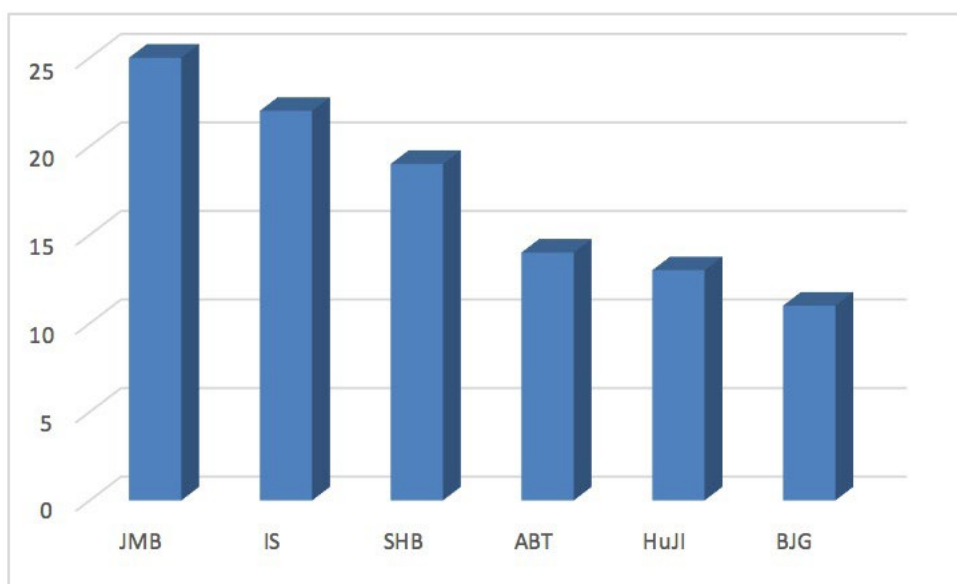
It is interesting to note that five of these individuals attended Cadet Colleges, and one of the current students included in the sample attends a Cadet College. Cadet Colleges in Bangladesh are special academic institutions known for their rigorous discipline and higher academic standard. The initial goals of the Cadet Colleges include producing ‘students capable of leading the country.’ These institutions are considered as the feeder for the Army officer corps.[70]

Organizations

Of the total 112 suspected militants, press reports specifically identified the organizations which 104 individuals were either affiliated with or aspired to be affiliated with. In ten cases the law enforcement agencies have not provided the names of the organizations. A total of 25 reported Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) members have been arrested. The number of Ansarullah Bangladesh Team (ABT) members arrested during the period under review was 14. Thirteen members of the Harkatul Jihad-al Islam Bangladesh (HuJI), the fountainhead of all militant groups in Bangladesh, were arrested. Reports show that two new organizations have emerged in 2015: the Shaheed Hamza Brigade (SHB), and the Bangladesh Jihad Group (BJG). Nineteen of the SHB, and 11 of the BJG have been arrested during the period. Members of the

BJG were arrested in two separate raids on 8 June and 25 June 2015. The press reports quoted police sources claiming that the BJG members belong to HuJI and ABT but were operating under a new name. The SHB activists were arrested in four separate raids, three in February and one in April of 2015. Law enforcement agencies could not identify the organization these arrestees were connected to when they made arrests of 12 students from a madrassah in the port city of Chittagong on 19 February. However arrests of five suspected militants a few days later on two separate operations based on the information gathered from the first group brought to light the existence of a new militant group. The name of the group and its structure became known when four individuals were arrested in April 2015 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Organizations of the Suspected Militants (n=101)



Besides those who are affiliated with extant local militant groups, 22 individuals have been identified as either connected to or aspiring to be connected with the Islamic State (IS). As noted before, 12 individuals were identified to be planning to travel to Syria or Iraq to join the IS. Except for two individuals – the British citizen and the Head of an IT department of an international soft beverage company – none seems to have access and resources to be directly connected to the IS or formally joined the IS. However, the authorities have identified one of them as the regional Commander of IS Bangladesh Chapter. [71] One of those who has been identified to have connections with the IS, arrested in June, also claimed to be the founder of a new group called *Junud At-tawhid Wal Khilafha*. Although no other activists of this new group has been arrested, a video was discovered with him that showed seven youth expressing their allegiance to the IS leader and that ten (presumably including those seven) were taking basic physical training and carrying weapons.

Conclusion

This exploratory study does not provide a definitive profile of the Bangladeshi ‘Islamist militants’ but shows that their characteristics are diverse. It also highlights the point that generalizations regarding militants are difficult to make, to say the least. This is important in the context of public perceptions in Bangladesh about the source of militancy and the profiles of militants.[72] The general notion that poverty, unemployment and madrassah education are the common drivers of terrorism in Bangladesh does not bear out from the socio-demographic data of the arrested individuals. The majority of them have come from middle class or upper middle class backgrounds; a significant number were educated in prestigious institutions of higher learning

and/or have a background in technical education. The finding that the militants are largely youth should not come as a surprise.

This is consistent with earlier studies across the world over time. However, it assumes greater importance if we take into account that about 47.6 million or 30 percent of the total 158.5 million people in Bangladesh are young (10-24 years).[73] More than half of the Bangladeshi population is between one and 24 years old. One of the important points that emerged from the discussions on various militant groups and the data is that the profiles can change.

One of the key limitations of this study lies with the sample; it relied exclusively on allegations of being militants instead of more reliable proof obtained through due process. Despite such a limitation, this study provides a snapshot of a profile of militants, which until now is not available in the extant literature. A follow up study on those who have already been convicted by various courts in Bangladesh will address the limitations of this study and should contribute to a better understanding of the militants. This might also address another lacuna of the study and fill in a void in the existing studies on militancy: the sources of motivation and the drivers of the radicalization process.

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Notes

[1] Syed Zain Al-Mahmood, 'Fourth Blogger Hacked to Death in Bangladesh', *Wall Street Journal*, 7 August 2015; URL: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/fourth-blogger-hacked-to-death-in-bangladesh-1438963397>. -The report mentions the killings of Avijit Roy, Wasiqur Rahman, Ananta Bijoy Roy and Niloy Chottopadhyay. In 2013, Rajib Haider was also hacked to death.

[2] As-Sahāb Media presents a new video message from al-Qā'idah's Mawlānā 'Asim 'Umar: "From France to Bangladesh: The Dust Will Never Settle Down"; URL: <http://jihadology.net/2015/05/02/as-sa%E1%B8%A5ab-media-presents-a-new-video-message-from-al-qaidahs-mawlana-a%E1%B9%A3im-umar-from-france-to-bangladesh-the-dust-will-never-settle-down/>

[3] Tipu Sultan, 'JMB-IS ek Sutre Gantha?' ('Are the JMB-IS tied together?', in Bengali), *Prothom Alo* (Bangla), November 30, 2015.

[4] 'The Revival of Jihad in Bengal', *Dabiq*, Issue 12, safar 1437; URL: <http://www.clarionproject.org/docs/islamic-state-isis-isil-dabiq-magazine-issue-12-just-terror.pdf>

[5] Ellen Barry, Bangladesh Pushes Back as Warnings of ISIS Expansion Gather Steam, *New York Times*, October 30, 2015; URL: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/31/world/asia/bangladesh-isis-terrorism-warnings.html?_r=0

[6] Bangladesh skeptical of claims that ISIS was behind shootings of foreigners, *New York Times*, October 5, 2015; URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/05/world/asia/bangladesh-skeptical-of-claims-that-isis-was-behind-shootings-of-foreigners.html>

[7] 'BNP: PM's statement unexpected', *Dhaka Tribune*, October 4, 2015, URL: <http://www.dhakatribune.com/politics/2015/oct/04/bnp-pms-statement-unexpected#sthash.EAaXj9bY.dpuf>

- [8] 'Bangladesh skeptical of claims that ISIS was behind shootings of foreigners', *New York Times*, October 5, 2015; URL: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/05/world/asia/bangladesh-skeptical-of-claims-that-isis-was-behind-shootings-of-foreigners.html>
- [9] 'Dhaka under pressure to admit IS presence: Hasina', *The Hindu*, November 9, 2015.
- [10] Global Terrorism Index 2015, Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace, November 2015. <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Global-Terrorism-Index-2015.pdf>
- [11] For a history of the founding of Bangladesh and subsequent tumultuous political developments, see: S. Mahmud Ali, *Understanding Bangladesh*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- [12] For discussions on the background, causes, conditions, and initial responses, see: Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, London: Routledge, 2008.
- [13] These are Shahadat-e-al Hikma banned on February 9, 2003; Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) banned on February 23, 2005; and Harkat-ul Jihad al-Islami (HuJI) on October 17, 2005.
- [14] These militant leaders were leaders of the Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), a banned organization. They were the supreme leader of the JMB Sheikh Abdur Rahman, JMB deputy, Siddiqui Islam also known as Bangla Bhai, ruling council members Aatur Rahman Sunny, Abdul Awal, Khaled Saifullah and Iftekhar al Mamun.
- [15] The difference in regard to the CT strategy between the BNP-led center-right coalition government (2001-2006) and the caretaker government (2007-2008) is described in a confidential memo of the US embassy in Dhaka to Washington: 'The interim government's intention to prosecute JMB's political supporters stands in sharp contrast to the facile assurances of the previous BNP-led government that there was no evidence of involvement by government or party officials. Steps such as the executions, continued JMB arrests, and the focus on JMB's backers suggest the interim government is serious about terrorism' (Cable no 07DHAKA546, 4 April 2007; accessed through *Wikileaks*, Public Library of US Diplomacy, accessed on July 10, 2015; URL: https://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07DHAKA546_a.html).
- [16] A.S.M. Ali Ashraf, 'Explaining Recent Intelligence Reforms In Bangladesh', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (Hum.)*, Vol. 59 (1), 2014, pp. 65-94.
- [17] Hizb-ut Tahrir (HT) was banned on 22 October 2009. Later seven other organizations Hizb-ut-Tawhid, Islami Samaj, Ulema Anjuman al Baiyinaat, Islamic Democratic Party, Tawhid Trust, Tamir ud-Deen and Alla'r Dal were blacklisted for their suspected involvement in militant activities (Kailash Sarkar, 'Ten Islamist outfits to face ban', *Dhaka Tribune*, 21 August 2013, accessed on July 5, 2015
URL: <http://www.dhakatribune.com/law-amp-rights/2013/aug/21/government-mulls-banning-10-islamist-outfits#sthash.D2nLLc4o.dpuf>
- [18] Daily Star, 'Militants spreading wings', *Daily Star*, 28 March 2015, p. 1: accessed on March 29, 2015; URL: <http://www.thedailystar.net/city/jmb-targets-cops-politicians-74176>.
- [19] HuJIB was designated as Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) by the US Department of State in March 2008. The 2014 US State Department Country Reports on Terrorism states, 'HUJI-B has connections to Pakistani terrorist groups such as Lashkar e-Tayyiba, which advocate similar objectives' (US Department of State, Bureau of Counter Terrorism, 'Foreign Terrorist Organizations', *Country Reports on Terrorism 2014*, accessed August 1, 2015; URL: <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2014/239413.htm>
- [20] Abhishek Bhalla, 'Bangladesh terror group thought to be behind Burdwan blast were 'funded by Saradha ponzi scam', *Daily Mail India*, 13 October 2014; accessed August 2, 2015; URL: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2791507/bangladesh-terror-group-thought-burdwan-blast-funded-saradha-ponzi-scam.html#ixzz3jVTDHpgg>
- [21] 'Bangladesh arrests three suspected Pakistani militants', *The Dawn*, 20 January 2014.
- [22] *Reuters*, 'Bangladesh arrests 12 suspected al Qaeda militants, weapons found', 2 July 2015. Accessed on July 3, 2015; URL: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/07/02/us-bangladesh-islamists-idUSKCN0PC0PR20150702>
- [23] Two issues—the reinstatement of the caretaker government (CTG), and the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) – became central to the political developments ahead of national election scheduled at the end of 2013. Periodic episodes of violence gripped the nation. For details of the issues and other developments, see: Ali Riaz, 'A Crisis of Democracy in Bangladesh', *Current History*, 113 (762), April 2014.

- [24] The Bangladesh government banned the Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) on 25 May 2015. 'Bangladesh bans Islamist group accused of blogger attacks', *BBC News*, 25 May 2015, accessed on May 26, 2015 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32879662>
- [25] Siegfried O. Wolf, 'Why the "Five Eyes" Should Not Turn Blind: A Decisive Moment for Counter-Terrorism in Bangladesh', *IndraStra*, 11 November 2015, URL: <http://www.indrastra.com/2015/11/FEATURED-Why-Five-Eyes-Should-Not-Turn-Blind-CT-in-Bangladesh-by-Siegfried-O-Wolf-0414.html?m=1>; also see: Karen Jayes, 'Rahman's Arrest Shines Light On UK Complicity In Bangladesh Reign Of Terror', *CAGE*, 24 November 2014, accessed on May 24, 2015 ; URL: <http://www.cageuk.org/article/rahman%E2%80%99s-arrest-shines-light-uk-complicity-bangladesh-reign-terror-0>
- [26] *Banglanews24*, 'The New Militant Organization of the Country is the BNP', *Banglanews24.com*, 21 January 2015, accessed June 5, 2015; URL: <http://www.banglanews24.com/fullnews/bn/359758.html>. - The headline is a quote of the cabinet minister. The information minister, and secretary-general of the ruling BAL described the BNP as militant organization on various occasions.
- [27] Available book length studies or edited volumes on terrorism in Bangladesh, either as a case study or as a part of the regional studies, include Farook Sobhan (Ed.), *Trends in Militancy in Bangladesh: Possible Responses* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2010); Hironmoy Karlekar, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan?* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005); Farooq Sobhan (Ed.), *Countering Terrorism in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press limited, 2008); Jaideep Saikia (Ed.), *Bangladesh: Treading the Taliban Trail* (New Delhi: Vision Books International, 2006); M. Sakhawat Hussain, *Terrorism in South Asia: Bangladesh Perspective* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Research Forum, 2007); Muhammad Humayun Kabir and Mufleh R Osmany (Eds.), *Global War on Terror : Bangladesh Perspective* (Dhaka: APPL, 2007); Imtiaz Ahmed (Ed.), *Terrorism in the 21st Century : Perspectives from Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2009). Mehadi Hassan Palash, *Jongibad: Bangladesh Keno Target* (Militancy: Why Bangladesh is a Target? In Bengali) (Dhaka: Bangladesh Research Forum 2006). Ain O. Salish Kendro (ASK), *Bangladeshe Jongi Totporota O tar Bichar* (Militant Activities in Bangladesh and the Trials, in Bengali), (Dhaka: ASK, 2007). Among the policy reports are: Frances Harrison, 'Political Islam and the Elections in Bangladesh' (London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2013); Neil DeVotta and David Timberman, 'Violent Extremism and Insurgency in Bangladesh: A Risk Assessment', (Washington DC: USAID and MSI, 2012) and Sumit Ganguly, 'The Rise of Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh' (Washington D.C: United States Institute of Peace, 2006). Book chapters and journal articles include Smruti Pattanaik, 'Bangladesh: Islamic Militancy and the Rise of religious Right' in D. Suba Chandran and PR Chari (Eds.), *Armed Conflict in South Asia 2008: Growing Violence* (London: Routledge 2008); Abdul Mannan, 'Militant Islamism in Bangladesh: Global Jihadist Connection.' *Perceptions*, XI, 2006, pp. 27–48. Mubashar Hasan, 'Democracy and Political Islam in Bangladesh', *South Asia Research*. 31(2), 2011, pp. 97–117; Sreeradha Dutta, 'Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh: The Threat from Within', *South Asia*, 30 (1), 2007, pp. 145-170; Moinul Khan, 'Islamist militancy in Bangladesh: why it failed to take root', *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*; 6 (1), 2011, pp. 51–64, and Nurul Momen and Marzina Begum, 'Acts of Terrorism in Bangladesh: A General Assessment', *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 3, 2005, pp. 850–856.
- [28] Christine Fair and Seth Oldmixon, 'Think Again: Islamism and Militancy in Bangladesh', *The National Interest*, 13 August 2015, accessed August 14, 2015; URL: <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/think-again-islamism-militancy-bangladesh-13567>. -Fair and Oldmixon were responding to the commentary of Atif Jalal Ahmad and Michael Kugelman, 'Will ISIS Infect Bangladesh?' *The National Interest*, 4 August 2015, accessed August 6, 2015; URL: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/will-isis-infect-bangladesh-13483>
- [29] Efforts to develop a profile of militants are palpable in the autobiography of a former militant (Hasan Rafiq, *Akjon Jongir Atmokotha*, Autobiography of a Militant, Dhaka: Boipatra Group of Publications, 2005), Zayadul Ahsan and Pavitra Banavar's chapter entitled 'Who are the Militants' (Ali Riaz and Christine Fair (Eds.), *Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh*, pp. 71-90. London: Routledge, 2010), and an appendix in one of my earlier works (Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, London; Routledge, 2008).
- [30] Shahriar Kabir, for example, has made this point repeatedly in his writings and media interviews. See his comments in Bangladeshi television talk show on 5 April 2015, accessed August 24; URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvDwNad98Zs>; accessed August 24, 2015.
- [31] *Islami Biplob* (Islamic Revolution), a bulletin published from Sylhet. Also see: Julfikar Ali Manik, "Huji kingpins' coalition link keeps cops at bay," *Daily Star*, 7 November 2005, p. 1.
- [32] Interviews with a number of reporters, including Zayadul Ahsan—then a senior reporter of the *Daily Star*—present in the press conference. Dhaka, January 2006.
- [33] Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy, *Islamist Networks: The Afghan-Pakistan Connection*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

[34] Rohingyas are members of an ethnic community in Myanmar. Muslim by faith, the members of the community face serious persecution in their homeland; they have been denied citizenship by Myanmar. Since the mid-1970s, thousands of them fled to southeastern parts of Bangladesh at various times, where they remained as stateless people. Some of the nationalist and Islamist insurgent groups have set up their bases within Bangladesh and have continued to fight the Myanmar regime. For a succinct history of the Rohingyas, see: ‘The most persecuted people on Earth?’, *The Economist*, 16 June 2015; accessed on June 17, 2015; URL: <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21654124-myanmars-muslim-minority-have-been-attacked-impunity-stripped-vote-and-driven>

[35] For more on JMB and JMJB, see: A. Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh*, opcit. – Polemical tone aside Subir Bhaumik provides useful information in his essay titled ‘Jihad or Joi Bangla’ in Jaideep Saikia and Ekatarina Stepanova (Eds.), *Terrorism: Patterns of Internationalization*, New Delhi: Sage, 2009.

[36] There is a debate whether the HT should be categorized as a ‘militant’ or ‘terrorist’ organization. It was banned in Bangladesh in 2009 allegedly for its involvement with the failed rebellion of the paramilitary border guards – Bangladesh Rifles (BDR). The organization operates legally in many countries..

[37] TRAC, Anasarullah Bangla Team (ABT); URL: <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ansarullah-bangla-team-abt>; accessed August 7, 2015. Also see: Tipu Sultan, ‘New Address Jamaatul Mujahideen: JMB Militants Joining Other Organizations’; *Prothom Alo*, 17 August 2014, p.1.

[38] TRAC, ABT, accessed August 7, 2015; URL: <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ansarullah-bangla-team-abt>

[39] For earlier online presence of the group, see URL: <https://archive.org/details/ShariahRulesOfJihadiForumUsersBangla>; accessed July 25, 2015. -

The ABT, in 2012, propagated translated versions of books by Sheikh Abdullah Azzam. Azzam was a Palestinian from Jordan, who was among the first Arabs to volunteer to join the Afghan War against the Soviet forces in the 1980s. Azzam is considered to have been the mentor of Usama bin Laden and one of the founders of the Al Qaeda. He later founded the Pakistan-based militant organization Lasker-i-Tayeba. For a brief introduction to Azzam, see Bruce Riedel, ‘The 9/11 Attacks’ Spiritual Father’, *Brookings*, 11 September 2011, accessed July 8, 2015; URL: <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2011/09/11-riedel>

[40] Mamunur Rashid, ‘Ansarullah BT deeply rooted in Al-Qaeda ideology’, *Daily Observer* (Dhaka), 7 November 2014, p. 1.

[41] TRAC, ABT, accessed August 7, 2015; URL: <http://www.trackingterrorism.org/group/ansarullah-bangla-team-abt>

[42] Ansarullah Bengali Team–Presents–Eradicate Democracy; URL: <http://qitaltube.blogspot.com/2013/02/ansarullah-bengali-team-presents.html>; accessed August 31, 2015.

[43] ‘Ansarullah’ chief, others in jail, *bdnews24*, 13 August 2013. Accessed July 24, 2015; URL: <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2013/08/13/ansarullah-chief-others-in-jail>

[44] ‘Al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri calls for Islamist resurgence in India – video’, *Guardian*, 4 September 2014, accessed September 6, 2014; URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2014/sep/04/al-qaida-leader-ayman-al-zawahiri-islamist-india-video>

[45] ‘Al-Qaeda chief’s ‘intifada’ call in Bangladesh’, *bdnews24*, 15 February 2015, accessed February 15, 2015; URL: <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2014/02/15/al-qaeda-chief-s-intifada-call-in-bangladesh>

[46] ‘Two top leaders of Al Qaeda Indian Sub-continent (AQIS) nabbed’, *bdnews24*, 2 July 2015, accessed July 2, 2015; URL: <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2015/07/02/two-top-leaders-of-al-qaeda-indian-sub-continent-aqis-nabbed>

[47] ‘Police arrest suspected ISIS “coordinator” in Bangladesh’, *The Strait Times*, 31 May 2015, accessed June 1, 2015; URL: <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/south-asia/police-arrest-suspected-isis-coordinator-in-bangladesh>

[48] For an excellent bibliography of available studies related to terrorist personality and organizations, see: Alex P. Schmid (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, London and New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 502–507.

[49] Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1977, p. 129.

[50] Jerrold M Post, ‘Individual and Group Dynamics of Terrorist Behavior.’ In: World Congress of Psychiatry, *Psychiatry: The State of the Art*, 6. New York: Plenum, 1985.

[51] Franco Ferracuti, ‘A Psychiatric Comparative—Analysis of Left and Right Terrorism in Italy.’ In: World Congress of Psychiatry, *Psychiatry: The State of the Art*, 6. New York: Plenum, 1985, and ‘A Sociopsychiatric Interpretation of Terrorism,’ *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 463, September 1982, pp. 129–141.

- [52] For example, S. Atran, 'Genesis of Suicide Terrorism', *Science*, 299 (5,612), 2003, pp.1,534–1,539; M. Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004; P. Gill, 'A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Suicide Bombing', *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 1 (2), pp.142–159, 2007; and A. Silke, 'Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalization', *European Journal of Criminology* 5(1), 2008, pp. 99–123.
- [53] Charles A Russell and Bowman H. Miller. "Profile of a Terrorist," *Terrorism: An International Journal*, 1, No. 1, 1977, p. 31.
- [54] This was a classified document of MI5, titled *Understanding Radicalisation and Violent Extremism in the UK*. *The Guardian* reported the findings. See: Alan Travis, 'MI5 Report Challenges Views on Terrorism in Britain', *Guardian*, 20 August 2008, accessed July 23, 2015; URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/aug/20/uksecurityterrorism1>
- [55] S. Bux, 'Muslim Youths, Islam and Violent Radicalisation: Addressing Some Myths', *The Police Journal*, 80, 2007, pp. 267–278.
- [56] J. Horgan, 'From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 618 (1), 2008, pp. 80–94.
- [57] Alan B Kruger, *What Makes a Terrorist*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- [58] Alan B. Krueger and David D. Laitin, "Kto Kogo?: A Cross-Country Study of the Origins and Targets of Terrorism." In: Philip Keefer and Norman Loayza (Eds.), *Terrorism, Economic Development, and Political Openness*, 2008, pp. 148-173.
- [59] David D. Laitin and Jacob N. Shapiro. 2008. "The Political, Economic and Organizational Source of Terrorism." In: Philip Keefer and Norman Loayza (Eds.), *Terrorism, Economic Development, and Political Openness*, 2008, pp. 209–232.
- [60] Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*. New York: Random House, 2006.
- [61] Gilles Kepel, *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- [62] Guilain Denoeux and Lynn Carter, *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*, Washington, D.C: USAID, 2009, p. 51.
- [63] For details of violence between 4 January and 4 April 2015, see: Ali Riaz, 'Congressional Testimony: Bangladesh's Fracture: Political And Religious Extremism,' Testimony before the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives, April 30, 2015; accessed July 15, 2015; URL: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA05/20150430/103406/HHRG-114-FA05-Wstate-RiazA-20150430.pdf>
- [64] Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) is an elite force created in 2004. It comprises members from Bangladesh's Army and the police. While the RAB has played a crucial role in counter-terrorism (CT) efforts since 2006, it has an abysmal record in protecting fundamental rights of the citizens. There are credible allegation of RAB being engaged in extrajudicial killings of alleged criminals and political opponents of the regime. Human Rights Groups, including the Human Rights Watch (HRW), stated that the Rapid Action Battalion '[is] Involved in Serial, Systematic Killings' and called upon the government to disband the unit. (Human Rights Watch, 'Bangladesh: Disband Death Squad', 20 July 2014. URL: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/20/bangladesh-disband-death-squad>). Amnesty International (AI) also alleged that the RAB was involved in a number of enforced disappearances (AI International Report 2014-15, Bangladesh; URL: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/bangladesh/report-bangladesh/>
- [65] 'Police in Search of 15-20 Youths intended to Join the IS', *Prothom Alo*, 30 May 2015, p.20.
- [66] The 20-year old female arrestee is a member of the Islami Chattri Sangstha, the female student wing of the mainstream Islamist party Bangladesh Jamaat-i-Islami (BJI). Neither BJI nor any of its student wings have been proscribed by the government. However, they have been treated as clandestine organizations since the International Crimes Tribunals (ICT) was founded in 2010. The ICT, a national court established by the Bangladesh government, is trying those who allegedly committed war crimes during the independence war in 1971. Most of those who have been convicted, being charged and awaiting trial, are leaders of the BJI. The party opposed the independence war and collaborated with the Pakistani military which unleashed a genocide. Despite her affiliation with a mainstream political party we have treated her as a militant group as reported by the law enforcing agencies.
- [67] To determine the age of those missing in the reports of these newspapers, the author checked other newspapers too.
- [68] 'Involvement with IS, a British Citizen Arrested', *Prothom Alo*, 30 September 2014, p.1;
- [69] The press reports that 22, including the principal and two teachers, were initially arrested, but ten were released as no evidence was found against them., "12 Arrested in Rab Operation in Hathazari", *Daily Janakantha*, 21 February 2015; URL: <http://dailyjanakantha.com/?p=details&csl=110617>
- [70] Currently there are 12 Cadet Colleges, nine for male, three for females. Prior to the independence in 1971, the country had four such colleges.

[71] '4 ISIS suspects arrested, placed on 5-day remand,' *New Age*, 20 January 2015, p. 1; URL: <http://newagebd.net/87681/4-isis-suspects-arrested-placed-on-5-day-remand/#sthash.mjTefU62.0QNJekOD.dpuf>

[72] Bibhuranjan Sarkar, 'There is no short cut to quell militancy,' *Bangladesh Protidin*, 14 March 2014, URL: <http://www.bd-pratidin.com/editorial/2014/03/14/48601>

[73] UNFPA, 'Launch of the State of World Population Report 2014 in Bangladesh,' 19 November 2014; URL: <http://unfpabgd.org/index.php?option=page&id=133&view=press&Itemid=999> .