

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Post-9/11 Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh: Causes and Legal Measures Taken by the Law Enforcement Agencies

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Abstract

The emergence of Islamist Terrorism has defined the current era when, in the name of Islam, the most horrifying terrorist incidences of all time occurred, killing thousands of people in the previous two decades has caused this vast devastation. After the incidence of 9/11 attack, the US and Bangladesh have also witnessed the most gruesome terrorist attacks, targeted killings, and several small-scale terrorist incidences by Islamist Jihadists. This study focuses on the actual reasons that caused the emergence of Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh post 9/11 and initiatives or the measurements taken by the LEAs of Bangladesh. The research includes semi-structured interviews with ten participants from diverse professional backgrounds. The study generated several critical facts. Political Islam, the Ideology of Islamism, deprivation in every aspect, and misinterpretation of Islam are the vital factors for emerging Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh post 9/11. Steps taken by the government or LEAs in response to Islamist Terrorism are successful in most of the cases. The enactment of a specific law, the prevention of terrorist financing, the establishment of various operational units within LEAs, and the effectiveness of intelligence units are crucial to success in combating Terrorism. This research recommends that the actual essence of Islam needs to be taught to the general people. Besides, employment opportunity has to be created, and terrorist financing has to be stopped. The recommendations for the LEAs are that they should emphasize cooperation with the intelligence units, providing counter-narratives to terrorists, friendly attitudes toward terrorists, being IT experts, and preventing terrorist financing.

Keyword: Islamist Terrorism, Political Islam, Misinterpretation of Islam, Intelligence, Terrorist Financing, Counter-Narratives.

Introduction

Islamist Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Different Islamist terrorist attacks have occurred in the history of the world. However, after the devastating terrorist attack on 9/11 in the US, 'Islamist terrorism' term came up when AL-Qaeda, an Islamist terrorist organization, admitted responsibility for the attack (Galindo, 2022). As Bangladesh is one of the countries with the highest Muslim majority in the world and is situated in a geographically important position in the South Asian region, it holds significant political importance for world leaders (Alam, 2023). Besides, in the Indian subcontinent, international terrorist organizations have their wings that try to influence Bangladeshi Muslim people to be affiliated and connected with them. Therefore, after 9/11, Bangladesh became affected by the resurgence of Islamist Terrorism. Several terrorist attacks after 9/11 proved the presence of Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh (Counter Extremism Project, 2020). Though it emerged in the late 1980s when a considerable number of Bangladeshi went to Afghanistan to join anti-soviet Jihad and returned to Bangladesh to form a terrorist organization, different Islamist terrorist attacks in recent years got some other dimensions of Terrorism (EFSAS, 2019). which raises the question of what led to the emergence of Islamist terrorism post 9/11 and what measures were taken by LEAs (Law Enforcement Agencies). Bangladesh

was founded on secular principles in 1971, despite its history within the larger context of Pakistan. Over time, secularism weakened as a religious agenda led by anti-independence forces gained ground. While many citizens still support cultural diversity and religious freedom, the post-9/11 global divide triggered a rise in Islamist Terrorism in the country. Political instability, corruption, and youth frustration further fueled the situation. Extremist groups exploited this unrest online, with some political actors even aligning with them for personal gain (Mostofa, 2021).

In Bangladesh, there is not enough literature or research on Terrorism, especially on Islamist Terrorism. Though Islamist Terrorism is comparatively under control by the LEAs of Bangladesh at present, it might be irresistible at times because the reactive strategy taken by LEAs would not uproot Islamist Terrorism completely. Besides, national and international Islamist terrorist groups are operating clandestinely. The main objective of this research was to find out the factors of the emergence of Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh post 9/11 and to explore the measures taken by the LEAs in Bangladesh in response to the ongoing Islamist terrorism post 9/11. Based on the background, the study is grounded on two questions:

- What are the causes of Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh?
- How effective is the law enforcement agency's countering Terrorism in Bangladesh?

Literature Review

Concept of Terrorism

While a concrete and universally accepted definition of Terrorism may never be found, as it differs from nation to nation, understanding the meaning is essential to comprehend the factors behind the emergence of Islamist Terrorism (Holez, 2021). The most accepted academic definition of Terrorism is

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the UN definition produced in 1992; "anxiety –inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by a clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby- in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets" (Schmid, 2020). Persons who commit these acts are called terrorists. The Anti-Terrorism Act of 20,09 in Bangladesh defines a terrorist person' as a natural person who commits an offense under section 10, 11, 12, or 13 of the said Act. Terrorism aims to commit violence, which attracts the attention of the general people, even of the government (UNHCR, 2009).

On the other hand, 'Islamism is a political ideology, whose key tenets include- a) Belief that Islam is not a religion, but a holistic socio-political system, b) Advocacy of Sharia (Islamic) law as divine state law, c) Belief that a transnational Muslim community, known as the Ummah, should unite as a political bloc d) Advocacy of an 'Islamic' state, or Caliphate, within which sovereignty belongs to God (Cesari, 2021). In recent years, Bangladesh has had much international focus on international security and politics because of the menace of Islamist Terrorism for the past two decades with its steady growth (Fair & Patel, 2022). The importance of security perspectives outstrips the economic growth rate because the country has experienced a few devastating terrorist attacks in recent times. After 9/11 in the US, attacks by Islamist terrorists increased abruptly in Bangladesh. They attacked the leader of an opposition party, opposition politicians, scholars, judges, journalists, religious minorities, bloggers, members of the judiciary, religious minorities, and members of the Islamic Ahmadiyya sect (Tanvir et al., 2021). Several factors contribute to the emergence of Islamist Terrorism. They are described below, along with a critical analysis.

Socioeconomic Issues

The socioeconomic issue is one of the essential factors for Islamist uprising terrorism in Bangladesh. Persistent poverty, deprivation, and dire consequences of substandard living conditions fueled a specific level of Terrorism in Bangladesh (Sida, 2024). A constant lack of socioeconomic development has created frustration among the youth. It encouraged unattended Madrassas (Islamic Educational Institutions) and unmonitored NGOs (Non-Government Organizations) to promote extremism among youths. In the name of development, international actors got opportunities to interfere and promote extremism (Mostofa, 2021). Besides, marginalization and discrimination of resource distribution in the society had an impact on the emergence of Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh (BTI, 2024). Although the country's economic growth was sustainable during the BAL government, it was mainly limited to urban cities (Freedom House, 2025). Inequalities widened in terms of the financial status of poor people, primarily affecting youths aged 18-21 (A. Islam, 2017). Therefore, terrorist organizations have the opportunity to recruit large disadvantaged groups. Unemployment, poverty, and Madrasa education are standard drivers for Terrorism but were not proven right from the interviews of arrested terrorists (Talukdar, 2023). Some of them came from upper-middle-class families and prestigious educational institutions (Prothom Alo, 2022). Lack of good governance is another potential factor for Islamist uprising terrorism in Bangladesh post 9/11 as endemic corruption with poor governance causes uneven distribution of wealth, which creates opportunities for Islamist groups to instigate the deprived people to join Terrorism (Freedom House, 2024). Islamism revives due to the consistent failure of the ruling party to provide 'the goods to the People,' sustain good governance, and retain cultural tradition and integrity (Hashemi, 2021). Bangladesh is also one of the countries most affected by corruption in the world, and according to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2024, Bangladesh ranked 151st (Transparency International, 2025).

Terrorist Financing

Terrorist financing is another significant factor in the emergence and continuation of Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh. It was first revealed in 2009 when a madrasa of Bhola was raided, and arms, ammunition, and Islamic literature were detected. Further investigation revealed that the madrasa was funded by Green Crescent, a British-registered charity (Ahsan, 2019). IPPs (Islamic Political Parties) are continuing to penetrate the process of Islamization at the grassroots level. Therefore, political Islam is a vital factor in emerging Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh (EFSAS, 2024). In August 2005, the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) orchestrated a series of coordinated bombings across 63 of Bangladesh's 64 districts, aiming to enforce their demand for the implementation of Sharia law. This event underscored the escalating influence of political Islam in the country (Mostofa, 2021). Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB) is a disciplined political party (Asia Society, 2024) with strong organizational control, though it remains controversial due to its opposition to Bangladesh's 1971 liberation war (Rayhan, 2019). Despite this allegation, JIB denies any involvement in crimes during the war, claiming their leaders were not responsible for the atrocities (Ratul, 2024). Hizb-ut Tahrir Bangladesh (HTB), launched in 2001 (bdnews24, 2024), grew rapidly by targeting university students with its anti-democratic ideology, spreading its message through peaceful 'Dawa' campaigns (Hizb ut Tahrir, 2024). Despite being banned in 2009 for alleged anti-government activities, the group continues to operate secretly. Their actions have raised concerns despite their public approach appearing non-violent (Dhaka Tribune, 2025).

Islamism versus Atheism

The rise of both Islamism and atheism has created a tense and polarized political atmosphere in Bangladesh, with each side showing intolerance toward the other. The murder of Avijit Roy, a well-known writer, deeply shocked the nation, and the government faced pressure from Islamist groups and made controversial arrests of bloggers to appease them (BBC, 2021). In the 11th Parliamentary Election in Bangladesh, the number of seats won by Islamic political parties in the 2018 Bangladesh parliamentary election was 0. This means that the Islamic ideology has decreased over time (Hajjaj, 2022). Bangladesh, a predominantly Muslim country, operates as a democracy rather than under Sharia law, despite efforts by some Islamist groups to replace it with an Islamic state (M. Islam & Islam, 2018). The international community supports Bangladesh's secular democracy, encouraging a balance of democracy and Islam while acknowledging the challenges of pluralism and freedom of speech within Islamic contexts (Human Rights Watch, 2025). After being banned and excluded from the political system, some Islamist political parties (IPPs) turned to violence, unable to promote their religious ideology through democratic means (Lutful, 2023). Key judicial rulings, like banning fatwas and protecting women's freedom of dress, reinforced secularism and challenged extremist influence (Daily Observer, 2022). Although the ruling party BAL (Bangladesh Awami League) took a firm stance against Islamist violence, it has also faced criticism for past alliances with certain extremist groups (East Asia Forum, 2021). Islamist Political Parties (IPPs) in Bangladesh claim a long-standing role in the country's development, but critics argue they share similarities with Islamist terrorist groups (Hajjaj, 2024). 9/11 attacks and the global war on terror forced Bangladesh to start taking counter-terrorism seriously. CTTC and RAB, and other major law enforcement agencies are used as major players in combating Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh (Shoieb, 2021). However, the contribution of these policies is limited by weak coordination, and politics, and effectiveness is at a high-level concern (Mostofa, 2025)

Investigating the counter-terrorism measures of LEAs

Before 2008, Bangladesh lacked specific laws to combat Islamist Terrorism despite growing concerns. Over time, legal measures such as the Anti-Terrorism Act (2012) and the Money Laundering Prevention Act (2009) were introduced alongside

operational drives by law enforcement agencies (Alom, 2024). International bodies have praised Bangladesh's progress, including its removal from the FATF "grey list" and positive recognition from the US and the Global Terrorism Index (FATF, 2020).

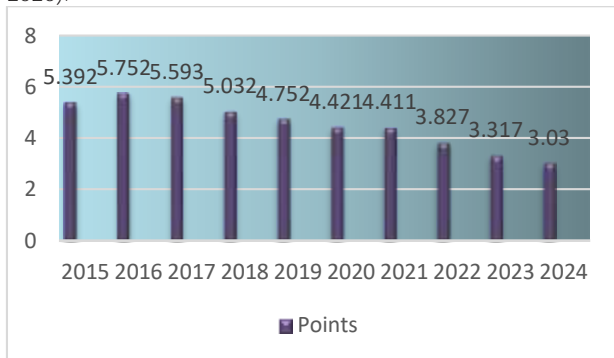


Fig 1. Bangladesh Terrorism Index

[Source: (Institute for Economic and Peace, 2024)]

From Figure 1, it can be seen that the Terrorism Index in Bangladesh is gradually decreasing. It has experienced a random solely number of terrorist incidents. Bangladesh's armed forces and intelligence agencies have supported police efforts with training and information to fight Islamist Terrorism, especially after 9/11. While units like NSI and DGFI have created specialized cells (Ashraf, 2022), overall capacity gaps remain—especially in technology, staffing, and strategy. Without addressing the root motivations of Terrorism or strengthening tactical responses, the country struggles to stay ahead of evolving threats (Prothom Alo, 2022). Community policing has shown potential in countering Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh, especially when local engagement is strong. However, efforts are often inconsistent, under-resourced, and lack clear guidelines from central authorities. Strengthening collaboration between police, community members, and youth, primarily through schools, could make a real difference (UNODC, 2025).

Several studies have been conducted in Bangladesh on Terrorism. Lorch (2020) argued that Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh grew from political conflict, state-led Islamization, and global jihadist influence. The rivalry between the Awami League and BNP, along with weak institutions, created space for radicalization. While some orthodox groups remained peaceful, others indirectly encouraged extremism. Government responses were often politicized and ineffective. Overall, Terrorism is driven more by political and governance failures than religion.

Arefin and Ritu (2021) expressed that post-9/11 Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh stems from political use of religion, weak governance, and global influences. Successive governments exploited Islam for power while failing to address extremism. Regional conflicts and international events like the Afghan war and Islamophobia fueled radicalization. Youth facing identity crises became easy targets for extremist groups. The study emphasizes that both local politics and global factors must be considered to understand and counter religious extremism in Bangladesh.

Rone et al. (2025) also argued that Post-9/11, Islamist extremism in Bangladesh rose due to poverty, political misuse of religion, foreign influence, and online radicalization. Public trust in countermeasures is low, while digital platforms play a significant role in spreading extremism. It has also harmed Bangladesh's global image.

Amit et al. (2021) explained that Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh rose sharply after 9/11, fueled by both global and local extremist groups. Social media has become a key tool for radicalization, especially among youth. While Bangladesh has adopted a strong law enforcement approach, it lacks preventive and digital counter-extremism strategies.

Past studies on Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh after 9/11 talked about politics, poverty, and foreign influence, but often from a distance. What they missed were the voices on the

ground. This study brings in real perspectives from police, students, religious leaders, and others to show how deeply misunderstood religion and everyday frustrations are fueling radicalization. It also highlights how gaps in our legal and enforcement systems, often overlooked, are allowing these threats to grow quietly.

The literature review presents the findings of previous and existing research but does not provide deeper insights into why Terrorism is occurring in Bangladesh. This study will fill up the gap by unveiling the factors behind Terrorism. Based on the literature review, the other objectives are:

- To explore the factors causing Islamist Terrorism.
- To ascertain the most important factor and to probe the factor.
- To investigate the measures taken by LEAs.
- To assess the effectiveness of the initiatives taken by LEAs.

Therefore, this study employed an empirical approach. An empirical study is mandatory because, theoretically, the answer to the research question could not be obtained. Theory can only provide the apparent meaning rather than individual perception. Participants remain at the heart of the research. Their mode of expression, style of communication, and reply to the research question often give more meaningful data to a researcher in qualitative research (Opdenakker, 2006).

Methods

A qualitative, semi-structured interview method conducted over the telephone is used for the research. A mutually agreed time was scheduled for the interview of police officers. There are two types of sampling methods: probability and non-probability. The non-probability method includes purposive sampling, convenience sampling, or quota sampling (Setia, 2016). The researcher employed a non-probability method with purposive sampling because the study required participants who were either related to the terms 'Islam' or 'terrorism.' The sampling method depends on the research question being addressed. The researcher began searching for potential participants after obtaining approval from the University ethics board. The researcher approached the gatekeepers to identify and recruit participants who are appropriately working with Terrorism.

In Bangladesh, the CTC unit in the DMP is dedicated to working against Terrorism. They gave consent for interviews with three police officers from the unit. A total of 10 participants were interviewed for the research. The duration of the interview averaged 30 to 45 minutes. Among the 10 participants, 3 were police officers (PO1–PO3), two graduated from public/private universities (P1, P2), two from Madrassas (M1, M2), and the others were a journalist (J), a lawyer (L), and a religious leader (R). Each was selected for their unique perspective on Islamist militancy, ranging from religious education, law enforcement, and media influence to public education. The questionnaire is designed to address the research questions, and the questions are presented in a sequential order to facilitate the exploration of these questions. Additional questions were asked depending on the participant's profession. Data collection is a process of gathering information and knowledge to gain original insights into the research questions (Bhandari, 2020). After obtaining the consent form and setting the timetable for the interview, the interview was conducted and automatically recorded in the mobile device's default recording system. Only three police officers participated in the interview in the English language. The rest of them participated in their local dialect (Bangla). The researcher's researcher uploaded the recording to the laptop and transcribed it in English.

In this research, thematic analysis was used to examine and analyze the interview transcripts. Thematic analysis was performed through six phases: a) familiarizing with data, b) generating codes, c) searching for the themes, d) reviewing the themes, e) defining themes, and f) finding sub-themes. The NVivo software helped to sort and organize large data sets.

During coding, the researcher attached labels on important text to index them for relating to a theme.

Ethical consideration

In the consent form, it was explicitly stated that participants were entirely independent in deciding to participate in the interview and had the right to decline participation at any time, both before and during the interview. They were informed about the research topic and its purpose. It was also mentioned that their real name would not be used in the research, and confidentiality of the participants would be maintained. Moreover, they were informed, both before starting the interview and in the consent form, that the interview would be audio recorded. After the completion of the research, all notes, recordings, and transcriptions would be destroyed. The researcher also received ethical approval from the University's ethics board before conducting the semi-structured interviews.

Results and Discussion

Causes of Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh

1) Political Ideology:

Overall, most of the participants believe that political ideology is one of the vital factors for emerging Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh post 9/11. This statement was supported by the statement, 'Though Bangladesh is a secular country, it is gradually inclining towards politicized Islamization, two things happened: One is the politicization of Islam and Islamization of Politics' (P01). However, one of the participants argues that political deprivation and government oppression of an individual is a propelling factor to make individual terrorists.

To become deprived of political rights and human rights is a result of political factors. Government oppression, human rights violations, corruption by government officials and political leaders, a corrupted system, continuous conflicts among the groups, violation of democratic rights, and obstruction to express different opinions are the political factors that are responsible for emerging Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh (P1).

From the quote, it is evident that not only politicized Islamization but also the existing democratic situation, corrupt bureaucracy, and continuous political violence are responsible for the emergence of Islamist Terrorism. Furthermore, 'supporters of one political party oppress that of another political party; those oppressed and discriminated people combine to make a group like terrorist group' (J). Rising political violence is a severe threat to the democratic order of a country like Bangladesh, and it often encourages militant groups to be activated (Islam, 2011). Besides, in the bilateral political environment in Bangladesh, 'some political parties give space to the militants who hold the ideology which is against the democracy, some political parties give space to that kind of Islamic factions or groups' (P02). IPPs are allied with mainstream political parties. Therefore, those IPPs nurture terrorist groups. Political parties 'used the terrorists' (J), and terrorist incidences occurred in political assemblies at different times, proving the 'political connection' (J) with the terrorists. One of the participants stated that 'denial of Islamist terrorism by the ruling political parties and blaming the opposition parties for Islamist terrorism is fueling the terrorist organization to intensify their terrorist activities' (P03). However, another participant argued that 'hiding the Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh by the ruling party is to avoid international pressure and opposition parties use Terrorism to stay in Politics' (J). Another participant stated that IPPs, like JIB, want to ruin the present secular political party to 'enforce their political ideology in Bangladesh' (M1). However, other participants argued that 'JIB is not a political party based on religion. Instead, they want Bangladesh to be another Pakistan because they were against the independence of Bangladesh' (P1).

2) Islamism:

Islamist terrorist groups are mainly trying to engrave Islam in every sphere of life of Bangladeshi people. After the incident of 9/11 in the US, the ideology of inculcating Islam into life became more fortified than before. International terrorist groups started to 'influence small terrorist organizations like Harkatul Jihad in Bangladesh' (L). However, one of the participants argued that he is 'doubtful about the direct linkage of Bangladeshi Militants with AQ or ISIS' (P). LEAs claimed that there is no direct linkage among them. However, the ideology of AQ or ISIS is followed by the terrorist groups of Bangladesh (P01). After 9/11, Muslims were restricted from going abroad because 'visa and immigration of Muslims were challenging to get' (L). Again, 'war against Muslim countries frustrated the Muslims' (J).

However, after 9/11, some chance takers tried to capitalize on the emotions of youths and told them to save Islam and recruited them into a terrorist organization. (P1)

From the quote, it is understandable that after 9/11, when the world system was in disfavor of Muslims, chance takers tried to use 'Islamism' to convince the familiar pious people. Attacks on Iraq and Afghanistan created 'sympathy among the Muslims of Bangladesh.'

3) Socioeconomic Factors

Socioeconomic issues are another crucial factor in the emergence of Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh. Socioeconomic factors include two sub-themes. They are 'Deprivation' and 'Misinterpretation of Islam'.

4) Deprivation

Most Madrasa students are from low-income backgrounds. Parents sent their children to the Madrasa to ensure accommodation, education, and food free of cost. 'Government provides money to only general educational institutions' (L). Nevertheless, Madrasa students are deprived of any benefits. Therefore, terrorists can quickly motivate most children in low-income families to grow up in broken families (P2). They do not get affection from their parents. They are deprived of their parents' love and care. Narcissism theory asserts that persons who are deprived of parental care become aggressive and violent (Moghadam and Eubank, 2006). Besides, people are deprived of facilities written in the constitution from the state. The state's discriminatory attitude deprives people. 'When people have nothing to do against discrimination, they can easily be motivated to terrorism' (J).

Social alienation or feeling separate, a victim of discrimination, frustration, and feeling of deprivation are the main socioeconomic factors for the emergence of Islamist Terrorism (P1)

From the quote, it is perceived that the sense of alienation among the people makes them frustrated and motivates them to be terrorists. However, deprivation is not always the reason to make people terrorists. Poor people are not always the victims of deprivation, and poor people are not always terrorists. 'People from wealthy families are under tight control by their parents. They have little freedom. So, they may, for the sake of adventure, become involved in Terrorism (P1).

5) Misinterpretation of Islam

Terrorist organizations often misinterpret Islam in their way to convince young people. The Quran is the sacred book for Muslims. However, hardly any Muslim in Bangladesh read the Quran with meaning. They are familiar with the Arabic language and can read the Quran. However, without knowing the meaning, anything read is of no use. Therefore, most of the Muslims do not see the beauty of Islam or religion. It becomes easier to bias an uneducated, pious Muslim 'misinterpreting an Arabic sentence or Hadith' (P1) because we have no depth of Islamist Knowledge. Jihad is widely referenced with Islam, and holy war has become a synonym for Islam. One of the participants said that 'terrorists also motivate people that if they join Terrorism, they will go to heaven' (M2). The sanctity of

Islam is thereby undermined. Moreover, 'students from general educational institutions know little about Islam' (M1). Hence, they are an easier target for a terrorist organization to misinterpret Islam. However, one of the participants thinks that all the blame should go to 'Islamic education providers' (R) who are supposed to deliver proper guidance to the follower. Mosques in Bangladesh are currently doing the work. On the other hand, the media plays a negative role in misinterpreting Islam in Bangladesh. Media broadcasts the news on the 'oppression and torture of Muslims throughout the world' (R) to attract the emotions of ordinary Muslim people. The media rarely attempts to uncover the actual reason behind any incident. Sometimes, the media broadcasts utterly fake news. Some news goes in favor of terrorists (J). Journalists are not specialists on any subject matter; instead, they are the news providers of any incidence. Therefore, before broadcasting news, they need to investigate the matter. Sometimes, the media 'publicize the terrorists as heroes' (PO1) by broadcasting that terrorists are working for the betterment of Islam. So, Islam, as a religion, is misinterpreted by ordinary Muslim people.

Suppose the newspaper published features on Terrorism so people could be more aware of that. Misinterpretation of Jihad has to be discussed in the newspaper, and the meaning of Jihad has to be clarified. Uncle of Hazrat Mohammad (S) was not Muslim, but Mohammad (S) did not hurt him, and he never fought with Abu Jahel for not being Muslim. When non-Muslims attacked the Muslims, then they did war, a face-to-face war that is called Jihad. (P1)

So, the actual meaning of Jihad is misinterpreted. Most of the terrorists do not know the meaning of Jihad or Islam. The newspaper can play a vital role by featuring the actual meaning of Islam. Jihad is not always to do war against the opponent. Sometimes, 'Jihad means, to be honest, to be corruption free' (P1).

In contrast, terrorists want to misinterpret the meaning of Islam to their followers. 'Terrorists want to get the attention of the Media' (PO3). In recent years, terrorists' art of using media has evolved to such a peak that they can reach their desired audience to propagate their agenda (Hoffman, 2006). Earlier media was used only by the state-owned broadcasting agency (Hoffman, 2006). Therefore, the press must be selective in its news broadcasting. However, there is 'no alternative to Media' (J) to make people aware of the misinterpretation of Islam or Terrorism. The media of Bangladesh played an essential role during the 2016 artisan attack by broadcasting the preventive approach taken by LEAs. Hence, media is of great importance in the present day.

Effectiveness of the Law Enforcement Agency's in Countering Terrorism in Bangladesh

1) Measures taken by the government

Enactment of specific laws by the legislative department. Due to the government's zero-tolerance principle against Terrorism, it enacted several laws to bring terrorists under the purview of those laws LEAs. In 2009, 'The Anti-terrorism Act 2009' was enacted, which was revised in 2013. 'It is working as the main pillar for the LEAs as well as for the court to try the terrorists who are arrested' (PO3). This law was declared with the guidance of the United Nations Security Council (PO1). Terrorist financing is one of the primary reasons for continuing Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh. Therefore, the 'Money Laundering Prevention Act 2012' was enacted to prevent money laundering. It enabled LEAs to keep the money launderer under vigilance. Besides, the legislative department of Bangladesh enacted the 'Digital Security Act 2018'. 'Digital evidence was inadmissible to court before the enactment of this act' (PO1). This Act removed the barriers. This Act helped LEAs prosecute terror suspects. 'These laws have special provisions which allow the terrorists to be punished' (PO2). However, the lack of implementation of the law often questions the sincerity and honesty of the legislative department. LEAs do much hard work to arrest a terrorist; even some police officers died during a

terrorist attack. However, 'terrorists come out from Jail after getting bail from the court' (J). 'It is very pathetic and alarming' (J). In contrast, a member of the legislative department thinks differently.

Everything is confirmed to be going on lawfully. Being conducted and complying with the law creates elongation. Besides, as it is Terrorism, always clues are not found. It is seen that some arrestees are exonerated. But most of the cases, they are under trial (L)

However, the lawyer thinks that terrorist punishment should be done within a short duration through the legal privilege of an arrestee, which is his utmost right.

2) Prevention of Terrorist Financing

The government of Bangladesh enacted the Money Laundering Prevention Act of 2012' to prevent terrorist financing in Bangladesh. 'Huge amount of Illegal money transaction was stopped after enacting the law' (L). If money transfers could be stopped, nobody would have been motivated to be terrorists. Terrorist financing has been continuing since 1990 in the name of NGO (Non-Government Organization), a benevolent organization, Al haram (P1). The CID (Criminal Investigation Department) of the Bangladesh Police and the BFIU (Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit) are solely responsible for investigating money laundering issues. LEAs have confiscated many bank accounts related to terrorist financing. Remittance is another way of transferring money to finance the terrorists. Government agencies are very much watchful about this remittance money.

3) Operational Drives

In Bangladesh, different units of LEAs are working to combat Terrorism. In DMP, there is a dedicated counter-terrorism unit known as the CTC unit. Besides, ATU and RAB are working against Terrorism. These units are performing operational drives, though these drives are 'reactive law enforcement' (PO2). However, LEAs initiated some proactive strategies, including seminars, workshops, tutorials, posters, banners, TV ads, and mobile apps. They included religious leaders, celebrities, social activists, volunteers, students from madrassas, schools, Universities, teachers, farmers, journalists, police, and representatives from civil society, as well as people from all walks of life. Additionally, LEAs are equipped to combat technology-centered Terrorism on social media and the internet. They have real-time online responding apps like 'Hello City,' 'Bangladesh Police Compliance,' and 'Bangladesh Police Handbook'. They use other technology tips to follow YouTube and Facebook of the terrorists (PO2). 'Bangladesh Police has dedicated cyber wing in CTC' (PO3). The police officers in that wing are specialists in cyber technology, and all of them have graduated in a technology-related field. They have a 'social media monitoring system' (PO1). Moreover, LEAs have logistically enriched teams like 'Bomb disposal unit' and SWAT teams.

The intelligence unit is the heart of the counter-terrorism unit of LEAs. The intelligence unit of LEAs in Bangladesh is very sensitized and responsible. Intelligence units also keep communication with neighboring countries. They also 'share the information with other intelligence units all over the world to enrich their information and to provide cooperation' (PO1). 'Behind every successful operation, there is every successful intelligence unit' (PO3). Intelligence units have layers that collect information, and dedicated personnel analyze and provide the information to the relevant department. After the incident of the 'holey artisan attack' in 2016, the bondage among the Intelligence units became stronger. The most renowned and effective intelligence units in Bangladesh are the DGFI, SB, RAB Intelligence Wing, Wing, NSI, and the Intelligence Wing of the Wing Police Headquarters. Intelligence units can easily reach all levels of the citizen. Most of the intelligence comes from the root level of people. That is why LEAs can respond quickly. Besides, 'BFIU (Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit) collects intelligence effectively to deter terrorist financing' (PO2).

Result and Discussion

On the whole, it can be said that several factors are related to Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh. They are political Islam, socioeconomic factors, lack of good governance, terrorist financing, and so on. Among all these, political Islam is considered the prime reason for the recent revitalization of Islamist Terrorism. IPPs are playing critical roles in this. IPPs and terrorist groups have the same ideology of Islamism and abhorrence of democracy, which made them even-minded, standing in the same line to cause a terrorist attack. However, from the research, it is extracted that ordinary mass people widely misinterpret Islam because Islam has a sensitive place in every Muslim people. Terrorist groups invade that sensitive place. Following the incident of 9/11, the increased vigor and modus operandi of the new terrorist organizations (JMB, HTB) and their recent terrorist attacks directly or indirectly prove the global linkage and Al-Qaeda's connection with them.

In summary, the political ideology of IPPs to instill Islam to rule the country by sharia law in place of democracy, along with the government's social and political instability, is the prime reason for Islamist terrorism post 9/11 in Bangladesh. Besides, domestic terrorist organizations follow the ideology, views, and patterns of international terrorist organizations from a world perspective. In countering Islamist Terrorism, the Bangladesh government took two initiatives: one legal and the other operational. Legal initiatives include the enactment of specific laws that enable LEAs to accomplish operational initiatives. The passage of particular laws, such as the ATA against Terrorism, protected LEAs in executing warrants and arresting terrorists and provided the legal basis for the legislative department to try terrorists. However, the law is often imposed on opposition and to misuse state power.

Moreover, applying the law to terrorists cannot prevent Terrorism; some control from family and society can do it. The enactment of the 'Money Laundering Prevention Act of 2012' partially prevented illegal money transfers, but it could not wholly prevent terrorist financing. However, the operational drives of LEAs were quite successful in countering Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh. CTTC, ATU, RAB, SB, DGFI, and NSI, all LEAs, had worked hard in combating Terrorism.

Discussions

This study reveals that the rise of Islamist Terrorism in Bangladesh after 9/11 is not just about religion. It is deeply rooted in people lived frustrations, political misuse of faith, and a growing sense of injustice. Many participants, ranging from police officers to students and religious leaders, spoke about how political parties have used religion for their gain, often giving space to extremist ideologies. This blending of politics and religion has made it easier for radical groups to grow in the shadows. What stood out most is how easily religion can be misused when people do not fully understand it. Terrorist **recruiters** prey on emotions, especially among young people who feel ignored or deprived. Some are poor Madrassa students, while others are well-off youths seeking meaning or a cause to fight for. The problem is not just poverty but a more profound lack of purpose, voice, and a sense of belonging. On the other hand, Bangladesh's law enforcement agencies have worked hard. New laws, intelligence sharing, and special units have helped reduce large-scale attacks. However, the system still struggles, laws are sometimes misused politically, and deeper community-level work is missing. What we learned from these voices is clear: fighting Terrorism is not only about force; it is about listening. If we truly want change, we need to teach the fundamental values of Islam, include young people in conversations that matter, and build a society where no one feels left behind.

Recommendations

Considering the findings, by ensuring a strong elected democratic government that can wipe out all the garbage of Islam. A well-balanced nationalism and Islam can make the

people more aware and active in the face of any odds and mishaps. LEAs need to be experts in technology so that they can prevent the online recruitment and propaganda of international terrorist organizations. Members of LEAs have to be so skilled in IT that they can quickly identify the persons who follow the ideology of international terrorist organizations. Ensure effective monitoring and surveillance of illegal money transfers. Who to whom, for what reason, and how much money is sent should be well scrutinized. The relevant authority should periodically control and audit NGOs and remittance money. Furthermore, LEAs should adopt a combination of soft approaches and hard operational approaches. Additionally, a comprehensive long-term strategy should be adopted, along with good coordination among the different units of LEAs.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The resurgence of Islamist Terrorism in post-9/11 Bangladesh is a profoundly human issue rooted in political exploitation, ideological confusion, and socioeconomic inequality. This study reveals that the rise in extremism is not simply about religion but about how religion has been politicized, misinterpreted, and weaponized. Islamist political parties have played a central role in promoting anti-democratic ideologies, often in collusion with mainstream political forces, creating a fertile ground for radicalization. Young people, particularly those experiencing unemployment, social isolation, or identity crises, have become vulnerable targets for extremist recruiters. What makes this situation more alarming is the widespread misinterpretation of Islam. Many Bangladeshis, though deeply religious, lack access to accurate religious education, making it easier for terrorist groups to distort concepts like Jihad to serve violent ends. The emotional pull of such narratives, especially after global events like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, has only intensified the issue. Bangladesh has taken significant legal and operational steps, including enacting anti-terrorism laws, disrupting terrorist financing, and establishing dedicated law enforcement units such as the CTTC. However, these actions are often reactive and not enough to prevent radicalization at its roots. Political interference and inconsistent judicial outcomes further erode public trust. Looking ahead, Bangladesh needs a more holistic, preventive approach. This includes promoting accurate religious literacy through schools and mosques, empowering young people with education and job opportunities, and fostering community resilience. Law enforcement agencies must also continue strengthening their digital capabilities to counter online propaganda while working in closer collaboration with communities, educators, and religious leaders. Above all, combating Terrorism in Bangladesh is about protecting its pluralistic identity. A society founded on tolerance, language, and unity must not allow extremism to redefine its future. By combining strong governance with social justice, legal reform, and grassroots engagement, Bangladesh can transition from reacting to rebuilding, ensuring peace not only through security but also through inclusion, understanding, and hope.

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