

**EXPLORING ONLINE RADICALIZATION IN BANGLADESH:  
STRATEGIES AND EVOLVING DYNAMICS**



**Submitted by**

Abu Rushd Muhammed Shaikh

**A thesis submitted for the degree of M. Phil. in International Relations,  
University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh**

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This is to certify that Abu Rushd Muhammed Shaikh has written the thesis titled "*Exploring Online Radicalization in Bangladesh: Strategies and Evolving Dynamics*" under my direct supervision. He has written the thesis as the partial fulfillment of his M.Phil. degree of International Relations.

I have gone through the thesis thoroughly and recommend its examination by the appropriate authorities.

Supervisor

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## **Abstract**

The unprecedented improvement in global communications technology has eased our lifestyle in many respects. On the contrary, this is also posing serious challenges to societies around the world. Bangladesh is no different. Given the present government's commitment to 'Digital Bangladesh' more people are getting access to the internet and internet-based social platforms. Both the international (Al-Qa'ida, ISIS) and domestic (ABT, Hizbut-Tahrir, JMB, Huji) extremist groups and terrorist organizations are taking advantage of this situation. They are utilizing encrypted social media platforms to launch various activities such as, holding virtual discussions, running campaigns, recruiting new members, building communities, spreading radical thoughts, and so on. As a result, Bangladesh has become a case study of online radicalization of late, which requires serious research attention. Against this backdrop, the study primarily attempts to explore the strategies and tools of online radicalization in Bangladesh based on the theoretical underpinning of Social Learning Theory (SLT). This qualitative study relies on both primary and secondary data, and the data collection techniques mainly include Key Informant Interview (KII), social media observation, and monitoring of websites. The research additionally provides crucial policy suggestions for overcoming the existing lacuna.

**Key Words: Online radicalization; Social media; Extremist group; Terrorist activity**

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**Acronyms**

ABT-Ansarullah Bangla Team

AL- Awami League

AQIS-Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent

CTTC-Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime

DMP-Dhaka Metropolitan Police

FGI-Focus Group Interview

ISIS-Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

JeI-Jamaat e Islami

JMB-Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh

SLT-Social Learning Theory



**Introduction**

- Context and significance of the Study
- Literature Review
- Objective of the Study
- Research Questions
- Methodology
- Research Ethics
- Limitations
- Structure of the Study

## Introduction

Bangladesh, unlike many of its neighbors, did not witness any significant terrorist violence since the Holey Artisan Bakery attack of 2016. However, a very different image has been emerging under the surface. Of late, remote radicalization activities through internet have become more common. Hate speech and disinformation are being propagated across the social media system by a network of violent extremist groups. According to Bangladeshi authorities, some of those detained for terrorism in recent years were radicalized online having a university education. Extremist militancy in Bangladesh has been in a state of silence, with recruiting and fundraising conducted entirely online. The recent arrests of terrorists show that extremist organizations have done well in terms of internet recruiting. The surveillance of these militants, as well as their mass arrests by security authorities, has compelled militant organizations to remain silent online, extending the time of silence. Technology advancements have greatly strengthened state actors, but they have also aided the activities of non-state players. Terrorist organizations are competent at disseminating their beliefs using contemporary technologies, and journals like Azan, Rumiya, Dabiq, Resurgence, and Al Balagh are used to accomplish so. These publications are aimed squarely at Bangladeshi youth. Al-Qaida released Al Balagh in Bengali in order to broaden its appeal among Bangladeshis. Terrorist groups also utilize a variety of social media platforms and encrypted messaging applications to communicate with Bangladeshi youngsters. Facebook, Telegram, YouTube, and Chirp Wire are among these platforms. Bangladesh's counterterrorism squad apprehended Zobaida Siddiqua Nabila, the country's first female operator, in 2021. She utilized a Facebook profile called "Titumir Media" to interact with sympathizers, according to police.<sup>1</sup> She also spoke with others via encrypted messaging systems such as Telegram and Chirp Wire. In her Telegram accounts, she had over 25,000 followers and operated 15 channels. Her channel used to stream extremist propaganda, bomb-making instructions, and attack plans. The media platforms utilized by Bangladeshi terrorists include Telegram, Hoop, Element, the Internet Archive, Bcove.Video, Yandex.Com, and Mediafire. They also indoctrinate children using YouTube. The Ummah Network is one such YouTube channel, with roughly a million followers and 70 million views. The channel is broadcast in Bengali. Generally, radical propaganda focuses on demonizing "western liberal ideas and democratic governments." Aside from attacking Western liberal concepts and democratic norms,

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<sup>1</sup> Islam, Aynul M. "Mapping Terrorism Threats in Bangladesh." *Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies* 29, no. 2 (April 2008): 153-176.

Bangladeshi Islamist organizations have fitted its ideology to several prophetic traditions that are unique to Muslims in South Asia.

Ansar Al Islam (AAI) gained notoriety in 2013 after they assassinated blogger Rajib Haidar, and they are also accused of assassinating scores of secular bloggers, publishers, and writers. IS staged a devastating attack on the Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka in July 2016 as a result of the relationship. This was Bangladesh's first hostage situation. Most crucially, it occurred in the diplomatic sector of the country. The incident claimed the lives of 29 persons, including 17 foreigners and five extremists. Since the devastating terrorist actions in 2016, the Bangladesh government has implemented a number of tough steps to curb the country's growing extremism and protect the country's pluralist nature. As a result, terrorist and extremist groupings did not gain foothold in the following years, and Bangladesh has experienced exceptional peace in the face of these militants' unrest in recent years. However, with the country's technological development, militants appear to have adapted their methods to the necessities of the new age. Previously, militants had a difficult time radicalizing individuals due to law enforcement agencies' vigilance, but in the arena of online media, militants have found a safe haven and entrenched themselves in numerous social media and web platforms. In contrast to the conventional method of radicalization, militants found internet persuasion to be far more beneficial, as it allowed them to spread their wicked propaganda to a wider audience while also assisting them in concealing their identities. Previously, militants sprang mostly from the country's poor and impoverished sections, which were afflicted by poverty and lacked access to traditional education. In their efforts to enlist naive teenagers to destabilize the country, radical groupings found these militants easy prey. They deliberately present brutality in conflict-torn countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Afghanistan, cherry-picking graphical pictures and videos to convince deviant adolescents that their faith is in jeopardy, and that only extreme activity can save it from the clutches of western imperialism. This instills in the adolescents a jihadi enthusiasm that leads them to join militant missions in order to protect their religion's dignity.

## Context and significance of the Study

Online rumors and disinformation are feared to be reigniting a surge of extremism in Bangladesh. Social media technologies are being used increasingly by individuals and groups to radicalize people for political and social change as the Internet and mobile computing devices become more widely available. To foster a shared knowledge of what social media is and how it is utilized by different people and groups in order to establish a radicalization construct, the strength and reach of social media are highlighted here. For the radical voice, social media applications are the ideal forum. In Bangladesh, the usage of social media and its impact on radicalizing communities is increasing at an alarming rate. Online radicalization has posed a serious danger to Bangladesh's stability. While the country's law enforcement authorities are doing a great job of combating abhorrent fundamental extremism in Bangladesh, these radicals have turned to the internet to recruit, sensitize, and radicalize the country's young. Since the 1980s, armed Islamism has presented a substantial threat to Bangladesh, with numerous crises in the Middle East serving as major motivators. The first generation of militants in Bangladesh, who created the Muslim Millat Bahini in 1986, was inspired by the Palestinian cause for independence.<sup>2</sup> The second generation of militants was inspired by the Afghan war against the Soviets in the 1990s, and they formed a slew of militant organizations in Bangladesh, including the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), and the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HUJI-B).<sup>3</sup> Events in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan affected the third generation of militants, fostering the establishment of the Islamic State (IS)-affiliated Neo-JMB and al-Qaida-affiliated Ansar Al Islam in Bangladesh.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, there is troubling evidence that it has already begun.

The fear of digital radicalization isn't new. Before the incident, the Holey Artisan Bakery attackers were active on social media and aggressively propagated extremist propaganda. They were also linked to other Bangladeshis residing in other countries, including one in Canada, who assisted in the planning and execution of the assault. Another convicted criminal who assisted in the plotting of the attack became radicalized after seeing films by Anwar al-Awalki, a well-known Al Qaeda commander, and Jasimuddin Rhmani, a Bangladeshi preacher who eventually associated himself with the Islamic State. However, extremist information is on the rise in Bangladeshi internet, most of it disguised to avoid

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<sup>2</sup> Murshed, Mahboob. "A Comparative Analysis between Bangladeshi and Korean Legal Frameworks for Combating Cybercrime to Ensure Cyber Security." *Korean University Law Review* 19, no. 23 (2016): 23-40.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

detection by government and social media companies. On YouTube, for example, Jasimuddin Rahmani's sermons continue to gain popularity. Anwar al-lectures Awlaki's are routinely dubbed into Bangla, shared over Telegram, and supported by followers on Facebook. Violent extremist ideology spreads in internet has real-world consequences. AQIS has a robust presence on social media, although its militants avoid staged acts of violence and conflicts with Bangladeshi security forces. Instead, they are secretly pursuing their enemies and normalizing hate for "atheists" and "blasphemers." Online in Bangladeshi, AQIS propagates divisive and prejudiced narratives. One of their goals is to convince Muslims that "authentic" Islam is opposed to peace and tolerance. To resist the damaging influence of nonbelievers, they advocate a "intellectual jihad." They are vehemently opposed to women's equality and routinely counsel their followers to confront blasphemers and secular liberals.

Owing to a mix of well-made movies and viral content, AQIS is achieving exceptional success among younger viewers who are more receptive. Armed jihad endorsements, support for terrorist groups, calls for attacks against liberal activists, and propaganda demeaning minorities are all on the upswing. The growth of Islamist bloggers who simultaneously express support for AQIS is primarily to blame for this. Surprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it easier for opportunistic extremist groups to recruit new members. Increased connection was used by violent extremists to draw audiences into their webs of influence. Because the administration is preoccupied with the crisis, internet radicalism is on the rise. The weaponization of social media is not being taken lightly by domestic and international authorities. Globally and in Bangladesh, use of social media is growing quickly. If we want to successfully combat radicalization, misinformation, and disinformation, we must forsake the current whack-a-mole strategy for content filtering and account takedowns. Long-term, investing in digital natives and spreading awareness are the greatest ways to tackle online extremism. A continuing conversation about how to combine the need to create a safer online environment with real freedom of expression must go along with this.

Bangladesh has millions internet users, with the majority of them being teenagers. In contrast to militants' underprivileged roots, militants radicalized through internet channels represented misguided adolescents from rich homes who had received a sophisticated university education. The radicalization of these urban university-educated kids has perplexed politicians and law enforcement authorities across the country, as these young people's motivations for joining violent organizations promoting medieval ideologies are lacking. The emergence of more urban educated terrorists is being ascribed to internet

radicalization. The insurgent leaders' rhetoric and propaganda entice these urban credulous adolescents. Internet radicalizes hide behind the veil of online platforms, attempting to radicalize teenagers through provocative remarks that seek to demonize Western liberal ideas and democratic governance. These issues encourage young people to join extremist groups, endangering the country's stability. Furthermore, internet radicalization has exacerbated the country's communal schisms, as seen by repeated attacks on the country's minority communities based on false accusations of desecration. Regulating online platforms is more challenging than traditional platforms, making it tough to resist misinformation.

Waging conflicts through social media propaganda has also become an appealing alternative for these radicals, since these radical groups undertake smear campaigns and use terrible propaganda apparatus. Furthermore, these online radical organizations promote conspiracy theories and a simplistic knowledge of world history and economics. Unfortunately, even the majority of educated young people believes in conspiracies and has a distorted view of liberty and modernity. Several such online sites arose during the Covid-19 era, as a result of the continuous lockdowns. They are stuffing absurd and harebrained misinformation and conspiracy theories under the guise of offering Islamic knowledge in order to motivate the youth in their efforts to destabilize the country. The quick growth in internet radicalization in Bangladesh can be attributed to a number of factors. To begin with, as previously said, young people are driven to spend more time online as day-to-day activities, including university education, have switched to online platforms. As a result, this additional time increases the vulnerability of the country's young to terrorist activity. Second, the Covid-19-caused epidemic has revealed societal cleavages, as middle-class youngsters see their family income dwindle and suffer hardships. Furthermore, the epidemic has exacerbated youngsters' sadness and dissatisfaction with the current system, increasing their openness to radical impulses. Finally, one of the most persistent blights on young vigor is unemployment. While the country has progressed greatly in recent decades, economic success has not translated into enough job creation, leaving the country unable to harness youthfulness into future growth. The Covid-19 epidemic has further placed the country's youth's future into doubt, aggravating the country's employment situation and halting schooling for an extended length of time. These jobless adolescents are drawn to extreme ideologies because these ideologies profit on youngsters' frustrations. As a result, teenagers falling prey to radical preachers is considerably increased when they are unemployed.

The government of Bangladesh undertook numerous actions to combat the terrorists which brought some sort of stability during the past few years. A series of operations were carried out by security forces, culminating in the deaths of roughly 100 insurgents.<sup>5</sup> Their main goal was to capture Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh and local Islamist terrorist network. Recent media reports have highlighted the arrest of roughly 500 Islamist terrorists in the last year, as well as militant organizations' internet activity.<sup>6</sup> The government and security organizations promoted tolerance, inclusivity, and digital literacy. The first step in eliminating contentious, discriminatory, and eventually hateful speech aimed to divide and polarize society is teaching people of all ages to identify, analyze, and interpret what they read and write on social media. Social media corporations like Facebook are tightening up their monitoring and improving their content screening procedures due to the reputational implications. There is hopeful evidence that these actions helped to reduce the amount of extremist content available online in Bangladesh. Despite having over 600,000 subscribers, AQIS still has a YouTube account, although Bangladeshi intelligence agencies have shut down dozens of terrorist channels.<sup>7</sup> These channels are robust, and they frequently resurface under new identities after being shut down. In light of this, the government has taken appropriate steps to combat the growing tendency of internet radicalization. The government has also taken the necessary legislative steps to include the online space under the legislation. Furthermore, the government has prevented terrible propaganda operations by properly punishing malicious extremists.

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<sup>5</sup> Hasan, Kamrul. "82% Bangladeshi Militants Radicalised Th Social Media." *Prothom Alo*, March 24, 2017. Accessed April 3, 2017. <http://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/new/14324/8225-Bangladeshi-militants-radicalise-through>.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

## Literature Review

Stefan Malthaner in 2018 argues that Social ties and networks are important in the study of radicalization. The author tries to find out the role of social ties, occasions and locations and individual networking on radical movement and activism. It is important to look at the group/network level as well as the individual to understand violent radicalism.<sup>8</sup> Social networks and peer pressure play a role in violent radicalization. Strong ties among a group and weak ties between small groups of likeminded people provide a network. Different types of spaces have been identified that facilitate this networking. Individual agency also plays a role in networking. The interactions start in more open spaces and lead to more and more reserved spaces that create echo chambers for radicals.<sup>9</sup>

The internet appears to create more noteworthy open doors to come to be radicalized. Numerous insightful articles attribute that the net in selling radicalization. Those exploration advocates that the internet goes about as an enhancement and has broken the ordinary constraints to radicalize individuals. At some stage in such manner, Gabriel Weimann's "Fear on the net: the new territory, the new requesting circumstances check the number of net websites of terrorist organizations. In one article, Weimann points out extremist websites that radicalize people. He tracked down that most terrorist organizations introduced their online presence. Remarkable examination suggests that there is a relationship between extremists' websites and online publicity and quick radicalization.<sup>10</sup> Components that work with online radicalization should be featured particularly. Youth use online media all the more clearly as a piece of their lives and social connections. This demonstrates that the meaning of direct communication is declining, and online contacts are experienced with conviction.

Heidi Elis in 2018 addresses that Radicalization to violence is usually a law enforcement concern but it may be expanded to public health which may play a preventative role. Radicalization is determined by many factors and is not easily identified. Religion, ethnicity, refugee status and mental health all are inadequate predictors of radicalization of groups and individuals. Social and personal grievances may make an individual more vulnerable to radicalization.<sup>11</sup> However, violence may not occur until this

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<sup>8</sup>Speckhard, A., Shajkovci, A., &Esengul, "Analysis of the Drivers of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan, including the Roles of Kyrgyz Women in Supporting, Joining, Intervening in, and Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan" 2017 Retrieved from Washington DC: The International Center For The Study Of Violent Extremism.

<sup>9</sup> ibid

<sup>10</sup> ibid

<sup>11</sup> Homeland Security Institute, "The Internet as a Tool for Recruitment and Radicalization of Youth," 2009, available at: [http://www.homelandsecurity.org/hsireports/Internet\\_Radicalization.pdf](http://www.homelandsecurity.org/hsireports/Internet_Radicalization.pdf).



vulnerability meets with social connections and opportunities that promote violence. Thus, the traditional approaches to prevention of violent radicalism have not been very effective and with adverse effects.<sup>12</sup> The author provides with alternatives such as identifying individuals at risk and building resilient communities. Identifying individuals at risk is part of the idea of resilient community. A resilient community is a community with enough social connection among like-minded individuals, between contrarian minded people and with social institutions (religious, services, government etc.). Public health may be a part of efforts to prevent radicalization by providing mental health services and connecting the society through the public health system.<sup>13</sup>

Baris Kirdemir in 2020 talked about the role of social media and present situation. Despite attempts by major social media platforms and law enforcement agencies, terrorists are using the internet as usual.<sup>14</sup> Content removal and redirection to contrarian narratives are two of the ways social medias like YouTube and Twitter tries to make their users safer. However, there are problems with this approach as not all of the terrorist groups' online activity is on mainstream sites but on other alternative websites, often open source or encrypted. They also make use of the dark web. The social media's use of automated software to manage the content removal also causes problems as automatic removal often flags and removes similar but legitimate content. The internet activism of terrorist organizations is quite resilient as the make use of many available platforms and methods to avoid the bans and to recruit more people.<sup>15</sup> They use the major social media sites to lure in mass people towards radicalized contents and then invite them to more closed spaces online. Some self-radicalized individuals also seek out terrorist groups and networks online.<sup>16</sup> This adaptability and resilience even spread among ideologically opposing groups who learn from each-others' methods online. With many new ways coming up and automation of social media accounts, simply cracking down on content may not work well enough. There are many adverse effects including an increase in the ideologically charges terrorist morale that they are fighting online for their cause. Strategic communication has been suggested as a way to counter terrorism online. Especially in the case of leaderless or self-radicalized individuals who depend on the internet for most of the information. Use of real online data to test hypotheses should have a strong

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<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup> ibid

<sup>14</sup> Clinton Watts, "Foreign Fighters: How Are They Being Recruited? Two Imperfect Recruitment Models," 2008, available at: [http://www.homelandsecurity.org/hsireports/Internet\\_Radicalization.pdf](http://www.homelandsecurity.org/hsireports/Internet_Radicalization.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> ibid

<sup>16</sup> ibid

theoretical basis. If there is a systematic approach to avoid trend-based correlation, the large data sets allow for use of many analytical tools and a combination of computational technology and qualitative analysis.

Vikram Rajakumar, in 2013, discusses the uses of strain theory and differential association theory to explain the phenomena of homegrown radicals. Homegrown extremists are people living in the state where they operate to external terrorist groups for leadership, expertise, and resources. They may be leaderless groups of self-radicalized individuals.<sup>17</sup> Robert Agnew's strain theory implies that the failure to achieve material goods, reduction of positive attitude and presence of negative sentiments can prompt individuals to commit crimes to bypass the strain. Edwin Sutherland's differential association theory explains crime as a learning outcome. The internet may be a place for such learning. The online data has been analyzed for keywords and themes that indicate shifts in their group identity. Algorithms may be used to detect emotions and group cohesion and polarization on social media and online platforms to detect online reactions of communities toward real life socio-political events. Monitoring changes in language can thus lead to more targeted measures for online recruiters. The use of accurate online data by extremists helps to recruit a large number of audiences online.

Arlinda Rrustemi in 2020 discussed the use of narratives to prevent radicalization and extremism. The narratives help people understand how a person can go about their faith. This counters the narrative spread by extremist shows faith as extremism and that rejection of extremism makes one a non-believer. The author proposes different ways for effectively spreading the messages. It is advised that the contents of the social and cultural contexts targets audience, and the messengers need to be informed about those contexts. Online and offline materials, public or private communication, and community activities have been were used by extremists. Hoffman believes that radicalization has a various leveled procedure; this is dynamically organized.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, Bergen, who has formed extensively on mental oppressor enlistment, sees an instrumental circumstance of the web for online radicalization.

Yeap and Park explain the web allows any character to get the advantage of the segment to extremist substance from their private domain as opposed to going to a comprehensive exacting social gathering. The net reduces impediments to the affiliation; very few specialists may moreover besides fight that

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<sup>17</sup>Charlie Devereux and Corina Rodriguez Pons, "Chavez May Radicalize Revolution as Venezuelan Foes Gain Ground," Bloomberg Business Week (online), September 27, 2010, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/bv7ld85> ([www.newsmx.com/News\\_ front/ChavezRadicalizeRevolution-venezuela/2010/09/27/id/371729](http://www.newsmx.com/News_front/ChavezRadicalizeRevolution-venezuela/2010/09/27/id/371729)).

<sup>18</sup> ibid

human exchange is fundamental for radicalization.<sup>19</sup> Behr explains that in virtual advancement, online activities can be considered a development of authentic lives. The genuine affiliation isn't fundamental as the web consistently allows an individual's radicalization with no real contact. Other than the real world, private associations may similarly make in the mechanized time. Thus, Mitchell Silber and Arvin Bhatt assert that Radicalization at the web in may happen with different private zones and are significantly less seen sources. Besides, the net extends openings for self-radicalization. It is a strategy where a character reliably winds up being radicalized with the guide of using himself. Accordingly, the net makes possibilities of radicalization without human trade or affiliation. An individual can go through different stages and may be radicalized by the internet. In their investigation of a radicalization case in the New York Police Department, Silber and Bhatt focus on four stages of radicalization: pre-radicalization, self-conspicuous evidence, educating, and jihadization.<sup>20</sup> Extremists regularly make mysterious or shut relationships at relational connection objections with appealing names and move their engaged groups. Despite attempts by major social media platforms and law enforcement agencies, terrorists are using the internet as usual. Content removal and redirection to contrarian narratives are two ways social media sites like YouTube and Twitter try to make their users safer. However, there are problems with this approach as not all of the terrorist groups' online activity is on mainstream sites but on other alternative websites, often open-source or encrypted. They also make use of the dark web. Social media's use of automated software to manage content removal also causes problems as automatic removal often flags and removes similar but legitimate content.

Ken Reidy in 2019 discusses about a concept of benevolent radicalism. This kind of radicalism is characterized by staying inside the bounds of social norms and engaging in selfless works like charity. The case of radical British Muslims who have helped those in need of assistance in Syria versus British Muslims of similar background who have joined Daesh has been discussed.<sup>21</sup> The people who joined Daesh have been termed as malevolently radicalized. The benevolently radicalized people focus on the victim side and pursue positive social gains while the malevolent ones focus on perpetrator side and reject social norms to achieve ideological goals. Malevolent radicals show support for violence to

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<sup>19</sup> Justin S. Nachsin, "Terrorism and the Use of Social Media in the Mumbai Attacks," *The Journal of Counterterrorism and Homeland Security International* 16:4 (2009): 16–19.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*

<sup>21</sup> Nicholas Blanford, "On Facebook and Twitter, Spreading Revolution in Syria," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 8, 2011, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/6hclsa4> ([www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/0408/On-Facebook-and-Twitter-spreading-revolution-in-Syria](http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2011/0408/On-Facebook-and-Twitter-spreading-revolution-in-Syria)).

achieve their ideological goals. The article proposes that by backing the benevolent radicals, the recruitment pools of violent extremists may become smaller and the vulnerable youth would find constructive ways to deal with their moral compulsion to help. It acknowledges that there are outcomes from radicalism and not all radicals become violent extremists or terrorism. Terrorists may have their personal and environmental causes. Thus, a focus on process instead of outcome may help prevent future terrorism. By recognizing that there are ways for radicals to be constructive, governments acknowledge the contributions of people of radical faith and make them less likely to engage in violence.

Quilliam suggests that Al Qa'ida's web magazine that advocates jihad from home has been solidly apportioned in the West and referred to as broadening the charm of severe zeal and online radicalization.<sup>22</sup> People can appreciate the additional induction to the web offers, which drives them towards radicalization. The decline of signifiers of separation among people works with individuals from everywhere in the world. Al-Lami explains that this self-radicalization is made out of people acquainted with extremist conviction frameworks without a partner with progressive social events through the web. Clara-AugusteSüß and Ahmad Noor Aakhunzzada in 2019 looks at the role of socioeconomic factors in Islamist radicalization in Egypt and Tunisia. It has identified that the socioeconomic factors work in forms of socioeconomic grievances and opportunities. Socioeconomic grievances make the youth and the poor more vulnerable to radicalization. They can make people more likely to support violence and become violent. They can delegitimize the state as it does not improve the condition of the people and it further gives people reason to take up violent means to disobey the state. There are also economic opportunities created for radical groups who are motivated by accumulating resources and manpower. They also promise economic prosperity and social services to the people to bring them to their cause.

Arlinda Rrustemi in 2020 discusses the use of life story narratives as a way to prevent radicalization and extremism. The life story narratives help people understand the various ways a person can go about their faith which counters the narrative spread by extremists that show faith as extremism and that rejection of extremism makes one a non-believer. The author proposes different ways for effectively spreading the messages. It is advised that the contents consider the social and cultural contexts of the target audience.

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<sup>22</sup> ibid

The messengers need to be informed about those contexts. Both online and offline materials, public or private communication and community activities have been advised.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study focuses on radicalization via the Internet with aims to -

- Examine how extremist organizations utilize social and virtual media in Bangladesh to undertake online radicalization, exchange thoughts, hold dialogues, and build followings of like-minded individuals.
- Examine the changing patterns and new dynamics of the extremists of online radicalization.
- Decode newly adapted technologies to control extremist communications which allows them to shape how their messages are seen and understood by a global audience.

### **Research Questions**

The study began by conducting a literature review to identify essential topics concerning online radicalization. This technique included a thorough and systematic search and evaluation of the literature, including establishing precise search keywords and segregation criteria. A comprehensive analysis utilized a mix of research variables, including a) radicalization, extremism, and terrorism, b) internet and online and c) role, effect, influence and changing strategies and evolving dynamics.

### **Central Research Question**

How has online radicalization evolved in Bangladesh through various strategies and forces linked with violent extremist groups?

### **Secondary Questions**

- To what extent has the online radicalization strategies facilitated new member recruitment and fundraising for the extremist groups in Bangladesh?
- What essential elements should Bangladesh consider to deal with the evolving dynamics of online radicalization?

## **Hypothesis of the Study**

For radical ideologies, the internet had become a vital source of information, communication, and propaganda. The internet may enhance chances of being radicalized because it is accessible to a large and growing number of people, regardless of gender or color, and because it enables them to interact with like-minded people from all over the globe. This internet connectivity to individuals may give a larger chance than the physical world to validate current opinions while avoiding confrontation with knowledge that might contradict them. This study supports the concept that the internet acts as an echo chamber, radicalizing individuals on an online forum.

## **Methodology**

This section outlines the methodological approach. This research is done by a mixed method. It contains primary data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions done with distinguished academics, journalists, government officials and intelligence forces. The secondary data were collected through online journals, books, articles, media reports, e-papers. First, it had given an overview of the methodology and its rationale. Second, it described the literature conducted and the subsequent primary evidence of collection. This study has become one of the main understandings of arguments in the literature and assessed the appropriateness the information gathered. It focused on gathering key information from each individual's experience. It explored the key hypotheses emerging from the literature and gathered insights into the patterns of an individual's online activities that may benefit policymakers and practitioners. The particular study sought to answer the research questions. The study used the following technique: semi-structured interviewing to obtain primary data.

## **Data Selection**

The data included presentations related to the research inquiries and social media feeds of social media platforms in the developments and their supporters. The specific media were chosen because they contain stages on which each of the three group's talks with individuals they wish to persuade and dissuade from their developments. The extremist organizations share space on social media, blogs allowing wide access to their conversation and surveillance methods. This study examined that how extremists broadcast their belief and how media power those messages. They are transferred to their targeted audience by dissolving a wide range of connections between the agencies and utilizing the stages. In general, they publicize their own cycles and advances. Through online, they have granted

pursuers access to lists of possible extremist sympathizers and their social media usernames. The organizations encourage others to join them in their vigilante actions by employing online. From the outset, media reports were used and websites that the three groups use; moreover, more sites were found as users on the fundamental stages. The social sites were singled out on the grounds to follow communication between the extremists and with the people websites they use, similarly their developments. Social Media reports were utilized to gather information about online activity of extremist groups.

### **Data Analysis**

Each website's articles and comments were looked through to examine the data, noting material that was relevant to study questions. Analyzed data for terror organizations that were relevant to their accountability with users and penetrability to people they wanted to attract. The data was separated into two categories: 1) information about the strategies and tools and 2) information about the functionalities regarding online radicalization. Although the extremist material was surveyed in this manner, the information was split according to their utilization of phrases and how they may plan advancements and mention new tactics for a demonstrable fact. Using the theoretical structure spread out towards the opening of this sector, the speech, visuals, text layout, and user active participation were studied for proposals on the many phases.

### **Research Ethics**

Information was stored in secret phrase protected records and hard drives due to the concept of the theoretical investigation. Furthermore, prior to each interview and during data collection, respondents provided their informed consent. Additionally, it was made sure that no private information would be revealed without consent. While some respondents and key informants approved of the possibility of sharing their private information, others want to keep it to themselves. The identities of the respondents and key informants in this research thus did not reveal any private information. Some people's names have also been kept hidden because they are afraid to reveal their true identities.

### **Limitations**

There has been significant limitation to this study. This investigation started from the time span of the degree's accreditation and security concerns. Moreover, every concept has a radicalized view. But at an alarming rate, Islamist radicalization through online is increasing in Bangladesh. So this study only

focused on such online radicalization. Thus, some various websites and media are related to these groups were inspected. Islamic State's magazines Dabiq, websites related to radical content, which promote radicalization through online were only examined. Some blogs and dark web could not be explored due to privacy concerns. For instance, the usage of stages, Instagram and YouTube, were the dataset for this investigation. These media were explored because coordinated efforts of extremists between users could be seen.

### **Structure of the Study**

The introduction chapter of this paper identifies the context, background, objective, methodology, research question of the Strategies and Evolving Dynamics of online radicalization in Bangladesh.

Chapter I includes historical ground along with the causes and forms of Online Radicalization in Bangladesh. Chapter II illustrates Tools, Methods, and Strategies used by extremists for Online Radicalization and focuses on social media and use of cell phones. It further explains online radicalization during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the further escalation of this situation.

Chapter III summarizes the online radicalization recruitment process and discusses the significance of such recruiting getting popularity among radicals and Youth being a major target with evolving dynamics of online radicalization. Chapter IV discusses fund mobilization for terror attacks through the online platform and includes the role of Internet, Social Media, and Propaganda of online radicalization. It includes challenges of online radicalization.

An examination of the significance of each of those findings is included in Chapter V. The chapter provides ideas and strategies for addressing internet radicalization. The function of government and civil society, the legal system, and the laws themselves are suggested in this chapter.



**Chapter I**  
**Understanding ‘online radicalization’**

## Chapter I

### Understanding ‘online radicalization’

Radicalization was viewed as a social and mental change that ends up in an extreme advancement of mind. However, after the 9/11, the term has been broadly identified by western nations in the epistemological contextt.<sup>23</sup> Individuals who get radicalized adopt extreme political, social, and/or religious ideas and aspirations, and they come to believe that the accomplishment of certain objectives justifies the use of indiscriminate violence. The process of preparing and motivating someone to engage in violent activity involves both their mental and emotional well-being. The process by which someone is exposed to an ideological message and belief system that encourages a shift from moderate views to extreme ones is known as online radicalization to violence. Online media, such as social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, is predominantly used to carry out this procedure. Social media are computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and distribution of material across virtual communities and networks, including knowledge, concepts, ideas, personal and professional interests, and other forms of expression. Instead of going to a radical religious meeting, anyone may obtain extreme religious information on the internet from their own home. As a result, all one needs is an internet connection; they don't even need to go somewhere else. A few academics contend that face-to-face human connection is essential for preventing radicalization, despite the fact that the internet lowers barriers to engagement. Online activities, however, can be seen as an extension of real-life activities in the digital age, therefore a direct physical link is no longer required. Personal ties may develop in the virtual world in addition to the real world.

More people from all civilizations can get radicalized due to the internet. The internet has broken down social and gender barriers as well as geographic ones, according to renowned security experts Rachel Briggs and Alex Strugnell, making it easier to disseminate extremist views. They draw attention to the fact that women may now be radicalized and reached over the internet. In many communities, it could be challenging for women to interact directly with male radicals or to work with them. It might also be challenging for women to publicly voice certain ideas. The internet, though, gives them more

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<sup>23</sup>Chris Summers, “Pictured: The Grinning ISIS Terrorists who Hacked 20 Innocent Victims Including Westerners to Death but Spared those who could Recite the Koran in Bangladesh Attack,” The Daily Mail, July 2, 2016, accessed March 14, 2017, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3671586/Pictured-grinning-ISIS-terrorists-hacked-20-innocent-victims-including-westerners-death-spared-recite-Koran-Bangladesh-attack.html>.

anonymity. According to several writers, the internet helps introverts who are looking for unconventional ideas by enabling private access to any information. Additionally, the internet is said to offer some degree of cloaking and anonymity.

The internet acts as an "echo chamber," accelerating the radicalization process. This implies that because the internet has so much storage, those who are looking for any extreme ideas to support their opinions are likely to find some reaffirming stuff there. The internet functions as a sort of "one-stop shop" for all the material that people could need to support their already extreme beliefs. As a result, compared to the real world, the virtual world shortens the process of radicalization. By offering an instant and constant access to any radical concept, the internet acts as a "conveyor belt" that quickens radicalization. According to that research, the internet functions as an accelerant and has eliminated previous hurdles to radicalization. In this context, *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, The New Challenges* by Gabriel Weimann counts the number of terrorist organizations' websites and analyzes their contents. Weimann draws attention to the abundance of extreme websites in his piece. He discovers that by the end of 1999, practically all terrorist organizations had a website. Numerous empirical researches indicate that there is a link between the quick radicalization of people and the websites and online preaching of extremists.

Circumstances brings up that jihadist radicals would utilize virtual places participating in profound argumentation, trading news, and trading notes on things like verse. In this way, similarly, as the approach of the intuitive Internet altered how non-radicals collaborated, so too did it change the jihadist data scene. Despite their comparative advantage over static sites, discussions weren't without their drawbacks either, and, as both Torres-Soriano and Zelin have appeared, the discussion furor was generally over by 2013 Gatherings like al-Qaida (AQ) what's more, and al-Shabab had detected an opportunity.<sup>24</sup> What's more, they were investing less energy attempting to attract new followers. Instead, they had started to move their thoughtfulness regarding more standard read "available" – stages, online media networks like Twitter, Facebook, and VKontakte, and record sharing center points like YouTube.<sup>25</sup> This philosophy-wide relocation started to happen insincere after al-Shabab turned into the essential fear-based oppressor the gathering in history to live-tweet one in everything about tasks. Imtiaz Ahmed describes how the group utilized Twitter to give strategic updates on the assault online radical activities.

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<sup>24</sup>Community Oriented Policing Service, "Online Radicalization to Violent Extremism" (Awareness Brief, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC, 2014)

<sup>25</sup> ibid

As a consequence of occasions like Westgate, jihadist utilization of Twitter expands dramatically. By 2014, every one of the leading associations was intensely putting resources into the stage. As a consequence of this and accordingly the simpler access to information that is managed, the quantity of instructive investigation to which their online exercises were oppressed prospered – researchers presently had more admittance to experimental information than any time in recent memory before. Furthermore, Berger and Morgan, whose historical registration of supportive of IS Twitter clients, found that there were no less than 46,000 such records working among September and December 2014.<sup>26</sup> Studies like these uncovered that there had been a structural shift inside the on-the-web jihadist scene. No more did it comprise a shut organization of gatherings prevalently populated by Arabic speakers; – all things considered, it had gotten a world hive of political activism and social trade.<sup>27</sup>

Since 2012 in Bangladesh, international and local terrorist organizations are using social platforms like Facebook and Twitter, and other popular blogs to attract people in support of their ideologies by offering easily accessible radicalizing content. Numerous terrorist acts and instances of intercommunal violence have occurred in Bangladesh during the past several years as a result of hate speech and violent ideology. The Ramu and Pabna instances, in which enraged individuals attacked religious minorities, made clear the attraction of such messages on the internet. People were upset in both instances by altered images and statements on Facebook that denigrated Islam and were uploaded by unidentified people using aliases. 83 The majority of Muslim Bangladeshis find it intolerable that the images and slogans disrespect the Prophet and Mecca. It is obvious that the unidentified individuals purposefully offended people's religious emotion in order to incite racial conflict in the community. As a result, spreading radical views through social media has become simple in Bangladesh. Afterwards, they introduced other secured chat engines like Telegram, Chat Secured, Protected, Threema, We Chat, etc. Encrypted messages pose challenges to security agencies, raising concern about balancing the right to privacy and state security.<sup>28</sup> A recent survey suggests that almost 82% of the radicalized youth in Bangladesh were influenced by social media for their inclination to jihadi ideology<sup>29</sup>. The messages being spread often have a tone and structure that young people are used to hearing or developing

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<sup>26</sup>Internet World Stats, "Asia Internet Use, Population Data and Facebook Statistics - March 2017," Internet Coaching Library, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm#asia>.

<sup>27</sup> ibid

<sup>28</sup>Tanbir Uddin Arman, "New Media, Digital Radicalization and Social Security," The Bangladesh Today, September 8, 2015, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://thebangladeshtoday.com/2015/09/new-media-digital-radicalization-and-social-security/>.

<sup>29</sup> ibid

themselves (further discussed in Chapter 3). As a result, they can quickly be drawn in by it. Some Islamic extremists in Bangladesh have made digital-related mechanical limits. Bangladeshi security expert Iftekharul Bashar refers to the recent internet radicalisation there as the “second wave of radicalization”.<sup>30</sup> The crucial wave began between 1999 and 2005 and resulted in a few extreme incidents around the nation. That wave faded away as a consequence of the government taking action against extremist and terrorist groups. However, this second deluge of radicalization is apparently uncommon. The new wave appears to depend upon developments and the spreading of messages through the internet. The recently described Ansarullah Bangla Team is one group that requires unique consideration. It has a sizable following, mostly made up of students from private institutions. They often use social networking sites and have a propensity to use the internet to get visibility. The educated youth analyze and interpret materials from numerous websites of international terrorist social gatherings. For instance, a study of young people in Dhaka City found that about half of them regularly spend hours online and consider social media to be a vital aspect of their life. The government of Bangladesh occasionally restricts the freedom of information for its citizens in an effort to stop radicalization via the internet. In this way, it aims to foster harmony between two opposing imperatives: preventing online radicalization and ensuring information freedom. With this knowledge, the government of Bangladesh's coercive measures don't seem to be either practical or endearing. In light of this intriguing situation, Bangladesh should objectively evaluate the effectiveness of its initiatives to prevent online radicalization without compromising its citizens' right to free speech and extensive internet access.

In online platforms, charismatic recruiters are seen as the best role models with attributes of honesty, willingness to bring change, protector of the oppressed, and their words and actions impact the behavior and motivation of the vulnerable youth who seek purpose, belonging, and change of the social structure. Targeted youth then is convinced to perform “hijrat,” which is leaving home to perform “Jihad” or what they believe is the war to “fight against the enemies of Islam”. Training periods range from weeks to months where they are taught the use of weapons, attacks, intolerance against specific communities, etc. Very often, these training courses are offered through online media, and the training manuals are made available in those media. Finding a single explanation for the causes of radicalization is challenging since they are poorly understood and can include a wide range of causes and influences. Inequality, prejudice, and marginalization are all factors that are considered as contributing to radicalization within

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<sup>30</sup> ibid

the community of practice around its prevention. While at the same time, each extremist's path to radicalization is distinct. Historical, political, economic, and social factors, including local and international power dynamics, may lead to radicalization. One of the factors is an increase in horizontal inequality. The impression of unfairness, human rights abuses, social and political isolation, widespread exploitation, and persistent maltreatment of certain groups are seen to be more important push factors than unemployment or poverty alone. These elements may lead to ungoverned areas where non-state actors are able to imperil territorial integrity and state sovereignty. People are tempted to transfer their loyalties to rival sources of authority, employment, and recognition in such accountability vacuums. The blatant rejection of society's expanding diversity is another factor in radicalization. The normalization of violence in the name of religion, misinterpretation of verses to prioritize 'celestial duty', perceived victimization of an associated community may also be the probable reasons for radicalization. Online radicalism has been created by a wide margin in the late many years, reflecting advances in innovation, what's more, changes in both the physical and information security domain. This part offers an audit of the writing in regards to the primary side of online radicalism: it maps improvements inside the fanatic biological system since the development of the web as we know it today, drawing on almost twenty years' worth of scholastic request. Terrorists post combustible materials like instructive recordings about the best approach to develop explosives and work weapons, recordings of fruitful assaults, addresses upholding revolutionary perspectives, blog entries, and messages supporting and further reassuring assaults and demonstrations of savagery. For example, psychological oppressor bunches have utilized Facebook to trade private messages and information to facilitate assaults and that people can show their help, have scattered publicity and proclamation on Twitter, and have transferred radicals' lessons and preparing recordings on YouTube.

The Bangladeshi government accepted proposals for the purchase of VSAT information circuits in late 1995. There were just two ISPs (Internet Service Providers) and around 1,000 customers in the nation after 1996. However, 1997 marked a turning point in this industry as it saw a huge increase in the use of the internet. ISPs increased to twelve, and there were 10,000 users. Subsequently, some new ISPs began their administration which fills the corresponding progression of this area. Nonetheless, the government received more liberal public approaches for a manageable and fast development of this industry, and accordingly, we had 180 ISPs by 2005.<sup>31</sup> In 2006 Bangladesh got associated with Submarine Cable

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<sup>31</sup> ibid

(SEA-ME-WE 4 Submarine Cable), which managed the cost of large transfer speed and minimal effort than any time in recent memory. After this, over a long time Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd., BTCL diminished the transmission capacity cost at normal spans which pulled in an ever-increasing number of users towards the internet world. BTRC currently has roughly 345 registered ISP permit holders, and there are about 4.5 million users affiliated with them, or about 0.32% of our entire population.<sup>32</sup>

Worries about digital radicalization are not actually new. A few terrorist groups in Bangladesh that are motivated by religion now have the means to create and disseminate their extremist ideologies online. Through terrorist acts and disinformation campaigns, they have captured the public's and media's attention. A few left-leaning political organizations are likewise working to improve their internet skills. Thirteen terrorist organizations are now functioning, while 29 more are utilizing fictitious credentials to conduct covert operations. The Home Ministry has received the names of eight terrorist groups that are very active online from the Special Branch (SB) of the Bangladesh Police. These groups are: Ansarullah Bangla Team, Allah'r Dal, Islamic Solidarity Front, Tamiruddin Bangladesh, Tawhidee Trust, Hizbut-Tawhid, Shahdat-e-Nabuwat, and Jamat-as-Sadat. Five of these terrorist groups have already been declared illegal by the authorities. These organizations will probably keep improving their internet capabilities in the future. A portion of the young individuals attracted to the Holey Artisan Bakery attack were ferocious social media users who had previously promoted extremist ideas. They had ties to other Bangladeshis who resided overseas, including one set up in Canada, who helped with the attack's planning and execution. Another criminal who has been charged with being involved in the strike's planning became radicalized after seeing films by Jasimuddin Rahmani, a Bangladeshi associated with al Qaeda who ultimately converted to the Islamic State. Consequently; online-connected elements spread hate and violence. Aside from violence and wrongdoings that appear to correspond with online disdain, the immediate impacts of hate speech on casualties are huge even without the disconnected association. As recently archived, "dread, outrage, pity, gloom, and a freshly discovered bias against the aggressor's group, just as actual impact including social changes and confinement" are among the normal direct impacts of online hate speech.<sup>33</sup> Like radicalism and malevolent information activities, the digital environment of hate speech is likewise versatile against countermeasures. As per a broadly coursed paper by a group of researchers on worldwide hate "network of networks," the flow hate

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<sup>32</sup> ibid

<sup>33</sup> ibid

network quickly overhauls and self-fixes at the miniature level when assaulted.<sup>34</sup> Also, stage-driven measures, for example, controlling hate speech content exclusively on Facebook might aggravate the issue. Hate speech networks intently communicate with other point groups, for example, avid supporters and furthermore networks that communicate in various dialects, empowering themselves to draw in more members from different pieces of the online information sphere. Likewise, hate-driven networks are firmly tied inside, particularly when group character is additionally framed. Devotees of fierce extremist groups, for example, ISIS or KKK foster solid communication security inside their online networks. This comparability, notwithstanding the philosophical contrasts, shows the presence of a general standard of conduct among the extremist groups.

Theoretical perspective of online radicalization in Bangladesh could be examined by social learning theory. The internet, to a significant part, provides for the crossing of geographical barriers, anonymity, and the creation of an atmosphere conducive to beliefs and ideas that are consigned to the category of undesirable in conventional discourses.<sup>35</sup> This enables the promotion of connection loops that maintain ideas and opinions that are hard or impossible to enforce offline. The subconscious and proactive personal desire of becoming part of a wider network is at the heart of the internet's appeal as a channel. Furthermore, the internet's 'personalization' characteristics play a significant impact. Adding to this type of thinking, the internet's personalization function lets users choose what they want to see and what they don't want to view. As a result, a 'filter bubble' emerges, diverting visitors into 'echo chambers.'<sup>36</sup> The homogeneous quality of these filter bubbles distinguishes them. As a result, both the 'filter bubble' and the 'echo chambers' serve as crucial conduits for aberrant behavior learning and adoption. The "filter bubble" is a contextual component determining whose prospects and current circumstances are made accessible to a person and favorable to compliance or deviation. Extending this perspective, the 'echo chambers' become a stage where skewed narratives in favor of a specific ideology against those in opposition are presented.<sup>37</sup> When such an 'echo chamber' of illicit or extremist conduct emerges, its goal is to increase the user's visibility online to abnormal messages at a higher frequency than normative

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<sup>34</sup>Sneha Shankar, "Bangladesh Unblocks Facebook after 21 Days; WhatsApp, Viber Restrictions Stay," International Business Times, October 12, 2015, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.com/bangladesh-unblocks-facebook-after-21-days-whatsapp-viber-restrictions-stay-2219519>.

<sup>35</sup>Astleitner, H. (2002). Teaching critical thinking online. *Journal of instructional psychology*, 29(2), 53-76.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*



communications, thereby raising the possibility of adopting such aberrant ideas and actions.<sup>38</sup> As a result, the research aims to determine how violent extremist organizations' methods are developing or have transformed in creating such "echo chambers" that will provide full rights to radicalizing material and groups that the user would not have had entry to through self-selection, resulting in the extremism of Bangladeshi youth.<sup>39</sup> The study examines the problem via the lens of Social Learning Theory (SLT). SLT is regarded as one of the most objectively proved criminological theories, in part because of the ease with which its fundamental aspects can be transformed into quantifiable variables of:

- 1) Differential associations (priority, frequency, duration and intensity),
- 2) Differential reinforcement,
- 3) Definitions, and
- 4) Imitation.

The study of cybercrime has benefited by the use of SLT, which emphasizes radicalization to terrorism as a taught type of violent conduct. A theoretical explanation of how filter bubbles are troublesome because of their function in determining availability and opportunity is provided by the fact that there is no discernible difference between learning one aggressive behavior and learning other aggressive behaviors.

A specific activity "must be viewed in the context of all other simultaneously accessible schedules and sources of reward," according to Akers in 1998. The "Filter Bubble" is crucial in defining accessibility and availability, which are requirements for choosing alternative associations and reinforcements.<sup>40</sup> Internet users are more inclined to choose, see, and accept "friends" when they are particularly suggested or made accessible, according to many publications. According to physiological theory, individuals naturally gravitate toward those who share their values, opinions, and attitudes. However, the 'filter bubble' function allows for a streamlined process. The initiation of interest towards hateful ideologies in a user's online activities leads to them being introduced to more content and associations of the same

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid*

<sup>39</sup>Samuel, T. K. (2016). *Radicalisation in Southeast Asia: A selected case study of Daesh in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines: Southeast Asia Regional Centre for CounterTerrorism (SEARCCT), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.*

<sup>40</sup>Neumann, P. R. (2013). Options and strategies for countering online radicalization in the United States. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 36(6), 431-459.

genre through the ‘personalization’ feature of the internet.<sup>41</sup> And with each more time the user uses or searches or engages, actively or passively, with such content, the ‘filter bubble’ enhances the information the user will later see. A user is limited by their filter bubble, which, according to Hawson, isolates us because each person's bubble is different. It presents us with a bias — our own — but does so covertly, and since we are generally ignorant that the information we are consuming is biased, we probably feel it is not.<sup>42</sup> People are thus far more likely to be exposed to material that offers for reinforcement when they join virtual groups, and ultimately, virtual worlds. Through this approach, the filter bubble may influence people to associate with extreme and abnormal groups and create echo chambers. Echo chambers still have their fundamental relationship with humans. As a result, the user's worldview becomes polarized, reflecting solely their extreme viewpoint, and they are less likely to be exposed to possible alternative. By their very nature, echo chambers are environments where concepts and associations are used often, continuously, and intensely, with few alternative definitions. This implies that filter bubble further intensifies exposure to aberrant behavior. Because of how solid the echo chamber is, "the majority of the learning of criminal conduct happens inside close personal groupings."<sup>43</sup> Additionally, the availability and accessibility of online echo chambers offer ongoing classifications and differential reinforcement in favor of deviant behavior. Deviancy amplification, a characteristic of online echo chambers, is a process in which a user who engages with deviant material, content, and associations is fed only with additional material, information, and associations but with a higher frequency that confirms definitions and provides potent differential reinforcement.<sup>44</sup> Online echo chambers may be the best way to explain the function of the internet by connecting radicalization to violent extremism. No one piece of extreme propaganda, according to Neumann, is certain to turn individuals into terrorists. Instead, prolonged exposure to extremist information, the increased impact of violent pictures and videos, and the ensuing emotional desensitization are the main causes of online radicalization.<sup>45</sup> Echo chambers provide the kind of participation that accelerates the pace at which a person adopts the prevalent viewpoints. Differential reinforcement is evocative of the echo chamber trait of abhorring disagreement. As a result, a process where opposing viewpoints or materials are not only opposed via the simple removal of them but also through a "drowning out" mechanism that resembles

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<sup>41</sup> *ibid*

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*

mob mentality results.<sup>46</sup> We notice the emergence of the ganging up process in online commentary sections across the political spectrum. This numbers game and use of ad hominem in online platforms are not specific to radicalized youths but also to all political ideologies. This, in turn, can lead to desensitization of violence, initiating a process of ‘online radicalization’ that can increase the propensity for radicalization to be transformed into actual violence, making echo chambers prime" criminogenic environments".<sup>47</sup> The emergence of such spaces shrunk the natural inhibition towards violence, and hence the potential for violence becomes actual violence. Constant feeding of violent material further bolsters the tendencies for violence. The widespread circulation of ISIS training videos and online chat rooms that created a virtual community in which the radicalization process not only occurred but allowed a much higher degree of interconnectivity has created cases of the so-called ‘lone wolf’ attacks.<sup>48</sup>

Case study includes Mr. Aminul Islam Beg who said that he came to know about ISIS in 2013. He started collecting and studying information about ISIS. Through online and reading, he develops the idea that the current activities and movement of ISIS are historically predetermined in the light of Hadith. Through the study of various Hadiths and Islamic articles, he developed the idea that the extremists of ISIS are in favor of the truth. From this idea, he did not study ISIS and started writing and described this in detail on his blog. And in order to establish the truth about the activities of ISIS, various arguments have been put forward in the field of Hadith. Among these followers, many have the mentality of going to war on behalf of ISIS. Few of them have already left the country to take part in the war. Some could not go to war because they did not get support from their surroundings.

Another case study followed by Safat Islam Abdullah (Facebook name) who became a member of Neo-GMB. In his confession, he claimed that after receiving a letter from Fatima of Iraq and a letter from Neuro-scientist Afia Siddiqui on Facebook, he realized that the NATO alliance with America is inhumane on the Muslim world and on Muslim women torture was never acceptable. In this case, he should have destroyed the previous crusade cut them to pieces. To that end, he continued to make my plans. He learned war strategies related to receiving mental and physical training as well as weapons. At that time, he gained knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith. Is showed that Also learned Biographies of

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<sup>46</sup>Bandura, A. (1990). Mechanisms of moral disengagement in terrorism. *Origins of terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, states of mind*, 161-191.

<sup>47</sup> ibid

<sup>48</sup> ibid

Umar bin Khattab, Kaka bin Amr, Khalid bin Walid, Muhammad bin Qasim, Hajjaj bin Yusuf, Salauddin Ayubi, Shahid Abdur Rahman, and the history of Jirat Biratva Gatha through online platform. At the same time, he learned their war strategy. He continued to acquire knowledge about the above-related topics till March 2020. Then he created Ali Kahn, Sufiyan Ali, Abur Rahman to work on armed and cyber terrorism. He communicated with the Mujahid brothers. He talked to Mujahid brothers in video and audio calls via Telegram. Also, he has been interested in weapons and war since he was six, and was curious about this. He learned about different weapons, such as AK-47, M-16, AKM, AK-12, Air-50, Markoff, Glock-16, Glow-15, SR-25, Turkish T-5000 cipher rifle, Barrett M721, Machine Gun MPS-MP-5, RPG-6, RPG-22, SVD Dragonav, Effective Range, Weight, and Cartridge Size.

In Case Study 3, it is shown that HT-B activities online go through three phases while recruiting new Bangladeshi members online. Via order to find a devoted and dedicated cadre, the party first strives to educate and raise knowledge about its goals among the general public in online forums. Second, the committed cadre engages the populace to persuade them to convert to Islam. The third goal is to create a caliphate by communicating in specific WhatsApp groups. While progressing from one stage to another, the outfit adopts a combination of military and political campaigning strategies in social media. Although the organization abhors violence, HT-B cadres have often been detained for their participation in subversive operations or possession of weapons and ammunition in Bangladesh. Interestingly, the Bangladesh Army disclosed in January 2012 that a coup attempt to create the Khilafat that was supposedly planned by certain middle-level officers with help from the HT-B was thwarted. Through internet channels including Telegram, the HT-B leaders in Bangladesh are in close contact with the organization's UK section. They provide them with both monetary and spiritual assistance. They get frequent donations from those who support it. According to media accounts, the HT-B is one of Bangladesh's wealthiest organizations and receives millions of Bangladeshi Taka (the national currency) from unidentified sources. The intelligence services of Bangladesh believe they are affiliated with Al Qaeda.

## **Chapter II**

### **Strategies and tools of online radicalization**

- Identifying strategies and tools
- Recruitment and financing
- Internet, Social Media and Cell-phones

## Chapter II

### Strategies and tools of online radicalization

#### 2.1 Identifying strategies and tools

Online radicalization is the process through which people are exposed to ideologies and belief structures that promote a shift away from moderate viewpoints toward extremist ones. It starts primarily through person-to-person interactions or the use of online media. There are several tools that radicals use to trigger the online radicalization in Bangladesh. Their main strategies involve through online recruitment, facilitating radicalization by financing, using social media networks such as YouTube, Facebook, twitter and dark webs to create a link with ordinary people. Other strategies involve compensation, acceleration, echoing the different narrative, and facilitation by different radical groups. As people get more involved into online groups, offline isolation is frequently accompanied with online immersion. Traditional radicalization trajectories frequently identify phenomena such as social alienation and radical absorption. The strategies can be divided into several parts.

#### **Ideological**

- Person accesses propaganda materials, including writings, films, content, and information on extremist ideologies.
- A person interacts online with other radicals.

#### **Operational**

- A person looks up information and buys weapons or supplies to make weapons.
- Obtaining funds or resources for an assault

#### **Echo chamber effect**

- Person spends time on websites where the counter-narratives or opposing viewpoints are absent.

#### **Group polarization**

- A person begins to speak about members of other groups in a demeaning or "us against them" manner.

#### **Legitimizing**

- Downloading or ingesting content that encourages or justifies violence.
- Verbal acknowledgement of the intention to use violence.

Compensation is most prevalent during the pre-radicalization period and refers to radicals attempt to compensate for offline weaknesses by establishing an alternate online presence. Offline vulnerabilities are linked to online radicalization processes through compensation. The fundamental notion is that readily available internet information exposes vulnerable individuals to worldviews that differ from those promoted by their shared ideology. Individuals may seek connection in a different social setting with a lower barrier to entry. Online compensation differs from compensation obtained by seeking out and joining radical networks offline because of this ease of access for susceptible individuals. The term "facilitation" refers to the features of the internet world that increase and make it easier to be exposed to and interact with extremist information. Moreover, the extremists competently construct radical accounts on monetary contrasts and political issues to make allies. Also, on the At-Tamkin Media wire channel on March 11, the IS employable 'Abu Muhammad Al-Bengali' energized youngsters living in "Dawlatul Islam of Bangla" to "regroup and talk with their agent in Bangladesh."<sup>49</sup> Referring to a number of refrains from the Qur'an, he requested that their allies work in little groups and complete attacks with vehicles or cutting edges. The message empowered their members and partners not to fear security workplaces, paying little heed to the attack of catches and torture.

## **Tactics**

While strategies are long-term goals to achieve ends, tactics are the concrete plans and means to facilitate obtaining the strategic objectives. Briefly, tactics are employed to achieve the long-term strategic goals. Though our focus in this study is not exclusively on strategies, there is a correlation between strategy and tactics. Moreover, the increasing application of strategies of extremists group in recent times accommodates a range of tactical moves to conduct their organizational operations.

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<sup>49</sup>Speckhard, A., Shajkovci, A., & Esengul, C. (2017). Analysis of the Drivers of Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan, including the Roles of Kyrgyz Women in Supporting, Joining, Intervening in, and Preventing Violent Extremism in Kyrgyzstan. Retrieved from Washington DC: The International Center For The Study Of Violent Extremism.

**Box: Tactics of extremists under strategies**

Operational

- Killings, arson, bombing, hostage taking, kidnapping, hijacking, seizures, raids, sabotage, threat or hoax
- Suicide bombings, IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices), person borne IED (PBIED)
- Harassment and ambushes
- Attacks on/against national symbols, civilians, foreigners, government forces, bloggers, secular activists, priests, Shias, Qadiani

Communication

- Global mass media, the Internet
- Propagation, legitimization and intimidation
- Storytelling, journalist interviews, fax, propaganda, face-to-face propaganda, press conferences, excursion

Recruitment

- Youth, Madrasa students, wealthy, English medium educated, university educated

Financing

- Donations, ransom, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, drug trafficking, illegal weapons trade, illicit trade in commodities, misuse of non-profit organizations

**Strategies and tactics of extremist groups in Bangladesh**

Name	Strategies and tactics
<b>JammatulMujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)</b>	a) Attacking the non-believers of their way of interpretation of Islam b) Drawing popular attention and sending messages in online to the targeted audiences for recruitment from different backgrounds and attracting funds c) Dispersing violent campaign online/offline by attacking and killing judges and police, and threatening journalists and women without veils e) Organizing operational capability with multi-ties organizational structure f) Managing funds from crop donations, income from a number of local businesses, transnational crime, donations from JMB members and sympathizers.
<b>Harkatul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh (HUJI-B)</b>	a) Influencing the current state system and thus manipulate the popular perception via internet. b) Spreading Taliban ideologies (AmraSobai Hobo Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghanistan) c) Conducting large scale calculative attacks targeting cultural events and political figures d) Gaining publicity and recruitment through large scale attacks e) Drawing attention of the domestic as well as international terrorist outfits for recognition and funds f) Maintaining a low profile presence in online and operates with online activities g) Collecting funds through robbery, illegal financial transactions
<b>Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT)</b>	a) Gaining the support of the public via ongoing political action b) Using tactful, regulated methods to mobilize the populace like radicalization c) Making collapse of existing governance system and capitalist institutions d) Maintaining a low profile presence in operational drive and preaching



	<p>ideologies and recruiting members through online</p> <p>e) Recruiting educated higher class tech-savvy youths</p> <p>f) Exploiting particular events and inciting public sentiments to draw greater attention for publicity and recruitment</p> <p>g) Maintaining high profile activism in cyber space</p>
<b>Hizb-ut- Tawhid (HuT)</b>	<p>a) Promoting armed struggle for establishment of Islamic rule by rejecting manmade laws</p> <p>b) Establishing a world under ‘Imam UzZaman’ by going against democratic norms and institutions</p> <p>c) Maintaining a low profile presence operationally but active in indoctrination and circulation using propaganda</p> <p>d) Injecting motivation and brainstorm to the radicalized minds to be extremists</p> <p>e) Using soft approach in recruitment and finance</p>
<b>Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT)/Ansar al Islam (AAI)</b>	<p>a) Restoring the pure Islam to establish their own version of ‘Shariah law’</p> <p>b) Subduing the secular thoughts and targeting writers, journalists, intellectuals and artists who publicly insulted Islam</p> <p>c) Operating a formal organizational structure by dividing members into three groups through using pseudonyms</p> <p>d) Maintaining widespread presence in cyberspace and using multilingual platform like Bengali, Urdu, Arabic and English</p> <p>e) Recruiting the educated youths, mostly come from higher class and English medium background</p> <p>f) Being selective in making people target and selecting the place of killing operation</p> <p>g) Spreading both pro-ISIS and pro-al-Qaeda material and propaganda through cyber space’s to get popular attention</p> <p>h) Capitalizing the political dynamics in spreading propaganda to get public attentions and circulation</p>
<b>Neo-JMB</b>	<p>a) Forming Islamic state through planning sabotage with different militant organizations and replacing current government system</p> <p>b) Recruiting members from college and university students of wealthy, modern families</p> <p>c) Operating through clandestine sleeper cell with ‘cut out process’ using surname and anonymity</p> <p>d) Blending the all walks of society levels as a tactic of recruitment and publicity</p> <p>e) Selecting indiscriminate targets of Hindu priests, Buddhist monks, Christian priests, Shia communities and foreign nationals, security forces and government officials, political leaders, parliamentarians</p> <p>f) Maintaining women cell and engaging public figure for influencing vulnerable people to radicalization</p> <p>g) Sympathizing particular events like Rohingya’s plight in efforts to mobilize support for jihadist recruitment</p> <p>h) Maintaining widespread presence in cyber space for online radicalization and recruitment</p>
<b>Allahr Dal</b>	<p>a) Setting an alternative parallel state challenging the existing state system</p> <p>b) Collecting funds from members and supporters through Zakat and even by misinterpreting the Holy Quran and Hadiths</p>
<b>IslamiSamaj</b>	<p>a) Rejecting prevalent governance and state system</p> <p>b) Calling people to go beyond man-made system</p> <p>c) Taking position of peaceful soft approaches to achieve their objectives</p> <p>d) Getting public attention by going beyond democratic norms and institutions</p>

ISIS formally introduced its Bangladeshi movement in November of 2015; the group had been working in Bangladesh since 2014 and began the philosophy online. In August of 2014, ISIS conveyed a Bengali-language video appearing changed individuals vowing their assistance for the alleged caliphate.<sup>50</sup> The following month, a British citizen was caught in Dhaka, one of the different British-considered individuals evidently recruiting for ISIS in Bangladesh, and in 2015, another nine individuals were caught in Bangladesh, censured for masterminding the loss of the government in solicitation to set up a caliphate. The terrorists in Bangladesh try to manufacture their limited stories reliant upon severe and socio-political issues. Numerous reasons can possibly trigger radicalization like the conviction framework, social difficulty, and neediness. Terrorists easily try to manipulate such triggers, which may be unique for certain classes of the general population. Terrorists use Bangladesh, a politically typical nation, as a platform to demand for the establishment of an Islamic state governed by Sharia law. They appear to be conscious of and beginning the negative ideas of others. In an effort to incite widespread unrest in the country, these organizations fabricate photographs with extreme themes, such as the persecution of Muslim Rohingyas, and post them on social media.

Internet serves as a collaborative instrument that allows for both intellectual and practical exchanges. Acting as an "essential source of information, communication, and propaganda" can help radicalize people.<sup>51</sup> For their radical opinions', offering a 'better opportunity to affirm current convictions than offline contacts'. Similarly, rather than driving radicalization, the internet enabled the terrorist actions of extremists. YouTube is a stage for sharing a video that was made in February 2005 and on normal is refreshed with 100 new long stretches of video consistently.<sup>52</sup> In any case, groups like al-Qaida and ISIS have raised the reason for YouTube from a straightforward, purposeful publicity instrument to a modern recruitment one. For instance, the most well-known and fruitful video ISIS shared on the stage was the decapitation of American columnist James Foley in 2014.<sup>53</sup> The video was at last eliminated by a YouTube as disregarding the stage's arrangement. In any case, as the interaction for eliminating a video from the stage isn't immediate, it accomplished its motivation by acquiring global consideration and

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<sup>50</sup>ibid

<sup>51</sup>Clark, T. (2018). Internet addiction – how much is too much time on the internet? The Center for Parenting Education. Retrieved from <https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/kids-and-technology/how-much-time-internet-kids/>

<sup>52</sup>ibid

<sup>53</sup>ibid

arriving at a huge number of individuals around the world. At last, YouTube permits users to remark on videos, making it an instrument that works with Jihadist networking. This idea makes networks where similar people can impart, share considerations, and impact each other fully intent on expanding the terrorist organization's recruiting base. Various factors were a disappointment, discouragement, illegal medication use, similarly as more broad issues of the degradation, and lawfulness. Radical organizations have established public barriers to further their use of extreme logic. In Bangladesh, institutional dysfunction and radicalization are closely associated. The unquestionably despotic standard state provides radical Islamists with a convincing backdrop for recruitment and planning. Government restrictions and political tension have combined to encourage certain groups to resort to violence.

**Firstly**, sympathizers, who agree with the cause but not through violent means this is the beginning of the ideological engagement.

**Secondly**, supporters who justify illegal/violent actions; this is the part where a person becomes ideologically engaged.

**Thirdly**, the activists support networks of a particular violent extremist organization.

The first and second levels are the part of cognitive radicalization and the third and fourth levels are the part of behavioral radicalization. It is to be noted that the shipment from psychological aspects of radicalization to violent behavior happens from the second to the third level of radicalization. Here, a catalyst event plays a vital part during the process of these shipments. The writing recognizes a shortfall of information about Islam, particularly about the usage of violence, as making youths unprotected against radical conviction frameworks and groups. 'Negligence of exacting training conflicted with violence makes youth all the more exposed and defenseless to recruitment. Severe organizations can get into the mind of adolescents with perplexed interpretations of religion.

## **2.2 Recruitment**

The RAB's media wing explains Extremist organizations regularly recruit new members to support their beliefs, particularly among youth. Online is one method they use for this. Numerous extremist organizations have websites, and both they and their sympathizers have accounts on various social

media platforms. They make use of these to spread propaganda and make friends with those who seem to be interested in what they are saying, thinking, and doing. Online friendships between newcomers and certain radicals may develop. The newcomers get more and more exposed to terrorist propaganda as they read the postings of their new friends and start to believe that many other people share it. Additionally, they may discuss it with their online new acquaintances and sometimes with their close ones in person. With these radical friends online, they feel that they are a part of a group and that these new acquaintances are genuine friends. They may not be aware that the radicals are attempting to take advantage of them in order to promote their own objectives rather than just like them for who they are. People may start to trust their internet acquaintances and believe what they say as they get sucked into these new social groupings and desire to retain their new "friendships." A few individuals may lose sight of the reasons why terrorism and extremism are abhorrent and immoral and start to think that their new friends are right about things. Many come to feel that using or supporting violence is their only option over time.

Terrorist organizations in Bangladesh, most notably JMB and Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami Bangladesh, consider it to be their religious duty to protect Muslims in need nearby. The third is that international organizations, like ISIS, might take advantage of the Rohingya situation to organize support both inside the nation and throughout the region. Muslims throughout Southeast Asia, including Bangladesh, have been urged by Al-Qaeda to support the Rohingya in Myanmar "politically, militarily, and financially." The Rohingyas' plight has often been brought up in ISIS's many online publications, especially Dabiq, which has also implied that the organization would eventually center on Myanmar. ISIS has also described its plan to establish a base in Bangladesh and use it as a launching pad for strikes against Myanmar. One assessment considers being crisis as fueling jihadist suppositions in various countries around there, astoundingly Indonesia and Malaysia.

Safat Islam Abdullah was a member of Neo-GMB. In his confession, he claimed that after receiving a letter from Fatima of Iraq and a letter from Neuro-scientist Afia Siddiqui on Facebook, I realized that the NATO alliance with America is inhumane on the Muslim world and on Muslim women torture was never acceptable. In this case, he should have destroyed the previous crusade cut them to pieces. To that end, he continued to make my plans. He learned war strategies related to receiving mental and physical training as well as weapons. At that time, he gained knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith. Also learned Biographies of Umar bin Khattab, Kaka bin Amr, Khalid bin Walid, Muhammad bin Qasim, Hajjaj bin Yusuf, Salauddin Ayubi, Shahid Abdur Rahman, and the history of Jirat Biratva Gatha through online platform. At the same time, we learn their war strategy. He continued to acquire knowledge about the above-related topics till March 2020. Then I created Ali Kahn, Sufiyan Ali, Abur Rahman to work on armed and cyber terrorism. I communicated with the Mujahid brothers. I talked to Mujahid brothers in video and audio calls via Telegram. Also, I have been interested in weapons and war since I was six, and I was curious about this. I learned about different weapons, such as AK-47, M-16, AKM, AK-12, Air-50, Glock-16, Glow-15, SR-25, Turkish T-5000 cipher rifle, Barrett M721, Machine Gun MPS-MP-5, RPG-6, RPG-22, SVD Dragonav, Weight, Cartridge Size.

**The first** is that the outcasts could get radicalized and take an interest in horrendous exhibits. The composition, all things considered, depicts outsider 'jihadist recruitment' as a minor risk. Regardless, there is a past loaded up with merciless shows among Rohingyas who entered the country earlier. ISIS is a subject of fundamentalist points of view that will endeavor to destroy the Rohingya and lead them towards violence. Attacker groups related to Jamaat-e-Islami have been adequately recruiting from Rohingya evacuees previously, and alerts that, 'As the Rohingya crisis continues creating, Bangladesh may end up to an assortment of Islamist aggressor groups.

**The second** is that it could encourage Bangladeshis to become radicalized. There is some indication that the country's extreme Islamist parties are taking advantage of the situation in this way. The headquarters of Hefazat-e-Islam are located in Chattogram, Bangladesh, which is near to the Rakhine region of Myanmar, where the Rohingyas have fled. As a result of the development, Rakhine must be emancipated,

and Myanmar would be the target of "jihad" 'if the military and its allies don't cease torturing the Rohingya Muslims'.

Felix-Joehnk pointed out that the Rohingya crisis is giving Hefazat-e-Islam a more conspicuous part in Bangladeshi public governmental issues and putting reformism at risk. Women establish another segment that terrorist organizations have been recruiting through social media. Essentially, jihadi talk from ABT had avoided women from battle, yet that they are rather vital in the achievement of jihad through non-warrior jobs. Lately, notwithstanding, this pattern appears to have switched, and various investigations have begun to dissect female inclusion in illegal intimidation. This interest began following perceptions that later terrorist organizations are recruiting women, particularly using social media. In an examination zeroed in on al-Qaida's self-destruction aircraft. Likewise, two significant clarifications regarding why women join terrorist organizations.

**In the first place**, women have individual reasons, like a close connection or a family misfortune; **second**, they tend not to be seen as dangerous by society, hence making it simpler for them to commit terrorist assaults. Bangladeshi terrorist organizations are active online, especially on Facebook and YouTube, where they promote their constrained viewpoint. It is safer to disseminate information online since there is less chance that LEAs will monitor it. Farooq observed that over the last two or three years, terrorists in Bangladesh have become more organized and persuasive in their internet proclamations. They have also launched a few terrorist assaults and highly visible events in Bangladesh. The Ramu and Pabna events, in which irate people assaulted strict minority, made it very evident how popular such statements on the internet are. In the two incidents, jihadists who used aliases uploaded altered images and remarks against Islam on Facebook. While past investigations have zeroed in on understanding the reasons they choose to join terrorist organizations, little consideration has been paid to the inspirations the organizations develop in filling their positions with them in Bangladesh. Later JMB intricate machines that need taught them to run equal establishments in the economic or medical care area. Women are frequently not set on the cutting edge yet are utilized to recruit different ladies through social media. This permits terrorist organizations to use them while not making a contention with the Islamic religion and law. Then again, women utilized by JMB for terrorist acts are more successful in spreading the message than their male partners, as they address a component of shock fit for drawing in boundless exposure while simultaneously contacting a more extensive crowd with their activities. In an examination by the Institute for Strategic Dialog investigating their utilization of the internet and social

media stages, women were discovered to be more dynamic than men, which proposes that women's job in JMB is expanding radicalization in Bangladesh.

Oddly, the COVID-19 epidemic has aided in facilitating the engagement of a substantially larger number by extremist organizations. Since the situation was first noted in mid-2020, Bangladesh's Internet use has increased by more than half. Extremists who were not afraid to use whatever means necessary to get their message across jammed up networks. Just seven AQIS YouTube channels that included COVID-19-related video had an increase of over 100,000 new subscribers in May 2020. Online radicalisation has risen as a result of the crises' reorientation of the government. There are promising indications that these initiatives may help reduce the amount of extremist content on Bangladeshi websites. The amount of misinformation around COVID-19 has notably decreased recently. Despite the fact that AQIS's YouTube account really has more than 600,000 supporters, several terrorist channels have been removed. Between April and September 2020, SecDev found that the amount of extremist content decreased by 43% on around 400 social media outlets. Between April and June 2020, more over 90% of Bangla channels who worked with the Islamic State were murdered. In light of everything, such channels remain reliable and often resurface shortly after being taken down with new identities.

### **2.3 Internet, Social Media, and Cell-phones**

Since internet facilitates radicalization via the dissemination of knowledge and communication, it may function as a "incubator" or "accelerator" of online radicalization. Bangladeshi terrorist organizations are active online, especially on Facebook and YouTube, where they promote their constrained viewpoint. As there is less chance of LEAs being involved in the dissemination of announcements online, it is safer. Over the last two or three years, the online propaganda of Bangladeshi terrorists has become more organized and attractive to their objectives. Disrespectful remarks and nasty ways of thinking have sparked a few terrorist acts and events of public importance in Bangladesh. The Ramu and Pabna events, in which irate people assaulted strict minority, made it very evident how popular such statements on the internet are. Terrorists using aliases and regular people uploaded altered images and remarks about Islam on Facebook in the two incidents. Cyber Security and Crime Unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police found that in January 2014, the creation of Al-Battar Media Battalion – a group outlined to spread progressive jihadi substance and ISIS proclamation using Twitter – was accounted for. The epic substance generally included substance, pictures, or chronicles highlighting the severity experienced by

non-enthusiasts, including executions. This substance is highlighted young and powerless individuals who feel socially separated from the critical world and joined to their contraptions like cells or PCs.

Social networking is fundamentally changing as a result of the rapid growth of mobile technologies. Mobile gadgets have made it simpler to access the internet regardless of location or time. Frequent and inbuilt intermittent changes of security codes/passwords become a nightmare for counter-terrorism agencies. The extremists are utilizing these expansions of technology to connect with their potential targets effectively without being intercepted. Of late, one case study revealed a secret communicating group used by a terrorist group named 'Protected Text'. Where they are using a number of security layers to keep each member separated.<sup>54</sup> If any member fails to login within a given time, he will be automatically out of the group and will not be able to join the group in the following session. Admin of the group monitors the progress and has the tools to delete the entire group anytime without any footprint. As such, the members and the admin of the group vanished from the cyber cloud within no time without any trace. There are four levels of the radicalization process.

Mobile phones and cell phones have gotten universal in regular day-to-day existence. Subsequently, social media has adjusted to fuse cell phone technology. Cell phones guarantee social media networks stay flawless through ordinary and consistent communication. Social media platforms have modified short videos and brief message groups to integrate mobile phone and new media developments. Anybody with a mobile phone may quickly write, disperse, or burn through messages and material on social media networks by limiting the word count in text or video formats. Joins are delivered through text or email to the location of the massive collection of papers for extended messages and movies. An important piece of modern media technology, cell phones combine social media with regular, constant communication among networked users. Social media users have the ability to get rapid updates on news and information from many internet sources as well as via social media networks thanks to cell phones. Users of social media are drawn to mobile technologies because of the speed at which content is updated and dispersed. To fulfill the craving for "as-it-happens inclusion and critique on live occasions"— as Michael Barthel and his co-creators portray it— since mobile phones have gotten mainstream all throughout the planet, some savage extremist groups have joined this new media technology into recruiting endeavors. For instance, some violent extremist organizations let their

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<sup>54</sup>Doosje, B., Moghaddam, F. M., Kruglanski, A. W., De Wolf, A., Mann, L., & Feddes, A. R. (2016). Terrorism, radicalization and de-radicalization. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 11, 79-84.



adherents download ringtones that may be installed on their phones. These recognizable downloads are undoubtedly anticipated to create a sense of self and group belonging and, in doing so, attract new media users.

ABT spreads steadily ISIS material both vis-à-vis and online. Videos purportedly moved by ABT have included unequivocal references to potential targets. The group has furthermore purportedly disseminated videos with bomb-creation rules. Most referred to that they have no immediate involvement in radical activities through the internet. The indirect hello has been gotten by respondents. Another referred to that they got philosophical/jihadi associations through the internet identified with radicalization. ISIS formally introduced its Bangladeshi movement in November of 2015; the group had been working in Bangladesh since 2014 and began the philosophy online.<sup>55</sup> In August of 2014, ISIS conveyed a Bengali-language video appearing changed individuals vowing their assistance for the alleged caliphate.<sup>56</sup> The following month, a British citizen was caught in Dhaka, one of the different British-considered individuals evidently recruiting for ISIS in Bangladesh, and in 2015, another nine individuals were caught in Bangladesh, censured for masterminding the loss of the government in solicitation to set up a caliphate. The terrorists in Bangladesh try to manufacture their limited stories reliant upon severe and socio-political issues. Terrorists easily try to manipulate such triggers, which may be unique for certain classes of the general population. Nirmal Ghoshn claims that terrorists are appealing to Bangladesh's Muslim majority population to convert it into an Islamic state controlled by Sharia law despite the fact that it is a constitutionally conventional country. They seem to be aware of and beginning the negative ideas of others. In an attempt to incite widespread unrest in the country, these groups fabricate photographs with extreme themes, such as the persecution of Muslim Rohingyas, and post them on social media. Moreover, the extremists competently construct radical accounts on monetary contrasts and political issues to make allies. Also, on the At-Tamkin Media wire channel on March 11, the IS employable 'Abu Muhammad Al-Bengali' energized youngsters living in "Dawlatul Islam of Bangla" to "regroup and talk with their agent in Bangladesh."<sup>57</sup> Referring to a number of refrains from the Qur'an, he requested that their allies work in little groups and complete attacks with vehicles or cutting edges. The message empowered their members and partners not to fear security workplaces, paying little heed to the attack of catches and torture.

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<sup>55</sup>Rahman, I., Amit, S., & Mannan, S. (2019). Social Media and Radicalization of University Students in Bangladesh. Paper presented at the International Conference 2019: Islam, Utopia and Youths in Bangladesh, Dhaka.

<sup>56</sup> ibid

<sup>57</sup> ibid

### **Chapter III**

#### **Recruitment through online platforms: Bangladesh context**

- Explaining the online and offline recruitment
- Emphasis on online recruitment: Why? Who are the targets? What are the benefits?
- The case of youth as a major target

## **Chapter III**

### **Recruitment through online platforms: Bangladesh context**

#### **3.1 Explaining the online and offline recruitment**

It is when the recruiter and the potential members of the radical organization have direct, one-on-one interaction, which is known as active recruiting or offline recruitment. In groups like JMB, recruiters focus on certain regions or communities where they are more likely to attract supporters. Some radical groups have particular requirements for hiring certain categories of people. It may not be necessary to allocate a lot of money to active recruiting. In ABT, a single person in charge of recruiting new members would need a source of revenue for living costs, and this assistance may come from a bigger financial infrastructure. At Neo JMB, the recruiter receives funding to study theology in foreign places of worship. Funding may also be needed for the establishment of meeting spaces, the creation and distribution of pertinent literature and other materials, and the provision of the fundamental necessities for the participation of the individuals in the organization (such as bogus identification documents or airline tickets). These costs are often little and are most likely covered by the recruiter. To cover these costs, the recruiter may also ask followers for fees and contributions.

Passive or online recruitment occurs when terrorist organizations use covert tactics to reach out to large audiences via the media. The practice of using social media to spread misinformation and recruit terrorists. The group Harkatul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh (HUJI-B) utilizes the internet and social media to find recruits and followers and spread its ideas via "propaganda." Both domestic and international terrorist acts might be considered to be recruiting terrorists. It enables terrorists to locate like-minded followers who are prepared to join the terrorist group or offer financial or other material assistance as well as to promote their ideology at a relatively minimal cost.

Online communication tools currently offer the largest window for passively luring potential extremists, but other more established techniques are still in use today, including printing flyers or indoctrination materials, broadcasting particular programs, and holding general meetings like those of Hizb ut Tahrir

(HT). There are certain fixed expenses associated with the infrastructure and materials used for passive recruiting, which may need ongoing financial assistance. For instance, Hefajat-e-Islam (HeI) has an IT crew on staff to refresh a steady supply of money. Although the use of social networks, access to them, and the development of websites may all be done for free, certain terrorist groups may produce high-quality material that calls for specialized knowledge and high-tech tools. It is possible that a lot of bloggers and moderators are involved in the circulation of the information due to the size and diversity of the distribution channels for this content. Internet recruitment efforts are often closely related to requests for donations and other forms of support from terrorists. Recruiters and others promoting radical ideologies sometimes utilize the same tools for both recruiting and contribution gathering, such as Allahr Dal does. Password-protected websites and chat rooms with limited access are used by terrorist organizations to disseminate propaganda, but they are also used by them to communicate sensitive data like bank account details or the real motivations behind ostensibly charity organizations.

Extremist groups sometimes invest a large sum of money in enlisting new members and supporting recruiters and recruitment networks like Jamat-e-Islam (JeI). This assistance might take the shape of recurring or one-time payments for related expenses or personal maintenance. Islami Samaj's recruiting networks are supported by terrorist groups but do not actively participate in terrorist attacks; instead, they try to spread their philosophy, bring in new members, and facilitate their operations. In the majority of the instances we've seen, recruiting networks rather than specific recruiters were funded by terrorist groups.

### **3.2 Emphasis on online recruitment: Why? Who are the targets? What are the benefits?**

Internet-based radicalization is a serious issue for Bangladesh. Some terrorist organizations in Bangladesh could virtually collaborate with international terrorist organisations like ISIS and Al-Qaeda. These organizations have acquired digital power to disseminate their belief systems. Particularly trained youth have developed into lucrative hotspots for the radicals. Terrorists attempt to manipulate the demanding evaluation of individuals through social networking platforms. Their twisted ideas have sparked a number of terrorist attacks and public acts of violence throughout the nation. Bangladesh has essentially sought for coercive or negative tactics to stop internet radicalisation in a similar way. These activities may be divided into three categories: legal activities, content screening, and maintaining

access. The government has adequately endorsed digital-related establishment; several additional laws are at this point in a draft structure. It has successfully conveyed outlaws against the producers of progressive messages. From time to time, the Government of Bangladesh has restricted couple of websites that contain outrageous messages. The online recruitment is used by radicals because -

**First**, identifying the internet's role in radicalization process. The majority of studies suggests that people who want to radicalize may overcome restrictions by using the internet as a catalyst or reinforce.

**Second**, the internet's breadth and speed make it easier to connect individuals across distance and space. Numerous studies have shown that the internet has the ability to "reach" individuals who radicals would not otherwise be able to reach.

**Third**, in the physical world, where we are more likely to meet individuals who have opposing opinions or have access to information that exposes opposing ideas, it might be more difficult to get the content that interests us. The internet makes it easier for people to receive this stuff.

**Fourth**, the radicalization process is accelerated by the internet. It makes it possible for people to connect instantly and continuously.

Analyzing the profiles of terror suspects in Bangladesh few common causes can be traced depending on education, age, socio-economic background, peer groups, ideological orientation, etc. that influence the psychosomatic development of a person:

- Inadequate idea about the basis of religion and values promoted by each religion
- Feeling of individual frustration and deprivation
- Inconsistent education system and lack of healthy channels for recreation.
- Attractive propaganda of international terrorist outfits.
- Availability of radicalizing contents online and offline.
- Apathy towards existing social structure and influence of peer groups, mainly for attraction of adventurous job.
- Lack of role models and guiding personalities to interact with.
- Lack of family ties and lack of accountability towards own family, community people, and the country.
- Poverty and unemployment (in some cases)

- The increasing sense of collective Muslim identity among youths and misinterpretation of religion to ensure afterworld rewards
- Identity crises among young immigrants and diffusion of ideas to the country
- Culture of intolerance leads to disrespect for others and the belief that his/her religion is the solution to all social and political problems.
- Bandwagon effect or tendency to follow the flow.

In terms of Bangladesh, vulnerable people of 15-30 years' age group are becoming radicalized.<sup>58</sup> Their background study reveals that mainly youth without having any strong family relationship or parental care, youth who are frustrated due to different personal reasons, who have no clear idea about the basis of religion and values promoted by religion, youth from an affluent and educated family who cannot find meaning and objective of their lives, people having no or less orientation with traditional Bangla culture, marginalized women, Madrasa students who follow a particular ideology for a long period, prisoners -both convicted and suspects who are influenced by inmates mainly, family members of terror suspects (in some cases), members of diasporas community and overseas workers, people having limited or incomplete knowledge of world politics, relatively poor or jobless people, sympathizers towards perceived suffering of Muslims are comparatively more vulnerable to radicalization. Relatively introverted, having softness on distressed people, member of a broken family having disturbing past are also becoming radicalized. Nonetheless, extremist content is proliferating on Bangladesh's internet, most of it carefully packed to prevent detection by the authorities and social media platforms. While sites upheld by celebrated groups, for instance, the Islamic State is consistently brought someplace close to social media organizations, extremist intentional exposure in close by languages is open on explicit websites, discussion get-togethers, social media channels add their own radical bend. Surprisingly, an analysis of 250 people in Bangladesh who had been kept indoctrinated and who were mostly young people indicated that 82% of them had been radicalized via different social media platforms; just 22% of them were madrasa students, while the rest were from the general establishment.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Countering Jihadist Militancy in Bangladesh (2018) Crisis Group.

<sup>59</sup> Tribune, D. (2019) Study: Militancy higher with General Education than Madrasa education.

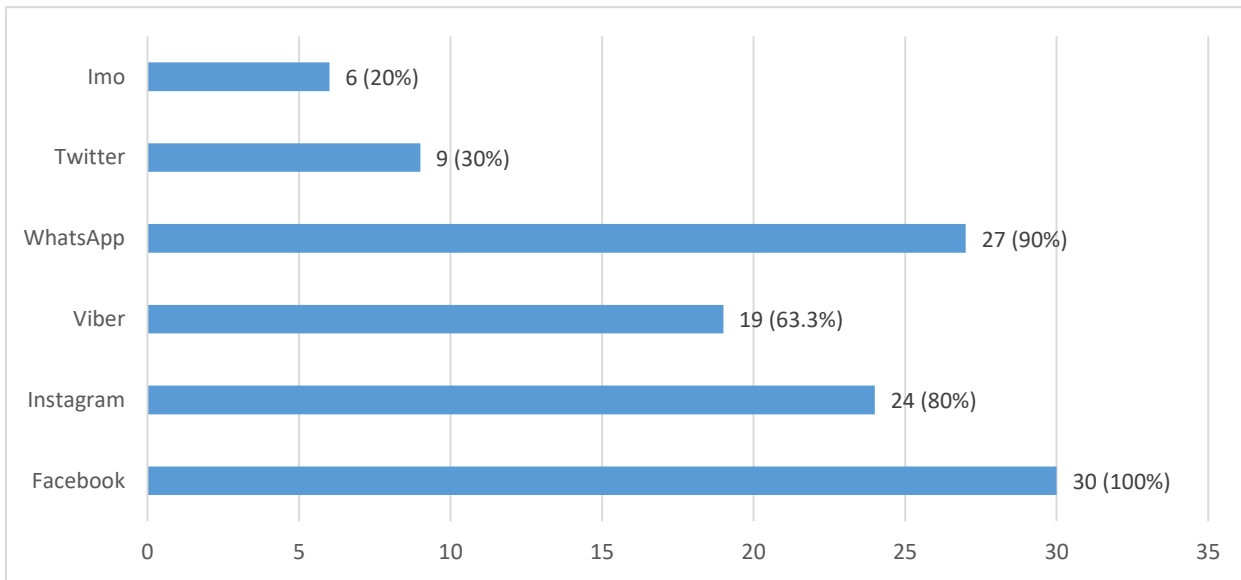


Figure 1: Youth connectivity to social media platforms

Source: Researcher's own construction based on field survey

Extremists group like Hizb-ut- Tawhid (HuT) moved discussions to social media stages and record sharing centers. The issue of online radicalism would be inspected from a more useful point of view.<sup>60</sup>

Radicalism is literally positive; it is being used in a negative sense in different countries and societies. At present, the word is being used to describe religious bigotry. Extremism as it is now used in the conventional sense. Extremism means any doctrine or system which is the opposite of tolerance. The quality of life and behavior of people change with the passage of time. As seen in the past of society, the followers of intolerant doctrines went against the conventional currents and propagated their doctrines at that time follows the effective approach.<sup>61</sup> Allahr Dal is spreading radical contents like jihadi songs and extremist scriptures, trying to recruit online to bring retired security personnel to bring out sabotage in armed forces and maintaining an organized organizational structure to challenge to existing governance system.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> . Conway, M. (2017). Determining the role of the internet in violent extremism and terrorism: Six suggestions for progressing research. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 40(1), 77-98.

<sup>61</sup> United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (2014) Counter-terrorism module 2 key issues: Radicalization & Violent extremism, Counter-Terrorism Module 2 Key Issues: Radicalization & Violent Extremism.

<sup>62</sup> Chowdhury, K.R. (2020) Bangladesh bans Allahr Dal militant group after thwarting terror plots, Benar News.

Online extremists "depend on" the internet more than the people who work in the coordinated no virtual groups. Likewise, mental problems, earlier lawbreaker records, conduct similitude with mass shooters are among the general patterns. Another examination showed that psychological oppression cases somewhere in the range of 1995 and 2015 discovered comparable outcomes. Practically 50% of the cases included past criminal records, and approximately 33% of the people had "a background marked by psychological maladjustment or behavioral condition."<sup>63</sup> Other significant topics included strictness, philosophical elements, and social disconnection. More than 87% devoured online extremist substances, and practically 60% made virtual associations.<sup>64</sup> These numbers surpass true associations between the solitary entertainers and more extensive savage extremist networks outside stages on the Internet. <sup>65</sup>The youngsters don't think about online radicalization due to a shortfall of any organized care program by the government or insightful foundations. This obliviousness gives an open way to the terrorists to reach them with no near and dear contact. The events of common severity show the effects of counterfeit messages on youths. Additionally, recruiting instructed youngsters may be more important to extremist social affairs than regular recruitment. Young people with mechanical information can develop the terrorists' ability in the digital territory.<sup>66</sup> They can make unmistakable virtual associations with a stay in contact with overall extremist social occasions while bewildering government restrictions. They may in like manner make more noticeable effects in the special society in the country. Along these lines, the extremist social events of Bangladesh try to abuse juvenile sentiments and extend their recruitment through the internet.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Das, S., Dayma, N.S. and Gujral, J. (2022) Increasing radicalisation in Bangladesh:A concern for South Asia. Available at: <https://www.cescube.com/vp-increasing-radicalisation-in-bangladesh-a-concern-for-south-asia> (Accessed: 18 August 2023).

<sup>64</sup> *ibid*

<sup>65</sup> Della Porta, D., & LaFree, G. (2012). Guest editorial: Processes of radicalization and deradicalization. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)*, 6(1), 4-10.

<sup>66</sup> Bhaumik, S. (2021) Bangladesh's Islamist Challenge intensifies, *The Diplomat*.

<sup>67</sup> Hasan, M. and Macdonald, G. (2022) The persistent challenge of extremism in Bangladesh, *United States Institute of Peace*.



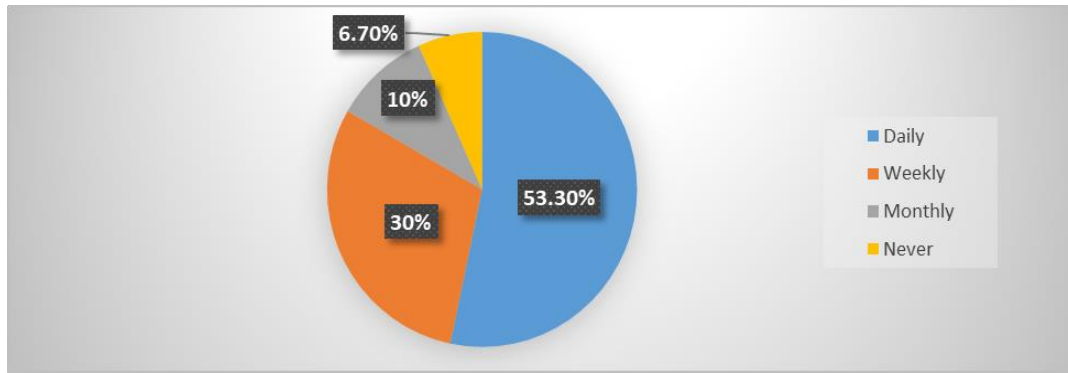


Figure 2: Intensity of receiving religious posts over social media  
 Source: Researcher's own construction based on field survey

Benefits of online recruitments are too many. Radicals believe that the Internet provides unrestricted access to an infinite number of individuals worldwide.

Online is one of the most effective means of communication and ideology. Extremists like JMB on this platform can follow a variety of procedures. Naturally, it is possible to confuse anyone on this platform. Religious ignorance or less possessing knowledge, having no religious knowledge but following innate religion, little through different means outside of basic education.<sup>68</sup> Those who follow religious knowledge in some matters are more motivated. In this case, the arrested persons or criminals do not show intimidation and go deep into them as friends or relatives. It is needed to find out the reasons for our involvement in extremism.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.3 The case of youth as a major target

Bangladesh has a sizable young population, many of whom are unemployed. According to data from the Population Reference Bureau, 46.7 million young people in Bangladesh, or about 30% of the total population, were aged 10 to 24 as of 2016.<sup>70</sup> According to an ILO study, 40% of the nation's young were not engaged in education, business, or preparation. Even among university graduates, the unemployment rate is high: a 2014 study indicated that in Bangladesh, over five out of ten graduates were

<sup>68</sup> Arefin, M.N. and Ritu, N.S. (2021) Addressing the political dynamics of radicalization leading to religious extremism in Bangladesh.

<sup>69</sup> Alam, S. (2017) The genesis of Islamic extremism in Bangladesh.

<sup>70</sup> ibid

unemployed.<sup>71</sup> It is entirely conceivable that a portion of these youngsters become baffled and harbor outrage towards society, making them ready for recruitment by assailant outfits'. Khan features the absence of youth admittance to 'good degrees of instruction, wellbeing and prosperity, work, political investment, and municipal cooperation as prompting their radicalization and fanaticism.

Digital radicalization concerns are nothing new. A portion of the young individuals attracted to the Holey Artisan Bakery attack were ferocious social media users who had previously promoted extremist ideas. They also had connections to other Bangladeshis who had moved overseas, including one who had settled in Canada, who helped execute the assault plot.<sup>72</sup> Another prosecuted criminal related with helping plan the strike was first radicalized in the wake of watching videos made by Jasimuddin Rahmani, a Bangladeshi auxiliary with al Qaeda who later changed himself to the Islamic State. An investigation on radicalization in 2017 by the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS) made the assumption that all ferocious extremist organizations' crucial focus is "to radicalize, recruit, and use the young for performing fear attacks."<sup>73</sup>

It cites a number of explanations for this, including the fact that young people without prior run-ins with the law give terrorist and violent extremist groups more operational freedom; they reduce the likelihood that more experienced explorers will be apprehended; when they are caught, young people receive lighter sentences due to their age; and young people are targeted due to their skills, particularly those related to technology. It is estimated that 20% of all self-destruction aircraft and terrorist organizations are made up of people between the ages of 15 and 18.<sup>74</sup>

In locations outside of Dhaka that are politically unstable and have a sizable traditionalist population, like as the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Noakhali, Lakshmipur, and Chapainababganj, JMB recruiters are attempting to attract young people. Nonetheless, the writing features the way that youth recruitment isn't kept to less fortunate, less instructed socio-economic groups and strict conventional schools: rather taught, working-class, metropolitan youth are being focused too. Education organizations, particularly colleges and establishments of higher learning, are additionally being transformed into recruiting pools

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<sup>71</sup> Kapur, R. et al. (2022) Hefazat-e-Islam and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Bangladesh, East Asia Forum.

<sup>72</sup> Venkatachalam, K.S. (2016) The rise of Islamic extremism in Bangladesh, The Diplomat.

<sup>73</sup> ibid

<sup>74</sup> ibid

for terrorists'.<sup>75</sup> The 2018 ICG report affirms that jihadist networks 'presently tap not just Madrasa understudies and their families in denied country regions yet additionally favored understudies in more well off quarters of the capital'.<sup>76</sup> It takes note of that three of the five claimed aggressors in the Holey Artisan Bakery assault 'had a place with Dhaka's world-class, not the madrasa are all the more normally connected with such jihadist aggressiveness' recommending that 'the appeal of jihadism has spread and that jihadists might have the option to tap another body electorate from which to recruit, regardless of whether hitherto just in little numbers' (ICG, 2018: 1).<sup>77</sup> The way these self-destructive youngsters had a long list of motivations to live brings up issues about the appeal of extremist philosophy on a far-fetched associate'.<sup>78</sup> Khan stresses the variety of those being focused for radicalization: 'understudies of standard training, madrasa foundation, public and private colleges, instructors of madrasa and college, princely just as underestimated populace, average citizens of various callings'.<sup>79</sup> The ICG report (2018: 22) echoes this: 'generally, recruits to brutal groups show colossal variety: from madrasa understudies to upper-working class youth at private colleges or universities'.<sup>80</sup>

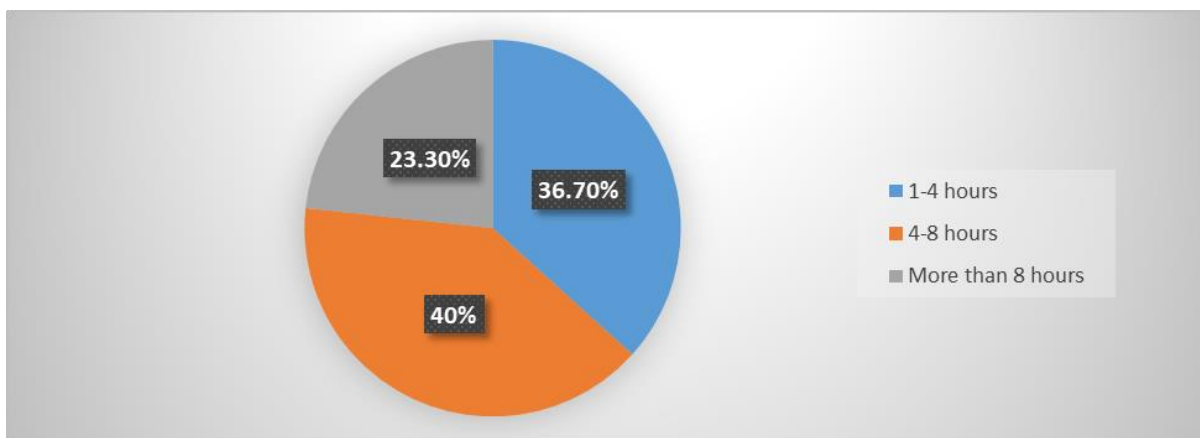


Figure 3: Hours spent behind social media by the youth  
Source: Researcher's own construction based on field survey

<sup>75</sup> Kabir, H., & Banik, A. (2017). The Evolution of Islamist Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Bangladesh.

<sup>76</sup> ibid

<sup>77</sup> Oldmixon, S. (2017) Bangladesh's risky Islamist gambit, The Diplomat.

<sup>78</sup> Rashid, M. I. (2017). Online Radicalization: Bangladesh Perspective. (Master of Military Art and Science Master's Thesis), U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

<sup>79</sup> ibid

<sup>80</sup> ibid

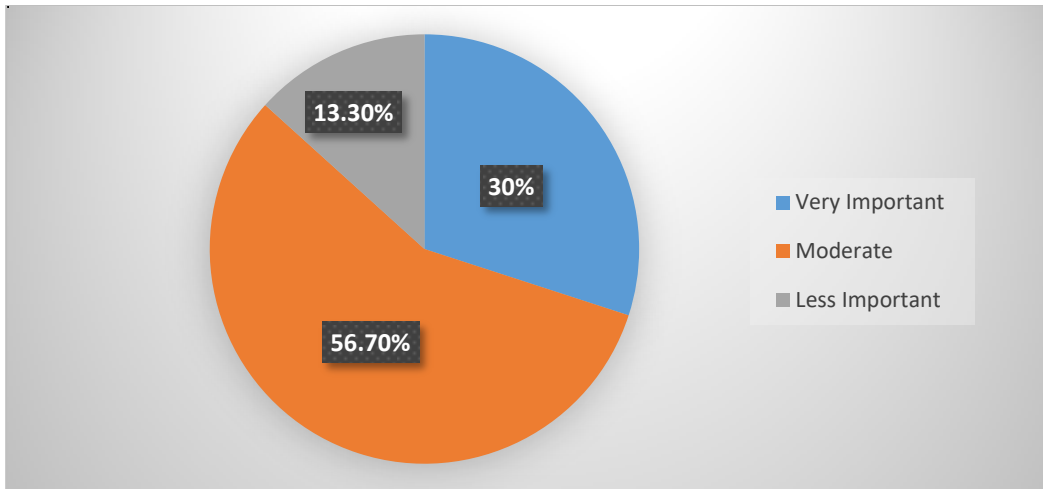


Figure 4: Importance of social media in the daily life of youths

Source: Researcher's own construction based on field survey

The footprints of terrorism in Bangladesh show that Islamization of our politics and the influence of returned Afghan 90's have played an important role in creating the environment for radicalization in Bangladesh long ago.<sup>81</sup> The majority of people of the country are Muslim, so being a part of broader Muslim Ummah through the establishment of Shariya Law was the most desired dream of a certain section of people here.<sup>82</sup> Prioritizing religious identity over nationalism has always created tension in our national politics. The use of religion as a political tool will be increased due to the very impulse of strengthening the fraternity of Muslims around the world to be a part of lost glory, the Caliphate.<sup>83</sup> To bring back the glory, youth are being targeted as they are the most crucial change-maker in sustaining the wave. Extremist groups expend considerable attempts and resources on recruiting youth.<sup>84</sup>

Recruitment relies on gradually escalating manipulation and socialization, which is frequently aided by psychological, emotional, or personal grievances (alienation, the search for identity and dignity), retaliation for past mistreatment, and a breakdown in communication between adults and young people in real-world settings as well as through online communities on social media.<sup>85</sup> On social media sites

<sup>81</sup> Ramachandran, S. (2021) What's behind the surge in violent Islamism in Bangladesh?, The Diplomat.

<sup>82</sup> Boucek, C. (2008). The Sakinah Campaign and internet counter-radicalization in Saudi Arabia. CTC Sentinel, 1(9), 1-4.

<sup>83</sup> ibid

<sup>84</sup> European Foundation for South Asian Studies (2018) The rise of political Islam and Islamist terrorism in Bangladesh, EFSAS.

<sup>85</sup> Muggah, R. (2020) The radicalization of Bangladeshi cyberspace, Foreign Policy.

like Facebook, Twitter, and other networks, recruiters are active users.<sup>86</sup> Also, through direct physical contact, they try to turn some places into ‘incubators’ such as commonplaces of worship, playground, library, prayer room or canteen/lounge of educational institutions, the market place and even the playing fields where young people are predominantly present and thus accessible.<sup>87</sup> Gradually they are invited to secret or closed groups through encrypted Apps to communicate and share radicalizing contents.

Most young people are targeted through online platforms based on their “likes”, “comments,” or sharing of propagation on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc., as well as their interests and conversations surrounding the so-called “Jihad” or necessity of creating “broader Muslim Ummah”.<sup>88</sup> Afterward, interaction begins with a skilled recruiter who spends many weeks, months and sometimes even years to develop a relationship of trust; youth are exposed to materials of motivating speakers who preach violent extremism to create the perception of victimization.<sup>89</sup> The involvement of educated youth in urban areas is a great concern for law enforcement agencies. Mainly for two reasons terrorists are trying to attract them-

Firstly, they are tech-savvy, always have internet access and can easily work on different online platforms.

Secondly, in recent years everything has been coordinated through global platforms where competency in the English language is a must to communicate and to translate instructions to disseminate among local outfits. These purposes can be better served through educated youth in comparison to madrasa students or youth from a low-income family. Also, they can be convinced with different analytical literature (mostly in English) on the need for so-called ‘Jihad’.<sup>90</sup>

Six ISIS extremists from Bangladesh assaulted Holey Artisan Bakery, an expensive Dhaka's diplomatic zone, on July 1, 2016, causing international outrage.<sup>91</sup> The militants, according to the Bangladeshi government, were religious extremists. Nevertheless, photos of dead victims posted on the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) website almost immediately after the assault imply that the terror organization could sustain a digital link with the ISIL mostly during the incident. In the early morning of

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<sup>86</sup> Md Mostofa , S. (2020) What does covid-19 mean for terrorism in Bangladesh?&nbsp;., The Diplomat.

<sup>87</sup> ibid

<sup>88</sup> Darden, J. T. (2019). Tackling Terrorists’ Exploitation of Youth. Washington: American Enterprise Institute

<sup>89</sup> Tanvir, S., Matiur, M. and Hossain, F. (2021) Role of social media in spreading violent extremism in Bangladesh, SSRN.

<sup>90</sup> ibid

<sup>91</sup> Holey Artisan Cafe: Bangladesh Islamists sentenced to death for 2016 attack (2019) BBC News.

July 2, 2016, Bangladeshi security officers executed a rescue attempt at the restaurant, freeing 13 hostages after a 12-hour standoff.<sup>92</sup> Unfortunately, 20 hostages were killed by the extremists, including Italians, Japanese, Indians, and Americans. Four terrorists and two police cops were killed during the event, and one insurgent was detained.<sup>93</sup> Unexpectedly, the assailants were not conventional "Mullah"; instead, they were topmost people studying at prestigious colleges in the United States and overseas.<sup>94</sup> Their peers described them as active and fun-loving teenagers. Following the event, however, a couple of their acquaintances notified the police that they had seen some unexpected and seemingly extreme alterations in their conduct. Thousands of additional young people in the nation may also be through a clandestine radicalization process.<sup>95</sup> According to mainstream thought, religious extremism is considered to be a cause of this radicalization.<sup>96</sup> According to a poll performed by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, a renowned think tank in Bangladesh, the current development of radicalization in Bangladesh is primarily related to violent extremism.<sup>97</sup> As a result, concerns about why and how topmost kids who have never been taught in conventional religious schools are becoming radicalized arise. Many researchers believe that Religious terrorism has reached unprecedented heights in Bangladesh.

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<sup>92</sup> Dhaka cafe attack ends with 20 hostages among dead (2016) The Guardian.

<sup>93</sup> ibid

<sup>94</sup> ibid

<sup>95</sup> Brig Gen Shahedul Anam Khan (2015) Reactivated JMB!, The Daily Star.

<sup>96</sup> Choudhury, I.I. (2015) Religious extremism in Bangladesh, The Daily Star.

<sup>97</sup> ibid

**Chapter IV**  
**Fund mobilization: An ‘Economy within an Economy’**

## Chapter IV

### Fund mobilization: An ‘Economy within an Economy’

Bangladesh has a variety of financing sources for internet radicalization. First of all, they come from unlawful acts, ranging from organized crime to low-level crimes (e.g. trafficking in drugs, weapons or human beings.) The money of Jammatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh (JMB) have a valid source, like as contributions from the group's members (often newbies) or illegally stolen monies from non-profit organizations. The Harkatul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh has discovered new methods of financing terrorist groups (HUJI-B).<sup>98</sup> Because of the way it operates, it frequently turns to new sources of revenue that would be seen as more natural for a state, including raising taxes or using natural resources for profit (such as in this case natural gas and oil). It is sometimes necessary to transfer money across or between countries in order to finance radical operations. This may be accomplished via authorized financial market and money transmission channels, through unauthorized methods, or by using cash couriers. Money laundering and funding of terrorism have many characteristics in common, including the attempt to conceal the cash from state authorities' inspection. The methods for doing so are often similar as well. The mission of the Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) broadened the scope of its standards' applicability to include funding of terrorism. The Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) has recently focused on identifying the differences between the two phenomena after initially considering counter-terrorist financing measures alongside the measures with the intention of adapting its standards to the specifics of terrorist financing.

Measuring the effect of terrorism on macroeconomic factors including growth, investments, and financial markets is a common strategy. Bangladesh's gross domestic product growth rates and the amount of foreign direct investment have both decreased as a result of terrorism (GDP). The flow of assistance and other interventions into a nation, however, has risen due to anti-terrorism initiatives. The US's enhanced assistance to Bangladesh, along with other key foreign donors, for the government's and economy's recovery. However, these developments are quite fragile in the absence of positive peace. Statistics after the Holy Artizen Bakery Attack indicate that a 1% rise in terrorism decreased

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<sup>98</sup>Jubaer, M. S. A. (2017). Understanding of Terrorism by the youth of Bangladesh. Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Securities Journal, 8(1), 18-34.



Bangladesh's economic growth by 0.002% and foreign direct investment (FDI) by 0.1%.<sup>99</sup> Another area of worry is the presence of Bangladeshis who have been shunned in the Middle East, the UK, and elsewhere. Because financial institutions improved their delivery times and offered value-added services, settlements flowed from only \$2 billion in 2006 to an estimated \$7 billion every year via banks.<sup>100</sup> In any case, it is projected that an additional \$7 billion would enter Bangladesh illegally via the hundi network, an unlicensed voluntary settlement scheme akin to the Middle Eastern hawala network.<sup>101</sup> The government opposes approving hundi, which would increase control, according to sources at the Bangladesh Bank, since it would divert money away from the authorized banking sector.

Although there is general agreement that such strategies are employed by adversarial parties, the amounts of money generated are only presumptions. JMB safe houses in Dhaka were attacked, and it was discovered that the homes were rented by Saudi employees. Due to settlements, research by the BIPSS has shown that huge amounts of cash are transmitted from Bangladeshi people group members in London. Additionally, evidence of a Diaspora linked to incidents in Bangladesh is growing. When a madrasa in Bhola, southern Bangladesh, was attacked by a rival of a terrorist division in March 2009, 10 firearms, 2,500 rounds of ammunition, and radical Islamic literature were found inside. This incident may have revealed the major link to financing from the Diasporas.<sup>102</sup> Investigations revealed that the Green Crescent, a British-affiliated noble cause, had funded the madrasa, and that its founder, British citizen Dr. Faisal Mostafa, had strong ties to the JMB and its current leader, Saidur Rahman.

CTTC, DMP outlines a framework for Bangladesh to prevent terror financing by including provisions/obligations for

- enhancing the effectiveness of financial institutions.
- enforcing compliance of all reporting agencies
- structural improvement and capacity development in tracking out methods, tactics, and routes of money laundering and terror financing
- enhancing financial reporting on CTF concern
- establishing transparency in the ownership of legal companies
- keeping an extensive CTF database

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<sup>99</sup> ibid

<sup>100</sup> ibid

<sup>101</sup> ibid

<sup>102</sup> ibid

- enhancing national coordination at the operational and policy levels
- establishing and sustaining international and regional CTF collaboration

However, there are still challenges. **Firstly**, like many developing countries, Bangladesh is dependent heavily on cash-based economies. Buying, selling, lending, and borrowing often take place in cash transactions with no paper trace, which makes it almost hard to enforce any laws governing money flows.

**Secondly**, the methods used by terrorist groups to fund themselves are developing. Terrorist organizations are using small-scale funding sources and spotting possibilities for finance. In addition to more traditional methods like the use of banking systems, money value transfer systems, and the physical transportation of cash, the financing of terrorist organizations and activities increasingly depends on new payment methods like cryptocurrency and internet-based payment services like Paypal. **Thirdly**, when they use different channels under different jurisdictions, it becomes difficult to collect and exploit evidence against them.

CTIB, HQ, and DGFI through a holistic investigation found out the likely sources of terrorist financing are as follows:

- a. Religious Donation: Innocent donors donate without knowing the hidden destination of their money.
- b. Individual Donation: In most instances, self-motivated and ideological sympathizers donate discretely.
- c. Business: Collection of money from the business organizations, traders, etc., using terrorist networks and online transaction systems.
- d. Extortion: Significant revenues from extortion of taxes from businesses transiting through the terrorist-controlled territory.
- e. Smuggling and Human Trafficking: Terrorist organizations often engaged in selling looted antiquities in international black markets. They are also involved in human trafficking as this is a very profitable means to collect a huge amount of money within a short time.

Bangladeshi extremist organizations get funding from a variety of sources. According to some sources, these groups get a significant portion of their money from the illicit traffic in goods including small guns, drugs, and foreign currency. These organizations also make a considerable profit from illicit cross-

border trading. These types of commerce produced a significant quantity of black money, which encouraged the use of different money-laundering techniques by both legal and illicit organizations and organizations. Radical organizations now often get income via money laundering. Additionally, a portion of the international remittances sent home by Bangladeshi workers who reside in the Gulf and other nations are thought to represent a component of the terrorist financial network. In certain cases, donations made to charities were used for terrorist activity. Some Non-Government Organizations divert their charity fund to finance the extremists. Bangladesh's economy is more developed than ever before. Apparently, the country's economy is becoming increasingly dynamic and strong. The central bank's foreign reserve is growing day by day. The internal economy of the country is going to be stronger day by day. The production system is in full force, and the mass people are expressing solidarity with production. Financial institutions are continuing their transactions in various ways. The government has taken strict action to stop the financing of extremist through money laundering on the basis of information that some organizations, including financial institutions, are involved in extremist financing and money laundering. Law enforcement agencies are monitoring and investigating the suspicious transactions of individuals and organizations to curb militant financing and money laundering. Extremists are taking precautions to avoid the monitoring of Law enforcement agencies. They are changing their funding method and following different techniques. But intelligence agencies and law enforcement agencies always try to crack their methods and get the extremist's fundraiser arrested.

Even though months-old intelligence proof of their funding of the Islamist extremist organizations exists, several Middle East-based international non-governmental organizations working in the nation are still unaffected. After the coordinated bombings that occurred throughout the nation on August 17, intelligence assessments advised the government to impose sanctions on the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS) in Kuwait and a number of other Middle Eastern NGOs that had been linked to the Islamist extremists. When extremists continue to get foreign support, an investigator observed, "arresting the militants and raiding their hideouts are not the sole remedies." According to a report in The Daily Star on August 31, the NGO Affairs Bureau has records for 34 significant, foreign-funded Islamic NGOs, 15 of which get over Tk. 200 crores in contributions annually from donors.<sup>103</sup> Each of these NGOs receives between Tk. 5 crore and Tk. 70 crore per year, with the majority of the money

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<sup>103</sup>Rahman, M. A. (2016). The Forms and Ecologies of Islamist militancy and terrorism in Bangladesh. *Journal for Deradicalization*(7), 68-106.

coming from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).<sup>104</sup> Some of these NGOs get funding from the US and the UK as well. Islamic Relief Organization (IRO), Al Markajul Islami, Ishra Islamic Foundation, Ishrahul Muslimin, AL Forkan Foundation, AL Maghrib Eye Hospital, etc. are a few of these NGOs. Several hundred Islamic NGOs in the area have registered with the Social Welfare Department..<sup>105</sup> These local NGOs are affiliated with the foreign-funded ones, but they too receive foreign funding and are not subject to government oversight.

When Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh (Ahab) leader Asadullah Al-Galib was apprehended, intelligence agents discovered further proof of such sponsorship, including checks, cash, and sometimes even hundis.<sup>106</sup> From Galib's home, the Ahab offices, and madrasas in Rajshahi, the investigators retrieved a sizable amount of computer papers, journals, notes, books, pamphlets, flyers, and audiocassettes. The investigators developed a more or less accurate picture of Galib after analyzing the data they had obtained from the papers, including his links to foreign financing organizations and Islamist extremists. According to a Special Branch operative, money is collected from the donations made to support jihad. There are no statistics on the amount of money entering Bangladesh, but the non-government organization (NGO) Bureau has sources who claim it is between 4.0 billion and 5.0 billion taka (61.5 million to 76.9 million US dollars) annually.<sup>107</sup> Investigators claim that the money is used to recruit young people and inspire and train them to fight for the construction of an Islamic state in Bangladesh by funding the growth and expansion of militant Islamic organizations including Jamaatul Mujahideen, Al Hikma, and Alhe Hadith Andolon. Al Haraming, which is prohibited worldwide, and the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, both established in Kuwait, are the organizations that raise money for the Islamic revolution.

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<sup>104</sup> ibid

<sup>105</sup> ibid

<sup>106</sup> ibid

<sup>107</sup> ibid

## Use of foreign funds

NGOs are a key source of funding for extremist groups. In Bangladesh, there are thought to be roughly 2,500 legally recognized NGOs, while there may be as many as 100,000. Considering that experts are unsure exactly how many NGOs are now in existence, monitoring and managing NGOs has proven challenging. Along with other organizations from the Middle East, the al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, founded in Saudi Arabia and prohibited globally by United Nations Security Council Committee 1267, has been targeted for funding psychological persecution in Bangladesh.<sup>108</sup> The rise of Islamic fanaticism in the nation has also been linked to NGOs and good deeds, with the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society (RIHS) in Kuwait and Hayatul Igachha (HI) in Saudi Arabia thought to have funded some 650 mosques that have been used by terrorist groups like Ahle Hadith Andolan Bangladesh and the JMJB. With over 10,000 establishments, qwami madrasas rely on funding from the Middle Eastern nations as well.<sup>109</sup> It is said that a significant amount of the money raised for the Qwami madrasas is utilized to train Islamic extremists. Investigators found that Ahab and another prohibited organization, Harkat-ul Jihad, first devised the plans that are now being carried out by the banned Islamist group Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). They learned that the JMB spends around Tk. 60 lakh per year to maintain its full-time leaders and cadres and Tk. 1 to 5 crore per year to buy explosives, weapons, and to conduct attacks. According to intelligence sources, the JMB has a 7-member majlish-e-sura, the central governing body, as well as 16 regional commanders, 64 district-heads, hundreds of operations commanders, and around 200 Ehsars, or full-time cadres.<sup>110</sup> The JMB also has a suicide squad. Every suicide bomber's family is supposed to get at least Tk 50,000 as compensation for their "sacrifice."<sup>111</sup> A high-ranking JMB source told The Daily Star, he manages Tk 46,000 to Tk 50,000 a month to operate his regional network, which spans four districts. Last year, JMB leader Abdur Rahman said that his organization was supported by more than \$10,000 per month and had a network of 10,000 trained full-time operators and one lakh part-time volunteers.<sup>112</sup> The RIHS is at the top of the list of suspect financial backers of Islamist extremists. In response to the intelligence community's suggestion to outlaw the RIHS, Kuwait's Abdul Aziz Khalaf Malullah paid a visit to Dhaka from August 14 to August 21. Ekramuzzaman, the director of the RIHS,

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<sup>108</sup>Rahman, M. A. (2016). The Forms and Ecologies of Islamist militancy and terrorism in Bangladesh. *Journal for Deradicalization*(7), 47-63.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid*

<sup>110</sup> *ibid*

<sup>111</sup> *ibid*

<sup>112</sup>Rashid, M. I. (2017). *Online Radicalization: Bangladesh Perspective*. (Master of Military Art and Science Master's Thesis), U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Retrieved from <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/1038847.pdf>

was detained in September at the request of intelligence services, but the Dhaka Metropolitan Police had to free him since he already had an anticipatory bond. With help from Galib, the RIHS built more than 1,000 mosques, 10 madrasas, four orphanages/madrasas, and a renal dialysis facility around the nation. Later evidence revealed the mosques and madrasas to be the JMB's militant activity hubs. Five foreign RIHS officers, two Sudanese, two Algerian, two Algerian, and one Libyan, departed the country after the August 17 bombings at the government's request. The five had previously worked for Al-Haramain in Bangladesh, an NGO that was outlawed globally for supporting al-Qaeda, before joining the RIHS.<sup>113</sup>

Al-Haramain was outlawed in Bangladesh in July 2004 at the US and Saudi Arabia's request. Following the ban, all 14 of Al-foreign Haramain's officials fled Bangladesh.<sup>114</sup> However, four of them came back a few months later and quietly joined the RIHS. Rabita Al-Alam Al-Islami, Al-Muntada Al-Islami, Society of Social Reforms, Qatar Charitable Society, Islamic Relief Agency, Al-Forkan Foundation, International Relief Organization, Kuwait Joint Relief Committee, Muslim Aid Bangladesh, Ar-Rib, Dar Al-Khair, Hayatullgachha, and Tawheed-e-Noor are the remaining NGOs that are currently under close intelligence surveillance. Galib acknowledged getting money from Ar-Rib. Since the middle of the 1990s, each of these NGOs has been operating in the nation. Another method of supporting Islamic extremists in Bangladesh is via money laundering. Every year, a number of religiously oriented political figures go to Middle Eastern nations to solicit donations on behalf of religious and philanthropic groups. They then use money laundering to transport the collected monies. On April 5, 2002, Bangladesh's Money Laundering Prevention Act-2002 went into effect with the intention of preventing money laundering. However, given the dire circumstances, Bangladesh is unable to significantly improve its own anti-money laundering skills. The security of the nation is at risk because money for jihadist organizations and other unlawful transactions is being laundered via banks and financial institutions.

The scope for preventing money laundering has become more difficult owing to its worldwide character, and both the area and amount of it have significantly expanded in Bangladesh in recent days. Some of the nation's exporters and importers assist in moving foreign cash that are used for money laundering and often arrive via Bangkok and Singapore. Since the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States has put pressure on Saudi Arabia to crack down on domestic support for extremists. As part of its attempts to stop the funding of international terrorism, Saudi Arabia enacted anti-money laundering

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<sup>113</sup> ibid

<sup>114</sup> ibid

measures. In order to prevent money laundering, regionally focused long-term strategies are necessary. Bangladesh has now acceded to an international anti-terrorist treaty, thus it is possible that the government will be able to improve surveillance of bank accounts and financial transfers to identify terrorism funding successfully going forward. Officials from the Foreign Ministry claim that joining the convention has made it possible for the government to check bank accounts and keep an eye on money transfers in order to look for evidence of funding for terrorists. Additionally, it will aid in preventing unauthorized money transfers via financial systems. Bangladesh will also have the option of requesting foreign assistance if required.

## **Chapter V**

### **Responses to online radicalization in Bangladesh: State and Non-state levels**

- State level responses of countering online radicalization
  - Legal framework
  - Zero tolerance policy
  - Role of law enforcement agencies
- Non-state level responses of countering online radicalization
  - Support of the civil society: NGO's and Think-Tanks
  - Community resilience and cohesion based on Bengali cultural ethos



## Chapter V

### Responses to online radicalization in Bangladesh: State and Non-state levels

#### 5.1 State-level responses to countering online radicalization

Bangladesh confronts difficulties in tracking the distribution of extremist information over the internet. To assist security and intelligence organizations, the Bangladesh National Telecommunication Monitoring Center analyzes suspected web and mobile phone similar activities. Its technology, on the other hand, has enacted laws that allow the ability to operate current ICT. Because radicals may invent new means to contact people, the administration's effort to take down or restrict a few web pages appears to be ineffective. Furthermore, it is difficult to uncover and stop covert organizations with extreme ideologies on online platforms.

Bangladesh's government has implemented measures to safeguard against cyber threats. Bangladesh's significant legislation in this area includes the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Act 2001, the ICT Act 2006, and the Digital Security Act 2016 (Draft). Bangladesh's Telecommunication Act of 2001 lays the groundwork for cyber-related legislation and primary intent of cyber-terrorism illegal.<sup>115</sup> It specifies, in particular, the penalties for behaviors that lead to a conviction and the inappropriate use of the internet via cellular phones. Section 53 of this Act allows the telecommunications agency broad powers to monitor communication networks in order to prevent any undesirable cyber events in the nation through the use of telecommunications instruments.<sup>116</sup> These penalties, meanwhile, do not clearly tackle the topic of cyber-terrorism. The stockpile of radical substances for transitory effects has been decreased by the Bangladeshi government. There are several types of extremists, some of them are hard-core radicals. Likewise, the government had taken harsher measures against them. It may very well be reasonable, from time to time, to monitor online substance if the situation demands. Regardless, the government has made a real framework, and the government has been aware of straightforwardness to the citizens about its activities.

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<sup>115</sup>Tanbir Uddin Arman, "New Media, Digital Radicalization and Social Security," *The Bangladesh Today*, September 8, 2015, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://thebangladeshtoday.com/2015/09/new-media-radicalization-and-social-security/>.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid*

### 5.1.1 Legal framework

Bangladesh's Government established the Information and Communications Technology Act of 2006 establishing a more precise legislative structure for combating cybercrime. Sections 56, 57, 66, 67, and 68 of this Act address the procedures and penalties relating to cybercrime. Despite the fact that this law creates a Cyber Tribunal and a Cyber Appellate Tribunal, it does not define "cybercrime."<sup>117</sup> The judge can convict perpetrators to up to seven years in jail under section 57 of this Act for deliberately posting any false, obscene, or defamatory material online that may be damaging to society. The Tribunal's efficacy is restricted, however, because that can take cognizance of every offense on its own or on the basis of an individual complaint. It will only function if a police officer submits a written report. According to Md. Mahboob Murshed, a lawyer in Bangladesh's Supreme Court, this clause renders the legislation less efficient in addressing cybercrime. This rule appears to be outdated and incompatible with the technological and evidentiary challenges that arise when analyzing and convicting a cybercrime.<sup>118</sup> The Digital Security Act 2016 (Draft) will be a modernized version of the government's cyber-security legislation. It is designed to replace some of the most contentious cyber-security regulations, such as section 57 of the ICT Act 2006. The administration, on the other hand, has failed to answer the jurisdictional issue raised by the Tribunals in the ICT Act 2006 case. Moreover, the study claims that Bangladeshi intelligence services use internet platforms to receive data. The visibility of internet networks sympathetic to radical views may be a valuable wellspring of data. Intelligence agencies were able to glean significant information about terrorist operations and ideas from chat rooms and blogs. Furthermore, these websites provide an opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue with terrorists and their followers. Active involvement and online challenges to extremist information may be a viable option to punitive tactics. Since terrorists are increasingly exploiting interactive and collaborative media platforms, the potential to combat extremists online through positive participation are bigger than they have ever been. Bangladesh, on the other hand, may not have taken advantage of these prospects.

Bangladeshi military forces have not only followed the local patterns but had taken global measures to counter the spread of terrorism and radicalization throughout Bangladesh. The UN Security Council had adopted three important resolutions, 1368, resolution 1373 and 1377 after the attacks on the World

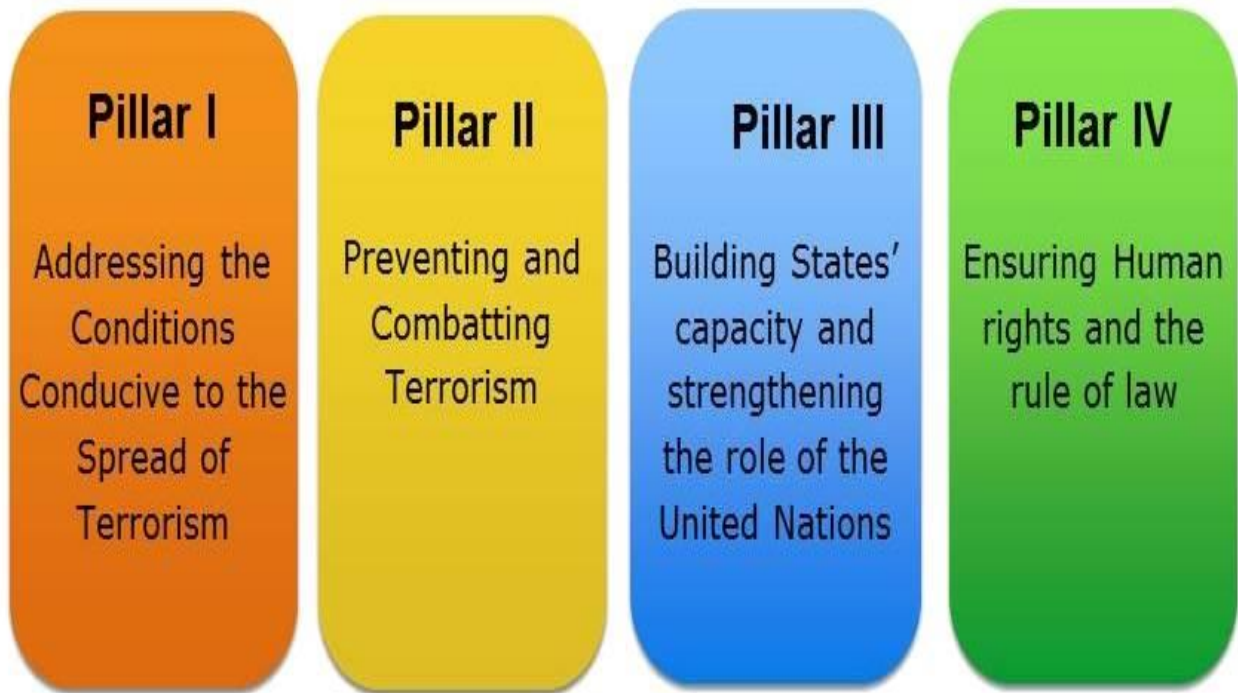
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<sup>117</sup> Farooq Sobhan, *The Role of Education in Countering Radicalization in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, 2015), VII.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid*

Trade Center and the Pentagon to combat against terrorism. There were a certain upraise in violent attacks due to increased Islamic militancy in Bangladesh and the exacerbated situation in CHT. Bangladesh has made great use of its armed forces to support civil authority in upholding law and order throughout the nation and combating terrorism in CHT. Defense forces have internal intelligence agencies that make a substantial contribution to the nation's overall intelligence requirements and analysis. The Anti-Terrorism Act 2009 was the first piece of specialized anti-terrorism legislation passed by Bangladesh in 2009. This anti-terror law has since undergone two amendments to bring it into compliance with previous resolutions and the UN Action Plan on Counter Terrorism Strategy. The Anti-Terrorism (Modification) Act 2013, the most recent amendment of this kind, included provisions allowing judges to consider videos, still images, and audio recordings used in social media as evidence. The government created a robust National Education Policy to combat militancy in 2010, which emphasizes the need of changing the Madrassa curriculum. Additionally, the government included anti-extremism portions to textbooks. Additionally, the Ministry of Education has been putting on anti-terrorism awareness campaigns at various high schools and universities. The government came out with a "National Counter Terrorism Strategy" in 2011. Bangladesh joined the Palermo Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes in August of the same year. The Money Laundering Prevention Act of 2012, the first piece of legislation in Bangladesh to include explicit provisions for money laundering and terrorist funding, was passed by the government. Effective measures have been made by the Bangladesh Bank's Financial Intelligence Unit to stop the funding of terrorists. Bangladesh was granted membership in the Egmont Group in July 2013, a worldwide organization with 131 members that works to fight financial crimes including money laundering and terrorist funding. Additionally, Bangladesh joined the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering, a self-governing, cooperative international group with 41 members and a number of global and regional observers. An agreement between Bangladesh and the USA was signed on October 22, 2013, and it intends to improve counterterrorism collaboration between the two nations via improved information sharing, capacity development, and law enforcement agency exchanges. A pact on extradition was signed between Bangladesh and India on January 28, 2013, with the goal of eliminating the networks and links between terrorist organizations operating in South Asia. In order to stop criminal activity, including terrorism, along the lengthy and porous border, Bangladesh and India have also boosted the frequency of combined patrols and are adopting a Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP). Bangladesh enthusiastically participated in the high-level "Summit on Countering Violent Extremism," which was sponsored by the White House in Washington, USA, in

February 2015, and reaffirmed its zero tolerance stance against terrorism. Bangladesh has successfully carried out operation Twilight and operation Holy Artisan Bakery and successfully countered the radical and extreme forces. It has followed the listed pillars to counter the spread of radicalization.



Bangladesh has developed a strong legal system to combat internet radicalization. Clear definitions of "cybercrime" should be included in the legislation. The government set up a core organization that would be the only decision-maker for matters concerning digital technology. The Cyber Tribunal and LEAs would be sufficiently attracted by these legislations to examine suspicious scenarios and take appropriate action. The laws would provide wide guidance to the exploring workplaces on staying aware of straightforwardness during any legitimate exercises. Moreover, the government ought to use digital experts at different levels to plan and make the laws. Digital law recommendations were made by experts. The government intends to create a single expert group that will translate legislation into actionable strategies. To modernize the logical capabilities, the government plans to establish a Cyber Forensic Lab using the FBI as an example. Later, the government may define a Cyber-Security Force to unambiguously supervise cybercrimes.

### 5.1.2 Zero tolerance policy

The composing review of Bangladesh Peace Observatory 2020 suggests that Bangladesh lacks refined digital noticing and declaring structures. It is like manner appears that the LEAs face challenges to keep awake with the terrorist groups. Of course, extremists appear to be endlessly making specific capacities to dissipate their messages despite constraints. The groups like Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JMB) and ABT stay aware of different social accounts in English similarly as in their neighborhood language. But the Bangladeshi Government has taken a zero tolerance policy. Forces like RAB, DMP, and NSI are monitoring the accounts of JMB, NEO-JMB, ABT Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube and have suspended their accounts on different occasions.<sup>119</sup> However, creating a new account or group with distinct looks is not difficult. They often repeatedly show up to confront the authorities by outlining the "correct" state of their current actions. Terrorist organizations also utilize social networking sites and make advantage of its characteristics in a number of ways. The government has been trying to build structures like the FBI; information on how the online stages have been used simply becomes uncovered after an event. These forces have recognized and wiped out a particular substance or frustrating a secretive group on social media. It had been achievable to stop the extremist substance by shutting down the entire stage. Thus, the Government of Bangladesh has started to screen those static websites, but the websites used by such groups may create difficulties to control.

Hateful content on social media, particularly on religious sentiments, are provoking violence and social instability. A number of incidents, including the killing of secular bloggers and so-called 'atheists', and mass protests against sensitive online posts have posed severe security threats in recent times. Though the government has enacted the Digital Security Act, 2018, prohibiting any spread of hateful content on the internet, it is extremely difficult to take appropriate action due to numerous volumes of violations. Considering a number of benefits, violent extremists are exploiting social media to radicalize, recruit, propagate, and communicate and to collect funds. They propagate their ideology by using hateful comments on people who are not subscribing to their narratives or who belong to other religious identities. In Bangladesh, the perceived identity of a certain group frequently pushes people to take others' opinions personally and fan the flame of violence. More monitoring cells need to be established by ICT agencies; they will also need advanced equipment to track down messages related to violent

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<sup>119</sup> Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium, "Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT)," accessed March 4, 2017, <https://www.trackingterrorism/group/ansarullah-bangla-team-abt>.

extremism. Developing alternative discourses to extremist content online and countering online hate speech while protecting freedom of expression and privacy are the major challenges for ICT agencies. Police officials need to be trained extensively on social media analysis for identifying individuals/groups and their networks, online community, tactics of online recruitment and specific types of videos/audios disseminated in a particular language that persuade violence.

Due to the fact that radicalization is a societal problem, the government has exerted influence on individuals at all tiers of society. Except for a few partitioned tries, Bangladesh has cultivated effective ventures to consolidate people and advance regard for potential online threats. The nonappearance of the highest point putting together organization is apparently another critical inadequacy in Bangladeshi counter-radicalization attempts. In any case, there may be a shortfall of exact examination of expected digital risks. Second, it may be risky for the government to make a translation of the laws into clear techniques for different organizations to counter radicalization. Third, the diverse counter-mental mistreatment workplaces working under various administrations need coordination. There are several normal interagency get-togethers at the more raised levels. Regardless, due to the influential thought of online stages, reliable and individual association is fundamental among the organizations. Fourth, limit building and getting ready for the organizations may not be especially arranged.

### **5.1.3 Role of law enforcement agencies**

Dhaka Metropolitan Police identifies that the Government of Bangladesh is presently using different methodologies like checking, isolating, and killing substances to decrease the stock of radical musings on the internet. Nevertheless, a number of models from across the globe demonstrate that terrorist organizations quickly adopt new technologies and use cutting-edge strategies to hide their content online. The government should consistently assess the virtual world's sufficiency and update its advancements due to its influence on public opinion. Setting up the possibility of a digital persona wherein a singular creator of radical musings may make different digital personas by working unmistakable online accounts. The Government of Bangladesh is accepting a sweeping and accommodating illuminating framework to decrease the interest in radical considerations. All associated workplaces should design stories and counter-accounts reliant upon this central accommodating subject. The government has organized all parties involved, ensuring that the messages are supported by workplace actions. The sociocultural context of the nation should guide the establishment of this

technique. Also, it should devise a segment to separate the feeble groups from the public field. It should moreover supportively associate with them in talking and addressing their psychological necessities.

According to DGFI, HQ, CTIB, there is no denying the fact that countering and preventing online radicalization without impinging the citizen's access to information is a very challenging task. The enhancement of mobile technology and the freedom of surfing in cyberspace have made the task even more complicated. However, the following actions may be taken to counter the present and future threat of online radicalization:

- Strengthening capability of the digital monitoring system of the LEAs.
- Taking electronic gadgets/devices as evidence.
- Monitoring and spreading counter-narratives as required for shaping the social perception.
- Promoting correct religious narratives as required through social media.
- Controlling extremist messages in cyberspace.
- Working with educational institutions to raise instructors', students', and parents' awareness of extremism and terrorism, as well as to impose appropriate limitations on the usage of mobile devices.
- Enhancing community engagement to promote social awareness and counter online radicalized narratives and.
- Promoting family bonding.
- Taking steps to develop a comprehensive religious education module separately prior to identifying the specific fields to eradicate misconceptions and lack of understanding. The modules may be circulated to the educational institutes to include in their religious teaching syllabus.

According to Islam, various departments are fighting terrorism in Bangladesh, but their skills and efforts are not properly coordinated. Terrorism is primarily combated by the Bangladesh Police, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), Border Guard Bangladesh, military forces, and intelligence services. Despite the fact that these troops have counter-terrorism units, they operate independently. He also claims that police officers are ill-equipped and under-trained to cope with emerging aspects of internet extremism. Various intelligence services in Bangladesh are looking to determine possible online or offline threats, including the National Security Intelligence (NSI), the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), the Special Branch (SB) of Police, and the RAB Intelligence Wing. In May 2004, the National

Security Institute established a distinct entity known as the "counter-terrorism cell" to identify specific risk demographics, places, and danger groupings. At the operational and tactical levels, the DGFI's "Counter-terrorism Bureau" has been evaluating, analyzing, and framing counter-terrorism policies.<sup>120</sup> The overemphasis on harsh powers over the internet and employing the stick over the carrot appears to be one of the fundamental problems with Bangladeshi forces' methods. These actions include content screening, blocking websites, and genuine movement, all of which primarily affect the static and freely accessible websites. They are unable to resist following more notable online limitations and the "dull networks" that can do so without much difficulty. Thus, Bangladeshi terrorist organizations often use a variety of social media platforms, blogs, messaging services, and video sharing websites to reach their target audiences. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, and messaging apps are more instinctive and appropriate as a method for terrorist organizations to disseminate their ideological frameworks. Furthermore, it is difficult to isolate or remove information from high-end websites since these websites depend on user-generated content and have their own user-assistance game plans. Once in a while, these reports may be beguiling as well. In this manner, the decision of out of the blue confining websites may not be a significant instrument in a democratic country like Bangladesh. Despite this, there is no established process for sharing data and coordinating collecting activities across the institutions. The lack of an organizational body results in a lack of collaboration among Bangladesh's entities.

## **5.2 Non-state level responses to countering online radicalization**

The lack of genuine empowerment in both the public and private spheres, the inadequateness of larger systems for intergroup dialogue, communication, and mediation, the lack of inclusion and tolerance within a given community's social and political environment, the inability to control provocateurs and radicalizing agents, and more are all factors that contribute to online radicalization. This tendency is aided by the deterioration of community and family structures as social control mechanisms. The society could play a pioneer role in non-state level to promote counter narrative along with cultural values to prevent radicals' narratives spreading online.

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<sup>120</sup>Shahab E. Khan, "Bangladesh: The Changing Dynamics of Violent Extremism and the Response of the State," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 2, no. 1 (2017): 192-193.



### **5.2.1 Support of the civil society: NGOs and Think-Tanks**

Radical recruiters target marginalized, vulnerable populations in society and play on their resentment and rage. Along with these structural dynamics, targeted manipulation and accompanying (socialization) procedures used on internet platforms pull individuals into extreme and violent groups. These processes are frequently aided by psychological, emotional, or personal factors like alienation, the search for identity and dignity, retaliation for previous wrongdoing, the breakdown of authority figures' relationships with young people, and virtual communities on social media. Collaboration between the public, nongovernmental organizations, and think tanks is necessary to stop individuals from joining violent extremist groups. Thus they promote ideas like:

- Assisting trustworthy internal mediators to promote communication with disadvantaged groups and the rehabilitation of former criminals;
- Promoting a rule of law and human rights-based approach to prevent online radicalization;
- Increasing civic space and promoting participatory decision-making at the local and national levels;
- Providing effective socioeconomic alternatives which promote violence online;
- Improving local governments' ability to provide digital security;
- Promoting respect for different cultural and religious groups;
- Combating the abuse of religion by violent extremists through collaborating with faith-based groups and religious leaders;
- Involving youth in the development of social cohesion;
- Working with the media to promote alternative narratives.

### **5.2.2 Community resilience and cohesion based on Bengali cultural ethos**

To prevent people from being motivated by online propaganda and then to join radical, violent extremist groups requires deeper analysis and reflection on the foundations of the social fabric of our country, which is now at risk of generating violent extremism. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh, radicalization leading to violent extremism has always been considered as completely a 'law enforcement issue'. Therefore, the desired "whole of society approach" as enshrined in the United Nations Action Plan for Countering Terrorism has not been realized fully. Still, the paramount importance of early intervention at the beginning of a person's radicalization process is being felt severely. Law enforcers can 'combat'

terrorism at its extreme level; however; it is neither desirable nor feasible for any state to let the circumstances exacerbate up to that level; rather, steps should be taken so that no one turns into an extremist. Promoting alternative narratives online which are inclined with Bengali culture and values could be very effective to fight online radicalization. Promoting the culture of unity and patriotism in social media should be our priority. Supporting the introduction of a school curriculum focusing on Media and Information Literacy (MIL) could help counter the attempts to radicalize young people through extremist propaganda and disinformation. Nourishing the plural cultural identity of the youth can help reduce the social alienation feeling of marginalization of the young people. Family needs to play the most crucial role in providing space for self-determination. It is important to provide practical religious education to respect other religious beliefs. To combat internet radicalization, relevant organizations must collaborate on a variety of programs. In order to have a long-term effect, prevention measures must concentrate on collaboration between practitioners, researchers, intelligence communities, and religious, civic society. Increasing the responsibility of the major digital companies so that society might seek regulation or self-regulation is one way to handle the issue of online radicalization.

## **Conclusion**

### **Suggestions**

- Investing in People
- Identifying red-flags
- Forming an effective and appropriate counter-narrative
- Bridging ethical concerns and Build community resilience and cohesion

## Conclusion

The results of this study shed light on the role of the Internet in radicalization and extremist behavior in Bangladesh, as well as broader trajectories toward extremism in general. While the existence of the internet as a radicalizing platform has been widely acknowledged as fact by policymakers, scholars, and the media, the processes driving online radicalization have remained largely unknown in Bangladesh. This study discovered that several processes were active in each event and that no one mechanism was totally engaged in all situations in this research. Isolation, echoing, and (ideological) facilitation were all present in some form. These implied that there were especially significant incidents in understanding online radicalization. As a result, the research supports the hypothesis. This study was unable to isolate online radicalization as a purely online process since different cases had offline detachment and vulnerability. This adds to the growing evidence that the internet cannot cause individual radicalization on its own. Furthermore, face-to-face engagement with other extremists was not required or present in any of the cases. This study suggests that online communication with individuals who have similar beliefs is sufficient for radicalization. This study is meant to reflect societal changes related to the extensive usage of the internet in Bangladesh. The outcomes of this study backed with the idea that younger people, in particular, now have more options to interact with extremist groups online than they had previously.

### Suggestions for combating online radicalization

- **Investing in People and Improve information sharing across all levels:** Terrorists and extremists' use of the internet is a serious concern for law enforcement and other agencies. Responding to this challenge would need a higher investment in personnel and resources. The internet appears to be playing an increasingly important role in the radicalization of individuals. Given the increasing relevance of the Internet in radicalization for these organizations, new online counter-terrorism tactics should attempt to address younger users. In the long term, police and government officials would need to invest more in their digital literacy abilities and enhance information sharing at all levels. Bangladeshi government is already funding additional training and resources to combat online crime, especially online extremism. The training has two objectives: to raise digital awareness and to strengthen the digital resilience of supporting institutions by further sharing information across all levels.

- **Identifying red-flags :** A number of incidents, including the killing of secular bloggers and so-called ‘atheists’, mass protests against sensitive online posts have posed severe security threats in recent times. Though the government has enacted the Digital Security Act, 2018, prohibiting any spread of hateful content on the internet. Violent extremists are getting benefits of exploiting social media to radicalize, recruit, propagate, and communicate and to collect funds. They propagate their ideology by using hateful comments on people who are not subscribing to their narratives or who belong to other religious identities. Bangladeshi government has established monitoring cell to track down messages related to violent extremism. Bangladeshi government is developing alternative discourses to extremist content online and countering online hate speech while protecting freedom of expression and privacy. Police officials are being trained extensively on social media analysis for identifying extremist individuals/groups and their networks, online community, tactics of online recruitment and specific types of videos/audios disseminated in a particular language that persuades violence.
- **Forming an effective and appropriate counter-narrative:** To prevent people from being motivated by online propaganda and then to join radical, violent extremist groups requires deeper analysis and reflection on the foundations of the social fabric of our country. Unfortunately, in Bangladesh, radicalization leading to violent extremism has always been considered as completely a ‘law enforcement issue’. Therefore, the desired “whole of society approach” as enshrined in the United Nations Action Plan for Countering Terrorism has not been implemented fully. Law enforcers can ‘combat’ terrorism at its extreme level; however; it is neither desirable nor feasible for any state to let the circumstances exacerbate up to that level; rather, steps should be taken so that no one turns into an extremist. Thus Bangladeshi government is promoting alternative narratives online through social cohesion to fight online radicalization. Bangladeshi government is also promoting the culture of unity and patriotism in social media. Bangladeshi government is conducting comprehensive review of online counter-narrative to bring change in the attitudes or actions of persons who are prone to radicalization through online forum.
- **Bridging ethical concerns and Building community resilience:** The government is encouraging the implementation of media and information literacy-focused educational curriculum. It may aid in thwarting efforts by extremist propaganda and misinformation to radicalize young people. Religious institutions are nourishing the plural cultural identity of the youth that could help reduce the social alienation feeling of marginalization of the young people.

Family needs to play the most crucial role in providing space for self-determination. It is important to provide practical religious education to respect other religious beliefs. Relevant agencies are working together on different projects to fight online radicalization. Preventive efforts are focused on cooperation between practitioners, researchers, intelligence communities and religious/civil society – in order to educate more young people. In a policy discussion over the internet's role, Bangladeshi government is considering ethical issues, such as to strike a balance between security and civil freedoms. Bangladeshi government is also considering innovative measures to shield the internet against the spread of radical ideas. The Bangladeshi government is safeguarding its populations against online radicalization. Digital technology has become an indispensable part of everyday life. As a result, the Bangladeshi government's action is walking cautiously along this line, striking a balance between the general security of the populace and the security of those who may be vulnerable to monitoring. Also, Bangladeshi government is addressing such issues at the policy level and advocating the mechanism of self-regulation

### **Future directions of research**

This study has practical significance in combating online radicalization in Bangladesh. To begin with, radicalization frequently begins offline, in the form of push-factors that make people more vulnerable to online pull-factors after they've been exposed to them. People who drop out of school, lose their jobs, or otherwise become disengaged from society may be receptive to extremist views on the internet. The internet has a number of effects on individual actor's radicalization and is one of numerous possible causes of online radicalization. There are noticeable differences in how persons on different radicalization paths use the Internet as a tool for extremist aims. Whether they learned from online sources and whether they used open social media platforms in their extremist activities were the two online activity predictors that might distinguish those who used the Internet as part of their radicalization route from those who predominantly radicalized offline. In fact, online radicalization includes individuals whose acts must be evaluated in the context of the socialization environments that shape their views and guide their behaviors both within and outside of the online domain. First, knowing the warning signals and recognizing these people before they get radicalized might be a crucial element of a larger effort to avoid online radicalization in Bangladesh. Second, those violent remarks via the internet should be recognized. It is critical to identify people who use extreme rhetoric to spread internet hostility

among the masses. Monitoring radical websites alone may not be enough to spot violent individuals. Between 2015 and 2022, there looks to be less dependence on specialized extremist websites and more on open social media platforms. In Bangladesh such shifts highlight the ever-changing threat of online radicalization, as well as the challenges confronting those attempting to combat it. This study's interviews with current or past professionals revealed several variables of online radicalization, resulting in a comprehensive triangulation of data. This would aid scholars and policymakers in gaining a better knowledge of the role of the Internet in radicalization and extremist behavior regarding Bangladesh.

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## Appendix 1

### Survey Questionnaire

Name.....

Age.....

Gender.....

Educational Institution.....

- Public
- Private
- Semi-Government

Which Social media do you Use the most? (Can choose multiple options)

- Face Book
- YouTube
- Imo
- What's app
- Viber
- Instagram
- Twitter

How Much social media is important in your daily life?

- Very important
- Moderate
- Less important

How Much time (hours) do you spend online in social media?

- 1-3
- 4-5
- More than 5

How often do you see religious posts over social media?

- Daily
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Never

Do you think online activity increases the chance of being radicalized?

- Yes
- No
- Neutral

## Appendix 2

### FGD Questions

1. Introduce the discussion with various examples of violent incidents in Bangladesh regarding online radicalization
2. Concept about online radicalization.
3. What are the reasons for online radicalization?
4. How it is progressing and what are the driven forces?
5. What are the recruitment processes and what are the specific narratives for that?
6. What are the factors that encourage youth to engage with these kinds of online radicalization activities?
7. How the Internet is being used as a means for spreading online radicalization?
8. What are the ways on the internet to spread-out the online radicalizations?
9. What are the ways on the internet to invite or engage youths in online radicalization?
10. What could be the counteraction on the internet to overcome the propaganda on online radicalization?
11. What are the effects on society and the country?
12. Is there any international effect to the country for these?
13. What are the ways to prevail over online radicalization?
14. Who could be the catalyst in this overcoming process?
15. What could be the steps to evaluate existing activities of law enforcement agencies and to overcome this situation?
16. What role could be played by the community, educational institutes and religious institutes?



## Appendix 3

### **Key Informant Interview**

#### Key Questions

1. How do you define radicalization?
2. How do radicals use online platforms for spreading their views?
3. How are political and socio-economic factors related to radicalization in Bangladesh?
4. Do you think that misconceptions about religion drive people to radicalization?
5. Who is being targeted mainly for radicalization by using online platforms and why these groups are being targeted?
6. How do radicals find new members through online platforms?
7. How and from where the funding for radicalization networks and activities is being managed?
8. Whether or not the government has a monitoring system for money laundering for the radicalization process. Do you think it is working properly?
9. How radicalization can transform and how government can deal with technological mobility?
10. What can be the way out of this online radicalization? How the government, law enforcement agencies, communities, political parties, civil society groups, media, and the religious institutions can play the role? And what can be the coordination process amongst the agencies

