

Religious Militancy in Bangladesh (2013-2016)

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Abstract: Religious militancy has come into focus all over the world after the attacks of the Al Qaeda in 2001 in New York. Militancy denotes the activities of individuals, groups or parties to engage in violence with a particular ideological purpose. Religiously inspired violent extremism and militancy emerged in Bangladesh only in the mid-1990s. But during 2001 to 2006, militancy in Bangladesh got a profound root through links and networks with global militant organizations. After a short break the issue of militancy again has come into forefront in 2013 with old and new networks following the wave of transnational trend. Militant organizations attacked bloggers, foreigners, atheists, priests, non-Muslims and other targeted individuals. Militant attacks and atrocities vehemently attracted global media. However, this paper is an attempt to examine whether there is militancy in Bangladesh or not with the nature of militant attacks and extent of the activities of militant gangs in Bangladesh during the period of 2013 to 2016.

Keywords: Militancy, Global Militant Organizations, Religious Militancy

I. INTRODUCTION

Religious militant groups in Bangladesh emerged in the mid-1990s which have undergone several transformations. Originally they grew out of the volunteers who joined the Afghan war against the Soviet Union. Since the 1990s, 'five generations of Bangladeshi militant groups' (Riaz, A. 2016:4-6) appeared on the scene. Militant groups showed their signs of revival with a full swing in the years from 2013 to 2016. Based on various literatures, militants from at least two banned outfits, namely *Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh* (JMB), and *Ansarullah Bangla Team* (ABT), revived in this period with organizational capability and involved with targeted assassinations involving individuals whom they consider apostates or obstacles to establishing an Islamic State in Bangladesh. The escalation of the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) and Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) further led to increasing militant activism in Bangladesh. Both AQIS and ISIS claimed their presence in the country during this period. The ABT claimed to be the Bangladesh unit of the AQIS and took responsibility for the murders of several atheist bloggers, intellectuals, secular activists, religious and sectarian minorities. Since then Bangladesh attracted international media attention for heightened militant activities. Global media highly covered the militant attacks that pressed widespread security concerns about visiting Bangladesh. These incidents took place at the heel of the Global Terrorism Index's (GTI, 2015) assessment that the country was 'vulnerable to high terrorism risk' (Global Terrorism Index 2015). The GTI score of the country was already on the rise

from an historic low of 4.1 in 2012 to 5.47 in 2013 to 5.92 in 2014. Bangladesh faced the largest bloody militant attack on first July 2016 at Holey Artisan Cafe in Dhaka at Gulshan scored the death of 29 people (foreigners, police officers, gunmen, and bakery staff). Gulshan is the heart of the diplomatic zone and this incident impacted Bangladesh's relations with countries and development partners. Bangladesh had to go through a tough examination after the dreadful attack. However, this increasing trend compels the necessity to study the causes and factors responsible for the rise of religious militancy during the timeframe. 'Why has religious militancy revived during the period of 2013 to 2016?' is the key question of the study.

The central argument of the study is that Bangladesh faced a growing intensity of religious militancy revealing close ties with the global militant organizations where banned religious parties and groups were responsible for the attacks and killings due to their feeling of alienation from the liberal democratic system; the weak presence of the main political party (BNP) in political affairs; political, economic, social and cultural suppression over the fundamentalists; their goal of establishing own religious ideology within the political system and the limitations of several counter terrorism mechanisms to combat militant activities properly.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study is mainly based on primary and secondary data collected following survey method. Data for the analyses and valid inferences are collected through closed-ended questionnaire. Survey method is one of the most frequently used research method by the scholars dealing with radicalism, fundamentalism, militancy, terrorism, extremism, insurgency and other similar categories. Qualitative and quantitative methods are applied for analyzing and interpreting data. Demographic questions were included to know the age, gender and faculties of the respondents.

A closed-ended questionnaire consisting of 13 questions was made to carry out the opinion survey. The survey was conducted among 50 respondents including students from different faculties of the University of Dhaka, civil society members and experts. Purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents for the study. Respondents consist of equal number of male and female students.

On the other hand, two leading newspapers were scanned to have clear understanding. The purpose of scanning was to become introduced with the reported incidents of the killing of the bloggers, seculars, religious priests and other intellectuals by the militant attacks from 2013 to 2016 and understand the

underlying causes of militancy, factors influencing involvement with militant groups, international linkages, trends and history of militancy. The Daily Star and the *Prothom Alo* were selected to scan. The *Prothom Alo* and the Daily Star are the largest in terms of circulation, and considered to be two of the most influential newspapers in Bangladesh. The papers were at the forefront of bringing the issue of rising militancy in 2005 to public attention. Since then they have paid close attention to the issue, and widely reported on various militant groups and measures against the militants.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study was to examine whether there is religious militancy in Bangladesh or not and assess the extent and nature of religious militancy in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of the study were:

- To understand the patterns of religious militant attacks in Bangladesh
- To investigate the strategies and techniques of committing militant and terrorist activities in Bangladesh
- To determine the underlying causes of religious militant activities in Bangladesh
- To scrutinize the impact of the attacks committed during 2013 to 2016

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Parvin and Siddiqui (Parvin, N. and Siddiqui, MSH 2011: 121-29) argue that the people of Bangladesh perceive terrorism negatively and they think that terrorism is increasing. The misinterpretation of religion, poor performance of political leaders, poor socio-economic conditions and foreign penetration are some of the causes of religion-based terrorism in Bangladesh. This study revealed that religion based organized groups particularly the religious extremist groups are involved in terrorist activities. It has been claimed that most of the Madrasha students from poor families engage themselves in such activities and the fund used for the activities come from Muslim countries.

Riaz (2008) examines the relevance, significance and trajectories of militant Islamist groups in Bangladesh, exploring the complex web of domestic, regional and international events and dynamics that have both engendered and strengthened Islamist militancy in Bangladesh. He explains the politics and ideology of Islamist militancy in Bangladesh from a historical perspective. He argues that since the September 11 attacks, "media and political analysts have paid enormous attention to a de-territorialized, supranational (Islamist militancy), uprooted activism conducted in the name of Islam."

Moinul Khan (2011) examines From 1999 to 2005 Bangladesh, the world's third largest Muslim country was swept by a wave of Islamist militancy that triggered considerable media and academic concern that Bangladesh would fall prey to Islamist

extremism. The Islamist extremism that Bangladesh experienced during those years was largely the result of an ideology and tactics brought back to Bangladesh by returnees of the Afghan war against the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. Those returnees believed that the radical Islamist ideology they encountered (and imbibed) in Afghanistan could be transplanted to the Muslim community of Bangladesh. This was a serious miscalculation.

Rahman and Kashem (2011) examine the first comprehensive study on the growing religious militancy in Bangladesh. The three factors - domestic, regional and international aspects are each discussed separately and their connection and links are analyzed.

Karlekar (2006) examines Bangladesh's potential as a base for terrorist organizations and points out that Bangladesh is a 'soft state' with poor governance; its police force is ineffective and easily influenced by such religious militia groups as *Jamaat-e-Islami* (JI-Islamic Party), JMB and Harkat-ul-Jihada-Al-Islami Bangladesh (HUJI). He draws parallels between these groups and the Taliban, compares Bangladesh with Afghanistan under the Taliban rule, and concludes that Bangladesh is far more developed, has an organized system of political parties, has tasted democracy for quite a long time, and has a vocal and assertive civil society.

All these studies give emphasis on overall issues of religious militancy in Bangladesh. No study above focused on university students and civil society members and their opinions about religious militancy in Bangladesh. To this end, we conducted this research to understand the opinions and views on religious militancy in Bangladesh.

V. UNDERSTANDING MILITANCY

The term militancy has not clear definition like the terms terrorism¹, fundamentalism², extremism³ and the like. These words are mostly used synonymously by academicians, non-academicians, but there are slight differences among them. The word 'militancy' can be understood as "the acts of individuals, groups or parties displaying engaging in violence usually for a cause whether religious, political, ideological, economic, or social." (Rahman, M.A. and Kashem, M.B. 2011:25)

Militancy is a loyalty to a kind of faith and values that is alien in society and may lead to violence. Analysts say those who destroy buildings and resources, but plan in such a way that they do not cause any harm to common people, will not be called terrorism. But if this incident is done in the defense of any ideological interest, it can be militant.

"Militancy could be defined as an aggressive and active behavior geared towards the defense and support of a cause (mainly politically), often to the point of extremism. Therefore, a militant could be described as a person involved in a fighting (or a protest movement) in the defence of a cause." (Inokoba and Imbua, 2010:102).

A. Riaz (2016) mentions that militant activities included murders of members of some identified groups and individuals or attack on them. Attack also includes chopping, bombing, shooting etc.

Global Militancy

The notion of militancy in global scale emerged following a declaration of holy war by Usama bin Ladin in August 1996 against the United States and its allies. Later on the world witnessed a number of militant attacks in various nations. The largest numbers of incidents and fatalities caused by religious terrorism occurred in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria. Terrorist incidents have occurred on a global scale, affecting not only Muslim-majority states in Africa and Asia, but also Russia, Australia, Canada, Israel, India, the United States and countries within the European Union. Such attacks have targeted Muslims and non-Muslims. In a number of the worst-affected Muslim-majority regions, these terrorists have been met by armed, independent resistance groups, state actors and their proxies, and elsewhere by condemnation coming from prominent Islamic figures.

The core differences between global militancy and local militancy in Bangladesh are in the following table:

Core Points of Differences	Global Militancy	Local Militancy in Bangladesh
Type of Insurgency	Combination of reactionary-traditionalist and liberationist with a global scope of operation	Reactionary traditionalist with a local scope of operation
Enemy	The United States (“the far enemy”) and its allies	The local regime in particular and the other political parties having faith in the constitutional system
Goal	Liberate the <i>Ummah</i> from the oppression and occupation of the infidels; and the reinstatement of the Caliphate	Gaining state power and establish <i>Shariah</i> law
Operational pattern	Transnational or that they are willing to carry out terrorist attacks far outside their territorial base, for example in Europe or the US.	Local target at the local battle zone
Recruiting Base	Global	Local

VI. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RELIGIOUS MILITANCY IN BANGLADESH

In this section we intend to discuss the history of religious militancy in Bangladesh which started with the ‘Udichi’ bomb blast in 1999 and ended with the horrifying ‘Holy Artisan’ attack in 2016 in Dhaka but the real background is so deep. The root of religious militancy in Bangladesh has to discuss from the early 1757.

The Quest for Religious Identity (1757-1971)

In the nineteenth century, Muslims experienced two major challenges to their collective identity: anti-Islamic propaganda by Christian missionaries and the colonial government’s

categorization of local communities in terms of religious affiliation. Christian missionaries such as William Carey (d. 1834) were active in the publication of anti-Islamic literature. In addition, the census reports of the colonial government categorized the native population in terms of religious affiliation, which listed Muslims as minority community in India. During the independence movement against the British colonial rule in the early 1940s, the quest for a separate political identity of Bengal Muslims gained momentum. India was divided into two independent states in 1947 on the basis of the “Two Nations Theory”. Conflicts soon began between the two wings of Pakistan as the ruling elites of West Pakistan undermined the ethno-linguistic nature of Bengal’s culture.

The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism in Bangladesh (1971-90)

After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, a new Constitution was adopted. Secularism was made one of the fundamental elements of the state. However, after the military coup d’état of 1975, secularism was replaced by the words “Faith in Almighty Allah” in the revised constitution. A new era of the relationship with Middle Eastern Muslim countries also developed during the military regime. This new diplomatic relationship opened up new opportunities for employment for Bangladeshi workers in Middle Eastern countries, especially in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries. These workers later brought Wahhabi ideology back home from Saudi Arabia and created a social ground and support base for future fundamentalists in the country. In 1988, another military dictator declared Islam the state religion of Bangladesh by amending the Constitution. To create an aura of political legitimacy as well as to win support from the oil-rich Middle Eastern Muslim countries, military regimes rehabilitated and eventually collaborated with Islamic political organizations in order to overcome their legitimacy crises, some of which were radical and fundamentalist in nature.

The Rise and Establishment of Religious Militancy (1990-2010)

In this period, two militant fundamentalist organizations shocked the country the most were the HUIB and the JMB. The mother organization of the HUIB is located in Pakistan. Shafiqur Rahman, an Afghan war veteran, founded the HUIB in 1992. It first drew serious attention when a group of armed militants of HUIB attempted to kill one of the leading secularist poets of the country, Shamsur Rahman, on January 18, 1999. On July 20, 2000 HUIB militants attempted to kill the then Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina by planting a bomb at a venue where she was scheduled to visit. On April 14, 2001 HUIB militants detonated bombs at a cultural program celebrating the Bengali New Year in Dhaka. On May 21, 2004 HUIB activists threw bombs at the Bangladesh born British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Anwar Chowdhury, while he was visiting the shrine of the Sufi Shaykh Hazrat Shah Jalal in the Sylhet district. On August 21, 2004, bombs were thrown at the rally of the party of opposition (the AL) in the

parliament in Dhaka, targeting the leader of the opposition and former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (Riaz, A. 2008:103-20). Another shocking boom (around 500 bombs) explosions occurred on 17 August 2005 and in a single day 300 locations in 63 districts of Bangladesh were attacked by Jama'at ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). Because of extensive media coverage and international pressure, the government banned both the JMB and its military wing on February 23, 2005. Shaykh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, along with five other JMB activists were arrested, tried, and finally executed on March 30, 2007 (Hashmi, T.I.2004:63-75).

Recent Incidents of Militant Groups in Bangladesh (2010-2016)

In February 2013, Abdul Quader Molla, a leader of the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami party was sentenced to life imprisonment by the war crimes tribunal which was established in 2010 by the government of Bangladesh to investigate the perpetrators of Bangladesh's bloody war of Independence in 1971. But Bangladesh's secularist bloggers and writers calling for the death penalty and protest from Shahbag. Islamist leaders denounced the war crimes tribunal as political and called for an end to the prosecution of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders; instead they demanded the death penalty for secularist bloggers, denouncing them as 'atheists' and accusing them of blasphemy. After the Shahbag movement, Bangladesh faced another type of bloody attacks and at that time militant groups attacked secular bloggers and the frequency of the attacks has increased. Reporters Without Borders noted that in 2014, a group calling itself 'Defenders of Islam' published a 'hit list' of 84 Bangladeshis, mostly secularists, of whom nine have already reportedly been killed and others were attacked. Ansarullah Bangla Team claimed the responsibility for many of the attacks. Religious militant parties sent death threat to 19 bloggers and intellectuals in 2015. The militant group also attacked Italian aid worker and a citizen of Japanese in 2015 and the massive attack on foreigners was in the Holy Artisan attack in 2016. This brutal militant attack led a 12 hours long hostage crisis ended with horrifying casualties of 29 people including 18 foreigners. The Holy Artisan attack posed complex challenge for Bangladesh to the gradual increase of religious militancy and Bangladesh went through a serious threat from religious militancy in the coming future.

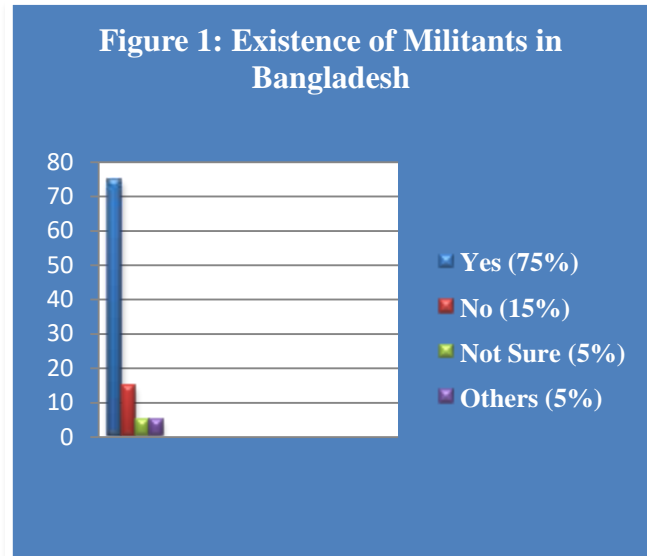
VII. DATA ANALYSIS

This section brings out the findings of the questions asked to the respondents.

Existence of Religious Militancy in Bangladesh

The existence of the religious militancy in Bangladesh is a burning question in Bangladesh. Newspaper scan finds out three kinds of arguments about the existence of militants in the country. 'First argument comes from the Government side that there is no militant or militant organization in Bangladesh and the Government has zero tolerance toward it. Second

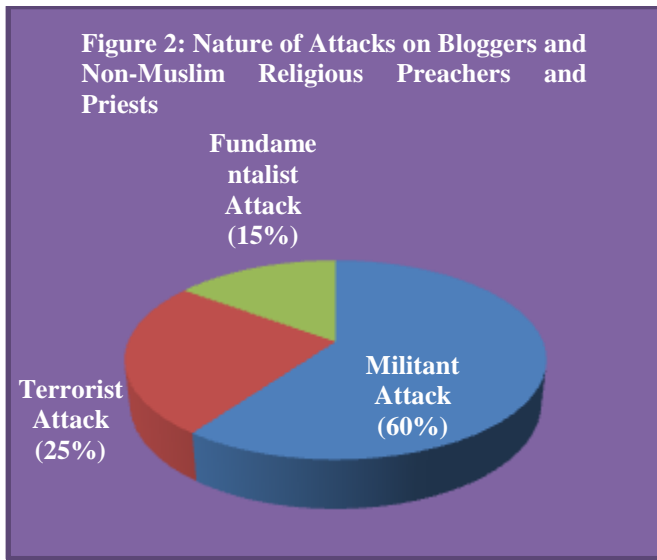
argument is derived from the different embassies that religious militants exist in Bangladesh and are operating under the shade of international militant or terrorist organizations. Last argument is found from the security forces of Bangladesh that is native banned organizations are reorganizing under the patronization of international militant or terrorist organizations.' (Sultan, T: 2016) To know the existence of religious militants in Bangladesh from the participants, they were given the questionnaires adding the first question-'Is there religious militancy in Bangladesh?' The answers of the question are shown in the following graph.



Among the respondents 75% argues that there exists religious militancy in Bangladesh. 15% gives their verdicts as there does not exist any kind of militancy in Bangladesh. 5% respondents is not sure about the existence of religious militancy in the country. Whereas other 5% argues that militancy is a political weapon used by the western countries to impose pressure upon Bangladesh.

Recent Attacks on Bloggers and Non-Muslim Religious Preachers and Priests

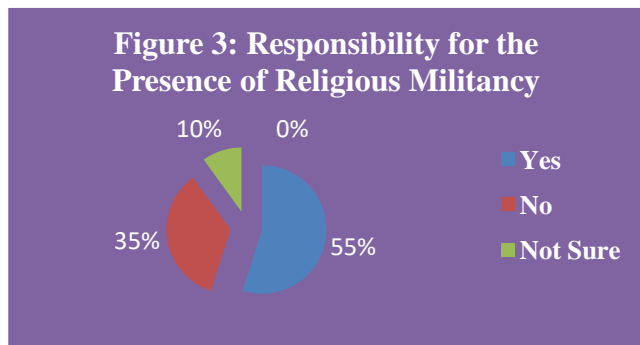
Since 2013, a number of non-Muslim religious preachers and priests and of secularist writers, bloggers and publishers in Bangladesh have been killed or seriously injured in attacks perpetrated by religious miscreants. The attacks have taken place at a time of growing tension between Bangladeshi secularists, who want the country to maintain its secularist tradition of separation of religion and state, and Islamists, who want an Islamic state. However, to know the nature of these attacks, the respondents were asked the question as 'How would you consider recent attacks on bloggers and non-Muslim religious preachers and priests?' The findings of this question are shown in the following graph.



Among the respondents 60% argues that recent attacks on bloggers and non-Muslim religious preachers and priests are operationalized by the militants whereas 25% sees these attacks as terrorist attacks. Finally, 15% opines that these attacks are not militant or terrorist in nature rather they are fundamentalist.

Religious Political Parties as Responsible for the Presence of Religious Militancy

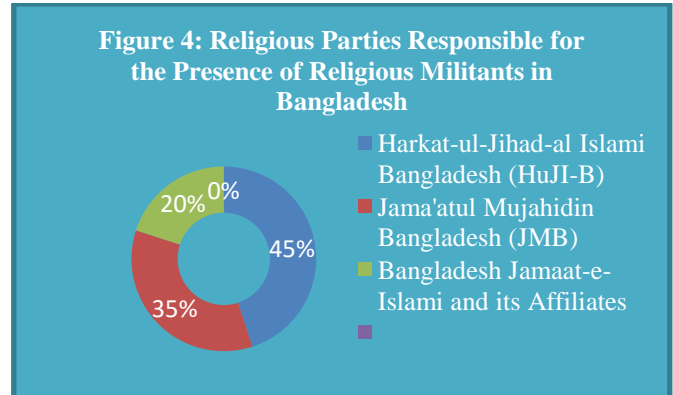
Bangladesh has attracted international media attention for heightened militant activities in 2015 and early 2016, particularly after a series of killings of bloggers by local militant groups allegedly associated with AQIS and after murders of foreign nationals, responsibility of which was claimed by the Islamic State (IS). After attacks, media and the Government mostly blame religious political parties responsible for. To know further about the real scene, the question, ‘Are the religious political parties in Bangladesh responsible for the presence of religious militancy?’, was asked to the respondents. The findings are in the following graph.



55% of the respondents answered positively that religious political parties are responsible for the presence of religious militancy in Bangladesh. 35% argued negatively in their judgment. According to them, religious parties are not in

charge for the religious militancy in Bangladesh. Finally, 10% respondents are not sure about the parties responsible for the presence of militants in the country.

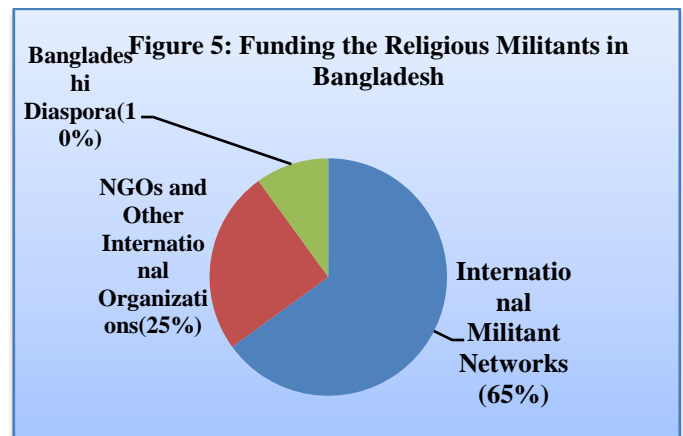
In this part, another question asked to know the religious parties responsible for the rise of militancy in Bangladesh. Here, the question, ‘Which religious parties are responsible for the presence of religious militants in Bangladesh?’ was asked.



45% respondents argue that HuJI-B is responsible for the presence of religious militancy in Bangladesh. 35% blames JMB responsible. Whereas 20% participants write that Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and its affiliates are responsible for the presence of religious militants in Bangladesh.

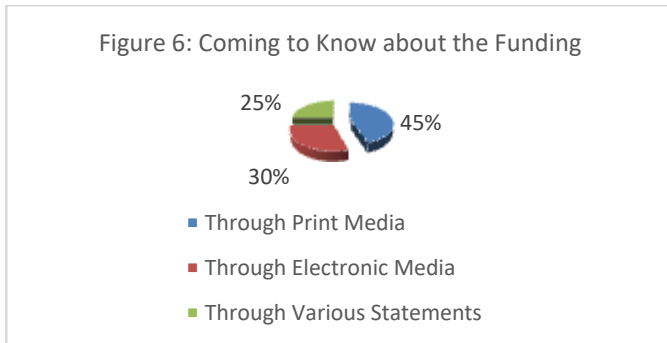
Funding the Religious Militants in Bangladesh

Religious militants financing refers to activities that provides financing or financial support to individual militants or militant groups. Islamists originations in global scale get financial support from black marketing and through various networks. Literatures on ‘militant financing in Bangladesh have brought out the findings such as foreign religious charitable organizations, global militant organizations, Islamic NGOs in Bangladesh and so on.’ However, current study asks the question to the respondents about the sources of funding the religious militants or militant groups. The findings revealed about the sources of funding are shown in the following graph.



65% of the respondents argue that international militant networks finance religious militants or militant organizations in Bangladesh. 25% emphasize NGOs and other international charitable organizations whereas 10% respondents answer that Bangladeshi Diasporas are funding Bangladeshi militants or militant organizations to establish Islamic state.

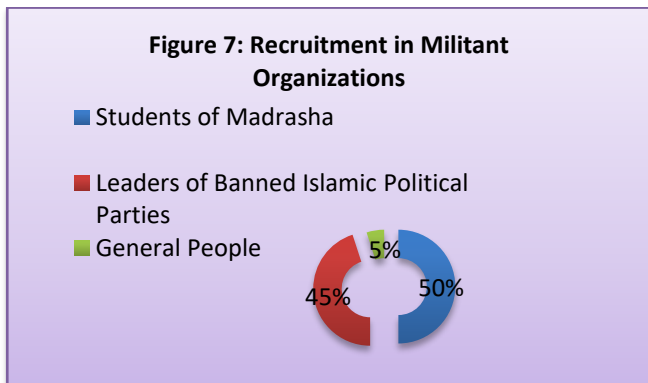
The respondents were also asked the question, ‘How have you come to know about the funding?’, to examine their knowledge about militancy and make a concrete argument about the financing of the religious militants in Bangladesh. It was done as because the Government side is always denying about the existence of religious militants or militant gangs in Bangladesh.



45% of the respondents answer that through print media they have come to know about the funding of the religious militants in Bangladesh. 30% argues they have known through electronic media whereas 25% responds that various statements of the political leaders, police and academicians helped them to know about the funding of the militants or militants groups.

Recruitment in Militant Organizations

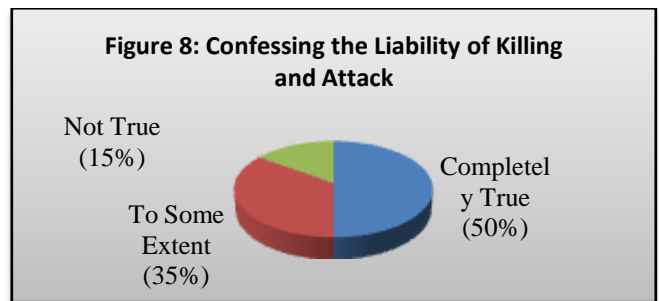
There is no easy answer to why people join militant organizations. It's a complex picture, we have to take into account processes linked to political and social exclusion dynamics, economic benefits, and poor governance structures as well as religious and ethnic discrimination. However, to sketch out the individuals who are targeted to recruit in militant organizations, participants were asked the question, ‘Who are being recruited or targeted to recruit in militant organizations?’ whose findings are in the following graph.



50% respondents answer that Madrasha students are targeted to recruit in militant gangs as they mostly hold militant ideologies. 45% argue that leaders of domestic banned religious militant parties are recruited mostly in the power structure of these parties as they do the same business. The opinions of 5% respondents completely differ from the others as they opine that general people are targeted to recruit in militant groups.

Confessing the Liability of Killing and Attack

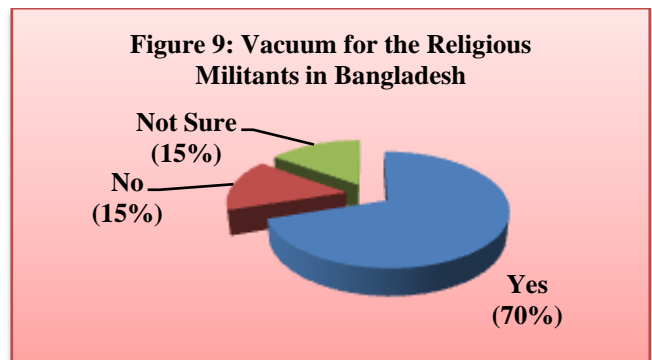
It is common since the inception of the militant attacks that after killing or attacking any individual (i.e. intellectuals, bloggers, seculars, priests or non-Muslims and others), ISIS, AQIS and ABT confess the liability through internet or their websites. To understand the real scene, the question, ‘To what extent does the confession follow the truth?’ was asked whose findings are in the following.



50% respondents answer that the confession of the liability by the ISIS, Al-Qaeda and ABT are completely true. 35% answers that the confession is true to some extent. Other 15% says that the confession is not true.

Absence of the Main Opposition Party (BNP) in Political Affairs Create any Vacuum for the Religious Militants in Bangladesh

A report from the ‘International Crisis Group’ sketches out that ‘absence of the main opposition party (BNP) in political affairs creates a vacuum for the religious militants in Bangladesh to operate.’(International Crisis Group 2015: 12-15) To examine the statement of the Crisis Group, the question, ‘Does the absence of the main opposition party (BNP) in political affairs create any vacuum for the religious militants in Bangladesh?’ was asked to the respondents.



70% argues that absence of the main opposition party (BNP) in political affairs explores a vacuum for the religious militants to operate. 15% of the respondents consecutively answers ‘no’ and other 15% is ‘not sure’.

Merging Extremism or Terrorism in the Name of Militancy

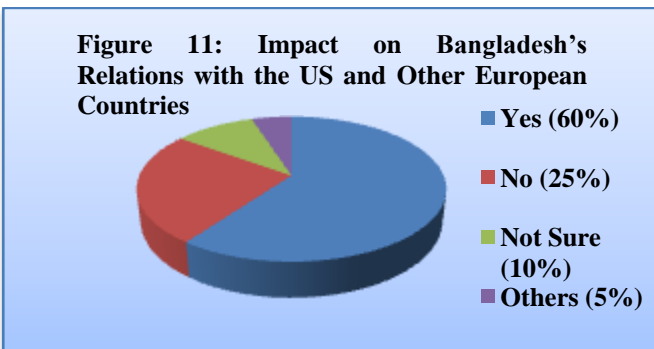
In Pakistan, Afghanistan and some Middle Eastern countries, extremism and terrorism are merging under the shadow of militancy. The statements of the attacks on bloggers, seculars and others prove very confusing to differentiate between extremist or terrorist or militant attacks. Following this anxiety, in the research it was attempted to bring out the answer of this puzzle.



65% respondents argue that extremism or terrorism is merging in Bangladesh in the name of militancy. 25% disagrees whereas 10% participants argue that they are not sure which one dominating the political arena in Bangladesh whether extremism or terrorism or militancy.

Impact of the Issue of Militancy on Bangladesh’s Relations with the US and Other European Countries

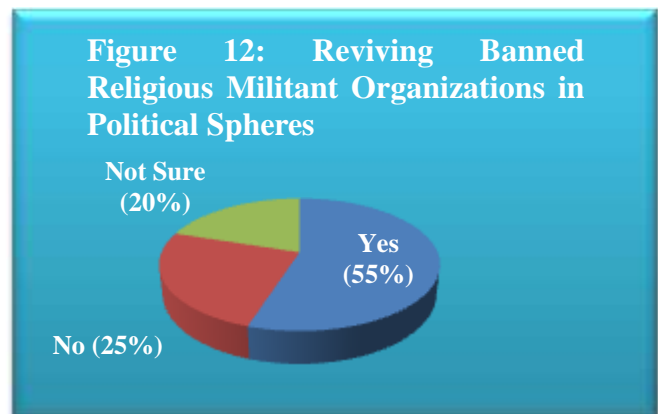
Following the attacks of the recent times, the US and European countries warn their native citizens to move in Bangladesh. Scholars argue that following the attacks upon foreigners in the Middle East and Bangladesh, European embassies warned their citizens to visit Bangladesh. It is true that the US and European countries play a vital role in the domestic politics of Bangladesh as they did during the liberation war of Bangladesh and subsequent socio-economic affairs. As a result, Bangladesh needs to maintain friendly relations with them. Experiencing the recent incidents of militancy, participants were asked the question, ‘Does the issue of militancy impact on Bangladesh’s relations with the US and other European countries?’



60% of the respondents argue that the issue of militancy bought an impact on Bangladesh’s relations with the US and other European countries. 25% says that militant attacks created no harm in foreign policy with the US and Europe. 10% is not sure about the consequences of recent militancy in Bangladesh. Finally 5% argues that this is a media-induced issue which did not hamper Bangladesh’s foreign policy.

Reviving Banned Islamist Militant Organizations in Political Spheres

After a decade of dormancy, religious militant groups in Bangladesh showed their signs of revival. Based on the investigations by Bangladeshi authorities, militants from at least two banned outfits, namely JMB and ABT, revived their organizational capabilities and during the period of 2013 to 2016. During this time they targeted assassinations involving individuals whom they consider apostates or obstacles to establishing an Islamic state in Bangladesh.’(Bashar, I.:2016) To operationalize the news of the ‘Today Online’, the question, ‘Are the banned religious militant organizations reviving in political spheres following the development of militancy in international politics?’ was asked whose findings are in the following.



55% respondents argue that banned religious militant organizations are reviving in political spheres following the development of militancy in international politics. 25% answers no whereas 20% are not sure about the revival of the banned parties in political landscape.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Religious militancy is the cruelest of crimes which is designed to threaten the personal safety of its target. Militancy is a threat to global peace and security. Recent attacks of the militant groups deteriorated the international image of Bangladesh as a moderate secular Muslim country. A number of international media, intelligence reports and studies portrayed Bangladesh as a new hub for religious militancy devoid of any socio-political and historical contexts. Later on Bangladesh had been portrayed by the international community, media or security institutes as a risky country.

On the basis of the aforementioned findings, it can be argued that militancy exists in Bangladesh. Banned religious parties revived in the political arena by different names that were being funded by various international global militant networks and foreign charitable organizations. In these organizations, Madrasha students and other underground leaders are recruited to operate in the realms. The absence of the main opposition party, BNP, offered a kind of political vacuum for functioning militant organizations. The notions of terrorism, extremism and militancy were being merged by the security forces and the Government interpretations. Finally, these militant operations impacted Bangladesh's foreign policy with the US and European countries.

Notes

1. 'The use of violence, or threatened use of violence, in order to achieve a political, religious, or ideological aim'
2. 'A movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of religious or other basic principles'
3. 'Driving (something) to the limit, to the extreme or the quality or state of being extreme, advocacy of extreme measures or views'

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