

# Mediatization, Social Media, and Islamization: Exploring the Nexus of Influence and Violence in Contemporary Bangladesh Politics

Aminur Rahman

International Relations, South Asian University, New Delhi

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## ABSTRACT

Internet technology probably contains one of the most important discoveries of the contemporary era. Additionally, it is now undeniably evident that individuals are increasingly using social media platforms as their main mode of communication in day-to-day life. The phenomena of Islamization through the Internet and social media has seen a noteworthy upsurge in the current period of fast modernization, principally driven by the ubiquitous effect of mediatization. This effect may be seen not just in Bangladesh's religious landscape but also in its political system. Religion's influence on social media is startlingly similar to how it is used as a powerful factor in Bangladesh's political dynamics. It is crucial to recognize that the procedure of islamization through digital platforms has also contributed to the spread of violence, which has primarily taken the form of targeted assaults on minority groups and those who support free-thinking beliefs. Further, it is crucial to take into account the elements at the national level that have influenced the disturbing trend of using social media as a weapon to incite violence. In order to promote the continuation of violence through digital channels, Islamist extremist organizations have carefully constructed these crucial elements, which are examined in this study. Additionally, this study seeks to bring the alarming trend of Islamist extremist groups blending politics and religion with ease while leveraging the potent mediatization power to instigate violence. This study seeks to clarify the methods used by these organizations to influence digital platforms for their evil ends through a number of thoroughly considered case studies. In the end, this essay makes the claim that political parties and Islamic extremist groups have a complicated and interconnected relationship, a dynamic that not only fosters but also promotes the inciting of violence through the strategic use of social media and digital communication channels.

**Keywords:** Islamist Extremist Groups, Islamization, Violence, Social Media, Political Parties, Bangladesh

## INTRODUCTION

After the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, there was a great shift in the politics of Bangladesh, and the rise of Islamist extremism (IE) in politics was seen as a part of that change. Initially, the rise of IE in Bangladesh can be drawn back to the prior 1980s. Religious extremism is now universally recognized as a severe threat to world peace and prosperity (Patel & Koushik, 2017). Bangladesh is not free from the risks of religious extremism and its activities. Between 1999 and 2005, the people of Bangladesh were influenced by Islamic extremist groups such as Hijbut Tahir Bangladesh, Jamaat-ul-Mujahidin Bangladesh and other extremist organizations (Bashar, 2017). Although no official activity of these extremist groups has been seen so far, their followers are still inciting violence in Bangladesh based on their ideology. Its apparent activities can now be seen on social media, spreading rumours through various fake Facebook IDs, angering devout Muslims and creating violence.

Islamist Extremism Groups (IEG) have recently begun investigating and operating using social networking platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, which are utilized for propaganda, recruiting, and financing (Alam, 2015). IEGs are using social media as a weapon, pulling in people who are immensely sensitive to their content via the Internet, enlisting individuals into IEGs and missions, and lastly, designing and implementing terror strikes in many areas of the world (Gielen, 2017, as cited as Amit et al., 2021).

Bangladesh is also no exception for it, being the mediatization of social media and weaponization of the Internet; extremist groups are significantly engaging with people daily through social media and the Internet (Amit et al., 2021). According to the Global Digital Report 2022, 4.95 billion people worldwide use the Internet, and 4.62 billion people use social media (Global Digital Report, 2022). In Bangladesh, about 90 million people use using the Internet, and 30 million people use social media (Sayeed et al., 2020). As social media plays a significant role in communication and various business dealings due to modernization, IEGs have also taken that opportunity and are promoting their ideology and rules and regulations of Islam. Apart from this online piety of Islam, the interrelationship between religion and media, these internet users spread a lot of rumours and fake news using social media, which helps the extremist group create violence and hate towards others. If we see the last decade, immense incidents have happened based on fake news on social media. As such, we observed that several violent incidents have happened toward minorities in Bangladesh. Ramu, Pabna, Comilla and Nasirnagar are the paramount case- where all the incidents have been triggered by fake news and rumours on social media.

With the mediatization of social media, the weaponization of the Internet makes the interlinked between religion and media open a platform of the piety of Islam, Islamic sermon and discussion on fundamental things of faith. The following discussion of this paper will divulge the main characteristics of the Islamist extremist groups in Bangladesh. It will also observe the influential factors of the Islamist extremist groups- how they are closely connected with those factors and how it influences them to create violence. Later, it will denote the nexus between Islamist extremist groups and political parties- where the political parties patronize the extremist group to take advantage.

## **MAPPING THE ISLAMIST EXTREMISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN BANGLADESH**

Bangladesh is only one of the many countries affected by the increasingly ubiquitous threat of religious extremism (RE) in today's world. It is important to recognize that extremism has no religious bounds and affects all religions equally. The existence of Islamic extremism is especially serious in Bangladesh, a country with a majority-Muslim population. Extremist ideas and religious emotion have come together to create a powerful menace that requires both national and international attention. In tackling this complex subject, it is essential to retain a balanced approach that acknowledges the wide range of Islamic religion while also supporting an atmosphere that promotes moderation and fends against the dangerous attraction of extremism. The rise of Islamic extremists in Bangladesh can be traced back to the death of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Since then, religious extremism has changed in different patterns and is coming to the forefront of modern technology. As a result, RE is now centred mainly on social media, and extremists are also taking advantage of it and creating violence. This chapter will map and conceptualize IE and social media based on the existing literature on the subject.

### **Islamist Extremism:**

Understanding the IE, it will take into account its core values, beliefs, and norms. RE is defined as any behaviour, belief or attitude that deviates from religious norms. Charles S. Liebman (1983) focuses on three dimensions to define religious extremism. He opined that the main three dimensions that are working behind the spread and provoking religious extremism were the practice of rules of regulation of religion, social separation and cultural rejection (Liebman, 1983). To some extent, RE works and is rigorously dependent on the theological aspect. Wintrobe (2003) argues that the link between terrorism and RE likely appears to be self-evident. Religious radicals desire to kill someone because they strongly believe in religious theologies that pardon violence in the devotion to God. They do not want to have compassion for their victims since they think and consider them God's enemies. Furthermore, they are highly willing to give up their lives because they think they will get a great reward in the afterlife in exchange for "martyrdom" (Wintrobe, 2003)

as cited as Berman and Lannaccone, 2006, for details, see page number, 109).

Apart from that, Bruce Lawrence defines fundamentalism as “the affirmation of religious authority as holistic and absolute, admitting of neither criticism nor reduction; it is expressed through the collective demand that specific creedal and ethical dictates derived from scripture be publicly recognized and legally enforced.” (Lawrence, 1990 as cited as Alam 2010, p. 3). On the other hand, if we take into account Wiktorowicz’s (2005) radicalization model, he gave the idea of four stages that may accelerate the violence chronologically. Firstly, he said that a person has new cognitive openness and ideas which he experiences from personal discrimination or group discrimination. Secondly, the person or group establishes a personal relationship with another worker or group that may have had an existing relationship or a new connection building upon an argument, debate, or protest. Thirdly, they seek a legitimate group or authority for the correct interpretation of Islam. Fourthly, when their faith and trust are born in a group, they seek out jihadists for salvation, and later it becomes rational for an eternal reward (Wiktorowicz, 2005, as cited as McCauley & Moskalkenko, 2017, for details, see page number, 7-8). As a result, when groups allow their employees to achieve their goals by creating violence, then individuals also create violence on behalf of the group. Therefore, the clear spectrum is that IE is amalgamated with religious fundamentalism and extremism based on the belief in God, code of conduct and practice of religious law.

### **Islamist Extremism and Islamization in Bangladesh:**

In Bangladesh, Islamist extremism is rising, and organizations aligned with or advocating for extremist Islamic movements have wreaked devastation on the country. These IEGs have developed in power and spread to the point where they can undertake organized violence campaigns across the country rather than being a fringe and distinctive aspect. According to traditional knowledge, the leading BNP and its party governing alignment have been blamed for rising levels of violence and bigotry. Khaleda Zia’s landslide victory in the parliamentary elections in October 2001 was widely regarded as the start of the running surge of radicalism (Habib, 2003). Although extremist activities have risen since then, it is stated here that the crisis has long roots and that the current scenario is the result of all the political parties in Bangladesh, including the Awami League (AL). Apparently, Islamic extremism is the main problem in Bangladesh rather than terrorism. In this case, Sreeradha Datta and Ali Riaz both have identified some factors in the existing literature that justify the rise of Islamist extremists in Bangladesh, both domestically and nationally.

In Bangladesh, Islamisation has played a significant role in the emergence and maintenance of militancy. This religious turn to the extreme has weakened the nation’s secular underpinnings and has also enhanced conceptions of the country’s religious identity. Since the early nineteenth century, the Bengal territory has seen a fierce battle between secular and religious cultures (Datta, 2007). The fledgling state’s secular foundation came under pressure within a short time. On one level, foreign policy imperatives pushed Mujibur Rahman to embrace a favourable view of orthodox forces, particularly the requirement for economic assistance from Middle East Islamic countries (Ahsan, 2005 as cited as Datta, 2007, for details, see page number, 146). Nonetheless, Mujibur Rahman’s socialism project failed, and his killings in August 1975 came too soon, tipping the scales against secularist identity. Bangladesh was forced to reestablish and consolidate its Islamic identity due to political pragmatism on the side of the army, which had been in charge for almost a decade. In 1977, a new constitution was adopted that abolished secularism and reaffirmed complete reliance and belief in Allah, the Lord. The prologue did indeed begin with a tribute to Allah. The military rulers needed supporters and political credibility, so they lifted the ban on religious parties (Datta, 2007).

As a result, Bangladesh saw a significant political transformation in the 1980s. This new tendency had a minor instant effect, but it sent out warnings of upcoming religious intolerance and the rise of fundamentalist inclinations. Despite this, IE and bigotry remained a minor factor after democracy was restored in 1991. Bangladesh was shielded from similar changes in other nations due to the Sufi heritage

among Muslims and the secular liberal Bengali society (Hossain, 2016). On the other hand, quick policies implemented by democratic administrations after 1991 have firmly positioned Bangladeshi society on the road to extremism. The appearance of Taslima Nasreen's novel in 1993 sparked outrage among radical groups, who objected to her portrayal of the country as a bigoted and extremist society. Nasreen departed Bangladesh in 1994 after a fatwa was issued against her (Hassan, 2010). Electoral parties were reluctant to recognize the Islamist extremism that was emerging in society due to political considerations. As we can see that both the BNP and the AL are deliberately trying to take advantage by supporting the Islamist political parties.

### **Growth of Madrassas:**

The rise of IE has been intensified by the growth of madrassas, just as the political structure has helped to create Islamization. These religious schools, which are often acknowledged and supported by the state, provide a supplement to the government's non-religious education system. Madrassas are now run by both religious and secular groups, along with the AL. By that time, the Awami administration (1996 to 2001), a committee led by Shamsul Haque approved madrassa schooling as a necessary component of the national curriculum (Asadullah et al., 2009). This unrestrained expansion represents two separate but intertwined phenomena. On one level, it suggests that the state's role in education is rapidly diminishing because the state is unable to provide basic elementary and high school education in remote regions; madrassas, who have a greater network in these areas, benefit (Maitra, 2003 as cited as Datta, 2007, For details, see page number, 149).

Madrassas, unlike government schools, provide a very limited religious syllabus centred on Quranic principles. Though essential for forming the moral tenets, belief and practice limit the extent of students' learning and restrict their work options. Most of the government jobs are out of reach due to the poor educational foundation. In addition, a key achievement for Islamist extremists in education policy is the recognition of Daura Hadith as equivalent to a master's degree. In 2006, the former prime minister Khaleda Zia declared the decision and recognized the degree (Riaz, 2010).

These two hurdles, notably the lack of secular topics and economic opportunities from outside the religious school system, operate towards madrassa schooling. Madrassa education, while widely available, has not shown to be easily digestible in the employment market (Hashmi, 2004). As a result, madrassa education in Bangladesh has significantly affected the rise of religious extremism. Many young people are drawn to militancy by an extreme viewpoint and the prospect of being more or less perpetual jobless (Khan, 2005). Therefore, no denying that the Islamization and growth of madrasas education and the education policy are influenced to create of Islamist extremists in Bangladesh.

### **Rising of Religious Parties:**

After the return of democracy in 1991, a revolution of 'Religious Political Parties' took place in Bangladesh (Linter, 2002). Thus, in 1991, Bangladesh gave legitimacy to elect Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI), which had directly opposed Bangladesh on the side of Pakistan during the war of liberation in 1971 (Ganguly, 2006). The Awami League, which was the precursor of the liberation war, was born out of the 'Bangla Language Movement', and it was centred on 'Bengali Nationalism' rather than religion. After the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, General Ziaur Rahman and General Ershad removed secularism from Bangladesh's constitution. Later, the assassination of Zia, Ershad fully adopted and announced that Islam would be the primary religion of the state instead of secularism (Lintner, 2004). However, Ziaur Rahman and Ershad both were consecutively pursuing 'pro-Islamic' and 'pro-west' lines (Riaz, 2012, as cited as Hossain, 2012).

Moreover, the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL), the Secular Party of Bangladesh, also patronized Jamaat-

e-Islam during the political crisis in 1996. Inasmuch, Religious extremism has grown exponentially in Bangladesh since 1996 due to its support for Islamic institutions and patronage of Jamat-e-Islam. Patronizing and supported by JeI, the organization “Qital fi Sabilillah” (Fighting in the way of Allah) has changed the name itself. After moving its headquarters to the northwestern and northern areas of the country in 1996. The group mainly has grown up due to its contacts between Shaikh Abdur Rahman, who was the son of the Ahle Hadith leader, and Asadullah Ghalib, the leader of the ‘Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh’ (AHAB) (Riaz, 2016). After getting together in 1998, they created the ‘Jaamatul Mujaheddin Bangladesh’ (JMB).

In 2001, JeI switched from Awami League to BNP again and participated in elections. In that election, they even got 17 seats out of 300 seats (Election Commission, 2001). The then BNP government appointed two ministers from JeI. Taking advantage of this, JeI later set up various welfare networks at the rural level and tried to garner their support. At that time, different more Islamic extremist groups emerged under the umbrella of JeI. Jamaat-e-Islami’s student organization Chhatra Shibir launched its organizational activities and welfare programs in about 64 districts. Therefore, the Islamization that Jamaat-e-Islam patronized served as an atmosphere for the subsequent rise of Islamist extremism. For example, the media has reported at various times that JeI has been the most cooperative in the activities of Islamic extremist groups like the JMB. Jamaat-e-Islam itself has committed many acts of violence and terror. As a result, they later turned violent against the democratic government in order to establish Islamic rule (Fink, 2010). Following the latest political deadlock, a number of IE parties have argued and propagated an aspiration of Islamic Sharia or Caliphate State as a feasible alternative to the conventional democratic system, which they believe encourages main political parties to engage in corruption, deception, and favouritism. Taking advantage of mismanagement, a disintegrating justice system, an economic meltdown, and a started to deteriorate and politicized law and order situation, they portray themselves as genuine and competent leaders who can bring about the progress, peace, and stability they desire (Choudhury, 2014).

## CONCEPTUALIZING THE ISLAMIST EXTREMISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN BANGLADESH

Nowadays, everyone who uses the Internet gets in touch with social networking sites. Social media has evolved into a tool for all types of communication. Furthermore, it is difficult to find somebody who is not a user of some form of social media, whether active or passive. In Bangladesh, Facebook is the leading and dominant social networking site. According to the report, as of June 2021, more than 48.2 million people in Bangladesh are using Facebook, which is 28 per cent of the total population of Bangladesh. Males constitute per cent of the population, and females are 30.9 per cent (Khan R. , 2021).

Based on the existing literature, it can be seen that Islamist extremists have increased exponentially due to Islamization, the increase of madrasas and the legitimacy and patronage of religious political parties. Due to digitalization and modernization, extremists have also become active on social media (Al-Zaman, 2019). Islamic sermons are held throughout the year in Bangladesh, especially every Friday (*Mullas* are used to give *Khutba*) in the mosque, Islamic sermons in the madrasa and the preaching of the religion by the people of Tabligh Jamaat in different mosques, and these videos are recorded and propagated online (Facebook, YouTube) (Rashidujjaman et al., 2022). When the speeches of these *mullahs* are uploaded online, the mass people get involved in this profoundly and clinch it. Various missed information is also spread on this occasion through social media, which helps in creating subsequent violence (Al-Zaman et al., 2020). As a result of Islamization, the mullahs now make direct political statements in these Islamic sermons. They often want to overthrow the government on the pretext of insulting Islam through fake accounts on Facebook. Because practically everyone who has access to the Internet in Bangladesh uses social media, especially Facebook, similar incidents are likely to occur. In Bangladesh, a number of horrible tragedies were sparked by Facebook posts or activities. Some big occurrences occurred in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2016 in Ramu, Pabna, Comilla, and Nasiragar, respectively.

Due to religious conflicts, political conflict, and naively trusting in someone's opinion without analyzing its reality, extremism, radicalization, and Islamist extremism have increased throughout Bangladesh's political and cultural history. The history of politics in Bangladesh can be broadly parted into three eras: firstly, the era of populist authoritarianism (1972–1975), secondly the era of military-dominated rule (1975–1990), and thirdly the era of representative democracy (1991–2006) (Riaz, 2012). Bangladesh's political climate shifted dramatically toward militant fundamentalism after the second military dictatorship was deposed in December 1990 by a mass uprising organized by the AL, the BNP, and its allies. In Bangladesh, militant Islamic extremists are disdainful of other faiths. Their political persuasion is Islamic ally chauvinist, and their scriptural orientation is fiercely literalistic. They adhere to a verbal reading of the Qur'an and proclaim Jihad towards those who oppose them, ignoring Islam's historical context (Alam, 2010). Building upon Bangladesh's current political, historical, cultural and societal context, it has been conceptualized with the amalgamation of the political party, Islamist extremist group, and social media. At present, we see that the activities of Islamic extremists are shifting from the traditional way and using social media to create violence in a modern way.

Based on the theory of *mediatization of religion*, which clearly alludes to the connection between social media and religion (Al-Zaman, 2022). Mediatization Theory has been described differently by different scholars. According to Deacon and Stanyer, the idea of *mediatization* is based on two traditions, the first is the 'institutional tradition', and the second is the 'social constructivist' (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014). The institutional tradition is basically focusing on the non-media actors through which the mediation process is taking place. And the social constructivist emphasizes the technology through which society is being influenced in an ecological way (Deacon & Stanyer, 2014). In addition, the media influences our social life and in every field through the mediatization theory, which is also connected with *culturalization* (Mezzoleni, 2008 as cited as Al-Zaman, 2022, for details, see page number, 1). Furthermore, this media theory mainly stands on two pillars: the influence of media, and the use of media. This media independently connects with society and culture (Hjarvard, 2011). As a result, media, culture, technology, and organizations create a combination in all fields through mediatization. While this combination affects every aspect of our lives, mediatization is more of a concern in politics (Mezzoleni & Schulz, 1999).

Later, another prominent scholar Strömbäck (2008), interpret the four stages of the mediatization of politics. Firstly, the media has now become a significant source of information sharing. Secondly, the media is now much more independent than the political power that previously had to rely on political institutions. Thirdly, political actors have now embraced the media to expand their activities. Lastly, in the past political actors relied on political logic, but now they are relying on media logic instead of political logic (Strömbäck, 2008). Clearly, the media has become an autonomic and distinct social institution. Besides, the media has also been integrated deeply, including other institutions. Such a religion is a social institution that is currently dependent on and influenced by the media, which is called the mediatization of religion. Although it is not universally standard, the media is becoming a powerful and vital medium for disseminating religious information (Hjarvard, 2011). Thereby, many people depend on the media for religious information nowadays. Moreover, this also applies to Bangladesh, where the people of Bangladesh gain and practice religious knowledge through social media. For example, *WazMahfil* is the most famous Islamic culture among Muslims in Bangladesh, which happens in almost every village and town in Bangladesh. Due to mediatization, they have recorded the video and audio and promoted it on social media like Facebook and YouTube (Al-Zaman, 2022).

As we know, in Bangladesh, almost 90 per cent of Muslims are divided into three main parts. Such as Salafism, Islamism, and Wahhabism and they all are linked to the basic tenets of Islam. Of these three divisions, Islamism is somewhat moderate and radical, and Salafism is associated with neo-Sufism and those who are more tolerant. Wahhabism and Takfiri Islam are much more radical and jihadist. However, Muslims in present-day Bangladesh mainly believe in jihadist Wahhabism and Salafism of Islam. In addition, these

Wahhabism and Salafism groups justify violence in the name of Jihad against Takfiri beliefs. (Khan, 2017). These groups have also been mediatized, and they are spreading Islamic knowledge, beliefs and norms through social media as a tool of *WazMahfil*. Hence there is plenty of untrue information spread in this *Wazmahfil* which helps to create violence later on (Al-Zaman et al., 2020). So if we look at the radicalization in present-day Bangladesh, we will see that the attack is being carried out in the name of Jihad, which the Islamist extremist groups see as revenge against the blasphemous people. Islamic speakers discuss Jihad in the *WazMahfil* and also determine what will be obtained in the hereafter if Jihad is done. Since Jihad applies against blasphemous [who insult Islam] people, extremist Muslims create violence in the name of Jihad. For instance, in Ramu, Pabna, Comilla and Nasirnagar, the same is happening where extremist groups are inciting violence against blasphemous people by accusing them of blasphemy.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ISLAMIST EXTREMISM AND INFLUENTIAL FACTORS**

A brief interpretation of historical circumstances is important to understand IE's influential factors in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has witnessed a crisis in politics from the very beginning of its independence. Nevertheless, the situation led to a military dictatorship and legalized political Islam. Later, the main dominant political parties, such as BNP and BAL, also accelerate political Islam by being Islamization, supporting madrasas and religious political parties.

Historically, East Pakistan disintegrated from the rest of the country to Bangladesh in 1971, rejecting the idea that all Muslim areas should be united into one state that was part of former British India. 'Secularism, democracy, nationalism, and socialism' were all included in the prologue of the Bangladesh constitution of 1972, which was ratified under AL leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. However, General Ziaur Rahman's military administration abolished socialism and secularism in 1977, substituting them with the proclamation of devotion to Allah (Lorch, 2019). Later, general Erashad also followed the same path as Zia. According to the scholarship, both military regimes employed Islamization as a legitimization method to substitute for their absence of legislative legitimacy.

In addition, it would not be right to gainsay that the 'Islamic Revolution of Iran' in 1979 did not affect the Muslims of Bangladesh. However, Iran was a Shiite majority country among the gulf countries, and other countries were Sunni (Esposito, 1999 as cited as Hossain, 2012, for details, see page number, 177). But despite Bangladesh being a *Sunni* country, the Islamic Revolution in Iran had an immense impact on its Muslims. Because of the Bengali nationalism and Muslim identity fought during the liberation war, they later tried to revive Islam due to various economic and social inequalities (Hossain, 2012). Thereafter, the Islamist party like JeI gained more power during that time. Especially in the mid-1980s, a lot of Islamic institutions, organizations, and political parties rose with an Islamic ideology and specific agenda that Bangladesh had seen. It is challenging to find out the actual number of political parties during that time, but the election commission gives an estimate that Islamic parties have been steadily growing since 1979. Ali Riaz traces out that the rapidly growing Islamic party was based on Islamic ideology mainly on the basis of four major factors. 'Such as the i) Bangladeshi ruling classes' hegemony dilemma – both civilian and military; ii) the military regimes' post-1975 legitimacy crisis; iii) the secularist parties' politics of expediency; iv) and civil society's unsuccessful resistance these elements contributed to the emergence of religious rhetoric in political discourse, allowing Islamist parties to become a significant power in the Bangladeshi political system' (Riaz, 2012). Those factors are influenced to make a new Islamic party who are consisted of Islamic fundamentalist ideology and tries to spread the ideology in a powerful way. Alongwith this, these Islamic political parties also patronized the Islamic militant group. Bangladesh's IEGs and ruling parties severely influenced religious extremism and Islamic militancy by making their various policies and religious educational institutions. The 'Five year Plan' (FYP) of Bangladesh has constructed the

Islamic society and monopolized the development of *Ummah* through Islamic values, education and culture. FYP funding for religious institutions' activities provokes religious extremism and militancy. Islamic institutions like *Aliya Madrasa* which is basically building upon the Islamic faith, norms and values (Hasan, 2020). The government supported those schools, and they are spreading religious extremism in society.

As like as the JMB gang and another extremist group, 'Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh' (JMJB), working as its collaborators, led by Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, established a reign of deadly terror in the northwestern region of Bangladesh. Moreover, the group detonated more than 450 bombs across Bangladesh and carried out suicide bombings in many places. When the JMB leaders were arrested in late 2006, according to their information, the organization used its technical and financial support to attract educated youth and provide them with advanced training and arrangements (Riaz, 2016). Later, these groups, JMB, JMJB and Harakatul Jihad Bangladesh (HJB), all started criticizing the secular government of Bangladesh and questioned its legitimacy. They oppose the democratic political process and speak of Islamic rule.

Ever since the Ershad government declared Bangladesh an Islamic state through the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution (Article 2, Clause A), the rise of extremism in Bangladesh has been robust (The Constitution, 5). About 88% of the people in Bangladesh are now Muslims, including different sections, such as Shia, Sunni, and Ahale-Hadith. The most extremist of these groups is Wahhabism, in which the majority believes in the Sunni ideology. And they are the ones who cause the violence. The factor behind this violence works; it is not possible through a specific factor. Cultural, social, political and human variables also act as factors that push people towards violence (Allan et al., 2015).

### Islamic Theology:

Rules and regulations of Islam are closely connected to Islamist extremist groups. Islamist violence is now crossing intercontinental lines in a world where Islamists face daily challenges from classical and modern cultures and lifestyles in an expanding global and computerized society. Simultaneously, IEGs build networks and broadcast their heinous crimes through the same process of globalization of media and technology, producing a spectacle to attract a segment of the Muslim young. Islamists have frequently targeted atheist bloggers, secular writers, LGBT rights advocates, and other "blasphemous persons," as evidenced (The Daily Star, 2015). Because blasphemy substantially affects the legitimacy and essential views of religion across Muslim society, that's why in Quran refers to the Verse Al AHZab 33:61: which apparently shows that whoever will defame the Prophet, she/he must be killed (Ashraf, 2021).

لَيَقْتُلُونَكَ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ وَيَسْتَنَافُونَكَ مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ [They will be reviled from all sides and viciously murdered wherever they are apprehended]

Islamists' robust claim on the issue of blasphemy indicates their breakdown of authority and insecurity. Islamists' uneasiness stems from the conviction that if severe action is not taken towards rebellious, unfaithful, and blasphemous individuals, blasphemy will become the standard and precedent in society, challenging the basic foundation of religious beliefs upon which Islamist theology is founded (Ashraf, 2021).

IEGs are introducing *Jihad* in the name of God against the blasphemous person. "The word "jihad" means "struggle" or "striving" (in the way of God) or to work for a noble cause with determination; it does not mean "holy war" (war in Arabic is *harband* holy is *muqadassa*)" (Knapp, 2003). In Islamic laws, the concept of the idea basically comes from the based on Quran and Hadith. The term jihad "comesform of isimmasdar of jaahada, yujaahidu, mujaahadatan and hihaadan which means (Work whole heartedly)" (Mansur, 2000 as cited as Ramlan et al., 2016, for details, see page number, 35). The concept of Jihad can



be notified as zeal or an immense effort in another way (Gafur, 2005). According to Islam, Jihad is one of the main pillars through which religious practices are maintained and the principles of Islam are established. Jihad in Islam is an honour and glory that every Muslim can achieve through Jihad. That is why it has been made obligatory in Islam. If any Muslim nation abandons Jihad, they will be disrespected by Allah, humiliated and ridiculed by their enemies, and ruled by their enemies. (Ramlan et al., 2016). And Jihad must be done and followed by every Muslim, because of which Allah has spoken about Jihad 41 times in different places in the Holy Quran.

Aftermath, Jihad is a fundamental issue in Islam, and it is deeply involved in blasphemy. Since Jihad is against the enemies of Islam, those who deviate from the religion are also enemies of Islam, according to Islam. Islam has said it will take a strong stand against degrading or blasphemous people. As such, when someone mocks Islam, Islamists attack them physically and mentally, and they see it as part of Jihad. Further more, Jihad is closely linked to violence since it means violent war. That is why when someone sneers or criticizes Islam and the Prophet on social media, extremists attack and cause violence. So since Jihad is a core ideology, it helps a lot to create violence.

### **Socio-Economic Condition:**

The poor economic outlook is constantly associated with tensions that range from micro-interpersonal to more extensive national existence. Poverty, unemployment, comparative hardship, and the terrible effects of the lowest living quality in Bangladesh indeed feed the formation of Islamist extremism to some degree. Bangladesh has 162 million people, making it the world's tenth-largest populous nation (World Bank, 2020). According to data from 2020, about 61.8 percent of the population lives in rural areas (World Bank, 2020). Around 31.5 percent of the whole population lives in poverty, with more than 14.3 per cent (14 million) suffering from absolute poverty of various degrees (World Bank, 2020). Despite terrible political conflict and violence in 2013, the country's economic growth has remained at around 6%, much below the objective of 7.2 percent for FY 2014 (Khatun, 2014). However, growth is generally constrained inside urban regions, with the majority of expansion occurring in two cities with unregulated private sectors. It expands the economic divide between urban elites and the vast majority of the population and youth inequities in educational institutions. Other reasons contributing to the emergence of Islamist radicals in the country include social marginalization and unbalanced resource allocation between rural and urban people. As a result, Islamist extremist has a larger pool of potential recruits.

Moreover, Bangladesh's unemployment rate was estimated to be at 5.3 percent in 2020. Bangladesh's unemployment rate has been stable at around 4.3 percent since 2010, following a decline from 2010 to 2011 (O'Neill, 2022). People are motivated to participate in various violent actions due to tremendous poverty and unemployment. Extreme religious organizations such as JMB, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, and others can readily inspire these people who are struggling. These militant organizations persuaded and then recruited underprivileged and jobless people, especially the young, to carry out violent protests and operations against the country's structure of politics and blasphemous.

### **Conflict of Culture and Common Islamic Interest:**

In Bangladesh, the question of Islam is complicated, delicate, and complex. It has transformed Bangladeshis' sense of patriotism into a schizophrenic dualism fueled by the conflict between their collective personality's cultural and religious parts (Riaz, 2017). On a bigger scale, the Bangladeshi people are influenced by cultural and ideological strife. For example, anti-Islamic cartoons and films created in the West substantially encourage Islamist extremism to engage in deadly acts. Behind the scene, Bengali Muslim culture is very complex. S. Ikram, a Muslim thinker who is basically a proponent of Bengali Muslim culture, thinks that Bengali Muslim culture is also formed on the basis of geography and

politics. He claimed that at one time, Bengali Muslims and Hindus used to have Mahabharata in their house, and they all used to read it, and no Muslims forgot their Allah and Prophet. (Ikram & Embree, 1964 as cited as Khan, 1985, for details, see page number, 838). However, there is a massive difference between Bengali Muslims and Hindus in modern society. At present, the cultural conflict between Muslims and Hindus has turned into politics. Bangladeshi Bengali Muslims, especially the Wahhabis, hate other religions and cultures to an extreme. As the fundamental of Islamic ideology and culture, only Islam is the true religion globally, and it has to obey and establish its culture and ideology. Thereby, the cultural conflict between Hindus and Muslims has become more apparent, and this might be the factor to create violence in some cases.

Moreover, there seem to be a number of similar Islamic reasons, including the long-running conflict between Israel and Palestine, the Kashmir problem, and the insurrection in Chechnya, among others. Islamic nationalism is now at the heart of these issues. Islamic extremist organizations in Bangladesh use these causes or remnants to legitimize their activities against the general public. They attract followers by instilling aggressive Islamic principles based on a ‘crisis in Muslim,’ as they refer to it. For example, In 2020, when a cartoon of a gentleman prophet came to France, the extremist Muslims of Bangladesh got excited. Furthermore, later, they moved with a call for a boycott of France (Prothom Alo, 2020). So in the name of Islam, if there is any criticism anywhere in the world or their ideology and culture are questioned, then the extremists become violent.

### **Affiliation of Islamist Political Party:**

In 1971, the Bangladesh state was founded on secular–socialist ideals, and its first constitution, drafted in November 1972, prohibited the use of religion in politics. Bangladesh proclaimed secularism to become one of its founding values and outlawed all religious political parties when it gained independence (Riaz, 2005). However, Islamists make headway due to military sponsorship and the determined strategic plan of successive military rule such as Ziaur Rahman’s and Hussain Muhammad Ershad’s, who, in their quest for political legitimacy on the one hand, and in separating the Awami League on the other, often actively or passively prepared the circumstances for the rising of Islamist extremism in Bangladesh (Rahim, 2001, as cited as Islam, 2016, for details, see page number, 28). The BNP asked for the cooperation of the JeI to form a new government after the fall of the Ershad administration and the national election of 1991. This was primarily a “mutually beneficial arrangement” between these two political groups. The BNP needed 11 seats in parliament to get a foothold in power, despite having 140 seats in parliament. They had to rely on the Jamaat for support (Riaz, 2005). Over the decades, Islamist groups in general, and the JeI in particular, have established themselves as valid political entities and have also established themselves as power players, both in terms of election outcomes and theological grounds. As a result of giving political legitimacy to Jamaat-e-Islam, they later sponsored various militant groups. The intention of which was to establish Shariya law in the country. Alongside, Islamist groups aspired to expand their dominance over conventional, rural social organizations in order to promote a certain version of Islam that would enable them to serve as the society’s primary guardian.

### **Role of Education and Governance:**

Bangladesh’s government is greatly influenced by education, which also shapes the political and social circumstances of the country. According to experts and policymakers simultaneously, there are several ways to witness how education affects governance, each of which contributes to the overall growth of the country. The “National Education Policy 2010” of Bangladesh, a key scholarly work, clarifies this crucial interaction between government and education. The primary goal of education in Bangladesh is to provide the information and abilities needed for individuals to participate fully in the procedures of democracy. Citizens who are more educated are inclined to be aware of their liberties and duties, allowing them to engage in

democratic processes actively, speak out for their views, and hold their representatives responsible. This element of education's influence on governance is consistent with the claims made by academics like Rizvi and Khan (2009), who contend that education gives people agency and makes them active agents of social change.

Additionally, education fosters inclusion and social cohesiveness, two characteristics necessary for good government. To guarantee that poor and marginalized populations have access to a high-quality education, Bangladesh's educational system has experienced major transformation. This inclusiveness promotes both social fairness and a feeling of national cohesion, which ultimately improves the stability and efficiency of government. According to Hossain and Pandey (2013), policies that support inclusive education are essential for eliminating social inequalities and fostering social peace, which strengthens the pillars of governance.

Furthermore, growth in the economy is a result of education and has a significant influence on government. A highly educated citizenry may spur economic development, lessen poverty, and open up career opportunities—all of which are strongly correlated with stronger governance. According to the "National Education Policy 2010," education is crucial for the development of human resources and promotes innovative thinking, entrepreneurship, and competitiveness in the marketplace. The government's ability to provide public services, make infrastructure investments, and address social disparities is strengthened by this economic growth, which eventually strengthens its governance capacities.

A foundational element in the creation of a successful society is the interaction between education and government. This mutually beneficial connection not only strengthens a nation's citizens but also promotes social cohesiveness and propels economic development. Unfortunately, Bangladesh's lack of strong educational institutions and efficient governing structures has led to an unsettling escalation in economic and social disparities. The rise of extremist group's forces with Islamic ideology to take advantage through the weak education system and governance which is poses a serious danger to the peace and security of the country. In order to lessen these difficulties and pave the way for a more inclusive and successful future, Bangladesh must now overcome the gaps in governance and education.

### **Lack of Education:**

Since the education system in Bangladesh is not universally one-sided, the education system here is divided into Bengali, English and Madrasa. Madrasa education is again divided into two parts, Quami and Alia. After the rapid outbreaks of terrorist activities in Bangladesh on August 17, 2005, both Islamic Extremism and madrasa education were thrust into the spotlight. As opposed to Alia madrassas, Quomi madrassas are not governed by the government and are theologically associated with the Deoband School, which influenced the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan (Ahmad, 2009). The very first Aliya madrasa was founded in 1780 under the British colonial administration's support (Nurullah & Naik, 1943 as cited as Rahman, 2020, for details, see page number, 616). The Aliya madrasa structure had to embrace a modified curriculum and accept English as a medium of instruction. Madrasas that implemented the modifications were referred to like the latest madrasas, while those that did not were referred to as ancient madrasas.

Alia Madrasas in Bangladesh have been reformed many times. The importance and acceptance of Alia Madrasa have also increased since the modern curriculum was reformed, and it has also gained appreciation in civil society (Bano, 2014). However, since 1970, Islami Chattra Shibir (ICS), the student wing of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (BJI) has been promoting its activities in almost every Alia Madrasa (Kabir et al., 2015, as cited as Rahman, 2020). The education system of Alia Madrasa was basically in line with the philosophy of Jamaat-e-Islam and its student body. While the student camp emphasizes Islam and the basics of Islam, the textbooks of Alia Madrasa also emphasize the teaching of Islam. Only English, Bengali and Mathematics are taught in Alia Madrasa through the modern curriculum, and all other Islamic

ideologies are taught in line with the philosophy of Jamaat-e-Islami (Bano, 2014).

The word Qaumi comes from the word 'qaum' (nation), and the Qaumi madrasa legacy arose as the Muslim population in British India attempted to reclaim its economic, social, and political supremacy. In 1866, the madrasa system was founded in Deoband (now in Uttar Pradesh, India). Deobandi Islam is known for its traditional conservative Islamic activity (Metcalf, 2002). The first Qaumi madrasas were constructed in Chittagong and swiftly expanded across Bangladesh. There are over 15,000 Qaumi madrasas in operation today, educating approximately 5 million students (Mamun & Shaon, 2018). The goals of Qawmi madrasa education and the mainstream education system are diametrically opposed. Madrasas are for people who want to do the religious practice.

The Bangladeshi Constitution recognizes education as a right of citizens and requires the government to make adequate efforts to promote education as a goal in and of itself, as well as a method of enhancing the economy, social equity and welfare. According to Article 17 of the Constitution of Bangladesh, it is the responsibility of the state to offer a uniform, mass-oriented, and universal education, as well as to extend free compulsory primary education to all children until such time as the law may establish (The Constitution, 17). Bangladesh's condition in terms of inclusive education is similar to that of other developing nations. Bangladesh is in the South Asian subcontinent. With a population of 160 million people, it is one of the world's most densely inhabited countries. Bangladesh is battling for universal education and inclusive education. The adult literacy rate is currently 54 per cent, with an enrolment rate of 81 per cent in primary schools (UNICEF, 2019). Where the adult education rate is 54%, a large portion is deprived of adequate education. Of this 54%, the madrasa education and mainstream education system are again in operation where the madrasa education system is purely Islamic. The fact is that a large number of adults are being deprived of education and coming from a madrasa background, and their psychological thinking is not changing at all. As a result, they started believing fake news without any verification. Moreover, since they have the basics of Islam in mind when they hear criticism in the name of religion, it becomes violent without verifying its truth. The current state of our education system bears a significant share of responsibility for the prevailing challenges. Primarily, the attainment of comprehensive adult education remains an elusive goal, as we have yet to achieve universal literacy rates. Furthermore, the absence of a standardized, universal education system has given rise to a multitude of educational pathways, including Bangla medium, English medium, Alia, and Qaumi education. These divergent avenues have, regrettably, led us further away from the pursuit of a cohesive and holistic educational framework.

## THE LINKAGE BETWEEN INFLUENTIAL FACTORS AND CASES

With regard to the securitization of mapping, conceptualizing the framework and influential factors, it will now delve more into how the violence was sparked in the first place via social media. Since the mediatization is playing a significant role in creating violence, as the media and religion mix it up and accelerate it, in all cases, it will try to find a link, relationship, or dependence with the political parties and influential factors in the context of the case studies. *Ramu, 2012*

In Ramu, Cox's Bazar, witnesses saw local crowds attack Buddhist monasteries, shrines, and Buddhist residents' homes in Ramu Upazila in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar District at midnight on September 29, 2012. In retaliation for an image depicting the desecration of a Quran being posted on the timeline of a false Facebook account with a Buddhist male identity, crowds demolished 12 Buddhist temples and monasteries and 50 dwellings. The Buddhist who was unfairly slandered did not actually publish the photograph. The accusation was false, and the Buddhist was found not guilty (The Daily Star, 2012).

### **Pabna, 2013**

This is yet another instance of Facebook misappropriation. Following rumours that a teenager from the

minority community had committed blasphemy, a mob went into a frenzy in a Hindu-dominated area in Bonogram, Pabna, Bangladesh, on November 3, 2013 (Topu, 2013). Rajib is a class X student at 'Bonogram Miapur High School' and Babul Saha's son, a bazaar shop owner. Hundreds of people descended on Babul Saha's home in Bonogram shortly after. Because they couldn't find the boy, the crowd kidnapped Babul and carried him to the bazaar. There, he and his son were threatened that they would be tried for "defaming the prophet." Despite his persistent protests that his son was innocent, Babul was beaten and thrashed violently. Some locals interfered at one point to save him and locked him in a shop. Meanwhile, another group set Babul's house on fire, which was more aggressive and vicious. Later, more gangs participated in the attack, vandalizing roughly 26 homes in the largely Hindu community (Topu, 2013).

### **Comilla, 2014**

On Sunday, at least 28 Hindu homes in Bakhsitarampur village, Homnaupazila, Comilla, were destroyed, allegedly in response to rumours that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had just been slandered in Facebook posts by some Hindus. Police detained Utshab Das and Srinibas Das over the rumours, according to Aslam Shikder, officer-in-charge of Homna Police Station; however, the two denied making any such statement on Facebook (The Daily Star, 2014). In this case, a victim filed a report with the police station. According to DC Tofazzal Hossain Miah, a special operation was underway to apprehend the perpetrators. The police and the district administration have been put on high alert. A larger police team has been dispatched to the isolated community. According to the local government, the incident was alleged to have been carried out by a religious extremist group (The Daily Star, 2014).

### **Naasirnagar, 2016**

In the same way, Rasraj Das of Haripur village in Nasirnagar posted a picture of Shiva with the Kaaba house on Facebook, alleging that some Islamic extremists had beaten Rasraj Das and handed him over to police on October 29, 2016. He was in jail under Section 57 (2) of the 'Information and Communication Technology Act (ICT)' on charges of humiliating Islam. However, several Islamic organizations staged protests. But Rasraj did not know how to run Facebook. He did not give her any status on Facebook. His Facebook account was hacked and given status. The post was not found later (Chakrabarty, 2016). Not only have these two incidents happened in Bangladesh, but there are also a lot of communal attacks happening in Bangladesh by the Islamist extremist group. But now, they have changed their approach. For this communal attack, they are using blasphemy as a tool.

The clear spectrum is that all these incidents have created violence using social media. The violence has been spread out in the name of defending Islam. All the minorities who have been attacked in the name of insulting Islam through social media were rumours. Nevertheless, the masterminders of those incidents were members of various Islamic political parties. For instance, Tofail Ahmed, who was the chairman of Bandarban's Naikhangchhari Upazila, was detained in connection with the vandalism and attack on a Buddhist mob in Ramu. Muktedir, his nephew, incited Ramu residents by displaying a doctored photo of Omar Faruk, who was an ex-member of Islamic Chhatra Shibir (Manik, 2013).

On the other hand, in Nasirnagar, the violence was organized and carried out by the extremist Islamist organizations 'Ahle Sunnat WalJamaat' and 'Hefazat-e-Islam'. Islamic terrorists utilize mosques to get Muslims together in order to perpetrate chaos on local Hindus. Evidence suggests that Chhatra Shibir, Jamaat-e-student Islam's wing, was involved in propagating hateful speech and posts on Facebook, which led to a series of attacks on Hindu mobs (Sarkar & Miazee 2016).

Giving through the question, since all the incidents are causing violence through rumours, how are the influencing factors connected with it? Initially looking at the events in Ramu and Nasirnagar, we can see that the violence that has been created using Islamophobia is inextricably linked with Islamic theology.

Because according to Islam and Islamic scholars, those who insult Islam are the enemies of Islam. They have to resist; accordingly, ordinary devout Muslims believe in it. They do not judge whether Islam is being insulted or whether they are right or wrong. Second, the social and economic conditions that drive ordinary people to create violence. When ordinary people suffer financially, they look for ways to establish themselves financially and socially. Since social status is inextricably linked with money, and then they are prepared to resort to any form of violence for money. Islamist extremist groups take this opportunity. They encourage ordinary people to resort to violence in exchange for money and, at the same time, attack minorities and take away their financial resources. Third, Islamist extremist groups present Islam as the only valid criterion and define it as a specific Islamic culture. Moreover, extremist groups try to convince the general public by describing the plight of Muslims in other countries that our Muslim brothers in other countries are not good, so people of other religions cannot be good here.

Fourth, the lack of education is being exploited by Islamist extremist groups as well. Where most of the ordinary people do not know about social media, they cannot even know how to run it, but they can easily flow by listening to others. Because their lack of education is pushing them to create violence, believing in the words of religious *Mullahs* or *Hujur*, without judging any rationality. Extremist groups have taken advantage of the legitimacy of Islamic politics and political instability. In that case, if we look at the incidents mentioned above, it is clear that Jamaat-e-Islam and members of his student organization have spread rumours on Facebook and created violence. And this Jamaat-e-Islam and other Islamic parties are spreading violence and hatred on a large scale by giving legitimacy to politics. In addition, our educational institutions are severely controlled by the Islamist extremist group. Extremist groups have branches in every educational institution. In particular, Alia Madrasa and the University have branches of student camps and other extremist student organizations- where they work to establish the rule of Islam. Besides, Islam is the only true religion taught in Qawmi madrasas, and Islam has to be established in this world. They are taught only Sharia law which makes them violent whenever they hear any criticism in the name of Islam.

Fifth, undoubtedly, the deficiencies in our educational system have made it difficult to maintain effective governance. Radical violence stands out as a particularly terrible result of this regrettable deficiency, which displays itself clearly in the shape of a variety of societal pathologies. An in-depth analysis of these incidents indicates a concerning trend in which each event may be clearly linked to failures in the area of effective governance. As a result, many types of prejudice thrive in areas where the educational system falls short in providing efficient civic education and encouraging a feeling of social cohesiveness. Extremist organizations operating under the name of Islam take advantage of social weaknesses in these spaces of unhappiness and disparity, which exacerbates the problems we already confront.

## **THE LINKAGE BETWEEN INFLUENTIAL FACTORS AND POLITICAL PARTIES**

Bangladesh still has a one-chamber parliamentary system. Two political parties such as Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) are dominating over the period. Other opposition groups have struggled to compete with these two parties on the national scale. Because residents can only elect one candidate for their district, people are much less inclined to vote for the candidates from minor parties that lack the national reach and resources needed to win, affecting the distribution of resources (Shehabuddin 2016). The other two smaller parties, Jamaat-e-Islam and Jatiya Party, have sometimes come to power in alliance with two larger parties. By the given the legitimacy of Jamaat-e-Islam and other Islamic political parties which lead to rise of extremism. The Awami League and BNP cannot avoid the responsibility for the rise of fundamentalism in Bangladesh. Although Ziaur Rahman first introduced the practice of religion-based politics, later, all the parties took advantage of it (Pattanaik 2009).

Now the question is, how are the two main political parties responsible for inciting Islamic extremists? Why are the major political parties responsible for the violence caused by social media? If we look at the above incidents, it will be clear where the links between extremist groups and political parties are. It will now focus here on three main points based on i) Islamic Sermon (*Waz or Mahfil, Khutba*), ii) Culture of Impunity and iii) Save the Vote Bank, which will prove that the political parties, including the current ruling Awami League, are also responsible for the social media violence. The influencing factors that have been discussed above depend entirely on how the ruling party controls them. The government could have controlled the above influencing factors, but they did not do so only for their own political interests. The role of the ruling party is more important than the influence factors that are responsible for the violence.

### **Islamic Sermon (*WazMahfil*):**

Firstly, the ruling party has given the opportunity to spread hatred towards other religions in the name of *WazMahfil*. This *WazMahfil* is a very old tradition of the subcontinent. This was done by people of all religions, Hindus and Muslims. Religions' public and social duties are carried out primarily through public speech. Throughout the history of Islam, lectures and sermons have been crucial to religious authority as well as popular streams of religious thinking and practice (Stille 2021). A speaker briefs the congregation of followers on religious responsibilities and heavenly instructions or implores them to be individual and societal behaviour and action, generally from an elevated position (Stille 2020). But at the present time, the *WazMahfils* that can be heard on YouTube and Facebook are spreading hatred towards others (The Daily Star, 2021). In the name of this *WazMahfil* they propagate religious theology like Jihad. Those who are mostly uneducated, who have no religious knowledge, go to this *WazMahfil*. And the educated people who go there don't have time to study religion, so they want to know it through Islamic scholars. But in this *WazMahfil* the poison of hatred is spread, which makes the common people easily excited. In 2013, for example, bloggers and writers were publicly ordered to be branded as atheists (Dhaka Tribune, 2013). Nevertheless, the government still did not tell them anything.

On the contrary, the government gave them the opportunity to hold procession meetings to demand the punishment of bloggers. They continue to spread misinformation about all these progressive authors and bloggers on social media. They even publicly threaten to assassinate progressive bloggers and writers. In this approach, they would like to take support and sympathy from Bangladesh's Muslim population. They strive to encourage and persuade the general public of Bangladesh to oppose progressive writers and bloggers with their political comments, which are pure lies and ill-intention, in order to establish political dominance over the widely accepted population of Bangladesh in the name of preserving the Holy Islam (Khan 2016). As a result, on May 5, 2013, Hifazat-e-Islam atheists staged a massive rally in Shapla Square to demand the punishment of bloggers, and the government allowed them to do the rally (Tipu, 2013).

### **Culture of Impunity:**

Secondly, the culture of impunity has encouraged Islamic extremists to create more violence. There is a massive connection between Islamist extremist groups and ruling party leaders and works. Leaders and activists of the current ruling party Awami League have been implicated in almost every incident in Bangladesh. Attacks on minorities, particularly the Chattrra League's name, come up in various terrorist attacks. Those who chant "Joy Bangla" during the day and at night again attack the minorities. On February 10, miscreants set fire to a house in Satkania (ProthomAlo, 2011); the next day in a protest, Rana Das Gupta, a minority leader in Satkania, said those who set fire to the minorities house those are chanted "Joy Bangla". During the protest, the local ruling party leaders were also present at the meeting, and they also spoke. But none of them objected to Rana Das Gupta's statement.

While allegations are levelled against someone from the ruling party, the Awami League leaders all protest and place the blame on the opposition. AL leaders said the attackers were all infiltrators but did not take

any legal action against anyone. In Satkania, and other parts of the country, there have been attacks on minorities and evidence of the involvement of the opposition and the ruling party. The government has said in a statement that action will be taken against the attackers, regardless of their party affiliation, but this has not been reflected in reality. A culture of impunity perpetuates attacks on minorities. Moreover, those who attacked on the minorities in Ramu, Nasirnagar, using fake Facebook ID they were out of justice. Instead, the ruling government gave nomination a person for the Upzila Union Parishad election who was accused of attacks on minorities.

The extremist groups have taken that opportunity; they have realized that the government can do nothing for them if they persecute minorities in a 90% majority of Muslim countries. Because they know the government is afraid of these majorities. If we look, the events of Ramu and Nasirnagar have not been judged yet. Even the police didn't accuse the other 305 people who were connected with this violence (Sarkar, 2020).

### **Save the Vote Bank:**

Thirdly, the ruling party colludes with Islamist parties to stay in power. After the incident at Shapla Chattar on May 5, 2013, the friendship between Hefazat-e-Islam and Awami League was increased. The Awami League has indulged Hifazat-e-Islam for their political interests even after inciting various acts of violence (Hassan, 2021). In this context, although the Qawmi Madrasa and the mainstream education system are completely different, the ruling Awami League has given *Daura Hadith* the same status of honours only to please the Islamic parties (The Daily Star, 2017). There is no problem in giving them honours status, but it would not be wrong to say that the government has helped them to create violence by indulging them in various ways.

The government has not taken any action against Islamic extremist speakers in various *WazMahfils*, even though they have spoken directly against women and other religions (The Daily Star, 2021). Moreover, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said in 2015 that Bangladesh would run according to the Medina Charter. There will be no law against the Quran, Sunnah and Hadith. She spokelike that at the 39th Islamic Foundation Anniversary (The Daily Star, 2015). She apparently spoke in support of the religious party and Islamic preacher so that no Islamic scholar and religious party go against her government. Since religious speakers easily influence ordinary people, she has tried to subdue them. As a result, the indulgence of the government for its own vote bank has helped them to resort to various acts of violence.

## **CONCLUSION**

The political crises that existed from the beginning of the creation of Bangladesh have not yet come out. From the then Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to General Zia, Ershad and the current ruling Awami League are also responsible for this political crisis. The way in which Ziaur Rahman initially legitimized religion-based politics in the name of multi-party democracy later had a profound effect on Bangladeshi politics. As a secular party, the Bangladesh Awami League could not get out of that influence as well. There is no denying that the Islamization that began with the legitimacy of religion-based politics is playing a massive role in the rise of Islamic extremists. Islamization has led to changes in education policy, and madrasas have grown exponentially. The madrasas have been used by Islamic extremists for their own benefit. Starting from Jamaat-e-Islam, the current Hefazat-e-Islam has also been created as a result of Islamization. In the current era of modernization, the practice of Islamization through the Internet and social media has also increased due to mediatization. Islamization is also responsible for the violence that is being created using social media and the attacks on minorities. There are also some influencing factors at the national level that have contributed to the use of social media to create violence. Observing those factors, it is clear that Islamic extremist groups are exploiting them to create violence.



Notwithstanding, among the various level factors, Islamic theology, socio-economic condition common Islamic interest, the affiliation of Islamist political parties and the role of educational institutions that have helped Islamization have also contributed to the violence. Furthermore, these factors helped to create violence only when religion was mediatized. Almost all religions are discussing their fundamental rules and regulations through social media; Islam is no exception. As Bangladesh is a Muslim-majority country, Islamic discourse has become a culture that has been going on for many years. The discussions that take place through this *WazMahfil* almost incite the common people to violence. In these discussions, Islamic speakers' warnings are given against the heretics, and even Jihad against them is advised. Therefore, when ordinary people see something derogatory on social media, they do not review it and engage in direct violence. Influential factors, as well as the responsibility for the violence that is being created through the *WazMahfil*, cannot be avoided by the political parties. Neither the government nor the political parties are protesting against the extremist statements made at the *WazMahfil*. Many times they patronize the *WazMahfil* for their own benefit. Moreover, the extremist groups are also finding the courage to incite violence because of the culture of impunity prevailing in Bangladesh. Political parties have supported Islamist political parties to protect their vote bank, and these Islamist parties have sponsored extremist groups. As a result, most of the violence that has taken place against minorities has not been brought to justice. Thus, the direct support of a political party is more important than the fact that the influencing factors are contributing to the violence. Therefore, it can be said that Islamic extremist groups and political parties are deeply involved in the violence that is taking place on social media.

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