

Country Report

Bangladesh

Muhammad Rezaur Rahman

March 2022

This Country Report offers a detailed assessment of religious diversity and violent religious radicalisation in the above-named state. It is an additional case study to a series from October 2019 which covered 24 countries (listed below) on four continents. This report was produced by GREASE, an EU-funded research project investigating religious diversity, secularism and religiously inspired radicalisation.

Other countries covered in this series:

Albania, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

<http://grease.eui.eu>



The GREASE project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 770640

The EU- Funded GREASE project looks to Asia for insights on governing religious diversity and preventing radicalisation.

Involving researchers from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, GREASE is investigating how religious diversity is governed in over 20 countries. Our work focuses on comparing norms, laws and practices that may (or may not) prove useful in preventing religious radicalisation. Our research also sheds light on how different societies cope with the challenge of integrating religious minorities and migrants. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how religious diversity can be governed successfully, with an emphasis on countering radicalisation trends.

While exploring religious governance models in other parts of the world, GREASE also attempts to unravel the European paradox of religious radicalisation despite growing secularisation. We consider the claim that migrant integration in Europe has failed because second-generation youth have become marginalised and radicalised, with some turning to jihadist terrorism networks. The researchers aim to deliver innovative academic thinking on secularisation and radicalisation while offering insights for governance of religious diversity.

The project is being coordinated by Professor Anna Triandafyllidou from The European University Institute (EUI) in Italy. Other consortium members include Professor Tariq Modood from The University of Bristol (UK); Dr. H. A. Hellyer from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) (UK); Dr. Mila Mancheva from The Centre for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria); Dr. Egdunas Raciunas from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania); Mr. Terry Martin from the research communications agency SPIA (Germany); Professor Mehdi Lahlou from Mohammed V University of Rabat (Morocco); Professor Haldun Gulalp of The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (Turkey); Professor Pradana Boy of Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia); Professor Zawawi Ibrahim of The Strategic Information and Research Development Centre (Malaysia); Professor Gurpreet Mahajan of Jawaharlal Nehru University (India); and Professor Michele Grossman of Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia). GREASE is scheduled for completion in 2022.

For further information about the GREASE project please contact: Professor Anna Triandafyllidou, anna.triandafyllidou@eui.eu

<http://grease.eui.eu/>

GREASE - Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together European and Asian Perspectives

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Socio-demographic Overview	5
<i>Bangladesh's Religious Diversity and Its challenges</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Inter-community Diversity and Discrimination</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Faith-based Education.....</i>	<i>10</i>
Historical Background of State-organised Religion Relations	12
<i>Legal Framework</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Institutional Framework.....</i>	<i>16</i>
Violent Religious Radicalisation in the Forms of Islamic Militancy, Political and Communal Violence	18
<i>Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Activities of Radical Islamist Political Pressure Group</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Communal Violence against Minorities of Bangladesh</i>	<i>21</i>
Policies and Practices Addressing or Preventing Radicalisation in Bangladesh ...	22
References	27

Introduction

Bangladesh is one of the first Muslim majoritarian countries to incorporate secularism as a fundamental constitutional policy. The journey of secularism, however, has been a tumultuous one. Immediately after forming the constituent assembly to adopt Bangladesh's first constitution, the secular and Islamic quarters appeared as rivals in the national political sphere. Despite that, secularism was incorporated in the constitution. The framers of the constitution rationalised this inclusion to reverse the damage caused by maligned use of religious politics, religious favouritism, intolerance and communal hatred persisted during the British colonial and Pakistan period. However, secularism was a relatively unfamiliar idea in the predominantly Muslim Bangladeshi society. This unfamiliarity passed mixed signals to Muslims about the place of Islam in newborn Bangladesh.

Moreover, political actors (ruling government, political parties, and Islamic groups) use this as an opportunity to reinstate religion-based politics by interpreting secularism as a competing ideology against Islamic values. This secular-Islam divide created scepticism about accepting secularism as neutral political arrangements to ensure religious liberties and equal citizenship. However, this scepticism had never become a force strong enough to replace secularism altogether to form an Islamic state in Bangladesh. The resilient presence of linguistic-secular Bangalee nationalism, the formation of strong liberal secularists, a history of syncretic and tolerant coexistence of different religious communities in society has a significant role to that end. However, this is just part of the story. Political actors found it more convenient to use both Islamic favouritism and secularism interchangeably or parallelly to legitimise their political interests, including justifying military authoritarianism and regressive democracy. This opportunist use of the secular-Islam divide was institutionalised in 2011 when Bangladesh re-introduced secularism as a fundamental constitutional principle while recognising Islam as the state religion. Islamic favouritism became a formalised part of polity and governance. This unique constitutional framework of the coexistence of secularism and state religion makes Bangladesh an interesting case for the study of religious diversity and governance.

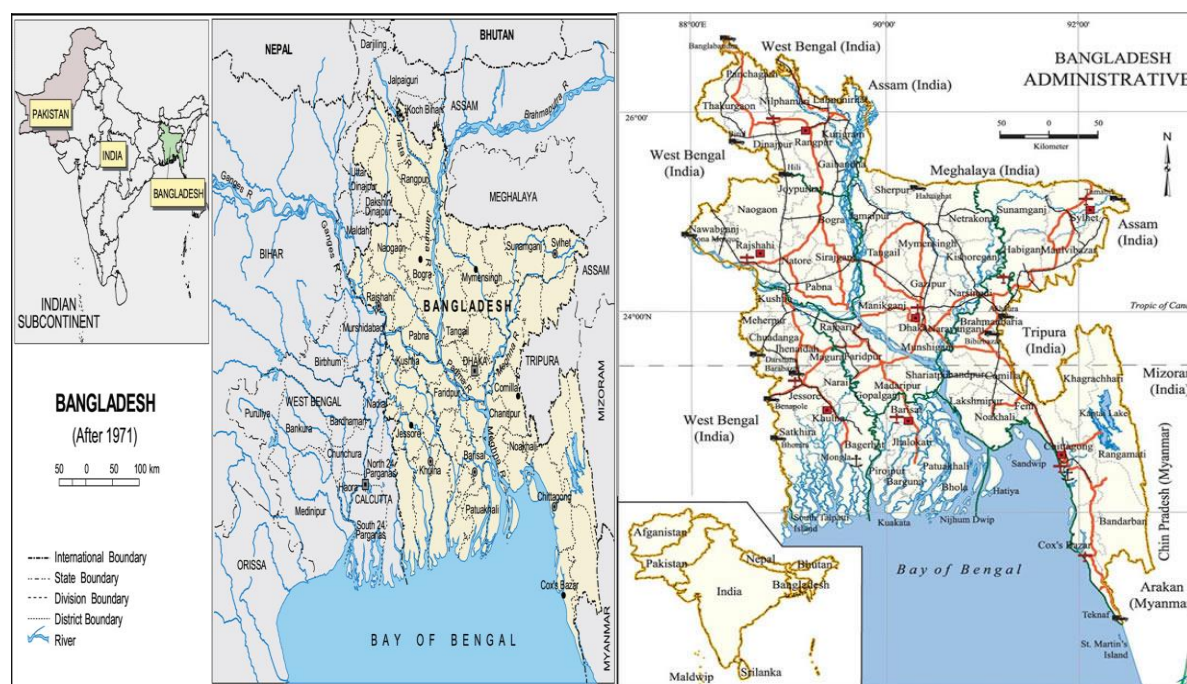
The incompatible juxtaposition has intensified division and tension between the majoritarian Muslims and minorities, and liberals. Although the government continued to use secular rhetoric of neutrality and equal citizenship to govern religious diversity and expressed a zero-tolerance policy against communal violence and Islamic extremist and militancy, these extremisms continue to persist.

This report unpacks the above issues in the following manner: it begins with a brief overview of socio-demographic data focusing on the religious group. The report then outlines the historical background that shows how politics of secularism-Islamism shaped state-religion relations. This part is followed by the contemporary arrangement for governing religion and religious diversity. The report then focuses on the issue of contemporary challenges of radicalisation in Bangladesh and policies and practices to prevent such radicalisation.

Socio-demographic Overview

The People's Republic of Bangladesh is a sovereign country in South-central Asia. Bangladesh is a post-colonial state. It was under British colonial rule. After the partition of India in 1947, it became part of Pakistan. In 1971, Bangladesh became independent from Pakistan after nine months of the bloody liberation war.

Figure-1: Bangladesh's Political map (after 1971) and current administrative map



Source: Government of Bangladesh, 'Political Maps of Bangladesh', available at: <http://dSPACE.lms.pmo.gov.bd/bitstream/123456789/331/1/Political.gif>, accessed 22 February 2022; Banglapedia, 'Bangladesh', available at: <https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Bangladesh>, accessed 22 February 2022.

Bangladesh shares boundaries with India on three sides (North, West, and East) and Myanmar in the East. Bangladesh is a small country with an area of 147,570 sq. km. It is the 8th most populated country globally¹, with a population of 164.6 (BBS, 2019) million (82.4 million male and 82.2 million female). Bangla is the constitutionally declared official language of Bangladesh.²

Bangladesh is a democratic republic with a unitary form of government. Bangalee nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism are the constitutionally declared fundamental principles of the state policies and part of the basic unamendable constitutional basic structure. However, Bangladesh's constitution also recognised Islam as the state religion.

¹ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/>, accessed 20 January 2022.

² Art. 3 states that the state language of the Republic is Bangla, *the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*.

Bangladesh is an ethnically homogenous country with approximately 98 percent population belonging to Bangalee ethnolinguistic group. But there are approximately 54 indigenous communities in Bangladesh, although the national census in 2011 reports 27 communities (Chakma and Chakma, 2021). These communities are concentrated in the northeastern part of Bangladesh and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region (ibid).

The 2011 census report estimated the number of indigenous populations to be 1,586,141, which is 1.8 per cent of the total population of Bangladesh (BBS, 2011). However, the number is claimed to be higher than (around 5 million) the official census (ibid). The indigenous peoples of Bangladesh have distinct socio-cultural and linguistic identities than the dominant Bangalee ethnolinguistic group. The indigenous peoples belong to different religious groups, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and animism.³ There are at least 35 different indigenous languages (ibid), though they have not been recognized as the official languages of Bangladesh.

It will not be an overstatement to say that the indigenous peoples have been the victims of the politics of Bangalee nationalism (Mohsin, 1997). The constitution identifies Bangladesh as the Bangalee nation and define nationalism based on language and culture of the Bangalees⁴ without recognizing these indigenous groups. Even in determining the nature of citizenship, there is a clear presence of nationalist hegemony as it recognizes Bangalee nationals as 'Bangalees', whereas others as 'Bangladeshies'.⁵ The final piece of majoritarian nationalistic dominance has been reflected through the non-recognition of these communities as 'indigenous' by the government of Bangladesh. The constitution only recognized these communities as 'the tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities'.⁶ This way, the provision has only encapsulated the ethnocultural aspects of their indigenous identity while disregarding the economic and political aspects related to that. (Chakma and Chakma, 2021).

Bangladesh's Religious Diversity and Its challenges

Despite being the fourth largest Muslim country globally,⁷ Bangladesh has considerable religious diversity and deep pluralism. Unlike European countries, this diversity is not the result of recent migrations or globalisation⁸ but is the result of historical invasions and rule by different nations. People from different religious communities have been living in the present territory of Bangladesh for centuries. However, before the 12th century, the dominant religions were those of the native communities: Hinduism, Buddhism, and animism practised by indigenous nations. Islam and Christianity entered into public life through major historical events: Bengal witnessed a unique Muslim

³ <https://www.refworld.org/docid/49749d5841.html>, accessed 23 February 2022.

⁴ Art. 9 provides that the unity and solidarity of the Bangalee nation, which, deriving its identity from its language and culture, attained sovereign and independent Bangladesh through a united and determined struggle in the war of independence, shall be the basis of Bangalee nationalism, *the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*.

⁵ Art 6 stipulates that the people of Bangladesh shall be known as Bangalees as a nation and the citizens of Bangladesh shall be known as Bangladeshies, ibid.

⁶ Art. 23A enunciates that the State shall take steps to protect and develop the unique local culture and tradition of the tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities, ibid.

⁷ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/muslim-population-by-country>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁸ http://grease.eui.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2019/10/WP2-Mapping-India-report-Gurpreet-Mahajan_tcm.pdf, accessed 20 January 2022.

invasion in 1204 AD, leading to Muslim rule for the next five centuries, whereas Christianity came along with the missionaries as part of the colonial expansionist projects. These events gradually created diversity as it exists in today's Bangladesh.

As per the 2011 census report, followers of Islam occupy the highest number of the population with (90.4 %) followed by Hinduism (8.5%), Buddhism (0.6 %), Christianity (0.3%) and another religious and non-religious group (0.2%) (BBS, 2015). Although Muslims are the dominant religious community, each religion exhibits much diversity, thus creating a larger pattern of diversity.

Table-1: Religious diversity based on population

Religious Community	Population	Population by percentage
Muslims	130,204,860	90.4
Hindus	12,299,940	8.5
Buddhists	889721	0.6
Christians	447009	0.3
Other religious groups (indigenous, Bahais, animists and non-religious group)	202167	0.2

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2015) *Age-Sex Composition of Bangladesh (Population Monograph: Volume-9)*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

There are clear trends of a gradual decline in the number of Hindus in Bangladesh. The table-2 prepared based on the census reports from 1951 to 2011 illustrates that decline. In particular, between 1974-2011, part of the Bangladesh era, the number of Hindus fell from 13.5 percent to 8.5 percent.

Table-2: Percent of the population of different religions from 1951-2011

Religious Community	1951	1961	1974	1981	1991	2001	2011
Muslims	76.9	80.4	85.4	86.7	88.3	89.6	90.4
Hindus	22.0	18.5	13.5	12.1	10.5	9.3	8.5
Buddhist	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6
Christian	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Other	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2

Source: Minority Rights Group International (2016) *Under threat: The challenges facing religious minorities in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: MRG; Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2015) *Age-Sex Composition of Bangladesh (Population Monograph: Volume-9)*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Barkat's research shows that from 1964 to 2013, around 11.3 million Hindus have left Bangladesh (Hasan, 2016). This mass migration of the Hindu population from Bangladesh to India happened due to political persecution, communal violence, and forcible land

grabbing using the infamous Vested Property Act (also known as the Enemy Property Act) by different political party members of Bangladesh, resulting in a serious decline in the Hindu population.

The Enemy Property Act was enacted during the Pakistani era as a reaction to the 1965 India-Pakistan War allowed the government to take the property of Hindus who left the country to India. This egregious law remained in force even after the liberation of Bangladesh under the guise of the Vested Property Act and has been used, somewhat illegally, to grab the land of the Hindus by forcing them to leave the country using different means of violence (Yasmin, 2016). The right-wing/ centrist political parties were said to be responsible for this massive land grabbing and forcing an exodus of the Hindu population. But research shows that the members of the Awami League (the presumed pro-minority political party and the present ruling government) also were equally involved in land grabbing (Minority Right Groups International, 2016). Although the Awami League government finally repealed the Vested Property law by enacting a new law: the Vested Properties Return (Amendment) Bill of 2001 to prepare a schedule of the properties vested and return them to the original owner. But 'this Act is deeply flawed and unfortunately has failed to meet its promises' (Yasmin, 2016). Also, the implementation process of this law has been prolonged, and the original owners had to go through a very complicated and burdensome process to reclaim their lands.

Despite being persecuted, the static percentage of Christians and Buddhists since 1974, as evidenced from the official census reports, seems questionable. While this indicates an overall demographic increase of Christian and Buddhist population in Bangladesh, still this constant percentage invites some questions, such as whether or not the data collection and sampling process on these communities were done with due diligence, and whether or not there is any difference in the nature of persecution they face than the persecution of the Hindus, and why there is no increase at all in Christian and Buddhist populations.

Inter-community Diversity and Discrimination

In Bangladesh, Islamic ideologues attempt to classify Islam as a homogenous idea, a monolithic religion (Riaz, 2018). But as Riaz argued, 'there are various meanings of Islam and its role in individuals' lives in contemporaneous Bangladesh' (ibid). It goes beyond Sharia-based ritualistic formalism includes 'artefacts of traditional popular culture – for example, folk songs – emphasise the mystic tradition within Islam, veneration of pirs (saints) and mazars (shrines) are common practices that draw on local tradition, and the ulema in Bangladesh are adherents of various madhabs and maslaks (ways or creed)' (ibid).

In terms of ratio, the majority of Muslims belong to the Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. At the same time, a small number of Jafa'ari Shias, Ismaelis and Ahmadis (also known as Qadiani) constitute different branches of inner-Islamic minorities (UN Human Rights Council, 2016). The dominant Sunni population questions the different rituals and practices of the Shia, but they are nonetheless seen as part of the wider Muslim community. There is a prevalent perception to consider Ahmadis as non-Muslim. This made them a subject of violent extremism as they were claimed to desecrating the sanctity of mainstream Islam (Home Office, 2018; UN Human Rights Council, 2016).

Within the Hindu community, the caste system is still noticeably prevalent. While there has been no widespread incident of inter-caste violence, the Dalits continue to be the most vulnerable and marginalised among Bangladeshi Hindus. Like India⁹, lower Hindu castes identify themselves as Dalits¹⁰ or Harijans¹¹. The members of these communities under the Hindu castes system are considered untouchables.¹² Although both these terms have been in active social and political usage in Bangladesh and India, the term Dalits is more formally and legally recognized.

The Dalits are usually identified with their traditional professions like sweeper, barber, weaver, blacksmiths, fishers, goldsmiths, cobblers, oil-pressers, etc. (Ullah, 2016: 11). During the British colonial period, these people were first brought from Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh of India to Bangladesh's current territory (ibid: 55).

In Bangladesh, despite the constitutional guarantee of ensuring equality and non-discrimination¹³, Dalits face exclusion and discrimination because their caste status is traditionally interpreted as forcing them to do poorly paid and traditionally 'dirty' jobs (International Dalit Solidarity Network, nd). For instance, the sweeper communities are socially marginalised to live in dedicated sweeper colonies and unhygienic slums with limited access to the most basic amenities. Dalits often face exclusion from educational institutions and obstacles when accessing health services (ibid). Although the government provides some facilities to the Dalits in Bangladesh in terms of housing, education, and health services, there is not much effort from the government for their social integration and freeing them from the trauma of living with untouchability (Ullah, 2016).

There are denominations within the Christian community, including Catholics, Anglicans and various forms of Protestantism, such as Baptism. But there is not any known incident of intra-community violence.

⁹ The difference is that the lower castes and tribes members in India are officially constitutionally protected as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The Bangladesh constitution does not have such provisions, though they are protected under the general equality and non-discrimination clauses. Moreover, the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh do not identify themselves as Dalits or Harijans.

¹⁰ It means the suppressed or downtrodden classes. Jyotirao Phule coined the term. However, the term got its currency in the hands of B.R. Ambedkar, a Dalit himself, who was the chairman of the Indian Constitution Drafting Committee and Justice Minister of newly independent India.

¹¹ It means the Children of God. Poet Narsinha Mehta first coined the word. But the word was popularized by M.K. Gandhi to identify as so-called untouchables. Gandhi found the term 'untouchables' to be pejorative, so he wanted a more dignifying and uplifting term to identify these people (Ullah, 2016). However, Ambedkar did not agree with Gandhi's idea of identifying these people as Harijans and preferred Dalits because it reflects the true essence of their identity and the discrimination/suppression experienced by them.

¹² The Indian constitution abolished the issue of untouchability and any practice related to it, see Art. 17, *Constitution of India*.

¹³ Art.27 states that All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law; Art. 28 provides that (1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. (2) Women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life. (3) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment or resort, or admission to any educational institution. (4) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making special provision in favour of women or children or for the advancement of any backward section of citizens, *the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*.

In terms of inter-faith attitude, the relationship among different religious communities is not hostile. But due to the increased use of religion for politics and the rise of reactionary extremist Islamic forces making the broader aspiration of achieving interfaith harmony and peaceful coexistence very difficult.

Faith-based Education

In Bangladesh, faith-based education is imparted through government institutions and private initiatives. As part of the right to education, different religions are taught in schools as a separate subject named Religious and Ethical Studies under the secular national curriculum, supervised, monitored, and regulated by the government institution named National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). The NCTB offers subjects for Muslims, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian students. However, this religious education is not equally accessible to students of minority communities (Baul and Kanta, 2021). This is partly because the government does not appoint an adequate number of teachers who are experts in teaching Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity (ibid). There are instances when the Buddhist and Christian students are forced to take Islamic studies or Hinduism (UN Human Rights Council, 2016: 13). In Bangladesh, there are both secular educational institutions and institutions exclusively for faith-based Education for all religions (ibid).

Table-3: The number of educational institutions in Bangladesh

Type of Institution	Number of Institution	Teachers	Students
Primary	133901	623964	17251350
Secondary	20467	243880	10330695
College	4419	120934	3872960
Madrasah	9303	113761	2453364
Professional	877	10816	168469
Teacher's training	216	2700	35071
Technical vocational	5897	34716	891964
University ¹⁴	151	31594	4434451

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2019) *Bangladesh Statistics 2019*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

The Islamic faith-based education system, known as Madrasah, has been developed and formalised extensively at the same level as the secular education system in Bangladesh. Madrasah education in Bangladesh is of two kinds– Alia and Qawmi. Alia Madrasah is a government-regulated and funded education system. they are regulated by a separate government institution named the Madrasah board. The Alia madrasa system in Bangladesh provides five levels of Education, namely: Ebtedayee (primary), Dakhil (secondary), Alim (higher secondary), Fazil (Bachelor), and Kamil (Master) (Roy, Huq and Rob, 2020).

¹⁴http://ugc.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/ugc.portal.gov.bd/annual_reports/0b944cc5_aa77_44_b7_b1db_cc1a20e0eb37/2021-09-08-06-49-e0bf991565e624555d9915b54629624d.pdf, accessed 20 January 2022.

In addition to government-regulated Madrasah education, many private institutions offer traditional Islamic teaching to Muslim boys and girls. These are known as Qawmi Madrasah. These educational institutions offer education on Islam, including Arabic language, Quran recitation, elementary Bengali language and simple arithmetic (Mizan and Rahman, 2014). Mostly, these institutions are residential and attached to a Masjid (Mosques) (ibid). The Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board does not regulate the Qawmi madrasah.

The Madrasahs have been seen as the source of harbouring extremist views against religious minorities or atheists/agnostics and are also considered the source of most Islamic militants (Mahmud and Islam, 2018). However, this contention has been strongly questioned in recent research on Islamic militancy in Bangladesh (Riaz, 2016). However, as per the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion report, 'the spread of madrasahs, particularly those not operating in line with the national curriculum, seems to be the main source of anxiety among religious minorities' (UN Human Rights Council, 2016).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, under its Hindu and Buddhist Religious Trusts, provides temple and Buddhist Pagoda based pre-school and religious education to children as well. Also, Ministry's Christian Welfare Trust provides training to youth students on ethics and morals.¹⁵ However, this government-funded faith-based education has not been adequately formalised like Madrasah education and is alleged limited and inadequate in providing proper faith-based education.

Independent educational institutions also provide exclusive and mixed (secular-religious) education for other major religious communities. International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) provides exclusive faith-based residential education for Hindu children from the age of 5-15 years under its Gurukul and temple-based education program (Roy, Huq and Rob, 2020: 15). Bangladesh Buddhist Association and Moanoghar (Chittagong Hill Tracts based socio-educational organization) provide both secular and Buddhist education in Bangladesh. Exclusive Buddhist education is provided in different Buddhist monasteries and Pali colleges.¹⁶

Although the Christian community is one of the smallest communities, the mission-based educational institutions have a strong presence in Bangladesh. Some of the key facilitators of these educational institutions are the Bangladesh catholic education board trust, Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha, Church of Bangladesh. These educational institutions are well-revered among all religious communities for providing quality national curriculum-based education. These educational institutions also provide a different level of religious education, including Sunday schools, B.Th. and M.A. in Christian Studies, etc. (Roy, Huq and Rob, 2020: 11).

Although the national census reports do not provide the exact number of the other faith-based educational institutions, independent research conducted by (Roy, Huq and Rob, 2020) provides some idea about the number.

¹⁵https://mof.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/mof.portal.gov.bd/page/77cff797_364a_448b_9e60_e12984ac2f9c/135_Religious_English.docx, accessed 20 January 2022.

¹⁶<https://www.bbsbd.org/chittagong-buddhist-monastery/school-college.html>;
<https://www.moanoghar.org/pali-college>, accessed 22 January 2022.

Historical Background of State-organised Religion Relations

The liberation war of 1971 was not fought only for socio-economic emancipation but also to protect the secular cultural identity from the West Pakistani ruler. 'It was this territorial nationalist identity which united the people of this region irrespective of their religious differences to stand together and fight for their democratic rights and national freedom' (Ahmed, 1994). 'After the independence of Bangladesh, Bengali nationalism, a purely secular concept', was proclaimed as the basis of the state' (ibid). It became a key and a constitutionally entrenched state policy by adopting the first constitution in 1972.

Under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Constitution of Bangladesh was finally adopted on November 4, 1972. In particular, secularism was adopted because political religion resulted in enormous political upheaval and communal violence. Moreover, it was necessary to bar religion from occupying the political space within Bangladesh to solidarity with multi-religious and cultural identities. Consequently, to ensure this secular constitutional order, the Awami League (AL) government banned all pro-religious political parties under the constitutional mandates (Riaz, 2004: 5). The political strategy of AL was to gain popular support by establishing an ideological hegemony based on linguistic Bangalee nationalism and secularism. Political analyses show that gradually AL started losing popularity for failing to ensure steady economic success, deteriorating law and order, corruption and favouritism (Riaz, 2008: 9). AL's secular-nationalist ideological hegemony thus needed to be substituted with stronger rhetoric.

For this reason, Mujib (then President of Bangladesh), despite being a strenuous supporter of secularism and opposed to the use of religion, started using pro-Islamic statements in his speeches (such as stating that he was proud to be Muslim and that Bangladesh is the second largest Muslim country). Mujib was also recorded to have claimed that secularism, as reflected under Art 12 of the 1972 Constitution of Bangladesh, did not imply the absence of religion (Riaz, 2004: 5). This was the beginning of the infiltration of religion into Bangladeshi politics.

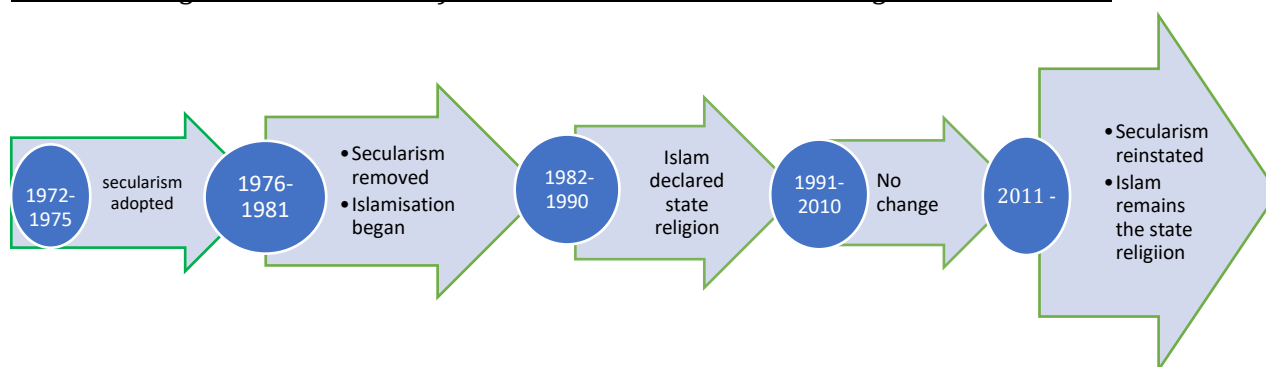
Historical narratives and later-day political analysis note that Mujib tried to present secularism as 'equal respect', 'non-communalism' and 'tolerance' as opposed to 'non-religiosity or separation of state and religion' as a strategy to secure economic and political cooperation; since denial to recognize Bangladesh's sovereignty by the pro-American and Middle Eastern countries had been affecting the flow of international aid to and trade of Bangladesh (Hossain, 2013).

Following the assassination of Mujib in 1975, Bangladesh witnessed several coup d'états, and eventually, in 1976, General Ziaur Rahman (Zia) assumed power and declared Martial Law in Bangladesh. This was the turning point towards the formal introduction of religion into politics through the constitution. To legitimise his usurpation, Zia targeted the constitution to attract the majority of Muslims of Bangladesh (Riaz, 2010: 45, 48). In 1977, Zia amended the governing principles of the constitution and made some significant changes: the introduction of Bangladeshi nationalism in place of Bangalee nationalism to distinguish people of Bangladesh from Indian Bangalees who are mostly

Hindus; replacing secularism with absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah; defining socialism as a means to achieve economic and social justice (analogous to the social justice concept of Islam); and, finally, inserting the Islamic invocation *bismillah-ar-rahman-ar-rahim*¹⁷ on the top of the preamble of the Constitution (Riaz, 2004: 20). Later, having formed his political party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and becoming president by means of a rigged election (Riaz, 2010: 48), Zia removed the ban on the pro-religious political parties through the 5th amendment to the constitution, which facilitated his alliance with pro-Islamist political parties to ensure his rule. Zia was assassinated in 1981 and succeeded by General Hossain Muhammad Ershad in 1982. Ershad went one step further, and, for the first time, Bangladesh had a state religion (Islam) by way of the Eighth Constitutional Amendment introduced in 1988.

While Zia's measures to use Islam can be seen as a strategy to achieve legitimacy for his apparently illegitimate reign and beginning of the process of Islamization. However, the large-scale Islamization happened during Ershad's regime. He undertook several initiatives to impose Islam on secular Bangalee culture (e.g., banning the drawing of Alpona¹⁸ in the Language Martyr's Day observation because of its similarity to Hindu/Indian culture) (Siddiqi, 2011: 7, 19; Mizan, 2015). Ershad eventually had to relinquish his position in the face of a massive anti-autocratic movement in the 1990s. However, despite the reinstatement of democracy, Islamic components inserted into the constitution were never removed. Both BNP and AL showed an inclination towards forming alliances with the Islamist political parties (Riaz, 2004: 46). Moreover, during the martial law periods and subsequent democratic regimes, another factor became increasingly noticeable: heightened violence against religious minorities of Bangladesh. The constitutional accommodation of Islamic features continued until the 15th Constitutional Amendment, passed in 2011, reinstated secularism.¹⁹ But it did not remove Islam as the state religion and Islamic invocation 'Bismillah-ar-Rahman-ar-Rahim' over the preamble.

Chart-1: Bangladesh's evolution from secular to Islamic ethnoreligious nationalism



¹⁷ In the Constitution of Bangladesh, this Islamic invocation has been translated as 'In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful)/In the name of the Creator, the Merciful'. It is a verse of Sura An-Naml (27:30) from the Holy Quran. In Islam, it is mandatory to begin any auspicious occasion by reciting this verse to show the utmost allegiance and respect to Allah.

¹⁸ Colorful lines and designs drawn on the surface of Language Martyr's Altar.

¹⁹ The amendment was passed by the parliament in line with the directions of the case concerning *Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Limited v Government of Bangladesh (2006) 1 BLT (HCD) (the Supreme Court of Bangladesh)*.

While the legislature's reason for keeping these religious idioms was to recognise religion in the symbolic form, one will find a clear inclination towards political compromise if examined carefully. By adopting this peculiar Islamic secularism, the government tried to avoid agitation from the Muslim community while keeping room for political negotiation with Islamist and secular forces. But this compromise has not been successful as the Islamic-secular divide has been more intense than ever, and Bangladesh is witnessing a new wave of communal violence and violent extremism against both the minorities and secularists-liberals.

Legal Framework

Bangladesh has both constitutional and statutory laws to demarcate and regulate state-religion relations. The constitution of Bangladesh, the supreme law of the Republic, provides the primary legal framework for the state's relationship with organised religions. The constitution also has entrenched freedom of religion as an enforceable fundamental right.²⁰ Theoretically, Bangladesh is a secular state as clearly stated in the preamble to the constitution that '[p]ledging that the high ideals of nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism...shall be the fundamental principles of the Constitution.'²¹ Art 8 of the Constitution²² strengthen this aspiration by incorporating secularism as a fundamental principle of state policy (Rahman, 2020). Although the constitution does not define secularism, it delineates the means to achieve principle of secularism in article-12. It states the principle of secularism shall be realised by the elimination of (a) communalism in all its forms; (b) the granting by the state of political status in favour of any religion; (c) the abuse of religion for political purposes; (d) any discrimination against, or persecution of, persons practising a particular religion.²³

The constitutional mechanism to realise secularism is based on certain negative obligations on the government instead of positively promoting it. This is because the framers of the constitution introduced secularism not as an ideological substitute to religion or the means to secularize the Bangladeshi polity, but as a political mechanism to eliminate the politicisation of religion and communalism, which historically caused majoritarian biases, socio-political disintegration, communal violence, and religious persecution during the British colonial and Pakistani regime (Halim, 2014).

But this so-called secular constitutionalism becomes an Islamic-secularism because of art 2A, which states, the state religion of the Republic is Islam, but the state shall ensure equal status and equal right in the practice of the Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and other religions (Rahman, 2020). Thus, this provision makes Islam 'the standard', and other religions get equal status only when and if they get a treatment similar to that of Islam (ibid). This peculiar juxtaposition formalises the revelation of the Islamic public sphere as a counter-

²⁰ Art. 41 states (1) Subject to law, public order and morality -(a) every citizen has the right to profess, practise or propagate any religion; (b) every religious community or denomination has the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions. (2) No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or to take part in or to attend any religious ceremony or worship, if that instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own, ibid.

²¹ Preamble, *Constitution of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh*

²² "The principles of nationalism, socialism, democracy and secularism, together with the principles derived from those as set out in this Part, shall constitute the fundamental principles of state policy, ibid, Art. 8.

²³ Art.12, ibid.

public sphere and thus, fortifies an already existing secular-Islam divide. This legal framework also reflects state preferential attitude towards the majoritarian religion. The attitude has rejuvenated and implicitly contributed to the rise of Islamism, often in a violent form

There are many statutory laws, both civil and criminal, that directly deals with matters relating to religion. The Penal Code, 1860, the principal criminal law, has incorporated provisions to maintain order among religious communities and ensure religious freedom. Such as the law criminalises any act of promoting enmity between classes²⁴, injuring or defiling a place of worship²⁵, disturbing religious assembly²⁶, etc.

However, the so-called secular Penal Code also has provisions that engrained the essence of the anti-blasphemy law and criminalised activities offensive to religious morals, and some of them were designed to enforce religious morality. It criminalises hurting religious sentiments²⁷, homosexuality²⁸, abortion²⁹ adultery³⁰. Even 21st- century legislation like the Digital Security Act 2018³¹ has resulted in many criminal prosecutions

²⁴ 153A. Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representations, or otherwise, promotes or attempts to promote feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of the citizens of Bangladesh, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both, Penal Code, 1860.

²⁵ 295. Whoever destroys, damages or defiles any place of worship, or any object held sacred by any class of persons with the intention of thereby insulting the religion of any class of persons or with the knowledge that any class of persons is likely to consider such destruction, damage or defilement as an insult to their religion, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both, *ibid*.

²⁶ 296. Whoever voluntarily causes disturbance to any assembly lawfully engaged in the performance of religious worship, or religious ceremonies, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both., *ibid*.

²⁷ 295A. Whoever, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of the citizens of Bangladesh, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both; 298. Whoever, with the deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of any person, utters any word or makes any sound in the hearing of that person or makes any gesture in the sight of that person or places any object in the sight of that person, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both, *ibid*.

²⁸ 377. Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine, *ibid*

²⁹ 312. Whoever voluntarily causes a woman with child to miscarry, shall, if such miscarriage be not caused in good faith for the purpose of saving the life of the woman, be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both; and, if the woman be quick with child, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine, *ibid*.

³⁰ 497. Whoever has sexual intercourse with a person who is and whom he knows or has reason to believe to be the wife of another man, without the consent or connivance of that man, such sexual intercourse not amounting to the offence of rape, is guilty of the offence of adultery, and shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine, or with both. In such case the wife shall not be punished as an abettor, *ibid*. [Note that the husband can only bring the charge of adultery against the man who had sexual intercourse with his wife. However, a wife cannot bring the charge of adultery against her husband if he commits an offence under this section.]

³¹ 28. Publication, broadcast, etc. of information in website or in any electronic format that hurts the religious values or sentiment.—(1) If any person or group willingly or knowingly publishes or broadcasts or causes to publish or broadcast anything in website or any electronic format which hurts religious

for hurting religious sentiments through online social media activities (Amnesty International, 2021).

Bangladesh has a typical bifurcation in its body of law: the laws governing public life are mostly secular state laws, and the laws³² governing family matters, i.e., personal laws, are rooted in religions, so different religious communities in Bangladesh follow different personal laws. However, these statutes curb the right to equality and non-discrimination and allow discriminatory religious doctrines and practices to prevail. Some examples are: depriving Muslim women of equal share in inheritance, legitimising polygamy for Muslim men, no divorce and no property rights for Hindu Women, controlling interfaith marriage³³, validating child marriage.³⁴ Bangladesh does not have any uniform family code. Despite relentless demand from rights activists and civil society, no government has shown a willingness to pass such a code. While secularism remains a key constitutional principle, it does not influence the secularisations of the law through reform and amendments to curb the discriminations and anti-liberal characters of some public and private laws relating to religion.

Institutional Framework

Bangladesh has a dedicated Ministry of Religious Affairs to oversee the religious affairs to 'create a religiously balanced environment for people by upholding values and customs of all religion and ensuring freedom of religion and beliefs'.³⁵ The objectives of this Ministry are: 'building i) a society with religious values and a sense of morality; ii) development of Hajj management; iii) institutional development of religious institutions and organisations; iv) celebrating religious festivals and providing medical services, grants and socio-economic development to the needy'.³⁶ Unlike the Turkish Diyanet, the Ministry does not generally interfere with religious practices, norms, and interpretation (Rahman, 2016). Generally, the Ministry holds a liberal view on religion and often criticises extremist religious views. However, a non-Muslim has never been appointed as the minister in the Ministry.

sentiment or values, with an intention to hurt or provoke the religious values or sentiments, then such act of the person shall be an offence, Digital Security Act, 2018.

³² Muslim personal laws: a) The Muslim Personal Laws (Shariat) Application Act, 1937; b) The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939; c) The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961; d) The Muslim Family Laws Rules, 1961; e) The Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Act, 1974; f) The Muslim Marriages and Divorces (Registration) Rules, 1975. Hindu personal laws: a) Hindu Widow's Remarriage Act, 1856; b) Hindu Disposition of Property Act, 1916; c) Hindu Inheritance (Removal of Disabilities) Act, 1928; d) Hindu Law of Inheritance (Amendment) Act, 1929; e) Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937; f) Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Act, 1946; g) Hindu Married Women's Right to Separate Residence and Maintenance Act, 1946. Christian personal laws: a) The Divorce Act, 1869; b) Christian Marriage Act, 1872; c) The Married Women's Property Act, 1874; d) Succession Act, 1925.

³³ The Special Marriage Act, 1872.

³⁴ The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2017.

³⁵ <https://mora.gov.bd/site/page/9f561846-1e53-4831-8f59-c3d34c2c6939/পটভূমি>, accessed 20 January 2022.

³⁶ <https://mora.gov.bd/site/page/ca60f975-f9c7-452c-9e92-37e96b6b12b4/Objectives>, accessed 20 January 2022.

The Ministry is assigned to extend cooperation, provide grants, and implement strategies for the development activities of the Islamic Foundation³⁷, Waqf Administration³⁸, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian Religious Welfare Trusts and affairs relating to their research and supervision. It is also responsible for bringing about religious harmony among the different religious groups.

While it is the mandate for the Ministry that it shall give equal attention to all religions, the activities of the government and the Ministry do not necessarily reflect that. The Ministry allocates considerable time and resources to promote Islamic related projects and works. A reflection on ongoing projects and programs of the Ministry shows that disproportionality. For example, in 2020-21, the government increased budgetary allocation by 8.17 per cent (Byron and Barua, 2021) to its existing multi-million-dollar (estimated cost now BDT 9,435 crore) project to build 560 model mosques-cum-Islamic cultural centres across the country³⁹. In contrast, no such initiative has been taken for such massive infrastructural development and institutional expansions for other religions. There are budgetary allocations for other religions, but those were mostly related to supporting faith-based education and maintaining/repairing the existing religious institutions/places of worship; the allocations already extended to Islamic institutions and faith-based education. The chief minority activist group: Bangladesh Hindu, Buddha, Christian Unity Council alleged continuous discrimination in the affairs Ministry's allocation of budget in case of the religious minorities⁴⁰ They also complained that the Islamic foundation gets more funding than other government-supervised minority religious trusts. While it is understandable to have more budgetary allocation to Islam related projects, the consistent allocations of government funds to establishing more mosques and new branches of Islamic foundations in different districts show government's focus on promoting the Islamic interest and values rather than supporting the Muslims to practice their religious freedom.

It is worth mentioning here that despite constant pressure from minority rights activities groups and other human rights organizations, these discriminations could not be effectively mitigated because of the lack of presence of minority community members in national politics and governance. Unlike the Muslims, the minorities, especially the Hindus, do not have a party, so they have not politically organized themselves. In Bangladesh, minorities votes are often given to Awami League because they are viewed as secular and non-communal. However, the Awami League's secular commitment had come under scrutiny due to their decision to keep and defend the state religion clause and their past and present affiliation with reactionary Islamist political parties and Islamic pressure groups. Although there are some representations within the major political parties and government, they are not numerically or positionally strong enough

³⁷ <http://www.islamicfoundation.gov.bd>, accessed 20 January 2022.

³⁸ <http://www.waqf.gov.bd>, accessed 20 January 2022.

³⁹ <https://mora.gov.bd/site/page/e62b3e73-e19a-4a22-95d6-e0214bbc83ea/Ongoing-projects>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁴⁰ <https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=http://bhbcop.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Rana-dasgupta-01.09.19.docx>, accessed 20 January 2022; <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/tk-200-crore-upkeep-hindu-temples-1233766>, accessed 20 January 2022.

to influence party policies or government decisions favouring the minorities to mitigate these constant discriminations.

Violent Religious Radicalisation in the Forms of Islamic Militancy, Political and Communal Violence

Bangladesh is often depicted as a country whose predominant trend of the cultural tradition is not of 'discord or conflict but peaceful coexistence of different faiths and the harmonious blending of various creeds' (Ahmed, 1994). This is because people from different religious communities have often come together for the more significant causes, forgetting the past horror of communal violence. The liberation war of 1971 of Bangladesh was one such example of religious harmony to defeat the Pakistani occupational force (Umar, 2004). However, some researchers question whether or not religious harmony or unity is indeed an innate feature of Bangladesh. Khan (2017) claims that even in the 17th century, there was a lack of unity between Hindu and Muslim communities, and also there were tensions within the same religious community, though there was not widespread communal violence. That being said, the broader South Asian historical narratives show that the coloniser, the political actors and external reactionary forces have been using religion as a tool to sensitise division and conflict among communities to achieve their vested interests. This resulted in a frequent incident of communal violence, violent extremism and overall started to forge a permanent sense of hatred and mistrust among different religious communities of Bangladesh.

For the last 50 years, the country has seen alarming numbers of religious extremism in forms of communalism, Islamic militancy, political extremism by the political pressure group(s). There may be some overlap in these different forms of extremism like minority eradication/suppression and/or establishment of an Islamic state, but in most cases, the groups initiate these extremisms have different political agenda, target groups, modes of engagement, and organisations.

The differences between these forces of extremism can be further elaborated here. The Islamic militant forces are focused on establishing an Islamic state by dismantling the existing governing structure and becoming a more significant part of Islamic Khilafat. To that end, they may attack anyone (irrespective of their religion) or anything necessary to achieve their goal. Political pressure groups share some similarities with militant groups. They also want to establish a theocratic state but reform the system despite the Sharia and Islamic mandates. In order to achieve that, they use political pressure and violence against the establishment. The communal forces do not necessarily want to establish an Islamic state, but they want to suppress the minorities to establish their religious dominance and to realise their economic and political agenda. Therefore, to understand the problem of religious radicalisation and violent extremism in Bangladesh, these three forms of religious extremism and three forces need to be discussed separately.

Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh

Bangladesh ranked 33 among 135 countries in the 2020 Global Terrorism Index.⁴¹ This could be considered an improvement as the previous year; Bangladesh had ranked 18th. But that is due to the reduced number of terrorist incidents. The fact is that militancy in Bangladesh exists in dormancy or flares up depending on the internal political situation and on action taken by the government. Bangladesh thus remains susceptible to terrorist threats because of some local and so-called international Islamic militant forces and their widespread activities since the 1990s.

The Islamic militancy takes root from the very early stage of Bangladesh. Between 1970 to 1986, the militant forces, inspired by Palestine and Libya, started to incubate in Bangladesh (Mostofa, 2021). The objective of these earlier militants was to secretly encourage people, in light of their objective, to establish an Islamic state in Bangladesh (ibid). Due to the covert nature of these activities and the apparent lack of any attacks, the identity of these militants remained untraceable till 1989. In 1989, some members of the 'Muslim Millat Bahini' were arrested, and police found passports and visas of different countries (ibid).

But the real rise of Islamic militancy happened in the mid-1990s. Since then, militant forces developed in different phases. The first phase started with the establishment of Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami in 1992. They were limited in number and power. But they set the pathway to creating one of the most notorious radical militant forces named Jama'at Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) in 1998 (Azad, 2021). They worked in a coalition with another radical group Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (henceforth JMJB), under the leadership of Siddique ul-Islam, also known as Bangla Bhai, who started causing violence in the Northern parts of Bangladesh (Riaz, 2021). Their apparent objective was to establish an Islamic state in Bangladesh and dismantle the secular governance. Between 2001-2005, JMB remained most active and caused several attacks against judges, government law enforcement forces, journalists, poets, cultural activists, secularists, lawyers, and even the general public. In 2005, they launched their most vicious attack, which was the coordinated detonation of 450 bombs in 63 districts within the space of 30 minutes (Riaz, 2016). This phase of militancy was ended with the execution of the top leader of the JMB and JMJB, but not before taking the lives of 156 people and numerous injured. Although the militancy scholar considered 2007 and 2013 the silent phase (Mostofa, 2021) due to strong counter-terrorism initiatives and speedy prosecutions, the formation of new militant force continued. JMB and other related militant organisations formed a new named Hiz-but-Tahrir, an organization connected to internationally militant forces.

The Islamist militancy resurfaced more violently in 2013, and it continued till 2016. Most of the attacks in this state were conducted by the Ansar al Islam, Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) and neo-JMB under the auspicious IS and Al-Qaeda. This is the first time the international militant organisations have shown their direct affiliation with the local militant forces (Riaz, 2016). This phase targets mostly secularist, free-thinking atheist bloggers (Graham-Harrison, 2016), foreigners, members from Shia (BBC, 2015) and

⁴¹ <https://visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>, accessed 20 January 2022.

other minority communities⁴², and law enforcement officials.⁴³ This phase was ended (in 2016) with the most intense and dramatic hostage crisis at the Holey Artisan Cafe in Bangladesh, killing 22 people, including 17 foreigners, at the hands of militant forces (Islam, 2021). From 2013 to 2017, these militant forces killed 225 and wounded 942 (Mostofa, 2021). Since 2018 the activities of the militant forces have been reduced because of the increased government action, formation of different anti-terrorist specialised forces, and social awareness. But, the intermittent attacks (Sazzad, 2019) and arrest of alleged terrorists indicates their presence.

Activities of Radical Islamist Political Pressure Group

A new source of radicalisation in Bangladesh is the Madrasah based political pressure group Hefazat-e-Islam (HI) Bangladesh. The difference between this pressure group and other Islamic parties is that mainstream Islamic political parties like Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islam, while explicitly pronounced to govern the country based on Sharia, do not deny the constitutionalism or democratic process of governance altogether. They have allied with major political parties like the Awami league or Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) for democratic elections and other government oppression. However, HI has shown dissatisfaction towards the present secular system of government, often through violent means.

They explicitly appeared in the political sphere on 5 May 2013, when a few hundred thousand students and teachers of different Qwami madrasah marched to Dhaka and assembled to fulfil their 13-point demand. The demands include: restoring complete faith and trust in the Almighty Allah instead of secularism in the constitution, passing anti-blasphemy law to prosecute defamation against Islam, stringent punishment for atheist bloggers for criticising Islam, stopping free mixing of women and mandating wearing Hijab for them, stop erecting sculptures and statutes, declaring Ahmadis as non-Muslims, etc. They threatened to keep occupying the Dhaka roads if their demand were not fulfilled. The police later used lethal forces that caused several casualties.⁴⁴ Their 13-point mandates have elements that would dismantle the secular character of the religion and secular governance system, and individual freedom. Those demands were not fulfilled directly by then ruling government: Awami League. The Awami government eventually started maintaining friendly relations with this radical group. One of such examples was the personal attendance of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in their Shokran Mahfil, where she was declared as Qawmi Janani (mother of the nation) for fulfilling some of their demands (Shaon, 2018). Also, government frequent arrest and prosecution of atheist bogglers illustrate government acquiesce towards their demands. Since then, HI has become an apparent anti-secular force that uses its large number of followers to pressure the government on any anti-Islamic action in their eyes. Recently, they started to spread interest from local to international issues. In 2021 (from 27-28 March), HI protested against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the so-called anti-Muslim Hindu leader, visiting Bangladesh. The protest quickly turned violent when Hi members set fire and vandalised different buildings and establishments in Dhaka, Chittagong, and other

⁴² <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/26/world/asia/bangladesh-suicide-bombing.html>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁴³ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-attack-idUSKBN16W0MU>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁴⁴ <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/22-more-killed>, accessed 20 January 2022.

districts. Several people died during the violent protest.⁴⁵ Although several HI personnel were arrested; HI remains a significant threat to Bangladesh's secular public sphere and polity.

Communal Violence against Minorities of Bangladesh

The issue of communal violence is the most frequent form of religious extremism in Bangladesh. The seed of communalism precedes Bangladesh. The divide between Hindus and Muslims started with the British coloniser's infiltration of religion-based politics. This divide caused one of the worse incidents of communal violence after the partition of India in 1947. However, Bangladesh adopted a secular and anti-communal policy in the constitution to eliminate the malevolent effect of communalism, which did not work well. The different political regimes in Bangladesh had continued colonial legacy of using religion in politics to gain the support of the majoritarian Muslims. This preferential treatment towards Islam created a sense of the dominance of Muslims over other minorities of Bangladesh. This dominance is often manifested through violent means even today.

Communal violence is a common and major issue in the broader South Asia. But the nature of communal violence in Bangladesh is different from other countries, such as India. During the different episodes of communal violence in India, there has been high minority participation. However, in Bangladesh, in the major if not all events of communal violence were one-sided and initiated by the majoritarian Muslim without any active participation from the minority. In other words, the minorities have always been on the receiving end of the violence.

Communal violence has been manifested in different forms in Bangladesh, and it is not particular towards any minority groups either. The list of attacks is very long, but some incidents were particularly noteworthy because of their gravity and significance.

Bangladeshi religious minority communities faced aggravated violence in 1992 when a mob of militant Hindus demolished the Babri Masjid (mosque) Ayodhya (in India). This was seen as an attack on the Muslim community by some Muslims in Bangladesh. In response to this event in the neighbouring country, agitated and extremist Muslims retaliated against Bangladeshi Hindus and other non-Muslim minorities. Many violent acts were committed, including vandalising Hindu temples, attacking Hindu-owned jewellery shops, and killing and raping Hindus.⁴⁶ The Babri mosque incident exposed the internal communal hatred Muslims held against their fellow Hindu nationals of Bangladesh.

Another notable communal violence occurred in 2012 in the Ramu, Coxbazar. On September 29 and 30, a group of extremists (around 25,000 in number) 'unleashed violence on the Buddhist community by spreading a rumour that a Facebook post derogatory to the Holy Quran was made on the Facebook page of a local Buddhist youth, Uttam Barua' (Sarkar, 2020). Although the Facebook page was faked, that did not stop the communalist from attacking 15 Buddhist villages, setting fire to 300-year-old

⁴⁵<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2021/04/24/brahmanbaria-mayhem-7-more-hefazat-men-held>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁴⁶<https://web.archive.org/web/20121018084907/http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country%2C%2CMARP%2C%2CBGD%2C%2C469f3869c%2C0.html>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Buddhist temples and houses, vandalising and looting more than 100 houses in Ramu (ibid). This event was particularly significant because there was no historical communal tension between Muslims and Buddhists. Instead, the Buddhist community is known to be friendly and accommodating towards Muslims.⁴⁷ But some argue that this attack was a sort of retaliation for the oppression of Rohingyas Muslims by Buddhists monks in Myanmar.

The final notable event is also very recent- from October 2021. During ever years Durga Puja (the principal Hindu religious festival), some sporadic incidents of vandalising the idols had happened. However, during this year's Durga Puja, a rumour that the holy Quran was dishonoured by placing it in the Puja Shrine in Comilla ignited large-scale violence against the Hindu community throughout Bangladesh (Human Rights Watch, 2021). A Muslim suspect was arrested for placing the Quran to create tension⁴⁸, but this event again reminds of the persisting communal tension in Bangladesh.

Policies and Practices Addressing or Preventing Radicalisation in Bangladesh

Officially, 'Bangladesh has a 'zero-tolerance policy of terrorism' and has waged an uncompromising battle to root out the evils of communalism, extremism and terrorism from within society.'⁴⁹ Bangladesh addresses this of violent extremism and militancy by applying special anti-terrorism laws, monitoring terrorist financing, implementing preventive and proactive measures by specialised forces, and prosecuting extremist group members.

'The Terrorism Act 2009 and the Money Laundering Prevention Act 2012, along with other legislation and other strategic counter-terrorism mechanisms, have been used to a great extent to address the problem'.⁵⁰ In addition to that, the government formulated Anti-Terrorism Rules, 2013, to fulfil the purpose of the Act of 2009. The Anti-Terrorism Act 2009 punishes any person, entity or foreigner for terrorist activities if they threaten the unity, integration, public security or sovereignty of Bangladesh by creating panic among the public or a section of the public to compel the government or any entity or any person to do any act or prevent them from doing any act - kills, causes grievous hurt, confines or kidnaps any person or attempts to do so.⁵¹ Any person and entity involved in terrorist financing are also subject to punishment under the law.⁵² The Act provides capital punishment for certain terrorist activities. Moreover, in order to cope with the changing dynamics of modern-day terrorist activities, the Act was amended in 2013 to include any discussion and conversation through Facebook, Skype, Twitter or any other internet site by the terrorist person or entity or still picture or video involving their offence, presented by the police or law enforcement agency as evidence to the Court (The Daily Star, 2019). Furthermore, the Act empowers the government to form one or more

⁴⁷<https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/buddhist-monks-in-bangladesh-offer-iftar-to-needy-muslims-during-ramadan/>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁴⁸<https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/placing-holy-quran-puja-mandap-man-identified-yet-be-held-cops-2203366>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁴⁹ https://www.un.org/en/ga/sixth/70/pdfs/statements/int_terrorism/bangladesh.pdf, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁵⁰ ibid.

⁵¹ Sec. 6, Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009

⁵² Sec.7, Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009

Anti-terrorism Special Tribunals for the speedy and effective trial of the offences committed.⁵³

The Digital Security Act, 2018 provides the legislative framework to prevent, monitor and take action by the law enforcement agency regarding any militant/terrorist communication using the virtual world and social media or committing cybercrimes⁵⁴ for virtual or social media terrorism (Hossain, 2018). The law provides stringent punishment by the specialised Cyber Tribunals through a speedy trial process.⁵⁵

The Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012 was enacted to regulate, among others, any forms of financial activities that may be used for terrorist activities in Bangladesh. The Act provides the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) of Bangladesh Bank with the power to provide 'if necessary, spontaneously provide other law enforcement agencies with the information relating to money laundering and terrorist financing'.⁵⁶

The Act of 2009 and 2012 thus empowered Bangladesh Bank (BB) to perform the anchor role in combating Money laundering and Terrorist Financing by issuing instructions and directives for reporting agencies and building awareness in the financial sectors. Based on this power given by these laws, Bangladesh Bank, the central bank of Bangladesh, adopted the Guidelines on Prevention of Money Laundering (ML) & Combating Financing of Terrorism (TF) for Capital Market Intermediaries (CMI). 'This Guideline has been prepared specially for CMI to enable them to keep in place an effective preventative measure against Money laundering and Terrorist Financing related issues which leads to establishing ML/TF risks free business' (Bangladesh Bank, nd).

In addition to regular police units, several specialised law enforcement bodies monitor potential terrorist activities track and arrest potential members related to terrorism. Since its formation in 2004, the elite force Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) has been particularly active in dealing with the issue of terrorism and played an important role in arresting militants and extremist groups.⁵⁷ Also, after the Holey Artisan Bakery incident, the Bangladesh government took extraordinary measures to have a dedicated Anti-Terrorism unit (ATU) within Bangladesh police to tackle terror threat, militancy and violent extremism in cooperation with all stakeholders of home and abroad. The Unit was established in 2017 to carry out its counter-terrorism initiatives based on intelligence from different sources, and it operates regular drives with specialised forces such as SWAT, CERT, bomb and explosive disposal teams etc. ⁵⁸ In addition, the ATU also uses a 'soft approach' to sensitise students and other stakeholders against terrorism and violent extremism through seminar workshops.⁵⁹ It also uses different media to publish and propagate counter-narratives against terrorism and violent extremism.⁶⁰ However, there are allegations against these law enforcement bodies of abusing their power to conduct

⁵³ Sec.28, Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009.

⁵⁴ See generally, Chapter VI, Digital Security Act, 2018.

⁵⁵ Sec. 2 (a) and (h), Digital Security Act, 2018.

⁵⁶ Sec.24, Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2012.

⁵⁷ <https://www.rab.gov.bd/achievement>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁵⁸ <https://atu.police.gov.bd/about-us/>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

unsanctioned extra-judicial killing of alleged militants or terrorists in the name of cross-fire or shootouts.⁶¹

Bangladesh's government prosecuted a large number of militants between 2007 and 2014. Between this time, 177 militant cases were tried by the court, 51 militant leaders were sentenced to death, 178 were given life sentences, and 245 were jailed for different terms (Riaz 2016 and 2021). Many cases relating to militancy are still pending before the court. The government also banned and black listed different Islamist organisations to control their public activities (ibid). But, the prosecution and the crackdown of the law enforcement forces have reduced the rate of attack in the last two/three years, but the forces are still in operation, albeit in a dormant state.

In comparison to having a good counter-terrorism mechanism, the issue of communal violence against minority communities has always been seen as a political problem. The major political parties often blame one another for inciting communal sentiment.⁶² The perpetrators behind these incidents are prosecuted under the general criminal law of Bangladesh and not as terrorists. In the context of the October 2021 communal attacks, the government decided to prosecute the perpetrators under the specialized Speedy Trials Tribunal.⁶³ In cases of broadcasting and publishing anything in digital format, the perpetrator can be prosecuted under the Cyber Tribunal under the Digital Security Act, 2018.⁶⁴ However, prosecuting the perpetrators has not been effective as the problems lie with a deep sense of mistrust, intolerance and hatred that have been forged over a long period of time. The government seems to comprehend that point, and hence since 2018, the Ministry of religious affairs has undertaken a project on 'Enhancing Religious Tolerance and Awareness' to increase tolerance among communities.⁶⁵ However, the effectiveness of such initiatives has come under scrutiny amidst the recent communal violence against Hindu communities in October 2021.

Although there is a separate National Human Rights Commission in Bangladesh (NHRCBD), its recent bureaucratisation by appointing retired civil servants and career bureaucrats have made this a clandestine branch of the government. Since 2016, the role of NHRCBD has not been effective in addressing several issues of human rights in Bangladesh (Islam, 2020), including the issues of religious violence/extremism and minority oppression.

There is no specialised minority commission to oversee the issues of religious discrimination and communal violence. Furthermore, there has not been any noticeable endeavour to formally legislate the government's promised Anti-discrimination law

⁶¹ <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/bangladesh/>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁶² <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/political-leaders-trade-blame-over-cumilla-incident-316012>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁶³ <https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/rest-of-the-world-news/bangladesh-plans-to-fast-track-trials-against-communal-rioters-in-temple-violence-case.html>, accessed 20 January 2022.

⁶⁴ Sec.28, Digital Security Act, 2018.

⁶⁵ <https://mora.gov.bd/site/page/e62b3e73-e19a-4a22-95d6-e0214bbc83ea/চলমান-প্রকল্প> , accessed 20 January 2022.

evading demand from the minority rights-based groups and strong recommendation of the Law Commission of Bangladesh and NHRCBD.⁶⁶

Concluding Remarks

Bangladesh is a country with one of the world's largest Muslim populations. It is also of a religiously diverse and plural society with a number of religious and ethnoreligious minority communities. There are also noticeable diversities within the dominant religious group.

Secularism is an entrenched fundamental principle of the constitution. However, the constitution also has incorporated Islam as the state religion. This incompatible juxtaposition has further intensified the secular-religious divide that existed from the time of the creation of Bangladesh. Also, this divide was created and later utilised by opportunist political actors to gain political goals and create communal division.

In terms of governance of religion, the existing laws have provisions to maintain religious order and prosecute communal violence. The laws are also in calculate provisions that are evidently anti-secular and have been used to further minority oppression. There is an apparent presence of majoritarian biases from the government at the institutional level. Despite the government's claims of equality, the discrimination against the minority communities remains constant and mostly unmitigated.

The secular-Islam divide, anti-secular legal framework, disproportional institutional support from the government, and apparent government favouritism towards the Muslim community have created a culture of majoritarian dominance and gradually regressed the minority communities, secularists and liberals. Altogether these factors contributed to the intensification of communal violence, the rise of reactionary pressure groups, Islamic militancy and increased terrorist activities in recent years.

There have been intermittent events of communal violence from the early stage of the creation of Bangladesh. But, since the 1990s, there have been a number of large-scale communal riots, which was also when Islamic militant force surfaced in Bangladesh. Since then, there have been increased and frequent events of violent religious radicalisation and communal violence. In particular, hundreds of people died last ten years, and many more were injured in several attacks from Islamic militant groups. Also, there are large-scale communal attacks against Hindus and Buddhists. This decade also witnessed the creation of a new radical Islamic political pressure group Hefazat-e-Islam (HI) Bangladesh, who used large-scale political violence to defy any actions alleged against Islamic interest and showed clear enmity against atheists, liberals and secularists. They have shown a clear intention to replace secular ideals with Islamic ideology.

Bangladesh's responses to this radicalisation have yielded mixed results. There has been some success in mitigating the situation of Islamic militancy and terrorist attack due to

⁶⁶ The Law commission its report provided justification for recommending an enacting of a formal anti-discrimination law. The commission also provided a draft bill for legislature. See, <https://www.lc.gov.bd/reports/126-BB%20Act%202014%20Concept%20Paper.pdf>; NHRCBD had also proposed a draft Bill for the consideration of the legislature. See, http://www.nhrc.org.bd/sites/default/files/files/nhrc.portal.gov.bd/notices/e3fa8ca0_d236_44a8_87ec_00e88fb7b8b1/Draft%20of%20proposed%20anti%20discrimination%20act.pdf

strong applications of anti-terrorism laws, active responses from specialised law enforcement agencies, and large-scale prosecutions of the militants. However, the recurrent arrest of members of alleged militant groups indicates their dormant presence. There is not much success in reducing the frequent events of communal violence due to lack of adoption of anti-communal policy and inadequate application of laws, lack of effort to improve inter-faith relation and clear inaction of the specialised body like National Human Rights Commission, etc. Also, the government's insufficient steps to deal with reactionary forces like Hefazat contributed to the unstable situation of religious governance and religious radicalisation in Bangladesh.

The situation of Bangladesh is not too different from India's. The rise of Hindutva through the reign of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has clearly shaken the secular foundation of India. BJP has adopted policies and legislations to promote anti-secular Hindutva ideology while undermining Indian Muslim cultural practices. BJP's majoritarian biases towards the Hindu community have degenerated the minority Muslims of India. The number of persecutions of Muslims by Hindutva radicals has increased exponentially, and the culture of impunity towards these radicals are visible through state inaction.

In sum, this report explains and demonstrates that for a country like Bangladesh, where one particular religious group is dominant, the religious governance needs to be based on the ideas of state neutrality, legal and institutional impartiality and proportionality, tolerance, inter-faith trust-building and strong application of laws against any forms of radicalisation. Otherwise, the minority and liberals will continue to suffer and be persecuted on their soil, and secularism will soon become a mere constitutional ornament.

References

Ahmed, A. F. Salahuddin. (1994) *Bengali Nationalism and the Emergence of Bangladesh: An Introductory Outline*, Dhaka: University Press Limited.

Amnesty International. (2021) 'Bangladesh: End crackdown on freedom of expression online', available at <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2021/07/bangladesh-end-crackdown-on-freedom-of-expression-online/>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Azad, M Abul Kalam. (2021), 'August 17 Bangladesh-wide bombings by JMB were not a surprise package. *Dhaka Tribune*, 17 August, available at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2021/08/17/august-17-countrywide-bombings-by-jmb-weren-t-a-surprise-package>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Bangladesh Bank. *Guidelines on Prevention of Money Laundering (ML) & Combating Financing of Terrorism (TF) for Capital Market Intermediaries (CMI)*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Bank.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2011) Population and housing census 2011, Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, available at: http://203.112.218.65:8008/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/National%20Reports/SED_REPORT_Vol-4.pdf accessed 23 February 2022.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2015) *Age-Sex Composition of Bangladesh (Population Monograph: Volume-9)*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, available at: http://203.112.218.65:8008/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/PopMonographs/Volume-9_Age-Sex.pdf, accessed 20 January 2022.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) (2019) *Bangladesh Statistics 2019*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, available at: https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/a1d32f13_8553_44f1_92e6_8ff80a4ff82e/2020-05-15-09-25-dccb5193f34eb8e9ed1780511e55c2cf.pdf, accessed 20 January 2022.

Baul, Tapas Kanti and Kanta, Priyanka Bose. (2021) 'Religious Minorities, in Shahabuddin, Mohammad. (eds) *Bangladesh and International Law*, Oxon and New York: Routledge.

BBC. (2015), 'Bangladesh Shia mosque attacked by gunmen', *BBC News*, 26 November, available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-34930668>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Byron, Rejaul Karim and Barua, Dwaipayana. (2021) '560 Model Mosque Project: Rise in cost, delay by 3yrs', *The Daily Star*, 7 December, available at <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/news/560-model-mosque-project-rise-cost-delay-3yrs-2911186>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Chakma, Pallab and Chakma, Bablu (2021) *The Indigenous World 2021: Bangladesh*, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. Available at <https://www.iwgia.org/en/bangladesh/4201-iw-2021-bangladesh.html>. Accessed 20 January 2022.

Graham-Harrison, Emma and Hammadi, Saad. (2016), 'Inside Bangladesh's killing fields: bloggers and outsiders targeted by fanatics', *The Guardian*, 12 June, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/11/bangladesh-murders-bloggers-foreigners-religion>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Halim, Abdul. (ed) (2014) *Gono Parishad Bitorko (the Debate of Constituent Assembly)*, Dhaka: CCB Foundation.

Hasan, Md. Kamrul (2016) 'No Hindus will be left after 30 years', *Dhaka Tribune*, 21 November, available at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2016/11/20/abul-barkat-632-hindus-left-country-day>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Home Office (2018) *Country Policy and Information Note Bangladesh: Religious minorities and atheists*, June 2018, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/749003/Bangladesh-Rel_Mins_and_Athiests-CPIN-v2.0_October_2018_.pdf, accessed 20 January 2022.

Hossain, Kamal. (2013) *Bangladesh: Quest for Freedom and Justice*, Dhaka: University Press Limited.

Hossain, Md Sazzad. (2018) 'Social Media and Terrorism: Threats and Challenges to the Modern Era', *South Asian Survey*, 22(2): 136–155.

Human Rights Watch. (2021) 'Bangladesh: Deadly Attacks on Hindu Festival', available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/21/bangladesh-deadly-attacks-hindu-festival>, accessed 20 January 2022.

International Dalit Solidarity Network (nd) 'Bangladesh', available at <https://idsn.org/countries/bangladesh/>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Islam, Abu Sayeed Asiful. (2021) 'Holey Artisan massacre: Revisiting the descent into darkness', *Dhaka Tribune*, 1 July, available at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2021/07/01/holey-artisan-massacre-revisiting-the-descent-into-darkness>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Islam, Rozina. (2020) 'Bangladesh NHRC: Some disappointed, some angry', *Prothom Alo*, 10 December, available at <https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/bangladesh-nhrc-some-disappointed-some-angry>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Khan, Akbar Ali. (2017) 'সপ্তদশ শতকের বাংলায় ধর্মীয় জীবন: কিছু প্রাসঙ্গিক ভাবনা', *Protichinta*, 17 April, available at <https://www.protichinta.com/সপ্তদশ-শতকের-বাংলায়-ধর্মীয়-জীবন-কিছু-প্রাসঙ্গিক>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Mahmud, Tarek, Shaon, Ashif Islam. (2018) 'Do militants generally come from madrasas?', *Dhaka Tribune*, 21 January, available at <https://archive.dhakatribune.com/opinion/special/2018/01/21/militants-generally-come-madrasas>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Minority Rights Group International (2016) *Under threat: The challenges facing religious minorities in Bangladesh*, Dhaka: MRG.

Mizan, Arpeeta Shams and Rahman, Muhammad Rezaur. (2014), 'Diverse Streams of Education in Bangladesh and Realization of the Right to Education', *Jamakon Yearbook 2014*.

Mizan, Arpeeta Shams. (2015) 'Need for a Right to Cultural Identity: The Dialectics of Narrow Identity markers and Identity Crisis in Heterogeneous States', available at <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/alma/990144588340203941/catalog>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Mohsin, Amena. (1997) 'The Politics of Nationalism - The Case of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Bangladesh', Dhaka: University Press Limited.

Mostofa, Shafi Md. (2021) 'Understanding Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh', *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 56(8): 2036–2051.

Rahman, Muhamma Rezaur. (2020) 'The Compatibility of State Religion and Constitutional Secularism', *Indian Journal of Secularism*, 24(1): 30-59.

Rahman, Muhammad Rezaur. (2016) 'Secularizing the God: Developing a Sui Generis Civil Religion Through Secularization of Islam in Turkey', *Bangladesh Journal of Law*, 16(2): 67-84.

Riaz, Ali. (2010) 'The Politics of Islamization in Bangladesh', in Riaz, Ali (eds), *Religion and Politics in South Asia*, Oxon and New York, Routledge.

Riaz, Ali. (2018) 'More than Meets the Eye: The Narratives of Secularism and Islam in Bangladesh', *Asian Affairs*, 49(2): 301-318.

Riaz, Ali. (2004) *God Willing: The Politics of Islamism in Bangladesh*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Riaz, Ali. (2008) *Islamic Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*, London and New York: Routledge.

Riaz, Ali. (2016) 'Who are the Bangladeshi 'Islamist Militants'?', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 10(1): 2-18.

Riaz, Ali. (2021) 'বাংলাদেশে সহিংস উগ্রবাদের কারণ ও পথরেখা অনুসন্ধান', *Protichinta*, 31: 29-50.

Roy, Sudipto, Huq, Samia and Rob, Aisha Binte Abdur. (2020) 'Faith and education in Bangladesh: A review of the contemporary landscape and challenges', *International Journal of Educational Development*, 79: 1-19.

Sarkar, Ashutosh. (2020) 'Eight Years of Ramu Attack: Buddhists still wait for justice', *The Daily Star*, 29 September, available at <https://www.thedailystar.net/backpage/news/eight-years-ramu-attack-buddhists-still-wait-justice-1969173>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Sazzad, Sazzadur Rahman. (2019) '50 Ahmadiyyas injured in co-ordinated attack on the community in Panchagarh', *Dhaka Tribune*, 13 February, available at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2019/02/13/sunnis-attack-ahmadiyyas-in-panchagarh>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Shaon, Ashif Islam. (2018) 'Qawmi leaders back Sheikh Hasina for another term', *Dhaka Tribune*, 4 November, available at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2018/11/04/qawmi-leaders-want-to-see-sheikh-hasina-in-power-again>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Siddiqi, Dina Mahnaz. (2011) 'Political Culture in Contemporary Bangladesh: Histories, Ruptures and Contradictions' in Riaz, Ali and Fair, C Christine (ed), *Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh*, Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Ullah, Rahmat. (eds) (2016) *The Harijans of Bangladesh Living with the Injustice of Untouchability*, Dhaka: ELCOP

Umar, Badruddin. (2004) *The Emergence of Bangladesh: Class struggles in East Pakistan (1947-1958)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UN Human Rights Council (2016) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief on his mission to Bangladesh*, 20 January 2016, A/HRC/31/18/Add.2, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/56ead3294.html>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Yasmin, Taslima (2016) 'The illegalities of enemy turned vested property', *The Daily Star*, 27 September, available at: <https://www.thedailystar.net/law-our-rights/the-illegalities-enemy-turned-vested-property-1290142>, accessed 20 January 2022.

Project name: Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together European and Asian Perspectives

Project Acronym: GREASE

Project Coordinator: Professor Anna Triandafyllidou

March 2022

Document series reference: D2.1 Country Reports



This document can be downloaded from the publications section of the GREASE website at <http://grease.eui.eu/>

The sole responsibility of this publication lies with the authors. The European Union is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.



The GREASE project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 770640