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The Fifth International Conference on
The Muslim World
and the West:
Barriers and Bridges

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**WAR AGAINST TERRORISM OR AGAINST ISLAM?
A STUDY OF THE MEDIA REPORTS
ON BOMB ATTACKS IN BANGLADESH**

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INTRODUCTION:

According to many world leaders, after 9/11 the world is at war; but it is also claimed that it is not a war between the West and Islam, but is instead a war against terrorism. In response to above Muslims all over the world, however, are either silent on the issue or proclaim that it is indeed a war by the west against Islam. The world media has often tended to portray the Islamic world (and various groups within it) solely through the prism of extremism and terrorism. Muslims are looked upon as the "enemy". From barbaric, fanatic, violent and militant to being inhuman, every negative characteristic is now freely being ascribed to Muslims.

Only a few EU countries have defined terrorism in law. In Britain the Terrorism Act 2000 is the largest piece of terrorist legislation in any member state. The Act says terrorism means the use or threat of action to influence a government or intimidate the public for a political, religious or ideological cause. The action involved includes serious violence against people or danger to life, a serious risk to public health or safety, or serious damage to property.¹ The proposed EU legislation says that terrorism is a deliberate attack by an individual or a group against a

country, its institutions or its people - with the aim of intimidating them and damaging or destroying their political, economic or social structures.²

Generally, extremism should be differentiated from other non-extremists groups through their means not ends. For instance, the goal of a political party is to go to power and it is natural. But, if the same party follow the violent means instead of following democratic process it becomes terrorists and vice versa. Unfortunately, media do not keep any room for the Islamic political parties who have following democratic process or peaceful means; in fact they are merged with the "terrorists." Since both (terrorists and Islamists³) have the same goal in general (theoretically) that is to implement shariah in the society. In other words the Muslim societies divided into the two simplistic "good (or secular, moderate, pro-Western) Muslim" and "bad (or militant) Muslim" category. That means the Muslims must be either with the terrorists or with the secular-modernist.⁴ As a result, it is necessary to have the indicators to identify the "terrorists" in order to distinguish it from other groups. The indicators might be as follows: 1) terrorists do not respect the existing political and legal system of certain country or the world; 2) they are not transparent in terms of their regular activities; 3) do not have internal election and do not participate in national and other local elections and 4) most importantly they follow the violence means (such as bombing, shooting etc.) to achieve their goals. In this paper, the major terrorist activities in Bangladesh and its alleged involvement of certain groups will be analyzed in the line with above indicators. The study is based on media reports only.

A CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR BOMB ATTACKS IN BANGLADESH:

Here is a chronology of major bomb attacks in the country during the last two years:

1. January 15, 2004, a reporter for a Bengali-language newspaper is killed in a bomb attack in the southwestern town of Khulna. An unidentified man bombed to death Manik Chandra Saha, staff correspondent of the daily Sangbad, in Khulna yesterday, sparking a

- string of demonstrations including hartal in the city. Police said the powerful handmade bomb blew the head off his body. The 50-year-old journalist, also Khulna-based stringer of BBC and former president of Khulna Press Club, was heading home at Ahsan Ahmed Road by rickshaw.
2. On May 21 2004, the British High Commissioner of Bangladesh Mr. Anwar Choudhury is wounded by a bomb while praying at a shrine in the northeastern Sylhet town but his bodyguard and two others are killed and 70 injured. The Bangladesh-born envoy, barely 18 days into his new assignment, suffered minor leg injuries as the bomb exploded on impact bouncing off his belly to the tiled floor of the shrine after Friday prayers.
 3. On August 21 2004, 23 people are killed in a bomb attack on an opposition rally in the capital Dhaka. Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed escapes with minor injuries. A wave of grenade attacks on opposition chief Sheikh Hasina's rally on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday left at least 16 people killed and 200 including top Awami League (AL) leaders Abdur Razzak, Amir Hossain Amu, Suranjit Sengupta, Ivy Rahman and Kazi Zafarullah critically injured and later on Ivy Rahman died. One of her personal security staff, Mahbub Alam, 42, who stood close by her, died. The unknown assailants fired seven bullets at the bulletproof sports utility vehicle (SUV) that Hasina boarded immediately after the blasts. A bullet also punctured the rear wheel of the vehicle and there was a large hole on the rear right side of its window shield.
 4. Jan 27, 2005 - A bomb blast kills four people, including former Finance Minister Shah Abu Mohammad Shamsul Kibria, at an opposition rally in the northeastern town of Laskarpur. The four other dead were identified as Kibria's nephew Shah Manjurul Huda, 40, and AL activists Siddique Ali, 35, and Abdur Rahim, 50, of Bongaon village and Abul Hossain of Shayestaganj.
 5. Feb 5, 2005- Four journalists including Khulna Press Club President Sheikh Abu Hasan were wounded, one critically, in a powerful bomb explosion on the press club premises. The other injured are Sheikh Belaluddin Ahmed, bureau chief of daily Sangram, Sheikh Jahid Hossain, staff photographer of daily Jugantor, and Tutul

- Ahmed, staff reporter of daily Loksomaj, published from Jessore. Later on Shekh Belal died.
6. On August 17, 2005 a series of 459 bombs exploded throughout Bangladesh within forty minutes, killing two people and injuring more than 120. The blasts hit sixty-three of the nation's sixty-four districts, targeting government buildings and train stations and sending waves of alarm across south Asia.
 7. October 3, 2005 - Two people are killed when five bombs explode in three court buildings outside the capital Dhaka. Yet another incident of five serial bomb blasts at courts in Chandpur, Laxmipur and Chittagong left two people killed and 38 others, including a district judge and a policeman, injured. Some hand-written leaflets of the Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), calling for establishing Islamic rule in the country, were found at the Chandpur blast site. Two bombers held from the Chandpur blast site and one from Laxmipur said JMB, which is blamed for the August 17 attacks across the country, assigned them to carry out the bombings
 8. November 14, 2005, the Outlawed Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) has struck again, this time killing two senior assistant judges and wounding three people in a suicide bomb attack in Jhalakathi. According to them it is an attempt to force the judges to deliver judgements based on Islamic laws and until Islamic rule is established in the country. Police arrested the bomber, JMB cadre Iftekhar Hasan Al Mamun, 28, who claimed him Mamun Ali, a member of the JMB suicide squad, and seized an unexploded bomb strapped to one of his thighs along with 24 leaflets of the banned organisation.
 9. November 29, 2005 - 11 people are killed by suspected suicide bombers in the port city of Chittagong and in Gazipur, 30 km (20 miles) north of Dhaka. Nine people including two lawyers and a police constable were killed and 78 others injured yesterday in two suicide bomb attacks by Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), on Chittagong and Gazipur court premises. In the latest wave of terror strikes on the judiciary, two JMB members blew themselves up -- one near a police check-post at the entrance to the Chittagong court building at 8:44am and the other at 9:45am in a crowd of lawyers

- and their clients at the Gazipur bar association building. The Gazipur suicide bomber died on the spot, and the Chittagong bomber, Abul Bashar, died later.
10. December 1, 2005 - A suspected suicide bomber kills two people near a court building in Gazipur. Besides rickshaw-pullers and pedestrians, the reckless attack in front of the high-security office of the deputy commissioner (DC) injured eight lawyers, three journalists and five law enforcers, sending shock waves throughout the country.
 11. December 8, 2005 - At least eight people are killed in a suicide bomb attack in Netrokona town, 360 km (220 miles) north of Dhaka. A suicide bomb attack killed at least eight people in Bangladesh and wounded more than 50 in the latest in a series of deadly blasts blamed on militants seeking Islamic rule in the country. Police said two bombs exploded on a crowded street within the space of a few minutes during the morning rush hour in Netrokona, a town 360 km (220 miles) north of the capital Dhaka. They said the wounded included three policemen. Many of the victims were people on their way to work at offices, colleges and markets, witnesses said. Thursday's deaths took the number of people killed by suspected suicide bombers to 28 in three weeks, including judges, lawyers and policemen. At least 150 people have been injured.

Until the August bombings, however, the government had denied the presence of Islamic extremists in Bangladesh. The opposition accused the prime minister of avoiding the issue because two Islamic parties, including Jammāt-e-Islami were partners in her ruling coalition. Khaleda Zia insists the government's inaction was merely due to lack of information before 17th August's 2005 bomb blast. 5

A brief description of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) & Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB):

"JMB has started a new chapter in the history of extremism in Bangladesh. There is no doubt that this is the organization that is responsible for all bombings including suicide bombing. On August 17, 2005, while claiming responsibility for the serial blasts through

*leaflets, in Bangla and Arabic, left at the site of the explosions across the country, the JMB said: "We're the soldiers of Allah. We've taken up arms for the implementation of Allah's law the way Prophet, Sahabis and heroic Mujahideen have done for centuries... It is time to implement Islamic law in Bangladesh. There is no future with man-made law."*⁶

According to several sources JMB was formed in 1998 in Jamalpur in Dhaka division of Bangladesh. However, its existence came to notice on May 20, 2002 with the arrest of eight Islamist militants at Parbatipur in the Dinajpur district along with 25 petrol bombs and documents detailing the outfit's activities. Subsequently, on February 13, 2003, the JMB is reported to have carried out seven bomb explosions in the Chhoto Gurgola area of Dinajpur town in which three persons were wounded. Some reports suggest that it is the youth front of the Al Mujahideen, an organization allegedly formed in the mid-1990s but whose existence is still ambiguous, whereas others indicate that the JMB is another name for the vigilante Islamist group the Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB).⁷ However, the JMB was outlawed by the Government on February 23, 2005.⁸ Most of the members of JMB confessed to having carried out bomb blasts at several points in Bangladesh.

The JMB aims at propagating Sharia, thus establishing Islamic rule in Bangladesh. It is opposed to democracy as a form of government.⁹ The group declared the following in its leaflets written in Bangali and Arabic which were found at various bombing sites of 17 August 2005:

*"We are the soldiers of Allah. We have taken up arms for the implementation of Allah's law the way Prophet, Sahabis and hero is Mujahideen have implemented for centuries. If government does not establish Islamic law in the country after this [third] warning and rather, it goes to arrest any Muslim in charge of seeking Allah's law or it resorts to repression on Alem-Ulema, the Jamaatul Mujahideen [JMB] will go for the counteraction, Insallah".*¹⁰

The top leadership of JMB comprises of Maulana Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam alias 'Bangla Bhai.' According to media, JMB draws its cadres from universities, madrasas and people in ordinary jobs. Media reports suggest that there are approximately US\$1250 is spent on each cadre every month. There are also 1,00,000 part-timers and 1,000,000 trainees.¹¹

Jamaat-e-Islami was established during the time of British India in Lahore on August 26, 1941 by Syed Abul Ala Maududi. After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, this movement worked as an independent organization in India as well as in Pakistan. Since 1971, when Bangladesh (formerly known as East Pakistan) seceded from Pakistan and became an independent state of its own, after that this movement's local personnel formed Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB), refurbished to accomplish its objectives in this part of the world.

Since its inception Jamaat-e-Islami has been actively involved in activities through dawah as well as other political involvements such as participating regular elections, peaceful demonstrations, publishing and distributing books, pamphlets, leaflets etc. JIB played significant role in Bangladesh politics during anti-Ershad movement, a military autocratic ruler ruled Bangladesh from 1982 to 1990. According to JIB's 2001 election manifesto, "The main objective of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh is to establish a complete equitable and well-rounded social order in the world on the basis of the Quran and Sunnah uprooting all sorts of man's oppression over man including the oppressed from the world through introducing the law of Allah on His earth."¹²

In JIB election manifesto it is clearly mentioned that only Islam which is the only chosen religion of Allah, and its implementation at individual, state and social levels is the panacea to all sorts of problems in Bangladesh. Simultaneously, according to JIB it also believes that honest people who lead their life in the way directed by Allah's Code Al-Quran and shown by His Prophet (PBUH) are able to set up a balanced, humanist, exploitation-free and progressive society uprooting all sorts of persecutions, misrule, misery and poverty from Bangladesh through

establishing a competent leadership in the true sense. Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh is an organization which is pledge-bound to hasten people's economic and social emancipation, cultural prosperity, preserve history and tradition and independence and sovereignty, wipe out repression on women and child bring about welfare and freedom of all people irrespective of caste, creed, color, protect natural and human environment of the country and make it developed and implement all kinds of constructive, welfare-oriented and humanist steps.¹³

The Jamaat is an Islamic and socio-political organization to establish the law of Allah and the rule of honest men for implementing the above mentioned issues in this country through participating in politics of democratic elections. This organization does not have any interest to grab power hastily and by any means. Rather the Jamaat has been struggling in a systematic way as per its short and long term plan with a view to establishing Allah's Deen and freeing humanity.¹⁴

The above description shows the differences of both organizations in terms of their goal, objectives and methods.

Arrest of the JMB Top Leadership:

After the bombings and suicide bombings government have arrested hundreds of JMB leaders and workers from different parts of the country, but failed to arrest the two top leaders (Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bahi). On October 28, 2005, the Government announces a reward of \$152,000 for information leading to the arrest of JMB chief Abdur Rahman and JMJB leader Bangla Bhai. However, In late January 2006, reports indicated Indian police arrested Sheikh Abdur Rahman, the spiritual and ideological leader of terrorist groups Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), in the province of Bengal. But the reports were incorrect. However, the dramatic 31-hour armed siege of the hideout of Jama'atul Mujahedin Bangladesh (JMB) kingpin Sheikh Abdur Rahman ended peacefully Thursday, 2nd March 2006 morning when the country's most wanted man surrendered without bloodshed. The siege ended at 7.20am when Sheikh Rahman came out of the house, 'Surya Dighal Bari', at

Shaplabagh where he and two accomplices had been holed up for the last one and a half days. The two other accomplices were identified as Md Maejul Islam alias Hridoy Chowdhury (39) and Md Abdul Aziz alias Hanif (24). All three were taken directly to the RAB15-9 headquarters without being allowed to talk to the waiting media men.¹⁶

Dubbing the arrest of most wanted top Islamist leader Shaikh Abdur Rahman as historic event, the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia Thursday said Bangladesh has proved that it could successfully combat terrorism being touted using Islam. Addressing the nation over radio and television on Thursday, (2 March, 2006) evening, the prime minister said "this country can crush any forms of terrorism... Many militants with such stature like Shaikh Rahman still remain out of touch abroad, but security forces of Bangladesh have caught the kingpin of bomb terrorism," she said.¹⁷

However, within four days of the arrest of Abdur Rahman, Siddiquil Islam, widely known as "Bangla Bhai"; the number two of JMB after Abdur Rahman, was captured alive by the RAB after a fierce gun-battle at a remote village in Muktagacha of Mymensingh district nearly 150 kms from the capital city Dhaka on Monday, 6th March at about 7:45 AM. Bangla Bhai along with two other JMB operatives including his bodyguard Sumon and a RAB official received severe injuries during the gunfight with the RAB commandos. They were reportedly wounded when the JMB operatives opened fire and also hurled a couple of powerful bombs from inside the hideout to resist the law-enforcers in a bid to make an escape route to avoid arrest. Another JMB hardcore operative identified as Masum, an 'Eshar' member (member of Suicide Squad) was killed on the spot being struck by a volley of splinters of a powerful bomb inside the hideout during the operation.¹⁸

MEDIA REPORTS ON TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN BANGLADESH:

The involvement of terrorist attack in Bangladesh for last couple of years becomes a centre for discussion among the opposing political parties, intellectuals and media. In this paper the discussion will be based on 2005 bomb attacks only due to its importance. Based on the documents

and statements given by the JMB leaders and workers there is no doubt that JMB was the mastermind of all the terrorist activities including the suicide bomb in Bangladesh. Besides, government action against JMB including two top leaders shows at least apparently government's sincerity to combat terrorism. However, it is necessary to look at the media reports on the terrorists attack and its follow up incidents.

An online Bengali magazine Muktaona reported, "some MPs and local leaders belonging to BNP and Jamaat from Bogra, Atrai, Naogaon, Rajshahi, etc., were instrumental in reviving the Jamaa'tul Mujahideen Bangladesh JMB goons with blessings of BNP and Jamaat high command in Dhaka. The idea was to crush the militant communist goons by the name "Sorbohara" in western part of Bangladesh by JMB goons who created a reign of terror in rural areas of that area.¹⁹ According to Bertil Lintner "Jamaat's stand on the "war against terrorism," however, contrasts sharply to that of the more established parties. Shortly after the US attacks on Afghanistan began in October 2001, the Jamaat created fund purportedly for "helping the innocent victims of America's war." ²⁰ Even though, I do not see any problem to collect money for war victims in any parts of the world. On 16 March, 2006 the day daily star published another report titled, "There is no difference between JMB and Jammat."²¹

According to Time Magazine (October 14 2002), "the Bangladeshi government typically reacts with fury to reports of jihadi camps (the reports have been published earlier) or fundamentalism within its borders. The reason isn't hard to fathom. In October 2001 two Islamic fundamentalist parties with a history of links to terror groups were elected as part of a four-way electoral alliance led by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). The accession of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote to power in Bangladesh rang alarm bells.²² This is the same Time Magazine which praised Khaleda Zia's anti-terrorists movement and reported that "Zia demanded and received public support for an anti-terror drive from Bangladesh's religious leader and from her Islamist coalition members."²³



In an Editorial published in the Bangladesh Observer says: "it is the Jamaat is pulling the string from behind the scene. The party has opened two fronts and shows only its political face. But it is active in gaining ground in both fronts." The Editorial also mentioned that "Sheikh Rahman has reportedly confessed that he was involved with Jamaat politics before forming his own militant outfit. He has also made it clear that he collected followers from the Jamaat and Shibir. The media has long been maintaining this position. Reportedly, Abdur Rahman has named three ministers who belong to the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) only in name but actually have their allegiance to the Jamaat."²⁴ The Amnesty report says: "Human rights organizations in Bangladesh believe over 100 women have been subjected to rape. Reports persistently allege that the perpetrators have been mainly members of the BNP and its coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami."²⁵

A group of New York based Bangladeshi, (perhaps belongs to opposition party) under the banner of Bangladesh Human Rights Watch urged Dr. Condoleeza Rice through a petition:

"The Jammat-e-Islami (JI) movement is prepared to implement its policies through the use of terrorism and intimidation. The student wings of the JI both in Bangladesh and Pakistan are directly involved in militancy. The Islami Chattra Shibir (ICS) is the student wing of the JI Bangladesh and has been involved in terrorism; some ICS members were believed to have been sent to train with Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. ICS haven't tried to conceal their links and have rallied in the support of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda chanting such slogan, as "We will all be Taliban and Bangladesh will be Afghanistan."²⁶

This group also mentioned that "recently Bangladesh has been terrorized by series of bomb attacks launched by the Islamic militants who wanted to implement Islamic Sharia Laws in Bangladesh. Their objectives are same to that of the written manifesto of Jamaat-e-Islami. These Islamic Jihadi's are killing the judges, secular personalities, lawyers and innocent people. They are threatening secular personalities, opposition leaders, schools, colleges and institutions. They are also

asking the women of all religions to wear head-to-toe veils and threatening them to death." These group sees government's action against terrorism are just 'eyewash' to please the people of Bangladesh and the international community. According to this group (referring some media in general) "arrested bombers and their cohorts were released under the pressure of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders as they were directly linked to the Jamaat-e-Islami. Every single arrested bomber and their cohorts claimed themselves to be the former members of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chattra Shibir."²⁷ Therefore, they requested the USA authority "to include Jamaat-e-Islami to the US terrorism list because of its direct support for terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and its affiliates."²⁸

Jamaat-e-Islami has also been linked with the terrorist by the media through the Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited (IBBL), since the Bank has been run by the some JIB leaders, not JIB itself. The report says: "The 'secret link' between the Islamist terrorist outfit Jammat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited (IBBL) might remain in dark for ever, as some highly influential ruling party leaders including a couple of Ministers allegedly creating severe pressure on the investigators to suppress the real story. A source close to the Task Force Interrogation (TFI) cell on condition of anonymity told the Bangladesh Observer that, the investigators have got some concrete information about the background of JMB funding and involvement of some commercial banks specially the IBBL in terrorist financing."²⁹

Abdur Raquib, executive president of IBBL, told the news agency a day after the Bangladesh Bank (BB) issued a showcause notice on the bank for maintaining accounts of some Islamist militants and suspicious transactions in some of its branches "Nobody knows who is militant and who is not. The word 'militant' is not inscribed on anyone's body." He also said the IBBL officials remain busy providing services to its 2.7 million clients from 169 branches. "It is tough to monitor each and every account."³⁰ Even though the mainstream newspapers did mention involvement of some other commercial Bank but avoided mentioning the names and only IBBL has been highlighted. But on March 29 2006,

the Daily Nayadigantha reported that that the JMB had financial transaction with other three Banks those are Pubali bank, Janata Bank and Standard Chartered Bank. Report also says the amount of transaction is more than the Islami Bank. According to the Nayadiganta (a Bengali daily) JMB did 12 million taka transaction with above three Banks.³¹

Maulana Delwar Hussain Saidee, a Parliament member of JIB, has become the main coverage of the Daily Star on July 26, 2006. The part of the report is following:

The British media blasted its government for not revoking Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker Delwar Hossain Saidee's visa this month although the Home Office has been considering excluding him from the UK following last year's July 7 bombings in London. Quoting several British MPs, the online and print media branded Saidee as a "preacher of violent hatred against the West" and criticized the government for granting him visa.³²

The Daily Star also mentioned that the Times Online carried a news item the same day on "hardline Islamist cleric" Saidee's arrival and said the government advisers wanted him banned from Britain. But the Foreign Office's Islamic issues adviser [Mockbul Ali] accused Saidee's detractors of being politically biased and said that his exclusion could jeopardize support from mainstream Muslims for the Government's anti-terrorism agenda.³³ Mockbul Ali, however, in an email defended Saidee from being excluded, terming him a "mainstream Muslim figure" and saying, "Any steps taken on his exclusion from the UK must take that into account, especially at a time when we require increasing support on the Prevent/Counter Terrorism agenda from British Muslims," Times Online read.³⁴

Recently a Selig S. Harrison's report in Washington Post says: "Jamaat inroads in the government security machinery at all levels, starting with Home Secretary Muhammad Omar Farooq, widely regarded as close to the Jamaat, have opened the way for suicide bombings, political assassinations, harassment of the Hindu minority, and an unchecked

influx of funds form Islamic charities in Saudi Arabia... With some 15,000 hard-core fighters operating out of 19 known base camps, guerrilla groups sponsored by the Jamaat and its allies were able to paralyze the country last August 17 by staging 459 closely synchronized explosions in all but one of the country's administrative districts." The report also says that a State Department report cited evidence that one of the Jamaat's main allies, the Harkat ul-Jihad-i-Islami, also headquartered in Pakistan, "maintains contact with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan." Bangladesh Harkat leader Fazlul Rahman was one of the six signatories of Osama bin Laden's first declaration of holy war against the United States, on Feb. 23, 1998.³⁵ ... The respected journalists in question cannot write freely about the Jamaat without facing death threats or assassination attempts... On the other hand Harrison's report also says that on July 13 the U.S. ambassador called Bangladesh "an exceptional moderate Muslim state."³⁶

The response sent by the Secretary General of Jamaate Islami Bangladesh and Social Welfare Minister Mr. Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed Bangladesh to said: The contributor of this report Mr. Seling S. Harrison will not be able to submit any proof that Jamaat had any distant relation with the said attack of 17 August, the base camps, the hardcore fighters or whatever else. Jamaat-e-Islami is not a mushroom organization. It is working towards the welfare of this country and its people for the last few decades. Jamaat is an Islamic Party that believes strictly in democratic and Constitutional politics. Jamaat has uninterrupted representation in Bangladesh Parliament. At present it is the third largest political force of the country. Jamaat does never believe in armed struggle. So there is no question whatsoever of Jamaat's having 15,000 armed fighters. I like to assert that Jamaat-e-Islami has no relations whatsoever with Harkat-ul-Jihad, Al-Quaeda or any other terrorist organization. Jamaat-e-Islami believes in the freedom of press. Jamaat-e-Islami never threatened any of the journalists. Journalist unions and the community of journalists never raised any such allegation against Jamaat-e-Islami.³⁷

US Spokesman of Foreign Affairs also responded to above news by saying that “US government does not have any information about Al-Qaeda network in Bangladesh. It is response to the article published in Washington Post on second August 2006.”³⁸ Besides, most of the media came into conclusion that “while the Jamaat may not be directly behind these attacks, its inclusion in the government has meant that more radical groups feel they now enjoy protection from the authorities and can act with impunity.”

In response to all the allegation Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and Industries Minister Mr. Matiur Rahman Nizami has said that “the role of media is not less than that of terrorists.” The minister was addressing a seminar on 'Fundamentalism, militancy and Islam' organized by Bangladesh Quran Shikkha Society at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday (28 September 2005).³⁹ Mr. Nizami also added that

Even after the confessional statements of those who were involved in the countrywide bomb attacks and the organization that had distributed leaflets admitted and declared their involvement, the Jamaat is being blamed... a newspaper ran a report that 40 percent of the arrestees from across the country on charge of bomb attacks are Jamaat members, which is totally untrue. And when we protested the news item, the newspaper published our rejoinder, but it was done in a way so as not to be clearly noticed.⁴⁰

The CNN reported that The Awami League believes Jamaat-e-Islami and the government are behind the terrorism in Bangladesh, while “J-e-I and [Industries Minister] Nizami have maintained that really, it is Indian and Israeli intelligence behind the terrorist campaign.”⁴¹

CONCLUSION:

In terms of objectives, activities and methods it seems that JMB and JIB are two completely different organisations and there is no link between the two. However, by any means media have been trying to link both organizations without looking at any convincing indicators. Media tries to establish link between the two by looking the following: 1) Some of

JMB leaders and workers including Shekh Abdur Rahman was involves in JIB before they have joined JMB; 2) Both (JMB and JIB) wants to establish Shariah in the state level; 3) According to media report, Mr. Nizami, the Amir of JIB said earlier that 'Bangla Bahi is the creation of media' and that makes him sympathizer to Bangla Bhai i.e. JMB; 4) most of the media concluded that the 'JIB may not be directly behind these attacks, its inclusion in the government has meant that more radical groups feel they now enjoy protection from the authorities and can act with impunity.'

However, the above arguments seem to be weak to justify JIB's involvement with terrorists activities. First of all, if JIB's any worker or a group quit and joins JMB and involve in terrorists activities JIB is not responsible for that, unless JIB support their action. Besides, this point seems to be vague in the sense that media could not say in details who are these people came from JIB and when they were with JIB. Secondly, terrorist should not be identified on the basis of their ends, rather means. For instance, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and the militant communist "Sorbohara Party" in western part of Bangladesh's main objective is same that is to establish at least theoretically classless society. But nobody ask the CPB to take the responsibility what this militant Sorbohara is doing. Thirdly, in interviews and press conferences Mr. Nizami several times stated that he did not say: "Bangla Bahi is the creation of media." But, his statement has not been published in the mainstream newspapers.⁴² He also says that this statement itself is the creation of media. Finally, this argument is very weak to justify JIB's involvement with terrorist attack, since JIB did not provide (directly or indirectly) any support to them. Rather JIB assisted government to take action against terrorists activities in Bangladesh.

However, JIB is the political party that participated most of the parliamentary and local elections throughout the history of Bangladesh. It actively participated along with other main political alliance against Ershad's anti-autocratic regime. All the leaderships of JIB from central to local level are being elected by the party members and workers for certain period of time. Throughout the history JIB has been transparent



in terms of their internal and external activities. So far, it has been proven that JIB do not have any link with any terrorists group. US Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher recently visited Bangladesh and mentioned that he did not find any relationship between JIB and terrorism.

On the other hand, JMB already declared that they do not respect existing legal system and democratic process. During their trial they repeatedly mentioned it in the court. As a result, they refused to hair any lawyer during trial, since for them this court is un-islamic and illegal. Their activities are not known to the public or they are not transparent. They themselves have taken the responsibility of all the bombings. During the trial none of the JMB leaders and workers has mentioned their link with JIB or any other parties.

Therefore, it is necessary to find out why media want to establish the link between a 'terrorist' and 'moderate political party.' In other words why JIB are forced to take responsibility of terrorists activities in Bangladesh, although it is obvious that they are not involve at all? It is not that media does not know the facts; rather they are motivated by the certain force or ideology that does not want to see that Islam can be implemented in state level through democratic process.

ENDNOTES:

¹ *BBC News*, Thursday, 20 September 2001.

² *Ibid.*

³ In this paper the term 'Islamists' will be used for the Islamic political parties or groups who wants to implement Shariah, are non-terrorists and respects and follow existing democratic process.

⁴ These are the Muslim but believe separation of religion and politics, pro-western and sometimes anti-Islamic.

⁵⁵ Alex Perry, "Rebuilding Bangladesh: A nation long plagued by natural disasters, poverty, corruption and violence may finally be on the verge of a happier future," *Time Asia*, Monday, April 03, 2006

⁶ See the News on Bomb attack in the several Newspapers in Bangladesh from 18 August 2005

⁷ Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB),

<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/JMB.htm>
retrieve 26 March 2006

⁸ "On the Edge of the Knife," *The Economist*, 8 December 2005, p. 34

⁹ Anand Giridharadas, "Bangladesh Tipping Point is Feared," *International Herald Tribune*, 19 August 2005.

¹⁰ "Liflets Ridicule Democracy, as for Islamic Rule," *The Daily Star*, 18 August 2005. Also see "String of Bomb Blasts Rock Bangladesh," *The Bangladesh Observer*, 18 August 2005.

¹¹ Zayadul Ahsan, "Trained in Foreign Lands, They Spread Inland," *The Daily Star*, 21 August 2005.

¹² Parliamentary Election manifesto, 2001,

<http://www.bangla2000.com/Election_2001/Manifesto_Jamaat-e-Islami.shtm>

¹³ *Ibid.* also see Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh website, <http://www.jamaat-e-islami.org/>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) is a paramilitary force was formed by the current government to curb the terrorism. Due to their many successful operations they became popular among the people. But according to oppositions this force has been used by the government for their political purpose.

¹⁶ See the Newspapers of Bangladesh, Friday, March 3, 2006.

¹⁷ See National Dailies and other media on Friday March 3, 2006.

¹⁸ See the dailies on 7 March 2006.

¹⁹ A. H. Jaffor Ullah, "The nexus between the militant JMB leaders and Khaleda Zia government," *Mukto-mona*, April 2, 2006, <http://www.mukto-mona.com/Articles/jaffor/shayekh_ar060306.htm>

²⁰ Bertil Lintner, "Religious Extremism and Nationalism in Bangladesh," Religion & Security in South Asia- An International Workshop Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies, Honolulu, Hawaii, August 19-22, 2002,

<<http://www.asiapacificcons.com/papers/pdf/religious.extremism.bangladesh.pdf>>

²¹ *The Daily Star*, 16 March 2006.

- ²² *Time Asia*, Monday Oct. 14, 2002
- ²³ *Time Asia*, April 3, 2006, Vol. 167, No. 14
- ²⁴ Editorial, "Hail Bangla Bhai's Capture: Will It Settle Militancy Issue?" *The Bangladesh Observer*, Tuesday, March, 07, 2006.
- ²⁵ Amnesty International Report, December 2001
- ²⁶ New York based *Bangladesh Human Rights Watch* has urged Dr. Condoleeza Rice, US Department of State to ban & enlist Jamaat-e-Islami as a terror network outfit in a letter on 23 December 2005. However, this organisation is run by a group of Bangladeshi intellectuls. <http://bangladeshwatchdog.blogspot.com/2005/12/ban-jihadi-terrorist-outfit-jamaat-e.html>,x retrieve on 14 June 2006. It is necessary to mention that "We will all be Taliban and Bangladesh will be Afghanistan" this slogan is not the slogan of ICS rather it was the slogan of 'Islami Okkaya Jote' another Islamic party and qualition partner of current governemnt. See *the New York Times*, January 2006.
- ²⁷ This statement is not correct at all. Since the Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami and Industry Minister, Mr. Motiur Rahman Nizami challenged through press conference that not a single JMB worker said their involvement in JIB or ICS. Some of the media who reported that failed to prove their allegations.
- ²⁸ New York based *Bangladesh Human Rights Watch* has urged Dr. Condoleeza Rice, US Department of State to ban & enlist Jamaat-e-Islami as a terror network outfit in a letter on 23 December 2005. However, this organisation is run by a group of Bangladeshi intellectuls. <http://bangladeshwatchdog.blogspot.com/2005/12/ban-jihadi-terrorist-outfit-jamaat-e.html>, retrieve on 14 June 2006.
- ²⁹ *The Bangladesh Observer*, Wednesday March 29, 2006.
- ³⁰ *The Daily Star*, Thursday March 16, 2006.
- ³¹ *Daily Nayadiganta*, Wednesday, March 29, 2006.
- ³² The news has been published in the *Daily Star*, Thursday, July 27, 2006, the article titled, "Preaching Hatred: Jammatt MP Saidee in UK hot soup," by Julfikar Ali Manik and Baishawjit Das.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Selig S. Harrison, "A New Hub for Terrorism? In Bangladesh, and Islamic Movement With al- Qaeda Ties Is on the Rise," *Washington Post*, August 2, 2006, Alex Perry, Deadly Cargo: Signs abound that Bangladesh has become a safe haven for Islamic *Jihadis*—including Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters fresh off the boat from Afghanistan," *Time Asia*, Monday, October 14, 2002.
- ³⁶ Selig S. Harrison, "A New Hub for Terrorism? In Bangladesh, and Islamic Movement With al- Qaeda Ties Is on the Rise," *Washington Post*, August 2, 2006
- ³⁷ The reply was sent by the Secretary General of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh to the Washington Post on their report published in the Washington Post, 2nd August, 2006 written by S. S. Harrison. I have received this mail on Friday 4th August 2006 through E mail from S A Hannan sahannan@sonarbangladesh.com. See

Jammat-e-Islami Bangladesh website <http://www.jamaat-e-islami.org/Post.htm>
retrieve 12 August 2006.

³⁸ *The Daily Prothom Alo*, 5 August 2006.

³⁹ *The Daily Star*, Thursday 29 September 2005.

⁴⁰ *The Daily Star*, Thursday 29 September 2005.

⁴¹ http://billroggio.com/archives/2006/03/international_islami.php

⁴² Recently in a private TV Channel he has mentioned it again.