Section 3:
Other Islamic Parties & Militant Groups
Hizb ut-Tahrir believes in a global caliphate and not in democracy. Its political agenda is not only about Bangladesh – it is part of an international Islamist movement based in London. It started operating in Bangladesh in 2001. The Dhaka police say Hizb ut-Tahrir has little support among ordinary people at present but could represent a potential threat for the future.

Chhatra Shibir members consider Hizb ut-Tahrir radical and say they’ve been approached to join on the grounds that they’re wrong to accept the democratic process, a parliamentary system, capitalism and a woman as the head of a political alliance.

Hizb ut-Tahrir is active among wealthy urban youth from the business and political elites in Bangladesh. Their approach is to convince the top layer of society in the hope their ideology will filter down; by comparison Jamaat believes it is a much more grassroots organisation. Hizb ut-Tahrir is active in distributing leaflets and posters outside the private university campuses, despite being a banned group. It still manages to hold processions, Study Circles and meetings in restaurants. Jamaat considers Hizb ut-Tahrir a challenge to their urban power base.

Interestingly, they say Hizb ut-Tahrir’s flag was visible in the Hefajat protests in May. This probably only shows how much of a rallying point the protests became for Islamists of different ideological shades.

The party is known to have a strong base in North South University and Dhaka University, including among female undergraduate students and some of the teaching staff. Some academics say Hizb ut-Tahrir has an emotional appeal for idealistic students who once would have joined leftist movements.

The party’s key person in Bangladesh is a university professor, Mohiuddin Ahmad, who studied in Britain and is said to have close ties to Birmingham. He was detained by the last caretaker government and is still under special watch.
Islami Oikyo Jote

This is an alliance of small madrasa based parties following the Deobandi School. Their name means "Islamic Unity Front". It has contested elections as part of the BNP led alliance.

Islami Oikyo Jote Structure

**MAJLIS E SHURA**
- 36 members, all male
- Policy making body
- Elected every 3 years
- Chairman & Secretary General lead it.

**NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**
- Members chosen by Majlis e Shura
- 61 members (1 is a woman who was elected in 2001-6 and sat on the reserved seats for women in parliament)

**DISTRICT COMMITTEES**
- Minimum 21 members

**CITY COMMITTEE**

**UPAZILLA OR THANA COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPALITY COUNCIL**
- Minimum 19 members

**UNION LEVEL**

**WARD**

**WARD**
ISLAMI OIKYA JOTE ALLIANCE

The only IOJ to be registered as a political party. Anti-Awami League. Constitution of IOJ formulated in consensus with 4 constituent parties who have equal say.

IT IS CURRENTLY A 4 PARTY ALLIANCE.

Khilafat-e-Islami Bangladesh
Bangladesh Nizami Islami Party
Farayezi Andolon Bangladesh
Ulema Committee Bangladesh
Jamiat-e-Ulema Islama
Khelafat Majlis

These two parties were part of the IOJ alliance but got registration from the Election Commission as separate political parties so decided to contest alone. IOJ says it’s not the result of a split and the 6 parties will work together with each other and with the larger 18 party BNP-Jamaat electoral alliance.

IOJ Bangladesh
This is an Awami League creation to confuse. Not registered as a political party. Led by Mizbur Rahman, said not to be an Islamic scholar or alim.
Ahl–e-Hadith Movement

The Ahl-e-Hadith are a minority sect but they are strong in many northern districts of Bangladesh and are thought to control up to 2000 madrasa. Their ideology is important because, though the majority of practitioners are peaceful, their ideas have been used to underpin the militancy of banned groups like Jamaat ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). All the Ahl-e-Hadith organisations, along with hundreds of Bangladeshi ulama, have disassociated themselves from the violent tactics of the JMB. It’s also worth noting both Jamaat and the Islami Oikyo Jote are doctrinal rivals of the Ahl-e-Hadith movement.

Philosophy:

Followers of this puritanical religious reform movement reject the idea that a Muslim must follow one of the four established schools of Islamic classical jurisprudence: Hanafi, Shafi’i, Maliki, and Hanbali. They do not regard these interpretations as legally binding. Instead they believe most religious and legal matters can be prescribed by the Quran and Hadith. If these texts do not give a clear indication, then they say Muslims should exercise *ijtihad* (independent judgment), but guided by the Quran and Hadith. Hadith texts are literally taken as a source of law, without regard to the context in which the Prophet did or said something. They also place huge emphasis on the concept of *Tawhid* (the unity of God) and object strongly to worshipping saints and visiting shrines, regarding this as idolatry. They deem Sufis un-Islamic.

Ahl-e-Hadith followers have some distinctive religious practices that may seem minor but are important:

- They must actually recite the *Surah al-Fatiha* prayer, whilst for other Muslims it’s enough for the Imam to do it on behalf of the congregation.
- They raise their hands during the *takbir* in the ritual prayer, while the Hanafis do not.
- Ahl-e-Hadith fold their hands on the chest during the standing posture of prayer, while the Hanafis fold their hands under the navel.
- Ahl-e-Hadith say "*ameen*" loudly after the imam recites *Surah al-Fatiha*, while the Hanafis say it softly.
- Other differences relating to the "correct postures" during the ritual prayer and to the number of voluntary units of prayer during Ramadan.
- Also differences on what would require refreshing the ritual ablution (*wadhu*) before prayers.

Emergence:

1971: The Jamiyat-e-Ahl-e-Hadith East Pakistan did not take a pro-Pakistan position, though many ulama opposed Liberation for fear it would damage Muslim unity. A few local Ahl-e-Hadith ulama did join pro-Pakistan militias - among them Maulana Abdullah ibn Fazal, the father of the JMB founder, Sheikh Abdur Rahman.

After Liberation, the Ahl-e-Hadith ulama were concerned about secularism and any attempt to remove the autonomy of the *quomi* madrasa. The movement remained aloof from party politics until the advent of Dr. Asadullah Ghalib.

Dr. Ghalib was instrumental in seeing how other religious parties (Jamaat and the Islami Oikyo Jote) had become power brokers in national politics and he decided not to be left behind. In 1978 he created the Ahl-e-Hadith Jubo Sangha (AHJS) or youth movement as a power base. In 1994, he split from the Jamiyat-e-Ahl-e-Hadith and created the Ahl-e-Hadith Andolan, Bangladesh.

Gradually Dr. Ghalib took over as the main representative of the sect in Bangladesh, building up a network of mosques, madrasas, publishing houses, charities and other organisations funded by Ahl-e-Hadith businessmen. Dr. Ghalib used his youth wing to mobilise madrasa and university students, whom he felt were being stolen away by Chhatra Shibir. He sent many madrasa graduates to Medina for further studies.

On 23 February 2005 Dr. Ghalib was jailed on charges of involvement in militant activities – charges he denies – and he was subsequently released in 2008. He is a Professor of Arabic in the University of Rajshahi.

An overwhelming majority of the movement’s followers are peaceful and entertain no sympathy for militancy. But Mumtaz Ahmad says Dr Ghalib told him Hafiz Ahmad Saeed of the Laskar-e-Taiba of Pakistan was “an honoured guest” at the 1997 Ahl-e-Hadith Andolan Bangladesh conference in Rajshahi. Ahmad also says that Dr. Ghalib collected funds from:

- Rabita-al- ‘Alam al-Islami (the World Muslim League) in Saudi Arabia
- Al-Harmain Foundation, a Saudi-based NGO, blacklisted by the US in 2004 for funding militancy.
- Al-Jamiyat-ul-Ahyah-asaurah al-Islami (Revival of Islamic Heritage Society), which is Kuwaiti.
- Al-Jamiyat-ul-Ahya-assunnah (Society for the Revival of the Sunnah of the Prophet), also Kuwaiti.
- Other Islamic organisations and NGOs.
- Rich Saudi philanthropists.
- Al-Tawhid Trust – Saudi and Kuwaiti funds – reportedly built 600 new mosques, five major madrasa and several orphanages.
- Hadith Foundation
Jamaat ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)

Banned

Sheikh Abdur Rahman
Born Jamalpur 1959.
Hanged 30 March 2007.

Timeline:

1995: Sheikh Abdur Rahman gains a Masters degree from Medina University, where he is introduced to Salafism. Madrasa educated in Bangladesh, his father, Abdullah Ibne Fazal, is a well-known Ahl-e-Hadith preacher so he is accepted easily on his return to Bangladesh. At first he works in import-export and also in the Saudi Embassy.

1996: He decides to pursue jihad inside Bangladesh for the creation of an Islamic state. He is pro-Taliban.

1997: Abdur Rahman visits Pakistan, probably to try and establish links with al Qaeda, but he fails.

1998: Sheikh Abdur Rahman founds the JMB in 1998. It has an office in Dhaka but is underground. He says his plan initially is to create a strong base in the north of the country and then send delegates out to woo more supporters. They operate out of mosques which have Ahl-e-Hadith communities based around them. They are not Ahl-e-Hadith mosques as such, but local people know and they can be recognised from the way they say their prayers, standing with their legs apart and feet touching the adjacent person.

2004, 1 April: JMB’s first operation begins, using the name Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) to confuse people. They decide to target Naxalites (Sarbahara), who are more dacoit than political and are making local people’s lives hard. This is in three adjacent sub-districts (Baghmara, Raninagar, Noagar) in Rajshahi and close to Natore. Sheikh Abdur Rahman meets with his party in Mymensingh and decides if they can wipe out the Naxalites they will win support. However, he realises he needs backing from the party in power and the police, so approaches a local BNP parliamentarian whose nephew has been killed by the Naxalites. The MP assembles other local politicians to back the initiative. All of them are linked to the Ahl-e-Hadith movement.

JMB opens three detention camps in three sub-districts. They go to the villages, call a public meeting and announce that they are there to wipe out extremists. Initially it is very popular and even local Awami League leaders are supportive.

They read out a list of names and ask those people to surrender to them by a specified date. Some do and have their weapons seized and are handed over to the police to be prosecuted but there are also vigilante mob killings of people identified by villagers as Naxalites. The police are silent about this.

At the end of April the Naxalite leaders have a secret meeting which JMB finds out about, so they attack them and kill their leader, Abdul Quyum Badshah, and hang him head down from a tree to display the corpse.

This is the first time news reports appear naming this group. The Jamaat-e-Islami chief, Motiur Rahman Nizami - then a Minister - initially claims that JMB’s henchman, Bangla Bhai, is a creation of the media.

Bangla Bhai (aka Siddiquur Rahman)

Khaleda Zia, visiting Rajshahi Police Academy, calls the three local politicians in tells them the vigilante violence can’t continue. They decide to stop it and send a message to the JMB to cease. The JMB dismantle their camps, driving away in trucks and dispersing.

At this point the JMB is not banned but is still active underground. Now they start to identify NGOs as a stumbling block to the Islamisation of the country because of issues such as women without purdah, usury and pro-Western politics. Short of funds, they start hit and run operations on the NGOs, stealing motorbikes and cash, looting and attacking their operations.

Feb 2005: JMB is banned.

Aug 2005: The JMB coordinates 500 bombs in all but one district between 10:30am and 11:30am local time. The JMB tries to distribute publicity leaflets twice to little avail, so they decide to stage a series of countrywide bomb attacks. They use sound bombs that don’t have nails or splinters in them, only leaflets covered in sawdust, so they won’t be damaged by the blast.
Attacks on the Legal System

"Aware of the command of Allah and following our obligations to the faith, the Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh rejects the existing judicial system. The Constitution, under which the country is currently being ruled, is bound to conflict with the rules of Allah." JMB

The JMB espouses Sharia law as their main aim for Bangladesh and preaches that the country’s legal system needs dismantling. They target the judiciary. They assume the government will be supportive because of the help of the three local politicians previously but the bombings have put the government under pressure and it starts arresting JMB activists.

**October 2005:** The JMB decides to target its three former allies, the local politicians. It attacks courts in Ghazipur, Chandpur, Chittagong and Jhalokati.

**Nov 2005:** Two judges are killed by the JMB in Jhalakathi.

**Jan 2006:** This is the last known successful attack by the JMB.

**March 2006:** The JMB leaders are arrested and 520 members charged.

**Feb 2006:** Maulana Saidur Rahman takes over as chief of the JMB.

**March 30 2007:** Sheikh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai are executed along with four others for their role in the killing of the judges.

**26 July 2007:** Aminul Haq, a former Rajshahi MP and telecommunications minister in the previous BNP-led coalition government, is sentenced to 32 years in prison for aiding and abetting JMB.

**2008-9:** The authorities launch a second crackdown on the JMB.

Indigenous Group

JMB still has its roots in Bangladeshi society, though all its founding leaders have been executed. It is a homegrown group, thought to have few links abroad. Initially it was assumed JMB was just a Muslim group and not militant. Today it has a stronger following than the other main militant group of the 2000s, Harkat-ul-Jihad-Al-Islami (HUJI). The International Crisis Group (ICG) estimates that at its height JMB had 2000 members but, as of 2010, only about 250 members.

Crisis Group also says JMB has operational ties to Lashkar-e-Toyeba and to al-Muhajiroun, the groups whose members took part in the London underground bombings of July 2005. There are also reports of some collaboration between JMB and the Tamiruddin faction of HUJI. It’s also believed Sheikh Abdur Rahman tried and failed to connect with the Taliban in 1996/7, before he formed this party, and then again in 2001 on a second trip to Pakistan. The assumption is al Qaeda didn’t say yes or no.

Women

JMB had about 50 women’s groups of about a total of 500 women, mostly wives and sisters, who were not into militancy but lent support, spread the message and helped recruitment. Today the women’s groups are disbanded. The International Crisis Group reports that marriages to JMB women were a way of cementing ties among the top leaders.
Funding

"Money is not a problem," Ataur Rahman Sunny reported his brother, the JMB founder, telling him when asked how to fund the 17 August 2005 bombings. Some media reports say JMB received funding from Middle Eastern NGOs (such as The Revival for Islamic Heritage Society) but local journalists who report on militancy say the likelihood is JMB doesn’t need a lot of money as it doesn’t conduct large operations and the explosives they use are mostly home made bombs and local weapons. Some reports said the bombs they used in 2005 only cost the equivalent of $1 each. One of the organisation’s more bizarre features is a compulsory requirement that every member learn how to pull a cycle rickshaw so he can earn his own living and learn humility. The International Crisis Group says JMB also obtained funds from village crop donations, local taxes, donations from people working in the Middle East, and their control of the hawela or informal money exchange system. Crisis Group says the strongest evidence of JMB’s foreign funding came in June 2005, when two British men of Bangladeshi origin who claimed to be from the organisation al-Muhajiroun, paid JMB £10,000 for help in establishing bases for arms production in Bangladesh. Ataur Rahman Sunny also told interrogators that the JMB leader received money from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Brunei, Sudan, Pakistan and a variety of Islamic foundations but he could not name the sources.

Connections between JMB and Jamaat

Initial recruits to JMB had Afghan experience but after 2002 many reportedly came from an Ahl-e-Hadith background, educated in alia madrasa and recruited through local mosques. Journalists covering militancy say there are no links as such with Jamaat-e-Islami, but some former members of Chhatra Shibir joined JMB. Crisis Group’s 2010 report says Sheikh Abdur Rahman was a radical Shibir member who grew disillusioned with the party’s commitment to work within democratic politics. It’s also thought some members were originally Jamaat hardliners who left because they objected to Jamaat going into a coalition led by a woman. Crisis Group says Bangla Bhai was a mid-level Shibir leader in Rajshahi University but became disillusioned in 1995 when Jamaat embraced democratic politics and promoted females into the party’s leadership. Ataur Rahman Sunny, the head of JMB’s military wing, was also a senior Shibir leader at Kushtia’s Islamic University. However this drift of a handful of Jamaat members to extremism does not imply official links.

In December 2012, the Rapid Action Battalion told the Daily Star that they had arrested five top JMB leaders who were plotting to attack the country’s war crimes trial and said the JMB was in contact with the war criminals.
Harkat-ul-Jihad-Al-Islami (HUJI)

The police say HUJI is currently in disarray but they may still have people who are lying low. All their main leaders are in jail. This diagram explains the group’s development over time:

** DEVELOPMENT OF HARKAT–UL–JIHAD–AL ISLAMI BANGLADESH (HUJI–B) **

**PHASE ONE**
- **HUJI**
- Founder in chief is Maulana Abdus Salam

**PHASE TWO**
- **Cell in HUJI (close to LeT)**
- 10-15 ppl
- Tamiruddin
- 50-100 ppl

**PHASE THREE**
- **Sachetan Islami Janata (Conscious Islamic People) formed**
- **Islamic Democratic Party**
- **NOT REGISTERED**
- **Islamic Gono Andolon**
- **PROPOSED NEW NAME never happens**

**TIMELINE**
- **1988/9**
  - started by Afghan war veterans
- **30 April 1992**
  - officially launched at press club to fight in Arakan
- **Late 90’s**
  - split because of divisions over whether to establish Sharia in Bangladesh before Arakan.
- **Early 2000’s**
  - Internal Militant cell formed

- **2006**
  - 17 Oct 2005
  - 2006
  - Proscribed

- **2013**
  - 2013: Almost all leaders arrested.
  - Less than 2500 members overall.
  - 2007: Maulana Abdus Salam claims to have 5000 members. Arrested 23 March 2009 and currently on trial.
  - Maulana Abdus Salam (escapened abroad in 2006)
  - Mufti Abdur Rauf (arrested 2 Aug 2006; currently on trial)
Ansarullah Bangla

The Bangladeshi police say this is an emerging extremist group inside the country. Its headquarters is in Yemen and its members are inspired by the American born Yemeni jihadi cleric, Anwar Al-Awlaki, considered the spiritual leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula until he was killed by a CIA drone in late 2011. Reports say in 2010 Al-Awlaki founded the magazine *Inspire*, which was read by the Boston bombers. According to the Bangladeshi police at least 10 of their nationals were arrested in Yemen between 2009-10 for links with Al-Awlaki.

In 2011 a British Bangladeshi disciple of Al-Awlaki, Rajib Karim, was convicted in Woolwich Crown Court of plotting to blow up a plane while working as a computer specialist with British Airways. Media reports say Awlaki had emailed Karim asking if it were possible to get a package or person on a flight to the United States. In court the prosecutor said Karim had links to Jamaat ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). Press reports said Karim, his brother Tehezib, and two others had travelled to Yemen to meet Al-Awlaki in December 2009. Bangladeshi police believe Ansarullah Bangla started in 2005 under the umbrella of a hitherto unknown NGO called Research Cooperation United Development (RCUD) and tried to recruit people for jihad. A Bangladeshi newspaper has reported that RCUD was a religious research organisation run by Tehezib Karim’s father-in-law.

In 2010 a British Bangladeshi woman, Roshonara Choudhry, tried to murder British MP Stephen Timms in retaliation for his having voted in favour of the Iraq war. She bought two knives for the purpose and had downloaded sermons by Anwar al-Awlaki.

In 2012 also inspired by Al Awlaki’s sermons, a Bangladeshi man, Quazi Mohammad Rezwanul Ahsan Nafis, was caught as he tried to plant what he thought was a bomb outside the Federal Reserve Bank in Manhattan.

Various Bengali language jihadi sites, like qitalmedia, have Al-Awlaki’s speeches translated but they’re not registered in Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi police say they are struggling because Facebook allegedly won’t cooperate with them if a page is registered outside the country, even though they’ve made approaches through Interpol and their own Telecom regulator.

The Bangladeshi police believe Ansarullah Bangla has no organisational structure as such, but operates through cells of six to seven people and uses the Internet as a manual for operations. They estimate the total number of members to be around 200, based in Dhaka in the private universities and belonging to wealthy families. The group is regarded as a potential threat since its members believe it’s their individual duty to kill anyone against Islam and the Prophet and wish to establish Islamic rule. The police say Ansarullah Bangla has prepared a hit list, with detailed pictures and information about where their targets live. Internationally, the police believe the group’s main enemy is the United States, based on their interview of a suspect arrested in 2011. There are reportedly links between Ansarullah Bangla and the JMB, according to the latter’s arrested leader, Saidur Rahman. After his capture Saidur Rahman is said to have confessed that he met Ansarullah Bangla and received financial assistance from them in 2008.

The Bangladeshi police also say this al-Qaeda inspired group was responsible for the murder of the blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider, in Dhaka in February 2013. One of the suspected assailants was an ex-member of the Jamaat student wing so it looked as if Shibir were involved, but the police say that was misleading. An official said the killers used machetes for the murder, rather than firearms, because they have a belief that it’s similar to using a sword and therefore more Islamic. The assailants are reported to have planned the killing one month in advance, trying to identify Rajib through Facebook but were initially only able to find a group photograph online which wasn’t enough. From the blogger’s Facebook status they knew he was at the Shahbagh protests, say police, and this is how they located him, following him home on more than one occasion. Rajib was killed outside his home, which was in a relatively isolated spot. He was hacked in the head, jaw and shoulder before his throat was slit. The police believe the same killers were involved in an attempt on the life of another blogger, Asif Mohiuddin, in January 2013 – an attack that also involved machetes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
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<th>LISTING</th>
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<td></td>
<td>8-Oct</td>
<td>Bomb Blast at Ahmadiyya mosque in Khulna, 8 dead, 30 injured</td>
<td>Riaz List</td>
<td>HUJI</td>
<td>Daily Star, 8 Feb 2011, Ahmadiyya Mosque Bmbing: Mufti Hannan produced in Khulna Court.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26-Sep</td>
<td>Bomb near Awami League meeting in Sunamganj in North kills 4.</td>
<td>Riaz List</td>
<td>Probabaly Huji</td>
<td>Tippo Sultan, Prothom Alo.</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>28-Sep</td>
<td>Series of bomb blasts at cinema and circus in Satkhina, kills 3, wounds 100+</td>
<td>Riaz list</td>
<td>Probably JMB</td>
<td>ditto</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>17-Jan</td>
<td>Tangail bomb at village fair kills 7, 20 injured</td>
<td>Riaz list</td>
<td>Probably JMB</td>
<td>Tippo Sultan, Prothom Alo.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1-Mar</td>
<td>Bomb thrown at policeman in Khulna and he dies</td>
<td>Riaz list</td>
<td>not militants</td>
<td>Tippo Sultan, Prothom Alo.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6-Sep</td>
<td>Awami League leader killed in bomb attack in</td>
<td>Riaz list</td>
<td>not militants</td>
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<tr>
<td>15-Jan</td>
<td>Bombs at Jatra performances at Bogra and Natore killed two and injured over 70 people</td>
<td>Daily Star, 16 Jan 2005, 2 killed, 60 hurt in bomb attacks on Jatra shows</td>
<td>JMB say police</td>
<td>Daily Star, 5 Feb 2005, JMB attacked jatra, arrested activist says.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1-Dec</td>
<td>suspected suicide bomber kills 2 near court in Gazipur</td>
<td>JMB alleged</td>
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