

**ISLAMIZATION OF THE STATE IN A DUALISTIC CULTURE:
THE CASE OF BANGLADESH**

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
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Abstract

This study examined the interaction of religion and politics in Bangladesh in light of the hypothesis that the nature of the particular process of Islamization of the state of Bangladesh, leading to its present semi-Islamic status, has been a function of three independent variables: the specific nature of Islam in the society; the configuration of political interests; and the international environment. The study found that the semi-Islamic status of the state in Bangladesh achieved under military rule is a consequence more of the manipulation of Islam by the military for the sake of legitimacy and of the influence of the Middle East, particularly the flow of remittances, rather than changes in the value orientation of the people of Bangladesh.

Résumé

Cette étude porte sur l'interaction de la religion et de la politique au Bangladesh, à la lumière de l'hypothèse selon laquelle l'islamisation partielle de l'Etat a été fonction de trois variantes indépendantes: La nature spécifique de l'Islam dans la société; la configuration des intérêts politiques; l'environnement international. Il a été prouvé, dans cette étude, que le statut semi-islamique de l'Etat au Bangladesh, réalisé sous la loi martiale, est plus la conséquence d'une manipulation de l'Islam par la force militaire dans le but de la légitimité et de l'influence du Moyen-Orient, particulièrement en ce qui concerne l'apport en devises des travailleurs Bangalis à l'étranger, que de changements dans l'orientation des valeurs du peuple de Bangladesh.

Preface

The contemporary world-wide surge in the Islamic fundamentalist spirit has inspired serious academic interest in Islam, particularly in the relationship between Islam and politics. A lot of research and a considerable amount of publication have taken place since the late 1970s. But most of the research and publication has focused on the role of Islam in certain geographic areas such as the Middle East and South-West Asia, which constituted the core area of Islam in terms of origin and orthodoxy. Hardly any major work on the role of Islam in the polity of Bangladesh has been published yet. This dissertation is intended to make an original contribution towards the study of the relationship between Islam and state in Bangladesh.

So far the only major work on the role of Islam in the contemporary socio-political context of Bangladesh is that of Razia Akter Banu's doctoral dissertation, "Islam In Contemporary Bangladesh: A Socio-Political Study" (1988). The thesis studies the values of the Muslims in Bangladesh to see, for example, what kind of Islamic orientation -- fundamentalist, orthodox or modernist -- is predominant. It also investigates whether secular or Islamic symbols of Bengali culture and nationhood have been more popular among the masses. Banu's study, the first of its kind, relied solely on its author's own survey data, but the data were neither longitudinal nor cross-cultural.

Other works on this topic, mostly articles and papers, are limited in scope. They have lacked empirical support, such as authentic secondary data or data based on surveys and interviewing, and have been marked by factual inadequacies resulting from only a cursory survey of the literature on the subject. Often, they have featured a strong tendency to rely on spurious data in an endeavor to justify the claim that huge inflows of resources from the Middle

East to Bangladesh have taken place and caused the de-secularization of the state and the subsequent Islamization.

The methodology of the present study attempts to overcome these shortcomings. The research project has aimed at testing a central hypothesis developed on the basis of a thorough survey of the literature in this field. That hypothesis postulates that the particular nature of Islamization of the state of Bangladesh -- that is, its semi-Islamic status -- has been a function of three independent variables: the specific form of Islam in the society; the configuration of political interests; and the international environment. Further, it holds that the future course of Islamization in Bangladesh would depend on changes in these variables, and the balance among them.

To ensure empirical rigor, public opinion surveys and interviews were carried out to test the validity of the hypothesis against social and political reality as manifest in individual and group orientations. Further, the author generated longitudinal and cross-cultural quantitative data, which are essential to measure changes in popular values in a comparative context. Cultural changes take place over a long period of time. To measure such changes data over a period of time are required. Also, cultural nuances can be better understood in comparison with similar cultures. Therefore, cross-cultural data are required to see to what extent values did change. In addition to conducting new public opinion surveys, the author replicated some older surveys that had been carried out earlier in Bangladesh and in other Muslim countries. So far, no comparative study with an in-depth comparison of longitudinal and cross-cultural data exists on this subject of Islam and state in Bangladesh.

The study's central hypothesis seems to stand up to the rigorous qualitative and quantitative examination. The survey of literature and our empirical data

suggest that, in the dualistic cultural heritage of Bangladesh -- where Islam, for the most part, assumed a non-militant apolitical stand -- there have been significant changes with regard to the role of Islam in the polity. The world-wide resurgence in the Islamic spirit since the 1970s has affected, to some extent, the value-system of the people of Bangladesh as well. Middle Eastern influence and military rule are two other variables explaining the trend towards the Islamization of the state in Bangladesh. The military has had an historical attachment with Islam, and in contemporary Bangladesh it has been using Islam for the sake of legitimacy. On the other hand, Middle Eastern influence has been found to stem from historical-spiritual connections more than the inflow of petro-dollars. Thus, the process of Islamization of the state of Bangladesh and its present semi-Islamic status have been the outcome of interaction among the three independent variables outlined in the hypothesis.

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CHAPTER 1

RELIGION AND POLITICS IN ISLAM:

AN OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of religion and politics in the Islamic world with a specific focus on contemporary Bangladesh. It briefly summarizes the ongoing debate on the apparently contradictory relationship between modernization and Islam. It further introduces more specific issues, such as the major research problems which revolve, in particular, around the nature of the dualistic Bengali Muslim culture and the question of the religious status of the state of Bangladesh. The chapter ends with laying out the hypothesis to be tested, specifying the dependent and independent variables.

1. The Salience of Investigating the State-Religion Relationship in Contemporary Bangladesh

The rise of nationalism in Afro-Asian countries during the colonial period and the emergence of modern nation-states in the post-colonial phase saw, in general, a decline in the political role of religion in the course of secularization of political institutions. Such decline, though typical of the Afro-Asian countries, is, however, less applicable in the case of the Islamic world where Islam has remained an important source of political legitimacy.¹ Islam's influence in molding political values of the believers has been quite pervasive. As observed by Hossein Razi:

Islam has influenced political attitudes on such matters as collective identity, the concept of justice, the nature of the legitimate political system, the rights and obligations of ruler and ruled, and the kind of characteristics decision makers should possess. It has a wider and deeper domain than nationalism, particularly among the lower and lower middle strata, which

constitute the overwhelming majority of the population.²

Particularly, the last two decades have witnessed a rekindling of popular interest in the political role of Islam. It is not that Islam did not play any political role all along, but, as observed by Boullata, its socio-political and legal dimensions were not prominent in ideological discourse.³ James Bill succinctly remarked in the same vein:

A revived and reassertive Islam -- a civilization and way of life that stresses primordial units and beliefs -- is evident not only in Arab climes but throughout much of the Third World. While Islam has always been very much alive, it is now a surging force with deep and direct political significance.⁴

This tendency has been further elaborated by Tareq and Jacqueline Ismael:

Since the early 1970s, the Islamic world has been experiencing a phenomenon to which different names -- Islamic revival, Islamic awakening, Islamic tide, Islamic resurgence -- have been attributed. Despite the different terminology, these names all refer to the emergence of politically active Islamic groups that oppose the political regimes, in their present forms, in all Islamic countries, and that call for a return to the original principles of the Islamic state.⁵

Bangladesh, the second largest Muslim country in the world, has also been affected by this re-assertion of Islam in the realm of politics. Bangladesh's dualistic cultural tradition, to be elaborated later on, makes it especially interesting to study the relationship of Islam and politics. The purpose of this study is to examine this interaction of Islam and politics in Bangladesh. More specifically, the study seeks to investigate the nature of Islamization of the state, and the causes for it. The main focus of the study is post-independence Bangladesh.

In the post-independence period, two different sets of ruling elites have attempted to swing the state in Bangladesh in two opposite directions in terms

of ideological orientation. Initially, attempts were made by the ruling civilian elites to secularize the state. But such attempts were foiled by military intervention. The military-led government that took over power changed the orientation of the state in an Islamic direction. This re-direction towards Islam culminated in a constitutional amendment in June 1988 making Islam the state religion. The endeavor to accord Islam a new constitutional status was also accompanied by commitments to bring the country's laws into conformity with the Islamic legal code. The main concern of this study therefore is to analyze this process of Islamization of the state and the reasons behind this transformation.

2. Modernization Theory and Islam

In the period after World War II, the modernization school emerged as the most celebrated theoretical framework for the understanding of the third world in western social science. The modernization school saw post-colonial societies in a stage of transition from tradition to modernity, following the inauguration of colonial reforms and the installation of colonial institutions. This transition from tradition to modernity, resulting from colonial reforms and institutions, was perceived as part of a unilinear historical route of development originating in the Western European experience.

Early modernization scholars saw tradition and modernity to be mutually exclusive.⁶ The antagonism between tradition and modernity dates as far back as the Enlightenment. Marquis de Condorcet's unilinear vision of progress condemned the past as useless and saw hope for human progress in the future. Also, Karl Marx's version of Enlightenment, as expressed in his idea of dialectical conflict of material interests, repudiated the past and saw hope in future revolutionary change. Basing themselves on such assumptions, most

scholars of third world development conceptualized modernity and tradition to be two antagonistic forces.

The assumption that tradition and modernity were contradictory rested on, as Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph observed,

a misdiagnosis of tradition as it is found in traditional societies, a misunderstanding of modernity as it is found in modern societies, and a misapprehension of the relationship between them.⁷

Such misdiagnosis of tradition and modernity was corrected, first, by cultural anthropologists in the mid-1960s who saw that traditional societies were not as malleable as the early modernization theorists had thought. Development in one sphere, such as technology, did not necessarily bring concomitant changes in other spheres of the indigenous social system.⁸ On the other hand, the mere destruction of traditional values and institutions, such as family and community, did not ensure the development of a new and viable modern society. Rather, quite often the destruction of traditional forms tended to lead to disorganization, delinquency, and chaos instead of a viable rational order.⁹

Critics also found that kinship ties, religious beliefs, linguistic affiliations, communal bonds, which are typical forms of association in a traditional social order, did not entirely disappear even in the most highly industrialized societies.¹⁰ Moreover, later research revealed that modernity incorporates traditional aspects while traditional forms incorporate, at least, latent, deviant, or minority values, configurations, and structures that may fit a model of modernity.¹¹ Hence, modernity and tradition were found to be complementary and compatible. Not only that, revisionist scholarship also discovered that modernization does not necessarily mean development. According to this view, development refers to the institutionalization of modernity into traditions of

national and cultural life. Without such institutionalization, modernization of a sub-system, for example, the military, may prove dysfunctional unless accompanied by the simultaneous growth of civil responsibility and tradition of an appropriate civil-military relationship.¹² Hence, it can be said, as Kothari argues:

In reality development entails both conservation and innovation; and consolidation of both tradition and change into an institutionalized framework and an internalized value system.¹³

The classical modernization theory, in its repudiation of tradition in general, had made religion a special object of focus. It took religious affiliation as a "primordial" loyalty, which was obviously considered an obstacle in the quest for modernity.¹⁴ It was assumed that progress in communications would erode such "primordial" loyalties. Karl Deutsch's concept of "social mobilization", which is an outcome of modernization, posited that the process of modernization would result in such a dynamic interaction among socio-economic forces that traditional values would be replaced by modern ones.¹⁵

A core element in the consensus in the modernization school was that secularization of the society was inevitable in the transition from tradition to modernity. As John Kautsky put it:

A modern society is characterized by a belief in the rational and scientific control of man's physical and social environment and the application of technology to that end. One could thus define the process of modernization as one of secularization....¹⁶

In a similar vein, another author observed that in the process of transition from traditional societies to modern nation-states,

the increasing secularization of society also exacts its toll on traditional religious beliefs, even though ritualized practices may continue long after they have lost their primary meanings. Defenders of traditional religions are confronted not only by the apathy of many who find little satisfaction in the ancient beliefs

and practices, but also by a minority who view the traditional religions as definite obstacles to modernization.¹⁷

By the late 1960s, however, the prevailing view on religion and modernity came to be questioned from within the modernization school. Some prominent modernization theorists¹⁸ recognized the adaptability and elasticity of traditional values and institutions as also their capacity to provide a meaningful basis for political integration and legitimation.¹⁹ As already observed, modernity and tradition no longer appeared as necessarily contradictory; now, it seemed that they could co-exist.

The world-wide resurgence of Islam in the 1970s and 1980s made the relationship between tradition and modernity more complex. Modernization was supposed to have eliminated religion from public life. Instead, what occurred was a revival of religion as a political force, particularly in the Islamic world. The response to this problem, from the western perspective, has been that what has happened in the Muslim countries is the abandonment of modernity and that is what explains the resurgence of Islamic ideas. But this argument has been soundly rebuffed by the scholars on Islam.²⁰

First of all, the lack of modernization in the Islamic world can not be attributed to Islam. Both quantitative and qualitative studies on Islamic societies refute the view that Islam is inimical to modernization.²¹ El-Manoufi found in his survey of Egyptian villagers that Islam did not hinder development as generally assumed in western social science.²² The findings indicated, as El-Manoufi observed:

Islam, embodied in religiosity, exercises no negative impact upon development. This contradicts the notion that Islam is responsible for the backwardness of Muslim societies and poses an obstacle to overall development. Religiosity, as the practical understanding of Islam, is a neutral factor in its relationship with development: it neither hinders nor furthers it.²³

On the other hand, as Ragab contended:

Backwardness resulted from serious disruptions in the social organization of these societies by foreign domination for long periods. The stunted political, economic and social institutions of these societies are incapable of serving the needs of the population in a meaningful way. Genuine development of institutions in accordance with the *sharia* was halted for centuries. Foreign institutions that run against *Sharia's* principles are imposed on people who experience a continuous acute conflict between what they hold to be the truth in their conscience and a dismal status quo.²⁴

As a result, western models of development failed because the institutions they built have not been rooted in, but are often inimical to, social and religious values that command the allegiance of the masses.²⁵

On the other hand, it can be argued that it was not Islam but colonialism which made the Muslim countries (and the third world in general) underdeveloped. At the time of colonization there was not a very big gap between European states and many Afro-Asian countries in terms of economic infrastructure, accumulation of capital and the general standard of living. But such gaps had become very wide by the time of colonial withdrawal, as has succinctly been noted in the context of India:

What is striking is the fact that at the beginning of British rule, India and Great Britain were at roughly equivalent levels of economic well-being, but by the 20th century the latter was a developed industrial country while the former not only remained primarily an agricultural country but also, with its integration into the world economic system as an agricultural dependency, subjected to great economic fluctuation and consequent grave economic distress. ... the development of Great Britain is related -- and it could not but be related given the two economic systems were so closely integrated -- to the underdevelopment of India.²⁶

Another perspective is that, while modernization and Islam are accommodative, Islamic modernization is not similar to secular-oriented western modernization. As Fazlur Rahman, a contemporary authority on Islam, has

argued:

it should be noted that Islamic modernism is not equivalent to secularism, even though so many western...political scientists...identify the two. They assume that all modernization is secularization, which is palpably untrue in case of Islam.²⁷

James Piscatori observed, in the same vein, that the view that Islam stifled the process of development owed much to Marx and something to Durkheim, who related nation-building to secularization. According to Piscatori, the recent experience of the Islamic world demonstrated a great deal of development²⁸ under the leadership of orthodox Muslims elites, such as Saudi Arabia, as well as radical ones, such as Libya and Iran.²⁹ Thus development could take place under Islamic leadership. On the other hand, substantial modernization does not necessarily lead to secularization. For example, Iran in the 1960s and 1970s experienced extensive modernization, including substantial investments in heavy industry and infrastructure, urbanization, expansion of literacy and formal education, growth of communications and mass media.³⁰ But these modernizing achievements failed to establish secular values and institutions. It can therefore be contended, as Ali Banuazizi does, that

the structural changes accompanying modernization do not necessarily bring about secularism, either at the level of political institutions and processes or in the attitudes and values of individuals who have been exposed to modernizing experiences.³¹

Thus, the view that lack of modernization opened the space for a resurgence of Islam in the socio-political sphere is untenable. On the other hand, it is true that rapid modernization tends to evoke opposition from traditional forces, and this conservative reaction results in the resurgence of traditional values and movements. But Islamic resurgence is not a phenomenon limited to only those societies that have experienced rapid modernization, such as Iran; it also pervades societies with a low level of modernization, such as

Bangladesh. This has been so because the Muslim masses are in a quest for authenticity in the wake of the failure of, and conflicts caused by, alien models of development. They do not want transplantation of western institutions. Rather, they want to adapt them to Islamic norms or innovate their own ones in accordance with Islamic tradition. Hence, it is important to look for causal relationships beyond either the lack of modernization or the presence of rapid modernization in investigating the reversal in the state ideology of Bangladesh from secularism to Islam.

3. The Dualistic Bengali Muslim Culture

The message of Islam was brought to Bengal first by the *sufis* (Islamic mystics) and merchants. Muslim military conquests followed later on. The Islamization of Bengal has been compared by some scholars with the Islamization of Indonesia.³² In both cases the prime period of conversion was from the 13th to the 16th centuries. As in Bengal, Islam came to Indonesia by sea and on the heels not of conquest but of trade.³³ Pre-Islamic Bengal and pre-Islamic Indonesia resembled each other in terms of the Buddhist-Hindu rivalry, accommodation of Buddhism, Brahmanic predominance in the last phase, and a rigid hierarchical social order.³⁴ In both cases, Islam offered an egalitarian doctrine as an alternative to the hierarchical order of society.

When Islam came to Indonesia, as Geertz observed, the latter was already a well-established non-Arabic civilization, which Islam, slowly and with great difficulty, only partly replaced.³⁵ Consequently, the Hindu-Buddhist Indic culture of the pre-Islamic period left a deep mark on the people and that Indic culture has never been Islamized. Islam was added to the local culture, rather than replacing it. Islam brought diversification and variation in terms of fundamental values and notions of life and one's role in society. Developments

during the colonial period -- particularly occupational and structural changes, puritanic Islamic movements of the 19th century, and a huge turn-out in pilgrimage to Makkah -- enhanced the role of Islam in the adaptive and compromising milieu of Indonesian culture. Thus, "the overall result", as Geertz observed,

is what can properly be called syncretism, but it was a syncretism the order of whose elements, the weight and meaning given to its various ingredients, differed markedly, and what is more important, increasingly, from one sector of the society to another.³⁶

In Bengal, the *Sufi* influence made Islam compromising and eclectic, incorporating many Hindu norms and symbols. As a result, to quote Asim Roy,

the syncretistic tradition remained the dominant form of Islamic acculturation in Bengal for several centuries until the 19th century witnessed the introduction of a new phase of Islamization of Bengal as part of far wider global movement of Islamic revitalization.³⁷

But the Islamic reformist movements of the 19th century could not completely eliminate Hindu-Buddhist symbols, norms and values from the Bengali Muslim culture. However, such movements were more successful in Bengal than those in Indonesia in terms of bringing the local Muslim culture to a closer resemblance to the legalistic mainstream Islamic culture of the Middle Eastern type. Still, the Hindu Bengali literary figures are venerated by the Muslims of Bangladesh though the Bengali Muslim literary style remains quite distinct from that of the Bengali Hindus. The national anthem of Bangladesh, composed by Rabindranath Tagore, a Hindu poet, is full of Hindu religious symbols and thus constitutes an issue of contention and dispute. The contemporary cultural orientation of the Muslims of Bangladesh is well summarized by Dilip Ghosh:

As far as common East Bengali Muslims were concerned, they were not unfaithful to their religion. But the level of religion -- the prescribed religious injunctions of Islam did not come in conflict with *deshar nyom* (the rules of the land). A perfect harmonious

relation was established between the loyalty to *dharma* (religion) and the loyalty to *desher niyom* -- the laws, customs and social practices of the land.³⁸

The contemporary Muslim culture of Bangladesh is therefore dualistic in the sense that it does not evade the injunctions of *sharia*;³⁹ rather, the fundamental Islamic laws co-exist with the customs of the land, the latter being a synthesis of Hindu and Islamic traditions. The vast majority of Bengali Muslims are equally committed to the Bengali and Islamic dimensions of their identity. They do not identify themselves as Islamic people, ignoring their Bengali ethno-linguistic background, nor do they like to project themselves as Bengali, forgetting their Islamic heritage. This orientation has received expression in the constitutional amendment replacing "Bengali" by "Bangladeshi" as the identity of the people of Bangladesh, because "Bangladeshi" refers to both Bengali and Islamic dimensions of identity of the overwhelming Muslim majority of Bangladesh.

However, this dualistic cultural orientation has been under pressure for purification from orthodox Islamic forces as the waves of worldwide resurgence of Islam in the 1970s and 1980s also hit Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, where Islam has always been tolerant and pliant rather than puritanic and legalistic, there seems to have occurred a relocation in terms of Islam's role in the polity. This is evident from the fact that now Islam has emerged as a potential political force that has already caused the constitutional de-secularization of the state. Herein lies the significance of studying the process of Islamization of the state in the context of a traditionally non-orthodox Muslim society having a dualistic culture.

4. The Religious Status of the Bangladesh State

In the contemporary Muslim world, Islam is a source of political legitimacy. But the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan was not legitimated in the name of Islam. Rather, it was Bengali nationalism that was the *raison d'être* of Bangladesh's coming into existence as an independent state. During the later days of united Pakistan, Bengali nationalism was not religion-oriented in the sense that the popular nationalist leaders were not positively identified with Islamic forces, nor did the goals of the nationalist movement envisage an Islamic state or implementation of Islam's socio-political ideals.

During the Pakistan phase, the two erstwhile enemies in the minds of the Bengali Muslims -- the British and the Hindus -- were gone. The British rulers and the Hindu landlords were replaced, however, by the non-Bengali Muslims of West Pakistan. These non-Bengali Muslims came to be perceived, in due course, as depriving the socio-economically backward Bengalis of their due share in economic and political power. As a result, Islamic consciousness was overshadowed by ethnic consciousness among the Bengali Muslims. Consequently, the Bengali nationalist movement acquired a secular orientation during the Pakistan phase. The secession from Pakistan led therefore to the establishment of a secular state in Bangladesh, at least at the initial stage, if we employ the criteria commonly used in various models of secularism in determining whether a state is secular or not.

David Martin discerned multiple patterns of secularism in Christendom: Anglo-Saxon, American, French/Latin, and Russian. The Anglo-Saxon pattern is characterized by erosion of religious ethos and institutions, but amorphous religious beliefs continue to be maintained. The American pattern is distinguished by the maintenance of amorphous religious beliefs and institutional

expansion while the religious ethos is on the decline. The French or Latin pattern is highlighted by strong religious beliefs, ethos and institutions confronting strong secularist beliefs, ethos and institutions. The Russian pattern features massive erosion of religious beliefs, ethos and institutions but the maintenance of such beliefs and ethos within the surviving religious institutions.⁴⁰ The Russian pattern, as described by Martin, refers to the period prior to *glasnost* and *perestroika*. Because of the reforms, there has been some revival of religious beliefs and ethos and expansion of religious institutions.

M. V. Kamath has articulated a distinctive Indian pattern of secularism. He describes Indian secularism as *sarva dharma sambhava* -- looking at all religions with equal respect or equi-distancing oneself from all religions. He cites, for example, that in India the President, Governor, and Chief Ministers are installed in secular ceremonies, but leading religious leaders are invited to all official ceremonies. Jawaharlal Nehru, as quoted by Kamath, gave a comprehensive view of Indian secularism:

India has a long history of religious tolerance. That is one aspect of a secular state, but it is not the whole of it. In a country like India which has many faiths and religions, no real nationalism can be built up except on the basis of secularity. Any narrower approach must necessarily exclude a section of the population and then nationalism itself will have a much more restricted meaning than it should possess.... That, I repeat, does not mean absence of religion, but putting religion on a different plane from that of normal political and social life.⁴¹

In the Islamic world, religious beliefs, ethos and institutions did not undergo any significant erosion except in rare cases such as Turkey. In Turkey there has been significant erosion of Islamic beliefs, ethos and institutions. The constitutional separation between Islam and the state has been accepted in Turkey and Indonesia. But the two countries maintain official membership in international Islamic organizations, such as Islamic Conference Organization

and Islamic Development Bank. Their secular constitutional character thus contradicts their pro-Islamic supra-national commitments.

According to the models of Martin and Kamath, Bangladesh under Awami League (AL) rule was a secular state. The constitution of Bangladesh declared the state as secular and no religion was accorded an official status. It did not mean an absence of religion because all religions were granted equal freedom and opportunities. During Bangladesh's war of liberation against Pakistan, there was a temporary erosion of Islamic ethos. Islamic institutions also suffered a decline as the AL government banned Islamic political parties. But the secular character of the state was replaced by an Islamic one after the military coup in August 1975.

A more comprehensive analytical framework that can be applied to the study of patterns of secularization universally was developed by Donald Smith. Smith found five analytically distinct aspects of secularization.⁴² Firstly, there is polity-separation secularization. It refers to the institutional separation of religion and polity. It implies non-recognition of a state religion or the religious character of the state. The Government no longer undertakes its traditional functions as promoter and defender of the faith. According to this criterion, Bangladesh was a secular state until the mid-1970s in the sense that the Bangladesh constitution did not accord privileged status to any religion. Secularism was one of the four basic principles guiding state affairs. The constitution of Bangladesh stated that, in order to achieve the ideals of secularism, all kinds of communalism, patronage by the state of any particular religion, misuse of religion for political purposes, discrimination against, and persecution of, anyone following a particular religion, will be put an end to.⁴³ But this policy of secularism was abandoned when the military came to power

after the August 1975 coup. The military regime of General Ziaur Rahman struck out secularism as a fundamental principle of state policy and replaced it with "a complete trust and faith in Almighty Allah". Socialism, another fundamental principle guiding state policy, was replaced, on the grounds of its being contrary to Islam, by social justice, an important feature of Islam's social ideals. In this manner polity-separation secularization came to an end in Bangladesh.

Secondly, there is polity-expansion secularization. It refers to the expansion of the political system into the areas of society formerly regulated by religion. The state extends its authority into areas of education, law, and economy which were earlier subject to religious norms and structures in the traditional system.

In the context of Islam, polity-expansion secularization can be evaluated according to the criterion of whether the state guidelines on law, education and economy reflect religious norms or not. In terms of this criterion, secularization took place during British colonial rule when secular education, secular law and western commercial codes were implemented. But even in that secular structure of government, an accommodation was made with religion. Religious schools, such as the Islamic schools called *madrasa*, were also founded by the colonial administration.⁴⁴ Family law remained traditional: Hindu family law for Hindus, Muslim family law for Muslims. This co-existence of secular and religious norms, introduced by the British, persists till today. There has not been any significant change in state policy in this regard whether during the period Bangladesh was a part of Pakistan or since Bangladesh's independence. Polity-expansion secularization, even though it exists, therefore remains incomplete in Bangladesh.

Thirdly, there is political-culture secularization. It refers to the transformation of values associated with the polity. That is, modern political values, such as notions of popular sovereignty, adult franchise, civil rights -- all being derived from the popular will -- replace traditional notions of political community and legitimacy of polity. In terms of this criterion, nowhere in the Muslim world has there occurred a complete political-culture secularization. Bangladesh is not an exception to this norm. The basic sources of legitimacy in post-colonial Muslim societies are both Islam and colonial traditions. Bangladesh was under British colonial rule for almost two centuries during which British political values, such as popular sovereignty, popular franchise, majority rule and so forth, influenced the educated strata of the society. These modern political values therefore co-exist with Islam-induced traditional political values.

As Lucian Pye observed, in Bangladesh as well as in Pakistan, Malaysia, and Indonesia, Muslims share the idea that personal virtue should be transferable into community power. The good should rule.⁴⁵ The ideal leader is a man who is not perfect but whose divinely inspired quality of blessedness can bring blessings on his followers when, as brothers, all strive to perfect their ways, and obey the obligations required by membership in the Islamic community. This implies that loyalty is a supreme value: leader and followers are bound together in a compact that is a part of God's will for an orderly society of believers.⁴⁵

Also important to note is the fact that in Bangladesh the intellectuals -- in particular, academics, lawyers, and journalists -- are generally non-religious in their socio-political orientation, whereas the *ulama* are Islam-oriented in terms of political values. This point has been confirmed in surveys conducted in 1968,

1969, and 1973.⁴⁷ Craig Baxter, too, notes that secularism continues to receive support from the intelligentsia.⁴⁸ Besides the *ulama* and the lower middle class, the military is also Islam-oriented. The Muslim military is generally Islam-oriented, particularly so in South Asia.

In the early phase of Islam, political, military and religious roles were merged together, while in the later dynastic phase military backing for the survival of civilian regimes became a political necessity. Also important to note is that, in the history of Islam, the institution of *jihad* conferred a privileged status on the military. This historical association between the military and the protection and expansion of Islam yields a positive image of the military in Muslim societies. Its intervention in politics wins popular support, especially when it portrays itself as the defender and promoter of Islam. As found by a contemporary observer, in 1980 half of the Muslim states were directly ruled by the military and in the rest the military was the ultimate power.⁴⁹ Thus, we see a co-existence of traditional Islam-oriented political values with liberal notions of politics borrowed from the political values and institutions of the mother country during the colonial interlude. Political-culture secularization has thus not been fully accomplished in Bangladesh.

Fourthly, there is political-process secularization. It refers to the decline in significance and influence of religious leaders, religious interest groups, religious political parties, and religious issues. The diminishing influence of religious political parties and their increasingly secular orientation are, for example, manifestations of political-process secularization. In terms of this criterion, for the first few years after independence political-process secularization was taking place in Bangladesh. Religion-based political parties were outlawed. The constitution stated that the exploitation of religion for

political purposes would be eliminated. The role of religious pressure groups and religious leaders waned in the realm of politics, because they had been discredited for having collaborated with the Pakistani military junta and thus having opposed the independence of Bangladesh. Religious issues lost political significance because the state, as stated in the constitution, would not give privileged status to any religion.⁵⁰

However, in the mid-1970s the government, to some extent, changed its stand on religious issues. This change started in 1974 when the then Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, visited Pakistan to attend the Islamic Summit Conference. Also significant was his visit in the same year to a few Arab countries to seek financial aid. But a major break in state policy occurred with the military coup in August 1975. Religion-based parties were then allowed to participate in politics. Religious leaders and religious issues regained their lost status and influence. Political-process secularization was thus diluted.

Fifthly, there is polity-dominance secularization. It implies a radical program of secularization by revolutionary regimes that recognize no area of religious autonomy. The aim of such regimes is to make society totally free from religious influence or to re-interpret religion so as to bring it into line with official ideology.⁵¹ This kind of secularization has never taken place in Bangladesh. Non-political religious institutions have always existed in Bangladesh independent of governmental control.

Thus, according to Smith's criteria, Bangladesh today is not a secular state. No doubt, efforts were made in the early 1970s by the Awami League government to make Bangladesh a secular state. But in the post-Awami League era such secularizing measures, as already shown, were abrogated.

If Bangladesh is not a secular state, is it then an Islamic one? There is no standard definition of an Islamic state that applies to the contemporary situation. Strictly speaking, according to classical Islamic political theory (advocated by Al-Mawardi and his immediate predecessors), the entire Muslim community should be united in a single polity under the rule of the caliph.⁵² Classical Islamic political theory centered on three main principles: unity, divine guidance, and historical continuity. Unity referred to the political unity of the entire Muslim community. Divine guidance meant that the *sharia* determined the relationship between the state and society. Historical continuity implied that the traditions of the Prophet, "the Righteous Caliphs", and the verdicts given by the ulama of the past, be followed scrupulously.

Even during the Abbasid period (750-1258 A.D.), however, *the dar al-Islam* (the universal Islamic state) had withered away. Instead, there came into existence three different political realms: the Ummayyad dynasty in Andalusia (the Iberian peninsula), the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt and North Africa, and the Abbasid state which represented the rest of the Muslim community. With the fall of the Abbasid caliphate in 1258 A.D. further political disintegration took place and the "caliphate" as an institution disappeared until it was revived later by the Ottomans. In the post-Abbasid period, the famous Muslim philosopher, Ibn Khaldun, provided an intellectual solution to this problem of political fragmentation. He posited spiritual, instead of political, unity of all Muslims. According to him, the Muslim community as a whole has no relation to the government of its various parts. He insisted that a good Islamic government was simply one that was in accord with the *sharia*.⁵³

Ibn Khaldun's reconstruction of Islamic political thought, however, did not strike root among the *ulama*. Instead, the *ulama* themselves reformulated

Islamic political theory. According to their version, unity centered on Islamic orthodoxy, of which they were the guardians. Divine guidance was transformed into the requirement that the advice of the *ulama* be sought by the political authorities on all legal questions. Historical continuity became *taqlid*, which refers to the principle whereby the opinions of the founders of legal schools, or later consensi, remain valid for succeeding generations.⁵⁴ In this fashion, the embodiment of all three principles in the caliphate was changed to their embodiment in the *ulama*.⁵⁵ Furthermore, for the *ulama*, Muslim rule was an important condition for an Islamic state, since the enforcement of Islamic law required that the ruler of the land be a Muslim.⁵⁶ Thus, in the post-Abbasid period the unity of religion and state was maintained as long as rulers recognized the jurisdiction of *sharia* and gained the sanction of the *ulama* for their policies.⁵⁷

In the post-colonial phase, as observed by Binder, the decline of Islamic political institutions resulted in the strengthening of the religious sphere through the identification of the latter with the entire community of believers.⁵⁸ The spiritual unity of all true believers in otherwise geographically distinct polities is taken to be embodied in the social institutions of Islam. There is no demand for a pan-Islamic empire, but *sharia* has become the blueprint for an Islamic state. Though political structures and institutions have varied in Muslim societies since the decline of the Abbasid caliphate in the 13th century, the *sharia* has ensured their Islamic character. This is an important reason, as observed by Saleem Qureshi, why contemporary Islamic fundamentalists, in their yearning for a return to original purity, search for an Islamic constitution, an Islamic penal system and an Islamic economics -- all included in various sections of the *sharia*.⁵⁹ The application of *sharia* has thus become the main criterion for determining whether a state, representing a Muslim majority, is

Islamic or not. Since the enforcement of *sharia* requires that the ruler be a Muslim, a Muslim ruler is consequently a second requirement for an Islamic state.

In Bangladesh, President Ershad declared in early 1988 that the new parliament would adapt the constitution to Quranic laws.⁶⁰ But opposition leaders claimed that this sudden change in policy was a ploy to confuse and divide the opposition which had been agitating for months, with substantial popular support, for the ouster of President Ershad.⁶¹ So far, no specific step has been taken towards the implementation of *sharia*. Even if the government goes ahead with its intention to apply Quranic laws, we will have to wait and see how far it goes in implementing them. However, at present, certain aspects of civil law, for example, family law and laws of inheritance, are taken from the *sharia*, while the criminal code and the commercial code are European in origin. This legal set-up was established by the British colonial administration, and no significant change has taken place since then. There is no formal *sharia* court system either. The Bangladesh constitution also does not specify that the head of the state has to be a Muslim. But it does state that Islam is the state religion.⁶² It also states that "absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah", as a fundamental principle of state policy, is the basis of all state actions. Another fundamental principle of state policy is social justice, which has been interpreted as encompassing Islamic ideas of social justice and economic equality.⁶³

Despite the declaration of such lofty Islamic principles, the government has until now taken only nominal steps towards Islam in the realm of public policy. Friday, instead of Sunday, has been made a weekly holiday. An Islamic university has been established under governmental initiative. Public school

curricula lay relatively greater stress on Islamic subjects than in the past. The government is taking an active role in international Islamic forums, such as Islamic Conference Organization and Islamic Development Bank. These measures are designed to confer an Islamic character on a state-structure which is similar in many ways to other post-colonial states.

In the light of the above discussion, Bangladesh at present can at best be described as a semi-Islamic state. There is the possibility that, if the military-backed regime of Ershad can overcome the popular agitation against it, the *sharia* will be implemented to some extent, in which case Bangladesh will qualify as an Islamic state. But if Ershad's regime succumbs to popular agitation, then the plan for the implementation of *sharia* will enter a state of uncertainty.

5. The Hypothesis

Bangladesh's experience with Islamization can be hypothesized thus:

The nature of the particular process of Islamization of the state of Bangladesh, leading to its present semi-Islamic status, has been a function of three independent variables: (1) the specific nature of Islam in the society; (2) the configuration of political interests; and (3) the international environment. Further, the course of future Islamization will be dependent on changes in these variables, and the balance among them.

Our hypothesis postulates that the tolerant Islam in Bangladesh stands distinguished from the legalistic mainstream Islam in that it does not highlight the political message because, for Bengali Muslims, Islam has traditionally been a matter of personal experience and piety. Opinion surveys and interviews should show whether this is still true or not, or whether the global Islamic resurgence has changed the orientation of the Bengali Muslims so that they now take Islam to be a social-political blueprint that ought to be implemented.

Empirical research should also reveal whether the intelligentsia, traditionally seen as a promoter of secular values, still holds secular political ideas, or whether it has been affected by the weakening of secular nationalism and the rise in Islamic awareness. Empirical research, in terms of survey and interviews, ought thus to demonstrate to us whether the trend toward Islamization is a function of the convergence of trends in society (changes in popular values in respect of the place of Islam in politics), in polity (changes among political groups, especially the status of the military) and pressures from the international environment, or whether the military in its search for symbolic legitimacy has been able to override, through its coercive power, both the traditional thrust of Bangladeshi society in respect of the role of Islam, and of the political forces reflective of that thrust.

The rest of the dissertation deals in detail with the dependent and independent variables, drawing on qualitative and quantitative evidence, in the following sequence:

A comprehensive study of the evolution of the Islamic state is provided in Chapter 2, covering its various stages: early, medieval, colonial, and post-colonial. To understand the evolution of the Islamic state, it is a historical as well as theoretical necessity to know about the evolution of Islamic political theory. Therefore, Islamic political theory and its various schools -- classical, traditional, modernist and fundamentalist -- are analyzed. Particular attention is given to contemporary fundamentalism and its ideal of a modern Islamic state. Having done the theoretical analysis of the relationship between Islam and state, specific attention is directed to our case study, beginning with the historical background, in Chapter 3, of Islam in Bangladesh. This is followed by a thorough study of the post-independence period: the prime focus of our

project. The relationship between Islam and state in contemporary Bangladesh is critically analyzed in three phases, delineated by the rule of three different leaders Mujib, Zia and Ershad. The study of the post-independence period, Chapters 4, 5 and 6, is followed by an investigation in Chapter 7 of the causal variables. The ranking of variables is done according to their priority and relative strength. Survey and interview data are employed in the testing of the central hypothesis. Finally, Chapter 8 provides the conclusions of the study.

Notes

- ¹ Islam was also used as a colonial instrument. Where the colonizers found it necessary to break the traditional Islamic institutions, their policy towards Islam was hostile and destructive. But in some cases the traditional Islamic socio-political system remained intact under colonial rule when a mutually beneficial agreement was reached between the colonizers and the local Muslim leaders.
- ² G. Hossein Razi, "Legitimacy, Religion, And Nationalism In The Middle East", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 84, no. 1 (March 1990), pp. 75.
- ³ Issa J. Boullata, *Trends And Issues In Contemporary Arab Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p.153.
- ⁴ James A. Bill, "Foreword", in Tawfic E. Farah (ed.), *Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism The Continuing Debate* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1987), p. ix.
- ⁵ Tareq Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael, *Government and Politics in Islam* (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), p.vii.
- ⁶ For example, Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: The Free Press, 1958); Cyril Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization: A Study in Comparative History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); Ralph Braibanti and John J. Spengler (eds.), *Tradition, Values and Socio-Economic Development* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, and London: Cambridge University Press, 1961); W. W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: a Non Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961); Donald Blackmer and Max Millikan (eds.), *The Emerging Nations, Their Growth and United States Policy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961).
- ⁷ Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition -- Political Development in India* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), p. 3.
- ⁸ Rajni Kothari, "Tradition and Modernity Revisited", *Government And Opposition*, vol. 3, no. 3 (Summer 1968), p. 277.
- ⁹ S. N. Eisenstadt, *Tradition, Change, and Modernity* (New York: John Wiley, 1973), p. 99.
- ¹⁰ Reinhard Bendix, "Tradition And Modernity Reconsidered", *Comparative Studies In Society And History* IX, no. 3 (April 1967), p. 326.
- ¹¹ Rudolph and Rudolph, pp. 5, 12.
- ¹² This view was promulgated by Huntington and shared by Kothari. See Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven:

Yale University Press, 1968); Kothari, "Tradition and Modernity Revisited", pp. 287, 288.

- 13 Kothari, p. 289.
- 14 For example, Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States", in Clifford Geertz (ed.), *Old Societies and New States: The Quest of Modernity in Asia and Africa* (New York: Free Press, 1963), pp. 109-113.
- 15 Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1966), p. 130.
- 16 John H. Kautsky, *The Political Consequences of Modernization* (Huntington, N.Y.: Robert E. Krieger, 1980), p. 20.
- 17 Harvey G. Kebschull, "Transitional Societies", in Harvey G. Kebschull (ed.), *Politics In Transitional Societies* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1968), p. 62.
- 18 For example, Bendix, Eisenstadt, Kothari, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph.
- 19 Ali Banuazizi, "Social-Psychological Approach to Political Development", in Myron Weiner and Samuel P. Huntington (eds.), *Understanding Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987), p. 298.
- 20 For example, Fazlur Rahman, James Piscatori, Tawfic Farah, Ibrahim Ragab, and Ali Banuazizi.
- 21 See the following sources for a thorough discussion on this topic: John L. Esposito (ed.), *Islam And Development* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980); Ibrahim Ragab, "Islam and Development", *World Development*, vol. 8, nos. 7/8 (July/August 1980); Tawfic Farah and Yasumasa Kuroda (eds.), *Political Socialization in the Arab States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1987); Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner (eds.), *The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986); James Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation-States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Nigel Biggar, Jamie Scott, and William Scheiker (eds.), *Cities of Gods -- Faith, Politics and Pluralism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986).
- 22 El-Manoufi surveyed two villages in Egypt. 96 percent of the inhabitants of one village and 95.7 percent of the inhabitants of the other were Muslims. A total of 492 individuals, randomly chosen, were interviewed; 232 from one village and 260 from the other. In terms of social status, 11 percent belonged to lower middle class, 80 percent middle class and 9 percent upper middle class. The following hypotheses were tested:

1. The more religious the individual, the more likely he is to be less interested in the future.
2. The more religious the individual, the more likely he is to be

less conscious of the need to control nature.

3. The more religious the individual, the more negative is his attitude toward action.

4. The more religious the individual, the weaker is his belief in the value of justice.

5. The more religious the individual, the weaker is his feeling of citizenship.

6. The more religious the individual, the less likely he will be to use modern techniques in agriculture.

7. The more religious the individual, the less productive he will be.

8. The more religious the individual, the less likely he will be to participate in political life.

The knowledge of Islam and of Islamic behavior (for example, praying) were two important indicators of religiosity in this study.

Source: Kamal El-Manoufi, "Islam and Development: A Field Study", in Tawfie E. Farah and Yasumasa Kuroda (eds.), *Political Socialization in the Arab States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1987), pp. 148-156.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

²⁴ Ibrahim A. Ragab, "Islam and Development", *World Development* vol. 8, nos. 7/8 (July/August, 1980), p. 519. Emphasis added.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p., 520.

²⁶ Baldev Raj Nayar, *India's Quest for Technological Independence: Policy Foundation and Policy Change*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Lancers Publishers, 1983), pp. 110.

²⁷ Fazlur Rahman, "Islam and Political Action: Politics in the Service of Religion", in Nigel Biggar, Jamie S. Scott, and William Schweiker (eds.), *Cities of Gods -- Faith, Politics and Pluralism in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), p. 160.

²⁸ In terms of rapidly increasing enrolment in schools, modern health care facilities, a functioning network of communications and transportation capable of meeting the needs of growing economies, and a high standard of living in third world standards.

²⁹ James Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation-States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 117.

³⁰ Banuazizi, "Social Psychological Approach to Political Development", p. 302.

- 31 *Ibid.*, pp. 305, 306.
- 32 For example, Abdul Momin Choudhury, "Conversion to Islam in Bengal: An Explanation", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: History and Culture* vol.I (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986).
- 33 Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 12.
- 34 Choudhury, "Conversion to Islam in Bengal", p. 14.
- 35 Clifford Geertz, "Modernization in a Muslim Society: The Indonesian Case", in Robert N. Bellah (ed.), *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 95.
- 36 Geertz, *Islam Observed*, p. 13.
- 37 Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. xiii.
- 38 Dilip K. Ghosh, "The Origins Of Secularism In The Ideology Of Bangladesh", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1975, p. 162.
- 39 Laws derived from the Quran and the Hadith, the two basic sources of Islamic law.
- 40 David Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), pp. 7, 8.
- 41 M. V. Kamath, "Role of Religion in a Secular State -- Political Perspectives", *Mainstream*, May 20, 1989, p. 9.
- 42 Donald E. Smith, "Religion and Political Modernization: Comparative Perspectives", in Donald E. Smith (ed.), *Religion and Political Modernization* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 7.
- 43 Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh, *Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*, Article 12 (Dhaka: Government Of Bangladesh, 1972).
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- 48 Craig Baxter, *Bangladesh: A New Nation in an Old Setting* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), p. 7.
- 49 Saleem Qureshi, "Military In The Polity Of Islam", *International Political Science Review*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1981), p. 272.
- 50 *Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*, 1972, Article 12.
- 51 Smith, p. 8.
- 52 Leonard Binder, *Religion And Politics In Pakistan* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), pp. 15, 16.
- 53 *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18.
- 54 *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 20.
- 55 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 56 Jawed, "Islam and Political Attitudes in Pakistan and Bangladesh....", p. 31.
- 57 Daniel Crecelius, "The Course of Secularization in Modern Egypt", in Smith (ed.), *Religion and Political Modernization*, p. 70.
- 58 Leonard Binder, *The Ideological Revolution In The Middle East* (New York: John Wiley, 1964), p. 59.
- 59 Saleem Qureshi, "Islam and Development: The Zia Regime in Pakistan", *World Development*, vol. 8, nos. 7/8 (1980), pp. 565, 566.
- 60 The declaration was made on March 13, 1988. See *The Gazette*, Montreal, March 14, 1988, p. B-1.
- 61 *The Gazette*, Montreal, March 15, 1988, p. B-7.
- 62 The constitution was amended on June 7, 1988, known as the 8th Amendment, to make Islam the state religion. See *Bangladesh Gazette*, additional issue, June 9, 1988, vol. 5, p. 8247; *The Gazette*, Montreal, June 8, 1988, p. D-19.
- 63 Charles P. O'Donnell, *Bangladesh: Biography Of a Muslim Nation* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), p. 190.

CHAPTER 2

ISLAM AND STATE

To understand the relationship between Islam and state in Bangladesh, it is important to know the more general relationship between Islam and state from a broader historical and theoretical perspective. Accordingly, the first half of this chapter attempts to investigate the historical evolution of the Islamic polity. It starts with the tracing of the development of the ideal Islamic state in the early phase of Islam. This is followed by an examination of the medieval phase, which witnessed the emergence of the dynastic caliphate, the end of the universal Islamic state, and the growth of multiple centers of power. The chapter next looks at the colonial phase, which is crucial to understanding the reaction of Islamic societies to alien rule and the emergence of new political institutions and their accommodation with Islam. It further examines the post-colonial phase, which hastened the political fragmentation of the *ummah* and ushered the birth of modern nation-states in the Muslim world.

Any review of the evolution of the Islamic polity, however, would remain incomplete without showing the development of Islamic political theory and its various schools: classical, traditional, modernist, and fundamentalist. The second half of the chapter therefore investigates the development of Islamic political theory. Throwing light on this development facilitates the grasping of the theoretical issues and ideological nuances involved in the process of Islamization of the state and in the struggle between the Islamic and secularist forces in contemporary Bangladesh.

1. The Ideal Islamic State in the Early Phase of Islam

In his work on *Religion and Political Development*, Smith delineated two basic models of traditional religio-political systems: the organic model and the church model. In the organic model, there is a complete fusion of religious and secular authority. The ruler exercises both religious and secular authority, and his chief function is to maintain the divinely-sanctioned social order in accordance with religious laws and traditions.¹ In the church model, on the other hand, secular and religious institutions are separated, but there is a close alliance and an extensive interchanging of political and religious functions between the two sets of institutions. Smith categorized Islam as approximating closely to the organic model, because the traditional Muslim state retained the organic Islamic version of the complete fusion of religious and political authority in the Prophet and his successors.²

The basis for this categorization of Islam as belonging to the organic model, with the fusion of religious and political authority, is that the original, and therefore the ideal, Islamic polity was a community of believers. It was a face-to-face community (*ummah*) in which everybody recognized his own responsibility to the community and to God. The state was an organizer of the community, and it facilitated and promoted individual ethical behavior in accordance with religious laws and by setting norms for such behavior.³ The societal dimension of this *ummah* was that it was a lawful society in which the rulers and the ruled were governed by the *sharia*, a comprehensive legal code that determined the relationship between state and society. Thus, from its origin, Islam is a religion that combines both spiritual and worldly dimensions of life into an organic whole. Unlike some other religious systems, in Islam there is no differentiation between secular and religious authority. So, the head

of the *ummah* was the spiritual head of the community plus the political chief as well as the commander-in-chief of the military.

In Islam the state is not an end in itself. The state organization exists to implement the *sharia*. To supervise this crucial task a ruler is needed who is known as the caliph. As has been cogently observed by Al-Yassini:

Inasmuch as the Muslim community transcends all cultural and political boundaries and is distinct from and in direct opposition to the community of unbelievers, there must be one ruler to govern the community, and obedience to him is a religious obligation.⁴

The legal basis of the office of caliphate is derived from the principle of *ijma*,⁵ which holds that the appointment of a leader is incumbent upon the believers. The office of the caliphate is an elected office. But the election, working out through *shura* (mutual consultation) and *bay'a* (oath of allegiance), is not directly administered on the basis of universal suffrage, but through the judgment of the Muslim jurists and the *ulama*, and subsequently of all Muslims.⁶ They accept the ruler to lead the nation on the basis of two conditions: the competence of the candidate, and rule according to the *sharia*. After the *bay'a* (the oath of allegiance) is offered by the citizens, it could not be revoked unless the caliph violated the injunctions of the *sharia*. Thus, the citizens delegated authority to the elected caliph who would now conduct the affairs of the state according to divine laws. Hence the *bay'a* is the symbolization of a contract between the head of the state and the citizens.⁷

The Quran and Hadith, the two basic sources of the *sharia*, do not outline any special form of government or any specific pattern or procedure that an Islamic state must follow. But the Quran laid down two basic principles: the *shura* (mutual consultation) and the obligation to rule according to *sharia*.⁸ Thus, the *shura* is a fundamental principle of Islamic government. It is managed

through a consultative assembly, known as *Ahl al-shura/Majlis al-shura*, which theoretically consists of people having thorough knowledge of Islam. The Muslim community delegates its legislative affairs to the *shura* and the decisions of the *shura* are binding on the community. During the time of the Prophet, in the conduct of non-religious affairs, the majority opinion, even if that went against the inclination of the Prophet, was implemented.⁹ This participatory spirit was maintained by the first four caliphs, whose reign is known in Islamic history as the "Reign of the Righteous Caliphs". The Islamic government in its early phase was thus a participatory institution in which both the elites and the masses had equal opportunities to participate.

The most crucial and sensitive political issue encountered in the early days of Islam was succession. During the lifetime of the Prophet, he himself led the Muslim community in all spheres of public life: religious, political and military. The Prophet led prayers in the mosque, answered questions pertaining to religion, provided leadership in political decision-making and diplomatic negotiations, and often led the *mujahideen*¹⁰ in battle. The three functions, namely, religious, political and military, were thus incorporated in the office of *Amir al-Mumineen* (the leader of the true believers), also known as the caliph. After the demise of the Prophet in 632 A.D., Abu Bakr, his most distinguished companion and the first adult male person to accept Islam, was nominated by Umar ibn-al Khattab, another distinguished personality from the galaxy of the Prophet's companions, to lead the Muslim community.¹¹ The companions in general reached a consensus, after long deliberations, and Abu Bakr was proclaimed as the first caliph. The Muslim community in general ratified this nomination by offering *bay'a*, an oath of allegiance to Abu Bakr.¹²

Immediately after receiving the oath of allegiance, Abu Bakr offered to

return the caliphate to the people. He addressed the people:

I wish it (caliphate) to be transferred to such a person who ensures justice, and hence I give it back to you and I absolve myself of your pledge of allegiance. Now hand over the caliphate to one whom you consider popular among you. As for me, I am a person like you.

At this the people got up and said, "O the caliph of the Messenger of God! By God, you are better than us all".¹³

Abu Bakr stayed on in office. However, the idea of popular participation in matters of succession did not strike roots either among the elite or the masses in the long run. Rather, what became the fundamental principle that would guide future Islamic governments was the statement that Abu Bakr made when people refused to accept his resignation, "Obey me as long as I obey God and His Prophet; if I do not obey them, you owe me no obedience".¹⁴

Abu Bakr's proclamation had a far-reaching impact on the development of Islamic political thought. It came to hold for Islamic governments even when the caliphate became a hereditary institution, devoid of the legitimacy of election. The impact related to the principle that the ruler should be obeyed by the citizens so long as he upheld the injunctions of the *sharia*. What is implicit in this principle is that the continuity in power could be justified only if the office-holder upheld the *sharia*. Thus, while the procedure of succession became flexible, what emerged as more significant was the policy of the ruler: whether it was in accordance with *sharia* or not.

Before his death, Abu Bakr (632-34 A.D.) had an informal consultation with the leading members of the community on who to select as his successor. After the consultation was over, Abu Bakr designated Umar ibn-al Khattab as his successor in a written document.¹⁵ This designation of Umar was ratified in an oath of allegiance, first given by the elders of the community and then by the

people in general. On his death-bed (644 A.D.), Umar appointed a college of electors, consisting of six leading figures from the galaxy of the Prophet's companions, and obliged the electoral college to nominate one among them as his successor. Uthman, a distinguished companion and one of the first few converts to Islam, was nominated and this nomination was ratified by the community by *bay'a*.

The third caliph, Uthman (644-56 A.D.) was not in a position to designate anyone as his successor since he was assassinated. Ali ibn Abi-Talib, the cousin of the Prophet and the first among the adolescents to accept Islam, was the most respected personality in Madina, the seat of government. The Muslims in Madina deliberated in an open assembly and chose him as the fourth caliph.¹⁶ Muslims residing outside Madina gathered in mosques in their respective cities and affirmed the selection of Ali and sent their delegations to Madina to offer *bay'a*. At the death of Ali in 661 A.D., there was a brief period of political anarchy. The "Reign of the Righteous Caliphs" came to an end, and a new era of dynastic caliphate was ushered in. First came the Umayyad dynasty that ruled from 661 to 750 A.D., to be followed by the Abbasiya dynasty which ruled from 750 to 1258 A.D. In 1258 the caliphate system, even in its dynastic form, came to an end because of the destruction inflicted by the Mongols. With it ended the universal Muslim empire headed by a caliph, although the Ottoman Turks later revived the office of caliph and were able to bring a substantial part of the Muslim population under the Ottoman caliphate.

2. The Islamic State After the Righteous Caliphs

a. The Medieval Dynastic Phase

As already observed, by the late seventh century actual political practice

was no longer in accord with Islamic political theory. The office of caliph had become a dynastic legacy, because of the inability of the vastly expanded Muslim nation to work out a mutual consensus through consultation as it had done in the early days. The sources of legitimacy became multiple: *ulama*, *fuqaha* (jurists), leading members of the community, and also the masses. .

Though the Umayyads established a dynastic caliphate and political succession passed on to the members of the Umayya clan, it did not always follow from father to son. The most eminent Umayya caliph, Umar-ibn Abdul Aziz, was the son-in-law of caliph Abdul Malik. Abdul Malik designated Umar as his successor because of the latter's honesty and efficiency even though the caliph had an adult son who could have inherited the throne.¹⁷ In theory, the practice of election was upheld as *bay'a* continued to be taken from important public figures as it symbolized legitimate accession to power.¹⁸

However, the principle of *shura* was abandoned from the time of the Umayyads. Instead, a new principle emerged, known as the *ahl al-hal wa'l aqd* or "people of loosening and binding". In the early phase of its formulation, the Islamic scholars stressed that only the *ulama* and *fuqaha* could qualify as members of *ahl al-hal wa'l aqd*, those who unbind and bind the community.¹⁹ But later on, the Islamic theoreticians changed their criterion and in practice religious and non-religious notables, such as *ulama* and *fuqaha* along with the ministers, the higher echelons of the bureaucracy and the military did participate in *ahl al-hal wa'l aqd*. In theory, it was an electoral college but, in reality, it was a consultative assembly whose function was to advise the caliph in formulating domestic and foreign policy. There was no agreement on the number of seats in this assembly, nor on the procedure of election. Thus, an elitist consultative assembly emerged replacing the institution of *shura*. This

assembly upheld the twin principles of the sunni political traditions: electing the caliph and the positive acceptance of his rule by the people through the oath of allegiance.²⁰

Another important development during the Umayyad rule was that -- unlike the "Reign of the Righteous Caliphs", when all Islamic lands were effectively under the administration of a single caliph -- the provinces came under the de facto control of independent governors. These provincial governors paid allegiance to the caliph and accepted his leadership over the universal Muslim community and, in return, the caliph issued them a letter of appointment legitimizing their rule. When the Abbasids took over in the mid-eighth century, the provinces were already under the control of de facto independent rulers. During the Abbasid reign (750-1258), the provincial rulers often passed on power to their successors on a hereditary basis. Thus, political fragmentation was in the offing. However, the universality of *sharia* kept alive the theory of a universal Islamic state, implicit in the concept of the *dar al-Islam*.²¹ In the words of H. A. R. Gibb, a reputed western authority on Islam:

What was involved in the Abbasid revolution was the continued existence of the caliphate as an effective governing institution; and that in turn depended upon its becoming a truly Muslim institution, standing in a proper relation to all other institutions derived from the principles of the Islamic ideology.²²

How effective the caliphate remained as a governing institution is doubtful, given the fact that the outlying provinces had de facto independent governors. But the Abbasids theoretically upheld the principle of election as represented in the institution of *ahl al-hal wa'l aqd* even though practice worked in favor of heredity.

The weakening of the office of the caliphate at the center and the

emergence of *amirs* and *sultans* in the outlying areas further retarded the evolution of electoral and participatory institutions. By the mid-ninth century, real political power had passed on to non-Arab dominated military and civilian bureaucracy. The absence of an established procedure, in practice, for political succession -- combined with the development of the practice of recruiting military forces from among mercenaries and slaves rather than relying on Arab tribal levies -- eventually led to the degeneration of the caliphate system.²³ During the later half of the long Abbasid rule, *dar al-Islam* as a single political entity came to an end. There came into existence, instead, three centers of power in the Muslim world: the Umayyad rule in Andalusia (the Iberian peninsula), the Fatimid rule in Egypt and North Africa, and the Abbasid realm covering the majority of the Muslim community. When the Abbasid caliphate was finally destroyed by the Mongol invasion in 1258, the Muslim community was scattered in dynastic *emirates* and *sultanates*.

In these dynastic principalities, political succession became a matter of power struggle among princes. Strong leadership capabilities with military backing could ensure the throne. Military intrusion became built into the succession process, and the struggles for succession were mostly settled by civil war or coup d'état.²⁴ Military authoritarianism thus emerged as a salient feature of Muslim politics. Hurewitz found two broad types within this pattern of military authoritarianism: autocracy under a strong monarch; praetorianism or tribal supremacy under a weak king.²⁵

The *ulama* also shifted their focus to adjust to the new political developments. From the 12th century onwards, the *ulama* placed all out stress on obedience to the ruler. The necessity of political unity for all Muslim territories, as seen by the *ulama*, was only in order to counter the non-Muslim

world. So long as individual *sultan/amirs* could protect their territories against non-Muslim invasion, the *ulama* were reconciled to the political fragmentation of the *ummah*, the universal Muslim community. But the *sultans* or the pseudo-caliphs, at least until the colonial invasion, continued to be under the *sharia*, not above it. The *ulama* recognized the rule of *sultan/amirs* as legitimate so long as they implemented *sharia*. Thus, military authoritarianism in Islam, as observed by Hurewitz, was never absolutely despotic. The obligation to abide by the *sharia* thus prevented the rise of medieval absolutism in Islam. The nature of politics in medieval Islam, as well summarized by Hardy, centered around the concept that,

political activity is a species of command and of enforcement of law. The Khalifa alone is entitled to rally wills within the aggregate of the Muslim umma and this he does by drawing attention to the demands of the Holy Law and to the penalties for non-compliance with those demands. Upon him alone is conferred the right to exercise powers of initiative, to take...political decisions.²⁶

Though the caliphate as an institution embracing the entire Muslim community ended with the Abbasids in 1258, shadow Abbasid caliphs did exist long after that. But these figure-head caliphs had no legitimacy outside their respective domains. On the other hand, the Ottoman revival of the caliphate did have legitimacy among the Muslims even outside the Ottoman territories. Though the Ottomans claimed the office of caliphate only in the later half of their prolonged rule, the symbolic value of their claim to be the spiritual head of the world Muslim community, even though politically scattered, was quite significant. This was evident in the "Khilafat Movement" launched by the Muslims of India in the early 1920s, protesting the proposed dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire by the allied powers in the aftermath of World War I.

The Ottoman Empire began as a *ghazi* state, an organization of warriors engaged in the sacred struggle against the shrinking Christian Byzantine state. By 1299 a principality was established under the leadership of the house of Osman. In less than a century Ottoman rule, under Bayezid, extended to the south of the Danube. Bayezid gained so much prestige in the Islamic world that the shadow Abbasid caliph of Cairo conferred on him the title of Sultan in 1396. By 1517, the Ottoman Sultan brought under his rule most of the lands of the Abbasid caliphate, including Islam's holy places in the province of Hejaz.²⁷ This raised the stature of the Sultan as the most important ruler in the world of Islam. The leading Muslim intellectuals, administrators, writers, artisans and artists from the Arab world flocked to Istanbul and influenced all facets of Ottoman life. This penetration of Arab scholarship, skill and piety made the Ottoman Empire resemble a traditional Islamic state. The enhancement of Ottoman prestige and position in the Islamic world, however, did not make them invoke the institution of caliphate. They called for it only when, in their days of decline, they were faced with unfavorable circumstances and formidable enemies. In 1774, Abdul Hamid, the Ottoman sultan, put forward a claim to religious jurisdiction over Muslims outside his territories. A few years later, the claim was strengthened by the addition of a fake legend that in 1517 the Abbasid caliphate had been transferred to the Ottoman sultan.²⁸ The Ottoman inheritance of the office of caliphate, as already observed, enabled the sultan to enjoy symbolic legitimacy as the spiritual head of *dar al-Islam*.

The Ottoman succession was based strictly on heredity -- from father to his ablest son. The doctrine of election of the Sultan through the institution of *ahl al-hal wa'l aqd* was maintained only as a traditional ceremony of allegiance. The Ottoman state rested on three pillars: the Janissary Corps (military); the Sultan and the higher civil service; and the *ulama*.²⁹ The sultan appointed the *Qadi* to

administer justice according to the *sharia*. The *shaikh-ul Islam* (the official head of the *ulama* in *dar al-Islam*) was also appointed by the sultan. In the central administration, the sultan appointed *viziers* (ministers) and a *grand vizier* (chief minister). The *viziers* used to discuss and decide on state policy in a council, the *Divan*, under the leadership of the sultan. High ranking civil officials, military generals and *ulama* also joined this council. The vast non-Muslim Ottoman subjects in Eastern Europe were allowed to organize their own communities, known as *millet*. The *millet* provided internal security and administered justice and social services according to their own customs and traditions. The religious leader of each *millet* was responsible to the sultan for collecting taxes and ensuring security.³⁰ In the outlying Muslim provinces in the Middle East and North Africa, which were under Ottoman rule for four hundred years, Ottoman traditions were one of political involvement and political rule by military officers.³¹

The state in the Ottoman polity was based largely upon structural legitimacy, or independent belief in the validity of the structures and norms, unlike in a traditional Islamic state where the state's *raison d'etre* was to implement *sharia*.³² There were three pre-requisites for entrance into the state service, that is, the Ottoman ruling class: (1) loyalty to the sultan and the state; (2) acceptance and practice of Islamic religion and the system of thought and action that was an integral part of it; and (3) knowledge and practice of a complicated system of customs, traditions and language known as the Ottoman way. Those who did not have the above three qualifications belonged to the subject class, the protected folk of the sultan. The ruling class was considered as the sultan's slaves and their life, tenure and property were under the disposal of the sultan.³³

The sultan, drawing upon his *orfi-i-sultani*, or sovereign powers, could enact laws known as *kanun* or civil law (mostly pertaining to administrative affairs) if such laws did not violate *sharia* in detail or principle.³⁴ But the sultan was far from an absolutist monarch. Even though the sultan could dismiss the *shaikh-ul Islam* at the former's will, a *fatwa* (religious verdict) from the *shaikh-ul Islam* could also depose the ruler. When the sultan, as noted by Berkes, "attempted to introduce an innovation not supported by the *ulama* he was powerless and in most cases lost his sovereignty".³⁵

On the other hand, if the sultan and the *ulama* were in agreement, the other contenders for power could be held at bay. Other than the *ulama*, another check on the sultan's power was the Janissary who, as described by Thompson, developed "from elite body guard to intermittent deponers of Ottoman sultans."³⁶ The sultan was thus prevented from assuming the mantle of an absolutist monarch. However, in general the position of the *ulama* was less entrenched in the Ottoman polity than what it had been in the Arabic caliphates. Though there was no watertight division between the *ulama* and the officials following an administrative career,³⁷ the Ottoman *ulama* considered that, as put by Heper, "cooperation with, and an official status in, the political realm was the only way of exercising influence on the temporal power".³⁸

Another empire, worth mentioning in terms of its size and longevity, that flourished in medieval Islam was that of the Mughals. The Mughals were sunni Muslims of Turco-Iranian origin. Babur, the founder of the empire, was from central Asia. He was an ambitious soldier of fortune who, being unsuccessful in recovering his patrimony of Samarkand, took over political power in Kabul and looked towards the plains of India that were rife with political disunity and unrest. Babur defeated the Muslim sultan of Delhi, Ibrahim Lodi, in 1526 and

laid the foundations of an empire that was to encompass, in course of time, almost the whole of the Indian sub-continent.³⁹

Akbar, the mightiest of the Mughal emperors who ruled for half a century (1556-1605), occupies a controversial position in the history of Islam for his ambiguous stand on the issue of religion. On the one hand, the orthodox Muslims accuse him of apostasy and brand him as a perverted heretic. On the other hand, the secularists eulogize him as a tolerant ruler and project him as an Indian nationalist who realized the importance of religious toleration in a multi-religious society. For example, in India, with its official commitment to the secular state, Akbar occupies a special place of honor for his religious tolerance and for according recognition to other religions at his court.

A third position, however, attempts to portray Akbar as a Muslim whose religious syncretism was motivated by political considerations of the time rather than innate animosity towards Islam. Akbar's various official acts are cited as proof that he remained a Muslim; for example, in a *farman* (royal order), Akbar asked his governors to spend their spare time reading Al-Ghazali and Maulana Rumi, two famous Islamic scholars.⁴⁰

From the beginning Akbar was liberal-minded and entertained discussions and discourse on comparative religion. He invited scholars of various religions for this purpose. But Akbar's interest in religious syncretism did not stop there. He promulgated the Infallibility Decree. Shaikh Mubarak, an Islamic scholar at Akbar's court, authorized the emperor to decide with binding authority any question concerning Islamic religion, provided that the ruling were in accordance with some verse of the Quran.⁴¹ Akbar's decree antagonized the Muslim chiefs of Bengal and Bihar, who interpreted the emperor's religious disposition as apostasy and an attack on Islam. They rebelled against Akbar.

They were aided by the *Qadi* of Jaunpur, who openly issued a *fatwa* (religious verdict) legitimizing the rebellion because the emperor had turned an apostate. Akbar killed the *Qadi* and quelled the rebellion which had lasted for five years.

Akbar further waded towards heresy when he promulgated a new religion known as *Din-i-ilahi* or Divine Religion. *Din-i-ilahi* was a twisted version of Islam tempered with *sufi* and Hindu mystical traditions. Akbar's motive was to unite the overwhelming majority of Hindu subjects with the minority Muslims and thus consolidate the Mughal base of power. But his attempt, though daring and rare in the history of Islam, got only lukewarm acceptance from the courtiers while it had no impact on the masses, either Hindu or Muslim. From 1582, when *Din-i-ilahi* was promulgated, as observed by Percival Spear, Akbar forfeited his Islamic faith, although occasionally he performed acts of conformity out of political motivations.⁴² The *ulama's* opposition to Akbar's religious syncretism was not massive, nor were they able to mobilize the Muslim masses against the heretic emperor.

The reasons for failure to stifle officially sponsored heresy were many. Akbar did not abolish the *sharia* courts and *qadis*, and the *ulama* depended on state patronage. On the other hand, the common Muslims hardly understood the nuances of Akbar's syncretistic initiative. Also, the fear of Akbar's military might, particularly the Rajput contingents under the command of Hindu *rajas*, stymied any potential uprising against Akbar, other than the revolts in Bengal and Bihar.

Akbar was followed by his son Jahangir (1605-27). Jahangir maintained the secular tradition with respect to state ideology though he did not try to resuscitate *Din-i-ilahi* nor open any new religious controversy.⁴³ Jahangir was succeeded by his son Shahjahan (1628-58) who made Islam the state religion of

the empire.⁴⁴

Towards the end of Shahjahan's career, an acute crisis of succession emerged. Shahjahan's sons, Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh, were powerful rivals for the throne. Not only that, they projected two different ideological orientations. The importance of this historical crossroads in Islamic developments in south Asia has been succinctly put forward by Ahmed:

In the late seventeenth century, the Muslims faced two choices: they could either firmly redraw the boundaries of Islam around themselves, shutting out the emerging realities, or allow the boundaries to become elastic and porous thereby effecting synthesis with non-Muslim groups. The two alternatives delineated were clear: legal, orthodox, and formal on the one hand and eclectic, syncretic, and informal on the other. It is no accident that these two clearly differentiated and mutually opposed choices emerged in the person and character of the sons of the Emperor Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh.⁴⁵

Aurangzeb represented the legal, orthodox and formal orientation and Dara Shikoh the eclectic, syncretic and informal one. When Aurangzeb won the struggle for succession and took over power in 1658, a significant turn-around in terms of state policy towards religion occurred. He was a devout Muslim and had a thorough knowledge of Islam. During his long reign (1658-1707), he ensured a thorough implementation of *sharia*. The *jizya*, the traditional tax on non-Muslims in an Islamic polity, which had been revoked by Akbar, was again imposed by Aurangzeb. With that, he secured instant legitimacy from the *ulama*.

However, Aurangzeb's imposition of an orthodox Islamic order is an issue of historical controversy. The orthodox Islamic circles glorify his reign as the golden age of Islam in India. On the otherhand, non-Muslims consider him a religious fanatic, tyrant and oppressor. A third moderate position contends that Aurangzeb was not the destroyer of Hindu temples he is popularly pictured as.

On the contrary, it is alleged, historical records exist showing numerous grants to Hindu temples.⁴⁶ It will be difficult to resolve the issue whether Aurangzeb aided the construction or destruction of Hindu temples, but his commitment to the Islamic state in a multi-religious society provoked non-Muslim revolts, particularly by the Marathas and the Sikhs. As a consequence, the state was involved in constant internal warfare and the empire weakened. He was the last powerful Mughal ruler, and after him Mughal power kept on sliding towards a steep decline until formally taken over by the British.

The Mughal succession was based on heredity. Rival princes, all blood brother, used to fight until the strongest one knocked out the rest unless the dying emperor had designated a successor. The principle of election in the form of *bay'a* from the *ahl-al hal wa'l aqd* hardly existed. But the emperor usually sought the allegiance of the *ulama*, and this is how the Sunni theory of election, though purely in the form of ceremonial gesture, was not ignored altogether.

In matters of civilian and military administration, the Mughals hardly made any differentiation between the civilian and military domains of authority. The Mughal emperors used to maintain a huge cavalry in Delhi, and it was supplemented by regional forces under the command of district level officers. The Mughal provinces were ruled by a nobleman called *subedar*, and the districts by a lesser official called *mansabdar*. Both civil and military powers rested with *subedars* and *mansabdars*.⁴⁷ Thus, the combination of civil and military powers vested them with considerable political clout. At the center, a powerful council of ministers used to advise the emperor in political decision-making. The position and influence of the *ulama* varied from time to time, depending on who was in power, as not all Mughal rulers were committed to

Islam, even though *qadis* and *sharia* courts were never abolished.

Thus, during the medieval phase, an important socio-political aspect of the dynasty-based empires and sultanates was that, though *dar-al Islam* was divided in many independent entities, the Muslim world viewed itself as one society. This was so because the sovereign Muslim states were still bound together by the principles and customs derived from Islamic law. So long as a Muslim could owe a wider allegiance than to his tribe or locality, or could identify himself with a larger group than his clan, he was associating himself with the *ummaḥ*, the universal Muslim community. The universality of the *sharia* thus kept alive the idea of the universal Islamic state, implicit in the concept of *dar-al Islam*, long after the political fragmentation of the Abbasid caliphate, the last state to have embraced almost the entire Muslim community.⁴⁸

b. The Colonial Phase

An important watershed between the traditional Islamic polity and the rise of modern nation-states in the Muslim world was the colonial experience. The necessity for looking into the colonial heritage lies in the fact that some colonial regimes inculcated among the local population alternative sources of political legitimacy, such as popular sovereignty. Where such inculcation took place, there emerged an uneasy co-existence of dual allegiance both to Muslim traditions of military orientation in politics and to democratic liberalism.

David Fieldhouse, a reputed authority on European colonial empires, found two broad types of colonial systems: the British and the French. In the British pattern of colonial rule, there were two sub-types: white settler colonies (such as Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) and the non-settler Crown colonies in India, South-East Asia, Africa and the Pacific. For the purpose of this study, it

is the Crown colonies that are relevant. In these colonies, an important idea transmitted by the British was that government should be influenced by the governed and that the ultimate objective should be responsible self-government. Crown colonies were granted legislative councils, whose assent was necessary to the passage of local legislation.⁴⁹ For the running of the colonial administration, the British constructed a bureaucracy of paid officials, British at the top, and local people at the lower levels. An alternative to this pattern was indirect colonial rule through local princes. Obviously, in the case of such princely states, in contrast to British India, the traditional value system and socio-political institutions were less subject to disruption.

On the other hand, the dominant feature of all other colonial systems (such as the Dutch, Belgian, Spanish, and Italian) was direct rule on the French pattern, as Fieldhouse observed.⁵⁰ France treated its colonial possessions as part of the metropolis, barring a few exceptions such as Morocco and Tunisia where indirect rule was practised. France pursued a policy of acculturation and assimilation. France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and Italy, all attempted to settle substantial numbers of Europeans in their overseas territories to promote settler colonies even though few were successful.⁵¹ France did not attempt to promote democratic values among the local population. Rather, they insisted on cultural conversion so that the colonized could acquire French identity and political rights associated with French citizenship; e.g., in Algeria, abjuring Muslim personal law was a condition for acceptance to citizenship. But this policy failed as only a few were willing to accept the deal.

Though the Netherlands pursued the French type direct rule, it introduced self-government. But the Dutch self-government operated in a different way

from that of the British. Furnivall, in a comparative study of British rule in Burma and Dutch rule in Java, pointed out that in Java the problem of westernized self-government was simplified to some extent by the presence of a much larger and more stable European element (than it was in Burma, a British colony), especially in the cities and even in small towns in the interior. It was the Europeans who took part in running the institutions of self-government.⁵² In Java, municipal self-government was largely run by the Europeans for the Europeans (that is, in accordance with European standards of housing, education, health care and sanitation, which were provided mostly to European residents).⁵³ The Javanese people therefore did not receive much training in running the institutions of self-government, nor did they associate much with such institutions as they were not primarily designed for their benefit.

A more critical picture of British colonial rule is portrayed by other scholars. In his study of British colonialism in India, Hutchins observed that the original British design for India was permanent rule under their bureaucracy. From the end of the 19th century until independence the dominant theme was that Britain's mission in India was to "keep order".⁵⁴ As Hutchins observed:

British Indian memoirs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are imbued with a sense of timelessness. Nationalism was simply ignored, or dismissed with the presumption that nationalists did not represent the "real" India. Indians assumed the championship of social reform, self-government, and nationalism at a time when the English had begun to question their value. While Indians read Mill and talked of rights and constitutions, the English were obsessed with princely ceremony.⁵⁵

Even though the British may have wanted to wish out of existence the Indian nationalist demand for self-government, elsewhere in the non-British colonies the very rise of such movements demanding a pluralistic and representative political order was absent. In the latter case, the nationalist movements aimed at independence but without any clear notion of what kind of government would

be established in the post-colonial period. In many cases, particularly in French colonies, nationalist movements became violent as the struggle for freedom involved war with the colonial power.

A view less critical than that of Hutchins', regarding British efforts to promote democratic values and institutions in the Crown colonies, is adopted by Schaffer. While analyzing the process of transfer of power in the British colonies, he stressed the concept of "preparation". "Preparation" referred to political and bureaucratic training to be provided to the local elites for ultimate transfer of power in the wake of decolonization. Schaffer pointed out four essential stages in the whole preparation process. The first stage involved the division of legislative and executive councils and the nomination of unofficial members to the legislative council, leading to election of some unofficial members. In the second stage, which is termed as the "representative" stage, the unofficial members formed a majority. The third semi-responsible stage ensued when a majority of the executive council came from, or was related to, the majority of the legislative council. In the fourth stage, nominated officials disappeared from the legislative council. The four-stage model is built on British colonial policies towards Sri Lanka, but the author contends that something like that was the preparatory pattern in the British Crown colonies.⁵⁶

The process of transition based on transfer by training assumed that progress was toward essentially a form of self-government, "a slow but sure approximation of the western parliamentary system and the Westminster form in absolute particular".⁵⁷ To the local nationalists, the Westminster model was a symbol of liberation and to the colonialist it was a culmination of training. But the actual process of preparation, described by Schaffer, started very late and was also hindered by bureaucratic values. He further himself argued that the

colonial situation resembled a special sort of bureaucratic haven rather than an education for Westminster democracy.⁵⁸ Even though the "preparatory" process was slow, hierarchical and bureaucratic, the local elites learnt during the "training" process about values and institutions such as pluralism, popular sovereignty and representative government. But the people in non-British colonies were not exposed to such values and institutions because of the different style of colonial rule and the different type of prevailing political culture in the mother country.

It is important to note that the party systems in the British and French colonies were different in nature. The political parties in the French colonies, for example, the FLN in Algeria and the Party of Independence in Morocco, participated in wars of resistance and therefore did not have experience in electoral politics and representative government. Their main role in the pre-independence period was to provide leadership and organization in the war of resistance. On the other hand, the parties that emerged in the British colonies, for example, the Congress and the Muslim League in India, the Graduates Congress in the Sudan, and the Wafd Party in Egypt, did participate in electoral politics and form representative governments, even though often only at the provincial rather than national level, under the tutelage of the British.

The British and the French, the two major colonial powers, also differed in their patterns of decolonization. The British decolonized through negotiations with the local nationalist elites. Before decolonization, the British allowed some political rights, such as restricted franchise to the local people, and also established some democratic institutions, such as elections and legislatures. Political parties and pressure groups were also permitted. For the British, the goal was to hand over power to an elected government that would take British

type parliamentary democracy as a model to emulate. The British withdrawal from India, the Sudan, and Malaysia typifies this pattern of decolonization.

The French decolonization involved violence and warfare, if not in all cases, at least in important regions, for example, North Africa and Indo-China. The Algerian war of independence is a significant event in recent history. Wars of resistance against the French took place also in Morocco and Tunisia at the same time.⁵⁹ It was thus a prolonged violent resistance against French rule that forced the French to negotiate decolonization. Obviously, there was not much opportunity to inspire the local people to emulate French-style representative government.

In terms of the role of Islam in the new political institutions which emerged during the colonial period, the Muslim League in India used Islam to mobilize the Muslim masses in support of its demand for Pakistan, a homeland designed for the Muslims of India. On the other hand, the FLN in Algeria and the Party of Independence in Morocco used Islam to mobilize the people in the war of independence. But even in South Asia there was not much room for interaction between Islam and the new political institutions because such political institutions were only at an embryonic stage. Usually, only a limited franchise was granted, and elections took place for legislatures which had limited jurisdiction. Further, the colonial powers kept the input structures weak and, on the other hand, strengthened output structures, such as the bureaucracy, police and military. The outcome was, as aptly described by Alavi, an "overdeveloped" state.⁶⁰ As a result, at the time of colonial withdrawal, underdeveloped political parties, parliaments and constitutions could not stand up to the pressures of an overdeveloped bureaucracy and military.⁶¹ This has been commonplace in the post-colonial phase, with India as a rare exception.

In the Indian sub-continent, it was initially the revolt of the local populace in 1857 that persuaded the British to consult local elites. Subsequently, it was westernized local elites who adopted western values and pressed for responsible government. The British conceded instalments of reform under the pressure of agitation. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the Indian nationalists acquired liberal and pluralistic notions of politics because of their exposure to British political values and institutions through English education. For example, Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah, the three most important leaders of the nationalist movement, received higher education in Britain, and others received English education at home. It was thus the association and contact with the British, if not the British colonial policies, which exposed the local elites to alternative models of political organization.

c. The Post-Colonial Phase

The colonial interlude had a major impact on the political culture and institutions of the Muslim world, particularly so in South Asia. Even though the colonial powers were reluctant to introduce representative institutions and preferred to rule with the help of bureaucracy or indirectly with the help of local princes, some new political ideas and institutions were transmitted to the colonies. As a result, in the post-colonial phase, Muslim polities are different from the ideal type Islamic polity of the early days, which did not differentiate between the secular and spiritual, and between the military and civilian, domains of life. The post-colonial Muslim nation-states recognize the structural differences institutionalized in the form of separation of civilian and military authority. Also, the office of the head of the state is separated from religious offices. However, the extent of institutionalization has been weak, and frequently the military has taken over civilian authority; indeed, military seizure

of political power has been the norm in Muslim nation-states. It would seem that the corporate nature of the non-Muslim military, in the sense of its separateness from societal forces -- particularly religion and religious forces -- makes it different from the Muslim military, particularly of South Asia and the Arab world, which is religion-oriented or involved with religious forces. Also, in Muslim states the religious authorities have not ceased their claim to power. In the sunni Muslim world, religious leaders have, no doubt, not yet been able to assume political power, but in most cases the secular authorities (whether military or civilian) have tried to appease the *ulama* and orthodox Muslims by introducing Islamic law and granting Islam a privileged constitutional status.

The present phase is also different from the dynastic phase in the sense that the people are now politically conscious, having been exposed to concepts such as popular sovereignty and liberal democracy, which impel Muslim rulers to seek legitimacy from the people. Whether the regime is military or civilian with military backing, it has to legitimize its rule with some ideological or moral justification. In most cases, the justification comes through association with Islam. Whether the regime has come to power through elections (e.g., Pakistan under Zulfikar Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto) or through military coups (e.g., Libya under Qaddafi; Syria under Hafez al Assad), the ruling elites resort to Islamic symbols and traditions to seek popular acceptance.

Another difference between the post-colonial phase and the earlier dynastic phase pertains to the level of identity and loyalty. In the dynastic phase, one level of identity concerned the local community and tribe, while another related to the wider Muslim community, *dar-al Islam*. In modern times, the transnational allegiance to *dar-al Islam* has given way to nationalist impulses and identification with one's own state.

An important feature of Muslim politics in the post-colonial phase is that there are some common traits that survived the colonial experience and transcend nation-state boundaries. In territorially distinct polities, the spiritual unity of all true believers finds expression in the common social institutions of Islam, such as common norms and rules guiding marriage, family, education and community responsibility towards the poor. The strengthening of religious institutions, as a result of the decline of the political institutions of Islam, encompasses the entire community of believers and embeds it in a common identification.⁶² While there is no demand for a pan-Islamic empire, *sharia* has become the blue-print for an Islamic state in Muslim politics. Though political institutions have always varied in Muslim societies since the decline of the Abbasid caliphate, the *sharia* has always ensured their Islamic character. This is an important reason why the Islamic fundamentalists of today -- in their yearning for a return to original purity and, consequently, for an Islamic constitution, Islamic penal code and Islamic economics -- look to the *sharia* as a source for all these.⁶³

This commitment to the *sharia* on the part of Islamic forces has strained the relationship between Islam and the new political institutions inherited from colonialism. The concept of "popular sovereignty", transmitted through colonial political reforms and western education, is at odds with Islam. In Islam, the *sharia* is sovereign. Delegated representatives of the true believers may exercise the rights of sovereignty but only so long as they legislate and administer in accordance with the precepts of *sharia*. Whereas "popular sovereignty" implies that the people as a collectivity are above all restraints, holy or profane, in Islam neither the ruler nor the ruled are above the jurisdiction of *sharia*. The concept of "popular sovereignty" is contrary to *sharia* and therefore unacceptable in Islam. However, the concept of "popular participation" is not

inimical to Islam because *shura* (consultation) as practised in the early days of Islam provided opportunities of participation to both elites and masses. Popular participation can take place and participatory governments can function in Islam so long as they observe the injunctions of *sharia*.

In the post-colonial phase, there developed an endemic apprehension in Islamic circles that, if free elections were conceded, the westernized intelligentsia may manipulate the masses and steer the state away from Islam. To thwart such a possibility, the military has often intervened claiming to be the guardian of Islam and instituted an authoritarian political order with only limited opportunities for political participation; this has been particularly so in South Asia. The consequence has been a tense political dualism in which the military, seeking legitimacy from Islam for its intervention in politics, stands opposed to the westernized intelligentsia demanding popular sovereignty.

3. Evolution of Islamic Political Theory: Classical, Traditionalist, and Modernist Schools

Islamic political theory evolved over a long period of time keeping in pace with historical changes. Though rooted in the laws and traditions extracted from the *Quran* and *Hadith*, it did adapt itself to changing socio-political realities. This does not mean that *taqlid*⁶⁴ has been ignored. The essence of Islamic political theory, that is, the sovereignty of the *sharia*, has been kept intact. But the *ulama* compromised on procedures and norms regulating political processes, such as the necessity of a central political authority led by a caliph gave way, in course of time, to multiple political entities and legitimized multiplicity of leaders, provided that the latter applied the *sharia*. The political unity of the *ummah* was, therefore, replaced by a spiritual unity manifest in the institution of the *sharia*.

a. Classical Political Theory

Classical sunni political theory refers, in particular, to the work of Al-Mawardi (974-1058) and his immediate predecessors. Apart from Al-Mawardi, the founders of the four sunni schools of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) would qualify as belonging to the classical school. Abu Hanifa (700-67), Malik ibn-Anas (716-95), Muhammad ibn-Idris ash-Shafi'i (770-820), and Ahmed ibn-Hanbal (780-855).⁶⁵ According to Abu Hanifa, the wise and the learned who are entitled to give opinion, that is, the members of *ahl-al hal wa'l aqd*, should choose the caliph through mutual consultation. The seizure of office by force and securing *bay'a* under coercion and compulsion were illegitimate. For the school of ash-Shafi'i, only the *ulama* were eligible to be members of *ahl-al hal wa'l aqd*.⁶⁶

According to the mainstream classical sunni political theory, all Muslims should be united politically. In such a universal Islamic polity, *sharia* is central and the state structure exists to implement *sharia*. A temporal authority is posited to supervise state activities geared towards organizing human behavior in accordance with divine commandments. This temporal authority is vested in the caliph, who is responsible for the welfare and security of the *ummah*. The power to exercise sovereignty rests with the caliph, and the caliph exercises the rights of sovereignty by virtue of having been delegated religio-political authority by the community. But his exercise of sovereignty is limited in that it must be within the limits of *sharia*.⁶⁷ The caliphate is a trust from God to administer divine law. Obedience to the caliph is therefore also a divine injunction. Rebellion against the caliph's authority is only justifiable if the caliph trespasses the limits of *sharia* in public policy or fails to live a pious life.

According to the majority view in the classical sunni school of thought, the world is divided into *dar-al Islam*, the domain of Islam, and *dar-al harb*, the non-Islamic territory. It is a collective responsibility of the *ummah* to expand the boundaries of *dar-al Islam*. The instrument to achieve this end is *jihad*, the holy war. But *jihad*, according to the most commonly held view, is preceded by two conditions.⁶⁸ First, the caliph or his representative invites a non-Islamic polity or tribe to accept Islam; if it accepts Islam, its people automatically become members of the *ummah* and are incorporated into *dar-al Islam*. If it refuses to accept Islam, it has to accept the suzerainty of *dar-al Islam*, that is, the overlordship of the caliph. If it refuses to do so, only then the third alternative of war applies. At this stage, the caliph declares *jihad* on the recalcitrant polity or tribe.

Al-Mawardi, whose works occupy the centerpiece in classical sunni theory, basically argued that the caliph should be an active ruler, and not a figurehead. For Al-Mawardi, the institution of the caliphate is an essential part of the *sharia*, and hence it is incumbent upon the *ummah* to elect a caliph through consultation and consensus. The election of the caliph is an obligation and the members of the electoral college should be intelligent, honest, knowledgeable in *fiqh* and *sharia*, and simultaneously they should be capable of comprehending the socio-political requirements of the Islamic nation. But the reigning caliph may also on his own authority confer a valid contract for the succession, and the assumption of office by virtue of nomination by the preceding caliph is legal.⁶⁹

The stress by classical thought on the political unity of the *ummah* and the necessity of a single leadership encountered a crucial problem when Mahmud of Ghazna emerged as an independent sultan in the early 11th century. But Sultan

Mahmud, during his rule in Ghazna and Khurasan, never did anything to oppose the caliph. Because it was impossible to restore the early Abbasid caliphate, when the caliph had been the sole spiritual and political head in *dar-al Islam*, Al-Mawardi felt the necessity of regulating the prevailing and future relationship of the caliphate with such independent sunni rulers as Sultan Mahmud. Al-Mawardi came up with the compromise that certain concessions might be granted to the governors of outlying provinces, provided that they did not interfere with the authority of the caliph as effective ruler of the central provinces. Under the compromise, the governor would be required to preserve the dignity of the caliphate and refrain from anything that might be construed as disobedience to the caliph. The compromise also required that the governor must establish the rule of *sharia* and must live up to it in word and deed. Further, the governor must enter into a pact of friendship and mutual assistance with the caliph. If these conditions are met, to quote Gibb,

Al-Mawardi goes as far as to say that the caliph must grant the conqueror this recognition and authorization; and even if they are not fulfilled, the caliph may do so in order to induce him to make submission.⁷⁰

Thus, Al-Mawardi struck a compromise in his attempt to adapt the primary principles of classical sunni theory to contemporary historical realities. The most important elements of classical theory had been unity, divine guidance and historical continuity. Al-Mawardi's theory retained all these principles of classical theory by allowing relative autonomy to the governors in the periphery without destroying the semblance of political unity.

Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), the famous Muslim mystic-philosopher, lived in the post-Mawardi period and built a bridge between the classical school and the traditionalist school. The latter pertains to the contributions of scholars

belonging to the post-Abbasid period, when *dar-al Islam* was politically fragmented and the caliph was only a symbolic head of the *ummah*.

Al-Ghazali's writings reflected contemporary political realities. He lived during the latter half of the Abbasid rule, when real political power had been captured by the Seljuk sultans while central political authority had eroded. He accepted the dualism in the realm of political authority caused by the co-existence of the Abbasid caliph, a figurehead ruler, and de facto independent sultans. He was concerned over how to legitimize hereditary kingship when in the sight of God all believers are equal and subject to the same divine law. His solution to this apparent contradiction in Muslim theory and practice in the sphere of government was, again, as in al-Mawardi, based on compromise and reciprocity. For him, so long as the sultan recognized the legal authority of the caliph, the sultan's government was legitimate. At the same time, Al-Ghazali made it incumbent for the sultan to respect and cooperate with the caliph's authority. He also introduced the idea that the caliph could delegate authority to whosoever was capable of administering law and order in accordance with the *sharia*; in return, the recipient had to acknowledge allegiance to the Abbasid caliph.⁷¹ Al-Ghazali, in effect, replaced the political unity of the *ummah* with the spiritual unity of all believers. This spiritual unity would exist so long as the sultans recognized the right of the Abbasid caliph and, in return, received the diploma of appointment. Thus, in Al-Ghazali's theory, the institution of caliphate remained as the centerpiece of Islamic government, but the functions of the caliphate were reduced to that of being only a living symbol in terms of unity, divine guidance, and historical continuity -- the three main principles of classical sunni political thought.⁷²

Another development during this interlude between classical and

traditionalist thought was the closure of the gate of *ijtehad*, or independent judgment by the *ulama* on the basis of general principles of Islamic jurisprudence. There is difference of opinion over the date when the gate of *ijtehad* was closed. Some locate the date as early as 900 A.D. but other evidence suggests a date two centuries later.⁷³ Regardless, this closure reduced flexibility in interpreting law, particularly in the context of new issues and circumstances. At the same time, it enhanced the position of the *ulama/qadis* against the ruler, because they could resist pressure from the ruler on the ground that on the point in question the law was already established by precedent and it was beyond his authority to review it. This is how the sunni *ulama* could assert a relative autonomy from the sultans, who were becoming more and more worldly and authoritarian.

b. Traditionalist Political Theory

The traditionalist sunni school fully bloomed during the post-Abbasid period, being especially enriched by two 14th century Arab scholars, Ibn Taimiyah (1260-1328) and Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406). It was further augmented, though much later, by an Indian scholar of eminence, Shah Wali-ullah (1703-81). In the eyes of Ibn Taimiyah and Wali-ullah, it was the *sharia* and the Muslim community that were of key significance, rather than any particular type of Muslim government, because there was no longer any central Muslim authority. Thus the institution of caliphate lost its prominence in sunni thought. According to Ibn Taimiyah, the true caliphate ended with the four "righteous caliphs" and from then onwards there have been various forms of Muslim rule. For him, it was not necessary for the Muslims to have one universal state under a caliph. If there were many Muslim states, as was the case during his time, there could be several *imams* (spiritual leaders), provided that competent

candidates were available.⁷⁴ It sufficed if, however, the individual Muslim states cooperated with one another. But he put special stress on the community and the implementation of *sharia*. Wali-ullah also stressed the Muslim community and *sharia* although he emphasized the idea of Islam as a polity. But the latter could be practised in the form of a world political order of Muslims, to which the regional Muslim political entities would be subordinate.⁷⁵

Ibn Taimiyah argued for a responsible government. According to him, the government is responsible to the community for the implementation of *sharia*, while the community is responsible to God to maintain a government that implements *sharia*. This principle provided a rational basis for legitimacy. It is the duty of individual Muslims to obey a government that applies the *sharia* and to oppose a government that deviates from it. He further added a new requirement that, if a believer failed to live up to the *sharia*, he ceased to be a Muslim; and, accordingly, if a ruler failed to apply the *sharia* he would also cease to be a Muslim.⁷⁶ Taimiyah also stressed the jurisdiction of the *ulama* in matters of the *sharia*; that is, they had the sole legal authority to interpret the *sharia* and to determine whether it was rightly implemented or not. This interpretation led to the forging of a strong link between the *ulama* and the common people. In return, the link facilitated an alliance between the *ulama* and the Muslim masses against deviant rulers.

Though one of the brightest scholars ever born in the annals of Islam, Taimiyah occupied a controversial position. Unlike other traditionalist scholars contemporary to him, he appealed for the reopening of *ijtehad*.⁷⁷ He himself was a great *mujtahid*⁷⁸ and paved the way for the future opening of *ijtehad*.⁷⁹

Taimiyah's orthodox position, indeed, later on inspired many puritanic movements in sunni Islam. The most prominent among them was the Wahhabi

movement, initiated by Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-91), a native of Najd. He was furious to see not only superstitions and innovations which Taimiyah had condemned, but also corruption and deviation in urban areas among the learned. In collaboration with Prince Muhammad Ibn Saud of Najd, Abdul Wahhab launched a puritanic movement which achieved impressive success in the Arabian peninsula. The increasing influence of the movement alarmed the Ottoman rulers, who undertook military measures which weakened the movement physically by 1818.⁸⁰ But the puritanic message of the movement reached far beyond the Arabian peninsula and by the mid-19th century almost the whole Muslim world witnessed puritanic movements, particularly India. Till today, Taimiyah is an important source of inspiration for contemporary radical sunni Islamic groups who seek a change in the political status quo.

Another luminous figure in Islamic thought, Ibn Khaldun (1331-1406) -- whose advent was immediately after the departure of Taimiyah -- maintained a position less puritanic and more sociological. Like the mainstream *ulama* in the post-Abbasid period, he contended that the political fragmentation of the *ummah* did not negate its spiritual unity. Thus, *dar-al Islam* remained a community of believers. For Ibn Khaldun, the reign of the "righteous caliphs" remained the ideal Islamic state, but he accepted deviations from the ideal type so long as different Muslim territories were ruled according to the *sharia*. Ibn Khaldun observed that, in the post-"righteous caliphate" era, when dynastic rule was established, the *sharia* was enforced and public interests secured. Thus, in his view not every monarchical system is necessarily evil. What brings deplorable political order, such as absolutist despotism and tyranny, is deviation from the rules of the religious law.⁸¹ Why such deviations take place can be known, in Ibn Khaldun's view, if the foundation of a state is investigated.

Ibn Khaldun introduced the concept called *asabiyah*, or group feeling. According to him, the foundation of a state and its institutions depend primarily upon this group feeling. Another complementary factor facilitating the building of a political order is religion with its specific value system. Leadership, religious values and *asabiyah*, that is, the propensity for cohesion, are the cultural and structural variables that enable a society, though segmented, to evolve into a unified and integrated state.⁸² With the passage of time, however, the original idea of group feeling gradually gives way to habitual obedience to a common ruler, who is considered to be a spiritual as well as a secular leader. This is how a royal house or dynasty establishes its rule by force over a people who have lost the sense of oneness or group solidarity. But a community with a strong group feeling can never be overpowered by any individual.⁸³ Hence, *asabiyah* constitutes a safeguard against the rise of tyrannical rule. Another moral principle which ensures that human association can be secured against anarchy, self destruction, misuse of luxury or power, is the *sharia*, if implemented as the supreme law in the political system.⁸⁴

Ibn Khaldun's theory, however, failed to leave a lasting impact among the *ulama*. The *ulama* themselves reformulated the three main principles of classical thought. Unity was replaced by orthodoxy, and the *ulama* were its guardians. Divine guidance was re-interpreted to mean that the opinion of the *ulama* be sought on all legal issues, while *ijma*, the consensus of opinion among the general body of *ulama*, was taken to be above error. Historical continuity gave place to *taqlid*, that is, the principle whereby the opinions of the founders of legal schools, or later consensi, remain valid for succeeding generations. The embodiment of the three principles in the caliphate was transformed into their embodiment in the *ulama*. Thus, in traditionalist theory the institution of the caliphate lost its significance, although allegiance to a figurehead caliph was

believed to have symbolic importance. Instead, three elements rose to prominence: *ummah*, *sharia*, and *ulama*. All three were interrelated. The universality of *sharia* ensured the spiritual unity of the *ummah*, and the *ulama* were the guardians of the *sharia*.

c. Modernist Political Theory

Modernist political theory is in fact a reformist response to the exposure to European political ideas and institutions during the colonial interlude. The modernist theoreticians were all very influenced by the achievements, both material and socio-political, of western civilization. Their reformulation of sunni thought was a defense of Islam against western encroachments. But, in their defense of Islam, they did not look back to the past. That is, they did not try to restore the past and reject the west. Rather, they looked at the future which would be molded by an adaptation of western ideas and institutions to a revitalized re-oriented Islam. They discovered that the apparent weakness of the *ummah* vis-a-vis the strength of the west was not an inherent failure of Islam; rather, they held that those who held religious and political power deviated from "true" Islam and retarded the progress of Islam by obstructing change and novelty. Hence, Islam did not produce backwardness; rather, the guardians of Islam, during the dynastic and colonial phases, suffered from inertia and stupor and lacked farsightedness, leadership and vigor which made Islam look medieval and non-progressive.

Most of the articulate intellectuals in the Islamic modernist school were from the Arab world. Among them two of the earliest and prominent figures were Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801-73) and Khairuddin al-Tunisi (1810-90). Al-Tahtawi was one of the pioneers in seriously encouraging the adoption of science and modern European thought for the development of the Muslim

world. Although al-Tahtawi, Khairuddin and their contemporaries attempted to legitimize the borrowing of western thought and science, in reality they were separating issues of social development from religious issues.⁸⁵ However, these issues were complicated by the presence of imperialism. How to emancipate the Muslim world from western imperialism, and how to galvanize Islamic morals and values with western science and thought, which were perceived to be the road towards development, were crucial questions. But these questions were not answered by the pioneers, whose efforts were limited to portraying western science as being non-contradictory to the principles of Islam and hence acceptable. It was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, and his intellectual heirs, who synthesized western science and thought with Islamic values and ideas into a reformist movement that aimed at both emancipation from colonial rule and achieving domestic development.

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-97) built his reformist career in both intellectual and political fields. He felt the need for political action as well as intellectual rejuvenation. He was against surrendering to the whims of despotic rulers. He was a pan-Islamist in the sense that he wanted to see all the Muslims united under one caliph. Like all other modernist thinkers, he was against *taqlid*. To him, the closure of the gates of *ijtehad* was illogical. The absence of independent reasoning blocked the progress of Islamic thought and institutions. *Ijtehad* was necessary to adapt tradition to modernity. Here, al-Afghani departed from the classical school, otherwise his stress on unity under a caliph and belief in *sufism* would have brought him in line with the classical scholars.⁸⁶

Al-Afghani's most brilliant intellectual heir was Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905). A focal point of Abduh's thought was that a true Islam, freed from un-Islamic accretions, was compatible with modern thought and institutions. He

rejected the doctrine of fatalism, as he considered true Islam to be a negation of fatalism and affirmation of free will. Abduh denounced *taqlid* strongly. *Taqlid*, to him, brought mimic imitation to interpretations based on blind authority. This blocked new initiatives and independence of mind. Thus, the positive relationship between Quranic revelations and scientific truth was concealed.⁸⁷ Any Muslim can understand Islam from the study of the Quran, Hadith and other sources without any intermediaries. This is how Abduh sought to negate the authority of the *ulama* as the guardians and authentic interpreters of *sharia*.

The difference between al-Afghani and Abduh was that the latter was less political than the former and stressed moral reform more. According to Abduh, the response to western encroachments, both intellectual and political, should be educational and moral reforms rather than political revolts. The tool of Abduh's reforms was *ijtehad*. He was disappointed to see Muslims with backgrounds in secular education imitating western ideas and institutions and the *ulama* attempting to reproduce the past. Abduh, however, was not in favor of ignoring the past or rejecting European achievements. He advised the *ulama* to exercise independent reasoning in dealing with religious issues. On the other hand, he appealed to the modern intelligentsia to adopt western science and philosophy so long as it did not tamper with Islamic principles.

Abdur Rahman al-Kawakibi (1849-1903), a contemporary of Abduh, resented despotic rule and propagated *ijtehad*. He was also against *sufi*-inspired innovations. His model envisaged an Arab caliphate centered in Makkah. This caliphate was to have a democratic government, which concept he borrowed from the west.⁸⁸

Two other noted intellectuals in the Arabic circle of the modernist school were Rashid Rida (1865-1935) and Mustafa Abdur Raziq (1885-1947), both of whom were disciples of Abduh. It has been claimed by Cragg that Abduh's modernism suffered from an inner irresolution which became more apparent in the works of his disciples, Rida and Raziq, which

illustrate the dilemma of a conservatism of mind that is anxious to keep step with modernity and is at the same time "fearful for the ark of God".⁸⁹

In the non-Arabic Muslim world, there emerged a less luminous galaxy of modernist thinkers contemporary to al-Afghani, Abduh and their cohorts. The most prominent among them were Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Muhammad Iqbal of India, and Mehmed Namik Kemal of Turkey.

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-98) was an educational reformer and pioneer of Islamic modernism in India. His mission aimed at educational and moral reforms. His method was that of articulation and persuasion rather than agitation, and he stayed away from political agitations. He and his Aligarh movement focused its attention not on the belief, but on the believers, not on the religion but on the community. Syed Ahmed's main concern was that it was not Islam that needed reform, but Muslims.⁹⁰

Unlike his Arab counterparts, Khan was a great admirer of the British empire; he found in British imperialism a blessing in disguise in terms of the much appreciated exposure to western science and socio-political institutions. To him, the Muslims of India constituted a distinct community different from the Hindus in terms of faith, culture and destination. But the Muslims remained backward by not accepting modern western innovations. So Muslim progress necessitated modern education, while their political goals could be realized best

through cooperation and consultation with the British. But Khan's exhortation towards modern education and values was not at the cost of Islamic principles. Modern education was to be encapsulated within a broad and dynamic Islamic framework.

Another prominent figure in India's Islamic modernism was Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938), known as the spiritual founder of Pakistan. In his early life, he was an admirer of the pantheism of Ibn-al Arabi, a mystic-philosopher of Moorish Spain. However, he had a change of heart during his stay in Europe, when he discovered the simple and invigorating message of Islam, as embodied in the Quran and as demonstrated by the dynamic example of the Prophet and his early followers.⁹¹ With this change in orientation, he became an admirer of al-Afghani. In the dynamism of early Islam, Iqbal discovered a creative impulse that directed mankind towards a positive moral channel. Unlike the Islamic world, the contemporary west was industrious enough, but it lacked a positive moral direction for the elevation of humanity. The west, according to Iqbal, was inventive but not creative, and thus would prove destructive for human moral development. Therefore, he invited mankind as a whole to join the morally invigorating and ethically positive Islam.⁹²

Iqbal's message to the Muslims was to rejuvenate Islam through *ijtehad*, which would ensure the spontaneous flow of creative thought within an Islamic framework. Iqbal did recall past Islamic glories and achievements but this was only to inspire and rejuvenate Muslims, a great nation having the potential for moral and spiritual leadership of the world yet, in Iqbal's eyes, in slumber for lack of proper leadership, initiative and a "true understanding" of Islam. However, in reality, Iqbal had no longing for the reconstruction of the past. It is the future that enticed him: a future that takes direct inspiration from the

creative impulse in the dynamism of Islam as embodied in the Quran and in the example of the Prophet, and one which seeks moral direction from Islam's positive ethical standards.

Another prominent non-Arab Muslim modernist intellectual was Mehmed Namik Kemal (1840-1888) of Turkey. Namik Kemal, like Iqbal, was a literary figure as well as a social reformer. He is famous for two basic ideas: *vatan* (fatherland) and *hurriyat* (freedom), borrowed from the ideas of the French Revolution but adapted to Islamic traditions.⁹³ He was deeply impressed by the achievements of western civilization and was a fervent believer in patriotism and liberalism but at the same time he was a devout Muslim. Kemal was critical of the leaders of the Tanzimat period for their failure to preserve the best of the old Islamic traditions and for borrowing European institutions.⁹⁴ He believed that the backwardness of the Muslims was relative rather than absolute. The backwardness was not because of any inherent weakness in Islam; rather, it was European imperial domination that had deprived the Muslim world of the opportunity of self-advancement, that is, modernization from within had been suffocated because of European politico-economic control. He felt the need for a modern Islamic state but this modernization should not be a direct imitation of European models.⁹⁵ Kemal believed that a modern state with a constitutionally representative government was compatible with Islam and modernization could be accomplished within an Islamic framework.

To sum up, most of the modernist Islamic intellectuals shared certain beliefs and attitudes. There was a common tendency among them to go back to the roots of Islam: the Islam in the Quran and in the examples of the Prophet. But this reminiscence of the early phase of Islam was for inspiration only and not for reproduction, because they located the ideal society in the future. They

were agreed on the necessity to revive *ijtehad*, which would ensure creativity and progress in Islamic thought and action. Along with it, there was a veiled repudiation of the authority of the traditionalist *ulama*. Lastly, the modernist intellectuals as a whole accepted western thought and science to be indispensable for a Muslim breakthrough into the modern world, but they differed on the extent to which such borrowing from the west should be recast and adapted to Islamic principles and values.

So much about their agreements. However, not all of them shared the same issues of concern. Some of them aimed at changing the beliefs and others wanted to change the believers. Some were inspired by a desire to upgrade the social, economic and political status of the Muslims and had no desire to tamper with Islam as a set of doctrines. Syed Ahmed Khan and Namik Kemal, for example, belong to this category. On the other hand, some others, though concerned with improving the socio-economic well-being of the Muslim community, went considerably beyond that and focused attention on matters of Islamic doctrine -- whether of reviving it, of reinterpreting it, or of reconstructing it. Abduh and Iqbal, for example, belong to this group.⁹⁶

4. Contemporary Fundamentalists and the Modern Islamic State

In the post-colonial phase, as observed by Humphreys, three main responses emanated from the breakdown of traditional society and the rise of modern nation-states: fundamentalist, Islamic modernist, and secularist.⁹⁷ The Islamic modernists, as referred to here, are not the direct spiritual and intellectual heirs of the Islamic modernist school that emerged in the 19th century. Rather, the contemporary Islamic modernists, as represented by the Muslim League in South Asia, the Wafd Party in Egypt, the Salvation Party in Turkey and the contemporary Muslim monarchies and sultanates in Morocco,

Jordan, and Brunei, for example, are quite liberal in their philosophy and are satisfied with symbolic Islamization, such as constitutional status for Islam and personal laws in accordance with *sharia*. On the other hand, it is the contemporary fundamentalists who are the spiritual heirs of the puritanic Taimiyah and the intellectual descendants of the Islamic modernist school of al-Afghani and his cohorts.

Islamic modernism -- in terms of a liberal version of Islam propagated in the post-independence period -- and secularism were the two dominant ideological trends in the 1950s and 1960s. But, from the early 1970s onwards, a global religio-political re-assertion of Islamic values undercut the popularity of liberal Islam and secularist trends. From then on, Islamic fundamentalism has become a strong contender in the field of political ideology.

The secularist trend in the Muslim world is represented by western liberalism as well as Marxist and neo-Marxist traditions. The secularists aim to bring about a separation between religion and state. Religion, to them, belongs to the private sphere of life and politics belongs to the public domain of life. They want to impose an institutional differentiation between these two domains of social life. Turkey achieved some success in this direction, followed by Indonesia and Tunisia. But a complete separation between religion and state is non-existent in the Muslim world, as has been observed earlier.

The Muslim exposure to the modern concept of secularism dates back to European colonial penetration. Colonialism brought an enormous socio-political upheaval as a result of exposure to contending ideologies that came from Europe along with colonial rule, such as liberalism, secularism, and socialism. The failure of Muslim political powers in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries to resist European colonial intrusion caused tremendous psychological and

intellectual confusion and frustration among the educated Muslim elite. From the early 20th century on, when western education started penetrating Muslim societies, a segment of the Muslim elite developed doubts about the usefulness of Islam as a socio-economic blueprint to guide a modern nation.⁹⁸ This perception was caused by the sudden exposure to an alien educational orientation and an inferiority complex acquired during colonial rule.

During the period of anti-colonial nationalist movements, from the 1920s onwards till the 1960s, socialism had some appeal among Muslim intellectuals because socialism was viewed as hostile to a common enemy, imperialism. This perception was further reinforced by the commitment and support extended by the imperialist powers to Israel, a common enemy of the Islamic world. But this trend of thought started changing from the late 1960s. The two Arab-Israeli wars in 1967 and 1973 brought almost an ideological re-orientation in the Arab world. The severe defeat in 1967 was a terrible blow to the Nasserite version of Arab socialism and to the radical Baathism (a version of Arab socialism) of Salah Jadid's (Syria's ruler from 1965 to 1969). It demonstrated, argued Ajami cogently, the failure of radical hope. The revolutionary states were seen as a total failure; they had destroyed the fabric of the social order and were cowardly and treacherous in war.⁹⁹ Boullata observed in the same vein:

Disenchantment grew stronger among the Arab people as neither Arab unity was achieved nor socialist dreams of better life for the lower classes were realized. The defeat of the Arab regimes in the war of June 1967 against Israel laid bare the hollow character of the dominant ideology in the Arab world.... The dominant ideology of Arab nationalism, and of Arab 'socialism' where it was implemented, were in crisis because of the more general crisis in the Arab economy and polity which the Arab defeat of 1967 aggravated.¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, the limited success in the 1973 war was interpreted by the Arab masses as a result of the Egyptian military's renewal of faith in and

devotion to Islam as manifested in the battle-cry of the Egyptian army "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great) instead of the secular slogans of 1967.¹⁰¹

This is how whatever appeal Arab socialism had mustered died out, and there was a resurgence of Islamic sentiment. But this resurgence in Islam's political appeal was not only limited to the Arab world. It simultaneously reverberated in other parts of the Muslim world. The new Islamic orientation was further boosted by the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979 and by the *jihad* (holy war) waged by the pro-Islamic forces against the invading Soviet army and local communists in Afghanistan after 1979. This is how the secularist trend lost ground to Islamic fundamentalism.

a. Fundamentalist School

Historically, the term "fundamentalist" emerged in Christianity, particularly in the context of Protestant reformation. The Protestant fundamentalists, theoretically, are those who strictly adhere to scriptural principles, that is, laws derived from the Biblical texts, rather than the traditions of the church, the clergy or the Pope.¹⁰² In the context of Islam, all Muslims are supposed to adhere to the laws derived from divine scriptures, that is, the *sharia*. But in reality, in the post *-khulafa ur-Rashidin* era, many innovations crept into Muslim life, particularly at the folk level, and political power became a dynastic legacy, resulting in deviation from the tenets of *sharia* both among the elite and the masses. Taimiyah, in particular, reacted vehemently to this corruption and tried to bring back the purity of the early days. To attain that end, he laid stress on the religious duties of all Muslims, rulers and ruled alike: it is incumbent upon the Muslim ruler to implement the *sharia* and it is equally obligatory on the Muslim citizens to live up to the *sharia*. Thus, Taimiyah's emphasis on purity and orthodoxy made him the pioneer of "Islamic Purification", which

later on influenced many scholars and reformers, such as Abdul Wahhab, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Modammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Sayyed Qutb and Hassan al-Banna.¹⁰³

The present-day followers of the "purification" school are known as fundamentalists, because their main demand is an Islamic state, as only such a state under the sovereignty of *sharia* can properly promote Islamic behavior among the citizens. The mission of the fundamentalists is therefore to capture political power to establish an Islamic state in which *sharia* will reign supreme. The blueprint for their modern Islamic state incorporates a modern economic infrastructure based on up-to-date science, technology and a rational bureaucracy -- all of which will be adapted to the tenets of *sharia* through the exercise of *ijtehad*. They do not accept the legitimacy of dynastic sultans, nor of elected presidents, who legitimize their rule with symbolic gestures to Islam but otherwise pursue secular goals through secular means. Their aim is to capture political power to implement *sharia*. With this goal in mind, they participate in politics through the available political channels, such as formation of political parties to compete in elections. But they also approve of underground cells and political violence when the opportunities for participation are denied or manipulated, contrary to their own policies.

The contemporary fundamentalists are in agreement with the Islamic modernist school of al-Afghani and his cohorts on five important points: searching into the roots of Islam -- the simple and dynamic Islam in the Quran and in the life of the Prophet; locating the ideal society in the future; revival of *ijtehad*; repudiation of the authority of the traditionalist *ulama*; and, lastly, borrowing western institutions in an adapted form. But the fundamentalists place less stress on the necessity of borrowing western institutions, because

modern and scientific education has already become an integral part of the educational curriculum in the Muslim countries and western thought and institutions have considerably influenced the Muslim world, particularly the intelligentsia. Rather, they are more interested in injecting a thoroughgoing Islamic orientation to borrowed institutions and to eliminating anti-Islamic ideas and values which have already pervaded the Muslim society.

Other than these ideas, the thinking of the fundamentalists is characterized by two important features which were absent in the modernist school. Firstly, there is an all out stress on the *sharia*, which should guide the political, economic and educational system, in short, all spheres of public and private life; secondly, there is a deep commitment to active political involvement to bring about a positive change in the status quo. The fundamentalists go as far as declaring *jihad* on Muslim governments because they are seen as compromising with the west/east and avoiding implementation of *sharia*. In contrast, the Islamic modernist intellectuals had laid more stress on moral and educational reform and less on political revolt, with perhaps al-Afghani constituting a partial exception, as his mission aimed at radical Islamic reforms and defiance of despotism, if not outright revolution.

b. Modern Islamic State

The modern Islamic state, in fundamentalist theoretical schemes, is representative in nature. However, the constitution of such a state is a rigid one insofar as the clauses concerning the *sharia* are concerned. What is implied is that the elected legislature does not have the authority to replace the *sharia* by secular legislation. Unlike liberal democracies, where the parliament is sovereign, in a modern Islamic state the *sharia* is sovereign and the legislature is subordinate to the *sharia*. The application of the *sharia* is, however, likely to

pose a problem for the fundamentalists as multiple schools of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) exist. But this problem has been made relatively easy to solve because the four main branches of *sunni* jurisprudence are practised in four respective regions of the Muslim world.¹⁰⁴ Only in a few cases are two schools of jurisprudence practised in one country. Even in that case, the existing norm is that only one school is officially recognized. For example, in Egypt and Syria both Hanafi and Shafi'i *fiqh* are followed by the people. But, historically the Hanafi *fiqh* has been the official version of law. It was instituted as such by the Ottoman administration and that practice has continued till now.

Contemporary Islamic governments solved this problem by either imposing one school as the officially accepted version of law, or by letting the minorities follow their own school of jurisprudence on controversial issues. For example, under Zia-ul Huq's Islamization program, the shias have been exempted from certain Hanafi laws, particularly those relating to *zakat*. In Saudi Arabia, the Hanbali *fiqh* is the official version while in Iran it is the Zafari *fiqh*. It is not a major problem for any Muslim regime to let the minorities opt out of the official version on controversial issues, if at all necessary. After all, until the colonial takeover, all Muslim countries had the *sharia* as the legal code, one of the four sunni schools being the official version in sunni lands and the Zafari school in Iran.

In the case of Bangladesh, the application of *sharia* will not be a problem because almost all Muslims are sunni belonging to the Hanafi school of jurisprudence. The Hanafi school was the official legal code during Muslim rule in India. The British also maintained the Hanafi jurisprudence as the civil code for the Muslim communities in India; the Hindus had Hindu law as their civil code. The same has been in practice till now all over the Indian sub-continent.

In case of thoroughgoing Islamization, the British criminal laws in practice in Bangladesh would have to be replaced by the Hanafi laws. The Hindus and other minorities can continue to have their own civil law as it is practised now. In the case of criminal justice, the non-Muslims can be subjected to *ta'zia* clauses as applied in Pakistan in dealing with non-Muslim Pakistanis and non-Muslim foreigners.¹⁰⁵ The problems related to the application of *sharia* are thus not insurmountable as contemporary Islamic governments find their way out.

In an Islamic state according to fundamentalist design, then the *sharia* reigns supreme and sovereignty ultimately rests with God. God's laws are above popular will. Further, individuals and parties who seek participation have to accept the sovereignty of *sharia* and work within an Islamic framework. This would nullify the possibility of a liberal or Marxist orientation of political institutions.

But in the field of economy there is some room for maneuver. The right to private property and private ownership in the means of production is secure in Islam. Nevertheless, public ownership in the means of production can also co-exist. The concept of public property, for example, *baitul Ma'l* (public treasury), has been there from the early days of Islam. Public property in Islam is a symbol of community responsibility towards the well-being of its less fortunate members. In the early days of Islam, the *muhajireen* (migrants) from Makkah, who were residing in Madina, used to get allowances from the public treasury according to their financial need. The early Islamic state also collected and disbursed *zakat*, an Islamic tax on wealth to be distributed among the poor. A modern Islamic state according to fundamentalist scheme can therefore be welfare-oriented as well.

To sum up, the minimum requirement for a state to qualify as Islamic according to the fundamentalist design is that the basic laws be in accordance with the injunctions of the *sharia*. Because the application of the *sharia* requires a firm commitment to Islam, the political elite should be true believers in word and deed. When this much is ensured, the structure and institutions of the state can vary considerably.

5. Summary and Conclusions

The historical review of the relationship between Islam and state is important in knowing how this relationship changed over time and how it affects the modern Muslim nation-states. It has been found that the universality of the *sharia* has kept alive the demand for an Islamic state even though the *ummah* is politically fragmented. At the same time, dependence on military backing on the part of the elite in the Arabic caliphates, as well as in the non-Arabic Ottoman and Mughal empires, established the primacy of the military in Muslim polities. The military thus ensured a historically legitimized role for itself in the realm of politics, which affects modern nation-states as much as it did during the medieval dynastic phase when the military was the intermittent deposer of Turkish sultans and determined succession to the throne in the Mughal empire. But this dominant military orientation in politics encountered new forces in the political arena in the post-colonial phase. To understand and analyze this encounter, we have to look at colonial traditions.

Colonial traditions are important to investigate because they provided alternative models of political organization, such as pluralism and popular sovereignty. They help us to understand the conflict in contemporary Bangladesh between the intellectuals, who prefer a liberal democratic order, and the military and bureaucracy which prefer an authoritarian political order.

The intellectuals have been traditionally liberal because of their exposure to liberal political values from the days of British rule. On the other hand, the bureaucracy and the military are two strong institutions, also inherited from the British. The military-bureaucratic alliance does not want to surrender its power and privileges to the civilian politicians.

The military derives its strength from the fact that technologically it is the most advanced institution, because of privileges enjoyed during the colonial period, while its ideological strength lies in identification with Islam. On the other hand, the civilian politicians -- secular and Islamic -- invoke their legitimacy from two rival sources, respectively: liberal and Marxist traditions, and the *sharia*. Secular forces were influenced by liberal and Marxist notions of politics through European education and exposure to European political values and institutions that began with the European colonial intrusion. Islamic forces are affected by developments in Islamic political thought and its re-interpretations and reconstructions in recent times.

A review of the evolution of sunni political thought is therefore important in understanding the ideological origins of contemporary Islamic forces in Bangladesh. The fundamentalist forces in Bangladesh, like elsewhere in the Islamic world, are affected by Ibn Taimyiah and the modernist Islamic school of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and his cohorts, whereas the majority of the *ulama* still follow the traditionalist school of the past. Both groups have their own spheres of influence and work towards the Islamization of the state. The fundamentalists believe that the Islamization of the state will automatically follow the Islamization of the society. So their prime object is to mobilize support to capture state power. The traditionalists, on the other hand, believe that the Islamization of the society through spiritual and moral purification of

individuals will naturally lead to the Islamization of the state. So their main object is to guide individuals and groups towards spiritual and moral renewal. However, all admit the primacy of the *sharia*, though the traditionalists take the *ulama* to be the sole interpreters of *sharia*, insisting on *taqlid*, whereas the fundamentalists insist on *ijtehad* in the application of the *sharia* to new circumstances. The review of the evolution of important sunni schools of thought is thus essential to understanding the ideological orientation of various Islamic groups in Bangladesh, all of whom are working for the consolidation of Islam in their own way.

An analysis of Islamic and colonial traditions has been provided by Akbar Ahmed in his model on the political leadership in south Asia. Ahmed observed that Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh exemplified two models of Muslim leadership in south Asia: one being orthodox, legalistic, and formal; the other being unorthodox, mystical, and informal. The influence of colonial rule resulted in a third model that rests on a liberal interpretation of Islam, as represented by Syed Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Ayub Khan. There is another type in Ahmed's typology which is represented by secular-oriented leaders, for example, Mustafa Kamal, who preferred the separation of state from religion. In this typology of Muslim leadership in south Asia, Aurangzeb and Ziaul Huq are characterized as puritans, Dara Shikoh and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as synthesizers, and Jinnah and Ayub Khan as modernists. Ahmed has not put any south Asian Muslim leader in the secular category.¹⁰⁶

In the context of contemporary Bangladesh, Ahmed's typology is quite meaningful. Tajuddin Ahmed, the first acting Prime Minister of Bangladesh, well-known for his strong pro-Soviet and pro-Indian leanings and strong anti-Pakistani and anti-Middle Eastern orientation, can be put in the secular

category. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Syed Nazrul Islam can be described as synthesizers; both were in favor of a secular state but also compromised with Islam when required. Khondker Mushtaque Ahmed and Ziaur Rahman were Islamic modernists. So far, no puritan has yet emerged in the power elite of Bangladesh though Ershad occasionally pretends to be so. As a result, the degree of Islamization of the state of Bangladesh has been quite mild in comparison to that of Pakistan under the puritan Zia-ul Huq. The reasons for the absence of puritans in the power elite of Bangladesh have to be sought in the historical role of Islam in the polity of Bangladesh, which will be investigated next.

Notes

- ¹ Donald E. Smith, *Religion and Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), p. 7.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ³ Michael C. Hudson, "Islam and Political Development", in John L. Esposito (ed.), *Islam and Development* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1980), p. 3.
- ⁴ Ayman Al-Yassini, *Religion and State in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), p. 5.
- ⁵ Consensus of opinion of the ulama on religious issues.
- ⁶ Mohammad Amin Saaty, "The Constitutional Development In Saudi Arabia", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1982, p. 4.
- ⁷ Mohamed Hosny Mohamed Gaber, "The Early Islamic State With Special Reference To The Evolution Of The Principles Of Islamic International Law, 632-750 A.D.", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The American University, 1962, pp. 53-57.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- ⁹ Al-Yassini, p. 6.
- ¹⁰ In the early phase of Islam, all able-bodied male believers participated in battles on a voluntary basis. There were no mercenaries or a standing army.
- ¹¹ Abdul Malik Ahmed Al-Sayed, "Classical Arabic-Islamic Political Theories Of Administration, An Analysis And Evaluation Of Their Contemporary Significance", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado, 1974, pp. 53, 54.
- ¹² There are two main traditions on succession in Islam: sunni and shi'a. Here, the sunni tradition is dealt with because in Bangladesh almost 100% percent of the Muslims are sunni.
- ¹³ M. Yousuf Kandhalawi, *Hayat-Us-Sahabah* (The Lives of the Companions), vol.II (New Delhi: Idara Ishaat-e-Diniyat, 1985), p. 23.
- ¹⁴ Al-Yassini, p. 7.
- ¹⁵ W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Political Thought* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1968), p. 35.
- ¹⁶ Ishtiaq Ahmed, *The Concept of an Islamic State -- An Analysis of the Ideological Controversy in Pakistan* (London: Frances Pinter, 1987), p. 54.

- 17 Muhammad Zakariya, *The Virtues of Salat* (Lahore: Maktaba Imdadia, no date), pp. 82, 83.
- 18 Ishtiaq Ahmed, p. 55.
- 19 Peter Hardy, "Traditional Muslim Views Of The Nature Of Politics", in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Politics And Society In India* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963), pp. 33, 34.
- 20 Fazlur Rahman, "Islam and Political Action: Politics in the Service of Religion", p. 157.
- 21 Islam divided the world into the lands under its control, *dar al-Islam*, and the lands not subjected under its control as yet, *dar al-harb*. This division, however, was formulated by the jurists during the Abbasid era. See Gustave E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam* (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 9.
- 22 H. A. R. Gibb, "The Evolution of Government in Early Islam", *Studia Islamica*, no. 4 (1955), p. 17.
- 23 William R. Thompson, "Explanations of the Military Coup", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Washington, 1972, p. 84.
- 24 Claude C. Welch, Jr., and Arthur K. Smith, *Military Role and Rule* (North Scituate, Mass.: Duxbury, 1974), p. 181.
- 25 Jacob C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East Politics: The Military Dimensions* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 15.
- 26 Hardy, p. 37.
- 27 Kamal H. Karpat, "Structural Change, Historical Stages of Modernization, And The Role of Social Groups In Turkish Politics", in Kamal H. Karpat (ed.), *Social Change And Politics In Turkey* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), p. 29; Vernon J. Parry, "The Reign Of Bayazid II And Selim I, 1481-1520", in Michael A. Cook (ed.), *A History Of The Ottoman Empire To 1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 74-76; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 13 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1975), pp. 773, 778, 788.
- 28 Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), p. 16.
- 29 Nur Yalman, "Intervention and Extrication: The Officer Corps in the Turkish Crisis", in Henry Bienen (ed.), *The Military Intervenes* (New York: Russell Sage, 1968), p. 130.
- 30 Akdes N. Kurat, "The Reign of Mehmed IV, 1648-87", in Cook (ed.), *A History Of The Ottoman Empire To 1730*, p. 159; *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 13, p. 780.
- 31 Morris Janowitz, "The Military in the Political Development of New Nations", in Wilson C. McWilliams (ed.) *Garrison And Government* (San

- Francisco: Chandler, 1967), p. 70.
- 32 Metin Heper, "Islam, Polity And Society In Turkey: A Middle Eastern Perspective", *The Middle East Journal*, XXXV (Summer 1981), pp. 347, 348.
 - 33 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 13, p. 780.
 - 34 Heper, p. 347; Michael A. Cook, "Introduction", in Cook (ed.), *A History Of The Ottoman Empire To 1730*, p. 5.
 - 35 Berkes, p. 16
 - 36 Thompson, p. 85.
 - 37 Suraiya Farooqhi, "Civilian Society And Political Power In The Ottoman Empire: A Report On Research In Collective Biography (1480-1830)", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 17, no.1 (1985), p. 116.
 - 38 Heper, p. 348.
 - 39 Richard L. Park and Bruce B. de Mesquita, *India's Political System*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1979), p. 14.
 - 40 Akbar S. Ahmed, *Discovering Islam -- Making Sense of Muslim History and Society* (London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), p. 76.
 - 41 Percival Spear (ed.), *The Oxford History Of India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 348.
 - 42 *Ibid.*, p. 349.
 - 43 *Ibid.*, pp. 363, 375.
 - 44 Percival Spear, *India - A Modern History* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1972), p. 140.
 - 45 Akbar S. Ahmed, *Pakistan Society -- Islam, Ethnicity and Leadership In South Asia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 8.
 - 46 Aziz Ahmed, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); *Pakistan Society*..... p. 14.
 - 47 Park and de Mesquita, pp. 15, 16.
 - 48 Hurewitz, p. 17.
 - 49 David K. Fieldhouse, *Colonialism 1870-1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), p. 31.
 - 50 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
 - 51 *Ibid.*, p. 40.

- 52 John S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy And Practice* (New York: New York University, 1956), p. 265.
- 53 *Ibid.*, p. 266.
- 54 Francis G. Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence -- British Imperialism in India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 186.
- 55 Hutchins, p. 187.
- 56 Benjamin B. Schaffer, "The Concept of Preparation -- Some Questions about the Transfer of Systems of Government", *World Politics*, XVIII, no.1 (October 1965), pp. 47, 48.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 48.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- 59 Douglas E. Ashford, *Political Change in Morocco* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961); David C. Gordon, *The Passing of French Algeria* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).
- 60 Hamza Alavi, "The State in Post-Colonial Societies -- Pakistan and Bangladesh", *New Left Review*, no. 74 (July-August, 1972), pp. 50-81.
- 61 For a thorough discussion on this issue, see the following works: Fred Halliday and Hamza Alavi (eds.), *State and Ideology in the Middle East and Pakistan* (London: Macmillan Education, 1988); C. P. Bhambhri, *Bureaucracy and Politics in India* (Delhi: Vikas, 1971); Ralph Braibanti (ed.), *Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1966).
- 62 Leonard Binder, *The Ideological Revolution In The Middle East* (New York: John Wiley, 1964), p. 59.
- 63 Saleem Qureshi, "Islam and Development. The 'Zia Regime in Pakistan", *World Development* vol. 8, nos. 7/8 (1980), pp. 565, 566.
- 64 Following the verdict of the *ulama* on any given issue settled in the past.
- 65 Thomas P. Hughes, *Dictionary of Islam* (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint, 1976), pp. 8, 188, 312, 570; James Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* VIII, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1959), p. 859.
- 66 Hardy, pp. 33, 34.
- 67 Hasan Moinuddin, *The Charter of the Islamic Conference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 53.
- 68 The issue of *jihad* is quite controversial. According to a prominent scholar belonging to the late Umayyad period, Sufyan al-Thawri, fighting against the nonbelievers is not obligatory unless they start the fight. Early Hanafi jurists, and others such as Awza'i and Imam Malik, did not state explicitly that *jihad* as a war had to be waged on the unbelievers solely because of

their non-belief. On the other hand, Imam Shafi'e was of the opinion that *jihad* in terms of war on the unbelievers for their disbelief was obligatory on all able-bodied believers and not only when the former entered into conflict with the latter. Ibn Taimiyah, an eminent scholar belonging to the post-Abbasid period, held the view that Islam should not be imposed upon non-believers by force, nor were they to be killed simply because of not becoming Muslim. See Moinuddin, p. 21.

- ⁶⁹ H. A. R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 157.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 162, 163.
- ⁷¹ Al-Sayed, "Classical Arabic-Islamic....", pp. 152, 153.
- ⁷² Binder, *Religion And Politics In Pakistan*, p. 16.
- ⁷³ Watt, p. 73.
- ⁷⁴ Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam- Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 84.
- ⁷⁵ Arif Hussain, *Pakistan -- Its Ideology and Foreign Policy* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), p. 11.
- ⁷⁶ Sivan, p. 96.
- ⁷⁷ Husain Haikal, "The Protestant Reformation And 'The Islamic Purification'", Unpublished M.A. thesis, Duquesne University, 1976, p. 81.
- ⁷⁸ One who exercises *ijtehad*, independent reasoning in matters of religious laws.
- ⁷⁹ This is an important reason why, though much later in history, the Islamic modernists and fundamentalists took him as an ideal source of inspiration and guidance. The modernists justify their adaptation of Islamic traditions to western science and institutions by recourse to Taimiyah's views on *ijtehad*. The fundametalists, as well, claim authority from Taimiyah in reviving *ijtehad* as they need it to deal with the problems of Islamizing a modern state. This will be elaborated later on.
- ⁸⁰ Muhammad Shehab Eddin, "Pan-Arabism And The Islamic Tradition", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The American University, 1966, pp. 229, 230.
- ⁸¹ Muhammad Mahmoud Rabi, *The Political Thought of Ibn Khaldun* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), p. 126.
- ⁸² Elbaki Hermassi, *Leadership and National Development in North Africa* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 15, 17, 18.
- ⁸³ Haroon Khan Sherwani, *Studies In Muslim Political Thought And Administration* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, 1945), p. 188.

- 84 Rabi, p. 16.
- 85 Ismael and Ismael, pp. 26-28.
- 86 Shehab Eddin, p. 259.
- 87 Kenneth Cragg, *Counsels In Contemporary Islam* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1965), pp. 36, 37.
- 88 Shehab Eddin, pp. 262-267.
- 89 Cragg, pp. 41, 42.
- 90 Richard M. Eaton, "Social and Political Implications of the Islamic Reform Movements in Bengal in the Nineteenth Century", in Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed.) *Bangladesh: Society, Religion and Politics* (Chittagong: South Asia Studies Group, 1985), p. 98.
- 91 *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 212.
- 92 *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol.7 (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 276.
- 93 *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 6 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1987), p. 792.
- 94 Ahmed Bin Salamon, "Reform Of Al-Azhar in the 20th Century", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, 1980, p. 62.
- 95 Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed. (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 142.
- 96 Eaton, p. 97.
- 97 R. Stephen Humphreys, "Islam And Political Values In Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria", *The Middle East Journal*, XXXIII (Winter 1979), pp. 2, 3.
- 98 Another segment was represented by the Islamic modernists, who saw the solution to the western challenge in borrowing western institutions within an Islamic framework. Yet another fragment of the Muslim elite was not fascinated by modern western achievements and remained loyal to the traditionalist line of *taqlid*. It found the answer to the western challenge in reconstructing the ideal past. This group follows the traditionalist school of thought under the leadership of traditionalist *ulama*. The majority of the general body of sunni *ulama* still follow the traditionalist school.
- 99 Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 65.
- 100 Boullata, p. 153.
- 101 Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, p. 154.

- 102 Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian Man", in Harold J. Grimm (ed.), *Career of the Reformer: I, Luther's Works*, vol. 31, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), pp. 327-379; Hans J. Hillebrand, "Introduction", in Hans J. Hillebrand (ed.), *The Protestant Reformation* (New York: Walker, 1968), pp. xiv, xv.
- 103 Husain Haikal, p. 77-88.
- 104 Anita M. Weiss, "The Historical Debate on Islam and the State in South Asia", in Anita M. Weiss (ed.), *Islamic Reassertion in Pakistan* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. 17.
- 105 *Ibid.*, p. 15.
- 106 Ishtiaq Ahmed, "Islam, Society and Pakistan", *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 11, 1989, p. 511; Ahmed, *Pakistan Society*...., pp. 9-15.

CHAPTER 3

ISLAM IN BANGLADESH

To analyze the relationship between Islam and state in contemporary Bangladesh, it is necessary to delve into the broader history of Islam in Bengal, particularly the nature of the Muslim society in Bengal and the role of Islam in the polity as perceived by the Bengali Muslim masses. This chapter aims at portraying the evolution of Islam in Bengal, which resulted in the development of a syncretistic and dualistic Bengali Muslim identity at the mass level. In the wake of colonialism, the Muslim elite in Bengal was reduced to a minuscule one, which failed to provide dynamic leadership to the Muslim community. On the other hand, the Hindu-led renaissance in Bengali culture from the late 19th century onwards influenced the Muslims as the cultivation of elitist Persian and Urdu declined in Bengal.

In the political field, the Muslims were deprived of power and position to the advantage of the Hindus who benefitted from the secularization of public education during the colonial rule. A small modern Muslim intelligentsia emerged during the later half of the British rule. It felt the urge to protect Muslim interests from the dominant Hindu community, and to promote such interests it established Muslim cultural and political organizations. Thus, a Muslim political identity resurfaced which ultimately convinced the overwhelming majority of the Bengali Muslims to opt for Muslim Pakistan on the eve of the partition of India. But, later on, the failure of the Pakistani elites to satisfy the political and cultural aspirations of the Bengali Muslims, in terms of regional autonomy, alienated the Bengali intelligentsia. As a result, the Bengali nationalism that emerged during the Pakistani period acquired a secular orientation, culminating in the disintegration of Pakistan and the emergence of

Bangladesh as a constitutionally secular state.

1. Historical Background of Islam in Bangladesh

a. Early Muslim Conquest

The message of Islam was brought to Bengal first by the *sufis* (Islamic mystics) and merchants. Muslim military conquests followed later on. It has been claimed that Muslim saints and scholars started preaching Islam in Bengal a few centuries before the political conquest by Bakhtyar Khilji in 1203-04.¹ Among the prominent *sufis*, who came to Bengal before the Muslim conquest, were Baba Adam Shahid and Shah Sultan Rumi. One scholar speculates that Baba Adam Shahid came to Bengal in 1179.² A Persian document of 1671 claimed that Shah Sultan Rumi came to eastern Bengal in 1053.³ Besides the saints, Muslim merchants also reached Bengal long before the military conquest. Arab traders had settled in Chittagong area in the 9th century. Coins found at Paharpur and Mainamati, two historically important sites in eastern Bengal, bear testimony to the presence of Arabs in those localities during the reign of Haroon-al Rashid (786-809), an early Abbasid caliph.⁴

The exposure to Islam before military conquest and the role of the *sufis* in proselytizing in Bengal had a very important impact on future Islamic developments. Statistics as to the extent of conversion and the percentage of the population converted to Islam are not available. Unlike in North Western India, in Bengal Islam did not appear solely as a religion of the conquerors. The battle for souls, in terms of conversion to Islam, was not so much by sword as by spiritual and moral excellence. As a result, the converts were exposed more to the spiritual dimension of Islam rather than to its legal and political institutions.

Donald Smith observes that, in the expansion of Islam, the *sufi* orders tended frequently to tolerate and even absorb non-Islamic religious beliefs and practices of the new converts.⁵ This was so in the case of Bengal. Initial conversion to Islam started in eastern and south-eastern Bengal from those constituting the lower strata. It was during the rule of the house of Balban (1286-1328), a historian notes,

that the saints of Islam who excelled the Hindu priesthood and monks in active piety, energy and foresight, began proselytizing on a wide scale not so much by force as by the fervor of their faith and their exemplary character.⁶

The 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries were the peak period of conversion to Islam.

In Bengal, the conversion to Islam was facilitated by social constraints placed by the caste system. The caste system kept the untouchables and the lower caste masses under the oppression of the upper caste elites. Their plight was aggravated by the revival of Hinduism during the Sena period (1100-1250). The Sena rule was marked by the ascendancy of the Brahmanical hierarchical order and a reorganization of the caste system, which had lost vigor because of Buddhist influence in the preceding three centuries when Bengal was ruled by the Buddhist kings, the Palas. In response to the elitism of the Hindus, the common people started to respond to calls of an egalitarian religion put forward by mystical *sufi* saints.⁷

But a contending view claims that it was not so much the caste system as such but the fact that Bengal had been under Buddhist influence which had weakened the caste system and therefore made Bengal more susceptible to Islam. Bengal came under the rule of the Pala dynasty in 750 A.D. which lasted for around three centuries.⁸ The Palas were Buddhist, and Dharmapala, the greatest of the Pala kings, was a great patron of Buddhism. Majumdar, a noted

authority on the history of Bengal, observed in this connection, "In the Pala emperors of Bengal and Bihar, Buddhism found its last strong pillars of support".⁹

It is quite reasonable to believe that the traditional Hindu society of Bengal, knit together by the caste system, was in a state of confusion as the egalitarian spirit of Buddhism provided an escape from the bondage of caste restrictions. Later on, Islam, another religion of an egalitarian nature, reached Bengal and confronted Buddhism in winning over the people who were already relieved, to some extent, of social constraints because of the loosening grip of the caste system. Islam won the battle and Buddhism lost its salience in Bengal. As observed by Thapar, "Islam found its largest following in previously Buddhist areas of India, the northeast and the east".¹⁰

Whether it was the rigidity of the caste system or the disintegration of it, *sufi* preaching found an enthusiastic audience among the low castes in Eastern Bengal. The *sufi dargah* (shrine) played an important role in the conversion of the low caste rural masses. *Sufis* and their *dargahs* were open to all whereas the low castes and the untouchables had no access to Hindu temples and to Brahmin priests. *Dargahs* were centers of contemplation and meditation, training for initiates, solace and comfort for emotionally troubled souls, and a resting place for wayfarers and visitors.

The *sufi* method of preaching was very effective in Bengal. Razia Banu remarks:

Islam, in *Sufi* garb, was intelligible and psychologically acceptable to the people of Bengal -- people who had been steeped in mysticism, animistic beliefs, and (*Yoga*) (and) *Tantric* practices.¹¹

Thus, the conversion to Islam in Bengal was not a conversion to legalistic and

orthodox Islam. As already noted, *sufi* influence made Islam compromising and eclectic, incorporating many Hindu norms and symbols. Islam in Bengal in the early phase was therefore syncretistic.

There is a controversy among scholars on the origins of the Muslims of Bengal. Early scholarship on the subject tended to claim foreign ancestry for Bengali Muslims. An important reason for the tendency to such claims was that in Bengal the extent of a person's nobility depended on the ancestral closeness westward towards Arabia: the farther west a person had migrated from, the higher the social status. This status orientation among Bengali Muslims has been well-summarized by Abdul Majid Khan:

Behind all these notions there was a strong suggestion that to be a Muslim it was necessary to be an alien, if not by race and origin, certainly in culture and social ideals and affiliations.¹²

Near the end of the 19th century, one scholar, K. F. Rubbee, claimed that aristocratic immigrants from all over the Muslim world accounted for a majority of the Muslim community of Bengal.¹³ A recent scholar, M. A. Rahim, has attributed foreign ancestry to almost one-third of Bengali Muslims. He has estimated that in 1770 there were probably 10.6 million Muslims in Bengal and that 3.2 million of them, that is, 30 per cent, were of foreign origin.¹⁴ But Razia Banu has argued that the 1872 Census repudiated Rubbee's speculation and Abdur Rahim's statistics. According to that Census, only 1.52 per cent of the Muslims of Bengal and 1.2 per cent of the Muslims in eastern Bengal (the then Rajshahi, Dhaka and Chittagong divisions) claimed foreign ancestry.¹⁵ Asim Roy has argued, in the same vein, that serological data¹⁶ on the Muslim population in Bengal indicated the dissociation of Bengali Muslims from those outside India and even from those of Uttar Pradesh. Blood groups confirm the local origin of the Muslims of Bangladesh.¹⁷ However, it is also true that many

Muslims of foreign origin flocked to Bengal as *sufi*, *ulama*, merchants, soldiers and bureaucrats, but not all of them settled in Bengal because of, among other things, its proverbial bad weather.

Traditionally, the Muslims of Bengal are divided into two categories on the basis of their origin: *ashraf* and *ajlaf*. The *ashraf* are of foreign origin and the *ajlaf* are of local origin. The former comprise the nobility and the latter are the commoners.¹⁸ According to Ma-huan, a Chinese traveller in Bengal in the early 15th century, the language in universal use was Bengali but Persian also was spoken.¹⁹ The *ashraf* rejected Bengali as a language of their religious and cultural communication. On the other hand, Arabic and Persian were respected as languages of Islam. Indeed, honor and prestige were associated with Arabic and Persian.

Written materials on Islam were all in Arabic or Persian. This caused a special problem because the converts to Islam were mostly the common people who had no knowledge of Arabic or Persian. As a result, they had no access to the Islamic literature. The Muslim scholars abstained from translating the Quran, the Hadith, or the *khutbas* (sermons) because of fear of diluting their meaning. As a result, the masses of Muslims remained without a basic knowledge of Islam, particularly so in the early stage of Islamic conversion. Thus, the Bengali Muslims, hindered by the linguistic barrier and unfamiliar with Islamic religious and cultural symbols, found access to the mystical *sufi* dimension of Islam a source of spiritual and moral inspiration.²⁰

A breakdown of the orthodox hold on the dissemination of Islamic knowledge occurred when some pioneering Bengali Muslim writers started writing in Bengali. It was a matter of great courage for them to undertake a literary venture on the Islamic tradition in Bengali against the deep-seated

Ashraf prejudices. The most important figure in this new Bengali Muslim literary tradition was Shah Muhammad Saghir, who flourished in the reign of Ghias-ud-din Azam Shah (1389-1409). Another important figure was Muzammil, a poet of the mid-15th century, who specifically mentioned in his *Nitishastra* (On Morals) that, as people did not understand Arabic, he felt the necessity of writing religious books in Bengali.²¹ But the influence of these writers was limited, and Bengali did not become a medium of religious communication for Muslims until much later.

The tide of Islamization in Bengal was halted by the rise of a folk Hindu revivalist movement that began in the 15th century. Kabir, a 15th century figure from north India, initiated a humanistic-spiritual movement that promoted the belief that Hinduism and Islam could unite in a fervent belief in God. Such belief in God ignored all divisions on the basis of community, ritual or theology.²² This humanistic-spiritual movement, later on, ushered in a vigorous folk Hindu religious revivalist movement known as *Vaishnavism*. A pioneer in the *Vaishnava* movement was Chaitanya (1486-1533), who stressed *bhakti* or personal devotion to God, which affected the masses of Bengal immensely. Another prominent figure in Bengali *Vaishnavism* was Nityanand who organized the movement into a sect, and systematized its rituals, rules of life, discipline and financial basis. *Sapta-Goswami*, the seven fathers of the sect, devised a special theology for it.²³

An important reason for the success of *Vaishnavism* in checking massive conversions to Islam in the rural areas of Bengal was that it was a movement that emerged outside the traditional Hindu religious institutions. It was free from brahmanical control and caste restrictions. Also, it was mass-oriented rather than elitist. It was free as well from religious rituals. One could have

direct access to God without the mediation of priests, temples or Sanskrit scriptures. Singing devotional hymns and folk ballads in Bengali was the *Vaishnava* mode of expressing love for God, which appeared to be in tune with the traditional mystical *tantric* spiritual traditions of rural Bengal.

An important outcome of *Vaishnavism* was the creation of a new, popular and vigorous Bengali literature revolving around the two Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The *Vaishnava* literature influenced Bengali Muslim society deeply.²⁴ Many Muslim poets of Bengal were inspired by *Vaishnavism*. Also, by that time, the stream of immigration of the *sufis* had thinned; so there were not many Muslims divines to counteract the *Vaishnava* drive. At the same time, the diffusion of Islamic knowledge was still confined to a small elite educated in Arabic and Persian, while the masses lived with a watered-down version of Islamic beliefs and rituals.

In the political arena, Bengal was an independent kingdom during the Sultanate period (1338-1538). An important political trend of this period was the policy of reconciliation with the Hindu majority. One reason for this policy was the peaceful condition that resulted from the unification of the whole of Bengal under the rule of Ilyas Shah in 1352. Another reason for the conciliatory attitude was the attempt of the ruling Afghan elite to develop a territorial nationalism to secure the independence of Bengal from the mighty rulers of Delhi. The distance from Delhi also helped the rulers of Bengal to attain this goal. Because of this independent orientation, the Muslim rulers sought the cooperation of the Hindus to strengthen their base of power, and this necessitated the participation of multiple religious groups in the state machinery.²⁵ Local vernacular literature received state patronage, even though it was mostly cultivated by Hindu literary figures and revolved around popular

Hindu themes.²⁶

This policy of Muslim rulers to aid the growth of popular Bengali literature was quite in contrast to the policy of the earlier Hindu rulers of Bengal who supported only the elitist Sanskrit literature. The Bengali literature that received Muslim patronage was plebeian in nature and was contributed mostly by the Hindu writers with a few exceptions, such as the well-known Shah Muhammad Saghir. Thus, the development of Bengali literature during the Sultanate period helped Hindu religious revival rather than spreading the knowledge of Islam to the masses. On the other hand, the political independence of Bengal from the control of Delhi also cut off Bengali Muslims from Islamic developments elsewhere in the Indian sub-continent and abroad. As a result, the Muslims of Bengal compromised their Islamic faith with the indigenous Hindu culture, and thus evolved a syncretistic Islamic tradition which, to quote M. Kaleem, "reconciled their old ideas with the new faith by identifying *Ishwar* with Allah, *Avatars* with Prophets, priests with *Pir-Murshids*".²⁷

b. The Mughal Period

In 1576, Bengal came under Mughal rule when it became a province of the Mughal Empire, bringing an end to the independence of Bengal and its isolation from the rest of the Indian sub-continent and the outside world. Along with it ceased the nationalistic identification of the Muslim aristocracy of Bengal with the Bengali masses. During the heyday of Mughal rule in India, the Muslim nobles of Bengal became the exponents of the same Persian and, later, Urdu culture as their counterparts in northern and western India.²⁸

An important development during the Mughal period was the rise of Bengali Muslim literary activity in response to the popular Hindu Bengali

literature promoted by *Vaishnavism*. This Muslim activity, which took place at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century, placed a special emphasis on topics such as the lives of the prophets and Islamic saints, written in Bengali. It was led by Sayyed Sultan, who carried the Prophet's message to the people in a language understood by them. However, the new surge in syncretistic religious movements of the time reduced the influence of such Muslim literary efforts.²⁹

An important feature of socio-religious life in Bengal during Mughal rule, contradictory to the spirit of Sayyed Sultan's literary movement, was the emergence of heterodox mystic orders. These new mystical orders represented a compromise between Islamic and Hindu-Buddhist mystical trends. Meanwhile, *Sufism* lost its vigor and degenerated into *faqirism*.³⁰ It now lacked orthodox *sufis*, such as Shaikh Jala al-din Tabrizi, Shah Jalal, Shaikh Ala al-Huq and Shaikh Nur Qutb Alam, who, by their devotion, piety and exemplary character, had impressed and motivated the masses of Bengal in the past. On the other hand, Hindu society was undergoing a reawakening with its reform orders and religious sects.³¹ All these new developments led to the growth of several cults and religious orders, common to both Hindus and Muslims. The *satyapir* cult, though it had originated earlier, prospered during the Mughal period, attracting both Hindu and Muslim adherents. The *darveshia* and *baul* orders also had Hindu and Muslim followers. These cults and orders, representing a common cultural heritage of the two communities of Bengal, developed further in the post-Mughal era under the *Vawabs* of Murshidabad.³²

The decline of Mughal rule in Bengal and the establishment of a dynastic *nizamat* in Bengal in 1717 by Murshid Quli Khan, a Mughal *subedar* who became virtually independent, led to significant socio-political developments.

Bengal came out of Delhi's imperial control, which revived the spirit of national development in isolation as had been the case during the independent Sultanate period. The ruling elite of Bengal was absorbed into the soil of Bengal and ceased to identify itself as foreign. At the same time, the Hindus emerged as a new socio-political force.³³ Murshid Quli Khan's drastic alteration of the land settlement pattern and the appointment of Hindu revenue officers as *ijaradars* led to the rise of a new Hindu landed aristocracy in Bengal, known as *zamindars*. The favors bestowed by him and his successors on talented Hindus produced a Hindu official upper class. The policies of the Murshidabad *nizamat* also produced a Hindu bourgeoisie: traders, businessmen and bankers. Thus, the Hindus came to have a social status equal to that of the Muslims.³⁴

An important aspect of the cultural life during the rule of the Murshidabad *Nawabs* was that both the ruling elite and the common Muslims tried to generate an atmosphere of understanding and cooperation between the Hindus and Muslims. The rulers as well as the commoners participated in Hindu religious festivals such as *Holi* and *Basant-panchami*.³⁵

Thus, Islam in Bengal in the pre-colonial period reflected the *sufi* -induced leniency and incorporation of Hindu religious norms, rituals and symbols. In the life of Bengali Muslims, Islam was a matter of personal experience and piety, and did not appear to make demands in the social and political spheres of life. It was a pliant and tolerant Islam. The culture of the traditional Muslim elite, that is, the *ulama*, the generals, and the *kuttab*s (secretaries) -- who were mostly foreigners coming from northwestern India, Afghanistan, Iran and central Asia -- did not affect the Bengali Muslim masses much. The reasons for the lack of a deeper penetration by Islam in Bengal during the Afghan-Mughal period were: the linguistic barrier: revival of popular Hindu religious

movements, such as *Vaishnava Chaitanyas*; and also the fact that the migration of Muslim missionaries had thinned by the 15th century. Hence, in the medieval phase a quasi-syncretistic Bengali Muslim culture emerged in which the position of the traditional Muslim elite as well as of the legalistic Islam was weak, and the ideological influence of Islam was tenuous.³⁶

It is very important to note that, in the case of Bengal, the long distance from their homeland compelled Muslim conquerors to seek maximum de facto independence from any central authority. Distance also made it difficult for both missionaries and conquerors to make much use of the political and scriptural resources of the Middle East.³⁷ The region of Middle East and Central Asia had, in the past, been the locus of legalistic Islam and it supplied *ulama*, soldiers, and administrators to outlying areas of the Muslim world. Bengal was deprived of these resources because of distance and its proverbial bad weather, which discouraged many immigrant Muslims from settling in Bengal. As a result, the perception of Islam that the Bengali Muslims acquired was secular in orientation in the sense that religion was understood as mainly a matter of personal experience and piety.

c. The Colonial Phase

An enormous socio-economic transformation took place in Bengal during British colonial rule and it affected the Muslims more than other communities. The Muslims were brought down from the most advanced, socio-economically, to the most backward group. This downturn in the lot of the Bengali Muslims started particularly with the passing of *diwani* (financial administration) to the East India Company in 1765.

The Muslims of Bengal in the pre-colonial period had several important

sources of income: ownership of land; collection of revenue; judicial and political employment; military and police services. The landed Muslim gentry in Bengal was almost destroyed because of the changes in the land revenue policy of the Government from 1772 onwards, culminating in the Permanent Settlement of 1793. Initially, a one year land revenue settlement was introduced. Under this arrangement, land revenue was almost doubled. To speed up revenue collection, a system of farming out of revenues to the highest bidder was adopted. These farmers of revenue were the Calcutta *baniyas* -- a class of traders, mostly Hindus -- who bid up the leases with the intention of enriching themselves at the cost of the peasants, the majority of whom were Muslims.³⁸ The one-year settlement was later abandoned and a Permanent Settlement was instituted in 1793 by Lord Cornwallis. As a result of this reform, *zamindars* (landlords) became proprietors, and gained partial property rights.³⁹ The Permanent Settlement acknowledged as landlords the subordinate officers, mostly Hindus, who had hitherto dealt directly with the peasants.⁴⁰ Thus, in Bengal an overwhelmingly Hindu landed aristocracy emerged which became the hereditary owners of land.

Another serious blow to Muslims or Muslim institutions enjoying rent-free lands-in-grant was delivered by the resumption of rent-free tenures by the colonial state. By Regulations XIX and XXXVII of the Code of 1793, Lord Cornwallis directed the holders of rent-free lands to register their deeds of grant in the collector's office within one year. Unregistered deeds were to lose legal validity.⁴¹ This caused panic and hatred among the Muslims towards the British, because many beneficiaries of rent-free tenures did not have any written deeds and many others had lost such documents, if they ever had any at all. Many such rent-free tenures had been held for a long time and there never appeared any necessity for maintaining written documents as non-written

traditions sufficed during Muslim rule. Huge incomes used to be derived from lands held rent-free, and part of them were used to finance traditional Islamic institutions. The new law enacted by the Company's government ruined hundreds of ancient families. The traditional Muslim educational system, which was almost entirely maintained by rent-free grants, encountered a severe setback.⁴²

Along with the weakening of Muslim education, another fatal damage to traditional Islamic institutions was that the *qadis* (Muslim judges) were stripped of power. The *qadis* could perform marriage and grant divorce but they lost jurisdiction over the judicial system as a whole. They were no longer an authority to be reckoned with by law breakers. This loss of authority by the traditional Muslim judges facilitated the penetration of un-Islamic beliefs and practices into the Muslim population, particularly among the Muslims in the interior districts of Bengal.⁴³

Besides the Permanent Settlement and the resumption of rent-free tenures, another reform by the Company's administration seriously harmed Muslim landed interests. The colonial take-over of the revenue administration under Lord Cornwallis deprived the Muslims of their traditional sources of income as English collectors were appointed in each district. In the process of governmental re-organization, the reform of the police and the military also harmed the Muslims. The abolition of the rural police in 1793 deprived thousands of Muslim policemen from their hereditary mode of employment. The Muslim troops were disbanded, which affected not only a significant number of Muslim officers but also tens of thousands of ordinary soldiers. No Muslim could enter the Company's Regiments at the officer level. If a place could be found for Muslims at a lower level, that position could not be a source

of wealth.⁴⁴

Important sectors of the judiciary and the civil service had not been affected by the early reforms of the Company's government. For some time after the British conquest of Bengal in 1757, the Muslims retained all the functions of the government in these fields so long as Persian and Urdu, around which traditional Muslim education had been built, continued to be the language of British administration in Bengal.⁴⁵ But, when the official language was changed in 1837 and Persian and Urdu were replaced by English, it wrought great havoc on the Muslims. The plight of the Muslims is well-observed by Percival Spear:

Tradition-bound Muslims held back from learning English, while enterprising Hindu Brahmins and Kayasths stepped in. Muslims became the victims of a self-imposed boycott, without office, and without prospects.⁴⁶

In the field of public education in Bengal, the British introduced Bengali as the medium of instruction. The instructors were mostly Hindus. The Muslim upper classes despised Bengali as a language of the Hindu folk, while the Muslim community as a whole disliked Hindu teachers. There was no provision for religious education for the Muslim youth in government-sponsored schools. As a result, the Muslims were discouraged from sending their children to government schools.⁴⁷ In 1856-57, in schools managed directly by the government, there was a total of 5303 students, out of which 4612 were Hindus, 689 were Muslims and 2 were Christians.⁴⁸ The Muslims were backward in the higher stages of education as well. A report for 1882-83 noted that the percentage of Muslims in colleges and high schools, though improving, had hitherto been very low.⁴⁹

Thus, the colonial reforms brought enormous changes which transformed the Muslim elites from their leading positions in political, economic and cultural spheres to the most backward in the socio-economic and cultural life of Bengal. Writing in 1871, William Wilson Hunter depicted the upheaval succinctly:

A hundred and seventy years ago it was almost impossible for a well-born Musalman in Bengal to become poor; at present it is almost impossible for him to continue rich.⁵⁰

With the decline of traditional Muslim institutions and traditional Muslim elites, there emerged in Bengal in the 19th century important Islamic movements that went a long way to purify the Islamic culture of Bengal. These movements were influenced by the reformist ideas of the eminent 18th century Indian scholar, Shah Wali-ullah, who found Muslim society to be in a malaise and urged spiritual as well as social reforms.⁵¹ Another source of influence was the puritanic Wahhabi movement of the Arabian peninsula, flourishing from the late 18th century to the early 19th century and affecting almost the whole Muslim world. Pilgrimage to Makkah exposed Muslims from different parts of the world to Wahhabi ideas. The introduction of the steamship facilitated journey to Makkah, and thus facilitated the diffusion of puritanic ideas to a larger number of pilgrims. One such pilgrim from eastern Bengal, Shariatullah (1781-1840), stayed on at Makkah, after performing pilgrimage, from 1799 to 1818 to study Arabic and Islam.⁵² He came back to his native Faridpur as an Arabic-Islamic scholar with Wahhabi-induced puritanic ideas.

Haji Shariatullah started a movement, based in Faridpur district, that came to be known as *Faraizi* Movement. The name took its root from the emphasis of the movement on reviving the practices of obligatory rituals (*Faraid*) of Islam. This complex socio-religious movement started about 1818 and rapidly spread over Eastern Bengal and Assam, particularly in the rural areas where the

Muslim peasantry suffered at the hands of Hindu landlords and European indigo planters, or where traditional Muslim landlords had lost their tenure.⁵³ Shariatullah emphasized the observance of the five pillars of Islam.⁵⁴ He insisted on the eradication of *shirk* (associating partners to God) and propagated the adherence to *tawhid* (the unity of God). He denounced *bid'a* (innovations), superstitions and corrupt beliefs which had crept into the Bengali Muslim community because of close contact with the Hindus and lack of adequate knowledge of Islam.

On the social plane, Shariatullah denounced caste practices as being against the Quran and *sunna*, and stressed equality among the believers. Such a social platform brought new converts to the *Faraizis* from the downtrodden segments of the rural population. Both Hindu and Muslim landlords opposed the *Faraizis* and persecuted Shariatullah, fearing the rise of a new locus of authority cutting the power and influence of *zamindars*.

The *Faraizi* movement became politicized under the leadership of Shariatullah's son, Haji Muhammad Mohsin (1819-62), popularly known as Dudu Mian. Dudu Mian was an excellent organizer with strong leadership capabilities. Borrowing from *sufi* administrative traditions, he divided Eastern Bengal into several *halaqas* (administrative circles), each consisting of 300-500 families. Each circle was subjected to the supervision of a *siyasi khalifa* (political deputy). He organized a militia called *lathials* (club-holders) to enforce his decisions and to deal with defaulters from tithes and *zakat*, which his followers were supposed to pay. His authority did not encounter any serious challenge from the Muslim peasantry because of some important reasons. Firstly, the poorer segments of the Muslim peasantry perceived Dudu Mian to be acting in their favor, especially in protecting them from the growing

exploitation by Hindu landlords, money-lenders and merchants, and from the repression by the European indigo planters. Secondly, Dudu Mian strengthened the traditional *panchayat* system and thus opened a forum, cross-cutting class divisions, to deal with rural problems on a day-to-day basis.⁵⁵ Dudu Mian was arrested by the British in 1857 in connection with the Indian rebellion against the British, also known as Sepoy Mutiny, and the *Faraizi* movement was suppressed.

Contemporaneous to the *Faraizis*, two other important puritanic movements that emerged in Bengal had a similar ideological orientation. These were the *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah* and the *Ta'aiyuni* movements. The former was led by Sayyed Ahmed Shahid (1786-1831) and Titu Mir (1782-1831), and the latter by Maulana Karamat Ali (1800-72).⁵⁶

Sayyed Ahmed had close contact with the Wahhabis of Arabia and, because of their influence, his movement is also known as Wahhabi movement. Sayyed Ahmed emphatically advocated the need for *jihad*. He declared India to be *dar al-harb* (the non-Islamic domain). He made *jihad* a religious obligation on the part of the Indian Muslims because of their living in *dar al-harb*. His call for *jihad* aroused the religious feelings of the poor Muslim peasantry of Eastern Bengal, who sent youths under the age of twenty from nearly every district of Eastern Bengal to North Western India. During his *jihad* against the Sikhs in North Western Frontier province he was martyred in the battle of Balakot. After his death, the movement became anti-British.⁵⁷

Sayyed Ahmed Shahid's disciple Titu Mir led the *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah* movement in Bengal. In between 1827 and 1831, he achieved great success in organizing the peasantry of 24-Parganas and Nadiya into a formidable block against the Hindu landlords and European indigo planters.⁵⁸ Titu Mir's platform

was confined to socio-economic issues. He declared the equality of man and tried to build up an egalitarian society on the basis of the Islamic principle of *shura* for deciding public affairs. He declared mutual cooperation for promoting the good and resisting the evil as bounden duty of every Muslim.⁵⁹ At the end of his career, his movement got politicized as he struggled against the vested interests of the rural elites and their British allies. He ran into clashes with landlords and indigo planters. He ultimately became a martyr along with many of his followers when the Company's army clamped down on them in the course of a clash with landlords and indigo planters in 1831.⁶⁰

A worthy disciple of Sayyed Ahmed Shahid, Maulana Karamat Ali from Uttar Pradesh, came to Bengal in 1835 and started an Islamic revivalist movement, known as the *Ta'aiyuni* movement. Although, like Sayeed Ahmed, he denounced innovations, superstitions and corrupt beliefs among the Bengali Muslims, he differed from Sayyed Ahmed on important issues. In contrast to Sayyed Ahmed, he declared that India was not *dar al-harb* and upheld the legality of Friday and *Eid* prayers. In 1870, he formally denounced the principle of *jihad* with reference to the prevailing situation in India. It has been claimed that Maulana Karamat Ali opted for a moderate position because of the failure of the Indian rebellion of 1857.⁶¹ Thus, he played a leading role in making the moderate orientation to be the leading force in Islam in Bengal by the last quarter of the 19th century. Because of British pressure in the post-mutiny period, most *Faraizis* and the followers of the *Tariqah-i-Muhammadiyah* diluted their militant programs. Instead, they adopted the policy of 'reform from within' -- stressing educational and moral reforms -- as a new strategy of religio-political revival of Bengali Muslims.⁶²

Another significant Islamic movement of the 19th century, less militant than

puritanic revivalism, was the Deoband movement. The Deoband movement started in 1858 along with the establishment of Deoband *Madrassa*, an Islamic seminary in Uttar Pradesh, founded by the traditionalist *ulama*.⁶³ The Deoband *Madrassa* stressed an orthodox curriculum, comprising the study of Quran, *Hadith*, *sharia*, *fiqh*, along with Arabic, Persian and Urdu.⁶⁴ There was no room for English or western ideas. It was the institutional organ of the traditionalist *ulama*, who saw in British rule a challenge from Christendom to Islam. The Deoband *ulama* were anti-British, and preached vehemently against western education and western culture.⁶⁵

The ideals of the Deoband movement spread with the establishment of the branches of Deoband, that is, *madrassa* following Deoband curriculum, all over India, including Bengal. The Deoband *ulama* urged Muslims to seek guidance from them on both religious and secular issues. The termination of the Muslim rule, as cogently noted by McDonough,

left the *ulama* with a certain feeling that they ought to have greater authority, and that the community needed them more than ever. One indication of this concern of the *ulama* was the founding of a new training institution for religious scholars, the *Dar ul Ulum* at Deoband. The establishment of the seminary was a conscious effort to try to accomplish with pen and book what swords had failed to do.⁶⁶

The Deoband movement left a deep impact on Muslims of both urban and rural areas. Thus, both puritanic and traditionalist revivalism contributed immensely to purge syncretistic accretions in the beliefs, rituals and behavior of Bengali Muslims, as has been well articulated by Asim Roy:

In its earliest stage, Islamization was no more than a change of commensal and connubial relations of the converts in a social sense, while, culturally, the dichotomy between exogenous Islamic great tradition and endogenous little traditions of the converted masses broke the cultural continuum and arrested the cultural process. This, in the second stage of Islamization of the land, necessitated the emergence of the cultural mediators and the construction of a syncretistic model of Islamic great tradition with

a view to restoring the broken continuity. The syncretistic model of Islamization held its ground until in third stage of Islamization, beginning from the early nineteenth century, the fundamentalist and the revivalist forces in Islam, stirred by a massive combination of diverse factors, sharply focussed on the need for a deeper Islamic consciousness, and launched a vigorous assault on the syncretistic and acculturated tradition.⁶⁷

But the puritanic revivalist assault on the syncretistic tradition could not wipe out significantly the non-Islamic beliefs, rituals and innovations; nor could it transform the Islamic tradition of Bengal into an orthodox and legalistic culture. Rather, it affected the religious orientation of a small segment of the Muslim masses. This view has been supported by many scholars.⁶⁸ The dissemination of Islamic knowledge did not progress much in the rural areas,⁶⁹ though it made some headway in the urban areas. This can be inferred from an incident which took place near Dhaka in 1874. None among the inhabitants of several villages knew how to conduct the *Eid* prayer whereas a youth from Dhaka, who happened to be passing by, led the congregational prayer.⁷⁰

By the last quarter of the 19th century, when the Islamic revivalist movements underwent a transformation from militancy to moderation, a modernist Islamic movement emerged in Bengal along with the Aligarh movement of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan of Uttar Pradesh. The modernist movement not only reinforced the moderate orientation of Islamic movements in Bengal, but it was also pro-British, unlike the puritanic *Faraizis*, Wahhabis or the traditionalist Deobandi *ulama*, who were all anti-British, both politically and culturally. The modernist movement influenced the urban Muslims, particularly a small group of rising intellectuals exposed to English education.

The two most prominent figures in the Muslim modernist movement were Nawab Abdul Latif (1828-93) and Syed Ameer Ali (1849-1928). Nawab Abdul Latif founded the Mohamedan Literary Society in 1863, one of the earliest

Muslim organizations in Calcutta. His goal was to persuade the British to provide educational opportunities to the Muslims since the Muslims were distrusted by the British. The organization was a loyal pressure group and self-preservation of Muslims was its important principle. Abdul Latif wanted to inspire the Muslims with modern thought and learning. But he was not in favor of discarding classical Islamic education. He made a vigorous plea for English education for Muslim boys but alongside the study of Arabic-Persian classics.⁷¹

Syed Ameer Ali founded the National Mohamedan Association in 1878 in Calcutta, which was re-designated as the Central Mohamedan Association in 1883. It was perhaps the first Muslim organization in Bengal that came into existence primarily as a political body. Ameer Ali provided a liberal interpretation of Islam. To him, Islam was a great civilizing force. It was Islam that had transformed the feuding Arab tribes into a great nation whose civilization became the center of learning and culture in the medieval period. Ameer Ali wanted to revive the Muslims morally and politically in the name of Islam. In his multiple treatises on Islam, he attempted to show the harmony between faith and empirical knowledge. For the same reason, he promoted western education, for science, rationalism, liberalism and democracy were not only compatible with Islam but were inherent in the fundamental teachings of the Prophet.⁷² His organization became a rallying point that attracted the new middle class of Muslim professionals, who considered it important to acquire a political grounding. The organization became a political lobby that struggled to obtain from the government a recognition of their just and reasonable claims. But in pursuit of its demands, the organization adopted a conciliatory approach instead of a militant posture. In reality, it tried to safeguard the interests of the new educated Muslim middle classes, against their Hindu adversaries, through constant representation of their demands to the government.⁷³

Thus, the modernist movements in the later half of the 19th century organized the Muslim middle classes and taught them basic political skills. It benefitted the new generation of Muslim intellectuals when the colonial administration yielded to nationalist demands and limited opportunities to participate in government were allowed in the early 20th century.

To sum up the important religio-political developments of the 19th century, it is to be noted that Bengal was the first major province that came under the rule of the British East India Company in 1757. Since the British East India Company took power from the Muslims, it considered the Muslims a potential political threat. The company and its British civil servants therefore pursued, in the early stages of colonial rule, a policy of active discouragement of the Muslims. This facilitated an early disintegration of the traditional Muslim elite in Bengal, in comparison to their counterparts in north-western India. In reaction to British encroachments, militant Islamic revivalist movements emerged to purify the beliefs and practices of the Muslims, to redress the grievances of the Muslim peasantry, and to contain western cultural influences. But the unsuccessful Indian nationalist rebellion of 1857 and strong Muslim involvement in it, fuelled prevailing British hostility towards Islamic revivalism. Its leaders were threatened and imprisoned, and the movements were suppressed. As a result, the militant Islamic revivalists became moderate and a new Islamic modernist renaissance emerged which was loyal to the British and projected a liberal interpretation of Islam.

It has been contended that the early disintegration of the traditional Muslim elite resulted in a decline of Islamic political values, thus paving the way for penetration by secular political values. By the late 19th century, European political values had struck root among the western-educated elite of India. They

affected Bengali Muslims more than their co-religionists in Muslim-majority provinces of north-western India, because the traditional social, economic, and cultural structure of Bengal had been affected by the British earlier and more thoroughly than it was in the case of north-western India.⁷⁴

The decline of the traditional Muslim elite in Bengal coincided with a decline in the use of Persian and Urdu languages. But the minuscule traditional Muslim elite that survived considered Persian and Urdu as their languages, whereas they took Bengali to be the language of the Hindus. As a result, the gap between the elite and the masses widened. At the same time, by the 19th century Bengali became a new literary medium, but it became mainly a medium of Hindu renaissance. This is evident from the Bengali books and journals that appeared in the 19th and early 20th centuries. During that period, the Muslim contribution to Bengali literature was negligible. So, on the one hand, Bengali Muslims with modern education could no longer communicate in Persian or Urdu and, on the other hand, their own language of communication carried Hindu or secular values. The language which, to some extent, became the medium of Bengali Muslim renaissance was English, as evident from the writings of Syed Ameer Ali and Khuda Baksh. But the capability to read English required English education, and English education tended to disseminate secular liberal values. So, it is not surprising to see that the modernist reformers gave liberal interpretations of Islam.⁷⁵ Thus, the decline of Persian and the emergence of English and Bengali weakened the traditional Islamic outlook. Both English and Bengali education diffused a non-religious orientation towards social and political institutions.

2. Religio-Political Developments of the 20th Century

By the early 20th century, the support of Bengali Muslims having a modern education tilted towards Bengali as their cultural medium. This leaning towards the Bengali language was not without some hesitation, because it was felt that Bengali might not project an Islamic identity; as noted by Rafiuddin Ahmed:

This hesitation is traceable in the writings of many who wrote in Bengali but, at the same time, expressed doubts about its status as a Muslim language.⁷⁶

The Bengali Muslim intelligentsia's doubts about the status of Bengali as a Muslim language was caused by the fact, to quote Ralph Russell, that

They had long clung to Persian, and then to Urdu, as their literary language (though making no very remarkable contribution to either), and when they did turn to Bengali, modern Bengali literature had been not only created but developed to a very high level by their Hindu compatriots.⁷⁷

Not only that, even in the period from World War I to mid-20th century, the Muslim contribution to Bengali literature remained immeasurably small. In comparison with that of the Hindus, the Muslim output was not even five per cent of the whole. Indeed, till 1920, well-educated and enlightened Bengali Muslim literary figures writing in Bengali were almost non-existent. As late as 1950, except for Kazi Nazrul Islam, all other Bengali Muslim literary figures were of limited genius and capabilities.⁷⁸ The situation changed only in the later half of the 20th century, partly owing to the efforts of the Pakistani authorities to promote an Islamicized Bengali literature, and also because of the zeal of Bengali nationalist intellectuals to defend their language and culture, which was frowned upon by their non-Bengali co-religionists.

In the political arena, as already observed, from the end of the 19th century the new generation of Bengali Muslim intelligentsia started organizing itself in

the form of pressure groups to articulate socio-political demands. Though the Indian National Congress, founded in 1885, was a secular organization, the Muslims mostly stayed out of the organization. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of the Mohamedan Anglo-Oriental College and a prominent Muslim leader of all India stature, discouraged the Muslims from joining the Congress as noted by Yasin:

He employed all his energies and efforts to impress upon the Muslims that the alliance with the Congress would be suicidal for them.⁷⁹

But an alternative view is put forward by Marxist scholars, who stress the class interests of the dominant classes in the Congress leadership as an explanation. According to them, the Muslims were apathetic to the Congress because they saw in it a vehicle to promote the interests of Hindu upper classes; as Ramkrishna Mukherjee saw it:

The Congress Party, with its core leadership representing the Hindu landed and business interests, was regarded by the Muslims as a Hindu organization.⁸⁰

However, it is quite evident that Syed Ahmed, who was then an accepted leader of the Muslim community of India and was firmly pro-British and anti-Congress, influenced significantly the development of an anti-Congress orientation among Bengali Muslims. The Bengali Muslims, as their co-religionists elsewhere in India, demanded separate electorates, which were given statutory recognition in the Indian Councils Act of 1909. Under this Act, Muslims were given the right to elect their representatives by separate Muslim electorates, and also the right to vote in general constituencies.⁸¹

The minuscule traditional elite that had survived in Bengal played an important role in founding the All-India Muslim League (ML) in 1906 at

Dhaka. The objective of this Muslim political party was to safeguard Muslim interests, to counteract the growing influence of the Indian National Congress, and to provide a political organization through which young educated Muslims could take part in public life.⁸² In the early decades of the 20th century the Muslim League's main demand was separate Muslim electorates. Only in the late 1930s did the party endorse a separate homeland for the Muslims of India. During the early 20th century the support for ML in Bengal was lukewarm, because Bengali Muslims were mostly peasants while the ML leaders, being mostly landed elite, did not project peasant political interests.

But others, particularly Fazlul Huq and Maulana Bhasani, were interested in safeguarding the rights of Muslim peasants against the dominance of Hindu landed elite through a secular platform rather than an Islamic one. Fazlul Huq's *Praja Samiti* (peasant association) and *Krishak Proja Party* (KPP) were in the vanguard of protecting their interests. So, in the general election of 1936-37, the Bengali Muslims voted for the KPP, defeating ML candidates in two-thirds of the Muslim constituencies.⁸³ But, in the late 1930s, when the KPP-ML coalition ministry enacted measures to protect the rights of the tenants, the lot of the Muslim peasantry improved. Consequently, the support for KPP dwindled, as the *Krishak-Proja* movement lost its *raison d'etre*. Also, Huq had disputes with the ML and formed a coalition ministry with Hindu groups in parliament, excluding the ML, which damaged his popularity among the Bengali Muslim masses. By the early 1940s, the ML had emerged as the major Muslim political party in the province.⁸⁴

At the national level, the fortunes of the ML improved significantly in 1937, when it secured the support of Fazlul Huq of Bengal, and of Sikander Hayat Khan, the Unionist leader of the Punjab, at the Lucknow session of the Muslim

League. But Fazlul Huq and ML leaders from other parts of India were not on the same plane regarding the blueprint for a future Muslim state. Huq's view was projected in the League's famous Lahore Resolution, known as the Pakistan Resolution, in 1940, when he introduced the motion that the north-western and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute 'Independent States' in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.⁸⁵

It has been contended by Sayeed that not only Huq, but the ML leadership as a whole at the time of passing of the Pakistan Resolution entertained the idea of the formation of two Muslim states -- one in the North-West and the other in the Eastern part of India.⁸⁶ But later on the ML leaders vacillated over the interpretation of the Pakistan Resolution until the ML convention in 1946 adopted a resolution replacing the term 'independent states' by an 'independent state'. However, Fazlul Huq had already retracted his support of the Pakistan Resolution.⁸⁷

Thus, the framing of the constitution of a future Pakistan, from the Bengali perspective, would have to safeguard the social, economic, cultural and political autonomy of Bengal in a grand confederation; as observed by Ayesha Jalal:

The Bengali Muslims' idea of 'Pakistan' was very different from that of Muslims in other parts of India, and certainly different from what Jinnah had in mind. It was not a question of how Muslims would get a share of power in the rest of India, but rather the ideal of an independent sovereign state consisting of the whole of Bengal and Assam (and free of the exploitative Permanent Settlement system), which was the real motivating force behind a movement which, for the lack of a better name, called itself the Bengal Muslim League.⁸⁸

The Bengali political elite was thus particularly conscious, long before the birth of Pakistan, regarding issues such as provincial autonomy. Not until 1946 did the leaders of the Bengal ML agree to the proposal of a unified Pakistan. Many

politically conscious Bengalis expected provincial autonomy to make them masters in their own province. So, only when the alternatives were starkly harsh -- either Jinnah's Pakistan, or a united Bengal, proposed by Fazlul Huq, Abul Hashem and Suhrawardy -- did they opt for the former.

a. Pakistan Period

During the British period, a strong stress had been laid on the external enemies of the Muslim nation -- the Hindus and the British. It has been contended by Nasir Islam that, during the Pakistan movement, the Bengali Muslims considered the religious differences between Hindus and Muslims as socially, rather than racially or linguistically, significant.⁸⁹ But this attitude changed during the Pakistan period, because the Hindus and the British disappeared from the scene and the positions left vacant by them were taken over by the socio-economically more advanced Muslims from western and northern India.

This was so because at the time of Pakistan's establishment in 1947, the Bengalis had negligible representation in the civilian-military bureaucracy, the professions, and the entrepreneurial elite, even though they comprised 54% of the population.⁹⁰ In 1947, out of a total of 133 Muslim members of the Indian Civil Service and Indian Police Service who opted for Pakistan, only one was a Bengali Muslim. In the first decade of Pakistan, about 96 percent of the military elite and 93 percent of the civil-bureaucratic elite was from West Pakistan.⁹¹ The absence of qualified and trained Bengalis meant that non-Bengalis had to be posted in important positions even in East Pakistan.⁹²

The poor socio-economic position of the Bengali people had historical causes. Bengal was the first Indian province to come under British rule and it

encountered the devastating effects of colonial land, educational and administrative reforms. The north-western part of India came under British rule only after the 1857 rebellion, and the colonial policy had changed by then. The British had decided to keep intact the traditional social structure as much as possible. As a result, the Muslims from the north-western provinces of India were less affected than Bengali Muslims.⁹³

The Punjabis, West Pakistan's dominant ethnic group, and Muslim immigrants from northern and western regions of India, were ethnic minorities in East Pakistan, but they came to fill most of its important positions. After independence, they controlled Pakistan's executive, bureaucratic, military, and financial establishment. Punjabi dominance became a major source of discontent among the Bengalis, and persisted until the final days of integrated Pakistan. The demand for complete Bengali provincial autonomy emerged as early as 1950, when Bengali representatives submitted the first draft of the projected constitution for Pakistan.⁹⁴

Another important Bengali grievance during this period centered around the problem of an officially sanctioned national language for the whole of Pakistan. When the central authorities declared Urdu as the national language, the Bengalis launched a province-wide mass movement, led mostly by intellectuals and students. It culminated in a massive agitation in February 1952, when the authorities shot several protesters to death in Dhaka.⁹⁵ This incident triggered protests against alleged cultural deprivation and became a long-lasting symbol of inspiration for the students and intelligentsia in their nationalist struggle. Thus, during the Pakistan phase, Bengali nationalism took a new direction. As observed by Craig Baxter, the Bengalis did not realize that their language would be relegated to an inferior status in Pakistan, or that their devotion to Bengali

culture would be criticized.⁹⁶ As a result, Bengali nationalism emerged via the language movement, along with a Bengali cultural renaissance with a secular orientation. The movement aimed at altering East Pakistan's subordinate relationship to the West, and at modifying the unequal power distribution within the Pakistani polity.⁹⁷

The growth of Bengali nationalism with a strong regional feeling was expressed in the overwhelming victory of the United Front in the provincial election of 1954. The election manifesto of the United Front had emphasized recognition of Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan, and the granting of maximum autonomy to East Pakistan, leaving only defense, external affairs, and currency with the center.⁹⁸ But the central government of Pakistan did not accept the election outcome and soon put Fazlul Huq under house arrest. The Bengali attempt to seek autonomy was thus frustrated by the heavy-handed central elites of Pakistan who did not trust the secular-oriented Bengali politicians.

By the mid-1950s, when the government initiated a comprehensive development program, Bengali intellectuals had singled out the problem of regional economic disparity as the key issue. After 1956, this problem captured the attention of the politicians.⁹⁹ In the 1956 Pakistani constitution, certain provisions tried to resolve some of the regional disputes. Bengali and Urdu were both made state languages, the constitution apportioned central, provincial, and concurrent lists and assigned residual powers to the provinces.¹⁰⁰ But Ayub Khan's military coup in 1958 abrogated the constitution and a unitary political strategy came to prevail, though Bengali along with Urdu remained state languages of Pakistan.

From Pakistan's earliest days, the Awami League (AL) had functioned as the main vehicle for expressing Bengali discontent. The party, which rested on a secular middle-class support base, was banned in 1958 by the military regime. When the party reappeared in 1964, its draft manifesto outlined a two-economy model for the country, and demanded separate economic, administrative, and political treatment for East Pakistan.¹⁰¹ The manifesto also envisioned autonomy for Pakistan's various regions. These aspirations climaxed in March 1966, when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman revealed his Six-Point Program: a true federation with unlimited provincial autonomy; all powers to rest in the hands of the federating units, except defense and foreign affairs; two separate but freely convertible currencies to be circulated in the two wings and, if this was not feasible, the introduction of effective constitutional safeguards to prevent the flight of capital from East to West Pakistan; taxation and revenue to be determined by the federating units, although the federation would be entitled to share in the proceeds of state taxes to meet federal expenditures; two separate accounts to be maintained for foreign exchange earnings, one each for the two wings; and the establishment of a separate paramilitary force for East Pakistan.¹⁰²

These demands immediately made Mujib popular among the Bengali nationalists. During the 1968-1969 urban agitations, he emerged as a popular political hero in East Pakistan. By 1970, he was the undisputed leader in East Pakistan, when his AL won a stunning victory in the national elections by capturing all but two of East Pakistan's seats, giving him 167 out of the 300 directly elected seats in the Pakistan National Assembly. Besides, the AL won 7 of 13 women's seats, making for a total of 174 out of 313 seats. The central government's March 1, 1971 declaration postponing the opening session of the National Assembly, disappointed Bengali aspirations. The AL then resorted to a strategy of "consolidating its de facto control over the province".¹⁰³ By late

March 1971, both parties, locked in a zero-sum game with neither side willing to compromise, had mobilized their power resources. The central elite, with superior power resources at its disposal, struck the first physical blow on March 26, 1971 which resulted in a guerrilla-cum-conventional war, leading to the emergence of an independent Bangladesh on December 16, 1971.

It has been alleged that the dissemination of the Pakistan ideology in East Pakistan was orchestrated through a two-pronged strategy: firstly, an induced revival of interest in the Muslim contribution to Bengal's culture and intellectual history and, secondly, a direct assault against the Bengali language and culture. The first strategy aimed at boosting a Muslim identity among the Bengalis, and the second one at reducing the influence of Bengali language and culture by making Urdu the only state language of Pakistan. The first strategy worked, as the Bengali Muslim intellectuals enthusiastically endorsed it. But the second one failed badly because the Bengali intelligentsia, to quote Jamal Osman,

while cultivating their Muslim identity, transcended their exclusively Muslim ego and became increasingly aware of their identity as Bengalis.¹⁰⁴

An important reason for this 'transcendence' of Muslim ego by the intellectuals was that, under the sponsorship and encouragement of the Pakistan government, a moderately Islamized Bengali literature had emerged. The Bengali Muslim intellectuals therefore had no hesitation any more over the status of Bengali -- whether it projected a Muslim identity or not -- as their predecessors had in the early 20th century. Bengali was now the medium of cultural communication of the overwhelmingly Muslim-dominated East Pakistan. So, they reacted strongly when Bengali was denied the status of state language.

In a similar vein as Osman, Abidullah Ghazi observed that

Bengalis had, from the inception of Pakistan, gradually begun to look to themselves self-consciously as Bengalis and to develop a new awareness of their identity with other fellow Bengalis and Bengali culture. External factors of economic and political exploitation and military dictatorship only acted as a catalyst to accelerate this growing consciousness.¹⁰⁵

The strengthening of the Bengali aspect of the dual identity of the Bengali Muslims -- Muslim and Bengali -- during the Pakistan period thus caused the Bengali nationalist movement to acquire a secular orientation. However, a contending view alleges that this growing Bengali consciousness, as argued by some scholars, did not make it difficult for the Bengalis to identify themselves as Pakistanis as well. Howard Schuman and Nasir Islam have argued that religion retained its importance as a principal source of Bengali Muslim identity even during the Pakistan era, at least for the masses.¹⁰⁶

According to Schuman's survey, conducted in 1963-64, of 1,001 East Pakistani factory workers and peasants, 48% of the respondents identified themselves as Pakistanis, whereas only 11% considered themselves Bengalis. In another survey, conducted by him at the same time, of 204 Bengali students, 74% of the students described themselves first and foremost as Pakistanis, whereas only 24% did so as Bengalis.¹⁰⁷ Thus in 1964 the average East Pakistani citizen suffered no conflict between his 'Bengali' and 'Pakistani' identities. This identity orientation at the mass level, though it underwent some transformation in the late 1960s, perhaps persisted until March 1971, when the central government suddenly postponed the forthcoming opening session of the newly elected national assembly. Such a view is shared by Schuman as well:

Enough important events occurred between 1964 and 1970 -- war with India, publicized conspiracy trials, the fall of Ayub, the campaigning of the Awami League -- so that any one or several of these in combination could have changed mass opinion....Mass

opinion in what is now Bangladesh may have been loyal to the concept of Pakistan as the nation until the Pakistan national army turned on the people of Bengal.¹⁰⁸

The identity consciousness -- the urge to seek out Bengali roots -- was felt more acutely by the intellectuals than the ordinary masses. It was the intellectuals, as in most nationalist movements, who were the ideologues and pioneers of the nationalist struggle. Because their struggle was against their non-Bengali co-religionists, an Islamic orientation could not emerge as it would have cut across ethno-regional interests.

3. Summary and Conclusions

Islam in Bengal in the early days was characterized by *sufi* -induced unorthodoxy. The linguistic barrier also made it difficult for the rural masses to fully integrate scriptural Islam. As a result, the Islamic tradition became syncretistic as Bengali Muslims borrowed Hindu-Buddhist religious norms and symbols. This syncretistic Islam underwent a puritanic reformation in the 19th century which, to some extent, expunged local accretions and innovations. But this purification could not entirely transform the Islamic tradition of Bengal into an orthodox and legalistic one. Simultaneously, colonial reforms brought about the destruction of the traditional Muslim elite and its traditional values as Bengal was the first province to come under colonial rule.

The new elite that emerged towards the end of the 19th century was exposed to English education and was liberal-oriented. By that time, the Hindus had secured a dominant position in the cultural, social and economic life of Bengal as a result of their being far more advanced in modern education and being the main beneficiaries of colonial land reforms. The Muslims were mostly rural peasants, the majority of whom were in Eastern Bengal. So, the Muslim

political elites of the early 20th century prior to World War II, except a small remnant of the traditional elite such as the *nawabs* of Dhaka and Bogra, projected peasant political interests rather than a Pan-Islamic posture.

When the demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims of India gained ground by the late 1930s, the Bengali Muslim elite lent its support to it but only on the condition that the Muslim majority provinces would be grouped together as independent states in a confederation. Only in 1946 did the Bengal ML leaders agree to a unified Pakistan which, of course, was expected to grant provincial autonomy. An alternative political solution put forward by another faction of the Muslim political elite of Bengal was for a united and independent Bengal. But the latter proposal was not a serious proposition, because the British, the Congress and the ML -- the main actors in the power politics of pre-partition India -- were not interested in it. Also, the expectation of provincial autonomy in a unified Pakistan dampened the appeal of a united and independent Bengal. The tendency of the Bengali Muslim political elite to seek autonomy or independence, was in tune with a long tradition of the Muslim elites of Bengal to achieve autonomy from the center of Muslim power in India. In the past, the long distance from Delhi helped the ruling Muslim elites of Bengal to attain their goal. During Muslim rule in India, only for about 150 years was Bengal effectively under the control of Delhi. Thus, though the overwhelmingly Muslim inhabited eastern Bengal joined Muslim Pakistan, their political leaders never gave up their struggle for autonomy.

In the Pakistan phase, the chief enemy of the Bengali Muslims -- the Hindus -- was gone. But the immigrant Muslims of northern and western India filled the important political and economic positions in East Pakistan. It was they also who formed the core of the central elites of Pakistan. The central

elites' contempt towards Bengali language and culture and their neglect of East Pakistan's socio-economic development resulted in a common Bengali platform against the non-Bengali dominated Pakistan. Because the struggle was against fellow non-Bengali Muslims, a secular orientation emerged in the Bengali nationalist movement.

The perception that their language and culture were under attack from the non-Bengali central elites of Pakistan made the Bengalis determined to protect their language and culture. On the other hand, there was no such concern over the safeguarding or promotion of Islam as the Bengalis perceived that the Pakistani government had taken adequate care of that. Rather, they felt that the central government's oft-repeated slogan, "Islam in danger", was used as a ploy to suppress Bengali nationalist aspirations. The central elites persistently portrayed Bengali nationalism as harmful for Islam because they understood Bengali culture to be highly influenced by Hindu values and ethos and, as such, in need of Islamization.

The central government's efforts to Islamize Bengali culture evoked a positive response from the Islam-oriented segment of the Bengali intellectuals. But it could not eliminate the perception of cultural deprivation among the mainstream Bengali intelligentsia. The intelligentsia's perceptions of cultural and economic grievances were glued together in a fervent nationalist movement aimed at provincial autonomy.

Though the Bengali Muslims gave less significance to the Islamic aspect of their identity during the nationalist struggle, they had acquired, over a long process of cultural transformation, a dualistic identity -- an equally strong attachment to both their Bengali and Islamic heritage.¹⁰⁹ Social forces which strengthened the Bengali aspect of their identity have been: an early

development of Bengali identity, that is, by the time Islam reached Bengal, the local people had already developed a Bengali identity; syncretistic religious traditions of the past; unsuccessful penetration of Urdu and Persian; and the adoption by Bengali Muslim intellectuals of Bengali as a medium of their cultural communication by the early 20th century. Some other historical forces tended to make Islam liberal-oriented rather than being orthodox and legalistic. These forces included: *sufi* influence and *sufism's* latitudinarian attitude towards Islam's socio-political institutions; the early decline of the traditional Muslim elite and its traditional values; and the spread of Bengali and English education. Social forces which invigorated the Islamic dimension of the identity have been: the puritanic reform movements of the 19th century; the institutionalization of traditional Islamic education through the *madrasa* system; and Bengali becoming a language of Islamic communication at the mass level in the later half of the 20th century. It can therefore be inferred that an overwhelming Muslim majority of Bangladesh would remain loyal to both dimensions of their identity -- Bengaliness and Islam -- and would reject any major deviation, if attempted by domestic forces or external influence. However, various politically relevant groups are likely to attempt to pull the state towards one or the other extreme direction, but such attempts are likely to be met by challenges from counter-groups, unless the value system of the society undergoes fundamental changes.

Notes

- ¹ Abdul Mannan Talib, *Bangladeshe Islam* (Islam in Bangladesh) (Dhaka: Adhunik Prakashani, 1980), p. 129; Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, "Islam In Bengal", *Journal of Indian History*, XLVIII, part III, no. 144 (December 1970), p. 469.
- ² Talib, p. 76.
- ³ Abdul Karim, *Social History Of The Muslims In Bengal* (Dhaka: The Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1959), p. 88.
- ⁴ Syed Ali Ashraf, *Muslim Traditions In Bengali Literature*, (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation, 1983), p. 19; Akbar S. Ahmed, *Discovering Islam -- Making Sense of Muslim History and Society*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988), p. 41.
- ⁵ Donald E. Smith, *Religion And Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), p. 49.
- ⁶ K. R. Qanungo, "Bengal under the House of Balban", in Jadu Nath Sarkar (ed.), *The History Of Bengal* (Patna: Academica Asiatica, 1973), p. 69.
- ⁷ Zillur Rahman Khan, "Islam And Bengali Nationalism", *Asian Survey*, XXV, no. 8, (August 1985), p. 838.
- ⁸ The Pala dynasty of Bengal was founded by Gopala in 750 A.D. Bengal and Bihar were under the rule of the Palas until the Muslim conquest of Bihar in 1199. But part of Bengal came under the sway of a new dynasty, the Senas, early in the eleventh century. See Vincent A. Smith, *The Oxford History Of India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 197.
- ⁹ R. C. Majumdar, *Ancient India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1964), p. 428.
- ¹⁰ Romila Thapar, *A History of India*, vol. I (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 264.
- ¹¹ Razia Akter Banu, "Islam In Contemporary Bangladesh: A Socio-Political Study", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London, 1988, p. 51. Emphasis added.
- ¹² Abdul Majid Khan, "Research About Muslim Aristocracy In East Pakistan", Pierre Bessagnet (ed.), *Social Research In East Pakistan* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1960), p. 20.
- ¹³ K. F. Rubbee, *The Origin of the Musalmans of Bengal* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, 1895), p. 1.
- ¹⁴ M. A. Rahim, *Social and Cultural History of Bengal*, vol. 1 (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1963), pp. 61-64.

- 15 Banu, p. 27.
- 16 Related to blood group.
- 17 Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 28.
- 18 Obviously, race played a role in social stratification. The *ashraf*, being mostly of Afghan, Persian and Turkic origins were of fairer complexion whereas the *ajlaf* were darker.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- 20 Asim Roy, "The Social Factors In The Making Of Bengali Islam", *South Asia*, no. 3 (August 1973), p. 29.
- 21 Banu, p. 68; Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal*, pp. 67, 68.
- 22 Ishtiaq Hussain Qureshi, *The Muslim Community Of The Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent* (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), pp. 111-117.
- 23 Jadu Nath Sarkar, "Transformation Of Bengal Under Mughal Rule", in Jadu Nath Sarkar (ed.), *The History Of Bengal*, p. 220.
- 24 Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, p. 473.
- 25 Ralph Russell, "Strands of Muslim Identity in South Asia", *South Asian Review*, vol. 6, no. 1 (October 1972), pp. 24, 25.
- 26 Mafizullah Kabir, "Aspects of Sufism in Bengal", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: History and Culture* vol. I, (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986), p. 23.
- 27 M. M. Kaleem, "Bengali Literature", in S. M. Ikram and Percival Spear (eds.), *The Cultural Heritage of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 138. Emphasis added.
- 28 Russell, p. 25.
- 29 S. M. Ikram, *Muslim Civilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 173, 174.
- 30 A form of austere sainthood marked by abstinence and outworldiness.
- 31 M. A. Rahim, *Social And Cultural History Of Bengal*, vol. II (Karachi: Pakistan Publishing House, 1967), pp. 6, 7.
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- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 11.
- 34 Banu, pp. 58, 59; M. A. Rahim, vol. II, p. 12.
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- 39 Elliot Tepper, *Changing Patterns Of Administration In Rural East Pakistan* (East Lansing: Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University, Occasional Paper No. 5, August 1966), p. 5.
- 40 Mallick, p. 38.
- 41 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 42 W. W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans* (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1969), p. 177.
- 43 James Wise, *Eastern Bengal* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1883), p. 21.
- 44 M. Ahmed Khan, *Muslim Struggle For Freedom In Bengal* (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation, 1982), pp. 7, 8.
- 45 Anil Seal, *The Emergence Of Indian Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 302.
- 46 Percival Spear, "The Position of the Muslims, Before and After Partition", in Philip Mason (ed.), *India and Ceylon: Unity and Diversity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 37.
- 47 Hunter, pp. 173, 174.
- 48 Azizur Rahman Mallick, p. 373.
- 49 Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community In Bengal 1884-1912* (Dhaka: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 49.
- 50 Hunter, p. 150.
- 51 M. Ahmed Khan, "Social and Political Implications of the Islamic Reform Movements in Bengal in the Nineteenth Century", in Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed.), *Bangladesh: Society, Religion and Politics* (Chittagong: South Asian Studies Group, 1985), p. 84.
- 52 M. Ahmed Khan, "The Islamic Reform Movements In Bengal In The Nineteenth Century: Meaning And Significance", in Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed.), *Islam In Bangladesh: Society, Culture, And Politics* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Itihas Samity, 1983), p. 100.
- 53 Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, p. 494.
- 54 The five pillars are as follows: faith, prayers at five appointed times daily, fasting in the month of *Ramadan*, pilgrimage to Makkah, and *zakat* (dues

for the poor).

- 55 Zillur Rahman Khan, "Islam And Bengali Nationalism", p. 841.
- 56 M. Ahmed Khan, "Social and Political Implications of the Islamic Reform Movements in Bengal in the Nineteenth Century", p. 84.
- 57 M. Ahmed Khan, "The Islamic Reform Movements In Bengal In The Nineteenth Century: Meaning And Significance", p. 108.
- 58 M. Ahmed Khan, *Muslim Struggle For Freedom In Bengal*, pp. 26, 27.
- 59 M. Ahmed Khan, "Social And Political Implications ...", p. 87.
- 60 M. Ahmed Khan, "The Islamic Reform Movements...", p. 108.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 99.
- 62 Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906 - A Quest For Identity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 52, 53.
- 63 M. Ahmed Khan, *Muslim Struggle For Freedom In Bengal*, p. 59.
- 64 Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906 - A Quest For Identity*, p. 23.
- 65 M. Ahmed Khan, *Muslim Struggle For Freedom In Bengal*, p. 60.
- 66 Sheila McDonough, "The Religious Legitimization of Change Among Modernists in Indo-Pakistani Islam", in Bardwell L. Smith (ed.), *Religion And The Legitimation Of Power In South Asia*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), p. 43. Emphasis added.
- 67 Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal*, p. 253.
- 68 For example, Banu, p. 96; Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906 - A Quest For Identity*, p. 70.; A. F. Salahuddin Ahmed, "Aspects of Bengali Society and Social Thought: Tradition and Transformation", *The Dhaka University Studies*, XXXVII, Part A (December 1982), p. 165.
- 69 At the early stage, Islamic conversion attained rapid success in the rural areas of Eastern Bengal inhabited mostly by low caste Hindus to whom, among other things, Islam provided an outlet to come out of the grips of the caste system. But at later stages, the attempted puritanic transformation did not succeed much in rural areas because of lack of Islamic knowledge among the rural Muslims who found it easier to live up to folk versions of Islam rather than up to the teachings of orthodox *ulama*.
- 70 James Wise reported the incident in detail in his classical work: "In 1874 the inhabitants of several villages assembled on the banks of the Lakhya to celebrate the Bakr-Id, but there being no one present who could lead the worship, a Dacca youth, aged twenty, who was passing in a boat, had to land and recite the usual prayer." See James Wise, *Eastern Bengal*, p. 36.

- 71 R. C. Majumdar, *Glimpses Of Bengal In The Nineteenth Century* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1960), pp. 50, 101.
- 72 See the following works of Syed Ameer Ali: *Islam* (London: Constable, 1906); *The Spirit of Islam* (London: Christophers, 1922); *A Short History of the Saracens* (London: Macmillan, 1899).
- 73 T. N. Madan, "Two Faces Of Bengali Ethnicity: Muslim Bengali Or Bengali Muslim", *The Developing Economies*, X, no. 1 (March 1972), p. 78; Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906 - A Quest For Identity*, pp. 163, 164.
- 74 Nasim Ahmed Jawed, pp. 41, 42.
- 75 *Ibid.*, pp. 43-45.
- 76 Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengali Muslims 1871-1906 - A Quest For Identity*, p. 129.
- 77 Russell, p. 26.
- 78 Ahmed Sharif, "*Itihashe Darpane Dui Shataker Bangali*" (Bengalis of Two Centuries from Historical Perspectives), in Muhammad Jahangir (ed.), *Jatiyotabad Bitarka* (Nationalism Debate) (Dhaka: University Press, 1987), pp. 29, 30.
- 79 Madhavi Yasin, "Ideas Of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan: An Evaluation In Historical Perspective", *Studies In Islam* XIX, no. 3 (July 1982), p. 156.
- 80 Ramkrishna Mukherjee, "The Social Background of Bangladesh", in Kathleen Gough and Hari P. Sharma (eds.), *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p. 407.
- 81 Khalid B. Sayeed, *The Political System of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 14.
- 82 Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community In Bengal 1884-1912*, pp. 219, 220.
- 83 M. Ahmed Khan, *Muslim Struggle For Freedom In Bengal*, p. 119.
- 84 After winning two-thirds of the Muslim constituencies of Bengal in the provincial election of 1937, Fazlul Huq formed a coalition ministry with the support of the ML, the Scheduled Caste Party and a small number of non-Congress caste Hindus. In 1941 he refused to join the ML in a parliamentary coalition and formed a new 'Progressive Coalition Party'. He was expelled from the ML and took a drastic step by forming a new ministry with the support of Hindu groups in the legislature, including Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, a Hindu Mahasabha leader of Bengal. It was a great political mistake for Huq as Jinnah launched an anti-Huq campaign to turn Muslim public opinion against him. However, in the meantime, Huq also realized that he could not work with his Hindu colleagues as they, particularly Mukherjee, were firm in pursuing pro-Hindu policies. In April 1943, the Governor of Bengal asked Khawja Nazimuddin, chief of ML in the Bengal legislative assembly, to form a new ministry.

For details see Khalid Bin Sayed, *Pakistan, The Formative Phase 1857-1948* 2nd. ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 213-214; D. N. Banerjee, *East Pakistan -- a Case Study in Muslim Politics* (Delhi: Vikas, 1969), pp. 32-41.

- 85 Talukder Maniruzzaman, *The Politics Of Development -- The Case of Pakistan (1947-1958)* (Dhaka: Green Book House, 1971), p. 20.
- 86 Sayeed, *Pakistan, The Formative Phase...*, p. 115.
- 87 Donald N. Wilber, *Pakistan* (New Haven, Conn.: HRAF Press, 1964), p. 21; Syed Serajul Islam, "The State and Economic Development: an Analysis of the Role of the State in the Economic Development of Bangladesh", v. 1, Unpublished doctoral dissertation, McGill University, 1982, p. 36.
- 88 Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 151.
- 89 Nasir Islam, "Islam And National Identity: The Case Of Pakistan And Bangladesh", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1 (February 1981), p. 62.
- 90 Rounaq Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 6.
- 91 Muhammad A. Quddus, *Pakistan -- a Case Study of a Plural Society* (Calcutta: Minerva, 1981), pp. 16, 17.
- 92 There were about twenty Muslims from outside the province, eight Englishmen, and only two Bengali Muslims in the East Bengal cadre of the Civil Service of Pakistan in May 1949. See Richard Symonds, *The Making Of Pakistan* (London: Faber And Faber, 1949), p. 152.
- 93 Jawed, pp. 41, 42.
- 94 Jahan, p. 29.
- 95 Jayanta Kumar Ray, *Democracy And Nationalism On Trial -- a Study of East Pakistan* (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1968), pp. 12, 13, 55, 56.
- 96 Craig Baxter, "Pakistan And Bangladesh", in Frederick L. Shiels (ed.), *Ethnic Separation and World Politics* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), p. 218.
- 97 Nasir Islam, "The National Question In Pakistan: Ethnicity, Religion, and Elite Strategies", *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, vol. 9, no. 2 (Fall 1982), p. 298.
- 98 Talukder Maniruzzaman, *The Politics Of Development...*, p. 43.
- 99 Manzuruddin Ahmed, "The Nature of Federal Crisis in Canada and Pakistan", Unpublished paper, Department of Political Science, University of Karachi, 1969, p. 21.

- 100 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 101 M. Rashiduzzaman, "The Awami League in the Political Development of Pakistan", *Asian Survey*, vol. 10, no. 7 (July 1970), p. 582.
- 102 Craig Baxter, "Pakistan And Bangladesh...", pp. 231, 232.
- 103 Robert LaPorte, Jr., "Pakistan in 1971: The Disintegration of a Nation", *Asian Survey*, vol. 12, no. 2 (February 1972), p. 101.
- 104 Jamal Osman, *Pakistanism And Bengali Culture* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Bangladesh Sahayak Samity, 1971), p. 22.
- 105 Abidullah Ghazi, "Muslim Bengal: A Crisis Of Identity", in Barbara Thomas and Spencer Lavan (eds.), *West Bengal And Bangladesh: Perspectives From 1972* (East Lansing: Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1973), p. 150.
- 106 Howard Schuman, "A Note on the Rapid Rise of Mass Bengali Nationalism in East Pakistan", *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 78, no. 2 (September 1972); Nasir Islam, "The National Question In Pakistan...".
- 107 The first sample of 1,001 subjects comprised factory workers from Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna and full-time rural cultivators from Barisal, Comilla and Noakhali. All of them were male Muslims between 18 and 32 years of age. The following question was asked in Bengali:
- Do you consider yourself first and foremost: a Pakistani; a Bengali; a man from (district of origin); a man from (village of origin)?
- The answers in percentage were: Pakistani 48; Bengali 11; man of (district) 17; Man of (village) 25.
- The second sample included 204 Bengali students in second year in an intermediate technical college in Dhaka. The same question as in the case of the first sample was administered. Their answers in percentage are as follows: Pakistani 74; Bengali 24; Man of (district) 0; Man of (village) 2.
- Source: Schuman, pp. 290-295.
- 108 Schuman, pp. 295, 296.
- 109 Abidullah Ghazi, p. 148.

CHAPTER 4

POST-INDEPENDENCE BANGLADESH POLITICS: THE SECULAR STATE UNDER PRESSURE

The interactions among legitimacy, popular perception of Islam's role in the polity, and external environment exert strong influence on state behavior in the contemporary Muslim world. They set the parameters within which the political elite functions, particularly in determining the ideological direction of the state. This chapter highlights the significance of these variables in the analysis of the relations between state and Islam during the Mujib phase.

The Mujib regime had both electoral and revolutionary legitimacy. It won a massive victory in a fair election. It was triumphant in leading the country towards independence through a popular armed struggle. But, in the course of the war of liberation and its aftermath, the AL government ignored Islam, an important source of legitimacy in the post-colonial phase of modern Muslim states. The negative role played by the pro-Islamic forces in general caused bitterness in the nation as a whole. Soon, however, the Muslim masses were able to differentiate the behavior of the Islamic groups during the war of independence, on the one hand, and Islam as a religion, on the other, as part of their identity and social set-up. Even if they could not grasp the historical and ideological reasons that motivated the Islamic groups to oppose the struggle for independence waged under the guidance of India and the Soviet Union, the policy of secularism became unpopular among them quite soon and, along with it, the legitimacy of the regime weakened. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism aroused Islamic sentiment among the people while the prospect of financial gain lured the regime towards the Islamic world. Though the state remained secular

officially, the government changed its position towards Islam in terms of policy and behavior.

1. Founding a Secular State

a. The Awami League Government-in-Exile

The Bengali nationalist movement during the Pakistani phase had de-emphasized Islam. But still the 1970 election manifesto of Awami League (AL) had assured that no law would be formulated or enforced in Pakistan contrary to the laws of Islam. The AL pledged that there would be a constitutional guarantee protecting the integrity of religious institutions. It also promised to require religious instruction at all levels of public education.¹ An important reason for AL's promise to safeguard Islam was that the 1970 general election was held under the Legal Framework Order, which prohibited propagation of ideals contrary to the ideology of Islam and Pakistan.² Political calculation was another factor. The AL did not want to give an opportunity to pro-Islamic parties to scare off people on the ground that AL, if voted to power, would destroy Islam.

At the outbreak of armed struggle between the Pakistani military and Bengali nationalists, the latter under AL leadership declared independence and parted with the Pakistan ideology. The participation of India and the Soviet Union in the secessionist cause promoted secular sentiments among the Bengali nationalists. Because Islamic parties were against secession and Islam had been manipulated by the Pakistani regime to discredit the secessionist attempt, the AL government-in-exile during the liberation war decided to weaken Islam's political appeal through the secularization of its political posture.

Another significant factor behind the secularist orientation of the AL government-in-exile was Tajuddin Ahmed's leadership. In the absence of Mujib, who spent the whole period of the war of liberation in a Pakistani prison, Tajuddin was the paramount leader of AL and the most powerful figure in the exile government seated in Calcutta.³ Tajuddin was secularist and anti-western. He was trusted most by Indira Gandhi's Congress government, and was also preferred by the Soviet Union, a crucial ally of the Bengali liberation struggle, over other senior AL leaders. He was also strongly pro-Indian and vehemently against Pakistan's Islam-oriented ideology. Tajuddin therefore found himself in a commanding position in his cabinet-in-exile in Calcutta.

The right wing faction of AL under the leadership of Khondker Mushtaque Ahmed maintained liaison with the United States and tried, in the early days of the war, for a compromise with Pakistan through the mediation of the U.S. and Iran. But Tajuddin was totally against such a rapprochement. India also did not want to see the attempt of East Pakistan to secede fall apart half-way. Mushtaque was cornered and all pro-Pakistani plans were stamped out. Having secured the continuation of the war of independence, Tajuddin's next important goal was to give a secular orientation to the government-in-exile. Tajuddin was particularly interested in securing India's lasting goodwill which was sure to accrue from a definitive departure from Islam-oriented ideology. A secular orientation would also help him in entrenching his own position in the party and government hierarchy.⁴

Thus, secularism was adopted as a basic principle of state policy of the Bangladesh government-in-exile. To give a secular orientation to the state and simultaneously to please India, it is contended, Rabindranath Tagore's poem, 'My Golden Bengal', was chosen as the national anthem of Bangladesh.⁵ To

quote Donald Smith,

In this poem the land of Bengal is addressed as "Mother". The imagery of "Mother Bengal" is unmistakably Hindu, part of a Bengali literary tradition that identified the land of Bengal with a female deity. The ten lines of the poem which make up the national anthem do not deify the land, but the orthodox *ulama* still feels uncomfortable with "my golden Bengal, I love you, oh my mother".⁶

The national anthem has remained a controversial issue as orthodox Muslims find the Hindu imagery in it objectionable. To pursue the ideal of secularism, the government-in-exile, immediately after moving to Dhaka, on the eve of the surrender of the Pakistani military, discontinued recitations from the Quran on the state-run radio and television. The use of Islamic greetings such as *As-salamu Alaikum* and *Khuda Hafez* were also stopped in the government media.⁷

*b. A Constitutionally Secular State:
Consolidation and Contradictions under Mujib's Leadership*

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman assumed power on his arrival at Dhaka on January 10, 1972, after being released by Pakistan. One of his initial actions was to rescind the policy of banning the Quranic recitations and Islamic greetings on radio and television. Popular pressure was building up against the policy and Mujib decided to yield. But the decision to ban religion-based parties taken in December 1971 continued.⁸ The ban affected exclusively the pro-Islamic parties, such as Jamaat-e-Islam and Muslim League, which had earned notoriety for collaborating with the Pakistani military and working against the cause of Bangladesh.

Even though Indian tutelage and Tajuddin's anti-Islamic ideology were key factors behind pursuing secular policies in the early days, popular sentiment and ethos among the participants in the war of independence, in particular, and the

populace, in general, were not in favor of an Islamic ideology either, at least until late 1972. Therefore, Mujib, though reversing the secularization of the media immediately after his repatriation, went along with the mainstream of AL on the policy of separation between state and religion, though incomplete and often ambiguous and contradictory.

Until late 1972, when the final draft of the constitution was approved, the Mujib government introduced piecemeal reforms, some of which were quite symbolic, towards a secular socio-political order. In January 1972 the Dhaka University Central Student's Union demanded that secular names should be given to student hostels which until then had communal identifications, such as, Salimullah Muslim Hall and Fazlul Huq Muslim Hall. The demand was precisely to withdraw the word "Muslim" from the names of hostels so as to promote a secular environment on campus. The demand was accepted and the word "Muslim" disappeared.⁹ The Islamic Academy was also closed down by the government in 1972.¹⁰

An important policy to cripple the anti-government pro-Islamic forces was adopted on January 24, 1972, with the promulgation of the Bangladesh Collaborators Order. The order stipulated the arrest, trial and punishment of all those who had cooperated with the Pakistani regime during the nine-month war of liberation (March-December 1971) or had collaborated with the Pakistani military in punitive acts against the freedom fighters.¹¹ In effect, all those who had participated in or supported activities against the cause of Bangladesh during the nine-month war could be arraigned. Besides imprisonment and trials, collaborators were discharged from government service. They were not eligible for participation in general elections: they could neither vote nor contest in general elections. The total number of people affected by the collaborators

order was around 60,000.¹²

The collaborators order caused a great schism in the nation, pitting the secularist against the pro-Islamic. It indirectly represented vengeance against those who did not want to accept the secular ideology behind the Bangladesh movement. A large number of those arrested belonged to various Islamic parties and organizations. Thus, almost the entire leadership of pro-Islamic political parties was imprisoned under the collaborators order.¹³ Many innocent people also ended up in jail as they fell victim to false charges laid by AL workers and freedom fighters. The order provided an opportunity for political blackmail to AL and its cronies. Almost anybody, unless well connected to AL and its affiliated organizations, could be threatened with the charge of collaboration, which forced many people into compliance. The ghost of 'collaboration' haunted not only the pro-Islamic elements who were against the secession of Bangladesh, but also any opponent of the AL regime. Such misuse of governmental authority caused a backlash among the people and promoted anti-AL and anti-secular feelings by the end of 1972.

The government's ideological direction towards secularism was well articulated in the final draft of the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, which was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 4, 1972.¹⁴ Secularism was made one of the four basic principles guiding state policy. Article 12 of the constitution read:

The principle of secularism shall be realized by the elimination of
communalism in all its forms;

granting by the state of political status in favour of any religion;
abuse of religion for political purposes; and

discrimination against or persecution of persons practicing a
particular religion.¹⁵

Mujib had his own definition of secularism; he said:

I also believe that all religions in Bangladesh must exist on equal footing and that is what I mean by secularism -- freedom of religion.¹⁶

On another occasion, Mujib explained his concept of a secular state at greater length:

My people have seen how the false and misleading interpretation of religion can lead to fanaticism and violence. We are therefore determined to establish a secular state. All Bengalis, irrespective of caste, creed, colour, and religion, shall enjoy all rights and privileges that are entitled to them as citizens of a free country.¹⁷

Mujib's version of secularism basically meant freedom of religion by eliminating discrimination and persecution on the basis of religion. But the constitution not only guaranteed the elimination of persecution and discrimination on the basis of religion, it also restricted the sphere of religion. Religion was reduced to individual, family and community level; it lost its role in national political life. Provisions banning religion-based parties and the collaborators order were incorporated in the constitution. Article 38 spelled out that no person would have the right to form or be a member of any communal political association or union in the name or on the basis of any religion. Articles 66(2) and 122(2)(c) together made any person, convicted of the charge of collaboration with the Pakistani regime during the war of independence under the Bangladesh Collaborators Order, ineligible to be enrolled as a voter and elected as a member of parliament.¹⁸

The above constitutional provisions seemed to target only Islamic parties for action, since other religious communities did not have any significant religion-based political organizations. Almost all those affected by the

collaborators order were Muslims. Thus, the constitutional provisions regarding secularism protected the religious minorities, but seemed focussed against the religious majority and thus became a sore point in national political life. The more the AL government stressed secularism in state-run propaganda, the more the government and its secular ideology became unpopular. Secularism and anti-Islam sentiment were glued together in the rising anti-government feelings, which ultimately alienated the people from the regime and caused its violent overthrow.

The issue of secularism, because of its prominence, has been a topic of intense debate among students of Bangladesh politics. Five perspectives can be discerned in the debate on the issue. The mainstream view is that secularism was a natural consequence of the liberation war.¹⁹ Liberation war was fought in a secular environment under the leadership of secular-oriented elites against fellow Muslims. It strengthened the secular dimension of Bengali identity and provided the dominant ethos of a secular nationalism. It was logical therefore that the pro-Islamic parties would be banned, because they were against the independence of Bangladesh and did not believe in Bengali nationalism.

Secularism was also necessary to assure security to the sizable Hindu community. Out of ten million Bengali refugees who took shelter in India in 1971, 90 % were Hindu.²⁰ The AL government did not want another exodus of Hindus. The safety of the Hindus was a precondition for maintaining good relations with the giant neighbor, India. Secularism was thus an expression of gratitude to India for her help during the war of independence and an assurance for the continuation of friendship.

A contending perspective, shared by intellectuals supporting the Islamic fundamentalist position, portrayed secularism to be an anti-Islamic design

imposed by India.²¹ It argued that secular policies were aimed precisely at weakening Islamic values and institutions to eradicate Islam's ideological influence. The national anthem 'My Golden Bengal' was branded as a symbolic expression of idolatry. It contended that, in the application of secular policies, Islamic institutions were discriminated against:

Institutions of all kinds, schools, colleges, halls, academies were asked to drop the 'Islamic' label from their names. Notre Dame College; Holy Cross College; St. Gregory's School; the Ramkrishna Mission; Anandamoyee Girls School; Jagannath College - to give some examples, were left undisturbed, although in each case their names have Christian or Hindu associations. But Islamic Intermediate College was changed to Kabi Nazrul College. The qualifying word Muslim was removed from the names of all Dhaka University dormitories.²²

On the issue of banning pro-Islamic parties, it is alleged that the AL government demonstrated sheer anti-Islamic bias. The fundamentalist school contended that AL eulogized India as a secular state and took India as a model of secularism, while in India religio-political organizations like *Jana Sangh*, *Hindu Mahasabha*, *Ram Rajya Parishad*, *Shiva Sena* and *R.S.S.* were allowed to function under the protection of article 19 of the Indian constitution, which gave freedom of speech, association, thought and assembly.²³ Thus, secularism, in the eyes of the fundamentalist school, was a discriminatory device to destroy Islam's cultural and political influence.²⁴

Another perspective, critical of the governmental position on secularism, took the position that the secularist policies of the government promoted religious activities and made the society no less communal than it was so in the past.²⁵ It contended that the state extended indulgence towards all religions and thus subjected itself to religious pressures. The Hindus got a three-day holiday for *Durga puja* (Hindu festival) while the Muslims wanted four days for *Eid al-fitr* (a Muslim holiday). The state-run television started its daily program with

recitations from the Quran and the *Gita* (Hindu scripture) while the Buddhists demanded that their holy book, *Tripitaka*, should be read as well. When the passage of the constitution bill was welcomed in the constituent assembly by recitations from the Quran and the *Gita*, a Buddhist M.P. demanded that there should be recitations from the *Tripitaka* and the Bible as well because Buddhists and Christians also constituted a segment of the population of secular Bangladesh. But the demand was rejected by the constituent assembly.²⁶ Thus, state indulgence towards some religious activities and the pressure for recognition from various religious communities, to quote Syed Serajul Islam, "contributed in unleashing a spate of frenzied religious activities under state patronage".²⁷

Another view, challenging the fundamentalist perspective, argued that secularist measures did not harm Islam.²⁸ The AL government retained the study of Islamic studies and Arabic in the school syllabus introduced during the Pakistani period. The Islamic Academy, which had been closed down in 1972, was reopened and upgraded as the Islamic Foundation in 1974.²⁹ To quote Amir-ul Islam:

The Muslims enjoyed more privileges instead of facing any problem in practising their religion after Bangladesh achieved independence as a secular state.³⁰

Thus, according to this school, not only were Mujib's domestic policies conducive to the practice of Islam, but also in the realm of external relations Mujib tilted towards Islam and re-oriented foreign policy to improve relations with the Islamic countries. As a result, to quote Mohsin, "the Muslim world could no longer ignore existence of Bangladesh and began to take interest in the welfare of its people".³¹

Yet another perspective blamed the secularizing measures of the AL government as inadequate and contradictory.³² Ghosh alleged that the AL government's policy towards the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages made a clear distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims. Again, during Mujib's tenure, the annual graduation ceremony of military cadets resembled a religious function, starting with recitations from the Quran as was the norm during the Pakistani period. Mujib had also led a *munajat* (prayer) in the constituent assembly after the successful passage of the constitution bill. Further, he occasionally called a *milad mahfil* (a popular religious ceremony) at the official residence of the Prime Minister, an action that ran contrary to the secular image of the nation.³³

As for the legal system of the country, Pearl had pointed out:

Bangladesh is constitutionally established as a secular state. Yet the Constitution contains no proposal for a common civil code, leaving Bangladesh with a legal inheritance which reflects the Islamic conception of former united Pakistan. ... The religious laws of the communities will continue to be applied by the courts to a very extensive area of familial activity.³⁴

The incorporation of secularism as a basic principle guiding state policy was thus contradictory.

Leftist intellectuals, belonging to the neo-Marxist school, have argued that the AL, being a party of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, was not a genuine believer in secularism.³⁵ In their interpretation, the AL was compelled to show sympathy and inclination for secular ideas when they came to power because a large segment of the population, having been disgusted with the Pakistani regime's policy of using religion as an excuse to suppress democratic movements, wanted to separate religion from politics. Thus, according to the neo-Marxist school, it was popular pressure that made the AL government

adopt secularism as a fundamental principle of state policy. But, being the representative of urban bourgeois and petty bourgeois classes and rural landed interests, it needed religion as a tool of social control to keep the masses prejudiced, divided and non-progressive. For that reason, the neo-Marxist intellectuals charged, the AL government had kept intact *madrassa* education (orthodox Islamic education), arranged religious ceremonies in official residence at public expense and established fraternal relations with Islamic countries.³⁶ The AL government's posture on secularism was thus deceptive and manipulative.

What emerges from this controversial debate over the issue of secularism is that the AL government had wanted to attain two basic goals in the name of secularism: to maintain good relations with India by assuring security and participation to the Hindus; and to prevent the rise of pro-Islamic parties. But this strategy backfired. The fundamentalists manipulated the issue of secularism to attack AL and the government by portraying them as agents of "Hindu India". Secularism was branded as an ideology that justified Indian hegemony over Bangladesh. The AL government was losing popular support because of the poor performance of the economy and the deteriorating law and order situation. But the fundamentalists' propaganda stressed that the economy was faltering because of an Indian conspiracy to destroy the economy of Bangladesh, as it was in India's interest to keep that economy dependent on her. The law and order situation was worsening, it was alleged, because the regime was only interested in strengthening the "Indian"-trained *Jatiyo Rakshi Bahini* (JRB)³⁷ to protect the ruling elite and AL workers, and not in the security of the masses.

Massive smuggling across the Indo-Bangladesh border, the Indo-Bangladesh

dispute over the issue of water distribution from the Farakka dam (located in West Bengal), and the Mujib government's handing over Berubari -- an enclave on Bangladesh-West Bengal border -- to India, seemed to confirm India's evil intentions against Bangladesh and boosted the fundamentalists' campaign. As a result, anti-Indian feelings surged among the populace; and secularism, seen as an ideology of Indian control over Bangladesh, became unpopular. The AL and the government became discredited for being too closely identified with India. On the other hand, Islam emerged as an ideology of protest and opposition to the "Indian" design over Bangladesh.

c. Mujibbad as an Alternative to Islamic Ideology

Like many other charismatic national leaders of Afro-Asian countries, such as Nasser and Nkrumah, Mujib was annointed as the advocate of a personalist ideology known as *Mujibbad* (Mujibism). The AL regime floated this ideology on behalf of Mujib, which was to assume a dominant position in the ideological spectrum of Bangladesh politics. The liberation war had been fought under the political leadership of the AL. But many contending ideological groups espousing various types of nationalist, socialist and communist orientations participated in it. In the post-liberation period, the Mujib government encountered a serious threat from the radical revolutionaries.³⁸ The regime responded to such challenges by strengthening the *Rakkhi Bahini* and, on the ideological plane, by introducing *Mujibbad* as the officially-sponsored ideology of the AL regime.

Mujib himself did not coin the word "Mujibbad" nor did he orchestrate a well-articulated ideology. According to one version the term *Mujibbad* was first introduced by the Chattra League (AL's student wing) and it became prominent in May 1972 when the Chattra League split into two factions -- one (Sidaiqui-

Makhan faction) supporting *Mujibbad* and the other (Rob-Siraj faction) supporting scientific socialism. From the student leaders the slogan of *Mujibbad* was borrowed by the young leaders of the AL and later on it penetrated the AL hierarchy.³⁹ According to another version, Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni, Mujib's nephew, promulgated the ideology of *Mujibbad* during the liberation war.⁴⁰

There is no doubt, however, that Sheikh Moni was intimately associated with the articulation of *Mujibbad* as he tried to build his legitimacy and base of support on his loyalty to Mujib rather than to the AL, because the latter appeared to him to be wrought with corruption. In March 1973, Moni planned to launch a purge to eliminate the opponents of *Mujibbad* who, in his eyes, were the Pakistan-minded bureaucrats, corrupt businessmen, smugglers and anti-social elements.⁴¹ Many AL leaders laid stress on *Mujibbad* during the election campaigns of 1973, stating that the elections would be a referendum on *Mujibbad*.⁴²

Mujibbad's most systematic formulation and intellectual rationalization was done by Khondker Mohammad Ilias, a former pro-Moscow leftist who had turned into a Mujib loyalist. In his thick volume, *Mujibbad*, he portrayed it as a progressive ideology that could transform Bangladesh into a socialist society in a peaceful mode. Bengali nationalism, being a core value of *Mujibbad*, had destroyed, according to Ilias, class barriers and religious discrimination. The Bengali nationalist struggle against the non-representative authoritarian Pakistani political order had demonstrated the desire of the people to achieve socialism gradually through elected representation.⁴³

However, it is apparent that this was a hollow justification for *Mujibbad* as a prelude to democratic socialism. The Bengali nationalist struggle against Pakistan did not destroy class cleavages in Bangladesh society; rather, the

dominant exploiting classes of non-Bengali origin were replaced by a new Bengali middle class with the blessings of the AL. Mujibism did bring harmony between the majority and minority religious groups for the first two years after independence. But soon after that, intense anti-Indian feelings of the masses aroused their Islamic consciousness and strengthened their Islamic identity, even though it did not result in sectarian strife.

Mujibbad offered basically nothing new in terms of ideas. It incorporated the four fundamental principles of state policy already enshrined in the constitution, namely, nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism. All these four principles had long been part of the Congress platform in India. The majority of the intelligentsia therefore found no original thoughts in *Mujibbad*, and it appeared to them as a cult of personality. To quote Jahan:

This attempt to develop an ideology based on a personality cult, however, has hurt Mujib's image. By identifying the new political structure too closely with his personality, Mujib is held responsible for all the deficiencies of the new system. Even the personal failings of the Awami Leaguers are blamed on Mujib and *Mujibbad*.⁴⁴

On the other hand, the stress on the very suffix "bad" ("ism"), sounding similar to Marxism, Leninism and Maoism, made *Mujibbad* an irritant to Muslims in general. They found it more repugnant than the secularist provisions in the constitution. The regime's desire to see officials in government, education, media and public enterprises becoming both experts as well as "Mujibbadi", like "red and expert" in communist systems, left an impression that the regime was following communist ideals.⁴⁵ It caused alienation among the majority of civil servants. To the military, *Mujibbad* was a greater nuisance. Mujib himself was absent during the war of liberation. The actual leadership in the battlefield was provided by the East Bengal Regiment, not by the AL.

leaders. It was Bengali nationalism, not *Mujibbad*, which motivated the masses to participate in the liberation struggle. The attempt of the Awami Leaguers to seek legitimacy through the institutionalization of *Mujibbad* as the official state ideology, therefore intensified the military's prevailing anti-AL orientation.

Mujibbad failed to attain its goal, that is, to legitimize the AL regime and the institutions it had established. Not only was it a political liability for the regime, it also provided the pro-Islamic forces an opportunity to depict *Mujibbad* as an alternative to Islamic ideology; their campaigns to portray AL as anti-Islamic found a receptive audience among the Muslim masses.

The Islamic forces were thus successful in redirecting the orientation of popular protest from the secular to the religious channel, because they were not sitting idle even though religion-based political organizations had been outlawed. They began to operate through the traditional religious institutions like the *madrasas*, mosques, and non-political Islamic forums such as the various types of social welfare organizations.⁴⁶ These organizations accommodated many workers and supporters of defunct pro-Islamic parties, and sponsored religious meetings and seminars to revive the Islamic spirit and consciousness among the lower middle class urban dwellers and the rural people. There was no governmental attempt to stop such activities because they used non-political platforms.

It has been alleged that in the 1972-75 period, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islam kept its existence secret and conducted clandestine activities. Its main objective was to discredit *Mujibbad* -- that is, the four basic constitutional principles, namely nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism -- through negative propaganda campaigns.⁴⁷

Besides the anti-government campaigns, the political revival of fundamentalist forces was attempted through the launching of a clandestine "Muslim Bengal" movement in 1973. Participants in this movement included collaborators of the Pakistani military who were in hiding and workers of outlawed Islamic parties. Their aim was to establish an Islamic state in Bangladesh. The "Muslim Bengal" slogan was raised in different places, and the government was scared that there was an underground campaign for a new Pakistan.⁴⁸ However, the movement died out when several of its prominent leaders were arrested for clandestine activities.⁴⁹ The demand for an Islamic state seemed rather premature for the time. The masses were not yet psychologically ready to cooperate with forces that they had denounced as anti-Bangladesh reactionaries during the liberation war.

An important source of support for this movement, though tacit, came from the octogenarian leader Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, who propagated an Islamic version of socialism. Maulana Bhasani launched a severe attack against Indian influence in Bangladesh within a few months of independence. He also criticized the AL's policy of secularism. Marxist scholars, however, contend that anti-Indianism was a garb to veil communal propaganda. As Umar observed:

The banner of this communal propaganda was then taken out from darkness to daylight by the chief of National Awami Party, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani. His anti-Indian propaganda in a communal style increasingly infected the Muslim people with anti-Hindu feeling.⁵⁰

Though anti-Indian propaganda did not result in Hindu-Muslim riots, at the popular level the government was perceived as the defender of Hindu interests while the AL was taken to be a forum for articulating pro-Indian and pro-Hindu interests, thus both the government and AL lost credibility. The AL

government did not dare to prosecute Bhasani because of his high stature and profile. Until independence, he was considered to be a progressive politician, always against vested interests and in favor of the working classes and the poor. However, he was always in the opposition and against the ruling elite as well. Bhasani thus served to popularize the cause of Islam in the realm of politics while the Islamic parties were outlawed.

However, a change was noticeable from the later half of 1973 in the Mujib regime's orientation towards Islam. The regime perceived that secularism as a policy was losing popular support. Its anticipated reform to secularize the system of education had to be cancelled when it was found out, through a survey conducted by the government-appointed Education Commission, that support for secular education was very low; on the other hand, an overwhelming majority wanted religious education to be an integral part of general education.⁵¹ Besides the low level of support for secularist policies, an important development in the domestic sector led to a more tolerant stance on the part of the regime towards the Islamic forces. As the threat increased from the left-wing revolutionaries, who wanted to overthrow the AL government by violent means, Mujib decided to release the collaborators, with the expectation that the pro-Islamic forces would work as a bulwark against the leftist radicals. On November 30, 1973 a general amnesty was granted to collaborators, with the exception of those who had been charged with murder, rape, or arson.⁵² Although the ban on the Islamic parties was not formally withdrawn, the amnesty helped the pro-Islamic parties to reorganize themselves when their senior leaders came out of prison.

Table 4.1**Education Commission Survey**

"Which of the Following Proposals is More Acceptable to You?"

Proposals:

1. There should be no special arrangement for religious teaching in general educational institutions.
2. There should be arrangement for the teaching of ethical principles derived from all religions in general educational institutions.
3. Religious education should be an integral part of general education.
4. Any other opinion.

<i>Proposal</i>	<i>Number of answers</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1	142	5.44
2	399	15.28
3	1951	74.69
4	115	4.40
Total	2612	99.81

Source: *Bangladesh Shikka (Education) Commission Report*, May 1974, p. 61, cited in Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Bangladesh Politics: Secular and Islamic Trends", S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), vol. I (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986), pp. 51, 52.

There were some other important reasons, some of them being external in origin, responsible for the new pro-Islamic leaning in the regime's outlook: the faltering economy, the rise in Islamic consciousness, and the perceived need among the ruling elite for mending relations with the Middle East in order to receive much-needed financial aid and to bolster its own legitimacy.

2. Mujib Administration's Leaning towards the Islamic World

a. Rapprochement with Pakistan

The disintegration of the largest Muslim country, Pakistan, because of Bangladesh's secession had saddened the Muslim world. The Bhutto regime in Pakistan lobbied strongly in the Islamic world against the recognition of Bangladesh. It soon realized, however, that the Islamic nations would not abstain from recognizing Bangladesh indefinitely. So Bhutto changed his strategy and requested the Islamic world to wait until Pakistan could sort out the outstanding problems in accepting the reality of Bangladesh. For the first one and a half year, Bangladesh-Pakistan relations remained cool even though the bitter feelings had subsided. The most important stumbling block in mending relations was Bangladesh's demand to put on trial the Pakistani military personnel who had committed serious crimes against civilians during the period of military occupation. Pakistan refused to recognize Bangladesh until Bangladesh withdrew its demand for a war crimes trial. Other issues of bilateral importance were: the repatriation of Bengalis stranded in Pakistan, Pakistan's acceptance of Biharis in Bangladesh who claimed themselves to be Pakistani citizens and wanted to migrate to Pakistan, and the sharing of assets.

A significant development in breaking the deadlock between Bangladesh and Pakistan was the Delhi Agreement of August 1973 between India and

Pakistan. Bangladesh could not be a party to this deal because of mutual non-recognition but Bangladesh held consultations with India throughout. The agreement provided for the release of the majority of POWs (Pakistani military personnel who surrendered to India on December 16, 1971 in Bangladesh). It also spelled out a pledge by Pakistan not to go ahead with the threatened trial of 203 Bengalis on espionage charges. Most crucially, India guaranteed that the 195 POWs accused by Bangladesh of war crimes would go to Bangladesh for trial only if Pakistan and Bangladesh agreed that the trials should take place.⁵³ Pakistan also agreed to accept the Biharis in Bangladesh. By October 1973, India had released 12,751 POWs, 20,272 Bengalis had come home from Pakistan, and 7,954 non-Bengalis, stranded in Bangladesh, had been accepted by Pakistan.⁵⁴

The agreement improved relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan, but it did not lead to mutual recognition until just before the Islamic Summit in 1974, when Arab leaders put pressure on Pakistan to recognize Bangladesh. A delegation of seven Arab countries led by the foreign minister of Kuwait came to Dhaka on February 21, 1974 to persuade Mujib to participate in the Islamic conference. Because of this pressure, both Bhutto and Mujib agreed to exchange recognition and Mujib went to Pakistan to attend the summit.⁵⁵ Thus, the diplomatic weight of the Middle East brought Pakistan's recognition on February 22, 1974 and made Mujib's participation in the Islamic summit possible, even though his secularist colleagues opposed it bitterly and India was enraged by it.⁵⁶

At the time of Pakistan's recognition of Bangladesh, only 40,000 Biharis had been accepted by Pakistan. By April 1974, all the Bengalis stranded in Pakistan and most of the Pakistani POWs had been repatriated. In May 1974

Pakistan agreed to take an additional 25,000 Biharis. In June 1974, Bhutto visited Bangladesh. Though he was received by a large crowd at the airport, his visit was not very fruitful in terms of bringing the two countries closer. He did not make any further commitment on the Biharis; the issue of sharing assets remained frozen as Pakistan demanded Bangladesh to share debts incurred on projects in East Pakistan. The anticipated boom in bilateral trade did not materialize, because the Pakistani authorities wanted the trade to be conducted in hard currency. Also, the possibility of exporting Bangladeshi tea dimmed as Pakistan already had a long-term contract with Sri Lanka.⁵⁷

b. Building Bridges with the Middle East

In the Middle East, primarily the intention not to embarrass Pakistan, and secondarily Bangladesh's secular ideology, had delayed the granting of recognition to Bangladesh. One of the earliest contacts between Bangladesh and the Middle East took place in August 1972, when the Bangladeshi foreign minister visited Cairo at the invitation of the Egyptian government even though Egypt had not yet recognized Bangladesh. In December 1972, Egypt and Bangladesh concluded a one-year trade agreement, according to which Bangladesh would export jute products, newsprint and paper to Egypt.⁵⁸ By the end of 1972, only Iraq and South Yemen had recognized Bangladesh. By early 1973, the government of Bangladesh had established some contacts with Algeria.⁵⁹ Mujib's participation in the fourth non-aligned summit in Algiers in September 1973, and his stopping over in Bahrain on the return trip home, was a great opportunity for him to meet Middle Eastern leaders. In Bahrain, Mujib's proclamation of support for the Arab countries in their struggle against Zionist Israel brought quick recognition from many Arab countries. Egypt, Syria, the Sudan and Libya recognized Bangladesh rightaway.⁶⁰

The Arab-Israeli war in October 1973 provided another opportunity for Mujib to win the sympathy of the Arab world. The government of Bangladesh sent a team of doctors from the army medical corps to Syria and a plane-load of tea to Egypt.

In 1974, Bangladesh leaned more towards the Middle East. The first important development, symptomatic of this leaning, was Bangladesh's participation in the Islamic summit and Pakistan's recognition of Bangladesh. At the same time, Bangladesh was admitted as a member of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC).⁶¹ In August 1974, Bangladesh participated in the Islamic finance ministers' conference in Saudi Arabia, and it also participated in the Islamic foreign ministers' conference held in Kuala Lumpur.⁶²

An important reason for the Mujib regime's leaning towards the Islamic world was the perceived need of financial assistance as Bangladesh was in the midst of an economic political disaster. The country's economic condition deteriorated as severe famine and floods struck Bangladesh. The economy was on the verge of collapse. The support for the regime plummeted and, along with it, the policy of secularism became discredited. In search of financial aid, the foreign minister of Bangladesh visited Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.), Bahrain and Qatar in early 1974. The devastating floods and famine of 1974 brought the regime to its knees. Mujib himself now went on a tour to the U.S., Iraq, Egypt and Kuwait. Efforts to win Islamic sympathy paid off to some extent. Saudi Arabia donated \$10 million as disaster relief even though she did not yet recognize Bangladesh.⁶³ OPEC became a major aid provider, with Bangladesh receiving \$82 million in OPEC commitments in 1974.⁶⁴ In early 1975, Bangladesh became a member of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

Table 4.2**Recognition of Bangladesh by Middle Eastern States**

Iraq	June 24, 1972
Algeria, Mauritania, Tunisia	July 17, 1973
Morocco	July 20, 1973
Egypt, Syria	September 15, 1973
Sudan, Libya	September 1973
Kuwait	November 1973
Pakistan, Turkey	February 22, 1974
U.A.E.	March 1974
Saudi Arabia	August 16, 1975
Jordan, Iran, Qatar, Yemen	August 19, 20, 21, 1975.

Source: Syed Anwar Hossain, "Bangladesh and Islamic Countries 1972-83", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: Volume Three, Global Politics* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1988), p. 139.

Even though officially secularism remained a guiding principle of state policy, the Mujib government had practically entered the Islamic camp in the realm of external relations, without severing its warm relationship with India and the socialist bloc. The secular orientation of the government had become diluted, more so in foreign policy than on domestic issues. Mujib did not want to move towards an Islamic state, but neither did he want to keep Bangladesh isolated from the Islamic world, particularly from the international Islamic forums.

Mujib himself was a moderate secularist, but he always felt uneasy in keeping aloof from Islam. This was quite evident in the later part of his tenure. The AL regime had three main factions in terms of orientation towards Islam: moderate secularists, hard-line secularists, and pro-Islamic. Mujib, Nazrul Islam, Kamal Hossain, Abdul Malek Ukil, Abdul Mannan, and Mansur Ali -- mostly senior leaders -- belonged to the first category. They represented the mainstream view in the AL. Tajuddin Ahmed, Abdus Samad Azad, Abdur Razzaq, Muhiuddin Ahmed, Phani Bhusan Majumder and Dhiren Dutta were hard-core secularists. The first four in this category were pro-Soviet leftist. Majumder and Dutta were not socialists but believers in secularism; they also supported the hard-line faction because secularist policies benefitted the Hindu community. Khondker, Taheruddin Thakur and Obaidur Rahman were prominent members in the pro-Islamic faction. They had been in favor of a compromise with Pakistan, rather than complete secession, during the war of liberation. So they kept a relatively low profile in the early years of independence in fear of exposing their pro-Pakistani sympathies. They feigned absolute loyalty to Mujib for the sake of political survival. However, Tajuddin's departure from the cabinet and Bangladesh's participation in Islamic summits strengthened the pro-Islamic faction, as India's influence on the AL regime

declined in matters of policy towards Islam. Such changes in the configuration of power within the AL regime had a significant correlation with the growing dissatisfaction of the military towards the Mujib government.

3. Alienation of the Military and the Fall of Mujib

A crucial development in the domestic sphere was the alienation of the military from the regime and its ideology. An important reason for its ideological alienation was that, during the Pakistani period, military training used to take place in military academies located in West Pakistan. Bengalis who were recruited to the military had to receive training in West Pakistan, and many of them had to serve in West Pakistan for long periods of time. Particularly, senior Bengali officers were mostly posted in West Pakistan. The Bengali military personnel had thus inculcated Islam-oriented socio-political values held by the West Pakistani society.

A clear manifestation of the military's discontent towards Mujib's AL government was the voting pattern in military cantonments in the March 1973 general elections. Mujib and his colleagues were disturbed to find that the votes recorded in the military cantonments had gone overwhelmingly against the AL candidates.⁶⁵ Apart from ideological reasons, there were several important factors behind the military's dissatisfaction. Firstly, military training institutions and garrisons had been damaged or destroyed during the war in 1971. But the AL government did not take effective measures for the reconstruction of these facilities. The defense services also remained poorly equipped. The Indian military took away as "booty" the military hardware left over by the Pakistani defense forces. This made the military resentful of Indo-Bangladesh friendship.

Secondly, the government budget for the defense services was not only

minimal but it was gradually reduced. In the 1973-74 budget, the revenue expenditure on defense was around 16 percent, but in 1974-75 budget it came down to 15 percent and then again to 13 percent in the 1975-76 budget estimates.⁶⁶

Thirdly, there was the establishment of the *Rakkhi Bahini*, which was organized under the direction of the Prime Minister's office. It was a de facto militia of the AL. To quote Khan:

Unsure of the ideological commitments of different sectors of the Bangladesh Liberation Forces, Mujib sought to raise a division of security forces which would have unquestioned loyalty to the new regime. Called the *Jatio Rakkhi Bahini*, this new contingent was designed as a countervailing force to the Bangladesh regular army.⁶⁷

Despite all these grievances against the AL regime, the military remained immobilized because of an internal schism in the early years. The schism was caused by the repatriation of Bengali military personnel who had been stranded in West Pakistan during the war. The repatriated personnel came back in 1973 and found that junior servicemen who had participated in the liberation war, known as freedom fighters, had attained higher positions, because of quick promotions, even though the repatriated officers were senior and better trained. They were also conservative and critical about the whole issue of liberation. The AL did not trust them, but, as Ahmed observed:

When they were asked by the Prime Minister to move to the aid of the civil authorities and when in fact they conducted a number of successful operations they not only regained their sense of unity and cohesion but also perceived that their services were indispensable.⁶⁸

By early 1974, the law and order situation had deteriorated further, the radical leftist parties assumed an increasingly violent role, and the AL MPs and workers felt more and more insecure as political assassinations increased. To deal with the situation, the government, in February 1974, enacted the Special Powers Act, providing for preventive detention of any person and outlawing of any political party if their activities were considered prejudicial to the interests of the state.⁶⁹ The military was called in to help law-enforcement agencies in checking smuggling and in launching counter-insurgency campaigns. As the military successfully cracked down on smugglers, hoarders, and black marketeers, and improved the law and order situation by containing insurgency, it came to perceive that only they could save the country from economic disaster and socio-political disorder. It also became aware of the weakness of the regime, its unpopularity, and the corrupt practices of many AL leaders.

Many young military officers felt frustrated, because many criminals, caught red-handed, had to be released as a result of interference by AL MPs and stalwarts. One incident, involving a brawl between a prominent AL leader and a young military officer, further soured the relationship between the military and the AL government. Significantly, Mujib himself became implicated as the military officer, along with some colleagues, went to Mujib directly to seek justice. Mujib was irritated at their direct approach, and dismissed a few of them. However, AL members involved in the dispute went unpunished. The dismissed officers became willing recruits to the team of young colonels who plotted to overthrow Mujib.⁷⁰

The Mujib regime was ousted on August 15, 1975 in a bloody coup staged by a group of disgruntled young officers, who resented the regime's corrupt practices and Mujib's personal weakness and failure to rein in his corrupt

colleagues. They also disliked the official ideology of secularism, which appeared as a symbol of Indian hegemony over Bangladesh. They saw an alternative path in an Islam-oriented state even though they did not have any political blueprint to implement on the eve of their assumption of power. The coup was well planned in terms of logistics and strategy, but the coup leaders, though they got the enthusiastic cooperation of the pro-Islamic faction of the AL regime, did not have a well thought out platform or program to implement.

4. Summary and Conclusions

During the Mujib phase Bangladesh remained constitutionally a secular state. Though secularism became unpopular within a short time, the government did not change its official position. Secularism became unpopular because the people perceived it to be an ideology to perpetuate the prevailing Indo-Bangladesh friendship in which Bangladesh appeared to occupy a subordinate position vis-a-vis India. Secularism was also perceived as assuring a strong role for the Hindu minority in the socio-political life of Bangladesh. To allay popular suspicion as well as to appease the west, Mujib dropped Tajuddin Ahmed from the cabinet. Tajuddin had been the staunchest advocate of secularism and the most vocal pro-Indian senior AL leader in Mujib's cabinet. To placate the pro-Islamic and right-wing forces, Mujib granted a general amnesty to collaborators who had not been convicted of serious crimes. However, the religion-based political parties, which were in fact Islamic fundamentalist and right-wing pro-Islamic parties, remained outlawed throughout Mujib's rule.

The Mujib government did not dare to offend the people by secularizing the system of education. Even the western educated elite was in favor of keeping religious education as an integral part of general education. The secondary school curriculum continued to provide for religious education as was the norm

during the Pakistani period. The government kept on funding *madrassa* education, the orthodox Islamic educational system. In the realm of foreign policy, the regime entered the Islamic camp through active participation in international Islamic forums and organizations, such as the Organization of Islamic Conference and Islamic Development Bank. This pro-Islamic posture in foreign policy was, however, necessitated by the near-bankruptcy of the national economy and the expectation of substantial financial aid from the Middle East. However, even that pro-Islamic chord in Mujib's foreign policy was not orchestrated at the expense of friendship with India and the socialist bloc.

Overall, Mujib himself compromised on the issue of secularism. The state's official secular status survived, but the government made substantial concessions to Islam by following the same Islam-oriented policies and programs inherited from the Pakistani period in certain domestic sectors, such as education and the civil code. Solidarity with the Islamic world and Islamic causes was another manifestation of Mujib's concession to the rising Islamic sentiment among the masses. However, Mujib's compromise on the issue of secularism vis-a-vis Islam was limited within the parameters of the constitutional provisions. Mujib ensured non-recognition of any state religion, while religion-based parties remained outlawed. Thus, under Mujib the state basically ensured polity-separation secularization, that is, institutional separation of religion and polity, although the government often blurred the distinction between secular and religious issues and acted against the spirit of its guiding principles.

Notes

- ¹ Joseph T. O'Connell, "Dilemmas of Secularism in Bangladesh", in Bardwell L. Smith (ed.), *Religion and Social Conflict in South Asia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), p. 67.
- ² Mahabubullah, "Islam and Bengali Nationalism", in Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed.), *Bangladesh: Society, Religion and Politics* (Chittagong: South Asia Studies Group, 1985), p. 31.
- ³ M. Rashiduzzaman, "Leadership, Organization, Strategies and Tactics of the Bangla Desh Movement", *Asian Survey*, XII, no. 3 (March 1972), p. 187.
- ⁴ Tajuddin's role in the provisional government during the liberation war and his relationship with India are well illustrated by Anthony Mascarenhas and Sukharanjan Dasgupta. See Anthony Mascarenhas, *Bangladesh A Legacy of Blood* (London: Hodder And Stoughton, 1986); Sukharanjan Dasgupta, *Midnight Massacre in Dacca* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978).
- ⁵ M. A. Aziz, *Can There Be Durable Peace In the Sub-Continent?* (Dhaka: Dahuk Publishers, 1978), p. 12.
- ⁶ Donald E. Smith, "Secularization in Bangladesh", *Worldview*, vol. 16, no. 40 (April 1973), p. 14. Emphasis added.
- ⁷ Abul Mansur Ahmed, *Amar Dhekha Rajnitir Panchas Bachar* (Fifty Years of Politics as I Saw it) (Dhaka: Khoshroz Kitab Mahal, 1984), p. 579.
- ⁸ Abul Fazl Huq, "Constitutional Development (1972-1982)", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: Volume Two, Domestic Politics* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986), p. 52.
- ⁹ *Sonar Bangla*, (in Bengali), January 25, 1972.
- ¹⁰ Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladeshe Dharmavittik Rajnitir Punoruth-than" (Revival of Religion-based Politics in Bangladesh), *Bichitra*, vol. 13, no. 25 (November 30, 1984), p. 23.
- ¹¹ The law defined a 'collaborator' as a person who had
 - (i) participated, aided or rendered material assistance to the Pakistan military in sustaining its occupation of Bangladesh;
 - (ii) waged war or abetted in waging war against the People's Republic of Bangladesh;
 - (iii) actively resisted or sabotaged the efforts of the liberation forces of Bangladesh;
 - (iv) made public statements or voluntarily participated in propaganda in favor of the occupation army within or outside Bangladesh;

(v) participated in by-elections held during the period of occupation.

Source: Moudud Ahmed, *Bangladesh: Era Of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman* (Dhaka: University Press, 1983), p. 44.

- 12 Tushar Kanti Barua, *Political Elite in Bangladesh* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1978), pp. 58, 59.
- 13 The first batch of collaborators arraigned by the authorities included 15 eminent personalities. They were the following: Nurul Amin, Hamidul Huq Choudhury, Khan A. Sabur, Mahmud Ali, Wahiduzzaman Khan Khawja Khairuddin, Kazi A. Kader, Ghulam Azam, Shah Azizur Rahman, A. Q. M. Shafiqul Islam, A. Jabbar Khaddar, Raja Tridib Roy, Professor Shamsul Huq, Obaidullah Majumder, and Aung Shue Prue. Many of them were Muslim League leaders. Source: Moudud Ahmed, pp. 51, 85.
- 14 S. K. Chakrabarti, *The Evolution of Politics in Bangladesh* (New Delhi: Associated Publishing House, 1978), p. 222.
- 15 Article 12, *Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*, 1972.
- 16 Zillur R. Khan, *Leadership in the Least Developed Nation: Bangladesh* (Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1983), p. 81.
- 17 Dilip K. Ghosh, "The Origins of Secularism in the Ideology of Bangladesh", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1975, p. 242.
- 18 Abul Fazl Huq, p. 52.
- 19 The adherents of this view, among others, are: Abul Fazl Huq, Syed Anwar Hussain, Emajuddin Ahmed, Rounaq Jahan, Zillur Rahman Khan, S. K. Chakrabarti, S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain.
- 20 Robert LaPorte, Jr., "Pakistan in 1971: The Disintegration of a Nation", *Asian Survey*, XII, no. 2 (February 1972), p. 103.
- 21 The advocates of this view are, for example, M. A. Aziz, M. Rashiduzzaman, Matiur Rahman, and S. A. Siddique.
- 22 Matiur Rahman, *Bangladesh Today* (London: News & Media, 1978), p. 71.
- 23 S. A. Siddiqui, *The Pattern of Secularism in India and Bangladesh* (Chittagong: 1973), p. 14.
- 24 It is important to clarify that the present author does not equate secularism with pro-Indianism. Secularism is not a principle of the state of India only and not all secularists in Bangladesh are pro-Indian either. However, it is more or less true that in Bangladesh pro-Indian elements, that is, those who want a warm relationship with India reminiscent of the Mujib period, are mostly secularists.
- 25 Tushar Kanti Barua and Syed Serajul Islam share this view.
- 26 Tushar Kanti Barua, p. 138.

- 27 Syed Serajul Islam, "The State and Economic Development: an Analysis of the Role of the State in the Economic Development of Bangladesh", v. 1, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 1982, p. 199.
- 28 The adherents of this perspective are: K. M. Mohsin, M. Abdul Hafiz, and Amir-ul Islam.
- 29 M. Abdul Hafiz, "Bangladesh-Pakistan Relations: Still Developing?", *BISS Journal*, vol. 6, no. 3 (July 1985), p. 353; K. M. Mohsin, "Trends of Islam in Bangladesh", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: History and Culture*, vol. I (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986), p. 31.
- 30 Amir-ul Islam, *Rashtra Sangbidhan O Dharma* (Constitution and Religion) (Dhaka: Shahid Serniabat, 1988), p. 15.
- 31 K. M. Mohsin, "Trends of Islam in Bangladesh", p. 31.
- 32 Dilip K. Ghosh and David Pearl share this view.
- 33 Ghosh, pp. 258, 259.
- 34 David Pearl, "Bangladesh: Islamic Laws in a Secular State", *South Asian Review*, vol. 8, no. 1, (October 1974), pp. 33, 34.
- 35 Badruddin Umar, Ahmed Sharif, and Kazi Nur-uzzaman, among others, belong to the neo-Marxist school.
- 36 For example, see Badruddin Umar, "1971 Shaler Mukti-zudh-her Chetana O Dharmer Rajnaitik Bybohar" (The Spirit of 1971 Liberation War and the Political Use of Religion), *Bichitra*, vol. 16, no. 49 (May 4, 1988); Kazi Nur-uzzaman, *Muktizodh-ha O Rajniti* (Freedom Fighter and Politics) (Dhaka: Dana Prakashani, 1985).
- 37 The JRB was a paramilitary force directly controlled by the Department of Cabinet Affairs, a portfolio that belonged to the PM. In reality, the paramilitary force acted under the order of AL stalwarts as if it were AL's own militia.
- 38 The radical revolutionaries were trying to bring about a second revolution in Bangladesh through a mass movement as well as armed struggles. They aimed at a social revolution against the exploiting classes and to establish a "peoples democratic republic" under the leadership of a workers-peasants party. See, for an elaborate discussion on this topic, Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Bangladesh In 1974: Economic Crisis And Political Polarization", *Asian Survey* XV, no. 2 (February 1975).
- 39 Rounaq Jahan, "Bangladesh In 1972: Nation Building In A New State", *Asian Survey*, XIII, no. 2 (February 1973), p. 205.
- 40 Talukder Maniruzzaman, *The Bangladesh Revolution And Its Aftermath* (Dhaka: The University Press 1988), p. 176.
- 41 A. T. R. Rahman, "Administration and Its Political Environment in

- Bangladesh", *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 47, no. 2 (Summer 1974), p. 189.
- 42 *Ibid.*, p. 181.
- 43 Khondker Mohammad Ilias, *Mujibbad* (Mujibism) (Dhaka: National Publications, 1972).
- 44 Rounaq Jahan, "Bangladesh In 1972....", p. 206. Emphasis added.
- 45 A. T. R. Rahman, pp. 190, 191.
- 46 M. H. Choudhury, "Nationalism, Religion and Politics in Bangladesh", in Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed.), *Bangladesh: Society, Religion and Politics*, p. 67.
- 47 B. M. M. Kabir, "Jamaat-e-Islam and Student Politics: An Analysis of the Relationship between Jamaat-e-Islam and Islami Chattra Shibir", Unpublished manuscript, Department of Political Science, Chittagong University, p. 3.
- 48 Barua, p. 61.
- 49 M. Rashiduzzaman, "Changing Political Patterns In Bangladesh: Internal Constraints and External Fears", *Asian Survey*, XVII, no. 9 (September 1977), p. 798.
- 50 Badruddin Umar, *Politics and Society in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Subarna, 1987), p. 190.
- 51 The Mujib government appointed a commission on education which undertook a public opinion survey on the educational system of Bangladesh. The survey indicated that support for secular education was limited to only about 21 per cent of the western-educated elite while the vast majority, approximately 75 per cent, was in favor of having religious education as an integral part of general education. The survey was conducted in 1974. The sample was randomly chosen from school, college, university and *madrassa* teachers, higher echelons of the bureaucracy, literary figures and newspaper editors. See Talukder Maniruzzaman, "Bangladesh Politics: Secular and Islamic Trends", in Chakravarty and Narain (eds.), vol. I, pp. 51, 52.
- 52 Talukder Maniruzzaman, *Group Interests and Political Changes -- Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1982), pp. 156, 157.
- 53 Denis Wright, *Bangladesh -- Origins and Indian Ocean Relations (1971-1975)* (New Delhi: Sterling, 1983), p. 186.
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 189.
- 55 Maniruzzaman, *Group Interests and Political Changes*, pp. 136, 137.
- 56 The cabinet was divided on the issue of participation in the summit. The secularists led by Tajuddin and Abdus Samad Azad were strongly against it and the pro-Islamic faction of Khondker and Taheruddin Thakur were all out for it. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs lobbied strongly for participation.

After prolonged deliberations, the pro-participation group won.

- 57 Denis Wright, pp. 190-200.
- 58 *Ibid.*, pp. 231, 232.
- 59 M. Golam Mostafa, "Bangladesh Foreign Policy: The Middle East Factor", *BISS Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1 (January 1986), pp. 37, 38.
- 60 Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladesh and Islamic Countries 1972-1983", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: Volume Three, Global Politics* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1988), pp. 139, 140.
- 61 Mizanur Rahman Khan, "Islamic Development Bank: A New Approach to Multilateral Financing", *BISS Journal*, vol. 4, no. 4, (October 1983), p. 117.
- 62 Maniruzzaman, *Group Interests and Political changes*, p. 141.
- 63 M. Golam Mostafa, "Bangladesh Foreign Policy: the Middle East Factor", p. 39.
- 64 Abdul Khaleque, *Political Economy of Financial Aid* (Dhaka: Polwel, 1980), pp. 341, 343.
- 65 Mascarenhas, p. 34
- 66 Emajuddin Ahmed, "The August 1975 Coup d'Etat", in Chakravarty and Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: Volume Two, Domestic Politics* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986), pp. 29, 30.
- 67 Zillur Rahman Khan, "Politicization of the Bangladesh Military: A Response to Perceived Shortcomings of Civilian Government", *Asian Survey*, XXI, no. 5 (May 1981), pp. 553, 554.
- 68 Emajuddin Ahmed, "The August 1975 Coup d'Etat", p.31.
- 69 Emajuddin Ahmed, *Bureaucratic Elites In Segmented Economic Growth: Pakistan And Bangladesh* (Dhaka: University Press, 1980), p. 159.
- 70 The brawl involved the Dhaka city AL chief, Ghazi Golam Mustafa, and a charismatic army officer who was a former freedom fighter, Major Shariful Huq Dalim. Dalim and his wife were insulted and beaten up by Mustafa's men. The incident worsened the relationship between the military and the AL. It added to the prevailing frustration of the military caused by the regime's connivance at the wrongdoings of AI, MPs and workers. See Moudud Ahmed, *Bangladesh: Era Of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*.

CHAPTER 5

THE SHIFT TO THE ISLAMIC DIMENSION: POLICY UNDER ZIA

The dualistic culture of the Bengali Muslims -- which harmonizes loyalty to Islam and loyalty to Bengali ethno-linguistic identity -- made them moderate, particularly in terms of their orientation towards the role of Islam in politics. However, this dualism is also a source of conflict when either the Islamic or the Bengali dimension of their identity is reinforced by internal or external forces or both. During the Mujib phase, the regime tried to promote secularism instead of Islam. On the other hand, the Muslim masses cultivated Islam¹ as they perceived that their religion had lost state patronage. Later on, their Islamic awareness was strengthened further by the global Islamic resurgence. Thus, the conflict between Islamic identity and Bengali identity affected national unity, and a consensus over fundamental values could not emerge. Zia, Mujib's successor, tried to resolve the conflict by evolving a new "Bangladeshi" identity. The new national identity incorporated both territorial and ethno-linguistic base of nationality and simultaneously it recognized the religion of the overwhelmingly Muslim masses of Bangladesh.

This chapter deals mainly with the Zia period. It briefly refers to the Mushtaque interlude during which an attempt was made to put an Islamic image on the constitutionally secular state by symbolic gestures. However, Mushtaque was in power for a short and turbulent period and did not have the opportunity to bring lasting changes in state policy or ideology.

1. The Military Coup and Mushtaque's Interlude

The military coup on August 15, 1975 played a crucial role in changing the relationship between Islam and the state in Bangladesh. On the one hand, it

initiated the military's involvement in politics. On the other hand, it allowed pro-Islamic and right-wing political parties to come to the forefront of Bangladesh politics in terms of sharing power, thus keeping the pro-secular and pro-socialist parties at bay. Though, immediately after the coup, a new AL government under the leadership of Khondker Mushtaque Ahmed stayed on in power, in due course the AL and the leftist parties became the losers. The coup thus set in new trends in terms of policies and policy-makers that were to prevail in Bangladesh for years to come.

Not only were the AL and the leftist forces the losers, the plotters of the coup themselves could not hold on to power for long. The latter shared political power with Mushtaque only for two and a half months. From the viewpoint of the plotters, who now formed a political party, the coup was a successful political revolution. It not only purged a segment of the ruling elite but it also ensured the autonomy of the state from India's hegemonic influence. The coup enabled the state, one argument goes, to re-evaluate its pro-Indian policy, pursued by the Mujib regime at the expense of Islam and the Muslim majority. This view is also shared by the Islamic fundamentalist parties.²

A contending view, shared by the AL and the leftist parties, portrays the coup as a set of murders committed by a group of aspiring colonels to capture political power. It was a conspiracy, it is alleged, between the colonels and the right-wing pro-Pakistani and pro-Islamic clique within the AL.³

A third position, represented by those benefitting from the coup -- that is, the successor governments of Zia and Ershad -- features a mysterious silence about the coup and the changes brought about by it.⁴ Here the tendency is to avoid the controversial issue. A commission was instituted to investigate the coup and the resulting bloodbath, but the report of investigation has never been

made public. No official trial of the coup makers has taken place either.

There is room for speculation that the coup was a conspiracy hatched by disgruntled colonels in collaboration with the right-wing pro-Islamic clique in the AL. But what is more relevant for our study is that the coup set the stage for an ideological re-orientation of the state away from secularism and gradually towards Islam.

Immediately after taking over the presidency, Mushtaque introduced four new slogans which had their immediate intended effect on the masses. Mushtaque introduced emotive slogans in his speech to the nation, broadcast by radio and television on the morning of August 15, 1975. The slogans, *Assalamu-Alaikum* (peace be on you), *Bismillah-ar Rahman ar-Rahim* (in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful), *Khuda Hafez* (God be our safeguard) and Bangladesh *Zindabad* (long live Bangladesh), are all, at least the first three, evidently Islamic. The first two are Arabic, and the latter two Persian. Such slogans manifested the Islamic orientation of the new regime, and directly appealed to Muslim sentiment. As Mushtaque himself observed later:

I know my people, otherwise national slogans do not change overnight. The people did not protest; rather they fully accepted it. It was in tune with people's mind and expectations. People did not like secularism and socialism; so they expected the change.⁵

The AL had introduced the slogan *Joy Bangla* (victory be to Bengal) during the election of 1970 and it became a popular slogan during the war of liberation in 1971. However, in the post-independence period *Joy Bangla* gradually lost its popularity because of its secular character, even though it remained the most oft-repeated slogan of the Mujib government and AL. The orthodox Muslims could never reconcile to it because of its association with Hindu imagery. The very word *joy* appeared to them to be "Hindu" in spirit. Also, importantly, the

similarity between *Joy Bangla* to *Jai Hind*, the popular Indian national slogan, made *Joy Bangla* sound increasingly embarrassing to the Muslims in the course of rising anti-Indian feelings.

Apart from the new slogans, radio broadcasts on August 15, 1975 consisted almost exclusively of curt announcements about curfews, recitations from the Quran, and music -- often martial in character -- associated with Pakistan. Also noticeable was the absence of Tagore songs and readings from the *Bhagavada Gita*.⁶ Thus, on the morning of August 15, 1975, people could easily recognize that the new regime was definitely not pro-secular nor pro-Indian, rather it was clearly pro-Islamic. The regime thus won instant approval and support from the masses.

This approval was evident from the fact that there was no attempt on behalf of the populace to publicly protest Mujib's murder or to mobilize support against the coup. Rather, many AL leaders and workers ran away to escape arrest. When, on August 15, which happened to be a Friday, dawn to dusk curfew was lifted for two and a half hours to let Muslims perform their Friday congregational prayer, people rushed out in large numbers to mosques and, after the prayer was over, went straight back home at the resumption of curfew, without causing chaos or public disorder. This demonstrated popular acceptance of the coup and Mushtaque's leadership.

Though Mushtaque enthusiastically portrayed his pro-Islamic orientation on August 15, 1975, his approach towards restructuring the relationship between Islam and the state was quite cautious and compromising. Mushtaque, as observed by O'Donnell, endeavored to achieve a balance between the secular-oriented nationalists and pro-Islamic forces. In order to strike a balance between the freedom fighters and the repatriated military officers, he appointed

General Khalilur Rahman, a repatriate, to a new post as the chief of defense staff and another senior repatriate as the head of the Bangladesh Rifles, the border security force.⁷

Mushtaque's government allowed a large number of pilgrims to go for *hajj* and for the first time a cabinet minister was made the head of an official *hajj* delegation. Some of the political prisoners belonging to NAP-Bhasani and Jamaat-e-Islam were released. In the realm of foreign relations, Pakistan was the first country to recognize the new regime. Saudi Arabia and China, which until then had not recognized Bangladesh, announced diplomatic recognition. Exchanges of ambassadors with Pakistan and China were also announced.⁸

Mushtaque thus made symbolic gestures to Islam in the realm of domestic policy, while in foreign relations Bangladesh's entrance into the Islamic camp, which had been initiated during Mujib's tenure, was further secured. However, Mushtaque did not alter any of Mujib's four principles -- nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism. Nonetheless, he de-emphasized secularism and portrayed an Islamic orientation, without officially eliminating secularism as a basic principle guiding state behavior. As Khan notes:

Instead of a continued emphasis on secularism, Mushtaque tried to incorporate Islam into the life of the new republic in more intimate ways. Being a religious Muslim and coming from a long line of religious leaders, Mushtaque sincerely felt that the future of Bangladesh lay in the direction of the Muslim world.⁹

There are important reasons why Mushtaque paradoxically clung to constitutional secularism. Firstly, he did not have enough time to devise and pursue an independent course on policy. Secondly, he did not have any independent base of power in terms of his own political organization. He did not dare veer away from constitutional secularism without alienating the

members of his cabinet, all of whom belonged to the AL. Most of them had only grudgingly accepted Mushtaque's leadership, fearing that non-cooperation with him would land them in jail. Even though some senior AL leaders were killed or imprisoned during his two and a half months in office, officially he was heading an AL government. So, his maneuverability was limited, and he had to follow the basic principles agreed upon by the AL leadership during Mujib's rule.

Thirdly, the coup-leaders' violation of military discipline and their staying with Mushtaque in the official presidential residence, was not liked by the senior military officers. The latter were not involved in the coup but approved of it to avoid further bloodshed and a potential civil war. More importantly, there were many pro-Mujib officers in key civilian and military positions who felt bitterly about the coup, and could have challenged Mushtaque if the basic constitutional principles were sacrificed. Mushtaque did not have enough time nor the courage to purge such elements from the civilian and military establishments. His options were thus very limited and, as a result, he had to retain constitutional secularism while simultaneously making symbolic Islamic gestures.

2. Coup and Counter-Coup and the Emergence of Zia

Pro-Secular, pro-Indian and pro-Soviet forces among the general public as well as in the military considered Mushtaque's regime to be illegitimate. They observed a semblance of compliance as they waited for the right opportunity to strike against Mushtaque. They plotted secretly to overthrow him and executed their plot on November 3, 1975. The coup was partially successful. Mushtaque and his cabinet had to resign. But the plotters, under the leadership of Brigadier Khaled Musharrat, could not install a pro-Mujib AL government

because the four seniormost AL leaders, who had been in prison since the earlier coup on August 15, were assassinated mysteriously in their prison cells, apparently on the orders of the leaders of the August coup.¹⁰

The unexpected assassinations dismayed the coup-leaders as their plan for a quick governmental transition fell into disarray. They chose to make Mohammad Sayem, chief justice of the supreme court, the president of the country, declared martial law and suspended the parliament. Brigadier Musharraf, the ring-leader of the coup, was a controversial figure because of his pro-Indian leanings. The military rank and file were therefore not in favor of this coup. On the other hand, General Ziaur Rahman, who had been retired and replaced by Musharraf as the chief of army staff on November 3, was a popular figure because of his nationalist, anti-Indian and anti-AL orientation, particularly among the freedom fighters. Pro-Zia forces together with radical anti-AL revolutionaries¹¹ launched a counter-attack against Musharraf and forces loyal to him on November 7. Musharraf was killed, and his collaborators in the military and AL were arrested.

The counter-coup on November 7 brought General Zia back into the limelight of Bangladesh politics. Zia was reinstated as the chief of staff of the army. President Sayem, who had been installed by Musharraf, stayed on, while martial law continued and the parliament remained suspended. A military council was formed to govern the country. Sayem was designated Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) and the chiefs of three defense services were made Deputy Chief Martial Law Administrators (DCMLA). All political parties and political activity were banned. Zia, an ambitious general who had hitherto kept his political ambitions concealed, emerged as the *de facto* ruler. Sayem stayed under Zia's shadow as the titular President and CMLA. However, Zia did not

wait too long to assert power formally. On November 30, 1976, he assumed the office of CMLA, and on April 20, 1977 he became President.¹²

An attempt to radically Islamize the state of Bangladesh occurred during the early days of Zia's martial law rule. Pro-Islamic circles exerted acute pressure on Zia to declare Bangladesh an Islamic Republic and to forge a confederation with Pakistan. The then Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Air Vice Marshal Mohammad Golam Tawab, and pro-Jamaat-e-Islam forces organized a mass meeting and demonstration in support of this demand.¹³

Libya was also involved in this move. Tawab paid a visit to Libya and, on his return, spearheaded the short-lived movement for an Islamic state. In March 1976, a mammoth gathering on *Seerat un Nabi* (conference on the life of the Prophet) was held in Dhaka. Tawab, a former chief justice, and the ambassador of Libya were among the prominent speakers at the conference.¹⁴ Instead of succumbing to the demand for an Islamic state, Zia forced Tawab to resign and compelled him to leave Bangladesh in April 1976. With the departure of Tawab, the movement dissipated as it did not have any grassroots support.¹⁵ The only way the pro-Islamic forces could have attained their goal was a coup against Zia, or internal lobbying within the armed forces to exert pressure on Zia. When their most important contact in the defense services failed to overpower Zia, the hope for a quick-fix Islamization died.

A very significant policy of the Zia regime was to change the identity of the nation -- from being "Bengali" to "Bangladeshi". The re-orientation of national identity together with the elimination of secularism was a major milestone in the process towards the de-secularization of the state. In 1977 Zia amended, through an ordinance, the constitution to stipulate that a citizen of Bangladesh would be termed as "Bangladeshi" and not "Bengali" as provided for in the 1972

constitution. Though on the surface it appeared to be a minor change, in reality it carried a wholly different ideological orientation from what had been pursued by the AL regime under Mujib. It was a shift away from the secular dimension of Bengali identity to the Islamic dimension. The former had been associated with secular nationalism while the latter was a fusion of ethnicity and Islam, referring to the fact that the overwhelming majority of the population of Bangladesh is Muslim.

Zia thus tried to co-opt the Islamic fundamentalists but, at the same time, he did not want to go too far as to be branded an Islamic orthodox leader and to be accused of denying the minorities a role in the national life. What Zia was really aiming at was to inspire a strong feeling of nationalism which would unite the nation. He preferred to infuse Islam into ethnic consciousness, which would differentiate the people of Bangladesh from the Bengalis in India and thus work as a rallying ground against any threat from India or from domestic pro-secular forces. In this manner, Zia wanted to strengthen his own platform for a moderately Islamic state through the infusion of an Islamic identity in nationhood.

The boldest step undertaken by Zia in parting from a secular orientation was the elimination of secularism from the constitution. By the Proclamations (Amendments) Order, 1977, Zia amended the constitution, striking out the clauses making secularism a basic principle of state policy. Secularism was replaced by "absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah". After the amendments, the preamble to the constitution read:

We, the people of Bangladesh,... pledging that the high ideals of absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah, nationalism, democracy and socialism meaning economic and social justice,... shall be the fundamental principles of the Constitution.¹⁶

The elaboration of the fundamental principles of state policy in the amended constitution made the same point:

The principles of absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah, nationalism, democracy and socialism meaning economic and social justice, together with the principles derived from them..., shall constitute the fundamental principles of state policy.¹⁷

The amended constitution further emphasized that "absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah shall be the basis of all actions." Socialism was not struck out but its meaning was diluted so as to be in harmony with Islamic principles. The fundamental principles of state policy in the amended constitution also spelled out the basic guidelines for international relations. Zia's amendments added a new clause:

The state shall endeavour to consolidate, preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity.¹⁸

Thus, the salience of Islam in building bridges with the Islamic world, which were damaged during the war of liberation and the subsequent secular orientation of the state, was restored. To facilitate further accommodation with Islam, it should be noticed, the clause stipulating socialism as a fundamental principle of state policy in 1972 constitution was also diluted. The amended constitution defined socialism as meaning economic and social justice, values which are in agreement with the principles of Islamic social justice. Even though under Zia's initiatives Bangladesh was not transformed into an Islamic Republic, the state thus did acquire an Islamic orientation.

The most important reason behind the elimination of secularism was that it had become unpopular and discredited. It was a reminder of the Mujib regime and its cold shoulder towards Islam. Secularism was also perceived by the

masses as an ideological bond of friendship between India and Bangladesh which made Bangladesh not only subservient to India but also kept her aloof from the Islamic world, particularly the Middle East. Zia realized that it was disadvantageous for his regime not to part with secularism. To mobilize mass support behind his platform he needed an Islamic orientation, which necessitated the elimination of the constitutional clauses enshrining secularism.

The rising tide of a global Islamic awareness also affected the Muslims of Bangladesh. Their orientation towards the role of Islam in the polity was changing. A section of them started believing that Islam was not only a matter of personal piety but it ought to have a rightful place in the socio-political arena. Frequent Islamic *zalsa*¹⁹ and seminars, gatherings, public lectures on various Islamic occasions, sponsored by various Islamic organizations, political and non-political, demonstrated an evident increase in the popular urge for Islamic identity and affiliation. The *sufis* and *pirs* gained popularity, and some of them began expressing political aspirations. The fundamentalist parties, allowed by Zia to re-enter politics, were busy reorganizing themselves with leaders and workers recently released from jail as the collaborators' order was rescinded.

Zia feared that the fundamentalists could attract his potential Islamic-minded supporters unless he clearly demarcated the ideological line the state would pursue under his leadership. At the same time, he needed the support and co-operation from the Islamic camp in order to beat his arch rival, AL. The AL, though it had lost popularity, had a nation-wide organizational network and a large corps of volunteers. To counter AL's organizational strength and expertise, Zia needed the political skills and strength of the Islamic political forces. Such co-operation would not have been forthcoming

without the abolition of constitutional secularism.

On the external side, the elimination of secularism, Zia calculated, would usher a new era of fraternity with the Islamic countries, particularly the Middle East. Besides the expected financial assistance, the diplomatic and moral support of the Islamic world would be a deterrent against India's potential aggression or attempt at political destabilization. On the whole, the replacement of secularism by trust in Allah appeared as the key to galvanize support for the regime from both domestic and external sources.

Our analysis of Zia's motivations and aims behind the de-secularization of the state is in tune with scholarly observations on this issue. Baxter has claimed that Zia modified the constitution to give a moderate primacy to Islam but at the same time attempted to assure non-Muslims that their opportunities would not be curtailed. Zia might have anticipated a rising Islamic fundamentalism which perhaps convinced him, as Baxter thought, to initiate symbolic Islamic gestures. However, the principal reason behind the constitutional changes, argued Baxter, was to accommodate the demands of Middle Eastern countries, especially Saudi Arabia, that a recipient of Islamic economic assistance should be properly Islamic.²⁰ In a similar vein, it has been contended that Saudi Arabia insisted on replacing provisions concerning secularism and socialism as a prerequisite before a Saudi ambassador could be sent to Bangladesh.²¹

Marcus Franda, while commenting on this issue, had observed that de-secularization was a condition for support from orthodox Islamic forces both at home and abroad. The Islamic fundamentalist parties had demanded that secularism should be dropped as a constitutional principle before they could mobilize support for the Zia regime. They also suggested that the national flag and the national anthem be changed, too. But Zia did not comply with the latter

demands.²²

*a. Zia's Policy towards the Collaborators and the Rise of
Fundamentalist Forces*

What made Zia a controversial figure was his policy of co-optation of the collaborators and Islamic fundamentalists. Zia, having been a freedom fighter, pardoned the forces who were against the independence of Bangladesh and, later on, cooperated with them and co-opted them into his government. Zia's actions caused a rift among the freedom fighters and disappointed the secular nationalists in general.²³ Zia was a celebrated hero of liberation and the first person to have declared the independence of Bangladesh over the Chittagong radio station immediately after the military crackdown in March 1971. The freedom fighters had not expected Zia to desert the progressive forces, such as the secularists and the socialists, and to make an alliance with those who fought against the cause of Bangladesh.

On Zia's initiative, laws were repealed and constitutional amendments were undertaken to rehabilitate the collaborators. In January 1976, the military government promulgated an ordinance which repealed the Bangladesh Collaborators Order of 1972. The ordinance put an end to all trials or other proceedings pending under that Order before any tribunal, magistrate or court or before any police officer or other governmental authority.²⁴ The collaborators were freed, and Zia's next move was to rehabilitate them politically. In December 1975, clause 2(e) of both article 66 and article 122 were repealed to remove the disqualification of persons, convicted of any offence under the Bangladesh Collaborators Order of 1972, from running for election as MPs or enrolling as voters. Article 38, which prohibited the formation of religion-based political parties, was repealed in May 1976, thus permitting the revival of

Islamic parties.²⁵

As a result of these measures, Zia got support from the collaborators, who resuscitated the Islamic parties in the aftermath of their political rehabilitation. The five Islamic parties among the 21 political parties enjoying recognition in early 1977 -- namely, the Muslim League, the Islamic Democratic League, the Jamaat-e-Islam, the Nizam-e-Islam and the Khilafat-e-Rabbani -- immediately supported Zia's assumption of the presidency in April 1977.²⁶ The same political forces also supported Zia in the referendum of 1977 and the presidential election of 1978. During the 1978 election, they launched a campaign portraying Zia as the defender of Islam.

Even though political parties were allowed to be formed and organized in 1976, the Jamaat-e-Islam could not surface because of some restrictions spelled out by the government's Political Parties Regulation (PPR). But a new Islamic party emerged in 1976, known as the Islamic Democratic League (IDL), as a result of the merger of several defunct Islamic parties, the Jamaat-e-Islam being the most important of them. Only after the election of 1979 did the Jamaat-e-Islam decide to work independently and openly in its own name.²⁷ The newly formed IDL, the revived Muslim League (ML), and other Islamic parties started propagating Islamic nationalism. The strength of the Islamic political forces first became manifest in the local government elections of 1977. A survey of 201 members and chairmen in 51 selected village councils indicated that 23% of the elected village leaders were supporters of ML and other right-wing parties. Subsequently, in the elections held in 78 municipalities in the same year, the ML won 17 chairmanships of the municipal councils.²⁸ In the 1977 parliamentary elections, the IDL/ML alliance did quite well, emerging as the

Table 5.1**1979 Parliamentary Elections: 300 General Seats**

<i>Party</i>	<i>Seats</i>	<i>Votes(in %)</i>
BNP	207	41.16
AL (Malek Ukil)	39	24.55
IDL/ML	20	10.08
JSD	8	4.84
Minor Parties	10	N.A.
Independents	16	N.A.

Source: Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues*, (Dhaka: University Press, 1980), p. 211; Emajuddin Ahmed, M. M. Khan et al, "The 1979 Parliamentary Elections of Bangladesh: An Analysis of Voter's Choice", *The Dhaka University Studies*, XXXVI, Part A (June 1982), p. 127.

third largest group in the parliament, with 20 of the 300 seats and 10% of the votes.²⁹

Further analysis of the 1979 election results shows that the two districts of Khulna and Rangpur -- one in the south and the other in the north -- had emerged as fundamentalist strongholds. The IDL/ML alliance did best in these two districts winning five and three seats, respectively.³⁰ The alliance also performed comparatively better in districts where the Hindus still retained significant economic power, such as Jessore and Chittagong, from where it won two seats each. Another feature of the alliance's performance is that it won seats in urban areas, reflecting its strength among the lower middle class urban dwellers, particularly students, small merchants, and lower echelons of the bureaucracy.

Towards the end of Zia's career, the fundamentalists were better organized and stronger. In February 1981, the convention of one fundamentalist student organization drew 15 to 20 thousand workers. Their demonstration in Dhaka alarmed the secularist and socialist circles.³¹ The secularists felt further threatened when the *Islami Chatra Shibir*, Jamaat-e-Islam's student wing, won 15 out of 17 seats in the Chittagong University Central Student Union elections in 1981.³² The fundamentalists also repudiated the 1971 liberation movement and claimed that their anti-Bangladesh role in 1971 was not a mistake, thus indirectly denying the Bangladesh concept. They also started an agitation for the restoration of the citizenship of Golam Azam, the leader of the East Pakistan branch of Jamaat-e-Islam in 1971, whose citizenship had been cancelled by the Bangladesh government for his anti-Bangladesh role during 1971 and afterwards. In response to such excesses of the fundamentalists, the Freedom Fighters Association and other pro-liberation forces launched a

movement for resisting and eliminating the anti-liberation elements and demanded the trial of *Al-Badars* and *Razakars*.³³ A series of violent clashes and strikes resulted throughout the country.³⁴

Under pressure from the Freedom Fighters Association led by a Marxist hardliner, Colonel (Retd.) Kazi Nuruzzaman, Zia gave in to the demands of the pro-liberation forces and promised to review his policy towards the collaborators and anti-Bangladesh elements. However, before Zia could do anything against the anti-liberation bloc, he was assassinated in a military coup organized by officers who were prominent freedom fighters. The coup against Zia tarnished the image of the freedom fighters. The BNP government in particular and the masses in general tilted away from the freedom fighters and their demands against the fundamentalist forces. Having participated in many coups and counter-coups, the freedom fighters appeared, in the eyes of the people, to be undisciplined, anarchical, and faction-ridden, and thus destructive of state security and national integrity. The discrediting of the pro-liberation forces indirectly bolstered the credentials of the anti-liberation fundamentalists.³⁵

Zia's policy towards the collaborators has received contrasting comment. It has been argued by some that sheer political opportunism motivated Zia to rehabilitate the reactionary elements. As Chakrabarti notes:

It is a mark of Ziaur-Rahmans's political acumen that he readily realized that the consolidation of his power and the perpetuation of his rule depended on the support he would be able to receive from the communal and pro-Pakistani forces.³⁶

On the other hand, Hussain contends that Zia perhaps wanted to bring about a socio-political reconciliation between the pro-independence and anti-independence elements. Most likely Zia thought, according to Hussain, that if

the prevailing hostility between the two groups perpetuated indefinitely, it could jeopardize the integrity of the nation and the stability of the state. Therefore, in order to build a broader consensus for a stable polity, Zia attempted to bridge the gap between the pro and anti-Bangladesh forces.³⁷ It would seem, however, that both views contain elements of the truth. Zia did not want to see divisions in the society perpetuated, pitting one group against the other and causing political instability. Nor did he want to lose potential sources of political support to combat his rivals -- the pro-secular, pro-socialist and anti-military elements under the leadership of the AL.

b. Other Piecemeal Pro-Islamic Initiatives

Some piecemeal Islamic reforms, mostly symbolic in nature, were also undertaken during Zia's tenure. Quranic recitations over the government-run radio and television increased significantly. The time allotted to readings from the Quran on radio and television increased threefold in the post-Mujib period, while that for broadcasts from each of the other religious scriptures remained limited to five minutes per day.³⁸ The Arabic and Islamic content in the primary and secondary school curricula was increased. The government also initiated the founding of an Islamic University, which was aided by Arab funds. Quite significant was the opening of the Department of Religious Affairs under a full-fledged minister.

The government declared Friday a half-day holiday for those who wished to take it. Huge billboards with quotations from the Quran -- in Arabic and Bengali -- were installed at many intersections in important towns. Quotations from scriptures were frequently posted on the walls of government buildings to remind people of the standards of Islamic behavior. Recitations from the Quran were a regular part of Zia's public meetings. The song of Zia's Bangladesh

Nationalist Party (BNP) evoked religious sentiments and postures of prayer.³⁹

The Zia regime attempted to Islamicize the general educational system of the country. The government formed a new syllabus committee, which took the position:

Islam is a complete code of life, not just a sum of rituals. A Muslim has to live his personal, social, economic and international life in accordance with Islam from childhood to death. So, the acquiring of knowledge of Islam is compulsory for all Muslims -- men and women.⁴⁰

The committee further recommended the introduction of a compulsory paper on Islamic studies in all grades from I to VIII. The government accepted the recommendation and it was implemented immediately.⁴¹

Zia also played the role of religious reformer, particularly in the field of education. He introduced the study of science in government-funded *madrasas* and was eager to introduce modern and scientific education at the Islamic University along with an Islamic curriculum. His program of combining modern and Islamic education invoked negative criticism from the Islamic traditionalists and the orthodox *ulama*, but the modernist Islamic circles welcomed it. Zia's reformist orientation, resembling that of Sir Syed Ahmed, Sir Abdul Latif and Syed Ameer Ali, has been aptly described by Franda:

To the extent that he exhibits a deep commitment to Islam, it carries with it a resolve to update the religion and adapt it to the world of the future.⁴²

c. Zia's Base of Support

Zia's base of support rested on both pro-independence and anti-independence elements. Being a hero of the war of independence, he was supported by an overwhelming majority of the freedom fighters in the military.

He was also supported by a large segment of the anti-Indian secular nationalists.

Among the anti-independence forces, Zia secured the support of the collaborators, pro-Pakistanis and pro-Islamic nationalists. The anti-liberation forces were entirely behind him at an early stage of his tenure. Gradually the more extremist among them started making demands, such as declaring Bangladesh an Islamic republic, changing the national anthem and the flag, and implementing the *sharia*. All this Zia was not willing to do.⁴³ Still, the extremists did not go so far as to denounce him, because they knew well that they could not stand up to the pro-secular and anti-fundamentalist forces without the protective shield of the moderate Islamic elements represented by Zia and his BNP. Consequently, a mutual understanding prevailed between the two even though the fundamentalists differed with him on the nature and extent of Islamization of the state.

Till early 1977, Zia pursued an "open arms" policy of accepting different ideological elements into his government, rather than taking sides in an ideological conflict. People belonging to various ideological orientations, particularly different brands of leftists, went along with him. However, Zia abandoned the "open arms" policy in the late 1970s when he saw the strength of right-wing and Islamic forces in the local government elections of early 1977.⁴⁴ Zia then decided to use the newly-elected moderately Islamic village leaders as a potential base of support.⁴⁵

One group of moderate socialists, with whom Zia continued to sustain his alliance, consisted of the lower and middle-class leftists of the National Awami Party (NAP)-Bhasani faction.⁴⁶ The combination of Islam and socialism, the latter being interpreted as social justice, in Zia's platform restored to national

politics an influential segment of the community that had been denied a political role in the post-independence period. Zia's alliance with the collaborators and pro-Islamic forces is well documented. During the 1979 general elections, one-eighth of the 2000 parliamentary candidates were people who had been accused or convicted of collaboration during Mujib's rule.⁴⁷ Their political rehabilitation was made possible by Zia and they were grateful to him for that. More importantly, the Muslim League (ML) and Islamic Democratic League (IDL) alliance, most of whose candidates were collaborators, campaigned with the slogan "defeat the Awami League and keep Islam safe in the hands of President Zia". Not only that, it was alleged by AL leaders that more than three-fourths of the BNP's victorious MPs in the 1979 election were collaborators. Shah Azizur Rahman, a veteran ML leader, who was appointed by Zia as the prime minister, was a prominent collaborator.⁴⁸

d. Zia-Minority Relations

The military coup of August 15, 1975 brought a sudden change in the relationship between the government of Bangladesh and the minorities, particularly the Hindu community that comprises 12.13 percent of the population according to the 1981 census. The Hindus trusted the AL government because AL was perceived by them to be a secular-oriented party, having a good understanding with India. The provision of secularism in the constitution was a guarantee that the minorities would not be discriminated against. Also, the AL government's conclusion of a 25-year treaty of friendship and cooperation with India assured the Hindu minority in Bangladesh that they could count on the AL government as their friend. The AL government also undertook a propaganda campaign to convince the citizens that the government was neutral in matters of religion, and that people belonging to different

religions would get equal treatment from the government. There were always at least two Hindu ministers in Mujib's cabinet, and the Hindus played an active role in the AL organization.

The assassination of Mujib and the overthrow of the AL government was a shock to the Hindus as it also irritated India. The Hindu community in Bangladesh perceived the change as a betrayal of Bangladesh's independence. Particularly, the military take-over and its Islamic orientation convinced the Hindus that the new regime under Zia's leadership would pursue policies similar to those of the Ayub regime during the Pakistan phase. They had paid a heavy price for the liberation of Bangladesh but felt that they had been betrayed. The military's come-back was a terrible frustration for them.

Zia's abolition of constitutional secularism convinced the Hindus that the Bangladesh military was no different from the despised Pakistani military in terms of ideological orientation. Both sought legitimacy in Islam and wanted the state to be Islamic, at least symbolically if not in terms of policy and laws. However, Zia did try to allay Hindu apprehensions by retaining the 25-year treaty of friendship with India, allowing public Hindu holidays, continuation of the reading of Hindu holy scriptures on government-run radio and television, and the coverage of minority religious festivals in the media. Though secularism as a fundamental principle of state policy was struck out from the constitution, Zia retained the clauses that ensured non-discrimination on the basis of religion. Clause (1) of article 28 of the constitution read:

The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

Table 5.2**Religious Groups in Bangladesh, 1981**

<i>Religious Group</i>	<i>Percentage in Population</i>
Muslim	86.67%
Hindu	12.13%
Buddhist	.61%
Christian	.31%
Others	.28%

Source: *Statistical Pocket Book Of Bangladesh 1987* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1988), p. 51.

Clause (3) of the same article read:

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.

Further security against discrimination towards minorities was spelled out in clause (2) of article 29:

No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office in the service of the Republic.⁴⁹

But all this did not convince the Hindu community. It remained distrustful of Zia as revealed in its electoral behavior. Baxter and Rashiduzzaman claim that in the 1978 presidential election, Zia was adversely affected in general in areas where the Hindu electorate was concentrated. Similarly, in the 1979 parliamentary elections, there was some inverse correlations between the strength of the Hindu electorate and the share of the votes polled by the BNP. Four of the top ten territorial subdivisions with Hindu concentration were among the lowest ten for the BNP.⁵⁰ On the other hand, 23 out of the 40 seats won by the AL came from Hindu-concentration constituencies.⁵¹ The Hindu community seemed to have remained staunchly loyal to the AL, the party it trusts.

3. Zia's Policy towards the Islamic World

a. Bangladesh-Middle East Relationship Under Zia

During the Zia period, Middle Eastern influence penetrated the domestic politics of Bangladesh as was apparent in Saudi Arabia's demand that secularism and socialism had to be struck out from the constitution before a

Saudi ambassador could come to Bangladesh. Such influence on the ruling elite of Bangladesh was visible in the later half of Mujib's tenure but during Zia's rule it became quite manifest. Mujib had started looking towards the Middle East in late 1973 when the economy was in poor shape and the state was desperately in need of external aid. Relations with the Middle East improved gradually under Mujib. Under Zia, friendship with the Middle East was cultivated not only for anticipated petro-dollars, but also to strengthen the regime's domestic base of support, that is, to win over the support of pro-Islamic forces. It was a part of Zia's coalition-building strategy. Whereas Mujib turned to the Middle East primarily out of economic compulsion, Zia's leaning towards it was basically motivated by the dynamics of the domestic political configuration.

When Zia came to power, all Muslim countries, particularly those of the Middle East, had recognized Bangladesh. During Zia's tenure, Bangladesh started reaping the benefits of his pro-Islamic policies in terms of inflow of financial aid and remittances from the Middle East. Mujib's overture to the Middle East beginning in 1974 and, in particular, his participation in the Islamic Summit in Pakistan in 1974 and his visits to Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates (UAE) had broken the thaw in the Bangladesh-Middle East relationship. With the improvement in relationship, the Middle Eastern countries started offering financial aid for Bangladesh and opened employment opportunities for Bangladeshi labor. Over the period from 1971 to 1973 Bangladesh did not receive any official aid from the Middle East. Financial assistance was first offered during 1974-75 when Bangladesh received a modest amount of U.S.\$ 76 million in aid from the Middle East. Later on, after the overthrow of the Mujib regime, the Middle Eastern link was consolidated.

The volume of aid fluctuated a lot from year to year but it settled around U.S.\$70 million a year on the average during Zia's tenure in office (Table 5.3). The aid was also given in kind. In 1975, Iraq made available 100,000 tons of petroleum to tide over the energy crisis in Bangladesh. Although Bangladesh did not receive any exceptional treatment in terms of lower oil prices, the OPEC special fund has helped it in some ways just as it has other Islamic countries harmed by the high oil prices.⁵² Bangladesh entered into bilateral agreements with a few Middle Eastern countries. In December 1978 Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia signed a bilateral agreement on economic and technical cooperation. Under the agreement, Saudi Arabia offered to Bangladesh commodity grants and assistance. From 1974 onwards, the Saudi Fund for Development advanced loans for such projects as railways and lowlift pumps.⁵³ In December 1978, Bangladesh and Iraq agreed to set up a joint fishing company in which Bangladesh was to have 51 percent share. In the same year, Iraq helped Bangladesh to rehabilitate temporarily the Muslim Burmese refugees who had crossed over into Bangladesh. In 1981, Kuwait offered a loan worth \$29 million for rural electrification projects.⁵⁴

The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) also came up with financial assistance from the late 1970s onwards. In the period from 1978 to 1982, IDB provided a loan of \$7 million for the completion of the Zia International Airport near Dhaka, with the repayment period stretched over 30 years. Another loan worth \$10 million was provided for an electrical power project with a repayment period of 20 years. IDB also aided the Bangladesh Industrial Bank (*Shilpa* Bank) on a project to develop small and medium size industrial enterprises.⁵⁵ IDB's assistance enabled the Shipping Corporation of Bangladesh to lease two cargo vessels. From early 1979 onwards, IDB started providing Bangladesh with foreign trade financing facilities. In the late 1970s and early

1980s, the aid was used for importing mainly crude oil and petroleum products.⁵⁶

While the gross volume of trade, both imports and exports, increased during the Zia period, there was no significant rise in terms of share in the total volume of Bangladesh's foreign trade (Table 5.4). However, in the crucially important sector of energy, the Middle East played an important role, with credits being provided for oil imports by the exporting countries or Islamic financial sources, such as OPEC fund or IDB.

In terms of Bangladesh's economic relationship with the Middle East, what has been of greater significance is the employment of Bangladeshi nationals in the Middle East. As early as 1975, when Bangladeshi labor started entering the Middle Eastern market, King Khaled of Saudi Arabia told the Bangladesh Haj delegation that Saudi Arabia would need 800,000 skilled and semi-skilled workers and would be happy to recruit such workers from Bangladesh.⁵⁷ No official record is available on employment for the period prior to 1976. In 1976, it was a small figure, amounting to only 5278. The figure shot up to 29,886 in 1977. By 1981, it had increased further to 54,684 (Table 5.5).

In terms of remittances, the Middle East accounted for 47 percent of remittances sent by Bangladeshi workers from abroad in 1980.⁵⁸ Since 1980, the number of Bangladeshi migrant workers to the Middle East has increased significantly. In 1981, about 82,000 Bangladeshi wage earners flew home on annual visits by the Bangladeshi air carrier; 70 percent of them were from the Middle East.⁵⁹

By 1978, the remittances sent by the migrant workers stood as the second largest export earning sector, after jute exports.⁶⁰ But it is not clear whether the

Table 5.3

Economic Assistance* to Bangladesh from the Middle East**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Amount (US\$ Million)</i>
1971-72	Nil
1972-73	Nil
1973-74	Nil
1974-75	76
1975-76	21
1976-77	73
1977-78	63
1978-79	63
1979-80	120
1980-81	35

* Includes grants, loans and credits.

** Middle East includes the Arab countries, Iran, OPEC fund, and IDB, but excludes Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkey.

Sources: *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1979* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1979), pp. 345-349; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1984-85*, p. 629.

Table 5.4

Bangladesh-Middle East* Trade

<i>Year</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>
1975	359.59	3.4	474,76	17.9
1976	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1977	1229,02	13.4	682 20	15.6
1978	1758,16	13.1	746,89	13.5
1979	1416,50	9.2	850,86	12.8
1980	1100,50	5.5	1455,50	19.6
1981	430.07	2.3	1165,26	17.6

A= Imports (US\$ thousands).

B= % of total imports.

C= Exports (US\$ thousands).

D= % of total exports.

*Middle East includes the Arab countries and Iran, but excludes Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey.

Sources: *Yearbook Of International Trade Statistics, 1981* vol.1, (New York: United Nations, 1982), p. 117; *Yearbook Of International Trade Statistics, 1982* vol.1, (New York: United Nations, 1984) p. 118; *International Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1983* vol.1, (New York: United Nations, 1985), p. 55; *International Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1987* vol.1, (New York: United Nations, 1989), p. 55.

Table 5.5

**Number of Persons Going to the Middle East from Bangladesh for
Employment**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>
1976	5,278
1977	29,886
1978	22,756
1979	24,252
1980	29,899
1981	54,684

Sources: *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1979*, p. 401; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1980*, pp. 488, 489; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1984-85*, p. 217; *Bangladesh: Economic Trends and Development Administration*, Report No. 4822, vol. II, (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, February 27, 1984), p. 7.

data accounted for remittances was from the Middle East only or from overseas as a whole. Haque has argued that Bangladesh entered into a dependency relationship with the Middle East and stood as a sub-satellite to the Middle East because of its accelerated labor export and increasing political and economic dependence. He alleges that Zia's constitutional amendment, replacing secularism by faith in Allah, rendered Bangladesh into an Islamic alliance state. The change, according to him, indicated an implicit expectation of gaining financial assistance from the Middle East.⁶¹

Besides financial aspects, moral and diplomatic support from the Middle East is another factor that influenced Bangladesh's relationship with the Middle East. Bangladesh did get sympathetic attention from the Middle East when she raised the *Farakka* issue⁶² at the United Nations and the Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference. On another occasion, the Arab League ministerial council endorsed Bangladesh's candidature for the UN Security Council in 1978.⁶³

Another important dimension of Bangladesh's relationship with the Middle East is religious. Islam originated in the Arabian peninsula and preachers, scholars, *sufis* and soldiers carrying the message of Islam had come to Bangladesh from all over the Middle East. The Middle East is perceived as the homeland of Islam. Therefore, a warm relationship with the Middle East reflects a positive orientation towards Islam while a cool relationship portrays an implicit indifference towards Islam. As a result, even the Mujib government could not afford to remain isolated from the Middle East for long. Because Islam is an important source of legitimacy in the Muslim world, particularly so since the early 1970s, the ruling elite of Bangladesh realized that Islamic brotherhood with the Middle East was essential for legitimacy.

b. Bangladesh-Pakistan Relations Under Zia

Though Pakistan is on the periphery of the Middle East and not one of the early seats of Islam, her official Islamic ideology has given her an important place in the Islamic world and is so perceived in Bangladesh. Thus, Bangladesh's relations with Pakistan is an important factor to focus on while analyzing Bangladesh government's orientation towards Islam. During Mujib's tenure mutual recognition was granted on the eve of his participation in the Islamic Summit in Lahore in February 1974. But diplomatic relations and commercial dealings did not take place. The relationship was quite cool: mutual recognition and tolerance, but not friendship. But this cool atmosphere changed overnight with the August 1975 military coup overthrowing Mujib's regime.

Pakistan was the first country to recognize the new regime of Mushtaque on August 15, 1975. Pakistan radio in a propaganda blast announced that Bangladesh had declared itself an Islamic Republic, which convinced Saudi Arabia to recognize Bangladesh immediately. During Zia's rule, Bangladesh's relationship with Pakistan matured to be placed on a sound footing, though some outstanding problems remained unsolved, such as the repatriation to Pakistan of Muslims of Indian origin known as *Biharis*.⁶⁴

In January 1976, the two countries exchanged ambassadors. In May 1976, they signed a three-year trade agreement, the first to be signed between the two countries.⁶⁵ In the same year, telecommunications and air services were restored. Pakistan handed over to Bangladesh 28 railway coaches which had been ordered earlier for the erstwhile East Pakistan Railway. Pakistan also presented a Boeing 707 to Bangladesh. In 1976, when the *Farakka* issue was raised at the U.N., Pakistan lent her support to Bangladesh. In return,

Bangladesh supported Pakistan's view in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979. In 1977 transit visas were introduced, and property rights were restored to citizens of Bangladesh who had left property in Pakistan. In the same year, agreements regarding joint economic commission, cultural cooperation and avoidance of double taxation were signed.⁶⁶ In 1979, an aviation accord was signed to facilitate movement of people and exchange of goods.⁶⁷

Even though Pakistan has a chronic hard currency shortage, she extended financial aid in cash in the mid-1970s to help out Bangladesh to overcome economic strains during times of political instability. In 1974-75, Pakistan offered \$2 million. In 1975-76, such aid shot up to \$25 million. In 1976-77, it went down to \$1 million.⁶⁸ It appears that in 1975-76 the offer of \$25 million was a sign of strong support for the new regime.

In terms of trade with Pakistan, some changes are noticeable during the Zia period. Bangladesh's imports from Pakistan increased in gross volume but remained quite insignificant in terms of their share in the total imports of Bangladesh (Table 5.6). Bangladesh seemed to be reluctant to import much from Pakistan. There were some bottlenecks -- such as Pakistani demands for payments in hard currency, prices to be indexed to international markets, and Pakistan's fear of political instability in Bangladesh --which were not sorted out thoroughly through mutual bargaining. In terms of Bangladesh's exports to Pakistan, the picture is a little brighter. In 1975, Bangladesh hardly exported anything to Pakistan. But in the late 1970s and early 1980s, exports increased quite a bit. In 1978, Bangladesh's exports to Pakistan constituted 8.7% of its total exports. But Pakistan's share in exports fluctuated in 1979, 1980 and 1981 though not in gross volume. Pakistan remained a moderately significant trade

Table 5.6

Bangladesh-Pakistan Trade

<i>Year</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>
1975	9,467	0.9	12	0.0
1976	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1977	5,433	0.5	28,346	6.5
1978	29,802	2.2	48,003	8.7
1979	53,559	3.4	35,013	5.3
1980	54,483	2.7	70,511	9.5
1981	62,532	3.4	44,177	6.7

A= Imports from Pakistan (US\$ thousands)

B= % of Total Imports

C= Exports to Pakistan (US\$ thousands)

D= % of Total Exports

Sources: *Yearbook Of International Trade Statistics: 1981*, vol. 1, (New York: United Nations, 1982), p. 117; *Yearbook Of International Trade Statistics: 1982*, vol. 1, (New York: United Nations, 1984), p. 118; *International Trade Statistics Yearbook: 1983*, vol. 1, (New York: United Nations, 1985), p. 55; *International Trade Statistics Yearbook: 1987*, vol. 1, (New York: United Nations, 1989), p. 55.

partner of Bangladesh, particularly in exports.

4. Summary and Conclusions

The low ebb of pessimism among the populace during the Mujib period was followed by a high tide of optimism during Zia's rule. This was so because of Zia's dynamic leadership in the domestic sector and a high profile as a third world leader in the international arena. In the realm of state-religion relations, Zia's greatest contribution was the healing of the wounds of the liberation war. The liberation war posed an acute dilemma to the Bengali Muslims. They had two options -- either to join hands with "Hindu" India for the sake of Bengali nationhood, or to remain loyal to "Muslim" Pakistan and sacrifice Bengali nationalist aspirations. An overwhelming majority had opted for the first option, but they were disillusioned in the aftermath of liberation.

Political and cultural sovereignty was achieved but at the cost of losing an Islamic identity -- at least at the state level. Secular Bengali national identity appeared to be in a state of vacuum; people felt the need of an Islamic orientation in their identity and nationhood. Zia capitalized on this change in popular sentiment and ethos and joined Bengali nationalist ego to an Islamic orientation. The outcome of this concomitant loyalty to Bengali identity and Islam was Bangladeshi nationalism. Zia's version of Bangladeshi nationalism restored the traditional stress of the Bengali Muslims on both the Islamic and Bengali dimensions of their identity.

Zia thus attempted to integrate the nation by healing the wounds of disunity caused by the liberation war. His efforts were directed at a rapprochement between the anti-liberation and pro-liberation forces. Often, he seemed to be leaning towards the pro-Islamic and anti-liberation groups, but he never went so

far as to alienate the pro-liberation forces, particularly the moderate elements. He realized that the two main ingredients in the dualistic Bengali Muslim culture had to be synchronized. He rightly perceived that there had to be a compromise and peaceful co-existence between the pro-Islamic anti-liberation forces and the secular-oriented pro-liberation elements, so that a consensus on basic values could emerge. In the absence of such a consensus, a stable polity could not be built. His strategy therefore was to build a coalition broad enough to have the support of an overwhelming majority by co-opting moderate elements from both Islamic and secularist camps.

The option chosen by Zia was a middle of the road strategy: neither secularism, nor an Islamic state in accordance with the *sharia*. He opted for recognition of Islam through symbolic pro-Islamic reforms, such as constitutional amendments and some piecemeal Islamic reforms. He needed the sympathy and support from the pro-Islamic forces at home and abroad which, he believed, would be forthcoming if such policies were adopted. Overall, then, under Zia's leadership, though Bangladesh was not transformed into an Islamic state, she did acquire an Islamic orientation.

In the realm of foreign relations, during the Zia regime Bangladesh came out of the socialist orbit of influence. Her intimate relationship with India had ended with the August 1975 coup. On the other hand, relations with the Middle East and Pakistan improved significantly. It was not only petro-dollars, however, that enticed Zia towards the Middle East. Friendship with the Middle East seemed also to provide legitimacy to the regime. The Muslim masses at home perceived the regime to be fostering Islamic brotherhood out of concern for Islam, and therefore deserved their sympathy and support.

Notes

- ¹ During the Pakistani period, the central government posed as the defender of Islam in certain cases, if not always, particularly using Islam to keep East and West Pakistan together on a common religious bond and to immunize the Bengali Muslims from the "corrupting Hindu" influences. Whenever the Bengalis demanded provincial autonomy or made other nationalist demands, the central government raised the slogan of "Islam in danger". Such manipulation of Islam made the Bengali masses secularly oriented in the realm of politics because Islam was used as a political tool to justify the consolidation of power in the hands of the West Pakistani elites. However, in the post-Bangladesh period, the Mujib government's frequent references to secularism, that is, the state was secular and all religions were equal before the government, disappointed the Muslim majority as they felt that Islam was ignored to compromise with "Hindu" India. As a result, with the rise in anti-Indian sentiments, Islam also gained popular appeal.

For the Pakistan period, see Rounaq Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972). For the Mujib period, see Moudud Ahmed, *Bangladesh: Era of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman* (Dhaka: University Press, 1983); Zillur Rahman Khan, "Islam and Bengali Nationalism", *Asian Survey*, XXV, no. 8 (August 1985).

- ² Khondker Hasnat Karim, "Akta Shafal Rashtra Biplob" (A Successful Revolution), *Dainik Miellel*, August 15, 1988, reprinted in *Bangladesh: Agami Shavvytar Thikana* (Bangladesh : the Destiny of Future Civilization), (Dhaka: Farukh Reza, 1988), p. 16.
- ³ Sukharanjan Dasgupta, *Midnight Massacre in Dacca* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978).
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16-20.
- ⁵ Interview with Khondker Mushtaque Ahmed, December 22, 1988. Translation from Bengali.
- ⁶ Marcus Franda, *Bangladesh -- The First Decade* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1982), p. 64.
- ⁷ Charles Peter O'Donnell, *Bangladesh: Biography of a Muslim Nation*, (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1984), p. 181.
- ⁸ Rounaq Jahan, *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues* (Dhaka: University Press, 1980), pp. 138, 139.
- ⁹ Zillur Rahman Khan, *Leadership in the Least Developed Nation: Bangladesh* (Syracuse: University of Syracuse Press, 1983), pp. 119, 120.
- ¹⁰ The assassinated leaders were Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, Mansur Ahmed, and M. H. Qamruzzaman.

- 11 They were known as *Biplobi Gana Bahini* (Revolutionary People's Force) affiliated with *Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal* (National Socialist Party), popularly known as JSD. Such radical cells were planted in the army by retired colonels Abu Taher and Ziauddin Ahmed, who had earlier been released from military service for their radical views. They were anti-AL and expected to get a better deal from Zia. For a thorough discussion on this issue, see Lawrence Lifschultz, *Bangladesh: The Unfinished Revolution* (London: Zed Press, 1979).
- 12 Jahan, p. 205.
- 13 Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladeshe Dharma Vittik Rajnitir Punoruth-than" (The Revival of Religion-based Politics in Bangladesh), *Bichitra*, vol. 13, no. 25 (November 30, 1984), p. 23.
- 14 Robert S. Anderson, "Impressions of Bangladesh -- The Rule of Arms and the Politics of Exhortation", *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 49, no. 3 (Fall 1976), p. 453.
- 15 Tawab, the main leader in this radical Islamic movement, was an obscure figure to the common people. He did not participate in the liberation struggle and in the post-Bangladesh period he resided overseas for most of the time. On the other hand, Zia was a hero of national liberation and his anti-Indian, anti-AL and a moderately pro-Islamic position won him massive support among the average Muslims. The fundamentalists, of course, preferred Tawab over Zia but they did not get much time to mobilize popular support behind an unknown figure like Tawab. Also the fundamentalist parties were still then banned and their organizational network was in disarray. Most importantly, it was the period of Zia's mounting popularity and it was almost impossible to mobilize grassroots support against him.
- 16 *The Constitution Of The People's Republic Of Bangladesh* (As modified up to June 30, 1988) (Dhaka: Government Printing Press, 1988), p. 3.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 19 A folk Islamic meeting addressed by the *ulama* and *pirs*, popular in *mofussil* towns and rural areas. Such gatherings used to take place a lot during the later half of Mujib's rule, and they played a significant role in arousing Islamic sentiment among the people. Such gatherings intensified in the post-Mujib period.
- 20 Craig Baxter, *Bangladesh: A New Nation in an Old Setting* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1984), p. 93.
- 21 A Bangladesh delegation met King Khaled of Saudi Arabia and requested him for a resident Saudi ambassador to be sent to Bangladesh. King Khaled insisted that the principles of secularism and socialism should be repealed from the constitution of Bangladesh before a Saudi ambassador could go to Bangladesh. Source: interview with Golam Azam, former chief of Jamaat-e-Islam in Bangladesh, November 19, 1988.

- 22 Franda, p. 225.
- 23 The extreme Mujib-loyalists among the freedom fighters and a large number of pro-Mujib elements in the disbanded *Rakkhi Bahini* and the armed forces fled and took shelter in India. They organized clandestine activities across the border. Kader Siddique, a hero of the liberation war, provided leadership to this group. Many freedom fighters still supported Zia and were in tune with government policies. Yet some others followed the Marxist hardliner, Colonel (Retd.) Kazi Nuruzzaman, who headed the Freedom Fighters Association. See, for example, Ishtiaq Hossain, "Bangladesh-India Relations: Issues And Problems", *Asian Survey*, XXI, no. 11 (November 1981), pp. 1122, 1123; Kazi Nuruzzaman, *Muktizodh-ha O Rajniti* (Freedom Fighter and Politics) (Dhaka: Dana Prakashani, 1985).
- 24 S. K. Chakrabarti, *The Evolution Of Politics In Bangladesh*, p. 240; Syed Anwar Hussain, p. 23.
- 25 Abul Fazl Huq, "Constitutional Development (1972-1982)", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: Volume Two, Domestic Politics*, (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986), p. 63.
- 26 S. K. Chakrabarti, p. 247.
- 27 Abbas Ali Khan, *Jamaat-e-Islami Itihas* (The History of Jamaat-e-Islam) (Dhaka: Sayyed Abul A'la Maudoodi Research Academy, 1984), pp. 61, 62.
- 28 M. Rashiduzzaman, "Bangladesh in 1977: Dilemmas of the Military Rulers", *Asian Survey*, XVIII, no. 2 (February 1978), pp. 127, 128.
- 29 Emajuddin Ahmed, Mohammad Mohabbat Khan et al., "The 1979 Parliamentary Elections of Bangladesh: An Analysis of Voters' Choice", *The Dhaka University Studies*, XXXVI, Part A (June 1982), p. 127; Jahan, p. 211.
- 30 It is, however, important to note that the performance of IDL/ML alliance in Khulna district was largely the result of popularity of Khan Abdus Sobur, who won three seats.
- 31 Golam Azam, *Eqamate Din* (Establishment of Religion) (Dhaka: Adhunik Prakashani, 1981), p. 46.
- 32 Ahmed Shafiqul Huque and Mohammad Yeahia Akhter, "The Ubiquity of Islam: Religion & Society in Bangladesh", *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 60, no. 2 (Summer 1987), p. 221.
- 33 *Al-Badr* and *Razakars* were volunteer-cum-militia groups formed by the ML, Jamaat-e-Islam and other pro-Pakistani parties in 1971 to fight against the freedom fighters.
- 34 Abul Fazl Huq, p. 69.
- 35 The anti-liberation elements no longer deny the reality of Bangladesh, but they reject the secular Bengali nationalist ideology on the basis of which the

war of liberation was fought. They also repudiate the war of liberation for, to them, it was a calculated military strategy of India to secure for her a hegemonic position in South Asia by destroying Muslim political power.

- 36 S. K. Chakrabarti, p. 239.
- 37 Syed Anwar Hussain, p. 23.
- 38 Huque and Akhter, p. 221.
- 39 Franda, pp. 233, 300.
- 40 Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Education, *Bangladesh National Syllabi and Curricula Committee Report, Part 11, Lower Secondary Level*, April 1977, p. 149, as cited in Syed Serajul Islam, "Islam in Bangladesh", Unpublished manuscript, Department of Political Science, Dhaka University, 1989, pp. 14, 15.
- 41 Islam, "Islam in Bangladesh", p. 15.
- 42 Franda, p. 300.
- 43 Azizul Haque, "Bangladesh 1979: Cry For A Sovereign Parliament", *Asian Survey*, XX, no. 2 (February 1980), p. 220.
- 44 Zillur Rahman Khan, pp. 160, 161.
- 45 M. Rashiduzzaman, "Bangladesh in 1977: Dilemmas of the Military Rulers", *Asian Survey*, XVIII, no. 2 (February 1978), p. 128.
- 46 NAP-Bhasani group believed in Islamic socialism and was led by Maulana Bhasani, a popular leader who had been active in Bangladesh politics for over half a century.
- 47 Anthony Mascarenhas, *Bangladesh A Legacy of Blood* (London: Hodder And Stoughton, 1986), p. 132.
- 48 Franda, pp. 230, 232.
- 49 *The Constitution Of The People's Republic Of Bangladesh* (as modified up to June 30, 1988), p. 19.
- 50 Craig Baxter and M. Rashiduzzaman, "Bangladesh Votes: 1978 and 1979", *Asian Survey*, XXI, no. 4 (April 1981), pp. 496, 499.
- 51 Franda, p. 230.
- 52 Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladesh and Islamic countries 1972-1983", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), vol. 3, p. 131.
- 53 Islam, "Islam in Bangladesh", p. 25.
- 54 Hussain, "Bangladesh and Islamic Countries 1972-1983", p. 132.

- 55 M. R. Khan, "Islamic Development Bank: A New Approach to Multilateral Financing", *BISS Journal* vol. 4, no. 4 (October 1983), pp. 117, 118.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- 57 Hussain, "Bangladesh and Islamic Countries 1972-1983", p. 129.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 134.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 135.
- 60 Chowdhury Emdadul Haque, "Labour Migration From Bangladesh To The Middle East: Development or Dependency?", Mohammad Mohabbat Khan and John P. Thorp (eds.), *Bangladesh: Society, Politics & Bureaucracy* (Dhaka: Center For Administrative Studies, 1984), p. 117.
- 61 *Ibid.*, pp. 121-124.
- 62 There has been a dispute between Bangladesh and India on the issue of distribution of river waters. India built a dam on the river Ganges that diverts water, causing inadequate flow in the lean season and overflow in the rainy season in Bangladesh. This is the most outstanding problem between the two countries to be resolved as yet.
- 63 Hussain, "Bangladesh and Islamic Countries 1972-1983", p. 135.
- 64 The *Biharis* are Muslim migrants, mostly from the province of Bihar in India, living in Bangladesh since the partition of India in 1947. They supported the Pakistani military in 1971 and were against the Bangladesh movement. Many of them do not accept the legitimacy of Bangladesh and want to migrate to Pakistan.
- 65 Talukder Maniruzzaman, *Group Interests And Political Changes -- Studies of Pakistan and Bangladesh*, (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1982), p. 187.
- 66 Abdul Hafiz, "Bangladesh-Pakistan Relations: Still Developing?" *BISS Journal*, vol. 6, no. 3 (July 1985), pp. 361, 362.
- 67 Surendra Nath Kaushik, "Pakistan's Relations with Bangladesh: An Overview of the Perception of the Leaders of the Two Countries", in Chakravarty and Narain (eds.), vol. 3, p. 164.
- 68 *Statistical Year Book of Bangladesh 1979*, pp. 345-349.

CHAPTER 6

MANIPULATING ISLAM FOR POLITICAL LEGITIMACY:

THE ERSHAD PHASE

The relationship between religion and state became more complicated during the Ershad period. The Islamic groups became more entrenched in the political theater of Bangladesh, and clashes between secularists and fundamentalists intensified, while the government accorded a constitutional status to Islam. The officially-accorded position of Islam as state religion split the opposition, and thus enhanced the viability of the regime. It also caused an acute political crisis, marked by a lack of consensus on the fundamental character of the state -- that is, whether it should be secular or Islamic. The regime has maintained a double posture: it has promised the application of *sharia*, but in reality it has only made symbolic gestures toward Islam. For this reason, the regime has provoked the wrath of secularists and fundamentalists alike. On the other hand, an otherwise unpopular regime gained lukewarm support from the moderate Islamic elements, which allowed it some breathing space. The regime thus seems to have been tolerated by the majority, rather than supported by it.

The important developments in the post-Zia period that affected the relationship between state and religion have been: changes in the leadership of the military hierarchy; the resurgence of fundamentalist parties and the emergence of new Islamic political forces; constitutional amendments making Islam the state religion; fraudulent elections that have failed to provide legitimacy for the regime; and continuation of Zia's policy of a warm relationship with the Islamic world, particularly the Middle East.

1. Assassination of Zia and the Decimation of the Army's Liberation-War Leadership

Zia's strategy of balance and moderation had provided the nation with a semblance of unity. Those who did not enter his coalition had opportunities to participate as members of the opposition in the legislature. The elections at the local and national levels were considered by the people to be fairly honest. However, his toleration of dissent, particularly in the military, resulted in many attempted coups, including the one that cost him his life.

An important outcome of the coup against Zia in May 1981 was that it expedited the decimation of the liberation-war leadership of the army. The last few heroes of the war of liberation -- Zia, Manzur, and Mir Shawkat Ali -- were all victims of the coup. Zia and Manzur were killed, along with some middle ranking officers, during the coup. Further, half a dozen officers were sentenced to death because of their participation in the coup; most of the victims were freedom fighters. But the worst was yet to come. The most devastating blow was the compulsory retirement of many freedom fighters from the army, the most senior among whom was Major General Shawkat Ali.¹

The freedom fighters could be easily discredited, as they had lost popular sympathy because of their undisciplined behavior. With the elimination of the liberation-war leadership, the "repatriated" officers emerged at the helm of the army under the leadership of Lieutenant General Hossain Mohammad Ershad. After that, the sympathy and support of the military as an institution leaned towards the anti-liberation forces.

a. *The Interlude between Zia and Ershad*

After the assassination of Zia, the Vice-President Abdus Sattar, a civilian, became the acting President with the support of Ershad and his military. But Ershad simultaneously put forward his demand for a political role for the military. Ershad's real political aspirations were manifest in his interviews with the media. However, for the time being, he exercised self-restraint, and supported the candidacy of Sattar in the forthcoming presidential election. In return for his support, Ershad demanded that Sattar establish a national security council in which the chiefs of the three branches of the military would be represented.

An important reason for Ershad's initial restraint was the strength of BNP and also fear of AL and its left-wing allies. Ershad was almost unknown to the masses and did not have any base of support outside the military. Consequently, he could not dare to antagonize both BNP and AL by capturing power through force. Rather, he decided to wait and evaluate the performance of Sattar and his BNP. As heirs of Zia, whose assassination evoked widespread sympathy among the masses, Sattar and BNP were both very popular.

Sattar's rival in the election was Kamal Hussain, a close friend of Mujib and a minister in his cabinet, who was the AL candidate. A third candidate was an octogenarian Islamic scholar, popularly known as Hafezzi Huzur, who had recently entered politics. Hafezzi Huzur's constituency was the small group of Deobandi *ulama*, students of *madrasas*, and a segment of traditionalist Muslims. Because Hafezzi's candidature catered mainly to Islamic sentiments, it caused problems for BNP, which also had been arousing the electorate on Islamic issues. The BNP mobilized the support of influential Islamic leaders, particularly prominent *pirs*, such as *pirs* of Sarsina, Atroshi, Choto Dayera and

Joynpur. These spiritual leaders approved the candidacy of Sattar and advised their followers to vote for him.²

Sattar won the election by a landslide, securing 65.80% of votes, whereas Hussain, the AL candidate, got only 26.35% of votes.³ But this massive victory, though it provided legitimacy to Sattar's new government, did not bolster his position. Sattar showed indecisiveness and weak leadership after assuming the presidential office. Various factions in BNP, who were held together by Zia's towering personality, indulged in open bickering and squabbles. Sattar's decision to appoint Mohammadullah, a famous Awami Leaguer who had recently joined BNP, as the Vice-President was the final blow that broke Ershad's restraint. In a bloodless putsch, Sattar was forced to resign, martial law was declared, and Ershad assumed power on March 24, 1982.

b. Ershad's Base of Support

Unlike his predecessor, Ershad's government has suffered from an acute crisis of legitimacy. He has not been able to build up a strong constituency for himself. Unlike Zia, Ershad is neither a charismatic figure nor is he popular among the masses. Zia had come to power in a popular uprising of the *Jawans* (soldiers), which he himself did not orchestrate, whereas Ershad himself led the coup that brought him to power. Zia had legitimized his rule by administering fairly honest elections, the verdict of which was popularly accepted. On the other hand, Ershad's elections have been fraudulent and their outcomes are perceived as such by the masses. Thus, having been unsuccessful in shoring up legitimacy through democratic means, Ershad has resorted to questionable tactics to weaken the opposition and strengthen his own party, which he founded to rally whatever support it could mobilize in favor of the regime.

His party, *Jatiyo Party*, consists mostly of people of right-wing and moderately Islamic orientation. More significantly, Ershad has been quite successful as a "party breaker", for *Jatiyo Party's* leadership is essentially made up of defectors from BNP, ML, AL, and Democratic League (DL).⁴ The once powerful and militant JSD suffered severe splits when Ershad manipulated matters to have its leader accept the position of leader of the official opposition in parliament.⁵ Ershad has often promised an imminent implementation of Islamic laws, but to a different type of audience he has pledged governmental action against anti-liberation forces and punishment for the desecration of secular political symbols, thereby confusing and dividing the opposition. Ershad showed his excellent use of political gimmicks when he announced, in August 1990, several concessions for Hindus, emphasizing his government's determination to protect their lives and property, and thereby trying to woo Hindu support.⁶ Ershad's policy of co-optation and divide-and-rule has thus compensated, to some extent, for his weak base of support.

Though Ershad has lacked a mass base of support, he does have institutional backing from some important sectors. In the first place, his strength is derived from the institutional support of the military, because of its incessant fear of AL's coming back to power.⁷ In return, Ershad has made the military the most privileged institution in terms of state patronage and opportunities. Another source of support for the regime is provided by the *pirs*, who have large religious followings; their support is quite significant in defusing the fundamentalist challenge. As a result, Ershad has so far been able to stay on in power with the help of the military's backing and by dividing and confusing the opposition.

2. Resurgence of Fundamentalist Forces during Ershad Phase

There has been a significant rise of Islamic fundamentalist forces during Ershad's rule. During Mujib's rule, such forces had worked secretly and through non-political forums. They got the opportunity to surface openly during the Zia period. Under the Ershad regime, they have consolidated their position, and have challenged the secular forces and engaged in bitter confrontations, often violent. Three important features characterize the Islamic resurgence during Ershad's rule: the re-surfacing of an invigorated Jamaat-e-Islam; the politicization of the *sufi* tradition, particularly that of the *Pir* of Atroshi; and the emergence of new Islamic political parties.

a. Jamaat-e-Islam

An important factor contributing to the Jamaat-e-Islam's positive image and support has been the failure of post-liberation governments to ensure moral and material progress. A very significant element in the credentials of the Jamaat has been the loyalty and commitment of its leadership, whereas politicians belonging to the other parties have often switched party loyalty with changes in the government. Further, with the rise in religiosity of various forms from the mid-1970s onwards, and the resulting state of stronger commitment to religion, the Jamaat has appeared as the logical answer to many.⁸ The Jamaat's elevated standing has also had to do with external factors. India's water-sharing policy, its support for the *shanti bahini*,⁹ and the South Talpatty issue¹⁰ have been exploited by the Jamaat far more effectively than by others in fomenting anti-Indian feelings. This is perhaps an important reason why the Jamaat has emerged as a strong political force in North Bengal where, owing to the allegedly adverse effects of Farakka dam, anti-Indian feelings run high.¹¹

Another important source of the Jamaat's strength is its band of dedicated workers, who are mostly students or graduates of *madrasa*. The Jamaat workers are the most committed and indoctrinated of all political cadres in Bangladesh. The Jamaat operates several educational institutions at district levels, where students are indoctrinated in Islamic ideology.¹² The Jamaat's student wing, *shibir*, is one of the strongest and most well-organized student organizations at the universities of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar, Chittagong and Rajshahi. It has always been militant but it has recently become quite violent. It has a band of armed activists who do not hesitate to engage in armed combat with the secularist student groups, both on and off campus. In the late 1980s, more than a dozen leaders and workers of rival parties died at the hands of *shibir* militants, while it also lost a few dozen of its activists in fatal confrontations and retaliatory acts undertaken by its foes.

Shibir's violent image has, however, harmed its popularity as demonstrated in student-body elections at Chittagong University in February 1990. In the 1981 elections at the same university, *shibir* had won a landslide victory. It had then taken most of the positions in the university student union. But, because of its excesses and its violent and non-tolerant image, it lost the next long-delayed election held in 1990. It could win no seat in the university student union and won only one of the six student hostel elections.¹³

In the late 1980s, the Jamaat decided on implementing a program with four targets. The first target was the capturing of power at Chittagong University, that is, to dominate student politics on the campus. They already had attained some success at the University with a landslide victory in the student union elections in 1981. The second and third targets were Rajshahi and Dhaka universities, respectively. Only in the last phase did the Jamaat plan to

consolidate its position nationwide.¹⁴

The primary attention of the Jamaat towards the universities indicates its reliance on students. However, it is quite weak among industrial workers and peasants. Apart from the students, the second largest base of support for the Jamaat is small business. In terms of occupational background, 42% of the members of the Jamaat's central committee are small merchants.¹⁵ The Jamaat also has a small following among the lower echelons of the bureaucracy.

In the early 1980s, the Jamaat had opted for a new strategy designed to gain greater access to the public. Instead of emphasizing only the establishment of an Islamic state, the party adopted a program to mobilize public support for the restoration of democracy. The Jamaat proclaimed for the first time, on November 20, 1983 at a public meeting in Dhaka, that the military government of Ershad was illegal.¹⁶ This declaration enabled the Jamaat to become a part of the opposition movement for the restoration of democracy. When the government yielded to the opposition and announced the third parliamentary elections in 1986, the Jamaat participated in them along with AL and many other parties. However, BNP abstained, because it did not want to participate in elections so long as Ershad was at the helm of the government.

The elections were rigged, with both the ruling JP and the AL resorting to massive fraud.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Jamaat did fairly well. The Jamaat had contested parliamentary elections for the first time in 1970. Though it could not secure any seat in the then East Pakistan, it was the second largest party in terms of aggregate votes polled. In the post-liberation period, the Jamaat could not participate in the first elections in 1973 because of a governmental ban. When the ban was annulled, it ran in the 1979 parliamentary elections in

Table 6.1

Third Parliamentary Elections in Bangladesh, 1986:**Party Position**

<i>Political Party</i>	<i>Seats Won</i>
Jatyio Party	153
Awami League	76
Jamaat-e-Islam	10
NAP (Bhasani)	5
Communist Party (CPB)	5
JSD (Rob)	4
Muslim League	4
JSD (Shahjahan Siraj)	3
BAKSAL	3
NAP (M)	2
Independents	32

Source: *Bichitra*, vol. 16, no. 40 (March 4, 1988), p. 22.

alliance with ML under a new name IDL. In 1986, it ran on its own, and won 10 out of a total of 300 seats. Even with this handful of seats, it was the third largest party in the parliament (see Table 6.1).

In recent years, particularly after the mid-1980s, the Jamaat has been strengthened by support and cooperation from BNP and Freedom Party, the latter being a small fundamentalist party formed by the colonels responsible for the August 1975 coup. Though there are differences within BNP on the issue of collaboration with the Jamaat, its chief, Khaleda Zia, has always favored a cordial relationship with the Jamaat.¹⁸ BNP's support has been crucial in enhancing the credibility of the Jamaat among the moderate Muslims.¹⁹ The anti-Ershad popular movement benefitted the Jamaat more than it did any other party. The Jamaat found a common ground to promote its cause by denouncing Ershad's non-democratic government, thus reaching a wider audience. During the anti-government movement, the Jamaat entered into violent clashes with AL workers on university and college campuses as well as outside. In the late 1980s, such clashes were marked by political killings. AL chief Hasina has alleged that in some instances Jamaat cadres, in collaboration with BNP and Freedom Party workers, launched attacks on AL workers.²⁰

Thus, by the late 1980s, the Jamaat had assumed an offensive posture and challenged its mighty rivals in violent confrontations. However, this does not necessarily mean that the Jamaat's popularity or electoral strength matches that of its arch rival, AL. Rather, the Jamaat's strength depends on its highly organized cadres. Though numerically much smaller than AL workers, Jamaat workers excel in dedication and commitment. This band of committed followers does help in mobilizing popular support for the party, but the Jamaat still lags far behind in electoral strength or sheer physical might to take over political

power. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say, as Hossain does, that the "Jamaat may not be able to take power immediately but the possibility of its coming to power is a visible reality now".²¹

It is possible for the Jamaat to come to power in coalition with other parties or in collaboration with the military, though the latter option renders their democratic posture a mere tactic. However, it does not seem likely that it can take over power on its own for the time being.

b. The Pir of Atroshi

The *Pir* of Atroshi was an obscure *sufi* saint until the mid-1970s, but now his residence in the ordinary village of Atroshi in Faridpur, known as the *Bishwa Zaker Manzil* (World Center for the God-Conscious), has grown into a centre of spiritual revivalism of Islam in Bangladesh. People from all walks of life visit him and seek redress for their problems.²² Other famous *pirs* also share this feature, though to a lesser extent. What has made the *pir* of Atroshi particularly significant is the military's attraction towards him. In the late 1970s, high ranking military officers started visiting the *pir*, President Zia being the most august pilgrim to Atroshi. An important reason for the senior military officers' visits was to introduce their subordinates to the *pir* for spiritual initiation, known as *bay'a*. Such an initiation bound a general and his subordinates in the same spiritual chain of command. Thus, *bay'a* was a form of control and discipline from the military point of view, as the officers and soldiers took the same *pir* as their spiritual commander.

Observing the military's devotion to the *pir*, civilian politicians also started paying homage to him. During the Zia period, BNP had a special relationship with Atroshi. After the death of Zia, acting President Sattar sought the support

of the *pir* in the presidential election of 1981. As soon as Ershad came to power, he did not lose any time in renewing the military's allegiance to Atroshi. Ershad's party members also, in due course, became the *pir's* favorites. The *pir* of Atroshi thus became the favorite *pir* of the ruling elites.

In September 1987, the devotees of Atroshi, under the guidance of the *pir* and the leadership of his two sons, established the Bangladesh *Zaker* organization. They claim that the *pir* has approximately 20 million followers, close to one fifth of the population.²³ If this huge following could be mobilized politically, the *Zaker* organization is likely to have enormous political strength. This, indeed, is what inspired the formation of the organization, in the first place.

The *Zaker* organization is an attempt to institutionalize Islamic values and ideals, particularly the *sufi* dimension of love for God, in the socio-political life of Bangladesh. With offices in every district and sub-districts (*Upazilla*), the organization has four basic aims:

1. To establish Islamic government;
2. To adopt appropriate policies for human welfare;
3. To motivate people in Islam-oriented national consciousness and to encourage people to be ready for the defense of independence and sovereignty;
4. To thwart anti-Islamic attempts undertaken by forces hostile to Islam; and to preach Islam and *tassawuf* (*sufi* meditation) to check moral deterioration.²⁴

However, the organization has promised that it will not necessarily resort to violence for the protection of Islam. Rather, it would ensure the protection of Islam through preaching and spiritual initiations (in the form of *bay'a*).²⁵

Within two years of its coming into existence, the *Zaker* organization formed the *Zaker* Party in late 1989. It is run by a supreme command council in which the *pir's* sons are important figures. Immediately after the birth of the party, Mustafa Amir Faisal, the *pir's* son and a member of the supreme command council of the party, gave a statement condemning the 1972 constitution as un-Islamic. He alleged that efforts were being undertaken to establish anti-Islamic political ideals through the attempted revival of the 1972 constitution. The statement sparked instant criticism from secularist forces. The AL denounced it, branding the anti-1972 constitution forces as anti-Bangladesh elements trying to revive a neo-Pakistan. The Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Unity Council, a minority religious body, denounced the statement as well.²⁶ The entrance of *Zaker* Party into the political theater of Bangladesh thus further intensified the confrontation between pro-Islamic and secular forces.

The *Zaker* Party, being a potentially strong political force, is likely to strengthen the position of Islam in the political arena of Bangladesh. Unlike the Jamaat, it is not militant, but its members are politically not as mature as the Jamaatis even though it has a much larger following than the Jamaat. Because it is new, it is the only Islamic party that is immune from controversy over any role in the liberation war. The *pir* himself was an obscure apolitical figure until recently, so he does not share any blemish for having taken sides in controversial political issues. The secularists cannot blame the party as an anti-liberation force as they have accused other Islamic parties. Herein lies the advantage of the *Zaker* party: a huge spiritual following available for political mobilization, and an unblemished image. However, the real strength of the party depends on how successfully it can transform the spiritual allegiance of its followers into political allegiance.

c. Emergence of New Fundamentalist Parties

The third aspect of the recent Islamic resurgence in Bangladesh is the emergence of new fundamentalist parties. To some extent, this is a consequence of the crucial phenomenon of value-change: the ideological transformation of some prominent freedom fighters and socialists into Islamic fundamentalists. As mentioned earlier, secular nationalism is proving to be a weak force in providing national identity, while socialism in its Bangladesh form has failed to attain developmental goals. Islam has therefore emerged as an alternative source of identity and ideological orientation.

Some open-minded leaders of the past have recently joined the Islamic camp and formed new political parties. A conspicuous case is that of Major Jalil, who in the 1970s had preached scientific socialism as the path to national emancipation. In the 1980s, he took a complete detour, finding emancipation in Islam, and established the *Jatiyo Mukti Andolan* (National Emancipation Movement) for the establishment of an Islamic government.²⁷ Another similar development is the Bangladesh *Islami Andolan* (Bangladesh Islamic Movement). Its leader Zainul Abedin, a sector commander during the war of liberation, was an obscure figure until he founded this party, whose goal is to transform Bangladesh into an Islamic state.²⁸ The Freedom Party, as mentioned earlier, is another fundamentalist party, founded by Colonel Farukh and his cohorts, all freedom fighters and one time open-minded individuals, if not secularists.

What is more important to observe is that within the Islamic camp, the fundamentalist orientation has surpassed the appeal of modernist and orthodox Islam.²⁹ This has been so because, as observed by Maniruzzaman,

frustration with the 'immobilism' and ineffectiveness of the modernist Islam led some of the people in Bangladesh cherishing Islamic values towards the direction of Islamic fundamentalism. This was most dramatically shown in the falling readership of the *Azad*, mouthpiece of Islamic modernism in the forties and fifties, and the increasing circulation of the daily *Sangram* and the weeklies, *Sonar Bangla* and *Jahan-e-Nau* -- the standard bearers of the Islamic fundamentalism in Bangladesh.³⁰

The Ershad phase thus witnessed a significant resurgence of Islam in the realm of politics; and, within the Islamic camp, the fundamentalist orientation surfaced as the most popular. This assertive posture of Islamic political forces influenced the ruling elites, to some extent, to accord Islam the status of state religion through a constitutional amendment.

3. Constitutional Change

Ershad retained Zia's commitment to Bangladeshi nationalism, but, in matters of religion, he went beyond the limits set by Zia, especially in terms of verbal commitments. His early statements as head of the government portrayed him as a quasi-fundamentalist. He made it clear in one of his initial speeches that Islam would be the basis of state policy. While addressing the Bangladesh secretariat staff in Dhaka, he said:

We will have to give Islam as a religion its rightful place in our constitution. Why there should be any fear if it is made the state religion? After all, Islam is a religion of tolerance and accommodation.³¹

He was more firm when he stated on January 14, 1983:

Islam being the religion of the majority of the population will be given the highest place in the country's future constitution and Islamic provisions will be included wherever necessary.³²

The 18-point program, which the Ershad government promulgated in early 1983, also emphasized Islam as the basis of national values. However, he never

implemented the *sharia* beyond some formal reforms, mostly symbolic in nature. He only secured a constitutional status for Islam, partly because of the gradual rise in fundamentalist strength and in order to divide the mounting opposition.

After late 1987, an all out opposition movement had gained momentum and demanded the resignation of Ershad's government. To defuse the opposition, Ershad called for a new parliamentary election on March 3, 1988.³³ Most of the opposition parties, including AL, BNP, and Jamaat, boycotted the election because they believed that a fair election could not take place so long as Ershad was in power and his own party was a contender. Ershad won what was regarded as a farcical and fraudulent election. However, he failed to attain his objectives, since the election did not bring him legitimacy or weaken the opposition. His next important move was to amend the constitution to make Islam the state religion. This pro-Islamic gesture was more successful in attaining the goals Ershad sought.

Soon after the election, Ershad declared that the new parliament would amend the constitution to implement Islamic laws. He was quoted as saying, "Islamic laws are natural in Bangladesh because the majority belong to Islam",³⁴ adding, "the day-to-day life of the nation must be guided by the tenets of Islam and the ideals of Prophet Muhammad".³⁵

Ershad's announcement surprised government officials, because policy along these lines had not been officially deliberated and sanctioned. Rather, Ershad seemed to be conducting a free-lance public relations campaign. Even the pro-Islamic forces denounced Ershad's propaganda, emphasizing the illegitimacy of the government. One Jamaat leader proclaimed:

A government which came to power illegally and is staying much against the wishes of the people can never do any good to Islam,

the people or the country.³⁶

Ershad's Islamic rhetoric eventually culminated in the passage of a constitutional amendment, known as the 8th amendment, on June 7, 1988. The amendment read: "The state religion of the Republic is Islam, but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in the Republic".³⁷

The amendment has been subject to various interpretations. One view has held that Ershad's main reason for launching Islam as the official religion was to woo Islamic fundamentalists, some of whom were campaigning against his regime for being too lax in supporting Islamic traditions.³⁸ The fundamentalists, however, have felt that the amendment did not go far enough to satisfy their basic demands for an Islamic state in accordance with the *sharia*. On the other hand, the secularist forces have claimed that the amendment went against the spirit of the liberation war of 1971. Another view has held that the amendment deliberately stopped short of an Islamic state so as to gain the middle ground in order to offset the lack of grassroots support for the regime.³⁹

An important goal of the regime was certainly to gain legitimacy from the Muslim majority, but it is doubtful if the regime was successful in achieving this aim. No doubt, it split the opposition and bought some breathing space for itself. There was a significant difference in the perceptions and strategies of the two main opposition alliances. The secularist bloc led by AL chief Hasina was against the amendment because it paved the way for an eventual Islamic state. That bloc insisted that the 1972 constitution, alongwith the four basic principles,⁴⁰ should remain the basis for any future constitution. On the other hand, the moderate alliance led by BNP leader Khaleda denounced the regime as illegitimate and therefore not authorized to amend the constitution. The alliance wanted the 1982 version of the constitution to be the basis for agitation

against the regime. Though the Jamaat was not satisfied with the limited concession to Islam, it did not join with the other leading opposition groups to work against the government initiative.⁴¹ In this manner, the opposition stood divided; to quote Dixit,

With the one point program being pushed into oblivion, the amendment instead of creating fresh wave of agitations against the Ershad government, has instead allowed the differences to surface again.⁴²

The issue of constitutional amendment thus, on the one hand, gave Ershad a new lease of life resulting from the squabbles in the opposition and, on the other hand, he was able to bolster his pro-Islamic image at home and abroad without fulfilling his promise of changing the legal code to be in accordance with the *sharia*.

4. Other Piecemeal Pro-Islamic Initiatives

One of the early pro-Islamic initiatives of the Ershad regime was taken in 1983, when Arabic was made a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools. However, the government soon backed off in the face of stiff opposition from students. The student movement's opposition to the new education policy has been interpreted from different perspectives. Kabir contends that the rejection of Arabic demonstrated the strength of the other side of the Bangladeshi identity complex, that is, the deep and enduring attachment to the Bengali language and culture.⁴³ On the other hand, Ataur Rahman argues that the student movement against Arabic was more symbolic, and that it was actually aimed against military rule.⁴⁴

However, the regime did not give up its attempt to Islamize the school curriculum. In late 1988, the government decided to include Islamic Studies,

effective 1991, as a compulsory subject in the secondary school certificate examination. In 1989, the subject became a compulsory course for students of grades IX and X.⁴⁵ So far, there has been no demonstration against this new policy. In the earlier case, the demonstration was against Arabic, not Islam per se. It is also important to note that the opposition was already split over the issue of religion, and the secularists did not expect to muster significant support in opposing the policy.

Another initiative of the Ershad government has been to exempt mosques from paying electric and water-supply bills. Ershad's attendance at Friday congregational prayers is regularly covered by the government-run media. He appears in traditional Muslim attire and speaks to the congregation. This marks a new practice by the head of the state in Bangladesh, and seems to be part of a public relations campaign to boost his legitimacy among the Muslim masses.

Further, Ershad has diluted the secular character of an important national celebration. In 1983, on the occasion of Martyr's Day (the 21st of February), which has been celebrated for many years in a secular mode in commemoration of the sacrifices made for the survival of Bengali language, Ershad ordered the Quran to be recited in order to stress the Islamic dimension of Bengali identity.⁴⁶ Again, in 1988 the Ershad government stopped the official celebration of Victory Day (the 16th of December)⁴⁷ in an effort to distance itself from the whole issue of the liberation war. It is worthwhile to note that Ershad and the present military hierarchy had not participated in the liberation war because they were stationed in West Pakistan in 1971. The government's new policy on Victory Day indicated its strong leanings towards the anti-liberation camp and its Islamic orientation.

Notwithstanding these initiatives, the Ershad regime has still not acted on the implementation of the *sharia*. It has, meanwhile, retained the pro-Islamic measures adopted by the Zia regime and added a few more of its own haphazardly. However, it has not followed any consistent program towards Islamization.

5. Ershad's Policy towards the Islamic World

a. Bangladesh-Middle East Relationship

In the realm of external relations, Ershad has followed Zia's policy of maintaining a warm relationship with the Islamic world. The link with the Middle East is crucially important for Bangladesh, since the Middle East provides a significant market for Bangladeshi labor and is a source of financial aid and petroleum on easy terms. Good relations with the Middle East are also proof of the Islamic commitment of the ruling elite, while diplomatic support from the Middle East strengthens the position of Bangladesh in international forums. For these reasons, Ershad has tried to forge a closer relationship with the Middle East by pretending to be more loyal to Islam than his predecessors. However, his strategy has not elicited a greater volume of financial rewards from the Middle East. His action making Islam the state religion was welcomed in the Middle East.⁴⁸ but it remains to be seen whether it is going to increase the flow of aid.

Meanwhile, there has not been any significant improvement in the various aspects of the Bangladesh-Middle East relationship except in terms of the employment of Bangladeshi labor. It has been claimed by Hussain that in 1982 the Middle East absorbed nearly 98% of the recorded Bangladeshis employed abroad.⁴⁹ However, many Bangladeshis are also working in the western world

but they are not taken into account in government statistics because they are privately sponsored. Hussain's figure is therefore likely to be inconclusive. Mustafa, another authority on Bangladesh-Middle Eastern relations, has claimed that by 1982-83 the remittances sent by Bangladeshis working abroad almost equalled the value of the total merchandise exports of Bangladesh and came close to half of the total foreign aid received.⁵⁰ It is important to note, however, that the remittances did not come only from the Middle East, as a large number of Bangladeshis also work elsewhere.⁵¹ Still, it is apparent that the number of persons going to the Middle East for employment has increased modestly since the mid-1980s (see Table 6.2).

Financial assistance in terms of grants, loans and credits from the Middle East has never been large in comparison to the flow of aid from the western nations. Indeed, aid from the Middle East has been quite modest, and did not increase during the Ershad phase. On an average, it has amounted to approximately US\$ 70 million per year (see Table 6.3). Saudi Arabia has been the most important donor. The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) also plays an important role in this field, providing finance to cover petroleum imports and also loans for various projects. In 1983, IDB provided \$16 million in loans to buy machinery for a fertilizer factory in Bangladesh. IDB is also a sponsor of the Islamic Bank in Bangladesh with a share of \$6 million.⁵²

In times of distress resulting from natural calamities, Bangladesh has received humanitarian aid from the Middle East but not as much as expected, especially in comparison to that received from non-Islamic sources. In 1983, the Saudi government provided \$30 million in aid for the flood-affected areas of Bangladesh,⁵³ while in 1987 the Iraqi government sent six helicopters to transport flood-relief materials to remote areas.⁵⁴

Table 6.2**Number of Persons Going to the Middle East for Employment**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>
1976	5,278
1977	29,886
1978	22,756
1979	24,252
1980	29,899
1981	54,684
1982	57,214
1983	58,187
1984	55,905
1985	76,902
1986	68,103
1987	73,577

Sources: World Bank, *Bangladesh: Economic Trends and Development Administration*, Report no. 4822, II, (Washington, D. C. : World Bank, February 27, 1984), p. 7; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1979* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1979), p. 401; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1980*, pp. 488, 489; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1984-85*, p. 217; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987*, pp. 114, 115.

Table 6.3**Economic Assistance* to Bangladesh from the Middle East**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Amount (million US\$)</i>
1971-72	Nil
1972-73	Nil
1973-74	Nil
1974-75	76
1975-76	21
1976-77	73
1977-78	63
1978-79	63
1979-80	120
1980-81	35
1981-82	54
1982-83	109
1983-84	90
1984-85	42
1985-86	96

* Aid includes grants, loans and credits.

** Middle East includes Arab countries, Iran, OPEC Fund, and IDB,
but excludes Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Sources: *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1979* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1979), pp. 345-349; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1984-85*, p. 629; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987*, p. 409.

Table 6.4

Bangladesh's Imports from the Middle East*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Gross Value (US\$ thousands)</i>	<i>% of Total Imports</i>
1975	35,959	3.4
1976	N.A.	N.A.
1977	122,902	13.4
1978	175,816	13.1
1979	141,650	9.2
1980	110,050	5.5
1981	43,007	2.3
1982	72,309	4.1
1983	30,061	2.0
1984	53,786	2.6
1985	270,400	11.1
1986	235,701	11.8
1987	334,804	13.0

* Middle East includes Iran and the Arab countries but excludes Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Sources: United Nations, *Yearbook of International Trade Statistics, 1981*, vol. 1 (New York: United Nations, 1982), p. 117; *Yearbook of International Trade Statistics, 1982*, vol. 1 (New York: United Nations, 1984), p. 118; *1983 International Trade Statistics Yearbook*, vol. 1 (New York: United Nations, 1985), p. 55; *International Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1986*, vol. 1 (New York: United Nations, 1988), p. 146; *International Trade Statistics Yearbook, 1987*, vol. 1 (New York: United Nations, 1989), p. 55.

Table 6.5

Bangladesh's Exports to the Middle East*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Gross Value (US\$ thousands)</i>	<i>% of Total Exports</i>
1975	47,476	17.9
1976	N.A.	N.A.
1977	68,220	15.6
1978	74,689	13.5
1979	85,086	12.8
1980	145,550	19.6
1981	116,526	17.6
1982	90,588	13.4
1983	164,321	20.8
1984	141,809	15.1
1985	167,197	17.1
1986	94,274	9.8
1987	92,854	7.7

*Middle East includes Iran and Arab countries but excludes Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Sources: Same as in Table 6.4.

Besides receiving grants and loans, Bangladesh has also entered into joint ventures with some Middle Eastern countries. In 1983, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia entered into an agreement to establish a Saudi-Bangladesh joint investment company with an authorized capital of \$60 million, with each country contributing half the amount.⁵⁵

Bilateral trade between Bangladesh and the Middle East has never been voluminous. Imports from the Middle East have fluctuated a lot, declining severely in the early 1980s but increasing moderately after the mid-1980s. However, they have never exceeded 14% of the total imports of Bangladesh (see Table 6.4). The most important factor in Bangladesh's imports from the Middle East is that the crucial energy supply comes from there but is usually made available on lenient terms and conditions. Bangladesh's exports to the Middle East, as a percentage of Bangladesh's total exports, remained quite stable from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s. Such exports accounted for no more than 20% or less than 12% of its total exports (see Table 6.5). However, in 1986 and 1987 they encountered a steep fall. Thus, the overall trade relations between Bangladesh and the Middle East have not been that strong. Bangladesh is not too dependent on the Middle East either in terms of imports or exports, except in the field of petroleum. It would appear that Middle Eastern influence on the political elite of Bangladesh stems not as much from Bangladesh's dependence on the Middle East as a trade partner as it does from historical and spiritual connections.

Several important top-level bilateral visits took place during Ershad's presidency, enhancing the already existing fraternal relations in the spirit of Islamic brotherhood. In 1984, the President of the U.A.E. and the Chairman of the P.O., Yasser Arafat, were important visitors from the Middle East. The

visit of the U.A.E. President resulted in a trade agreement between Bangladesh and the U.A.E. In the same year, Ershad paid a visit to Iraq and, soon after the visit, Iraq agreed to recruit 11,000 skilled workers from Bangladesh.⁵⁶ In 1987, Ershad also visited North Yemen. In the same year, the deputy foreign minister of Oman paid a visit to Bangladesh, which resulted in the signing of an air services agreement between the two countries.⁵⁷ Ershad frequently visits Saudi Arabia for *hajj* and *Umrah*,⁵⁸ thus proving his worth as a God-fearing Muslim leader to the Saudi elite and gaining support from the Middle East, particularly in the orthodox sheikhdoms. Such ostentatious piety has also won him some sympathy from the religious-minded Muslim masses at home, compensating to some extent for his low level of legitimacy. The Ershad regime has also played an active role in international Islamic forums, such as Islamic summits, OIC, and IDB.

Overall, Ershad's feigned piety has helped him in gaining sympathy both at home and in the Middle East. His high profile in Islamic forums has also reinforced his pro-Islamic image. The regime's commitment to Islam, which is manifest, among other things, in a warm relationship with the Middle East, is a trump card in Ershad's hand that has helped in boosting his credibility both at home and abroad.

b. Bangladesh-Pakistan Relationship

Bangladesh's relationship with Pakistan, if not a barometer to measure the regime's ideological orientation, is at least a significant factor to be noted in studying the regime's policy towards Islam. A good relationship with Pakistan is a likely indicator of an Islamic orientation of the regime. The Bangladesh-Pakistan relationship was normalized during the Zia period. Diplomatic exchanges took place; air services were restored; a joint economic commission

was established and bilateral trade resumed. Bangladesh and Pakistan supported each other's stands on transnational issues in international forums. However, an outstanding problem that has remained unsolved is the issue of Biharis stranded in Bangladesh.

In 1973, Pakistan entered into an agreement to accept the stranded Biharis, but by 1984 only 170,000 out of a total of 600,000 had been repatriated to Pakistan.⁵⁹ Later, the Pakistani government said that it would complete repatriation as soon as *Rabita al-alami al-Islami* (Muslim World League), a Saudi Arabia-sponsored organization, was able to mobilize funds for transportation costs.⁶⁰ In 1988, high-level delegations from the *Rabita* visited Bangladesh and Pakistan, and assured financial assistance to cover such costs,⁶¹ raising hopes of a quick repatriation. But such expectations are not likely to materialize soon, given the volatile ethnic situation in the province of Sind, which has discouraged the government of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to accept a huge influx of Biharis.

Some new developments took place with respect to top-level visits and had an impact on existing bilateral relations. After Mujib's trip to Pakistan in early 1974 to attend the Islamic Summit, and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's reciprocal visit to Dhaka the same year, no top-level visits between the leaders of Bangladesh and Pakistan took place for a decade. However, in mid-1988 President Zia-ul Huq paid a short visit to Bangladesh to express his sympathy to the flood-affected people of Bangladesh. Further, in late 1989, then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visited Bangladesh and held discussions with Bangladeshi leaders on a wide range of topics. This was followed by a visit by the Foreign Minister of Pakistan in March 1990.⁶² These visits by Pakistani leaders added warmth to the earlier stagnant relations. Pakistan, for the first time, seemed to show some

flexibility in discussing the issue of the Bangladeshi share in the pre-independence assets of united Pakistan.⁶³ However, further improvement in bilateral ties is not likely to take place until Pakistan takes the remaining stranded Biharis.

An important indicator of the state of relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan is bilateral trade, which has seen no significant increase during the Ershad phase (see Tables 6.6 and 6.7). Imports from Pakistan have always been insignificant. They were not more than 4% of total imports during the Zia phase and did not increase in the Ershad period.⁶⁴ On the other hand, the country's exports to Pakistan reached quite a substantial volume during the Zia phase, being 10% of its total exports at their peak. During the early Ershad period, Pakistan's share in Bangladesh's exports remained more or less the same as before, but declined drastically in the mid-1980s. The decline denotes an uneasy status-quo in Bangladesh-Pakistan relations, particularly in the field of trade and commerce: old bottlenecks have not been sorted out nor new avenues opened. Nevertheless, Bangladesh has enjoyed a favorable balance in her trade with Pakistan because of its unwillingness to import much from the latter.

The Bangladesh-Pakistan relationship during the Ershad phase has thus shown the same caution as exercised earlier by Zia. Both leaders perhaps did not want to give an opportunity to the secularists and pro-liberation forces to blame them as "anti-Bangladesh" on the ground of an assumed "confederationist plot" with Pakistan.⁶⁵ Nor did they apparently want to keep aloof from Pakistan and disappoint the pro-Islamists for not developing a bilateral relationship with

Table 6.6**Bangladesh-Pakistan Trade**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Gross Value (US\$ thousands)</i>	<i>% of Total Imports</i>
1975	9,467	0.9
1976	N.A.	N.A.
1977	5,433	0.5
1978	29,802	2.2
1979	53,559	3.4
1980	54,483	2.7
1981	62,532	3.4
1982	62,473	3.5
1983	44,207	2.9
1984	32,179	1.5
1985	52,207	2.1
1986	43,007	2.1
1987	83,757	3.2

Source: Same as Table 6.4.

Table 6.7

Bangladesh-Pakistan Trade

<i>Year</i>	<i>Gross value (US\$ thousands)</i>	<i>% of Total Exports</i>
1975	12	0.0
1976	N.A.	N.A.
1977	28,346	6.5
1978	48,003	8.7
1979	35,013	5.3
1980	70,511	9.5
1981	44,177	6.7
1982	65,315	9.7
1983	61,850	7.8
1984	68,799	7.4
1985	40,605	4.2
1986	34,935	3.7
1987	36,709	3.1

Source: Same as Table 6.4.

Pakistan. It would seem that the post-Mujib elite of Bangladesh has regarded a moderate level of Islamic fraternity with Pakistan as the best strategy available to it.⁶⁶

6. Summary and Conclusions

The assassination of Zia brought about a quick decimation of the "liberation war" leadership of the military. The repatriated officers, who are generally considered to be conservative, pro-Islamic and positively identified with the anti-liberation forces, emerged as the new military leaders. Ershad was the seniormost among them, and in that capacity he took over political power in a bloodless coup. Though he later resigned from the army and raised a political party of his own, the *Jatiyo* Party, the military has remained his main source of support. The *Jatiyo* Party has not yet been able to command popular support, except lukewarm support from a segment of moderate Muslims. Like Ershad himself, his party suffers from a poor image. The party leadership is largely made up of defectors from the moderate right-wing and pro-Islamic parties, who are perceived as opportunists by the people.

In terms of Islamization of the state, the Ershad regime has moved a little beyond where Zia had left it. According Islam the status of state religion and making Islamic studies a compulsory subject in secondary schools are important policies in the regime's Islamization drive. However, Ershad does not seem to be seriously interested in the implementation of *sharia*. There is no pressure on him from the masses to implement the *sharia*. Further, neither the military hierarchy nor the upper echelons of the bureaucracy are eager for it. It would appear that the ruling party, the military and the bureaucracy want only a moderate and nominal level of commitment to Islam, which Ershad has already ensured.

No doubt, the fundamentalists demand the application of *sharia*, but their support is still limited and therefore the regime does not see any imminent danger to itself from them. Indeed, Ershad's constitutional amendment, making Islam the state religion, has taken away some ground from under their feet. Externally, Ershad has been welcomed in the Islamic world, particularly in the Middle Eastern sheikhdoms, because of his Islamic gestures. This, in return, has strengthened, to some extent, his fledgling legitimacy among the moderate Muslims at home. Thus, the support of the military and lukewarm support from a segment of moderate Muslims has helped Ershad to stay in power, especially in the context of a split in the opposition over the issue of constitutional status for Islam.

Meanwhile, the state has assumed an Islamic character with the designation of Islam as the state religion, even though in terms of the legal code there has hardly been any significant change. The state in Bangladesh essentially represents an accommodation between Islamic and British legal traditions; laws concerning family and property are derived from the *sharia* whereas criminal and commercial codes are inherited from the British. The Islamic measures adopted so far have been mostly symbolic and conciliatory in nature, aimed at winning the sympathy and support of the Muslim majority.

Notes

- ¹ Zillur Rahman Khan, *Leadership in the Least Developed Nation: Bangladesh* (Syracuse: University of Syracuse Press, 1983), p. 187.
- ² Gyasuddin Molla, "The 1981 Presidential Election", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: Volume Two, Domestic Politics* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986), p. 117.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 118.
- ⁴ Korban Ali, a senior Awami Leaguer, and Moudud Ahmed, a senior BNP leader, broke party ties and joined the Ershad government. Sheikh Shahidul Islam, Mujib's nephew and a prominent Awami Leaguer, took a cabinet position in Ershad's government.
- ⁵ It refers to A. S. M. Abdur Rab. Now he enjoys the status and privileges of a cabinet minister.
- ⁶ Hindus in Bangladesh have been against all post-Mujib governments. They dislike the military in particular and provide a solid bloc of support to AL. As Ershad seeks re-election in 1991 as *Jatiyo* Party's nominee, his goal is to confuse the Hindu community and win over at least a segment of it to his favor, which will reduce the probability of AL's winning the election. To attain that goal, he declared, in a predominantly Hindu gathering organized to extend support to his leadership, *Janamastami*, the birthday of the Hindu deity Krishna, a general holiday and further said that a Hindu teacher would be appointed in each secondary school to teach Sanskrit. For details, see "Concessions to Bangladesh Hindus", *India Abroad*, VI, no. 48 (August 31, 1990), p. 13.
- ⁷ Aabha Dixit, "Islamization of Bangladesh", *Mainstream*, September 10, 1988, p. 21.
- ⁸ Sadek Hossain, "The Jamaat Factor in Bangladesh Politics", *Dhaka Courier*, vol. 5, no. 12 (October 28-November 4, 1988), p. 5.
- ⁹ The *shanti bahini* is a guerrilla organization of tribal rebels in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. For more information see, Syed Aziz-al Ahsan and Bhumitra Chakma, "Problems of National Integration in Bangladesh: The Chittagong Hill Tracts", *Asian Survey*, XXIX, no. 10 (October 1989), pp. 959-970.
- ¹⁰ Both Bangladesh and India claimed ownership of newly emerging islands, namely, New Moore/South Talpatty and Purbasha in the estuary of the Haribhanga river on the border between Bangladesh and West Bengal. See Habibur Rahman, "Delimitation of Maritime Boundaries: A Survey of Problems in the Bangladesh Case", *Asian Survey*, XXIV, no. 12 (December 1984), p. 1308.
- ¹¹ Sadek Hossain, p. 5.

- 12 Ahmed Shafiqul Huque and M. Y. Akhter, "The Ubiquity of Islam: Religion & Society in Bangladesh", *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 60, no. 2 (Summer 1987), p. 222.
- 13 *Bichitra*, vol. 18, no. 40 (February 16, 1990), p. 12.
- 14 "Jamaat Gaining Ground", *Friday*, Dhaka, August 5, 1988, p. 12.
- 15 *Bichitra* (in Bengali), vol. 14, no. 42 (March 14, 1986), p. 22.
- 16 Jammat-e-Islam, *Ganatantrik Andolan O Jamaat-e-Islam* (Democratic Movement and Jamaat-e-Islam) (Dhaka: Dept. of Publications, Jamaat-e-Islam Bangladesh, 1984), p. 11.
- 17 *Bichitra*, vol. 16, no. 40 (March 4, 1988), p. 22; Syed Serajul Islam, "Bangladesh in 1986: Entering a New Phase", *Asian Survey*, XXVII, no. 2 (February 1987).
- 18 Zafar Samdani, "BNP: 'To Love or to Leave Jamaat?'" *Dhaka Courier*, vol. 5, no. 11 (October 21-27, 1988), p. 8.
- 19 The BNP-Jamaat relationship was tense in late 1989 because of clashes between the *shibir*, Jamaat's student-wing, and the *Chatradal*, BNP's student-wing, at various educational institutions.
- 20 Shahriar Kabir and Asif Nazrul, "Akramanat-tak Bhumikay Jamaat-Shibir: Shamney Vivishikha", (Jamaat-Shibir in an Attacking Posture -- Horror Ahead), *Bichitra*, vol. 17, no. 24 (November 11, 1988), p. 25.
- 21 Sadek Hossain, p. 6.
- 22 K. M. Mohsin, "Trends of Islam in Bangladesh", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: History and Culture*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986), p. 34.
- 23 "Bangladesh Zaker Organization", Special Feature, *Ittefaq* (in Bengali), vol. 35, no. 288 (October 21, 1988), p. 7.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 26 *Bichitra* (in Bengali) vol. 18, no. 35 (January 12, 1990), pp. 12, 13.
- 27 Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladeshe Dharma-Vittik Rajniti Punoruth-than", (The Revival of Religion-based Politics in Bangladesh), *Bichitra*, vol. 13, no. 25 (November 30, 1984), p. 25.
- 28 Bangladesh Islami Andolan, "Bangladesh Islami Andolonar Dawat" (Invitation of Bangladesh Islamic Movement), (party pamphlet) (Dhaka: Bangladesh Islami Andolan, n.d.).
- 29 The orthodox tradition is represented by the traditionalist *ulama*, for example, Deoband and its followers.

- 30 Even as new fundamentalist forces have arisen, some older Islamic forces have lost ground because of changes in the ideological orientation and perceptions of Muslims in Bangladesh. Such changes are revealed in a survey of the circulation of daily newspapers and political weeklies of Bangladesh, conducted in late 1982. The survey showed that the dominant view represented by the dailies was liberal in orientation but accommodative of Islam. However, political weeklies were almost evenly divided along leftist and Islamic ideological lines, while liberalism constituted only a minority view. For details, see Talukdar Maniruzzaman, "Bangladesh Politics: Secular and Islamic Trends", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), vol. 1, pp. 65, 66.
- 31 Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladesh and Islamic Countries 1972-1983", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: Volume Three, Global Politics* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1988), pp. 125, 126.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- 33 Earlier, Ershad called an election in May 1986 which his party won in a landslide victory, but the people were not convinced of Ershad's legitimacy because the election was flagrantly rigged.
- 34 *The Gazette* (Montreal), March 14, 1988, p. B-1.
- 35 *The Gazette*, March 15, 1988, p. B-7.
- 36 This is the statement of Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, quoted in *The Gazette*, March 15, 1988, p. B-7.
- 37 *Bangladesh Gazette*, Additional Issue, vol. 5 (Dhaka: Dept. of Publications, Govt. of Bangladesh, June 9, 1988), p. 8247.
- 38 *The Gazette*, June 8, 1988, p. D-19.
- 39 Dixit, p. 21.
- 40 These were nationalism, democracy, socialism, and secularism.
- 41 Syedur Rahman, "Bangladesh In 1988 -- Precarious Institution Building Amid Crisis Management", *Asian Survey*, XXIV, no. 2 (February 1989), p. 218.
- 42 Dixit, p. 22.
- 43 M. G. Kabir, "Post-1971 Nationalism In Bangladesh: Search For A New Identity", M. A. Hafiz and A. R. Khan (eds.), *Nation Building In Bangladesh: Retrospect And Prospect* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, 1986), p. 58.
- 44 Ataur Rahman, "Bangladesh In 1983 -- A Turning Point for the Military", *Asian Survey* XXIV, no. 2 (February 1984), p. 240.
- 45 *Ittefaq*, vol. 35, no. 344 (December 19, 1988), pp. 1, 2.

- 46 Charles Peter O'Donnell, *Bangladesh: Biography of a Muslim Nation*, (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1984), p. 255.
- 47 The Pakistani military surrendered in Dhaka on December 16, 1971. It was a victory of the Indian military and the Bengali freedom fighters over the Pakistani military and its Bengali collaborators. This day is therefore a symbol of victory of the pro-liberation forces against the anti-liberation forces, and also of the secularist forces over the Islamic ones.
- 48 Because of Ershad's making Islam the state religion, a Middle Eastern ambassador at Dhaka eulogized him as a bridge between Bangladesh and the Arab world. See Amir-ul Islam, *Rashtra Sangbidhan O Dharma* (Constitution and Religion) (Dhaka: Shahid Serniabat, 1988), p. 19.
- 49 Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladesh and Islamic Countries 1972-1983", p. 129.
- 50 M. Golam Mostafa, "Bangladesh Foreign Policy: The Middle East Factor", *BISS Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1 (January 1986), p. 49.
- 51 In 1980, the Middle East accounted for 47% of the remittances Bangladesh received. Since then the number of Bangladeshis employed in the Middle East has increased significantly. Also, the size of the Bangladeshi community in Europe and North America, particularly people in the categories of refugees, illegals and new immigrants, has increased substantially. No conclusive assessment can therefore be made from the available data. For the 1980 data, see Hussain, "Bangladesh and Islamic Countries...." p. 134. For the Bangladeshi migrants to the Middle East in the 1980s, see *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1984-85*, p. 217; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh, 1987*, pp. 114, 115.
- 52 Mizanur R. Khan, "Islamic Development Bank: A New Approach to Multilateral Financing", *BISS Journal*, vol. 4, no. 4 (October 1983), p. 118.
- 53 Syed Tayyeb-ur-Rahman, *Global Geo-Strategy of Bangladesh, OIC -- and Islamic Ummah* (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation, 1985), p. 52.
- 54 Syed Serajul Islam, "Bangladesh in 1987: A Spectrum of Uncertainties", *Asian Survey*, XXVIII, no. 2 (February 1988), p. 170.
- 55 Syed Serajul Islam, "Islam In Bangladesh", Unpublished manuscript, Dept. of Political Science, Dhaka University, 1989, p. 25.
- 56 Peter Bertocci, "Bangladesh in 1984: A Year of Protracted Turmoil", *Asian Survey*, XXX, no. 2 (February 1985), p. 167.
- 57 Islam, "Bangladesh in 1987....", p. 170.
- 58 *Hajj* is the annual pilgrimage to Makkah in the month of *Zul Hizza* of the Islamic calendar, whereas *Umrah* is a non-obligatory pilgrimage to Makkah, which can be performed at any time of the year.
- 59 Surendra Nath Kaushik, "Pakistan's Relations with Bangladesh: An Overview of the Perception of the Leaders of the Two Countries", in S. R.

Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), vol. 3, p. 167.

- ⁶⁰ Syed Serajul Islam, "Bangladesh in 1986: Entering a New Phase", *Asian Survey*, XXVII, no. 2 (February 1987), p. 171.
- ⁶¹ Syedur Rahman, "Bangladesh In 1988", p. 221.
- ⁶² *Bichitra*, vol. 18, no. 44 (March 16, 1990), p. 8.
- ⁶³ Syedur Rahman, "Bangladesh in 1989 -- Internalization of Political and Economic Issues", *Asian Survey*, XXX, no. 2 (February 1990), p. 157.
- ⁶⁴ The trade data is available only up to 1987.
- ⁶⁵ Pro-liberation forces and secular nationalists often blame the Muslim Leaguers for plotting a confederation with Pakistan, thus compromising the sovereignty of Bangladesh.
- ⁶⁶ Perhaps it has more to do with economics; after all, the regimes have not been so sensitive toward these groups internally. It is important to note that Bangladesh-Pakistan trade is no longer domestic transactions immune from tariff barriers and open international competition.

CHAPTER 7

THE ROLE OF VALUE CHANGE

This study's initial hypothesis postulates that the nature of Islamization of the state of Bangladesh, that is, the semi-Islamic status of the state, has been a function of three independent variables: (1) the specific nature of Islam in the society; (2) the configuration of political interests; and (3) the international environment. It further holds that the prospects for future Islamization of the state of Bangladesh will depend on the dynamics of interaction among these variables. More concretely, the stability of the Ershad regime, the influence of the Middle East, and the worldwide fundamentalist Islamic movement, would appear to be the important factors in the future Islamization of the state.

The hypothesis is based on the assumption that the "tolerant" Islam in Bangladesh stands distinguished from the legalistic mainstream Islam in that the former does not highlight the latter's political message, because for Bengali Muslims Islam has traditionally been a matter of personal experience and piety. It remains to be seen, however, whether this assumption is still true or not, and whether the global Islamic resurgence has changed the orientation of Bengali Muslims in such a way that they now take Islam to be a socio-political blueprint that ought to be implemented. Similarly, it needs to be examined whether the intelligentsia in Bangladesh, traditionally seen to be a promoter of secular values, still holds secular political ideas, or whether it has been affected by the weakening of secular nationalism and the rise in Islamic awareness. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to assess whether changes have occurred in the value orientation of Muslims in Bangladesh.

Public opinion surveys would seem to be an especially useful means for discerning changes in values. The chapter therefore relies to a considerable

extent on survey data, both comparative and longitudinal, in evaluating the impact of the global Islamic resurgence on the values of Muslims of Bangladesh.

A strong caveat is, however, necessary in relation to the use of public opinion surveys. To measure value change, it is essential to measure change against earlier findings. Yet, whether in respect of Bangladesh or the Middle East, there is either the absence of data for the earlier period or the public opinion surveys that had been done were poorly structured, inefficiently administered and inadequately reported. In turn, the nature of this past work could not be without an adverse impact on the quality of the surveys administered by the present author, since they had to be similar to the earlier ones for the sake of comparison. However, notwithstanding the limitations of these surveys, reliance on them has been found to be necessary for an assessment of value change in Bangladesh. Inferences drawn from the data, weak as their basis may be, are perhaps still better than no inferences at all. They are especially so since the existing literature altogether neglects this aspect of the issue.

1. The Comparative Context of Value Change

Since the mid-1970s, the resurgence of Islam has threatened secular national identities in Muslim societies. A series of surveys conducted in recent years to tap political attitudes of university students in the Arab world testify to the emergence of the Islamic identity as the most important orientation. Arab students demonstrate commitment and loyalty to Islam first, and only then to one's own nation-state. This value commitment marks a noticeable change from earlier value patterns, although this observation needs to be qualified by the reservation that hard data derived from rigorous survey work is difficult to

come by for the earlier years.

Two Lebanese scholars jointly conducted two surveys at the American University of Beirut in the 1950s; the first of these surveys was done in 1957 and the second in 1958. The subjects in both surveys were Arab students taking undergraduate courses. Over 75 percent of the subjects in both samples were from Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, while the rest came from Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. The 1957 sample consisted of 80 Christians and 58 Muslims, and the 1958 sample comprised 43 Christians and 26 Muslims.¹ Curiously, the results of the two surveys, though so close in time, were inconsistent. In the 1957 survey, the Muslim Arab students ranked religion first in importance among five objects of loyalty, namely, family, national (ethnic) origin, citizenship, political party and religion; family followed a close second (see Table 7.1). However, in 1958 family was ranked first by more than half of the respondents while only 11.5% chose religion as most important (Table 7.1). No explanation was given by those who administered the survey for this apparent slump in the attraction of religion. It is possible that the 1958 survey, with a sample of only 26 Muslim subjects, was not a sound representation of Muslim Arab students.²

The same scholars administered a similar survey in 1970-71 at the same university. The subjects were 114 undergraduate Arab students, 70 percent of whom came from Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria while the rest came from Bahrain and Kuwait. Christians constituted 49 percent of the sample and Muslims 51 percent.³ Family reportedly came out to be the most important object of loyalty, irrespective of sex and religion.⁴ Unfortunately, no breakdown of data, showing

Table 7.1

**Value Orientation of Muslim Arab Students at the
American University of Beirut -- Survey Results**

<i>Object Ranked as First Priority</i>	<i>No. of subjects</i>		<i>Percentage</i>	
	1957	1958	1957	1958
Family	19	15	32.7	57.6
Citizenship	1	0	1.7	0
Religion	21	3	36.2	11.5
Political Party	12	3	20.6	11.5
National Origin	7	4	12.0	15.3
Total Muslim subjects: 1957= 58				
1958= 26				

Source: Levon H. Melikian and Lutfy N. Diab, "Group Affiliation of University Students in the Arab Middle East", in Tawfic E. Farah (ed.), *Political Behavior in the Arab States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), p. 11.

Table 7.2**Identity Orientation in the Gulf States**

<i>How Do You Identify Yourself?</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
I am the child of X person	251	19.0
I belong to X tribe	190	14.4
I believe in X religion	625	47.2
I am a citizen of X	258	19.4
Total	1324	100.0

Source: Faisal S. A. Salem, "The Issue of Identity in Selected Arab Gulf States", in Tawfic E. Farah and Yasumasa Kuroda (eds.), *Political Socialization in the Arab States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1987), p. 51.

the numbers and percentages of subjects ranking their objects of preference, is available.

However, by the late 1970s a remarkable change had occurred. In 1977, a survey was carried out by Tawfic Farah at Kuwait University, with the survey sample including 420 randomly-chosen Arab undergraduate students of both sexes. About 99 percent of the sample was Muslim, representing 13 Arab states in addition to Palestinians.⁵ Most of the students, regardless of sex, now ranked religion first in their hierarchy of group affiliations, followed by family, citizenship, national origin, and political ideology.⁶ Unlike the earlier results, family ranked a clear second to religion.⁷ At first blush, these results may seem similar to those of the 1957 survey, where religion had been accorded priority number one. It is noteworthy, however, that, while in 1957 only 36% of the respondents held religion to be the first priority, in 1977 religion was ranked to be the most important object of loyalty by more than half of the respondents. Regrettably, the report on this survey, too, does not provide data in detail, neglecting to furnish information on the numbers and percentages of subjects ranking their objects of loyalty.

There may well be a question as to the influence of location on the findings of these surveys, since Beirut is known to have been a more liberal place than Kuwait. However, the influence of location seems neutralized by the fact that both the Beirut and Kuwait samples represented the Arab world as a whole instead of the states of Lebanon and Kuwait, respectively. The Beirut samples included subjects from seven Arab countries and the Kuwait sample consisted of subjects from 13 Arab states in addition to the Palestinians. Furthermore, if Christians are excluded from the Beirut samples, the percentage of subjects from Lebanon would decrease significantly and there would seem to be a

reasonable balance between subjects from more liberal and less liberal socio-political backgrounds. Still the issue of the type of students drawn to Beirut as opposed to Kuwait remains puzzling as the question could not be resolved in the absence of more information on the background of the students.

Another survey, largely similar in purpose to those carried out at Beirut and Kuwait, was conducted in the Gulf states in the years 1979-82. The methodology of this study consisted of a questionnaire containing open-ended and multiple-choice questions testing the identity issue. The sample included 1,393 youth from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The mean age of the respondents was 17; surprisingly, 71 percent of them were females and 28 percent males.⁸ Nothing is, however, mentioned about the religious background of the respondents. It can, however, be safely assumed that almost all were Muslims because the indigenous population of these countries is monolithically Islamic. There is no indication, however, whether the subjects were school-goers or not. But it can be again assumed that a large percentage of them were students because in recent times school enrolment has been quite high in the Gulf states.

The subjects were asked, "How do you identify yourself?" They could choose one out of four options: family, tribe, religion and state.⁹ Interestingly, religion emerged as the most important object of identity, followed by state, family and tribe (see Table 7.2); almost half the sample chose religion as the source of identity. These findings, at the end of the decade of the 1970s, on Islam having become the most important element in group identity and affiliation, clearly show the immense appeal of Islam among the educated youth in the Arab world.

2. The Evolution of Value Change in Bangladesh

The surveys done in the Middle East stimulated interest in Bangladesh on the question of identity. A survey similar to the ones done at Beirut and Kuwait universities was conducted by Sultana Zaman at Dhaka University in the late 1960s. The objective of the survey was to monitor changes in the value system. Actually, Zaman surveyed students and faculty at Dhaka University twice, once in 1968 and again in 1973, although the sample in both surveys included only a small number of subjects: 25 undergraduate students and 25 senior faculty. The subjects were asked to rank in order of priority six values, namely: theoretical (where the dominant interest is the discovery of truth); economic (where the economic man is interested in what is useful); aesthetic (where the highest value is in seeing form and harmony); social (where the highest value is love of people); political (where the highest value lies in power and influence), and religious (where the highest value lies in unity). In 1968, both teachers and students were low in religious value as compared with other values (Table 7.3). However, in 1973, perhaps as a consequence of the war of liberation, the religious value of both teachers and students dropped even further and became the lowest value (Table 7.3).

Zaman's findings thus demonstrated a steep decline in Islamic values between the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, the secular orientation suffered a severe jolt in the mid-1970s, when Islam made significant inroads in the value system of the students. This is made clearly evident by Ellen Sattar, who conducted a survey of 641 undergraduate and graduate students during the 1974-75 academic year at Dhaka University. Muslims formed 90 percent of the sample. Sattar found that 66.5% of the students responded in favor of a strong religious commitment. However, it is unfortunate that this survey, involving a

Table 7.3

Comparison of Values*

<i>Values</i>	<i>1968</i>		<i>1973</i>	
	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Teachers</i>	<i>Students</i>
Theoretical	44.40	40.24	47.70	45.68
Economic	39.96	42.20	40.80	40.50
Social	44.10	45.10	45.40	45.68
Political	35.28	40.86	40.48	39.60
Religious	36.28	34.02	26.10	26.96
Aesthetic	39.96	37.98	40.16	41.44

*The mean scores are reported.

Source: Sultana Sarwatara Zaman, "Change of Values", *The Dhaka University Studies*, XXI, Part A (June 1973), pp. 153, 155, 157, 159.

Table 7.4**Islamic Orientation of Dhaka University Students:****Survey Results, 1957 and 1988**

(in percentage)*

	1957	1988	
		A	B
Read the Quran in Translation	12	27.9	28.6
Read the entire Quran in Arabic	54	52.4	54.2
Felt attraction towards Islam	55	88.6	89.3

*Percentages are based on actual responses.

A=including non-Muslim subjects

B=excluding non-Muslim subjects

Source: M. Afsar Uddin, "Notes on Researches about Student Problems at the University of Dacca", in Pierre Bessaignet (ed.), *Social Research In East Pakistan* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1960), p. 57; 1988 data is from the survey conducted by the present author.

Table 7.5
Hierarchy of Value Preferences Among Dhaka University Students:
Survey Results, 1988

<i>Object Ranked as 1st Choice</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Family	169	48.1
Religion	129	36.8
Citizenship	22	6.3
Political Ideology	14	4.0
National Origin	12	3.4
Family & Religion	1	0.3
No Answer	4	1.1
Total	351	100.0

Source: Survey conducted at Dhaka University by the present author.

Table 7.6

Identity Orientation in Bangladesh: Survey Results, 1983

(in percentage)

<i>Objects of National Pride</i>	<i>Rural*</i>	<i>Urban (Dhaka)</i>
Islam	9	13.6
Secular symbols**	15	47.0
Resources and people	16	21.0
Total	40	81.6

*In the rural sample, 40% did not understand the question; 9.4% did not answer; 8% saw nothing to be proud of; and 2.8% gave irrelevant answers.

In the urban sample (Dhaka), 18% of the responses were under the following categories: "do not understand", "nothing to be proud of", "others", and "not stated".

**Such as liberation war, language and race.

Source: Razia Akter Banu, "Islam In Contemporary Bangladesh: A Socio-Political Study", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London, 1988, pp. 296-298.

Table 7.7**Hindu Population in Bangladesh**

(in percentage)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Share in Total Population</i>
1947	28.0
1951	22.0
1961	18.4
1974	13.5
1981	12.1

Sources: Yuri V. Gankovsky, "The Social Structure Of Society In The People's Republic of Bangladesh", *Asian Survey* XIV, no. 3 (March 1974), p. 227; *Statistical Yearbook Of Bangladesh 1979*, p. 49; *Bangladesh Population Census 1981*, p. 74; *Statistical Pocket Book Of Bangladesh 1981*, pp. 96, 97.

large sample, has not been reported in detail. No information has been provided on what questions were asked.¹⁰ Meanwhile, another survey conducted in the early 1980s at Dhaka University reportedly showed an increase in pro-Islamic values among the students.¹¹

The same trend of the rise in religious commitment is evident in longitudinal data as well. A survey had been done at Dhaka University in 1957 to find out the extent of practice of, and loyalty to, Islam among the students.¹² This survey was replicated in 1988 by the present author.¹³ As table 7.4 shows, there has been a marked increase in the percentage of students who have read the Quran in translation. No change was evident, by way of contrast, in the percentage of students who have read the Quran in Arabic. At the same time, there was a big jump by 1988 in the share of those who felt an attraction towards Islam. It is not known whether the 1957 survey included only Muslims or the general body of students. In either case, the rise in the percentage figures between the two surveys is substantial, testifying to the great surge in the appeal of Islam among students by the late 1980s.¹⁴

The Islamic resurgence in Bangladesh as reflected in the longitudinal survey data is, however, less vigorous than it is in the Arab world. This is evident from a survey conducted by the present author in 1988 at Dhaka University, which employed the same questionnaire that had been used earlier among Arab university students at Beirut and Kuwait.¹⁵ As Table 7.5 shows, religion emerged at Dhaka University to be second in importance, after family, as an object of affiliation and identity. It would seem therefore that the global surge in Islamic awareness affected Bangladesh less than it did the Arab countries, where Islam was the most important object of affiliation and identity.

It may not be entirely appropriate to claim that the changes that have occurred in the value system of the students and youth can also be ascribed to the population in general. It is nonetheless plausible to assume that what has affected the value system of the students and youth is part and parcel of larger social forces affecting the values of the population as a whole. It is fairly obvious, on the basis of general observation, that significant changes have occurred in recent years in the value system of the people of Bangladesh. The Muslim majority of Bangladesh now seems to be more committed to Islam than it was in the past. The contemporary worldwide surge in the fundamentalist Islamic spirit has thus been manifest in Bangladesh also, but it is equally evident that it has not so far transformed the value system fundamentally. The moderate Islamic orientation in Bangladesh, as reflected in Islam being ranked second in importance by students as an object of identity and affiliation, has not yet given way to the orthodox Islamic value system.

The findings of a survey, specifically addressed to the larger population, support the view that the majority of the Muslims in Bangladesh are not yet ready for an orthodox Islamic state. Razia Akter Banu conducted a broad-based survey of adult Muslims of Bangladesh in 1983. The survey sample consisted of randomly-chosen 5547 adults, 2086 of whom were from the city of Dhaka and 3461 from 20 villages selected from all over Bangladesh.¹⁶ The survey demonstrated that the secular symbols of Bengali culture were still predominant over Islamic symbols (see Table 7.6). The political implication of the continuing moderate orientation towards Islam is that an orthodox Islamic state, run in accordance with the *sharia*, is unwarranted from the perspective of the majority in Bangladesh, at least for the time being. The Muslim majority does not seem to be ready yet for an orthodox Islamic state.

It is important to note that the "tolerant" nature of Islam in Bangladesh has also undergone a significant transformation. It is true that the majority of the Muslims in Bangladesh still believe that the religious minorities should enjoy equal rights of citizenship with the Muslim majority.¹⁷ However, the perception and behavior of the minorities themselves, particularly the Hindus, cast some doubt on the assumed "tolerant" nature of Bengali Muslim culture. The insemination of "Pakistan ideology" had already led to the erosion of "tolerance" towards the religious minorities. Though there has not been significant sectarian strife in Bangladesh in the post-1947 period, except on rare occasions, the Hindu perception of insecurity mounted immediately after the partition of India, and resulted in massive outmigrations.

The same attitude of insecurity is reflected among the Chakma minority located in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh. The opening of the tribal areas to migration of people from the plains and the carrying out of development projects by the Government of Pakistan in the 1950s and 1960s destroyed the economic and ecological balance in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Chakmas lost lands and property and encountered stiff competition in socio-economic opportunities from the socio-economically more advanced Bengalis who migrated to the tribal areas under government patronage. The Chakmas did not respond to the call of liberation war in 1971, because they did not see any benefit in fighting against the remote Punjabis. In the post-Bangladesh period, they demanded recognition as a separate ethnic group, but the Mujib government turned down any such demand. The Chakma grievances intensified as the *Rakkhi Bahini* carried out violent raids in the Hill Tracts. A segment of Chakma nationalists asked for autonomy. However, this demand for autonomy did not translate into a secessionist movement for lack of external help. After the overthrow of Mujib, India came forward with strategic

assistance and a sanctuary for the secessionists. The government of Bangladesh responded by unleashing the military on the Chakmas, and a secessionist guerrilla war began in the Hill Tracts from the late 1970s. More recently, the Ershad administration offered a general amnesty to the guerrillas and made some promises to the Chakma nationalists, which weakened the secessionist movement, with one of the two factions in the secessionist camp surrendering.¹⁸

The Hindus have not waged any secessionist movement as they, unlike the Chakmas who are concentrated in one region bordering on India, are scattered all over Bangladesh. However, Hindu-Muslim relations constitute a crucial factor in the political dynamics of Bangladesh and they set, to some extent, the ideological direction of the state.¹⁹ Hindu-Muslim riots in north-western India and elsewhere after the partition in 1947 affected Hindu-Muslim relations in Bengal and caused a heavy exodus of Hindus, particularly the landed elite, from East Pakistan. The 1951 State Acquisition Act affected the *zamindars* (landlords), many of whom were Hindus, severely.²⁰ It expropriated the lands belonging to the big landlords, which devastated the Hindu landed elite of East Pakistan. Hostile Indo-Pakistan relations and the war in 1965 were also important reasons for Hindu migrations from East Pakistan.²¹ The biggest wave of Hindu migration took place in 1971 in the wake of the crack-down by the Pakistani military. The secular orientation of the liberation war and the Hindu participation in it, the secular ideology of the Bangladesh government, and the warm Indo-Bangladesh relationship during the Mujib phase, however, could not lure the Hindus back to Bangladesh. Most of those who migrated in 1971 came back but not those who had left earlier. The share of Hindus in the population of Bangladesh has suffered a serious decline since the partition; whereas it was 28.0% in 1947, it stood at only 12.1% in 1981 (see Table 7.7).

The reason behind the failure of the Mujib government to provide psychological security to the Hindu community was the rise of anti-Indian feelings and the popular perception that the regime had neglected Islam in order to compromise with "Hindu" India. In the post-Mujib period, the pro-Islamic ideology of the successor regimes and the rise of fundamentalist parties have entrenched the Hindu perception of insecurity. President Ershad's recent constitutional amendment according Islam the status of state religion has further frustrated the religious minorities as they see their future bleak in an upcoming Islamic Republic.²²

The minority perception of insecurity and the poor prospects in terms of socio-political advancement have thus diluted the "tolerant" posture of the Bangladeshi Muslims. The rise in hostile Indo-Bangladesh relations, particularly in the post-Mujib era, and the advent of a worldwide Islamic resurgence have brought substantial changes in the popular perception of the role of Islam in the polity, notwithstanding the continued appeal of secular symbols. These changes have qualitatively altered the meaning of "tolerance" with regard to the role of Islam in Bangladesh society. The emergence of a mass Islamic consciousness and the enhanced political appeal of Islam have further served to reduce the level of "toleration" in the polity.

3. Value Change and Other Factors

Whether the moderate level of Islamization, introduced since the overthrow of Mujib, is a reflection of popular will or is a result of other variables is still a debatable issue. The present author attempted in his 1988 survey of Dhaka University students to test the impact of the various factors on the Islamization of the state in Bangladesh. The students were asked to assess the significance of military rule, changes in the value system, and Middle Eastern influence.

Table 7.8

**Reasons Behind the Islamization of the State:
Survey Results, 1988**

<i>Factors in Islamization</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Military Rule	75	21.4
Changes in the Value System	35	10.0
ME Influence	29	8.3
Mil Rule & ME Influence	130	37.0
Mil Rule & Ch in Value Sys	31	8.8
ME Inf & Ch in Value Sys	23	6.6
Mil Rule, ME Inf, Ch Va Sys	17	4.8
Other Reasons	9	2.6
No Answer	2	0.5
Total	351	100.0

Source: Survey of Dhaka University students conducted by the present author.

Table 7.9
Migrant Workers' Remittances*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Amount (U.S.\$ Millions)**</i>
1972-74	0
1975	9
1976	16
1977	45
1978	102
1979	127
1980	197
1981	362
1982	368
1983	576
1984	527
1985	364
1986	497
1987	617

*The Middle East included.

**At 1988-89 U.S.\$.

Source: World Bank, *World Tables 1988-89*, (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1989), pp. 126, 127.

However, the questionnaire did not restrict the respondent's choice to only one of these factors, for that would have merely made for extracting a forced opinion. Rather, the respondent was asked to choose from among one of these factors or various combinations of these factors (see Table 7.8). What is striking in the survey results is that two-thirds of the students believed that military rule and Middle Eastern influence were the reasons behind the state-initiated Islamic measures. In contrast, only 10% held that changes in the value system were responsible for these measures. Another 20% thought that changes in the value system in combination with other factors had caused the moderate level of Islamization of the state. These survey results tend to confirm the earlier findings of the low priority placed on changes in values.

The survey results, at the same time, seem to extend support to the popular myth of Middle Eastern influence, emanating from the flow of petro-dollars to Bangladesh, as the factor behind the Islamization measures adopted by the government in the post-Mujib era. However, this Middle Eastern link seems to have been exaggerated. Chakravarty rightly notes:

A few scholars argue that the present regime's emphasis on Islam is only to placate the Arab world to get aid from the petro-dollar kingdoms. But this contention does not appear to be tenable, because so far only the leading imperialist and capitalist countries like the U.S.A., West Germany, Japan, Canada, etc. are the principal donors to Bangladesh.²³

Chakravarty's position finds support in the aid statistics. From 1974-75 to 1985-86, on an average, Bangladesh received US\$ 70 million per year from Middle Eastern sources (including grants, loans and credits from Iran and the Arab countries), which accounted for only 6% of the average annual foreign aid received by Bangladesh.²⁴ However, there still seems to be a valid basis for the popular myth of Middle Eastern influence if foreign aid is understood in a

broader sense than merely petro-dollars. Here, it is noteworthy that the extent of remittances sent by Bangladeshi workers from the Middle East is quite significant. In 1980, such remittances accounted for 47% of all remittances sent by Bangladeshi workers from abroad.²⁵ More importantly, by the late 1980s the number of Bangladeshi workers going to the Middle East had increased by more than two-fold over the figure of 1980.²⁶ The relatively low level of direct foreign aid from the Middle East thus seems to have been compensated for to some extent by workers' remittances.

To test the central hypothesis further, the present author, in collaboration with research assistants, interviewed 40 individuals of diverse occupational, ideological and political backgrounds in late 1988 and early 1989 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In terms of occupation, the individuals interviewed belonged to the following categories: lawyers, academics, journalists, retired military officers, and university students. In terms of the ideological orientation of organizations to which they were affiliated, they were distributed as follows: secularist and socialist, 15; Islamic fundamentalist, 10; and moderately Islamic (belonging to BNP and Democratic League), 5. Another 10 were moderately nationalist, without any strong political affiliation. Of the 40 individuals interviewed, 23 held important positions in various political parties. The sample had been chosen in such a way as to represent all important ideological orientations and political parties active on the political scene in Bangladesh. Three important questions were commonly asked in the interview:

1. Why was secularism incorporated in the constitution of Bangladesh in 1972?
2. Why did Zia and Ershad embark on the process of Islamization of the state?
3. What would be the future trend with respect to the position of Islam in the polity of Bangladesh?

On the question of incorporation of secularism in the constitution in 1972, the leftists and secularists held that secularism was a reflection of the popular will. However, some secularists believed that the people of Bangladesh have always been secular-oriented. Others within the secularist camp viewed secularism, both in popular sentiment and in state policy in the early days after independence, to be the result of the conditioning of popular opinion by the liberation war. They also placed stress on the AI's leadership of the liberation struggle, which left a secular orientation on the Bangladesh movement. The Marxists, however, denied the significance of the role of AI, contending instead that the secular ideas came from various types of leftists and the working class who participated in the liberation struggle. The AI was said to have only accommodated itself to them.

The fundamentalists and the moderate Islamists, on the other hand, emphasized external factors. The fundamentalists unanimously held the view that secularism was incorporated in the constitution in 1972 because of Indian pressure and Soviet influence. The moderate Islamists cited external influences, but they also acknowledged the role of AI's secular orientation and the opposition of pro-Islamic groups to the cause of liberation. There was, however, a lack of consensus among the moderate nationalists on this issue. Some attributed the secularism in the 1972 Constitution to the political developments of 1971. Others blamed Indian influence to have ushered in the secular orientation of the state. These various views reflect the contradictory positions prevailing on the political scene but they constitute, if taken together, a sound analysis of the secular orientation of the Bangladesh state after secession from Pakistan.

On the question of de-secularization of the state and the future trend with

respect to the position of Islam, the interviews provided additional insights. All those interviewed, irrespective of ideological or political affiliation, cited Middle Eastern influence as one of the factors behind the trend towards Islamization. However, the secularists and leftists laid stress on the strategy of the military elite to exploit religion for political survival. They did not think that there had been any significant change in popular political values regarding Islam.

On the other hand, the fundamentalists and moderate Islamists emphasized the rise in Islamic sentiment among the Muslim masses as having influenced the ruling elite. They, however, acknowledged that the elite was also using Islam for gaining legitimacy. The moderate nationalists, who were not biased against the political role of religion, also held that Islam was being used by the ruling elite for the sake of legitimacy and political consolidation. Like all others, they also acknowledged the impact of the influence of the Middle East.

It is noteworthy that the fundamentalists placed stress on value changes in favor of Islam to have influenced the moderate Islamization of the state, whereas the leftists and secularists did not accept any significant change in the value system in favor of Islam to have taken place which could have influenced the de-secularization of the state. No doubt, the surveys, particularly the one reported in Table 7.4, did support a significant increase in the popularity of Islam. However, on the question of what factors guided the Islamization of the state, the overwhelming opinion seems to underline military manipulation and Middle Eastern influence, rather than value change (see Table 7.8). The empirical data, based on surveys and interviews, therefore leads us to accord greater salience to the military rulers' manipulation of Islam and to Middle Eastern influence over that of changes in the value system on the process of Islamization.

4. Summary and Conclusions

Our empirical data suggest -- against the backdrop of the dualistic cultural heritage of Bangladesh, where Islam for the most part assumed a non-militant apolitical stand -- that significant changes have occurred with regard to the public's view of the role of Islam in the polity. The worldwide resurgence in Islamic spirit from the 1970s onwards has affected the value system of the people of Bangladesh. Islam's appeal, both in the spiritual and political dimensions, has increased since the mid-1970s. The intelligentsia, traditionally seen as the promoter of secular values, no longer unanimously pursues secular political goals.²⁷ The students at Dhaka University, traditionally the nerve-center of the secularist intelligentsia, are now more responsive to the appeal of Islam than in the past. However, this value re-orientation is still at a moderate level; that is, a fundamentalist Islamic orientation is far from the dominant norm.

On the other hand, Middle Eastern influence and military rule emerged to be the two strong variables explaining the trend towards the Islamization of the state of Bangladesh. The military elite itself, particularly Ershad and his cohorts, is not much interested in living up to the injunctions of Islam except for the sake of public image. For it, Islam is not a consummatory value, but it is being used instrumentally for the sake of legitimacy and political consolidation. On the other hand, Middle Eastern influence has been found to be a consequence both of historical-spiritual connections and the material inflow of petro-dollars in the form of workers remittances.

The process of Islamization of the state of Bangladesh and the present semi-Islamic status of the state have thus been the result of both internal and external factors. The military, in its search for ideological legitimacy did

attempt to overpower the inherent thrust of Bangladeshi society, particularly in respect of the position of Islam in the polity. However, the military's manipulation of the issue alone did not determine the ideological status of the state. The impact of the external environment has been an important factor, while the moderate increase in the popularity of Islam played only a minor role in the political dynamics that have determined the extent to which the state could accommodate the *sharia* or remain independent of it.

Notes

- ¹ Levon H. Melikian and Lutfy N. Diab, "Group Affiliation of University Students in the Arab Middle East," in Tawfic E. Farah (ed.), *Political Behavior in the Arab States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), pp. 6, 7.
- ² The administrators of the surveys considered the 1957 and 1958 surveys together and came to the conclusion that the students ranked the family first in importance. But this kind of combination, in the view of the present author, distorts the reality and should be scrutinized rather than accepted outright. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-15.
- ³ Levon H. Melikian and Lutfy N. Diab, "Stability And Change In Group Affiliations Of University Students In The Arab Middle East", *The Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 93 (June 1974), p. 15.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- ⁵ Tawfic E. Farah, "Group Affiliations Of University Students In The Arab Middle East (Kuwait)", *The Journal Of Social Psychology*, vol. 106 (December 1978), p. 161.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 163.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.
- ⁸ Faisal S. A. Al-Salem, "The Issue of Identity in Selected Arab Gulf States", in Tawfic E. Farah and Yasumasa Kuroda (eds.), *Political Socialization in the Arab States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1987), p. 48.
- ⁹ It is possible that the way the question is cast played a role in influencing the subjects. But this is an impressionistic guess and there is no way the present author could verify it empirically.
- ¹⁰ Sattar's sample of 641 students represented all major faculties at Dhaka University. See Ellen Sattar, *Socio-Economic Survey of Dhaka University Students* (Dhaka: University Grants Commission, 1975), pp. 1-25, 43-45.
- ¹¹ The author came to know of this survey in an interview with Professor Monzurul Huq, Department of Psychology, Dhaka University, on November 1, 1988.
- ¹² M. Afsar Uddin, "Notes on Researches about Student Problems at the University of Dacca", in Pierre Bessaignet (ed.), *Social Research in East Pakistan* (Dhaka: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1960), p. 57.
- ¹³ The sample included 351 students, randomly chosen from various faculties and departments. 262 (74.6%) were 1st year honours students; 88 (25.1%) were M.A. students and only 1 (3%) was a 3rd year honours student. 204 (58.1%) were males and 144 (41%) were females. 3 (9%) did not disclose their gender. 23 (6.5%) described themselves as non-Muslims.

- 14 In the 1988 survey, 6.5% subjects (23 out of 351) described themselves as non-Muslims. Some of these non-Muslim subjects read the Quran in translation and felt an attraction towards Islam. In 1957, the percentage of non-Muslim students at Dhaka University was higher than 1988, but it could not have been higher than 10-12% of the total student population. In 1988, the percentage of non-Muslims in Bangladesh was 12%, whereas in the survey they accounted for 6.5%. In 1957, non-Muslims accounted for approximately 20% of the population. It can then be assumed that the non-Muslims in the 1957 survey did not account for more than 10%, if the survey included non-Muslims at all. The presence or absence of non-Muslim subjects or the variation in their percentages in the two surveys do not therefore make any significant difference to the data.
- 15 The present author sought the help of the faculty members at Dhaka University and also employed research assistants to conduct surveys and interviews. It was ensured that visible signs of religious or ideological affiliations, for example, in external appearance, were absent among those who personally administered the surveys and interviews.
- 16 Razia Akter Banu, "Islam in Contemporary Bangladesh: A Socio-Political Study", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of London, 1988, pp. 131, 134, 160.
- 17 Banu, p. 226.
- 18 For a more detailed discussion on this topic, see Syed Aziz-al Ahsan and Bhumitra Chakma, "Problems of National Integration in Bangladesh -- The Chittagong Hill Tracts", *Asian Survey*, XXIX, no. 10 (October 1989), pp. 959-970.
- 19 However, recently some Hindu migrants from Bangladesh residing in West Bengal organized themselves politically and launched a movement called *Shwadin Bangabhumu* (Independent Bengal), headquartered in Calcutta. Their goal is to liberate the whole of Bangladesh. Their agents often distribute leaflets inside Bangladeshi territories which have caused acrimonious protests from the Government of Bangladesh. The fundamentalists are also exploiting the issue to mobilize popular support to the defense of motherland against any potential "Hindu" incursion from India.
- 20 According to the Act, the cultivator was to be confirmed as proprietor, and was henceforward to pay land revenue taxes directly to the Government. The Government initiated the takeover of estates in two stages, 1951 and 1956. For details, see Elliot Tepper, *Changing Patterns Of Administration In Rural East Pakistan* (East Lansing: Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University, Occasional Paper No. 5, August 1966), pp. 10, 11.
- 21 Yuri V. Gankovsky, "The Social Structure Of Society In The People's Republic Of Bangladesh", *Asian Survey*, XIV, no. 3 (March 1974), pp. 221, 222.
- 22 Though Ershad recently announced several concessions to the Hindu community, including the determination of his government to protect Hindu lives and property making *Janmastami* (the birthday of Krishna) a Hindu

deity) a general holiday and promising to appoint a Hindu teacher in secondary schools to teach Sanskrit, it will take some time to see what impact these measures have on the Hindus. The presidential election in 1991 is likely to offer an excellent opportunity to observe whether the above measures will bring about a swing in Hindu votes in Ershad's favor or they will be ignored. For more information on this issue see "Concessions to Bangladesh Hindus", *India Abroad*, VI, no. 48 (August 31, 1990), p. 13.

- 23 S. R. Chakravarty, "The National Liberation Movement -- Problems and Prospects", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: Volume Two, Domestic Politics* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1986), p. 12.
- 24 *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1979*, pp. 345-349; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1984-85*, p. 629; *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1987*, p. 409.
- 25 Syed Anwar Hussain, "Bangladesh and Islamic Countries 1972-1983", in S. R. Chakravarty and Virendra Narain (eds.), *Bangladesh: Volume Three, Global Politics* (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1988), p. 134.
- 26 *Statistical Yearbook of Bangladesh 1987*, pp. 114, 115.
- 27 In a series of interviews conducted in 1968-69, Nasim Ahmed Jawed found the modern educated middle class in Bangladesh to be holding secular political values. He had randomly chosen 163 subjects from four professions: lawyers, university faculty, journalists and *ulama*. Only 8% of the modern professionals held that a polity ought to seek the ends of Islam. However, the *ulama* were unanimously of the opinion that the state should seek to serve Islamic ends. Jawed's findings are quite in contrast with the results of the interviews conducted by the author. The latter interviews showed that many political activists who wanted to establish an Islamic state had a secular education. Also, many fundamentalists were recent converts to the cause of Islam. It can therefore be claimed that the Islamic ideology has penetrated a segment of the intelligentsia though a majority among it is still secular-oriented. For Jawed's survey, see Nasim Ahmed Jawed, "Islam and Political Attitudes in Pakistan and Bangladesh: A Thematic and Quantitative Approach", Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1974, pp. xi, xiii, 82, 113.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

There has rarely been a complete separation between religion and state in the history of Islam. Indeed, whenever attempts were made at such a separation, they provoked rebellion and instability, and the state had to reconcile itself to religion and the interests it represented. The role of Islam in political development thus closely resembles Smith's organic model of the traditional religion-based political systems. In the organic model, there is a complete fusion of religious and secular authority. The ruler exercises both religious and secular authority, and his chief function is to maintain the divinely-sanctioned social order in accordance with religious laws and traditions. Smith categorized Islam as approximating closely to the organic model because the traditional Muslim state retained the organic Islamic version of the complete fusion of religious and political authority.¹

In the post-colonial period, however, the question of religious and secular authority proved to be quite contentious as no clear division emerged between them. In terms of political authority nothing belonged to 'Caesar' exclusively. Nevertheless, there have been attempts to pull the state all the way towards theocracy or secularism. But only in rare cases have such endeavors been successful and again only to a limited extent. On the other hand, the modern nation-states in the Muslim world accept the separation of civilian and military authority. But the degree of institutionalization of this separation is weak, and frequently the military has taken over civilian authority. At the same time, the people are now politically conscious, which impels Muslim rulers to seek legitimacy from the people. Thus, in the post-colonial period, there emerged two important sources of legitimacy: Islam and the modern, western political

tradition, particularly pluralistic notions of politics which were internalized by the intelligentsia through contact with British colonialism in the case of South Asia. As a result of this dual legacy, while military rulers in Bangladesh have resorted to Islam in search of legitimacy, the modern intelligentsia has demanded pluralistic participation.

On the other hand, a critical aspect of contemporary politics in the Muslim world in general is the weakening of secular nationalism, and the popularity of Islam as an alternative to secular models of politics, such as liberalism and Marxism. The recent rise of fundamentalism in the Islamic world has resulted in demands for an Islamic state based on the *sharia* as the legal code. This development has provided an opportunity to the military to pose itself as the champion of Islam, as is evident in the case of Bangladesh, even though the fundamentalists attack it as being opportunist and not bona fide Islamist. However, the conflict between the military and the fundamentalists in Bangladesh is still at a low level. It is so because both are mutual beneficiaries of each other's activities. The efforts of various Islamic groups to promote Islamic values benefit the military because it, too, appeals to the Muslim masses in the name of Islam. On the other hand, the military crack-down on the secular nationalists and leftists, to the extent it weakens these groups, benefits the fundamentalists.

Though the military in Bangladesh is pro-Islamic and the military elite has provided leadership to the country for most of the time since independence, no puritan like Zia-ul Huq² of Pakistan has yet emerged in the power structure of Bangladesh. Akbar Ahmed's typology of Muslim elites' ideological orientations is quite illuminating in understanding elite behavior in South Asia. He found two models of Muslim political leadership in South Asia: puritan and

synthesizer. The influence of colonial rule further resulted in a third model that rests on a liberal interpretation of Islam. There is still another model in Ahmed's typology which is represented by secular-oriented leaders.³

In the context of contemporary Bangladesh, Akbar Ahmed's typology is quite meaningful. Bangladeshi political leaders fall under secular, synthesizer and Islamic modernist categories (Tajuddin, Mujib and Zia respectively). So far, no puritan leader has been able to assume political power in Bangladesh though some unsuccessful attempts were made from both the military and civilian quarters.⁴

The reason why no puritan leader has risen so far in the power elite of Bangladesh has to be sought in the dualistic cultural tradition of the Muslims of Bangladesh. A set of homogeneous core values that the nation should share as a whole has not emerged yet. As a result, the Muslims in Bangladesh have not been able to emerge as an *ummah*, a united Islamic community. Accordingly, the state of Bangladesh could neither remain secular nor could it become a fully Islamic state. As well observed by Islam,

This dichotomy of "Bengali" identity vs "Muslim" identity in Bengali Islam is perhaps responsible for not "giving form and substance to an integrated Islamic Ummah" in Bangladesh. Ever since this has been the major source of conflict in the Muslim society of Bangladesh. In the fight between two forces -- religion and indigenous culture -- though Islam has eventually received predominance the process has impeded the transformation of the society into an Islamic State.⁵

The spiritual commitment to Islam and at the same time an equally emotional loyalty to "Bengali-ness" has placed the Muslims of Bangladesh on the horns of a dilemma with regard to the position of Islam in the polity. During the Pakistan period, repeated attempts by the central elites to impose an Islamic orientation in Bengali culture caused a backlash which reinforced the

secular symbols of Bengali nationhood and identity in the Bengali nationalist movement. The war of liberation further strengthened those secular symbols. However, in the aftermath of that war, too close an affiliation of the successor regime with the secular symbols of Bengali culture sparked anti-secular reactions, which strengthened the Islamic aspects of Bengali identity. As a consequence, the ruling elite in Bangladesh seems eager to avoid moving too far in any one direction, secularism or Islam.

In the future, the elite may perhaps overcome the dilemma if the existing balance between secular and Islamic values shifts in favor of Islam. Recent events, such as the politicization of the *sufi* tradition and the emergence of the *Zaker* Party with a huge following, add up to considerable strength for the Islamic camp. Until recently, the *sufis* mostly stayed away from politics or were insignificant actors in national politics. However, their influence is pervasive now. It has penetrated elements of the bureaucracy, military, and the inner circle of the ruling elite. In other words, the influence of Islamic forces has penetrated deeply into the upper echelons of both the civilian and military administration. This development suggests a significant potential for change in the configuration of political forces in favor of Islam.

It is noteworthy, too, that students -- the most active political group in Bangladesh -- are no longer monolithically secular in their political orientation. The secularists have lost their monopoly over campus politics in recent years, where secular sentiments are now giving way to Islamic ethos. The university campuses, once the nerve-centre of secularist ideologies, had by the late 1980s turned into battlegrounds of contention between the secularist and fundamentalist forces. The fundamentalists, though still a minority in most places, are quite well entrenched and constitute a growing force on the

campuses. The intelligentsia is thus no longer united on the desirability of a secular state.

The military, though not formally participating in politics, constitutes a crucial group in the politics of Bangladesh.⁶ By the early 1980s, the military had been shorn of its liberation war leadership and had come under the influence of a right-wing and pro-Islamic religious hierarchy. Many senior officers pledged spiritual fealty (*bay'a*) to the *sufis*. The military as an institution is therefore strongly in favor of Islam and is likely to act as a guardian of Islamic values in the polity.

Of equal importance are the loyalties of another institutional group, the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy in post-colonial societies is an overdeveloped institution inherited from colonial rule, bestowed with a pervasive executive power and obviously reluctant to surrender power to elected officials. With contempt for pluralistic and participatory values, the bureaucracy in Bangladesh has traditionally been conservative and right wing. The bureaucracy has long been a target of the Jamaat's recruitment strategy, and the Jamaat has been successful in making some inroads into the lower echelons of the bureaucracy. On the other hand, the *pirs* have successfully penetrated the upper echelons. As a result, the loyalty of the bureaucracy seems now to lie with the Islamic forces rather than with the secularists. In brief, among the politically significant groups in Bangladesh, the military and bureaucracy are positively aligned with Islam whereas the students and intellectuals are mostly with the secularist camp. However, pro-Islamic elements have now penetrated the university and college campuses even though they still constitute a minority.

In the realm of party politics, the political parties are mostly divided into two broad alliances: secularist and socialist bloc versus the right-wing and pro-

Islamic alliance. Both camps seem to be equally powerful in terms of popularity and support base. In terms of individual parties, the AL appears to be the most popular party with the largest organizational network, encompassing both urban and rural areas. Despite its organizational strength and popular support, the party has been suffering from disunity, particularly since the assassination of Mujib. Senior AL leaders, such as Kamal Hussain and Abdul Mannan, are openly critical about the nature of participation and decision-making in the party. Internal dissensions heightened during 1989, leading to the apprehension that the party might break up.⁷ In the absence of Mujib, the party lacks a paramount leader who could heal factional disputes.

Next to the AL in political stature is the BNP. The party's current strength rests on its chief, Khaleda Zia, who seems to be the most popular leader in Bangladesh. Her popularity rests on her absolute rejection of any elections under President Ershad. The split between Khaleda Zia and Obaidur Rahman, a prominent BNP leader, in 1989 weakened the party as Obaidur Rahman formed a splinter BNP. The BNP does not have the same level of grassroots organizational strength or popular support as the Awami League. The ruling party, the *Jatiyo* Party, is much weaker than either AL or BNP. Composed of defectors from various other parties, such as BNP, ML and AL, the party is trying to gain legitimacy and support through symbolic Islamic gestures and various economic development measures of the government. All other parties are minor parties and do not command enough support to be viable contenders for power. In the case of a fair election, AL is likely to win the largest number of seats, but not an absolute majority.⁸

However, the possibility of a fair election is remote so long as Ershad is in power. Ershad's survival has been facilitated mostly by the disunity of the

opposition parties. Such disunity exhausts the opposition and enhances the maneuverability of the regime. Also, prolonged opposition has dispirited some opposition leaders, leading to their being co-opted by the government, which has further weakened the opposition. There is no indication of Ershad's likely fall in the immediate future. Even if the Ershad regime collapses and the secular alliance under the leadership of AL captures power, the likelihood of de-Islamization of the state is slim.

This is so because AL itself is split on the issue of post-Mujib constitutional amendments regarding secularism. The AL's senior leadership is unwilling to revert back to the 1972 constitution whereas the younger generation of leaders is committed to restoring the 1972 constitution. Even if the radical wing trounces its more conservative colleagues, there is the looming fear of military intervention in defense of Islam. A more serious prospect would be an alliance between the military and the pro-Islamic forces. For, the pro-Islamic forces are likely to foment discontent and agitation against any de-Islamization policy, facilitating an eventual military intervention. Also, the external environment, particularly the Middle Eastern lobby, will exert influence against possible de-Islamization. The prospects for de-Islamization under a secular-oriented regime in the near future are therefore quite bleak.

On the other hand, the prospects for further Islamization under Ershad's leadership are not promising either. Ershad, though verbally favoring the *sharia*, does not have any strong commitment to implementing Islamic laws. Nor is the populace ready yet for an orthodox Islamic state. The present level of Islamization seems to be satisfactory to both the domestic constituency as well as the external Islamic world.

The possibility of the Jamaat or the *Zaker* Party capturing power in the immediate future is not promising, too. In the 1986 parliamentary elections, even though they were rigged and unreliable, the Jamaat won only 10% of the popular vote. It does not seem feasible that the Jamaat would be able to muster enough popular support to win a majority in the near future. On the other hand, the *Zaker* Party would have to work hard to make the spiritual disciples politically loyal. It can not be taken for granted that the spiritual followers of the *pir* of Atroshi will automatically support the *Zaker* Party (ZP) or its policies. Traditionally, the *murids* look at their *pirs* as spiritual guides, not as political mentors, though politically-oriented *pirs* have always existed against the mainstream apolitical *sufi* tradition. But still, out of a following of several millions, a good number of faithfuls are likely to extend their political loyalty to ZP.

Neither ZP or JI is in a position, on its own, to mobilize enough support necessary for an electoral victory in the foreseeable future. But an electoral alliance of JI, ZP, ML, and smaller fundamentalist parties could possibly win a majority in the near future and incorporate the *sharia* in the legal code. The formation and viability of such an alliance, however, is very unlikely, given the contradictory spirit of JI and ZP. JI is militant and favors use of violence, if necessary, for the sake of Islam. It is also intolerant of secularists and socialists even if they are Muslim by faith.⁹ On the other hand, ZP is more tolerant and non-violent. It does not want to resort to violence for the sake of implementing Islam in the polity. Rather, it wants to induce Islamic values in the people by exposing them to the spiritual dimension of Islam. An alliance between JI and ZP is therefore quite unlikely in the immediate future, though in course of time ZP may become less idealist and more pragmatic and feel the strategic need for forging an alliance with JI for the sake of coming to power. Such an outcome

would depend on the performance of ZP in the political arena. The party is still in an embryonic stage, and it is too early to predict its future behavior. For the time being, then, the present status of the state of Bangladesh of being a semi-Islamic state seems to reflect the prevailing equilibrium among the political forces active in Bangladesh politics.

However, in the long run, changes in political culture in favor of Islam -- that is, from an assimilative Islam to a puritanic-legalistic Islam -- would seem to be a pre-requisite for a thorough Islamic transformation of the state of Bangladesh. Such a change in the political culture of Bangladesh in favor of Islam has been taking place at a moderate pace. But still the process of change has not reached the point where it would be congenial for a thorough implementation of the *sharia*.

The changing position of Islam in the polity of Bangladesh can be better understood in the wider perspective of change in the role of Islam across Muslim societies in the Islamic world. It is an observation well-supported by scholarly works that secular nationalism as the main denominator of national identity became weak in the Muslim world during the last third of the 20th century. From the early 1970s onwards, a resurgence in Islam has threatened secular national identity in Muslim societies. One reason for the resurgence of religion has been that nationalism as the basis for a civil society proved to be a weak force.¹⁰ A series of surveys conducted to tap political attitudes of university students support the contention of the weakening of secular identity in the face of rising religious commitment in the Arab world and, to a lesser extent, in Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, the secular symbols of Bengali culture and nation still outweigh Islamic ones, but secular nationalism has proven to be a declining

force. Mujib's Bengali nationalism, based on secular images, values and traditions, soon lost its appeal with the Muslim masses of Bangladesh. With the unpopularity of the Mujib regime, its fundamental principles, such as secularism and Bengali nationalism became discredited. On the other hand, an Islamic orientation gained popularity. When Zia replaced secularism and Bengali nationalism with absolute trust in Allah and Bangladeshi nationalism, the new posture won instant popular acceptance. Zia's solid victory in the 1978 presidential election, and his party's sweep of the 1979 parliamentary elections, provided strong evidence that the majority were in favor of a moderate Islamic orientation in national identity and state behavior.

In the Muslim world in general, an important reason for the decline of secular nationalism is the failure of secular nationalist leaders to deliver the promises they made while mobilizing popular support behind their movements. Also, the dependence of the nationalist leaders, either on the capitalist western bloc or on the Marxist-Soviet bloc, showed them as subordinating the nation to foreign powers. In the case of Bangladesh, during the heyday of Bengali nationalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the AI leadership of the nationalist movement promised to transform the country into *Sonar Bangla* ("Golden Bengal"). However, in the post-independence period the dream of *Sonar Bangla* did not come true. Rather, the nation encountered severe dislocation and mismanagement of the economy, a breakdown in the law and order situation, and a severe drop in the standards of living and opportunities of life. These were important reasons for the unpopularity of the Mujib regime and, along with it, its ideology of Bengali nationalism and secularism also got discredited. Moreover, the state and the ruling elite were perceived by the masses to be in a subordinate relationship to the neighboring giant, India. As a result, popular discontent was directed against the ideological bond that glued

Indo-Bangladesh friendship, that is, secularism. The resulting unpopularity of secularism and secular-oriented Bengali nationalism coincided with the tide of Islamic resurgence that was pervading the Muslim world. As a consequence, the ideological vacuum caused by the discrediting of secular notions of national identity and politics paved the way for the strengthening of Islam-oriented political values and identity.

An important outcome of this weakening of secular nationalism and the strengthening of Islamic orientation has been that it has undermined the popularity of secular-oriented regimes and facilitated intervention by the military as the defender of Islam. Since the military coup in 1975, all succeeding military regimes or generals-cum-politicians in power have introduced some Islamic reforms to gain legitimacy at home and abroad.

The quasi-military regime's continuity in power has been facilitated by disunity among the civilian political groups. The disunity has provided an excellent rationalization for the military to enhance its credentials by claiming that the military leadership is the only viable option in the absence of consensus among the civilian political forces. This has greatly bolstered Ershad's own confidence and his regime's shallow legitimacy. The military has thus been the biggest beneficiary of moderate changes in the value system in favor of Islam. However, the further strengthening of Islamic identity and ethos among the masses is likely to jeopardize the military's advantageous position. In a situation of stronger Islamic sentiment among the masses, the military elite is likely to encounter more pressure to implement the *sharia* or to make room for the fundamentalists to take over.

Our analysis of the independent variables thus shows that the interaction of internal and external forces has made the state of Bangladesh neither secular

nor Islamic. One independent variable -- that is, the nature of the inherited Islamic society -- leads us to expect that Bangladesh would be neither an Islamic state nor a secular one. In other words, state power would not be used for the implementation of *sharia*, but the state would maintain an Islamic character through an accommodation of Islamic and western laws and a resort to symbolic Islamic measures. In this manner, an equilibrium between a semi-secular state and an Islamic society would be reached. This expectation is a valid one, because Islam to Bengali Muslims has been a matter of personal experience and piety. Historically, Islam was not perceived to be making socio-political demands on Bengali Muslims except during the Islamic reformist movements, often militant, in the 19th century. Islamic tradition in Bengal has been accommodative¹¹ and tolerant instead of legalistic and militant.

However, the traditional apolitical nature of Islam in the polity of Bangladesh has been changing because of the internal group dynamics of Bangladesh politics, the external environment, and changes in the value system. The worldwide Islamic resurgence has weakened secular nationalism. The Middle Eastern influence, both spiritual and financial, has had a considerable impact in favor of the Islamization of the polity. Moderate changes in the value system of the people have also taken place. Islam now has an appeal for the people not only as a system of faith and rituals to be experienced in personal life, but also as a socio-political holistic system that ought to be applied to the solution of national problems. This change in the popular perception of the role of Islam in the polity is, however, still at a moderate level. The Muslim majority is still aloof from the fundamentalists or militants demanding a thorough application of the *sharia*.

Finally, changes in the configuration of political groups have strengthened

the military with a pro-Islamic orientation as against the civilian intelligentsia, which incorporates conflicting ideological tendencies. The military hierarchy has benefitted from cohesion and unity in its ranks, particularly in matters of ideological orientation. This has been achieved through purges of freedom fighters and others, whose loyalty appeared to be doubtful to the senior repatriated officers who took the helm of the military in the post-Zia period. On the other hand, civilian opposition has been divided not only on strategy and tactics but also on a fundamental ideological question: whether the 1972 Constitution, enshrining secularism as a fundamental principle of state policy, or the 1982 Constitution, replacing secularism by firm faith in Almighty Allah, ought to be the starting point for a new beginning in a post-Ershad phase.¹² The secularists want to go back to the Mujib Constitution whereas the moderates prefer the Zia version. The fundamentalists, though accepting Zia's version as an interim arrangement, are committed to the thorough implementation of *sharia*.

The net result of the interaction among the various endogenous and exogenous forces is that Bangladesh is neither a secular state nor an Islamic one. At best, Bangladesh can be accorded the status of a semi-Islamic state, because it has enacted some reforms, including constitutional amendments, to accommodate Islam within a state built on British-laid colonial foundations.

It would seem that a thoroughgoing Islamization of the state would require fundamental changes in the value system of the society in favor of Islam. Institutional and structural changes required for the implementation of *sharia* cannot be attained on a solid footing without corresponding changes in the political culture. The influence of institutional groups, such as the pro-Islamic military, or of the external environment, such as the Middle East, is not enough

for thorough Islamization. Changes in the political culture thus constitute an important pre-requisite, but such changes occur gradually only over a period of time. If the global surge in the Islamic fundamentalist posture sustains itself over a long enough period as to influence the Muslim masses of Bangladesh -- and, consequently, there evolves a stronger affinity and loyalty to Islam than to the secular symbols of Bengali ethno-linguistic identity -- then the demand for the implementation of *sharia* is quite likely to gain the support of the majority. Otherwise, the existing duality in the Bengali Muslim culture -- an equally strong affiliation and loyalty to Islam and to Bengali ethno-linguistic heritage -- is likely to sustain only a moderate Islamic orientation in state policy and behavior; in other words, Bangladesh is likely to see the perpetuation of the existing semi-Islamic status of the state.

Our study of Bangladesh thus underlines the importance of cultural limits to political change; that is, external influences and the pressure of certain domestic forces may affect local values and strengthen some political groups against others, but a fundamental re-structuring of the state from secular legal and political norms to religious ones would require substantial changes in the political culture of the masses as well as of the elites.

Notes

- ¹ Donald E. Smith, *Religion and Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), pp. 7, 8.
- ² This is open to some dispute as doubts have been raised as to the extent to which he allowed open deviations from Islamic principles. There is not much room for settling such disputes as our prime focus is not Pakistan.
- ³ Akbar S. Ahmed, *Pakistan Society -- Islam, Ethnicity and Leadership In South Asia* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 9-15; Ishtiaq Ahmed, "Islam, Society and Pakistan", *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 11, 1989, p. 511.
- ⁴ For example, former chief of Air Force Tawab tried to make Bangladesh an Islamic Republic in collaboration with Libya and local Islamic forces in the early days of military rule. Also, Hafezzi Huzur, a prominent and well-respected Islamic scholar, unsuccessfully contested the presidential election in 1981.
- ⁵ Syed Serajul Islam, "Islam in Bangladesh", Unpublished manuscript, Department of Political Science, Dhaka University, 1989, p. 2.
- ⁶ An important dimension of the military's role in post-Mujib politics in Bangladesh is the participation of a large number of retired military personnel in active politics. Not only the parties established by the military elites, such as BNP and JP, have a large number of former military personnel, but the latter are found in almost all sorts of parties. Even the anti-military AL has quite a few retired top brasses of the military among its leaders. However, the majority of the retired military personnel tend to lean towards pro-right and pro-Islamic parties. Thus, an indirect link is established between the military and the civilian political institutions. Even though the military as such is no longer in power, its influence pervades deeply through the political realm. Even if the opposition parties come to power, they will find it almost impossible to purge the political domain of military influence.
- ⁷ Syedur Rahman, "Bangladesh In 1989 -- Internationalization of Political and Economic Issues", *Asian Survey*, XXX, no. 2 (February 1990), p. 152.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 153. Professor Anisuzzaman, a noted secularist intellectual and AL-supporter, shares a similar view that, in the case of a fair election, AL would emerge as the largest party though it is not likely to attain absolute majority. Source: Interview with the author in December 1988.
- ⁹ The Jamaat follows Ibn Taimiya's doctrine, as mentioned earlier, that a Muslim ruler who does not apply the *sharia* ceases to be a Muslim, and a Muslim individual who does not live up to the *sharia* also ceases to be a Muslim. Therefore, secularists and socialists, even if they claim to be Muslims by faith, are not considered to be Muslims by the Jamaat. Rather, the Jamaat considers them to be *munafiq* (renegade) and the Islamic penalty

for a *murtad* is death. Consequently, the Jamaat does not consider it morally wrong to liquidate its socialist and secularist enemies. This is why some Jamaat leaders in the post-Mujib era declared that they did not make any mistake in 1971; that is, their role in 1971, which involved the liquidation of a segment of the secular-oriented intelligentsia, was not morally wrong. This caused a serious controversy and intensified animosity between the fundamentalist and secularist forces.

- 10 Weiner and Banuazizi found it in their research on Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. See Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner (eds.), *The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. 19.
- 11 In the sense that it retained some pre-Islamic symbols and values and evolved many innovative practices which are not to be found in the Quran and *Sunnah*. These local accretions co-exist with orthodox traditions and rituals spelled out in the texts and upheld by the *ulama*.
- 12 The present form of the constitution, with amendments made by the Ershad regime, is not accepted by the opposition, because it considers the Ershad regime to be illegitimate and as such all amendments made to the constitution by it are also illegal.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Demographic Data

Total Population Of Bangladesh According To 1981 Census:

87,120,000.

Estimated Population Of Bangladesh As Of July 1990:

113,005,000.

Degree Of Urbanization In Bangladesh:

According to 1981 census (in percentage)

Urban	Rural
15.1	84.8

According to Bangladesh Planning Commission Projection for 1988:

Urban	Rural
21.9	78.1

Sources: *Statistical Pocket Book Of Bangladesh 1987*, p. 51; *1987 Statistical Yearbook Of Bangladesh*, p. 73; *1987 Statistical Yearbook Of Bangladesh*, p. 36; Special Feature on "National Population Day 1989", *Ittefaq*, Monday, January 2, 1989, p. 3.

APPENDIX 2**Survey Questionnaire (administered by the author at Dhaka University in 1988)****Section A**

Please circle the option that applies most directly to you:

1. Have you read the Quran in Bengali translation?

a. yes

b. no

2. Have you read the entire Quran in Arabic?

a. yes

b. no

3. Do you feel attracted towards Islam?

a. yes

b. no

Section B

Rank, according to your preference, the following objects: a) family; b) citizenship; c) religion/Islam; d) political ideology; e) national/ethnic origin.

1st.....

2nd.....

3rd.....

4th.....

5th.....

Section C

Bangladesh was born as a secular state. But now it has become an Islamic Republic. It is said that this change in the ideological orientation of the state of Bangladesh occurred:

a) because of the military rule (c.g., the military uses Islam in order to stay in power);

b) because of pressure from the Middle East (c.g., promise of huge

financial aid if the Government of Bangladesh is pro-Islamic);

c) because of changes in the value-system of the people of Bangladesh (e.g., world-wide Islamic resurgence has also affected Bangladesh and made the people Islamic in political-orientation).

Which of the following options most accurately represents your views on Bangladesh's change:

1. a.
2. a and b only.
3. All of the above.
4. None of the above. Then, what is your explanation? (Please elaborate)

Section D

1. Who do you think are most suited to run the government?

- a) civil servant
- b) civilian politicians
- c) Ulama
- d) military
- e) none of the above. Then, who? (Please elaborate)

Section E

1. Which political party do you support?

2. Which year you are in?

- a) Honour's 1st year.
- b) Honour's 2nd year.
- c) Honour's 3rd year.

d) M.A. preliminary.

e) M.A.

3. What subject are you specializing in (e.g., law, economics, mathematics etc.) ?

4. Are you?

a. Male

b. Female

Section F

1. What is your or your family's occupation?

a) peasant/farmer

b) labourer/manual worker

c) businessman

d) lower level civil servant/employee

e) middle level civil servant/employee

f) higher level civil servant/employee

g) other. Then, what? (Please elaborate)

2. Where did you live before being admitted to the university?

a) Zilla (district) town

b) Upa-Zilla (police station) town

c) village

d) other. Then, what? (Please elaborate)

Section G

1. How would you describe yourself in terms of religion?

a) Practicing-Muslim (pray 5 times a day)

- b) Not much practicing-Muslim (pray on Fridays or once in a while)
- c) Not practicing-Muslim (do not pray)
- d) Islamic fundamentalist
- e) Non-Muslim
- f) If any other category, what? (Please elaborate)

APPENDIX 3

List of Persons Interviewed

1. Khondker Mushtaque Ahmed, former President and Chairman, Democratic Party.
2. Golam Azam, former chief of Jamaat-e-Islam.
3. Shafiul Alam Prodhan, President, Jatiyo Ganatantrik Party.
4. Hemayat Uddin Ahmed, Joint Secretary, Bangladesh Krishak-Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL).
5. Mohammad Ayenuddin, Secretary General, Bangladesh Muslim League.
6. Lt. Colonel (retd.) Farookh Rahman, Chairman, Freedom Party.
7. Abdul Matin Chowdhury, 1st Joint Secretary, Central Committee, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).
8. Amal Sen, General Secretary, United Communist League.
9. Pankaj Bhattacharia, General Secretary, National Awami Party (Mozaffar) (NAP-M)
10. Shahina Khan, Member, Central Committee, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (Obaid).
11. Saiful Huq, Member, Central Committee, Bangladesh Workers Party.
12. Harun-or-Rashid, Joint-Convener, Okkya Jasad (United JSD).
13. Major (retd.) Jainul Abedin, Amir, Bangladesh Islami Andolan (Bangladesh Islamic Movement).
14. Amir Hossain Amu, Joint Secretary, Awami League.
15. Maruf Chinu, Member, Central Co-ordinating Committee, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (Bangladesh Socialist Party) (BSD).
16. Humayun Kabir Hiru, Joint General Secretary, Central Committee, JSD (Shahjahan-Rob).
17. Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, General Secretary, Bangladesh Communist Party (CPB).
18. Korban Ali, Chairman, Islami Okkya Andolan (Islamic Unity Movement).
19. Zakariya Chowdhury, Joint Secretary, Chattra League (Bangladesh Student League).
20. Subash Singha Roy, Chattra League (Student League) activist.

21. Samir Basu, Jatiyatabadi Chattra Dal (BNP-student wing) activist.
22. Ahmed Abdul Kader, Chairman, Bangladesh Islami Zubshibir (Bangladesh Islamic Youthfront).
23. A member of Dhaka University Chattra League (Student League) central committee.
24. Prof. Akmal Hossain, Dhaka University.
25. Prof. Zafar Shah, Dhaka University.
26. Prof. Abdul Quddus, Dhaka University.
27. Prof. Razia Akter Banu, Dhaka University.
28. Prof. K. M. Mohsin, Dhaka University.
29. Prof. Ahmed Shafiqul Huq, Dhaka University.
30. Prof. Anisuzzaman, Dhaka University.
31. Nuruzzaman Chowdhury, Director, National Institute of Educational Administration.
32. Brigadier (retd.) Abdul Hafiz, Director General, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies.
33. Asheqa Irshad, Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies.
34. Abul Asad, Editor, *Sangram*.
35. Zulfiqar Ahmed Kismati, Senior Assistant Editor, *Sangram*.
36. Shahriar Kabir, Executive Editor, *Bichitra*.
37. Ataur Rahman, Senior Reporter, Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (Bangladesh News Agency).
38. Dr. Ahmed Sharif, a noted Marxist intellectual.
39. Mohammad Azizul Islam, a business executive and former JSD activist.
40. Major (retd.) Manzur Ahmed, a business executive affiliated with Bangladesh Freedom Fighters Association.
41. Mahmudul Ahsan, a lawyer and Jatiyo Party supporter.
42. Mujibur Rahman, a civil servant and Jamaat-e-Islam activist.

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