

Abdus Shuman

COUNTER-TERRORISM IN BANGLADESH: THE IMPERATIVE FOR COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH

Abstract

Terrorism in Bangladesh is home-grown and does not have external links. The paper identifies religious fundamentalism, a fight against liberal values, general deprivation and political grievances as the root causes of terrorism in Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh is focusing most of its efforts on conventional methods of counter-terrorism, which is only effective as a short-term process, but does not address the root causes of terrorism itself. For this, civil society organisations need to be allowed to play their role in the counter-terrorism strategy. Bangladesh requires the strengthening of local governments to give them more autonomy from the national government and more authority to resolve local situations without state's interruptions to fight against terrorism. Communities can also work together with local governments to strike at the root causes of terrorism.

1. INTRODUCTION

On 7 July 2005 four bomb blasts caused massive damage to London's public transport system. This attack made the British government very much aware that terrorism was now a threat to its own national security. The British government had been very active since 2005 in its efforts to counter terrorism. For instance, the

Mr. Abdus Shuman, a British researcher of Bangladesh origin, was a Visiting Scholar at BISS in early 2007. His e-mail address is: shumanabdus@yahoo.com

government enacted the 2006 Terrorism Act which made it a criminal offence to directly or indirectly encourage the commission, preparation, or instigation of acts of terrorism or to disseminate terrorist literature. As well as the conventional counter-terrorism methods such as intelligence surveillance, the government has also used non-conventional methods such as the Preventing Extremism Together (PET) initiative, where the government works with local communities to combat extremism. Furthermore, think tanks have also written booklets on alternative means to combat the terrorist threat: Demos' publication *Bringing It Home* (2006) argues that it is imperative to use a *community*-based approach to counter-terrorism.

What is interesting about the methods used by the British government is that it has two factors: using both conventional means such as the intelligence services as well as legislation, *and* non-conventional means, such as using grass-roots level organisations, local communities, and civil society to engender possible long-term solutions to the terrorist threat. The government uses a realist model to strike at the terrorist threat, as well as a liberal democratic model which seeks to utilise civil society and communities to strike at the root causes of terrorism in Britain.

In the case of Bangladesh, the government is focusing most of its efforts on conventional methods of counter-terrorism which tackles force using a counter-force. This is effective as a short-term process of curbing terrorism, but does not address the root causes of terrorism itself. This essay's main argument is that to counter terrorism in Bangladesh requires the use of government sanctioned force against terror suspects *and* an increased involvement of civil society organisations, as well as working with communities themselves to keep a check on their own locales, which is best achieved by the improvement of local government systems in Bangladesh. Thus, the essay is split into seven sections. Firstly, the essay deals with the root causes of terrorism in a general sense, which include religious extremism, the battle against liberalism, general deprivation, and specific political goals. Secondly, terrorism in Bangladesh will be discussed by looking at terrorist groups operative in Bangladesh which are motivated by the root causes as described in the first section of the essay. Thirdly, the government's strategy to deal with terrorism and its limitations will be analysed. Fourthly, an argument is presented to suggest that democracy in

itself is not enough to counter terrorism. Fifthly, how civil society can achieve more long-term solutions to the terrorist problem. Sixthly, an exposition of the British model which seeks to use communities to counter terrorism will be given. And lastly, it will be argued that local government systems need to be improved if communities are to help counter terrorism, which in itself is a long term solution to the terrorist threat in Bangladesh.

2. CAUSES OF TERRORISM

2.1 Definitions of Terrorism

Many papers on terrorism begin by demanding an exact, universally accepted definition. Part of the frustration must arise from the fact that there are so many different definitions of terrorism. This was demonstrated in Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman's study of terrorism, in which they analysed 109 academic and official definitions (Khan, 2006: 157). They discovered that the element of violence was in 83% of definitions, political goals in 65%, inflicting terror in 51%, indiscriminate targeting in 21%, and victimisation of civilian non-combatants in 17.5%. They found that whereas academic definitions varied, official definitions for terrorism were quite similar. For example, the US Department of State and the FBI believe terrorism to be "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives". SAARC holds that "any person commits an offence within the meaning of this additional protocol if that person by any means, directly or indirectly, unlawfully and wilfully, provides or collects funds with the intention that they should be used or in the knowledge that they are to be used, in full or in part, in order to carry out any [...] act intended to cause death or serious bodily injury to a civilian, when the purpose of such an act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or international organization to do or abstain from doing an act" (Ahmed, 2006: 21).

The similarity of official definitions of terrorism show that they are based on a western perspective and at variance with the Third World perspective, which could for example see the Palestinian issue as not terrorism but the legitimate fight to win back a people's

homeland. Furthermore, it shows that terrorism is defined as such so as to keep the state immune from charges of terrorism in that terrorism is “legitimate” if carried out by the state. However, such definitions do not elucidate the root causes of terrorism, the knowledge of which are necessary if counter-terrorist methods are to succeed. The next four sections of this paper will deal with the four root causes of terrorist violence.

2.2. Religious Extremism as a Cause of Terrorism

Imtiaz Ahmed describes the twenty-first century’s Islamic militancy as “post-rational terrorism”, a terrorism which has gone *beyond* the reason of the state and the subaltern (Ahmed, 2006; Ahmed, 2007). The reason of the state is the violence or threat of violence used by the state mainly to reproduce the power of the state, and it includes right-wing, counter-terrorism, state terrorism, and white terrorism. The state in using any of these four methods would vehemently deny that it is engaging in terrorist activities. The reason of the subaltern is the violence used by such a group to aid their fight against domination, be it oppression because of racial, ethnic, or social divides. Its forms of violence stem from various groups, including non-state, anarchist, anti-state, nationalist, revolutionary, Red, and left-wing protagonists. Terrorism *between* the reason of the state and the subaltern is the rationalized use of violence using the state or the subaltern. There are nine types of such terrorism: good, religious, ethnic, cultural, groupuscular, urban, domestic, international, and transnational. The last type of terrorism is that *beyond* the reason of the state and the subaltern: “there are versions of terrorism that defy rationality. In fact, violence and terror carried out not only beyond the domain of the state but also beyond the rationale usually put forward by the state or the subalterns. [... This terrorism] threatens not only the state but also the life and living of the subaltern masses, and therefore remains generally unacceptable to both the state and the subalterns” (Ahmed, 2006: 32).

There are seven types of such terrorism: nuclear, bio-terrorism, narco-terrorism (violence by drug traffickers), catastrophic (violence against civilian masses with vengeful or messianic goals), post-modern, and suicidal. Post-modern terrorism is a new threat which faces the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is characterised by the whole world being a potential target; there being

a genuine support for such apocalyptic movements which seeks to cause mass destruction; and there is a real chance that very lethal weapons may fall into the hands of terrorist groups (Lacquer, 1996). Suicide terrorism had been used by the Jewish sects of Zealots in Roman occupied Judea. By the end of the twentieth century, it had become the ultimate weapon of the relatively disempowered subaltern elements, beginning with the Hezbollah in 1981. In the post 9/11 era, suicide terrorism had attained an international dimension, going beyond the territorial domain of the state. Of suicide terrorism, Edward Said remarked that although he did not agree with Palestinian terrorism he at least understood it as an act of desperation by human beings. Yet, suicide terrorism was different as the perpetrators of 9/11 were educated men with stable or high incomes. Yet, they refused to negotiate or engage in any dialogue: there was no note or political message following the attacks, and therefore it transcends the political and enters the metaphysical for it suggests the cosmic quality of the minds at work (Ahmed, 2006: 35/6).

Ahmed explains Islamic militancy as a radical version of Islam which has displaced reason from religion (Ahmed, 2007). Kant saw the importance of reason within religion, that having knowledge and rational capabilities was not enough, but that there ought to be “room for belief” in order to nurture a moral dimension of freedom, immortality, and religious fulfilment for man. This echoes the rationale of the Islamic Sufi scholar Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) who believed that true knowledge depended on seeing all things with the eye of the imagination as well as the eye of reason, that one needed a certain faith/imagination to see the unity of God amongst the numerous categorisations of the world that reason had constructed. Thus, both thinkers believed that faith and reason were essential in order for one to live in the world. One cause for the displacement of reason from religion was due to the influence of various revival movements in the nineteenth century which called for a return to an authentic version of Islam. The most influential movement was the *Faraidi* movement led by Shariat Ullah who studied Islam for ten years in Mecca and came under the influence of Wahhabism, a puritan movement developed by Muhammad Ibn Abd al Wahhab (1703-1792). The *Faraidi* movement criticised the Pirs (cult of saints) in Islam, and their stance led to the cessation of spiritualism,

mysticism, and piety, and towards an understanding of Islam which focused on “ritualistic formalism” and “legalism”. Furthermore, the spread of the influence of the Deoband Madrasah which was first set up in the town of northern India in 1866. This madrasah worked under the *dars-i Niazmi* system which focused on the teaching of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), whilst keeping the teaching of the rational sciences at bay. Deobandism denounced the worship of saints, and music and dancing, it refused any ideas of progress and wished to return to a puritanical view of Islam where a militant jihad was a core value, one which sought to inculcate the belief that *sharia'h* law was immutable and that the *ulema* was authoritative. Ahmed blames the spread of such a misguided view of Islam in the twentieth century, and which is carrying on in the twenty-first century, to five specific causes: the bad state of Islamic scholarship in the Muslim world; the misperceptions of what “secularism” means; the influence of Saudi Arabia and Wahhabization due to the rise of petrodollars; the post-national diaspora in the Middle East, those involved being attracted to a puritan version of Islam; and the weaponization of society.

2.3. Terrorism as the Fight against Liberal Values

Firmer British Prime Minister Tony Blair argued that the fight against extremism is actually a battle for global values (Blair, 2007). In the twentieth century Turkey became a secular nation. But other Islamic countries were not modernising at the same speed as Turkey, and some saw this as symbolic of Islam’s decline. Their solution was to restore Islam through religious extremism and populist politics. However, the extremists realised that if they presented the striving towards a pure Islam as a fight within Islam itself, many Muslims would disregard their cause. The solution was to present the battle as one against the western world, where the “west” represents Hindus, Christians, or Muslims who supported ideas of progress, including freedom of expression, democracy, and human rights. Muslim religious extremists do not want Muslim countries to modernise, instead they want the Muslim world to retreat into governance by a semi-feudal religious oligarchy. And so the current war in Iraq is interpreted by Blair as a fight not against American occupation, but one which is trying to prevent a democratic government being implemented in the country.

2.4. General Deprivation as a Cause of Terrorism

The literature reviewed suggests that poverty in itself is not a direct cause for terrorist activities. Generally, terrorists do not endorse a specific economic system that differs from that which is in the place of the country that they have attacked (Blair, 2007). Instead, terrorism arises from and can spread because of general deprivation suffered by a section of the population. Barkat discusses the notion of the “economics of fundamentalism”, which is a “concentrated expression of religious-based communal politics” that rejects a secular democratic mind-set and encourages the growth of fundamentalism and its economic agents and interests (Barkat, 2005:3). With the influence of Wahhabism and the dire economic conditions of Bangladesh, it was possible for a communal based politics to gain a foothold by misusing Islam as a slogan: religion as a way to tackle the poverty issue. A self-destructive culture of plundering made strong roots in the economic, political, and social sectors of Bangladesh, which led to the spread of corruption, proliferation of small arms, black money, and mal-administration, which all contributes to the economics of fundamentalism and the consolidation of religious-based politics (political Islam) in Bangladesh. This economic criminalization has increased effective demand of political criminalization, thus the economics of fundamentalism stretches to encompass the political sphere where economic/political criminals can determine the budget allocation, patronise grafts etc., all for personal gain and without the reduction of poverty. Thus, research shows that the number of poor has actually increased in Bangladesh, suggesting a solid basis for the influence of religious extremism in Bangladesh. Furthermore, Kabir writes that the “the key factor in the dynamics of violence is relative deprivation and inequity. The magnitude of violence in Bangladesh is often induced by relative deprivation where frustrations and discontents of the societal groups and younger generation can be easily politicised” (Kabir, 2005: 38). Terrorism is not directly related to severe downturns in the economy, but a response to political conditions and long-standing feelings of indignity and frustration.

2.5. The Terrorists’ Political End

Kabir continues by stating that if poor countries facing terrorism, such as Bangladesh, were to improve their economic conditions and

eradicate poverty this would make it harder for terrorists to find new recruits, but would not completely deter terrorism. The reason is that some terrorists are motivated by political ends. Pape rejects connections between suicide bombers and Islamic fundamentalism or poverty. His research, which analyses every suicide bombing and attack around the globe from 1980 to 2003 (315 in all), suggests that “nearly all suicide terrorist attacks actually have in common a specific secular and strategic goal: to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from territory that the terrorists consider to be their homeland. Religion is often used as a tool by terrorist organisations in recruiting and in seeking aid from abroad, but is rarely the root cause” (Pape, 2005: 29). Furthermore, Khan defines terrorism as “the deliberate use of violence employed as an instrument of coercion in order to achieve political ends” (Khan, 2006: 153); the important word being “political” where the terrorists are working at the macro-level for the benefit of a group/people, whereas criminals generally work at the micro-level for personal gain.

3. TERRORISM IN BANGLADESH

Four general root causes of terrorism have been analysed. The next section will investigate terrorism in Bangladesh, asking whether Bangladesh has become a breeding ground for al-Qaeda recruits, and investigating the terrorist groups residing in Bangladesh and their motivations for engaging in violence.

3.1. Bangladesh as a Breeding Ground for Terrorists?

The Bangladeshi people appear split between two opposing sentiments: firstly, to sympathise with fellow Muslims who are being killed in Iraq and Afghanistan as part of the “war against terror”, and secondly to support American efforts to fight extremist Islamic factions. Some commentators have focused on the former sentiment by claiming that Bangladesh has become a hot-bed for Islamist terrorists. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* carried a cover story claiming that Bangladesh was a potential hub for Islamic terrorists, a report that was reproduced by the *Wall Street Journal*. This media campaign caused a severe blow to the Bangladeshi image (see Khan, 2004: 225). The image problem was further harmed when the US placed Bangladesh on its list of terror prone countries. Furthermore,

there is a tendency for some Indian writers to exaggerate the threat that Bangladesh faces from al-Qaeda terrorist groups. Joshi argues that Afghans that fled the American strikes in 2001 had settled in Bangladesh. He reported rumours of a ship sailing from Karachi to Chittagong carrying assorted militants from Afghanistan, and that a senior leader of HUJI had told *Time* magazine that 150 Taliban fighters had entered Bangladesh in this way. In 2002, the Bangladesh Islamic Manch was formed which circulated speeches by Osama bin Laden, their goal being to create a larger Islamic land than the territorial limits of Bangladesh and which would include the Muslim areas of Assam, north Bengal, and Burma's Arakan province (see Joshi, 2004: 94/5). Furthermore, Bhaumik writes that "all major Islamic radical groups active in South Asia have bases, safe houses, sympathisers and rendezvous points in Bangladesh" (Bhaumik, 2003: 275). He also argues that agents in Pakistan's covert war against India use Bangladesh as an effective launching pad for its attacks in the northeast region of India, and that the heavy flow of Islamic petrodollars from the Middle East has strengthened the financial sinews of political groups such as the Jamaat-i-Islami, which has provided a legitimate base for which recruits can be drawn from the general population. His conclusion is that "Bangladesh is well on the way to become South Asia's second front of Islamic terror after Pakistan" (Bhaumik, 2003: 282; also see Rahman 2006, for a list of Indian accusations against Bangladesh).

However, there is no evidence to back up the allegations that Bangladesh has links to external terrorist organisations, and any "evidence" suggested from the writers above have been ascribed to sloppy reporting. And so Major General Ghulam Quader writes, that "it has been proved beyond any doubt that there does not exist any connection between al-Qaeda and Bangladesh's militant organisations. While some organisations may have received foreign financial assistance, the goals and objectives of the home-grown militant organisations seem to be limited within the boundary of the country, which distinguish them from global Islamic terrorism. It is obvious from this that Bangladesh is by no means exporting Islamic terrorism, either at the international or the regional level" (Quader, 2007). Thus, Bangladeshi terrorism is home-grown and not related to al-Qaeda. Bin Laden's target is America and American allies, and he has little concern with Bangladesh. Also, the US Ambassador to

Bangladesh (Mary Ann Peters) refuted the claims that Bangladesh was a breeding ground for terrorists. The American government has to justify its expenditure on intelligence and security in its global fight against terrorism, and therefore it demonises certain countries so that the American public and Congress has a reason to give the government the funding it needs. Essentially, Islamic fundamentalism is on the increase in Bangladesh, yet “the upsurge of rightist forces is very much a global and regional phenomena. To be precise, on a regional comparative scale, religious violence in Bangladesh would be relatively small [...] it is difficult to keep Bangladesh insulated from whatever takes place in the region [...] But that al-Qaeda type violent extremists will emerge in Bangladesh to destroy the system either in Bangladesh or elsewhere is not supported by the social, economic, and political realities in a country with a moderate culture and the vibrant poverty alleviation programme of the NGO community” (Khan, 2004: 227). Furthermore, the exaggerated Indian accusations against Bangladesh have been caused by the strained relationship between the two countries, stemming from India’s denial of the two-nation theory, disputes over Ganges water sharing, and India’s hegemonic view toward its smaller neighbours. Yet the accusations are mutual, for Bangladesh also accuses India for harbouring terrorists. What can be deemed from the following discussion is that although Bangladesh is not a rampant breeding ground for terrorism as some media analysts and academics would suggest, Bangladesh has the *potential* for harbouring terrorist groups, due to its poverty levels, high unemployment, unchecked madrasah education, and influence from the Middle East. It is not right that Bangladesh’s image has been so badly tarnished from such misguided reports, but instead of fervently denying *any* link to external terrorist groups, the government must act to ensure that such links cannot emerge in the future.

3.2. Terrorist Groups in Bangladesh

The paper will now focus on four terrorist groups which correlate with the four causes of terrorism as related earlier in the paper (religious extremism, anti-western liberalism, deprivation of the population, political ends), although the four causes are not necessarily exclusive of one another.

Firstly, HUJI (Harkatul Jihad al Islami) was led by Mufti Hannan before his arrest in 2005, and he organised terrorist activities against the internal political, social, and religious structures and belief systems of Bangladesh. HUJI's aim is to establish Islamic *Hukumat* (rule) in Bangladesh by waging war, killing progressive intellectuals, and waging *jihad* against a "corrupted regime", a corrupt western system of democracy and judiciary. Hannan admitted to being taught at the Deoband madrasah which advocates a literal and austere interpretation of Islam and excludes all learning that is not obviously Islamic, and creates a form of Islam where the state is irrelevant. HUJI members have been incriminated in the following crimes: the July 2000 attempted assassination of Sheikh Hasina, the May 21 2004 attack against the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Anwar Chowdhury, assassination of former Finance Minister Shah A.M.S. Kibria, and the grenade attacks on the Udichi cultural programme (Amin, 2007: 11).

Secondly, members of JMB (Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen) aim to cripple Bangladesh's modern secular democracy and establish a nation under *sharia'h* law. The JMB were responsible for the nationwide bomb blasts on August 17, 2005. A note issued after the attack warned that further violence would continue if the Bangladesh constitution was not changed so that it aligned with Islamic principles (Ali, 2006: 81). JMB member Hasan al Mamun was captured for killing two judges in a bomb attack on November 14, 2005 in Jhalakathi. He still had an unexploded bomb on his thigh when he was seized. He also had a leaflet stating that "we don't want *Taguti* (non-Islamic laws), let Quranic laws be introduced. Laws framed by humans cannot continue and only the laws of Allah will prevail" (*Daily Star*, November 15, 2005). Also, Abdur Razzak became Bangladesh's first suicide bomber when he exploded a bomb at Gazipur courthouse near Dhaka on November 29, 2005, where two judges were killed. Razzak had a note in his pocket describing himself as a *Fedayee* (one who devotes himself to Allah), and stating that the bombing was a "primary warning message from a dedicated *mujahideen* for the forces deployed for the judges' security. We will continue our *jihadi* mission until establishing an Islamic welfare state" (*Star Weekend Magazine*, December 9, 2005).

Thirdly, in the 1960s communism became the prevailing ideology of outlawed groups operating in Bangladesh, including the

Revolutionary Communists of Bangladesh. They were once influential with their ideals of abolishing poverty and the dire social conditions of the Bangladeshi people, but now such groups have very much lost any influence that they once had. For instance, the group PBCP (Purba Banglar Communist Party) has simply split into different factions, each sub-group posing minimal risk to the state. When not engaged in infighting between rival groups, they commit isolated acts of extortion and abduction. Most civilian fatalities inflicted by these groups are more in line with routine criminal acts than “terrorism” (Amin, 2007: 10).

Fourthly, insurgent groups have operated in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) since the 1970s. The Parbattya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (The CHT’s People’s Solidarity Association) was formed in 1972 as a mass contact organisation with communist leanings. The Shanti Bahini formed the armed wing of the PCJSS, responsible for attacks on government security forces. After the CHT Peace Accord was signed in 1997 between the Awami League government and the PCJSS, the United People’s Democratic Front (UPDF) emerged which led to rivalry with the PCJSS for increased control over the hills. This is an example of terrorism caused by the secular and political ends of a group.

4. THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

There has been much written about government inaction toward the terrorist threat. Though in the respective times in which the BNP and AL were in power they claimed that they would find the perpetrators, their main priority was always to deflect the impact of the terrorist incident and prevent the opposing party making much political capital out of it. It was only until February 22 2005 that the government finally acknowledged the existence of terrorism in Bangladesh, and banned the JMJB and the JMB (Rahman, 2006: 96-108; Rahman, 2007)..

4.1. Government Strategies

Khan (2006) uses Bajpai’s study, *Roots of Terrorism*, to map out governments’ responses to terrorism on a theoretical and general level. The liberal response blames the increase of terrorism on the government itself since terrorism is seen to be a reaction to the

state's bad practices. The state's failure in tackling issues of deprivation and poverty engenders feelings of marginality as the state cannot even provide the most basic needs. Its failure makes it a target of terrorism, when all other legitimate means of redress have been exhausted. Thus, the state should target the root cause of grievances to divest the militants of their rationale of striking the state. The state should only use force as a last resort, otherwise a cycle of violence develops. The conservative approach views terrorism as arising from the processes of nation-building and the stresses that this process entails, which is more pronounced if statehood is reached before nationhood. To enforce the new regime some groups may become alienated, which leads to fear which may lead to violence. The conservatives believe that force is necessary to counter terrorism, since economic, political, and social engineering is a waste of time. The realist approach holds that terrorism is a reflection of the competition between states, where one seeks to "control" the other through the exercise of power. Terrorism is promoted by states in order to weaken rival states. Thus, no amount of state-building or civil society schemes to better democracy will work since the terrorist attacks are externally motivated.

In his empirically based study, Kalam documents six approaches that the Bangladeshi government actually used to curb the terrorist threat (Kalam, 2006). Firstly, the coercive approach is an on-going law and order approach. The government launched Operation Clean-Heart in 2002 which led to 11280 arrests and the seizure of 2028 weapons, and Operation Spider-Web in 2003 to check the left-wing extremist parties operating in the south-western districts of Bangladesh. Secondly, peace approaches were used, especially over the CHT conflict. Disagreements over the land issue continue to hamper chances of a resolution, but progress has been made by the government allocating TK15 crores to the PCJSS for the purpose of job creation. Thirdly, a general amnesty approach was used especially with members of the *Sarbahara* group (left radicals) operating in south-west Bangladesh. When amnesty was declared in 1999, 2700 operatives of the underground movement responded. However, the group resumed their violent tactics in 2003 which led to the government using coercive methods again. Fourthly, negotiating approaches which bears similarity to general amnesty, where the government helps insurgents return to a normal life after

they had surrendered. Fifthly, approaches towards the Jehadi-Islamic groups have not fared well largely due to the party's needs to not alienate potential political allies, and so neither the BNP nor the AL have outlawed the Jamaat-i-Islami but instead use the Islamic party for political leverage. Sixthly, cross-border bilateral approaches involve regional co-operation against the terrorist threat, especially with India. The Indian High Commissioners to Dhaka are usually very proactive, talking to high officials and members of the media and NGOs. But there is still a tendency for both sides to hurl allegations at each other.

4.2 Limitations to Current Government Strategies

Khan argues that to use any one of the three strategies (liberal, conservative, realist) in isolation will fail; there is not simply one set of counter methods for what is a very complex situation. The realist remedy of using force is the most prevalent in Bangladeshi policy circles, perhaps due to the legacy of its imperialist past since Britain used coercive capabilities to discipline any resurgent elements. South Asian nations may see the use of force as quicker than long drawn out dialogues or social transformation. Yet, Khan advocates the "exclusivist" approach that uses all three methods, the advantage of which is that terrorism is therefore tackled in the short *and* long term (Khan, 2006: 185). Khan also notes fifteen limitations to the government's approach to countering terrorism. Many of these limitations stem from problems with the government itself: over-centralization of the government, this leaves local problems unresolved and sometimes unattended which breeds resentment toward state powers; internal politics, that the governments may at times release known criminals or ally themselves with groups with links to terrorists for the sake of political expediency, will merely give terrorist groups an added legitimacy; lack of knowledge of the terrorists, if the government does not know or care why some lash out at society, then they will never hope to resolve the problem; and a politicised administration does not allow government functionaries to act decisively and objectively to resolve government issues for fear of political reprisal.

The government's response to terrorism shows an upward swing of the use of force to counter the rising spiral of violence, without making any headway in addressing the root causes of terrorism

(Kalam, 2006: 176). The current caretaker government is using RAB (Rapid Action Battalion) to seek out the terrorists and bring them to justice. To some extent, they have been very successful, bringing in the top leaders of groups such as JMB and JMJB, including the notorious Bangla Bhai who, along with five others, were hanged on March 30, 2007. However, some terrorists were suspiciously killed in cross-fire shooting. Whilst some members of the public seem indifferent to the extra-judicial deaths of criminals, members of the media and civil society have lodged complaints. “While pragmatic considerations in dealing with a terrible law and order situation may gain some temporary support for such summary actions by RAB, questions continue to persist about both the legal rationality and societal acceptance of such extra-judicial action for long” (Rahman, 2006: 116). The issue is how democratic states can combat a largely unidentified enemy within the bounds of the law, or without descending to methods which question their own allegiance to democratic principles. Therefore, it is necessary for the government to stop seeing counter-terrorism as merely counter-force, and to introduce constructive dialogues between politicians and policy-makers, the police and the people, and the upholding of justice and not its decline.

5. DEMOCRACY AS AN IDEOLOGY TO COUNTER TERRORISM

5.1. Western Values against Islamic Extremism

Tony Blair argues that the long-term fight against Islamic extremism must involve democracy promotion (Blair, 2007). This attitude is not about regime change, but about *values* change. He argues that fundamentalists are not attacking American policy as such, but using it as an excuse to gather support in their actual fight against western values, which include liberty and democracy. The extremists assert that democracy is a western value imposed on Islamic cultures. However, Blair holds that it is only by showing that democratic values are better than what the fundamentalists endorse that al-Qaeda can be defeated. His evidence is based upon the many who risked their lives to vote in the Iraqi and Afghani democratic elections, arguing that given the chance, people in the Middle East will vote and *do* want democracy. This is ultimately a battle about

modernity, but there are millions of Muslims who do want to live under Western values, which is better defined as *global* values (e.g. freedom of expression) common to all humanity whatever their culture and faith. In Harish's analysis of the essay he sees a subtle new strategy in formation: there is less about why fundamentalism/terrorism is wrong, and more about the need to promote democracy and global values; less about rejecting "bad" values, and more about accepting "good" ones (Harish, 2007).

5.2. Democracy is not Enough to Counter Terrorism

Gause's essay "Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?" argues that it cannot, thereby refuting Blair's insistence that democracy can end the spate of violence caused by terrorism. Gause argues from an American perspective, criticising Bush's belief that pushing for Arab democracy will spread American values, improve American security, and eventually stop the production of anti-American fundamentalists. Gause is less sanguine since the data shows that there is no strong relationship between democracy and the absence/reduction of terrorism – terrorism stems from factors much more specific than regime type. It should also be noted that from the evidence of public opinion surveys, if people could vote they are more likely to bring to power anti-American political parties (Hamaas was voted in), who would be much less likely to co-operate with America over issues such as terrorism, oil supply, and Israel, than the authoritarian leaders that are in place now. Rather than push for quick elections, America should exert more effort into encouraging the development of secular, nationalist, liberal political parties that could compete in an open democracy with the Islamist parties.

Furthermore, much of the evidence suggests that terrorism is more likely to occur *in* democratic countries (see Gause, 2005). William Eubank and Leonard Weinberg's studies in the 1980s showed that more terrorism occurred in democratic countries and that both victims and perpetrators were citizens of democracies. Robert Pape argues that the targets of suicide bombers are almost always democracies, but the motivation of the bomber is to fight against military occupation and for self-determination: terrorists are not driven by a desire for democracy but by their opposition to what they see as foreign occupation. The American State Department's annual "Patterns of Global Terrorism" report showed that between

2000 and 2003 269 terrorist attacks occurred in countries classified as “free” by Freedom House (75% of which were in Pakistan/India, thereby terrorism in that case is a regional tussle and not about values); 119 occurred in “partly free” countries; 138 occurred in “not-free” countries (50% in Iraq/Afghanistan, thus the implementation of democracy has not stopped the terrorism there); and no attacks in authoritarian China. Thus, “showing that there is no relationship between incidence of terrorism in a given country and the degree of freedom enjoyed by its citizens” (Gause, 2005: 66). The Americans and British should also take heed that a 2002 poll by Zogby International showed that most people surveyed in Kuwait, Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE held favourable views of American democracy and freedom even whilst having negative views of American policy in the Arab world.

Though Gause’s essay is more related to the western fight against al-Qaeda, the essay has relevance for its argument that democracy is not enough. Simply by having a democracy with democratic values is *not enough*, even if it is a healthy democracy. Of course, Bangladesh must get the basics right, which means a much greater record on good governance, but there is more to be done than implementing a democracy if Bangladesh is to really stem terrorism. The remainder of this paper will deal with what needs to be implemented in Bangladesh in order for its fight against terrorism to be truly effective.

6. CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AS AN APPROACH TO COUNTER TERRORISM

6.1. Civil Society in Bangladesh

The history of civil society in political thought from Hobbes to Putnam has been adequately described in Khan and Kabir (2002), Wadood, and Eusuf (2006). There are multiple ways to view civil society. Guhathakurta and Karim’s study shows how various global aid organisations perceive civil society: ODA states that civil society should include business interests; USAID that it is non-business and non-partisan; UNDP that it should have freedom of association and participation; and the World Bank holds that it should have freedom of association and free expression of opinion (Rahman, 2006). Shethi describes civil society as the locus of actions by actors bent on

change whether these are foreign or domestic groups, charities for relief, action groups devoted to raising consciousness, and protest or political groups. These groups are not interested in gaining power themselves, but helping the people as a whole become empowered, and thus they work with a moral mandate. Civil society also acts as an enabling environment, as its starting point is the stabilisation of a system of rights, constituting human beings as individuals, both as citizens in relation to the state and as legal persons in the economy and the sphere of free association. Civil society only works if these ideas are established *a priori* and civil society is expected to maintain these ideals. One can also see Rahman and Zafarullah (2002) for a detailed discussion of the differences between civil society and NGO's.

For the purposes of this paper, Key's definition of civil society will be used because it emphasises its links with democracy (Key, 2006). Key points out that civil society is a social value and a set of institutions, and therefore not all countries have a civil society for they may lack a culture of respect for the values of citizenship or the actual institutions which make civil society work. Civil society can promote fuller participation in public life in two ways: firstly, civil society is predicated on the belief that every individual has inherent worth and rights within the larger society, and secondly, that individuals gain power when united together. Key's idea of civil society is akin to Tocqueville's ideas of "associations". Tocqueville was a nineteenth century political theorist who wrote a seminal work on democracy, *Democracy in America* (1830/1835). He believed that if men were to be civilised, they needed to learn the art of associations, the art of working together to solve a community's political and social problems. This was good preparation for living democratically since civil associations led to political associations. Whilst civil society is not singly a sufficient condition for democracy, it is necessary for its durability for democracy relies on public participation. Tocquevillian associations are echoed in Putnam's phrase "social capital" (1993), which refers to the capacity of states and societies to establish a sense of community that leads to a significant proportion of the community to voice their concerns and seek active involvement in the community to redress any problems. It is believed that highly active civic associations are strongly associated with effective public institutions, and that norms and

networks of civic engagement have promoted economic growth (Rahman, 2006).

Civil society in Bangladesh, though not fully developed, is not a new concept. By the second half of the twentieth century there was a growing sense of the equity of people. The Teheran Proclamation of 1968 declared that “since human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible, the full realisation of civil and political rights without the enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights is impossible” (Rahman and Zafarullah, 2002). In Bangladesh the human rights debate has gained momentum because of the expansion of the human rights issue especially after so many failures, and the growing strength and influence of the NGO and civil society sector. Civil society is not new in Bangladesh: major political events (end of colonial rule in 1947, the language movement in 1952, the autonomy struggle in 1969, war of independence in 1971, anti-authoritarian resistance in 1989-90, and the revival of the democratic political process in Bangladesh in 1991) all featured direct civil society involvement. Civil society thus became the voice against poor governance, oppressive regimes, and ineffective service delivery systems for those who felt isolated from the state. Due to its growth the Bangladesh state can no longer ignore the civil society sector. Previously, the traditional view of the Bangladesh state had been that it had comprised of the parliament, judiciary, and executive. In recent times, this model has been broadened to include the local government, private sector, and civil society. The state had to concede some of its powers to civil society to appease the growing demands for the latter.

6.2. How can Civil Society Help to Counter Terrorism?

As previously described, Bangladesh has the potential to build on its civil society programmes (Key, 2006). Signs of encouragement come from Bangladesh’s Language Movement of 1952, the first struggle in the world to be based upon the necessity to keep a national language. This movement showed that popular sentiment as expressed through civil society organisations should be acknowledged by the government. Also, an independent media is necessary for civil society as it serves as a mechanism for communication between like-minded people. Bangladesh is doing well in this respect. Even if there are many allegations that

newspapers are politically biased, there is still a range of newspapers with a variety of perspectives. Technological means of communication are also spreading with the numbers of cyber-cafes with cheap access to the internet rising, as well as mobile phones being readily available to people from rural areas.

Participation in civil society prepares people to fulfil their civil obligations and exercise their rights (Key, 2006). The ability to communicate also yields the potential for much needed dialogue between rulers and ruled. Meeting with civil society groups is the best way for officials to get information, building trust between government and governed. The state should make further room for civil society; the state cannot force people to think, it should allow for calm and democratic dissent otherwise it becomes tyrannical rule. Thus, civil society is able to succeed where government cannot in certain crucial matters, such as the development of feelings, ideas, and understanding, which need to be artificially created by civil associations (Key, 2006: 456).

The establishment of civil society yields not only political benefits but also economic and social benefits (Key, 2006: 459). Civil society leads to civil order, this allows for economic growth which benefits the private sector. Civil order means fewer *hartals* (strikes), fewer disruption of production, fewer lost contracts, and an increase of foreign investments. Civil society organisations are used by governments worldwide to help them construct welfare systems which provide greater opportunities for the lower classes and aids in the efforts towards fair wealth distribution. Businesses will ultimately benefit and they should therefore rethink the way they do business and become more “socially conscious”, and thus underwrite some of the cost of welfare programmes. This will help alleviate poverty and stem social deprivation from worsening, both vital since the poor are often targeted to become new recruits for terrorist groups. The social benefits include civil society’s compatibility with the Islamic religion, Islam being an inclusive faith which prescribes alms-giving and reinforces community. There has been some concern amongst the Bangladesh people of the increasing secularisation of the public sphere, thus leading academics and policy makers to find new ways to incorporate religious sentiment into public life. Social programmes organised by religious groups are seen as more effective than similar government programmes as they

are run by those who are morally righteous. Thus, civil society allows a space in which religion can express itself and exercise its moral teachings in an efficient manner, therefore allowing a truer version of Islam to be received by the people instead of the extremist version of the radicals.

The paper will now focus upon how exactly civil society can help in the drive against terrorism. Democracies need a strong and vibrant civil society because the latter can achieve certain things that government alone cannot do. There is evidence of a worldwide trend amongst the modern and more established societies for the authority of the state to be questioned on normative/moral grounds, whilst the demand of the people desiring more representation has meant the expansion of civil society (Key, 2006). This has yet to be a tendency in the newer states, such as Bangladesh, which suffer from what Max Weber calls the “liability of newness”; new states have yet to routinise their government procedures or to develop the capabilities of civil society, and thus exercise force when dealing with terrorism within the state, instead of looking for peaceful and longer-term solutions which would require the aid of civil society. “The Third World Security Predicament” is a term referring to the fact that domestic threats are more prevalent than foreign threats, which could be attributed to the process of nationalism/state building, or third world poverty. The suppression of civil society actually broadens the appeal of extremist groups for they see the state as dominant and responsible for all the ills of society, and oppressive in the sense of not giving a voice to the common people.

Civil society is also fast coming into the discussion of state security for three specific reasons (Khatri, 2004). Firstly, civil society broadens the definition of “security” (usually seen from the perspective of the state, i.e. state defence, foreign policy issues) to “human security”, which focuses on conditions of daily life including food, shelter, and unchecked population growth, issues that are finally being seen as detrimental to a population’s way of life. Secondly, there has been a shift in the focus of security studies from inter-state to intra-state. Between 1990-2002, 58 major armed conflicts occurred in 46 different locations worldwide - all but three were internal conflicts. Many argue that there is an inexorable link between the security of a people with good government and institutional development, which the traditional notion of military

security cannot encompass (Khatri, 2004: 271). Thirdly, the increase of democracy (60% of the world is run by democratic governments) and the spread of influence of the liberal model with its emphasis on openness, human intervention, and economic security, makes it easier for civil society to be involved in security issues.

Khatri points out seven ways in which civil society has made a positive impact on the security issues which face South Asia (Khatri, 2004: 274). The achievements include: exploring alternatives for conflict management at a non-government level; acting as informal channels for exploring policy options without committing governments; influencing public discussion of regional issues; prompting government action by calling public attention to escalating problems; lowering barriers between officials and citizens, especially on economic issues; creating new connections between research institutes and among NGO's in the region; and serving as a formative influence ground on individuals who would later go into leading national roles. He also notes three broad approaches by which civil society organisations can work in order to counter terrorist violence (Khatri, 2004: 275). The band-aid approach addresses the immediate need of the victims of conflict through the welfare approach by providing them with food aid and carrying out relief activities. The reformist approach attempts to reform the system by advocating a peace-building approach through de-escalation of conflict, denuclearisation, etc. And the structural change approach advocates bringing about long-term fundamental changes in thinking and in the economic, social and political systems to change thinking and behaviour. Therefore, civil society participation in the peace-building process needs to go beyond the realist school of thinking to the democratic liberal approach where terrorist threats can be addressed through radical social, economic, and political reforms to bring about transformative peace.

However, civil society organisations have also been much criticised for their ineffectiveness. The problem stems from members of civil society being involved in political parties, and thus many take a particular political stance. Though the civil society movement is booming, it has very little impact on actual political policy issues. These organisations lack a systematic approach to deal with political issues, especially after the 1990s where there was no example where civil society had an effect on a policy decision: there was much

research, but no direct impact. Though there are ways to improve the direction in which the civil society movement is going (have a strategic plan for the next ten years so that organisations know when, how, and what fields they will be working in; maintain a separation between civil society and political parties to keep impartiality), at the present time it appears there is too much research and not enough direct action. It is the need for *direct* action to tackle the terrorist threat head on, that local governments and communities can have a huge impact. They can act in ways which can deal with terrorist threats, and they must as it is their communities which are being affected and so the stakes are high.

7. THE USE OF COMMUNITIES IN COUNTER-TERRORISM STRATEGIES

7.1. The British Model

After the 7/7 terrorist attacks in London, authorities realised their grave mistake of allowing radical Muslim groups that incited violence to stay in the UK as long as they did not directly attack the country. This allowed the extremist groups to organise, recruit new members, and spread their newsletters. The UK government's strategy to deal with terrorism is known as "Contest" (Briggs et al., 2006: 24-25). It consisted of the four Ps which spanned all aspects of the counter-terrorism agenda: preventing terrorism by tackling the radicalisation of individuals; pursuing terrorists and all those that sponsor them; protecting national security; and preparing for the consequences. Before the 7/7 attacks, the "prevention" part of the strategy received less funding and attention than the other three parts of the plan. The strategy was criticised for being nothing more than a set of police and judicial powers, the "harder" end of the general counter-terrorism strategy. Analysts therefore believed that it was crucial that the government broadened their scope of attention to include the "softer" side of counter-terrorism – namely community involvement. Looking at the past it became evident that "all our experience in Northern Ireland told us that community engagement is the cornerstone of effective counter-terrorism policy, influencing both the formation and implementation of policy". And thus in the aftermath of the July bombs, the government launched the

“Preventing Extremism Together” (PET) initiative in an attempt to work with the Muslim community in order to fight terrorism.

The British realised that “while a security response is vital, it will not, on its own, be enough. Winning hearts and minds and preventing individuals being attracted to violent extremism in the first place is also crucial” (*Preventing Violent Extremism: Winning Hearts and Minds*, DCLG, 2007: 4). In an effort to counter the terrorists’ ideology, the Home Office leads on protecting those individuals most at risk from violent extremist influences; the Department for Education and Skills has an important role in relation to the impact that education can have; and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office works on the overseas dimension. The Department for Communities and Local Government argue that it is vital that local communities are used to challenge the extremist threat. The strategy has four approaches. Firstly, it is important to promote shared values. Since 100,000 4-15 year-olds attend *madrassahs* after school, increasing citizenship classes to reach these religious schools would have a huge impact on the younger generation of Muslims living in the UK. The government is also addressing how faith and culture is taught in the national curriculum. Secondly, the government aims to support local solutions, by promoting wider cultural activities and inter-faith work. The government hopes to help local authorities set up forty local forums by April 2008, which will act as a meeting ground for discussion and debate. Thirdly, the scheme will hope to build civic capability by supporting leadership organisations working to tackle violent extremism. And fourthly, the government hopes to strengthen the role of faith institutions and leaders. The Department of Education and Skills will support the development of an accredited Continuous Professional Development Programme for faith leaders, to develop the skills needed for imams to engage effectively with members of their local communities.

The UK government has also increased spending in initiatives to tackle terrorism using “soft” methods. The Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund will make £6 million available to support local authorities. The aim of the fund is to develop a society in which Muslims in the community identify themselves as part of a wider British society, condemn violent extremism, support the security forces, and develop their own capabilities to deal with local problems as they arise. Cohesion and integration are key government

priorities. Since the disturbances in northern towns in 2001, the government has tried to identify how best to manage community tensions and foster interaction between groups. The government solution was to invest in community initiatives: “the investment of £6 million pathfinder funding for community cohesion from April 2003 to October 2004 provided a firm foundation for good practice, and good ideas for ‘what works’” (*Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund*, DCLG, London: 2007). This rationale has led to the government providing more money for similar such schemes. For example, the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund distributed £7.7 million to faith-based organisations so that they may engage more effectively with government, civil society, and other faiths.

There are many examples of how government money has been spent in order to build greater community ties. There are four priority areas which the UK government has provided funding from the pathfinder fund. Firstly, activities are funded which provide effective local campaigns to confront extremist ideologies. The Radical Middle Way Roadshow travelled throughout the UK and presented Islamic speakers who spoke about community engagement. The roadshows were attended by 60,000 18-30 year-olds. Secondly, the fund aims to support and nurture civic and theological leadership. Therefore, Women’s Voices was set up as a steering group which discussed how Muslim women could have a greater role in democratic participation. Thirdly, increasing the resilience of key organisations and institutions and supporting early interventions. Funds will be given to activities to promote intelligence gathering and sharing at the local level, and to develop ways to target extremism in universities. For example, the North London Central Mosque worked with the Metropolitan Police Service’s Muslim Contact Unit on how to identify signs of extremism and how to respond accordingly. Lastly, capacity and skills development, and the provision of guidance and awareness-training for front-line staff/managers in organisations providing services or community support. The Dudley Forum on Extremism and Islamophobia works with the Dudley Muslim Association to train its volunteers on the best way to deal with race relation issues arising in the UK. For more examples of projects which use community initiatives to tackle terrorism, one should read *Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund 2007/08: Case Studies*. However, the point is that the UK

government fully believes that investing money into community projects is worthwhile. It is perhaps too early to judge the results of these schemes, but past research suggests that the Muslim community in England wants an opportunity to air their views and participate in the political life of the country, and therefore money should be spent on such community projects. This shows that even the British, with their healthy democracy and vibrant civil society, needed to address people on the community/grassroots level in order to fully tackle the terrorist threat.

The next section of the paper looks at what “soft” powers the Bangladesh government can use to tackle terrorism in the country.

7.2. Bangladesh and Local Government

National government is too huge an organisation to be able to deal with the specifics of handling a community-based approach to counter-terrorism. The solution is for local governments to be strengthened and better funded so that it can engage the communities in its respective areas. There are a number of arguments for the development of local government systems, especially in developing countries. Firstly, the strengthening of local governments aligns with the need to pursue pro-active policies for local autonomy. This has the beneficial effect of promoting democratisation and popular participation; delivery of public services at the local level; and the efficient allocation of public resources. Secondly, since the early 1990s there has been a trend in the decentralization of previously highly centralized governments and the broadening of local governance capacities. This has been demonstrated by Korea, China, Japan, and the Philippines all pursuing policies which will invigorate local participation in the political process. Thirdly, the Bangladesh constitution itself supports the existence of local government bodies: “the state shall encourage local government institutions composed of representatives of the areas concerned and in such institutions special representation shall be given, as far as possible, to peasants, workers, and women” (Article 9; also see Articles 50/51). And lastly, local governments are the crucial mediator between the people and the government at the national level. Local representatives have a duty to report the demands of the people to government at the higher levels and ensure that the government works towards these common

aspirations. The point is that individuals are capable of the responsibility of managing public goods and services, and therefore self-governance is possible and a desirable outcome of democratic institution-building (Syedur Rahman, 2000).

The structure of Bangladesh's local government system is as follows (Democracywatch, 2007). The Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development, and Cooperatives is the overarching body in charge of the rural and urban local organisations. The urban population are organised by the 6 City Corporations and the 302 Pourashavas. The rural population are organised by the 64 Zilla Parishad, then the 482 Thana/Upzilla Parishad, and finally the 5002 Union Parishads. The Union Parishad is the lowest level of local government in Bangladesh and is governed by the elected Chairperson who manages 12 elected members in charge of 12 separate Wards/villages. It is clear that the UPs are in a unique position to monitor communities, to really know a single community and thus be responsive to any fundamental changes to that locale, including for example whether individuals are inciting messages of hatred. This attention certainly cannot be given at the national level, and not even at the Thana level of government. Thus, the community approach is best to *build trust* with the local population so that they themselves will understand the need to report disturbances within the villages, knowing that their local Chairman is on call to investigate as soon as possible.

However, the local government system in Bangladesh is generally weak (Syedur Rahman, 2000: 235/239; Democracywatch, 2007: 4). Bangladesh is a relatively young nation and its priorities were focused toward economic development planning, regional integration, and economic stabilization, which resulted in the neglect of the local government system which was seen as a peripheral issue. Local government bodies in Bangladesh lack managerial expertise, and adequate financial resources to undertake the activities within their domain. Dependence of grants from higher levels of government have increased over time rather than decreasing. Interventions from the national level have not allowed local government growth. They also lack the resources and information to fulfil their duties: rural local governments are formally allocated 38 separate functions, but are realistically only able to do 6 of these activities. The system is also far from transparent due to a lack of

involvement of stakeholders and a concealment of decision-making. Essentially, the UPs are wasted resources. Democracywatch's report entitled "People's Perception of Union Parishad in Bangladesh" showed some disappointing findings in regards to people's interaction with the Union Parishads: 66% are not concerned/well informed about the UPs activities; 50% thought that the reason for the UPs inadequacies were based on the inactivity of its senior members; and the majority believed that the UP members had made no impact on key issues such as law and order, black-marketing, and health.

Yet, there is hope for the future. It is estimated that there are 13 000 non-governmental organisations, and also 500 women's organisations in Bangladesh with a total membership of over 2 million. This signals that the formation of further community and local groups in Bangladesh will be a major factor changing the composition of Bangladeshi life. These groups have the ability to become partners of the public sectors programmes for economic growth and development. There are a number of ways in which the UPs can improve their performance (Syedur Rahman, 2000: 241): the employment of skilled management personnel who will come with sound management practices including accountability of financial resources; the end of micro-management from the top; the training of female UP members; and raising awareness of the UP activities to the people. The rewards for improving the local government system in Bangladesh are great and have the potential to improve the daily lives of the millions.

7.3. Local Government and Counter-Terrorism

There are many reasons why local governments and communities need to be included in the counter-terrorism effort. If Union Councils (UPs) were given the necessary funding and authority to act as they deem necessary in local issues, then these bodies, with the help of the communities that they serve, can monitor the terrorist threat themselves. If given the responsibility of monitoring their own community for extremists who may reside there, or radical imams preaching messages of intolerance, then the members of the community will know that they are in a better position than the national government to deal with such situations. The threat may not be a national crisis, and may only be something

small, such as the fiery rhetoric of a pro-Taliban supporter, but words could turn violent and if this was remedied as early as possible, then it may *prevent* individuals continuing their path towards radicalism. Local communities with the support of their UPs are the best instruments to use to check the daily situation of their various villages. It should also be noted that Bangladesh is geographically different from Afghanistan; there are not many hills in which to hide, and if a terrorist were to act in this country he would need the co-operation of the community which he would be unlikely to get. Intelligence agencies can only reach a certain point, they need the co-operation of communities. This was demonstrated by the Liberation War: the war was won by the Bangladeshis because the communities united together in order to hide the liberation fighters who were then able to stay in East Bengal and eventually win the war. This shows that when there is a risk to the lives of the Bangladeshi people, the communities are willing and able to band together for a common cause. It is this resilience and determination which is needed now in order to prevent the spread and growth of terrorism in Bangladesh.

Communities can help counter terrorism in different ways (Briggs et al., 2006: 58/59). Firstly, communities offer important sources of information and intelligence – an early warning system. This is especially important in the case of terrorist groups such as the JMB which is willing to strike without any prior warning. Secondly, communities noticing the signs of terrorism in their locale are best placed to act pre-emptively to divert their young people from extremism: the self-policing society. Thirdly, though the state needs to play its role, communities must take the lead in tackling problems that create grievances, such as low unemployment and lack of educational facilities. Finally, the security services cannot act without the support of the communities they are there to protect. Though the RAB have been effective in capturing leaders of terrorist groups in Bangladesh, their presence has been perceived as removing the people from the political process. RAB may also be seen as a symbol of the government ignoring civil rights in their efforts to counter terrorism, by for example looking over those killed in the cross-fire of RAB attacks. The worry is that if the government does not act justly, but chooses when and when not to enforce justice, then the government itself has lost its appeal to fight terrorism in the

name of freedom and people's rights. The main point is that "security is always delivered through consent, never through force". The nature of the threat means that the security forces must act earlier to catch the terrorists before they act, not during their criminal acts which may be the detonation of a bomb, but this increases the likelihood of mistakes being made. Sustaining this practice in the long-term will only be possible if communities give their active consent to the police, because the former will have to allow the police the benefit of the doubt on more than one occasion.

The community approach to counter-terrorism is also able to strike at the root causes of terrorist violence. In terms of religion, it should be noted that there are approximately 200 000 mosques in Bangladesh, staffed by approximately 350 000 religious functionaries, yet unlike many Middle Eastern Islamic countries, the network of mosques operate outside the state control, and retain considerable autonomy despite several lacklustre attempts by the state to weaken their independence (Ahmad, 2000: 3). In many small towns and villages there may not be a public hall or similar civic facility. As such, mosques as well as being used for religious matters also play a role in the local communities, doubling up as public forums where important issues can be debated. Since the state cannot keep track of so many mosques, it seems that UPs are in a better position to ensure that the imams of mosques are not preaching an erroneous and violent version of Islam. It is essential that the teachings of Islam are not misconstrued in such a way that it breeds hatred for values of tolerance and liberty. As well as mosques, madrasas should also act as sources of knowledge. The situation of so many unobserved mosques is similar to the numbers of unobserved madrasas. There are four types of madrasas in Bangladesh: Quomi madrasas (6500), government/'Alia madrasas, non-government madrasas (6906), and elementary/Ebtedayee madrasas (only 5150 out of 18000 are approved by the government). The Quomi madrasas teach a curriculum known as Dars-i-Nizami, which focuses solely on Islamic studies. These madrasas are private, and do not receive financial support from the government but from religious endowments. This relative autonomy means that these madrasas do not reform their education system and continue to produce graduates unable to compete in the labour market, thus worsening the unemployment problem in Bangladesh.

It has been argued that people do not send their children to these institutions by choice as such, but simply because it is cheap. These madrasas may preach an extreme version of Islam, or may act as recruitment centres for terrorist groups (Hannan of HUJI was taught at a Deoband madrasa, for instance). So like the situation with mosques, local communities are in a better position to monitor what is being taught at these institutions. There would also be a huge incentive to lobby for change, or alternatively make local school fees cheaper so that there is less reason for parents to send their children to madrasas which refuse to teach a modern education. Local education committees could be formed which simply check the teachings of the madrasas by interviewing teachers and students. They could also act to ensure that madrasas have competent headteachers in charge of the whole school. Of course, one does not want to stop religious education, but like the 'Alia madrasas it is possible to combine a liberal education which encompasses maths and English with a teaching of Islam.

One of the arguments against the government's handling of the terrorist situation is their use of RAB, which led to a break of trust between communities and the government. This suggests that the government is only willing to use force to counter terrorism. This supposed suppression of dialogue encourages violence, especially since there is now no way for terrorist groups to feel that they can express their grievances, the result being acts of force to express their anger over their plight. By strengthening local governments and communities, this empowers local people, allowing them to take part in the political process. In this way, individuals can take their local grievances to local representatives who will hopefully be able to take it to national representatives, if the situation cannot be resolved locally. By this way, individuals from terrorist groups may see that democracy is the best means by which individuals from all sectors of society can voice their views, that an ideal democracy promotes egalitarianism over elitism, that the voice of the marginalized has its best chance of being heard in a liberal democracy which favours freedom of expression. The promotion of local government would hopefully *demonstrate* how democracy can actually benefit the people, and therefore counters one of the causes of terrorism, that of the attack of global values, such as liberty and human rights.

General deprivation is another cause of terrorism when recruits can be made from the poor and vulnerable, or like the wealthy Saudis responsible for the 9/11 attacks who simply could not bear to see their Muslim brothers suffer, it is clear that alleviating the poverty issue in Islamic countries is a necessary step in combating terrorism. In the Commonwealth's publication *Making Democracy Work for Pro-Poor Development*, it is stated that pro-poor development is about expanding opportunities so that individuals can help themselves out of poverty. Many believe that the poverty issue can be resolved by economic growth. Advocates of pro-poor development believe economic growth to be necessary, but do not think it is enough. In some contexts the poor lack a voice, and powerful elites may simply serve their own self-interest and therefore economic growth does not have the desired impact on poverty alleviation. Instead, the ideal is for democracy to work for pro-poor development. At the general level, this means that the democratic structures of Bangladesh need to be fair and reliable. Beyond the core institutions (parliament, independent judiciary) that need to be in place, democracy requires the reinforcement of a democratic culture, such as respect for human rights; representation and participation in the political process by a wide variety of social groups including the disadvantaged, a process that can be enhanced by the strengthening of local government; and a free media which may encourage citizens to hold their government to account. The major point of pro-poor development is to allow those suffering from poverty to have a say in the possible ways for the community to resolve the problem together, and to ensure that the government keeps any pledges that they make.

In order for this programme to work, it is necessary to have communities which engage with their local governments. Once communities become empowered, locals can manage resource distribution or fix enduring problems in their villages. "In the long run building stronger and more accountable local government is the only way to make decentralisation pro-poor. But it requires time, resources, and capacity building. For the poor the lasting benefits will outweigh the immediate costs" (Commonwealth, 2003: 13). Such community participation links to the earlier emphasis made in this paper about the community having a say about local education and also such engagement with politics strengthens the argument for

democracy being the best form of government. If communities can help themselves out of poverty so that their daily lives are improved, the change may signal to others that community participation can yield results. It will be a long process, but the rewards are deterring those losing hope away from terrorism as a potential answer to their grievances.

Specific political disagreements can also be causes of terrorism, as shown by the situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Kalam, 2006: 161-164). One reason that the problem has continued for so long is that the previous governments have been reluctant to engage in dialogue with the affected parties. For instance, the PCJSS see the continued presence of army camps in CHT as against the terms of the 1997 Peace Accord that the government signed. The creation of a Regional Council is one way to supervise the governance of the CHT (Ahmed, Mohsin, Chakma, 2003: 164). The Council has responsibilities to coordinate the general administration, law and order, and development of the CHT. If the government wishes to implement any laws regarding the CHT then it needs to go through the Council first. This Council is therefore the point of call for locals to air their perspectives of the situation. It was previously noted that the introduction of RAB signalled to communities that the government is reluctant to engage in dialogue with affected groups, but the existence of the Council has meant the creation of a forum where the United People's Democratic Front and their rivals the PCJSS can discuss their grievances. This decentralisation of authority, and the potential for locals and members of the PCJSS and the United People's Democratic Front to say how they wish for the problems of land distribution to be resolved, may help solve the situation in the long-term. In the short-term, the benefits could include the cessation of violence if the communities affected believe that their voices are being heard by the state.

8. CONCLUSION

After analysing the general causes of terrorism to be religious fundamentalism, a fight against liberal values, general deprivation, and political grievances, this essay related these root causes to the terrorism present in Bangladesh, identifying groups such as HUJI, JMB, and PBCP. After it was determined that terrorism in

Bangladesh is home-grown and does not have external links, this paper analysed the efforts of the government to handle the terrorism situation. Government strategies were discussed, where the main limitation was the state's emphasis on a "hard" approach to counter-terrorism which has the negative effect of jeopardising the liberties that the government claims to be protecting. The argument proceeded by suggesting that even having an effective government and a healthy democracy, this was not enough to counter terrorism, and hence the need to allow civil society organisations to play their part in the counter-terrorism strategy. Civil society can help in the counter-terrorism strategy in several ways, but its main limitation was its relative ineffectiveness in Bangladesh. Of course, this is a symptom of the weakness of the Bangladesh government. However, the main point is that more is needed to tackle the root causes of terrorism, made clear by the British model. Britain has a healthy democracy and a vibrant civil society, but policy makers realised that it needed to engage local communities in its fight against terrorism. For this to work in Bangladesh requires the strengthening of local governments, to give them more autonomy from the national government, and more authority to resolve local situations without the state's interruptions. Though improving local government systems would take time, the benefits are huge for communities are best placed (far more than national governments and intelligence services) to monitor their own locales and report risks of terrorist incitements. Communities can also work together with local governments to strike at the root causes of terrorism, such as ensuring that madrasa education is modern and liberal, and aiding in pro-poor development.

Bangladesh has a long way to go before it can implement the necessary reforms which would make local governments strong and effective enough to engage fruitfully with local communities. Yet, the point is that Bangladesh is not a breeding ground for terrorism, but it has the *potential* to be so because of the extreme poverty, and numbers of unchecked madrasas in the country. Therefore, it would be wise to consider all the possible ways to counter this threat before it materialises, and along with the present government direct actions against terrorism, one must not discount the values of the "soft" approach to terrorism, one which is more effective at tackling the root causes of terrorism.

REFERENCES

Ahmad, Mumtaz “Islam, State and Society in Bangladesh” Seminar at the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (Dhaka, 14th June 2000).

Ahmed, Imtiaz; Chakma, Bhumitra; Mohsin, Amena “Administrative Reforms in the CHT” in *Identity, Culture, and Politics* (4:2) (2003).

Ahmed, Imtiaz “Introduction” in Ed.: Ahmed, Imtiaz *Understanding Terrorism in South Asia* (Manohar, New Delhi: 2006).

Ahmed, Imtiaz “Terrorism Beyond Reason: Possibilities and Limits” Seminar at BISS “Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century: Bangladeshi Perspective” (Dhaka, 10 March 2007).

Ali, Shawkat *Faces of Terrorism in Bangladesh* (UPL, Dhaka: 2006).

Amin, ATM “Regional Security Environment and Terrorism Threat to Bangladesh” Seminar at BISS “Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century: Bangladeshi Perspective” (Dhaka, 10 March 2007).

Awan, Muzaffar “Islam, Democracy, and Secularism” in *Defence Journal* (July 2005).

Barkat, Abul “Economics of Fundamentalism” Conference at Cornell University “South Asia Conference on Social and Religious Fragmentation and Economic Development” (Cornell University, 15-16th October 2005).

Bhaumik, Subir “Bangladesh: The Second Front of Islamic Terror” in Ed.: Ghosh, Sucheta; Mishra, Omprakash *Terrorism and Low Intensity Conflict in South Asian Region* (Manak Publications, New Delhi: 2003).

Blair, Tony “A Battle for Global Values” in *Foreign Affairs* (January 2007).

Briggs, Rachel; Fieschi, Catherine; Lownsbrough, Hannah *Bringing it Home: Community-Based Approaches to Counter-Terrorism* (Demos, London: 2006).

Chakraborty, Amalendu “Madrasa Education During British Rule: Toward a History of the Madrasa-I-Alia” Seminar at the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (Dhaka, 16 August 1997).

Commonwealth Group of Experts *Making Democracy Work for Pro-Poor Development* (The Commonwealth Secretariat, London: 2003).

The Daily Star, “JMB Suicide Bomber Kills Two Judges” (5:522, 15 November 2005).

The Daily Star, Ahmad, Qazi Kholiquzzaman “Civil Society Made in Bangladesh: An Anatomy” (19 February 2007).

Democracywatch, "People's Perception of Union Parishad in Bangladesh" (Democracywatch, Dhaka: 2007).

Department for Communities and Local Government, "Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund" (DCLG, London: 2007).

Department for Communities and Local Government "Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund 2007/08: Case Studies" (DCLG, London: 2007).

Department for Communities and Local Government "Preventing Violent Extremism: Winning Hearts and Minds" (DCLG, London: 2007).

Dhar, MK, "Bangladesh: A Need to Rediscover the Secular Forces" in *World Focus* (314) (February 2006).

Elmesseri, Abdel Wahab "Secularism" in *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* (11:4) (1994).

Engineer, Asqhar Ali, "Religion, Democracy, and Secularism" at BISS "International Conference on Religious Militancy and Security in South Asia" (Dhaka, 10-13 October 2004).

Eusuf, Aba; Atiur Rahman, Syed Wadood, "Civil Society and Governance" in Hye, Hasnat Abdul (ed.), *Governance: South Asian Perspectives* (University Press Limited, Dhaka; 2006).

Gause III, FG "Can Democracy Stop Terrorism?" in *Foreign Affairs* (September 2005).

Harish, SP, "A Question of Values? Changing Strategies in the Ideological Battle against Terrorism", *RSIS Commentaries*, Found at www.idss.edu.sg (February 2007).

Husain, Syed Anwar, "Religious Militancy, Civil Society, and Interfaith Dialogue" at BISS "International Conference on Religious Militancy and Security in South Asia" (Dhaka, 10-13 October 2004).

Hussain, Sakhawat, "Terrorism in South Asia – Ramifications in the Internal and External Security of States", at BISS Seminar on "Global War on Terror: Bangladeshi Perspective" (Dhaka, 6 September 2006).

Joshi, Ruchira, "Terrorism in Bangladesh" in Singh, Sudhir (ed.), *Terrorism in South Asia* (Authorspress, New Delhi: 2004).

Kabir, Ekram, *Extremism in Bangladesh: Poverty is the Root Cause* (NewsNetwork, Dhaka: 2005).

Kalam, Abul, "The Challenges of Terrorism: Bangladesh Responses" in Muni, SD (ed.), *Responding to Terrorism in South Asia* (Manohar, New Delhi: 2006).

Khan, Abdur Rob "Impact of September 11th on South Asia with Special Reference to Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka" in Ed.: Sobhan, Farooq *Strengthening Cooperation and Security in South Asia Post-9/11* (Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, Dhaka: 2004)

Khan, Mizanur Rahman, Mohammad Humayun Kabir (eds.), *Civil Society and Democracy in Bangladesh*, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 2002.

Khan, Mohabbat "Problems of Democracy: Administrative Reform and Corruption", *BISS Journal* (22:1) (January 2001).

Khan, Shahedul Anam, "The State and the Limits of Counter-Terrorism – II: The Experience of India and Bangladesh" in Ahmed, Imtiaz (ed.), *Understanding Terrorism in South Asia: Beyond Statist Discourses* (Manohar, New Delhi: 2006).

Khatri, Sridhar, "Confidence Building, Cooperative Security and Human Security: The Role of Civil Society in South Asia" in Sobhan, Farooq (ed.), *Strengthening Cooperation and Security in South Asia Post-9/11* (Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, Dhaka: 2004).

Pape, Robert, "Blowing Up an Assumption" in *Dhaka Courier* (2 September 2005).

Rahman, Ataur, "Determinants of Governance and Political Reforms" at National Workshop at the Centre for Governance Studies, University of Dhaka, "Problems of Governance and Way Out" (Dhaka, 7 June 2004).

Rahman, Ataur, "New Security Frontiers: Bangladesh's Quest for a Moderate Muslim State" Seminar at BISS on "Global War on Terror: Bangladesh Perspective" (Dhaka, 6 September 2006).

Rahman, Atiqur, "Economic Case of Terrorism in South Asia: The Case of Bangladesh" in Khatri, Sridhar (ed.); Kueck, Gert, *Terrorism in South Asia: Impact on Development and Democratic Process* (Shipra Publications, Dhaka: 2003).

Rahman, Atiur, "Decentralization and Development: The Bangladesh Experience" in Aditya, Anand (ed.); Paday, Devendra Raj, *Democracy and Empowerment in South Asia* (Nepal South Asia Centre, Kathmandu: 1995).

Rahman, Habibur, Habib Zafarullah, "Human Rights, Civil Society, and NGO Organisations: The Nexus in Bangladesh" in *Human Rights Quarterly* (24) (2002).

Rahman, Rafiqur, *Bangladesh in the Mirror: An Outsider Perspective on a Struggling Democracy* (University Press Limited, Dhaka: 2006).

Rahman, Syedur "Governance and Local Government System" in Hye, Hasnat Abdul (ed.), *Governance: South Asian Perspectives* (University Press Limited, Dhaka: 2000).

Rahman, Reaz "The Emerging Scenario of Terrorism in Bangladesh" at Seminar at BIISS on "Global War on Terror: Bangladesh Perspective" (Dhaka, 6 September 2006).

Rahman, Ziaur, "Response to Terrorism: The Bangladesh Case", at Seminar at BIISS on "Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century: Bangladesh Perspective" (Dhaka, 10 March 2007).

Sawhney, RG, "Democratic States and Response to Terrorism" in *Strategic Analysis* (X:4) (July 1986).

Shelley, Mizanur Rahman, "British Engagement with Bangladesh in Counter-Terrorism: Opportunities for Cooperation", at Conference at RUSI "Bangladesh Perspectives in the Global War on Terrorism" (London, 24 July 2006).

Siddiqui, Kamal, "Local Government in Bangladesh: A Short Introduction" in Siddiqui, Kamal (ed.), *Local Government in Bangladesh* (University Press Limited, Dhaka: 1994).

Star Weekend Magazine, "Dancing with the Devil" (4:74) (9 December 2005).

Wagner, Christian, "Religion, States, and Conflict in South Asia" at Conference at BIISS on "International Conference on Religious Militancy and Security in South Asia" (Dhaka, 10-13 October 2003).

Wood, AT, *Asian Democracy in World History* (Routledge, London: 2004).