

Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh Public Awareness and Attitudes

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Executive Summary

Overall support for violent extremist groups or their violent tactics is low in Bangladesh. However, contrary to popular theories about causal links between poverty and support for violent extremism, where support is found it is not only among the uneducated poor, but also among the more well-to-do. In a recent survey testing support for the goals and tactics of three leading extremist groups, a surprising number of the more educated and wealthier citizens in Bangladesh indicated support for militant groups, including the local offshoots of Islamic State (Da'esh)¹ or Al-Qaeda. Perhaps more significantly, many survey respondents also claimed not to recall high-profile militant attacks, signaling a widespread uneasiness with speaking openly about violent extremism. This uneasiness could have adverse implications for not only for public support of government efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism, but the effectiveness of current interventions as well.

As part of a nationwide RESOLVE Network survey of 4,067 respondents in April 2017, Bangladeshis were asked about three high-profile events of domestic extremist violence in the past twelve years. The first was in August 2005, when hundreds of small bombs were simultaneously detonated in sixty-three out of sixty-four districts by the Jagrato Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB). The second was the October 2015 assassination of a well-known publisher of atheist publications by members of the Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), an affiliate of Al-Qaeda. The third drew global headlines in July 2016 when the Holey Artisan Bakery was besieged by local militants, who killed twenty hostages and dedicated their action to Da'esh. Those taking the survey were asked about their awareness of the events themselves, whether they supported the violent tactics, and their support for the militants' stated goals for the attacks, which included promoting *Sharia* or assassinating the distributor of materials judged to be an affront to Islam.

¹ Da'esh is an Arabic translation of the acronym for the Islamic State in the Levant, also known as ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) or ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). The RESOLVE Network refers to ISIS by this Arabic acronym.

KEY FINDINGS

- While overall support in Bangladesh for violent extremist groups and their violent tactics is low, a surprising number of well-to-do and well-educated Bangladeshis indicate support.
- Among those who indicated support for violent extremist tactics in a countrywide survey, women indicated greater support than men.
- A significant number of citizens claimed not to be aware of violent extremist attacks, potentially indicating widespread uneasiness with openly discussing politically sensitive issues amid indications that many Bangladeshis feel freedom of expression is constrained.
- Shrinking space for open public discourse about the challenge of violent extremism could raise significant barriers to the government's ability to neutralize and mitigate extremist threats.

Although overall support for the specific tactics used by the three militant groups in the survey was small, terrorism is a low numbers game; support need not be high for militant groups to gain adherents. The goal of two of the three militant groups tested in this survey was to use violent tactics to implement *Sharia*, domestically or globally. Not all of those surveyed were aware of the three attacks, but among those who recalled them were significant minorities who supported the attackers' goals. Respondents were less likely to support using violent means to achieve these ends, but among those who did, more women supported violence as a tactic than men. Higher-income groups expressed greater support for militant groups, and better-educated Bangladeshis were more likely to support the ABT's assassination of a well-known publisher than other demographics. There was some slight preference among rural respondents for the goals of Da'esh to globally implement *Sharia*, but no significant variation in support for violent attacks was noted between urban and rural dwellers.

The relatively high level of respondents expressing no knowledge of these three prominent attacks is concerning. It could reinforce other recent research that shows Bangladeshis increasingly feel that their freedom of expression is being restricted and that survey participants may have been reluctant to speak on such sensitive subjects. It could also have a policy impact, as this low level of recognition could make it more difficult for the government to persuade citizens of the need for vigorous efforts to counter violent extremism. There is a deep well of supporters for the greater integration of *Sharia* law in Bangladesh, even if most citizens rejected violence as a means to achieve it. This finding suggests that both the government of Bangladesh and civil society could face significant challenges in neutralizing the triple threats of rising frictions between socially conservative Muslims and supporters of secularist views, growing social dislocation, and shrinking spaces for open public discourse.

Introduction

Since the nation's independence in 1971, the secular principles upon which Bangladesh was founded have been challenged; in recent years, the country has faced a wave of violent extremism.² With the emergence of Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) and the regional franchise of Islamic State (IS) or Da'esh, the possibility has been raised that the paroxysms of violence that are the hallmark of these organizations may become more common in Bangladesh.³ Home to one of the world's largest Muslim populations of more than 150 million people,⁴ the country is seen as fertile ground for radical ideology and extremist violence.

In recent years, terrorists have brutally murdered secular bloggers, writers, and publishers and have targeted non-Muslim minorities. In July 2016, five youths claiming to be affiliated with Da'esh attacked the Holey Artisan Bakery in an upscale Dhaka neighborhood. Twenty-nine people were killed, including twenty hostages, two police officers, five gunmen, and two staff; eighteen of the twenty hostages killed were foreigners. Da'esh immediately claimed credit for the attack.⁵ While these recent high-profile attacks have drawn the most attention, Islamist militant groups perpetrated some 147 attacks in the country between 2001 and 2016.⁶ Even though public support for these groups presumably influences their ability to operate in Bangladesh, as well as the state's efforts to counter them, there have been little data to date measuring this support.

This research brief is based on a nationwide RESOLVE Network survey designed to address this gap. The survey instrument presented respondents with vignettes of actual terrorist attacks perpetrated by three important militant groups: the Jagrato Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB); Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT), an Al-Qaeda affiliate; and Da'esh. The instrument queried respondents' knowledge of the attack, support for the groups' stated goals, and support for the tactics they employed. It also collected demographic and other respondent-level information data that can be used to determine individual support for the goals and the means employed by the terrorists. It summarizes the views of Bangladeshis on the most prominent militant organizations operating in the country in the recent past and present. It exposes important variation in support when it is broken down by cross-tabulating it with variables indicating gender, education, and socioeconomic standing.

² Matthew Nelson and Seth Oldmixon, "Bangladesh on the Brink: Mapping the Evolving Social Geography of Political Violence," RESOLVE Network *Bangladesh Research Report* No. 1, September 2017.

³ Da'esh is the Arabic translation of the acronym for the Islamic State in the Levant, also known as ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) or ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). As a general rule, the RESOLVE Network refers to ISIS by this Arabic acronym.

⁴ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*, www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sa.html (updated August 2017).

⁵ "Bangladesh Siege: Twenty Killed at Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka," *BBC News*, July 2, 2016.

⁶ START. 2016. Global Terrorism Database [Data file]. Retrieved from www.start.umd.edu/gtd.

Methodology

This research brief draws on data from a face-to-face nationally representative RESOLVE Network survey of 4,067 households in Bangladesh. The survey was conducted from April 12-30, 2017. No large political events or incidents of violent extremism with the potential to impact the attitudes of those surveyed occurred while the survey was conducted. However, a number of anti-militant raids did occur during that time. These raids sparked fear among Bangladeshis in certain areas of the country. Five percent of survey respondents discontinued the survey due to questions about religion and militancy as a result of the sensitivity generated by the raids.

The survey utilized a stratified random sampling design that was nationally representative at division levels. Sample ratios were 50 percent male and 50 percent female and 75 percent rural and 25 percent urban. These ratios are in line with the 2011 Bangladesh Population Census.⁷ Samples at the division level were assigned in line with the proportionate distribution of the population, including religion, as provided by the 2011 Census. All estimates were calculated using analytical weights. The survey response rate was 70 percent, similar to other surveys recording response rates of 75 percent in Bangladesh.

Initially, the survey was planned to reach 8,000 respondents. A little over halfway through its implementation, however, efforts to collect data were halted after local authorities requested that certain essential questions be removed from the survey itself. At the time that data collection was halted, the distribution of the sample that had been gathered was already representative of administrative divisions, gender, religion, and urban/rural dwellers in Bangladesh. A decision to continue the survey without the questions was rejected, given the representativeness of the sample already, and given that doing so would result in conducting what would be two separate, incomparable surveys. The original margin of error for the survey with a sample size of 8,000 was about 1.10 percent at a 5 percent level of significance. The margin of error for the reduced sample was 1.54 percent at a 5 percent level of significance. Despite its smaller than anticipated sample size, this survey remains more than four times larger than other public surveys, including Pew's Global Attitudes Survey.⁸ The survey questionnaire was tested prior to gathering data in the field and implemented under the supervision of the Institutional Review Board. The questionnaire was undertaken in Bangla, Bangladesh's national language. Demographic information for each of the respondents was collected. Questions asked in the survey sought to elicit respondents' views on subjects including religion, governance, and violent extremism.

To understand Bangladeshis' awareness of and attitudes toward violent extremism, respondents were presented with brief accounts of actual domestic terrorist attacks, which included the stated goals of the attack and the tactics the groups employed. These vignettes summarized the following events:

⁷ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, "National Report Volume 1: Analytical Report," Bangladesh Population and Housing Census 2011, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, October 2015).

⁸ See "International Survey Methodology," Global Attitudes Survey 2014, Pew Research Center, www.pewresearch.org/methodology/international-survey-research/international-methodology/global-attitudes-survey/bangladesh/2014.

- The simultaneous detonation of hundreds of small bombs in sixty-three out of sixty-four districts of Bangladesh organized by Bangla Bhai, leader of the JMJB in August 2005;
- The assassination of Faisal Arefin Dipan, a well-known publisher of atheist publications, by members of the ABT, an affiliate of Al-Qaeda, in October 2015; and
- The siege of the Holey Artisan Bakery in July 2016 by Bangladeshi militants, who killed non-Muslim hostages and dedicated their action to Da'esh.

Respondents were asked whether they were aware of each event. Knowledge about a particular group and the attack was a necessary gateway question for subsequent queries about personal views about the goals and tactics of the group's actions. Given that the overall literacy rate in Bangladesh is 58 percent, it was expected that many respondents would be unaware of the events presented in the instrument that were reported in the print media or online. Equally important, given that one of the attacks took place some twelve years prior to the survey, it is entirely possible that some people were too young at the time of the attack to recall it.⁹ Respondents who indicated knowledge of the events in question were asked to rate their support of these organizations' stated goals using a five-point scale. They were then asked whether they supported the tactics that the group used to secure its goals, using the same scale (Table 1).

Table 1 Goals and means of Islamist militant groups in Bangladesh

Militant Group	Goals	Means
Bangla Bhai (Jagrato Muslim Janata Bangladesh) (JMJB)	Eliminate Bangladesh's judicial system and replace it with <i>Sharia</i>	The detonation of hundreds of small bombs simultaneously in sixty-three of sixty-four districts in August 2005
Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT)	Stop the publication of secular materials	The assassination of Faisal Arefin Dipan, a publisher of secular materials, in October 2015
Islamic State (Da'esh)	Help establish <i>Sharia</i> throughout the world	The targeted killing of the non-Muslims during the siege of the Holey Artisan Bakery in July 2016

Surveys of this kind merit important caveats. The political environment in Bangladesh is increasingly restricted; in this same survey, more than one-third of respondents believed that individuals have very limited freedom in their expression of political views or their work on political issues.¹⁰ This result is comparable to the findings of two other opinion polls conducted in 2015 and 2016, which found that approximately one-third of those

⁹ UNICEF, "State of The World's Children 2015 Country Statistical Tables," 2015. www.unicef.org/infobycountry/bangladesh_bangladesh_statistics.html

¹⁰ Ali Riaz and Syeda Salina Aziz, "Democracy and Sharia in Bangladesh: Surveying Support" RESOLVE Network *Bangladesh Research Brief* No. 3, September 2017.

surveyed did not feel free to express their political opinions.¹¹ Respondents may have indicated that they had not heard of a particular event as a way to opt out of the question. It is possible that this survey's estimates of those who have not heard of the event are biased downward. Similarly, respondents may not have been entirely forthcoming when asked about their support for the goals or means that each group employed in the events presented. It is strongly suspected that these findings present underestimates of knowledge of events, as well as support for the goals and tactics employed. There is no scenario imagined under which respondents would have exaggerated their knowledge of the events or their support of the goals or tactics used by the three groups included in the survey.

¹¹ "Democracy International Releases Latest Survey Data on Bangladesh at Wilson Center," press release, Democracy International, December 8, 2016; "Bangladesh's Democracy: According to Its People," public opinion survey, The Asia Foundation, March 25, 2016.

The Militant Landscape in Bangladesh

While at least of a half a dozen Islamist militant groups have been active in Bangladesh in recent years, this survey focused on three:

- *The Jagrato Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB)* is closely related to the Jamatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). The two groups are often viewed as more or less the same organization since they came under the leadership of Shaikh Abdur Rahman and Siddiqur Rahman (also known as “Bangla Bhai”). The group formed in 1998, but it did not become operational until the early 2000s.¹² JMJB’s most notorious attack occurred in August 2005 when the group set off 459 bombs simultaneously in sixty-three of Bangladesh’s sixty-four districts in effort to push the country into adopting *Sharia*.¹³ The group has also been linked to recent violence in Bangladesh, including an incident in Dinajpur at the end of 2015 in which an Italian Catholic priest was attacked.¹⁴ Information about leaders arrested since 2006 has revealed that they tend to be “educated in technical and vocational training colleges, and born and raised in urban areas.”¹⁵
- *Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT)*, which has also called itself Ansar al-Islam and Ansar Bangla 7, is affiliated with Al-Qaeda and draws its inspiration from one of its former leaders, the late Anwar al Awlaki. The organization first appeared in 2007, but it did not draw significant attention until 2013 when it began viciously attacking secular writers and bloggers. It mobilizes youth extensively through its online presence, which propagates its jihadist ideology and disseminates training manuals to help plan and execute terror attacks. ABT tends to draw recruits from Bangladesh’s middle-class, educated youths.¹⁶ It was banned in May 2015.¹⁷
- *Islamic State (Da’esh)* is a number of groups of militants claiming to operate under Da’esh, which has become increasingly common. Da’esh has claimed responsibility for several attacks on foreigners, members of the LGBTQ community, Shia, Ahmadis, Sufis, and religious minorities, among others.¹⁸ In July 2016, those involved in the bakery attack were in contact with Da’esh and dedicated the attack in their name, although there is no evidence that Da’esh actively aided them.¹⁹ In recent years, dozens of Bangladeshi nationals have gone to fight with Da’esh.²⁰ The group’s English-language magazine *Dabiq* recently offered a tribute to one Bangladeshi militant who died in Syria.²¹

¹² Ali Riaz, “Who Are the Bangladeshi ‘Islamic Militants’?” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10, no 1 (2016): 2-18.

¹³ “A Look at Some Key Radical Islamist Groups in Bangladesh,” *Associated Press*, November 27, 2015.

¹⁴ “Bangladesh Hindu Priest Beheaded ‘by Islamic State’,” *BBC News*, February 21, 2016.

¹⁵ Riaz, “Who are the Bangladeshi ‘Islamic Militants’?”, 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 2-18.

¹⁷ “Ansarullah Bangla Team Banned,” *Dhaka Tribune*, May 25, 2015.

¹⁸ See Farasha Bashir, “Rising Extremist Worries in Bangladesh,” *The Diplomat*, October 9, 2015; Julfikar Ali Manik and Ellen Barry, “Bangladesh Gay Rights Activist Is Hacked to Death,” *The New York Times*, April 25, 2016; Devitra Dwibhashyam, “Hindu Man Hacked to Death in Bangladesh, ISIS Claims Responsibility,” *International Business Times*, May 1, 2016; “ISIS Claims Attack on Ahmadi Mosque in Bangladesh,” *Agence France Presse*, December 26, 2015.

¹⁹ Praveen Swami, “Dhaka Café Attackers Were Lightly Armed, Shared Single Gun for Photos,” *The Indian Express*, July 6, 2016.

²⁰ Animesh Roul, “Spreading Tentacles: The Islamic State in Bangladesh.” *Terrorism Monitor* 13, Issue 3, February 6, 2015: 3-5.

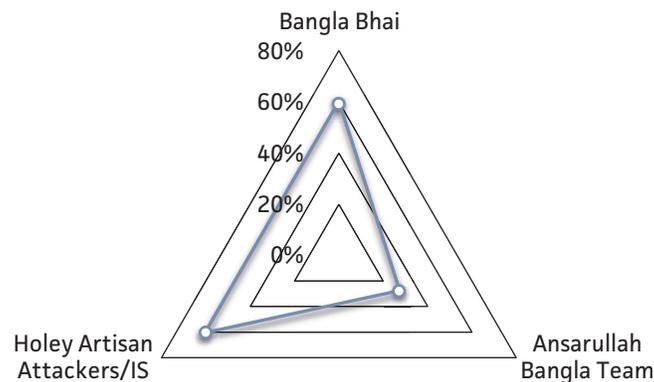
²¹ “Among the Believers Are Men: Abu Jandal al-Bangali.” *Dabiq* 14 (Rajab): 1-68; Tamara Khandake, “The ‘Islamic State’s Leader in Bangladesh Is Probably Canadian,” *Vice News*, June 8, 2016.

Findings

NOT ALL BANGLADESHIS ARE AWARE OF ACTS OF EXTREMIST VIOLENCE

A large proportion of the respondents reported being unaware of the three extremist attacks tested in this survey; this lack of familiarity varies across the events (Figure 1). While 60.2 percent had heard about wave of nationwide bomb attacks organized by JMJB in 2005, and 60.5 percent was aware of the siege at the Holey Artisan Bakery in 2016, only 27.4 percent was aware of the ABT assassination of the secular publisher in 2015.

Figure 1 Knowledge about the militant groups and their activities

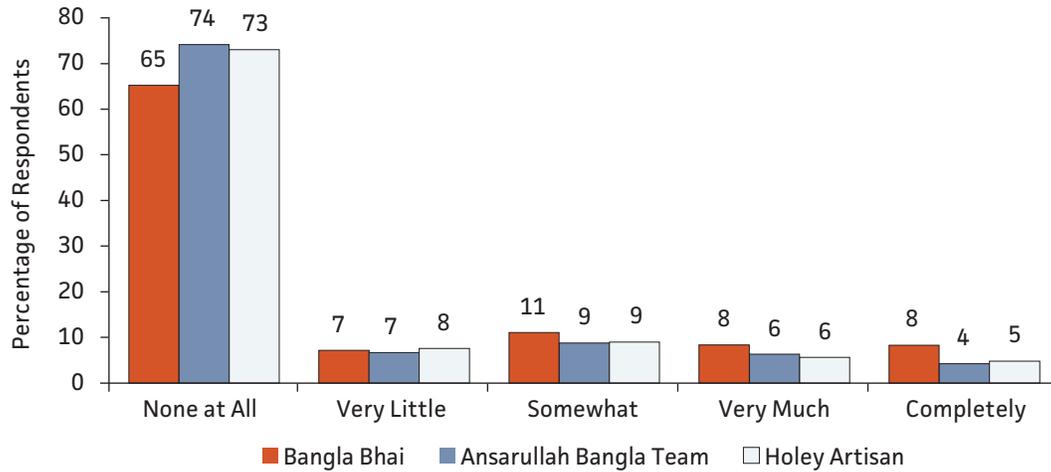


MOST BANGLADESHIS WHO ARE AWARE OF VIOLENCE REJECT MILITANTS' GOALS, BUT SOME DO NOT

Solid majorities reject the goals of militant groups, but a sizeable minority does not. Respondents who were aware of the three incidents were asked if they supported the attackers' goals. While 65 percent of respondents said they did not support the goals behind the wave of bomb attacks coordinated by JMJB, another 34 percent did support them very little, somewhat, very much, or completely (Figure 2).²² While 74 percent of respondents did not support the goal of ABT when they assassinated a leading publisher, 26 percent did to varying degrees. For those who knew of the Holey Artisan Bakery siege, another large majority of 73 percent of respondents did not support the goal of Da'esh of implementing *Sharia* globally as espoused by the attackers; 28 percent did to varying extents.

²² Note that, due to rounding errors, the bins do not always sum to 100.

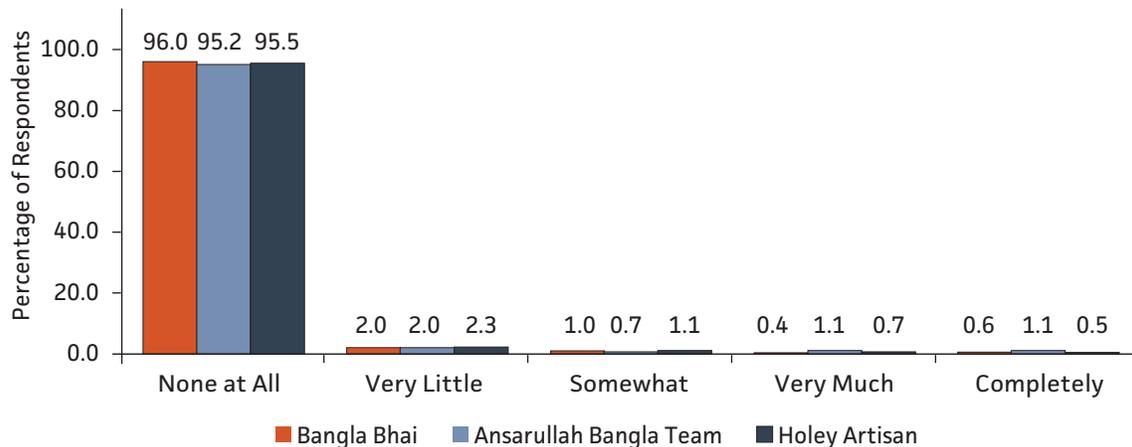
Figure 2 Distribution of support for the goals of the attacks



MOST BANGLADESHIS WHO ARE AWARE OF EXTREMIST GROUPS REJECT THEIR VIOLENT TACTICS

Almost all respondents rejected violence as a legitimate means for these groups to pursue their ends (Figure 3). Support for the wave of bomb attacks launched by JMJB was very low; 96 percent said they gave no support at all to this tactic; a meager 4 percent supported bombing as a tactic very little, somewhat, very much, or completely. Just over 95 percent of respondents rejected the murder of a secular publisher committed by ABT, but nearly 5 percent of respondents supported the assassination in varying measures. Respondents also rejected the use of deadly violence in the Holey Artisan Bakery attack; almost 96 percent opposed it, while some 4 percent thought it was justified very little, somewhat, very much, or completely.

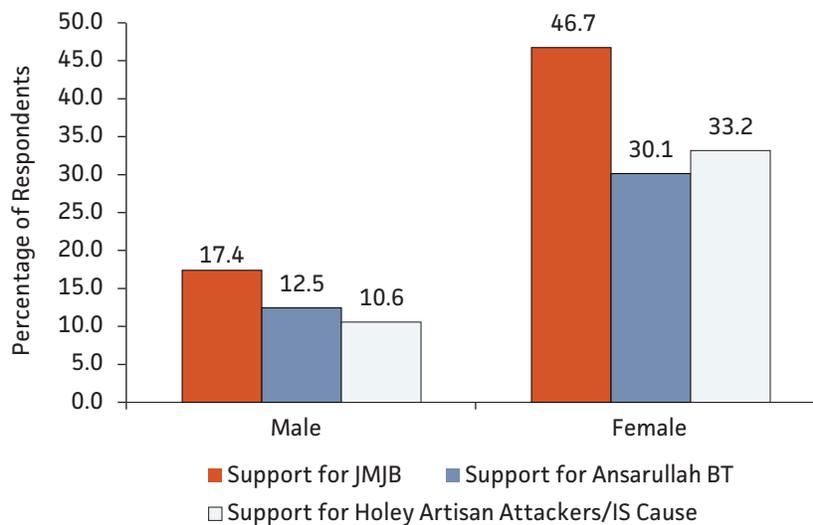
Figure 3 Distribution of support for the means of the attacks



MORE WOMEN SUPPORT VIOLENT TACTICS THAN MEN

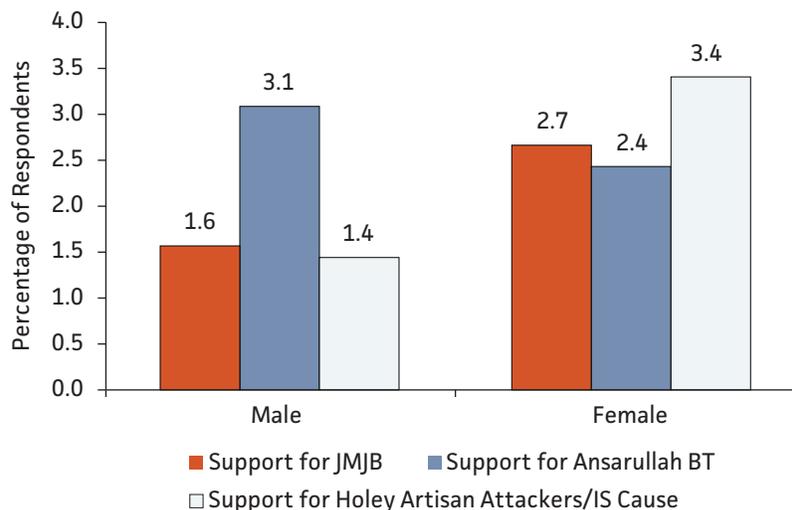
Among the small percentage that favored the goals and tactics of militant groups, the survey found stronger support among women than men (Figure 4). The difference was most pronounced for the 2005 JMJB-led wave of bomb attacks; 47 percent of women from this subset of respondents expressed support for the group’s goal to implement *Sharia*; only 17 percent of men took the same position. Female respondents were also more likely to support the violent means of the attack (Figure 5), although the differences were smaller, and, in the case of the ABT assassination, statistically insignificant.

Figure 4 Support for goals of militant groups, by gender



Note: The distributional difference is significant using the Chi Squared at the 0.01 level for all groups.

Figure 5 Support for means adopted by militant groups, by gender

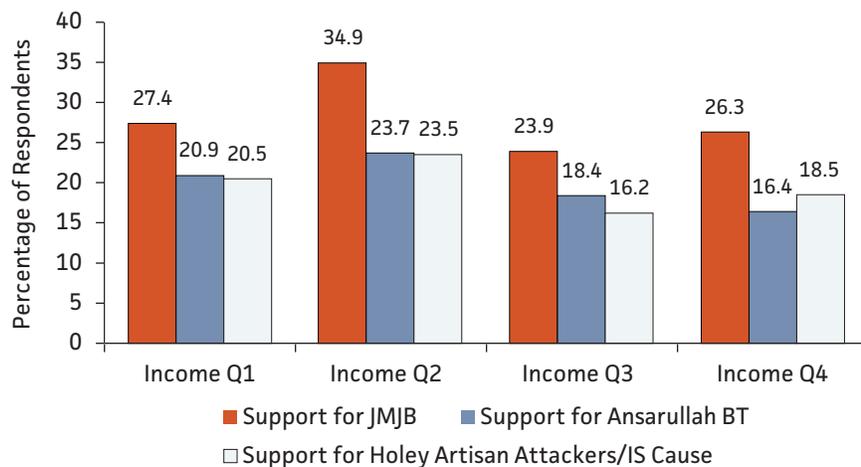


Note: The distributional difference is significant using the Chi Squared at the 0.05 level in the case of JMJB, at the 0.01 level in the case of the Holey Artisan attackers/IS, and not significant in the case of ABT.

HIGHER-INCOME BANGLADESHIS EXPRESS GREATER SUPPORT FOR SOME MILITANT GROUPS

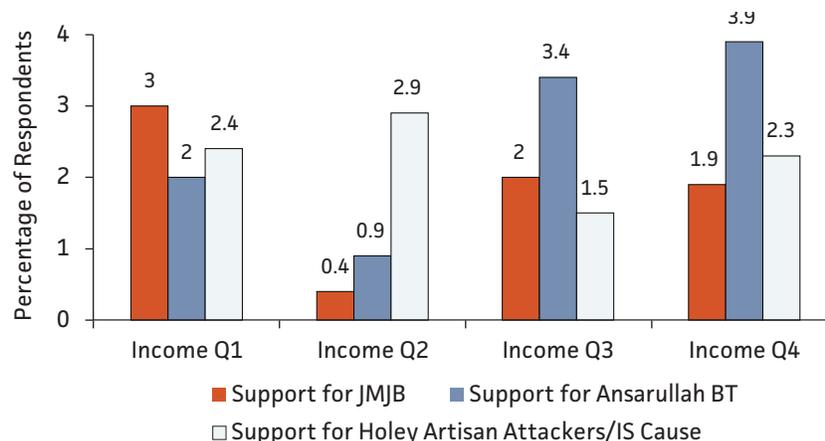
Among the subset of those who supported militant groups, those in higher-income groups tended to support the goals of JMJB for *Sharia* in Bangladesh and Da'esh for the implementation of *Sharia* globally (Figure 6). Income did not seem to be a significant factor in determining support for violent tactics (Figure 7). This analysis used monthly household expenditure as a proxy for income, as research has found that respondents are less likely to dissemble when asked about expenditures compared to direct questions about their income. It examined differences in support for goals and tactics across quartiles of expenditures; Q1 was the highest income group and Q4 was the lowest income group.

Figure 6 Support for goals of militant groups, by income



Note: The distributional difference is significant using the Chi Squared at the 0.01 level in the case of JMJB, the 0.05 level in the case of the Holy Artisan attackers/IS, and not significant in the case of ABT.

Figure 7 Support for means adopted by militant groups, by income



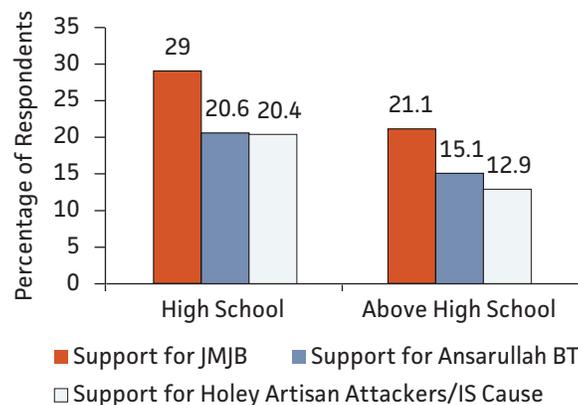
Note: The distributional difference is significant using the Chi Squared at the 0.05 level only in the case of JMJB, and not significant in the case of ABT nor in the case of the Holy Artisan Bakery attackers/IS.

MORE EDUCATED BANGLADESHIS SHOW GREATER SUPPORT FOR ASSASSINATION OF PUBLISHER

Among respondents who were part of the small percentage that supported militant groups, those with more education were less supportive of the goals of all three militant groups (Figure 8). However, a different pattern emerged when the focus shifted from the goals to the means (Figure 9). Whereas there are few differences in support for JMJB and Da'esh across educational groups, respondents in this subset with more education were more likely to support the assassination tactics employed by ABT against the noted publisher.

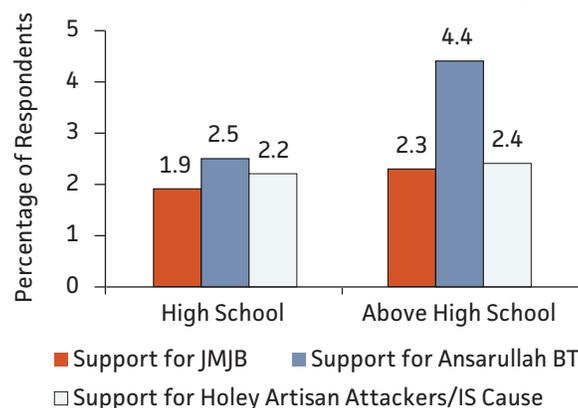
To come to this conclusion and measure how educational attainment influenced support for militant groups' goals and tactics, respondents were divided into those with a high school degree or lower, and those who had studied beyond high school. Whether attendance at a nongovernment religious school (*quami madrassa*) predicted different levels of support for goals and tactics was also tested, but no statistically significant differences between the groups were found.

Figure 8 Support for the goals of the militant groups, by education



Note: The distributional difference is significant using the Chi Squared at the 0.01 level in the case of JMJB and the Holey Artisan attackers/IS, and at the 0.10 level in the case of ABT.

Figure 9 Support for the means of the militant groups, by education

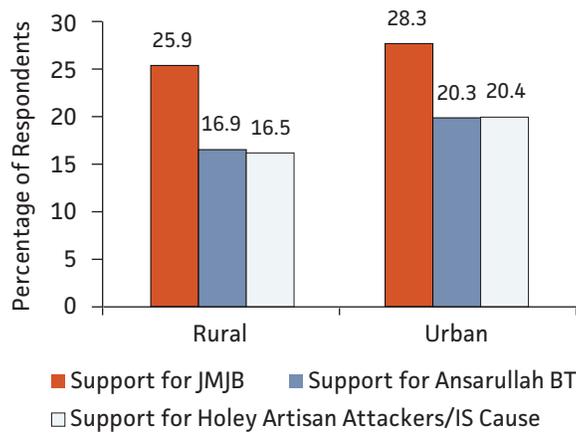


Note: The distributional difference is significant using the Chi Squared at the 0.10 level only in the case of ABT, and is not significant in the case of JMJB nor in the case of Holey Artisan attackers/IS.

SUPPORT FOR VIOLENCE IS NOT INFLUENCED BY LOCATION

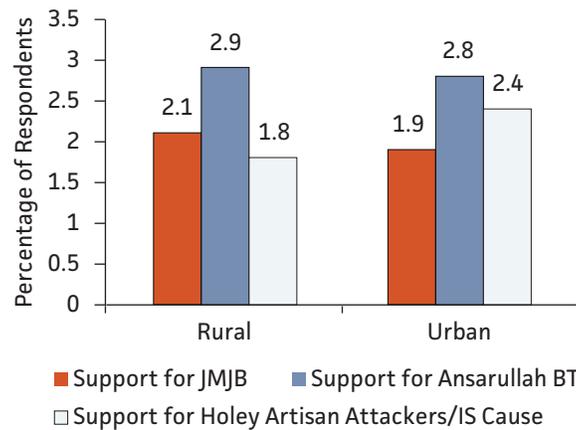
Among the small group who supported violence, rural respondents tended to support the goals of Da’esh, but not JMJB or ABT (Figure 10). No significant rural-urban differences were observed in support for the violent means used by any of the groups (Figure 11).

Figure 10 Support for the goals of the militant groups, by location (rural/urban)



Note: The distributional difference is significant using the Chi Squared at the 0.05 level only in the case of the Holey Artisan attackers/IS and is not significant in the case of JMJB nor in the case of ABT.

Figure 11 Support for the Means of the Militant Groups, by Location (Rural/Urban)



Note: The distributional differences are not significant using the Chi Squared for any group.

Conclusions

While many respondents indicated no knowledge of the three attacks tested in this survey, the possibility cannot be ruled out that they were afraid to answer truthfully. As was noted in another analysis of data drawn from the same survey instrument, respondents became evasive when they were asked the most sensitive questions, such as those regarding minority views on *Sharia*. On those questions, the no-response rate increased dramatically. This same sample of respondents also acknowledged that one of the problems in Bangladesh's democracy is that they do not feel free to speak their mind.²³ If respondents' knowledge of these significant events is genuinely as low as the survey suggests, then there may be a policy impact. The government may have difficulty persuading citizens of the need for vigorous efforts to counter violent extremism. If citizens do not believe a problem exists, why would they support efforts to mitigate it, particularly if these efforts adversely impact their political, economic, or social lives?

Overall support for the specific tactics used by the three militant groups in the survey was low (around five percent), but terrorism is a low numbers game. Support does not need to be high for militant groups to be able to successfully recruit the militant manpower they require to conduct operations. This concern is compounded by the much larger pool of sympathizers this survey identified. While most respondents rejected the goals of the extremist groups, large minorities actually supported the goals of the attacks, even though they roundly rejected the means. A separate analysis based on the same survey found widespread support among Bangladeshis for *Sharia*, with women leading men in expressing this support.²⁴ Given that the goal of two of the three militant groups tested in this survey was to use violent tactics to implement *Sharia*, either domestically or globally, there may very well be a deep well of sympathizers who support their ends, if not their means. Only small numbers are needed to commit violent acts, and Bangladesh's 150 million Muslims provide an ample recruiting pool.

While the survey found some variation in support among respondents based upon their economic and educational backgrounds, the largest difference in levels of support for either the goals or tactics of militant groups was among women. This variation between men and women is an important finding, mainly because most efforts to counter violent extremism focus on men. The findings suggest that more effort should be focused on women, who are likely to have an important role in the decisions made by men in their households. Bangladesh has already witnessed the emergence of women terrorists, and these differences in levels of support based on gender may be an important measure of more significant changes that are taking place in the country's militant landscape.

²³ See Riaz and Aziz, "Do Bangladeshi Democrats Support Sharia?", 2017.

²⁴ Ibid.

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RESOLVE

NETWORK

INSIGHT INTO VIOLENT EXTREMISM AROUND THE WORLD

The RESOLVE Network is a global consortium of researchers and research organizations committed to delivering fresh insight into the drivers of violent extremism around the world. The Network provides access to open-source data, tools, and curated research to ensure policy responses to violent extremism are evidence based. Members of the Network work in parts of Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East to promote empirically driven, locally defined responses to conflict and to support grassroots research leadership on violent extremism.

Our partners operate in more than 25 countries where challenges with conflict are an everyday reality. We are passionate about amplifying credible local voices in the fight to mitigate the destabilizing risks of social polarization and political violence.

To learn more about the RESOLVE Network, our partners and how to get involved visit our website, www.resolvenet.org, and follow us on Twitter: @resolvenet.

