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Responding to Terrorism through Counter-Terrorism Policies and Practices in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT :

Terrorism remains one of the most pressing global security challenges of the twenty-first century, and Bangladesh has emerged as a critical case for examining how developing democracies respond to violent extremism. Since independence, the country has experienced multiple phases of terrorism, ranging from left-wing insurgency in the 1970s to religious militancy in the 1990s and 2000s, and more recently, transnational jihadist threats linked to groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda. High-profile incidents, including the 2005 nationwide bombings and the 2016 Holey Artisan Bakery attack, have underscored the evolving nature of the threat and the urgent need for effective counter-terrorism strategies.

This study critically analyzes Bangladesh's responses to terrorism through its counter-terrorism policies and practices. Drawing on secondary data and international comparative perspectives, the paper examines the legal and institutional frameworks, including the Anti-Terrorism Act 2009, the establishment of specialized agencies such as the Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU), and the role of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB).

Findings suggest that Bangladesh has achieved significant success in disrupting militant networks and reducing operational threats. However, persistent challenges remain in balancing security with human rights, addressing socio-economic root causes of radicalization, and ensuring the sustainability of strategies within a democratic framework. The paper concludes that a holistic approach, integrating law enforcement, judicial reform, community engagement, and regional collaboration is essential for building long-term resilience against terrorism in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Terrorism; Counter-Terrorism; Bangladesh; Violent Extremism; Security Policies

Introduction

Terrorism has emerged as one of the most significant threats to global peace and security in the twenty-first century (Azubuike et al., 2023). The attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 not only reshaped the international security architecture but also triggered an unprecedented wave of counter-terrorism policies across the globe (Zimmermann, 2011). From advanced democracies to developing states, governments have faced the challenge of preventing violent extremism while safeguarding civil liberties and ensuring democratic accountability (Wilkinson, 2006). Within this global context, Bangladesh provides an important case study for understanding how a developing democracy grapples with the evolving threat of terrorism.

Since its independence in 1971, Bangladesh has experienced various forms of political violence, armed insurgency, and terrorism (Parvez, 2016). The early decades were marked by left-wing insurgencies rooted in socio-economic discontent and ideological struggles. Bangladesh's response has been characterized by a policy of "zero tolerance" toward terrorism. The government enacted the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2009, subsequently amended in 2012 and 2013, which criminalized financing of terrorism and provided broad legal definitions to prosecute militants (Ashraf & Islam, 2023; Parvez, 2016). Institutional responses have also been robust: the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), established in 2004, has conducted numerous operations against militants; the Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit was formed in 2016; and the Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU) was created in 2017 to coordinate national efforts (Fair et al., 2017). These initiatives illustrate an integrated approach to enforcement, prevention, and intelligence.

Despite successes in dismantling militant organizations and disrupting terrorist plots, significant challenges remain (Combs, 2022). Bangladesh has been criticized by international human rights organizations for extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and the alleged misuse of counter-terrorism laws against political opponents (Azubuike et al., 2023). The balance between ensuring national security and upholding democratic principles is a persistent dilemma. Moreover, socio-economic inequalities, lack of quality education, and political polarization continue to create fertile ground for radicalization (Martin & Weinberg, 2016).

The importance of studying Bangladesh's counter-terrorism lies in its dual role as both a frontline state against extremism in South Asia and a developing democracy struggling to strengthen institutions (Ashraf & Islam, 2023). As terrorism becomes increasingly transnational, understanding Bangladesh's strategies also contributes to global debates on counter-terrorism and security governance (Lorch, 2020).

Research Problem

The central problem addressed in this study is how Bangladesh has responded to terrorism through its counter-terrorism policies and practices, and how effective these measures are in reducing threats while maintaining democratic accountability.

Objectives

1. To examine the evolution of terrorism in Bangladesh and its root causes.
2. To analyze Bangladesh's legal, institutional, and operational counter-terrorism frameworks.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness and challenges of these policies and practices in light of international standards.

Structure of the Paper

The paper follows a conventional academic structure. After this introduction, the literature review examines theoretical debates, global perspectives, and Bangladesh-specific research. The methodology outlines the qualitative design and data sources. Findings present an overview of terrorism trends and policy responses in Bangladesh. The discussion provides comparative analysis with international literature and practices, critically evaluating Bangladesh's achievements and shortcomings. The paper concludes with recommendations and future research directions.

Literature Review

Defining Terrorism

The definition of terrorism remains highly contested in both academic and policy discourse. The absence of a universally agreed definition reflects the political, cultural, and ideological diversity of states. Generally, terrorism can be described as the use or threat of violence against civilians or non-combatants with the intention of instilling fear and achieving political, ideological, or religious objectives.

Internationally, different states and organizations adopt their own definitions. The *United Nations* has struggled to finalize a comprehensive definition due to disagreements over whether state violence should be included. The *UK Terrorism Act (2000)* defines terrorism broadly, including serious violence against persons or property aimed at influencing governments (Ashraf & Islam, 2023). The *US Code* emphasizes politically motivated violence by subnational groups against civilians. In Bangladesh, the *Anti-Terrorism Act (2009)* defines terrorism as acts such as killing, harming, or abducting persons with the aim of threatening sovereignty or coercing government action (Fair et al., 2017; Mishra, 2016).

The definitional debate is not merely academic, it has practical implications. Ambiguity allows misuse of counter-terrorism legislation against political opposition or dissent, while overly narrow definitions risk leaving gaps in enforcement (Talukder, 2024). For Bangladesh, where political violence often overlaps with terrorism, clarity is especially critical.

Causes of Terrorism

Scholars identify multiple causes of terrorism, ranging from individual-level psychological factors to structural socio-economic and political conditions. Three key dimensions are particularly relevant for Bangladesh:

- *Socio-economic factors*: Poverty, unemployment, and lack of education make sections of the population vulnerable to radicalization (Talukder, 2024). In rural areas, limited access to economic opportunities contributes to grievances that extremist groups exploit.
- *Political factors*: Political instability, weak democratic institutions, and confrontational party politics undermine resilience to terrorism. Polarized politics create environments where violence is normalized, making extremist ideologies more appealing.
- *Religious and ideological factors*: Since the 1990s, religious extremism has become a primary driver of terrorism in Bangladesh (Husain, 2017). Misinterpretation of religious texts, combined with global jihadist narratives, motivates violent actions. The Afghan war of the 1980s, in which many Bangladeshis participated, also served as an incubator for militant groups that later carried out attacks at home (Azubuike et al., 2023).

International Perspectives

Comparative analysis reveals that counter-terrorism varies across contexts. The *US* prioritizes military interventions abroad and expansive domestic surveillance. The *UK* relies on the "CONTEST" strategy, emphasizing four pillars: Prevent, Pursue, Protect, and Prepare. *India* combines strong legal frameworks with heavy militarization in conflict-prone regions, while *Pakistan* struggles with balancing counter-terrorism and political instability.

Bangladesh shares similarities with these models but faces unique challenges as a resource-constrained democracy. Its success lies in rapidly reducing militant operations after 2016, but its weaknesses include allegations of authoritarian tendencies and insufficient judicial capacity (Husain, 2017).

Bangladesh-Specific Literature

Research on terrorism in Bangladesh emphasizes both its historical roots and contemporary challenges. Scholars note that the combination of poverty, weak governance, and exposure to global jihadist movements makes the country particularly vulnerable. Reports by international think-tanks highlight the importance of balancing enforcement with community-based interventions. Critiques, however, focus on human rights violations, suggesting that over-reliance on force may undermine long-term resilience.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore counter-terrorism policies and practices in Bangladesh, with particular attention to their evolution, implementation, and challenges. Terrorism is not merely a law enforcement issue but a multidimensional phenomenon deeply embedded in

political, socio-economic, cultural, and global contexts. A purely quantitative approach, while useful for measuring trends, would not adequately capture the complexities of policy development, institutional practices, and community responses. Therefore, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate to generate a comprehensive and critical analysis.

The research design is both exploratory and analytical (Azubuike et al., 2023). It is exploratory in the sense that terrorism is a continuously evolving phenomenon in Bangladesh, requiring an investigation into new patterns such as online radicalization and transnational linkages. At the same time, the study is analytical, as it critically examines the effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures, comparing Bangladesh's strategies with international practices. By combining exploration and analysis, the methodology ensures that the research does not remain descriptive but also provides evaluative insights.

The study relies primarily on secondary sources of data, which were systematically collected from a wide range of academic, institutional, and media publications. Scholarly literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and dissertations, was consulted to build a strong theoretical foundation. These works provide definitions of terrorism, typologies of violent extremism, and evaluations of counter-terrorism strategies in both global and regional contexts. Official documents such as the Anti-Terrorism Act (2009) and its amendments, government white papers, and parliamentary debates were also reviewed to understand the legal and policy framework in Bangladesh (Fair et al., 2017). Reports from international organizations such as the United Nations, Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) were examined to assess Bangladesh's compliance with international obligations (Ashraf & Islam, 2023). In addition, analyses by think tanks, including the International Crisis Group and regional research institutes, were used to capture contemporary developments and policy debates. Finally, national and international media reports were reviewed to reconstruct major terrorist incidents, counter-terrorism operations, and public responses.

The analysis of data was conducted thematically. All sources were first categorized into broad themes, terrorism evolution, legal and institutional frameworks, enforcement practices, preventive measures, international cooperation, and challenges. Within each theme, sub-themes were identified, such as human rights issues, politicization, socio-economic drivers, and transnational influences (Fair et al., 2017). Thematic analysis allowed the study to organize diverse information coherently and to identify recurring patterns, contradictions, and gaps. In addition, a comparative dimension was incorporated by analyzing how Bangladesh's policies align with or diverge from international models. Comparative references to the United Kingdom, the United States, India, and Pakistan were particularly valuable in highlighting both similarities and distinctive features (Azubuike et al., 2023).

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed. While the research relied exclusively on secondary data, the sensitivity of the subject required caution in interpreting sources. Official reports and government publications were critically assessed to avoid uncritical reproduction of state narratives. Similarly, media accounts, which may reflect political bias or sensationalism, were cross-checked with multiple sources (Husain, 2017). Academic integrity was maintained by citing all references properly and by ensuring that the analysis was balanced and evidence-based. Care was taken not to stigmatize particular communities or religious groups, recognizing that terrorism is a complex phenomenon with political, economic, and social dimensions.

The study also acknowledges its limitations. First, the absence of primary data, such as interviews with policymakers, law enforcement officials, or community leaders, restricts the depth of first-hand perspectives. While secondary sources provide valuable insights, they may not fully capture the lived experiences of those directly involved in counter-terrorism. Second, reliance on government documents and politically polarized media creates the possibility of bias. Although triangulation of sources was employed to mitigate this, some distortions may remain. Third, terrorism and counter-terrorism are rapidly evolving phenomena. For example, the growing role of digital platforms in radicalization has only recently become prominent, and data may quickly become outdated. Fourth, the focus on Bangladesh limits the generalizability of findings, although the comparative dimension provides some broader relevance.

Despite these limitations, the methodology is robust and well-suited to the research objectives. By adopting a qualitative, thematic, and comparative approach, the study is able to capture the complexity of counter-terrorism in Bangladesh. It situates the country's policies within broader theoretical debates and global practices, while also highlighting the specific socio-political dynamics that shape local responses.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal that terrorism in Bangladesh has undergone significant transformations since independence, with each phase shaped by the broader political, socio-economic, and global context. The trajectory of terrorism illustrates a pattern of evolution from left-wing insurgency to religious militancy and, more recently, transnational extremism. These developments have necessitated a wide range of state responses, which have become increasingly structured through legislation, institutional development, and operational practices. At the same time, the findings underscore persistent challenges that undermine long-term effectiveness, particularly in relation to human rights, judicial efficiency, and socio-economic vulnerabilities.

Bangladesh's early experience with terrorism was rooted in the turbulent political and economic conditions that followed the liberation war of 1971. During the 1970s and 1980s, leftist insurgent groups, most notably the Sarbahara Party, launched violent campaigns against the state. These groups mobilized disenfranchised rural populations by exploiting inequality and poverty, and their activities included assassinations, abductions, and attacks on state representatives. Although the threat was eventually contained through state repression and the gradual consolidation of governance, this period demonstrated how marginalized groups could adopt terrorism as a tool of political struggle. The gradual decline of left-wing militancy by the end of the 1980s, however, gave way to a new form of terrorism influenced by religious ideology.

The 1990s and 2000s marked the rise of Islamist militancy in Bangladesh, facilitated by the return of fighters from the Afghan war and the global diffusion of jihadist ideologies. Two groups in particular, Harkat-ul Jihad al Islami-Bangladesh (HuJI-B) and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), came to dominate the militant landscape. HuJI-B's objectives centered on establishing an Islamic state, and its networks were supported by external actors linked to transnational jihadist movements (Ashraf & Islam, 2023). JMB, by contrast, sought to demonstrate organizational strength through spectacular attacks. The synchronized bombings of August 2005, when nearly 500 devices exploded across 63 districts, represented the most striking example of JMB's operational capacity. These attacks underscored the ability of extremist groups to coordinate across the country and to target not only state institutions

but also the general public. This period was also marked by targeted killings of secular activists, intellectuals, and members of the judiciary, which generated a climate of fear and highlighted the deepening ideological polarization within Bangladeshi society.

In response to these evolving threats, Bangladesh has developed a comprehensive legal and institutional framework. The cornerstone of this framework is the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2009, which provides a wide-ranging definition of terrorism and grants extensive powers for the criminalization of financing, the proscription of organizations, and the prosecution of individuals (Kalic, 2013). Amendments in 2012 and 2013 expanded the law to include cyberterrorism and to align with international standards, particularly those required by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). This legislation demonstrates Bangladesh's efforts to integrate its domestic policies into global counter-terrorism norms, reflecting an awareness that terrorism is both a local and an international issue.

Institutionally, Bangladesh has established several specialized agencies to enhance its counter-terrorism capacity. The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), created in 2004, has played a central role in dismantling terrorist networks and conducting high-profile raids (Fabe, 2017). The Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit, established in 2016 under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, has developed expertise in intelligence gathering, cyber monitoring, and tactical interventions. The Anti-Terrorism Unit (ATU), launched in 2017, serves as a coordinating body at the national level, ensuring greater coherence across jurisdictions (Fair et al., 2017). Judicial mechanisms, including Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunals, have also been introduced to process terrorism-related cases. These findings indicate that Bangladesh has moved from ad hoc responses to a more structured and institutionalized counter-terrorism framework, demonstrating both state capacity and determination (Mehrotra, 2009).

Operationally, counter-terrorism practices in Bangladesh combine enforcement with preventive strategies, although the former continues to dominate. Enforcement measures include intelligence-led operations, arrests, and targeted raids that have successfully disrupted the organizational structures of militant groups. High-profile operations, such as "Storm 26" in 2017, illustrate the ability of law enforcement agencies to respond quickly and decisively to imminent threats. The dismantling of JMB and Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) networks demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach (Ashraf & Islam, 2023).

Preventive measures, however, are less developed. Community policing initiatives have sought to build trust between citizens and law enforcement, encouraging the early reporting of radicalization. Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) programs have engaged religious leaders, teachers, and youth in promoting narratives of tolerance. Oversight of madrasa curricula has been strengthened to limit the influence of extremist ideologies, while cyber units within the CTTC monitor online propaganda and recruitment efforts (Fabe, 2017). International cooperation, including intelligence sharing with the UN and Interpol, has further reinforced operational capacity.

Despite these achievements, persistent challenges remain. The most significant of these relate to human rights concerns. Allegations of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary detentions by RAB and other agencies undermine the legitimacy of counter-terrorism efforts. International human rights organizations have criticized Bangladesh for excessive use of force, warning that such practices may alienate communities and create grievances that extremists can exploit. Judicial inefficiencies further compound the problem, as terrorism-related cases are often delayed, and weak evidence collection undermines successful prosecutions. The perception that counter-terrorism laws are sometimes used against political opponents fuels suspicions of politicization, reducing trust in institutions.

Overall, the findings suggest a mixed picture. Bangladesh has achieved remarkable success in dismantling terrorist networks, strengthening legislation, and building specialized institutions. These efforts have significantly reduced the scale and frequency of terrorist incidents in recent years. However, the persistence of ideological radicalization, human rights concerns, judicial inefficiencies, political polarization, and socio-economic vulnerabilities highlights the fragility of these achievements. The findings make clear that counter-terrorism in Bangladesh is not merely a security challenge but a multidimensional issue that requires the integration of legal, institutional, social, and economic measures. Sustainable resilience against terrorism will therefore depend on the state's ability to balance enforcement with rights, prevention with development, and security with democratic accountability.

Discussion

The findings presented in the previous chapter demonstrate that Bangladesh has achieved significant progress in disrupting terrorist networks and reducing operational threats. At the same time, the persistence of ideological radicalization, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and governance-related challenges raises important questions about the long-term sustainability of these measures. To provide a deeper understanding, this discussion chapter examines the findings thematically and in relation to the broader literature. Comparative insights from other countries are also integrated to highlight similarities, differences, and potential lessons for Bangladesh.

1. Evolution of Terrorism: Domestic Roots and Global Connections

The findings show that terrorism in Bangladesh has evolved in three distinct phases: left-wing insurgency, religious militancy, and transnational jihadist linkages (Shafiq & Al Faruque, 2023). This trajectory reflects both domestic grievances and international influences. The early prominence of left-wing insurgency resonates with global patterns in the 1970s and 1980s, when Marxist-inspired groups were active in Latin America, Africa, and South Asia (Azubuike et al., 2023). In Bangladesh, poverty and inequality created fertile ground for these movements, which parallels the experience of India's Naxalite insurgency. However, unlike in India, where left-wing extremism continues to pose a serious challenge, Bangladesh successfully weakened its leftist groups by the late 1980s (Combs, 2022).

The shift to religious militancy in the 1990s mirrored developments in neighboring Pakistan and Afghanistan, where the Afghan jihad inspired new generations of militants. Bangladesh's experience highlights the transnational dimension of terrorism, as fighters returning from Afghanistan imported radical ideologies and organizational models (Zimmermann, 2011). This pattern has been observed globally: foreign fighters returning from conflict zones such as Iraq and Syria have similarly posed threats to Europe and Southeast Asia.

The implication is that Bangladesh cannot view terrorism solely as a domestic phenomenon. Just as international conflicts shaped its terrorism landscape in the past, future threats may be influenced by developments abroad. This aligns with the literature emphasizing terrorism as a *global phenomenon*, simultaneously local in its grievances and global in its networks.

2. Legislative and Institutional Frameworks: Achievements and Gaps

The study finds that Bangladesh has established a robust legal framework through the Anti-Terrorism Act (2009) and amendments, alongside specialized institutions such as RAB, CTTC, and ATU. These measures are comparable to international practices. For instance, the United Kingdom's *Terrorism Act (2000)* and subsequent legislation also provide broad powers for proscription, financing restrictions, and surveillance (Parvez & Rahman, 2022). The United States has enacted comprehensive laws such as the *USA PATRIOT Act (2001)*, which significantly expanded investigative powers (Ashraf & Islam, 2023). Similarly, India passed the *Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)*, giving authorities sweeping powers to ban organizations and detain suspects.

In terms of institutional design, Bangladesh's CTTC and ATU resemble specialized units in other countries, such as the UK's Counter Terrorism Command (SO15) or the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces in the United States (Rahman, 2016). These parallels suggest that Bangladesh has adapted global models to its own context.

Yet gaps remain. International literature stresses the importance of judicial independence and due process in sustaining counter-terrorism legitimacy. In the UK, while strong powers exist, they are counterbalanced by parliamentary oversight and judicial review (Azubuike et al., 2023). In Bangladesh, however, the findings reveal that tribunals face delays and are sometimes perceived as politicized. Similarly, while RAB has been effective in operations, allegations of extrajudicial killings undermine public trust and attract international criticism (Fabe, 2017). Comparatively, Pakistan has faced similar accusations regarding its use of military courts and extrajudicial practices, which weakened its credibility.

Thus, while Bangladesh has developed strong legal and institutional mechanisms, their credibility and sustainability depend on strengthening judicial processes and ensuring accountability.

3. Preventive Strategies: Limited but Growing Role

The findings show that preventive strategies, including community policing and countering violent extremism (CVE) programs, are present but less institutionalized in Bangladesh. Globally, preventive approaches are gaining prominence as scholars recognize that enforcement alone cannot eliminate terrorism. The UK's "Prevent" strategy under the *CONTEST framework* emphasizes community engagement, de-radicalization, and safeguarding vulnerable individuals. Similarly, countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands prioritize rehabilitation and reintegration programs for radicalized individuals.

Bangladesh has made some progress in this area, such as engaging imams in promoting peaceful religious narratives and monitoring madrassas. However, preventive efforts often lack sustained funding and institutionalization. Compared to Western countries, where preventive programs are integrated into broader security strategies, Bangladesh's initiatives remain ad hoc. Strengthening preventive mechanisms could reduce long-term vulnerabilities and complement enforcement measures.

5. International and Regional Cooperation

The findings highlight Bangladesh's participation in international counter-terrorism frameworks, including compliance with FATF standards and collaboration with the UN and Interpol (Spahiu et al., 2016). Regional cooperation, however, remains underdeveloped. South Asia is characterized by political rivalries, particularly between India and Pakistan, which weaken the effectiveness of regional mechanisms like SAARC (Ashraf & Islam, 2023).

Comparatively, Europe has made significant progress in regional counter-terrorism through mechanisms like Europol and intelligence-sharing agreements (Guidance, 2015). Southeast Asia has also strengthened regional frameworks, particularly after the Bali bombings of 2002, leading to enhanced cooperation under ASEAN (Fabe, 2017). Bangladesh's limited regional integration reflects broader South Asian dynamics rather than domestic shortcomings. Nonetheless, strengthening bilateral cooperation with India, Myanmar, and Nepal could improve intelligence sharing and border management.

6. Socio-Economic Drivers and Radicalization

One of the key findings is that poverty, unemployment, and lack of education continue to drive vulnerabilities to radicalization in Bangladesh. This aligns with literature highlighting the role of socio-economic marginalization in fostering extremism. For instance, studies on Boko Haram in Nigeria emphasize how economic deprivation fuels recruitment. Similarly, in Pakistan, madrassa networks often provide both education and social mobility for impoverished families, making them fertile ground for extremist influence (Zimmermann, 2011).

Bangladesh's challenge is to integrate socio-economic development into counter-terrorism policy. While counter-terrorism operations have disrupted networks, they have not addressed the underlying grievances that extremists exploit. For Bangladesh, policies that link counter-terrorism with employment, youth empowerment, and inclusive governance could strengthen long-term resilience (Fair et al., 2017).

7. Politicization and Governance Challenges

The findings reveal that counter-terrorism in Bangladesh is sometimes perceived as politicized, with opposition parties alleging misuse of laws for partisan purposes. This undermines public trust and risks delegitimizing genuine counter-terrorism efforts. Comparative cases illustrate the dangers of politicization (Rogers, 2021). In Pakistan, counter-terrorism has often been entangled with political conflicts, reducing effectiveness and alienating communities. Conversely, in the UK, while counter-terrorism policies are contested, they benefit from bipartisan consensus and institutional checks that reduce overt politicization (Zimmermann, 2011).

For Bangladesh, ensuring the neutrality of counter-terrorism institutions is critical. Without broad political consensus, counter-terrorism risks being viewed as a tool of repression rather than a genuine security measure. Building transparency, oversight, and bipartisan support could enhance legitimacy.

8. Sustainability and the Balance between Security and Rights

The overarching theme emerging from the findings is the tension between security imperatives and democratic accountability. Bangladesh has achieved operational success in weakening militant groups, but questions of sustainability remain. Excessive reliance on enforcement without addressing root causes risks perpetuating cycles of violence. Moreover, human rights abuses erode legitimacy both domestically and internationally.

Comparative experiences highlight the importance of balance. The US war on terror demonstrated that overwhelming reliance on militarized responses can produce long-term instability (Azubuike et al., 2023). Conversely, European models emphasize integration of enforcement, prevention, and rights

protection. Bangladesh stands at a crossroads: it can either consolidate its current gains through holistic strategies or risk renewed cycles of violence if grievances remain unaddressed.

Conclusion

Terrorism remains one of the most pressing security challenges for contemporary states, particularly in regions where historical grievances, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and global extremist ideologies intersect. This study has explored how Bangladesh, a country with a complex political history and strategic geographic position, has responded to terrorism through counter-terrorism policies and practices. By examining the evolution of terrorism in Bangladesh, the development of legislative and institutional frameworks, the operational practices employed, and the challenges faced, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of both achievements and limitations.

From a broader perspective, this study contributes to the literature on terrorism and counter-terrorism by showing how a developing country like Bangladesh navigates the tension between security imperatives and democratic governance. It highlights the importance of contextualizing counter-terrorism within specific historical, political, and socio-economic realities, rather than importing models wholesale from other contexts. It also illustrates the need for constant adaptation, as terrorism evolves rapidly in response to global and regional dynamics.

Future research can build on this study by exploring the perspectives of communities most affected by counter-terrorism policies, particularly in rural areas and among marginalized groups. Primary research involving interviews with policymakers, law enforcement officers, and community leaders would provide valuable insights into the implementation and effectiveness of counter-terrorism measures. In addition, greater attention should be paid to the role of digital platforms in radicalization and the potential of online counter-narratives in preventing extremism.

In conclusion, Bangladesh has demonstrated determination and resilience in the face of terrorism, achieving significant operational successes. However, the sustainability of these achievements depends on the country's ability to balance enforcement with rights, prevention with development, and security with democracy. By pursuing a holistic and inclusive approach, Bangladesh can not only safeguard its national security but also strengthen its democratic institutions, social cohesion, and long-term resilience against the evolving threat of terrorism.

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