



THE ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT OF BANGLADESH
JAMĀ‘AT-E-ISLĀMĪ (BJI) WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO THE QUR’ĀNIC CONCEPT OF
AL-WASATĪYYAH

BY

MUHAMMAD HEDAYATUL ISLAM

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of requirement for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Uṣūl al-Dīn and
Comparative Religion

Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and
Human Sciences
International Islamic University Malaysia

JUNE 2016

ABSTRACT

Al-Wasatiyyah as a multi-dimensional concept is scholarly acknowledged as a “justly balanced path or balanced approach” of Islam. The term gained popularity and became prominent in Muslim communities and the media after the attacks of September 11, 2001. In the context of contemporary Islamic thought, *al-Wasatiyyah* is the counterweight of religious extremism and liberalism. Many liberal Muslim intellectuals and non-Muslim scholars tend to link terrorism and extremism to the existing Islamic movements globally. However, leaders of moderate Islamic movement never approve of a global *Jihād* or terrorism against the West, as well as of war against Islam and Muslims by the West. This study aims at investigating the relevance of the concept *al-Wasatiyyah* in Bangladesh, addressing the multifarious problems besetting the Muslim world. The Bangladesh Jamā‘at-e-Islāmī (BJI), a contemporary leading Islamic movement in Bangladesh, represents a comprehensive example of a Muslim group in trying to address the prevailing socio-cultural and politico-economic problems which Muslim nations face. This research first examines *al-Wasatiyyah* from main sources - the Qur’ān and Sunnah based on the interpretation of early and contemporary scholars’ views. Then it analyses opinions and objectives of BJI: organization’s policy, ideology, social activities and most importantly political activities involvements in the government policies. In this regard, Jamā‘at’s constitution, literatures and various lectures of the top leaders available were also reviewed. In parallel, an exploratory case study (semi-structured interviews) was conducted to measure Jamā‘at’s practical activities (practice) with their theory. This study found that the concept *al-Wasatiyyah* is used as an important means for an Islamist Movement to revert the ultra-secular polity as well as liberal and extreme views not in favor of Islam. This study concludes that based on the true Islamic teachings, the BJI has the potential not only in promoting a ‘Balanced Approach’ as championed by Islam but also to develop a social movement based on the worldview of Islam. While achieving this goal, the need for political authority and a grassroots network is central to countering terrorism, extremism and liberalism in Muslim-majority country like that of Bangladesh. However, the critics representing the left-leaning anti-Islamic forces tend to blame BJI for its failure to take a stand against the exploitation and injustices perpetrated on the fellow Muslims of the erstwhile East Pakistan since 1947 until the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

ملخص البحث

تعتبر الوسطية عند العلماء- كمفهوم متعدد الأبعاد- هو "الطريق المتوازن المعتدل" أو المنهج المتوازن" للإسلام. اشتهر هذا المصطلح وأصبح بارزا في المجتمعات الإسلامية ووسائل الاعلام بعد هجوم ١١ سبتمبر، ٢٠٠١. وفي الفكر الإسلامي المعاصر، الوسطية هو التوسط بين التطرف الديني والليبرالية. حاول كثير من المسلمين المنتمين لليبرالية والعلماء غير المسلمين ربط الإرهابية والتطرف إلى الحركات الإسلامية الموجودة في أنحاء العالم. وفي الحقيقة لم يوافق قادة الحركات الإسلامية المعتدلة على الجهاد العالمي أو الإرهاب ضد الغرب أصلا، وكذلك لم يوافقوا على الحرب ضد الإسلام والمسلمين من قبل الغرب. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحقيق أهمية مفهوم الوسطية في أوضاع بنغلاديش، ومعالجة المشاكل المتعددة التي يعاني منها العالم الإسلامي. الجماعة الإسلامية بنغلاديش (BJI)- وهو الحزب الرائد للحركات الإسلامية المعاصرة في بنغلاديش- تمثل نموذجا شاملا لجماعة المسلمين في محاولة المعالجة للمشاكل الاجتماعية الثقافية والسياسية الاقتصادية السائدة التي تواجهها الدول الإسلامية. هذا البحث يتناول أولا الوسطية من مصادرها الرئيسية: القرآن والسنة استنادا إلى تفسير وجهات النظر للعلماء المتقدمين والمعاصرين فيها. ثم يحلل آراء وأهداف BJI: سياسة المنظمة، أيديولوجيتها، وأنشطتها الاجتماعية والسياسية وتدخلاتها في سياسة الدولة. ولهذا تمت مراجعة دستور BJI والكتب المطبوعة ذات الصلة بها، والمحاضرات المختلفة لكبار قادتها. وإضافة إلى ذلك، تم إجراء دراسة حالة استكشافية (مقابلات شخصية شبه منظمة) لقياس الأنشطة العملية للجماعة الإسلامية في (التطبيق) بناء على نظريتها. وجدت هذه الدراسة أن مفهوم الوسطية يستخدم كوسيلة هامة لحركة إسلامية، وتثبت أن النظام السياسي المتطرف للعلمانية ووجهات النظر لليبرالية والمتطرفة ليس في صالح الإسلام. وتخلص هذه الدراسة إلى أنه استنادا إلى التعاليم الإسلامية الحقيقية، ليس لدي BJI القدرة في تعزيز "المنهج المتوازن" فقط كما أيده الإسلام، بل لديها القدرة أيضا لتطوير حركة اجتماعية بناء على الرؤية الكونية للإسلام. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، وجود السلطة السياسية وشبكة القاعدة الشعبية هي الأساس لمكافحة الإرهاب والتطرف والليبرالية في بلد غالبية سكانه المسلمون مثل بنغلاديش. ومع ذلك، فإن النقاد الذين يمثلون قوى اليسار ذات الميول المعادية للإسلام يميلون إلى اتهام BJI بفسلها في اتخاذ موقفها السليم من الاستغلال والظلم الذي أجري على أتباعهم المسلمين من باكستان الشرقية سابقا من عام ١٩٤٧ إلى الإستقلال بنغلاديش في عام ١٩٧١.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation of Muhammad Hedayatul Islam has been approved by the following:

Mohd. Kamal Hassan
Supervisor

Fatimah Abdullah
Internal Examiner

Abu Bakar Rafique Ahmad
External Examiner

Muhammad Al-Ghazali
External Examiner

Abdul Razak Bin Sopian
Chairman

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Muhammad Hedayatul Islam

Signature.....

Date

INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

**DECLARATION OF COPYRIGHT AND AFFIRMATION OF
FAIR USE OF UNPUBLISHED RESEARCH**

**THE ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT OF BANGLADESH
JAMĀ‘AT-E-ISLĀMĪ (BJI) WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
THE QUR’ĀNIC CONCEPT OF *AL-WASAṬIYYAH***

I declare that the copyright holder of this dissertation are jointly owned by the student and IIUM.

Copyright © 2016 Muhammad Hedayatul Islam and International Islamic University Malaysia. All rights reserved.

No part of this unpublished research may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of the copyright holder except as provided below

1. Any material contained in or derived from this unpublished research may be used by others in their writing with due acknowledgement.
2. IIUM or its library will have the right to make and transmit copies (print or electronic) for institutional and academic purposes.
3. The IIUM library will have the right to make, store in a retrieved system and supply copies of this unpublished research if requested by other universities and research libraries.

By signing this form, I acknowledged that I have read and understand the IIUM Intellectual Property Right and Commercialization policy.

Affirmed by Muhammad Hedayatul Islam

.....
Signature

.....
Date

*This thesis is dedicated to my family, friends, and other well-wishers for their support
in its entire ramifications toward making my dream a reality*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All thanks, praises and gratitude belong to the Almighty Allah (S.W.T.), the Most Gracious and Most Merciful, without Whose immense blessings this research could not have been completed. In all humility, I thus prostrate myself in absolute submission to Him.

My thanks and gratitude are due to a number of people. I remember all those people who have supported and helped me in completing this work directly or indirectly by all means. I am grateful to all. First of all, I would like to acknowledge my profound gratitude to my learned scholar-cum-supervisor Tan Sri Professor Dr. Mohammad Kamal Hassan, Distinguish Professor and former Rector of IIUM. Professor Kamal Hassan has invested a lot of time and effort in supporting and guiding me throughout my study despite his busy schedule. His humility, thoughtfulness and caring attitude always inspired me as spiritual guide. I also offer my thankfulness to Professor Dr. Ibarahim Zain (Dean of IRKHS), Professor Dr. Thameem Ushama (Former Head of Usuluddin & Comparative Religion), Professor Dr. Abdul Rashid Moten, Professor Dr. Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim, and Dr. Adiba Abdul Rahman for giving me helpful advice at various phases of my research. My sincere and humble gratitude are also due to Professor Dr. Ataul Huq Pramanik, and Dr. ASM Shahabuddin whose critical comments and suggestions on many occasions make me confident in improving and finishing this research.

I also offer my thankfulness to my all thesis examiners, especially two external examiners Professor Dr. Abu Bakr Rafique Ahmad, Deputy Vice Chancellor at International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC), and Professor Dr. Muhammad Al Ghazali at Internation Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), and internal examiner Associate Professor Dr. Fatimah Abdullah at IIUM for giving me helpful suggestions and recommendations at various phases of my research. I am grateful to the staff of postgraduate office at the Kulliyyah of IRKHS and the staff of the Department of Usuluddin and Comparative Religion, and also the staff of the IIUM Central Library (Loan and Circulation Counter), and very specially Sister Engku Nurulzati Engku Aziz and others for their support during my study here.

I am extending my heart-felt appreciation to those Jamā‘at leaders and thinkers who took their precious time to take part in the interview session. I also acknowledge with immense gratitude many lecturers of IIUM and specially Associate Professor Dr. Md Yousuf Ali and Dr. Noor Muhammad Osmani whose generosity and caring heart was always a source of inspiration.

I am indebted to all of my friends and well-wishers, particularly, Dr AHM Saifullah Sadi, Br. Abu Sayeed, Br. Mohammad Khairul Islam, Br. Jahirul Huq, Br. Tareq Bin Hossain, Br. Sakeeb Ferdous, Br Habibur Rahman and very special thanks and gratitude to Br. Habibullah Hadi & Sultana Parvin Rani, and Br. Zaman Hossain for their immeasurable generosity and technical assistance in doing this research.

It is also my pleasure to express appreciation to my beloved two sisters Rawshon Ara Jwela and Saba Sultana Laboni and my only elder brother Habibur Rahman Bhutto, and two brothers in-law, Shamsul Huq Bablu and Noor Muhammad Ayon. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my sweet nieces and nephews who always encourage me to remain strong.

My best ever heart-felt gratitude is reserved for my beloved wife (Jaan) Rebeka Sultana Lipi, whose constant support, sharing and caring motivated me to strive hard. The three darlings of my heart- Monowara Islam Bushra, Fazlul Huq Fahim and Lutful Huq Labib are an extraordinary gift from Allah (S.W.T.). Their sweet smiling faces will always have a place in my heart.

Last but not least, I wish to record my everlasting gratitude and gratefulness to my beloved parents – Haji Muhammad Nurul Islam (Abba) and Mrs Rokeya Islam (Maa), parents in-law- Professor Dr. Ataul Huq Pramanik (Baba) and Mrs Shahara Begum (Mamma) whose enduring love and care were always with me. May Allah (SWT) shower His blessing to all of them.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Abstract in Arabic	iii
Approval Page.....	iv
Declaration	v
Copyright	vi
Dedication	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
List of Tables	xiv
List of Figures	xv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the Study	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....	8
1.4 Significance of the Study.....	9
1.6 Research Objectives.....	11
1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study	11
1.8 Literature Review	12
1.9 Methodology of the Study	17
CHAPTER TWO: UNDERSTANDING AL-WASAṬIYYAH.....	19
2.1 Introduction.....	19
2.2 Meaning of Al-Wasaṭiyyah.....	20
2.3 Al-Wasaṭiyyah in the Views of Early and Contemporary Muslim Scholars	26
2.3.1 Early Muslim Scholars.....	26
2.3.1.1 Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (839–923 AD)	26
2.3.1.2 Imam al-Ghazālī	27
2.3.2 Contemporary Muslim Scholar.....	30
2.3.2.1 Yusuf Al-Qaraḍāwī:	30
2.3.2.2 Landmarks of Islamic Moderation	30
2.3.2.3 Views of other Muslim Scholars:	33
2.4 Al-Wasaṭiyyah between Extremism, Liberalism, and Deficiency	35
2.4.1 Al-Wasaṭiyyah vs Moderation: Different Perceptions.....	36
2.5 The Distinct Features and Scope of Ummah Wasaṭ.....	40
2.6 Scholarly Efforts for the Restoration of Al-Wasaṭiyyah	46
2.6.1 Imām al-Ghazālī	47
2.6.2 Imam Ibn Taymiyyah.....	48
2.6.3 Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī: Balancing through underscoring Raḥmah and Responsibility	51

CHAPTER THREE: AN OVERVIEW OF BANGLADESH JAMĀ‘AT-E-ISLAMI.....	55
3.1 Introduction.....	55
3.2 Historical Background of the Jamā‘at	63
3.3 Goals and Objectives	67
3.4 Organisational Structure	70
3.5 Some Prominent Leaders of Ji Bangladesh	73
3.5.1 Professor Ghulam Azam	76
3.5.2 Maulana Motiur Rahman Nizami	80
3.5.2.1 Education:.....	81
3.5.2.2 Contribution in education:.....	81
3.5.2.3 Moderate and Tolerant personality:.....	81
3.5.2.4 Early Career:.....	82
3.5.2.5 Career in wider Islamic Movement:.....	82
3.5.2.6 National Politics:	83
3.5.2.7 Member of Parliament:.....	83
3.5.2.8 Role as Minister of Agricultural Affairs (2001-2003) and Minister of Industrial Affairs (2003-2006).....	83
3.5.2.9 Social Welfare Activities:.....	84
3.5.2.10 Leader of Global Muslim Ummah:	85
3.5.2.11 Suffering in the way of Allah:	85
3.5.3 Allama Delwar Hossain Sayedee.....	86
3.5.3.1 Figure of spiritual and social leadership.....	87
3.5.3.2 Liberation War.....	88
3.5.3.3 Joined Political Party	88
3.5.3.4 Social welfare	89
3.5.3.5 Prolific Writer.....	90
3.6 Ideology, Policy, and Strategic Plan.....	90
3.6.1 Ideology	90
3.6.2 Policy	92
3.6.3 Fundamental beliefs of the Jamā‘at	92
3.6.4 Strategic Plan	93
 CHAPTER FOUR: THE JAMĀ‘AT AS AN IDEOLOGICAL MOVEMENT	 100
4.1 Introduction.....	100
4.2 Da‘Wah and Tarbiyah (Islamic Moral-Spiritual Training and Education).....	100
4.3 Develop Intellectuals with Islamic Commitment	104
4.3.1 Higher Islamic Institutions of Learning in producing visionary Leadership, Multiple Intellectuals and Professionals	105
4.4 Exposure to Diverse Literature	106
4.4.1 Relationship with Global Islamic Movement	107
4.5 Ĥijāb and Niqāb (Complete Cover of Woman’s Face)	107
4.5.1 Views of Mawdudi.....	107
4.5.2 Views of Bangladesh Jamā‘at Leaders	108
4.5.3 Other Scholarly Views:.....	109

4.6 Applying Tajdīd (Renewal) and Al-Wasatīyyah (Balanced Approach) in ‘Hukumat-E-Ilāhiya’ to ‘Iqāmat-E-Dīn’ to Welfare State	112
THE JAMĀ‘AT AS A SOCIAL MOVEMENT	114
4.1 Activities of Jamā‘at in the Process of Islamization of Family and Society	114
4.2 Jamā‘at’s Welfare Service, Charity, and Integration of Islamic Values	116
4.2.1 Lack of Welfare Driven Mass Support	119
4.3 Relationship of Jamā‘at with non-Muslims and Ethnic Groups	122
4.3.1 Non-Muslims under Muslim attack in Bangladesh.....	126
4.4 Philosophy of Jamā‘at in Islamization of Economics and Finance	127
CHAPTER FIVE: AL-WASATĪYYAH AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR FREEDOM MOVEMENT AND OTHER RELATED ISSUES	128
5.1 Critical Decision on “1971 Liberation War”	128
5.1.1 Opposition of Jamā‘at to Pakistan Movement and BJI to Independent Bangladesh.....	140
5.1.1.1 Opposition of Jamā‘at-e-Islāmī to Pakistan Movement	140
5.1.1.2 Opposition of BJI to Bangladesh’s Independence.....	146
5.2 Exercise of Western Democracy and Shura	151
5.2.1 The Jamā‘at-e-Islāmī: Rejection and Accommodation of Western Democracy	151
5.2.2 Election in a Secular System.....	154
5.2.3 Democracy in Islam and Concept of Shūrā	157
5.2.3.1 Democracy in Islam	157
5.2.3.2 Abūl ‘Alā Mawdūdī.....	159
5.2.3.3 Al-Qaraḍāwī	161
5.2.3.4 The concept of Shūrā in Islam.....	163
5.3 Women Leadership and Empowerment.....	165
5.3.1 Leadership and Empowerment and Rights of Women in Islam	169
5.4 Political Alliance (with Leftist, Secular and Liberal Front)	173
5.5 Political Culture of Intolerance.....	175
5.5.1 The Jamā‘at Factor.....	178
5.5.2 The Jamā‘at vs the Secular Forces (Ideological Clash)	179
5.6 Relationship with Other Islamic Groups	180
5.6.1 Many faces of Islam: Social Islam vs Political Islam	181
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION	189
6.1 Conclusion	189
6.1.1 The Elements of Wasatīyyah in Jamā‘at-e-Islāmī	189
BIBLIOGRAPHY	195
APPENDIX 1: LANDMARKS AND MILESTONE OF ISLAMIC MODERATION AND REFORMATION.....	209
APPENDIX 2(A): THEME OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	211

APPENDIX 2(B): TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW.....	212
APPENDIX 3(A): STRUCTURE OF THE JAMĀ'AT (ORGANIZATION).....	232
APPENDIX 3(B): STRUCTURE OF THE JAMĀ'AT (LEADERSHIP).....	233

LIST OF TABLES

Table 5.1	Election Result, Bangladesh, 1991-2001	156
Table 5.2	Election results, Bangladesh, 2008	157
Table 5.3	Election Result of Bangladesh Jama'at-e-Islāmi, 1979-2008	157
Table 5.4	Variations of Islam in Bangladesh	182
Table 5.5	Taxonomy of Islamist Political Parties in Bangladesh.	183

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	The word “ <i>wasat</i> ” demonstrated in the Qur'an in different forms	21
Figure 2.2	Several meanings of <i>al-Wasat</i> iyah	24
Figure 2.3	Attributes of <i>Ummah Islamiyyah</i> (Islamic Community)	42
Figure 3.1	Jama‘at-e-Islami’s Organizational Structure	71
Figure 3.2	Jama‘at-e-Islami’s Leadership Structure	72
Figure 5.1	Man’s dual identity in Islam	170

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the research beginning with a description of the research background, statement of the problem, significance of the study, research questions, and objectives of the study. This chapter will also focus on the scope and limitation, literature review, and research methodology adopted in this study. The chapter concludes with an outline of the thesis structure.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Allah (S.W.T.) has made *al-Wasāṭiyyah* a hallmark of the Muslim *Ummah* as mentioned in the Qur’ānic verse, “Thus We have made of you an Ummah justly balanced, so that you might be witnesses over the nations and the Messenger (Muḥammad) a witness over you.”¹ Islam is, in essence, a justly balanced religion and a complete code of life that promotes peace, mercy, justice, and universal brotherhood. Islam categorically rejects extremism or fanaticism in all its forms. It equally rejects ideological liberalism, secularism and atheism.

In the context of the Qur’ānic expression “*ummatan wasāṭan*”, the interpretation of the *Mufasssirūn* (Qur’ānic exegetes) and the views of the early Muslim scholars refer to the term *al-Wasāṭiyyah* to imply the Islamic community or nation having the attributes of justice, excellence, and balance.² Imām Abū Hāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (1058–1111), in his many writings, especially his magnum

¹ Al-Baqarah, 2:143

² Mohd Kamal Hassan. *The Need to Understand al-Wasāṭiyyah: As Part of IIUM’S Mission of Islamization*. (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM, CENTRIS, 2013).

opus *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* and *Mizān al-'Amal*, offers a detailed understanding of the meaning of *al-wasat*. He opined that in order to achieve success in this world and the Hereafter, a man and his inner faculties must be in line with *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm* (the Righteous Path).³

Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī (b.1926) interprets the phrase *Ummah Wasat* as the Just (*al-'Adl*) and Chosen (*al-Khiyār*) or best nation.⁴ He highlights the *al-Wasatīyyah* approach alongside classical and contemporary scholars and as such articulates, “Islam, therefore, recommends *al-Wasatīyyah* and balance in everything: in belief, *'Ibādah*, conduct, and legislation. This is the straightforward path that Allah SWT has prescribed *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*. Therefore *al-Wasatīyyah*, or the balanced path, is not only a general characteristic of Islam; it is also a fundamental landmark.”⁵ As a contemporary advocate of the “justly balanced” approach or Islamic moderation, al-Qaraḍāwī lists thirty⁶ landmarks and milestones of *al-Wasatīyyah*. Out of the thirty “middle path” positions, Muslims have to adopt eight basic religious implications in pursuing the path of *al-Wasatīyyah*.⁷ Furthermore, al-Qaraḍāwī mentions that “the Muslim *Ummah* is a nation of justice and justly balanced; it witnesses every deviation

³ Abū Hāmid Mohammad al-Ghazālī. *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al- Dīn*. In T.J. Winter (ed. and trans.), *On Disciplining the Soul and Breaking the Two Desires* (Book 22 & 23). Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, (1995). See: Feisal bin Mohamed Hasan. *Relevance Of Al-Ghazālī's Doctrine Of Al-Wasat (The Desired Balanced Middle Way) In Countering The Ideologies Of Extremists With Special Reference To Jema'ah Islāmiyyah In Singapore*. (MA theses, Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, (ISTAC), 2008), p.33.

⁴ Yusuf al-Qaraḍāwī. *Al-Ṣaḥwah al-Islāmiyyah baina al-Juhūd wa al-Taṭarruf*. (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1991), p.28

⁵ Ibid, pp.7-8

⁶ Actually prior to this it was 'twenty landmarks' concisely as a methodology of moderation, and distributed these to the General Constituent Assembly of the International Union of the Muslim Scholars, in London in 2004. Afterwards it has become thirty in detailed and well-arranged form until it becomes more perfect as it should be, in terms of the idea, presentation and expression. Thus, it has reached at the thirty landmarks. See more: *Fiqh al-Wasatīyyah al-Islāmiyyah wa al-Tajdid: Ma'ālim wa Manārāt*, and *Islamic Moderation and Renewal: Wasatīyyah – Tajdid* (trans.) By Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim and et al, and edited by Mohamed Ajmil, Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2013).

⁷ Mohd. Kamal Hassan, *Voice of Islamic Moderation from the Malay World*, (Kuala Lumpur: EMIR, 2011), pp.213-218

from the ‘straightforward path’ in this life and in the Hereafter.”⁸ *Al-Wasāṭiyyah* thus implies carrying out to the best of one’s ability what Allah (S.W.T.) has prescribed and avoiding what He has forbidden, understanding the wisdom of His laws and moral guidance, and grasping and applying basic Islamic principles to every new situation as it arises.⁹ According to a number of *Ahādīth*, the Prophet Muḥammad (s.a.w) praised those who adopted a balanced approach to worship. The Prophet (s.a.w) said: “Indeed this religion is easy and it will defeat anyone who makes it difficult.”¹⁰ In another Hadith, the Prophet (s.a.w) reminded his followers: “Convey the good news and do not make them run away, make it easy and do not make it difficult.”¹¹

To understand the practical meaning of *al-Wasāṭiyyah* within the Islamic movement, we first need to understand the meaning of the Islamic movement. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī stated in his book, *Priorities of the Islamic Movements*, that Islamic movements are an organised and popular collectivity united in their service of Islam. It is a grassroots movement guided by a structured leadership. It is politically active in recognition that championing the holistic mission of Islam requires political influence. Islam combines faith, worship, *Sharī’ah*, creed, propagation, dealings, transactions, governance, and worldly life. In order for all of these to be achieved, Islam has to be related to the system of governance, and the use of political power and public administration.¹²

Islamic movements emerged with the desire to implement social justice within the guidance of Islamic *Sharī’ah* in contemporary Muslim societies, while seeking to offer better solutions to the political and economic institutions, reform social and

⁸ Al-Qaraḍāwī. *Al-Ṣaḥwah...* pp.7-8

⁹ Aisha Lemu. *Laxity, Moderation and Extremism in Islam*. (n.p.1993), p.2

¹⁰ Al-Bukhārī. Vol. 1, Hadīth no. 39. (Cairo: Dar Ibn Razab, 2006).

¹¹ Ibid, Hadīth no. 69 and Muslim. Hadīth no. 1734

¹² Al-Qaraḍāwī. *"Priorities of the Islamic Movements in the Coming Phase"*. (Cairo: Dār al- Nashr for Egyptian Universities, 1992), pp.9-22.

cultural values, and remedy the philosophical and intellectual problems faced by the majority of Muslim countries. It endeavours to lead the Muslim *Ummah* to success in both this world and the Hereafter.

Islamic movements the world over either in the form of ideological social movements or organisational political institutions, are still in the process of evolution. It is noteworthy that empirical evidence has proven how the Islamic movements have gradually made concrete accomplishments in North Africa and the Middle-East after the Arab Spring, as exemplified by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and An-Nahdah in Tunisia. It is undeniable that the approach of Islam adopted by these groups, with their doctrine of social justice and the implementation of Islamic moderation, is the main mechanism underlying this development. Similarly, Islamic movements in other parts of the Muslim world have been trying to develop their own strategy to establish Islam and the *Shari'ah* (Divine Law) as a comprehensive and justly balanced code of human life.

Consequently, Bangladesh, one of the most populous Muslim countries, has also been witnessing the proliferation of Islamic movements as both a political and ideological force since its independence from Pakistan in 1971.¹³ The rise of Islamic political forces has brought forth several contenders, one of them being the Jama'at-e-Islami Bangladesh (JIB) and the newly restructured Bangladesh Jama'at-e-Islami (BJI), which serves as a contemporary leading Islamic movement and the pioneer of Islamic parties in Bangladesh. Moreover, Jama'at-e-Islami is one of the oldest parties in the sub-continent. It was first formed in British India under the leadership of Sayed Abu'l 'Ala Mawdudi in 1941. The Jama'at started its work in what is now Bangladesh

¹³ Monoar Kabir, *Politics and Development of the Jama'at-e-Islami Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: AH development Publishing House, 2006), p.9.

in the 1950s.¹⁴ After Bangladesh gained its independence, the Jamā‘at began to operate publicly under its own name on May 25-27, 1979, along with other Islam-based political parties¹⁵.

The Jamā‘at’s organisational achievement has made it an expanding force in Bangladeshi politics.¹⁶ It is the pioneer of Islamic movements in united Pakistan and in the later independent Bangladesh.¹⁷ Furthermore, the Jamā‘at is a moderate Islamic movement and an Islamic political organisation that believes in democracy, human rights, and is committed to upholding the rule of law. Islam in Bangladesh is a deep-rooted social institution. Social norms and other interactions in the country have largely been originated and are guided by Islamic principles.¹⁸ The Jamā‘at seeks to establish a just society only through democratic principles and a democratic process.¹⁹

The relative indispensability of the concept of *Tayyār al-Wasāṭiyyah al-Islāmiyyah*, or the trend of a justly balanced approach in Islam cannot be discounted from the socio-political milieu of today, because it is the right attitude that reflects a balanced Islamic method.²⁰

In adopting the methodology of *al-Wasāṭiyyah* in *Da‘wah* (preaching), teaching, *Iftā’* (issuing legal edicts), research, reform, as well as revival, the Jamā‘at has realised that the propagation of Islam in the context of Muslim-majority

¹⁴ Saidul Islam, “Minority Islam in Muslim Majority Bangladesh: The Violent Road to a New Brand of Secularism”, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 31(1), (2011):125-141.

¹⁵ The mainstream Islamic movements and Islamic political parties in Bangladesh are Bangladesh Jamaa-e-Islami (BJI, or Jamā‘at) and Islamic Oikko Jote (JOJ), Khelafat Majlis, Khelafat Andolon, and Islami Shashontontro Andolon (ISA). Apart from there are other Islamic groups, namely, Hizbut Tahrir (HT), Harkatul Jihad al-Islami (HUJI) and Jamā‘atul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB) which are domestically and internationally labeled as Radical or Militant group and banned by the Government of Bangladesh. See more: Monoar Kabir, *Politics and Development of the Jamā‘at-e-Islāmi Bangladesh*, (Dhaka: AH development Publishing House, 2006).

¹⁶ Monoar Kabir. *Politics and Development of the Jamā‘at-e-Islāmi Bangladesh*. p.19

¹⁷ Yusuf Ali, *Introducing Bangladesh Jamā‘at-e-Islam*, (Dhaka: Al-Falah Printed Press, 1989), N.p.

¹⁸ Saidul Islam, pp. 129-139.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Al-Qaraḍāwī, *Al-Ṣaḥwah al-Islāmiyyah wa Humūm al-Waṭan al-‘Arabī al-Islāmī*, (Cairo: Bank al-Taqa, 1988), p.42

Bangladesh where the secular civil society and some radical Islamic groups are synthesised, is in need of a comprehensive and complete model of the balanced method. Furthermore, the current Jamā‘at rhetoric concerning the place of women in the society shifted from an extreme to a moderate approach. This new position differs significantly from that held by its founder Abu’l A‘la Mawdūdī that women’s place is at home by virtue of divine ordinance. Current Jamā‘at leaders in Bangladesh encourage female participation in certain social affairs including their right to study, work, and vote.²¹

Moreover, the *al-Wasāṭiyyah* advocacy of Jamā‘at, though it has yet to address certain social and religious issues, has nonetheless increased its popularity in rural areas by its provision of social services and implementation of Islamic integration through its network of school and madrasah, health clinics, hospitals,²² charities, and Islamic micro-credit projects.²³

Alternatively, compared to other Islamic movements and organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Justice and Development Party in Turkey and Morocco, the Bangladesh Jama‘at-e-Islāmī is considered one of the most flexible of such groups. This is viewed against the backdrop of the Jamā‘at’s willingness to address contemporary issues with a high degree of tolerance and openness. Issues like democracy in Islam, Islamic economics and finance, the qualities of leadership, state-society relations, the role of civil society, minority rights, and women’s rights etc.

²¹ Elora Shehabuddin, “Jamā‘at-i-Islami in Bangladesh: Women, Democracy and the Transformation of Islamist Politics”, *Modern Asian Studies*, 42 (2008):577-603

²² Iftikhar Iqbal, “Moderate Islam in Bangladesh: Trends and Trajectories” in *ICAS Report 2007*, (Washington DC: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2007), 81

²³ *Bangladesh Today*, International Crisis Group, (Asia Report, 2012)

have all had a place in the new evolving socio-political lexicon of the Jama‘at-e-Islāmī.²⁴

According to the State Department of USA, Bangladesh is a moderate Muslim country in its nature. To measure the extent of *al-Wasāṭiyyah* and the Islamic movement in Bangladesh, we may begin by examining Jama‘at-e-Islāmī’s support of democracy, education, Islamic micro-credit, women’s empowerment, and the ways in which it has adapted Western ideologies in an integrated manner. The moderate Muslim and Islamic movement²⁵ is expected to be pro-active rather than reactive. This necessity of this has accentuated with the events of 9/11 and the ongoing global campaign to fight terrorism spearheaded by the Western powers, wherein it is Muslims alone who are curiously singled out as terrorists. Moreover, Muslim nations have long suffered from military, autocratic, and suppressive rule. All have led to the increasingly intense call for Islamic political and social reforms. Similarly, the Muslims in Bangladesh oppose terrorism and extremism within their own ranks that often arise from a perceived threat of secularism.²⁶

²⁴ Saidul Islam, “*Minority Islam in Muslim Majority Bangladesh: The Violent Road to a New Brand of Secularism*”, *op.cit.*, and Kareem M. Kamel. (2009). *The Muslim Brotherhood: Between Survival and Progress*. Middle East Political and Economic Institute <<http://ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=22093>> Viewed on 13 April 2012

²⁵ According to MA Bari, “Islamic Movement” means is a generic term for groups that do not restrict religion to personal piety but see Islam having its own unique social and political message. Examples include the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Jama‘at-e-Islāmī in South Asia. They are described by their detractors as ‘Islamist’ or ‘fundamentalist’.” Their off-shoot groups in Europe have been active in community work, establishing mosques and research centers, publishing houses and journals. For details, MA Bari. *Meet the Challenge make the change: A call to action for Muslim civil society in Britain*. (Cordoba papers, May 2013). To Irfan Ahmad, By Islamist, following Roy (1994) and Fuller (2003), mean an activist who regards Islam as a complete system of life and believes in establishing an Islamic state as a foremost duty. See Irfan Ahamd. *Between moderation and radicalization: transnational interactions of Jama‘at-e-Islāmī of India*. *Global Networks* 5, 3 (2005). pp. 295.

²⁶ Iftekhhar Iqbal, p.81

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are considerable studies on the subject of *al-Wasāṭiyyah* (Islamic moderation) and the Jama‘at-e-Islāmī in Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka. While much has been said in black and white about the resurgent Islamic movement arising in recent decades, the proliferation of religious and academic scholars have paid little attention to the study of Bangladesh Jama‘at-e-Islāmī. Few studies are manifest in the course of the Jamā‘at’s propagation as well as its program, central leadership, and its success and failure in the democratic system. Among them, some studies have a propensity to lay the blame on the Jamā‘at as an Islamist extremist or terrorist organisation, and some dispute the Jamā‘at as a controversial Islamic party, due to the fact that it opposed the liberation and independence of Bangladesh in 1971. However, some studies of the Jamā‘at portray it as an ideology-based movement aiming at a gradual Islamisation of society, coming across the relation between *al-Wasāṭiyyah* and the Jamā‘at as a leading Islamic organisation and the third largest political party in Bangladesh.

Moreover, the *al-Wasāṭiyyah* approach still needs to be scrutinised as to whether the Jamā‘at’s endeavour may be considered to be an exemplary moderate Islamic movement practicing from within rather than simply on the outer surface of the organisation. It is noteworthy that the Jamā‘at has, on earlier occasions, disregarded many social phenomena such as the *Hijāb* vs. *Niqāb* debate as well as the issues of women empowerment and leadership. Later, the Jamā‘at has addressed these issues in the light of Islamic principles, and more significantly, the moderate think-tank of the Jamā‘at advocates that the Qur’an and Sunnah, or teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w), are silent on many specific issues of running a state and, thus, man-made law is needed to manage the details of day-to-day governance. Unlike other Islamic political leaders and traditional ulema in Bangladesh, the young leadership of

the Jamā‘at narrowly favours the creation of man-made laws as long as they are not contradictory with the *Shari‘ah*.

With this preliminary background, this study aims at investigating the relevance of *al-Wasatiyyah* in Bangladesh in addressing the multifarious problems currently besetting the society. If the Bangladesh Jama‘at-e-Islāmī (BJI) truly represents a comprehensive Islamic moderate approach to addressing the prevailing socio-cultural and politico-economic problems, then the BJI has the potential not only to promote a ‘Justly Balanced Approach’ as championed by Islam but also to enlarge an ideologically-driven social movement and political institution. Based on the conception that true Islamic teachings are situated between extremism and liberalism, the current study is not just about the history, ideology, and politics of the Jamā‘at (although they are an important aspect of the explanations behind the study), rather, its main purpose is to investigate the conceptualisation and implementation of *al-Wasatiyyah* in the Jamā‘at’s leadership, their literature and publications, and their strategies and policies in countering the fanaticism, extremism, and ultra-secularism in Muslim-majority Bangladesh.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

A substantial body of research emphasises the need for an affiliation between *al-Wasatiyyah* and Islamic movements based on practical realities. In reference to the Islamic movements in Bangladesh, specifically Jamā‘at-e-Islāmī, it represents an emerging power in the continuous clash with extremism, liberalism, and ultra-secularism in both the social and political domains. However, religious extremism, as well as a liberal secularisation process and the secular dominant civil society, pose a great challenge in context of a populous Muslim society. There are several reasons for