ABSTRACT

A Perplexing Relationship Between Islamic Social Movement and Islamist Parties’ Electoral Performance in Bangladesh

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Existing literature on Islamic social movement does not address the relationship between the success of an Islamic social movement and Islamist parties. To address the gap in the literature, I ask why an Islamic social movement rises despite the failure of Islamist parties, and why Islamist parties fail in spite of the increasing influence of an Islamic social movement. To answer these questions, I conducted 14th in-depth elite interviews in Bangladesh. Based on the findings, I argue that Islamic social movement in Bangladesh is rising notwithstanding the failure of the Islamist parties because of two reasons: the state’s strategic use of Islam and Islamist groups’ effort in utilizing political opportunities to increase the strength of the movement. In contrast, the Islamist parties in Bangladesh fail despite the growth of the movement because the parties failed to direct the resources of the movement to increase constituency and non-religious parties are successful in attracting the religious voters.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would not have been possible to finish this thesis without the support of many people. First of all, I am very grateful to my advisor, Dr. Janine A. Clark, for her consistent support. I admire Dr. Clark for reading all my rough drafts that I do not feel comfortable with now. Most importantly, I thank her for both challenging and inspiring me simultaneously. I would not have learned what I did throughout the process of my thesis writing if she did not challenge and inspire me at the same time. Dr. Clark knew when to give what advice to make me move forward with the thesis. She has also been very enthusiastic, encouraging, and helpful, which helped me to finish the thesis on time. I also appreciate her integrity and kindness, especially taking very little time to read by work and giving me constructive feedback. The research strategies and writing skills that I learned from Dr. Clark will help for my future research or work. I am very glad that I chose Dr. Clark as my advisor, and I am very grateful to her for all her support.

I am also thankful to my committee member, Dr. Andrea Paras, for all her support. Though she did not read my work until I finished my second draft, I always had her support whenever I needed to talk to her about my thesis. I am grateful to her for her constructive feedback on my second draft. She identified places where I need to make changes and explained how I could possibly improve the thesis. She also offered me the support of a family in Canada and provided me emotional support when I went through an emotional trauma near the end of my writing process. It would have been a very different and difficult experience if I did not have Dr. Paras’s academic and emotional support.

I also want to thank Dr. Craig Johnson, the external member of the committee, for indicating some of the shortcomings of the thesis. His advice and suggestion will help me to
improve my research in the future. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the graduate coordinator, Renée Tavascia, of the department of Political Science. She has been always there for me whenever I had a question. I appreciate her for her kindness as well as the willingness to help me starting from how to register for a course to how to set a date for my defense.

I am also grateful to my family, especially my mother, Kamala Sarkar and my sister, Susmita Sarkar. Despite the time difference between Canada and Bangladesh, they have always been there for me whenever I needed them to encourage me work on my thesis or listen to me for a while. I also want to thank my mentor, Mary J. Sansalone, who has been supporting me financially, emotionally and academically. I thank her for encouraging me to do a thesis and helping me to make decisions about my studies. Last, not the least, I also want to thank my undergraduate advisor, Dr. Sara Amin, for her emotional as well as academic support.
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Chapter One: Introduction

In 1997, the Awami League (AL) government of Bangladesh developed the National Women Development Policy, which would grant women equal inheritance rights if legislated. However, the government failed to pass the policy as it faced a strong opposition from Islamist groups in the form of demonstrations and strikes where Islamists declared to prevent the policy at any cost (Jahan and Sahan 2014: 430). The next government, Pro-Islamist Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) even dropped the clause on equal inheritance right from the second draft of the policy in 2004 (Gayen 2011). However, AL again promised to implement the Policy of 1997 in its election manifesto in 2008. Accordingly, when AL came to power in 2008, the government approved the policy in the cabinet in 2011. Unfortunately, from the day of the approval of the policy, the Islamist groups demonstrated tenacious resistance against the policy and declared to prevent it at any cost, as they had in 1997 (Gayen 2011). The Islamist groups called for a strike where the Islamists came down to streets in funeral garb to show that they were ready to sacrifice their lives to impede the policy. As a result, then Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, announced that no law that goes against the Quran would be enacted. Thus, the Islamist groups were successful again in blocking the clause that allows equal inheritance right to women in Bangladesh (Gayen 2011).

Despite the growing influence of the Islamist groups in the political domain and society in general, Islamist political parties have been experiencing declining electoral success since 1991. Islamist parties won 12.92% of total vote in 1991, 9.07% votes in 1996, 4.97% votes in 2001, and 4.6% votes in 2008 (Jahan and Shahan 2014: 432). The parties did
not participate in the election in 2014. This research only focuses on the relatively\(^1\) moderate Islamist groups in Bangladesh, and the Islamic social movement\(^2\) includes Islamic movement organizations such as Islamic movements with and without a political wing, parties that do not originate from any Islamic movements but create an Islamic movement and claim themselves Islamic movements, and organizations that belong to one of these three groups. This research will use the umbrella terms “Islamist groups” to refer to Islamic social movement.

Although the Islamist groups had a little influence in the political domain and society before or even right after the liberation war, the influence of the Islamist groups started to slowly increase a few years after the independence. Islamist political parties were banned upon the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. However, the parties have been allowed to participate in the formal politics in 1978, and the influence of the Islamist groups has been growing since then. The increasing presence of the Islamist groups and their growing strength is noticeable through the rising number of Islamist organizations, Islamists’ ability to mobilize demonstrations and strikes, their influence in the political domain, and the popularity of the Islamist groups in the public sphere and society in general. However, Islamist parties do not enjoy proportional electoral success; rather their electoral success has been declining since 1991. Thus, there is a contrasting scenario that “shows high significance of Islamic principles and Islamic parties in the policy domain and very insignificant success of the Islamic political parties in the electoral domain” (Jahan and Shahan 2014: 427). Why do the Islamist parties fail to increase their electoral support while the influence of the

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\(^1\) Most Islamist parties and organization uses violent means, but some of them are less violent than others. For instance, Jamaat-i-Islami uses less violence than Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen.

\(^2\) This research recognizes that a social movement is not a centralized actor. There are many subgroups or social movement organizations, conflicts, and politics within a social movement. Moreover, there are many different social movements for the same cause, and the movements have many differences and similarities, which will be explained later in the paper. However, the politics within the movement is not the focus of this research. For the sake of emphasizing the relationship between Islamic social movements and Islamist parties, this research will refer to Islamic social movement and Islamist parties as distinct entities. The paper will also use “Islamic movement” to refer to any specific Islamic social movement in Bangladesh and use “Islamic social movement” to refer to all the Islamist groups that aim at establishing an Islamic state to avoid complexity around terms.
Islamic social movement is rising? And, why does the influence of the Islamic social movement increase while the electoral support of the Islamist parties declines? The existing social movement literature does not address these questions. The literature has a gap in explaining why some movement-parties experience a decline in their electoral success despite the growth of the movements while the rise of a social movement and the movement party's electoral success tend to happen simultaneously. Indeed, Cowell-Meyers notes the fact that there is a gap in the literature concerning the relationship between social movements and social movement parties (2014: 62). There are scholars who analyzed why a movement participates in electoral politics (Frankland 2008: 36; Mecham 2014: 26; Kirdis 2015: 85; Sinno and Khanani 2009: 39; Kitschelt 2006: 282), what happens to a movement's ideologies, strategies, and activities when its political wing competes in electoral arena (Ho 2003: 683; Gomez Bruera 2015: 567; Levy 2012: 795; Bolleyer 2010: 603), and how the relationship between a movement and its political party determines whether the movement party should adapt to electoral politics and become a mainstream political party (Mecham 2014: 30; Somer 2014: 55; Hwang 2014: 70; Liow and Chan 2014: 89; Maghraoui and Zerhouni 2014: 130). However, the relationship between the success of social movements and social movement parties is still under-theorized as the existing literature does not explain why a movement rises despite the failure of the movement parties, and why the movement parties fail in spite of the success of the movement.

The gap within the social movement literature is clearly demonstrable in the specific literature of Islamic social movements. Islamic movements and Islamist parties are often interconnected. There are Islamic movements that start a political party, and there are Islamist parties that claim themselves an Islamic movement, such as many Islamist parties in Bangladesh. However, the research on Islamic social movements and Islamist political parties is divided into two major areas. One group of scholars such as Donald J. Porter (2002),
Muzaffer Ercan Yilmaz (2012), Hrair Dekmejian (1994), Sheri Berman (2003), Maha Azzam (2006), Michael Robbins and Lawrence Rubin (2013) examine the rise and fall of the electoral politics of Islamist parties. Another group of scholars such as Ziad Munson (2001), Asef Bayat (2005), Hala Shukrallah (1994), Roel Meijer (2005), Cihan Tugal (2009), Kayhan Delibas (2009), and Nilufer Narli (1999) use social movement theory to explain Islamic movements in general without focusing much on the electoral politics of the movement parties. Thus, there is a little work that combines both sections of the literature and illustrates the relationship between the success of the movement and the movement parties.

In order to address the gap in the social movement literature, this research raises the following questions: why does the electoral success of Islamist parties decline despite the rise of Islamic social movements, and why does an Islamic social movement thrive notwithstanding the failure of Islamist parties? The proposed research uses the case study of Bangladesh to answer these questions because there has been a rise of Islamic social movement in Bangladesh while the Islamist parties' electoral support has been declining. Moreover, there have not been any studies that explain this puzzling scenario of Bangladesh (Jahan and Shahan 2014: 439; Riaz 2014: 172).

Based on fieldwork conducted (14 in-depth elite interviews) in Bangladesh and content analysis of secondary literature, this research argues that the Islamic social movement is growing despite the failure of the Islamist parties because of two reasons. First, the strategic use of Islam by the state of Bangladesh has created political opportunities for the Islamist groups to grow as well as strengthen the Islamist groups. Second, the Islamist groups have managed to utilize available opportunities to further strengthen the Islamic social movement. Islamist groups directed available opportunities to increase Islamic institutions, such as political parties, Islamic schools, and Women’s Quranic study group (Harrison 2015: 41 & 49). By Islamizing the society, they created an atmosphere where no un-Islamic laws
can be approved or where non-religious parties feel pressured to display their loyalty to Islam to win the votes of the Muslim majority (Devine and White 2013: 131).

This research also argues that Islamist parties' electoral support declines despite the upsurge of the Islamic social movement because of the parties failure in directing the resources of the Islamic social movement to increase constituency and non-religious parties success in attracting religious (Islamic) voters. The Islamist parties fail to utilize the resources of the Islamic social movement due to three reasons: strategic mistake, failure to increase legitimacy from the majority of Bangladeshis, and failure to extend their networks and keep sympathizers committed.

First, the Islamist parties failed to successfully frame Wahhabism to be acceptable in the society. Many successful Islamist parties either adapt to local cultures or establish a new ideology through compelling framing. However, Islamist parties in Bangladesh attempted to replace the local syncretic form of Hanafi and Sufi Islam with Wahhabism instead of framing Wahhabism to be accepted by the majority of Bangladeshi Muslim. As a result, there is an ideological conflict between the masses and the Islamist parties, which results in declining electoral support for the Islamist parties.

Secondly, the Islamist parties failed to gather moral legitimacy from people or win the heart of Bangladeshis. There are incidences of Islamist parties that give up on violence, work as the best alternative to existing governments, extend social services to neutralize past scandal, adapt to democratic institutions and build relation with other religious groups to earn legitimacy in many different countries. However, Islamist parties in Bangladesh still use violent means and fail to make people believe that they do not have any hidden aspiration of destroying modern institutions once they come to power. They also fail to earn the legitimacy of being the best alternative to the existing state. In addition, Islamist parties, especially Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) could not neutralize its scandal as war criminals. Jamaat-i-Islami
opposed the liberation of Bangladesh against Pakistan and collaborated with Pakistan in 1971. As a result, many Bangladeshis, especially the secular groups and young generation, do not want to elect Jammat-i-Islami.

Thirdly, Islamist parties failed to extend their networks to mobilize a wide range of people and keep them committed to the parties. Islamist parties, especially JI is still reluctant to extend its networks to outside communities and invite a diverse group of people. Moreover, the parties failed to mobilize the urban middle class, youth population, and religious minorities. The parties also failed to keep their sympathizers committed to the party as they neglected to maintain a successful patron-client relationship. In contrast, leaders of non-religious parties, especially AL and BNP, kept using Islam to attract more religious voters. They have changed their lifestyle and activities of their parties to attract more and more religious voters. This ultimately reduces the number of votes Islamist parties get. The following chapter will discuss the methodology of this research.
Chapter Two: Methodology

Bangladesh is one of the best suitable case studies for this research because Islamic social movement in Bangladesh is becoming predominant in contrast to the declining electoral share of the Islamist parties. Indonesia or Pakistan could have been the focus of the research as the electoral support of the Islamist parties is insignificant in comparison to the rise of Islamic social movements in both Indonesia and Pakistan. However, Islamist parties in Indonesia or Pakistan do not experience a steady decline in their electoral support like the parties in Bangladesh. Islamist parties in Indonesia recently experienced a rise in their electoral support in 2014. Therefore, I chose the case study of Bangladesh for this research.

I conducted 14 in-depth elite interviews between July and August in 2015 in Bangladesh to explain the relationship between the success of Islamic social movement and Islamic movement parties’ electoral support. I interviewed five academics whose areas of focus is religion and politics to get an educated perspective on the research question. Academics were recruited from top two public universities which have the country’s finest faculty to answer questions about Islamic movements and Islamist parties. Among the academics, there were people who sympathize or support the Islamic social movement and Islamist parties, and there were also participants who support the movement not the parties. I also interviewed an academic who is very critical of the parties but support some of the Islamic movement organizations. These academics’ historical knowledge about Bangladeshi politics in relation to the Islamic movements and Islamist parties made them some of the most important people to explain why there is a contradictory relationship between the success of Islamic social movements and Islamist political parties in Bangladesh.

I also interviewed five journalists who report on religious and political issues in Bangladesh. Journalists were recruited from two popular newspaper companies, and both of the newspapers write about Islamic movements and parties. The journalists recruited from the
newspaper companies have firsthand knowledge about Islamic movements and Islamist parties. They had the opportunities to experience Islamists’ demonstration in the capital as well as get the opportunity to interact with party members of Islamist parties. Three of my journalist interviewees maintained a neutral position and explained the strength and weakness of the Islamic social movement and Islamist parties. Two of my journalist interviewees were very critical of the Islamist parties but showed their support for some of the Islamic movement organizations. These journalists’ multiple perspectives on the topic in addition to their historical and contemporary knowledge about Islamist parties and Islamic movement enriched the research.

The third group of people I interviewed for the research is NGO workers from development NGOs and Political NGO. Four NGO workers were interviewed for their expertise in working with people at the grassroots level. Two of the NGO workers recruited for the study are also a human right and a women's right activists in the country. Thus, they were able to explain the puzzle from the perspective of activists who are closely engaged in the mainstream politics as well as NGO workers who interact with people, especially the rural population. The NGO workers were able to explain why people get involved in the Islamic social movement or why people sympathize with the movement but do not vote for the Islamist parties. Among the NGO workers, one of the participants were critical of both the Islamic social movement and party and one of them sympathize with both the Islamic social movement and parties, but vote for BNP. I also interviewed an NGO worker who supports some of the Islamic social movement organizations but votes for AL. There was an NGO worker who maintained a neutral position and explained the strength and weakness of the Islamic social movement and parties.

In addition to the fieldwork in Bangladesh, I also did a content analysis of newspaper articles and secondary literature. However, the research has some limitations. One of the
most significant limitations of this research is that I could not interview people from the Islamist political parties or Islamic social movements for the study. The Islamist leaders would have been very important agents to explain why Islamist parties experience declining electoral support despite the increasing influence of the movement. I could not interview members of the Islamist groups due to the political instability in the country during my fieldwork. Some of the prominent leaders of Jamaat-i-Islami were executed and people who criticized Islam or Islamists were murdered during that time. Thus, it was difficult to approach Islamist leaders and interview them at that time. Another important limitation of the research is that I only conducted 14 interviews due to the time constraint and political instability in Bangladesh. Doing more interviews would have allowed the research be informed by more opinions.

Despite all the limitation, the research is still valid and crucial for the social movement literature. Though Islamists were not interviewed for the research, the research is informed by the opinion of experts on religion and politics, especially Islamist politics of Bangladesh. Those experts explained the case very objectively. Moreover, the research did not lose much for not being able to integrate the opinion of the Islamists as many past studies have published the view of the Islamists regarding their electoral success, which is integrated into the research. Moreover, interviews with a diverse group of people enriched the research with different perspectives. As mentioned above, there are interviewees who are well-wishers of the Islamists and want to be Islamist parties’ candidates in an election. There were also interviewees who were very critical about the Islamists and depicted why Islamist failed to mobilize electorate. There were also people who were in a neutral position regarding their support for the Islamists and clearly explained the strength and weakness of the Islamists and why Islamists fail to mobilize electoral support despite the growing strength of the Islamic social movement.
Though I only interviewed 14 people for the research, all the interviews were in-depth interviews with ten open-ended questions. Interviews were designed to be one hour long, but most of the interviews were more than one hour and some of them lasted for two hours or more. As a result, the research is very detailed and rich with information. Therefore, the study makes a significant contribution to the literature of Islamic social movement and the movement parties and ultimately to the research of Social movements and social movement parties. This research will use pseudonyms for all the interviewees to ensure privacy and security for the participants. Information used in this research from the interviews conducted will be paraphrased except the direct quotations. The rest of the paper will first summarize the social movement literature to illustrate the gap in the literature by examining different types of social movements, discuss relevant theories for the research, and analyze the findings of the study to answer the research question.
Chapter Three: Literature Review

The relationship between social movements and social movement parties is still under-theorized in the social movement literature. The specific literature of environmental movements, feminist movements, and Islamic movements indicate this gap. This chapter will first provide a general overview of social movements and social movement parties to familiarize the reader with the movements and the parties. Secondly, it will examine the literature regarding the relationship between movements and movement parties with a focus on environmental movements, feminist movements, and Islamic movements to demonstrate that the existing literature does not explain the relationship between the success of a movement and the movement party.

A) Overview of Social Movement and Social Movement Parties:

When a group of people attempts to advance collective interests through violent or non-violent protests, demonstrations, and disruptions outside of institutional political apparatuses, the collective action is called a movement (Kitschelt 2006: 278). There are also social movements that choose not to challenge states through contentious movements but use informal networks to pursue their goals (Tugal 2009: 551; Wiktorowicz 2004: 12). Social movements in a less open political system usually use informal networks rather than formal social movement organizations because of the fear of being repressed by regimes/governments (Wiktorowicz 2004: 12; Denoeux 1993). For example, the Islamic movement in Turkey focused on changing everyday practices of Turkish people to infuse a desire of having a religious leader in the society rather than challenging the state to establish an Islamic state (Tugal 2009:551). A large number of Islamists in Jordan also used informal networks for mobilizing resources for contention (Wiktorowicz 2004:13).

Social movements can be made up of either a single or multiple different groups and organizations, and there could be different types of social movement organizations for the
same issues. Different organizations and constituencies of a social movement might carry different discourses, but they all share one main goal (Bayat 2005: 898). There could also be various types of social movements for the same issues (Kirdi 2013: 26; Sinno and Khanani 2010: 38-39). According to Kirdi, civil society organizations that provide services like health care and apolitical Dawah (preaching and spreading Islamic values) without any political demands are all considered Islamic movements (Kirdi 2013: 26).

In contrast, political parties are the entities that aim at serving collective interests through participating in an election (Kitschelt 2006: 278). However, a movement and a movement-party (a political party that is developed by a movement to push forward the objectives of the movement or shares the goal of a movement) have similar goals. For instance, Islamist parties and Islamic movements have the common objective of establishing Islamic states or ruling states based on Islamic laws and values (Salih and El-Tom 2009: 1). However, political parties are narrower actors than the movements (Mecham and Hwang 2014: 5). For example, the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon has its political party that competes in elections. However, the goals of Hezbollah are not just limited to electoral politics, but to provide goods and services and Islamize the society (Mecham and Hwang 2014: 4).

A movement’s activists use the electoral arena for their mobilization as well as to attain the goals of the movement (McAdam and Tarrow 2010: 536). There are many movements such as environmental movements, feminist movements, and Islamic movements that develop political parties as a means to advance their interests. The following paragraphs will explain why leaders of a social movement decide to form a political party, what happens when a movement starts its political wing, and why leaders of some movements refuse to form a political party.
Firstly, leaders of social movements start a political party due to several reasons, such as due to close political system or due to the limitations of a social movement. For instance, when a significant number of constituencies present their demands through protests but feel that the existing political parties do not make any effort to address their demands and the thresholds for political representation is low, movement entrepreneurs are likely to enter into electoral politics (Kitschelt 2006: 282). Moreover, social movements decide to form a political party due to the limitations that social movements endure. Social movements do not have the power to make policies or distribute state resources to achieve their goals (Mecham 2014: 26). Therefore, many movement activists start a political party for taking advantage of the power of legislature and state resources (McAdam and Tarrow 2010: 536; Kitschelt 2006: 282).

Thus, many movements develop political parties to achieve their goals through formal political institutions (Phillip 1996: 440–41). For instance, the African National Congress in South Africa, the Republican Party in the US, the Nazi Party in Germany, and Green parties in many different countries were developed by movements to push forward the goals of the movements (Kitschelt 1990: 184). Moreover, there were cases in Europe where social movements were the first step for developing political parties (Kitschelt 1990: 184). There are also movements that have turned into political parties. For instance, the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua became a political party after the Sandinista revolution (Kallen 2009).

When movements start to act like a political party, many of them go through a transition from being an informal institution to a formal organization, or from a radical group to a moderate institution. The movements change their means of achieving things: from protests to making claims in a conventional way (Phillip 1996: 440–41) though there are exceptions such as Hamas and Hezbollah. Moreover, participating in electoral politics makes
it difficult for movement leaders to keep the movement viable outside of formal institutions since the campaigns for elections limit the energy and resources dedicated to the movement (Doyle and McEachern 2007: 162; Cowell-Meyers 2014: 62).

As a result, many social movement entrepreneurs do not participate in electoral politics (Kitschelt 2006: 288). Movement leaders fear that engaging in electoral politics would deprioritize the core issues of their movements. A movement-party would need to adapt to formal political institutions and would have to take care of issues outside of the movement's goals (Kitschelt 2006: 288). Moreover, some goals are best achieved through a movement rather than a political party. For instance, Quinn Mecham argues that an Islamic movement has greater potential to achieve the Islamists’ goal than a political party. An Islamic movement can be useful to promote Islamic education, provide charity, religious propagation (dawah), and change social norms, which might not be possible through a political party because Islamist parties are often repressed by states (Mecham 2014: 25).

**B) Different Social Movements and Political Parties/Movement-Parties:**

This section argues that the existing literature on social movement and social movement party does not explain the relationship between the success of a movement and its movement-party. This section of the chapter will show this gap in environmental movements, feminist movements, and Islamic movements respectively.

**1) Environmental Movement and Environmental Parties:**

Environmental movements have been amongst the most influential social movements during the past half-century (Heijden 2014: 410). Green parties (environmental parties) have been established by the activists of environmental movements in numerous countries where the activists think that grassroots activism or an environmental social movement is not sufficient to achieve environmental goals (Heijden 2014: 401). However, the development of Green parties created internal confusions and conflicts within the environmental activism.
There is a dilemma about how to develop a balance between an anti-parliamentary, grassroots-centered, and radical change-oriented movement and a political party that has to build coalitions and perform strategic negotiations. As a result, many of the Green movements experience an uneasy relationship with their political parties (Heijden 2014: 402).

This section briefly summarizes the literature on environmental movements and environmental parties to show that the literature on environmental movement does not examine the relationship between the success of the environmental movements and environmental parties. The literature mostly examines why the movement activists decide to transform the movements into political parties or form a political party, how the movements change as the activists start a political party, and different aspect of the movement and party.

Firstly, the literature on environmental movements and environmental parties explains why leaders of environmental movements transform the movements to political parties or decide to start a movement-party. For example, E. Gene Frankland uses the example of the Green movement in Germany to explain why the Green movement transformed from an activist group to a professionalized political party. The Green movement in Germany was against the institutionalized political party in its primary stage. However, the Green movement has changed to a professional political institution due to the competitive positions the Green has had to maintain in the political sphere (Frankland 2008: 36) as well as to prevent state repression (Mayer and Ely 1998: 6). Moreover, there are environmentalists who think that participation in electoral politics would allow the representatives of the movement to gain offices in the cabinet. As a result, they will be able to hold power and influence policies in favor of the movement (Doyle and McEachern 2007: 168).

Secondly, a significant number of scholars examine the changes that an environmental movement experiences when the movement entrepreneurs start a political party. According to Nicole Bolleyer, Green parties often start from a Green movement
Thus, the Green parties lack the organizational infrastructure of other parties, but they also tend to be very active, radical (Poguntke 2002: 136) and more democratic than conventional political parties in their initial stage (Bolleyer 2010: 603). However, once the parties enter into electoral politics, many of them tend to cut off relation with their grassroots organizations (Poguntke 2002: 136). The movement parties start to be more centralized, bureaucratic, and professional despite their initial ideological stance of being an alternative to conventional political parties (Bolleyer 2010: 603). As a result, the movements start to face internal conflicts (Bolleyer 2010: 603) and difficulties to create a party that is both viable and stays committed to the ideologies and goals of the movement (Bolleyer 2010: 604).

Thirdly, there are scholars who explore different issues of environmental movements and environmental political parties. For example, Botetzagias and Schuur examine the factors that determine both the participation and activism of the members of Green parties in Europe. According to the authors, studying environmental activism with the light of psychological and sociological factors helps us to understand how both the Green parties and contextual factors affect the activism of the members of Green movements (Botetzagias and Schuur 2012: 510-11). For instance, participants' involvements in environmental NGOs, new social movements, as well as activities in environmental parties play a substantial role in determining the participation of people in the movement. The authors also believe that both inadequate national environmental policies and good environmental conditions lead to higher environmental activism (Botetzagias and Schuur 2012: 510-11).

In brief, the literature draws links between environmental movement and environmental parties, as it explains why environmentalists start environmental parties and how the movements change after creating the parties. However, it does not show us the relationship between the success of environmental movement and the parties.
2) Feminist Movements and feminist Parties:

Similarly, the literature on Feminist movements and Feminist parties does not explore the relationship between the success of the movement and parties. Feminist movements are some of the oldest ongoing social movements. There has been a large number of scholars who have written about feminist movements and different aspects of the movements. The literature of feminist movements illustrates the relationship between the movement and non-feminist parties as well as why the movement leaders create feminist parties. However, it does not explain why a movement party experiences declining electoral success while the movement is rising and vice versa.

Though scholars examine country-specific feminist movements (Salhi 2010 and Seung-Kyung and Kyounghee 2011), transnational feminist movements (Maddison and Sawer 2013), growth (Bystydzienski 2001) of a feminist movement and there are only a few scholars who examine the relationship between a feminist movement and a feminist party. For instance, John T. Ishiyama discusses women's parties in post-communist polities and explains why some of the post-communist states experience the emergence of women's parties while others do not (Ishiyama 2003). Juan P. Marsiaj demonstrates why political parties are important to change policies for sexual minorities (Marsiaj 2006: 167).

Young, in contrast, explores the relationship between feminist movements and political parties, non-feminist parties. Young explains why social movements maintain a relationship with political parties and electoral politics and how it varies from movement to movement. When a movement spends a significant amount of resources for electoral strategies and “if electoral strategies are a regular element of a movement activity” for a long period, maintaining the relationship between a political party and the movement becomes a core activity of the movement (Young 2000: 20). In contrast, when resources spent by the
movement is minimal and over a short period of time, it can be understood that political parties and electoral politics are not the prime concern of the movement (Young 2000: 20).

Besides, people who study feminist movement and party, they do not study the relationship between the success of feminist movements and feminist parties. Kimberly B. Cowell-Meyers studies the feminist movements and feminist party in Northern Ireland. The author shows that different feminist movements in Northern Ireland developed a women’s political party to push forward the movement’s agenda (Cowell-Meyers 2014:61). The main purpose of the movement-party is not to win an election, but to pressure other political parties into giving greater attention to women’s concerns and ensure equal rights for women (Cowell-Meyers 2014:62). Thus, she does not explain the relationship between the success of a feminist movement and feminist party. Therefore, the literature on the feminist movements and feminist parties has a gap in addressing the relationship between the success of the movement and movement-party.

3) Islamic Movements and Islamist Parties:

Although social movement theory was not used to discuss Islamic movements until recently (Wiktorowicz 2004: 1), evidence shows that a growing number of scholars use social movement theories to explain Islamic movements. Scholars implement the theory to both radical (Andreas Armborst 2013; Philip W. Sutton and Stephen Vertigans 2004; Emmanuel Karagiannis 2005) and moderate Islamic movements (Banu Eligur 2010 and Asef Bayat 2007). A moderate Islamic movement is a movement that “accepts electoral democracy and political and ideological pluralism and aims for gradual social, political, and economic changes” (Ashour 2009: 4). In contrast, radical Islamist movements are the ones that refuse to work within established state institutions and use violent means to accomplish their goals (Ashour 2009: 4). The research conducted and this paper as a whole focuses on moderate Islamic movements in Bangladesh.
In this section, I argue that the literature on Islamic movement does not address the relationship between the success of an Islamic movement and its political party. More specifically, the literature fails to answer why a movement party experiences declining electoral support when the movement is on a rise and vice versa. In order to show this gap in the literature, the following paragraphs will summarize the literature on Islamic social movements. It will first show that most of the literature on Islamic movements does not address the relationship between Islamic movements and Islamist parties. The literature is divided into two sections: one group of scholars uses social movement theory to study Islamic social movements in general and the other group examines the growth of Islamist political parties without combining them. Secondly, it will show that there are a few scholars who combine and study both Islamic movements and Islamist political parties, but they do not elaborate on the relationship between the success of a movement and its political party.

1. Discussion that Does Not Address the Relationship Between Islamic Social Movement and the Parties:

One group of scholars such as Munson (2001), Bayat (2005), Shukrallah (1994), Meijer (2005), Tugal (2009), Delibas (2009), and Narli (1999) use social movement theory to explain Islamic movements. The other group of scholars such as Donald J. Porter (2002), Emmanuel Karagiannis (2007), Hrair Dekmejian (1994), Maha Azzam (2006), Michael Robbins and Lawrence Rubin (2013), and Muzaffer Ercan Yilmaz (2012) examine the rise and fall of electoral success of Islamist parties. However, the scholars do not examine the relation between the parties and movement in their analysis. As a result, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between the movement and movement parties. This gap will be demonstrated in the following section.
A) Analysis of Islamic Movements without a Focus on the Parties:

The following paragraphs will first demonstrate how scholars use political opportunity structure to explain the rise and behavior of Islamic movement. Secondly, it will show how scholars use resource mobilization theory with an emphasis on network and alliance to study Islamic social movements. Thirdly, it will explain how academics use framing theory to explore Islamic social movement in an attempt to show that a group of scholars studies Islamic movements without focusing on Islamist parties.

Firstly, a group of scholars such as Jenkins (1983: 533), Wiktorowicz (2004: 4), Berman (2003: 15), Schwedler (2004) and Isis Sanchez Estelles (2010) uses political opportunity structure to explain Islamic social movement. However, their analysis does not depict the relationship between Islamic movements and Islamist parties. For instance, Berman explains the rise of the Islamic movement in Egypt and argues that it is the political opportunity or lack of an alternative to the authoritarian regime of Egypt, which gave birth to the Islamic movement in Egypt. He argues that the regime failed to protect the economy of Egypt from deteriorating as well to create new job opportunities. In that context, Islamists offered Islam as a solution to the crisis and gained support and recognition from the masses through their civil society activism (Berman 2003: 15).

Change in political opportunity structure can also alter the behavior of an Islamic movement. For instance, Mohammed Hafez argues that political environment, such as a change in opportunity structure, determines the use of violence by Islamist actors. Hafez uses the case study of Groupe Islamique Arme (GIA) in Algeria to show that GIA used violent means due to the repression from the state. GIA used to be a moderate Islamic social movement before 1992 when Algeria had an open/permissive political system. However, closure of the political system along with the state repression on the Islamists promoted a sense of injustice among the Islamists. Thus, the Islamist groups formed their own radicalized
organization and used violence to defend themselves as well as to fight against the state (Hafez 2004: 53).

Hafez and Wiktorowicz go further and argue that social movement can adopt violent means if the movement is excluded from formal politics and suffer indiscriminate and reactive (opposed to preemptive) state repression. Gama’a Islamiyya in Egypt used to be a moderate Islamic social movement like many other movements. The movement was used by the state of Egypt to counter the leftist force before the 1980s (Hafez and Wiktorowicz 2004: 80). As a result, the movement has strengthened its mobilization capacity and resources. However, the Egyptian regime started to repress the Gama’a Islamiyya discriminately and reactively during the 1980s. Thus, Gama adopted violent means to defend itself as well as to protect the organizational resource it has accumulated over time. Moreover, political exclusion limited the tactical options available to the movement and legitimized Gama to use violence (Hafez and Wiktorowicz 2004: 80). In brief, this group of scholars uses political opportunity structure to explain the rise and behavior of Islamic social movements. However, their analysis does not depict the relationship between an Islamic movement and the movement party.

Secondly, there are also scholars who study Islamic social movement with the help of resource mobilization theory, especially with a focus on networks and alliance, but the relationship between Islamic movements and Islamist parties is yet to be examined in their analysis. For example, Joel Beinin argues that it is important to understand the characteristics and context of informal networks to understand the social process through which participants become mobilized and embedded in the networks of movements. Understanding the social process is crucial to comprehend how networks affect a movement because “the particular character of informal networks, the forms of hierarchy and status they embody” affect movements differently (Beinin and Vairel 2012: 13). For example, Joel Beinin and Marie
Doboc show that Egyptian workers’ reliance on local networks enables as well as limits their attempt to mobilization at the same time. The reliance on the networks helped them to sustain local strikes as well as hindered the coordination among workers on a national level (Beinin and Vairel 2012: 13). Thus, it is important to understand the context to see how networks affect movement activities (Beinin and Vairel 2012: 8).

Singerman goes further and explains why Islamic movements use informal networks. The author argues that Islamic movements tend to use associational networks of personal relations such as family and friends to mobilize resources and recruit members to avoid repression from the state (Singerman 2004: 144). Besides, Islamists do not lose much by using the informal network as Islamists enjoy authenticity and legitimacy in their society, which helps them to deliver their messages and being accepted (Singerman 2004: 152).

Janine A. Clark examines how Islamic social movement organizations use social networks and informal institutions for activism. Clark studies how Islamic social movement organizations, Hizb al-Islah and Islah Charitable Society in Yemen, use Quranic study groups to disseminate their message, invite people to support the activities of the movement, and recruit new members. The movement organizations slowly involve women of the study groups to their movement using different strategies based on the level of the commitment of the potential member. Many of these women become involved in the social movement so strongly that they close their ties from previous networks and build new relations based on Islamist ideology (Clark 2004: 180). These women later work for the Islamic social movements consciously and unconsciously (Clark 2004: 180). Thus, Clark’s study indicates that social movement organizations do not always grow out of friendship network of different groups. “The reverse can happen: friendship networks emerge from recruitment efforts” (Clark 2004: 180). In short, this group of scholars explains why the context of informal networks is important for mobilization and why and how leaders of Islamic movements use
networks to mobilize activism. However, they do not examine the relationship between Islamic movements and Islamist parties.

Thirdly, many scholars use framing to examine Islamic social movement, but the analysis of the relationship between the movement and movement party is absent in their research. For instance, Carrie Wickham argues that different incentives can contribute to the success of Islamists’ outreach, but the importance of framing become crucial as participants become integrated into the movement. Wickham studied the Islamists’ recruitment of high school and university students in three urban lower-middle class neighborhoods in Egypt. The author found that different material and socio-psychological benefits attracted most of the students to join Islamic networks (Wickham 2004: 231). However, their commitment to the networks, especially during high-risk activism, depends on the Islamists’ framing of the activism as a high moral duty. Moreover, it is not simply the frame but also how the frame resonated with the experience of the students, the authenticity and effectiveness of the agent, and the reinforcement of the message, which determined the commitment of the participants (Wickham 2004: 232). However, the scholars of this group also do not explain the relationship between Islamic movement and Islamist parties.

**B) Analysis of Islamist Parties without a Focus on Islamic Social Movements:**

A group of scholars examines Islamist parties’ electoral success without explaining the relationship between Islamic movements and parties in their research. For instance, Gidengil and Karakoc explain why an Islamist party gains a significant share of the popular vote in ‘free and fair’ elections and how an Islamist party can maintain a strong support base and turn into a successful electoral party (Gidengil and Karakoc 2014: 1). They argue Islamist parties would be successful electoral parties if they can improve the living standard of the disadvantaged, develop successful economic policies, and ensure the protection of democratic values (Gidengil and Karakoc 2014: 11).
Similarly, there are scholars who explain why and how Islamist parties manage to develop a popular support base in a consolidating democracy (Gerges 2013: 391; Hamayotsu 2011: 974). For example, Fawaz A. Gerges argues that a large number of Islamist parties try to increase their political legitimacy and support base through public services. They believe that the possibility of being re-elected depends on parties’ ability to provide public goods, create job opportunities, and to promote economic growth and political transparency. Thus, according to Gerges, Islamist parties are increasingly becoming service oriented parties in an attempt to gain popular support (Gerges 2013: 391).

Jillian Schwedler goes even further and shows how political opportunities can contribute to both rise and fall of an Islamist party. Schwedler examines Islah Party’s (an Islamist party) alliance with the regime in Yemen and argues that political opportunity can contribute to success and failure of a political party. The Islah Party was formed in 1990 and it joined the ruling coalition government (people’s congress party) in 1993 (Schwedler 2004: 205). During the time of the coalition government, the members of the Islah party were appointed as deputy prime minister and ministers, and the influence of the party grew. However, the influence of Islah Party reduced significantly as the People’s Congress party withdrew its alliance with the Islah Party (Schwedler 2004: 206).

In brief, this section of the literature examines Islamic social movement and Islamic political parties separately. Thus, the relationship between the success of Islamic social movements and Islamist parties remain unexplained in this section of the literature.

2. Discussion that Combines Islamic Movements and Islamist Parties but Fails to Address the Relationship between the Success of Islamist Parties and Islamic Movements:

The following scholars do combine the analysis of Islamic movements and Islamist political parties, but the literature is still under-theorized, as they do not explain the
relationship between the success of Islamic movements and Islamist political parties. In other words, they do not explain why Islamist parties in some countries face declining electoral support on the rise of Islamic movements while Islamist parties tend to experience a concurrent rise in their electoral support with the rise of Islamic movements. This section will first show why an Islamic movement participates in electoral politics and how the relationship between the movement and the movement party changes once the movement starts a political wing to demonstrate the gap in the literature.

First of all, a number of scholars discuss why some Islamic movements decide to participate in electoral politics. Mecham argues that participating in electoral politics may help leaders of Islamic movements to achieve their goal of governing states based on Islamic laws (2014: 26). Moreover, Islamists’ participation in electoral politics would allow them to get access to media, state resources, and immunity from persecution. Furthermore, Islamists’ participation in parliaments allows them to propose bills as well as to participate in the discussion on political issues (Mecham 2014: 26).

Esen Kirdis also explains why some Islamic movements decide to form Islamist political parties. She argues that an Islamic movement decides to form a political party based on their strategic interests and needs. According to her, leaders of Islamic movements decide whether to participate in electoral politics based on the cost-benefit analysis of forming a political party. They make decisions based on their ideological priorities and organizational needs as well as their past experiences (Kirdis 2015: 85).

Similarly, Sinno and Khanani argue that entrepreneurs of Islamic movements decide to participate in electoral politics based on the “quality of the electoral opening” and the benefits of participating in elections (Sinno and Khanani 2010:39). Sinno and Khanani think services-oriented and patronage-based movements usually participate in elections that are “fair and representation meaningful” (Sinno and Khanani 2010: 40-41). They participate
because they can count on the beneficiary of their services and their dedicated cadres who help with the transition from a movement to an electoral party. Moreover, the advantages these two types of movements receive from participating in parliaments contribute to increasing the effectiveness of their activities and enhance their support base (Sinno and Khanani 2010: 40-41). Thus, participating in fair and meaningful elections allow the movements to become a major party like Justice and Development party (AKP) in Turkey or become a crucial coalition partner of a ruling government, which ultimately increases the legitimacy of the movement (Sinno and Khanani 2010: 41).

Secondly, a number of scholars discuss how Islamist parties’ tie to Islamic movements affects the parties’ behavior. According to Hwang and Mecham, a large number of political parties that were created by Islamic movements or have connections with Islamic movements become moderate and change their electoral strategy over time (Hwang and Mecham 2014: 181). The parties attempt to 'normalize' and become less distinct from other political parties through strict adherence to the rules of political realm (Hwang and Mecham 2014: 181). According to the author, parties that normalize are more likely to gain electoral success. However, Islamist parties with strong ties to Islamic movements will be constrained in their attempts to normalize, as the leadership of these movements strives to ensure that the parties do not go beyond the movements’ immediate goals (Mecham 2014: 30).

Mecham also argues that an Islamist party is most likely to have electoral success when the party attracts protest voters who do not vote for religion, but because of their dissatisfaction with the existing government. In order to attract protest voters, Islamist parties might undertake a fundamental shift in their ideologies and characteristics (Mechan 2015: 33). Murat Somer shows that the Justice and Development party (AKP) of Turkey distanced itself from the Mili Gorus movement (MG) and was able become a normalized political actor; thereby attract mainstream constituencies (Somer 2014: 55). Most importantly, the
AKP was able to attract protest voters, which contributed to the electoral success of the party (Somer 2014: 55).

In contrast, Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia normalized to a significant degree, but still faces difficulties in succeeding in elections (Hwang 2014: 70). While AKP in Turkey received a significant number of votes "for reasons other than Islam", PKS voters chose the party for “reasons often including, but not restricted to, Islam" (Hwang 2014: 81). Moreover, protest voters in Indonesia do not support the same political party in every election, as Indonesia has more than one Islamist party (Hwang 2014: 81). The discussion about PKS shows that it is not guaranteed that normalization will ensure electoral success for Islamist parties (Mecham 2014: 32). Besides, the literature leaves us with no answer regarding why Islamist parties experience declining electoral support while Islamic social movement is rising and why an Islamic movement grows despite the failure of the Islamist parties. Therefore, the gap in the literature justifies this research.

In short, the summary of the literature of environmental movements, feminist movements, and Islamic movements (along with their political wings) shows how movement leaders use different methods under different circumstances to mobilize support, why leaders of a movement start a political wing, and how movements change once they start political parties. However, the relationship between the success of a movement-party and the movement is still underdeveloped. The gap in the literature justifies this research to examine the relationship between the success of social movements and social movement parties. Addressing the gap in the literature, this research will make a significant contribution to the literature of social movement and social movement parties. This research will be helpful to explain why any social movement party fails or experience declining electoral support in spite of the rise of the social movement and vice versa. The following chapter explains the theories that will be used to assist this research.
Chapter Four: Theory

Though there are different social movement theories, a combination of political opportunity structure, resource mobilization, and framing theory is relevant to explain the research puzzle about Islamic social movement and Islamist political parties in Bangladesh. This chapter will firstly show why some of the social movement theories are not relevant to the case and then illustrate why a combination of political opportunity structure, resource mobilization, and framing theory is helpful to understand the case.

Firstly, though relative deprivation theory partly helps to explain the rise of Islamic social movement in Bangladesh, it does not explain why Islamist parties are failing to increase their electoral support despite the rise of Islamic social movement. A group of scholars argues that grievance that comes from relative deprivation to other groups in a society or the deprivation in relation to the protesting groups’ expectation or in relation to their past experience gives rise of social movements (Snow 2013; Karl-Dieter Opp 1988; Law and Walsh 1983). Students who study in Qawmi Madrassa are not adequately integrated into the formal job market of Bangladesh in comparison to their peers from public schools and Alia Madrassa. Thus, they feel they are deprived and they have grievances from being neglected.

However, relative deprivation of Madrassa community does not give rise to the Islamic social movement as the members of Qawmi Madrassas do not want any government intervention in their institutions. Rather, the strategic use of Islam by the state and the role of the Islamic movements and political parties are the two main reasons behind the rise of Islamic social movement. The state’s use of Islam created opportunities for Madrassas to grow and the Islamic movement and parties mobilized the Madrassa community to be part of the broader Islamic social movement. Moreover, Islamist parties continue to experience declining electoral support despite the grievance among increasing number of graduates,
students, and people involved in the Madrassa education. Therefore, relative deprivation theory is not sufficient to explain why Islamist political parties’ electoral support has been declining despite the growing strength of the Islamic social movement in Bangladesh and vice versa.

Similarly, rational choice theory also fails to explain the puzzle. According to many scholars, relative deprivation does not always give rise to a social movement unless the deprived groups think that their participation in a contentious movement is a rational choice or the participation will make the deprived better off than their present situation (Mancur Olson 1965; Herrnstein 1990). Rational choice theorizes that individuals are rational and they make all their choices based on the cost and benefits analysis of an action. Thus, whether an individual will join a movement and continue his/her participation for a long time or vote for a particular party will be based on the cost and benefits analysis (Wickham 2002: 150). According to rational choice theory, it can be assumed that people do not want to take the trouble to go to vote because no one will know if they voted. Or, people will not participate in demonstrations that are often attacked by the state forces.

However, this is not the case in Bangladesh, as many people go to vote and go to the streets to protest with the Islamists. A significant number of people in Bangladesh go to vote in spite of the hassle of a long line, registration requirement, and “even the threat of physical violence or arrest in order to vote” (Feddersen 2004: 99). Voter turnout has been increasing gradually in every election until 2008. In 2008, 85.26% of the total population voted in contrast to 55.45% in 1991 in Bangladesh (Voter Turnout Data For Bangladesh, International IDEA: 2016). Furthermore, millions of people went down to streets to support the Islamist groups' protest despite the risk of being harassed by the state force (Harrison 2015). When the cost of participation in a movement is obvious, rational choice theory’s explanation does not help to comprehend participation in a risky movement (Wickham 2002: 156). Thus, the
explanation of rational choice theory is not sufficient when we see that a large number of people participate in the Islamists’ movement taking the risk of being harassed, but do not vote for the parties.

A combination of political opportunity structure, resource mobilization, and framing theory helps best to explain the scenario in Bangladesh. Political opportunity structure explains the success or failure of a movement based on the availability of political opportunities such as political elites and institutional arrangements (Kingstone et al. 2013: 98). For instance, an open political system increases the prospect of a social movement compared to a closed political system. Moreover, movement activists can create political opportunities or change a situation for the movement. Movement activists can change policies, develop an alliance with political institutions, draw attention from media and develop frames for mobilizing collective action (Mayer 2003).

Resource mobilization theorists argue that success of a movement is significantly determined by the movement leaders’ strategic mechanism to harness available resources and directing the resources for pursuing the goals (Liow 2011: 668). The resources are categorized into moral (legitimacy, loyalty, commitment, solidarity support, sympathetic support and celebrity), cultural (artifacts and cultural products such as specialized knowledge), social-organizational (institutions both created by movement and outside of a movement), human (labor, experience, skill and expertise), and material resources (such as financial resources) (Edwards and McCarthy 2004: 117). Resources are mobilized through self-production, aggregation of resources, resource appropriation, and patronage (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Although it is widely accepted that availability of resources increases the likelihood of collective actions, resource mobilization theorists argue that mere availability of resources is not enough for a social movement (Edwards and McCarthy 2004: 116). Coordination and strategic effort are necessary for securing control over resources that are
individually held and direct the resources for collective action (Edwards and McCarthy 2004: 116; Jenkins 1983: 533). Resource mobilization theorists, thus, emphasis on making an institutional change such as changing social structure, organize an unorganized group for their common goal or represent the interest of unrepresented people in politics (Jenkins 1983: 529).

Framing theorists argue that success of a movement depends on the capacity of a movement to frame their message in such a way that best resonates with the experience and lifestyle of potential participates (Chong and Druckman 2007: 104; Wiktorowicz 2004: 16). In addition to the resonance, the credibility of the agents that articulate the frame, that is, “the personal salience of the frame for potential participants, the consistency of the frame, and the frame’s empirical credibility in real life” is also essential for the success of the movement (Wiktorowicz 2004: 16).

This research will use political opportunity structure, resource mobilization, and framing to explain the relationship between the success of the Islamic social movement and Islamic political parties in Bangladesh. Firstly, as the empirical analyse below will demonstrate, political opportunities created by the state initiated the Islamization of society, and Islamist groups, especially Islamist parties and Islamic social movement directed the available opportunities created by the state to further Islamize the society in order to achieve their goal of establishing an Islamic state. One of the reasons behind Islamist groups’ success in the Islamization is their use of powerful framing. For instance, Islamist groups including both Islamist parties and Islamic movements claim Islam is in danger and needs to be protected if they want to change a policy or hold a demonstration. Islamist parties, at the same time, fail electorally due to their failure in developing a frame to be accepted and elected by the majority people. Moreover, Islamist parties failed to direct the resources of
Islamic social movement to increase constituency. The following chapter will analysis the finding of the study to answer the questions raised in the research.
Chapter Five: Analysis

Bangladesh has the fourth largest Muslim population in the world, and the country has witnessed a rise in Islamic social movement (Riaz 2014:156) since the late 1970s. However, Islamist political parties have been experiencing declining electoral support since 1991. Why do Islamist parties fail to increase their electoral support despite the rise of the Islamic social movement? And why does the Islamic social movement gain such an influence in the society while Islamist parties experience declining electoral support? Based on fieldwork conducted in Bangladesh and secondary literature, this research argues that Islamic social movement in Bangladesh is growing due to the state’s strategic use of Islam and Islamist groups' effort in directing available opportunity/resources to Islamize the society. On the one hand, all the governments in Bangladesh have patronized Islamist groups or supported them by being loyal to Islamic values for strategic reasons, which has created political opportunities for the Islamic social movement to rise and contributed to the growth of Islamic social movements. The Islamist groups, on the other hand, utilized available resources and opportunities created by the state to further Islamize the society.

This research also argues that Islamist parties face declining electoral support despite the rise of Islamic social movement if the parties fail to direct the resources created by the movement to increase constituency, and if non-religious parties are more successful at attracting religious voters. The Islamist parties in Bangladesh experience a decline because they failed to mobilize the resources of the Islamic social movement, and they fail due to three reasons. First, it is due to Islamist parties' strategic mistake of trying to impose a foreign ideology, Wahhabism, instead of trying to frame it to be accepted by the local. Second, it is due to the parties’ failure in earning legitimacy from the majority Bangladeshis. Islamist parties could not earn the legitimacy to govern the country due to their failure in offering to be the best alternative to the existing state or political parties, failure in neutralizing past
scandals, and failure in adapting to democratic institutions and building relation with religious minorities.

Third, it is because of the Islamist parties' failure in extending networks and keeping people committed to the movement. Islamist parties still could not mobilize urban middle class and youth population, and they have reluctance in extending their networks to people who are not part of the movement. This chapter will first discuss different Islamist groups in Bangladesh to familiarize the readers with different types of moderate Islamist actors and how they are similar and different from each other. Secondly, it will discuss why the Islamic social movement is growing. Thirdly, it will illustrate the growth of the movement, and fourthly it will demonstrate why Islamist parties are experiencing a decline in electoral support.

1) Islamist Groups and Similarities and Differences Among Them:

I categorize the relatively moderate Islamic groups intro three categories based on their association to the existing Islamic movements in Bangladesh and argue that all the Islamist groups share one common goal of establishing an Islamic state though they have conflicts among them. This section will first examine different types of Islamic actors: Islamic movements with and without a political wing and political parties that did not originate from an Islamic movement but claim themselves as a movement in Bangladesh. Secondly, it will discuss the conflicts among the Islamist actors, and thirdly it will demonstrate the similarities among the Islamist groups.

The Ahl-i-Hadith and Tabligh Jamaat are examples of Islamic movements without a political wing. The Ahl-i-Hadith movement follows Wahhabism and claims to have 25 million followers in 40 districts out of 64 districts in Bangladesh. The main ambition of this movement is to spread the knowledge of the Quran and Hadith (World Almanac Of Islamism 2011 2011). Tabligh Jamaat is a grassroots-based puritan, pacifist, and missionary movement
that follows Wahhabism. The movement has millions of supporters in Bangladesh (Hashmi 2004: 39) and gathers millions of people from Bangladesh and elsewhere in every winter in Tungi, next to the capital Dhaka. The gathering is called Ijtama, and it is the second largest congregation of Muslims after the pilgrimage to Mecca (Bennett and Ramsey 2012: 170).

There are also Islamic movements that have political wings such as the Sufis and Pirs movement and Jamaat-i-Islami movement. The Sufis and Pirs represent mystic Islam, and the Sufis played a crucial role in preaching Islam in Bangladesh, especially in rural areas when Bangladesh was under the Indian subcontinent (Bennett and Ramsey 2012: 176). People accepted Islam through Sufis due to Sufis' practice of simplicity, egalitarianism, and the notion of brotherhood. “It has been argued that the development of coexistence and tolerance, especially between Hindus and Muslims, is one of the greatest achievements of the Sufis in Bengal (Bangladesh)” (Bennett and Ramsey 2012:171). However, this tradition was in conflict with the “Two Nations Theory” (Hindus and Muslims are two different nations). Thus, Sufis, who used to work as intermediaries among political elites and citizens, withdrew themselves from political debates during the middle of the nineteenth century (Bennett and Ramsey 2012:171). Some of the Sufi masters later established political parties after the independence of Bangladesh although the electoral support of these parties is insignificant.

Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) is an Islamic movement as well as the largest Islamist political party in Bangladesh in terms of organizational strength and electoral support. It aims to establish an Islamic state through democracy. The party was banned after the independence of Bangladesh from 1971 to 1978 (Riaz 2003: 301). There are also Islamist parties that did not originate from an Islamic movement like Jamaat-i-Islami. However, the parties work as an Islamic movement or create the impact of an Islamic movement and claim themselves as Islamic movements. The parties want to establish an Islamic state like all the other Islamist groups. One of the examples of such parties is Islamic Oikyo Jote (IOJ).
However, most of these groups have conflict among them. For instance, Ahl-i-Hadith movement challenges the Sufi movement claiming that the doctrines of the Sufis were highly influenced by ordinary people (Bennett and Ramsey 2012: 164); thus, the doctrines lack credibility. Sufi and Pirs movements, in general, opposes Jamaat-i-Islami and Tabligh Jamaat movement although there are some people in Jamaat-i-Islami and Tabligh Jamaat that pay respect to certain Pirs (Hashmi 2004: 39). My interviewee Iqbal, who is a human right activist and NGO worker with previous work experience as a journalist, also states that Sufis and Pris criticize Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) as dishonest and cheaters and claim that Jamaat-i-Islami commits sin, as JI prioritizes electoral politics over remaining true to Islam through its activities (Iqbal 2015). Tabligh Jamaat also criticizes Jamaat-i-Islami for being very strategic about succeeding in electoral politics rather than focusing on establishing Islam in society (Pattanaik 2009: 273; Mishra 2012: 292).

Similarly, my interviewee NGO worker Karim, who sympathizes with the Islamist parties but vote for BNP, claims that no single person from Tabligh Jamaat votes for Jamaat-i-Islami, and Tabligh Jamaat will never ally with Jammat-i-Islami because of the strategic conflict between them. Jamaat-i-Islami aims to come to power whereas Tabligh Jamaat’s goal is not to be in power but to spread Islam (Karim 2015). Likewise, interviewee Ahmed, who is an associate professor of political science with an expertise in religious politics as well as a sympathizers of the Islamist groups, states that Tabligh Jamaat does not like the politics of Jamaat-i-Islami because of the party’s priority to gain electoral strength than spreading Islamic values like Tabligh Jamaat (Ahmed 2015). Jamaat-i-Islami also criticizes Tabligh Jamaat for not helping Jamaat to increase its electoral support according to Iqbal (2015). Jamaat-i-Islami blames Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) that TJ does not act seriously to establish Islam in the country. Jamaat-i-Islami once said that TJ does picnics (referring to Ijtama), and the
picnics would not help TJ to compete with the corrupted government of Bangladesh and come to power (Iqbal 2015).

Despite the enmity among the Islamist groups, they have a lot of commonalities. All these groups oppose women’s liberation and “Western codes of conduct, law and ethics, and even dress and culture” and aim to establish an Islamic state (Hashmi 2004: 39-40). These groups are also pro-Pakistan and anti-Indian (Hashmi 2004: 39-40). Some of my interviewees also confirm that all the Islamist groups aim or help to establish an Islamic state based on Shari’a law (Rahman 2015; Ahmed 2015; Rashid\textsuperscript{3} 2015; Haque\textsuperscript{4} 2015), and they are pro-Pakistani and anti-Indian (Iqbal 2015; Chowdhury 2015). According to Rahman, who is a senior Journalist, all the Islamic actors have connections with each other (2015). My interviewees also argue that all these groups work together when something goes against Islamic laws and values (Karim 2015; Amin\textsuperscript{5} 2015). For instance, Zaman, who is an associate professor of sociology and expert in social movement and religious politics, states that most of the Islamist groups participated in the Islamists’ demonstration against equal inheritance right for women (Zaman 2015). Moreover, in response to the death sentence of a popular Jamaat-i-Islami leader, all most all the Islamist groups came down to the street to protest against the death penalty (Zaman 2015; Amin 2015; Haque 2015). Thus, based on the secondary literature and the opinion of my interviewees, it is clear that the Islamist groups share similar goals despite their differences, especially they all want to establish an Islamic state. The following section will explain how all these groups contribute to the growth of Islamic social movement in Bangladesh in addition to Islamization done by the state.

\textsuperscript{3} Rashid is a lecturer of Political Science with an expertise in Islamic politics. He is also a sympathizer of Islamist groups in Bangladesh.

\textsuperscript{4} Haque is one of my interviewees who is an NGO worker.

\textsuperscript{5} Amin is an interviewee who is senior journalist and he extensively writes about Islamic political issues.
2. Why Islamic Movement is Rising in Bangladesh?

Islamic social movement grows in contrast to the electoral decline of the Islamist parties because all the Islamist groups are contributing to the same goal of Islamizing the society, and the state of Bangladesh contributes to the Islamization in the form of patronizing the Islamist groups or approving and adapting to the Islamist values for strategic reasons. This section argues that Islamic social movement in Bangladesh has become prominent due to Islamization by the state and Islamist groups. This section will firstly show how different governments and political parties of Bangladesh have contributed to the rise of Islamic social movement, and then how different Islamist groups have taken part in the upsurge of Islamic social movement.

A) Strategic use of Islam by the State of Bangladesh:

Strategic use of Islam by the state has started since the independence of Bangladesh. After independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh was established on the principles of socialism, secularism, democracy and nationalism. The Awami League (AL) government at that time banned all the religious parties from politics (Jahan 1974: 133). However, soon after the independence, the same AL government released 33,000 detained Islamists who had collaborated with Pakistan during the liberation war to weaken the socialist groups (Jahan 1974: 133). Furthermore, the leader of the AL government, Sheikh Mujibur Rahama, founded an Islamic foundation for research on Islamic culture and society and joined the Organization of the Islamic Conference to attract fund from the Middle East (World Almanac Of Islamism 2011 2011: 670). Moreover, the AL government let the madrassa education system to continue (Hashmi 2004: 41).

Mujib’s successors continued the Islamization of society more extensively for gaining legitimacy to govern (Riaz 2008: 12). According to Taj I. Hashmi, Mujib’s successors understood the significant possibility of the rise of Islam in Bangladesh as the preconditions
for its rise, including poverty, illiteracy, unequal distribution of wealth, and a large Muslim population (90%), existed in Bangladesh during the 1970s and 80s (2004: 36-37). General Zia (ruling period 1975-1981), who came to power after the assassination of Mujib through a military coup or without the support of the majority people, used Islam as a political tool to make his rule acceptable to the vast majority of Muslim population (Riaz 2008: 12). He tried to govern the country in the name of Islam to legitimize his rule (Hashmi 2004: 36). Zia’s government redefined national identity by dropping secularism and socialism from the constitution and replacing them with “Absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah” (World Almanac Of Islamism 2011 2011: 670; Naher 2010: 317). Zia also allowed the Islamist parties, which were previously banned in the formal politics, to participate in the politics through a constitutional amendment in 1976 (World Almanac Of Islamism 2011 2011: 670; Naher 2010: 317). In addition, Zia established the Ministry of Religious Affairs, introduced mandatory religious studies in government schools, encouraged madrassa education by giving funds, and started Islamic programs in government-controlled media (Naher 2010: 317; Mishra 2012: 286; Hasan 2012: 161; Ahamed and Nazneen 1990: 796).

General Ershad (ruling period 1982-1990), who came to power after Zia through a military coup, also used Islam as a political tool to gain legitimacy to govern (Mishra 2012: 287). Ershad announced Islam as a state religion, made Friday the weekly holiday, started religious teaching in the military, as well as began to construct new mosques and repair old ones in addition to promoting Madrassa education even further than his successor (Mishra 2012: 287). Ershad distributed the fund he received from the Middle East to increase the number of madrassas and promoted Islam in the society in general. Thus, Bangladesh was experiencing a growing emergence of Islamist organizations and ideology during the time (Riaz 2004; Iqbal 2015; Jahan and Shahan 2014: 437).
The democratic governments after the authoritarian regimes have continued the practice of the military regimes (Mishra 2012: 287) for strategic reasons. Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) are the two major political parties in Bangladesh. These two parties have continued to govern the country alternately from 1991 to 2008; AL was elected twice in a row in 2008 and 2014 for the first time. Both the AL and BNP have continued the practices of the previous government regarding the Islamist groups. For instance, both parties let the state-run Islamic Foundation (Hasan 2014), Madrassa education and the Islamist political parties to continue to participate in elections when they were in power (Mishra 2012: 287; Rashid 2015 and Islam 2015).

Moreover, both the AL and BNP started to use Islam for earning credibility to govern the country. Both AL and BNP failed to establish good governance and stability. Due to their failure in earning credibility through good governance (Hasan 2014) and weakening of the social and political institutions of the country (Hasan 2012: 176), both AL and BNP have been using Islam for gaining popularity or for maintaining their support base (Hasan 2014; Riaz 2004). AL and BNP also started to use Islam because they believe the religious status of the party determines its success. Bangladesh had its first democratic election after the authoritarian rule in 1991. During the election, AL campaigned from a liberal and secularist position whereas BNP was a center-right party. The defeat of AL made the AL leaders think that Islam has penetrated to the society deeply and BNP's center-right position helped BNP to win the election (Jahan and Shahan 2014: 437). Thus, AL started to show the party’s loyalty to Islam and present the party as the defender of Islam. Coincidently, AL won the following election in 1996 (Jahan and Shahan 2014: 437). As a result, AL continued to use Islam to attract more voters. Similarly, BNP thought AL won the election in 1996 due to its strategic

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6 Islam is one of my interviewees who an associate professor of Political Science. He is also an expert of religious politics in Bangladesh.
use of Islam, thus BNP “decided to move further right” to increase its support base (Jahan and Shahan 2014: 437). Content analysis of election campaign of AL and BNP in 1991 shows that both AL and BNP tried to show their faithfulness to Islam to attract the religious voters. For instance, BNP chanted that “La ilahaillallah dhaner shishe bismillah” (“there is no God but Allah, vote for the paddy sheaf (symbol of BNP) saying God the merciful”). Similarly, AL chanted “La ilahaillallah naukarmalik tui Allah” (“there is no God but Allah, the boat (symbol of AL) belongs to Allah”) (Hasan 2012: 66).

Thus, wherever Islamist groups protest against any laws or policies, both AL and BNP try to compromise as they try to present themselves as the custodian of Islam according to my interviewee Zaman (2015). Moreover, both AL and BNP have been showing inertia in approving laws and policies that are regarded anti-Islamic (Jahan and Shahan 2014: 427). As a result, “Islamist groups on the political margin began to exercise disproportionate influence by taking advantage” of the political environment (Mishra 2012: 287). According to Iqbal (an interviewee), if AL and BNP do not give a lot of space to the Islamist groups, it would have been difficult for the Islamist groups to grow (Iqbal 2015). Similarly Ali Riaz in his influential book, “God Willing: The Politics of Islamism in Bangladesh” argue that the Islamization by the state resulted in an increasing influence of the Islamist parties in the political domain as well as a growing number of religious institutions, preaching and gatherings which led to the growth of Islamic social movement in Bangladesh (Riaz 2004; Siddiqi 2010: 20).

**B) Islamization by the Islamist Groups:**

Islamist groups utilize the state’s supportive attitude towards the Islamists and contribute to strengthening the Islamic social movement. Islamist groups in Bangladesh enjoy a more favorable environment than many of their counterparts in the Middle East due the state’s attempt to be Islam-friendly. Therefore, Islamist groups can work to Islamize the
society without any coercion or repression from the state. For instance, the Sufis and Pirś use their Shrines (Mazar) as centers to preach Islam and teach about the Quran and Sunnah (Bennett and Ramsey 2012: 164) without any fear of being repressed by the state.

Furthermore, the Sufis received funds from the state during the Ershad government to build Sufi Shrines (Hasan 2012: 64). Moreover, General Ershad makes visits to the Sufi shrines to show his loyalty to Islam, which increases the legitimacy of the Sufis. Thus, Sufism thrives and continues to be popular among masses. A large majority of Muslim believes that Sufis are the source of spiritual wisdom and guidance and make visits to their Shrines (Bennett and Ramsey 2012: 164). Moreover, thousands of people, regardless of religious background, go to these Shrines for mental peace and spiritual strength. Gradually, the group has expanded its supporters in every section of the society (Ahamed and Nazneen 1990: 801).

Tabligh Jamaat also grows without being controlled by the state and contributes to the Islamization of society through its dawah (preaching of Islam) movement. Though Tabligh Jamaat existed in the regions of Bangladesh for a long time, but it was during the 1970-1980s that TJ experienced a rapid expansion (Sikand 1999: 112). One of the main reasons behind the expansion during that time was the authoritarian regimes’ (1975-1990) attempt to use Islam or create an Islam-friendly environment to legitimize their power (Sikand 1999: 112). TJ continues to grow and Islamize the society since then. The primary goal of Tabligh Jamaat is to spread Islamic values in the personal life of individuals from grassroots level (World Almanac Of Islamism 2011 2011; Pattanaik 2009: 273; Mishra 2012: 292). It aims at strengthening faith among Muslims (Ahamed and Nazneen 1990: 799; Devine and White 2013: 141), especially people who deviated from Islamic lifestyles (Hasan 2012: 65). Tabligh Jamaat (TJ) uses dawah movement that includes activities with people in the community as well as missionary journeys to other places (Siddiqi 2012: 177) to achieve its goals.
Members of TJ are expected to learn the process of dawah and implement their learning in every aspect of daily life. Implementation process begins with family and continues to spread the teaching to their community and beyond. TJ believes that members will be committed to the movement if they have support from their families. Thus, TJ primarily focuses on family and makes sure women in the family are involved in deen (religion). TJ invites women to participate in weekly taleem (women’s religious study group) sessions in TJ members’ houses (Mishra 2012: 292).

TJ also uses Chilla, where participants go on missions to mosques and offer training on Islam to mobilize men. The Chilla varies from three days to a few months, and there has been an increase in the number of men, especially young middle-class men attending Chillas (Devine and White 2013: 142). The core function of Chillas is to promote greater importance to Islam in individuals’ life (Devine and White 2013: 142). The TJ participants are encouraged to adopt an austere lifestyle, such as stop smoking and drinking alcohol, and watching TV. Participants are also encouraged to attend mosque, fast and pray five times a day. TJ’s strategy of mobilizing people through the emphasis of teaching good and moral behavior and promoting self-improvement made the movement popular among many people in recent years, especially in the North of Bangladesh (Devine and White 2013: 142). It mobilized a significant number of people from all walks of life, “from students and teachers, to doctors and engineers, and even officials and ordinary people” (Hasan 2012: 65). Thus, Bangladesh now has the largest organization of Tabligh Jamaat in the Muslim world (Bennett and Ramsey 2012: 170).

Islamist parties also contributed to the rising Islamic social movement in a supportive political environment by recruiting people through different organizations and building alliances with major political parties. For example, Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) follows a rigorous strategy of recruiting members for the organizations. The student wing has strong influences
in many universities and colleges and uses its influence to recruit support (Pattanaik 2009:273). In addition, JI uses its publishing organizations, such as newspaper and magazines, to spread the cause of the movement in addition to religious gatherings, such as Wajmahfils, to mobilize people (Pattanaik 2009:280). Wajmahfil, a gathering where an Islamist leader talks about the glory of Islam, plays an influential role in Islamizing society. One of the popular leaders of Wajmahfil is Delwar Hossain Saidee from Jamaat-i-Islami. He used gatherings to spread Islamic political ideology and encourage the participants of the group to go and spread the message of the meeting in their networks (Hasan 2012: 64). Jamaat-i-Islami also uses the support of Islamic NGOs working in rural areas to spread Islamic ideologies (Pattanaik 2009:280).

Islamist parties also develop alliances with the major political parties, AL and BNP, to increase their support base in important institutions and utilized their members' influence in the favor of the movement (Kumar 2012:544). For example, JI has developed an alliance with Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). As a result, members of Jamaat-i-Islami were appointed as the minister of Social Welfare and Agriculture in the coalition government of BNP and JI in 2001 (Datta 2007:147). JI used its power and influence in the government to recruit a significant number of agricultural officers and generated robust support base in the Bangladesh Army. All these support bases help to promote the Islamic social movement (Kumar 2012:544).

As a result of a combined attempt from different Islamist groups and the state’s supportive attitude to the Islamist or state’s patronization for the Islamist groups contributed to the rise of Islamic social movements in Bangladesh. The following section will illustrate the rise of Islamic social movement by demonstrating the increasing influence of the Islamist in different sectors.
3) Rising Islamic Social Movement:

As a result of the strategic use of Islam by the state and the Islamist groups’ effort in raising the influence of Islamists in Bangladesh, Islamic social movement has been rising in the country. My interviewee Ahmed also claims that the influence of Islamic social movements has increased over time, especially in the last three decades in Bangladesh (2015). Thus, Islamist actors play a significant influence in the political domain as well as society, which is disproportionate to the electoral support of the Islamist parties.

Indeed, many scholars note that the Islamist groups’ influence in the society is significantly higher than the electoral success of the Islamist parties. For example, my interviewees Zaman and Amin, who is a senior journalist and writes about religious politics, claim that decline of Islamist parties’ electoral success does not mean that Islamic parties and movements are experiencing less influence in the politics of Bangladesh (Amin 2015 & Zaman 2015). Secondary literature also suggests that the growth of Islamic social movement is disproportionately higher than the electoral success of the Islamist parties. For instance, Pattanaik claims that the impact of the rising influence of Jamaat-i-Islami is felt more socially than through its ability to come to power (Pattanaik 2009: 274). Similarly, Harrison argues that Islamic groups in Bangladeshi politics “have a strength that goes beyond mere electoral achievement” (Harrison 2015: 15). Harrison asserts that Islamic groups are deeply rooted at the grassroots level and increasing their influence slowly (Harrison 2015: 15). In a similar note, Hussain says she has witnessed a growing number of urban middle-class women adopting veil with the rise of Islam, and Islamist actors use women’s veiling as a medium of expressing the growing influence of Islam social movement (Hussain 2010: 328). The following paragraphs of this section demonstrate the rising Islamic social movement through growing influence of the Islamist actors in the political domain, popularity in the public
sphere, increasing number of Islamic organizations, and Islamists’ growing strength in organizing street protests.

The increasing influence of Islamist actors is visible in the political domain. Due to the increasing influence of the Islamist groups, non-religious parties, especially AL and BNP, display their loyalty to Islam for winning the votes of religious voters or not to hurt the religious sentiment of majority Muslim population (Mishra 2012: 289; Karlekar 2005: 23-27). Leaders of both AL and BNP display their loyalty to Islam through their personal lifestyle and activities of their parties throughout the democratic era since 1991 as shown earlier (Devine and white 2013: 131; Hasan 2012: 64). Moreover, the increasing influence of Islamist actors is visible in the policy domain (Jahan and Shahan 2014:426). When Islamist parties were banned right after the independence in 1971, there was no protest against the ban of the Islamist parties. However, when the Supreme Court of Bangladesh made changes in the fifth amendment of the constitution in 2010, which prohibited Islamist parties, Islamists in the country were furious by the verdict of the court and held violent demonstrations. Islamic actors declared they would do anything to protect the Islamic principles in the country. Though most of the party members of AL wanted to establish secularism by banning the Islamist parties, the party decided not to prohibit the parties fearing the loss of votes in the upcoming election (Jahan and Shahan 2014:427).

Similarly, when the Supreme Court of Bangladesh declared the practice of fatwa as illegal and unconstitutional and whoever practices fatwa should be punished in 2001, Islamists held demonstrations and caused violence in various cities (Riaz 2004: 8-9; Hashmi 2004: 59). Islami Oikya Jote, an Islamist party, held a demonstration for more than a month protesting the verdict of the Supreme court, which terrified general public (Riaz 2004: 45). The AL government of that time did not take any initiative to intervene to ban fatwas because of the fear of angering the Islamist groups in the country (Pattanaik 2009:281). Moreover,
when AL government made an attempt to modernize the Islamic education system (the madrassa) in 1997, it faced strong opposition from the Islamist groups. Thus, the government moved away from its decision (Jahan and Shahan 2014: 430). Furthermore, the Islamists mobilized a movement called Hefazat-e-Islam (protect Islam), which made thirteen demands to be passed as a law. Two of the demands are “pass a law keeping a provision of capital punishment for maligning Allah, Islam and Prophet Muhammad and smear campaigns against Muslims”, and "Declare Qadianis (Ahmadiyyas) non-Muslim” (Daily Star 2013). Islamist groups were never seen before with such radical demands in the mainstream politics.

The rise of Islamic social movements is also noticeable in the public sphere. Historically, the public sphere in Bangladesh has been religiously neutral, but attempts have been made to create an Islamist public sphere through infusing Islamic contents into debates and discussions due to the growing strength of the Islamist groups. Publications of Islamist novels and the foundation of women’s discussions groups are two examples of the attempts made for creating an Islamist public sphere. A significant number of Islamist novels have been published over the last decade, and the popularity of these fictions is growing though they are yet to be as popular as the secular fictions (Riaz 2013: 302). The books are intended to be a tool for dawah (preach and spread Islamic values) to convince readers to adopt an Islamic way of living (Riaz 2013: 303). Although the books are fictional, they deal with real issues, emotions, relations-family or friends, and readers try to relate to the characters of the nobles regarding morality and individuals’ role in society (Riaz 2013: 304). A women’s group, Taleem, was initially organized among middle class and semi-literate/literate women, but the study group has been reaching out to illiterate rural women, especially in the north of Bangladesh. The growing popularity of Islamic novels and expansion of women’s group demonstrate the growing strength of Islamic social movement in Bangladesh (Riaz 2013: 312).
The growing influence of Islamist actors is also apparent through the increasing number of Islamic organizations (Riaz 2014:156). The number of clandestine organizations and Islamist parties has dramatically increased over the last decade (Riaz 2014: 45). More than 100 Islamist parties now wish to replace the secular legal system of Bangladesh with Shari’a law (Griffiths and Hasan 2015: 236; Hasan 2012: 162). It is estimated that at least 35 Islamic parties operated in the mainstream political system and participated in elections since 1990 (Riaz 2010; 64) when there was not any single Islamist party right after the independence of Bangladesh or a few parties before the independence. Though many of these parties failed to increase their electoral support, they have gained significant power and influence in the society (Riaz 2004: 45). Moreover, Islamist groups now dominate a big chunk of the economy in Bangladesh. They own banks, hospitals, newspaper companies, TV channels, and real estate businesses.

In addition, Islamic religious schools (Madrassa) have been growing (Riaz 2008: 39). Though Madrassas can be used for educational development or work as a substitute for the lack of government schooling, madrassa education is also directly associated with the growth of Islamic social movement in Bangladesh (Hasan 2012: 64). Many different Islamic movement and parties such IOJ relay on madrassah for their support base (Riaz 2008: 31), and the students and teachers of the madrassas are one of the most significant resources of the Islamic movements in Bangladesh (Kumar 2012: 543; Hasan 2012: 64). My interviewee Islam and Chowdhury, who are associate professors of political science with an expertise in religious politics, also argue that members of madrassas are one of the main resources for Islamic parties and movements (2015). Few other interviewees claim that the students of madrassas make the majority of the participants in the Islamists’ demonstration and Islamize society at the grassroots level (Chowdhury 2015; Zaman 2015; Siddique 2015; Amin 2015). Thus, the increasing number of madrassa has transformed the society, as it is believed that
both the moderate and radical Islamists are produced in madrassas (Devine and White 2013: 131).

There are two types of madrassa: Alia madrassa, run by the government, and Qaumi madrassa, outside of the government’s control (Kumar 2012:544). In 1975-76, there were around 1,830 Madrassa with 18,728 teachers who taught nearly 541,500 students. The number has increased to 2,700 madrassas, 26,500 teachers and 541,500 students in 1988 (Ahamed and Nazneed 1990: 798). The number of madrassas was increased to more than 64,000 in 2002 (Datta 2007:149). It is estimated that “government Madrassa has grown about 732% whereas student enrollment has jumped by 653%” in 32 years between 1972-2004” (Hasan 2012:162). One of the reasons behind the growth of madrassah is the provision of Ershad government to modernize madrassa with non-religious compulsory subjects, such as English and Mathematics. Moreover, due to the failure of the democratic government to ensure secondary education to all the children in the 1990s, the number of secondary madrassas has been raised (Devine and White 2013: 132).

Moreover, Jamaat-i-Islami establishes English medium madrassa to change the notion that a madrassa is a place for the poor who fail to provide food and education to their children and to encourage middle-class students. Jamaat-i-Islami also built women’s madrassah to involve women in the Islamic movement (Kumar 2009: 543). Now madrassas have an equal number of female to male students (Devine and White 2013: 132). In brief, the growing number of Madrassa shows the growing influence of Islamist groups as people from Madrassa go onto Islamize the society consciously or unconsciously.

Moreover, the number of mosques in Bangladesh has also increased significantly, which contributes to the rising influence of the Islamic social movement. Though there is no exact number about how many mosques were there in Bangladesh during the 1970s, scholars argue that the number of mosques increased significantly (Hasan 2012: 64). Moreover, it is
the state’s patronage, especially the Ershad government that increased the number of mosques. There are currently around 250,399 mosques in 65,000 villages of Bangladesh (Hasan 2012: 63). Mosques serve as the center of Islamic activities as they raise Islamic social consciousness through five prayers per day and regular recitation of the Azan (Hasan 2012: 63). Besides, the mosques’ imams play an influential role in villages in determining the lifestyle of Muslims (Hasan 2012: 63; World Almanac Of Islamism 2011 2011). Thus, the growing number of mosques contributes to the rising Islamic social movement in Bangladesh.

Islamists are also increasingly successful in mobilizing street support. For instance, Ahmed who is a sympathizer of the Islamist groups in Bangladesh, (2015) says,

“When I was a student, there were very few JI supporters' or Islamists’ demonstration in my hometown. But now I can see JI leaders are holding demonstrations in front of a police station. It shows that they are stronger and more capable than before”.

Islamists now are influential in mobilizing millions of people on the streets through the strategic framing of their messages. For instance, upon the declaration of the death sentence of one of the prominent leaders of JI in 2013, JI photo-shopped the image of the leader, Delwar Hossain Saidee, on the moon and spread that the leader was seen on the moon to show that Saidee is a favorite leader of Allah. JI called for its solo protest in February 2013 to prevent the death sentence, and it was successful in demonstrating its street power (Harrison 2015: 50). The message about the leaders' face on the moon mobilized millions of people, and police lost control “of Bogra, Gaibanda, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Takurgaon, Rajshahi, Chittagong, Chapainawabganj, Cox’s Bazaar, Feni and Satkhira” (Harrison 2015: 53). There were places where police stations were burned down, and many police posts were deserted. According to a JI official, around 30 districts out of 64 districts in the country were in the control of JI during that time (Harrison 2015: 53). Ultimately, JI was successful in preventing the death sentence.
Moreover, the Islamist groups, especially the political parties know that if they frame their message stating that Islam is in danger due to a policy or action of the state, people will come to protest against the act that the Islamists want to prevent according to some of my interviewees (Iqbal 2015; Amin 2015; Rahman 2015; Islam 2015; Chowdhury 2015). Thus, Hafajat movement spread (the Islamist's latest big demonstration) the message that Islam is in danger due to Shahbag movement (which will be explained later) and every Muslim should come down to the streets to defend Islam. Accordingly millions of people attended the demonstration of Hafajat, and Amin claims that people joined the movement because of the slogan that “Islam is in danger” (Amin 2015). The Hafajat's demonstration was also the largest demonstration of the Islamist groups since the independence (Zaman 2015).

Based on the interview data and secondary literature, it is clear that the influence of the Islamist groups in Bangladesh is growing. The Islamist groups exercise more power and influence in the political realm, especially in the policy domain, and they are more popular in the public sphere. Moreover, the number of Islamic institutions, such as madrassas, is growing, which ultimately strengthen the Islamic social movement. Furthermore, the Islamist groups are more powerful in street protest than they used to be right after the independence.

4) Why Islamist Parties Face Declining Electoral Support?:

Despite the increasing influence of the Islamist actors described in the previous section, Islamist parties in Bangladesh face declining electoral support since 1991. This paper argues that the Islamist parties experience declining electoral support despite the growth of the Islamic social movement due to their failure in directing the resources gathered by the Islamic social movement to increase their constituency and non-Islamic parties’ success in winning the votes of religious voters. This section will first show how the Islamist parties’ failure to mobilize resources gathered by the Islamic social movement causes their electoral
decline. Secondly, it will show how non-religious parties gradually attract religious voters and contribute to the declining electoral support of the Islamist parties.

A) Lack of Resource Mobilization:

The Islamist parties fail to win elections due to their failure in directing resources already gathered by the Islamic social movement. Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim country, and most people are sympathizers of Islam and Islamic movements. However, Islamist parties could not mobilize the sympathizers and supporters of Islamic movements to increase their support. According to Rashid, who is a lecturer of political science with an expertise in religious politics and a sympathizer of the Islamist groups, the support base of the Islamic social movement is not represented in the ballot box. He says Islamic social movements consistently have promoted an Islamic identity since the 19th century, which could be mobilized further to increase the electoral support of the Islamist parties (Rashid 2015). This section will first show the available resources that Islamist can potentially direct to increase constituency. Secondly, it will show the reasons behind Islamist parties' failure in mobilizing these available resources to increase constituency.

The Islamist parties could mobilize resources already gathered by Islamic social movements to increase their constituency. Bangladesh has several Islamic movements that do not have political wings. For instance, Tablighi Jamaat has supporters all over the country, but the movement does not have a political wing. However, my interviewees suggest that Islamist parties fail to direct the supporters of Tablighi Jamaat to vote for Islamist parties. For instance, Haque, who is an NGO worker, states that millions of Muslims get together every year to understand the true meaning of Quran in Tablighi Jamaat’s Ijtama. The participants include Qawmi madrassa-based Islamists and Deobandi Islamists and a significant number of ordinary people, such as teachers, businessmen, students, and farmers. However, the Islamist
parties failed to direct the supporters of Tablighi Jammat to vote for the Islamist political parties (2015).

Moreover, some of my interviewees state that Islamic movements that have political parties also fail to direct the supporters of the movement to vote for the movement-parties. For instance, there is a strong Sufi movement, which has followers all over the country. According to Karim, the Sufi movement is so powerful and integrated into the society that it will continue in Bangladesh as long as Islam exists in the country (2015). However, parties associated with the Sufi movement failed to make the participants of the movement vote for the movement-parties (Amin 2015). Thus, one part of the movement votes for AL and the other part votes for BNP (Karim 2015).

Failure in mobilizing available resources causes the contrasting scenario of the rising Islamic social movement and declining electoral support of the Islamist parties. Since Islamist parties fail to transition the resources of the movement to increase electoral support, Islamist parties remain as minor parties in the political spectrum. If the parties do not collaborate with any of the major political parties, it will be even difficult for them to survive in Bangladeshi politics according to Iqbal (2015). For instance, if BNP refuses to work with the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), JI would be very vulnerable because the opposition parties of JI are very strong as my interviewees state (Iqbal 2015; Karim 2015; Chowdhury 2015).

### Reasons Behind Islamist Parties’ Failure in Mobilizing Resources for Electoral Support:

This section argues that there are three main reasons behind the Islamist parties’ failure in mobilizing available resources for electoral support. The reasons are: Islamist parties’ strategic mistake of trying to impose a new ideology rather than framing the ideology to be accepted by the local; the parties failure in mobilizing legitimacy to govern the country; and their failure in extending networks to involve a broad range of people and keeping them
committed. This section will discuss the strategic mistake, legitimacy crisis and failure in extending networks and keeping people committed to the parties respectively.

1) **Strategic Mistake:** This section argues that Islamist parties fail to increase electoral support when they try to impose a new ideology without framing it in the local context. Ideology is a cover term for values, beliefs and goals of a group of people and it is assumed that ideology works as a determining factor for individual or collective action (Snow and Byrd 2007: 120). Framing is different from ideology. Framing does not just carry the existing ideas and meaning but produce and maintain meaning for mobilization (Snow and Byrd 2007: 120). In other words, movement entrepreneurs strategically modify, alter or emphasize a particular aspect of values or beliefs to make their message be acceptable or to mobilize people for the cause of the movement, and this process is called framing. Movement leaders try to frame their message to resonate with the lifestyle of the people that they aim to mobilize (Chong and Druckman 2007: 104; Wiktorowicz 2004: 16). However, the Islamist parties in Bangladesh fail to utilize the resources of the Islamic social movement to increase their constituency due to their mistake of trying to impose Wahhabism without framing it to resonate with the lifestyle of the local people. This argument will be demonstrated through the findings from the fieldwork conducted in Bangladesh as well as secondary literature on Islamic social movement.

The local people in Bangladesh practice a syncretic form of Islam. Both existing literature and some of my interviewees confirm that the region that is called Bangladesh today used to be an area that lacked development and was the place where poor Hindus (the untouchable) lived under the Indian sub-continent. As a result, many of these Hindu people converted to Islam when the Muslim preachers (Sufis) came to the region (Hasan 2012: 156; Amin 2015; Islam 2015, and Chowdhury 2015). Since many of the Muslims or their ancestors in the region used to be Hindu at some point, Muslim society absorbed a lot of
Hindu cultures (Hasan 2012: 156; Amin 2015; Islam 2015, and Chowdhury 2015). Therefore, Bangladeshi Muslims are liberal and they practice the syncretic form of Islam rather than puritan Islam like Wahhabism according to Pattanaik and some of my interviewees (Pattanaik 2009: 273; Chowdhury 2015, Amin 2015, Zaman 2015). An example of syncretic Islam in Bangladesh is Sufi Islam, which integrates elements of Islam and Hinduism, especially Vaishnavism and Yoga tantra of Hinduism (Custers 2009). Sufis, especially Maijvandari continues to follow the practice of Vaishnavism. They practice the singing and dancing to reach ecstasy and practice the tradition of the master (guru) and disciples relationship like the Vaishnavas (Custers 2009). Moreover, Wahhabism is considered to be a stricter version of Islam than Sufi Islam or Hanafi Islam in terms of the literal reading of Quran and other holy texts. Wahhabism rejects the Sufis’ practice of showing respect or worshiping dead saints as intercessors of God (Platteau 2008: 341), which is widely practiced among the followers of Sufis in Bangladesh. Moreover, my interviewee Chowdhury, who is a faculty of political science with an expertise in religious politics, states that believers of Wahhabism oppose the celebration of Eid (a practice that comes from Hanafi Islam), which is one of the main celebrations among the Bangladeshi Muslims (2015).

Islamist parties in Bangladesh fail to direct available resources to increase electoral support because they try to impose Wahhabism without framing it according to the local culture. The main ideology of one of the influential Islamic movement, Tablighi Jamaat, is Wahhabism. Though local people practice the syncretic form of Islam with a significant influence of Hanafi Islam and Sufi Islam, Tablighi Jamaat manages to mobilize millions of people from every walk of life to follow TJ, as it frames its message in the local context. One of the examples is how Tabligh Jamaat spread its ideology through marriage. Bangladesh is still a patriarchal society, and "the notion of early marriage, especially for girls, is in line with the patriarchal values" (Siddiqi 2012: 179). Following the local values, TJ encourages people
to get married as soon as possible to avoid un-Islamic pre-marital sexual relation (Siddiqi 2012: 179). Moreover, it encourages men to marry religious women to ensure that the children are raised with religious values. TJ frames its message with patriarchal values and states that a man is responsible for his wife's material needs as well as her access to heaven. If he ensures that his wife is religious, he will be able to go to heaven with her recommendation. Thus, it is important for a man to marry a religious woman (Siddiqi 2012: 180). Moreover, TJ maintains the local hierarchic system based on age to spread its message. It invites the senior members of a family to encourage the family members to join TJ (Siddiqi 2012: 183).

However, Islamist parties in Bangladesh fail to direct the already assembled supporters of Islamic movements, because they try to impose Wahhabism instead framing it in the local context. When Tablighi Jamaat tries to Islamize the society from the grassroots level following the local culture, JI tries to impose its ideology without following local culture. Some of my interviewees confirm Islamist parties attempt at imposing Wahhabism. For instance, Chowdhury states that many Islamist parties, especially JI, believe that Hanafi Islam or Sufi Islam is not a pure form of Islam, thus the Islamists have the responsibility of replacing Hanafi Islam and Sufi Islam by Wahhabism. Chowdhury says that Islamist parties including JI attempted at destroying the symbols of Hanafi Islam and Sufi Islam by destroying certain types of Mosques and Shrines to establish Wahhabism (2015) despite knowing that syncretic Islam has become part of the culture. Similarly, Amin claims that the main Islamist party Jamaat-i-Islami tries to establish Wahhabism by destroying the local Islamic values and tradition (Amin 2015) instead of framing the ideology in the local context. Existing literature also confirms JI’s attempt at destroying the practices of Sufi Islam. For instance, JI is blamed by the Sufis, especially Maizbhandari, for bombing Sufi Shirins (Riaz 2008: 30).
Islamist parties’ attempt to replace the syncretic Islam with Wahhabism against the will of the majority contributes to their failure in convincing the supporters of Islamic movements to vote for the parties. People feel resistant towards the parties when the parties aim to impose a new ideology rather than framing it to be accepted. As a result, people do not vote for the parties. For instance, Rahman (an interviewee) says, “We do not want anything to be imposed upon us in the name of religion. I am a Muslim and I pray, but I will vote for AL” (Rahman 2015). Ahmed (an interviewee), who is a sympathizer of the Islamist group, also notes that JI does not have a real understanding of people’s mindsets, which results in its inability to increase electoral support (2015). Thus, Islamist parties’ failure in framing their message in line with the popular culture causes electoral failure.

In line with the fieldwork conducted in Bangladesh, the existing literature on Islamic social movements suggests that Islamists are successful when they frame their message according to local culture. A movement appeals to potential supporters when its message speaks to the belief, experience, and needs of the audiences. Not all the Islamist groups share the same ideological interpretation of Islam. Different Islamist groups focus on the different content of Islam, some focus on maintaining the purity of Islam while some emphasize on the social justice (Collins 2007: 74), depending on their strategic interests. In other words, a movement needs to speak to popular culture either to survive or succeed (Collins 2007: 74). For instance, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was able to mobilize a relatively significant number of people among many other Islamist groups and non-Islamic groups, such as communist movement because of its strategic choice of framing its message according to the local context. The original ideology of Muslim brotherhood is rooted in the Hanbali school which is the most conservative with respect to its emphasis on the literal reading of the Quran and other Islamic texts (Munson 2001: 489). However, the Muslim Brotherhood strategically avoided contested ideas, such as advocating “a return to the glorious age of Islam or an
insistence on a literal reading of the holy texts” (Munson 2001: 504). Instead, the Muslim Brotherhood’s ideological message was communicated in the local Islamic idioms and widespread views of Islam in Egypt (Munson 2001: 504). Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood used “what variety there was within its ideological perspective to attract people in different situations” (Munson 2001: 498) instead of imposing its original conservative ideology.

Based on the date from the fieldwork in Bangladesh and secondary literature, it is clear that Islamist parties fail electorally if they try to impose a new ideology instead of framing it in the local context to be accepted by the majority people.

2) Failure in Mobilizing Legitimacy from voters:

One of the most important moral resources for a social movement or a political party is legitimacy. Legitimacy is a “generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, definitions” (Suchman 1995: 574). When a movement’s actions and ideologies are legitimate to its audiences, it does not need to invest much effort in mobilization as “legitimate organizations become almost self-replicating” (Suchman 1995: 575). Moreover, social movements that “mimic institutionally legitimated features for their particular kind of endeavor gain an advantage” in comparison to the groups that fail to do so (Edwards and Kane 2014: 217). In contrast, social movements become vulnerable to criticisms that they are irrational and negligent when they lack legitimacy (Suchman 1995: 575). Though legitimacy is often developed outside of social movements and bestowed by an external actor to the movement, there are movements where leaders earn or mobilize legitimacy through different strategies (Suchman 1995: 575; Edwards and Kand 2014: 218).

However, it is difficult for certain groups such as Islamist parties to earn legitimacy. It is difficult for Islamist parties, as people fear that “even moderate Islamist parties may
harbor potential violence and revolutionary tendencies or they may have links to more radical or extremist groups” (Wiegand 2013: 28). For instance, many governments in the Middle East try to dismiss Islamist parties claiming that Islamist parties are taking advantage of democratic elections, and the parties can turn to violence anytime if their interests are not fulfilled by democratic institutions (Wiegand 2013: 26). In order for an Islamist party to gain legitimacy, it needs to be accepted by people in the society (Wiegand 2013: 25).

There are Islamist parties that earn legitimacy, and this section argues that legitimacy is one of the important factors that determines the success of Islamist parties. The argument will be supported by first showing how Islamist parties’ failure in mobilizing legitimacy from voters resulted in their inability to direct the followers of Islamic social movement into constituency in Bangladesh. The argument will further be supported by demonstrating how earning legitimacy helped Islamist parties to succeed elsewhere. The following paragraphs will compare Islamist parties in Bangladesh and relatively successful Islamist parties elsewhere on the following issues: use of violence, adapting to modern institutions, building alliances with non-Muslim community, being the best alternative to the state, and naturalizing previous scandals. These examples demonstrate that the parties that earn legitimacy tend to be relatively successful.

I) Giving Up on Violent Means for Gaining Legitimacy:

Islamist parties, including the moderate parties, in Bangladesh use violent means, unlike most Islamic movements that avoid violence. Neither Tabligh Jamaat nor Sufi movement uses violent means. However, JI still uses violent means, and many people claim that JI and its student wing support Islamic militant groups in Bangladesh (Vij 2013; Mehrotra 2009: 1-2; Vaughn 2010: 8). One of the latest examples is JI's use of violence in 2013 upon the death sentence of Saidee as mentioned earlier. Members of JI and its student wing engaged in many attacks and counter attacks with the security forces and burned down
buses and trains with people inside. It threw grenades into crowded streets in addition to attacking and burning down many homes of minorities ("Bangladesh: End Deadly Street Violence" 2013; Pattanaik 2013: 418; The Daily Star 2016). More than 100 people were killed and hundreds of people were injured due to the violent acts of JI ("Bangladesh: End Deadly Street Violence" 2013).

My interviewees also confirm the use of violence by JI members. For instance, Zaman, who maintains a neutral position towards the Islamic social movement, speaks about JI’s student wing from his firsthand knowledge. He says members of JI’s youth wing are usually nice and polite. However, they do not hesitate to go kill people when they are ordered to do so or their interest is harmed (Zaman 2015). When the Islamists were dominant in different halls of Chittagong University, no one except JI members could go to those halls and live there (Zaman 2015). Members of JI’s student wing are not afraid of killing because they think killing for the sake of religion will ensure heaven (Zaman 2015). The use of violence by Islamist parties reduces their legitimacy and causes their failure in electoral politics, as they fail to justify their violent acts like many other Islamic movements such as Hezbollah. As a result, they lose their legitimacy as an Islamic institution from voters, and violent activities of the parties discourage people, including the supporters of Islamic movements, to vote for the parties as my interviewee Zaman and Ahmed mentioned (2015).

In contrast, most of the successful Islamist parties in the Middle East use non-violent means to gain legitimacy that would not have been possible otherwise. Wiegand argues Islamist groups most often reject the use of violence because the parties are more successful as political parties than violent Islamist groups, and the use of violence is not a rational choice most of the time (Wiegand 2013: 44). The cost of violence is higher than the benefits they receive using violent means (Wiegand 2013: 44). Thus, many political parties, which

7 The case of Hezbollah will be explained later in the paper.
begin as violent Islamic organizations, start using non-violence as a means to achieve their aim (Wiegand 2013: 6 & 26). In brief, there are Islamist parties that give up on violence to earn legitimacy or justify their use of violence for not losing legitimacy. However, the Islamist parties in Bangladesh failed to any of these. As a result, they suffer from legitimacy crisis, which affects their electoral support.

II) Earning Legitimacy through Adapting to Modern Institutions or Eliminating Suspicion against Islamist Parties:

Islamist parties in Bangladesh also failed to develop legitimacy because they could not convince voters that they do not have a hidden aspiration of pushing the society backward to the golden age of Islam or destroying the institutions of the modern Bangladeshi state. The recent Islamists' demonstration, Hafajat Islam, where JI and many other Islamist parties participated demanded to "stop setting up sculptures at intersections, colleges and universities across the country" in addition to banning foreign culture and free mixing of men and women (The Daily Star 2013). Therefore, people fear if Islamist parties destroy modern institutions once they come in power. A number of my interviewees confirmed this and stated that people suspect if Islamist parties come to power, the parties will destroy modern institution and push the society backward to the golden age of Islam. For instance, Islam and Karim say that there is an insecurity if the Islamist rulers abolish modern institutions and breaks all the statues in the country (2015) or start to control people’s lifestyle (Islam 2015 & Amin 2015). Moreover, a few interviewees state that people are nervous if Islamist parties start extremism like the neighboring countries, Afghanistan or Pakistan (Islam 2015; Zaman 2015; Karim 2015; Rahman 2015). In addition, people fear that the freedom of movement, freedom of speech, freedom of thinking will be halt if JI comes to power according to my interviewee Islam, Amin, and Rahman (2015). As a result, people do not vote for the Islamist parties despite their support for the Islamic social movement as Islam mentioned (Islam 2015).
In contrast, successful Islamist parties earn legitimacy from people by explaining and showing that Islamists are capable of adapting to the modern state system, and they do not have a hidden agenda of pursuing violence after they come to power. The Muslim Brotherhood, a relatively successful political party and an Islamic movement in Egypt, was created by Hasan al-Banna in 1928 with the aim of establishing an Islamic state and to Islamize the society. However, the movement did not get legitimacy from the state even when the republic was founded after the 1952 revolution. The authoritarian regime of Egypt during the post-revolution refused to grant legitimacy to the movement and sometimes repressed the movement (Ghamem and Mustafa 2011:396; Munson 2001:489-90). However, the movement mobilized informal legitimacy from the population of Egypt to secure recognition. The movement showed that Islamic values could be applied to the modern world (Berman 2003: 263; Azzam 2005:1126) and adapted to the ideology of modern states, such as democracy, pluralism, and women’s rights to resonate with the socio-economic concerns of the young generation (Al-Awadi 2014: 17).

Similarly, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) in Malaysia also earned legitimacy from voters by explaining PAS’s ideology to perspective participants, which is one of the important reasons behind the electoral success of the PAS (Liow 2011: 671). PAS youth played an active role in explaining the party’s agenda and aspirations to eliminate the misconception about the PAS or suspicions about PAS’s Islamist aspiration. PAS’s youth wing integrated non-Muslims to the movement to “dispel misperceptions of PAS, stoked by the mainstream government and controlled media, and to further PAS’s political aspirations to become a party of national appeal and consequence” (Liow 2011: 685). In order to mobilize non-Muslims, the PAS young wing regularly met with civil society organization “to ameliorate suspicions of PAS’s Islamist aspirations” (Liow 2011: 674). For instance, they went to Chinese New Year celebrations and met with the Sanggam Hindu organization, as
they knew that engaging with these organization would help them to mobilize thousands of other people who are related to the institutions (Liow 2011: 674). In addition, welfare services were given regardless of religious background to mobilize youth to join Dawah movement (Liow 2011: 674). As a result, PAS manages to be the most well resourced Islamist party that manages to win around 15% share of the vote in Malaysia since 1999 (Liow 2011: 674). In brief, there are Islamist parties that adapt to modern state institutions and eliminate suspicions against the parties to increase legitimacy. However, the Islamist parties in Bangladesh failed to do that, which is one of the reasons behind the legitimacy crisis of the Islamist parties in Bangladesh and their electoral failure.

III) Legitimacy Through Offering to be the Best Alternative to the Existing States:

Islamist parties in Bangladesh also failed to mobilize legitimacy by offering to be the best alternative to the existing state, which results in their failure in convincing the supporters of Islamic social movement to vote for Islamist parties. A large number of people live below the poverty line in Bangladesh and there are several social problems, such as corruption and political instability. However, Islamist parties failed to use these opportunities to demonstrate that they can be better alternative to the existing state. Islamist parties fail to provide much needed social services in Bangladesh. Though JI claims that it provides humanitarian and welfare services to poor, critics of JI says that JI only provides social services to its members and supporters, but not to the majority of people (Harrison 2015: 47). My interviewee Ahmed, who sympathizes with the Islamist parties, also states that JI leadership is not efficient in being involved in social services. He says that BNP and AL meet social needs more efficiently than JI. If JI were to involve in social services, their support would have increased. Moreover, if JI prefers social activities, funding will not be a problem. According to Ahmed, JI should spend more time in citizens’ program (Ahmed 2015).
In addition, a number of interviewees claim that people see Islamist parties trying to fulfill their own interests rather than serving people, which reduce their legitimacy. Zaman says Islamist parties do many deviating things, such as they ally with AL at one time and with BNP at another time for their interest though the parties have a different ideological stand (Zaman 2015). Similarly, Rahman claims that Islamic parties are not just limited to religious activities, religious laws, and the rule of God like Islamic movements, such as Tablighi Jamaat. The Islamist parties want to go to power and enjoy economic benefits. This is demonstrated through their nepotism and switching sides in terms of building coalitions (Rahman 2015). Thus, people question about the parties’ identity and ideology and lose faith in them (Amin 2015). As a result, people including the many supporters of Islamic social movement do not vote for the Islamist parties (Zaman 2015).

Some of my interviewees also claim that Islamists parties in Bangladesh failed to offer to be the best alternative to the existing state due to their failure in mobilizing capable leadership (Rahman 2015; Karim 2015; Islam 2015; Zaman 2015). For instance, Ahmed claims that Islamist parties fail to increase their electoral support because people who campaign for elections from the Islamist parties are not educated and lack social and financial status in the society. JI leadership is much weaker in comparison to non-religious political parties. However, JI does not want to invite people outside of their institution and nominate as candidates (Ahmed 2015). Ahmed says, “I am a university professor, and if I want to be JI’s candidate in the next election, JI will not select me because I am not part of their group”. JI will select someone from its group who might be a primary school teacher or Imam with no academic education. The Imam might be a good person, but he is not competent for the position. Ahmed says if A is both a good person and honest, but B is honest and financially influential like C, ordinary people will compare B and C and vote for the party that is less harmful among B and C (Ahmed 2015).
As a result, the Islamist parties fail to direct the supporters of Islamic social movement because people think the parties will not be able to meet their demands associated with governance as my interviewees explain. For instance, Siddique, who is a senior journalist, argue that religious Muslims do not support the Islamist parties because the parties lack the capacity to meet Bangladeshis’ demands (2015). Moreover, Amin says that the participants of Islamic social movement believe that they follow Islamic movement for religious reasons. Their support towards an Islamic movement for religious reason does not imply they have to vote for the movement-party (Amin 2015). The participants decide which party to vote for based on parties' ability and willingness to improve economic conditions, ensure security, establish good governance or improve human development (Amin 2015).

People look at candidate’s money, influence, tradition, party image, and party founder image before they vote for a party according to Ahmed (2015). Based on these considerations, BNP and AL are well ahead of Islamist parties (Ahmed 2015). Most importantly, people do not believe that Islamist parties will better meet their demands than AL and BNP (Amin 2015). Rahman puts it more explicitly and says, “Tell me what is the good policy or what is the nice thing that Islamist parties did that we should vote for them?” (Rahman 2015).

In contrast, successful Islamist parties earn legitimacy by acting as the best alternative to existing states through social services. For example, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt has become the key provider of social goods and services where the state failed to provide (Berman 2003: 260-61: Azzam 2005: 1126). It started welfare services, which surpassed the services provided by the state, to gain legitimacy from Egyptian (Al-Awadi 2014: 1; Munson 2001: 501). Muslim Brotherhood expanded its network and established new branches all over the country. Whenever it established a new branch in an area, it also started its welfare services, such as school, clinic, and handicraft industry. Through these networks, the Muslim Brotherhood recruited millions of new members and has been able to
demonstrate its ability to meet the socio-economic needs of the Egyptian population. Its action gave legitimacy to its message that “Islam is the true path to development” (Munson 2001: 501). The efficiency and success of the Islamist group in providing social services implicitly sent the message that the state is failing to meet the need of its citizens (Berman 2003: 61) and the rule of Islam/ or rule by the Islamists would be the best alternative to the ineffective regime of Egypt (Berman 2003: 262).

The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria also managed to win the national election in 1992 from a situation when it had an insignificant support base. Islamists in Algeria also used ‘an extensive associational network’ for providing social services to the needy in an attempt to mobilize them for collective action. Islamists’ efficiency in providing services slowly ruined the credibility of the state and increased the legitimacy of the Islamists to come to power (Berman 2003: 262). Similarly, Islamists in Turkey did not directly challenge the state; rather they tried to win the heart of the people by working through the civil society (Tugal 2009:424). They chose to increase their popularity through social, welfare and educational means (Azzam 2006:1126). In brief, the Islamist parties in many different countries acted as the best alternative to the existing state to increase their legitimacy to be elected in power. However, the Islamist parties in Bangladesh failed to offer to be the best alternative the existing states. As a result, they fail to increase their electoral support.

IV) Legitimacy through Neutralizing Past Scandal:

Islamist parties, particularly JI could not neutralize its past scandal that creates legitimacy crisis and contributes to the parties’ failure in mobilizing electoral support. All the Islamist parties in Bangladesh were against the liberation war of Bangladesh against Pakistan. Thus, there is a scandal associated with the Islamist political parties, especially JI as main leaders of JI collaborated with the Pakistani forces and killed and raped many Bangladeshis
According to my interviewee Iqbal, people did not talk about Islamists' role against the liberation war before 1996. It started with the leadership of Jahanara Imam (mother of a freedom fighter) in 1996, and there have been cultural events and publication that portray the role of the Islamists during the liberation war. Different cultural groups, NGOs that are pro-secular, political party, especially AL, made a lot of publication about the role of JI during the liberation war (Iqbal 2015). Moreover, through the trial of the war criminals, AL government is sending a message against the Islamist parties and highlights the atrocities of the Islamists, claims Rahman (2015).

JI leaders are truly the criminal of the war crime and the party is aware of this, but the leaders of the party were not able to neutralize the scandal against them (Hossain and Siddique 2004: 385) or develop positive feelings for Islamist parties like many Islamist parties did in the Middle East. Furthermore, there were times when leaders of JI claimed that they did not make any mistake by collaborating with the Pakistanis in 1971 (Hossain and Siddique 2004: 385). This type of comments from JI leaders "have infuriated the nationalist and patriotic forces and widened the gap between Jamaat and common people" (Hossain and Siddique 2004: 385). My interviewees explain how the scandal discourages Bangladeshis to vote for the Islamist parties. For instance, Ahmed states that people do not support Islamist parties, especially JI, because of the fear of being criticized, as JI is an anti-liberation force (Ahmed 2015). Zaman says people do not want to compromise about the liberation war even though they are religious (2015). “If I do not recognize the liberation war, which is directly related to my identity, I will have nothing to identify me” (Zaman 2015). Liberation war is no less important than Islam. As a result, people do not support the Islamist parties because the parties were against the liberation war (Zaman 2015). Bangladeshis' opposition against JI can be further demonstrated through Shahbag movement. Shahbag movement was promoted to ensure death penalty of war criminals, many of which are leaders of JI. It is estimated that the
movement had people from 100,000 to 500,000 (Anam 2013). Thus, the Islamist parties' failure in neutralizing past scandal cause the parties' failure in electoral politics.

In contrast, many Islamist organizations neutralize bad reputation or scandal and earn legitimacy. There are many terrorist groups that abandoned violence and transformed into legitimate political parties (Wiegand 2013: 47). For instance, IRA/Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland, Palestine Liberation Organization/Fatah, Al-Gama’a al-Islamiya, the National Liberation Army/ National Liberation Front in Algeria earned legitimacy to be political parties in their respective countries regardless of their history of terrorism (Wiegand 2013: 49-49). According to Wiegand, a party which used to be a terrorist organization needs to win the hearts and minds of people and it is possible through offering benefits such as “social services, better and more effective governance, a halt to corruption and inefficiency that may be practiced by other parties”. Through these activities, a former terrorist group can neutralize the dislike against them or even promote a positive attitude towards them (Wiegand 2013: 63). Sinn Fein, which is the political wing of a terrorist group (IRA), is an example of a terrorist group that earned legitimacy, as it attained 22% of the seats in the Assembly of Northern Ireland (Wiegand 2013: 49). Hezbollah is both a political party and militant group. Despite its history as a terrorist group and its continuous militant actions, Hezbollah managed to become part of the government in Lebanon (Worrall et al. 2016: IX). Hezbollah earned legitimacy from Shiites, Sunnis, Christians, and secular leftists by advancing Palestinian cause (Worrall et all. 2016: 19) and through its social welfare services and religious preaching (Worrall et all. 2016:8). In short, there are Islamist parties that neutralize past scandal and increase legitimacy through different means, such as social services. However, the Islamist parties, especially JI, in Bangladesh failed to neutralize past scandal to increase legitimacy from Bangladeshis. As a result, they suffer from electoral failure.
In conclusion to the section on legitimacy, Islamist parties in Bangladesh failed to direct the supporters of Islamic social movement due to their failure in earning legitimacy from voters to come to power and govern the country. The parties failed to earn legitimacy because of their use of violence without justification and failure in adapting to institutions of modern states, acting as the best alternative to the existing state and neutralizing their scandal as war criminals.

3) Networks:

Social networks are crucial for collective action. Acknowledging the importance of social networks, this section argues that Islamist parties fail in electoral politics if they are not successful in extending networks to include a wide range of people and keep them committed to the party. This argument will be first shown through the Islamist parties in Bangladesh and then further supported by the existing literature. This section will first show how the lack of extension of social networks contributed to the failure of Islamist parties’ electoral success in Bangladesh and how Islamist parties elsewhere benefited from the extension of social networks. Secondly, it will show that Islamist parties’ failure in keeping sympathizers committed to the party explains why Islamist parties fail electorally despite the rise of Islamic social movement. It will also show how successful Islamist parties keep people committed to the movement to explain the importance of mobilizing commitment for electoral success.

I) Extension of Social Networks for Electoral Success:

Islamist political parties in Bangladesh fail to extend their networks to a diverse group of people unlike Islamic social movement, which results in their failure in directing the supporters of the Islamic social movement to vote for the parties. For instance, Sufi movement has non-Muslim supporters. However, JI has a restriction for non-Muslim supporters to be a full member of the party (Harrison 2015: 48). Moreover, JI puts strict requirements for someone to be a member of the party, unlike many other Islamic movements.
in Bangladesh. Participants need to pass a test that is very difficult for average Bangladeshis to answer (Harrison 2015: 48). Furthermore, once interested candidates pass the test, they have to go through a rigorous personal and professional training to become a full member of the party (Pattanaik 2009: 276; Harrison 2015: 48). Thus, the young members of JI argue that the party will not be able to win a democratic election unless it reduces the requirements for being a JI member (Harrison 2015: 55). As a result, the main Islamist party JI fails to mobilize a wide range of people or the supporters of Islamic social movement to vote for the party.

My interviewees also claim that Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) still fails to develop networks outside of their comfort zone and include a diverse group of people. JI has teachers’, doctors’, businessmen’, lawyers’, farmers’ and workers’ association. However, these institutions do not work closely to include more new people. According to journalist Haque, Islamists’ network such as Madrasas works to increase supporters, but they work within their networks, such as mosques and madrassas. Islamist parties do not seek to mobilize ordinary people (Haque and Karim 2015). According to Siddique, a senior journalist, ordinary people do not even know the name of all the Islamist parties (Siddique 2015). In a similar note, Ahmed states that JI has no relation with the majority of people. JI does not want to think beyond their institutions. If someone is not part of their group, they will not think about those people (Ahmed 2015). Therefore, ordinary people, who are part of the broader Islamic social movement, remain under-mobilized by the Islamist parties to vote for the parties.

Islamist parties also fail to mobilize the middle-class population, unlike Islamic movements. For instance, JI is mostly supported by middle-class and lower-middle-class peasants in Bangladesh (Hashmi 2011: 33). In contrast, there are Islamic movements that have mobilized middle-class population in Bangladesh. For instance, the Sufi movement and the Tabligh Jamaat movement used to have participants from mostly the agrarian society.
However, both of these movements, especially Tabligh JI have significant middle-class supporters now. For instance, the Tabligh's Ijtama is attended by many elites including the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh (Sikand 1999: 112). My interviewees also acknowledge that Islamist parties fail to mobilize the middle-class population. Although JI managed to mobilize students from some renowned private universities in Bangladesh, it is very insignificant (Zaman 2015; Karim 2015; Amin 2015; Iqbal 2015). Zaman says Islamist parties mostly have more followers in poor regions where people are financially insecure (Zaman 2015). Islam also argues that Islamist parties win seats in rural areas where people are illiterate and do not have access to technology (Islam 2015). He says, educated people do not vote for JI and JI will never win a seat in Dhaka (the capital of Bangladesh). Thus, Islamist parties do not have the support that Islamic social movement has, which causes Islamist parties’ electoral failure despite the rise of Islamic social movement.

Islamist parties also fail to mobilize the young generation or first-time voters. The Shahbag movement that was mentioned earlier shows Islamist parties’ failure in mobilizing the youth population. Shahbag movement is the largest secular movement Bangladesh has seen since the independence movement, and the majority of the participants of the movement were youth population. A significant number of young people in Bangladesh participated in the movement with the demand to hang the members of JI who committed war crimes in 1971 (Lewis 2013). Young generation’s opposition towards Islamist parties is also obvious in the comments of my interviewees. Iqbal says if you look at the election result of 2008, you will see a lot of young generation voted for pro-liberation party AL, as one of the major campaign issues of AL was to ensure trial of the war criminals (Iqbal 2015). Similarly, Rahman says around 50% of the total population in Bangladesh is youth population, and this 50% of the population does not like the Islamist parties and they do not want anything to be imposed upon them (Rahman 2015). Iqbal explains one of the reasons why young generation
does not like Islamist parties are Islamist parties' restriction on dress code. There has been a lot of transformation in the lifestyle of people in Bangladesh since the independence and people do not like political parties to interfere in their dress code. The young generation has a secular spirit and they want to be free. They do not want anyone one to control what they should to wear (Iqbal 2015). Thus, Islamists fail to attract young generation, unlike Islamic social movement. For instance, a growing number of young people are mobilized by Tabligh Jamaat (Hasan 2012: 65).

The importance of social network for mobilizing support is also shown in the existing literature. For instance, Janine Clark’s case studies in Egypt, Jordon, and Yemen, where Islamist parties are relatively successful in increasing electoral success, show that Islamic social movements are heavily dependent on middle-class social networks. These networks include doctors, lawyers, engineers and university students as the core supporters of the institutions. Islamists mobilize Middle-class social networks because they have and spend time, money and skills to the institutions (Clark 2004: 33-34). The networks also include both Islamists and non-Islamists, and this is one of the reasons behind the success of Islamic Institutions in those countries (Clark 2004: 35). The Islamist social institutions in these countries pay less attention to Islamic laws and procedures, but more attention to developing trust, solidarity, and a family-like relation. Thus, people outside of the networks do not notice the Islamic nature of the institution. However, non-Islamists do not immediately or do not always become Islamists (Clark 2004: 36). Their participation in the networks due to jobs, donation or volunteering slowly creates a bonding, a relation of trust and solidarity (Clark 2004: 37). This helps Islamist social movement or parties to mobilize support.

II) Keeping Members Committed to the Party for Electoral Success:

Islamist parties’ failure in keeping sympathizers committed to the party is another reason behind the parties' electoral failure. Free riding is pervasive (Jenkins 1983: 537).
According to Jenkins, “collective incentives of group solidarity and commitment to moral purpose” are essential for avoiding free-rider issues (Jenkins 1983: 537). Jenkins argues that it is relatively easier to mobilize and keep people committed to a movement if they share identities and have strong interpersonal networks within a group. In contrast, it is difficult to mobilize and keep people committed if they do not share strong distinctive identities and intergroup networks but have strong ties outside of the movement networks (Jenkins 1983: 538). Thus, mobilizers should develop programs that develop solidarity and moral commitments among participants to keep them committed to the collective actions (Jenkins 1983: 538).

A number of interviewees claim that people are not committed to Islamist parties in Bangladesh (Karim 2015, Haque 2015, Rahman 2015, Zaman 2015, Ahmed 2015). Accordingly, Islamist parties’ failure in keeping sympathizers or members of the Islamic social movement committed to the parties resulted in an electoral failure of the Islamist parties as my interviewees state. For instance, Zaman says ordinary people sympathize with Islam and Islamist groups when something goes against Islam, but they are not committed to the movement parties (Zaman 2015). One of the important reasons behind Islamists’ failure in keeping people committed to the parties is Islamists’ failure in maintaining a patron-client relationship. Zaman says Bangladeshis are habituated with client-patron relationship. People maintain a relationship with someone if they are either clients or patrons. Thus, we support one group today and another group tomorrow for our interests (Zaman 2015). If you want to be a member of the parliament, you would have to spend money, which is only possible by AL and BNP as corporate class promotes AL and BNP for maintaining the patron-client relation (Zaman 2015). Islamist political parties, in contrast, fail to maintain the patron-client relationships, as they fail to get involved in the corrupted political culture. As a result, Islamist parties fail electorally (Ahmed 2015).
The importance of keeping supporter committed to the movement or party for gaining electoral success is seen among Islamist parties elsewhere. For example, Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in Indonesia developed a program of “communal responsibility” to keep its supporters committed to the party. According to PKS, when a service recipient is in a community-based relationship, which emphasizes collective responsibility, the recipients become attached to the party. One of the examples of the communal responsibility program is a cooperative scheme, KOSSUMA, run by the female activists of PKS (Hamayotsu 2011: 988). KOSSUMA is a microfinance organization, and to participate in the program, participants need to form a group of 10-15 members to take joint responsibility for the loan. PKS cadres supervise these groups and meetings in the groups. Through this type of community building mechanism, PKS slowly incorporated lower middle-class urban people in the PKS community networks, as it provided them with regular socio-economic support in contrast to their urban life which was isolating and insecure (Hamayotsu 2011: 988). The community networks also allowed the PKS cadre to establish regular contact with neighboring communities and continue the party’s commitment to Dawah during both good and bad times. All these efforts help the party to keep people committed to the movement party and help to run an effective electoral campaign (Hamayotsu 2011: 988). Moreover, PKS’s strategy of creating opportunities for a political career within the movement and party helps to attract youth and keep them committed. As a result, PKS has been the only Islamist party that did not experience a decline in electoral success for a long time in Indonesia (Hamayotsu 2011: 987). In brief, Islamist parties fail electorally if they fail to extend their networks to involve a wide range of people and keep them committed in their parties.

In concluding the section on why Islamist parties fail electorally in Bangladesh, this section has shown that Islamist political parties fail despite the growth of Islamic social movement if the parties attempt at imposing a new ideology instead of framing it in the local
context. They also fail if they suffer from legitimacy crisis to govern a country, and if they fail to extend their networks to a wide range of people and keep their members committed to the parties.

**B) Non-religious Parties’ Effort in Attracting Religious Voters:**

AL is considered as the most secular party in Bangladesh and once it took pride in its secular identity. However, AL’s position with respect to Islam has changed dramatically and now it tries to show the party’s loyalty to Islam. AL also joined an alliance with JI in 1990. The leader of AL, Sheikh Hasina, started to cover her hair with black headdress and wear long black-sleeved blouse before the election in 1996 (Hasan 2012: 176; Siddique 2010: 20). Similarly, BNP, the main opposition of AL, has built a coalition with Jamaat-i-Islami and many other Islamist parties to counter the influence of AL (Mishra 2012: 289; Karlekar 2005: 23-27). The party leaders continued to use Islam and now they compete to “out-Islamicize” each other. For instance, the chairperson of BNP, Khaleda Zia, says “we stand united for the sake of Islam” referring to her party’s alliance with Islamist parties in her election campaign in 2001 (Riaz 2004:17). She also says “God willing, we shall form the next government” to protect Islam (Riaz 2004:17). Similarly, Sheikh Hasina, the head of AL, “began to express her and her party’s alignment with Islam” (Hasan 2012: 66). For instance, Hasina started to carry prayer beads, making pilgrimages to Mecca and using of Islamic phrases in public speeches as an attempt to show her parties’ loyalty to Islam (Hasan 2012: 176). In 2006, Khaleda Zia also said she would even accept the demands of radical Islamist groups to ensure the state’s recognition to private madrassahs. A few months later Zia’s declaration, Hasina declared AL’s alliance with an Islamist group, Bangladesh Khilafat Majlish (BKM) (Siddiqi 2010: 20).

My interviewees also confirm that both main political parties, AL and BNP, consistently try to display their parties' loyalty to Islam. The leader of the AL, Sheikh Hasina,
started to make pilgrimages to Mecca and use Islamic jargons in her public speeches (Rashid 2015; Zaman 2015; Ahmed 2015). BNP does the very similar thing to attract religious voters (Rashid 2015). Thus, journalist Rahman says that there is no pure secular party in Bangladesh. Party members of AL wear religious attire, pray, and talk about religious values, like closing down beer place more than BNP (Rahman 2015). According to Islam, if BNP refuse to work with Jamaat-i-Islami, AL will start working with Jamaat-i-Islami again, because JI still has some supporters. It becomes clearer when you see that AL has not banned religious parties such as Jamaat-i-Islami (Islam 2015).

Non-religious parties’ success in attracting religious voters by using Islam reduces the number of votes Islamist parties get as my interviewees suggest. For instance, Iqbal says if AL and BNP did not use religious symbols and language, many people would have accepted religious parties and vote for them (Iqbal 2015). Now, ordinary people see leaders of both BNP and AL to fast, pray and go to mosques, so they do not feel pressured to vote for religious parties for the sake of religion (Ahmed 2015; Iqbal 2015). According to NGO worker Karim, people vote for BNP instead of JI because BNP protects Islam from a liberal position. BNP supports Islamic institutions but does not attempt to establish Wahhabism like the Islamist parties. Moreover, BNP maintains a good relation with the Middle East and people in the villages believe that Islam will be protected if they vote for BNP (Karim 2015). Thus, BNP enjoys most of the Islam loving people’s vote according to Ahmed (2015).

Similarly, AL is trying to attract the supporters from the central left to central right. People who are liberal or central left, they vote for AL because there is no major alternative. After achieving the votes of liberal, AL is trying to convince the rightist voters. They increasingly try to increase their platform, and Hasina (leader of AL) often say we are Muslim and we did this and that for Islam according to Rashid (2015). As a result, many supporters of Islamic movements, such as Tabligh Jamaat or Sufi movement vote for AL and BNP as mentioned
earlier in the paper (Kabir 2015). Based on the interview data, it is clear that non-religious parties strategically mobilize religious voters to vote for their parties, which ultimately reduces the number of votes Islamist parties receive.

In brief, the case of Bangladesh shows that Islamist parties failed in electoral politics due to their failure in directing the supporters of Islamic social movement to increase constituency. They failed to lead the resources of Islamic social movement due to their failure in framing their ideology in the local context, earning legitimacy and extending networks and keeping people committed. Thus, Islamist parties’ electoral support is declining despite the success of the Islamic social movement. Moreover, when Islamist parties fail to mobilize the supporters of the Islamic social movement to increase constituency, Islamist parties’ competitors or non-religious parties use Islam to mobilize religious voters. As a result, Islamist parties experience declining electoral support.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

Leaders of many different types of social movements form political parties or decide to participate in electoral politics to leverage their movement agendas. Social movements and movement-parties go through various changes as the parties start to take part in elections. There are incidences where a movement party detaches from its original movement once it participates in elections. There are also examples where a movement benefits from its political wing, which passes legislations in favor of the movement. Since the support base of a social movement tends to support the movement party, a movement party should receive more votes when the strength and influence of the movement increases or the movement become popular in a society. Many Islamist parties in Egypt, Turkey, and Morocco experience a rise of electoral support with the rise of Islamic social movement. However, there are cases where Islamic political parties’ share of vote decreases or the parties fail to increase electoral support despite the rise of Islamic social movements. Bangladesh is one such case. However, the social movement literature does not explain this puzzling relationship between social movements and social movement parties.

In order to fill this gap in the social movement literature, this research raised the question of why Islamic political parties face declining electoral support despite the rise of Islamic social movements, and why Islamic social movement grows tremendously when Islamist parties fail electorally. More specifically, the research asked why Islamic political parties in Bangladesh are experiencing a decline in their electoral support while that Islamic social movement in the country is becoming popular, and why Islamic social movement is growing despite the declining electoral support of the Islamist parties. Based on the fieldwork conducted in Bangladesh and secondary literature, this research argued that Islamic social movement has been growing despite the failure of Islamist parties because of the state’s strategic use of Islam and Islamic movement’s effort in directing the available opportunities
to strengthen the movement. All the governments since the independence of Bangladesh created opportunities for the Islamist groups to grow and the authoritarian regimes from 1975-1990 patronized the Islamist groups. The patronization and the state's friendly attitude towards the Islamist groups created opportunities for the Islamist groups to rise, and the Islamist groups utilized the opportunities to build institutions and Islamize the society.

The research also argues that Islamist parties in Bangladesh experience declining electoral support despite the growth of the movement because the parties failed to direct the resources of the Islamic social movement to increase constituency and non-religious parties’ succeed at mobilizing religious voters. Islamist parties in Bangladesh fail to mobilize the resources of the Islamic social movement for three reasons. First, many of the parties try to impose Wahhabism instead of trying to frame it in the local context, unlike many Islamic movements. Second, they fail to earn legitimacy to govern the country. Third, Islamist parties experience declining electoral support because the parties did not extend their network to a wide group of people and fail to keep their sympathizers committed to the parties. Thus, Islamists leg behind, and the non-Islamist parties succeed in mobilizing the Islamist voters. As a result, the percentage of votes Islamist parties get every year declines.

The finding of this research will be helpful to understand the relationship between the success of any movement and movement party, especially Islamic movements and Islamist parties. It is important to understand the relationship between the success of a social movement and movement parties to understand the mechanism of the movement and movement party. A movement can be far more influential than the parties that represent the movement. In the similar line, a movement party can also be more successful than a movement, which needs to be examined in details in the future. Thus, this research will help to eliminate the overgeneralization that a movement party and movement become influential around the same time. This research will be helpful for movement leaders, such as
environmentalists, that aim to increase the electoral support of their movement parties. It will help them understand why the movement parties fail despite the growth of the movement and how can they possibly direct the resources of the movement to increase the electoral success of the movement parties. This research will also be particularly helpful for policymakers who have to deal with social movement and social movement parties. It will make the policy makers not to undermine the influence of a social movement by looking at the success rate of the movement parties. Moreover, it will help policy makers to understand why and how the influence of certain movement rise despite the movement-party being a minor party in the formal politics, and why any movement party fails to increase electoral support or experience declining electoral support despite the rise of the movement.

Moreover, this research will be crucial for the policy makers in Bangladesh. It will help them to understand the specific relationship between the Islamic social movement and Islamist parties. This research will explain why Islamist groups in Bangladesh have grown significantly, and why the groups, especially the Islamist parties exercise power and influence that is disproportioned to their electoral success. This will also clarify that is not only the Islamic militant groups that use violence; moderate Islamist parties also use violence to pursue their goals. Moreover, this research will be helpful for Islamic movement and movement parties that aim to increase the electoral success of the parties. It will show why the parties fail electorally despite the success of the Islamic social movement and where the parties could improve or how the parties could possibly direct the resources of the Islamic social movement to increase constituency.

The case of Bangladesh is also very interesting for future study about Islamic social movement and Islamist political parties. While most of the Islamic movements suffer repression from the state, Islamic social movement in Bangladesh grew with the support of the state. However, the Islamist parties failed to increase their support in Bangladesh while
many of their counterparts grew significantly in the Middle East despite the repression from the states. This raises the question whether Islamist parties become more successful when they are repressed by the state? This needs to be addressed in a future research.
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