

The American Embrace: A Trap for Bangladesh's Islamists

News:

The United States diplomats in Dhaka have reportedly expressed interest in building relations with Jamaat-e-Islami, a prominent Islamist party in Bangladesh, and other conservative Islamist political parties, including Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh and Islami Andolan Bangladesh ahead of the February 12 national elections, according to audio recordings published by The Washington Post ("US seeks to be 'friends' with Bangladesh's once-banned Islamist Party", January 22, 2026). The recordings, from a closed-door meeting on December 1, show a U.S. diplomat stating, "We want them to be our friend", and expressing confidence that Jamaat-e-Islami would perform better than ever in the upcoming election.

Comment:

America's approach to political Islam is not about principles, but about control and subjugation. For decades, the U.S. tried to suffocate it under the 'war on terror,' but now sees this demand as organic and unkillable within the Muslim world. This dynamic has played out vividly in Bangladesh, where youth have revolted against the long-standing, Western-backed Hasina regime. Such organic resistance is a primary U.S. concern, underscored by Secretary of State Marco Rubio's recent warnings that radical Islam seeks not just territory, but expansion and global domination.

Thus, the U.S. tactic has shifted from eradication to their previous management style, i.e. through "inclusion-moderation." The idea is to support certain 'moderate' Islamist groups into democratic election, hoping they become tools against 'extreme' factions. But history shows this is a trap. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt was first praised as moderate democrats, only to be abandoned and labeled terrorists when the U.S.'s geopolitical interests are served.

The warning for Bangladesh is sharp. As a vital point for the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, America cannot allow free reign to Islamic aspirations. This explains a seeming U-turn: after supporting a long crackdown on Islamists here including Jamat Islami, the U.S. may now engage them. This isn't strange; it's a tactical trap to control them, similar to how it works with Ahmed al -Sharaa in Syria to exert influence.

Bangladesh's Islamic parties stand at a crossroads. The West may accept them only if they abandon their foundational goal—establishing an Islamic state—and renounce Shariah. In doing so, they lose their Islamic identity, becoming no different from secular parties, yet remain vulnerable to being discarded when geopolitics shift.

This also reveals a fundamental truth: a genuine Islamic project cannot succeed within a Western framework. Compromising core beliefs for political access is not pragmatism but a form of exploitation, leading away from Islamic principles. Muslims are called to serve Allah, not appease foreign powers. Using Islam as a cloak while engaging with Western Kufr democracy under its own rules confuses the Ummah and contradicts the divine command: ﴿إِنْ يَتَفَقَّهُكُمْ يَكُونُوا لَكُمْ أَعْدَاءُ وَيَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَأَلْسِنَتُهُمْ بِالسُّوءِ وَوَدُّوا لَوْ تَكْفُرُونَ﴾ **"If they gain dominance over you, they would be to you as enemies and extend against you their hands and their tongues with evil, and they wish you would disbelieve."** [Surah Al-Mumtahina: 2]. The only clear path is unity in rejecting any colonial project to liberalizing "Islam" and working solely toward the reestablishment of the rightly-guided Caliphate — the true source of mercy and liberation for the Muslim world.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Irtiza Chowdhury – Wilayah Bangladesh