
HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

(JOURNAL OF HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION)
NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC, United Nations

Vol. 19 Nos. 1-2

January-June 2015

BANGLADESH SPECIAL

POLITICS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH:
MANIPULATION, CRIMINALIZATION AND CORRUPTION
Md. Shairul Mashreque

CULTURE OF PARLIAMENT BOYCOTT AND THE FUTURE OF
PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN BANGLADESH
Md. Shahidulla Kaiser

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN BANGLADESH
Binodkumar Singh

RISE OF ISLAMIC RADICALISM IN BANGLADESH: IMPLICATIONS FOR
THE SECURITY OF NORTH-EAST INDIA
Raj Kumar Sharma

PROFILING NON-STATE ARMED MILITANT GROUPS OF BANGLADESH
Anurag Tripathi

ROHINGYAS' PROBLEM IN BANGLADESH
Sujit Kumar Datta

MICROFINANCE PROGRAMME OF BANGLADESH: A CRITICAL SURVEY
Alok Kumar

INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS: THE BEGINNING OF A NEW DAWN
Shubha Chatterjee

PAKISTAN-BANGLADESH RELATIONS
Ashish Shukla

HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

Editor : K. WARIKOO

© Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, New Delhi.

- * All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electrical, mechanical or otherwise without first seeking the written permission of the publisher or due acknowledgement.
- * The views expressed in this Journal are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions or policies of the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation.

SUBSCRIPTION

IN INDIA

Single Copy (Individual)	:	Rs.	500.00
Annual (Individual)	:	Rs.	1000.00
Institutions & Libraries (Annual)	:	Rs.	1400.00

OVERSEAS (AIRMAIL)

Single Copy	:	US \$	30.00
		UK £	20.00
Annual (Individual)	:	US \$	60.00
		UK £	40.00
Institutions & Libraries (Annual)	:	US \$	100.00
		UK £	70.00

Himalayan and Central Asian Studies
is included within the *ProQuest* products

Himalayan and Central Asian Studies
is included and abstracted in *Worldwide Political Science*
Abstracts and *PAIS International*, CSA, USA

Subscriptions should be sent by crossed cheque or bank draft in favour of
HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION,
B-6/86, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi - 110029 (India)

Printed and published by Prof. K. Warikoo on behalf of the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, B-6/86, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-110029. Distributed by Anamika Publishers & Distributors (P) Ltd, 4697/3, 21-A, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi-110002. Printed at Nagri Printers, Delhi-110032.

EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Dr. Lokesh Chandra

Chairman
Indian Council of Cultural
Relations
New Delhi, India

Rajiv K. Bhatia

Director General
Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House
New Delhi

Prof. Vitaly Naumkin

Director
Institute of Oriental Studies
Moscow (Russia)

Prof. Devendra Kaushik

Gurgaon, Haryana (India)

Prof. Kh. Umarov

Head, Institute of Economy
and Development
Tajik Academy of Sciences
Dushanbe, Tajikistan

Prof. Priyankar Upadhyaya

Director
Malaviya Centre for Peace
Research
Banaras Hindu University
Varanasi (India)

Prof. Fatima Kukeyva

Faculty of International Relations
Al Farabi Kazakh National
University
Almaty, Kazakhstan

Dr. Sanjyot Mehendale

Executive Director
Caucasus and Central Asia Program
University of California
Berkeley, USA

Prof. R. S. Yadav

Chairman
Department of Political Science
Kurukshetra University
Kurukshetra
Haryana (India)

Prof. T.S. Sarao

Head
Department of Buddhist Studies
University of Delhi
Delhi (India)

CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Md. Shairul Mashreque is Professor, Department of Public Administration, Chittagong University, Bangladesh

Dr. Kazi S.M. Khasrul Alam Quddusi is Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, Chittagong University, Bangladesh.

Dr. Md Shahidulla Kaiser teaches at Department of Public Administration, Chittagong University, Bangladesh.

Dr. S. Binodkumar Singh is a Research Associate in Institute for Conflict Management (ICM), New Delhi. He has done his Ph.D. on “Indo-Bangladesh Relations: Their Impact on the Security of the North East” from the Department of Defence and National Security Studies at Punjab University, Chandigarh.

Raj Kumar Sharma is a UGC Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Dr. Amit Ranjan is associated with Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi

Abanti Adhikari is Assistant Professor, Department of History, Narasinha Dutta College, Kolkata

Dr. Richard L. Benkin is the author of *A Quiet Case of Ethnic Cleansing: the Murder of Bangladesh's Hindus*, which is available at <http://www.InterfaithStrength.com>.

Dr. Anurag Tripathi is Assistant Professor in Christ University Bengaluru, Karnataka. Earlier, he was Research Associate at the Institute for Conflict Management (ICM), New Delhi.

Dr. Sujit Kumar Datta is Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, Chittagong University, Bangladesh.

Alok Kumar is a doctoral scholar at Centre for Inner Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Shubha Chatterjee is a research scholar at Centre for Inner Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Dr. M S Nanda Kishor is Post-Doctoral Fellow (Erasmus Mundus) at Leiden Institute of Area Studies, Leiden University, Netherlands and Assistant Professor at Department of Geopolitics and International Relations, Manipal University, Karnataka, India

Ashish Shukla is associated with Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi. He is the author of *Deadly Connection: The Cost of Becoming a Frontline State* (Delhi, Vijaya Books, 2013).

Dr. Divya Agnihotri is a formal doctoral scholar from Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

Vol. 19, Nos. 1-2

January-June 2015

CONTENTS

Editor's Page	<i>K. Warikoo</i>	1-6
Politics of Rural Development in Bangladesh: Manipulation, Criminalization and Corruption	<i>Md. Shairul Mashreque</i>	7-23
Bangladesh in the Horizon: Intractable Issues	<i>Kazi S.M. Khasrul Alam Quddusi</i>	24-36
Culture of Parliament Boycott and the future of Parliamentary Democracy in Bangladesh	<i>Md. Shahidulla Kaiser</i>	37-54
Islamic Fundamentalism in Bangladesh	<i>Binodkumar Singh</i>	55-66
Rise of Islamic Radicalism in Bangladesh: Implications for the Security of North-East India	<i>Raj Kumar Sharma</i>	67-86
Radicalism in Bangladesh: Causes, Concerns and Consequences	<i>Amit Ranjan</i>	87-99
Fundamentalist Islam in Bangladesh	<i>Abanti Adhikari</i>	100-107
Ethnic Cleansing of Bangladesh's Hindus	<i>Richard L. Benkin</i>	108-118
Profiling Non-State Armed Militant Groups of Bangladesh	<i>Anurag Tripathi</i>	119-133
Rohingyas' Problem in Bangladesh	<i>Sujit Kumar Datta</i>	134-151
Microfinance Programme of Bangladesh: A Critical Survey	<i>Alok Kumar</i>	152-164
India-Bangladesh Relations: The Beginning of a new Dawn	<i>Shubha Chatterjee</i>	165-196
Political Regimes and Water Sharing Disputes Between India and Bangladesh	<i>M S Nanda Kishor</i>	197-210
Pakistan-Bangladesh Relations	<i>Ashish Shukla</i>	211-235
Bhutan-Bangladesh Relations	<i>Divya Agnihotri</i>	236-251

Editor's Page

Bordered by India on its west, north and east, Myanmar on the southeast and by the Bay of Bengal in the south, Bangladesh covering an area of about 140, 000 sq kms and with over 156 million people is among the world's most densely populated countries. Bangladesh has been confronted with the problems of high population growth rate, poverty, floods and cyclones, which have been adversely affecting its economic development. Seventy five percent of the population lives in the rural areas and majority of labour force is employed in the informal economy. Two-thirds of Bangladesh's export earnings come from the garment industry, which employs more than three million workers, 90 per cent of whom are women. Notwithstanding these problems, the country has registered modest economic growth over the past few years, which is sustained by liberal foreign assistance, readymade garment exports and remittances from Bangladeshis working abroad. Though majority of its population (about 89 per cent) are Muslims, there are other communities such as Hindus (9.5 per cent), Buddhists, Christians and others (about 1.5 per cent).

Independent Bangladesh emerged in December 1971 on the strength of Bengali nationalism and as a secular country. However, after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, the secular principle of the constitution of 1972 was dropped and the Islamic orientation of the polity became pronounced. The political-bureaucratic-military elite started using Islam to legitimize their leadership. Bangladesh now sought to emphasise its links with the Islamic *Ummah* and stressed the need to maintain special relations with the Islamic countries. The country now witnessed the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism, as *Jamaat-e-Islami* and other Islamic outfits such as *Islamic Chhatro Shibir* and *Islami Oikyo Jot* consolidated and expanded their institutional network fully utilizing the Islamic petro dollars. The existence of Islamist militant underground groups such as *Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami (HuJI)*, *Hizbul Mujahideen*, *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba*, *Jaish-e-Mohammad* in Bangladesh and their continued anti-India activities, poses a major security threat to India. Two radical terrorist organizations, *Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB)* and *Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)* were banned in February 2005. In recent years militants have targeted secular writers in Bangladesh. Between March

and May 2015, three bloggers Washiqur Rahman, Avjit Roy and Anant Bijoy Das, who advocated rationalism and opposed fundamentalism, were hacked to death by Islamist extremists.

Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina came to power with an overwhelming majority of 230 seats out of 300 in the ninth parliamentary election held on 29 December 2008. With about eighty per cent of the electorate having turned up to vote, Sheikh Hasina got a massive mandate to bring peace, stability and development in Bangladesh. Now Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina demonstrated her resolve to curb forces of intolerance, extremism and terrorism and take her country back to the liberal, democratic and modernist path. After 34 years of long wait the Supreme Court of Bangladesh awarded on 19 December 2009 death sentence to 12 killers of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This judgement is a new milestone for Bangladesh, as it reestablished the rule of law and upheld the principles of sovereignty, nationalism and democracy, which were dear to Sheikh Mujib, the founder of Bangladesh. Five of these convicts were hanged on 28 January 2010. In another historic judgement delivered on 3 January 2010, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh lifted a four-year stay on a ban on the "abuse of religion for political purposes". This order marks a new beginning for the country in its walk back to the "secular" Bangladesh as was envisaged in its original constitution of 1972. In January 2014 Sheikh Hasina became the Prime Minister for third time winning the 2014 parliamentary election, which was boycotted by the main opposition BNP-led alliance. Given the criticism by the main opposition party *Bangladesh Nationalist Party* (BNP) and its Islamic allies of this judgement, Sheikh Hasina's government has to surmount the challenges in her efforts to take her country back to liberal, secular, democratic and modernist path, while maintaining fine balance between tradition and modernity. And another important test shall be to amend the Vested Property Act, so as to enable the return of Hindu properties confiscated or grabbed by virtue of this Act to their original owners.

Sharing a common land border of over 4,100 kms., both Bangladesh and India are bound by age old traditions, culture and history. Notwithstanding the significant role played by India in the liberation of Bangladesh, relations between the two countries have been beset with several irritants. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism and existence of Islamist militant groups in Bangladesh, illegal migration of millions of Bangladeshis into India, issues of Bangladesh's export of gas to India, transit access for India's north-east, existence of enclaves in each other's

country and water sharing have been the main issues requiring resolution.

The visits of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India(2010), Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Dhaka (2011), President Pranab MNukherjee(2013) and Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj (June 2014) indicate the importance attached by the two countries to strengthen mutual relations. Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in early January 2010 marked an end to decades long "mutual distrust" and paved the way for building new relationship bonded in mutual trust and friendship. Five agreements including three security related pacts – Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, Agreement on Combating International Terrorism, Organized Crime and Illicit Drugs Trafficking, and Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons – were signed during her visit. Sheikh Hasina assured that " Bangladesh soil would no longer be used by groups inimical to India". On its part, India committed to provide one billion US Dollars credit line to improve the infrastructure in Bangladesh. Both countries have thus consolidated their political, economic, trade and cultural relations on the principles of partnership and mutual growth.

The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh on 6-7 June 2015 heralded a new chapter in India-Bangladesh ties, as both countries settled the 41 year old boundary dispute. Earlier the Indian Parliament showed rare unanimity in passing the Constitution (119th Amendment)Bill to ratify the India-Bangladesh Land and Boundary Agreement (LBA). That such intractable issue of land and boundary dispute has been resolved thanks to strong political will and consensus cutting across party lines, is a testimony to the actual implementation of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'neighbourhood first' policy. Whereas Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina hailed it 'as a new milestone in bilateral relations, the opposition BNA described it as 'an important day in our national life'. LBA brings to end the anomalies of the Radcliffe Award drawn during partition of the sub-continent. It provides for sovereignty over 111 Indian enclaves covering an area of 17,158 acres to Bangladesh, while the territory of 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in India with an area of 7,110 acres will be ceded to India. Besides, the issue of undemarcated stretch of 6.1 km of international boundary stands now resolved. Earlier in 2014 India accepted the verdict of international arbitrator which settled the maritime boundary with Bangladesh.

Both countries also signed signed 22 agreements to deepen economic ties, connectivity and on cooperation in maritime safety, to curb human

trafficking, fake currency etc. Whereas Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reiterated zero tolerance towards terrorism, Modi announced a 2 billion US dollars line of credit to Bangladesh for infrastructure development. That West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was part of the Indian delegation, signaled the new Indian government's commitment to keep states in the loop while deciding upon issues related to the concerned states. Since water is a state subject, Indian Prime Minister expressed confidence that "with the support of state governments in India, we can reach a fair resolution on Teesta and Feni rivers". Narendra Modi while addressing the joint press conference alongwith Sheikh Hasina at Dhaka on 6 June 2015 stressed: "We are not just neighbours. We are two nations bound by the threads of history, religion, culture, language and kinship. As we deepen our political engagement and celebrate our rich inheritance, as our economies get more integrated and our people better connected, our relations will become more prosperous. It will also open new economic doors for India's Northeast and it will enable our two economies to integrate South Asia and connect it with the dynamic East".

The two countries launched two trans-border bus services on Kolkata-Dhaka-Agartala and Dhaka-Shillong-Guwahati routes, which would shorten the distance between north-eastern states and Kolkata. Agreements for building power plants to produce 4,600 MW electricity to help Bangladesh to overcome its energy crisis were also concluded. India's Reliance Power Limited signed separate MoUs with state-run Bangladesh Power Development Board. Adani Power will set up 2 coal-fired plants with a total capacity of 160 MW. There is great scope for collaboration between the public and private sectors of two countries particularly in textiles, production of consumer goods and garments, power generation, mining and exploration, services sector etc. Closer bilateral cooperation between Bangladesh and India with higher intra-regional trade and investment can benefit both countries, with fuller utilization of their complementarities and comparative advantages in various sectors. This will not only alter the balance of trade with India in favour of Bangladesh, but will also spur the growth of industry and Indian investments in Bangladesh, leading to overall development of that country.

Indian official trade with Bangladesh is over 5 billion US dollars, with Indian exports of over 3 billion US dollars. To this should be added over 3 billion US dollars worth of exports through informal channels. The existing imbalance in bilateral trade is sought to be set right. That Bangladesh has now allowed Indian ships to access ports like Chittagong

and Mongla, will have huge economic benefits. As of now Indian ships carrying goods to Bangladesh travel all the way to Singapore, transship goods to other vessels which ship them to Bangladesh, the whole process taking 30 to 40 days. Now it would take hardly a week for Indian ships to reach Chittagong.

Another important outcome of Modi's visit to Bangladesh was the conclusion of an agreement on connecting Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) to facilitate sub-regional road linkages. BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement ensures free movement of private, public and commercial vehicles from all the four countries across each other's territories. Bangladesh can now use its geographical advantage to emerge as a transit port in the region, covering Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and North East Indian states. This is a major step forward towards sub-regional cooperation in South Asia on developing connectivity and transit trade.

Illegal immigration of over 15 million Bangladeshi nationals to India has changed the demographic profile of some north-eastern states of India, besides putting pressure on land and resources causing social tension. Bangladesh's failure to cooperate with India in the repatriation of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants has complicated the problem. It is high time that India takes requisite steps for effective border control, registration of foreigners and their removal from voter lists, issue of photo-identity cards particularly in the states bordering Bangladesh. International agencies like ICRC and UNHCR which have achieved some success in the repatriation of refugees/migrants from Afghanistan and Tajikistan, can be coopted to facilitate the repatriation of Bangladeshi nationals from India to their home country. Besides, the problems of illicit trade in drugs and psychotropic substances, cattle smuggling and human trafficking need to be addressed through proper border management and resilient security architecture.

Now what is required is the speedy and time bound implementation of these agreements at the bureaucratic level. There is need for institutionalisation of bilateral cooperative mechanisms so that no political handicaps affect the process. It is hoped that with the bilateral relations maturing into constructive engagement, various contentious issues affecting these relations for decades, would be resolved so that there is all round development, peace and stability in the region. A comprehensive water sharing and management mechanism needs to be evolved to deal with the issues of flood control, desilting of rivers and regulating the water flow, on long lasting basis. Given Bangladesh's commitment to the global

campaign against terrorism, it would be in Dhaka's interest to curb the rise of Islamist extremism and terrorism. Bangladesh should continue to be seen as a moderate, pluralistic society committed to regional peace, democratic values and practices.

K. Warikoo

POLITICS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH *MANIPULATION, CRIMINALIZATION AND CORRUPTION*

MD. SHAIRUL MASHREQUE

INTRODUCTION

A plausible explanation of the politics of rural development, political economy attributes significance to the features of social formation that are relevant to the understanding of the nature of structural manipulation and ruthless exploitation of the rural poor. This study resorts to this perspective to discover a logical connection between manipulation, criminalization and corruption. Part of the explanation here involves the state as an organized larger community operating with government and public administration that continue to buttress socially construed exploitative mechanism.

The scenario of governance conceptually connected with politics of rural development enables us to understand potential barriers to institutional intervention towards poverty reduction. Rural development to reduce poverty cannot be achieved simply through growth with equity indicators and targeted safety-nets. Projected programmes of addressing poverty under Millennium Development Goals (MDG) are difficult to implement.

Many dimensions of governance cannot be reduced to the single dimension of political economy-material benefits and possession of resources. Other dimensions, too, are pertinent to the analysis of the politics of rural development. Now the key actors and factors of policy environment have much to influence governing process to steer the wheel of the community and shape the destinies of the masses.

This contextualism provides much room for the analysis of relational

matrix under the condition of seemingly fuzzy governance within the methodological perspective of political economy based on pro-Marxist stance. Plethora of recent studies (Wood 1976, Alavi 1973, Blair 1978 and 1985, Huizer 1981, Westergaard 1976, Poulantzas 1975, Umar 1986, 1987) on development are illuminating with insightful research notes to facilitate understanding of the state of governance that impinges into peasant social fabric. Peasant communities operating within Asiatic mode of production have been encapsulated by feudal or semi-feudalistic pattern of governance. Bangladesh presents a prototype of Asiatic mode of production in a hydraulic structure ruled by the semi-feudal lords and emerging tycoons who use opportunities for investment in capitalistic mode of production. They have come to constitute a governing class lying at the apex of the community power structure because of high income (including unearned one coming through the channel of corruption), large landholding estate and education.

Some recent socio-economic surveys on rural local communities in Bangladesh conducted by Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) and Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) are “snap-shots of a vast and complex social formation undergoing a rigorous process of social transformation”.¹ Both the surveys present almost similar findings though BARD conducted research with a larger sample. It is clear from the surveys that local governance does not serve the interests of the majority of the peasants. Blair (1987) argues that leaders in any society invariably are elite of one sort or another. Blair compares Bangladesh context with that of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala states of India. However, governance situation in Bangladesh is strictly different from that of Indian states. This is because of the fact that some undemocratic culture coupled with military and quasi-military intervention is responsible for blocking the normative development of democratic political institutions. In Bangladesh the petty bourgeoisie has become a dominant social class. The state plays a Bonapartist militarist role. There happens to be relative autonomy to keep its political jackets clean and resolve inner contradictions among themselves (traditional petty bourgeoisie and new petty bourgeoisie).

NATURE OF THE STATE

The central point of political economy of governance is the nature of the state. Public policies appear as institutional sanctions as a sequel to

penetration by the state. Public policies allocate resources among the individuals or groups as a reflection of state intervention. State is to be regarded as a 'prior entity'; any change in the complexion of the state smoothes the way to socio-economic transformation. The explanation thus pursued here also adheres to stimulus- response model where the state allocates values as an outcome of the manipulation of the forces that make up overall community structure with differential access to organizational resources.

Policy environment in developing areas displays an 'exclusionary relation' from the system of distribution. The disadvantaged groups are structurally excluded from ownership and access to resources. Legislative measures in line with ongoing policies or new policy options hardly improve state intervention as the bureaucratic machinery determine forward course of action at the implementation stage. There has been very little alliance between public administration implementing public policies and ordinary masses.

In developing areas peasants and other working classes continue to be powerless organizationally. They are unorganizable having less resources at their command. Even policy reforms and redistributive policies cannot strengthen their right and ensure their access to 'technological inputs'. State is not opposed to the forces that are organized with a high level of capacity building.

The concept of such dominance has diverse ramifications in its application in the study of the politics of rural development. For our present purpose we look at this phenomenon as a manifestation of the nature of the state. This intellectual position tantamounts to institutional paramountcy of the dominant class controlling state apparatus and giving policy direction to national and local affairs.

Universal proposition about the nature of domination is important. But the conceptual points in connection with the nature of the state very much apply to developing areas. We prefer to focus on the nature of the state in developing areas especially in Bangladesh in terms of its directing role in rural development.

State in developing countries catalyses development of capitalism in extremely indigenous economic environment. Capitalistic mode of production has been encapsulated in traditional economy that characterizes South Asian context with the remnants of feudalism. However, the causation of domination transcends the boundary of economics to embrace a complicated array of interactions among diverse

social forces. We contend that the dynamics of policy action is to be understood through understanding of those forces that accompany the nature of power play.

With regard to the role of the state, doctrinaire position varies with different style of conceptualization. Emphasising a particular component of domination depends on the way a scholar looks at the policy issue. The approach he might develop from ideological orientation limits the boundary of his intellectual action. Socialist radicals researching on a given policy issue emphasize economic variables in relation to economic differentiation and polarisation. The conservatives would like to attach importance to traditional frontier of state intervention. Liberal democrat would consider participatory component as a modernization paradigm. One single pointer to the understanding of the state is not adequate. Contemporary approaches to the nature of the state reflect various strands of opinion on the phenomenon and thus suffice for our understanding of the entire gamut of domination.

We proceed to analyze post-colonial scenario in recent years by referring to neo-Marxian political economy. This is of much relevance to the process of development both in the formulation of public policies and the outcomes of their implementation.

Neo-Marxian political economy accentuates the state of underdevelopment in post-colonial states. It epitomizes dependency syndrome as a continuing situation in which the center dominates the peripheries in all aspects of transactional relationship. Stalwarts of Neo-Marxism- Frank (1979), Wallerstein (1974), Rhodes (1970), Dos Santos (1969), Baren (1967), Amin (1974), Alavi (1973, 1982), Kalecki (1976) depicted such situation with the variables like trade dependency, surplus drain, free market, multinational corporation, class nature of bureaucracy, reproduction of capitalist social order and distributional problems relating to pricing and subsidy policies.

Dependency situation is reinforced by elite as the dominant policy actor of the peripheral state. The exogenous forces of policy development with the intervention of donor agencies tend to heighten income inequality and thereby create structural tension in the countryside. Structural tension also happens to be the outcome of the 'predatory and soft' character of the state. In a 'predatory state' rent seeking is an omnipresent policy to obtain private benefits from public action and resources. Protracted policy failure becomes the function of the state failure.

Contemporary thinking on development scenario especially in Asian

context in line with various dimensions of governance in policy making is insightful with useful learning points and experiences. Theoretical perspectives on the role of the state based on epistemological novelty may help us to understand a link between governance and public policy. Modernization theories, dependency perspectives, contemporary Marxists' views about post-colonial state (overdeveloped state apparatus, relative autonomy), concepts like praetorian regime, liberal democracy, embedded autonomy, social capital, civil society and development state provide much intellectual enthusiasm for re-conceptualizing political economy of state society intervention in public policy.

**MANIPULATION, CRIMINALIZATION AND CORRUPTION:
RURAL BANGLADESH SCENARIO**

Manipulation appears to be the function of governing elites. The contemporary scenario of triangular manipulation is a manipulation by the dominant interest group – the coalition of interests among “governing elites,” “fortune seeking political entrepreneurs” and privileged business communities. Governing elites include both political leadership and bureaucracy. It is seen that governing elites expand various opportunities for economic concentration including rent-seeking ones. It ultimately aggravates the poverty situation threatening the legitimacy of the regime and increasing the probability of regime turn over.

Manipulation has of late degenerated into criminalization. Bangladesh syndrome of criminalization has diverse manifestations like rampant politicisation and partisanization, toll extortion, forced occupation of land, commercialization of politics and criminalization of business and syndication. Criminalisation started to mushroom in Bangladesh when things stumbled onto misgovernance with state failing to stem the rot.

The propensity to corruption is inherent in misgovernance. Corruption has acquired a pervasive character devouring economy as a whole. This problematic scenario continues to hold tenuously on extremely fragile and soft state. The consequence is likely to be the generation of catastrophic conditions as well as humanitarian crisis. Corruption in terms of massive societal degeneration put severe strains on the implementation of public policy on various sectors and sub-sectors. Despite effectiveness of the economic policy strategy in raising GDP at a reasonable rate and raising remittance flows, corruption has brought into being a set of interrelated and potentially explosive problems. This is reflected in the fast deterioration

of material conditions and rising structural tension bedeviling the lives of the vulnerable especially in the countryside. Quddusi has succinctly analyzed recent trends in criminalization and corruption in a state with military preponderance.² It is clear from his study that corruption thrives in the midst of criminalization of politics.

Corrupt practice in various forms continues to engulf all strategic institutions undermining governance. It is so deep in field level extensions of departments for rural development with the reinforcement of criminalization and syndication that it seems impossible to break its vicious chain. The environment around bureaucracy and political arena has become inordinately vitiated to give way to institutionalisation of corruption. The dinosaur of corruption has reigned supreme under the manipulative design of fortune seeking rural leaders to weaken political stability and economic resilience. Local touts active in rural politics have immensely benefited from Machiavellian syndrome of politicization while the honest have been sidelined.

“For decades, the story of Bangladesh has been a cycle of poverty, natural disaster, political violence and corruption.”³ A policy of patrimonialism followed by successive government in Bangladesh has facilitated corruption.⁴ Patrimonialism is a system in which the politicians grab national wealth and resources to enrich themselves creating an affluent class subservient to them through the massive transfer of public wealth to private hands.⁵

Political leadership actually does not represent the majority of the rural population. The change of political allegiance of local leadership with the change of the ruling regime is evident.⁶ Local leadership has turned into a lucrative trade without investment drawing most patronage resources from the ruling regimes. Patronage resources have been usually placed at the disposal of the influential elites including local MPs. There is a great struggle among faction leaders to capture those resources which provide accessibility to development inputs flowing into the locality from different strategic points of the “centre power axis.”

Under the circumstances one can realize the indispensability of decentralized local governance (LG) system in minimizing the damaging effects of centralization. Poverty reduction as one of the major objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), requires decentralized LG at the micro-level. More, obsolete structures as found in micro public administration constitute a road block to any intervention aimed at economic empowerment of the poor living far below the subsistence level.

We have democratic institutions at the sub-national level that are more apparent than real and are merely the political fronts of the 'Kulak clubs'. The poor continue to remain voiceless having no opinion leader to speak out their problems. Moreover, bureaucratically structured field administration as the extension of central command directs development process with communication, information, networking, planning and budgeting.

There has been an endless quest for good governance at the local level. Given the nature of the state initiative for local governance reforms is same as flogging dead horse. State bureaucracy desires changes within its own prescription and the governing class that dominates the 'local state' would resist any reform that would jeopardize status-quo. In the recent past democratic government cared little about decentralization. As a result local-self government could not receive proper nourishment. The central power axis resorted to massive politicization that ruined the character of local government. The field bureaucracy continued to exercise leverage over local institutions as a crucial variable in development intervention. It served the interest of the local conglomerates that came to constitute a governing class benefiting much from the wave of politicization. The governing class used available institutions as strategic resources for concentration of wealth.

We talk of autonomy so often as if it were the only variable for the promotion of local governance. Trapped by the illusion of autonomy the continuing malfunctioning of local governance with representative institutions and field administration told heavily on community life of the low income group. The terribly bad shaped democratic institutions plagued by internal strife, impotence and split enabled the field bureaucracy to have strangle-hold over local institutions. Relative autonomy was used only to resolve internal contradiction, manage crisis and serve information needs.

The dysfunctional role of the members of parliament is pertinent to the analysis of fuzzy local governance. They were found using their position to channel development projects into their constituencies. This was obviously for establishing command over patronage resources and mobilizing support base. The urge to share patronage resources was a critical factor in the abiding interests of MPs to see how projects were being implemented. MPs increasingly intruded into local politics when it came to the utilization of public funds in their respective constituencies. At the micro level such intervention gave rise to dualism in the

implementation of rural development projects. However, the governing class was rather benefited by the centrally determined sectional allocations for development projects. In such an environment local governance was divorced from public purpose, disarrayed by private gains and material interests where “dividing line between the ruling party and the opposition was indistinguishable.”⁷

Of course belatedly the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Local Government Initiative, Campaign for political Reform and other civil society groups came forward with the ideas of strengthening existing potentials of local self governance. Donor agencies funded policy analysis on the issue of local governance with action research to offer future policy options. However, it has been increasingly realized by the civil society that community wide consensus on generic and specific issues of local governance needs to be reached. There needs to be a broad based initiative with the participation of citizen bodies and community stake holders. The new perspectives in local governance reveal a strong desire for promoting local government initiative with new vision to set appropriate agenda of action. Much is left to the proposed Local Government Commission that is expected to take a planned approach to local governance providing a platform for community participation in need based development. The civil society can only play second fiddles with advisory roles.

The crisis of non-participation of the ordinary rural citizens is crystal clear in a “soft” and “predatory” state like Bangladesh. Here the structure of governance is subservient to “extensive rent seeking” an omnipresent policy to obtain private benefits from public actions and resources. So fuzzy governance bedevils the otherwise seemingly stable community life. Repeated policy failure is thus a forgone conclusion. This is evident from the frantic attempt of the governing elites to grab more resources.

Bureaucracy is found to be bolstering fuzzy local governance using manipulative skills and techniques. The governing class including the tycoons may not benefit from the “enforcement of rules of law,” transparency and anti-corruption state action. Instead they “gain from extensive unproductive and profit seeking activities in a political system they control than from long term efforts to build a well functioning state in which economic progress and democratic institutions flourish”.⁸

The protracted fuzzy governance is an inevitable outcome of triangular manipulation with bureaucracy going strong to practice corruption. A plethora of organizations influenced by a triangular alliance

are not effective mechanisms to articulate the interest of the deprived class as policy inputs. Local government bodies, co-operatives, several committees and civil societies (not all) have become more or less the “ploys of intensive political hobnobbing.”

The foundation of peasant existence in the politico-administrative landscape has been constantly eroded by three interlinked processes: one operates on the global dimension, one on the national plane and one at the local level. The net effects of the cold and dark happenings in the globalization process have been disastrous in the southern hemisphere, battering the lives of peasants. The cumulative effects of policy failures and inadequacies in organization and management at the national level are equally disastrous, worsening material conditions of living. In addition, the shattering impact of project intervention altogether with flimsy and insensitive institutional structures on the peasant economy is obvious.

Policy failure is not a matter of inefficient public policy but clear-cut fuzzy governance. The governing class running the show through various intervening interest groups blissfully overlooks progressive impoverishment in the countryside marked by a “veritable” cauldron of economic crises. The downslide of the poor and fixed income group has become one of the significant marks of the fall of the destiny of the peasant society.

This state of affairs has been accelerated by the dysfunction of politico-bureaucratic leadership at the local level. Local government, including field administration and local self-governing body, has been serving the “centre power axis” consisting of political leaders, bureaucracy and metropolitan tycoons. Trapped by the illusion of autonomy, the continuing malfunctioning of local governance tells heavily on community life terribly immersing the peasant and low-income group.

There are many cases of corruption practiced by public officials in collaboration with politicians who have lost public image. We may cite one case of bureaucratic corruption: misappropriation of food from buffer stock. Buffer stock operations to maintain price stabilization of food items in internal markets and to meet sticky situations such as food crisis were soaked with misappropriation. This corrupt practice is proverbial. Food crisis loomed large in 2006. But the ruling politicians and bureaucrats unashamedly claimed there was no such crisis. Tactics of misappropriation that are at bureaucrats’ fingertips also benefited the ministers. Food otherwise misappropriated was shown as a consignment on the way to a delivery point. Out of 603,852 metric tons of food in buffer stock, 201,204 metric tons of food was shown as consignment on the way. Stories about

sinking a barge with food in the river/sea and missing of truckloads of cereal are common and misleading. In reality food items were misappropriated.⁹

At the local level of rural development, village leaders branded as touts benefited from bureaucratic allocation that turned into misappropriation and bungling. This is evidenced from manifold stories of malpractice in public distribution system as in the case of subsidies in agriculture (fertilizer as a case), distribution of *khas* (government-owned) land, relief under Food for Works Programmes (FWP) and Money for Works Programmes (MWP), rural rationing and Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGD).

The wave of politicisation—a phenomenon of the recent past has its impact on the criminalisation of local politics. Politicisation in the whirlpool of criminalisation of politics took a heavy toll. The unholy nexus between the politician, politicised local bureaucrats and businessmen was embedded into the governing structure to pollute policy environment at the local point. Politicisation of administration constituted a fundamental constraint to fairness in justice and distribution of inputs and to new investment by bonafide businessmen. It rather facilitates political and bureaucratic payoffs for the privilege of doing businesses. According to reports, artificial crisis of food and price hikes have been due to the presence of criminal syndicates controlling markets at bottom.

This sort of political bankruptcy adversely affects the peripheries. The terribly bad shaped democratic institutions plagued by internal strife, impotence and splits enable the bureaucracy to gain a stranglehold over local institutions. Relative autonomy is used only to resolve internal contradictions and manage manifold crises in intriguing issues of development to serve information needs about local situation. As a matter of fact the recent dynamics of rural development under bureaucratically shaped institutional arrangement hints much about erratic governance. While “bureau-pathology,” “organized anarchy” and “formalism” at the field are a constant source of discomfort to the ordinary masses, the local conglomerates feel at home on the vantage point of access relationship.

The dysfunctional role of local MPs is pertinent to the analysis of mal-administration. They have been found using their position to channel rural development projects into their constituency. It is obviously to establish command over patronage resources and mobilizing support. One can easily surmise the direction of local politics of rural development that is presumed to be inhibiting normative process of project implementation.

The urge to share patronage resources was found to be a critical factor in the abiding interests of members of parliament (MPs) to see how projects were being implemented. MPs increasingly intruded into local politics when it came to utilisation of public funds in their respective constituencies. Since the abolition of *upazila* (sub-district), local administration in 1991, the MPs emerged as the major players in local politics of rural development to control public resource patronage. Such intervention impinges on the institution of local government giving rise to dualism in the implementation of the projects of rural development. However, the rural leaders affiliated to ruling party and politicized local bureaucrats were not presumed to be resentful. They might not be affected by the centrally determined sectoral allocations of development projects.

Increasing alienation of the “disadvantaged locus” is thus an inevitable outcome of the malfunctioning of the structural dimension of governance based on triangular manipulation. The bureaucratic approach is deeply entrenched with a rigid blueprint and non-participation. Political leadership is soaked with marked populism, factionalism and power politics. Economically affluent tycoons approach with the proceeds of business somewhat in a non-conventional manner to influence politics and public policies in their favour.

This triangular manipulation contributes much to the reinforcement of “institutional anarchy.” Protest movement against irregularities, price hike, malpractice, insensitive political leadership and much less bureaucratic response – institutional anarchy syndrome – creates sufficient ground for a man-made crisis.

Structural tension has become a common feature of community life at the base. Unhappy consequences of even disadvantaged-focused rural development projects breed frustration among the disgruntled and the victims. This is a continuing process as the bottom end of distribution profile continues to be caught up by the deprivation trap. Paradoxically the outcomes of poverty alleviation policy in the presence of policy triangles rather help the crisis of poverty to raise its ugly head. Allocative decisions under elitist manipulation both intra and intersect orally without emphasising the depressed rural sector and isolated population in the countryside, may mean to exclude the rural poor from the purview.

Pro-poor economic growth with targeted safety-nets as envisioned in the PRSP is mere rhetoric. Moreover the extent and ramifications of rural poverty can hardly be reduced to a single dimension of political economy – income, material benefits, maternity health, and reduced infant

mortality. There are other dimensions too like community organization, market mechanisms and bureaucratic public administration. The inextricable crisis of rural poverty that badly hurts the countryside is a culmination of erratic policy management that perpetuates discrimination and instability.

Project implementation scenario bespeaks of the poverty of implementation resulting in a series of policy failures. Several policy induced measures funded by donors and manipulated by policy triangles are stated to be counterproductive having failed to increase the poor's access to "productive assets," "raise their return to assets," improve employment situation during lean period, ensuring the poor's access to basic education and health and supplement their resources with transfer as "access to secondary incomes." Too many projects under annual development programme (ADP) and several technical assistance programmes and technology transfers have been far from effective, weakening the platform of stabilization and integration.

Multiplicity of anti-poverty projects is merely a stop-a-gap measure to compensate for the colossal damage done to the agro-based peasant economy due to large-scale privatisation under open market economy. The primary producers of rice, wheat, cotton, and jute are beginning to face challenge; in market-led "institutional milieu." They defray excessive costs of production getting much less return than expected. Land owning plutocrats, potential investors and tycoons are not affected. This economic class can easily shift to even tertiary occupations making best use of opportunities under privatization.¹⁰

Projected safety nets against damaging consequences of globalization can hardly provide protection against exorbitant rate of interests, black marketing, hoarding and ills of monopoly competition. There is no protection for cooperative marketing. It is facing problems such as inadequate facilities for transportation, poor holding power of the peasants, storage of facilities, lack of grading and standardization, fraud practice, lack of primary producer's organization and inadequate market intelligence.¹¹ In addition, there is no protection against local monopoly of business class and dealers and middlemen obtaining support from politico-administrative institution and no arrangement for the extension of market infrastructures to the benefit of the primary producers of rice, cereals and cash crops.

The dichotomous situation in the policy arena of rural development as clearly indicated by relational matrix and uneven distributional profile

stands out to be a menacing setback bringing us to the heart of political economy of peasant society in Bangladesh. The challenge in the wake of the downward spiral of rural poverty and escalating tension can hardly be met even by pro-poor economic growth with a human face. The institutional set-ups as the vehicle of triangular manipulation cannot be expected to provide a tangible program for the poor.

The strategies of rural development to handle outstanding issues accelerate poverty aggravation rather than alleviation reportedly at the implementation stage due largely to a subtle mechanism of manipulation engineered by “policy triangles.” There has been overlapping of the ruling elites in all decision making institutions at the micro level, for example, village council, co-operative, union parishad and various development and project committees. They decide upon priorities and strategies maintaining liaison with local bureaucracy that is dispensing promotional and extension services. In the process of triangular manipulation they obtain access to patronage resources.

Roadmap to poverty alleviation – the projected policy goal sketched by the governing class has turned into a roadmap to manipulation and corruption. The real beneficiaries are not the poor as such. Leaders/tycoons dispense patronage resources to their immediate followers and henchmen. As a result benefits of growth-oriented development trickle down only to the immediate followers. Bonafide participation in the sharing of benefits has evaporated in such a policy environment.

The cumulative understanding of the peasant society from a series of research activities is not enough to see things below the surface. Ignorance about the behind-the-scenes maneuvers continues to be profound despite much concern in development policy with crisis of poverty. The content of public policy on poverty alleviation prepared through agenda seeking activities of the relevant institutions blocks the road to desired outcomes. There is little knowledge about policy context, environment matters, resource relevant activities, interest groups, target population, social fabric and organisational resources. There remains a critical linkage between policy content and policy context.

An attempt to understand this critical linkage in rural landscape enables us to fathom various structural features that are synergically related to provide a background of grinding poverty. The economically and politically influential have overtime developed all skills of manipulation bending the process of policy implementation in their favour in alliance with the bureaucracy. They fare well in the competition for scarce valuables

in an economic environment that the bureaucrats pretend to change under the banner of poverty alleviation. Despite a barrage of policy measures to redress public predicament at the rural-local point the overall context reveals that such measures have paradoxically reinforced the status-quo empowering the dominant peasant layer. Bureaucratic power is hardly used to curb the stranglehold of the landowning and rising commercial classes. The governing class is thus reluctant to go for any economic policy reforms that may cost them “political support without bringing any political dividend.”

The members of the governing class are understandably bound by common interest that ultimately coheres a well-knit relationship. They thus form “special understanding” as a class for itself to successfully block any effort that threatens their interest.¹² Any apparent conflict/competition on any development issue among the ruling elites is a mere camouflage to turn public attention other way round.

Under these circumstances it seems difficult for the incumbents on the supply side to break the “political vicious circle” protecting the rights of the peasants through projected safety nets against the domineering political and economic forces. When such forces coalesce to render distribution process all but skewed market as a socially construed mechanism functions to drain the surplus from the rural to the metropolitan area. A similar situation exists in India where sweeping changes of the social action by action from above were thrown away despite repeated ideological assertions of the policy makers for developing socialistic pattern of economy. This is due largely to the lack of explicit political commitment and the domination of the propertied class over political leadership. Elitist orientation of bureaucracy with its close linkage with local elite accounts much for making things worse.

On the one hand the hidden subsidies on food and other inputs are phased out in rural Bangladesh. On the other hand, a major percentage of aid funds earmarked for poverty alleviation is absorbed in paying high salary to project consultants-both local and foreign and defraying the cost of contracting the project/sub-project through an underhand deal with bureaucratic incumbents. Only a little percentage is spent on the target

CONCLUSION

The dichotomous situation in rural development as clearly indicated by manipulation, criminalization and corruption that beget uneven

distributional profile stands out to be a menacing setback bringing us to the heart of the politics of rural development in Bangladesh. The challenge in the wake of downward spiral of rural poverty and escalating tension can hardly be met even by pro-poor participatory rural development with human face. The institutional set-ups as the vehicle of triangular manipulation cannot be expected to provide tangible programmes for the poor.

The strategies of rural development to handle outstanding issues accelerate poverty aggravation rather than alleviation reportedly at the implementation stage due largely to subtle mechanism of manipulation engineered by 'policy triangles'. There has been overlapping of the ruling elites in all decision making institutions at the micro level, for example, village council, co-operative, union parishad and various development and project committees. They decide upon priorities and strategies maintaining liaison with local bureaucracy that is dispensing promotional and extension services. In the process of triangular manipulation they obtain access to patronage resources.

Roadmap to poverty alleviation –the projected policy goal –sketched by the governing class – has turned into a roadmap to manipulation, criminalization and corruption. The real beneficiaries are not the poor as such, as the leaders/tycoons dispense patronage resources to their immediate followers and henchmen. As a result benefits of growth oriented development trickle down only to the immediate followers. Bonafide participation in the sharing of benefits has evaporated in such a policy environment.

The cumulative understanding of the peasant society from a series of research activities is not enough to see things below the surface. Ignorance about the behind-the-scene maneuver continues to be profound despite much concern in development policy with crisis of crushing poverty. The content of public policy on poverty alleviation prepared through agenda seeking activities of the relevant institutions blocks the road to desired outcomes. For, there is little knowledge about policy context-environment matters, resource relevant activities, interest groups, target population, social fabric and organizational resources. True, there remains a critical linkage between policy content and policy context. An attempt to understand this critical linkage in rural landscape enables us to fathom various structural features that are synergistically related to provide a background of grinding poverty. Economically and politically influential have overtime developed all the skills of manipulation bending the process

of policy implementation in their favour in alliance with bureaucracy. They fare well in the competition for scarce valuables in an economic environment that the bureaucrats pretend to change under the banner of poverty alleviation. Despite a barrage of policy measures to redress public predicament at the rural-local point the overall context reveals that such measures have paradoxically reinforced the status-quo empowering the dominant peasant layer. Bureaucratic power is hardly used to curb the stranglehold of the landowning and rising commercial classes. The governing class is thus reluctant to go for any economic policy reforms that may cost them 'political support without bringing any political dividend'.

The members of the governing class are understandably bound by common interest that ultimately coheres in well-knit relationship. They thus form 'special understanding' as a class for itself to successfully block any effort that threatens their interests. Any apparent conflict/competition on any development issue among the ruling elites is a mere camouflage to turn public attention other way round.

Under the circumstances it seems difficult for the incumbents on the supply side to break 'political vicious circle' protecting the rights of the peasants through projected safety nets against the domineering political and economic forces.. When such forces coalesce to render distribution process, all but skewed market as a socially construed mechanism functions to drain the surplus from the rural to the metropolitan area. Similar situation exists in India where sweeping changes of the social action by action from above were thrown away despite repeated ideological assertions of the policy makers for developing socialistic pattern of economy. This is due largely to the lack of explicit political commitment and the domination of the propertied class over political leadership. Elitist orientation of bureaucracy with its close linkage with local elite accounts much for making things worse.

On the one hand the hidden subsidies on food and other inputs are phased out in rural Bangladesh. On the other hand, major percentage of aid funds earmarked for poverty alleviation is absorbed in paying high salary to project consultants-both local and foreign and defraying the cost of contracting the project/sub-project through underhand deal with bureaucratic incumbents. Only a little percentage is spent on the target beneficiaries.

REFERENCES

1. T. Ahmed, "Politics and Development at the Grassroots: A Study of Local leadership". *Bangladesh: Politics, Administration and Change*, No. 16, January-June, 1991, p.41.
2. Kazi S.M. Khasrul Alam Quddusi, "Criminalization, Corruption and Militarization in Bangladesh: Recent Trends". *Asian Profile*, Vol. 38, No. 2, April 2010, pp.209-218.
3. Baladas Ghosal, "Democracy Treads Light Rope". *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Vol. 151, 1991. pp.15-16.
4. Haroon A. Khan, "Democratization in Bangladesh". *Asian Profile*, Vol.26, No.2, April 1998. p.157, M.S. Mashreque, *Politics, administration and Participation: An empirical Profile of Rural Bangladesh*. Chittagong, CBS, 2002.
5. Talukdar Moniruzzaman, "The fall of military dictator: 1991 Elections and the Prospect of Civilian Rule in Bangladesh". *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.65, 1992. pp. 203-225.
6. T. Ahmed, *op.cit.*
7. Rehman Sobhan, "Structural Dimensions of Malgovernance in Bangladesh". *Bangladesh Observer*, 10 April and 11 April 2006.
8. E.W. Nafzige, and Auvinen, "Economic Development, Inequality, War and State Violence". *World Development*, Vol. 30, No.2, February 2002.
9. *Bangladesh Observer*, 4 April 2006.
10. M.S. Mashreque, "Community Structure in Rural Bangladesh: Dimension of Development and Participation". *Human Face*, Vol. 4, 2005.
11. M. Habibullah, "Co-operative Marketing of Agricultural Produces: Lessons from the Comilla Experiment". *Observer Magazine*, 18 February 2005.
12. M.A.K. Mozumder, "Implementation of Public Policies; A critical Appraisal of their Linkage between Content and Context". *Development Review*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1994.
13. *Ibid.*

BANGLADESH IN THE HORIZON

INTRACTABLE ISSUES

KAZI S.M. KHASRUL ALAM QUDDUSI

INTRODUCTION

More than four decades ago, Bangladesh appeared on the world scene as an independent state. Amid plenty of vicissitudes, the country is trying to consolidate its position. Its political scenario, however, remains tumultuous more often. Civil society groups and conscious citizens have long been involved in creating awareness for qualitative change in politics. They continue to advocate massive reforms in the political system, electoral laws, electoral code of conduct and administration so as to strengthen democracy in Bangladesh.

A reiteration of the drastic reform measures is always there so that the nation can ruminate over what our politicians need to and can do to enable the nation to feel the true essence of democracy. The governance crisis is a regular feature in Bangladesh which appears with variants during different regimes.¹ Complete lack of democracy within the political parties is a burning issue in the country. Criminalization, militarization and democratic failure have haunted the nation frequently.²

It is also an open secret that money making during incumbency is not only motivated by self-interest. Making the party's fund wealthy is also a major factor that drives the political parties crazy in mobilizing money for the next general elections. Unfortunately, most of the professional bodies of the country representing the civil society are now divided.

This paper points to the flagrant socio-political and cultural problems that continue to bother the masses with little sign of let-up, thus putting the total well-being of the nation in sort of disquiet.

EDUCATION: THE DIVIDE

The country has seen formation of seven education commissions and committees so far. However, bulk of the recommendations could not be executed due to lack of political will of successive governments and policy inconsistency. The much-awaited *Education Policy, 2010* incorporates lofty yet time-befitting measures such as unified curriculum for general, *madrassas*, vocational education up to secondary level; pre-primary education for children above 5 years; compulsory primary education for class I to VIII; secondary level education from class IX to XII; transformation of all 3-year degree courses into 4-year; religion, ethics education for all faiths up to secondary level and technical educational institutions at every *upazila*.³

The Education Policy also envisages formulation of integrated education law and formation of permanent education commission. In fact, effecting equality of condition, that is, changing the ascribed values such as sex, complexion, properties inherited is impossible by any intervention or by the state. Though it is not possible for the state of Bangladesh to provide all households with air-conditioners, it can at least strive to ensure equality of rights in terms of basic and fundamental rights of citizens. And, ensuring equality in education is supposed to play a vital role obviating the state from going out of its ways in many other cases.⁴

Despite the efforts to make *madrassa* education more scientific and time-befitting, there remains a wide gap between general education and *madrassa* education in Bangladesh (See Table 1). A section of *madrassa* products do well in their transition to general education at the tertiary level. However, bulk of the products aim at building their careers at religious institutions such as mosques and *madrassas*. Though their mainstreaming is essential for both the nation and the *madrassa* people, the realization on the part of the latter is still missing.

With mushrooming of highly-expensive private educational institutions in our country, ranging from kindergartens and universities, there is need for bringing semblance of equilibrium in the education sector. Meanwhile, every year around ninety per cent higher-secondary passed students cannot get themselves enrolled in public universities due to inadequacy of seats therein and the scenario is almost the same at the lower levels as well. However, the increase of educational institutions in the private sector is more than justified and one should, thus, promote burgeoning of the same so that more and more students can avail

TABLE 1
BASIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENERAL EDUCATION AND *MADRASSA* EDUCATION⁵

<i>Criterion</i>	<i>General Education</i>	<i>Madrassa Education</i>
Experts' Opinion	Curricula are framed on the basis of needs, age, psychology and power of retention of the learners. NCTB (National Curriculum and Textbook Board) is responsible for ensuring the preceding factors.	Curricula are not framed on the basis of needs, age, psychology and power of retention of the learners. There is no special board to oversee the issues either.
Textbook Writing	Expert writers are selected for writing prescribed textbooks on the basis of the framed curricula.	Expert writers for writing prescribed textbooks are almost absent. Books are written basically by unknown writers where little consideration is given to quality and excellence.
Being 'Up-to-date' and Utility	Emphasis is given to the aspects of making education qualitative, time-befitting and up-to-date. To attain these ends, educationists and intellectuals are invited to seminars and symposia to give their suggestions.	At no stage of <i>madrassa</i> education is such emphasis given to making education qualitative, time-befitting and up-to-date.
National Tradition and Values	At every stage of general education curricula and syllabi are framed with due emphasis placed upon national tradition, values and cultural trend.	At no stage of general education are curricula and syllabi framed with due emphasis placed upon national tradition, values and cultural trend.

themselves of the education they aspire.

A good number of private universities have already made their mark in imparting quality education in Bangladesh. Such a rating can also be done in relation to privately owned colleges and schools which are providing primary and secondary education. However, the crux of the problem is the fee they are charging in exchange for their education, if not quality in all cases. It is quite understandable that it is not possible with the private educational institutions to provide education with the charges anything near the governmental fees in public educational institutions.

For example, charging taka ten thousand or more monthly for a student in a school does not send right signals by any stretch of the imagination, whereas in public schools the students are receiving education on a pittance. Some may argue that the quality of education the students are getting almost free of cost in public schools and colleges is incomparable to the one imparted in highly-expensive private schools and colleges. True, many primary school teachers of the country lack appropriate qualification.

However, there is counter school of thought as well which claims that products of private educational institutions find it markedly uncomfortable in various public examinations. Though only few private educational institutions are providing real quality education, the complaint of low quality of education in many public educational institutions is not at all unfounded. For this, many factors are responsible which include low salary of teachers and resultant private tuition by school and college teachers; lack of quality training; lack of interest among talented ones to join those institutions due to financial demotivation and so on.

In the recent past, the government did show a silver lining in terms of betterment of salary and other facilities of teachers of all levels through forming a separate pay commission which is yet to see the day of light. The government will have to put premium on rigorous training as well. By proper training, even mediocre intakes could be turned excellent and capable of imparting quality education to the pupils and the complaint of shortage of good English and mathematics teachers makes the necessity all the more pressing.

Many private educational institutions boast of quality English education. Though their claim is debatable in many cases, the government should critically rethink its strategy in terms of language education. Around three percent of the population has vocational training and, thus, many people go abroad as modern slaves. They find things difficult in the highly competitive job market due to lack of knowledge of language. Needless to say, due emphasis on functional foreign language skill development can easily raise our foreign remittances.

Though global recession is a discouraging factor for the government to go for any pay hike, there is no viable alternative. In fact, investment in education cannot be judged by an immediate cost-benefit analysis. Education is a major tool to reduce social inequality, the absence of which is a major reason behind poverty. Meanwhile, imparting proper type of education is also crucial to have a sound and sane posterity.

Educationists, in this regard, suggest that the country must fix the objectives and goals of education as well as introduce universal values in education for creating enlightened generations so that socially committed, intelligent, warm-hearted and generous instead of selfish and socially alienated people can be groomed.

High expense of education in private educational institutions in Bangladesh is turning education in those institutions out of reach for the middle-income people. It is deepening the financial and social divide further which is doing no good to the social fabric. It is high time the state played an interventional role here, the necessity of which has been further accentuated by the governments of various countries 'bailing-out' role in facing up to the global meltdown.

TECHNOLOGY: THE DILEMMA

Though the level of development could have been a lot higher, the progress has not been meager. A country-wide ICT-infrastructure has been and is being developed to ensure access to information to every citizen so as to facilitate empowerment of people and enhance democratic values and norms for sustainable economic development. Bangladesh's readiness in putting e-Governance in place is laudable. At the individual level, the use of mobile has become a household matter in the present day Bangladesh. Due to easy and facile availability, mobile is now a most common item in the hands of even people of poorer sections of the society.

Low income earners, very small businessmen and even housemaids boast mobile phones these days. Previously, computers were required for internet use. By courtesy of the state-of-the-art mobile technology inbuilt in the mobile sets of almost every company, many mobile users can use Internet on their mobiles.

Though the statistics (See Table 2) provided by the Networked Readiness Index (NRI) 2013 does not give a very bright picture, things are rosier these days. Use of Internet on mobiles has gained real ground in Bangladesh and use of virtual social networks has also grown markedly among the literate people who are aware of and are interested in this technological facility, especially the students.

Business usage of ICTs is also increasing rapidly in Bangladesh. In fact, the business community pioneered use of ICTs in Bangladesh in many cases and the public sector followed suit. Online and mobile banking has been put in place by almost all private banks, with the public banks trying

TABLE 2
INDIVIDUAL USAGE IN BANGLADESH (NRI 2013)

<i>Serial</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Rank/144</i>	<i>Value</i>
1	Mobile phone subscriptions/100 population	126	56.1
2	Individual using Internet, %	126	5.0
3	Household w/ personal computer, %	127	3.1
4	Household w/ Internet access, %	117	2.6
5	Broadband internet subscriptions/100 population	112	0.3
6	Mobile broadband subscriptions/100 population	124	0.0
7	Use of virtual social networks*	123	4.5

N.B. *Indicates Score range: 1-7. Source: *WEF and INSEAD, 2013*. p.198.

to catch up. Mobile phone companies have made transfer of money a very easy as well as reliable affair through introduction of m (mobile)-Transfer. *bkash* remains the prototype in this respect. However, the government usage of ICTs, as depicted in the Networked Readiness Index (NRI) 2013, gives a shiny picture.⁶ All the indicators in the said index give positive impressions with importance of ICTs in government's vision getting a vantage position. Bangladesh government's well-professed 'Digital Bangladesh' vision is an explicit reflection of the government's commitment to the use of ICTs for the betterment of the citizens.

Impact of ICTs and e-Services in Bangladesh has already been significant. In almost every service, the use of ICTs has become almost a necessity. Though 'digital by default' is yet to take hold, trend towards that milestone is evident. The number of ICT-based jobs is increasing. Access to basic public and private sector services through using ICT facilities is being increasingly encouraged and arranged by both the public and private sectors. Internet use in schools is also on the rise with the government's scheme to bring the schools under the networks.

So far as social impact is concerned, the scenario can be said to be a tantalizing one. Misuse of technology has also shown its ugly colors in Bangladesh. A bizarre type of pornography using mobile cameras, that is, videos taken without consent of the people involved, especially young girls, has increased alarmingly. Blackmail of females, even by husbands and boyfriends, with the threat of uploading the obscene scenes in the Internet or spreading the same in the market through creating CDs or DVDs has increased sharply these days.⁷

Facebook, the social media, has also had its impact across the country. This has become extremely popular with the young generation. Many social blogs are now active online. Though some social blogs sponsored by

the government have been playing constructive role in dissemination of information by using technology, some people are just using it as a pastime. Incidents of spreading social and religious hatreds have also increased owing to social media, though the social media were intended to make social actions and interactions more proactive. Awareness rather than stringent state policies is likely to bring more benefits on this count. Facebook, like dynamite invented by Alfred Nobel, will pay rich dividends only when used as a mechanism for social well-being or else it will harm the social peace as has been the case in Bangladesh in some glaring instances in the near past.

The government has recently made the provisions of ICT Act 2009 stringent to tackle such concerns and cases of such incidents are now being lodged with the police stations. However, the punishment procedure is still deficient in comparison to the sudden flare of obscenity. Though the Networked Readiness Index (NRI) 2013 did not take negative impact of technology into account previously, it may require taking it into consideration in their future studies and reports.

SOCIETY: THE SLUMP

Mahatma Gandhi, the great champion of humanity, referred to seven propensities of humans as seven deadly sins in his time. They are: wealth without work; pleasure without conscience; science without humanity; knowledge without character; politics without principle; commerce without morality; and, worship without sacrifice. Time has changed and progressed with the passage of time. However, have the tendencies changed and if changed, in which direction: for the better or for the worse? Here follows an analysis, or rather, examination of the deadly sins in the context of the current scenario obtaining in Bangladesh:

Wealth without work: Admittedly, a larger section of the society is working really hard to earn their livelihood. Another section is hard put to find jobs and is making their all-out efforts to manage jobs but without much success. Yet another section is going astray out of frustration of not getting suitable jobs. However, a sizeable section has, in fact, no work at all despite having a lot of money and means. In fact, offspring of such people seem to have lesser work than their parents. As a result, they resort to strange mechanisms to just pass the time. Proliferation of various kinds of narcotics and, *Yaba*, in recent time, must have a close correlation to lack of work for the ones who find no better ways of using, or rather,

squandering money. The irony is that a lot of people are literally languishing for want of some money.

Pleasure without conscience: Pleasure with no regard for conscience seems to have landed us in such a land where the room for conscience is being shrunk alarmingly. The search for endless pleasure is giving rise not only to social vices, crimes are also skyrocketing. The tendency towards sensual pleasure has reached high proportions. Alarming increase of rape across the country and even incest gives testimony to the horrible fact that a section of the society has lost their conscience altogether and have become real burden not only for the society but also for themselves. They require a real jolt to get back the conscience that is plummeting terribly fast.

Science without humanity: Scientific inventions are supposed to support the cause of humankind. In fact, many such inventions have turned lives of humans a lot more easy and comfortable. Meteoric developments in the fields of medical science and ICTs have turned the world into a place where science seems to be a real friend to humankind. However, misuse of scientific developments, especially in the fields of conventional and unconventional warfare, has turned such inventions into the weapons for extermination of peoples across the world. Use of deadly weapons by various countries, international alliances and even by the mutineers has turned various corners of the globe into battlefields and number of battlefields is alarmingly on the increase these days.

Knowledge without character: Search for knowledge is universal and the search is unending as well. However, according to old traditions prevalent in our society, knowledgeable yet bad people are to be avoided. Knowledgeable people are no doubt assets for the society. However, their knowledge and wisdom without regard for character can become counterproductive as the recipients of their deliberations might well be duped into their traps. In our society, number of such people is not any less. Men of questionable character disguised as wise people are out there to exploit the common people. Such bad people, by using their social positions, even force their disciples to be their obliged victims.

Politics without principle: Humans are political animals. Human interest in and concern for politics is indeed wholesome for proper growth of political thoughts and beliefs among the general people. If the common people are well aware of political necessities, they can influence the leaders as well by encouraging positive elements while discouraging unholy elements. However, the real picture is not rosy as principle is dwindling

fast in the ambience of our influential politicians. Most of them do not care for principles any longer.

TABLE 3
STATUS OF INSTITUTIONAL TRUSTWORTHINESS IN BANGLADESH⁸

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Pertinent Question</i>	<i>Perception</i>
<i>Credible commitments</i>	Do institutional actors honor their commitments?	Unreliable
<i>Benevolence</i>	Do the institutions do good to the citizens?	Wanting
<i>Honesty</i>	Are representatives of institutions telling the truth?	Restricted
<i>Competency</i>	Do institutional office holders have the necessary knowledge and skills?	Incomplete
<i>Fairness</i>	To what extent are they dealing with everybody in an equal manner?	Partial

On balance and on reflection, one finds that politics has become just a ladder for acquiring wealth and power and to attain wealth and power our politicians are ready to stoop to anything. The political waywardness has a direct bearing upon institutional integrity as well and table 3 gives a picture as to the country's nature of overall institutional trustworthiness.

Commerce without morality: Business is such a vocation which was adopted even by the great Prophet as well to support his livelihood and he appreciated the role of businessmen who were honest in their intentions and who had no avarice. In fact, the role of business cannot be overemphasized considering the demands of various commodities by the clients and the citizens. However, in this age of cut throat profiteering, even modicum of morality has become a rarity in the domain of many businessmen. While profit-making is quite common and justified for a business venture, hoarding and creating artificial crisis are beyond the precepts of morality. However, what about the current trend of adulteration and indiscriminate use of formalin? Is morality in commerce not totally dead in this age of unlimited adulteration and formalin?

Worship without sacrifice: Worship is required to please the Creator. In every religion, there are many means and mechanisms of worship. Rites and rituals also abound. Number of religious festivals is not few either. However, despite a lot of people maintaining their true fervor, many of such worships turn out to be show-offs at times. Many rituals and festivities give an impression at times that these are intended to impress the audience, not necessarily satisfy the Creator. However, worship without sacrifice is very unlikely to gratify the Creator. In the same vein,

wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, science without humanity, knowledge without character, politics without principle and commerce without morality will sap the vitals of humankind.

POLITICS: THE GREED

Civil society groups can articulate the demands of the common people and advocate for their interests and rights. However, reluctance to call a spade a spade on the part of many affiliated professional bodies undermines the very appeal and force of the concept of civil society. So, professional bodies should not be affiliated with political parties. The loan defaulters cause severe damage to the country's economy. However, their importance increases enviably during the election times. Parties start vying for nominating loan defaulters as they promise to come out successful in the elections by the money they hardly give back. Moreover, arrangements by the banks to save the hardened loan defaulters embolden them all the more.

Democratization within the political parties not only brings dynamism and motivation to perform better, it definitely infuses tolerance in the leadership and the rank and file for the rival political parties, which has become a rarity in our political arena leading to the contemporary political confrontations. Bar on becoming chief of a political party for more than a stipulated period can better the scenario. The system of contesting in five seats is not only ridiculous, it is insult to the people whose constituencies are forsaken by the winners before the by-elections.

By preventing such farcical elections, wastage of money can be stemmed and promotion of local leadership ensured. Thus, none should be allowed to contest in more than one constituency. The percentage of successful women candidates in national parliament rose in 1996 elections. Interestingly, the elected women members included topmost political leaders of the mainstream political parties. Very few women belonging to rank and file register victory in the national parliaments. Number of women seats should be increased with the provision of direct election.

As seen in Table 4, quorum crisis was and is a regular phenomenon during the tenure of our parliaments. Though the opposition parties boycott the parliament for a large proportion of time, the ruling party members also enforce sort of auto-boycott through remaining absent in the parliament for many days, thus contributing to grave loss of working hours. Deduction of allowances for the parliament members for absent

TABLE 4
WORKING DAYS BOYCOTTED BY THE OPPOSITION⁹

<i>Parliament</i>	<i>Total Working Days</i>	<i>Boycotted by the Opposition</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
First	134	1	0.74
Second	206	67	32.52
Third	75	29	38.66
Fourth	168	3	1.78
Fifth	395	135	34.17
Sixth	4	-	-
Seventh	383	163	42.55
Eighth	373	223	59.78
Ninth (till end of 15th session, 29 November 2012)	337	283	83.97
Total	2075	904	43.56

days might improve the situation. In Bangladesh, there are instances when some members of parliament visit their constituencies only a few times in between two elections. Some even boast that there is no need to go to villages and talk to the poor people who are quite amenable to the money dished out to buy votes during the elections. Making it mandatory for the public representatives to stay some days in a month in their locality will definitely prevent parliament members from being isolated from their constituents. The election of president through an electoral college can also be a good move indeed and will provide more fervor to presidency. In the present system, anybody can become a president with the blessings of the majority party in the parliament.

The president-elect thus remains more loyal to the parliament members than to the people. Hopefully, the Electoral College system can fetch better personalities for this exalted position. Another ground breaking step is to elect prime minister from the party with majority seats, speaker from the second majority and deputy speaker from the third majority. The current system of majority party grabbing everything hardly shows respect to the people who have voted against the majority. Thus, providing something to others will definitely reflect the true spirit of democracy.

Bar on a single person holding two posts of the head of government and chief of a political party is also likely to work wonders. This mechanism will no doubt work as a real check and balance. It will definitely provide more time and space to both the positions. In Bangladesh, the tendency to cling to more and more posts gives rise to manifold problems. Furthermore,

there are many instances in history that great leaders cannot always become great statesmen. Thus, these two jobs can well be apportioned according to aptitudes, and the outcome will very likely be rewarding.

Politics and governance are intertwined. *World Justice Report, 2014* has placed Bangladesh in 92nd position out of 99 countries in its Rule of Law Index. The position itself gives an idea as to the sorry state of affairs. According to this report, Bangladesh has been found wanting in most areas of the rule of law. The report categorically says that corruption is prevalent in Bangladesh with the ranking at 95th position.¹⁰

TABLE 5
BANGLADESH IN THE WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT RULE OF LAW INDEX, 2014

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Factor Score (Out of 1)</i>	<i>Regional Rank (South Asia*)</i>	<i>Income Rank (Lower Middle Income)</i>	<i>Global Rank (out of 99)</i>
Constraints on Government Powers	0.41	6/6	18/24	80/99
Absence of Corruption	0.27	5/6	22/24	95/99
Open Government	0.36	4/6	20/24	85/99
Fundamental Rights	0.43	4/6	20/24	87/99
Order and Security	0.64	3/6	17/24	76/99
Regulatory Enforcement	0.37	4/6	22/24	91/99
Civil Justice	0.36	4/6	20/24	92/99
Criminal Justice	0.29	5/6	23/24	94/99
Overall	0.39	4/6	20/24	92/99

N.B. *South Asian Countries include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Human rights violations and police abuses have also been found problematic by the report. Bangladesh's overall ranking in the report is shown in Table 5 which provides a comprehensive idea about the overall governance scenario in Bangladesh.

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh, despite being a land of promise, is burdened with many ills. Bangladesh's rate and scope of development is something to cheer about. However, its nature of governance still remains rather shoddy. It has been compounded by recent electoral politics. The education sector, despite the government's efforts, is yet to be streamlined. Bangladesh's achievement

in technology sector is commendable. However, the dark side of technology has exposed itself badly here. Individual privacy and social privacy is at stake as the State's readiness to tackle the vices is rather low-keyed.

The societal level of national psyche is on the wane, too, with the innate human qualities taking a nosedive. The capacity to even comprehend the problems is also lacking across the board. Drastic reform is the key to providing the people with some respite. The reform measures are basically political and intended to provide better governance. If politicians are at ease and at peace with each other, they can deal with other issues properly. As soon as the political leadership of all complexions realizes the preceding fact, the more will they be able to negotiate the intractable issues that continue to perturb the nation.

REFERENCES

1. Kazi S.M. Khasrul Alam Quddusi, Crisis of Governance in Bangladesh. *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, Vol.13, No.4, 2009. pp.63-73.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Government of Bangladesh (GoB). *National Education Policy 2010*. Dhaka, Ministry of Education, 2010.
4. *Ibid.*
5. A.S.M. Anwarulla Bhuiyan, and S.A. Khandaker, 'Qualitative Development in Education and Reform in Madrasa Education: Bangladesh Context' (In Bangla). *Lok Proshason Samoeeky*, Vol.49, 2008. pp.29-57.
6. World Economic Forum (WEF) and INSEAD, *The Global Information Technology Report 2013*. Switzerland, SRO-Kundig, 2013.
7. Kazi S.M. Khasrul Alam Quddusi, 'Technological Boons: Usage and Impact'. *The Daily Sun* (Dhaka) (Special Supplement on 4th Anniversary), 30 October 2014.
8. Steinar Askvik, "The Significance of Institutional Trust for Governance in Bangladesh". In *Understanding Governance and Public Policy in Bangladesh*, edited by Ishtiaq Jamil. Dhaka, MPPG, North South University, 2011. pp.95-100.
9. Jalal Firoj, Forty Years of Bangladesh Parliament: Trends, Challenges and Achievements. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh*, Vol. 58, No.1, 2013. pp.83-128.
10. World Justice Project, *World Justice Project Rule of Law Index, 2014*. Washington, D.C, 2014. p.67.

CULTURE OF PARLIAMENT BOYCOTT AND THE FUTURE OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN BANGLADESH

MD. SHAHIDULLA KAISER

ABSTRACT

Since independence, Bangladesh has rotated between electoral democracy and military rule, and between parliamentary and presidential forms of government. These persistent systematic changes have hampered the institutionalisation of democracy in Bangladesh and also seriously affected the growth of an effective parliament. However, the practice of boycotting parliament by the political parties, particularly by the opposition has been hampering the performance of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. The opposition lawmakers boycotted around half of the total sittings of parliament in a period of nearly 20 years since the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991. The persistent practice of boycotting parliament by the opposition is not only an unacceptable act but the practice is also damaging the image, popularity and credibility of Bangladesh parliament. The paper examines the underlying causes behind such practices and their adverse impact on parliamentary democracy. Immobilising the parliament through non-participation brings undemocratic forces to fore, as was witnessed during 2006 to 2008.

INTRODUCTION

In modern days of political system, the legislature as part of public administration of a country is considered indispensable for good governance. Particularly, in the democratic framework, the role of parliament and parliamentary structures in ensuring responsible and accountable government is distinctive. Many argue that "if there is one symbol that stands for a representative system, it is certainly that of the Assembly, a collegial body through which the will of all (or part) of the population is expressed".¹ Hence, the importance of parliament in a

democratic environment is significant in the sense that it represents pluralist conception, enabling different segments of the society to contribute in law making, holding the executive accountable, and setting value goals for the society.² The Members of Parliament (MPs) are thought to be the agents of masses in the parliament under a democratic set up. Their active participation in the parliament is important for the sake of true democracy. In the Westminster system, parliament is the focal point of administering state affairs, and is the central locus for all discussions and solutions to the problems of the country.³ The opposition in the Westminster style parliaments has to play important role of overseeing the executive and hold them accountable.

Bangladesh, a country in South Asia, got her independence from Pakistan in 1971 through a glorious liberation war. Bangladesh has been considered as a child in the arena of parliamentary democracy, although, the journey of parliamentary democracy marks more than 20 years. The people of Bangladesh are yet to get the benefits of parliamentary democracy. There are many reasons behind the poor performance of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. Ahmed argues that it is because of the lack of institutionalisation of the parliament, that the result of parliamentary democracy is so poor in Bangladesh.⁴ The inception of Bangladesh as a sovereign country was based on the parliamentary system of government. But, before the idea of government started to function effectively, the country experienced military interventions and there had been several years of undemocratic governments. Since the restoration of democratic government through fifth parliament in 1991, it was believed that the true notion of parliamentary democracy would remain effective with the active participation by the members of the parliament. But, if one looks at the performance of parliaments since 1991, one sees a consistent failure in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of people in Bangladesh, which is the major weakness of Bangladesh parliament. However, some authors argue that the weakness of Bangladesh parliament *Jatiya Sangsad*, is manifested not so much in the absence of its initiatives in formulating laws and budgets, but in the absence of real discussion, debate, and scrutiny of the proposals put forward by the executive branch of government.⁵ There are several other structural functions that constrain the effective functioning of the Bangladesh parliament. Most notably, the practice of boycotting parliament by the political parties, particularly by the opposition has been hampering the performance of parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. The opposition lawmakers boycotted around

half of the total sittings of parliament in a period of 19 years. From 1991 to November 5, 2009, the parliaments had 1,241 sittings while the opposition lawmakers boycotted as many as 584 sittings.⁶ The persistent practice of boycotting parliament by the opposition is not only an unacceptable act but the practice is also damaging the image, popularity and credibility of Bangladesh parliament.

Sometimes, the opposition is justified to go for parliament boycott in order to place their legitimate demands and press for their implementation by the ruling party. However, in the parliamentary history of the South Asian sub-continent, election boycotts were more evident than parliament boycotts. During the British colonial rule, both the Indian National Congress (INC) and Muslim League (ML) boycotted elections as part of their non-cooperation programme against the British.⁷ In earlier stages of parliamentary development in Bangladesh, for instance, strategies like en masse resignation and boycotting parliamentary elections worked while Bangladesh was governed by the military juntas. However, it is a matter of hope that the opposition did not quit the parliament fully as they are engaged in committee meetings.⁸ But their presence in the plenary sessions is more crucial for the sake of democracy and to place their legitimate demands. If the opposition MPs boycott the parliament, they only confront the ruling party in the streets and Bangladesh has been experiencing such obnoxious effects for the last 20 years.

The paper tries to investigate the causes and consequences of the boycott of parliament by the MPs, particularly the opposition since the return of democratic environment in 1991.

BOYCOTTING PARLIAMENT: BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVES

In the real sense of parliamentary democracy, the word 'boycott' is in total contrast to the very notions of parliamentary affairs. Parliament is for participation, discussion, and debate that would be something positive, constructive, and fruitful. In general sense, boycotting parliament means, non-participation in parliamentary affairs. It may be hundred percent parliament boycott with no participation in any kind of activities by the MPs, once they take oath after the election. However, on some occasions, there may be partial boycott. For example, MPs can take part in parliamentary committee meeting; can go for parliamentary tours or other activities. But the most important activity in the parliamentary affairs is to join the parliamentary sessions.

While participating in the plenary sessions, the people of Bangladesh have the opportunity to watch or listen live through state television channels or radios. The people can compare the performance of MPs in the plenary sessions and they can ensure the accountability of MPs. One characteristic of boycotting parliament by the opposition in Bangladesh has been that the opposition parties continue to avail benefits from the parliament. For example, the sixth parliamentary election was boycotted by the main oppositions but they accepted the amendment for enacting non-party caretaker government by the same parliament. Apart from enjoying the regular benefits like salary and allowances, the opposition members also accepted the privilege of import of duty free cars while they were in the middle of boycotting parliament sessions.

In Bangladesh, the major political parties like *Awami League* (AL) and *Bangladesh National Party* (BNP) very often blame each other for boycotting parliament sessions. While in the treasury bench, these political parties claim that the boycotting opposition is being irresponsible by not attending the parliament. The same parties, when in opposition, blame the treasury bench for compelling them to stay away from the House proceedings. It seems that the political parties of Bangladesh enjoy being in the parliament only when in power. In most cases, the government remains reluctant to accept the legitimate demands and claims of the opposition. This is a common phenomenon in the parliamentary practice of Bangladesh to accuse each other for immobilising the parliament. Ahmed asserts that both AL and BNP boycotted more frequently than the other parliamentary parties.⁹ Sometimes the persistent boycott by the opposition turns the competitive parliament into a one-party legislature. Ahmed further argues that although other countries in South Asia have witnessed walkouts, prolonged boycott of parliamentary sittings is a unique Bangladeshi feature.¹⁰

It is interesting to look at the past election manifestoes of both the major parties AL and BNP to determine their stand about the boycott of parliament. While addressing the people before parliamentary elections, both AL and BNP promised to be regular in parliament even if they lose in elections and enact new laws if necessary to combat parliament boycott.¹¹ But it did not reflect in the actual proceedings. Opposition MPs from the fifth parliament threatened to boycott parliament to protest the then government move to initiate the Suppression of Terrorist Activities Bill, which was thought to be a law contrary to the basic notions of human rights. However, the bottom line of the parliamentary participation in Bangladesh is that it has been experiencing walkouts and boycotts of

parliamentary sittings by the opposition, which have become a regular feature of parliamentary life.

PARLIAMENT BOYCOTTS IN OTHER DEMOCRACIES

The literature on parliament boycott is limited, may be because no such frequent incidents of parliament boycott happen in the world democracies. However, there are several instances of boycotting parliamentary elections in order to amend or repeal certain electoral laws, which could have prevented holding of a free, fair and meaningful election. It might be useful and interesting to look at the other countries, whether there are any instances of such boycotts of parliament.

In the context of South Asian sub-continent, Rubinoff provides an example of parliament boycott in India during 1980s while the Indian Congress Party was in power. The Indian opposition MPs adopted the means of boycotting sessions and extra-parliamentary activities. The most recent parliament boycott in Asia occurred in Myanmar when the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her party decided to quit the oath taking ceremony in a dispute over the wording of the constitution after the by-election held in April 2012. The opposition MPs wanted to swear to “respect” the constitution as opposed to “safeguard,” which the ruling party preferred. However, they agreed to end the boycott of parliament and swore an oath to protect the constitution. Again in 2011, more than 30 percent of MPs in the Turkish parliament refused to take their oath when the parliament reopened for the first time following the election. The main opposition *Republican People’s Party* (CHP) boycotted the opening ceremony in reaction to court decision of not releasing two party members from detention. In Iraqi parliament, Kurdish law makers boycotted parliament sessions to place their legitimate demands in the budget. In Macedonia, the opposition boycotted the parliament sessions in December 2012, when 17 people, among them 11 policemen and two opposition deputies, were slightly injured in scuffles that broke out following a heated debate over the 2013 budget. There are some instances of cutting the salaries of opposition MPs. The opposition in Albania has been boycotting the country’s parliament on and off since 2009, when the country held its last general election. The opposition accused the Democratic Party of fraud and manipulation in the elections. However, the way the political parties of Bangladesh behave while in opposition is unique, for there is no other country where the opposition has made it a

habit to stay out of parliament continuously once they are elected and taken oath. Both the two major parties are continuing to adopt such practices while they are out of power. But they attend parliament regularly when they rule the country.

PARLIAMENT BOYCOTT IN BANGLADESH

As mentioned earlier, Bangladesh never experienced a consistent form of governing system since her independence. However, the society expected to see an effective parliament after the democratic election held in 1991, the fifth parliament. In a Westminster style parliamentary system, it is the main responsibility of the opposition to ensure government's accountability through active participation in the parliament. So the regular presence of opposition and their discussions and debates are vital in order to ensure the true notion of parliamentary democracy. But in Bangladesh, the opposition started boycotting parliamentary sessions since mid-1990s and the practice is going on till date.

Since the restoration of democratic environment after the fall of military regime in 1990, the democratic parliament elected in 1991, worked very well in the first few years, making several important reforms and resolving major controversies. One significant outcome of this parliament was to reintroduce the parliamentary form of government and both the then ruling party BNP and opposition AL unanimously agreed on that. Ahmed termed the change as the single best example of government-opposition collaboration in Bangladesh's parliamentary history.¹² But serious problems emerged when a parliamentary by-election was held in Magura. The opposition alleged massive rigging by the then ruling party BNP in the election and expressed serious doubt about the holding of a free and neutral election under the management of BNP. The opposition parties began to form a coalition and started to boycott the parliamentary sessions for several months. Later they resigned from the parliament demanding that government amend the constitution so as to provide for holding all future parliamentary elections under Non-party Caretaker Government (NCG). That was the beginning of boycotting parliament by the opposition since the restoration of democratic environment in the country (See Table 1 for details). The culture of boycotting parliament was started in the fifth parliament by the then opposition AL to realise their demands for Non-party Caretaker Government system. As statistics shows, the AL lawmakers boycotted 135 out of 400 sittings of the fifth parliament.

The ruling BNP government had no other option but to hold sixth parliamentary election, which was boycotted by the mainstream opposition parties. They amended the constitution and fulfilled the demand of AL and other opposition parties to place a NCG to hold next election. A new parliament was constituted after the election to seventh parliament in 1996. The people of Bangladesh again witnessed the boycott in the seventh parliament. This time the main opposition BNP started boycotting parliament. They boycotted 163 out of 382 sittings of the seventh parliament, between 1996 -2001.

Interestingly, when the AL again found itself in the opposition benches in the eighth parliament, it set another example of boycotting parliament from the beginning of the new House. The opposition even missed the inaugural session of parliament. The AL lawmakers remained absent for 70 consecutive sittings since the beginning of new parliament. They joined the parliamentary committees after around three years. Raising different issues, and in protest against the then ruling BNP's refusal to allow discussions on important issues, the AL started boycotting parliament. They boycotted 223 out of 373 sittings in the eighth parliament, between 2002-2006.

The ninth parliament began on 25 January 2009 with the presence of main opposition BNP lawmakers. Their presence on the inaugural day of the new parliament raised the hope for change in the political culture. Political analysts had earlier predicted the change due to bitter experiences of the military backed caretaker government's rule. But this culture did not disappear from the political landscape. Non-compromising attitude of the ruling and main opposition party brought back the negative culture within a few days of the new parliament's constitution. BNP lawmakers along with its alliance MPs started to boycott sittings of the new parliament. As of date, the MPs of the Alliance led by the opposition BNP boycotted 316 sittings out of 370 in the current ninth parliament.

TABLE I
PARLIAMENT BOYCOTT BY THE OPPOSITION

<i>Parliament</i>	<i>Total working days</i>	<i>BNP/Coalition as opposition boycotted</i>	<i>AL/Coalition as opposition boycotted</i>
Fifth (1991-1995)	400		135
Seventh (1996-2001)	382	163	
Eighth (2001-2006)	373		223
Ninth (2009 as of May 2013)	370	316	

Source: The Daily Star, 3 June 2013.

Although, the root causes of persistent parliament boycott by the opposition lay in the faulty election management, opposition has given many excuses to justify their absence in the parliament sessions. One common complaint by the opposition is that the ruling party does not recognise and respect the rights of opposition. However, there are many underlying factors that create a situation of boycotting parliamentary sessions by the opposition MPs. Some factors are related to structural procedures of the parliament, while some are solely due to politicising by the opposition.

Article 70 of the Bangladesh constitution is believed to be one of the major constraints in the advancement of true parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. According to the clause, the MPs cannot engage in floor crossing. They cannot vote against their parties in parliament. If they do so, their seats will be declared as vacant and an immediate by-election follows shortly. This particular clause in the Bangladesh constitution has created an environment of practising loyalty to the party leaders and their decisions. In some cases, it was evident that some MPs were interested to take part in parliament sessions but could not do so for compulsion of obeying the party diktat. Several MPs of the current ninth parliament decried their party's stance of House boycott. "People in our constituencies criticise us for not speaking in parliament on different important issues. We want to participate in the House proceedings. But we cannot do so, as our high command thinks otherwise",¹³ said a BNP legislator of the ninth parliament asking not to be identified.

Forming a coalition with likeminded political parties to win the national elections is an ongoing political practice in Bangladesh. Since the restoration of parliamentary democracy, both AL and BNP are leading two alliances. The AL is leading a coalition named 14 party Grand Alliance while BNP is leading 18 party United Alliance. The decision to participate in parliamentary sessions is usually taken in the meetings of the alliances. The decision is taken by the lead political party, which affects the intentions of other political parties. Hence, many MPs apart from the lead opposition party are interested to join the parliamentary sessions but can not do so because of the decisions taken by the coalition. "We will join parliament if the BNP decides to return to the House," an MP from *Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami* (BJI), a party under the coalition led by BNP said to a news reporter explaining their stand for parliament boycott.¹⁴

Many MPs in Bangladesh have won several consecutive elections. When they are in power, they argue for joining parliamentary sessions.

But they forget the same necessity while they are in opposition. It is not that much evident that the MPs are held accountable by the local voters back in their constituencies for not attending parliament sessions. In some cases, they try to manage the local voters saying that the opposition MPs are not given floor to speak in the parliament. Most people in Bangladesh, particularly the rural people are not fully aware of the parliamentary affairs and the business of political parties. So there is little or no accountability for the MPs for boycotting parliament. Also, there is a strange behaviour of Bangladeshi voters once the election is over. The people of Bangladesh turn out in large numbers whenever there is a movement for restoration for democracy or an election, the majority appear to be disenchanted with performance of their representatives.

In the eighth and ninth parliaments there was a major gap between the number of MPs from the party in power and the opposition (see Table 2). In a particular parliament the winner of two-third majorities can easily dominate and promulgate new laws without taking consent from the opposition MPs. This one sided dominance by the ruling party evinces little interest in the opposition to join parliament and perform their duties. The recent practice of coalition formation in the elections has made the situation more critical. Adding the seats of political parties within the same coalition creates more dominant position in the parliament for the leading parties in coalition with an absolute majority. In the eighth parliament, the BNP-led Four Party Alliance won 47 per cent of votes and 72 per cent of seats, and now in the ninth parliament, the AL-led Grand Alliance won 57 per cent of the votes and 87 per cent of the seats.¹⁵ Such a one sided advantage for the ruling party simply affects the power balance in parliament. However, there were some attempts from the opposition side to make the parliament effective in spite of their marginalised position. For instance the BNP was willing to make the ninth parliament effective at its initial stage, but it later adopted the strategy of boycotting parliamentary proceedings as a means to realise their political demands.

There is also the unique nature of government-opposition relations in the parliamentary democracy of Bangladesh that inhibits the participation in parliamentary work. Unlike other democratic systems, where the opposition is at least listened to, if not always consulted, the government in Bangladesh generally looks upon the opposition with suspicion.¹⁶ Rarely did it respond to the legitimate demands of the opposition unless threatened or faced with public action as well as parliamentary pressure. The opposition adopted a two-pronged strategy:

TABLE 2
THE SIZE OF INCUMBENTS AND OPPOSITION IN THE PAST PARLIAMENTS

<i>Parliament</i>	<i>Ruling party (Coalition vote share)</i>	<i>Ruling Party</i>	<i>Electoral Performance of the Government and Opposition: Number of Seats</i>		
			<i>Govt. MPs and supporters</i>	<i>Opposition MPs</i>	<i>Independent MPs</i>
Fifth	30.8	BNP	158	139	3
Seventh	37.4	AL	179	120	1
Eighth	47.2	BNP (Four Party Alliance)	216	78	6
Ninth	57.1	AL (Grand Alliance)	262	34	4

Note: The sixth parliament is excluded as it was of short tenure

staging walkouts or boycotting the JS, and organising street agitations. However, in the ninth parliament, the AL pledged to make an opposition MP as deputy speaker and allocate chairmanship of different parliamentary standing committees. But only two chairmanships of the parliamentary standing committees were given to the opposition. The offer for deputy speaker position also lapsed two times, one at the first session of the ninth parliament when both speaker and deputy speaker were made from the treasury benches and the other recently, when the speaker became the president of Bangladesh. Partisanship is widely noticed in parliamentary behaviour; in particular, those who are in power often use parliament to malign the opposition. The latter, in turn, try to teach the former a lesson by staying away from parliament's proceedings. This is a common practice of the opposition to legitimize their boycott on grounds of alleged government repression of the opposition parties and its refusal to release opposition activists from jail.

Currently, parliamentary sessions are aired live in the state run television channel and radio. Also, the private media including satellite channels air important news in their regular news bulletins. There is also a separate terrestrial free to air channel 'Sangsad Television' in place to telecast the parliament sessions live to mass audience. However, people in the constituencies, particularly the poor people do not get a chance to watch the parliamentary sessions in most cases. Often they do not have a television set or radio set to watch or listen the live proceedings. In urban areas, the state run channels including 'Sangsad Television' are kept in a way in the cable line. Again, it is a common perception that people usually

do not like to watch one sided talks from ruling MPs in the parliament. The people in the constituencies do not judge the performances of the MPs and make them accountable through their participation in the sessions.

The political parties usually underscore the need for active participation in parliamentary work, while they are in power. Both the AL and BNP did the same in the past. They start to boycott parliamentary sessions once they find themselves in the opposition benches. The AL started to boycott the fifth parliament demanding the inclusion of provision for NCG to hold free and fair elections. The BNP has boycotted many sittings under the ninth parliament for the restoration of NCG in the constitution. The BNP also justified their absence in the current ninth parliament seeking 'respectable number' of seats in front row and on the issue of party chairperson Khaleda Zia's cantonment house.¹⁷ Interestingly, the AL had made the same demand for "legitimate" share of seats in the front row during eighth parliament to justify their parliament boycott. This practice has been going on regular basis since the mid-session of fifth parliament.

ADVERSE EFFECTS OF PERSISTENT PARLIAMENT BOYCOTTS

There are many adverse effects of the persistent boycott of parliament sessions by the political parties. It is not only the opposition parties who are used to boycott the parliament, but there are many instances, when the MPs from treasury benches are absent in parliamentary proceedings for many days.¹⁸ A parliamentary session in Bangladesh costs huge expenses, it is not wise to waste public money by boycotting parliamentary sessions continuously. Bangladesh parliament experiences relentless quorum crisis due to frequent parliament boycotts by the opposition MPs that results in a huge financial wastage. Lack of quorum or late start of the sittings have been perennial problems in the past parliaments. According to the rules of procedure, the speaker can only run the House with a minimum presence of 60 legislators. If the number of MPs is less than 60 in the house, the speaker has no options but to adjourn the session due to lack of quorum. *Parliament Watch*, the database of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB 2003, 2004, 2005) reveals such delays in 240 workdays (only one began on time in 14 sessions – first through fourteenth) have cost the nation about BD Takas 144.8 million (US \$2.07 million) wasting 9,554 minutes because of quorum crisis.¹⁹ A total of 172 hours were wasted between the first and fifteenth session in the ninth

parliament for quorum crisis though the Awami-led alliance has more than 300 lawmakers in the parliament. It caused a loss of Taka 59 crore to the public exchequer. Twenty-four minutes and 27 seconds were wasted on average in every working day due to quorum crisis, and the nation had to spend Tk 78,000 (nearly 1000 US\$) a minute during the parliament session according to the *Parliament Watch* by TIB.²⁰ In spite of boycotting the current parliament for 316 sittings, the opposition MPs received allowances and perks of Tk 4.49 crore.²¹

The competition for power between the two major parties has been too stiff to keep the parliament running and complete its full term let alone be a policy contributor. In the political arena, the two major parties have hardly compromised on significant national issues. The relationship between the ruling party and the opposition is characterised by a high degree of hostility and conflict. The two parties abhor and demonize each other and the chiefs of these parties have not even been on speaking terms with each other since the restoration of democratic governance in Bangladesh in 1991. The opposition is seldom allowed to ventilate their grievances and opinion in the plenary sessions, which in turn provokes them to stage frequent walkouts or boycott parliament, and organize street protests. Due to the lack of compromise between the two contending parties in Bangladesh, the people experienced a total of 716 days of hartals since the restoration of parliamentary democracy (See Table 3).

TABLE 3
HARTALS CALLED BY THE OPPOSITION SINCE THE INCEPTION OF
PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

<i>Parliaments</i>	<i>Hartal called by the opposition</i>	
	<i>AL and its allies</i>	<i>BNP and its allies</i>
Fifth	80 days	
Seventh		332 days
Eighth	270 days	
Ninth (as of May 2013)		34 days

The opposition practice of boycotting parliamentary sessions also affected the quality of parliamentary committee functions. Persistent boycott of the parliamentary sittings made the success of committees weaker in public view. The eighth parliament experienced severe opposition boycott. It took almost two years to form committees after the first sitting due to non-participation by the main opposition party.

People back in the constituencies are frustrated to see the persistent boycott of parliament by the political parties, particularly the opposition. People are also hurt at the unparliamentary words used by the MPs from the treasury benches and opposition while they speak in the parliament. One opinion survey reveals that parliament is far from being a forum for constructive debate, ensuring accountability or sharing opinion on relevant national issues among the ruling and opposition parties.²² The survey of general public and professionals observes that opposition parties are keen to boycott parliament regardless of the merits of a particular issue and deliberately try to disrupt parliament's functioning. They also hold the ruling party as largely responsible for inducing the opposition to adopt extra-parliamentary activities. Although the ruling party is expected to play a constructive role in parliament by providing adequate space and ensuring the MPs voice, they do not usually do so.²³

WAYS TO TRUE PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY
Some Recommendations

There have been many attempts to initiate reforms of Bangladesh parliament but most of them failed blatantly. Ahmed concurs that the reforms did not appear possible for several reasons: inexperience of MPs, bureaucratic intransigence, and lack of political will.²⁴ He also argues that the major parliamentary parties apparently have a tendency to maintain the *status quo*. It is evident from the performance of past parliaments that there are a number of challenges that constrain the work of parliament. Some drastic measures are required for making the parliament of Bangladesh more effective and participatory. However, it is the sincerity of political parties which can make the reforms possible and successful. There must be a consensus amongst all political parties to change the current undemocratic political practices of boycotting parliament.

There is a growing demand from the civil society and think-tanks to enact a new law to curb the practice of boycotting parliament by the MPs, especially on partisan grounds. Although, there is a provision in the constitution that permits an MP to remain absent from the parliament for a consecutive period of 90 days. In most cases, the MPs come back to parliament before the tenure of their absenteeism reaches 90 consecutive sittings, to uphold their membership. Again they start to quit parliamentary plenary sessions. In the ninth parliament, the opposition led by BNP remained absent from Parliament for 83 consecutive days, but they decided

to participate in the 2013 budget session. Otherwise, they were liable for cancellation of their membership.²⁵ Earlier after a prolonged absence of 77 consecutive working days, the opposition led by BNP joined proceedings of the 12th session of ninth parliament in 2012. The TIB, graft watchdog, called for amendments to the constitution to reduce the maximum period of absence from parliament sessions by MPs from 90 days to 30 days.²⁶

The apple of discord between the political parties is the issue of holding parliamentary elections in a credible and fair way. This situation has caused more persistent parliament boycott in Bangladesh. Indeed, the management of regular, free and credible parliamentary elections is considered as first step of flourishing parliamentary democracy in any country. It is evident from the past parliamentary elections, that there have been severe allegations of partisan use of state machinery and other fraudulent practices which compromised the credibility of electoral outcome. The formulation of the unique system of Non-Party Caretaker Government (NCG) to preside over parliamentary elections is a temporary solution. It cannot continue for an indefinite period of time. However, the NCG should sustain for a certain period in order to build a culture of holding free and fair elections. The current ruling alliance led by the AL decided to abolish the NCG system through the 15th Amendment of the constitution in 2011. The government led by the AL and its Grand Alliance is proposing to hold the next parliamentary election under the incumbent government. In a role reversal of the events of 1995-96, the BNP-led opposition has launched a campaign for the restoration of the NCG system and is threatening to boycott the forthcoming election if it is held under the incumbent government.²⁷

In addition to an agreement on the system of governance under which elections will be held, the independence and unchallengeable authority of the Election Commission (EC) must also be established, and the neutrality of the state machinery during elections must be ensured. It is the responsibility of EC to manage the elections in a free and fair way. The credibility of EC was lost in the midst of election frauds during the regimes of military governments and people along with political parties lost their trust on this institution.

The parliament of Bangladesh does not adequately represent social diversity. Women, who constitute approximately 50% of the population, are under-represented. Similarly, the religious minorities, who constitute nearly 10% of the population, are under-represented. The most difficult challenge, however, is to ensure the representation of the poor. As the

expenses (mostly unofficial and hence illegal) associated with contesting elections are rising prohibitively, there is an increasing tendency for the parliament to turn into a 'rich man's club'.²⁸ It is now common to see the MPs belonging to the rich community. Also, most of the parliamentarians are engaged in business whereas the people's expectation is to see lawyers as the MPs in parliament. These businessmen MPs are criticised for not attending the parliament sessions as it is thought that they hardly feel the necessity for the same. The political parties need to play a proactive role to introduce party quotas or reserved seats in order to increase the representation of women and religious minorities. Political parties need to recruit prospective parliamentary candidates from the poor sections as well who can then be groomed, nominated and elected. The financing of their election campaign needs to be underwritten by the party or through a reformed system of election financing from the public exchequer.²⁹ A representative parliament from all sections of the society can ensure the effective functioning of the parliament.

There is no mechanism to ensure the neutral role of the Speaker. Speaker's partisan role has been a common excuse by the opposition in all the past parliaments. There was a possibility to have the Deputy Speaker from the opposition and it was mentioned in the manifesto of ruling AL. However, it did not happen as both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker are from the treasury benches. The position of Deputy Speaker from the opposition could have acted as motivational factor for the opposition to join the parliament sessions.

Article 70 of the Bangladesh Constitution, which prohibits floor-crossing, has long been mentioned by the MPs as a major barrier on their freedom of expression in the parliament. Though the article only forbids voting against the party, parliamentarians have been reluctant to even express views critical of any policy or decisions of their party. There is now wide consensus that the stringent conditions of Article 70 should be relaxed, and the parliamentarians should be allowed to speak and vote against their party, except for in a no-confidence motion. Also the MPs should get an assurance that even if their party stand is in line with non-participation in the parliamentary sessions, they can easily participate in the parliament based on their own judgement.

People feel that their respective MPs are obliged to carry on their constitutional responsibilities in any situation. Such impression came out at a recent survey completed by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) in 2009.³⁰ It is evident that persistent parliament boycott by the MPs

made the situation difficult for them to face their constituencies, as they did not highlight the grievances.

In order to bring an end to the continuous boycott of parliament sessions, there should be efforts to keep the opposition busy with the parliamentary work. However, bringing the opposition back into the parliament as well as keeping them engaged in parliamentary work remains the most challenging task in Bangladesh. Several procedures which have been put in place in other democracies to strengthen the opposition's role can be transplanted in the Bangladesh parliament. Jahan and Amundsen argue for bringing the UK model, 'opposition days' in Bangladesh parliament when the opposition will choose subjects for discussions.³¹ They also propose that the speaker should consult the leader of the opposition in setting the agenda of the parliament. The opposition can be given the opportunity to chair a larger number of parliamentary committees than may be proportionate to their seats in parliament, including the important Public Accounts Committee and Public Undertaking Committee. It will, however, not be possible to engage the opposition in parliamentary work unless there is a consensus amongst all major political parties to abandon the politics of confrontation, exclusion and violence.

CONCLUSION

The people of Bangladesh experienced serious effects of negative politics since the inception of Bangladesh as an independent country. There was much hope and aspiration after the restoration of democratic environment in 1991, but there have not been any significant changes in the quality of politics in Bangladesh. For the sake of true parliamentary democracy, the practice of boycotting parliament must come to end right now. It is the sincerity of the political parties which will make the parliament of Bangladesh more effective and fruitful. Particularly, AL and BNP must come forward to take necessary steps to stop boycotting parliament sessions. They must give up all the conflicts and not allow personal interests to influence their work. The parliament must be the place for the solution of all disputes and problems. If the political parties confront in the street by boycotting the parliament, it is very likely that undemocratic forces will intervene and it was already evident during the tenure of military backed caretaker government from 2006 to 2008. The ruling party needs to come up with an open mind to transform the political culture and take

necessary actions to accommodate the opposition MPs in the parliament. The opposition on the other side must also bear in mind the constitutional provisions of attending parliamentary sessions along with their commitment to the people before elections. Otherwise, the unexpected and persistent boycott of parliament by the opposition will severely affect the dreams of millions who sacrificed their lives in 1971 for making Bangladesh a sovereign nation and their desire to live in a democratic society under a democratic government. Until the parliament is made effective, no significant change in governance will take place and the future of Bangladesh's parliamentary democracy will remain at stake.

REFERENCES

1. Y. Meny, *Government and Politics in Western Europe*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990. p.181.
2. K.M. Mahiuddin, *The Parliamentary Committee System in Bangladesh: An Analysis of its Functioning*. Verlag, Dr. Müller Aktiengesellschaft & Co., 2009.
3. M.M. Rahaman, 'Origins and Pitfalls of Confrontational Politics in Bangladesh'. *South Asian Survey*, Vol.14, No.1, 2007. pp.101-115.
4. N. Ahmed, 'In search of institutionalisation: Parliament in Bangladesh'. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol.4, No.4, 1998. pp.34-65.
5. R. Jahan, and I. Amundsen, *The Parliament of Bangladesh: Representation and Accountability*. Dhaka/Bergen, Center for Policy Dialogue and Chr. Michelsen Institute, CPD-CMI Working Paper 2. 2012. p.2.
6. S. Liton, "Boycott culture crippling parliament". *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 23 February 2010.
7. N. Ahmed, 'Development and working of parliaments in South Asia'. *Asian Journal of Political Science*. Vol.9, No.1, 2001. pp.18-48.
8. T. Rahman, *Parliamentary Control and Government Accountability in South Asia: A comparative analysis of Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka*. Oxford, Routledge, 2008.
9. N. Ahmed, 2001. *op.cit.*
10. N. Ahmed, 'Parliament and Citizens in Asia: The Bangladesh Case'. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*. Vol.18, No.3-4, 2012. pp. 463-478.
11. N. Ahmed, 'Critical elections and democratic consolidation: the 2008 parliamentary elections in Bangladesh'. *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol.19, No.2, 2011. pp.137-152.
12. N. Ahmed, 'Parliamentary politics in Bangladesh'. *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Vol.32, No.3, 1994. pp.364-382.
13. S. Liton, and R. Hasan, "Key issues, no critical voice Many opposition MPs willing to join JS, parties unwilling". *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 12 September 2012.
14. *Ibid.*
15. R. Jahan and I. Amundsen, *op.cit.*
16. N. Ahmed, 'Parliament?executive relations in Bangladesh'. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol.3, No.4, 1997. pp.70-91.
17. 'BNP won't return until seat, Cantt house rows resolved'. *The Financial Express*, Dhaka, 15 June 2009.

18. M. Moniruzzaman, "Parliamentary Democracy in Bangladesh: An Evaluation of the Parliament 1991-2006." *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol.47, No.1, 2009. pp. 100-126.
19. T. Rahman, 2008. *op.cit.*
20. *Parliament Watch, Ninth Parliament* (8th to 15th session) (in Bangla), Dhaka, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), 2013.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Institute of Governance Studies (IGS), *Confrontation, Competition, Accountability: The State of Governance in Bangladesh 2008*. Dhaka, IGS, 2009. p.112.
23. *Ibid.*
24. N. Ahmed, Reforming the parliament in Bangladesh: Structural constraints and political dilemmas. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Vol.36, No.1, 1998. pp. 68-91.
25. 'JS Budget session starts today BNP ready to join'. *Daily Star*, Dhaka, 3 June 2013.
26. Note No.20.
27. R. Jahan and I. Amundsen, *op.cit.*
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Jatiya Sangshad o Sangshad Shadasshyader Vumika: Jonogoner Prottasha (Parliament and the Role of Parliamentarians: People's Expectation)*. Dhaka, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), 2009.
31. R. Jahan and I. Amundsen, *op.cit.*

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN BANGLADESH

BINODKUMAR SINGH

ABSTRACT

Ever since the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, Bangladesh has been experiencing steady growth of Islamic fundamentalist parties and groups. The ideology of secularism, which was the benchmark of the liberation struggle, has been systematically replaced by the Islamic ideology, first in the shape of constitutional amendments and then in day-to-day politics. The symptoms of this transformation are quite visible, thereby threatening the minority communities particularly the Hindu community. On the other hand, Islamic fanaticism in Bangladesh is closely connected to the phenomenon of Islamist terrorism. The phenomenal rise of political and militant Islam is a major concern for the country as well as for the region.

Bangladesh emerged as an independent, secular and democratic republic on 16 December 1971. In the initial phase of independence, the Bengali nation-state was the predominantly visible identity of the new member of the international community. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly (CA) on 4 November 1972, the father of the nation, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, outlined the rationale behind the secular identity of Bangladesh stating "Muslims will observe their religion and nobody in this State has the power to prevent that. Hindus will observe their religion and nobody has the power to prevent that. Buddhists and Christians will observe their respective religions and nobody can prevent that. Our only objective is that nobody will be allowed to use religion as a political weapon."¹ The Constitution of Bangladesh (Article 12) also provided the basis for secular credentials of Bangladesh. Although the new state was predominantly inhabited by Muslims, the foundation of the nation-state was different –

it was Bengali ethnicity. Therefore, the emergence of Bangladesh apparently demolished the foundation of the 'two-nation theory'² and consequently, the religious identity was sidelined.

But, after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman on 15 August 1975, there has been a steady growth of Islamic fundamentalist parties and groups in Bangladesh. The rise is paradoxical in a country, which emerged as a Bengali nation-state after discarding the religious identity. The Islamists, who collaborated with the Pakistani army and other terrorist groups and who faced public trials for atrocities committed against their own people, have even occupied seats of power. The phenomenal rise of political and militant Islam is undoubtedly a major concern for country as well as for the neighboring country like India because of the geographical ramifications involved.

ADVENT OF ISLAM IN BANGLADESH

Islam arrived in present Bangladesh in the 13th century when Ikhtiaruddin Muhammad Bakhtiar Khilji entered Nadia, the capital city of Lakhnauti and conquered it in 1203-04 AD. He created a small principality which gradually expanded into a Muslim kingdom by the later part of the 14th century. By the next century the whole of Bengal came under the Muslim rulers. The invasion and immigration followed by settlement turned the entire region into a Muslim dominated area.³ However, the massive conversion to Islam did not start till the 14th century when a large number of Sufis from Arabia, Persia, Bukhara and North India came to Bengal to spread Islam. The movement of Sufis to Bengal remained uninterrupted till the 17th century.⁴

As the Muslim conquerors took control of Bengal in 1338 AD, they tried to consolidate their rule by creating an institutional support base. They started building *madrassas* (Muslim seminaries), patronized Islamic scholars and Sufi preachers, created endowments to promote Islam, and encouraged immigration.⁵ The Sufis played the pivotal role in the process of mass conversion. They cultivated a highly effective relationship with the rural and poor masses. They attracted the people belonging to the lower strata of the Hindu and Buddhist society and took no time in starting mass conversion. The process of transformation of a Hindu society into an Islamic religious setting without altering the folk tradition, culture and linguistic foundation was not fast. It took two centuries to notice a visible change in the religious demography of Bengal. With this visible

transformation, the emergence of a self-conscious Muslim community too was clearly evident.⁶

The steady spread of Islam established some contact of the Bengali Muslims with the rest of the Islamic world. The first expression of Muslim solidarity in a larger canvas was evident during the Wahhabi Trials of 1869-1871.⁷ The consciousness of the Bengali Muslim as part of *Islamic Umma* (Muslim community or people) began to grow since then. In 1872 the Muslims constituted more than 50 per cent of the population in three divisions of Bengal and this phenomenal growth was attributed to widespread conversion which sparked off a controversy that descended down the 19th century to the last on the origin of the Muslims of Bengal.⁸

During the Muslim rule in Bengal, one of the striking developments was that the Bengali language began to flourish due mainly to royal patronage and as a language spoken by all the inhabitants irrespective of their religious and other primordial affiliations. The Sufis adopted the Bengali language for the purpose of spreading Islam as it was the primary vehicle of communication. The rulers also patronized the language for two distinct purposes – to spread Islam among the common people and to consolidate their rule.⁹ Therefore, the advent of Islam in Bangladesh did not cause any social tension and disharmony. It was mainly because of the adaptation of the new religion in the Hindu environment of Bengal and retention of many social and existing religious customs, traditions and practices that the converts used to follow in the pre-Islamic days.¹⁰

ISLAMISATION OF POLITICS IN BANGLADESH

The role of religion in the politics and society of Bangladesh gained momentum when Bangladesh adopted Islam as 'state religion' during General Hussain Mohammad Ershad's regime (1982-1990).¹¹ Earlier, President Zia-ur Rehman (1977-1981) initiated the process of cultivating extremists for gaining political support who in turn facilitated terrorist groups in Bangladesh. The trend to seek political support of the extremists was encouraged by the successive Governments. Begum Khaleda Zia during her first regime (1991-1996), reportedly manipulated the Islamists in weakening the then opposition *Azami League* (AL) and its allies as well as to destabilise India. The *Jamaat-e-Islami* (JeI), which is the leading Islamist political party of Bangladesh, formed part of the government during Khaleda Zia's second tenure (2001-2006).¹² Leaders like Motiur Nizami Rahman, who took over JeI in late 2000, became a Minister during her

regime. Azizul Huq, a member of the advisory council of *Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh* (HuJI-B), formed part of the coalition government of Begum Khaleda Zia.¹³

The other party that formed part of Khaleda Zia's Government was *Islamic Oikyo Jote* (IOJ), which has been openly vocal about its support for the Islamist militants, the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda.¹⁴ Both IOJ and Jel promote extremist Islamic policies which provide ideal breeding ground for the growth of militancy. Their presence in the political power structure encouraged the extremist elements to act without any fear as they enjoyed the patronage of the authorities.¹⁵ In fact, the political environment of Bangladesh has changed. Even Sheikh Hasina, a promoter of secular ideology during the latter half of her tenure as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh (1996-2001), changed her attire by wearing dress of a Haj pilgrim and wearing the black Muslim headgear. She was even accused of not taking any action against the Islamist extremists involved in the killing of ethnic minorities, which was reportedly due to her desire to obtain Muslim support for the 2001 elections.¹⁶ Thus political radicalization of Islam in Bangladesh provided an ideal platform for the escalation of activities of Islamist extremists and terrorist groups pursuing a pro-active Taliban agenda.

In 2001, the 9/11 and subsequent 'War on Terror' brought many extremist outfits in Afghanistan under the United States scanner. These terrorist outfits required an alternate place to camp and operate. The Canadian Security Intelligence Service reported in July 2003 that the Islamic radicals in Bangladesh established links with Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden's *International Islamic Front* (IIF).¹⁷ The unstable social, political and economic setup along with long absence of democratic polity made Bangladesh a soft country for the extremists and terrorists to establish their base. Ali Riaz, Associate Professor at Illinois State University, identified certain internal factors that contribute to the rise of Islamic militancy in Bangladesh including favorable socio-political environment; coercion as an acceptable mode of governance; criminalization of politics; absence of state institutions in certain geographical areas of Bangladesh; a sympathetic civil administration; and mobilization of popular culture for Islamist objectives.¹⁸ He also points out four regional factors that contribute to the rise and proliferation of Islamist militancy in Bangladesh as – Indo-Bangladesh relations; cross-border cooperation among the militant groups of Myanmar, North East India and Bangladesh; easy availability of weapons; and the 'proxy-war' between India and Pakistan.¹⁹

According to Hiranmay Karlekar, "One of the reasons that makes Bangladesh an ideal base for their operation is that it is a soft state with ineffective governance and an inefficient police force, which fundamentalist Islamist organizations like the JeI, IOJ, and HuJI-B, with their highly organized, trained and armed cadres, can dominate without much trouble since they already have a foothold in the Government."²⁰ Islamist militants had their people in all government departments and sections of society, including mosques, *madrassas*, educational institutions, the secretariat, the judiciary, civil society, mass media and even the armed forces. Islamists had also developed a strong countrywide network to capture power through Islamic revolution.²¹ It may be noted that, serial bombing in August 2005 in which more than 400 small bomb blasts rattled the capital Dhaka and towns across Bangladesh within a span of half an hour, demonstrated a steady increase of terrorist inroads in the political and social setup of Bangladesh.²² The rise of suicide bombings carried out by Bangladeshis in the region including India thus extending their area of influence across borders is another cause of concern.

The radicalisation in Bangladesh determines the intensity of its indulgence in supporting the North East insurgents and terrorist activities in India. In fact, Naga and Mizo insurgent groups of India's North East were able to establish their base in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) immediately after the partition of India. Presently, there are various armed militant groups active in India's North East. Most of these groups are aided and provided safe havens in Bangladesh.²³ It was under the regime of Begum Khaleda Zia (2001-2006) that the number of extremist groups of the North East increased. In April 2004, there was a massive arms seizure at Chittagong port. The seizure included 150 rocket launchers, 840 rockets, 2,500 grenades, 1,700 assault rifles and over a million ammunition rounds. In fact, it was the largest arms haul in the history of Bangladesh till now. According to Subhash Kapila, "The types of weapons indicate that they were intended for anti-Indian insurgents being hosted in Bangladesh and equip them to launch devastating fire-power attacks on Indian Army regular forces posts, camps etc."²⁴

RISE OF ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh's emergence as an independent, secular and democratic republic in December 1971 did not altogether blur its religious contour. It did not take time to find the resurgence of Islam as the overwhelmingly

visible face of Bangladesh.²⁵ The process towards Islamisation of the political environment of Bangladesh had begun during the rule of Sheikh Mujib. However, the resurgence of Islamic movement could be seen prominently during the military rule (1977-1990). By the time Khaleda Zia came to power (1991-96), the extremist Islamists became more blatant in their attacks on the country's minorities and secular forces. It was during this time, Bangladesh's main terrorist group, *Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh* (HuJI-B), was formed, reportedly with funds from Osama Bin Laden.²⁶

According to Bertil Lintner, HuJI-B's firm links with the Al-Qaeda were first proven when Fazlur Rahman, leader of the "Jihad Movement in Bangladesh" signed the declaration of 'Holy War' against the United States on 23 February 1998.²⁷ Ever since that *fatwa* (Islamic rulings), Bangladesh has become a place for the Al-Qaeda network and by formally signing the *fatwa*, Fazlur Rahman drew Bangladesh into Osama's orbit.²⁸ The trend of Islamisation was intensely felt both inside and outside Bangladesh soon after the formation of *Bangladesh Nationalist Party* (BNP) Government in alliance with the *Jamaat-e-Islami* (JeI), the *Islamia Oikya Jote* (IOJ) and *Jatiya Party* (JP) in 2001.²⁹

It did not take long to obtain hard evidence of resurgence of Islamist militancy in Bangladesh. The radicalisation of the country became a focused discussion after the publication of a write up by Alex Perry in the *Time* magazine on 21 October 2002. It flashed a disturbing news item saying that 150 Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters from Afghanistan landed in Bangladesh in December 2001. The article revealed that Ayman al-Zawahiri, a top Al-Qaeda leader and trusted deputy of Osama Bin Laden entered Bangladesh through the Chittagong Port and stayed there for several months. He visited Dhaka and stayed in the residence of a local Islamic radical before leaving Bangladesh for Myanmar, with Rohingya rebels.³⁰

The presence of the foreign militants in Bangladesh clearly suggested the seriousness of the situation when four Yemenis, an Algerian, a Libyan, and a Sudanese were nabbed in a house located in Uttara in Dhaka city. It was revealed by the domestic intelligence agency, the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) that these militants were involved in arms-trafficking and arms training at a *madrassa* in Dhaka city sponsored by a Saudi organization called *Al-Haramin*, which is known to have links with Osama's money distributing infrastructure, operating 37 branches in different parts of Bangladesh.³¹ The revelation of Taliban and Al-Qaeda

men's presence came from the interrogation of a Rohingya Muslim HuJI-B fighter named Fazle Karim *alias* Abu Fuzi, who had been nabbed in Kolkata on 7 October 2002. He was a veteran of Al-Qaeda camp in eastern Afghanistan. He came from Kashmir and landed in Kolkata, where he disembarked from a train. This drew an international focus on Bangladesh which could be turned into another hotbed of Islamic militancy. The concern was reinforced by the arrest of four members of *Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh* (JMB) and the seizure of a packet of uranium on 30 May 2003; the global angle of international terrorism could not be ignored.³²

Moreover, *Prothom Alo* (a Bangladeshi newspaper) had a scintillating but disturbing report in December 2004 stating that 3,000 Bangladeshis fought along with the Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. Among them 2,364 had received training in Afghanistan from the Al-Qaeda before returning to Bangladesh.³³ Although the Police had been successful in nabbing 435 militants from whom the government tried to figure out the magnitude of the militants' threat, the volubility of the problem was clear and ominous. Added to it, the problem was compounded by reports of the release of most of the arrested persons on the ground of lack of proper evidence. It was reported that several stage-managed factors, such as, weak First Information Report (FIR), destruction of evidence and absence of coordination among the investigating agencies led to freeing the arrested militants.³⁴

In the recent years, Bangladesh experienced a series of acts of violence of grave magnitude. On 21 August 2004, a bomb attack on an *Awami League* (AL) gathering killed about 22 persons and injured 338. It was allegedly masterminded by Islamists to eliminate Sheikh Hasina Wajed. It was not merely an attack to eliminate the prominent opposition leader. It could be comprehended in a broader perspective. It was designed to stifle the vocal opposition through terror and intimidation. It also demonstrated how organized the jihadi elements were and how fragile was the security of the country.³⁵ On 17 August 2005, there were serial bomb blasts numbering 459 in 63 Districts out of 64 triggered by militant Islamists of JMB within a short span of 30 minutes, killing one and injuring several others. A message was left behind in each of the bomb sites, "Enforce Islamic Laws".³⁶ All these point out to the phenomenal rise of militant Islam in Bangladesh.

The year 2005 was full of militant activities demonstrating their strength, network and efficient execution of their deadly attacks in

Bangladesh. Besides the serial bomb blasts of 17 August 2005 there were attacks in Chittagong and Gazipur Districts in November and December. These activities finally forced the Government to ban the HuJI-B, the *Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh* (JMJB) and the JMB.³⁷ Despite the ban, the militancy has not ceased to operate. A worrying sign of the time is the emergence of the pan-Islamic party *Hizb ut-Tahrir* (HT) in Bangladesh. Ostensibly, a non-violent organization, the HT has attracted the attention of intelligence agencies from the Central Asian countries to Indonesia, which fear that “the sophisticated infrastructure and organizational discipline of the party can be exploited by Al-Qaeda”.³⁸ HT keeps a low profile in Bangladesh, but it is spreading its influence all over the country. On 1 May 2007, Islamic militants exploded several bombs at Bangladesh’s three major railway stations – Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong Districts. The blasts occurred a month after the execution of six top leaders of JMB. Later, it was claimed by *Jadid Al-Qaida* (Jadid means New), believed to be linked with the Osama’s Al-Qaeda. They left aluminum plates at the explosion scenes with inscriptions in English ‘The Al-Qaeda Network’.³⁹

Recently, for the first time, on 2 August 2014, a video showing a group of five Bangladeshis declaring themselves as followers of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, surfaced online with an English title ‘Muslims in Bangladesh give Bay’ah⁴⁰ to the Caliph Ibrahim’. Among them one was leading the Bay’ah saying: “We will follow Caliph Ibrahim as spiritual leader until death and will organise the Muslims by his leadership believing only in Allah as the supreme authority and Al Quran”.⁴¹ On 24 September 2014, Detective Branch (DB) of Police arrested Asif Adnan (26) and Fazle Elahi Tanzil (24), who had allegedly been planning to go to Syria through Turkey with the help of a United Kingdom citizen.⁴² Further, DB, on 25 September 2014, arrested Hafizur Rahman (22), who claimed to be the chief of the Bangladesh unit of the ISIS during a raid in Surama Tower on Comrade Moni Singh Road of Dhaka city for allegedly recruiting members for ISIS.⁴³ Later, on 28 September 2014, DB arrested Saimur Rahman *alias* Ebney Hamdad, a UK citizen of Bangladeshi origin and a suspected member of ISIS at Kamalapur area in Dhaka city. Saimur came to Bangladesh six months ago to appoint members for ISIS.⁴⁴

DERADICALISATION IN BANGLADESH

Of all the measures taken to crack down on the Islamic extremists, the process of bringing the war criminals to justice is the most important. In

the first-ever execution in a War Crimes case on 12 December 2013, *Jamaat-e-Islami* (JeI) Assistant Secretary Abdul Quader Mollah (65), who earned the nickname 'Mirpurur Koshai (Butcher of Mirpur)' was hanged at Dhaka Central Jail after his conviction on charges relating to his sinister role during the Liberation War of 1971.⁴⁵ Thus far, the International Crimes Tribunals (ICTs) conducting the War Crimes Trials that began on 25 March 2010, have indicted 18 leaders, including 13 JeI leaders, three *Bangladesh Nationalist Party* (BNP) leaders and two *Jaya Party* (JP) leaders. Nine verdicts have already been delivered by the two ICTs, in which seven persons have been awarded the death sentence, while three have been given life imprisonment.

Another major challenge faced by the democratically elected AL Government was the mutiny in Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), (currently known as the Border Guards Bangladesh-BGB) in which 74 people, including 57 army officials, were killed during the gruesome mutiny on 25 and 26 February 2009, at the Pilkhana headquarters in the national capital Dhaka and other battalions across the country. Whatever the reason, it was very clear that the mutiny was in no way spontaneous, but one that was planned. And, moreover, the involvement of the *Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh* (JMB) in the planning was strongly suspected. The first step to reconstitute the BDR was the proposal to change the name from BDR to BGB which was passed on 21 December 2010.⁴⁶ Apart from the reforms in the BDR, the Government went ahead to try the mutineers in the court of law. Remarkably, concluding the trial, on 20 October 2012, a special court of the BDR sentenced 723 soldiers of erstwhile BDR to different terms of rigorous imprisonment ranging from four months to seven years each.⁴⁷ Apart from the measures taken to bring the war criminals and BDR mutineers to book, the Islamist extremists have been subjected to direct attacks. According to the database of South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), since 2009, the Security Forces (SFs) had killed some 160 militants across the country (data till 5 October 2014).⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh's Islamic identity has strengthened over the years, and marked increase in the number of attacks on non-Muslim population groups appear to have been prompted by a desire to build a "nation state", free from minorities, as well as motivated by political revenge. That Islam is going to play an even more important role in shaping Bangladesh's future identity

is also evident from the increased role of *madrassa* education in the country. The *madrassas* fill an important function in an impoverished country such as Bangladesh, where public education is inadequate and most families cannot afford private schools. The very fact that millions of young Bangladeshis now graduate from *madrassas* run by fanatics is also bound to change perceptions of life and society.

Though the Islamist extremists have not carried out any major strikes in the last few years, it will be not be right to say that they have been completely wiped out. One should keep in mind that the militant outfits like JMB and HuJI-B have the capacity to undertake major attacks as police on 22 September 2014, claimed that leaders of JMB and seven other Islamist outfits, currently inside various jails, are trying to regroup and form a unified platform to establish their ideologies by carrying out subversive activities across the country. Moreover foreign funding for militant outfits has not been drastically checked which continues to be a matter for worry.

Indeed, the Sheikh Hasina Government has achieved dramatic success in containing extremist forces in Bangladesh. However, the corrosive nature of violent and disruptive street mobilization by political parties like BNP and its allies supported by JeI has the potential to destroy the tenuous stability that has been secured after decades of disorder. Bangladesh has made very steady gains, but is still at risk of sliding back if the Government wavers even slightly.

REFERENCES

1. Khandakar Mohammad Ilias (ed), *Bangabandhu's Philosophy for Social Revolution*. Dhaka, Bangladesh Parishad, 1979. p.118.
2. The two-nation theory is the ideology that the primary identity of Muslims in the Indian subcontinent is their religion, rather than their language or ethnicity, and therefore Indian Hindus and Muslims are two distinct nationalities, regardless of ethnic or other commonalities. The two-nation theory was a founding principle of the Pakistan Movement and the partition of India in 1947.
3. Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed), *Islam in Bangladesh: Society, Culture and Politics*. Dhaka, Bangladesh Itihas Samiti, 1983. p.II.
4. *The Sufi Devotees of Bangladesh*. Dhaka, Islamic Foundation, 1982. pp.157-174.
5. Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed), *Understanding the Bengal Muslims: Interpretive Essays*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2001. pp.11-13.
6. Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal*. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983, Chapter 1.
7. Wahhabi Trials is a series of prosecutions in which Muslims suspected of involvement in 30 years of anti-colonial activity, culminating in the 'Great Indian

- Mutiny' of 1857, were heard, convicted and executed or transported.
8. Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed, *Fundamentalism in Bangladesh: Its Impact on India*. New Delhi, Akansha Publishing House, 2008. p. 71.
 9. *Ibid.* p. 83.
 10. *Ibid.* p. 85.
 11. Anjan Roy, "Minorities under threat in Bangladesh". *World Focus*, Vol. 27, No. 2, February 2006, p. 9.
 12. Abu Kala, 'The Challenges of Terrorism: Bangladesh Response'. In S.D. Muni (ed.), *Responding to Terrorism in South Asia*. Colombo, Manohar Publications, 2006. p.155.
 13. Hiranmay Karlekar, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan*. New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2005. p.84.
 14. Kanchan Lakshman, "Islamist Extremist Mobilization in Bangladesh". *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol.3, No.12, 17 June 2005.
 15. R.N.P. Singh, *Bangladesh Decoded*. New Delhi, India First Foundation, 2007. p. 249.
 16. Bertil Linter, "Bangladesh Extremist Islamist Consolidation". *Faultline*, Vol. 14, July 2003. p. 7.
 17. Mansi Mehrotra, "Security Challenges in India-Bangladesh Relations", *Article No. 1199*. New Delhi, Centre for Land Warfare Studies, 27 October 2008.
 18. Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A Complex Web*. London, Routledge, 2008. p. 44.
 19. *Ibid.* p.80.
 20. As cited in Hiranmay Karlekar, *Bangladesh: The Next Afghanistan*. p.76.
 21. *Ibid.* p.157.
 22. Sashanka S. Banerjee, *India's Security Dilemmas: Pakistan and Bangladesh*, New York, Anthem Press, 2006. p.158.
 23. Vijendra Singh Jafa, "Insurgencies in North East India: Dimensions of Discord and Containment". In S.D. Muni (ed.), *Responding to Terrorism in South Asia*. New Delhi, Manohar Publications, 2006. pp.225-227.
 24. Subhash Kapila, "Bangladesh's anti-India gun running and Insurgent Havens Persist". *Paper No. 978*, South Asian Analysis Group, 29 April 2004.
 25. Basant Chatterjee, *Inside Bangladesh Today: An Eye-witness Account*. New Delhi, S. Chand & Co., 1979. p.155.
 26. Amrita Dey, "Indo-Bangladesh Counterterrorism Cooperation". *World Focus*, Vol. 31, No.2, February 2010. pp.73-76.
 27. Bertil Lintner, "Bangladesh: A Cocoon of Terror". *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 April 2002.
 28. Yonah Alexander and Michael Swetnam, *Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaida: Profile of a Terrorist Network*. New Delhi, Aditya Books, 2001. Appendix 1B.
 29. Amrita Dey, *op.cit.*
 30. Alex Perry, "Deadly Cargo". *Time*, 21 October 2002, pp.22-25.
 31. Abu Nasar Saied Ahmed, *Ibid.*, p.106.
 32. Alex Perry, "A very Dirty Plot". *Time*, 9 June 2003.
 33. *Prothom Alo*, 22 and 23 December 2004.
 34. *Ibid.* 21 August 2006.
 35. Aravind Adiga, "A Democracy is Shaken". *Time*, 6 September 2004, pp.38-40.
 36. *The Daily Star*, 22-23 August 2005.
 37. Ali Riaz, "Bangladesh in 2005: Standing at a Crossroad". *Asian Survey*, Vol.XLVI, No.1, January/February 2006.

38. Wilson John, "The Roots of Extremism in Bangladesh". *Terrorism Monitor*, 13 January 2005.
39. 'Serial blasts rock Bangladesh'. *The Tribune*, 2 May 2007.
40. In Islamic terminology, *Bay'ah* is an oath of allegiance to a leader. It is known to have been practiced by the prophet Muhammad.
41. 'ISIS in Bangladesh'. *Dhaka Tribune*, 7 August 2014.
42. 'Cops capture 2 'ISIS recruitees' in Bangladesh'. *The Daily Star*, 26 September 2014.
43. Another militant held in city - Arrestee working for ISIS, says DB. *The Daily Star*, 27 September 2014.
44. 'Suspected IS member held in capital'. *Dhaka Tribune*, 29 September 2014.
45. S. Binodkumar Singh, Executing the Butcher, *South Asia Intelligence Review*, Volume 12, No. 24, 16 December 2013.
46. Anshuman Behera, Deradicalisation in Bangladesh: Challenges Ahead. *Journal of Defence Studies*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi, Vol.5. No 2. April 2011. pp.138-146.
47. 'BDR mutiny trial ends'. *The Daily Star*, 21 October 2012.
48. Fatalities-Islamist Terrorism 2005-2014. South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), www.satp.org

RISE OF ISLAMIC RADICALISM IN BANGLADESH *IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SECURITY OF NORTH-EAST INDIA*

RAJ KUMAR SHARMA

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is located between India and Myanmar in South Asia and shares 4,096.7 kms of its border with India in its west, north and east.¹ It was part of Pakistan, known as East Pakistan till 1971, when Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation after a bloody civil war with Pakistan. Bangladesh is eighth most populous country in the world with more than 140 million people, as per the 2011 government census.² It also has a high population density at 964 people per square km. Muslims dominate the population constituting 89.5 percent of the total (mainly Sunni Muslims), Hindus form 9.5 percent and others stand at 0.9 percent. Bangla is the official language in Bangladesh and 98 percent of the population speaks this language.³ As per a 2005 report by Goldman Sachs, this country has economic potential of becoming one of the largest economies in the world, known as 'Next Eleven'. However, this potential has largely remained untapped due to political instability, corruption, overpopulation and resultant poverty. Though Bangladesh is a unitary parliamentary republic, the Army has a history of dabbling in political affairs. There have been many military coups in Bangladesh, prominent among them taking place in 1975, 1981, 1982, 1996 and 2007. The military coup in 1975 resulted in the assassination of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman while President Zia-ur Rahman lost his life during the 1981 coup. Increasing presence of Islamic radicals in Bangladesh has been a cause of concern in the country. Let's examine how Islam started to play an active role in Bangladesh, a country that started its journey on the tenets of secularism and democracy.

INCREASING INFLUENCE OF ISLAM IN BANGLADESH POLITICS

Inclusion of present day Bangladesh as a part of Pakistan in 1947 was based on the predominance of religious majority (Muslims) in this area. However, East Pakistan was looked down upon by its rulers based in Islamabad. The ruling elites in Islamabad had a sense of aloofness towards their brethren in East Pakistan. They believed that practice of Islam in East Pakistan had become tainted due to its association with Hinduism.⁴ Attempts were made to sideline Bengali identity of East Pakistan. This was evident when Mohammad Ali Jinnah declared Urdu as the national language of Pakistan in 1948, despite opposition from people in East Pakistan who favoured Bengali over Urdu. When General Ayub Khan came to power in 1958, he too tried to suppress Bengali identity. As Pakistan saw Rabindranath Tagore as a symbol of 'Bengali nationalism', efforts were made to target his work and legacy. Ayub Khan tried to stop celebration of Tagore centenary. After the India-Pakistan war in 1965, the Pakistan government had even banned Tagore's songs on radio and official functions.⁵ Born in Kolkata, Tagore was a Bengali Hindu who was held in high esteem by Bangla speakers as he was the only Indian to receive Noble Prize in literature. Due to oppressive policies of Islamabad, a nationalist movement came up in East Pakistan led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in late 1960s. Pakistan tried to brutally suppress this movement but could not do so and East Pakistan emerged as an independent nation, named Bangladesh in 1971. India assisted Sheikh Mujib and helped in the creation of Bangladesh. Creation of Bangladesh dealt a blow to 'two nation' theory of Pakistan, as its partition took place on the basis of language (Bengali) and not religion. It showed that nationalism in Bangladesh was based on 'lingual identity', not on religious identity. However, subsequent events under different political and military leaders have been influenced by religious identity moving away from lingual identity.

Sheikh Mujib became President of newly independent Bangladesh. He wanted to have a secular, democratic republic in Bangladesh and formed his party, *Awami League*. The constitution of Bangladesh, framed in 1972, had four principles, namely nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism. Committed to his secular credentials, Mujib banned *Jamaat-e-Islami*, a party that opposed creation of Bangladesh and helped the Pakistani army during the liberation war in 1971.⁶ The influence of Islam over politics remained weak in the initial years of Bangladesh but this trend had started reversing under Mujib itself. Mujib tried to maintain a

secular state but ironically, there were instances where his decisions were influenced by religious considerations. This has been highlighted by Bangladeshi media activist, Saleem Samad.⁷ According to him, Mujib revived and upgraded Islamic Academy to Foundation in March 1975, though it had been banned in 1972. He also banned sale and consumption of liquor and also prohibited betting with special reference to horse racing. He even introduced Koranic recitation on national radio.⁸ Anti-liberation individuals like Shah Azizur Rahman were freed by Mujib in 1974. To the surprise of even his supporters, he attended meeting of Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1974 held at Lahore. Bangladesh was accepted as a member of OIC after Mujib attended its Lahore meeting. Bangladesh also became founding member of Islamic Development Bank (IDB) in 1975. IDB is associated with OIC. The purpose of the bank is to foster the economic and social development of member states in accordance with the *Shariah* Law.⁹ According to Prof. Syed Anwar Husain the visible paradox in Mujib's policies had internal and external dimensions.¹⁰ Internally, it had two aspects. One, Mujib wanted to boost tottering administration with public support based on Islamic sentiment. Secondly, he wanted to please the right-wing in order to check the influence of left-wing forces. External dimension manifested in his attempts to please Muslim countries in order to get moral, diplomatic and economic support at a time when Western aid had almost dried up. Newly independent Bangladesh had suffered huge economic and human losses. The liberation war had destroyed around one-fifth of its economy and economic reconstruction would not have been possible without external help. And the only 'identity' Mujib could use in international arena was that of Islam to extract help and aid from fellow Muslims. That explains why Mujib dropped his symbolic valedictory expression *Joy Bangla* in favour of *Khuda Hafiz*. Dr Talukder Maniruzzaman calls it "shift from secular attitude towards sentiment of majority".¹¹

The subsequent leaders in Bangladesh too could not resist the temptation to use Islam in politics and the trend was further intensified under General Zia-ur Rahman, chief of staff of Bangladesh army. He took over power in Dhaka in November 1975 through a military coup after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. After ruling Bangladesh for two years as a General, Zia gave up his uniform in 1977 and ruled Bangladesh as a civilian. He created his own party, *Bangladesh National Party* (BNP). In 1977, Constitution of Bangladesh was amended, replacing the word 'secularism' with the phrase *bismillah ar rahman ar rahim* (in the name of

Allah, the beneficent and the merciful). A clause stating that the government should preserve and strengthen fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity was also added to the constitution.¹² Zia had a soft approach towards radical elements and he lifted the ban on *Jamaat*, in a bid to provide further legitimacy to his military rule. Hence, by the time Zia's term ended due to his assassination in 1981, Bangladesh ceased to be a secular republic constitutionally and in spirit. A former Supreme Court judge, Abdul Sattar had a brief rule who was overthrown by General H. M. Ershad in yet another military coup in 1982. General Ershad went a step ahead and declared Islam as the state religion through the eighth constitutional amendment in 1988. The military rulers wrapped themselves in the mantle of Islam in their quest of legitimizing their military regime. They created conditions for emergence of various radical groups, as they allowed elements of conservative Muslim clergy to express their views more freely, insisting on particular interpretation of Islamic theology. This led to emergence of new political culture that could accommodate a tilt in favour of more pristine, austere and parochial vision of Islam.¹³

The outcome of Martial Law in Bangladesh was that by the time this country returned to civilian rule in 1991, the radical elements had got deeply entrenched in its politics. The two prominent political parties, *Awami League* (led by Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Sheikh Mujib) and BNP (led by Khaleda Zia, widow of General Zia) have contributed little to institutional growth of democracy in Bangladesh. They use government to settle personal scores and score brownie points over each other. Sheikh Hasina, like her father, has a pro-India tilt while Khaleda Zia has close links with the radical elements and a soft corner for Pakistan and China. Continuing from where her husband left, Khaleda Zia headed coalition government after 2001 general elections with support from radical parties, namely *Jamaat-e-Islami*, *Islamic Oikyo Jote* and *Jatiyo Party (M)*. She won a tough election that saw more than 100 dead during the violent campaign. The posters of Osama bin Laden were widely used during the campaign, showing a lobby of supporters that endorsed his brand of Islam.

Since Khaleda Zia formed government with the support of hardliners, she took steps to erase the legacy of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh. In 2002, she banned flying of the national flag at half-mast on August 15, the day Mujib was assassinated. She also cancelled national mourning day announced by *Awami League* government to commemorate the death anniversary of Mujib on 15th August. His portraits

were also removed from government offices.¹⁴ To please her supporters, she displayed the name of Zia International Airport in Arabic script in 2003. She even banned publication and distribution of Ahmadiyya religious literature in January 2004, under pressure from hardliners. Ahmadiyyas are a minority in Bangladesh. Both BNP and *Awami League* ruled with personal vendetta and ignored issues of development and governance. As per the World Bank Data, 76.5 percent of Bangladeshis lived on less than US dollars 2 per day in 2010.¹⁵ Graduate unemployment rate stands at 47 percent due to poor quality private education and use of outdated curriculum in public universities, as per a report by Economics Intelligence Unit (EIU).¹⁶ Such conditions allow Islamic radicals to lure poor and unemployed youth for fulfilling their agenda. This has been confirmed by survey reports brought out by Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS).¹⁷ The growth of unregulated *madrassas* has further assisted in radicalization of youths in Bangladesh. There are approximately 9,000 government registered *madrassas* and 15,000 *Qawmi madrasas* under Bangladesh Qawmi Madrasa Education Board. They are totally out of government control and have developed their own curriculum.¹⁸

It is important to briefly trace the birth and growth of major radical political parties and terrorist groups in Bangladesh, before we analyse their impact on India's north-eastern states.

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami

Jamaat-e-Islami was formed in British India by Syed Abdul Ala Maududi in 1941. After partition of India, *Jamaat* had different wings for India and Pakistan. *Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami* was born in 1979 as an Islamic political movement after General Zia lifted the ban on *Jamaat* in 1975 imposed by Mujib. The bar on formation of an Islamist political party in Bangladesh was removed by fifth constitutional amendment brought by General Zia. *Jamaat's* parent party, *Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan* resisted independence of Bangladesh and indulged in war crimes along with the Pakistan Army. However, *Jamaat* got a new lease of life under military rule in Bangladesh. Both BNP and *Awami League* have courted *Jamaat* for political gains. *Awami League* joined hands with *Jamaat* in their movement against General Ershad which gave it legitimacy for the first time. *Awami League* even tried to woo *Jamaat* to keep it away from BNP before 1996 elections.¹⁹

Founder of *Jamaat*, Maududi believed that social transformation should be brought out by training a core group of disciplined and dedicated members to be social and political leaders. Over a period of time, this

group would succeed in Islamising the society. This would be the time when *Jamaat* would push for an Islamic state. Hence, *Jamaat* aims to capture political power in order to Islamise the society in Bangladesh. Maududi believed that the world was inevitably headed to an Islamist utopia and all the *kafirs* (those who believe in democracy, socialism etc.) would try to resist movement towards the Islamic utopia, who should be overcome.²⁰ No surprise, Maududi served as an inspiration for Taliban. As is elaborated on *Jamaat's* website, "it performs in political arena because Islamic law cannot be implemented without political force".²¹ It also emphasizes on social reform (according to Islam) and social service which makes it a complete Islamic movement, not merely a political party. It has chalked out a four point program for realizing its aims. One is through purification and reconstruction of thoughts of the people on the basis of *Quran* and *Sunnah*. This is necessary to make people understand the necessity of following Islam in every sphere of life. Second point emphasises training and organization. Third relates to social reform and service. Last one seeks to reform the government and administration. While all this has been explained in a moderate manner, it does not fully explain what *Jamaat* practically does.

Jamaat has tried to build influence in national institutions like the army, bureaucracy, universities, media organizations etc. *Jamaat* receives funding from Saudi Arabia and also had a good control over Bangladesh's third largest bank, Islami Bank when it was in power along with BNP. Media reports suggest that the money collected in recent Saradha Group scam in West Bengal was used to fund *Jamaat* in Bangladesh. *Islamic Chattra Shibir* is the militant student body of *Jamaat* while it also has a workers front called *Sramik Kalyan Federation*.²² *Chattra Shibir* has substantial presence in University of Chittagong, Rajshahi University, University of Dhaka, Islamic University etc. *Shibir* is known as the *rog-kata* (tendon-cutting) party, a reference to its favourite tactic of maiming opponents by slicing their tendons. *Shibir* has been able to perpetrate a reign of terror at the Rajshahi University through the nexus of pro-*Jamaat* teachers and administrators, a fact that explains why *Jamaat* lays so much emphasis on controlling administration and institutions.²³ *Shibir* serves as main recruitment ground for *Jamaat*. *Jamaat* has been an ideological base to the groups that adopted violent methods to achieve the objective of establishing an Islamic state in Bangladesh. Though it claims to be a moderate Islamic party, there are no doubts about its radical character.²⁴ Bhagne Shahid, the organizational chief of *Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh* (JMB), during

his interrogation in 2010 revealed that former MP of *Jamaat*, Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher, was functioning as the coordinator of JMB, *Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami* (HuJI), *Hizb ut-Tahrir* and *Jamaat Shibir*.²⁵ In 2013, High Court banned *Jammat-e-Islami* declaring it illegal. The writ petition was filed by Bangladesh Tariqat Federation arguing that *Jamaat* was a religion based party and it did not believe in independence and sovereignty of Bangladesh.²⁶

Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (Bangladesh)

HuJI (B) is the Bangladesh branch of HuJI formed in 1992 by Bangladeshi Afghan veterans to establish Islamic rule in the country. Its members had fought against Najibullah government in Afghanistan after undergoing training in Pakistan. The founding members include Shaikhul Hadith, Allama Azizul Haq, Muhammad Habibul Rahman of Sylhet, Aatur Rahman Khan of Kishoreganj and Habibullah of Naokhali.²⁷ HuJI (B) was banned as a terrorist organization by US State Department in 2008. HuJI is inspired by Osama Bin Laden and the Taliban and is known to follow Deobandi ideology. Laden's *International Islamic Front* (IIF) had assisted in the formation of HuJI. The group struck headlines due to its radical slogan, *Amra Sobai Hobo Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghanistan* (We will all become Taliban and turn Bangladesh into Afghanistan).²⁸ HuJI leaders had signed February 1998 *fatwa* sponsored by Laden declaring American civilians as legitimate targets. HuJI has carried out high profile terror attacks in Bangladesh. It attacked Sheikh Hasina in 2004 during an *Awami League* rally. It earlier tried to assassinate her in 2000. In June 2014, eight HuJI militants, including its chief, Mufti Abdul Hannan were sentenced to death for 2001 bomb attacks that targeted Bengali New Year celebrations. Hannan was already on the death row for attempting to kill former British High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Anwar Choudhury in 2005. HuJI has connections to Pakistani militant groups like *Lashkar-e-Tayyeba* and also *Indian Mujahideen*.²⁹ HuJI had also threatened to kill Indian cricket players in a letter to Indian High Commission in 2004 due to which Indian cricket team's tour of Bangladesh was postponed.³⁰ HuJI had attacked American Centre in 2002 in Kolkata. HuJI had provided logistic support to the *United Liberation Front of Assam* (ULFA) in 2008 to execute blasts in four districts - Guwahati, Kokrajhar, Barpeta and Bongaigaon resulting in more than 80 deaths and over 300 injured. HuJI is believed to be actively working with the banned *Student Islamic Movement of India* (SIMI) and Pakistan based *Jaish-e-Mohammed* (JeM) in its efforts to destabilize India. It has also

been linked to 2008 Jaipur bombings where nine synchronized blasts were carried out in fifteen minutes killing 63 and injuring more than 216.

Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)

JMB came up in late 1990s, arising from the *Ahle Hadith Andolan* of Bangladesh. Follower of Salafist ideology, the group aims to establish Islamic state in Bangladesh based on Sharia Law. The group is notorious for pioneering suicide bombings in Bangladesh.³¹ The group carried out audacious series of blasts in 63 out of total 64 districts in Bangladesh in 2005 planting 458 local made bombs. Leaflets were distributed claiming that JMB members were soldiers of Allah who had taken up arms for implementing Allah's law. 30 people were dead while 150 were wounded in the attacks. The victims included judges, lawyers, police and government officials. Six members of JMB including its leader, Sheikh Abdul Rahman were convicted for these blasts and hanged in 2007.³² It seemed that JMB had been almost finished by these hangings but recent media reports suggest that it is trying to regroup under little known *Jamaat-ul-Muslemin* and *Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT)*.³³

Hizb ut-Tahrir - Bangladesh (HT-B)

Hizb ut-Tahrir, an international organization, came up in 1953 and has presence in more than 20 Muslim countries. It seeks to unify all Muslim countries under a Caliphate based on Islamic rule. Its Bangladeshi chapter was formed in November 2001 in the wake of growing anti-Americanism around the globe. The group, headed by Prof Mohiuddin Ahmed has been active in universities and administration. It was banned by Bangladesh government in 2009, saying that the organization is against the interest of law and posed a threat to public life.³⁴ Just before the ban was imposed, 40 cadres of HT-B were arrested in 2009 for distributing leaflets for supporting border guard's mutiny in which around 50 military officials were killed. In 2012, a bid for an Army coup by mid-level army officers with the support of HT-B to establish *Khilafat*, was foiled.³⁵ The group is trying to reorganize post-2009 ban in areas like Chittagong by publishing leaflets, jihadi books, different outlets and pasting posters on city street walls secretly. A media report said that around 10,000 members of HT-B were working actively across the country. The cadre includes students of reputed educational institutions, including Dhaka University, Chittagong University and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.³⁶

Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT)

ABT is a new entrant among the radical elements in Bangladesh, as it came to light in 2013 during the *Shahbag* movement. The group members killed a blogger named Ahmed Rajib Haider for his 'atheist' views. Haider was known for criticizing Islamic fundamentalists. Five students belonging to ABT were arrested in Haider murder case. Police got the clue about ABT from a website of an al Qaeda-affiliate that posted news of the arrested students under the heading "Five Lions of the Ummah".³⁷ After the arrest of its chief Mufti Jasim Uddin Rahmania, reigns of ABT have been taken over by Maj. Syed Md Ziaul Huq. Huq, a former student of the Military Institute of Science and Technology (now Bangladesh University of Professionals) is an expert in information technology.³⁸ The group has strong presence in cyberspace as its members are trained in information technology. It translates and disseminates material produced by Al Qaeda in its bid to introduce global *jihad* in local language. It also uses internet to narrow gap between local and global militant movements.³⁹ In September 2014, two ABT members were caught by authorities while trying to join militant group *Islamic State* in Middle East.⁴⁰ According to Indian officials investigating Burdwan blast on 2 October 2014, those arrested and died during making of the IEDs were members of ABT and they sought to revive JMB.⁴¹ These blasts have highlighted that West Bengal is also on the radar of radicals in Bangladesh. The pamphlets recovered from the blast site had names of Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri and phrases like *mujahid* and *salaam to our brothers in Chechnya*.⁴² The growing number of *madrassas* near India-Bangladesh border and in the Siliguri corridor too has been noticed by the intelligence authorities after these blasts. Bengal shares 2,200 kms border with Bangladesh which has also emerged as a channel to pump Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) in India, since there are immigrant pockets near this border that serve as excellent hideouts for anti-India elements.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SECURITY OF NORTH-EAST INDIA

Rise of Islamic radicalism in Bangladesh has serious implications for security of India, particularly for the north-eastern states. It would be useful to briefly analyze general implications of this trend on India, before explaining its specific ramifications for India's north-eastern states.

Islamic political parties opposing *Awami League* have shown a

tendency to define themselves in opposition to India, in effect portraying *Awami League* as India's stooge. Radical groups have tried to buttress their own 'Islamic identity' by attacking India.⁴³ According to former Indian Ambassador to Bangladesh, Veena Sikri,⁴⁴ the vested interests in Bangladesh try to equate pro-India with being anti-Bangladesh or anti-India as being pro-Bangladesh. This trend increased under Khaleda Zia led four party alliance between 2001 to 2006. During BNP led government, Bangladesh also started growing closer to Pakistan and China at India's expense. It was a time when Bharatiya Janata Party led National Democratic Alliance government was in power in New Delhi, which was not seen in good light by newly formed BNP led coalition in Bangladesh. Khaleda Zia's bias towards Pakistan came up when General Parvez Musharraf visited Dhaka in 2002. Musharraf, in his bid to alienate India, expressed regret for the excesses committed in 1971 war. The newly generated bonhomie between Khaleda Zia and Musharraf allowed him to obtain permission for stationing additional personnel of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) at the Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka.⁴⁵ This was done to better coordinate Pakistan's anti-India activities in north-east through Bangladesh. According to Syed Ashraful Islam, a minister in present *Awami League* government, Khaleda had arranged a meeting between Musharraf during his 2002 visit and ULFA leader Anup Chetia, who was jailed in Bangladesh.⁴⁶ Bangladesh also used China as a 'balancer' against India under Khaleda Zia. Bangladesh signed a defense agreement with China in 2002, following which China became the biggest arms supplier to Bangladesh. China also overtook India as the biggest trade partner of Bangladesh in 2006. Khaleda visited India at the end of her tenure which itself was evident of the importance she gave to India in her foreign policy. The growing anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh prompted the then Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh to remark during his interaction with media editors in 2011 that 25 percent of Bangladeshis were anti-Indian.⁴⁷

India's north eastern states have been infested with decades old insurgencies. As per the Home Ministry, Government of India Annual Report 2013-2014, there have been 7,504 incidents of violence in north-east from 2007 to 2013. 14,776 extremists were arrested during this period while 2,446 were killed. Civilian casualties stood at 1,596 while 251 security personnel lost their lives. This shows that north-eastern region is internally fragile. A total of 6,387 kms (99% of the borders of North-east) is international border while only 1% of the border is shared with India. It is

connected to India through 20-40 km narrow Siliguri corridor (also called Chicken's Neck). If this corridor is cut off, India has no alternate route to reach north-eastern states. The region shares borders with Bhutan, China, Bangladesh and Myanmar. This fact makes the region vulnerable to external influence. Most of the violent incidents are reported from Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Meghalaya while Tripura, Mizoram and Sikkim remain peaceful. Close examination reveals that Assam has found a place in strategic thought of founding fathers of Pakistan and Bangladesh. At the time of partition, Muhammad Ali Jinnah had told his colleague, Moinul Haq Choudhary, "Within a decade, I shall be able to annex Assam to East Pakistan by the dint of more infiltration of Muslims there...".⁴⁸ Former President of Pakistan, Z A Bhutto has also mentioned his thoughts about Assam in his book *Myth of Independence*. He says that apart from Kashmir, Pakistan also has a problem over Assam with India. There are Muslim majority districts in Assam that should have been handed over to Pakistan in 1947. Even a pro-Indian leader like Sheikh Muibur Rahman in his book *Eastern Pakistan: Its Population, Delimitation and Economics* states that Assam must have been included in East Pakistan for better economic and financial health of East Pakistan. These views have found an echo in contemporary times, when Al Qaeda announced its intention to form its new wing in the Indian subcontinent in September 2014 by uniting Muslims in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Assam, Gujarat and Kashmir.

Given near unanimity among former Pakistan and Bangladesh leaders about the inclusion of Assam in present day Bangladesh, it becomes easy to understand what is happening in India's north-east. Pakistan's intelligence agency, ISI has been waging its 'asymmetric warfare' against north-east India to 'bleed India with thousand cuts' using Bangladesh as a launching pad. Even before Bangladesh became independent, East Pakistan was used by ISI between 1956 to 1971 to train and arm Naga and Mizo insurgents in the camps in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The headquarters of the so called Naga Federal Government and Mizo National Front of Laldenga were located in CHT.⁴⁹ Arun Shourie writes, in his book *Will the Iron Fence Save a Tree Hollowed by Termites: Defense Imperatives Beyond the Military*, that there was American pressure on Pakistan after the US launched its 'War on Terror' campaign in 2001 and as a result, Pakistan had shifted almost 200 terrorist camps from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir to Bangladesh. Links between ISI and BNP were accepted by former ISI chief, Asad Durrani in March 2012, when he accepted in Pakistan Supreme Court that ISI paid Rs 50 crore to Khaleda

Zia ahead of the 1991 elections in which her party won.⁵⁰ ISI has been using media in its efforts to generate anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh. Editors of two newspapers, *Prathan Alo* and *Itafaq* are said to be close to ISI.⁵¹ Also, there is a nexus between ISI and Bangladesh's intelligence agency, Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI). Indian intelligence agencies call DGFI as the cousin of ISI.

Illegal migration from Bangladesh to India, mainly in Assam has been used by ISI in its efforts to disturb the region's social fabric. There is no official data with the Indian government on number of illegal migrants from Bangladesh. However, different Cabinet reports on security suggest that it is in excess of 10 million. High population density and poverty in Bangladesh create push factors for migration to India. Without this massive illegal migration, it would be hard for Bangladesh to survive this demographic pressure. Hence, north-east India becomes part of 'lebensraum' (living space) for Bangladesh. Howard Stein in his book *Developmental Time, Cultural Space: Studies in Psychogeography* calls it 'psychogeography', a phenomenon where people make mental map of belonging to a region even though spatially they may be situated in different countries. According to 2001 census, population of Muslims in Assam has gone up to more than 30 percent and most of it seems to be coming from illegal migration from Bangladesh. Muslims have a majority population in the districts of Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Morigaon, Nagaon and Hailakandi and these areas are near the Bangladesh border. Assam shares 262 kms long porous border with Bangladesh which makes it easier for these migrants to cross the border. This increasing Muslim population explains why Assam has caught the eye of Al Qaeda. The violence between local Bodos and Muslims is a manifestation of this demographic change. The Supreme Court had called it 'demographic aggression' in 2005. Earlier, a report by Intelligence Bureau (IB) in 2003 had acknowledged that ever since BNP came to power in Bangladesh, there was presence of ISI officials, rise of communal forces and presence of Indian insurgent groups from north-east in the country. The report further said that illegal migration from Bangladesh had crossed 15 million and it posed a security risk for India.⁵²

A number of Islamic militant outfits have come up in Assam like *Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam* (MULFA), *Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam* (MULTA), *Muslim Liberation Tigers of Assam* (MLTA) etc. *Jamaat* in Bangladesh has been trying to mobilise the Muslim population in India's north east. One such instance came up in November 2002 when

Karimganj (Assam) police recovered a large number of audio cassettes containing anti-India speeches by Maulana Dilavar Hussain Sayeedi, a Member of Parliament and leader of JMB.⁵³ A former vice-president of *Jamaat*, he is serving 'imprisonment till death' for crimes against humanity during 1971 war. It is not India's figment of imagination that BNP had an understanding with north-east insurgents and provided safe havens to them on Bangladesh territory. Khaleda Zia saw these insurgents as a strategic asset. It became clear in 1998, when Khaleda Zia, as an opposition leader said that her party would like to regard the cadres of *United Liberation Front of Assam* (ULFA) as 'freedom fighters', just as the *Mukti Bahini* were freedom fighters.⁵⁴

ULFA is a terrorist organization that seeks secession of Assam from India through an armed struggle. Hence, it was not a mere coincidence that ULFA commander-in-chief Paresh Barua maintained close links with Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Zia. Paresh and Tarique had met in connection with Chittagong arms haul in 2004. Bangladesh authorities had caught 10,000 weapons and three lakh rounds of ammunition in this haul including 7,500 AK rifles, anti-tank recoilless rifles and over 3,000 grenades. This huge cache of arms was meant for north-east insurgents and it was evident from the arrest of 16 militants of five different Indian insurgent groups immediately after the seizure in Bangladesh. As per *Times of India* report of 9 February 2010, this incident showed ISI-ULFA-Tarique nexus at work against India and included top intelligence officers of Bangladesh, ULFA chief Paresh Barua, Dawood Ibrahim and Pakistani High Commissioner in Dhaka, Manzar Shafiq.⁵⁵ An ULFA militant arrested in 2002 had told Assam police that ULFA leaders, Paresh Barua and Aurobindo Rajkhowa lived in Bangladesh and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) helped ULFA fully.⁵⁶ He also gave details of ULFA camps in Bangladesh.

ULFA has tried to court *Awami League* leaders as well. A report by US Think Tank, Startfor said that ULFA had invested US dollars 6 million to fund candidates of BNP and *Awami League* during 2007 general elections.⁵⁷ It was a strategy to hedge its bets in order to protect its business and militant operations should either party win. India has given a list of 66 terror camps to Bangladesh in March 2014 that carry out anti-India activities from its territory. The camps belong to *United Liberation Front of Assam*, *National Democratic Front of Bodoland(anti-talks)of Assam*, *the People's Liberation Army*, *Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lupof Manipur*, *National Socialist Council of Nagaland-IM*, *National Liberation Front of Tripura*, *Meghalaya's Hynniewtre National Liberation Council* and *A'chik National*

Volunteers' Council-Breakaway.⁵⁸ It is often not reported in a comparative perspective that there are as many terrorist camps in Bangladesh as in Pakistan. Further, more Indian fugitives wanted for acts of terrorism in India have been given shelter in Bangladesh (85) than in Pakistan (20).⁵⁹

National Investigation Agency (NIA) in 2014 unearthed a plan by *National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak Muviah)* to bring a huge cache of arms to northeast India through Cox Bazar. The arms and ammunition was to be loaded in a ship from Beihei port on China-Vietnam border in the South China Sea and had to be brought to India through Cox's Bazar. NSCN's chief of procurement Anthony Shimray had struck a deal with Chinese suppliers. But he was arrested by Nepal police and handed over to India in 2010 resulting in cancellation of the deal.⁶⁰ NSCN aims to establish 'Nagalim' or 'Greater Nagaland' by merging areas inhabited by Naga people in northeast India and Myanmar. However, the group has signed ceasefire with India since 1997. Attempts by NSCN to acquire weapons show that it may be using the ceasefire period to strengthen its firepower to strike with vengeance against Indian security forces. In 2013, it had even threatened to end the ceasefire when its members were arrested for carrying firearms in violation of the 1997 ceasefire agreement.

CHINA FACTOR

Another important cause of concern for India is that China too has been involved in north-east insurgencies. China was directly involved in north-east insurgencies till 1970s. Later, when ISI's network became stronger, China started using ISI as a surrogate to carry out subversive activities in the region. When Bangladesh became independent, China's first Premier, Zhou Enlai is believed to have said that 'India has created a rock which will fall on its own feet'.⁶¹ This explains why both China and Pakistan have been trying to enhance their presence and influence in Bangladesh. Chinese made weapons are smuggled into India through Cox Bazaar, a hub of illegal arms smuggling in Bangladesh. Interests of both China and Pakistan coalesce in keeping north-east India unstable. For Pakistan, unstable north-east means that India would have to withdraw its Army units from Kashmir and deploy in the north-east. It gives Pakistan a breathing space on Line of Control from where it can infiltrate terrorists in India. For China, fanning flames in an area where it has territorial claims will help it, if China decided to go to war with India over Arunachal Pradesh. Indian policy makers and defense experts have to prepare for a

two-front war (Pakistan and China). If this were to happen, north-east insurgents could try to further intensify their anti-India activities to trouble Indian Army, making it a two and half front scenario. Keeping in view the 'utility' of northeast insurgents, China has been helping them in their fight against India. ULFA chief Paresh Barua has been awarded death penalty by a Bangladesh court in connection with 2004 Chittagong arms haul. Indian intelligence agencies believe that Barua is hiding in Ruili town, on the border of China-Myanmar in Yunnan province of China.

NSCN's chief of procurement Anthony Shimray has made some startling revelations during his interrogation. He told Indian investigators that China hosts a permanent representative of NSCN (IM) since 2008. He further disclosed that an ISI agent stationed in Bangladesh had met the NSCN (IM) leadership in Bangkok in 2008 and offered military and financial help if the Nagas broke the ceasefire with India.⁶² Shimray has specifically mentioned the name of Norinco, one of China's largest state-owned weapons manufacturers with whom NSCN was in contact for a deal. Chinese agents working on behalf of Chinese intelligence agencies even offered surface to air missiles to NSCN but the group did not have enough finances to seal off the deal. As per Shimray, Naga insurgents were giving away details of Indian Army deployments in the India-China border region of Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh including position of Indian aircrafts and missiles.⁶³ In 2011, Wang Qing, a Chinese spy disguised a TV reporter was arrested and deported by Indian officials after she visited headquarters of NSCN (IM). As per Indian officials, she accepted being a spy for People's Security Bureau, a Chinese intelligence agency. The incident highlighted links between Chinese intelligence agencies and northeast insurgents.⁶⁴

According to Ajai Sahni, China is planning to launch a 'Strategic United Front', in order to bring a number of terrorist outfits from Jammu and Kashmir and northeast under a single umbrella, to launch what has been described as 'synergised attacks in India'.⁶⁵ This front will also include Maoists and Pakistan's support. Linkages between Maoists and northeast insurgents have also come up in recent times, especially in Assam.⁶⁶ Both China and Pakistan seek to exploit homegrown cadres in India's north-east to keep tensions alive in the region. This seems to be their long term plan as internal disturbance causes more instability than any external attack and gives more headaches to Indian security agencies.

CONCLUSION

Presence of radical elements in Bangladesh has direct security implications for India. This has been evident in series of blasts in India like Jaipur and Assam bombings in 2008 that were executed by terrorist groups from Bangladesh in collaboration with ISI and Indian terrorist groups. Recent blasts in Burdwan have also been traced to terror groups in Bangladesh. Keeping in view the increasing footprint of terrorist groups like *Islamic State* in Middle East, it is logical to assume that such developments will only embolden radicals in Bangladesh. The internet has further narrowed the gap between global and local terrorist groups (e-radicalization). This has made it easy to recruit and incite people in the name of religion. Bangladesh remains vulnerable to radicalization due to weak governance and poverty. Pakistan will keep making efforts to use Bangladesh in its bid to keep India's northeast internally unstable. Pakistan suffers from a 'wounded psyche' due to its division in 1971 and it will make every possible effort to divide India and carve out a separate state from north-eastern states. China too will chip in and try to keep India caught up in its internal security situation through north-east insurgents and Maoists, so that India's ambition of rising as a global power remains unrealized. The intensity of threats from radicals in Bangladesh will depend on the government (BNP or *Awami League*). Bangladesh would serve itself well to learn from Pakistan's example. Terrorists are nobody's friends and they pose a threat to survival of the state that uses them for its narrow gains. Since most of the radical groups use 'anti-India' sentiment to their advantage in Bangladesh, it is time that India started to address this issue. The major reason of this sentiment stems out of India-Bangladesh disputes over border and water sharing. Since India has a strong government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, these disputes can be solved so that India regains its friendly image in Bangladesh. India also needs a 'no-nonsense' security policy where narrow interests of domestic politics should not be allowed to overtake national security concerns. Hopefully, our neighbors will recognize our mutual security concerns and make sincere efforts to tackle terrorism.

REFERENCES

1. Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, *Annual Report 2013*. URL: [http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/AR\(E\)1314.pdf](http://mha.nic.in/sites/upload_files/mha/files/AR(E)1314.pdf).

2. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, *Population and Housing Census 2011: Preliminary Results*. URL: <http://203.112.218.66/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/BBS/PHC2011Preliminary%20Result.pdf>.
3. CIA World Factbook Website, URL: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bg.html>.
4. Sumit Ganguly, *The Rise of Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh*. United States Institute of Peace Special Report, Washington, 2006, URL: www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SRaug06_2.pdf.
5. Saleem Samad, *State of Minorities in Bangladesh: From Secular to Islamic Hegemony*. 1998, URL: http://mukto-mona.com/Articles/saleem/secular_to_islamic.htm.
6. Anupam Ray, *Islamic Radical Ideologies and South Asia Security: The Case of Bangladesh*. 2008 URL: [csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/080115_islamic_radical_ideologies.pdf](http://www.csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/080115_islamic_radical_ideologies.pdf).
7. Samad, *op. cit.*
8. Ray, *op. cit.*
9. Islamic Development Bank Website, URL: <http://www.isdb.org/irj/portal/anonymous?NavigationTarget=navurl://24de0d5f10da906da85e96ac356b7af0>.
10. Syed Anwar Husain, "Religion and Ethnicity in Bangladesh Politics". In Verinder Grover (ed), *Bangladesh: Government and Politics*. New Delhi, Elegant Publishers, 2000. pp 381.
11. Maniruzzaman Talukder, "Bangladesh Politics: Secular and Islamic Trends" In R. Ahmed (ed), *Religion, Nationalism and Politics in Bangladesh*. New Delhi, South Asian Publishers, 1990. pp 73-74.
12. Ray, *op. cit.*
13. Ganguly, *op. cit.*
14. Sudha Ramachandran, "Bangladesh, Pakistan and the country in between". *Asia Times*, 21 August 2002 URL: http://atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/DH21Df02.html.
15. World Bank Website, URL: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.2DAY>.
16. EIU Report, *High university enrolment, low graduate employment: Analysing the paradox in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka*, 2014, URL: http://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/britishcouncil.in2/files/british_council_report_2014_jan.pdf
17. "Understanding Trends in Radicalization and Religious Extremism in Bangladesh 2009-2010". Quoted in *Safety and security in North Bengal, Bangladesh: A youth perception survey*. Saferworld and the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies (BIPSS), 2012, URL: www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/.../North%20Bengal%20report.pdf.
18. "India's Internal Security Challenges: New Frontiers," URL: www.isas.nus.edu.sg/Attachments/.../9_23102009183559.pdf.
19. Jaideep Saikia "Terror Sans Frontiers: Islamic Militancy in North East India" ACDIS Occasional Paper, University of Illinois, 2003, URL: <http://acdis.illinois.edu/assets/docs/257/TerrorsansFrontiersIslamicMilitancyinNorthEastIndia.pdf>.
20. Ray, *op. cit.*
21. Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Website, URL: <http://www.jamaat-e-islami.org/en/aboutus.php>.
22. Ray, *op. cit.*

23. Mahamudul Haque, "Shibir grows under teacher-admin care". *Daily Star*, 11 February 2010 URL: <http://archive.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=125803>.
24. Anand Kumar, *Return from the Precipice: Bangladesh's Fight against Terrorism*. New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2012. p. 20.
25. *State of Terrorism in Bangladesh 2010-2011*. Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, September 2011, URL: <http://www.bei-bd.org/images/report/whc522da0fbbc3a1.pdf>.
26. "Bangladesh's Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami declared illegal". *Zee News*, 1 August 2013.
27. B Raman, "The Harkat-Ul-Jihad-Al-Islami Of Bangladesh (HUJI-B)". *Outlook*, 4 September 2007.
28. HuJI Profile given on South Asia Terrorism Portal Website, URL: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/Huj.htm>.
29. US State Department profile of HuJI (B), URL: http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2011/195553.htm#huji_b.
30. "Indian cricketers get death threat, team departure for Bangladesh put off". *The Tribune*, 6 December 2004.
31. US State Department, "Country Reports on Terrorism" 2005, URL: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/65462.pdf>.
32. Randeep Ramesh, "Bangladesh executes six Islamic militants". *The Guardian*, 30 March 2007, URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/mar/30/bangladesh>.
33. Shahriar Sharif, "Bangladesh extremist group JMB resurfaces under new banner". *Khabar South Asia*, 9 September 2014, URL: http://khabarsouthasia.com/en_GB/articles/apwi/articles/features/2014/09/09/feature-01.
34. "Bangladesh Islamist group banned". *BBC News*, 23 October 2009, URL: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8321329.stm>.
35. "Hizb-ut-Tahrir Bangladesh: Transnational Islamist Movement". 22 January 2014, URL: http://www.sspconline.org/opinion/Bangladesh_HizbutTahiri22012014.
36. Tarek, Mahmud, "Banned Hizb-ut Tahrir reawakening". *Dhaka Tribune*, 3 May 2014, URL: <http://www.dhakatribune.com/politics/2014/may/25/banned-hizb-ut-tahrir-reawakening>.
37. "Profile: Ansarullah Bangla Team". *South Asia Conflict Monitor*, Vol 1, No 2, July 2013.
38. Kailash Sarkar, "Ansarullah now run by Maj Ziaul: Police". *Dhaka Tribune*, 29 August 2013.
39. Iftekharul Bashar, "Violent Radicalisation in Bangladesh: A Second Wave?" 2013, URL: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?id=171814>.
40. "Two Ansarullah Bangla Team members caught for trying to join IS". *bdnews24*, 25 September 2014, URL: <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2014/09/25/two-ansarullah-bangla-team-members-caught-for-trying-to-join-is>.
41. "Burdwan blasts: Probe indicates the module of Ansarullah Bangla wanted to revive JMB". *India Today*, 9 October 2014.
42. "Burdwan blast exposes module with Qaida papers". *The Telegraph*, 6 October 2014 URL: http://www.telegraphindia.com/1141006/jsp/frontpage/story_18898393.jsp#.VE3xh_mUeYA.
43. Harash Pant, "India and Bangladesh: Will the Twain Ever Meet". *Asian Survey*,

Vol XLVII, No 2, 2007 pp 231-249.

44. Veena Sikri, "India-Bangladesh Relations: The Way Ahead". *India Quarterly*, Vol 65, No 2, 2009, pp 153-165.
45. Sultan Shahin, "India frets over Pakistan-Bangladesh Nexus". *Asia Times Online*, 6 March 2004.
46. "Khaleda's govt arranged Musharraf-Chetia secret meet,says Bangla minister". *Indian Express*, 11 January 2010 URL: <http://indianexpress.com/article/news-archive/web/khaledas-govt-arranged-musharrafchetia-secret-meet-says-bangla-minister/#sthash.by0pEA5N.dpuf>.
47. "SM Krishna on a two-day visit to Bangladesh," *NDTV*, 6 July 2011, URL: <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/sm-krishna-on-a-two-day-visit-to-bangladesh-117028>.
48. Onkareshwar Pandey, "ISI and New Wave of Islamic Militancy in the North East," In B B Kumar (ed), *Illegal Migration from Bangladesh*. New Delhi, Concept Publishing, 2006, p. 103.
49. B Raman, "Bangladesh and Jihadi Terrorism – An Update". South Asia Analysis Group, 2012.
50. "Ex-ISI chief admits funding BNP polls '91". *The Daily Star*, 17 March 2012, URL: <http://archive.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=226659>.
51. Shahin, *Op. Cit.*
52. Chandan Nandy, "Bangla migrants pose threat: IB". *The Hindustan Times*, 7 November 2003.
53. J N Roy, "Illegal Migration From Bangladesh and Security Scenario in North East". In B B Kumar (ed), *Illegal Migration from Bangladesh*. New Delhi, Concept Publishing, 2006, p. 98.
54. Wasbir, Hussain, "Insurgency in India's Northeast Cross-border Links and Strategic Alliances". URL: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume17/wasbir.htm>.
55. Manas Paul, "Decoded: ISI-Ulfa-Tarique nexus". *Times of India*, 9 February 2009.
56. "Bangladesh Supports Northeast Terror Networks". *NDTV*, 6 November 2002.
57. "ULFA gave \$6 mn to Bangladesh parties". *Times of India*, 25 February 2007.
58. "BSF gives list of 66 terror camps to Bangladesh," *rediff.com*, 9 March 2014 URL: <http://www.rediff.com/news/report/bsf-gives-list-of-66-terror-camps-to-bangladesh/20140309.htm>.
59. B Raman (2012), *op. cit.*
60. "NSCN's Cox's Bazar armsdrop plan revealed". *bdnews24.com*, 1 April 2014, URL: <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2014/04/01/nscn-s-cox-s-bazar-armsdrop-plan-revealed>.
61. RSN Singh, "Bangladesh Under Siege". 9 June 2006, URL: <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/SRR/2006/01/51.html>.
62. Saikat Datta, "The Great Claw of China". *The Outlook*, 7 February 2011.
63. Mithu Choudhury, "NIA Report Reveals NSCN (IM) – China Link," 2013 URL: <http://northeastnewsportal.blogspot.in/2013/01/nia-report-reveals-nscnim-china-link.html>.
64. Morris Lyle, "Is China Backing Indian Insurgents?". *The Diplomat*, 22 March 2011, URL: <http://thediplomat.com/2011/03/is-china-backing-indian-insurgents/>.

65. Ajai Sahni, "The Northeast: Troubling Externalities," 2012 URL: http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/sair/Archives/sair10/10_38.htm.
66. Nihar Nayak, "Growing Maoist Activism in Assam: Sinister and Calculated Moves". *IDSA Comment*, 24 February 2012 URL: http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/GrowingMaoistActivismInAssam_nnayak_240212.html.

RADICALISM IN BANGLADESH *CAUSES, CONCERNS AND CONSEQUENCES*

AMIT RANJAN

In 1971, trashing the religion based 'two nations theory', East Pakistan was liberated from West Pakistan, and Bangladesh was born. The proponents of partition of India in 1947 had forgotten the basic fact that besides religion, individuals do have other identities too, and one preponderates over the other according to time and space. Ethnicity, cultural traits and language were the main issues over which Bangladesh was demanded, fought for and born, but after its liberation entropy reigns supreme. New tussle started where religious, sectarian and ethnic issues re-occupied the socio-political space. Tensions led to conflicts and re-emergence of violence. In that situation religious radicalism and militancy cropped up. Both emerged under state patronage, during the military rule from 1975 to 1980, and afterwards the democratic parties too helped them. As a result the society failed to settle down even after 1971, most of the historical debates have been clearly polarized, and violence has become an intermittent process. These developments have their impact on the socio-political fabric of Bangladesh, and on its neighbours, especially on India because of contiguous border.

In this paper an attempt is being made to look into the presence of radical forces, causes for their emergence and the consequences. This paper debates that presence of radicalism and militancy in Bangladesh is due to use of violence which continued in a structural form after liberation. The groups were used by the state to use mass violence against opponents. As a result favourable environment was created for ripening of radicalism, militancy, and violence.

EVOLUTION OF RADICAL RELIGIOUS GROUPS

The roots of radicalism in present Bangladesh can be located in socio-economic conditions of colonial Bengal. During the colonial days, though they constituted majority of population, most of the peasants were Muslims while majority of landlords were Hindus. This class contradiction led to antagonism between the two communities.¹ Those contradictions and antagonisms were used by the colonial rulers and religious bigots to serve their purposes. In the past, simmering tensions had led to conflicts between the two communities, but communal violence of 1940s turned to be a prelude to bloodied partition of India in 1947. On 'Direct Action Day' call given by the Muslim League on 16 August 1946 massive violence took place in eastern parts of Bengal. According to an estimate 15,000 people were killed and 5,000 injured. It was retaliated by the Hindus, led by Sikh taxi drivers from Calcutta (Kolkata).² The cycle of violence, partition and mass displacement of people broke whatever tenuous inter-religious bond left between Hindus and Muslims in East Bengal. As the bloodied partition did not lead to complete demographic change, many Muslims preferred to stay in India while a percentage of Hindus remained in Pakistan. This gave rise to 'hostage theory', propounded by some scholars. The moot reason for non-migration of many people was that they were not socially and economically capable to do so at that time, though both Hindus and Muslims had crossed enmass to the other side in 1950s, 60s and 70s.³

After the partition of India, impact of religion, as a common denominator between the two parts of Pakistan, started fading away, and ethnic differences emerged. The political leadership under Urdu speaking *Mohajirs* and ruling elites from Punjab complicated the situation by not agreeing to a demand for *also* granting a status of national language to Bengali in 1948.⁴ Eventually, the struggle to protect their language, save cultural traits from encroachment, and to secure economic interests against exploitation led to birth of Bangladesh. The process started in the beginning of 1950s, and till 1971 many rounds of violent clashes had taken place. Amidst those days of violence and differences, the radical groups (re)strengthened themselves. In 1971, to quell the mass protests under leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman over the issue of premiership of Pakistan, Pakistani Army and members of *Jama'at-e-Islami* (JI) indulged in large scale violence. The counter violence was used by the armed members of *Mukti Bahini*, who were trained by the Indian security forces.⁵ Who started the violence depends upon the narration of an individual, but

undeniable fact is that the Pakistani establishment chose violence as an option instead of entering into a political compromise with Sheikh Mujib. On the basis of an interview, Professor Ishtiaq Ahmed, in his book *The Pakistan Military in Politics: Origins, Evolution, Consequences*, writes that after it became clear that the Assembly was not meeting on 3 March 1971, Bengali militants began to attack Bihari Muslims (Urdu speakers in East Pakistan) in Chittagong. Those who took part in assaults were mixture of *Awami League* cadres and local criminals. The Pakistan Army remained passive till 25 March 1971. Citing from the Hamodur Rehman Commission, he further writes that the Commission wondered why the military had not tried to quell the agitation at that early stage and had, instead, been ordered to return to its barracks.⁶ The reason being that Lt General Sahibzada Yaqoob Ali Khan, commanding officer of the eastern command, and governor Admiral Ahsan Ali were not ready to follow the orders to use armed forces against their citizens. They were of the view that the situation needs a political solution. Army started its brutality after both of them were replaced.⁷

Once violence started, the Urdu speaking radical groups, having an allegiance to Pakistan, went on killing spree. The leadership and most members of the JI were from *Tablighi Jama'at* (TJ)⁸ which seems to have established its foothold in East Pakistan by 1960s. During the killings in 1971, JI was led by Professor Ghulam Azam (who was earlier associated with the TJ). During the war itself, Ghulam Azam shifted his base to West Pakistan, from where he directed his deputy, Abbas Ali Khan, to form the *Razakars*, the dreaded paramilitary outfit whose task was to identify and kill freedom fighters. A similar group, *al-Badr*, was launched by the *Islami Chhatra Sangha* (ICS), the student wing of JI. Not to be left out, the *Muslim League* formed its own armed group, *al-Shams*, which, along with the *Razakars* and *al-Badr*, worked in tandem with Pakistan.⁹ After Bangladesh came into existence, most of the members and leaders of these groups remained there instead of adopting Pakistan as their new country. While the JI and similar Islamic political groups had evoked tremendous hostility among ordinary Bangladeshis for their role in the events of 1971, the TJ, by remaining completely aloof from political involvement in the course of war had endeared itself to many. For the *Tablighis* the war over *duniyavi* (worldly) spoils was, at best, irrelevant-neither did the movement as such support the liberation struggle and nor did it oppose it.¹⁰

After liberation of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujib (1972-75) imposed a ban on the groups engaged in violence during 1971, but after his

assassination the bans were lifted. He was for a secular state which, apart from language and culture, was a plank of Bengali nationalism. In the context of Bangladesh, [Sheikh] Mujib defined it in the following words:

Secularism does not mean absence of religion. Hindus will observe their religion; Muslims will observe their religion; Christians and Buddhists will observe their religions. No one will be allowed to interfere in others' religions; the people of Bengal do not want any interference in religious matters. Religion cannot be used for political ends....¹¹

His ideals are inserted into Article 21 and Article 18(2) of the constitution. Though Mujib was for a secular state and had banned the JI and other organizations, he too used violence as a means to establish control over the aggrieved groups. In order to amass power, in less than three years of drafting of original constitution in 1972, he pushed through the fourth amendment, which instituted authoritarian one-party rule in place of parliamentary democracy.¹² *Awami League* (AL), the party formed by Mujib, made explicit efforts to bring the functionaries of the state under its control and took steps to marginalize the army. Mujib sidelined the armed forces, created his own paramilitary forces the *Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini* (JRB). It associated with arbitrary terrorizing tactics, and became an instrument to quash resistance against the regime.¹³ Though the regime argued that the JRB was created to fight against the Marxist dissident group *Gono Bahini*, many dissenters were killed by its cadres.

After the assassination of Mujib in 1975, General Ziaur Rahman (1975-81) came into power through a coup. He lifted the ban on the use of religion in politics and enacted Political Party Regulation act, which cleared the way for JI etc to play a role in Bangladesh's politics. During his tenure, in 1979 Ghulam Azam returned to Bangladesh from his exile in London. This boosted the morale of the cadres of JI. His successor in the Army, General Ershad (1983-90) consolidated the non-secular face of the nation by declaring Islam the state religion.¹⁴ He made Islamiat a mandatory subject for students of grades three to ten.¹⁵ It was during his reign in 1988, Islam was declared as the state religion. He even appointed two 1971 war criminals, Abdul Mannan and Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, to cabinet positions.¹⁶ In 1991, after the return of democracy in Bangladesh, the JI contested on 221 of the 300 seats open to direct election, won 18 seats and 12 percent of votes; following a tactical alliance with the *Bangladesh Nationalist Party* (BNP), it gained two additional seats from the 30 indirectly elected women's seats.¹⁷ In 1996 it won 3 seats and 8 percent of votes. In 2001 it gained 4 percent of vote and 17 seats. In 2014

the Election Commission of Bangladesh did not permit it to contest elections. From 2001 to 2006, it used its alliance with the BNP to take control of the social welfare ministry, dominating Bangladesh's well-funded NGO sector. It controlled the Islamic Bank, Bangladesh's third largest.¹⁸

Most of the militant groups which emerged later on in Bangladesh have their roots in JI. Currently, several militant Islamist groups exist in Bangladesh. They are the *Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh*, (JMB), *Jagrata Muslim Janta Bangladesh*(JMJB), the *Harkat-ul-Jihad-Islami* (HuJI), the *Islami Chhatra Shibir* (ICS), and the *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* (HuT).¹⁹ These groups are result of domestic reasons or splits from parent organization. A new militant group which has emerged in Bangladesh is *Harkat-ul-Jihad-Islami-Bangladesh* (HuJI-B). Among the CIA-sponsored *Mujahideen* guerrillas were around 50,000 'foreign fighters', volunteers from Arab and other Muslim lands beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan, training with the largely Pashtun guerilla groups fighting in eastern Afghanistan, and being radicalized in the process. It appears that some 2,800 of these fighters came from Bangladesh. A group of the returnees from Afghanistan established HUJI-B in 1992.²⁰ Also there is resurgence of new radicals like the *madrassah* - based *Hefazet-e-Islam* (HeI), patronised by both the JI and the BNP.²¹ Though the militant groups operate under different leadership, at many times they act in unison and together.

INTERNATIONAL CRIME TRIBUNAL'S JUDGMENT: A CHALLENGE TO RADICALS

In the lead up to the 2008 election, war crimes trial was a key demand among the urban, educated youth. The *Awami League* (AL) made war crimes trial a key election promise while the BNP chose to remain in alliance with JI. As a result, the AL secured votes to form government. After coming into power the AL government initiated war crimes trial proceedings in 2010.²² As the proceedings began and verdicts were started being delivered, three guilty men were sentenced to death by the ICT. It was expected that Abdul Quader Mollah the 'butcher of Mirpur' would meet with same fate, but this did not happen. His sentence was greeted with much cynicism and anger. There was speculation of *AL-Jamaat* detente whereby the *Jamaat's* leader's lives were to be spared in return for *Jamaat* breaking its alliance with BNP. It's against that background that Shahbag Awakening began on 5 February 2013 in Dhaka, which later on spread to other parts

of the country.²³ The JI cadres reacted violently. The widespread violence led to killing of Ahmed Rajib Haider by *Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh* (HeI) cadres. He through his blogs raised the demand for death sentence, instead of life imprisonment to the perpetrators of 1971.²⁴ Acting under the pressure of the Shahbag movement, the tribunal handed over capital punishment to Mollah. After he was hanged till death on 12 December 2013 fresh round of violence started in which many lost their lives. Amidst all these troublesome events, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina called for parliamentary elections on 5 January 2014. In an election, marred by violence, rigging and boycott by the opposition groups, AL secured the majority to form the government.

The AL government continued with the trial of perpetrators of crime during 1971. So far the ICT has convicted ten people. Out of ten, eight are Jamaat leaders and two are from BNP. On 29 October 2014 it handed over death sentence to JI chief Motiur Rahman Nizami.²⁵ The verdict came a week after the death of another high profile convict 90 year old Ghulam Azam in custody.²⁶ Commenting on Nizami becoming a minister in independent Bangladesh, the War Crimes Tribunal observed that it was a “slap in the face of our Liberation War as well as the martyrs.” “We couldn’t agree more. How could a popular party like BNP and a leader like Khaleda Zia be so oblivious to history, so disregardful of public sentiment and so disrespectful to the memory of our martyrs to make a leading collaborator – the leader of *Al Badr*, a para-military force known for killing our intellectuals – a minister in her cabinet?”²⁷ Later, on 2 November 2014, another high profile Jamaat leader Mir Quasem Ali was also found guilty for crimes committed in 1971, and was awarded death sentence by the tribunal. The verdicts can be challenged in the Supreme Court.²⁸ After the verdict, Prosecutor Zead Al Malum maintained that the families of martyrs and other victims of the country’s Liberation War got their expected justice.²⁹ The handing over of capital punishment to the guilty men has been criticised by many international human rights groups and organizations. Reacting to the European Union’s (EU) concerns against the capital punishment Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that they expressed concern whenever individuals involved in crimes against humanity are punished. “Didn’t they (war criminals) violate human rights killing people brutally in 1971? How does the EU express concern for those who violated human rights of the people in 1971?”³⁰ Earlier Pakistan, for whom Nizami and Qausem once fought for, maintained a distance. Tasnim Aslam Khan, spokesperson of Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

said, “we’re mindful of the developments in Bangladesh.....we don’t comment on the internal matters in other countries”, but on 1st November it backtracked and voiced its ‘serious concerns’ over the death sentence awarded to Nizami.³¹

The radical groups reacted to ICT judgement in their own way. Soon after the verdict on 29 October 2014, the JI’s acting *Ameer* (head) Makbul Ahmed and acting secretary general Dr. Shafiqur Rahman declared a 72 hours of country- wide phase wise *hartal* (shut down). Though it was promised to be peaceful, incidents of violence were reported from some parts of Dhaka. Protesting against the death penalty handed over to Nizami, the miscreants set a bus on fire in broad daylight in Dhaka’s Kadamtoli area. However, there was no casualty as the passengers of the Borak Paribahan bus managed to run away.³² In Bijoyagar near Central Law College, area of Dhaka, several hours ahead of the countrywide 24-hour *hartal* called by JI, at least 10-15 crude bombs were set-off. As per media report, there was no casualty from the bomb blasts. In other parts of the city, the pro-hartal activists burnt tyres on the roads to create obstacles to vehicular movements.³³

CONCERNS AND CONSEQUENCES

Internally, the role of JI in 1971 and its rise in post-1979 Bangladesh created deep ethnic fissure. As Bengali speaking preponderates over an inclusive idea of Bangla nationalism, the non-Bengali speakers are at disadvantage. Majority members of Urdu speaking community are not treated as citizens. Khalid Hussain describes the Urdu speaking Bihari as the most disadvantaged group in Bangladesh because they are not recognized as citizens in the country they regard as their home. Narrating his own experience, he said “on completion of primary school, he and other students tried to enroll at the local high school but were refused. Their only option was a private school which most could not afford. They are living in a situation where the nation they relate to-Pakistan-has refused to accept them and the country of their current habitation –Bangladesh- calls them ‘traitor’ and has rendered them stranded.”³⁴ The plight of Biharis is that they are not refugees; so that at least international law or bodies can extend humanitarian assistance to them but yet, they are not treated part of their country. In May 2008 Bangladesh High Court ruled that the children of Urdu-speaking ‘Bihari’ Muslims awaiting repatriation to Pakistan for over 37 years would be granted Bangladeshi citizenship.³⁵ And they were

provided the right to vote in parliamentary elections.³⁶ As the leadership of JI and most of its sister organizations is from Urdu speaking community, there is sheer hatred against this ethnic group.

Minority religious groups are at a disadvantage. With the rise of Islamic groups and militancy, the situation has exacerbated. Through Islamic Television (ITV) channel and newspapers like *Inqilab*, *Naya Diganta*, and *Sangram* the Islamic groups propagate and promote their socio-political and cultural ideas. Most of their religious ideas are in conflict with religious beliefs and cultural traits practiced by the minority groups.³⁷ Religious tensions often led to attacks on Hindus. The demolition of Babri mosque in India in 1991 triggered violence against the Hindus in Bangladesh.³⁸ In 2001 the election related violence started fifteen days prior to the October 1 elections and continued until about 27 October, which ruined the Durga Puja, the most important religious festival of Hindus in Bengal. In between about 330 incidents of violence were carried out against the members of the Hindu community. The forms of violence included rapes, killing, physical torture, plunder, extortion, damage of property etc.³⁹ Not only religious parties attack the Hindus, but also the so-called secular ones do so to serve individual or party's interests. In 2012 in Ramu area, a large crowd included many functionaries of three major political groups –AL, BNP and JI destroying 24 Buddhist and Hindu temples.⁴⁰ The painstaking research by Professor Abu Barakat of Dhaka University has shown that as of 1997, through various versions of the Enemy Property Act, 53% of the land owned by Hindus has been forcibly taken over, most of it between 1972 and 1980. This has affected 4 out of every 10 Hindu households. The largest beneficiaries of these illegally dispossessed lands were those affiliated to the 'secular' party AL, followed by BNP and JI.⁴¹

The members of minority sectarian groups too had been targeted by the Islamic groups. Violence against the Ahmediyya, a minority sect has become commonplace since 2001. The "groups of anti-Ahmediyya believers have periodically attacked Ahmediyya's places of worship. The Human Rights Watch (HRW) report describes these incidents as part of a larger trend within society: "the recent upsurge in the persecution of the Ahmediyyas can be understood as part of gradual trend in Bangladesh on moving away from the country's secular roots toward more blending of religion and politics."⁴²

The cadres who carry out violence are recruited and trained in various *madrassahs* under the control of radical groups. There are two types of *madrassahs* in Bangladesh: *Aliya* and *Qwami*. *Aliya* are state-supervised

and state-supported modeled after Calcutta *madrassah* (and later Dhaka *Aliya madrassah*); while the latter category comprises privately managed *madrassahs* modeled after Deoband *madrassah*. Then there are 54 private universities, out of which 15 are either directly or indirectly under control of JI. Even other Islamic groups have their control over academic institutions. Both institutions are being used by the militant groups to serve their purposes. After spectacular blasts of 450 bombs by the JMB on 17 August 2005, the intelligence agencies in their initial assessment, identified 233 *madarssah* where military training took place. ICS has established its presence over many educational institutes of Bangladesh.⁴³ In the same year the JMB, in a daring attack killed former finance minister Shah A.M.S. Kibaria and four other AL activists in a political rally in Dhaka.

The rising radicalism is a cause of concern not only for Bangladesh but also to India which shares about 4,096 kilometers of border with it. The two countries also share religious and ethnic demographic composition. Therefore, any development in one country has its spillover impact on the other. In 1971 India's support made the liberation of Bangladesh possible. Prior to its liberation, during military crackdown to control the growing agitation many Hindus and Muslims had crossed into the Indian side of border. Some managed to get Indian citizenship, but many are still considered as 'outsider' or 'foreigner'. There are no tensions over the status of Hindu migrants but the Muslim migrants have become 'cause of concern'. The demand to oust the 'illegal migrants' is mainly raised in the Indian states of West Bengal and Assam.⁴⁴ Earlier, many such demands were more or less ignored, but rise of militant forces in Bangladesh have made the Indian state vigilant and unsympathetic towards the people crossing the border.⁴⁵ Many times after committing crime, perpetrator crosses into the Indian border. The Indian government had intelligence inputs way back in 2005 about radicals from Bangladesh infiltrating into the country. The released cable by wiki leak states, "The (Indian) authorities are concerned that these elements (radical Islamists) have a strategic, long-term plan to take advantage of the porous border to infiltrate India and provide support to insurgent groups." The cable further states, "The three terrorist organizations of primary interest to Indian authorities monitoring the border are I(JUM) (now JMB), *Jagrata Muslim Janta*, Bangladesh (JMJB) and *Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami* (HuJI)."⁴⁶

In 2010 and 2011, several JMB members crossed over to India. They made great efforts to mix with the local populace, to fulfil their interests. They set up hubs to provide trainings to prospective militants in

manufacturing explosives and to establish links with international terror outfits. Facts uncovered by Intelligence Bureau (IB) and National Investigation Agency (NIA) show that the JMB had begun operations in 2010 at Beldanga and Lalgola with around 10 to 25 men. Within four years, the module successfully recruited 180 men spread across seven districts of central and north Bengal, Howrah and Kolkata, from where it drew logistical support to carry out their operations in India and Bangladesh. In 2014 the group hatched a plot to kill the Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hassina, but their plot was foiled by the police and NIA. Shahnur Alom alias "doctor Ilias", a top JMB operative after his arrest by the Assam police confirmed that several top leaders from JMB had visited at least one *madrasa* in the state and conducted motivational training there.

CONCLUSION

The growing religious radicalism and militancy pose serious threat to the secular society and state in Bangladesh. The radical ideology and militancy cannot be weeded out by counter-violence means. In Bangladesh there is a need to move away from Bengali nationalism and give socio-political space to other minority ethnic groups also. The minority religious and sectarian groups have to be provided with secured secular space where they can live without fear.

To check the growing radicalism in 2010, the AL government had ordered nearly 24,000 libraries attached to the mosques to remove books written by Syed Abul Ala Maududi, who is the founder of JI in pre-partitioned India. The government said that his writings are against the peaceful ideology of Islam. Then in one of its ruling in 2010, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh recommended the omission of the word 'Bismillah' (in the name of God) from the preamble of constitution. Both these steps are way forward to make the state secular and save society from radicalisation process. The Bangladeshi state and civil society need to curtail the use of any form of violence against an individual or a group.

As India suffers due to spill over effects of growing militancy in Bangladesh, it has to take steps to manage its border areas. There has been rise of local groups in the areas bordering Bangladesh, which strongly demand an end to 'illegal migration'. The Indian government's move to sign Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) is a positive step to slash down the stereotype image. The Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his public address in December 2014 at Guwahati stated that the LBA is all set to get

implemented in 2015. Finally, to control the rise of radical groups and militants is a socio-political process. The political establishment and society of Bangladesh has to collectively decide about the future of their country: whether they are going to live with various forms of violence or they are ready to discuss, debate and take steps to control it. The onus lies with them.

REFERENCES

1. Partha Chatterjee 'The Second Partition of Bengal'. In Kaushik Roy, *Partition of India: Why 1947?* New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2012. pp. 146-163.
2. Penderal Moon, *Divide and Quit*. London, Chatto & Windus, 1961. pp. 58-59.
3. See Joya Chatterji *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-1967*. Cambridge, New York, New Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2007. See also Subhasri Ghosh, 'Population Movement in West Bengal: A Case Study of Nadia District, 1947-1951'. *South Asia Research*, Vol.34, Issue 113, 2014. pp.113-132.
4. See Ayesha Jalal, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, Harvard Business Publishing, 2014.
5. Srinath Raghvan, *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh*. Ranikhet, 2013.
6. Ishtiaq Ahmed, *The Pakistan Military in Politics: Origins, Evolution, Consequence*. New Delhi, Amaryllis Publication, 2014. pp.169-170.
7. Ayesha Jalal. *op.cit.*, p.164.
8. TJ is a transnational Muslim reform movement founded in colonial India in the early 20th century. Although many of its followers claim that it is apolitical, it is not. It seeks to create a parallel authority to the state that does not entail any involvement including direct or indirect opposition. See also *Encyclopedia of Islam*. https://books.google.co.in/books?id=OZbyz_Hr-eI. Accessed on 26 December 2014.
9. Yoginder S. Sikand 'The Tablighi Jama'at'. In Guhatakhurata, Meghna & Willem van Schendel, *The Bangladesh Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. London & Durham, Duke University Press, 2013. pp.336-344.
10. *Ibid*.
11. *Parliamentary Debates*, As cited by Amena Mohsin, 'Secularism as Religious Tolerance', In Guhatakhurata, Meghna & Willem van Schendel, *op.cit.*, pp.334-335.
12. Dina Mahnaz Siddiqi, "Political Culture in Contemporary Bangladesh". In Ali Riaz and C.Christine Fair, *Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh*. Oxon & New York, Routledge, 2011. pp. 7-26.
13. Ali Riaz, *Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh: A complex web*. New York, Routledge Contemporary South Asia Series, 2008. pp. 10-11.
14. Dina Mahnaz Siddiqi, *Op.cit.*
15. Ali Riaz, *Islamist Politics and Education*. In Ali Riaz and C.Christine Fair, *Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh*. Oxon & New York, Routledge, 2011. pp. 116-135.
16. Praveen Swami, 'What India can learn from Bangladesh's Jamaat-e-Islami ban' <http://www.firstpost.com/world/what-india-can-learn-from-bangladeshs->

-
- jamaat-e-islami-ban-1007303.html Accessed on 23 December 2014.
17. Elora Shehabuddin, 'Civil Society and Islamist Politics'. In Ali Riaz and C.Christine Fair, *Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh*. Oxon & New York, Routledge, 2011. pp. 91-114.
 18. Praveen Swami, 'What India can learn from Bangladesh's Jamaat-e-Islami ban'. *op.cit.*
 19. Sumit Ganguly, 'The Rise of Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh'. www.usip.org Accessed on 7 December 2014.
 20. Cited in S. Mahmud Ali, *Understanding Bangladesh*. New Delhi, Foundation Books, 2010. p.290.
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. Jyoti Rehman. 'The Jamaat Factor in Bangladesh Politics'. *op.cit.*
 23. *Ibid.*
 24. 'Mufti Jasim, 7 NSU students charged'. *The Daily Star*, 29 January 2014.
 25. 'Dhaka Tribunal sentences fundamentalist leader to death for 1971 war crimes. *The Telegraph*, 29 October 2014.
 26. Syed Badrul Ahsan, 'Facing up 1971' *Indian Express*, 4 November 2014.
 27. Mahfuz Anam, 'The Meaning of Nizami's Verdict'. *The Daily Star*, 31 October 2014.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. 'Martyrs Family got the justice'. *The Daily Star*, 2 November 2014, Dhaka.
 30. 'Why Does EU Express Concerns When War Criminals punished, asked PM', *Observer Online Report*, 30 October 2014.
 31. 'Pakistan Voices Serious Concerns over Bangladesh's JI Chief's Sentence'. *Daily Times*, 2 November 2014.
 32. 'Hartal: Bus torched in Kadamtoli'. *The Daily Star*, Dhaka, 30 October 2014.
 33. '10 Crude Bombs set-off at Bijoy Nagar Wednesday Evening'. <http://unb.com.bd/pre-hartal-violence> Accessed on 10 November 2014.
 34. Khalid Hussain, 'An Urdu-speaking Bihari in Bangladesh'. <http://www.un.org/en/letsfightracism/hussain.shtml>
 35. Akansha Pandey, 'Without a Nation: Stateless Biharis in Bangladesh'. [http://bargad.org/2012/24/without-nation-stateless-biharis-in Bangladesh](http://bargad.org/2012/24/without-nation-stateless-biharis-in-Bangladesh) Accessed on 15 November 2014. *Ibid.*
 36. *Ibid*
 37. Md Shamsul Islam, 'Political Violence in Bangladesh'. In Ali Riaz and C.Christine Fair, *Political Islam and Governance in Bangladesh*. Oxon & New York: Routledge, 2011. pp.27-45.
 38. See Tasleema Nasreen, *Shame: A Novel*. Michigan, Prometheus Book, 1997.
 39. Md Shamsul Islam, 'Political Violence in Bangladesh'. *op.cit.*
 40. Garga Chatterjee, 'The dangerous slide of Bangladesh'. *DNA*, 15 October 2012.
 41. *Ibid*
 42. Cited in Md Shamsul Islam, 'Political Violence in Bangladesh'. *op.cit.*
 43. *Ibid.*
 44. Antara Datta, *Refugees and Borders in South Asia: The Great Exodus of 1971*. New Delhi, Routledge, 2013.
 45. *Ibid.* Also See Delwar Hussain, *Boundaries Undermined*. London, C. Hursts & Company, 2013.
 46. '2005 intel revealed Bangladesh radicals plan for India: Wikileaks' <http://timesofindia.com/india/2005-intel-revealed-Bangladesh-radicals-plan-for-India-Wikileaks/articleshow/44921152>. Accessed on 20 December 2014.

47. Dwaipayan Ghosh 'Boundary of Terror'. *The Times of India*, 31 October 2014.
48. 'Burdwan blast: JMB tried to induct boys from Assam madrasa to create modules' *Indian Express* 7 December 2014.
49. 'Bangladesh bans books written by radical Islamic author'. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-10661454> Accessed on 24 December 2014.

FUNDAMENTALIST ISLAM IN BANGLADESH

ABANTI ADHIKARI

Islam is the third major monotheistic tradition to emerge in human history. The term 'Islam' itself, often translated as "submission", refers to the decision by the Muslim (one who submits or surrenders) to abide both in mind and body by the will of God (in Arabic, *Allah*), the one God. To submit to the divine will, as articulated in the sacred texts of the tradition, is therefore to bring about a harmonious order in the universe. In this sense, Islam refers not only to the act of submission but to its consequence, that is, peace (*salam*). With the arrival of Islam in India before the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (1206 AD) Mahmood of Ghoor and Mohammad Ghazni, came to the western part of the Indian mainland, and looted Somnath temple. As regards the Mughal emperors, the last emperor Aurangzeb (died 1707 AD, last of the great Mughals), was disrespectful towards the Hindus. He destroyed many Hindu temples and reimposed the *jizyah* tax on the Hindus, unlike his predecessor the great ruler Akbar who had exempted the Hindus from paying the religious tax. One interesting aspect of Islam, unlike other religions like Buddhism, Christianity or Hinduism, is that, it does not believe in idol-worship. In Bangladesh and in India, one may find the *mazars* of the *pir*. Islam is a religion of the common man, and the proverb says in Bengali, *Anno bastra paridhan, Islam dibey samadhan*.

Coming to the issue of Hindu minority women in Bangladesh, they are often victims of fundamentalist activities and try to leave their motherland and come away to West Bengal in search of livelihood. They were mostly beaten up and their houses and properties looted after 1947. Before independence, the Bengali intelligentsia formed the majority of the Dhaka University elite, but most of them were evicted and had to come away leaving everything. This was not only due to the government exchange programme, but also because they were apprehensive about

their security. Those Hindu teachers who remained there, became victims at the hands of the terrorists.

Numbering over a billion, Muslims today form the majority in more than fifty countries and a substantial majority in many others. There are vibrant growing communities in Europe and both North and South America. However, the greatest number of Muslims live in the developing regions of the world, including Arab-speaking North Africa and the Near East, and countries of east and West Africa and central, south and southeast Asia. Indonesia perhaps has 100% Muslim population. However, violence and fundamentalist Muslim activities are found mostly in Afghanistan, Central Asia and in Bangladesh, where majority of population is below the poverty-line. Historians are unanimous that the fundamentalist groups in Bangladesh, such as the *Razakars* and the *Al Badar* mostly find financial support from the countries of the Middle East, which are rich with petro-dollars. Although the Taliban is said to be the most powerful in Afghanistan, and has taken the responsibility for the recent assassination of Bengali writer Susmita Bandopadhyay (the author of *Kabuliwalar Bangali bou*) and such other books, its influence can be felt in different Islamic states like Pakistan or Bangladesh. Another such Islamic organization is SIMI (*Students Islamic Movement in India*) which has been banned in India. Yet, SIMI activists try to spread violence in different parts of India and Bangladesh and are often arrested by the police and the BSF (Border Security Force). They carry heavy arms and often use the north-eastern hills as a corridor through which arms are sent from India to Bangladesh and vice-versa.

Susmita Bandopadhyay was a Bengali who had fled to Afghanistan after marrying a *Kabuliwala* (businessman) residing in Calcutta's Burrabazar area. She became famous by writing a few books where she narrated the grim lifestyle of the Afghan women inside a village and the absence of liberty or equality among these women and their subservience to the patriarchy. The book is extremely interesting as it describes the village-life in the interior of Afghanistan and the tragedy faced by women, their social customs and marriages. She also describes the rise of the Taliban in the countryside of Afghanistan and how they became popular. Ultimately, on her return to Afghanistan permanently, she was brutally assassinated by the Taliban on 5-6 September 2013 on suspicion that she was an Indian spy.

Fundamentalism is, therefore, extreme in Afghanistan, but it stays in a hidden form in Bangladesh. One such case may be that of Taslema

Nasreen, who has been denied resident status by the Bangladeshi government. The works of Tasleema Nasreen may be provocative in the Islamic world of Bangladesh, but she was asked to leave the country, which even added to her international repute. She wrote many books like *Lajja*, *Amar Meyebela*, *Nirbachito Column* and others, where she exposes the undercurrent cruelty of the Muslim society towards women.

The issue of *Fatwas* in the Bangladesh countryside, needs to be discussed here. *Fatwas* are basically religious edicts issued by an Islamic head, and the curse is generally made to those who have not paid any heed to the teachings of Islam. Dr. Anisuzzaman, formerly of the department of Bengali, Dhaka University has written a book named *Fatwa*, where he has compiled the newspaper clippings to describe the bad effects of *Fatwa* in the countryside of Bangladesh. He has described the pathetic condition of a widow Noor Jahan, who was stoned to death after receiving orders from the Maulavis. Dr. Anisuzzaman describes that it was difficult for the dead Noor Jahan's father to lodge complain against the criminals and such crimes take place almost everyday in Bangladesh, and go unnoticed by the press.

Jamaat-e-Islami, the Islamic fundamentalist party in Bangladesh which is numerically strongest as well, has its roots in the pre-independence period. The *Jamaat* wants to convert Bangladesh into an Islamic state, and it has close links with Pakistan. The former chief of the *Jamaat*, Golam Azam, (who died in 2014 at the age of 93 years), was quite unpopular in Bangladesh and resided in the topmost storey of a ten storey flat, when we met him for the last time in 2001. Myself and my mother, late Mrs Chitra Adhikari, sought an interview with him in which he described the theological aspects of Islam and how he and his son were asked to leave the country when Bangladesh gained independence in 1971. The students and almost everybody in Bangladesh hates him, because he massacred many people and ruined the lives of women in the war of 1971, after which he was evicted and asked to leave the country. But he returned after *Awami League* became powerless. However, after the conclusion of the recent Shahabag movement in Bangladesh, Golam Azam was given fifteen years of life-imprisonment.

At the opposite end of the scale, is the *Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee*, with journalist Shariyar Kabir as its leader. Its main task was to have the criminals of 1971 war tried and it raises posters and funds for the relatives of the victims of 1971 war. The organization may be leftist in its ideas, but it cannot do much except raising public opinion against the

war criminals. The sad story of the victims of 1971 war has been recorded by many writers in their books. The *Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee* established a 'peoples' Court', held a meeting in the Suhrawardy Uddyan at Dhaka, and demanded life-sentence/hang to death for Gulam Azam the former chief of the *Jamaat-e-Islami*. The tragedy and torture of the victims of Bangladeshi war has been narrated by Shariyar Kabir¹ and many other writers, who described how Chittagong and other places away from Dhaka, the paddy fields and houses were turned into burial grounds. The miscreants and criminals, who could not escape to Pakistan, stayed in Bangladesh and became associated with the fundamentalists.

Another instance of fundamentalism in Bangladesh is the torture on Hindus and Hindu women in particular. When East Pakistan was formed in 1947 on the basis of religion, the Bengali Hindu intelligentsia who still remained in East Pakistan suffered largely and they gradually moved away to India. Many of the Hindu teachers of Dhaka University were assassinated. The Hindu institutions that are still surviving in Bangladesh, such as the Ram Krishna Mission, have *Swamijis* who are reluctant to talk about their sufferings. Still they narrate how their institutions were damaged from time to time due to the atrocities of the Muslim fundamentalists whenever the Muslim dictators like Ershad came to power. The Ram Krishna Mission is still a safe place for Hindus in Dhaka and its suburbs. The mission is hospitable and gives shelter to foreigners, whenever required.

To understand the sufferings of the victims of 1971 war, historians are trying to record the oral history of Bangladesh *muktijuddho*. Many victims of 1971 war are illiterate and the rape victims feel ashamed to talk about their sufferings. Since no written history is possible to be written by the illiterate masses, interviews and other methods have to be taken, in order to know the torture on the women and children, particularly in the distant provinces of Chittagong or other remote areas.

A major reason for the spread of fundamentalism in Bangladesh may be the lack of scientific education amongst the youth in Dhaka, that leads them to non-secular ideas. Without scientific knowledge and education, the youth remain poor and uneducated, and so when they are offered money by other powers, they easily grab it. Ayesha Jalal in one of her famous books has differentiated between the two groups: the *Asrafs* or the high-born Muslims and the *Atrafs* or the converted Muslims of Bengal, who are generally of dark complexion. *Madrassa* education is practiced in Dhaka University and its premises, which prevents the spread of scientific

education and nurtures the growth of Islamic faith thereby enhancing the non-secular ideas.

In order to understand the growth of communalism that led to the first partition of Bengal, one has to keep two events in mind: In the first place, the formation of the Anglo-Oriental College in 1875, by Sir Syed Ahmed. The British followed the policy of 'checks-and-balances' and so this college was formed under the auspices of Sir Theodore Beck, to educate the Muslim community. The 'so-called' Bengal Renaissance had already taken place in the middle of the nineteenth century, depicting Raja Rammohun Roy as the 'first modern man'. There were other pioneers in Bengal like Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and his students. However, the 'Bengal Renaissance' was a failure in many aspects: it failed to educate the poor Muslim community which could not become a 'comprador' class, unlike its Hindu counterpart.

Secondly, Bengal was partitioned for the first time in 1905 by Lord Curzon. But with protests from Rabindranath Tagore and others, it was annulled. Still the *Muslim League* was formed in 1906 at the Shimla conference under the auspices of the Nawab of Dhaka. The *Muslim League* gradually turned into a violent communal party that led to the 'Demand for Pakistan' in its Lahore Resolution of 1940. Communalism was spread through the venomous writings of the newspaper *Millat* and the uneducated Muslims had blind faith in the speeches of Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah. The communal disturbances turned into violent outburst in 1952, the language movement, and finally led to the 1971 war. There was much bloodshed during the 1971 war for the cause of Bengali Muslim nationalism.

A discussion on fundamentalism in Bangladesh would be incomplete without a discussion on the situation in Pakistan. In both Bangladesh and Pakistan, there has been the rise of dictatorial rule by the army generals which definitely nurtures fundamentalist activities. Bangladesh gained independence with India's help, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, much against the wishes of *Jamaat-e-Islami* and its leaders. They took revenge and assassinated Sheikh Mujibur Rehman inside his own house on 15th August 1975 (midnight) along with all his family members, except two daughters, who were then outside Bangladesh. Army rule took over and a look at the middle-class lifestyle of Sheikh Mujib's house at *Dhanmondi* (Dhaka) would point to the devastation that took place in the peace-loving family. It took many years for his daughter Sheikh Hasina to return from exile and punish the murderers.

The leader of the opposition in *Bangladesh National Party* is Begum Khaleda Zia, whose party is not in power for the last five years. She is the widow of Bangladesh President late General Zia-ur-Rehman and there is open rivalry between the leaders of these two parties. The BNP is basically anti-democratic and it had *Jamaat-e-Islami* as its political ally when it came to power last time. However, on August 1, 2013, the Bangladesh Supreme Court declared the registration of *Jamaat-e-Islami* illegal, and ruled that the party is unfit to contest national polls.

The Shahabag movement, which was spontaneous and anti-fundamentalist in nature, deeply affected Bangladeshi politics. Shahabag protests, associated with a central neighbourhood of Dhaka, Bangladesh, began on February 5, 2013 and later spread to other parts of Bangladesh, as people demanded capital punishment for Abdul Quader Mollah, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment. But it can hardly be said that the movement was successful in driving out terrorists from the country. Many of the war-criminals are roaming around in public or live safely in Pakistan.

Bangladesh's war crimes court on 30 December 2014 sentenced a leading Islamist to death for rape, mass murder and genocide during the country's 1971 war of independence from Pakistan. Azharul Islam became the 16th person and the 11th Islamist to be convicted of atrocities by the International Crimes Tribunal, which found him guilty of being a key member of a notorious pro-Pakistan militia. The 62-year old was the assistant secretary general of the nation's largest Islamist party, the *Jamaat-e-Islami*. The presiding judge Enayetur Rahim ordered him to be 'hanged by the neck' for the genocide of more than 1,200 people in a flood plain in the northern district of Rangpur.² In his reply, he said, 'I am innocent'.³

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina created the tribunal in 2010, which has mostly focused on the trials of the *Jamaat* leaders who opposed the independence of Bangladesh. The tribunal has also sentenced to death a former minister of the main opposition *Bangladesh Nationalist Party*. Secular protesters staged marches in the capital Dhaka and Rangpur to hail the latest verdict.

It may be pointed out that Bangladesh is gradually turning non-secular. The constitution of Bangladesh has been changed many times, and the constitution has been given an Islamic colour. The leaders of the political parties attend the OIC meetings sometimes and they receive help from the petro-dollar countries like Iran, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

There has been the rise of democracy in Bangladesh in opposition to military rule and this democratic outlook has increased with the rise of *Grameen* Bank in Bangladesh, introduced by Mohammed Yunus, an economist. He brought 'revolution' in the Bangladesh countryside by introducing the co-operative micro-credit system and by providing sanitary facilities in the rural areas. In the urban areas of Bangladesh, there has been the growth of garment factories that has given livelihood to many women who come from the semi-urban belt and work for hours in the factories. Such factories are being built in Dhaka, Savar and other nearby places, which has led to the financial independence of the lower middle class urban women. Dhaka is thickly populated and thousands of labourers move into Dhaka from the rural belt in search of their daily livelihood. In the northern part of West Bengal, there is porous border between West Bengal and Bangladesh, and many day-labourers, without passport or even ration card, work as seasonal labourers and cross the borders whenever necessary. Again there is a 'no-man's land' named *Chitmahal*, which causes tense situation.

To stop fundamentalism in Dhaka and its neighbourhood, there should be spread of education and equitable distribution of resources. Dhaka relies many on loans from the IMF, and there is lack of indigenous industries. Urban women in Dhaka sometimes work in the mills and garment factories. Poverty is a serious problem in Bangladesh and providing employment opportunities for the poor can only lead to peace. There is a lot of internal migration to Dhaka from the neighbouring districts, and the people mostly find their job as rickshaw pullers.

Mohammud B. Ahsan reported that in the last week of October 2013, bands of political activists roamed the streets in 'post-apocalyptic' madness as they clashed with their opponents and the law-enforcement bodies. Vehicles were torched, houses and shops were gutted, cocktails were hurled, guns were fired and kerosene-induced flames danced on the roads swaying to the sound of flutes. Altogether, anywhere between fourteen and twenty lives were lost to violence. Hundreds were injured. Such is the tragedy of Bangladeshi fundamentalism.⁴

To the question confronting the Islamic society, several contemporary Muslims would offer a straightforward response: "Islam is the solution". The phrase is commonly used by what are often termed "Islamist" or, more crudely, "Islamic fundamentalist" movements. It implies that such movements seek a return to some idealized Islamic past, or are a throwback to "medieval" patterns. Mostly, however, these movements present a 'new'

vision of both Islam and Islamic society, even when they refer to the achievements of Islamic history. For example, many observers have pointed out that the sharply political manner in which Islamic vocabularies and symbols – are used by both the leaders and supporters of Islamist movements actually have little precedence in the Islamic past.

What is also termed ‘political Islam’ is a phenomenon of great complexity, too often reduced by the media and academic observers to such seismic political events as the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran that ousted the Shahs and brought Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his followers to power; the 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat of Egypt by radical Islamists; and the activities of such organizations as *Hizbullah* in Lebanon, *Hamas* in Israel-Palestine, and various Islamist groupings that emerged in the Algerian civil war from the early 1990s. The fact remains that overt political activity is but one expression of a renewed commitment to the faith on the part of many Muslims. In addition, it should be recognized that most Islamist groups are political opposition movements and, therefore, cannot fairly be understood without consideration of their particular ideals and perceived grievances.

REFERENCES

1. See his *Ekattorer Dushaho Smroti*.
2. *The Asian Age*, 31 December 2014.
3. *Ibid*.
4. Mohammed Bad Ahsan, ‘The Ultimate tragedy of Bengladesh’. *The Statesman*, Kolkata, 2 November 2013.

ETHNIC CLEANSING OF BANGLADESH'S HINDUS

RICHARD L. BENKIN

Why the Bangladeshi Hindus? Why should their death concern a non-Hindu, non-South Asian when so many people worldwide face human rights abuses? Even within Bangladesh, several minorities in addition to Hindus are under duress—from indigenous peoples overwhelmed by Bengali settlers in their ancestral lands to Ahmadiyyas who are threatened with being defined out of Islam.¹ Why do Bangladesh's Hindus deserve our attention and resources?

- There are perhaps 15 million people at risk, despite decades of Hindu population loss, compared with an estimated 100,000 Ahmadiyyas and 2 million indigenous tribes inside Bangladesh.²
- Their oppression is part of wider Hindu-Muslim conflict in South Asia that could explode at any moment. My recent investigations in Assam's tribal areas confirm that volatility, and the fact that the problem is spreading.³ When the All-India Muslim League demanded that the British split the sub-continent into separate Hindu and Muslim states before departing, they ratified that conflict, which threatens to tear asunder one of the 21st century's most critical geopolitical area. In a bit of historical irony, the *Muslim League* got its wish to separate from Hindus the same year that *Apartheid* (or "apartness") was established in South Africa.⁴
- Neither Hindu groups nor international bodies are addressing this human rights travesty effectively. Amnesty International's (AI) 2013 *Human Rights Report* on Bangladesh, posted at its web site, does not even mention the oppression of Hindus. Hindus appear only in AI's praise of the current *Awami League* government's (phony) Vested Property Return Act and its prosecution of 1971 war crimes; and in a mention that one Hindu Temple was destroyed along with 20 Buddhist temples. Yet, AI claims to have visited

Bangladesh three times that year. And it saw no evidence of the ethnic cleansing of Hindus?⁵

I cannot tell you the number of times I have asked myself what sort of effrontery I must have to insist that something so terrible is happening when all of the “respected” organizations say otherwise: Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch; the UN; my own United States including its State Department, CIA, and the President be he Democrat or Republican, Obama or Bush; India; CNN, Reuters, the BBC, *New York Times*, *Times of India*, *Times*, London, the left-wing media, the right-wing media, and pretty much every other major “media” you want to cite. It would be one thing if they denied the problem and I could crawl into a cocoon and yell, “Conspiracy!” But we do not even get that; all we do get is silence.⁶ Those who wish to keep Bangladesh’s anti-Hindu atrocities and the government’s complicity out of public view count on people being reticent to challenge the standard narrative, often because changing it is difficult and requires extensive evidence

- The goal of this “quiet case of ethnic cleansing” is horrifying and nothing less than the complete elimination of Hindus from Bangladesh. In 1951, Hindus were almost a third of East Pakistan’s population. When East Pakistan became Bangladesh, they were down to a fifth; 30 years later less than a tenth; and today about one in 15.⁷

One third, one fifth, one tenth; and one fifteenth. And there is no moral imperative to explain numbers as powerful as that? The few attempts to do so frequently encounter charges that the effort is somehow less than legitimate because it “ignores” other real or imagined human rights issues. Equally asinine is the compulsion to throw in inanities like, “well, of course not all Muslims are bad.” No one with any credibility could hold a position so contrary to fact or even logic. That misguided sense of obligation dilutes the impact of the issue and suggests that others control the narrative and our ability to save more than 15 million lives. Eschew those qualifiers and act decisively; because if we do not, Hinduism in Bangladesh will become nothing but a memory.

THE EVIDENCE

Though it strains any measure of credibility to believe that my meager resources are that much greater than those of AI and the human rights industry, every nation in the world, their intelligence agencies, the UN, and all major media; our first challenge is to document the atrocities and refuse to relent in demanding they be redressed. In 2009, I was presenting a case against Bangladesh to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) at the end of which a key staff person pulled me aside. She said that USCIRF staff believed me but that the key enabling them to act would be documenting government complicity, in this case inaction when there was a responsibility to act.⁸

So here it is.

1. Three months after taking office, Sheikh Hasina told visiting French naval commander Gerard Valin that her government would repeal the nation's "anti-minority laws"; thus, in all likelihood becoming the first sitting head of state to admit that *her country in fact has anti-minority laws!* Had the leader of India, the United States, or Israel, or most other countries made such an admission, there would be worldwide furor. Yet, there was none in this instance. The only mention was by a few papers inside Bangladesh.⁹ Perhaps that is why Hasina has been able to ignore her promise—even actively avoid it—without anyone calling her on it.
2. Just before the 2008 elections, Bangladesh's Supreme Court issued a rule nisi, asking the government to explain why the Vested Property Act (VPA) – which legalizes the thievery of minority, especially Hindu land and is the economic engine for ethnic cleansing – should not be declared *ultra vires* to the constitution; and lands confiscated under that law returned to their rightful owners. The military leaders at the time told me that providing a response would exceed their mandate and were leaving it to a newly elected government that would soon take power. So when the *Awami League* did, it had the ability to tell the Supreme Court that the VPA contradicted the constitution, and that would have been the end of it. Hasina and her minions not only let it pass, they also re-doubled its use to continue dispossessing Hindus.¹⁰ In fact, that same year, its forces used the VPA to support and justify an anti-Hindu pogrom in the heart of the capital.¹¹

3. In 2011, the Supreme Court handed the government another gift by identifying several constitutional amendments passed during the Ershad dictatorship of the 1980s, and asking the government to submit replacements that were in line with basic notions of justice. Chief among them was the Eighth Amendment which declared Islam the official state religion, mandated that no law begin without homage to Allah, and awarded special privileges and funding to Islamic institutions, while providing disabilities to those of other religions. The government through the legislature which it controlled absolutely, complied and submitted substitutes for all of them-except the Eighth Amendment, which remains in force today. How might that same government react if the United States passed a constitutional amendment declaring Christianity an official religion? But, again, no one seemed to notice what was being done to the Bangladeshis.¹²

All these things *support* ethnic cleansing, but we also have a verified pattern of atrocities that the government enables or has a role. These hate crimes are rarely prosecuted and even more rarely punished. Moreover, through the VPA and the corrupt administration of law, the culprits are often rewarded for their misdeeds. Still, the international community lets the *Awami League* posture itself as “pro-minority” without actually being “pro-minority.” The reality is quite different from that common belief.

- During the *Awami League's* first year in office, major anti-Hindu incidents occurred at the rate of almost one per week. They included murder, rape, child abduction, forced conversion to Islam, physical attacks, land grabs, religious desecration; and at least one three-day pogrom that occurred immediately behind a Dhaka police station.¹³
- Things were no better the second year. The number and intensity of anti-Hindu atrocities did not drop. In one 26-day period, there were seven major anti-Hindu actions or almost one every three days. The Hindu American Foundation, Bangladesh Minority Watch, and others document the same level of atrocities in the third year, 2011.¹⁴
- As we moved into 2012, I confirmed at least 15 similar incidents in first quarter alone-almost 1.25 every single week – and as we were moving out, almost one major incident a week during the fourth quarter. In at least two cases, Bangladeshi officials warned

human rights activists that they better stop investigating the matter or face serious consequences.

- In between, there was a nine day period in May 2012 that saw an abduction, a murder in broad daylight, and two gang rapes, one of a child on her way to a Hindu festival: four horrific incidents taking place within a nine day period and no police actions against the *known* perpetrators. These were reported in local media, investigated and confirmed by Rabindra Ghosh and by my own associates as well.
- The numbers for 2013 were even worse because of massive communal violence in Bangladesh. While the government fought its political opponents, its actions in cases of anti-Hindu atrocities did not change.
- And 2014 could shape up to be the worst year of all. With the *Awami League* retaining office in an election boycotted by the opposition, its refusal to stop anti-Hindu atrocities has been even more blatant. March and April, for example, saw abductions of young Hindu women and girls at almost one per week. Attacks, even murders, have gone unpunished. Several Hindus are sitting in prison, falsely charged with murdering a Muslim; and counsel's attempt to see or represent them have been blocked by the government.¹⁵

All these incidents occurred under this *Awami League* government; were not prosecuted by that government, which often participated in their cover-up; have been verified by two or more independent sources; and were specifically anti-Hindu and not random. Samir Kalra, Director and Senior Fellow for Human Rights of the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), noted "nearly 1,200 incidents of violence directed against religious minorities (mostly Hindus) between 2008 and 2011."¹⁶

Another incident hit me particularly hard. It took place in 2009 when I was in Northern Bengal. Locals told me about a family of Bangladeshi Hindus nearby who had crossed into India only 22 days earlier. Unlike so many Hindu refugees I meet, who have been scared into silence, this family wanted to talk about what happened to them. They told me how their little patch of land was overrun by Muslims and how they were thrown off their property while the invaders enjoyed the few creature comforts they had in their home. They talked about the father being beaten, an uncle killed; but the one who got me was their 14-year-old daughter. She

kept trying to speak but her mother kept pushing her away. Finally she started talking and kept repeating that “the Muslims chased [her].” I asked her what she meant by that and if they caught up to her. After a pause, she told me that they caught her and “did bad things to me.” Do I need to be any more specific?

Since then, I have met with many Hindu women who were gang raped—heard the most horrible things—but that girl in particular continues to haunt me. Her rapists were not some group of “religious fanatics”; they were her Muslim neighbors. They believed that as Muslims they were entitled to have their way with the girl and her family and knew that they would not be prosecuted for it.¹⁷

THEN WHY THE SILENCE?

That child’s rape and those of so many other Hindus in Bangladesh is as much the responsibility of the silence and inaction on this issue as it is of the perpetrators or their enablers in the Bangladeshi government. It has taken things to such ridiculous ends as the following incident demonstrates. In May 2014, I met with Bangladeshi Ambassador Akramul Qader at his country’s embassy in Washington. I went there to remind the Bangladeshis of their request for my help; my ability to provide it; and my refusal to do so as long as it refuses to stop allowing its Hindu citizens to be brutalized or worse.

The meeting went pretty much as I expected, with the man representing 150 million Bangladeshis answering my charges with the stupidest denials I have heard to date. First, he denied that there had been *any* problems after 1971, insisting that there was “no persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh.” After I exposed that as the lie it is, he admitted that there “were some incidents at the time of [the 2001] elections”; *but* “all the perpetrators had been punished and I know of no other incidents since then.”

“Well then let me enlighten you,” I said and provided evidence refuting his denial. Okay, okay, he relented. He told me he could think of “one incident” that occurred recently but dismissed it as the work of a few “religious fanatics”; which then became his refrain: that *if* there are incidents, we should blame a small number of extremists who are not supported by the Bangladeshi government.

I told him that that is simply untrue. His supposedly “moderate” *Awami League* government is as much in bed with Islamist radicals as was

the previous BNP government; and their support, even more so than the BNP's, is what allows Islamists to operate. I said, "Your denials do not even make any sense. You don't go from a third of the population to between seven and eight percent simply through 'voluntary emigration,'" which is what he was claiming; but he persisted; and here is where things got really bizarre. "Oh, yes," he said. "This is happening because they [Bangladeshi Hindus] cannot find suitable matches for their children, so they go to India where there are more Hindus." He insisted; and worse, he expected me to believe that he was serious.

The Ambassador's "explanation" could have been the product of his assumption that Americans are naive, get their information from Google, and will deferentially buy any crap that comes from people defining themselves as victims of western colonialism. But consider: Would anyone buy that nonsense if he was trying to explain why a Muslim population was disappearing; or a Christian one? Yet, Bangladesh's top representative in Washington was ready to say pretty much anything, no matter how ridiculous, confident that without even the semblance of credibility, we would continue giving him a pass and allow Bangladesh's ethnic cleansing of Hindus to continue because no one was going to object – or even care.

Commentators have advanced many reasons for the lack of action to save Bangladesh's Hindus from some alleged innate passivity on the part of Hindus to bias and conspiracies. All *appear* to make some sense on the surface, but none is really compelling on further review. The essential reason lies in what sociologists call the "definition of the situation"; which refers to the way people use the elements surrounding them (both physical and otherwise) to understand what is expected of them and others and how to behave.¹⁸ The flack a few years ago about cartoons that depicted a picture of Prophet Mohammed provide an example. People's definition of the situation determined their response. Was it an exercise of free speech that is enshrined as an essential value in liberal, western culture? Or was it an offense against one of the world's great religions and its 1.6 billion followers?

On a more mundane note, if your hometown cricket team loses a big game, being a fan, you will define it as a defeat and a tragedy. Yet, the fans of the team that won will define it as a happy occasion and a victory. Victory or defeat, free speech or religious offense; how you define the same situation determines how you understand your appropriate response and allows us to understand why others behave as they do.

Returning to the Bangladeshi Hindus, it is an important human rights

issue and one need to save lives; that it is a moral imperative for us to speak out and identify both victims and victimizers so we can take effective action. Others, however, define what I am saying as “communal” because it emphasizes one religious community and, they believe, causes division. Whoever controls the definition controls the dialogue with all of its consequences. In order to stop this quiet case of ethnic cleansing, *we* need to seize control of the narrative that determines how most people define the situation. This issue is one that decent people of all communities everywhere should get behind. It should not cause division but unity. Yet, as long as we allow others to control its definition, they will determine how people react—or don’t.

CALL FOR FIVE POLICY INITIATIVES TO CHANGE THE DEFINITION OF THE SITUATION

One, re-take the agenda regarding how the ethnic cleansing of Hindus is defined. As noted above, we have allowed others to dissuade people from recognizing the horror of what is happening to Hindus in Bangladesh by boxing their defenders in a corner with words like “communal” and “Islamophobic”; neither of which come close to describing the reality of the situation. That must end. Methods for achieving that include public demonstrations, blogging, “expert” opinion, public speaking, teaching a class, and so forth. The opportunities are endless and each one offers a multitude of ways to participate. For instance, the academic elites force their definition on students who accept it in absence of any authoritative opinion to the contrary. Being able to add even a lecture series, let alone an entire course that presents them with that based on validated evidence as opposed to mere ideological rants will have an enormous impact. Similarly, the new media (including blogging, social media, online journals, and so forth) provide an opportunity to break the stranglehold that the old media has on how the situation is defined; and the old media will be forced to embrace the new narrative once that happens. Again, we can base it on fact as opposed to recycled and tired ideological rants.

Two, re-take the agenda that defines Bangladesh as a “moderate” Muslim state. The second definition we must change in re-taking the narrative is the naive belief among international elites that Bangladesh is a “moderate” Muslim country. The UN formally defined it as such, and a recent CNN report began: “Muslim and moderate. Two words that describe Bangladesh.” Bangladeshis play the moderate card every chance they get

and trumpet their nation as “a model of religious harmony and tolerance” on their US website.

The Bangladeshis are indeed a gracious people who once had a reputation for openness; but they have been successively brought under the thumb of radicals and the officials who enable them; and thereby have become a major source for the ethnic cleansing of Hindus. If those same elites recognized that Bangladesh participates in the ethnic cleansing of its largest religious minority and does not allow religious equality, however, it would shatter one of their cherished myths. Either they would have to recognize that their voluminous words and actions about Bangladesh are inaccurate, and they are funding a country that is anything but moderate; or they have to question the very definition of what they mean by a moderate Muslim country. Though the facts are overwhelming, their acceptance is another matter. The key is getting them out to the right people at the right time using the same methods as those noted above. These internet outlets are always on the hunt for new and compelling information. Seek them out, and offer your services. Needed change in that definition of moderate will not come *from* them. It must come *to* them from others in the form of passion and compelling evidence.¹⁹

Three, engage in active and unrelenting outreach to other religious bodies. When in the 1970s and 1980s, the American Jewish community engaged in an all-out and ultimately successful effort to save Jews in the Soviet Union; a big part of that success was getting other groups to recognize the issue and be part of attempts to influence legislators. Similarly, the American Civil Rights movement of the 1960s became effective when Americans recognized that it was not just a problem for Black Americans and that addressing inequalities was in everyone’s interests. Most religious and civic groups are anxious for interfaith outreach and will jump at the chance of engaging in that sort of action.

Four, make your vote count. Speaking about my experience in the United States, when politicians are on the wrong side of an issue, it is generally because they are recipients of bad or incomplete information. Citizens of democratic republics have every right within the law and even an obligation to petition their political leaders, and if their leaders do not respond to make their vote count and replace them with people who will.

Fifth, do not let others hijack your agenda. When you take the lead in trying to do something significant, others will oppose you; and many times, they will attempt to hijack your agenda to make the issue a serious one. People will interrupt you and ask why, if you are addressing this issue,

that you are not addressing some other. It is a disingenuous ruse. Since when is defending human rights only legitimate if it addresses every human rights issue? When it happens do not get into a discussion but respond that you would like to learn more. Even if you believe the people are wrong, do not engage them because if you are talking about whatever it is they have raised, you are *not* talking about the Bangladeshi Hindus and thus contributing to the problem. Do not let them stop you with words like communal, Islamophobic, or racist. None of their slanders does one thing to stop the rape of more 14-year old girls like the one I met. Tell them so, and move on to *your* agenda.

Effectively re-casting the definition of any situation, and certainly in this case stopping the attempt to eliminate Hindus from Bangladesh, will be effective only if it is planned, rather than haphazard, and ongoing rather than one or two times. Three people carrying signs outside the Bangladeshi embassy everyday for a month will have a greater impact than 10,000 people engaging in one protest. It does not take an army, only a small group of individuals committed to not going down in shame because they sat by idly while millions were slaughtered when they could have done something to prevent it.

REFERENCES

1. The Bangladeshi government followed the deliberate settlement of Bengalis in places like the Chittagong Hill Tracts.
2. Population figures can be difficult to verify, but these numbers have come from numerous sources. Also see, "Hindus most discriminated in Pak, Bangladesh". *Struggle for Hindu Existence*, 25 September 2010. <http://hinduexistence.org/2010/09/18/hindus-most-discriminated-in-pak-bangladesh-by-the-state-islamic-authority/>; Richard L. Benkin, "Ethnic Cleansing of Hindus continues in 2012". *Hindu Janajagruti Samhiti*; May 8, 2012, <http://interfaithstrength.com/BD2012a.html>; and "Bangladesh Overview," *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*, <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=5632>.
3. On 22 February 2014, Indian Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi addressed the problem in a landmark speech in Silchar, Assam. He promised to stop illegal migration from Bangladesh and defend Bangladesh's beleaguered Hindus. "We must accommodate Hindu Bangladeshi migrants: Modi in Assam". *The Times of India*, 22 February 2014.
4. Yet, the All India Muslim League's political and ideological descendants today refuse Israel's place as a Jewish state.
5. Amnesty International, *Annual Report, 2013: The state of the world's human rights*, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/bangladesh/report-2013>.
6. Richard Benkin, "Bangladesh's Hindus are dying. Are we okay with letting it happen?," Address to Human Rights Center for Bangladesh, Dallas, Texas,

- January 19, 2013. <http://www.interfaithstrength.com/Dallas.htm>
7. Richard L. Benkin, *A Quiet Case of Ethnic Cleansing: the Murder of Bangladesh's Hindus*. New Delhi, Akshaya Prakashan, 2012. p.30.
 8. *Ibid.*, p.281.
 9. "Govt to ensure minority rights, CHT peace treaty: PM". *Daily Star*, Dhaka, 30 April 2009.
 10. Rabindranath Trivedi, "Bangladesh High Court delivered Rule Nisi on government hearing HRCBM's writ on Vested Property Act". *Asian Tribune*, 9 November 2008. <http://www.asiantribune.com/?q=node/14087>. Also see Benkin, *A Quiet Case of Ethnic Cleansing, op.cit.*, pp.183-185.
 11. Richard L. Benkin, "A Terrifying Existence," The term "pogrom" originally referred to anti-Jewish attacks in Czarist Russia that took place with the government's complicity. The term has come into more general usage to describe similar actions against any religious, ethnic, or other easily stigmatized community.
 12. "Bangladesh scraps caretaker system, BNP vows to protest amendments". *Jagran Post*, 30 June 2011. Also see K M A Malik, "Changes of Bangladesh Constitution: What the government is up to?". *Sonar Bangladesh*, <http://www.interfaithstrength.com/images/Changes.htm>.
 13. Richard L. Benkin, "A Terrifying Existence". *The Pioneer*, 21 July 2009, <http://www.interfaithstrength.com/images/Pogrom.html>
 14. Incidents through 2010 are documented in detail in Benkin, *A Quiet Case of Ethnic Cleansing, op. cit.*, pp.311-331. Incidents after that time come primarily from Advocate Rabindra Ghosh and through him Bangladesh Minority Watch and Global Human Rights Defence; they all have been confirmed by his direct testimony and my own associates' investigations. Also see "GHRD Submission: Bangladesh, Universal Periodic Review, 16th Session to the UN Human Rights Council, 2013". *Global Human Rights Defence*, October 2012. <http://ghrd.org/FilesPage/4129/UPR-GHRD-2012-BD.pdf>.
 15. The incidents in 2012 and 2013 have been verified by me and my associates, reported in local papers, and have been uncovered and investigated by Human Rights Advocate Rabindra Ghosh, founder of the Bangladesh Minority Watch and an impeccable source of information. He has come under frequent attack by government agents or others, which the government refuses to prosecute or even investigate. He is also the attorney who has tried to represent the imprisoned Hindus referred to above.
 16. Unpublished letter to *The New York Times*, April 2012. <http://www.hafsite.org/media/pr/haf-writes-ny-times-highlighting-human-rights-violations-bangladesh>. The Hindu American Foundation has also been a credible partner for years in confirming ongoing anti-Hindu atrocities. See for instance, "Hindus in South Asia and the Diaspora: A Survey of Human Rights 2011". Hindu American Foundation, 12 March 2012. http://www.hafsite.org/sites/default/files/HHR_2011_FINAL.pdf.
 17. Personal testimony reported in Benkin *A Quiet Case of Ethnic Cleansing, op. cit.*, p.67.
 18. W. I. Thomas, *The Unadjusted Girl*. Boston, Little, Brown, 1923.
 19. Richard L. Benkin, "Is "Moderate Muslim" an Oxymoron?" *New English Review*, July 2012.

PROFILING NON-STATE ARMED MILITANT GROUPS OF BANGLADESH

ANURAG TRIPATHI

In the past several years a number of militant groups have emerged in Bangladesh. Some of them are affiliated with political parties while others have no affiliation. Rivalry between the leaders of the nation's two largest political parties *Bangladesh Nationalist Party* (BNP) and *Awami League* (AL) has led to an ongoing series of demonstrations, strikes, and, increasingly, to politically motivated violence. The BNP is widely perceived as being pro-Pakistani and supporter of extremist ideology while AL is perceived as to support secular ideology. The rise of radical political and religious parties like *Jamaat-e-Islami* (JeI) has promoted the growth of *madrassas* (religious seminaries) in the country, mostly funded by West Asian countries.¹ These *madrassas* have hosted various terrorist groups anxious to recruit and train young students.

The other prominent cause for the emergence of militant Islam in Bangladesh is the state failure to address problems of poverty, corruption, and the lack of good governance. As a result, large segment of population has no faith on State institutions. In such a political atmosphere, religious organisations spread their influence in the society. These organisations also highlight the failure of State for tackling genuine problems and preach extremist ideology. Over the last two decades, a number of militant groups have established their presence through violent acts of terrorism in Bangladesh. The competition for political support has led to this kind of terrorism being largely ignored by mainstream political parties. This ignorance and inaction not only exacerbates the issue, but even promotes political terrorism by signalling tacit acquiescence.

Notably, the Islamist armed groups in Bangladesh, *Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh* (JMB) and *Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh* (HuJI-B), like many of the like-minded groups in Pakistan, aim at establishing

Islamic rule in Bangladesh. What makes these groups different is the kind of patronage they get from the constituencies like the JeI and the BNP. The JeI, which played a major role in killing millions of innocent individuals during the Liberation War in 1971, continues to be major supporter of all these groups. In the last few years, Bangladesh has also been witnessing the involvement of *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* (HuT), a pan-Islamic radical group, in radicalising the youth and intellectuals.² Several new Non-State Armed Insurgent Groups (NSAIGs) have emerged in Bangladesh.

JAMA'ATUL MUJAHIDEEN BANGLADESH (JMB)

Formation and Objectives JMB was formed in 1998 in Palampur District (Jamalpur District according to SATP) in Bangladesh.³ While the exact origin is shrouded in mystery, its existence came to notice on 20 May 2002 with the arrest of eight Islamist militants at Parbatipur in the Dinajpur District along with 25 petrol bombs and documents detailing the outfit's activities. Subsequently, on 13 February 2003, the JMB reportedly carried out seven bomb explosions in the Chhoto Gurgola area of Dinajpur town in which three persons were wounded.⁴ Some reports suggest that it is the youth front of the *Al Mujahideen*, an organisation allegedly formed in the mid-1990s but whose existence is still ambiguous. Some believe that the JMB is another name for the vigilante Islamist group- the *Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh* (JMJB).⁵ The JMB was proscribed by the Government on 23 February 2005.

The JMB aims at establishing the rule of Islam in Bangladesh through an armed struggle. The outfit is opposed to the establishment of democracy and calls for the conduct of government under Islamic law. On 17 August 2005, while claiming responsibility for the serial blasts through leaflets, in Bangla and Arabic, left at the site of the explosions across the country, the JMB said: "We're the soldiers of Allah. We've taken up arms for the implementation of Allah's law the way Prophet, Sahabis and heroic Mujahideen have done for centuries... It is time to implement Islamic law in Bangladesh. There is no future with man-made law." The JMB said the blasts were its "third call" to establish Islamic rule in Bangladesh. "If ignored and [if] our people are arrested or persecuted, *Jama'atul Mujahideen* will take the counter-action," the leaflets said. They also warned the United States and Britain against occupation of Muslim lands: "It is also to warn Bush and Blair to vacate Muslim countries, or to face Muslim upsurge." Espousing a radical variant of Islam, the outfit is opposed to

cultural functions, cinema halls, shrines and NGOs⁶. One of the most important objectives of JMB is to free Muslims of the influence of 'anti-Islam forces' and practices that brought women out of their houses.

Leadership and Area of Operation The present leader of the outfit is Saidur Rahman, former *Amir* (Chief) of Jelin Hobiganj District. In March 2007 JMB's top leadership including its supreme commander Maulana Abdur Rahman and second in command Bangla Bhai and four other *Majlish-e-Shura* (Advisory council) members were executed as they were found guilty of killing two judges in Jhalakatti in November 2005. Prior to March 2007 the group had three leaders, the supreme commander Maulana Abdur Rahman, second in command Bangla Bhai and Dr. Asadullah Galib, leader of *Ahle Hadith Andolon Bangladesh*. Dr. Galib, a teacher of Arabic language in Rajshahi University was arrested in 2005. The group also had a seven member *Majlish-e-Shura*, which looked after the operational activities.⁷ *Daily Star* reported on 28 August 2005 that though the outfit was formed in Jamalpur District, its terrorist campaign is based in northern and north-western Bangladesh. According to *Growing Fanaticism and Extremism in Bangladesh: Shades of Taliban*, published by the AL, the JMB is active in the Dinajpur, Joypurhat, Jamalpur and Bagerhat Districts. Although the activities of Bangla Bhai were mainly in southern Bangladesh, the group has networks across the country. It was able to carry out country wide bomb blasts in August 2005 where 500 bombs were planted in 64 districts.⁸

Cadre and Organisation The outfit is known to maintain about 10,000 full time and 100,000 part-time cadres. Reports also suggest that there are approximately 10 lakh trainees of the outfit. The cadres belong to a wide spectrum of the society, including teachers of universities, *madrassas* and common people. There are different wings of the outfit, including those related to finance, public relations, external links and the publicity and recruitment wing, which is reportedly the largest of them all. While a relatively small wing looks after arms training, the intelligence wing has cells in different political and non-governmental organizations.⁹

Finances and Weaponry The group receives funding from different sources like individual donors from countries like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia. Funding also comes via NGOs which under cover of establishing different welfare institutions like orphanage, *madrassas* and dispensaries facilitate the group's activities. NGOs such as the Kuwait-based *Revival of Islamic Heritage* and *Doulatul Kuwait*, UAE-based *Al Fuzaira*, *Khairul Ansar Al Khairia*, Bahrain-based *Doulatul Bahrain* and the Saudi Arabia-based *Al*

Haramaine Islamic Institute have provided, over the years, generous funding to the outfit.

The JMB and its leaders are reported to have invested in a large number of shrimp farms and cold storages in the south-western region of Bangladesh. The outfit is also alleged to be involved in activities such as money laundering which ensures a steady flow of finances to its coffers. Funds through the *Hundi* (illegal money laundering mechanism) channel are generated through operatives in places such as Dhaka, Jessore and Chittagong.

An analysis of the seizures from JMB cadres and their hideouts indicates that the outfit uses or has access to time bombs, detonators, petrol bombs and RDX explosives. Militants of the JMB receive extensive training in the making of explosives. The JMB's involvement in the 17 August 2005 country-wide bombings is a pointer towards its explosive making and planting expertise. The JMB is also reported to be procuring its arms and explosives from the militant groups in Pakistan, Myanmar, Thailand and China, which are brought into the country through the land and sea routes.¹⁰

HARKAT-UL-JIHAD-AL ISLAMI BANGLADESH (HUJI-B)

Formation and Objectives The *Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh* (HuJI-B) was established in 1992, reportedly with assistance from Osama bin Laden's *International Islamic Front* (IIF). On 30 April 1992, several HuJI-B leaders addressed a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club in capital Dhaka and demanded that Bangladesh be converted into an Islamic State. The outfit's activities, however, were noticed in June 1996 after the AL came to power. The HuJI-B was proscribed by the *Bangladesh Nationalist Party* (BNP)-led coalition Government on 17 October 2005.¹¹ HuJI-B aims to establish *Islamic Hukumat* (rule) in Bangladesh by waging war and killing progressive intellectuals. It draws inspiration from bin Laden and the erstwhile Taliban regime of Afghanistan. At one point of time, the group issued a slogan, *Amra Sobai Hobo Taliban, Bangla Hobe Afghanistan* (We will all become Taliban and we will turn Bangladesh into Afghanistan). HuJI-B recruits are indoctrinated in the mould of radical Islam.¹²

Leadership and Area of Operation The HuJI-B is led by Shawkat Osman *alias* Sheikh Farid. Imtiaz Quddus is the general secretary of the outfit. The coastal area stretching from the port city of Chittagong south

through Cox's Bazaar to the Myanmar border, notorious for piracy, smuggling and arms running, is the principal area of activity of the HuJI-B.¹³ The group reportedly maintains six camps in the hilly areas of Chittagong, where its cadres are trained in the use of weapons. Unconfirmed reports also indicate that it maintains six training camps near Cox's Bazaar. The HuJI-B cadres allegedly also infiltrate frequently into the eastern corridor of India to maintain contacts with terrorist and subversive outfits of the region. HuJI-B has been found to be responsible for a number of terrorist attacks orchestrated in Indian urban centres, in recent years.

Cadre and Organisation Although there is no authoritative information on the actual cadre strength, most reports state it to be around 15,000. Several such recruits were trained in the Kormi and Kasia areas of Bangladesh. Further, many hundred recruits were reportedly trained at various training camps in Afghanistan, primarily during the reign of the Taliban. Both the local residents and foreigners are recruited into the HuJI-B. Besides, refugees from Myanmar are a significant source of cadres for the outfit. They include stateless Rohingyas, whose families have fled Myanmar over the years allegedly due to religious persecution. Cadres of the HuJI-B are primarily recruited from various *madrassas* (seminaries). The *madrassas* essentially impart religious training and most of them are financed by Arab charities. Reports also indicate that many HuJI-B recruits have seen 'action' in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, Chechnya and Afghanistan.¹⁴

Finances and Weaponry The HuJI-B reportedly receives financial assistance from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan through Muslim Non-Governmental Organisations in Bangladesh, including the *Adarsa Kutir*, *Al Faruk Islamic Foundation* and *Hataddin*. It is also suspected to be generously financed by the ISI of Pakistan.¹⁵

JAGRATA MUSLIM JANATA BANGLADESH (JMJB)

Formation and Objectives The *Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh* (JMJB), an Islamist vigilante outfit that espouses the ideals of the Taliban, seeks to ensure that the northwestern region of the country is 'swept clean' of the activities of left-wing extremist groups, primarily the *Purba Banglar Communist Party* (PBCP). A section of the Bangladeshi media points out that the JMJB is an outgrowth of the Islamist militant outfit JMB. Indeed there is considerable overlap between the leadership of the JMB and the JMJB. Other reports have indicated that the JMJB is a youth front of the

outlawed militant group *Harkat-ul-Jihad*. As per its senior leader Maulana Abdur Rahman, who is also the chief of JMB, the outfit was formed in 1998. However, when the JMJB first came to limelight on 1 April 2004, it was also known by other names like *Mujahidin Alliance Council*, *Islami Jalsha* and *Muslim Raksha Mujahideen Oikya Parishad*.

The JMJB follows the ideals of the Taliban militia and propagates a movement based on *Jihad*. Its chief has been quoted as stating that "Our model includes many leaders and scholars of Islam. But we will take as much (ideology) from the Taliban as we need." It has explicitly stated on more than one occasion that it does not subscribe to the prevailing political system in Bangladesh and that it would "build a society based on the Islamic model laid out in Holy Quran-*Hadith*." The JMJB functions with an avowed objective of neutralizing the left-wing extremists, especially cadres of the PBCP. The professed long-term goal of the outfit is to usher in an 'Islamic revolution' in Bangladesh through *Jihad*.

Leadership and Area of Operation In the early hours of 30 March 2007, JMJB chief Siddiqui Islam *alias* Azizur Rahman *alias* Omar Ali Litu *alias* Bangla Bhai was hanged in the Kashimpur jail, where he was kept since his arrest on 6 March 2006 from the remote Rampur village under the Muktagachha sub-district of Mymensingh district, 120 kilometres north of Dhaka after skirmishes with the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB). Five other top militants of the JMB including its 'supreme commander' Maulana Abdur Rahman were hanged on the same day. All these militants including Siddiqui Islam had been pronounced guilty by the Supreme Court of involvement in the killing of two judges in Jhalakathi in November 2005. On 4 March 2007, President Iajuddin Ahmed had rejected their mercy petitions paving the way for their execution.

The highest decision-making body of the JMJB is the seven-member *Majlish-e-Shura*. Apart from Siddiqui Islam and JMB chief Abdur Rahman, other members of the council included Ashikur Rahman, Hafez Mahmud, Tarek Moni and Khaled. Information regarding the *Shura*, after the 30 March 2007 executions, is not available. 'Commander' Bangla Bhai hailed from Bogra district and claimed that as a college student, he had joined the *Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS)*, student wing of the JeI. Bangla Bhai also claimed that he quit the ICS in 1995 after the JeI accepted female leadership, which according to him was a sacrilege. On the other hand, Maulana Abdur Rahman was reported to have worked at the Saudi embassy in Dhaka between 1985 and 1990. He studied at the Madina Islamic University in Saudi Arabia and has reportedly traveled to India,

Pakistan and Afghanistan, among other countries. His last visit to Pakistan was reportedly in the year 2003.

The JMJB created strong bases mostly in northwest Bangladesh, in the Districts of Rajshahi, Satkhira, Naogaon, Bagerhat, Jessore, Chittagong, Joypurhat, Natore, Rangpur, Bogra, Chittagong, and Khulna. It has allegedly spread its network to most *madrassas* and other educational institutions in these districts. The outfit also established at least 10 camps at Atrai and Raninagar in the Naogaon District, Bagmara in Rajshahi District, and Naldanga and Singra in Natore District. There have been reports of JMJB recruits being given training through recorded speeches of Osama bin Laden and the video footages of warfare training at the Al Qaeda's Farooque camp (now defunct) in Afghanistan. Some JMJB leaders reportedly stated that the outfit is headquartered in Dhaka. However, media reports indicated all activities of the organisation revolving around Jamalpur District.

Cadre and Organisation Bangla Bhai on occasions claimed that JMJB commands the strength of 300,000 activists across the country. The outfit has about 10,000 full-time activists and spends up to Bangladesh Taka (BDT) seven hundred thousand on them a month. The JMJB reportedly has a three-tier organisation. The first tier of the outfit consists of activists called *Ehsar* who are recruited on a full-time basis and act at the behest of the higher echelons. The second tier, known as *Gayeri Ehsar*, has over 100,000 part-time activists. The third tier involves those who indirectly co-operate with the JMJB. According to JMJB leaders, the whole country has been divided into nine organisational divisions. Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet and Chittagong have an organisational divisional office each, while Dhaka has two divisional offices and Rajshahi three. The outfit also had committees in each village and according to media reports villagers were being forced to join the committees. If anybody refused, he was branded as a 'collaborator' of the PBCP and taken to the JMJB 'trial centre'.

Finances and Weaponry Regarding the sources of income, Bangla Bhai was reported to have said, "People from all rungs of society are generously paying us funds, no one is pressurised for money. If someone happily makes a donation, there's no problem." Abdur Rahman also was reported to have set up a mosque and a seminary with financial assistance from the non-governmental organization *Rabeta-e-Islam* and another organisation, *Islami Oytijjho Sangstha*.

JMJB cadres during their vigilante operations in 2004 were seen with firearms. They also reportedly wielded swords, other sharp weapons,

hammers and hockey sticks. Reports have indicated that the JMJB also had access to crude explosives.

PURBA BANGLAR COMMUNIST PARTY (PBCP)

Formation and Objectives The *Purba Banglar Communist Party* (PBCP) is among the many Maoist splinter organizations in Bangladesh. It was founded in the year 1968 following a split in the *Bangladesh Communist Party* (BCP). It has been outlawed since the time of the military regime of Zia-ur-Rehman. There has been a spurt in the activities of the PBCP since the beginning of the year 2002, in a reversal of trend. The PBCP has a revolutionary agenda of capturing state power through armed struggle. It draws inspiration from the Chinese revolution.

In the opinion of the PBCP, oppression by the then West Pakistani government on the people was the principal reason that led to the Liberation War in the territories of the then East Pakistan following which Bangladesh was formed. The PBCP is staunchly nationalist and perceives that India is a hegemon in the sub-continent, which according to it is the 'principle contraction' facing Bangladesh. The PBCP is strongly opposed to the presence of feudal elements in Bangladesh. Ideologically, it is closer to the Marxist-Leninist groups of India and wishes to launch a joint movement along with progressive parties in India, particularly the Naxalites of West Bengal. The PBCP entertains the hope that China would, at some time in future, provide significant assistance in realising its goals.

Leadership and Area of Operation Mofakkar Chowdhury is the chief of the PBCP. The PBCP has pockets of influence in south-west Bangladesh, bordering the Indian State of West Bengal. Its presence can be noticed in Districts such as Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Magura, Meherpur, Narail, Kushtia, Jessore, Jhenidah, Chuadanga and Pirojpur.

Activities and Financing PBCP cadres have reportedly been involved in acts of murder, robbery, extortion, land grabbing and abduction for ransom. Bangladesh Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury said on 8 April 2002 in Parliament that the PBCP was being encouraged by the opposition to cause disturbances in some parts of the country. Speaking in the context of all outlawed parties including the PBCP, the Minister stated that "Members of the outlawed parties are involved in rape, murder, dacoity, extortion, and other terrorist activities as well as in land grabbing."

According to reports the PBCP primarily targets landowners and contractors and extorts money from them. It is believed that PBCP cadres

harass businessmen for finances and torture people in remote villages. The outlaws are alleged to be indulging in settling land disputes in rural areas. In the process of adjudicating disputes, PBCP cadres collect money through their strong-arm tactics from both the parties to a dispute. Besides, development activities undertaken by the government are yet another source of 'income' for the PBCP. In its pockets of influence, the PBCP levies a 'tax' on civil contractors who undertake construction works such as laying roads and bridges and constructing culverts and schools. It is reported that there is a certain degree of reluctance among contractors to undertake works owing to the extortion threats of the PBCP. This has impeded development work in south-west Bangladesh.

The spurt in the PBCP's activities is a result of several hundreds of its surrendered cadres being released by the erstwhile AL government a little ahead of the 1 October 2001-general elections. Also, many more cadres, subsequently, secured bail. It is reported that, since the time these cadres gained freedom, there have been vigorous attempts to regroup and perpetrate acts of violence. Reports indicate that the outlaws met with some degree of success in their efforts. Within the first three months of the year 2002 alone, PBCP cadres had reportedly killed a little less than 100 persons, in 10 districts in south west Bangladesh. Also, between 1998 and 2002, PBCP cadres are believed to have killed 18 political activists belonging to rival groups, reportedly for turf control, as well as to grab prime land. The PBCP also publishes a journal *Purba Bangla*, meaning East Bengal.

ISLAMI CHHATRA SHIBIR (ICS)

Formation and Objectives The *Islami Chhatra Shibir* (ICS) is the student wing of the JeI, which came into existence in 1941. According to the outfit, its objectives are to struggle for changing the existing system of education on the basis of Islamic values, to inspire students to acquire Islamic knowledge and to prepare them to take part in the struggle for establishing Islamic way of life. A significant aim of the outfit is to establish an Afghanistan-Taliban type Islamist regime in Bangladesh. Consequently, the outfit is opposed to forces of modernization, secularism and democracy.

Leadership and Area of Operation Nurul Islam Bulbul is the Central President of the ICS. Mohammed Nazrul Islam is the Secretary General of the outfit. Other important leaders are: Kamal Ahmed Sikder, A. S. M. Faruq, Muhammad Mujibur Rahman Manju, Muhammad Raisul and A. S. M. Ashraf Mahmud Uzzal. Executive Council is the highest decision-

making body of the outfit. The ICS has a central secretariat, comprising eight members. In addition, the ICS has established 6 divisions countrywide: Dhaka Division, Chittagong Division, Sylhet Division, Rajshahi Division, Khulna Division and Barisal Division. Each division has several Districts and other units under its jurisdiction. The ICS is one of the strongest student fronts in the Universities of Chittagong, Dhaka, Rajshahi and Jahangirnagar. It is also emerging as a dominant group in the Khulna and Sylhet Universities. Within the vast *madrassa* structure in Bangladesh, the ICS is reported to be a dominant and uncontested organisation.

External Linkages As one of the largest Islamist student organisations in South Asia, the ICS maintains close relationship with various Islamist fundamentalist organisations of different countries. In 1979, the ICS secured membership of *International Islamic Federation of Student Organisation* (IIFSO). Its former President Dr. S. A. M. Taher was also the Secretary General of IIFSO. The outfit is also a member of the *World Assembly of Muslim Youth* (WAMY). The outfit is also reported to be maintaining close links with the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's external intelligence agency. With the help of the latter, it is reportedly working to support Islamist subversive agenda in many regions in India, particularly in areas bordering Bangladesh. The ISI is also reportedly providing substantial amount of funds to the ICS. Other Islamic countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, have contributed a major proportion of its financial resources.

The ICS also maintains close links with various terrorist outfits operating in South Asia and Afghanistan. These terrorist outfits reportedly carry out their activities in Bangladesh through the ICS. The ICS reportedly helps them recruit and indoctrinate fanatic youth. A significant number of them were reportedly sent to Pakistan and Afghanistan during the reign of the Taliban regime where a large number of fanatic youth come under the direct command of Osama bin Laden.

The ICS is also part of a larger Islamist extremist network of the HUJI-B, *Jeland Islami Oikyo Jote* (IOJ). This network has assisted the terrorist outfits in developing an effectual infrastructure for training as also a network of clandestine camps and shelters for stockpiling weapons and supplies in Bangladesh.

SOME OTHER OUTFITS

Shahadat-e al Haqima (SAH) was launched in Rajshahi District on 8 February 2003. The leader of SAH is Kawsar Hossain Siddique. The group was believed to be funded by the infamous mafia don Dawood Ibrahim. It was believed that SAH was working in Bangladesh for many years before it was formally launched in February 2003. The group in its initiation put forward 7 point demands and renounced the Liberation War of 1971 and the constitution and spoke about its objective of attaining state power through violent means. The group was banned in February 2003 as the then BNP-JeI government found it to be a threat to the country's stability. Although there is no authenticity about the size of the strength of SAH, the group's leader Kawsar claimed that the outfit has 10,000 commandos and 25,000 fighters working in the country to bring Islamic revolution. The group also claimed to have links with Al Qaeda.¹⁶ However, nothing has been heard about this group's activity for the last two years.

Hizbut Touhid was established in 1994 at Korotia village in Tangail District of Bangladesh. The organisation is led by Bayezid Khan Panni *alias* Selim Panni of Tangail District who claims himself to be the *Imam-Uz-Zaman*, meaning someone just after the prophet of Islam. *Hizbut Touhid* aspires to establish a world under the leadership of *Imam-Uz-Zaman*. It is against democracy and democratic institutions as it considers them to be the rules of evil. Also, the organization opposes leadership of women in politics and also working of women. It also feels that the Muslims who are not following the ideology of *Hizbut Touhid* are not real Muslim. The organisation believes that every man and woman in Islam are armies of Allah and they should behave like armies in every walk of their lives. *Hizbut* Chief Panni has written many books like *Dazzal* and *This Islam is not at all Islam*. In the book *Dazzal*, Panni argues that Jews and Christians should be eliminated by the Muslims.¹⁷ The group promotes armed struggle for establishment of Islamic rule in the world. Books and leaflets written by Imam Panni are the main guiding force for the group. CDs, books and leaflets are widely distributed among people to attract cadres. Through these leaflets the group urges people to join them to establish Islamic rule, rejecting all 'man made' laws.

The outfit has around 1,200 trained cadres.¹⁸ It also has a women's wing. Some media reports also claim that the organisation is recruiting and training people to establish a suicide squad.¹⁹ The cadres are known to carry hammers, chilly powder and guns with them. In September 2003

Hizbut Touhid cadres hammered a man to death in Pagla Bazaar in Narayanganj District. The group is active in several southwestern districts including Kushtia, Meherpur, Jhenidah, Magura and Chuadanga. The organisation also has its presence in the capital Dhaka and it is operating from Uttara, an upper middle class neighbourhood of the city. 31 of its members were arrested in Kustia District including the group's regional commander in April 2009. One of the major hurdle in booking this group is that it often carries out its activities under cover of *Tablig Jamaat* (Proselytising Group). The organisation is suspected of receiving foreign funding. Investigations are on to identify the donors. The group is also suspected to have foreign linkages because Panni, who left Bangladesh soon after the country's independence developed connections with many fanatic religious groups of the world during his stay abroad.

Islami Samaj is a breakaway faction of JeI. The organisation was established on 6 May 1993 by Mufti Abdul Jabbar. The present *Amir* of the organisation is Syed Humayun Kabir, a former member of ICS. The organisation's objective is to establish Islamic rule in the country. It also opposes democracy as it feels that it is a man made system and contradictory to rule of Islam.²⁰ The organisation urges people to revolt against people's sovereignty and the man-made system and to establish sovereignty of Allah and Islamic rule in the country. *Islami Samaj's* headquarter is located at Kushiara village in the District of Comilla. Eight *Islami Samaj* members were arrested on 7 August 2008, from the premises of District and Sessions Judge's court in Bandarban District and seven others were arrested in Jamalpur District while they were distributing leaflets of the organisation. *Islami Samaj* has close connection with JMB.

Ulema Anjuman Al Baiyinaat Bangladesh (UAB) is formed by the followers of Dhaka based religious organization *Razarbagh Dargah Sharif*. The organisation operates from the Dargah situated in 5 Outer Circular Road, Dhaka. The present Peer of the Dargah is Syed Muhammad Mukhleshur Rahman. This group claims that it follows the Sufi cult of Islam.²¹ Its significance is that it is against JeI and all other Islamic political parties. UAB believes that these parties are actually doing business in the name of religion. The group also feels that mainstream political parties like AL and BNP are not doing their job properly and such parties are there only for the sake of doing politics. Interestingly, UAB favours trial of the war criminals of the Liberation War of 1971. Although the group claims that it is against terrorism and militancy but its publications—the newspapers daily *Al Ehsan* and monthly *Anjuman Al Baiyinaat* have written

in support of *jihad*.²² UAB claims that it has thirty lakh followers.

Hizb-ut Tahrir (HuT) Bangladesh is part of the global Sunni political party that aspires to establish *Khilafat* by uniting all Islamic countries. Like its counterparts worldwide, it wants to establish *Shariah* in Bangladesh. HuT has three clear goals: to establish a community of like-minded HuT members in host states, to sway public opinion in one or more host states to facilitate change of government, and, finally, to establish a new government that will implement Islamic laws. Recently, HuT has published “Islamic Manifesto” for Bangladesh demanding a *Khilafat*, implementation of *Shariah* law. HuT is also against participating in elections as it views elections being contrary to *Shariah* law. The Chief of HuT in Bangladesh is Mohiuddin Ahmed. Its cadres are mostly university students.²³

Islamic Democratic Party (IDP) was launched in May 2008 but it came to limelight in September 2008 only after it held functions all across the country during the month of *Ramdan*. The members of the party are mostly Afghan war veterans. The objective of the party is to establish *Shariah* law in Bangladesh. Sheikh Abdus Salam, who was also a leader of HuJI-B, heads the party. Interestingly, IDP members deny their linkage with HuJI-B or having any hand in the violent activities carried out by HuJI-B in the country. They claim that the acts of violence are actually the handiwork of a splinter group headed by Mufti Hanan and Abdur Rouf. Although the group was permitted by the caretaker government to launch political party but it was debarred from participating in the ninth parliamentary election held in December 2008. Its leader Abdus Salam is presently behind the bars.

Touhid Trust is an NGO established by Dr Galib of *Ahle Hadith Andolan* in 2001. The NGO was active in northern Bangladesh. It used to receive funds from Kuwait based NGO organisation *Revival of Islamic Heritage Society* (RIHS). However, RIHS stopped its funding to the Trust in 2005 following dispute over its management. It is almost dead at the moment.

Tamir-ud-Deen is founded by HuJI-B leader Mufti Abdur Rauf, an Afghan war veteran. Mufti Abdur Rouf, alumni of Darul Ulum Deobond *madrassa* in India, established the outfit after he was expelled from *Islami Dawati Kafela* (IDK) in 1999. IDK was founded by a section of HuJI-B activists in late 1990’s. However, *Tamir-ud-Deen* was renamed as *Hijbe Abu Omar* after Mufti Rauf was arrested in August 2006 for continuation of its activities. The organisation believes in armed revolution. Majority of

its cadres are teachers and students of *Kawmi Madrasa*. In fact, Rauf himself was a teacher in a *Kawmi Madrasa*. *Majlis-e-Sura* is the highest policy making body of the organisation. The organisation has a country wide network spread in places including Dhaka, Mymensingh, Sherpur, Barisal, Patuakhali, Madaripur, Panchagarh, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Chittagong, Sylhet and Dinajpur Districts. The organisation is also believed to be working to send activists abroad to fight the 'enemies of Islam' in places across the globe. For funding, the organisation often stages fake kidnappings involving fellow operatives and extorts hefty ransoms from families. It also collects money from pious Muslims and *Zakat-al-Fitrah*.²⁴

REFERENCES

1. "Bangladesh During Civilian Rule (1991-2000) Upsurge of Militant Islam", downloaded from http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/18353/12/12_chapter%204.pdf accessed on 16 May 2014.
2. Surinder Kumar Sharma and Anshuman Behera, *Militant Groups in South Asia*. New Delhi, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2004.
3. "*Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB): A Profile*", downloaded from <http://www.ipcs.org/special-report/south-asia/jamaatul-mujahideen-bangladesh-jmb-a-profile-11.html> accessed on 16 February 2015.
4. "*Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)*", downloaded from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/JMB.htm> accessed on 16 February 2015.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, 2009, "Understanding 12 extremist groups of Bangladesh", downloaded from http://www.observerindia.com/cms/export/orfonline/modules/analysis/attachments/Bangladesh-Militant-Groups_1246945884723.pdf accessed on 12 January 2015.
8. *Ibid.*
9. "*Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)*", *op. cit.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. "*Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B)*", downloaded from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/Huj.htm> accessed on 20 February 2015.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. "*Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB)*", downloaded from <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/terroristoutfits/JMJB.htm> accessed on 20 February 2015.
16. "Bangladesh bans Dawood-funded terrorist group Al-Hikma". *The Hindustan Times*, 17 February 2003.
17. Sunita Paul, "HuT planning offensives in September '09", *www.modern Ghana.com*, 16 April 2009 down loaded from <http://www.modernghana.com/>

- news/211300/1/hut-planning-offensives-in-september-09.html, accessed on 22 May 2009.
18. "Hizb-ut Towhid men sent to jail". *The Daily Star*, 19 April 2009.
 19. Sunita Paul, " Silent rise of HizbUtTowhid", www.modernghana.com, 14 April 2009, downloaded from <http://www.modernghana.com/newsp/210898/1/pagenum2/silent-rise-of-hizb-ut-towhid.html>, accessed on 14 May 2009.
 20. New Militant group on the block", www.bangladeshnews.com.bd, Sunday. 10 August 2008, downloaded from <http://www.bangladeshnews.com.bd/2008/08/10/new-militant-group-on-the-block/> accessed on 15 May 2009.
 21. "A Muslim following the teachings and traditions of an ancient form of Islamic mysticism", downloaded from www <http://www.yourdictionary.com/sufi> accessed on 16 May 2009.
 22. "Murdered Muslims of India are not terrorists, but Shaheed. Allah Ta'aala says that they are alive." *Alishan*, 27 November 2008, downloaded from <http://www.al-ihsan.net/protibad.asp?language=EN&id=292>, accessed on 25 May 2009.
 23. Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury, "Bangladesh: Hub of international terror?", *Global Politician*, 13 April 2008, Downloaded from <http://74.125.153.132/search?q=cache:MUZ11L29S78J:www.globalpolitician.com/24493-bangladesh+Hizb+ut-Tahrir+bangladesh+linkages&cd=7&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=in>, accessed on 16 May 2009.
 24. "It is religious tax/alms (*Zakat*) paid on the day when Muslims break the fasting period at the end of the month of Ramadan. Downloaded from <http://www.ezsoftech.com/ramadan/ramadan53.asp> accessed on 1 June 2009.

ROHINGYAS' PROBLEM IN BANGLADESH

SUJIT KUMAR DATTA

ABSTRACT

Bangladesh is one of the countries facing the problems of refugees, migrations and displacements. The emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country bears testimony of refugee issues and concerns. In the early 1990s Bangladesh witnessed influx of a quarter of a million who fled to Bangladesh due to persecution by the Myanmar authorities. This study examines the public view on the involvement of Rohingya refugees in various crimes in Bangladesh.

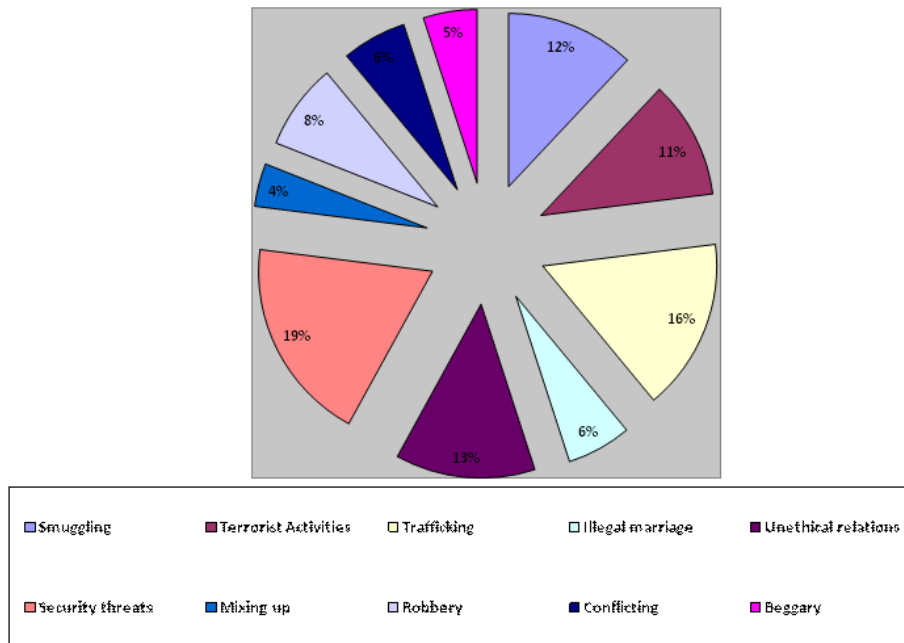
INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of 1991-92, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) showed sympathy to Rohingyas and made substantial efforts to accommodate them. With the supervision of GOB and financed by the UNHCR, 21 camps were set up in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban to accommodate about 260,000 Rohingyas. At present there are only two camps (Kutupalong and Nayapara) which accommodate 27,000 registered Rohingyas. There are 826 sheds in two camps where 4,956 families are accommodated, as each shed contains 6 families. Kutupalong camp officially housed 8,216 refugees, and Nayapara 13,405, as on December 2001. The size of the population in relation to the size of the actual living space accounts for many concerns, including health conditions, water and sanitation, and housing. Rohingya influx has not stopped yet and it is the major problem for Bangladesh.

400,000 illegal Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh have been causing law and order problem and damaging the environment. Bangladeshi foreign minister Dipu Moni in a statement stated that "some 28,000 registered refugees were living in two camps, and nearly 400,000

unregistered refugees living outside the camps are a heavy burden on Bangladesh economically, socially, environmentally and also in terms of law and order issues."¹

CRIMES COMMITTED BY ROHHINGYAS



Source: *Field report* 5-10 February 2012.

Since early 1990s, there has been growing trend to expand traditional definition of security to include non-traditional challenges. These challenges include threats from environmental degradation, illegal migration, HIV / AIDS and other infectious diseases, transnational crimes and others which pose serious threats to the security and well being of communities and individuals.²

Socio-Economic problems

In the recent years Rohingya issue has become a crucial problem in Bangladesh. The socio-economic sector is drastically hampered due to Rohingya refugees and the illegal inflow has not stopped yet. Ukhiya and Teknaf are the poverty prone areas of Bangladesh where majority of Rohingyas are sheltering after their arrival.

Due to the limitation of income source, lack of cultivable land, most people are depending on day labor. So Rohingyas are putting pressure on

the local job market and ultimately threatening the society and economy. According to field research, the residents of Ukhiya and Teknaf are more insecure than the Rohingyas. The GOB and UNHCR are jointly giving support to registered refugees. Unregistered ones are not getting support enough for their minimum standard of livelihood. So they are engaged in smuggling, trafficking, begging, conflicts, robbery, unethical physical relations, and so on. The following socio-economic problems are occurring in Bangladesh because of the Rohingyas. "True, they are doing some criminal activities in Cox's Bazar but it is not only they who are doing so, many of our politicians are engaged in crime as well".³

Security threats

The daily *Cox's Bazar* reported that "an unidentified Rohingya was killed in a shootout with BDR. While he was trafficking illegal Burmese goods to Bangladesh, BDR had an exchange of gunfire with traffickers. Two men died in the shootout, among them one was identified as a Rohingya by the BDR men".⁴ The 1994 UN Human Development Report identified drug trafficking, migration, terrorism, small arms proliferation and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as major threats to human security. The study shows that 19% respondents of local people think that registered Rohingyas are well organized and they want to make revolution to occupy Chittagong Division. 10% respondents assume that unregistered Rohingyas are being acute threat to the security. Above 500,000 unregistered Rohingyas are scattered mainly in Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and Chittagong city. They are living below extreme poverty line. Majority of the unregistered Rohingyas do not afford to maintain their family so they are becoming security threats to the society. The respondents also said that "our life, liberty and property are not safe". We are residing in an insecure situation and any moment we may have to suffer unexpected incidents if the GOB is unable to take effective efforts to resolve this problem. Poverty and insecurity are two sides of same coin. Econometric studies have shown that poverty feeds insecurity and insecurity feeds poverty both at the level of the state and the individual. In twenty first century non-traditional security concerns like poverty, health, environment and epidemic disease such as AIDS are given preference to traditional security issue. In these circumstances the GOB ought to take necessary steps with the help of UNHCR to remedy this situation. The Bangladesh government has appointed the police and Ansar for the security of the Rohingyas. Every camp has a Camp-In-Charge (CIC) to maintain law and order in the

camps. Apart from government security forces, camp management committee, block committee and security volunteers assist in managing the camps. Despite the security forces appointed by the government there is insecurity. In 2008, however, camp police tortured a young Rohingya refugee to death after another refugee involved in a personal dispute with him claimed he was a terrorist.⁵

Arms Trafficking

Illegal arms trade and infiltration of arms into Bangladesh are recent dynamics. It is a fact that most of the camp and non-camp Rohingyas are allegedly involved in arms trafficking in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border zone. For trafficking arms, India-Bangladesh border is being used by smugglers as a suitable transit route. Myanmar is a member state of 'Golden Triangle' having close link to Thailand-Cambodian trafficking syndicates. The militant groups are trying to recruit men from camps and non-camp refugees and they are buying and selling arms from these insurgent groups operating in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Indian border area. It is reported that at least 37 illegal arms smuggling syndicates are active in Bangladesh controlling the illegal arms market and supply to terrorist groups. Around 60 kilometers of the border area at Teknaf in the Cox's Bazar district, where there is little government security presence, is one of the main routes for arms trafficking. The gun runners face little resistance here and maintain several offices in the port city of Chittagong, the hill district of Khagrachhari and Bandarban, Cox's Bazar and Dhaka, where they maintain close contacts with various terrorist groups.⁶ According to the UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC), there are some 200,000 Rohingyas living in Bangladesh, of whom only 28,000 are documented and live in two Government camps assisted by the agency. Some of the refugees have been allegedly involved in various crimes including smuggling of arms and ammunition.⁷

Terrorist Activities

Several international, regional and local Islamic terrorist organizations are manipulating the Rohingyas to join and do dangerous tasks in the battlefield, clearing mines, and work as porters. According to Asian intelligence sources, Rohingya recruits were paid 30,000 taka (\$525) on joining and then 10,000 taka (\$175) per month. The families of recruits killed in action were offered 100,000 taka (1,750).⁸ Recruits were taken mostly via Nepal to Pakistan, where they were trained and sent further to

military camps in Afghanistan. Al Qaeda and Taliban have connections with a section of Rohingyas and they are engaged in terrorist activities. *Rohingya Solidarity Organization* (RSO) and the *Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front* (ARIF) both joined and formed the *Rohingya National Alliance* (RNA) in 1996. In 1998 two RSO factions and the ARIF merged into the *Arakan Rohingya National Organization* (ARNO).⁹ There are also other armed groups which are operating in the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Those include the *National Unity Party of Arakan* (NUPA) and the *Arakan Army*. Both these groups are mostly based among the Buddhist Rakhine population. A number of extremist Islamist groups such as *Harkat-ul-Jehad-al-Islami* (HUJI), *Jama'atul Mujahidin*, *Shahadat-e-Al-Hikma*, *Hizbut Tahrir* and *World Assembly of Muslim Youth* (WAMY) are linked to Rohingyas. In one of the panel discussions held in BISS, one panelist said that a large number of Rohingyas is involved in gun running along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Some have been connected to supplying weapons to terrorists and criminal syndicates including the JMB.¹⁰

Unemployment problem

Though unemployment problem is one of the core problems in Bangladesh, Rohingyas are putting extra pressure. Among 500,000 Rohingyas about 85% are unskilled and more than 90% are not literate. International community and GOB are not giving minimum support to provide for their livelihood. So obviously they have to depend on daily labour, rickshaw pulling, shop helpers, fishing, domestic workers, smuggling and trafficking etc. In Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, Chittagong and Dhaka city there are many more Rohingyas serving as a rickshaw pullers, an auto rickshaw or city bus driver, day labor or any other services. It has dampened the daily wage of locals, particularly of the daily labourer. Many locals whom we interviewed pointed out that before the arrival of the Rohingyas daily labour earned Taka 200 per day, but now the same person earns around Taka 60-70.¹¹

Prostitution

Sexual violation is becoming a common phenomenon inside and outside the camps day by day. According to field report we can find that about 13% registered and 12% unregistered Rohingyas are having unethical physical relations with the local youth. The local youth are losing morality and are also facing epidemic disease like AIDS. In 2008 Baishakhi Television telecast a three days serial reporting that four HIV infected

people were diagnosed. Majority of the respondents are concerned about the security of their school going and recently dropped out sons who are prone to such risks. In Kutupalong and Nayapara, about 50% of the unemployed and low income retailers deal with Rohingyas and gradually they engage in physical relations. Sometimes they forcefully rape the Rohingyas. Hasina Begum, a registered Rohingya was raped by the three local youth in 2008.

Prostitution is a major health concern for Rohingya residing areas. Inside and outside the camps, both camp and non-camp Rohingya women are increasingly being engaged into prostitution. Local people, even school going innocent boys are getting interested in sexual intercourse with Rohingya girls. During the field work, most respondents believed that the environment of Cox's Bazar is polluted by Rohingyas. Rohingyas are preferred for sex to local people as they give financial incentives to the local youth to make physical relations. Doing so, gradually they offer to get married and consequently they are getting integrated with local people. Every morning hundreds of Rohingya girls enter the Cox's Bazar town to earn through prostitution and go back to camp at night. They do not take permission to go outside the camp and always move freely. Most of the times, the unregistered Rohingyas do not afford to maintain their family due to limited source of earning, so they are obliged to engage in prostitution.

Smuggling

They are smuggling *yaba*, heroin, opium, narcotic drugs, and small arms. For smuggling from Myanmar beyond the region and the continent, both India and Bangladesh are used as transit points. In recent times *Yaba* (madness medicine), a synthetic drug manufactured mostly in Myanmar-Thai border, constitutes a significant component of drug smuggling on the border. If one observes the *Ukhiya news.com* and *Cox's Bazar news 24.com*, one finds that quite often police or BDR arrest the smugglers with huge amount of *Yaba* and other narcotic drugs. Myanmar is a member of 'Golden Triangle' and is also located in close proximity of major narco-producing region, the 'Golden Crescent', so that drug trafficking becomes a lucrative phenomenon. Bangladesh has been a major transit country for illegal weapons transfer to the insurgency ridden areas of South Asia on the one hand, and drug trafficking route of two of the world's largest drug producers.¹² Both registered and unregistered refugees are engaged in smuggling to maintain their family. In our surveys, about 14% unregistered and 12% registered refugees are enrolled as smugglers.

Police and BDR have been trying to stop the inflow of *Yaba* from Myanmar to Bangladesh but it could not be stopped. Both through land and waterways *Yaba* is smuggled from Myanmar to Bangladesh. In June 2009 it was reported that over 2,000 *Yaba* tablets worth one million taka were seized by Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border from a bus plying to Cox's Bazar from Teknaf.¹³ The close nexus among the terrorist, drug and arms dealers and insurgent groups operating within the region is creating acute security threat for Bangladesh. Besides, the local people allege that Rohingyas in the camps give shelter to illegal outsiders and criminals and bring arms through the border areas.

On 16 June 2008 the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), arrested a smuggler with 350-litres of soya bean oil while he was attempting to smuggle the same to Burma. At least 100,000 liters of diesel is smuggled to Burma from Teknaf and Ukhiya points per month. In Burma a liter of diesel is sold at Taka 70, while in Bangladesh it is sold for Taka 45. People of Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships depend on Bangladeshi diesel and in return contraband drugs and fishing nets are smuggled to Bangladesh, said a trader in Teknaf town.¹⁴

Illegal marriage

Above 80% of the local respondents have shown positive view on the issue of marriage between the two communities. If anyone wants to marry a Rohingya girl, they give more facilities because their goal is to mix up with the local people and international community is also interested in the permanent settlement of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh. Although marriages have been taking place between members of these two communities for years and in both directions, that is, Rohingya men marrying Bengali women and Bengali men marrying Rohingya women, but more recently the prevalent mode has been the latter. A resident of Kutupalong camp, for instance, arranged his sister's marriage with one of the locals of Teknaf in 1992. His sister is now permanently settled in that area.¹⁵

The survey shows that about 150-200 Bangalis married Rohingya women and some Rohingyas married Bangali women. Following facilities were highlighted as to why Bangalis marry Rohingya women: (i) Marrying a Rohingya woman is less costly; (ii) Some Rohingya women are relatively fairer to locals; (iii) There is no legal bar to marry a Rohingya woman; (iv) Many go on to marry for the second time; (v) Majority get married for economic incentive; (vi) International community is interested in mixing

up Rohingyas with the locals and the government did not impose any restriction to marry Rohingyas.

Rising price level

In Cox's Bazar and Bandarban district approximately 450,000 Rohingyas are living as illegal migrants and not having refugee status. In Rohingya inhabited areas the prices of daily necessities and land are increasing day by day. In recent times, the Rohingyas have been put into a dire situation as their food supply is close to being depleted particularly for the unregistered Rohingyas. With joblessness and marginalization the Rohingya refugees have been badly hit by globally rising global food prices.¹⁶ The informants complained that the influx of Rohingyas has caused the prices of the essential commodities to shoot up.¹⁷

Mixing up with local people

Large number of Rohingyas, particularly undocumented ones are mixing up with the locals, which is another crucial problem for Bangladesh. Many Rohingyas have bought land in Bandarban and Cox's Bazar district and made houses. Most of them claim that they are the citizens of Bangladesh by birth and would never go back to Myanmar. In this sense, they want to stay in Bangladesh permanently and also claim citizenship rights.

Begging

During the survey we found that, begging has been increasing rapidly in Ukhiya and Teknaf *Upazilla* and majority of them are unregistered Rohingyas specially children and women and older persons. Neither the government nor UNHCR is supporting unregistered Rohingyas for their livelihood, so they are bound to beg because some of them are unable to work, some of them are not getting jobs and some are lazy to work. Rohingyas are thus posing threat to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness in Bangladesh.

Robbery

Robbery is becoming a daily incident in Rohingya inhabited areas. According to field work many local people have accused the Rohingyas of being engaged in robbery. The students of Chittagong College and Chittagong University who are the residents of Ukhiya and Teknaf, alleged that they do not feel safe when they go to their village due to Rohingya robbers. In November 1992, a Union Parishad member of Khuniapalong

lodged a written complaint with the district administrator that “a group of armed Rohingyas looted his house and took Taka 25,000 worth of goods.”¹⁸ Badsha Miya Chowdhury, a local BNP leader of Kutupalong informed that about 6 months ago “a group of unregistered Rohingyas looted my house, took Taka 2,000, our clothes and also cooking dishes”.¹⁹ In January 1997, five refugees were arrested as they were absent from their respective camps without prior permission from camp authorities, and were arrested from a public tea-stall being suspected of committing robbery.²⁰

Conflict with local people

Conflict between two communities is becoming a common phenomenon in Rohingya resident areas. On 27 May 1997, a clash between local villagers and refugees in Nayapara camp took place. Peace and harmony between the two communities were brought about through dialogue and negotiations by the Thana/Camp officials and the local leaders.²¹

Becoming voters and using passport

Another dimension of Rohingya problem is that they are becoming voters and using passport to go abroad. It was reported that there are currently 55,000 Rohingyas in Saudi Arabia with Bangladeshi passport.²² However, another report stated that about 500,000 Rohingyas have gone to Saudi Arabia by using Bangladeshi passport.²³ They are committing varieties of crimes there and the Bangladeshis suffer losing their image worldwide. Many locals are of the opinion that Rohingyas play a critical role in *Union Parishad* or local elections, even in national elections. Some even pointed out that the Chairman of Teknaf Sadar got elected by making some refugee voters.²⁴ Most of the informants of Kutupalong complain that during the Rajapalong Union Parishad election in 2004, Baktiar Ahmed got elected as member in Kutupalong by helping the Rohingyas to become voters. Nurul Alam a resident of Kutupalong camp confessed, “I became a voter, with the support of Baktiar Ahmed, the former member of Kutupalong and I got paid handsome figure for becoming a voter.”²⁵

Law and Order situation

The law and order situation in the camps and non-camp areas is not good enough. The Rohingyas often get involved in disputes and conflicts with the local people. They are also engaged in various crimes like smuggling, trafficking, robbery, and illegal business. They always go outside the camps without taking permission and are moving freely anywhere in Bangladesh.

Though the GOB has appointed the police and the Ansar Bahini for the security of Rohingya refugees, these are not sufficient to maintain huge number of Rohingyas. It has been reported that the police does not treat Rohingyas properly and women and children are more vulnerable to violence. The Rohingya women and girls are tortured inside and outside the camps by the security officials. "Anjuma, a 12 year old Rohingya girl had been gang raped by three BDR soldiers who had previously ordered her family and six others staying in village near Teknaf to return to Myanmar". "A small boy of the Kutupalong camp faced child abuse by a policeman inside the camp".²⁶ The local people are being tortured by security forces who are appointed in camps to provide security for the Rohingyas.

When Tufael Ahmed a student of Chittagong College, Chittagong and a local of Kutupalong, was going to Chittagong by bus, the police of Marichya check post stopped the bus and checked the passengers' luggage. Tufael Ahmed was asked about his nationality. He replied to the police that he was not a Rohingya, but a student of Chittagong College and was going to Chittagong. The police check the passengers particularly when the buses come from Teknaf, because Rohingyas are engaged in smuggling *Yaba* and other narcotic drugs. Huge amounts of *Yaba* are being smuggled by Rohingyas to Chittagong and Dhaka City through Arakan road and water ways. On 5 April 2012, 12 Rohingyas were arrested by the Coast Guard in Bangladesh while they were illegally entering Bangladesh to go to Malaysia by the water ways.²⁷

Environmental Problems

Environmental problem is another major security concern for Bangladesh. Majority of the local literate people alleged that environment is facing multi-dimensional threats beside Rohingya resident areas. The major issues regarding environmental problems include deforestation, particularly cutting trees, water pollution and unhygienic living conditions. Derk Revaka, the Chief Representative of the UNHCR in Bangladesh said that Rohingyas are highly destroying the forest, polluting the environment and committing crimes. Among 40 key respondents from the local people, 44% believe that deforestation activities involved Rohingya refugees. However, only 24% Rohingya refugee respondents agreed with the statement. Besides, 24% of them said that their involvement in deforestation would be only 10%. However, Rohingyas are blamed for deforestation particularly for cutting trees.²⁸

Rohingya Refugees are indiscriminately cutting down trees for collecting firewood and cutting hills for their shelter, residing here and there, thus causing significant damage to the environment. The authority gives them compressed rice husk but this is not sufficient enough and they always sell a large portion of it in the local market. By selling compressed rice husk, they can buy other daily necessary goods and manage cooking by collecting wood from the nearest forest. They also cut trees deliberately to earn their livelihood. The lands of the two existing camps were Reserved Forest of the Department of Forestry, Government of Bangladesh. The unofficial camp for the unregistered refugees, Taal, Camp lands are also based in the reserved forest area.²⁹ Unregistered Rohingyas have destroyed about 70 acres of forest to make their shelter.³⁰ The field survey showed that unregistered refugees are largely blamed for destroying the forest. Uneducated Rohingyas do not know about the significance of forest reserve, so they are cutting down the trees without any hesitation. Despite government restriction and due to the insufficient supply of compressed rice husk, Rohingyas collect firewood from the forest. Before the arrival of Rohingyas, the local people used to graze the land, but due to the camps these grazing lands are totally lost. As the reserved forest is being destroyed, the local people are becoming 'internally displaced persons'. The situation is getting worse day by day. Due to deforestation, the ecosystem of that area is undergoing a drastic change. The spices that would be grown in the area are rapidly getting extinct. They are cutting the hills to make houses. So soil erosion is becoming another major environmental disaster in this area. Indiscriminate cutting of trees and burning forests has brought a drastic natural change and probably turned into a non-reversible position in this area.

Water pollution

In the Rohingya refugee resident areas, water is increasingly polluted due to lack of access to sanitation and limited source of fresh drinking water. Here majority of them do not use sanitary toilets. During the survey, we found that undocumented Rohingyas are living a squalor condition having little facilities of sanitation. Because of drinking impure water, waterborne diseases are becoming a common feature both inside and outside the Rohingya resident areas. The sewer management in the camps is of great concern particularly in the Tal camp. All sewerage flows into the 'Naf River', spoiling the purity of the river water. Water pollution not only

hampers the dwellers of camps but is also making the local people vulnerable to diseases.³¹

Living conditions

Unhygienic living conditions is another concern of environmental problem. The Rohingya resident areas are very clumsy and dirty and they do not get adequate facilities of sanitation and pure water supply. There are 826 sheds in two camps where 4,956 families are accommodated, as each shed contains 6 families. According to the WFP vulnerability surveys in 1999 the huts "are small, crowded and inadequate for healthy living."³² Due to lack of proper treatment in July and August 2008, 29 unregistered Rohingyas died in the Leda camp in Teknaf on 5 September 2008.³³

CONDITION OF WATER AND SANITATION IN KUTUPALONG CAMP

Total Refugee Population in Kutupalong Camp		12,670
<i>Facilities</i>	<i>Total Units</i>	<i>Unit Per Thousand</i>
Hand pumps tube wells	71	5.6
Units of latrines	531	41.9
Units of Bath Houses	142	11.2
Garbage	52	4.1
Incinerators	4	0.3
Medical Incinerator	1	0.1

Source: Field report, Kutupalong Camp, 12-15 February 2012.

EDUCATIONAL SITUATION

Education is a fundamental right of a nation but Rohingyas do not get proper education facilities despite RIB and RTM running the education programs with the funding of UNHCR. Since the beginning GOB has been providing primary education among the Rohingyas. According to 1951 convention the Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education. Hundreds of Rohingyas are enrolled in many educational institutions in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban district. According to admission rules and regulations a student has to submit one's birth registration certificate. Majority of Rohingyas manage the birth certificate from nearest Union Parishad member and chairman by bribing the Headmaster and related 'School Managing Committee' members. Most of the time Rohingyas hide their actual identity and show themselves as local people. Local people

state that whenever a Rohingya will seek admission into a local school obviously he/she has to identify as a Rohingya otherwise he/she cannot get admitted. Majority of the local respondents complain that “in case of supporting primary education for Rohingyas inside in the camps, why do they go outside the camps for the reason of taking education”. Local people also alleged that UNHCR has been giving privileges to Headmaster and also funding to build the new hostel, recreation center, school boundary and sports elements to admit the Rohingya children. They think it is the policy of UNHCR to mix up the Rohingyas with the local people and thus prolong the Rohingya problem in Bangladesh. When I asked the Headmaster of Kutupalong High School about it, he replied that, “I do not know who is Rohingya and who is local? They have same physical structure, same language and also show the birth registration card.” He pointed out that the main problem is that how they manage the birth certificate? When I asked the general secretary of Ideal Students Association”, Kutupalong, he said that, Rohingyas are being engaged in educational institutions and when a Rohingya gets admitted into a local school he identifies himself as local people. If a Rohingya gets admitted into a local school, obviously he has to submit his actual identity or Rohingya identity.

Said Alam passed SSC from Kutupalong High School in 2008, HSC from Cox’s Bazar Government College in 2010 and enrolled in Ukhiya Degree College. Aziz Noor passed SSC from Kutupalong High School in 2006 and HSC from Bandarban Government College in 2008 and is now resettled in Canada. Md. Enam has passed SSC from Balokhali High School and is presently in Ukhiya Degree College. Md. Yunus has passed from Kutupalong High School and is presently in Cox’s Bazar Government College.

ROHINGYA REFUGEES CHILDREN ARE ENROLLED IN FOLLOWING SCHOOLS

<i>Primary Level</i>	
Leda Junior High School	75%
Leda Government Primary School	41,496
Kutupalong Government Primary School	20-25
Kachobania Government Primary School	20-30
Balokhali Government Primary School	20-22
Thaingkhali Government Primary School	41,559
<i>Secondary Level</i>	
Hnila High School	30-50

Rangikhali Fazil Madrasha	41,496
Hnila Girls High School	41,562
Kutupalong High School	18-20
Balokhali High School	15-18
Thaingkhali High School	41,496
Ukhiya Bahomoki High School	0-02
<hr/>	
Higher Secondary Level	
<hr/>	
Ukhiya Degree College	0-03
Cox's Bazar Government College	0-01
Bandarban Government College	0-05
<hr/>	
Graduate and Above	
<hr/>	
International Islamic University Chittagong	41,404
Premier University Chittagong	41,404

Source: Field Survey Report, 10-15 February 2012.

ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The role of international community is crucial for the durable solution of Rohingya refugee crisis. International community has been providing critical support for the survival of Rohingya refugees in camp and non-camp areas since 1991. Besides several countries such as Bangladesh, Myanmar, India, Thailand and Indonesia are directly affected by the Rohingya refugee issue making it an international problem.³⁴ Bangladesh has been hosting significant number of Rohingyas for 22 years, but Myanmar is not interested to resolve this issue. In this study, most of local respondents alleged that the international community is highly responsible for the illegal inflow of undocumented Rohingyas.

International community can be categorized into two groups -state and non-state actors. Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, India, Indonesia, China, Japan and Malaysia in Asia, Saudi Arabia and UAE in the Middle East, USA and Canada in North America, UK and Germany in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, ASEAN and SAARC are the major state actors involved in the Rohingya refugee issue. Non-state actors can be categorized into two groups-international governmental organizations (IGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). UNHCR, USAID and EU are the major IGOs involved in Rohingya refugee issue. The related INGOs engaged in Rohingya refugee issue are IRI, TAI, MSF, ACF, and *Concern Worldwide*. There are huge numbers of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that interact with states, some of which have political purpose, some have humanitarian, economic and technical

purposes. Sometimes, state actions are also influenced by inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) whose members are national governments like, the UN and its agencies, European Union and USAID.³⁵ The major challenge for the international community remains the large number of unregistered Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh who cannot live in the camps. Besides, there has been rising number of Rohingyas who are crossing the Bangladesh-Myanmar border day and night. Abdul Gafur, a local BNP leader of Kutupalong, for instance, complained that the armed Rohingyas ransacked his house, destroyed banana plantation and stole poultry and cattle. Gafur is of the opinion that the Rohingyas targeted him because he was actively seeking their repatriation.³⁶

PROCESS OF AMICABLE SOLUTION

Based on the findings of the research, following recommendations and proposals can be considered for amicable solution of the problem. While the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been engaged in providing support to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh along with other numerous international organizations, they can take positive initiatives to resolve the issue with Myanmar.³⁷ International community prefers voluntary repatriation, resettlement and integration. About 90 percent local respondents think that repatriation is the only solution of the problem. However, only 45 percent of the Rohingyas want to go back to Myanmar. Others are interested in resettling in third countries and integrate locally. Food and Disaster Management minister Dr. MA Razzaque told reporters after a meeting with the US Assistant Secretary for population, refugee and migration, Eric Schwartz and deputy secretary Kelly Clements that, "rehabilitation and repatriation are the permanent solutions to the Rohingya refugee problems, which has turned into an international and regional crisis".³⁸

Voluntary Repatriation Process

Repatriation is a key element in solving vulnerable Rohingya refugee issue but repatriation cannot be done only through willingness. The first repatriation of the Rohingyas took place in 1978 as an outcome of a bilateral agreement signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar on 6 June 1978. A Memorandum of understanding signed between the GOB and UNHCR in 1993 stipulates that the UNHCR shall provide protection to refugees from Myanmar and cooperate with GOB to ensure their safe and voluntary

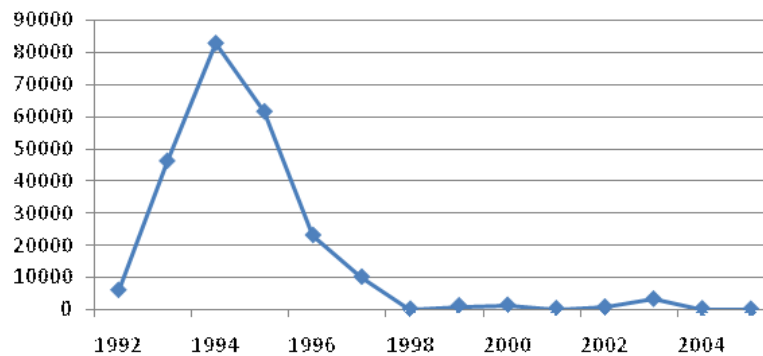
repatriation. Under the MOU nearly 35,000 refugees were repatriated by November 1993.³⁹ In November 1993, UNHCR also signed a MOU with GOM which allowed the agency's access in Myanmar to promote the repatriation and monitor the reintegration of Rohingya refugees. Since 1992 till 2005, 2,36,599 refugees were repatriated. But there remain 27,000 registered and over 450,000 unregistered Rohingyas still living in camps and non-camp areas. The problem is that, the repatriation process has stopped since 2005 and GOB continues its effort to restart the process and complete repatriation through diplomatic way. On the other hand, the Rohingyas are opposed to the repatriation process on account of persecution by the GOM upon their return. On 16-17 May 2009 the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, Dipu Moni, visited Myanmar and at the end of her visit, Dipu Moni informed the media that military leaders in Myanmar admitted that Rohingyas are Myanmarese and agreed to take them back. She further added that Myanmar government sought a list from Dhaka of the number of Rohingyas living in Bangladesh as part of the repatriation process.⁴⁰

YEAR WISE REPATRIATION, 1992-2005

Year	No. of people repatriated	Year	No. of people repatriated
1992	5962	1999	1128
1993	46129	2000	1323
1994	82753	2001	283
1995	61504	2002	760
1996	23045	2003	3231
1997	10073	2004	210
1998	106	2005	92
Total repatriated		=	2,36,599

Source: Imtiaz Ahmed, *Plight of the stateless Rohingyas*. 2010, p. 101.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE REPATRIATED



Resettlement Process

Resettlement process was initiated by the UNHCR in 2006 but was stopped in 2010. It is another form of durable solution of Rohingya problem. Both the GOB and the UNHCR agree on this point that the problem can be mitigated if the Rohingyas can be resettled in any other country. In 2006, twenty-three refugees were resettled in Canada and further 79 in 2007.⁴¹ Seventy eight refugees-28 adults and 50 children were identified by the UNHCR as a priority group for resettlement. While talking to a student of class five in a school at refugee camp, the student told that he wanted to learn English to settle in a third country.⁴² Md. Shajahan, the UNHCR representative of "resettlement program" said that, I do not think Rohingya problem can be solved by the resettlement process because no illiterate Rohingya can resettle in third country. That means they give preference to those who are literate, and the process was running on the basis of literacy, though above 90 percent of the Rohingyas are not literate. In fact the resettlement process is responsible for the inflow of undocumented Rohingyas. At present most of the Rohingyas are more interested in resettlement in third countries than repatriation.

Like other South Asian countries, Bangladesh has a tradition of hosting a large number of refugees for a long period. Here, refugees are subjected to same laws as for foreigners. However, due to lack of any explicit legal regime, asylum seekers and refugees are dealt under adhoc administrative arrangements, which by their very nature could be arbitrary and discriminatory, and do not accord any right to the refugees. On the other hand, in the absence of a legal framework and access to asylum procedure in Bangladesh, newly arrived Rohingyas are forced to stay illegally here and are prone to various vulnerabilities including engagement in illegal activities and even in terrorism.

REFERENCES

1. bdnews24.com, 6 October 2009.
2. A. K. M. Nazrul Islam, Neila Husain and Mahbubur Rashid Bhyian, *Small Arms Trafficking in Bangladesh: Threat to national Security*.
3. Seminar on 'protection of refugees and IDPs' organized by Faculty of Law, Chittagong University and UNHCR. 2007, p.15.
4. The Daily Cox's Bazar, 18 May 2008.
5. Country reports, bd, world refugee survey, <http://www.refugee.org>.
6. Imtiaz Ahmed, *The Plight of the stateless Rohingyas*. 2010.
7. A.K.M. Nazrul Islam, Neila Husain and Mahbubur Rashid Bhyian. *op.cit.*

8. Imtiaz Ahmed, *The Plight of the stateless Rohingyas*. 2010.
9. *Ibid.*
10. A.K.M. Nazrul Islam, Neila Husain and Mahbubur Rashid Bhyian. *op.cit.*
11. Imtiaz Ahmed, *South Asian Refugee Watch*, Vol.1, No.1, July 1999.
12. A.K.M. Nazrul Islam, Neila Hussain and Mahbubur Rashid Ahuiyan. *op.cit.*
13. Imtiaz Ahmed, *The Plight of the stateless Rohingyas*. 2010. p.74.
14. <http://www.kaladanpress.org>, 19 June 2008.
15. Imtiaz Ahmed, *South Asian Refugee Watch*, Vol.1, No.1, July 1999.
16. Imtiaz Ahmed, *The plight of the stateless Rohingyas*. 2010. p.80.
17. Imtiaz Ahmed, *South Asian Refugee Watch*, Vol.1, No.1, July 1999. p.50.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Survey report*, 10-12 February 2012.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. *The Daily Prothom Alo*, 12 February 2010.
23. *Dainik Purbakone*, 1 December 2011.
24. Imtiaz Ahmed, *South Asian Refugee Watch*, *op.cit.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Imtiaz Ahmed, *Plight of the stateless Rohingyas*. 2010. p.29.
27. *The Daily Prothom Alo*, 7 April 2012.
28. Akkas Ahmed, M.K. Hossain and A.T.M. Rafiqul Haque, *People's perception on Depletion of Forest Resurces in Ukhia and Teknaf by Rohingya refugees*. 2012.
29. Imtiaz Ahmed, *The Plight of the stateless Rohingyas*. 2010. p.83.
30. *The Daily Prothom Alo*, 17 November 2010.
31. Imtiaz Ahmed, *The Plight of the stateless Rohingyas*. 2010. p.83.
32. *Ibid.*, p.91.
33. *The monthly Rohingya Review*, 31 October 2008.
34. Ahmed Imtiaz, *Plight of the stateless Rohingyas*, 2010, p.127.
35. *Ibid.*, p.128.
36. Imtiaz Ahmed, *South Asian Refugee Watch*, V.
37. Akkas Ahmed, M.K. Hossain and A.T.M. Rafiqul Haque, *People's perception on Depletion of Forest Resurces in Ukhia and Teknaf by Rohingya refugees*. 2012.
38. bdnews24.com, 8 June 2011.
39. Imtiaz Ahmed, *The Plight of the stateless Rohingyas*. 2010. p.99.
40. "Myanmar pledges to take back Rohingyas", Bdnews24.com
41. Imtiaz Ahmed, *Plight of the stateless Rohingyas*. 2010. p.102.
42. *The Daily Samakal*, 15 May 2009.

MICROFINANCE PROGRAMME OF BANGLADESH

A CRITICAL SURVEY

ALOK KUMAR

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a critical survey of the impact of microfinance programme on economic wellbeing of the rural poor of Bangladesh. First part of this paper discusses the evolution of its economy, need of development and role of Yunus in emergence of microcredit programme. The later part of this paper evaluates the evidence of positive impact in reducing level of poverty. It also considers the social aspect of microfinance especially in relation with the situation of poor women. There are ample examples of economic empowerment of villagers and its spill-over effect in different spheres of social life. But over the years, several negative effects also started emerging with the expansion of microfinance such as rural indebtedness, exorbitant interest rates, use of coercive means in case of defaults etc. Finally, it comes up with suggestions regarding government interventions and financial self-reliance for institutional sustainability of this programme.

BACKGROUND

Bangladesh has evolved through a complicated course of transformation. The course of journey began as a famine-stricken country of early 1970s, to a flood affected country of late 1980s which was in perpetual need of food relief, to an innovator of delivering microcredit¹ services to the poor thereafter.² Over the years, Bangladesh has steadily but gradually improved on the economic front. The rate of poverty (on consumption basis) has declined from 70 percent of 1970s to the level of 40 percent in 2005 to 31.5 percent in 2013.³ The economic performance of the country was not very impressive during 1970s and 1980s as the growth rate was averaging between 3 to 4 percent because of natural calamities but it accelerated in 1990s. Since then up to the first decade of the new

millennium it has registered no less than 5 percent annual growth rate. According to the World Bank data, it was 5.2 percent in 2009 which has grown to more than 6 percent thereafter. It was largely because of the implementation of several far-reaching economic reforms.⁴ The microcredit programme was one of those reforms which has played significant role in improving the economic situation by transforming rural economic condition. Still today this programme of Bangladesh is leading the global microfinance industry in terms of outreach because of strong records of repayment and the lowest transaction costs than anywhere else worldwide.⁵

EVOLUTION OF MICROFINANCE PROGRAMME IN BANGLADESH

During the decade of 1990s, there had been a global wave in international developmental arena, in which poverty alleviation was the top most priority. Several initiatives had already been taken of which, provision for small loans to tackle problem of poverty, caught attention of several NGOs and aid agencies.⁶ By that time Bangladesh had achieved global fame as an innovator of microcredit programme and it became the cradle of microcredit movement. Prof. Mohammed Yunus was the architect of this programme in Bangladesh who founded Grameen Bank (GB) in 1976 and in such a short span of 30 years he was conferred with Nobel Prize in 2006.⁷

It all begun in 1976, when Prof. Yunus made a serious attempt for emancipation of 42 poor people from a village adjoining the Chittagong University where he was teaching economics. He paid just \$27 to the moneylenders, for emancipation of these people which brought happiness in their life. Then he realised that such a small effort can do such a big miracle, which could be done on large scale. Soon after he took them to a nearby bank for a small loan to enable them to work as self-reliant micro-entrepreneurs but unfortunately the bank didn't find them creditworthy. Again, after long insistence, the bank officers very reluctantly became ready to lend only on the condition that Prof. Yunus had to become guarantor of those loans. This idea worked and became successful. They not only utilised the fund for income generation activities but also repaid without delay. Then, Professor Yunus started expanding this adventurous enterprise to other areas and finally the whole idea took the shape of Grammen Bank in 1983. The entire practice of 'collateral-free tiny loans

for income-generation activities', was termed as "microcredit".⁸ Later on this programme was clubbed with many other financial services such as micro-insurance, remittances etc and was termed as "Microfinance". It was a paradigm shift in the thought process of the whole banking system. With these innovations and contribution to the global microfinance industry, Bangladesh achieved high recognition of the world. The success of microfinance programme and Grameen Bank of Bangladesh has become a global example for indigenous development programme. Access to finance makes people go out on their own and become an entrepreneur.¹⁰

Microfinance is a process of providing loans of small sums to the poor especially the hitherto financially underserved people. "Microfinance thus takes a different character as it incorporates (a) a range of financial services, not only credit, (b) the attitude of perceiving microfinance business as long-term growth potential and (c) the capacity building of potential clients to create a new market for growth of financial services with improved productivity".¹¹ Innovation by Yunus was meant for providing small loans to a large number of poor people, which in turn paid back in even larger extent. The emphasis was to lend for financially underserved populations because the rudimentary banking system did not permit them to obtain loans. This ignited the idea of microfinance banking and a large number of underserved people connected themselves with this programme.¹²

NEED OF FINANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BANGLADESH

Financial development had become an important part of the development agenda. There are ample examples to show that deepening of financial services into general mass, contributes positively to the economic growth through many channels. It contributes to the process of growth by pooling and raising funds, making environment conducive for the risk bearing investments by allocating resources in a very efficient manner to ensure their productive use by monitoring and providing instruments of risk mitigation. It also helps in equitable distribution of income and alleviation of poverty by various ways such as raising overall income, distribution of opportunity according to individual ability especially for poor households and smaller and medium entrepreneurs etc.¹³ In case of Bangladesh, there is a significant linkage between microfinance and financial development¹⁴

and microfinance has had specific impact on the reduction of poverty in the country¹⁵ by alleviating credit constrains. According to the national statistics of Bangladesh, the growth process of the country is largely attributed to its broad-base, i.e. all sectors such as agriculture, industry and services, which contribute to economic growth almost proportionally in accordance with their shares to the GDP.¹⁶

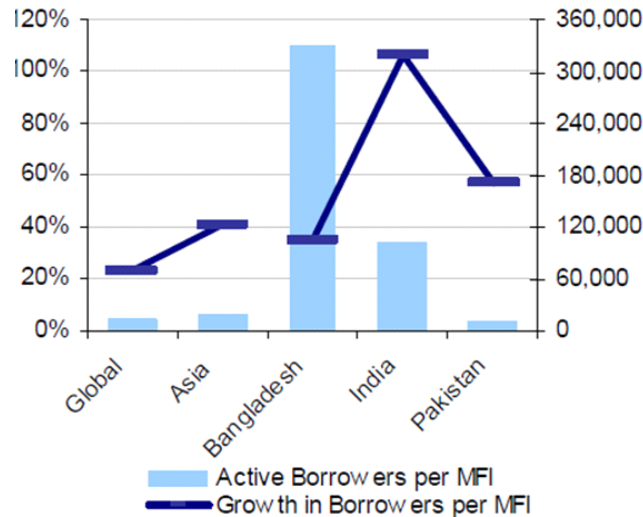
The need of finance is mainly because of three broad reasons viz. life cycle, emergencies and opportunities. Finance for life cycle includes the entire span of life starting from childbirth, nutrition, education, celebration, house building, old age etc. Under emergency needs personal reasons include health related issues, death, widowhood, unemployment, or any other casualty. Thirdly, many times financial need arises for availing emerging economic opportunities such as investment in new business or purchase of other productive assets etc.¹⁷ The financial need and the level of financial development are largely determined by the ability of small firms and individuals to make efficient use of accessibility to finance. It eases the entry for new firms and promotes more efficient asset allocation. In this way financial development also helps in competing with global economy with swiftly increasing growth opportunities.¹⁸

Since the traditional banking system failed to reach out the poor, NGOs in Bangladesh significantly paved the way for the poor in remote areas to access microcredit. The failure of banking system was largely attributed to the notion that the poor do not have credit worthiness because ownership of collateral in the form of tangible assets was very rare among them which was considered as a necessary prerequisite for having access to credit from bank. The NGOs and the Grameen Bank firmly established the fact that not only the poor are bankable but they deserve micro-lending and contrary to the conventional thought a good rate of recovery can be ensured from them.¹⁹ In due course of time, this innovative approach of banking with the poor that such lending does not require collateral, gained global recognition and its capability in addressing financial needs of the poor is well documented and widely acknowledged.²⁰

CURRENT STATUS OF MICROFINANCE PROGRAMME IN BANGLADESH

The microfinance sector of Bangladesh is recognised as the most efficient and one of the world's largest programmes. It is spearheading the global

microfinance industry in terms of the absolute size and productivity.²¹



Source: MIX, 2005 Benchmarks Report

A survey of leading Microfinance Institutes (MFIs) by Microfinance Information Exchange (MIX) in 2005 revealed that apart from the market leader MFIs like Grameen Bank, Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC) and Association for Social Advancement (ASA), the local Bangladeshi MFIs serve over three times more active borrowers than their leading Indian peers and 10 times more than global average. Another trend analysis shows that growth in Asian MFIs and Bangladesh is stronger than the global rate of growth. In terms of growth in the number of borrowers per MFI, the performance level is near about the average, may be because the MFIs of Bangladesh have attained a certain level of saturation.

According to the recent reports of MIX (financial year 2013-14) the total number of borrowers is around 16.4 million along with 13.8 million depositors. Total loans disbursed figures around US 4 billion dollars. However the deposits figure US 3 billion dollars. In terms of number of borrowers, depositors, deposits and loans, the Grameen Bank is undisputed leader of all MFIs of Bangladesh followed by BARC and ASA. The average size of loan is US 50-100 dollar with 4-6 months term,²² which makes the microfinance sector a vibrant US 4 billion dollar industry. Bangladesh also tops the list of countries which have adopted comprehensive regulation of e-money and mobile payments.²³

It is also important to note that the microfinance institutions are also in compliance with several efficiency indicators used to determine the

efficiency of the MFIs by MIX such as Subsidy Dependence Index (SDI), Outreach Index (OI), Financial Self Sufficiency (FSS) etc.²⁴ This financial self sufficiency has been achieved by the efficient internal control mechanism and commercialisation of financial services. The main source of finance for MFIs is finance by Palli-Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)²⁵ and sometimes members' savings are taken as condition for membership or access to loan. Though it is sufficient for smaller MFIs which are yet to establish their credentials for commercial borrowings for large MFIs, with broad client base, commercial borrowings become a necessity.²⁶ It is also important in the sense that commercial borrowings help in integration of microfinance sector with mainstream financial sector.

Most importantly the repayment rate in Bangladesh is more than 90 percent in general. However, for larger MFIs like Grameen Bank, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BARC) and Association for Social Advancement (ASA), the recovery rate is even much higher because they have commendable Management Information System (MIS)²⁷ system, strong credit and collection policies, HR system, internal audit and controls, branch operations etc.²⁸ Credit rating of these MFIs is as that of good as commercial banks.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION IN BANGLADESH

Financial inclusion is a process of reaching out the traditionally underserved people through non-traditional means.²⁹ Thus the main objective of financial inclusion is to provide universal access to innovative financial services and products to the excluded populations to encourage equitable growth and development. Despite having such a great performance on microfinance programme, Bangladesh is lagging far behind other developing countries in terms of financial inclusion. According to IEU³⁰ (2014) Bangladesh is at 7th position in Asia and at 29th position in the world (jointly with Mongolia). This indicates that a large number of 160 million Bangladesh's population is still deprived of access to the financial services. A South Asian country like India with such a huge population (1.21 billion) holds 1st position in Asia and 5th (jointly with Mexico) position in the world in terms of financial inclusion.³¹

According to the World Bank Global Financial Inclusion Index (2011),³² only 40 percent of the adult population of Bangladesh has an account in formal bank. In terms of availing financial services, the situation needs high attention. According to the same database, only one-fifth of

them were able to get a loan during one year (2010-11). Merely 2 percent of the adult population used the account to receive salary or wages and only 3 percent had received any kind of remittance in their accounts during the same period. According to the data available on the website of MIX, in the year 2014 the total number of borrowers in microfinance sector is 16 million only which is just 10 percent of the total population and the number of depositors is much lesser, i.e. 13 million only. This clearly indicates that the level of financial exclusion is still on the higher side, despite such a great record of the country in the microfinance segment.

COMPARISON OF BANGLADESHI GRAMEEN GROUP WITH INDIAN SELF-HELP GROUPS

Indian microfinance programme is now recognised as the largest microfinance programme of the world because of initiatives taken by NABARD in which Self-Help Groups (SHGs) were linked with Banks to avail financial services. The programme was named as SHG- Bank Linkage Programme which has grown to such a magnitude that it became the world's largest microfinance programme.³³

TABLE 1

<i>Characteristics of Groups</i>	<i>Self-Help Groups</i>	<i>Grameen Groups</i>
Homogeneity	Homogeneous	Homogeneous
Size	Small (10-20 members)	Very small (5 members)
Democratic Principles	Direct	Direct
Decision Making	All members	All members
Mutual Guarantee	All members	All members
Thrift	Mandatory	Mandatory
Daily Administration	Member	Facilitator/promoting agency
Type of Financial Needs	All purposes	Economic opportunity
Tenure of Groups	Long	Long
Peer Pressure	Yes	Yes
Fund Management	Yes	No
Perception of members	Owner	Solidarity

Source: Dasgupta and Rao, *Microfinance in India: Issues, Challenges and Policy Options*. 2003, p.224.

According to the classification by Microfinance Information Exchange (MIX), the two neighbouring countries are among the top 20 leading countries in terms of microfinance programme. There is huge similarity at policy level and in the characteristics of the groups associated with

microfinance programme. Table 1 shows comparison of the characteristics of Grameen Groups of Bangladesh and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) of India. Both are almost similar except few things, whereas SHGs are self administered and financing is done for all purposes. Grameen Groups are administered by the facilitators and financing is done for economic opportunities only. A very significant difference is in the size of the groups. Grameen Groups are very small groups and SHGs are relatively larger groups. Groups of smaller sizes are better in terms of functioning of the group, they are easy to manage and they are more cohesive but if the size of group is very small then meeting financial requirements becomes very difficult as well as a group of small size generates lesser resources. So the size of Indian SHGs is ideal in terms of feasibility of operation, financial self dependency and income generation. In case of Grameen Groups, though they are very small, they do not face financial problems because they do not necessarily depend on their own resources.³⁴ The main source of their funding is Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation. Both Grameen Groups and Self-Help Groups are functionally suitable according to the financial environment of their respective countries.

IMPACT ON WOMAN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH INNOVATIONS

A large number of independent studies have revealed that provision for easy access to financial services at affordable cost for the poor families has significant positive impact on their livelihoods. Impact studies on the Grameen Bank have shown similar positive impact on members' livelihoods on different economic and social indicators such as emancipation of rural people from vicious cycle of poverty, better health, nutrition, housing conditions and sanitation. These positive impacts have resulted into low birth rate, low infant/child mortality rate and improved access to education, improvement in health and nutrition of women and empowerment with higher participation of women in socio-political activities.³⁵ A major advancement in their livelihood can be marked through the institution of microfinance and their participation in local economic activities. A significant number of rural women have bought or leased agriculture lands in their independent names in several districts of Bangladesh.³⁶

A number of innovations are already under way in rural Bangladesh. The world acclaimed microfinance leader Grameen Bank has introduced a pioneering experiment of Grameen Phone which is based on shared

access for villagers on the basis of one phone per village. It is operated by a local entrepreneur especially woman. The bank provides loan to a village woman to buy a mobile phone. She sells phone communication facility to other neighbouring villagers, who pay in cash according to their usage. It is well documented that these Grameen Phones have become commercially successful and each phone is generating revenue more than US 100 dollar per month that is three times higher than a company earns from urban mobile phones in Bangladesh.³⁷

DRAWBACKS OF MFIs OF BANGLADESH

There are some drawbacks such as, the MFIs of Bangladesh, except few large MFIs, do not follow the international standard of reporting. Many MFIs do not reveal the delinquency ratio of loans. Their level of operation, number, accounts, type of products are not reconciled and reported accurately in compliance with international standards so it becomes very difficult to standardise local MFIs with rest of the world. The Management Information System (MIS) of MFIs of Bangladesh, except few large MFIs, is not up-to-mark. Microfinance provides loan to those people who do not generally qualify for credit from traditional banking system. Many scholars are of the opinion that these people easily sink into debt trap. There are cases in Bangladesh when people have borrowed for some crop which was totally destroyed by floods, yet MFIs continued to collect the instalments despite knowing the fact that they had nothing to repay. Villagers sell their livestock, chickens, goats etc. for repayments. In many cases they send their children for work to help them make repayments.³⁸ There are several examples when the MFI agents have physically harassed or used coercive means in case of delay of payments. In the wake of many lacunae of this programme, the most crucial point is that Yunus and other person who pleaded for this cause, "failed to develop an analytical superstructure capable of sustaining the many assumptions and claims that serve as the rationale for spending billions of dollars".³⁹

CONCLUSION

The MFIs of Bangladesh are still way behind the leading MFIs of other parts of the world especially in terms of accessing the commercial market. Average Bangladeshi MFI gets access to commercial borrowings, hardly one third of the global average i.e., the amount of funds they are sourcing

from commercial market. These MFIs mainly depend on either members' deposit or on PKSF financing.⁴⁰ If they will be allowed to borrow from commercial banks, through government legislation, this would drive down the interest rates by capitalising the market. In recent years, government interventions as a crack down on Grameen Bank and tightening the grip on rural finance adversely affected the microfinance sector. If government is committed for further progress of this sector, then it needs to pass legislation for allowing the MFIs to borrow from commercial banks and it has to stop interference in this sector.

One can say that the source of funds of MFIs needs to be diversified to make this programme more viable and sustainable. For strengthening of this programme, transaction cost also needs to be reduced so that financing would become cheaper and collaterals should be substituted with collateral substitutes. On the other hand it is equally important to mention that the risks involved in the process of lending should also be reduced as well as sufficient finance should be made available to minimise the demand-supply gap. For the demand side, liberalisation, provisions for small loans should be according to the capacity and requirement of the micro borrower as well as customers should be able to transact in informal environment.

The transaction cost is also very high which needs to be brought down. It can be brought down with the help of information technology like mobile banking. Mobile phone has deep penetration in Bangladesh providing ideal conditions to scale up mobile banking facility that will result into the reduction of the transaction cost. In this direction a significant step was taken when the central bank passed a regulatory framework in 2011. The mobile banking facility will certainly boost up the agenda of financial inclusion.

Poverty alleviation remains the main focus of the efforts of microfinance and financial inclusion. Poverty alleviation of specific disadvantaged groups is urgently needed in Bangladesh. It is possible only with a neatly tailored and customised services fit for the target group. According to Ahmed,⁴¹ for this purpose few things need to be taken into account. Rather intervening in microfinance sector, an intervention is urgently required for overcoming exclusion from essential services like nutrition and health care. A combination that includes development of health, socio-political and economic empowerment and protection of livelihood should be initiated. Customised intervention such as financial help on priority basis, as and when needed, is required to reduce financial

shocks and to provide them with sustainable livelihood.

REFERENCES

1. In this paper, the term microfinance and microcredit are used interchangeably according to the theme of discussion. Microfinance is a new term and microcredit is relatively old terminology, so they are used according to the situation. Definition wise microfinance is a broader term as it includes a number of financial services other than small loans.
2. S. Zohir, "NGO Sector in Bangladesh: An Overview". *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 36 (Sep. 4-10, 2004), p 4109. Accessed on 01/11/2014 from JSTOR URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4415513>
3. World Bank, *Global Economic Prospects: Bangladesh*. 2013. Accessed on 2 Nov 2014 from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects/regional-outlooks/sar>
4. P. Paci, and M. Sasin, *Making Work Pay in Bangladesh: Employment, Growth, and Poverty Reduction*. World Bank, Washington DC, 2008, p.3.
5. The Microfinance Information Exchange (MIX) is an organisation which "promotes responsible financial services for underserved communities through data analysis and market insight". It is supported by many socially sensitive organisations including the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), Citigroup Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The MasterCard Foundation, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation and others. It collects data provided by leading MFIs at both country specific and global levels and produces reports, bulletins and also makes data available for research purposes.
6. P. Develtere, and An Huybrechts, "The Impact of Microcredit on the Poor in Bangladesh". *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (April-June 2005). p. 165. Accessed on 01/11/2014 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40645154>
7. G. Buyske, *Banking on Small Business: Microfinance in Contemporary Russia*. Cornell University Press, 2007. p.220.
8. M. Yunus, "Grameen Bank, Microcredit and Millennium Development Goals". *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 39, No. 36 (Sep. 4-10, 2004), pp. 4077-4080. Accessed on 01/11/2014 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4415509>
9. M. Rashid, "Microfinance in Bangladesh: Challenges and Prospects". *The Daily Star*, Vol. 5, No. 877 (web edition of November 15, 2006), Accessed on 2 Nov 2014, URL <http://www.thedailystar.net/2006/11/15/d61115050160.htm>
10. H. Mintzberg, "Developing leaders? Developing countries?". *Development in Practice*, Volume 16, No.1 Taylor & Francis Ltd (2006), p. 7. Accessed on 01/11/2014 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4029855>
11. R. Dasgupta, and K. D. Rao, "Microfinance in India: Issues, Challenges and Policy Options". *Savings and Development*, published by Giordano Dell-Amore Foundation, Vol. 27, No. 2, (2003) p. 203. Accessed from JSTOR on 2 Nov 2014, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25830826>
12. *Op. Cit.* note 7. p.220.
13. S. Claessens, "Access to Financial Services: A Review of the Issues and Public Policy Objectives". *The World Bank Research Observer*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Fall, 2006), p. 208. Accessed from JSTOR on 2 Nov 2014, URL <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40282350>

14. M. Barr, "Microfinance and Financial Development". *Michigan Journal of International Law*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2005, pp. 271-96.
15. J. Morduch, and Barbara Hayley, "Analysis of the Effects of Microfinance on Poverty Reduction". *NYU Wagner Working Paper 1014*, 2002. New York University, New York, p. 7. Accessed on 01/11/2014 from http://www.pdf.wri.org/ref/morduch_02_analysis_effects.pdf
16. *op. cit.* note 4. p.6.
17. *op. cit.* note 11. p.203.
18. *op. cit.* note 13. p.210.
19. *op. cit.* note 3.
20. *op. cit.* note 2. p.4110.
21. *op. cit.* note 9.
22. P. Lachman, "Microfinance in Bangladesh". *Fordham Political Review*, Online edition, 2011. Accessed on 01/11/2014 from <http://fordham-politicalreview.org/microfinance-in-bangladesh/>
23. Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), *Global Microscope 2014: The enabling environment for financial inclusion*. New York, 2014, Sponsored by MIF/IDB, CAF, ACCION and Citi Group, p.14. Accessed on 01/11/2014 from www.eiu.com/microscope2014
24. J. Yaron, and R. Manos, "Determining the Self-Sufficiency of Microfinance Institutions". *Savings and Development*, Giordano Dell-Amore Foundation, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2007, p.133. Accessed on 01/11/2014 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25830958>
25. Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) was established in 1990 by the Government of Bangladesh as a "not-for-profit" company, registered under the Companies Act 1913/1994. The principal objective of PKSF is to provide funds to various organizations for their microcredit programme with a view to help the poor who have no land or any credible material possession. Source: Official website of PKSF-About Us URL http://pksf-bd.org/?page_id=85
26. *op. cit.* note 9.
27. MIS system is computerised database of financial informations organised and programmed in such a way that reports at every level of management can be produced at regular intervals.
28. See supranote 9.
29. *op. cit.* note 23. p.6.
30. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is the research arm of The Economist Group, publisher of *The Economist*.
31. *op. cit.* note 23.
32. Asli Demirguc-Kunt and Leora Klapper, "Measuring Financial Inclusion: The Global Findex Database". *World Bank Policy Research Paper 6025*, (2012). Accessed on 2 Nov 2014 from http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/financial_inclusion
33. K. G. Karmakar, G. D. Banrejee and N. P. Mohapatra, *Towards Financial Inclusion in India*. New Delhi, Sage, 2011. p.58.
34. See supranote 11. p. 224.
35. *op. cit.* note 8. p. 4077.
36. G. Kelkar, "Development Effectiveness through Gender Mainstreaming: Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction in South Asia". *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 40, No. 44/45 (Oct. 29 - Nov. 4, 2005), p. 4697. Accessed on 02/11/2014 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4417355>

37. A. L. Hammond, "Digitally Empowered Development". *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 2, 2001, p. 100. Accessed on 02/11/2014 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20050067>
38. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), *Microcredit "death trap" for Bangladesh's poor*. Reported by James Melik for Business Daily, BBC World Service, (November 3, 2010). Accessed on 01/11/2014 from www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11664632
39. J. Adams, and Frank Raymond, "Did Yunus Deserve the Nobel Peace Prize: Microfinance or Macromorfe?" *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2008. p. 438. Accessed on 23/11/2014 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25511328>
40. Rashid. *Supra note 9*.
41. S. M. Ahmed, "Capability Development among the Ultra-poor in Bangladesh: A Case Study". *Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition*, Vol. 27, No. 4, (Special Issue: *Social Exclusion: Inaugural Issue of the Gender Health and Human Rights Section*, August 2009). pp.528-535. Accessed on 01/11/2014 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23499641>

INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS *THE BEGINNING OF A NEW DAWN*

SHUBHA CHATTERJEE

BACGROUND

Today's Bangladesh was the eastern most part of Pakistan before 1971. The partition of India and Pakistan also resulted in the division of Bengal into west and east. While West Bengal which remained within India consisted of the Bengali Hindus, the Muslim majority area in the east went to Pakistan. The state of Pakistan emerged with two geographically dispersed locations. The newly established eastern wing of Pakistan became the country's largest province with forty four representatives as against twenty eight from the west. However, East Pakistan was ridden with several shortcomings. Lewis described it as "a severely fractured version of the old state of Bengal because it was now without its capital, Kolkata, which had contained its industrial base and main port. It was composed only of a large and backward agricultural hinterland, along with the tea growing district of Sylhet that had previously been part of Assam."¹

Although it was the Bengali Muslims who initially supported the movement for the creation of Pakistan, later, after its emergence, they were the ones to demand their separation from the Pakistan. This was primarily the result of several tensions and contradictions that Pakistan encountered between its eastern and western wings immediately after its independence. In 1949, the Constituent Assembly had set up a Basic Principles Committee to begin the difficult task of framing the new Constitution. However, soon after that, there were widespread protests, meetings and demonstrations across East Bengal. This was the result of the interim recommendations of the Committee that were published in

1950. According to Lewis, the recommendations proposed a “set of draconian emergency powers to the Central government that would override provincial autonomy and also recommended that the official language of the state would be Urdu.”² The Bengali Muslims considered the recommendations to be strongly biased favoring the interests of West Pakistan.

When Urdu was proclaimed as the state language in 1948, the declaration disappointed the Bengali Muslims who were a distinct group of people having their own linguistic and cultural identities. The West Pakistan dominated *Muslim League* began to redefine Pakistan’s political culture by undertaking a deliberate approach to Persianise and Arabicise the religion and culture of Pakistan. For example, an Adult Education Center that was established allocated substantial funds to impart education in Bengali language through Arabic script. Bengali Muslim writers were encouraged to write in *Chalit Bhasha* to get rid of the influence of Sanskritized words in Bengali literature. By April 1951, around Rs. 60,000 was spent by the government in an attempt to impart literacy through Arabic script.³

From the economic point of view, East Pakistan was deprived and discriminated heavily. There were huge disparities in resource allocation between the Western and the Eastern wings of Pakistan. For example, East Pakistan in spite of having favorable conditions to produce jute crop unfortunately had no facilities of its own to process the crop for export. As a result, the crop was transferred to West Pakistan for processing. This exploitative system created disadvantages for the East Pakistanis in two ways. Lewis argues that, first, “raw jute was purchased from East Pakistani growers at a disadvantageous rate of exchange, and then, second, little of the value added from subsequent jute processing and exportation was returned by the government to East Pakistan”.⁴ Thus in spite of contributing heavily to the foreign exchange earnings of Pakistan through the export of its raw jute and jute goods, East Pakistan received little benefits.⁵

Apart from taking advantage of the economic situation of East Pakistan, the government of Pakistan dominated by the Punjab elites also excluded the Bengali Muslims of that region politically. As a result of a lack of political voice in their own country, the politically conscious Bengalis began to feel left out from the political spectrum. Initially they supported the creation of Pakistan as they presumed that autonomy would be granted to them at the regional level and they would share power at the federal level. However, not only the grant of autonomy was denied,

but basic democratic rights were also taken away from them. Moreover, the political structure of Pakistan came to be dominated by the West Pakistani elite, thereby secluding the East Pakistanis. Bharadwaj described the Bengali Muslims as helpless victims of exploitation by the elites of West Pakistan who misused their power to “plunder resources from East Pakistan, monopolized external aid and channelized state resources to West Pakistan”.⁶ Also the West Pakistani elite dominated most of the job sectors like banking, administration, business and armed forces, thus, making availability of jobs a distant hope for the Bengalis.

The first instance of resistance was witnessed on 21 February 1952. The violent suppression of the Language Movement led to the revival of Bengali nationalism. In the demonstrations that followed, the army killed twelve people when students and other groups marched to demand equal status for Bengali.⁷ This movement became a major landmark in the history of Bangladesh Liberation War as it marked the beginning of this long drawn struggle. Although the resentment against the government was prevalent among the Bengalis long before, nevertheless, this movement was the first outburst of the people against the state. After that, the consolidation of *Awami League* and the subsequent coming of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made the movement for an independent Bangladesh all the more strong. The more ruthless the Pakistani government became, the more resistance the people of East Pakistan displayed. In this course of struggle for independence many lives were lost. Bangladesh government figures state that Pakistani forces aided by collaborators killed three million people, raped 200,000 women and displaced millions of others.⁸ On 25 March 1971, when the Bengalis declared their sovereign state of Bangladesh, Pakistan government began its military crackdown that led to the death of hundreds and thousands of people. The widespread genocide conducted by the Pakistan government forced millions to flee to India as refugees that ultimately forced India to send forces to Bangladesh in 1971 in support of the new country.⁹ India supported the cause of the people of Bangladesh. During that tumultuous period, India hosted ten million refugees for ten months providing shelter, food, medicine and other essentials of daily life. However, with the crisis getting more deepened, they also got involved in operational activities. Finally, an all out offensive was launched on 3 December 1971 under the banner of India-Bangladesh Joint Forces Command, where lives of about seven thousand officers and men were lost.¹⁰ Thus, after the thirteen days India-Pakistan War of 1971, Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

who was arrested by the Pakistan Government was later released and he became the first President of Bangladesh.

INDO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

India and Bangladesh share a land boundary of 4,096 kms. India surrounds Bangladesh on three sides. Bangladesh has an outlet to the Bay of Bengal, which is also shared with Myanmar and India.¹¹ Despite the fact that India and Bangladesh are more than just being geographical neighbors, their relationship has always been overshadowed by several thorny issues bothering both the nations. Since the beginning the two countries have had problems of water sharing, illegal migration, land demarcation, border management, trade deficit etc. The stability of their relationship depended heavily on the kind of government and administration in both countries. It has been seen that the Indo-Bangladesh ties suffered during the time of the *Bangladesh National Party* (BNP) government and progressed considerably under the regime of the *Awami League*. Also the party's positive attitude, unlike the BNP, creates a conducive environment for India to respond positively. Thus, it has been India's prerogative to always extend support to Begum Hasina's government and ensure that her party retains popularity among the Bangladeshi masses.

After the assassination of Sheikh Mujib in 1975, Bangladesh faced a period of military dictatorship casting a prolonged spell of political turmoil. Since mid-seventies, Bangladesh moved towards an Islam-based polity. This became more explicit after the inception of the *Bangladesh Nationalist Party* (BNP), which came into existence after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib in 1975. Its leader General Ziaur Rahman who was also a freedom fighter implicitly took power after the military coup in the mid-seventies. Immediately after assuming power he started nurturing an anti-Indian sentiment within Bangladesh. He harbored a grudge against India for her role in the liberation and was against Mujib for sidelining the Army, signing the 1972 treaty and creating the paramilitary force, the *Jatiyo Rokkhi Bahini*.¹² He also started cultivating closer ties with Pakistan, China and the Muslim countries for larger economic and political benefits.¹³ Some important changes that took place during his tenure was the revision of the 1972 Constitution whereby secularism was deleted as a foundational principle, ban on religious political parties was lifted and the war of liberation was rephrased as the war of independence.¹⁴ Although these modifications were deliberately done to legitimize his rule, however, their

impact had far reaching results eroding deeply the ideological basis and principles that the 1971 liberation war stood for.

On the other hand, the *Awami League* which had led the 1971 Liberation War has been supporting and acknowledging the contribution which the Indian government made for the people of Bangladesh particularly during the war. After coming to power in 1996, its leader Sheikh Hasina Wajid, daughter of Sheikh Mujib stressed on the normalization of India-Bangladesh relations. She realized its necessity and harped on the economic well-being of both countries. However, still there are several long standing issues which are major areas of contestation between India and Bangladesh and need to be addressed to strengthen their bilateral relations.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

1. *Water Dispute*

India and Bangladesh share 54 rivers between them.¹⁵ A major irritant in their relations has been over the sharing of these rivers as they play a role of vital importance for both the countries. In case of all these rivers, India is the upper riparian while Bangladesh is the lower riparian region. Till date, the only major solution that has been achieved in this field is on the sharing of the Ganga water that was formalized with the signing of the Ganga Water Treaty in 1996 between the two countries. The solution to the Teesta Water dispute remains uncertain and recently the construction of the Tipaimukhi dam has also generated resentment among the Bangladeshis. The complexities in the situation can be understood from the fact that both India and Bangladesh share the rivers and it becomes very difficult to come to an agreement where both countries can be in a win-win situation. In this section the problem of water sharing has been discussed by focusing on Farakka Barrage, the 1996 Ganga Water Treaty, Teesta dispute and the problem over the Tipaimukhi dam.

1.1 *Farakka Barrage and the 1996 Ganges Water Treaty*

Ganges is a very important river for both countries. India requires Ganges waters to keep the Calcutta Port functional. Earlier, the main channel of the Ganges used to flow through the Bhagirathi-Hoogly river basin. Hence there was sufficient water in the Hoogly for navigational purposes. But the siltation in the river bed caused a gradual shift in the course of the

Ganges that resulted in the scarcity of water in the Calcutta Port. Thus, the need to maintain water flow in the Hoogly river suddenly arose. Also strong current of water was needed to flush down the silt deposited in the Calcutta port.¹⁶ Hence, diverting water of the river Ganga to Hoogly for the purpose of maintaining the requisite level of water throughout the year has been the main concern for India. On the other hand, Bangladesh has been affected with the problem of seasonal flow that Ganga encounters. In other words, it means that during the rainy season excessive river flow causes overwhelming floods while during the dry season there is a scarcity of water which creates difficulties for Bangladesh to fulfill its water requirements.

The dispute of water sharing dates long back to 1951 after India started preliminary planning for the construction of the Farakka barrage. Pakistan objected to it as it would have affected the flow of the water of Ganges into East Pakistan which is today's Bangladesh. However, India maintained that there would be no scarcity of water in East Pakistan as sufficient water was available in the Ganges.¹⁷ In 1957 Pakistan suggested to seek the advisory and technical services of a UN body to which India did not agree.¹⁸ She raised the issue at the International Water and Peace Conference held at Washington in 1967 and Afro Asian Legal Consultative Committee meeting in 1968.¹⁹ Although, later in 1970, at the fifth meeting of the India-Pakistan Secretaries-level talks on the Ganges water-sharing issue, the two countries agreed to decide the amount of water to be discharged into East Pakistan from Farakka, they could not move ahead because of the political turmoil in East Pakistan.²⁰ Thus, the issue remained unresolved with Bangladesh inheriting the dispute after its independence.

Immediately after the independence of Bangladesh, a joint declaration was signed by Sheikh Mujib and Mrs Indira Gandhi in March 1972 for the establishment of a Joint River Water Commission on a permanent basis.²¹ Within few months, the commission completed a joint aerial photographic survey of the Ganges below Farakka. Related hydrographic surveys from the ground were also done in 1973-1974. However, following the visit of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to New Delhi in May 1974, two fundamental areas of differences arose between the two countries. They differed on the ways to augment the water of the Ganges as well as on the amount of Ganges water Bangladesh would be allotted during the lean months.

The construction of the Farakka barrage in Murshidabad district of West Bengal which began in 1961 was completed in 1971. However, it

came into operation only in 1975 following a temporary accord between India and Bangladesh. The accord was concluded between the two countries on 18 April 1975 for sharing the Ganga water between 21 April and 31 May 1975.²² In this accord, Bangladesh had won considerable concessions from India. Bangladesh was to begin with 44,000 cusecs of water and receive up to 49,500 cusecs during the last part of the lean period while India was to receive much less, going from 11,000 cusecs up to 16,000.²³ However, after the expiry of the agreement on 31 May 1975, India decided to unilaterally withdraw water at Farakka. Tensions arose as Bangladesh considered it a breach of agreement and demanded resolution of the problem for the whole year instead of the lean period. It began to criticize India and started accusing India for her hardships. It also issued a white paper blaming India for thwarting her efforts in resolving the water issue.²⁴

After the establishment of military rule and the subsequent coming of General Ziaur Rahman in power, the Indo-Bangladesh water dispute began to be internationalized as Bangladesh tried to search for a multilateral solution to the problem. For example, Bangladesh tried to raise the Ganges water issue at the thirty-second meeting of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the seventh Islamic Foreign Ministers' Conference at Islamabad, the Summit Conference of the nonaligned countries at Colombo and finally at the thirty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly, in September 1976.²⁵ However, Bangladesh failed to gain any international support and India firmly maintained the issue to be a bilateral one and considered Bangladesh's action as an obstacle in finding a peaceful solution to the problem.

Talks were again resumed after the Janata Party came to power in India in 1977. After a series of high level meetings, an agreement was concluded between the two countries on 5 November 1977 for a period of five years. This treaty fixed Bangladesh's share of the Ganges water during the lean period. The amount of water for Bangladesh was calculated on the basis of water available at Farakka between 1948 and 1973. The treaty contained a guarantee clause under which Bangladesh was promised 80 percent of the water available at Farakka during the lean period. Article 12 of the treaty further reinforced that during the operation of the treaty, Bangladesh's share of water at Farakka could not be reduced under any circumstances, which was a considerable victory for Dhaka. According to Hossain, although the treaty was heavily criticized in India, the agreement could be considered as a landmark in India's diplomacy with

Bangladesh as it broke the earlier deadlock and sent a “clear signal to Bangladesh that its leaders must seek solutions to problems with its giant neighbor on a bilateral basis.”²⁶

As the expiry of date of the 1977 treaty came nearer, the water dispute again came in the lime light. However, this time with another military coup in Bangladesh and the return of Indira Gandhi to power in India in the 1980 elections, the renewal of this agreement seemed to be a distant possibility. Both countries were at loggerheads with each other. Differences once again arose between the two on the augmentation of water for distribution during the dry season. Thus, 1977 Ganges Water Agreement lapsed on 4 November 1982. After this two Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) were signed during the visit of President H.M. Ershad to India in October 1982 and during the tenure of the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in November 1985 respectively.²⁷ In the 1991 election the BNP came to power in Bangladesh with Khaleda Zia as the Prime Minister. During this time, although a series of meetings were held between the two nations, no agreements could be reached because of their earlier differences. Dhaka stuck to its previous opinion of building water reservoirs in Nepal to be used by them during the dry season. This proposal has always been out rightly rejected by New Delhi who saw this as an attempt by Dhaka to regionalize the dispute. On the other hand India’s proposal has been to construct a link canal through Bangladeshi territory to connect Brahmaputra with the Ganges. India argued that the link canal would give Bangladesh better access to water during the dry season. However, Bangladesh never approved the plan on the ground that the canal would destroy the fertile agricultural land of the country.

The mid-nineties saw a new turn in the relationship between the two countries. This was basically because of two reasons. The 1996 parliamentary election in Bangladesh brought the *Awami League* to power. Immediately after coming to power, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made efforts to find some acceptable solutions to the Farakka issue. Improvement of relations with India was made a major foreign policy objective by her government. On the other hand, the United Front government was formed in India which gave a signal of optimism. The non- Congress government was more interested in improving relations with India’s neighbors. Secondly, despite facing staunch criticisms from her homeland, Sheikh Hasina always avoided to internationalize the Ganga Water issue. She understood that India was more willing to interact with Bangladesh directly than when put under any kind of international or regional

pressure. Finally in 1996, the second major treaty on the sharing of the Ganga water was signed between the two countries involving the then Chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu in the negotiations. The treaty became valid for thirty years and India was placed with several obligations. India has to respect the principle of sharing the Ganges water with Dhaka and could no longer withdraw water unilaterally from Farakka. Bangladesh got the maximum share (52%) of the water available at Farakka during the dry season.²⁸

The 1996 water treaty has been a watershed in the Indo-Bangladesh relations as it paved the way for further cooperation between the two countries. The relations between them began to be viewed with new vigor as both the nations subsequently intensified their cooperation at both political and economic level. For example, on 6-7 January 1997, soon after signing the water treaty, the Indian Prime Minister visited Dhaka and agreed to increase economic cooperation between the two countries. On 11-13 March 1997, the Bangladesh-India Joint Economic Group met in New Delhi.²⁹ The meeting discussed ways to enhance mutual cooperation in the fields of economics and finance, trade and commerce, transportation, agriculture, and science and technology. Both governments also reached an understanding not to support insurgencies in each other's territory.

1.2 Teesta Water Dispute

Although the Ganga Water treaty removed a major deadlock in the bilateral relations between the two countries, controversies remained over signing agreements on the sharing of other major rivers. Teesta is one such river in which no solution could be achieved after decades of discussions. The 1982 Teesta River Agreement allows India and Bangladesh to share 75% of the river water on a 39 and 36 percent basis. During the visit of the former Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Dhaka in September 2011, it was announced that India would share the remaining 25% of the river water on a 50-50 basis.³⁰ The visit seemed to have delivered the result as the Teesta Water sharing agreement was about to be signed. According to Kumar, the agreement was somehow "stitched together because of the pressure from Bangladesh, and both sides agreed to share water in a 52:48 ratio."³¹ However, the agreement could not be realized due to the last minute opposition by the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Bannerjee.³² The importance of the Teesta water sharing for Bangladesh could be gauged from the fact that the river remains an important one for the irrigation of the north western Bangladesh particularly the greater

Rangpur area. For West Bengal, the agreement would have meant loss of 10,000 acres of land and further reduction of water in North Bengal. The 52:48 sharing ratio was not a desirable one for northern Bengal as it could have seriously affected the agriculture of the region. Also the reports of independent data collection by the central water resources ministry and the government of Bengal on the Teesta's flow in lean season differed greatly leaving Mamata Bannerjee alarmed enough to refuse to travel to Dhaka.³³ After withdrawing from the Prime Minister's team that went to Bangladesh, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee appointed a one-man committee headed by noted hydrologist Kalyan Rudra to examine the availability of Teesta water, particularly during the dry season, and the quantum that could be shared by India and Bangladesh. Rudra was also to highlight the point of sharing – the location from where water could be released to Bangladesh.³⁴ According to Rudra, even now, when Bangladesh gets around 25 per cent of the waters, the water from the Teesta is not able to meet the requirements of its catchment area in northern Bengal, which is around 3,294 sq kms in size. Moreover, the increasing dependence on ground water in the region has resulted in further reduction of the base flow of the river in the lean season. Rudra also found fault with the pact for not taking into account the water generated in Bangladesh, as 16 per cent of the river is in the neighboring country.³⁵ Thus, the treaty could not be signed.

1.3 Controversy over the Tipaimukhi Dam

The recent resentment is related to the proposed construction of a dam by India at a point called Tipaimukh on the river Barak, Manipur. Bangladesh opposes the construction on the ground that it will be heavily affected as Barak is the tributary of a major river of the country-Meghna. The issue was discussed by Dhaka when Manmohan Singh visited the Bangladeshi capital in September 2011.³⁶

2. Unequal trade relations

The geographical contiguity of India with Bangladesh has facilitated the growth of increasing trade ties between the two nations. The trade relations assumed a special role particularly after 1982 when Bangladesh embarked upon the path of liberalization. India has been the major beneficiary of the trade relations between the two countries. Bangladesh is one of the most important markets for India's exports. During 1985-1990, the growth rate of Bangladesh's trade with India was higher than that with the world

and SAARC countries as a whole. During the period 1988-89 to 1992-93, whereas India's total export increased by 164 per cent, the increase in export to Bangladesh alone was 293 per cent. In the fiscal year 2001-2002, India exported goods worth US \$ 1.1 billion to Bangladesh while it imported only US \$ 50 million worth products.³⁷ In 2011-12, India's total exports to Bangladesh reached the level of 5.84 billion dollars.³⁸ However, this economic relation remains unequal as Bangladesh faces a huge bilateral trade deficit with India coupled with the problem of illegal flow of Indian goods into the Bangladeshi territory. According to Dubey, the available figures for 2011-12 show a trade balance in favor of India, of the magnitude of 3.2 billion dollars.³⁹

This trade gap has been a major irritant for Bangladesh which blames India for this unfavorable trade deficit. Bangladesh blames India for numerous non-tariff trade barriers that have restricted mutually beneficial trade between the two countries. Also the illegal or unofficial trade that takes place across the border adds to the deficit and both the countries are finding it very difficult to tackle the problem because of the involvement of large number of local people. This trade is mainly carried through the porous land border escaping Bangladesh import duties. This is possible as the locals of the border areas participate in this trade in collusion with the anti-smuggling enforcement agencies, bypassing the custom posts. According to the World Bank Report, they also operate "individually transporting small quantities just as head loads or by bicycle rickshaws- and in Bangladesh it is sometimes called *bootleg* smuggling".⁴⁰

The Non Tariff Barriers (NTB) introduced by India remain an irritant for Bangladesh as these pose constraints in increasing the bilateral trade between the two countries. These requirements include packaging requirements, lab testing for food and cosmetic products, customs clearances, visa restrictions etc.⁴¹ These barriers aimed at safeguarding the business of the local Indians and their trade interests who otherwise would have been seriously affected.⁴² These are necessary precautionary measures that India is compelled to undertake but it has suggested other ways to address the problem of the trade imbalance. India has long wanted Bangladesh to sign a free trade agreement that would boost trade. But Bangladesh's response has been lukewarm in this regard. The present trade between the two countries is conducted under the provisions of the prevailing Indo-Bangladesh Trade Agreement. It has been seen that India's bilateral trade has been more balanced with those countries with which it has a bilateral free trade agreements than with those countries with which

it does not have such an agreement.⁴³ Thus, an agreement like this would open the possibility of an equal trade relation between the two countries.

Over the years, both countries have pledged to work together to enhance the economic ties and New Delhi has taken several steps in this regard. India has granted huge concessions to Bangladesh which has subsequently propelled Bangladeshi exports to India. For example, Sobhan writes, "India has removed 47 Bangladeshi products from the negative list of imports in order to allow them duty free access to the Indian market."⁴⁴ It has also allowed duty free access to ten million pieces of Bangladeshi readymade garments in its territory. India has even allowed Nepal and Bhutan transit access to Bangladesh along with 24 hours unregulated access from the Tin Bigha Corridor to Dahagram and Angorpota enclaves.⁴⁵ The opening of new land ports and the building of a new immigration building and truck terminal at India's Petrapole port bordering West Bengal have increased cross-border trade. Border *haats* have already been opened in Balamari (Kurigram)-Kalaichar (West Garo Hills) and another one is proposed in Balat (East Khasi Hills)-Dalora (Sunamganj).⁴⁶ This has been a significant step increasing the economic activities in the surrounding areas. Establishment of border *haats* has enabled people to increase trade and come out from the poverty. As far as Non Tariff Barriers are concerned, India has begun dismantling some of those practices. For example, India has set up testing facilities for Bangladesh at the Petrapole border. Sanitary tests for food items like *hilsa* have shifted from Petrapole to Kolkata.⁴⁷

3. Issue of granting transit facilities to India

The true success of India's Look East Policy will depend on how far the benefits of this initiative trickle down to the north eastern part of India. However, as Chatterjee writes, "North East India which is the gateway to the South East Asian countries has been left out from the opportunities opened up through the Look East Policy. North East India because of its geographical location has been virtually secluded from the mainstream India."⁴⁸ Thus, one of the priorities of the Indian Government should be to facilitate development in the North Eastern region. This can be accomplished more smoothly if Bangladesh agrees to grant transit facilities to her. This is because the present route, via Assam and North Bengal, through which the goods from the North East travel to the mainland India is much longer and time consuming. The route becomes much more convenient if it is through Bangladesh. The transport cost will come down

significantly with Bangladesh profiting hugely through the transit fees. India believes that this facility would give a major impetus to the development process of its north east region which is ridden with the problem of insurgency.⁴⁹ Although Bangladesh allowed the transit in air and sea to India immediately after independence, the transit through the road is yet to be given and New Delhi has been consistently demanding this from Dhaka in order to connect her North East with the mainland. However, Bangladesh has been continuously refusing India on grounds of possible security threats and also perhaps because Bangladeshi export would be adversely affected.⁵⁰ Because of the isolated geographical location and its proximity with Bangladesh, north east India imports goods from that country and the grant of transit facilities to India will help the north east to reduce its dependency on the Bangladeshi manufactured goods. Perception also plays an important role in Bangladesh's non-cooperation with India in this aspect. For example, when Khaleda Zia visited India in 1992, India was interested to discuss the issue of trade and transit facilities for Indian goods and the possible use of Chittagong port by the north east states of India. However, according to an important Indian source, the Bangladeshi officials were suspicious about India in Bangladesh because of which the latter did not allow transit and trade facilities to India through its territory or from the ports of Chittagong towards the north east states of India.⁵¹ This negative perception of India prevalent among the Bangladeshis left the issue unresolved. Bangladesh also feels that granting transit access to India will make them vulnerable. It feels that "India will take advantage of the transit access to transport its military personnel to the borders of Arunachal Pradesh which in turn will generate negative repercussions from China with whom it has favorable growing relations."⁵²

The issue came up for discussion during the visit of the Bangladeshi Prime Minister Begum Sheikh Hasina to New Delhi in 2010. Bangladesh, in principle, agreed to allow India to use the Bangladeshi sea ports of Chittagong and Mongla and the inland water port of Ashuganj.⁵³ A year later, an agreement was about to be signed allowing transit access to India during the visit of the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Dhaka in September 2011. However, it could not be done as India was unable to sign the Teesta Water Agreement and Bangladesh created a counter pressure on her by refusing to sign the transit treaty.

Thus, because of the lack of cooperation, the issue remained unresolved. Bangladesh needs to come out from the Big Brother-Small Brother syndrome and understand its interest in cooperating with India.

The grant of transit facilities is a service leading to mutual benefit of both the countries. As Dutta correctly explains that the one-time transit facility given to India for the use of Ashuganj port can be viewed as a win-win arrangement for both the countries as it served the mutual purpose of both countries. The port was used to bring large containers from Kolkata port to dispatch them to the Palatan Power Project in Tripura in order to export power to Bangladesh.⁵⁴

4. Boundary Dispute and its Spillover Effect

India shares 4,098 kms of land boundary with Bangladesh, her longest border with any country.⁵⁵ This has also created significant adversities in the course of Indo-Bangla relations. This is primarily because of the fact that a major part of the border is disputed related to land in adverse possessions, presence of enclaves in both the countries and the 6.5 kms of non-demarcated land along the Comilla-Tripura border. The existence of 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and 51 Bangladeshi enclaves on Indian soil have been the result of the demarcation of the boundary between these two countries. The distortion goes long back during the time of India-Pakistan partition when the border between the two was drawn by Sir Radcliffe on the basis of the Two Nation Theory. While Indian enclaves in Bangladesh are spread over 17,158.1 acres, Bangladeshi enclaves in India are located over 7, 110 acres.⁵⁶

Enclaves are islands surrounded completely by the other country's land. According to Kumar, an important feature of the enclaves present in India and Bangladesh is that "they include about two dozen counter enclaves as well as counter-counter enclaves (a patch of Bangladesh that is surrounded by Indian Territory which in turn is surrounded by Bangladeshi territory)." Because of their stateless nature, about 1, 50, 000 people living in these areas are in state of penury.⁵⁷

To resolve this issue, a comprehensive treaty also known as the Indira-Mujib treaty was signed between the two countries in 1974.⁵⁸ Although Bangladesh immediately ratified it, the treaty could not be successfully concluded as India hesitated in doing that. The issue was then relegated to background as relations between both the countries soured after 1975. Following the 2009 election in Bangladesh and the subsequent return of Sheikh Hasina to power, land boundaries and enclave issues were again taken up seriously in the Indo-Bangladesh talks. In January 2010, when the Bangladeshi President Sheikh Hasina visited New Delhi, boundary issues were agreed to be settled in the light of the 1974 Land Boundary

Agreement. A Joint Land Boundary Working Group was also formed to expedite the process of negotiation.⁵⁹

This agreement was carried forward in September 2011 when the former Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh visited Dhaka. Additional Protocols for the Land Boundary Agreement, 1974 were signed in this meeting to address all the issues that hampered the final settlement of the India-Bangladesh boundary. These issues related to undemarcated land boundaries in three sectors visualized Daikhata-56 (West Bengal), Muhuri River-Belonia (Tripura) and Dumabari (Assam); enclaves and adverse possessions. Both countries also agreed to exchange the adversely possessed lands along the Bangladesh-India border in Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya and West Bengal along with 162 enclaves in each other's territory.⁶⁰ However, the successful implementation of the new border agreement requires a Constitutional amendment which the government did not do arguing that it needed the confidence of the then opposition, the BJP. Thus, this agreement is of extreme importance for the Indian government involving the lives of thousands of people living in the enclaves. If properly negotiated, the agreement can be a major achievement for both the countries.

5. Illegal migration: an Unattended Problem

Another serious issue in bilateral relations between the two nations is the problem of illegal migration or the inflow of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants into the Indian territory. India shares a border with Bangladesh running through the Indian states of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.⁶¹ Dhaka has never recognized this problem and the government in New Delhi does not have any accurate data. However, data collected during the 1990s put the number to an estimated 20 million to 30 million Bangladeshi immigrants.⁶² Migrations take place because of a combination of several push and pull factors. In the case between India and Bangladesh, population growth, land pressure, unemployment, natural disasters and religious persecution are listed as push factors while better economic opportunities, patronage by political groups in India, immigration agents and touts and the porous border can be considered as the pull factors.⁶³ Continued migration from Bangladesh has changed the demography of India's border areas. As Pant notes, in the long run it can cause serious "ethnic imbalance, electoral irregularity, and loss of employment opportunities for Indian nationals."⁶⁴ Uncontrolled migration can also have serious socio-political implications particularly for the people

of North East India who are directly burdened with the problem. The menace is more acute in Assam as it has been politicized contributing to the growth of identity politics in the state. According to Hazarika, "(V)isibly reshaping and transforming the demographic, ethnic, linguistic and religious profile of large parts of population in these areas, it stirred a potent brew of hatred, suspicion and fear".⁶⁵ Long back in 1998 when Lt. General Sinha was the Governor of Assam, a report was sent to the then President M.K. Narayan which categorically stated that "the influx of illegal migrants is turning the lower Assam districts into a Muslim-majority region."⁶⁶ The large scale growth of the Muslim population especially in Dhubri, Barpeta, Karimganj and Hailakandi resulted in the growth of insecurity among the Assamese Muslims who felt alienated by the illegal migrants.⁶⁷ This was in turn encashed by the radical parties like the AIUDF which recruited both the Assamese and Bengali Muslims to expand their support base. Situation became all the more elusive as many illegal migrants started possessing ration cards and other official documents after settling in the Assamese soil, thus becoming citizens of India. This becomes possible because of the close nexus between the officials and the political parties which want to win them as vote banks. According to D.N. Bezboruah, "It is the Congress that sowed the seed of illegal immigration from Bangladesh for electoral gains, and now it does not know what to do with an explosive situation".⁶⁸

The political ramification of the issue has been unprecedented with areas like Kokrajhar being periodically affected by the ethnic violence. Kokrajhar is a Bodo dominated area where large scale immigration of Bangladeshi Muslims has taken place. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Gossaigaon sub-division of Kokrajhar witnessed large scale migration of immigrant Muslims. In the last two decades the population of the Muslims in the area increased manifold causing immense pressure on the land. According to news in *The Hindustan Times*, "immigrant Muslims procured lands from many Bodos in Gossaigaon areas and outnumbered Bodos in many villages. Slowly, there were migrations of immigrant Muslims (mainly agricultural labourers and daily wage earners) to Kokrajhar town areas."⁶⁹

As competition over the control of land and other resources increased, clashes started taking place between the two distinct communities. The first big massacre took place in 1993 when 50 persons were killed in Kokrajhar and Bongaigon district. The next spell of violence erupted in 1994 leaving over 100 dead. The next round of violence between the Bodos and the Adivasi settlers in 1996 left over 2.2 lakh people homeless and

nearly 200 dead. In 2008, migrant Muslims and Bodo tribals clashed again in Udalguri district causing more than 100 deaths.⁷⁰ Again in 2012 and 2014 the region was rocked with large scale ethnic violence between Bodos and Muslims in which at least 100 people were killed and lakhs were displaced.⁷¹

Although India has raised the issue from time to time, the refusal of both the parties of Bangladesh, namely the BNP and the *Awami League*, to acknowledge the problem makes it a long standing one. The problem of effective border management and the growth of illegal migration are the two sides of the same coin. Bangladesh's denial of the illegal migration problem forced India to erect fence along most of its border which sometimes created tension in the concerned area straining the relations between the two countries. For example, according to Pattanaik, "in 2003 a crisis erupted when 213 nomadic people especially the snake charmers from Bangladesh were stranded in no man's land and Dhaka refused to take them back. This led to border tensions and bilateral political crisis as both India and Bangladesh refused to own these people creating a humanitarian crisis. Finally these people were mysteriously made to vanish from the no man's land as a face saving measure."⁷² As a response to this incident, the then BJP government brought an amendment to the Citizenship Act in 2004 that defined 'illegal migrants' for the first time by inserting Clause B and Clause C to Section 2 of the Citizenship Act 1955.⁷³ The hurdle increases all the more for India as she faces difficulty in successfully carrying out deportation of the illegal migrants. This is because the local police are often unfamiliar with the language and the problem due to which they often dump the Indian citizens into the illegal category. Quoting Pattanaik again, "till July 2012 total number of 2,442 people were deported or pushed back while 42,338 people were declared as foreigners".⁷⁴ Also rampant smuggling, illegal migration, trafficking in women and children and insurgency create complications for the Border Security Force (BSF) to manage the border. As a result there have been frequent exchanges of fire between the BSF and Bangladeshi Rifles.

The Census of 2001 shows that the Murshidabad district of West Bengal, the lone Muslim majority district in the state had a 28.5% increase compared to 1991 figure. The Census showed that there were 8,25,380 additional Muslims in the district. The Muslim share in the district's population has risen to 63.67 % from 61.4 % in 1991. Malda, another Muslim dominated area in the state witnessed an arrival of 3,83,879 new Muslims.⁷⁵

Thus, porous and poorly managed borders, absence of a strong immigration policy in India, vested interests of the political parties to turn the illegal migrants into a significant vote bank and the adamant nature of the Bangladeshi government to refuse the existence of this issue, have facilitated the illegal migration.

6. Rise of religious extremism

Religious extremism poses direct threat to the security and political stability of Bangladesh. Soon after the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the subsequent overthrow of the *Awami League* government by a military coup d'état in August 1975, secularism soon came to be replaced by an Islam oriented state ideology. A link between religion and politics emerged which increased during the military rule of General Ershad. During his period, Islam was made the state religion and many *Jamaat* leaders returned from Pakistan facilitating the revival of *Jamaat-e-Islami*. The post-Mujib period witnessed a steady rise of religious fundamentalists and a subsequent increase of terrorist activities. After the coming of BNP to power, the fundamentalist forces started spreading their tentacles through acts of propaganda and terrorism. The presence of the secular forces in the Bangladeshi society soon became over shadowed with the rise of religious fundamentalists. Activities like attacks on religious minorities and condemnation over feminist writer Taslima Nasreen's *Lajja* during this period portrayed the diminishing influence of the liberal forces and intellectuals in the Bangladeshi society.

The 2001 general election in Bangladesh appeared to be a major setback for the secular democratic forces led by the *Awami League*. In this election, *Jamaat-e-Islami*, an Islamic organization, emerged as the third largest party capturing 17 seats with 4.29% votes.⁷⁶ This is an Islamic political party responsible for spreading Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism in Bangladesh. It is also the most organized outfit among all the political parties of Bangladesh. Over time, it has secured stable and reliable funding sources that include its members as well as sympathizers. These groups of people cater to all ages and backgrounds starting from those who are *madrassa* educated people who have received modern education. Today, the influence of *Jamaat-e-Islami* has expanded in a manner to reckon with. It has made inroads into multiple sections of the Bangladeshi society by virtue of its strong organizational apparatus. The party can be seen working actively on campuses of large educational institutions to spread the doctrine of hate and bigotry against the religious and sectarian

minorities in Bangladesh and also against the liberal people of that country. It is trying to infiltrate the army, the air force and the civil bureaucracy, thus, threatening the country with extremism.⁷⁷ During this time several other Islamic organizations also became prominent. These were *Islamic Chatra Shibir* (ICS), *Harakat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami* (HUJI), *Islamic Oikya Jote* (IOJ), *Rohingya Solidarity Organization* (RSO), *Jamiyatul Mujahideen*, *Al Qaeda*, *Students of Madrassa* (SM).⁷⁸ In this period of the coalition rule between the *Bangladesh National Party* (BNP) and the *Jamaat-e-Islami* that lasted from 2001-2006, Bangladesh witnessed a sharp escalation in terrorist activities planned by these groups.

The recent years have witnessed the growth of several other Islamist organizations having the potential to create disruptions in future. *Hizbut Tahrir* (HT) is one such banned organization that is fast increasing its activities throughout Bangladesh. It mainly functions through its website, posters, leaflets and occasional rallies. As Ilahi Chowd puts it, while most of the Islamist extremist groups recruit from "lower middle class, rural, half educated, unemployed youth, HT targets the urban, economically affluent, educated professionals".⁷⁹ This is even more dangerous affecting the very backbone of the country. Another extremist group is *Hefazat-e-Islam* formed in 2011. However, it came into prominence in 2013 with its 13 point demand put forth to the government. Some of these demands were promulgation of blasphemy law with a provision of death penalty, scrapping of laws on women's right and the proposed education policy, declaring Ahmediya community as non-Muslims, banning of Christian missionary activities especially in Chittagong hill tracts and dismantling of sculptures erected in public places as those are considered un-Islamic symbols by them.⁸⁰

Atrocities against the religious minorities are still quite common in Bangladesh. Just before the last parliamentary election in Bangladesh that took place on 5 January 2014, dozens of activists affiliated with the BNP and the *Jamaat-e-Islami* were arrested for attacking the Hindus and destroying their homes and property. These groups are said to have damaged 100 homes belonging to the Hindus, wounded scores of people and killed at least two dozen people.⁸¹

However, the rise in religious extremism is also simultaneously countered with increasing stringent measures adopted by the government to stop it. Immediately after coming to power, the *Awami League* government has shown zero tolerance to terrorism and has taken several significant steps. Law enforcement and intelligence agencies have been

strengthened. Government agencies like the Bangladesh Police, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), Directorate General Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and the National Security Intelligence (NSI) have been increasingly active. Laws have also been strengthened against terror financing. On 16 February 2012, Bangladesh Parliament unanimously passed an amendment to a 2009 law that legalized capital punishment for domestic acts of terrorism. The 2012 Anti Terrorism Act authorized death penalty for terrorists targeting another country from Bangladesh.⁸²

6.1 *The Shahbag movement*

As Bangladesh heralds towards a more vibrant Islamic democracy, establishing ideals like secularism and liberalism becomes all the more vital for its successful functioning. The people of Bangladesh, with their turbulent past, understand this and also realize the threat posed by religious extremism to their hard earned independence. Bangladeshis, till today, have not forgotten the wounds that were inflicted upon them by the *Razakars*- allies of Pakistan, during the Bangladesh War of Liberation in 1971. These war criminals were responsible for murdering and raping unarmed civilians. Today, most of those heinous perpetrators are top leaders of several Islamic organizations with international criminal charges against them. Bangladeshis live their entire lives in the hope that justice will be delivered to them some day. However, their patience crossed the threshold and public outrage became visible on 5 February 2013 when thousands of young people gathered at Shahbag Mor, Dhaka to protest against the war criminals. This incident famously known as the Shahbag Movement was a spontaneous action organized by the activist bloggers of the *Bangladesh Online Activist Network* (BOAN). The uprising began when Abdul Qader Mollah, current Secretary General of *Jamaat-e-Islami*, was given life imprisonment by the International War Crimes Tribunal when the expectation was death penalty. Also known as the *Buthcher of Mirpur*, Mollah was responsible for murdering and raping numerous Bangladeshis.⁸³ The people of the country who had been waiting all the while felt to be let down. They took to the streets demanding change of judgment. They also placed a six point demand to the Speaker, Advocate Abdul Hamid.⁸⁴ However, the protest became more intensified when the *Jamaat-e-Islami* and their student wing, *Islamic Chatra Shibir*, issued death threats against the protestors.⁸⁵ The organizations then went to the streets of Dhaka calling a series of strikes that eventually turned very violent. Many Shahbag bloggers became targets of attacks carried out by the

Islamists. On 15 February 2013, Ahmed Rajib Haider, a blogger and campaigner was brutally killed in Dhaka.⁸⁶ Five students of North South University who were suspected to be in the murder were arrested by the government on 2 March 2013.⁸⁷ The activists of *Hefazat-e-Islam* organized two huge rallies on 5 May and 6 May 2013 respectively. Their march to Dhaka on 5 May 2013 drew a crowd of nearly half a million *madrassa* students, teachers and sympathizers.⁸⁸ Its rally in Motijheel, the nation's financial district, became very violent instigating the police to come down heavily on them.⁸⁹ Finally, on 17 September 2013, Abdul Quader Molla was found guilty of murders and other war crimes by the Bangladesh Supreme Court.⁹⁰ The court converted his life sentence to death sentence and ordered his execution. Finally on 12 December 2013, he was executed.⁹¹

Thus, the Shahbag Movement can be called a manifestation of strong and secular Bengali culture prevalent in the country. The movement brought together thousands of young people who did not feel afraid to voice their protests against the Islamic fundamentalists for committing crimes against humanity. In a way, the movement revived the spirit of 1971 with its secular, youthful, nationalistic and idealistic characteristics.

7. Cross-Border Terrorism

Although the situation improved after the *Awami League* came to power, nevertheless, cross-border terrorism still remains a threat. Today, security threats take various other forms including disrupting the economy of a country. This has been precisely the case with Bangladesh as it is being used by Pakistan to destabilize India. Pakistan has been well known in pushing fake currency to India from Bangladesh in order to weaken the Indian economy. In September 2013, Border Security Force seized Rs 10 lakh fake Indian currency notes (FICN) at India-Bangladesh border.⁹² Again in August 2014, the Delhi police seized Rs 4 lakhs of fake Indian currency notes from the Old Delhi Railway Station that came from Bangladesh.⁹³ Reports like this have been quite common illustrating the serious threats that emerge from Bangladesh. Some reports also claim that Bangladesh has contributed to the destabilization of the northeast by allowing the *United Liberation Front of Assam* (ULFA) and other militant groups to operate from its territory with a view to carrying out terrorist activities in India. These groups have been provided shelter in Bangladesh and allowed to run training centers there.⁹⁴

More recently, the blast that happened in West Bengal's Burdwan

region on 2 October 2014 vindicates that the terror outfits of Bangladesh are seeking safe haven in the Indian soil. The explosion that took place in a flat was accidental that killed two men and injured another while producing bombs. However, the materials that were seized from the flat exposed an alleged terror module with suspected links to Al Qaida. The materials confiscated from the flat included 58 improvised explosive devises (IEDs), 55 improvised hand grenades, gelatin sticks, chemicals, explosive making literature and pamphlets that featured the name of Ayman-al-Zawahiri.⁹⁵ Later National Investigating Agency (NIA) revealed that those who were arrested are members of the *Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh* (JMB).⁹⁶ Thus, it becomes evident that the porous border between the two countries gives them an effortless passage to enter into the Indian territory and West Bengal being a bordering state provides the easiest and the safest location for their hide-out.

AREAS OF COOPERATION

India-Bangladesh relations have been seriously constrained by several tribulations bothering both the nations. Nevertheless, these thorny issues never deterred the two states from cooperating in areas that affect them directly. Collaboration in the field of economy and security has yielded tangible results for both the countries. This has been possible with the help of Hasina's government which made considered efforts in this direction thereby creating friendly atmosphere for both the countries.

Cooperation in the field of security: Immediately after coming to power in 2009, Sheikh Hasina pledged not to allow Bangladesh to be used by the terrorists and controlled the activities of several insurgent and terror groups like the *United Liberation Front of Assam* (ULFA) and *Lashkar-e-Tayeba* (LeT) respectively. In due course of time, Bangladesh not only took actions against other terror groups like *Harkatul Jihad al Islam* (HUJI) and *Jamaat ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh* (JMB) but also handed over two LeT members of Indian origin operating from Bangladesh.⁹⁷ In November 2009, Indian government was handed over the Foreign Secretary of ULFA Sashadhar Chowdhury and Finance Secretary Chitraban Hazarika by its Bangladeshi counterpart.⁹⁸ Dhaka also captured the Chairman, his bodyguard and the Deputy Commander in Chief of ULFA namely Arabinda Rajkhowa, Palash Phukan and Hitesh Kalita respectively and handed them to the Assam Police.⁹⁹ Soon after the Mumbai terror attack in India, Bangladesh government in order to address the Indian concerns

arrested Abdul Rouf Merchant, an operative of the mafia gang headed by Dawood Ibrahim.¹⁰⁰ Security cooperation was further consolidated during the visit of Sheikh Hasina to New Delhi in January 2010 as both countries signed three agreements related to Mutual Assistance on Criminal Matters; Transfer of Sentenced Persons and Combating International Terrorism, Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking.¹⁰¹ In January 2012, with the help of Indian intelligence agencies, Bangladesh unearthed a coup plotted by some military officers against its government. The officers were believed to be against the incumbent government.¹⁰²

Thus, both countries realize the importance of mutual cooperation as the dynamics of security has far reaching impact for the people across the boundaries. Bangladesh's commitment has been very important for India whose past failures in containing insurgencies in its north eastern region posed significant threats to its internal security. With subsequent help from Bangladesh, India has been able to bring down the level of insurgent activities and strengthen its security.

Developmental Assistance to Bangladesh: India has assisted generously in developing the infrastructure of Bangladesh. The country faces an acute shortage of power and India has provided 250 MW of electricity from its grid to the power starved Bangladesh. The two countries signed a MOU during Hasina's visit to New Delhi on January 2010. Under the Energy Agreement with Bangladesh, India supplies 250 MW of electricity from top Indian power utility NTPC Ltd which will continue for 25 years.¹⁰³ India has also offered its assistance to build a 1,320 MW electricity production plant in Khulna as a joint venture.¹⁰⁴ Thus India plays a major role in helping Bangladesh to meet its domestic power demand and boost economic growth. India has also extended a credit of one billion dollars to Bangladesh, the single largest amount of credit being extended to any country. This was announced during the Bangladesh Prime Minister's visit to India in January 2010. The loan has been granted under very soft terms with 1.7 per cent rate of interest, 20 years of maturity and five years of grace period. A good proportion of this credit, amounting to about 200 million dollars, is in the form of grants.¹⁰⁵ The remaining amount of 800 million dollars have been allotted to fund sixteen projects in Bangladesh.¹⁰⁶ The projects identified for being financed under this line of credit are mostly in the sector of transport infrastructure. According to the Ministry of External Affairs Report Report, India has also extended aid "worth over Taka 250 crore (over US \$ 37 million) to help it cope with natural disasters and floods in 2007-08 including supply of 1,000 MT of

skimmed milk powder, and 40,000 MT of rice. India has completed and handed over 2,649 core shelters in the affected villages in Bagerhat district in southern Bangladesh."¹⁰⁷

Cultural Exchanges and Cooperation in other areas: India's gestures towards her eastern neighbor have also been positive and amicable. It conferred the famous and prestigious Indira Gandhi prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2009 to the Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during her visit to New Delhi in 2010.¹⁰⁸ The two countries also celebrated the 150th Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore in 2011. It was a year long celebration with the joint inaugural ceremonies being held on Dhaka and New Delhi on 6 May 2011 and 7 May 2011 respectively.¹⁰⁹ To promote the people to people contacts, India issues about half a million visas every year and multiple scholarships to enable the Bangladeshi students to come and study in India. Training assistance is also provided to these students in several Indian universities and other institutions covering a wide range of disciplines. The scholarships and training programs are offered to the Bangladeshi nationals under several schemes like the ITEC, TCS of Colombo Plan, ICCR, AYUSH, Common Wealth, SAARC and IOR-ARC. Cultural exchanges take place in the fields of music, theatre, art, painting, books etc. This was further strengthened with the inauguration of the Indira Gandhi Cultural Center (IGCC) of Indian Council for Cultural relations at Dhaka on 11 March 2010. In the field of connectivity, railway links have been established. One train which is called "Maitree Express" operates between Kolkata and Dhaka and another railway link from Akhaura to Agartala has been proposed whose work will start in 2015. Several institutional mechanisms are also in place which looks into the bilateral issues of both the countries. They meet periodically to discuss a wide range of matters. Some of these are the Joint River Commission (JRC) and the Joint Economic Commission (JEC) at the ministerial level; Joint Working Group on Security (JNG); Joint Boundary Working Group (JBWG); Joint Working Group on Trade (JWG); Joint Group of Custom Officials (JGC); Protocol Renewal Committee and Standing Committee to review implementation of Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade, and Inter- Governmental Railway Meeting.¹¹⁰

WAY AHEAD: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in India with a landslide victory following the 2014 Lok Sabha elections. Although the previous

government under the leadership of Dr. Manmohan Singh failed to conclude any breakthrough agreement with Bangladesh, nevertheless both countries shared good friendship with each other. Now, with the coming of the BJP government the dynamics of relation will possibly alter as the issue of illegal migration will come up for discussion with Bangladesh which the previous government always avoided. Even before coming to power, Narendra Modi during his election campaign in places like West Bengal and Assam talked about taking action against the illegal migrants from the neighboring country and rehabilitating the Hindu migrants. However, the present BJP government under the leadership of Narendra Modi has taken conscious steps to not to upset the delicate nature of the relations. Immediately after coming to power, Narendra Modi invited all member countries of SAARC in his oath taking ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.

Although Begum Sheikh Hasina could not be present due to her prior commitments, her warm regards and congratulations were sent through Bangladesh's Parliament Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury.¹¹¹ During the maiden visit of the present Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj from 25 to 27 June 2014 to Dhaka, several issues relating to the Land Boundary Agreement, proposed water sharing deal and the issue of illegal migration were discussed. India also announced several measures to strengthen its relation with the country. India announced five year multiple entry visa to Bangladeshis below 13 and above 65 years of age. A second bus link connecting the states of Assam and Meghalaya was proposed to increase connectivity between the two sides. It was also during the BJP led government that the first bus service connecting Dhaka with Kolkata had started way back in 1999. In the field of energy cooperation, India will be supplying an additional 100 Mega Watt of electricity from the Palatana power project in Tripura to Bangladesh in addition to the 500 Mega Watt that it is currently supplying.¹¹² Indian Foreign Minister's visit also coincided with the verdict that came from the United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) based in The Hague, which resolved the longstanding maritime dispute that existed between Dhaka and New Delhi over the Bay of Bengal.¹¹³ The Tribunal first fixed the location of the terminus of the land boundary between the two countries and then delimited their boundary encompassing the territorial sea, Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and continental shelf both within and beyond 200 nautical miles. Bangladesh was awarded 19, 467 sq. km of the 25, 602 sq. km. of the sea area in question, thus gaining about four fifth of the disputed

area.¹¹⁴ India got back 6,000 sq. km. of the disputed area along with the controversial South Talpatti island.¹¹⁵ This delimitation will have far reaching implications as it will increase the prospect for further cooperation between the two countries. The verdict will set the base for proper management and exploitation of the resources present in the bay in a cooperative manner. Recently, the Third Meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) was held fruitfully. Several decisions were taken including the effective implementation of the coordinated Border management Plan. The new arrangement of holding meetings of Divisional Commissioners (DCs) and District Magistrates (DMs) of clusters of bordering districts was welcomed by both the countries. The two neighbors are also working on the upgradation of infrastructure of the Land Customs Stations (LCSs) and Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) in a coordinated manner. The two parties discussed the progress of the construction work that is going on at Phulbari-Banglabandha for the opening of immigration facilities.¹¹⁶ Both sides also agreed to hold the third meeting of the sub-regional group of JRC on Tipaimukh Hydroelectric Project along with the early completion of fencing along the Indo-Pak Border.¹¹⁷ Both countries are also significantly participating to increase mutual trade. Bangladesh government has very recently announced the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) for the Indian investors. India has also decided to provide 1,000 Mega Watt of power to Comilla in Bangladesh.¹¹⁸ As far as the ratification of the Land Boundary Agreement, 1974 is concerned, the present government has taken the initiative to secure parliamentary approval.

CONCLUSION

The role of the Indian government in the liberation of Bangladesh is well known. After 1971, India-Bangladesh relations, though underpinned by several problems, started on a friendly note. However, seed of discord between the two countries soon gave way to animosities that affected the relations considerably. Perception played a very important role where mutual mistrust and suspicion restricted the strengthening of the relations. The assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975 and the subsequent military coup taking over Bangladesh created a period of instability in its relations with India. As Bangladesh increasingly began to move towards an Islam based polity, the political leadership of the country started nurturing anti-Indian sentiments among the Bangladeshis. However,

bilateral relations between the two countries improved with a change in the domestic politics of Bangladesh. *Awami League*, unlike BNP after coming to power improved the relations between the two countries. But major problems like water dispute, trade deficit, transit problem, boundary issues, religious fundamentalism and illegal migration still remain. Although these come up in the discussions, significant solutions are yet to be achieved. However, both the countries are trying to set aside their differences and solve these long standing issues in an amicable way. As such New Delhi and Dhaka have been seen cooperating in many spheres yielding tangible results. The bilateral relations have prospects of further success, but problems affecting both the countries need to be tackled first to achieve this.

REFERENCES

1. David Lewis, *Bangladesh Politics, Economy and Civil Society*. New Delhi, Cambridge University Press, 2011. p.59.
2. *Ibid*, p.61.
3. A.Rahim, 'Communalism and Nationalism in Bangladesh'. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Volume 42, Number 6, 2007. pp.551-572.
4. *op. cit.*, No.1.
5. Sanjay. K. Bharadwaj, "Contesting identities in Bangladesh: A Study of Secular and Religious Frontiers". London School of Economics (L.S.E) Asia Research Center, *Working Paper 36*, 2011. Accessed on 5 July 2014, URL: http://www.lse.ac.uk/asiaResearchcentre/_files/ARCWP36-Bhardwaj.pdf
6. *Ibid*, p. 17.
7. *op. cit.*, No. 1.
8. "Bangladesh sets up war crimes court". *Al Jazeera*, 25 March 2010. Accessed 5 July 2014 URL: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2010/03/2010325151839747356.html>
9. *op. cit.*, No.1.
10. M. Harun-Ar-Rashi, "Let Us Prove That Past Is Past". *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, Volume 6, Number 4, 2011. pp. 380-388.
11. *Ibid*.
12. Smruti. M. Pattanaik, "Make the People the Ultimate Stakeholders". *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, Volume 6, Number 4, 2011. p p. 389-398.
13. Bhumitra Chakma, "South Asia's Realist Fascination and the Alternatives". *Contemporary Security Policy*, Volume 30, Number 3, 2009. p. 404.
14. *op. cit.*, No.12.
15. Aparna Ray, "India, Bangladesh: Water Disputes and Teesta River Diplomacy". *Global Voice Online*, 8 June 2012. Accessed on 10 July 2014, URL: <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/06/08/india-bangladesh-water-disputes-and-teesta-river-diplomacy/>
16. B. C. Upreti, "Indo-Bangladesh Water Dispute". In *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh*, edited by S. R. Chakravarty. New Delhi, Har-Anand Publications, 1994. p. 140.

17. Kuldeep Singh, *India and Bangladesh*. New Delhi, Annual Publications, 1983. p.89.
18. B. M Abbas, *The Ganga Water Dispute*. Bangladesh, The University Press Limited, 1982. p.20.
19. R.K Dixit, 'Indo-Pakistan Talks on Farakka Barrage and Related Matter'. *Indian Journal of International Law*, Vol. IX, 1969.
20. Ashild Kolas et. al., *Water Scarcity in Bangladesh: Transboundary Rivers, Conflicts and Cooperation*. Oslo, Peace Research Institute (PRIO) Report 2013. p.82.
21. B.M. Jain, *India in the New South Asia: Strategic, military and economic concerns in the age of nuclear diplomacy*. London, Tauris Academic Studies, 2010. p.91.
22. *op. cit.*, No. 16.
23. Ishtiaq Hossain, "Bangladesh-India Relations: The Ganges Water-Sharing Treaty and Beyond". *Asian Affairs*, Volume 25, Number 3, 1998.p p.131-150.
24. *op. cit.*, No. 16.
25. *op. cit.*, No. 23.
26. *Ibid.* p.137.
27. M.A. Salman, Kishor Uprety, *Conflict and Cooperation on South Asia's International Rivers: A Legal Perspective*. USA, World Bank Publications, 2002. pp. 162-164.
28. *op. cit.*, No.23.
29. *Ibid.* p.148
30. Aspen Institute India, *India Bangladesh Relations: Towards increase partnership: A Report*, July 2012. Accessed 28 May 2014, URL: http://www.anantaas-penceentre.in/pdf/India_Bangladesh_Report.pdf
31. Anand Kumar, "Impact of West Bengal Politics on India-Bangladesh Relations". *Strategic Analysis*, Volume 37, Number 3, 2013. pp. 338-352.
32. Indrani Bagchi, "Manmohan Singh, Sheikh Hasina put Teesta behind, fix boundary". *The Times of India*, 7 September 2011.
33. Archis Mohan and Ananya Sengupta, "Sweet Teesta of Triumph: No Deal without Bengal Consent". *The Telegraph*, 5 September 2011.
34. Avijit Sinha, "Focus on Teesta in dry season". *The Telegraph*, 3 December 2011.
35. *op. cit.*, No. 31.
36. "India won't harm Bangladesh's interests: PM to Dipu Moni". *The Economic Times*, 26 July 2013. Accessed 10 August 2014, URL: http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-07-26/news/40815211_1_dipu-moni-teesta-bangladesh-foreign-minister
37. Anand Kumar, "Indo-Bangladesh relations". *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, Volume 7, Number 3-4, 2003. pp. 29-40.
38. Muchkund Dubey, "India Bangladesh Economic Relations". *Mainstream Weekly*, Volume LI, No 14, 25 March 2013.
39. *Ibid.*
40. "India-Bangladesh Bilateral Trade and Potential Free Trade Agreement: Bangladesh Development Series Paper No: 13". *World Bank Report*, 2006. Dhaka, World Bank office. p.57.
41. *op. cit.*, No. 30.
42. *op. cit.*, No. 37.
43. Indra Nath Mukherji, "India-Bangladesh Bilateral Trade: Issues and Concerns". *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, Volume 7, Nos. 3-4, 2003. pp. 41-56.
44. Farooq Sobhan, "India Bangladesh Relations: Past, Present and Future". *ORF Discourse*, Volume 3, Number 3, 2008. pp. 1-5.
45. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), *India Bangladesh*

Relations. New Delhi, 2013.

46. *op. cit.*, No. 30.
47. *Ibid.*
48. Shubha Chatterjee, "Situating North East in India's Look East Policy". *Journal of International Relations*, Volume 1, Issue 1, 2014. pp. 51-54.
49. *op. cit.*, No. 37.
50. "Issues between India and Bangladesh". *IAS Score* (website). Accessed on 27 August 2014, URL: <http://iasscore.in/international-details-58.html>
51. *op. cit.*, No. 37.
52. *op. cit.*, No. 30.
53. "Bangladesh India to start work on Feni Bridge". *The Assam Tribune*, 5 May 2012. Accessed on 19 September 2014, URL: <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=may0512/at046>
54. Sreeradha Dutta, "Show Tangible Results Leading to Visible Benefits". *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, Volume 6, Number 4, 2011. pp. 399-406.
55. "India-Bangladesh Border Fence". *Global Security* (website), 14 August 2013. Accessed on 19 September 2014, URL: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/india/india-bangladesh-fence.htm>
56. Kanchan Lakshman and Sanjay K. Jha, "India-Bangladesh: Restoring Sovereignty on Neglected Borders". *Faultlines*, Vol. 14, Article 7, 1 January 2003. Accessed on 28 September 2014, URL: <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume14/Article7.htm>
57. *op. cit.*, No. 31.
58. T.J., "Border agreements: The end of enclaves". *The Economist*, 7 September 2011, Accessed on 15 August 2014, URL: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2011/09/border-agreements>
59. Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, "India-Bangladesh Joint Communiqué 2010: A Review". *ORF*, 2 February 2011, Accessed on 10 August 2014, URL: <http://orfonline.org/cms/sites/orfonline/modules/analysis/AnalysisDetail.html?cmaid=21131&mmacmaid=21132>
60. Government of India, *Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Report, "Protocol to the Agreement between India and Bangladesh concerning the demarcation of the land boundary between India and Bangladesh and related matters"*. New Delhi, 2011.
61. Harsh.V. Pant, "India and Bangladesh: Will the Twain Ever Meet?" *Asian Survey*, Volume 47, Number 2, 2007. pp. 231-249.
62. Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, "India: Resolving the Bangladesh Immigration Issue". *The Diplomat*, 27 May 2014.
63. Prakash Singh, 'Demographic Movements: The Threat to India's Economy and Security'. *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, Volume 11, Number 1, 2002. pp. 99-100.
64. *op. cit.*, No. 61.
65. Sanjoy Hazarika, *Rites of Passage: Border Crossing, Imagined homelands, India's East and Bangladesh*. Delhi, Penguin, 2000. p. 118.
66. Nitin.A. Gokhle, "A Election Gimmick". *Outlook*, 8 May 2001.
67. Supratim Dey, "Borderline case". *Business Standard*, 25 August 2012.
68. Samudra Gupta Kashyap, "As Much for Land as for Votes". *Hindustan Times*, 14 May 2014.
69. "Key facts about Assam violence". *The Hindustan Times*, 26 July 2012. Accessed 15 July 2014, URL: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/key-facts-about-assam-violence/article1-895836.aspx>

70. Samudra Gupta Kashyap, "Ethnic riots part of Kokrajhar history, but no lessons learnt". *The Indian Express*, 25 July 2012.
71. "Dozens of Muslims killed in ethnic violence in north-east India". *The Guardian*, 3 May 2014, Accessed on 17 June 2014, URL: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/03/dozens-muslims-killed-ethnic-violence-north-east-india-assam>
72. Smruti.M. Pattanaik, "Politics of Illegal Immigration and India Bangladesh Relations". *IDSAs Issue Brief*, 16 May 2014, Accessed 10 August 2014, URL: http://www.idsa.in/system/files/sspattanaik160514_0.pdf
73. "Cong move opens old wounds". *The Telegraph*, 10 January 2006.
74. *op. cit.*, No. 72.
75. "Train from Bangladesh". *The Telegraph*, 15 September 2004.
76. Mizan Rahman, "Ban on Jamaat by June: Bangladesh minister". *Gulf Times*, 14 March 2014.
77. Suman Haque, "The Light Bearer of Islamic Extremism in Bangladesh". *The News Today*, 27 July 2014.
78. Apratim Mukarji, "Rise of Religious Radicalism in Bangladesh". *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, Volume7, Nos. 3-4, 2003. pp. 57-76.
79. Ishfaq Ilahi Chowd, "Religious Extremism in Bangladesh". *The Daily Star*, Dhaka. 1 January 2014.
80. *Ibid.*
81. Palash Ghosh, "Banglstan: Do Hindus have a future in Bangladesh?". *International Business Times*, 25 October 2014.
82. Faiz Sobhan, "Countering violent extremism in Bangladesh". *Dhaka Tribune*, 28 May 2013.
83. Dr.Rupak Bhattacharya, "The Shahbag Generation of Bangladesh". *The Assam Chronicle*, 24 September 2014.
84. "Shahbag protestors submit 6-point demand to Speaker". *The Financial Express*, 11 February 2013. Accessed 18 August 2014, URL: <http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/old/index.php?ref=MjBfMDJfMTFfMTNfMV8xXzE1OTg2Mw==>
85. Farooq Sulehria, "Shahbag". *The News*, 15 March 2013. Accessed 15 July 2014, URL: www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-165360-Shahbag
86. "Shahbag protestor killed". *Bdnews24*, 15 February 2013. Accessed 10 August 2014, URL: <http://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2013/02/15/shahbagh-protester-killed>
87. "Rajib murder 'cracked". *Bdbews24*, 2 March 2013. Accessed 10 August 2014, URL: https://www.google.co.in/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CBwQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fbdnews24.com%2Fbangladesh%2F2013%2F03%2F02%2Frajib-murder-cracked&ei=vLRKVI2_AYzX8gXwwYLoBw&usq=AFQjCNFG0o8BGfH5YNk2NhU8MdomWfs5Uw&bvm=bv.77880786,d.dGc
88. Syed Zain Mahmood, "Bangladesh protest violence leaves more than 30 people dead". *The Guardian*, 6 May 2013.
89. Abu Bakar Siddique, "39 killed in Hefazat clashes on May 5-6". *Dhaka Tribune*, 9 November 2013.
90. Biswadip Das with Suliman Niloy, "Mirpur butcher Mollah must die, says SC". *Bdnews24*, 17 September 2013, Accessed 10 August 2014, URL: <https://www.google.co.in/url?>
91. "Bangladesh Executes Islamist Leader Abdul Quader Mollah for War Crimes". *Global Voices*, 14 December 2013.

92. Deeptiman Tiwary, "BSF seizes Rs 10 lakh fake currency notes at India-Bangladesh border". *The Times of India*, 3 September 2013.
93. "Cops seize fake money, two arrested". *The Asian Age*, 21 August 2014, Accessed 21 September 2014, URL: <http://www.asianage.com/delhi/cops-seize-fake-money-two-arrested-774>
94. "India faces threats from almost all its neighbours". *The Hindu*, 3 September 2012, Accessed 10 July 2014, URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-faces-threats-from-almost-all-its-neighbours/article3851365.ece>
95. "Terror Shelter: Burdwan blast exposes module with Qaida papers". *The Telegraph*, 6 October 2014.
96. Monalisa Chaudhuri, Indranil Sarkar and Alamgir Hossain, "NIA announces Bangla outfit link to Burdwan blast". *The Telegraph*, 25 October 2014.
97. Anand Kumar, "Shaikh Hasina's Visit to India and Future of Indo-Bangladesh Relations". *Dialogue*, Volume 11, Number 3, 2010.
98. Wasbir Hussain, "Down But Not Out As yet". *The Outlook*, 18 November 2009.
99. Bhumitra Chakma, "Bangladesh-India Relations: Sheikh Hasina's India-positive Policy Approach". *RSIS Working Paper No. 252*, 2012. Accessed 5 July 2014, URL: <https://www.google.co.in/url?sa>
100. *op. cit.*, No. 30.
101. "India, Bangladesh working on Extradition Treaty: Hasina". *The Times of India*, 13 January 2010, Accessed 16 August 2014, URL: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-Bangladesh-working-on-Extradition-Treaty-Hasina/articleshow/5439817.cms>
102. "Dhaka tipped off by Delhi". *The Daily Star*, 22 January 2012, Accessed on 16 July 2014, URL: http://archive.thedailystar.net/newDesign/print_news.php?nid=219373
103. Sujay Mehdudia, "NTPC arm to supply 250 MW of power to Bangladesh from next month". *The Hindu*, 4 October 2013.
104. "Bangladesh and Coal". *Coal Issues Portal, Source Watch*, The Center for Media and Democracy. Accessed on 28 August 2014, URL: http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Bangladesh_and_coal
105. *op. cit.*, No.38.
106. Sengupta, "India, Bangladesh and Nepal: Learning Lessons, Facing Challenges". *ORF Issue Brief*, Number 64, 2013. pp. 1-16.
107. *op. cit.*, No. 45.
108. *op. cit.*, No. 30.
109. *op. cit.*, No. 45.
110. *Ibid.*
111. "8 world leaders who got Narendra Modi's invitation for swearing in". *The Times of India*, 23 May 2014.
112. Elizabeth Roche, "India announces new visa policy for Bangladesh". *Live mint*, 26 June 2014, Accessed on 18 August 2014, URL: <https://www.google.co.in/url?sa>
113. Delwar Hossain, "India -Bangladesh: After Sushma Swaraj's Visit". Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), *South Asia, Dhaka Discourse, Article 4569*, 21 July 2014, Accessed 17 July 2014, URL: <https://www.google.co.in/url?sa=>
114. Sam Bateman, "Resolution of Bangladesh-India maritime boundary: Model for South China Sea disputes?" Accessed 18 July 2014, URL: <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?id=182805>
115. "BNP blames govt for losing South Talpatti". *New Age*, 11 July 2014, Accessed

- 10 August 2014, URL: <https://www.google.co.in/url?sa>
116. "India Bangladesh call for effective implementation of Border Management Plan". *Net Indian*, 21 September 2014, Accessed on 21 September 2014, URL: <https://www.google.co.in/url?sa>
117. Sheikh Shahrar Zaman, "Dhaka and Delhi agree on border fencing". *Dhaka Tribune*, 21 September 2014.
118. "Bangladesh to create SEZ for Indian investors to forward the bilateral relations". *The Economic Times*, 7 October 2014. Accessed 14 October 2014, URL: <https://www.google.co.in/url?sa>

POLITICAL REGIMES AND WATER SHARING DISPUTES BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH

M.S. NANDA KISHOR

Civilizations began and survived along with rivers and later there was a transition where nation states fought for the flow of the river and ended up in wars. The twenty first century is also moving towards the spectre of conflict over water. There are states which have been fighting eternally for the rivers, there are few conflicts which came up animatedly with the creation of new states and the other few conflicts which probably would have found solutions amicably (between the disputants) but are not able due to third party interference. The India-Bangladesh water sharing dispute is a classic case of accepting, understanding, confronting, litigating and dragging the issue since the birth of Bangladesh. Several efforts have been made to find amicable solution. The push and pull factors such as national interest, foreign policy and geopolitics have been playing major role in perpetuating the conflict. One can neither give a definitive solution nor completely push it aside as a non-issue.

Rivers have become extremely important with the tag of scarce being added to it now. With the increasing demand for energy in day to day life, the natural flow of the river has been (ab)used by all the governments across the world. Water which was only required for drinking and agriculture has subsequently assumed pivotal position with advances made in science and technology and today it is the most important source of energy. The issue of rivers becomes extremely critical when they are trans-boundary in nature. This further leads to the issue of allocation. If a river flows through one state into another, the first state cannot possibly have the right to use all the resources at the mouth of the river. India is facing a serious water resource problem and as trends suggest, it is expected to become 'water stressed' by 2025 and 'water scarce' by 2050.¹ This has

somewhat alerted India to have water conservation decisions that include the Ganges and the Teesta and several other tributaries. The water issue between India and Bangladesh has been going on in the name of India-Bangladesh water dispute for the last four decades. The famous saying in history “you can change your friends, but not your neighbours”, is an apt example to explain India-Bangladesh relations, more specifically the water relations. It is a reality to live with and both the nations have to sort it out.

THE RIVERS AND GENESIS OF THE PROBLEM

The most interesting case that needs examination is Ganges, being one of the largest river systems in the world. It rises south of the main Himalayan divide near Gangotri in Uttar Pradesh, India. On its way towards the sea, numerous tributaries join the Ganges river from India and Nepal. The river divides into two channels below Farakka. The right arm continues to flow south in West Bengal as the Bhagirathi-Hooghly on which Calcutta Port is situated. The left main arm enters Bangladesh 18 km below Farakka and joins the Brahmaputra river at Goalundo. In Bangladesh, the Gorai river is the main distributary which leaves the Ganges river about 65 kms above the confluence of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers.

Considering the Ganges basin in Bangladesh, regular water supply from upstream is needed, particularly during the dry season (November-May) for several things such as agriculture, domestic, industrial purposes, for maintaining river depths, and sustaining fisheries and forestry which is predominantly the livelihood of people. Until 1975, the river was unregulated and the supply of water in the dry seasons was adequate. In that year, a barrage on the Ganges river at Farakka was commissioned by India. The purpose of the construction was to divert water from the Ganges river to the Bhagirathi-Hooghly river to maintain the navigability of Calcutta Port. The Farakka Barrage Project is comprised of the Jangipur Barrage across the Bhagirathi-Hooghly and a feeder canal taking off from the Ganges upstream of the Farakka Barrage and discharging into the Bhagirathi-Hooghly downstream of the Jangipur Barrage.² The latest issue being raised by civil society as well as environmentalists is that of the consequences related to environment in Bangladesh. The reduced flow in the Ganges system has potential socio-economic and environmental implications for Bangladesh.

The second important case in water dispute between India and Bangladesh is that of Teesta being the fourth major trans-boundary river

in Bangladesh. Upstream inflow in this river provides support to agricultural production in the Teesta river floodplain (TRF) in the northwest region of the country. Bangladesh constructed a barrage in 1990 to provide irrigation water for crop production in the Teesta Barrage Project (TBP) area and subsequently India also constructed a barrage on this river upstream. TBP commenced operation with partial conveyance infrastructure in 1993. The project was designed to be implemented in two phases. The phase I was finished in 1998. It is generally believed and observed that irrigation water supply significantly increases farm incomes. The Teesta water is crucial for Bangladesh, especially in the lean period from December to March when water flow often temporarily comes down to less than 1,000 cusecs from 5,000 cusecs every year.

This has augmented irrigation water demands. However, withdrawal of water in India upstream restricts irrigation water availability in the TBP area. The river Teesta is one of the main Himalayan rivers, which originates in the glaciers of Sikkim at an elevation of over 8,500 m above mean sea level and is the life line for Sikkim. The river then forms the boundary between Sikkim and West Bengal before it joins the Brahmaputra as a tributary in Bangladesh. Total length of the river is 315 km. The river traverses 97 kms in Indian plains before entering the extreme northwest region of Bangladesh. It flows around 124 kms in Bangladesh and joins Brahmaputra River. The Teesta river enters Bangladesh near Nilphamari region and flows for 45 km through the rice producing districts of Rangpur, Lalmonirhat and Gaibandha and thereafter joins the Brahmaputra river in Kurigram.

According to the Bangladesh Water Development Board, the country is dependent on the Teesta for its irrigation projects covering 750,000 hectares of land and has accordingly built a barrage (1st Phase) on the Teesta. Any water shortage in the Teesta very often disrupts irrigation in the vast tracts of land and undermines Bangladesh's agriculture. As a lower riparian under pressure from the fluctuating flows on the Teesta, Bangladesh is keen to reach a deal.³ Water sharing of Teesta river is one of the thorny issues between New Delhi and Dhaka. In this respect, a water sharing agreement was supposed to be inked in 2011, but due to the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's objections, it could not be implemented. Ms. Banerjee's apprehension with regard to Teesta is well-founded as the northern region of West Bengal also faces major issue of water scarcity and it is the only source of water for agricultural crops. With the reduced flow it would further inhibit the prevailing hydro deficit

situation of northern region which could lead to domestic tensions and create major problem for governance itself. The creation of artificial canal at the Teesta (Gajoldoba) Barrage in Jalpaiguri to irrigate Northern Bengal was the only option left before the West Bengal government. Bangladesh calls this unilateral as its share of water has been reduced largely due to the Gajoldoba canal. Though one can locate larger politics by West Bengal government associated with the issue in keeping pressure on the Union government in India, one cannot completely ignore the problems faced by the north Bengal region. Some recent statements by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on her visit to Dhaka are positive with regard to finding amicable solution to Teesta issue.⁴

It is also equally important to take note of the water crisis India has been going through in recent years. As a middle riparian state even India is struggling to meet the expectations of the agriculture sector. The water demand projection is quite alarming and India is making efforts to manage it and failure to do so would lead to domestic unrest. The World Bank in its 1999 report indicated that the overall water demand will increase from 552 BCM (Billion Cubic Metres) to 1,050 BCM by 2025, which will require the use of all available water resources in the country.⁵ According to The World Bank, India is the largest user of ground water in the world, after China. If something is not done soon, an estimated 114 million Indians will soon face desperate domestic, agricultural and industrial shortages.⁶ There are real pertinent issues which are directly linked to India's economic progress. Lack of water resources has taken it towards facing food crisis and failing to act on water conservation and innovative methods would very soon make it a food importer. Government agencies say that by 2050 India must nearly double grain production, to over 450 million tons a year, to meet the demands of increasing population.⁷ India being a middle riparian state faces tremendous pressure from the upper riparian states such as China. India's dependency on the rivers originating from the Tibetan plateau is a well-known fact and China is pursuing major inter-basin and inter-river water transfer projects in the region. As an alternative, the Indian policy makers came up with a plan to link major rivers of the country. The plan has not seen the light as there are several issues between several states within India. Bangladesh needs to understand these dynamics India has been facing for a long time.

Another important factor that goes unnoticed many a times is the poor water governance in Bangladesh during the floods. It has structured most of its time and energy in criticising India rather than looking for

solutions within. It has been identified that the main causes of flooding in Bangladesh are generally considered to be results of heavy monsoon downpour and synchronization of flood-peaks of major rivers. Bangladesh suffers from this extreme situation of facing floods in monsoon and then drought like situation affecting its fisheries industry and other major stakeholders in the summer. There have been some developments such as creation of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre under the Bangladesh Water Development Board in the past but much attention is paid to disaster management rather than water conservation for use in the summer. Bangladesh also needs to concentrate on some other important factors contributing to the recent floods, such as river bed aggradations due to siltation and damming of rivers, soil erosion due to unwise tilling practices and changes in the base level of the rivers due to local sea level rise. There is a need for restoration of abundant channels and lakes, dredging rivers and streams, establishing buffer zones along rivers, conservation tillage and developing advanced early warning and flood-proofing systems to manage natural disasters like flood and drought. Though issues such as deforestation in Nepal and Tibet which also contribute to floods cannot be controlled by Bangladesh, preparing different watershed management methods and conservation methods can certainly make a difference in its drought situation.

INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM

The India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) has been functioning since 1972. JRC constituted a Joint Committee of Experts (JCE) headed by the two countries water resources secretaries on the mechanism of sharing the Teesta waters and decided to follow the ground rules and benchmarks that were used to arrive at the Ganges Treaty. The JCE decided that the 'principles' and 'details' would be the basis on which any water sharing formula would be worked out.⁸ The JRC cannot take any major decisions without consulting the higher political authorities in the respective countries. The JRC mandate stipulates for two meetings a year but many a times it has been found that it takes place may be once or twice in five years. Both countries need to use this as an opportunity to talk and dialogue regularly. This in a way would also help in improving the relations between two countries.

THE DISCOURSE ON WATER DISPUTE-RHETORIC TO REALITY

There are some interesting works with regard to Ganga which divide the relationship between India and Bangladesh into five phases. Namely, friendly regime and productive talks, a total rupture, rapprochement and the first agreement on water sharing, the sea-saw game: reverting to the old paradigm and the final breakthrough till the agreement was reached through.⁹ There is no definitive meaning of the word national interest and it is as vague as we are able to understand the actions of nations. Still it can be understood "as an analytic tool, it is employed to describe, explain, or evaluate the sources or the adequacy of a nation's foreign policy. As an instrument of political action it serves as a means of justifying, denouncing, or proposing policies. Both usages, in other words refer to what is best for a national society. They also share a tendency to confine the intended meaning to what is best for a nation in foreign affairs. Beyond these general considerations, however, the two uses of the concept have little in common".¹⁰ It is interesting to analyse this particular definition as it is tailor made for India in its relation to Bangladesh. It does qualify to all the three aspects mentioned in justifying its position, denouncing the fears often pronounced by Bangladesh and yet keeps proposing policies convenient to it as an upper riparian state. The question of best for 'national society' considering India's position emerges from its demand for energy domestically. With Prime Minister Modi's regime and his pro-industrial development model for India, it is going to be proactive in procuring the energy required to match the demand from the industry to meet its ends. Further "the national interest will continue to feature in the political discourse of states because it has important subjective utility. However, by examining the concept as it is understood across the spectrum of International Relations Theory, it is clear that while it may retain rhetorical and lexical functions in the modern age, the national interest lacks substantive objective content".¹¹ There is lot more subjective utility in the whole discourse on water sharing based on national interest, national society, development and other related concepts.

The whole problem of river water sharing needs to go beyond the rhetoric of national interest alone as each country needs to cater to its national interest. The only substantial argument that can be thought henceforth is that national interest of a smaller nation (geographically, financially and militarily) is no inferior to that of a bigger state as national interest is an idea and an essential tool in the hermeneutics related to

politics used in building identity of a nation and confidence of the people of their respective countries. National interests continue to prevail through the form of governments jealously maintaining their sovereignty over their own stretches of the river, and they invoke the discourse of “national interest” to legitimise development of the basin’s resources. It is usually assumed that each country has an “objective” geographically-based interest deriving from its location on the river, topography and benefits derived or sought from the river and its resources. Second, as opposed to this assumption of a singular, objectively definable national interest, there is an array of diverse political and social interests within each country. Each country, moreover, has different ways and mechanisms for understanding, negotiating, optimising and mediating these diverse interests. This drives us to the concept of understanding the existing mechanism for trans-boundary river water sharing. International river law is one of the handy tools in analyzing it. It has served purpose across the world in solving some of the major problems related to river water sharing.

The Congress of Vienna is one of the foundations on which many conventions have been built. In 1815 the Final Act of the Congress of Vienna laid down the framework of international river law for almost a century. The Barcelona Convention in 1921 declared that states are forbidden to create obstacles for navigation in any way. The Geneva Convention of 1923 allowed countries to develop hydraulic power as long as it remained “within the limits of international law,” a fairly abstract idea.¹² The Pan American Declaration of 1933 further developed the idea expressed in the Geneva Convention. This Declaration stated that states can exploit rivers as long as the use of the river will not affect the activities of another state through which the river flows. Also the declaration was made that navigation could not be impaired by agriculture. These laws have been developed in greater details by the United Nations, individual agreements between states, and other international governing bodies such as the European Union. A sustained attempt to develop in a systematic way “a code of conduct” concerning transboundary water resources was made by the International Law Association (ILA), resulting in the 1966 ILA Helsinki Rules on the Uses of the Waters of International Rivers. The ILA rules have had significant impact on the treaty practice of States that culminated in the adoption of the only universal legal instrument in this field – the 1997 UN Convention on the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (the UN IWC Convention).¹³

The greatest problem in applying ILA rules to the case of India-Bangladesh is much more problematic. Both have agreed to talk bilaterally and have their own institution called JRC in place. Besides, neither India nor Bangladesh have signed or ratified the convention. When the problem of water sharing cropped up after 1971 it was much anticipated that Bangladesh would not be in a position to get a fair deal. Prior to the creation of Bangladesh, it was an issue between India and Pakistan. Notably Pakistan ignored this region and did not give the importance as that of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 which India negotiated to buy peace with Pakistan. India has been quite often accused of being too generous to Pakistan but in turn it has ended up in creating anti-India sentiments among Kashmiris as they are unable to locate the larger ideal Nehru envisaged while signing the treaty.

THE TIPAIMUKH: NEW ISSUE IN INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

The Tipaimukh Hydroelectric Project is one the major issues that caused flutters among the environmentalists, activists and indigenous people in India. It is being envisaged near the confluence of Barak and Tuivai rivers, in Manipur, India and within 100 km of Bangladesh border. Costing Rs 6,351 crore and the 164 meter high dam will have a firm generation capacity of 401.25MW of electricity by the Indian state-owned utility North East Electric Power Corporation Ltd. (NEEPCO).

The construction of Tipaimukh dam will have adverse impact on the downstream part of the Barak river basin, which is in northeastern part of Bangladesh, known as Surma-Kushiyara-Meghna river basin. Institute of Water Modelling (IWM), an autonomous research institute in Bangladesh has recently conducted a study on the impact of Tipaimukh dam on Bangladesh. The study predicts that, the dam, once operational, will change the hydrological pattern of the Barak River. According to the report, the overall nature of impact can be summarized in six broad categories, like hydrological impact, impact on flooding pattern and on river-floodplain-wetland ecosystem, impact on morphology, impact on water quality, dam-beak and general.¹⁴ Gowher Rizvi, Foreign Affairs Advisor to the Sheikh Hasina-led government, has accepted this position and equated it to a “run of the river project, where the water stored in the dam or the reservoir has to be discharged continuously to enable generation of electricity”. Meanwhile, the civil society in Bangladesh has questioned the nature of the dam in restricting water availability to the Kushiara and Surma rivers

as well as the capacity of the dam to generate 1500 MW.¹⁵

While India has been emphasising upon the hydro-electric and flood prevention benefits of the project, Bangladesh has been concerned about the impact of such activity on the river regime, capacity of the dam to control floods, impact on hydrology, particularly the water drainage on crop lands, etc. India has sought to allay these concerns by pointing out that the impact of the dam would be felt inside Indian territory as well, given that some land and National Highway No. 53 in Manipur will be partially submerged. India has also invited Bangladesh to become a partner in the project, which would also facilitate the sharing of power to be generated.¹⁶

Environmentalists and agriculture experts have warned that the twin dams, at Tipaimukh and Phulertal, across the cross-border Barak river would dry up rivers and waterbodies downstream, rendering vast farmland arid, hitting agriculture and threatening food security in the north-eastern districts of Bangladesh. A joint communique issued during Ms. Hasina's visit to New Delhi in January 2010 stated that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh gave the assurance that India would not take steps in respect of the Tipaimukh project that would adversely impact Bangladesh.¹⁷ However, the forest advisory committee (FAC), which met on 11 and 12 July 2013 denied forest clearance to the proposed 1,500 MW Tipaimukh hydel project in Manipur. The committee recommended that in case the implementing agency desired, they could explore the feasibility of constructing smaller dams involving diversion of smaller forest areas commensurate with their power generation capacity.

FOREIGN POLICY IMPERATIVES AND POLITICAL GIMMICKS

It is often said that every nation has the government it deserves, so it has the geopolitics it deserves. Leopold von Ranke once stated "politics is the attempt to safeguard and further national interests in the midst of a conflict of the Great Powers, both in the realm of ideas and realities". Going by this statement, the water issue is a tussle between two important nations of the region to maintain their sovereignty over their geography through trans-boundary rivers. India for decades has been living in the illusion of creator of a nation called Bangladesh. However, there have been several unresolved issues which were taken up during the Janata government in March 1997. The data collected then indicated that flow during the lean season was as low as 55,000 cusecs at Farakka and they also opined that

the minimum requirement to keep the Calcutta port navigable in the lean season of April-May was 40,000 cusecs. The remaining 15,000 cusecs was more than what Bangladesh needed during the lean season. These negotiations led to short term solution of five years agreement but left the long term solution to Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission. The Janata government gesture was much appreciated in Bangladesh as they found something more profitable to them happening against the produced data.

The subsequent election led to Indira Gandhi coming back to power and there was a stalemate again. This led to much disappointment in Bangladesh. Rajiv Gandhi's take over as Prime Minister of India and his desire to have regional cooperation and keeping India-Bangladesh river water sharing as a priority was a welcome move. His visit to Bangladesh led to another short term agreement for three years and also led to the setting up of a task force co-chaired by the concerned secretaries of water resources in the two countries to deliberate upon short and long term measures.

In between these events, it is important to take note of the political turbulence leading to coups and abuse of power. Khaleda Zia's period from 20 March 1991 to 20 March 1996 didn't produce any favourable results for Bangladesh. It was also a period of political consolidation. With the coming of Hasina to power with a political legacy and learning from the mistakes of her predecessor, she went ahead to seek India's help in bringing a solution to the water sharing problem. As against these developments in Bangladesh, there were fractured mandates in India which led to the formation of a coalition government in the name of United Front led by H D Deve Gowda. The efforts of the secretaries and officials should be acknowledged in the long term solution inked between India and Bangladesh on 12 December 1996 called as Ganga Water Treaty. The success of the treaty is always debatable. India has its own arguments in trying to come up with new barrages and Bangladesh has its own compounding fears of receiving less water.

The latest issue between India and Bangladesh has been the case of Teesta water. Teesta issue generates immense nationalistic fervor in Bangladesh which is negotiating from the weaker position of a lower-riparian state. Even the country's two main political parties-the *Bangladesh Nationalist Party* (BNP) and the *Awami League* are accusing each other. For both parties, championing Bangladeshi national interests on the Teesta issue remains a key electoral strategy. Hasina who is often seen as someone who maintains smooth relations with India once made a statement reacting

to the suggestions made by Khaleda Zia of BNP prior to Hasina's visit to India in 2010, "I thank her for wishing me success on my tour. But she did not go to Delhi to discuss these issues when she was in power. She was in power before me. But she did not bring the Teesta waters then, she seems to forget these issues when in power. It is only natural though, given that she was born in India. I brought the Ganges waters in my previous tenure; she could have done that with Teesta".¹⁸

During the visit of Manmohan Singh, it was announced that an agreement on sharing of Teesta waters would be signed, although the people of Bangladesh did not know the details. At the last minute, the agreement was not signed on the ground that Mamata Banerjee was opposed to it. "The people of Bangladesh don't know what really happened. Our government says so. Hasina says so. I have not met Mamata, and I don't know who blocked it".¹⁹ Bangladesh High Commissioner Tariq Karim is extremely hopeful of the present NDA government finding a solution within a span of four months. He made an apparent reference to promises being made to the people of Bangladesh by the political class time and again on Teesta. He even pleaded in one of the interviews "when the PM went to Bangladesh, we sent invites to all of them, and all came except West Bengal CM (Mamata Bannerji). It's that state that we have the strongest historical ties with, and what we have to understand is that rivers will flow a certain way....god and geography ensured that".²⁰ He also requested the political parties in India and Bangladesh to move beyond the politics one needs to play to stay in power. He reiterated, "we have to make a paradigm shift in our thinking about segmenting rivers. Any river basin is a force of nature with a personality of its own. What we are talking about is managing the common resource of water that we have, that we need to do for everything from agriculture to flood control. Every year thousands of acres are washed away when these rivers are in full spate. Our biggest challenge is to lift people out of poverty, but in Bangladesh every time we do that, the rivers push more people into poverty because of lost land. Being the lowest of the low riparians, we cannot manage this on our own, we have to do it together, we are all stakeholders".²¹

There are clear evidences to prove that more often the issue of rivers is played by political parties within their own territories to gain political mileage with least concern for the people who suffer on day to day basis. In case of India, the situation Manmohan Singh experienced as the Prime Minister at the hands of Mamata Bannerji was a mockery of federalism

and it throws up many more challenges in the coming years. It is hard to make the politicians to think and accept that nature does not understand the politics but behaves according to the action reaction cycle. Despite the rhetoric running around between India and Bangladesh, there has been lot of support from India to Bangladesh. India has extended a \$ 1 billion line of credit to Bangladesh which is the largest single line of credit given by India to any country, of which \$200 million has been converted into grant-in-aid. The support is for a range of projects, including railway infrastructure, supply of Broad Gauge microprocessor-based locomotives and passenger coaches, procurement of buses, and dredging projects. Government of India also fulfilled its commitment of establishing IT labs in model schools of each of the 64 districts of Bangladesh, inaugurated by Prime Minister Ms. Sheikh.²² India is also committed to export 500 MW of electricity to Bangladesh, with the line having a 23 maximum capacity of 1,000 MW. The two countries also agreed to invest in power generation. As a result, grid connectivity was completed in 2013. India is now exporting 500 MW of electricity to the south-western region of Bangladesh. In March 2014, India has promised an additional 100 MW of power from the Palatana power plant in Tripura.²³ India's intention is much clear as it wants progress and economic development of Bangladesh. India expects a peaceful neighbourhood as the new government in power has made the policy of 'neighbourhood first'. India has been liberal despite the security concerns and constant problem of illegal immigration posed by Bangladesh.

IMPORTANCE OF COHESIVE POLITICAL REGIMES AND PROBABLE SOLUTIONS

It is important to take note of the relations between India and Bangladesh getting strained due to unresolved issues such as water sharing. There needs to be a cost benefit analysis. There are few remarkable achievements so far in the bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh. Firstly, India faces a major challenge in handling insurgency in the Northeast as Bangladesh was used as a safe heaven by the insurgents for a long time. It is due to Sheikh Hasina's support that some outfits are kept in control to a large extent. She also handed over some most wanted separatists who posed threat to India's security in the region. Secondly, the growth of anti-Indian elements such as *Jamaat* has been checked under Hasina's regime. With the ongoing trials of war criminals, the anti-Indian sentiments sown in the people using religion has been virtually controlled to a large

extent. Sheikh Hasina has been promising to find a way out with regard to water problems. People are also quite realistic in Bangladesh as they are not expecting any miracle to happen with regard to the land boundary dispute, but water is a major issue concerning day to day life of the people. India needs to support some of her initiatives.

Water governance policies between India and Bangladesh are characterized by three important features: (a) statist in terms of decision-making (b) nationalistic in terms of discourse, and (c) reductionist in terms of scope. Governance in a sector like water must be perceived as a subset of a country's general governance system of how various actors relate to each other.²⁴ There is also a necessity to find alternatives to big dams and barrages by keeping the environmental concerns in mind. Single narrative of holding on to constructing dams and barrages as the only solution would lead to water conflicts which have the potential of causing damage to bilateral relations. Finding alternatives to a complex problem is the work of the policy makers and bureaucrats. Kalyan Rudra observes that "the Planning Commission of India and its counterpart in West Bengal – the Irrigation and Waterways Directorate – have never seriously considered the option of smaller, decentralised reservoirs. Such projects would be farmer-centred, less destructive from the environmental point of view and cost-effective".²⁵ The most important mechanism yet remains least explored is the conservation of water during the rainy season so as to be used during dry season. An integrated flood management program has to be designed and executed with people's involvement in it in respective countries. It has to be acknowledged that a progressive step has been taken by both the countries to share flood projection data on constant basis and this can be one of the steps in a long way to start with.

REFERENCES

1. Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, *Water Security For India: The External Dynamics*. New Delhi, IDSA, 2010.
2. M. Monirul Qader Mirza, "Hydrological changes in the Ganges system in Bangladesh in the post-Farakka period." *Hydrological Sciences Journal* 42, no. 5, 1997. pp 613-631.
3. n.2
4. Haroon Habib, "Mamata relents on Teesta deal, LBA." *The Hindu*, February 22, 2015.
5. Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, *Water Security For India: The External Dynamics*. *op cit*.
6. Ram Mashru, "India's Worsening Water Crisis." *The Diplomat.*, April 19, 2014.

7. Brahma Chellaney, "Neighbours leave India high and dry for its water supply." *The National*, February 1, 2013.
8. n.5
9. Punam Pandey, "Revisiting the Politics of the Ganga Water Dispute between India and Bangladesh." *India Quarterly* Vol. 68, no. 3, 2012. pp 267–281.
10. J. N. Rosenau, "National Interest." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. New York, MacMillan, 1968. pp 34 – 40.
11. Scott Burchill, *The National Interest in International Relations Theory*. Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2005.
12. Patricia K Wouters, Sergei Vinogradov, Andrew Allan, Patricia Jones, Alistair Rieu-Clarke, *Sharing Transboundary Waters An Integrated Assessment of Equitable Entitlement : The Legal Assessment Model*. Paris, UNESCO, 2005.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Zakir Kibria, *Gaining Public Acceptance (GPA) for Large Dams on International Rivers: The Case of Tipaimukh Dam in India and Concerns in Lower Riparian Bangladesh*. Nairobi, 2005.
15. Medha Bisht, "IDSA Comment." New Delhi, IDSA, April 25, 2012.
16. *Ibid.*
17. Haroon Habib, "In Bangladesh, Tipaimukh dam pact sparks fresh row." *The Hindu*. November 21, 2011.
18. "Hasina accuses Khaleda of 'forgetting' issues." *Bangladesh Times*, October 1, 2010.
19. Mohammad Al-Masum Molla, "Khaleda: Not India, AL responsible for unresolved issues." *Dhaka Tribune*, Dhaka, July 2, 2014.
20. Suhasini Haider, "Hope Mamata will see larger picture on Teesta: Bangladesh envoy." *The Hindu*, Chennai, July 8, 2014.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report 2013-14*, New Delhi, 2014.
23. Joyeeta Bhattacharjee, "India-Bangladesh Relations: A Ten-point Agenda." *ORF Issue Brief*, No. 71, New Delhi, Observer Research Foundation, 2014.
24. Peter Rogers Hall and Alan W., *Effective Water Governance*. Sweden, Elanders Novum, 2003.
25. Kalyan Rudra, "Taming the Teesta." *The Ecologist Asia*, Vol.11, No. 1, January - March 2003.

PAKISTAN-BANGLADESH RELATIONS

ASHISH SHUKLA

INTRODUCTION

Due to a number of reasons Pakistan's relations with many countries of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) do not get proper attention at home and abroad. Besides, politico-diplomatic establishment and academic community, national and international media too do not give due importance to Pakistan's relations with other South Asian countries namely Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives. Discussion of Pakistan-Bangladesh relations in the media is often prompted by some unhappy and negative developments. In recent past Bangladesh's decision to go ahead with the execution of *Jamaat-e-Islami* leader Abdul Quader Molla, for his involvement in war crimes of 1971, vitiated the environment. Arrested in August 2010, Molla was tried in a special court known as the International Crimes Tribunals (ICT) which found him guilty and was sentenced to life imprisonment.¹ On prosecution's appeal, Supreme Court of Bangladesh overruled ICT's decision and awarded death sentence to Molla who was later sent to gallows and hanged till death on 12 December 2013 in Dhaka Central Jail.² There was hue and cry in Pakistan over his hanging. Pakistan's National Assembly on 16 December 2013 passed a resolution condemning the execution of Molla.³ Speaking in the National Assembly, *Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf* (PTI) chairman Imran Khan said that Molla was innocent and charges against him were false,⁴ while the Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan stated that "the whole nation is feeling sad over this tragic incident. A person who was the flagbearer of a united Pakistan was executed through judicial murder."⁵ On 17 December 2013, Bangladesh summoned Pakistan's High Commissioner in Dhaka and sought an

explanation from him. Bangladesh's foreign ministry strongly protested against the resolution and issued a statement saying that Molla's trial and punishment was an internal affair of Bangladesh and the resolution adopted by National Assembly of Pakistan was uncalled for.⁶ This explains that even after more than four decades, the ghost of 1971 Liberation War still haunts the relationship between the two countries.

Pakistan's relations with Bangladesh⁴ are important and deserve an in-depth analysis. Scholarship, though thin and dated, on Pakistan-Bangladesh relations suggests that there exists a large amount of goodwill for each other among the people on either side which could possibly be used to develop a multifaceted and mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries. The absence of major conflict, in post-1971 period, between the two seems to validate the contention. However, past four decades of history provide a bleak picture. Ever since 1971, Bangladesh has been constantly raising three key issues; firstly, offer of an unconditional apology for the crime committed by Pakistan Army against the innocent East Pakistani citizens; secondly, provide Bangladesh its due share in assets; and thirdly, take back Pakistani citizens stranded in Bangladesh. Despite a number of high-profile meetings and assurances, Pakistan could not resolve these issues to the satisfaction of Bangladesh. In order to fully understand the nitty-gritty of this relationship, it is necessary to look into the history and various important developments after Bangladesh's emergence in 1971.

THE BIRTH OF BANGLADESH

Many in undivided India had precisely predicted the separation of East Pakistan from West Pakistan. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, a legendary figure of Indian independence movement, in an interview given to Lahore's *Chattan* magazine had categorically predicted that "The moment the creative warmth of Pakistan cools down, the contradictions will emerge and will acquire assertive overtones. These will be fuelled by the clash of interests of international powers and consequently both wings will separate."⁸ This happened within twenty five years from the emergence of Pakistan itself. The birth of Bangladesh was unique in the sense that in the history of international relations, possibly for the first time an oppressed numerical majority, pushed between rock and a hard place, waged a successful armed struggle against West Pakistan to get independence.⁹

Apologists in Pakistan, while analysing the event, either exclusively

blame the policies of West Pakistani rulers towards East Pakistan or accuse India of first creating a rift between both the wings of Pakistan and then exploiting the differences and in the end pushing for secession of East Pakistan. Ayesha Jalal, an eminent Pakistani historian, while accepting the inadequacy of religion to forge a long lasting unity between the two wings,¹⁰ forcefully argues that “the breakup of Pakistan was the result of the autocratic policies of its state managers rather than the inherent difficulties involved in welding together linguistically and culturally diverse constituent units.”¹¹ Javed Jabbar, a Pakistani Senator and former Federal Minister, sees Indian conspiracy behind the birth of Bangladesh. He argues that elements from India, soon after August 14, 1947, began to stoke sentiments among the people of East Pakistan against West Pakistan.¹² However, many in Pakistan, barring a few exceptions, refrain from addressing the larger and more important question of incoherent national ideology.

There has been very little or no debate in Pakistan over the most important historical questions such as what factors were responsible for the creation of Pakistan? And what is the *raison d’être* of Pakistan? Pakistani students from the very beginning, through their history textbooks, learn that Muhammad Ali Jinnah created Pakistan. Class one text book *Jadid Mu’ashrati Uloom* offers students a one line answer to the question that “The Quaid-i-Azam created Pakistan.”¹³ Same is true about the question of Pakistan’s ideology. Husain Haqqani, former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, claims that it has become so common today that even an elementary school student would tell anyone and everyone that Pakistan is an “ideological state” and Islam is its ideology.¹⁴ Leaders of the “Pakistan movement” including Jinnah on the basis of a communal “Two Nation Theory” demanded and got a separate homeland for the Muslims of South Asia. Analysing the question as to who created Pakistan, Mani Shankar Aiyar concludes that “It was not the Muslims but the Muslim League who won Pakistan. The Muslim elite may have voted with their hands for Pakistan. But the Muslim masses voted with their feet to stay on in India.”¹⁵

Thus, Islam and “Two Nation Theory” were supposed to give Pakistan a unique identity and ideology through which the nation building project was taken up and completed. However, the “Two Nation Theory” collapsed, in principle, on 14 August 1947 when a large number of Muslim populace preferred to live in India instead of migrating to the newly created homeland. Soon, it became clear that Islam would not be able to work as

a unifying force to bind all the communities together, yet devoid of political legitimacy at home the ruling class kept invoking Islam and “India Threat” to keep the country together. As far as the two wings of Pakistan were concerned, there were only three things in common – Islam, English language, and Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). In popular jokes, the PIA connection was the strongest among the three.

Besides the absence of geographical connect, there were a lot of striking and unbridgeable differences between East and West Pakistan. Whereas West Pakistan was multi-ethnic and multi-lingual, East Pakistan had one dominant Bengali language and Bangla culture of which every East Pakistani was proud of. On top of that West Pakistani politico-security elite, which came to dominate the state of Pakistan soon after 1947, never ever considered Bengalis equal partner and ridiculed them as “weak and un-martial.” Due to irrational attitude and discriminatory policies of West Pakistani establishment towards East Pakistan, the ethno-linguistic and cultural differences were soon compounded by genuine politico-economic grievances. With the passage of time these unaddressed grievances alienated East Pakistan from West Pakistan and former came to believe that the latter is using it as its colony. The situation got complicated after first general elections in Pakistan in December 1970. The election results confirmed a wide gap between both the wings of Pakistan. Out of a total 313 seats (300 general seats + 13 uncontested reserved seats for women), Mujib-ur-Rahman led *Awami League* got 167 (160 general seats + 7 uncontested reserved seats for women) while Zulfikar Ali Bhutto led *Pakistan People’s Party* (PPP) secured 85 seats (81 general seats + 4 uncontested reserved seats for women). Usually looking into these figures, one would logically assume that *Awami League* won a landslide victory and was entitled to rule over Pakistan. A close look into the matter made it amply clear that *Awami League* won 160 out of 162 directly contested seats in East Pakistan, while PPP won 81 out of 138 directly contested seats in West Pakistan. Both the parties could not open their account in the other wing meaning that PPP did not get a single seat in East Pakistan and *Awami League* could not open its account in West Pakistan. In a parliamentary system, numbers matter the most and in this case *Awami League* had the required numbers with itself. However, the politico-security establishment did not want to hand over power to a Bengali. Military regime of Yahya Khan deliberately delayed the process by not inviting Mujib-ur-Rahman to form the next government which brought Bengalis on the streets for protest demonstrations. Talks after talks failed to resolve

the deadlock and Yahya Khan ordered a military crackdown on the protesting Bengalis in East Pakistan.

Military's crackdown on innocent Bengalis was very brutal and horrifying. Archer Blood, then US Consulate General in Dacca, wrote detailed account, known as "Blood Telegram," of bloodshed in East Pakistan. In one of the telegrams on 31 March 1971, Blood noted that:¹⁶

Disturbing aspect of current situation is that wanton acts of violence by military are continuing in Dacca. As case previous nights, scattered firing heard throughout night from various parts of city. Hindus undeniably special focus of military brutality...atrocities rampant, including those of reliable eye-witnesses. Bengali businessman not all supporter saw six naked female bodies at Rokeya Hall, Dacca U. Feet tied together. Bits of rope hanging from ceiling fans. Apparently raped, shot and hung by heels from fans. Workmen who forced dig one of the two mass graves at Dacca U. report 140 buried within. Other grave equally as large...Army broadcasts monitored here indicated one unit in desperate situation near Pabna on March 30. Low on ammunition. Called for help, including air strikes. Told to hold out "at all costs." Told helicopter dispatched to drop fresh arms and ammo.

Justice Hamdood Rahman Commission report in its finding too confirmed brutalities by the Pakistani military. Lt. Gen. A.A.K. Niazi himself testified before the commission on the role of his predecessor Lt. Gen. Tikka Khan in continuing the crackdown on the innocent citizens. He categorically stated that:¹⁷

Military action was based on the use of force primarily, and at many places indiscriminate use of force was resorted to, which alienated the public against the Army. Damage done during those early days of the military action could never be repaired, and earned for the military leaders names such as "Changez Khan" and "Butcher of East Pakistan"...On the assumption of command I was very much concerned with the discipline of troops, and on 15th of April, 1971, that is within four days of my command, I addressed a letter to all formations located in the area and insisted that loot, rape, arson, killing of people at random must stop and a high standard of discipline should be maintained. I had come to know that looted material had been sent to West Pakistan which included cars, refrigerators and air conditioners etc.

The commission recommended trials for senior officers found guilty by the commission. In its supplementary report the commission noted that:¹⁸

There is consensus on the imperative need to bringing to book those senior Army Commanders who have brought disgrace and defeat to Pakistan by their subversion of the Constitution, usurpation of political power by criminal conspiracy, their professional incompetence, culpable negligence and willful

neglect in the performance of their duties and physical and moral cowardice in abandoning the fight when they had the capability and resources to resist the enemy. Firm and proper action would not only satisfy the nation's demand for punishment where it is deserved, but would also ensure against any future recurrence of the kind of shameful conduct displayed during 1971.

Then the commission recommended:¹⁹

That General Yahya Khan, General Abdul Hamid Khan, Lt. Gen. S.G.M.M. Pirzada, Lt. Gen. Gul Hasan, Maj. Gen. Umar and Maj. Gen. Mitha should be publically tried for being party to a criminal conspiracy to illegally usurp power from F.M. Mohammad Ayub Khan in power if necessary by the use of force. In furtherance of their common purpose they did actually try to influence political parties by threats, inducements and even bribes to support their designs both for bringing about a particular kind of result during the elections of 1970, and later persuading some of the political parties and the elected members of the National Assembly scheduled to be held at Dacca on the 3rd of March, 1971. They, furthermore, in agreement with each other brought about a situation in East Pakistan which led to a civil disobedience movement, armed revolt by the Awami League and subsequently to the surrender of our troops in East Pakistan and dismemberment of Pakistan.

Such brutal crackdown led millions of Bengalis to flee into the Indian Territory. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi accused Pakistani establishment of settling its internal problem with the use of brutal force and appealed the international community for help. She was very categorical in saying that "The regions which the refugees are entering are over-crowded and politically the most sensitive parts of India. The situation in these areas can very easily become explosive. The influx of refugees thus constitutes a grave security risk which no responsible government can allow to develop."²⁰ With no meaningful attempts by the international community to intervene and resolve the issue, India prepared itself to take some risk. In April 1971, India allowed East Pakistani leaders to set up *Awami League* headquarters in Calcutta (Now Kolkata).

Soon *Awami League* declared independence and established a government in exile. It is no secret that India provided help and training to *Mukti Bahini* but had been quite careful in monitoring and supervising their activities. It never allowed radical and extremist elements to take charge of the force and ensured that moderate faction of *Awami League* led the movement. India's support proved to be crucial and direct Indian intervention in East Pakistan, which resulted in the surrender of 90,000 Pakistani personnel and paved the way for an independent Bangladesh. Many in Pakistan, even today, blame India exclusively for breaking up

the country. However, the reality is different and very few Pakistanis accept that. For example Husain Haqqani agrees that “Although there is no doubt that India encouraged Bengali nationalism and supported the creation of an independent Bangladesh with arms once civil war started, the slide into civil war in erstwhile East Pakistan was primarily the result of a Pakistani internal power play.”²¹

With the creation of Bangladesh, the “Two Nation Theory” was declared dead. Indira Gandhi famously declared that “We have avenged a thousand years history and thrown the two-nation theory into the Indian Ocean.”²²

INITIAL CONTACTS AND MUTUAL RECOGNITION

Given the brutal violence and bloodshed which preceded the creation of Bangladesh, it was not easy for Pakistan and Bangladesh to normalise their relationship. For Pakistan, the loss of half of the territory and population was like a trauma that posed a big question mark on its national identity and ideology. Bangladesh too was in no position to forget the sufferings easily. However, as the popular saying goes “life doesn’t stop”, so both the countries had to move on. The problem was that the two leaders, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaikh Mujib-ur-Rahman set conditions for talking to each other. Mujib-ur-Rahman ruled out any discussion with Bhutto until Pakistan recognised Bangladesh, while the latter linked the recognition of Bangladesh with the resolution of all major issues, especially the repatriation of Prisoners of War (PoWs). The most complicated issues, immediately after the end of war, were:

1. Recognition of Bangladesh.
2. Repatriation of about 90,000 Prisoners of War (PoWs), held in India, to Pakistan.
3. Division of Assets between Pakistan and Bangladesh.
4. Repatriation of Pakistanis, commonly referred as Biharis, stranded in Bangladesh.
5. Repatriation of Bengalis from Pakistan to Bangladesh.

These issues were not easy to resolve. Bangladesh wanted to try at least 195 PoWs on charges of genocide while Pakistan wanted all the PoWs back as soon as possible. As per Geneva Convention 1949, PoWs were required to be released unconditionally soon after the cessation of hostilities. In case of India-Pakistan-Bangladesh, United Nation Security

Council passed Resolution 307 on 21 December 1971. Article 3 of the Resolution called upon "to take all measures necessary to preserve human life and for the observance of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and to apply in full their provisions as regards the protection of the wounded and sick, prisoners of war and civilian population."²³

Meanwhile Bangladesh in August 1972 moved an application to the UN for membership which was vetoed by China on behalf of Pakistan. Pakistan wanted all issues to be resolved before settling the issue of recognition. Bangladesh too was in no mood to be soft on the issue. With the passage of time, international pressure grew on India to resolve the PoWs and other issues that came to the fore because of the 1971 war with Pakistan. In July 1972, India and Pakistan signed Simla Accord which provided a set of mutually agreed guiding principles that were to be followed by both countries in their future relationship. The most important point of this agreement was that both parties agreed "to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them."²⁴ However, there was no agreement over the repatriation of PoWs to Pakistan, as India on Bangladesh's insistence, linked the issue with the recognition of Bangladesh by Pakistan. Later India persuaded Bangladesh to de-link the repatriation and recognition issue. A joint declaration, issued on 17 April 1973 at the end of Bangladeshi Foreign Minister's visit to New Delhi, set the stage for repatriation of all PoWs, except 195 PoWs detained by Bangladesh for trial, and stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh to Pakistan and detained Bangladeshis in Pakistan to Bangladesh. This joint declaration was followed by a formal agreement between India and Pakistan in New Delhi on 28 August 1973 which devised a three-way repatriation scheme. The agreement required:²⁵

1. Repatriation of all PoWs, except 195 held by Bangladesh for trial, and civil internees held in India to Pakistan.
2. Repatriation of all Bengalis in Pakistan to Bangladesh.
3. Repatriation of all non-Bengalis, who opted for Pakistan, stranded in Bangladesh to Pakistan.

Pakistan, however, agreed to take only four categories of Pakistanis;²⁶

- A. Persons of West Pakistan domicile.
- B. Central government employees and their family irrespective of their domicile.

- C. Members of divided families irrespective of domicile.
- D. And some hardship cases.

The question of recognition of Bangladesh by Pakistan could not be resolved even after this agreement because the former wanted to try 195 PoWs on the charges of war crime, but the latter wanted all of them back unhurt before settling the recognition question. With Bangladesh's continued insistence to try 195 PoWs, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto got infuriated and at one point of time even threatened to try Bengalis held in Pakistan. Amir Mir in an article refers to an interview of Bhutto on 27 May 1973 in which he had stated that "Public opinion will demand trials of Bangladeshis here. We know that the Bengalis passed on information during the war. There will be specific charges. How many will be tried, I cannot say."²⁷ To make Bangladesh believe that he was serious, Bhutto decided to detain 203 Bengalis against the 195 soldiers held by Bangladesh.²⁸ The hardening of positions and tough statements from both sides did not produce any tangible result. Finally, a visible change was noticed in Pakistan's attitude in early 1974 which later led to a thaw in the relationship. In February 1974, Pakistan was to host International Islamic Summit and Bangladesh being a Muslim country was supposed to be invited. In late January 1974, Bhutto, while addressing a public meeting in Sukkur, stated that "When we have invited Muslims from all corners of the world, how can we keep our door closed to seven crore Muslims of East Pakistan who lived with us for 26 years."²⁹ With this he extended an informal invitation to Mujib-ur-Rahman. Initially there was no enthusiasm on the part of Bangladesh but Shaikh Sabah Al-ahmad al Jaber, Foreign Minister of Kuwait who led a seven member delegation to Bangladesh, persuaded Mujib to participate in the summit. Possibly, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister conveyed Bhutto's message of recognising Bangladesh on the occasion which changed Mujib-ur-Rahman's mind. Bhutto used the occasion of summit to officially recognise Bangladesh. In return, Bangladesh accepted Pakistan's demand to stop the trial of 195 PoWs while Pakistan agreed to take back all the four categories of non-Bengalis stranded in Bangladesh. Meanwhile, with the help of International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) Bangladesh was able to repatriate, between 1973 to April 1974, around 170,000 Biharis to Pakistan.³⁰

Finally, after the mutual recognition, Bangladesh got UN membership on 10 June 1974. In the same month Bhutto visited Dhaka and even went

to National Memorial at Savar but his behaviour was not very appropriate. He did not doff his cap and refused to register his comments in the visitor's book. In his first visit to independent Bangladesh, he held discussions with Mujib-ur-Rahman on a range of issues which resulted in signing of two agreements to resume trade relations and stop hostile propaganda against each other. However, nothing tangible could come out on the more complicated issues such as division of assets and repatriation of stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh which gave an impression of failure of these talks. In response to Mujib-ur-Rahman's request to take back all the stranded Pakistanis, Bhutto stated that "I have not come to Bangladesh with a blank cheque."³¹ He later argued that while demanding a share in assets, Bangladesh was not interested in liabilities. On the question of repatriation, Bhutto was of the view that since Biharis, as the stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh are called, had originally migrated to East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, why should Pakistan take them back.

Despite mutual recognition in February 1974, Mujib-ur-Rahman's tough stand on some of the complicated issues and Pakistan's insistence to resolve those issues on her own terms did not allow the two countries to overcome the trauma of 1971 and develop a healthy relationship. Since Mujib-ur-Rahman had linked the division of assets and repatriation of Biharis with establishing formal diplomatic relations, the two countries could not move forward to establish resident diplomatic missions. Mujib-ur-Rahman tried hard diplomatically and raised the issue at various international fora, including United Nations and Commonwealth, to push Pakistan but with no success.

In a tragic event on 15 August 1975 Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman along with his family members, except his two daughters Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Sheikh Rehana, was assassinated. The military coup, conducted by junior officers, brought Khundkar Moshtaq to power. Islamabad without any delay recognised the military regime and Prime Minister Bhutto dispatched, as a friendly gesture, 50,000 tons of rice for the "brotherly people of Bangladesh."³² President Khundkar Moshtaq appreciated Pakistan's goodwill gesture and expressed hope of normalisation of relations. Some scholars suggest that the donation of 50,000 tons of rice and 15 million yards of cloth by Pakistan to Bangladesh was because Pakistan wanted Bangladesh to adopt some Islamic nomenclature.³³ Zulfikar Ali Bhutto even appealed to other Islamic countries to recognise the new government in Bangladesh.³⁴ By October 1975 both countries agreed to establish diplomatic relations. The Moshtaq regime could not

last long because the 3 November 1975 coup was followed by a counter coup, sepoy mutiny on 7 November 1975 which elevated Gen. Zia-ur-Rahman to the presidency. Under the new military regime in Bangladesh, diplomatic missions of the two countries assumed their responsibility in January 1976. With this the initial engagement between the two countries got institutionalised.

NORMALISATION UNDER GEN. ZIA-UL-HAQ REGIME

With the departure of Mujib-ur-Rahman and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto from the scene, relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh improved. In August 1977, Tobarak Hussain, Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh, visited Pakistan and held discussions with Pakistani leaders over a number of important issues. The joint communique, issued at the end of his visit, asserted that "there is a need for cooperation between the peoples of two brotherly countries."³⁵ In December 1977, Bangladeshi President Zia-ur-Rahman visited Pakistan and held discussions, on several issues, with his Pakistani counterpart Fazal Ilahi Chaudhry and Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA) Gen. Zia-ul-Haq. During their discussion, leaders of the two countries emphasised the shared past and common religio-cultural linkages and agreed to strengthen brotherly relationship between Pakistan and Bangladesh. In their view strengthening of relationship between the two South Asian countries would significantly contribute to peace and stability of the region. On the economic front, both parties agreed to increase overall trade volume. They also agreed to set up a Joint Economic Commission to "promote economic, trade and technical cooperation."³⁶ During the discussion a suggestion, from Pakistani side, came up regarding entering into "a loose confederation" with Islam as a common link in which President Zia-ur-Rahman took no interest. There was no substantial progress on the contentious issues of division of assets and repatriation of non-Bengalis to Pakistan. The visit is considered to be a watershed in Pakistan-Bangladesh relations, as it paved the way for cooperation and engagement in multiple sectors such as trade, banking, shipping, telecommunication, air services etc. Later, showing some generosity, Pakistan gifted a 707 Boeing, 28 railway carriages, and 8,520 tons of cement to Bangladesh.³⁷

The next important development was Bangladeshi Foreign Secretary's visit to Pakistan in July 1978 during which he pushed Pakistan on the repatriation issue. With active help from UNHCR and financial assistance

from Saudi Arabia and Libya, by September 1979, 2,800 more Biharis were sent back to Pakistan.³⁸ Lord Ennals, a former MP of Britain, is believed to have played an important role in this repatriation. He even met Pakistan's President Zia-ul-Haq in 1980 to discuss the humanitarian aspect of the issue which subsequently led to the repatriation of 7,000 more non-Bengalis.³⁹ He did not stop here but went ahead to help organise Geneva Conference in 1982 and also established an international resettlement trust so that the financial aspect of the problem could be taken care of.⁴⁰

Meanwhile again in May 1981, a tragic incident happened in Bangladesh in which President Zia-ur-Rahman got assassinated. After his death, army supported a civilian regime for a while and later in March 1982 Gen. Ershad imposed martial law. During Ershad's regime, relationship between Pakistan and Bangladesh improved for better, yet the contentious issues could not be resolved to the full satisfaction of Bangladesh. Pakistani President Gen. Zia-ul-Haq visited Dhaka in 1985 and during his meeting with a delegation of Biharis he told them that Pakistan, under the 1973 agreement, had already fulfilled its "legal obligation."⁴¹ In July 1986, as part of an official visit to South Asian countries, Gen. Ershad visited Islamabad and held discussions with Gen. Zia-ul-Haq. At the end of the visit, agreements regarding trade and cultural exchanges were concluded. The two countries also signed a memorandum of understanding reciprocally exchanging plots in diplomatic areas in Islamabad and Dhaka so that a building could be constructed for the diplomatic mission of each country. Changing his earlier attitude, in July 1986, Gen. Zia-ul-Haq signed an agreement with a humanitarian organisation called *Rabita Al-Akan-Al-Islam* (RAAI). Under the terms of this agreement later in July 1988 Rabita Trust Deed, with Zia-ul-Haq as chairman, was established. The trust had the responsibility of mobilising funds to repatriate around 250,000 Biharis. The government of Pakistan and RAAI jointly donated Rs. 300 million (250 + 50) to the Trust.⁴² It was assumed that all the requisite money for the project would be mobilised within three years after which repatriation would be started. However, with the death of Pakistani President in an air crash in 1989, the repatriation got postponed.

THE DEMOCRATIC INTERLUDE IN PAKISTAN

After Zia-ul-Haq's death in a mysterious plane crash, general elections

were held in Pakistan in which Benazir Bhutto-led PPP won against the *Islami Jamhoori Ittehad (IJI)*, an alliance of nine political parties brought together by Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), by securing 92 seats that went up to 108 after inclusion of elected members from tribal and minority seats.⁴³ Despite clearly winning the elections, it was not easy for Benazir to become Prime Minister of the country. Military did not want the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, earlier executed by Gen. Zia-ul-Haq without a fair trial, to lead the country. Benazir herself mentions in her autobiography how generals tried to create hurdles in her way.⁴⁴ She could assume the office of the Prime Minister only after agreeing to terms and conditions put forward by Pakistan Army. Under these terms and conditions, Benazir was required not to be vindictive towards the family of Zia-ul-Haq; not to change defence policies or interfere in the affairs of the armed forces; not to make sweeping bureaucratic/administrative policy changes; not to alter the Afghanistan policy, and keep the experienced Sahabzada Yaqub-Khan as foreign minister; and, most importantly not to alter nuclear policy, and finally to let the veteran President Ghulam Ishaq Khan guide and control the secret nuclear programme.⁴⁵

This explains that Benazir, despite being Prime Minister of Pakistan, was not independent enough to take important decisions, especially on foreign policy issues. This was the reason that Pakistan's relations with Bangladesh did not develop. More or less same was the case with Nawaz Sharif regime. Both Benazir and Nawaz Sharif, during the democratic interlude, served as Prime Minister twice, yet military dominated from behind the veil. Both the leaders during their tenures were preoccupied in political problems at home and relations with Bangladesh could not become a priority.

On the economic front, in August 1989 Pakistan-Bangladesh Economic Commission met for the third time in Dhaka in which it was agreed that both the parties would work to widen and diversify their trade and economic relations. In October 1989 Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visited Bangladesh. This visit was publicised as introducing a new era of closer cooperation between the two countries. In official circles, it was maintained that Pakistan was very much willing to cooperate with Bangladesh in almost all areas. During the visit, Benazir said that:⁴⁶

We are prepared to cooperate with you in all walks of life without any reservations or qualifications. We can do much in matters of commerce, trade and economic development to better the lot of our peoples. Over the years, we have traversed a journey, which at times was difficult, at times traumatic. But like two brothers

who set up separate homes, we remain as members of the same family, each always caring about the future, well-being and security of the other. We in Pakistan follow, with great interest your effort to promote prosperity and well-being of your people.

These words undoubtedly pleased many in Bangladesh. However, a careful analysis suggests that nothing of that sort happened which could be termed path-breaking or ushering a new era in the relationship. In fact, the visit was near failure as nothing concrete could come out in the end. The two countries only signed an agreement for cultural exchanges.⁴⁷ In a related development, Benazir Bhutto refused to meet stranded Pakistanis. Given, her political weakness at home, Benazir is reported to have even requested Dhaka to resettle Biharis permanently in Bangladesh and agreed to secure financial assistance for the purpose through contributions by Pakistan and other Islamic countries.⁴⁸ The reason behind Benazir not taking any interest in the repatriation issue was the strong opposition of Sindhi nationalists, so she termed it a complex problem and by and large tried to avoid the issue.

Nawaz Sharif, during his first tenure in office, made some progress on the repatriation issue and constituted three committees to accelerate the process. Soon it was agreed that a symbolic repatriation would take place by December 1992 with a batch of 325 Biharis coming back to settle permanently in Pakistan. In November 1991, the *Muslim World League* urged Muslims to fund the repatriation of Biharis to Pakistan. In August 1992 Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia came to Pakistan on an official visit and held talks with her Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif over a variety of issues including the repatriation of Biharis, sharing of assets and liabilities. The joint statement issued by Pakistan and Bangladesh stated that the repatriation would begin soon. However, growing domestic pressure in Pakistan against the repatriation blocked the process. Later with the dismissal of Nawaz Sharif government the situation changed and the issue was put into cold storage.

Benazir Bhutto, during her second term in office, visited Bangladesh in October 1993 to participate in a conference of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting.⁴⁹ On the sidelines of the conference, Benazir met with her Bangladeshi counterpart Khaleda Zia and discussed various issues. However, nothing concrete could come out of that meeting. During his second tenure in office, Nawaz Sharif in January 1998 visited Bangladesh to attend India-Bangladesh-Pakistan business summit.⁵⁰ Nawaz Sharif described the 1971 debacle, which led to the birth of

Bangladesh, as “a result of political injustice” which although fell short of an apology yet was welcomed in Bangladesh. However, the reaction in Pakistan was quite opposite and in a way hostile too. During her meeting with Nawaz Sharif, Sheikh Hasina Wajed made it quite clear that the Biharis were unacceptable to Bangladesh and her government could not support them indefinitely. Later Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz, while visiting Bangladesh, refused to even accept that Biharis were Pakistani in any sense.⁵¹ On the issue of division of assets, no progress could be made during the democratic interlude in Pakistan.

IMPROVING TIES UNDER MUSHARRAF REGIME

When Gen. Pervez Musharraf came to power in October 1999, he faced the problem of legitimacy. Musharraf’s initial focus was to get some sort of legitimacy in the eyes of common people and marginalise and weaken mainstream political forces to the extent that they could not raise their voice against his regime, let alone thinking of getting back at the helm. Not much had happened on the external front till September 11, 2001 terrorist attack that brought Pakistan back into the focus of international attention. Under intense international pressure, Musharraf agreed to make Pakistan a frontline state in the US-led war on terrorism. The situation at the eastern border too got complicated after the terrorist attack on the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly and Indian parliament. Responding to the parliament attack, Indian government launched *Operation Parakram* and mobilised its forces at the border with Pakistan. After its armed intrusion into Kargil, Pakistan was once again on the brink of war with India. The situation was brought under control after Musharraf under international pressure agreed to withdraw the armed intruders. He banned some of the terrorist outfits and promised not to let them use Pakistani soil to create trouble for India.

As regards relations with Bangladesh, even in such an environment, Musharraf decided to visit Bangladesh in July 2002. In fact, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf met each other in early 2002 during the SAARC summit held in Kathmandu. In her interaction with the President, Khaleda Zia invited Musharraf to visit Bangladesh to which he agreed. The July 2002 visit was portrayed as highly successful because of the fact that Pakistani President, who happened to be the Chief of Army Staff as well, expressed his regret for the events of 1971. Soon after landing in Dhaka, Musharraf

went to national memorial at Savar to pay homage to the national heroes of Bangladesh who died during the 1971 debacle. In the visitor's book, Pakistani President wrote:⁵²

I bring sincere greetings and good wishes from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for their Bangladeshi brethren and sisters. We wish this land and its people peace, progress and prosperity...Your brothers and sisters in Pakistan share the pain of events of 1971. The excesses committed during the unfortunate period are regrettable. Let us bury the past in a spirit of magnanimity. Let not the thought of future be dimmed. Let us move forward together; courage to compromise is greater than the courage to confront.

Later speaking at the banquet the next day, he stated that:⁵³

My brothers and sisters in Pakistan share with their fellow brothers and sisters in Bangladesh profound grief over the parameters of the events of 1971. As a result of this tragedy a family having common religious and cultural heritage and united by a joint struggle for independence and a shared vision of the future, was torn apart. We feel sorry for this tragedy, and the pain it caused to both our nations. But wounds do heal with time. We shall always stand by our Bangladeshi sisters and brothers. Time has come to build brotherly trust and confidence and lay down foundation of mighty pillar of friendship so that our future generations take pride of what we accomplished today and painful memories of the past don't haunt them anymore.

Bangladesh welcomed Musharraf's statement. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia thanked Musharraf for his candid expression and expressed hope that it would help mitigate the old wounds. It was not a formal and unconditional apology but was an important development because Musharraf was not only the President of Pakistan but chief of an institution that had committed all the crimes and excesses against the innocent East Pakistanis. Speaking to the reporters, Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Morshed Khan said that "We welcome what President Musharraf wrote in Savar and (said) at the banquet last night."⁵⁴ Bangladeshi media was divided. Some welcomed the statement, while others accused Musharraf of using the words carefully to placate both Bangladeshis and Pakistanis and thus, demanded a formal apology from Pakistan. The two sides signed a number of trade agreements and a cultural exchange programme and also agreed to hold regular foreign ministerial meetings. Pakistan, for its part, agreed to allow duty-free access to Bangladeshi jute and tea and the two parties also decided to extend the existing defence cooperation treaty.⁵⁵ On the two contentious issues, Musharraf could not offer anything substantial. On the question of sharing of assets, he categorically told

Bangladeshi journalists that "If you talk of assets, we have to think of the liabilities we incurred."⁵⁶ On the question of repatriation of stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh, a five member delegation led by Alhaj Nasim Khan met Pakistan's President and pressed for the repatriation. Musharraf assured the delegation of all possible help to resolve the issue. However, later interacting with the media he made it very clear that he had every sympathy for the plight of thousands of people, yet he could not allow them to emigrate to Pakistan.⁵⁷ In a remarkable move, after Musharraf's return to Pakistan, over 50 leaders of Pakistani civil rights organisations publically apologised to the people of Bangladesh. In their joint statement cum apology, the leaders said that:²⁸

We feel sad and burdened by what we know was a violation of the people's human rights... The apology should have come a long time ago, and citizen groups did make attempts to do so... We deeply feel that a message from us is necessary to acknowledge the historic wrongs, to express sincere apology and build a bond based on honest sentiments.

Thus, it is amply clear that despite Musharraf expressing regret, the two main contentious issues could not be resolved to the satisfaction of Bangladesh. Yet this visit proved to be an important landmark in many ways. Firstly, Musharraf was the first head of state of Pakistan to visit Bangladesh. Although, he was not the first Pakistani leader to express regret for the events of 1971 but certainly was the one and only Chief of Army Staff who made such comments openly.

In September 2003, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, in his capacity of a special envoy of Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, visited Bangladesh to invite Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to the 12th SAARC summit.⁵⁹ During the visit, Kasuri echoing the line of Musharraf expressed regret for the 1971 event. Khaleda Zia visited Islamabad in January 2004 to participate in the 12th SAARC Summit. Addressing the 12th Summit meeting on 4 January 2004, Khaleda Zia stated that "SAARC must move simultaneously in many directions if we are to visibly improve living standards. The need of the hour is to consolidate past gains, move towards actual implementation of projects and strengthen common resolve."⁶⁰ A momentum to improve Pakistan-Bangladesh relations was built during her interactions with Pakistani leaders on the sidelines of the summit. These interactions paved the way for further cooperation in various fields.

In February 2006, Khaleda Zia came to Pakistan on a state visit where she received a red carpet welcome. Instead of pushing to resolve the

complicated political issues, both sides emphasised to improve economic ties between both the countries. In a remarkable development, both countries not only signed four Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) - on trade, standardisation and quality control, agriculture and tourism - but also agreed to finalise a Free Trade Agreement by 30 September 2006.⁶¹ Speaking at the joint press conference Shaukat Aziz said that Pakistan wanted to benefit from Bangladesh's experience in a number of sectors including micro-finance, population welfare, social sector, while it could help Bangladesh in sectors like Information Technology etc.⁶²

POST-MUSHARRAF DEVELOPMENTS

Gen. Pervez Musharraf resigned from the post of the President in August 2008 amid fears of being impeached by the new civilian government which came to power after the general election results. As in the past, domestically Pakistan was struggling hard to deal with the growing internal security challenges, while its foreign policy remained entangled with US-led war on terrorism in the region and securing its own "interests" in Afghanistan. From Pakistan's side, no significant attempts were made either to resolve the outstanding issues with Bangladesh or to strengthen ties in the areas where cooperation was possible.

In 2009, the *Awami League* government in Bangladesh, with two third majority in the parliament, decided to set up International Crimes Tribunal to investigate and prosecute people who helped Pakistan military in suppressing the 1971 liberation movement. The tribunal, through an official gazette notification, came into being on 25 March 2010. It consisted of three judges with one Chairman and two members. Soon after the establishment of the Tribunal, a number of top leaders of *Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami* (BJI) including Abdul Quader Molla were arrested. At the time of liberation war in 1971, Molla was an activist of *Jamaat-e-Islami's* student wing. He was also the founding member of *al-Badr* militia and because of his participation in the brutal violence, he came to be known as the butcher of Mirpur.

The trial was bound to revive the memories of 1971 and strain ties with Pakistan. Sheikh Hasina government's intention to try 195 Pakistanis, who were given immunity and repatriated to Pakistan, led to the deterioration of ties with Pakistan. Islamabad argued that since the war crimes dispute between Pakistan and Bangladesh was settled long back, the Hasina government should not proceed with the trials. Contrary to Pakistan's argument, Bangladesh maintained that the provisions of section

3 (1) of the International Crime Tribunal Act-1973, notwithstanding the immunity, allows trial and punishment for alleged role in the events of 1971. The Bangladesh government also underlined that the 1974 agreement was an executive act and was not ratified by the parliament of Bangladesh, thus it could not stop trial and prosecution of member of auxiliary force/individual/members of group of individual.⁶³

Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar, in her capacity of a special envoy of President Asif Ali Zardari, visited Bangladesh on 9 November 2012 to invite Sheikh Hasina for the scheduled D-8 Summit in Islamabad.⁶⁴ During her visit, Khar stated that relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh were based on “common religion, history and traditions” and former valued its relationship with the latter.⁶⁵ Bangladeshi leaders including the then Foreign Minister Dipu Moni on their part raised the issue of formal apology from Pakistan for army’s brutalities of 1971. Khar’s response was that Bangladesh should “bury the past” and move on to build cordial relationship.⁶⁶ Within few days, Bangladesh declared that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed would not go to Islamabad to attend the D-8 Summit.⁶⁷

In February 2013, Abudl Quader Mollah was charged for his involvement in a number of murders including the mass killing of over 300 people in Mirpur. After a lengthy trial, in an open court, Molla was found guilty. In its unanimous judgement, the Tribunal stated:⁶⁸

We have taken due notice of the injustice, magnitude of the offence of murders as ‘crimes against humanity’ being offences which are predominantly shocking to the conscience of mankind. We have carefully considered the mode of participation of the accused to the commission of crimes proved and the proportionate to the gravity of offences. The principle of proportionality implies that sentences must reflect the predominant standard of proportionality between the gravity of the offence and the degree of responsibility of the offender. In assessing the gravity of the offence, we have taken the form and degree of the Accused’s participation in the crimes into account.

With these observations, the Tribunal sentenced Molla with life imprisonment. Whereas BJI and Molla’s supporters maintained that charges were politically motivated, thousands of youth gathered at Dhaka’s Shahbagh Square and demanded death penalty for the Islamists responsible for War Crimes in 1971.⁶⁹ These protests forced the government to amend a law to allow the state to appeal against any verdict of the Tribunal.⁷⁰ The prosecution later approached the Supreme Court which overruled the ICT verdict and sentenced Molla to death.⁷¹ On 12 December

2013, Molla was hanged till death. In Pakistan, many considered the hanging of Molla as a revenge" against Pakistan.⁷² Reacting to the execution of Mollah, Pakistan's Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar termed the hanging very unfortunate and a tragic step. He also stated that Molla was hanged because of his loyalty and solidarity with Pakistan in 1971.⁷³ On 16 December 2013, Pakistan's National Assembly passed a resolution condemning the execution of Abdul Quader Molla.⁷⁴ The resolution was moved by Pakistan's *Jamaat-e-Islami* member Sher Akbar Khan. *Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf* (PTI) Chief Imran Khan stated that Abdul Quader Molla was innocent and all charges against him were false.⁷⁵

Bangladesh reacted strongly against the National Assembly resolution. Sheikh Hasina strongly condemned the resolution and termed it an interference in the internal affairs of her country. Ministry of Foreign Affairs called Mian Afrasiab Mehdi Hashmi Qureshi, then Pakistan's High Commissioner in Dhaka, and lodged a strong protest.⁷⁶ In addition, thousands of Bangladeshis chanting anti-Pakistan slogans entered the diplomatic zone outside the Pakistani High Commission in Dhaka to protest against the resolution passed by the National Assembly of Pakistan.⁷⁷ When Police removed protesters from the diplomatic zone, they gathered at the Shahbagh Square and demanded severing diplomatic ties with Pakistan. Maruf Rosul, a protester and student of the University of Dhaka, was found saying: "We demand that all diplomatic relation with Pakistan be severed until Pakistan says sorry for 1971 and for indulging into the internal affairs of Bangladesh."⁷⁸ These protests potentially threatened to further strain the relationship between Pakistan and Bangladesh. The uneasy relationship proceeded with little or no significant improvement. In January 2015 police detained Mohammad Mazhar Khan, an attache at the consular section of Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka, for his alleged secret meeting with one of his accomplices called Mujibur Rehman.⁷⁹ Later it came to be known that the High Commission official was an ISI agent who used to route funds to various outfits including the *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, the *Ansarullah Bangla Team*, the *Jamaat-e-Islami* and its student wing *Chhatra Shibir*.⁸⁰ The official was also involved in pumping fake currencies across the border to destabilise the Indian economy.⁸¹ Following the incident, Bangladesh in February 2015 declared him *persona non grata* and asked him to leave the country. Pakistan on its part withdrew the diplomat but denied the charges levelled against him.⁸²

Although nothing concrete happened on the contentious issues in post-Musharraf period, in an interesting development, Pakistani Supreme

Court pulled Pakistan's Foreign Office and the Cabinet Division for failing to answer contentious issues raised in a 2009 petition regarding the repatriation of around 237,000 stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh.⁸³ The Interior Ministry on its part explained that section 16-A of the Pakistan Citizenship Act 1951 makes it clear that all the persons residing in territories, which prior to 16 December 1971, constituted East Pakistan and were residing in there since that day voluntarily or otherwise should cease to be citizens of Pakistan.⁸⁴ The Ministry also made it clear that those who could not be repatriated before 18 March 1978, when the section came into being, but whose repatriation had been agreed to by the government continued to be citizens of Pakistan.⁸⁵ Muhammad Aftab, Director of the Cabinet Division, informed the court about Bangladesh High Court's decision in 2003 in which the court had declared all stranded Pakistanis as citizens of Bangladesh.⁸⁶ The Supreme Court of Bangladesh had also ratified the decision. Even after Pakistani Supreme Court pulling the government, there has been no meaningful development towards the resolution of the issue.⁸⁷

The tension continues between the two countries, as both regularly trade charges against each other. Dhaka accuses Islamabad of stoking unrest in Bangladesh and sponsoring militancy, while the view in Pakistan is that the Bangladesh government appears to be on a mission to disrupt ties with Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

The people who once were united under one Pakistani flag look very distant now. Even after 43 years of separation, the ghost of 1971 haunts both Pakistan and Bangladesh. It's an established trend now. Whenever, there is an *Awami League* government in Bangladesh, the relationship with Pakistan gets strained. Some even portray *Awami League* as pro-India and anti-Pakistan. The reason, of course, is the bitter memories of the past. Since, *Awami League* had suffered a lot in the process of getting an independent Bangladesh, it could not simply forget whatever happened during the liberation war and move on. Pakistan on its part did not address the genuine concerns of Bangladesh. Offering a formal apology is not a big deal for Pakistan, especially after four decades when most people know very well about the Pakistan military's crackdown on the innocent unarmed East Pakistanis. After the release of Hamoodur Rahman Commission report, there is nothing to hide. However, rightwing

organisations and security establishment do not want to take blame for seeking to find a military solution to a political issue. Same is the case of the stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh who are forced to live a pathetic life in the camps. It is beyond logic and understanding that if Pakistan could live with millions of Afghan refugees then what stops it to accommodate a few lakh Biharis who not only claim but want to return to Pakistan. Thus, the buck stops at Pakistan for not taking adequate measures to settle the contentious issues and normalise relations with Bangladesh.

REFERENCES

1. Salim Mansur, "Genocide and Justice in Bangladesh", 2014, available at <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4115/genocide-molla-bangladesh> accessed 6 February 2015.
2. Molla's lawyers had filed a review petition before the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. The apex court rejected the petition which led to his execution on 12 December 2013. For details, see "Bangladesh hangs top Jamaat leader Mollah over 1971 war crimes". *Indian Express*, Delhi, 13 December 2013.
3. The resolution was moved by *Jamaat-e-Islami's* Sher Akbar Khan. PML-N, PTI, JUI-F and *Awami Muslim League* (AML) supported the resolution while PPP and MQM opposed the resolution terming it as internal affair of Bangladesh in which Pakistan should not interfere.
4. "Resolution passed: Abdul Quader Molla was innocent, Imran Khan claims", available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/646260/abdul-quader-molla-was-innocent-imran-khan/> accessed 19 February 2015.
5. "NA resolution condemns Abdul Quader Molla's execution". *The News International*, Karachi, 17 December 2013.
6. "Bangladesh grills Pakistan envoy over Molla resolution". *Dawn*, Karachi 18 December 2013 available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/1074675> accessed 19 February 2015.
7. Prior to 1971 Bangladesh, known as East Pakistan, was part and parcel of Pakistan.
8. M. J. Akbar, *Tinderbox: The Past and Future of Pakistan*. Noida, Harper Collins Publishers, 2012. p. 312.
9. In its effort to get separated from Pakistan, Bangladesh received unqualified support from India which greatly helped Bengali nationalists achieve statehood.
10. Ayesha Jalal, *The Struggle for Pakistan: A Muslim Homeland and Global Politics*. London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014. p. 6.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
12. Javed Jabbar, *Pakistan: Identity and Destiny*. New Delhi, Har-Anand, 2012. p. 82.
13. For details, see K. K. Aziz, *The Murder of History: A Critique of History Textbooks used in Pakistan*. Lahore, Vanguard Books, 2013. p 2.
14. Husain Haqqani, "Pakistan and the Islamists". *Current History*, Vol. 106, No. 699, 2007, pp. 147-152.
15. Mani Shankar Aiyar, *Pakistan Papers*. New Delhi, UBS Publishers' Distributors

- Ltd, 1994, p. 98.
16. Archer Blood, "Army Terror Campaign Continued in Dacca", *Telegram to Washington D.C.* Department of State, 31 March 1971.
 17. Justice Hamoodur Rahman Supplementary Report, pp. 23-24, available at <http://www.pppusa.org/Acrobat/Hamoodur%20Rahman%20Commission%20Report.pdf> accessed 19 March 2015
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
 19. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.
 20. Cited in, Gary J. Bass, *The Blood Telegram: India's Secret War in East Pakistan*. Noida, Random House, 2013, p. 137.
 21. Husain, Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*. Washington D.C., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005, p. 67.
 22. Cited in, Nazir Hussain, "India and Pakistan: Threat Perception & Prospects for N. Risk Reduction". *Regional Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2001, pp. 57-71.
 23. For details, see UNSC Resolution 307, 21 December 1971, available at [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/307\(1971\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/307(1971)) accessed 25 February 2015.
 24. Text of the Simla Accord, available at <http://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?19005/Simla+Agreement+July+2+1972> accessed 27 February 2015
 25. Text of the Indo-Pakistani Agreement of 28 August 1973, Wikileaks Canonical ID: 1973NEWDE10046_b, available at https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/1973NEWDE10046_b.html accessed 27 February 2015
 26. Farzana Shakoor, "Pakistan-Bangladesh Relations-A Survey". *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 1989, pp. 109-133.
 27. Amir Mir, "Dhaka's decision on 'trials in absentia' to affect ties with Pakistan". *Daily Times*, Lahore, 16 December 2014.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. Farzana Shakoor op cit.
 30. Shahnawaz A. Mantoo, "Bihari Refugees Stranded in Bangladesh Since 1971". *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2013, pp. 123-129.
 31. K. Bird and S. Goldmark, "Dhaka and Bhutto: The Slow Thaw". *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 June 1974.
 32. "Pakistan's Bangladesh Problem". *bdnews24* 14 December 2014. Available at <http://opinion.bdnews24.com/2014/12/14/pakistan%E2%80%99s-bangladesh-problem/> Accessed on 4 March 2015
 33. P. B. Singh, "Dhaka-Pindi Relations and Ziaur Rahman's visit to Pakistan". *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 1. No. 10, 1978, pp. 13-18.
 34. *Ibid.*
 35. M. H. Syed, *Encyclopedia of SAARC Nations*. New Delhi, Gyan Publishing House, 2003, p. 220
 36. C. M. Shafi Sami, "Pakistan-Bangladesh Relations in the Changing International Environment". *Pakistan Horizon*, vol. 44, No. 4, 1991, pp. 23-29.
 37. Farzana Shakoor, op cit.
 38. Shahnawaz A. Mantoo, op cit.
 39. *Ibid.*
 40. D. Chowdhury, *Bangladesh and the South Asian International System*. Dhaka, Academic Publishers, 1992, p. 301.
 41. Z. Haider, "Repatriation of the Biharis Stranded in Bangladesh: Diplomacy and Development". *Asian Profile*, Vol. 31, No. 6, 2003, p. 534.
 42. "Background Information about the Rabita Trust", available at <http://>

- www.statelesspeopleinbangladesh.net/rabita_trust_deed.php accessed 19 March 2015
43. Benazir Bhutto, *Daughter of Destiny*. Noida, Harper Collins, 2009, p. 390.
 44. *Ibid.*
 45. Khan, Feroz Hassan, *Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb*. California, Stanford University Press, 2012, pp 227-228.
 46. "Benazir, Ershad for expansion of ties". *Dawn*, Karachi, 2 October 1989.
 47. "Call for intensified cooperation". *Dawn*, Karachi, 4 October 1989.
 48. Cited in Catheryn Jacques, *Bangladesh, India and Pakistan: International Relations and Regional Tensions in South Asia*. New York, Palgrave, 2000. pp. 169-70.
 49. Moonis Ahmar, *Pakistan and Bangladesh: From Conflict to Cooperation*. Dhaka, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, 2003. p. 22.
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
 51. "Nawaz Sharif's second stint in office", available at <http://www.ghazali.net/book1/Chapter10a/update10c.html> accessed 12 March 2015
 52. Sanam Noor, "Outstanding Issues between Pakistan and Bangladesh". *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 58, No. 1, 2005, pp. 47-60., and see also, Haroon Habib, "'Regrets' for 1971", available at <http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl1917/19170630.htm> accessed 4 March 2015
 53. "Musharraf says once again, Sorry—for 71 calamitous events". *Asian Tribune* 31 July 2002. Available at <http://www.asiantribune.com/news/2002/07/31/bmusharraf-says-once-again-sorry-71-calamitous-eventsb> accessed 13 March 2015
 54. "Bangladesh welcomes Musharraf's 'apology'", available at <http://m.rediff.com/news/2002/jul/30bang.htm> accessed 13 March 2015
 55. Sudha Ramachandran, "Bangladesh, Pakistan and the country in between". *Asia Times Online*, 21 August 2002, available at http://atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/DH21Df02. Accessed 13 March 2015
 56. Sumit Mitra, "Supping with the enemy". *India Today* 12 August 2002., available at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/india-concerned-at-pakistan-president-pervez-musharraf-overtures-to-bangladesh/1/221198.html> accessed 13 March 2015
 57. "Musharraf wraps up Bangladesh visit", available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/2163374.stm accessed 13 March 2015
 58. Haroon Habib, *op cit.*
 59. Jawed Naqvi, "Kasuri, Sinha will meet in New York". *Dawn* 8 September 2013. available at <http://www.dawn.com/news/114400/kasuri-sinha-will-meet-in-new-york> accessed 13 March 2015
 60. Khaleda Zia's statement at 12th SAARC Summit, available at http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bangladesh/document/papers/SAARC_pak.htm accessed 13 March 2015
 61. Shahzad Raza, "Pakistan, Bangladesh sign 4 memoranda". *Daily Times*, Lahore, 14 February 2006.
 62. "Pakistan-Bangladesh Ties". *Dawn*, Karachi, 15 February 2006.
 63. Amir Mir, "Dhaka's decision on 'trials in absentia' to affect ties with Pakistan". *Daily Times*, Lahore, 16 December 2014.
 64. "Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar visits Bangladesh" Press Release, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan available at <http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?prID=367> accessed 18 March 2015
 65. *Ibid.*

66. "Pak-Bangladesh ties: 41 years on, still awaiting an apology". *The Express Tribune*, Karachi, 16 December 2012.
67. *Ibid.*
68. International Crimes Tribunal-2 (ICT-2), ICT-BD Case No. 02 of 2012, available at <https://bangladeshtribobserver.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/qader-full-judgement.pdf> accessed 18 March 2015
69. Subir Bhaumik, "Stirrings of a Dhaka spring". *India Today*, 1 March 2013. Available at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/stirrings-of-a-dhaka-spring/1/252195.html> accessed 18 March 2015
70. "Bangladesh: Abdul Kader Mullah gets death penalty for war crimes", available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-24108640> accessed 18 March 2015
71. *Ibid.*
72. Ejaz Hussain, "Post-Mollah Bangladesh and Pakistan Relations". *The Nation*, Lahore, 3 January 2014.
73. "Nisar expresses grief over Bangladesh JI leader's execution". *Tribune* 13 December 2013. available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/645071/nisar-expresses-grief-concern-over-bangladesh-jamaat-leaders-execution/> accessed 19 March 2015
74. "NA resolution condemns Abdul Quader Molla's execution". *The News International*, Karachi, 17 December 2013.
75. "Resolution passed: Abdul Quader Molla was innocent". *Tribune* 16 December 2013. available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/646260/abdul-quader-molla-was-innocent-imran-khan/> accessed 19 March 2015
76. "Bangladesh summons Pakistan High commissioner over NA resolution", available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/646780/bangladesh-summons-pakistan-high-commissioner-over-na-resolution/> accessed 19 March 2015
77. "Dhaka demonstrators protest Pakistan's reaction to Molla's execution". *Tribune*, 18 December 2013. available at <http://tribune.com.pk/story/647281/dhaka-demonstrators-protest-pakistans-reaction-to-mollas-execution/> accessed 19 March 2015
78. Saad Hammadi, "Protesters push Bangladesh to cut ties with Pakistan", available at <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2013/1220/Protesters-push-Bangladesh-to-cut-ties-with-Pakistan> accessed 19 March 2015
79. Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Diplomat back from BD after terror funding allegation". *Dawn*, Karachi 5 February 2015.
80. Haroon Habib, "Pakistan withdraws official from Dhaka Embassy". *The Hindu*, New Delhi, 4 February 2015.
81. Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "Bangladesh expels Pakistani diplomat for smuggling fake Indian currency, funding terrorists". *The Economic Times*, New Delhi, 6 February 2015.
82. Baqir Sajjad Syed, *op cit.*
83. "SC unhappy over delays in case about Pakistanis stranded in Bangladesh". *Dawn*, Karachi 19 February 2015.
84. *Ibid.*
85. *Ibid.*
86. *Ibid.*
87. "Tensions with Dhaka". *Dawn*, Karachi, 2 March 2015.

BHUTAN-BANGLADESH RELATIONS *POLITICO-ECONOMIC RETROSPECT*

DIVYA AGNIHOTRI

The politico-economic changes in the post-cold war era compelled the small state to find ways and means to adjust to the changing international scenario. In the beginning of the 1970s, two South Asian countries, Bhutan and Bangladesh appeared on the international horizon. In 1971, Bangladesh attained independence with the help and support of India after her arduous war of liberation against Pakistan. In the same year on 21st September, with India's support Bhutan was admitted to the United Nations as a member.

Geographically, Bhutan is located to the north of Bangladesh. The two countries do not share a border, a 30 km wide strip of Indian territory separates them. Bhutan is a small Himalayan kingdom with a long and proud history of never being colonized. Bhutan's land area is less than one third of that of Bangladesh. In the South Asian region, Bhutan and Bengal have an impressive history of bilateral cultural exchanges and trade relations.

Both the countries have kindred approach to politics and economic policies in the multinational forums. Both share the experience of a small nation state living within the strategic environment of a powerful neighbor. Both wanted to be free of the hegemony of superpowers. Both nations are members of the SAARC and are keen to develop the regional forum into a dynamic and vibrant one.¹ This similarity of political conditions and their focus on regional co-operation make the two countries natural allies.

Bhutan, a land-locked small Himalayan kingdom, traditionally followed a policy of isolation, or perhaps better termed, a policy of withdrawal from international politics to preserve her independence and distinct identity. Protected by her geography, she found the policy to be

successful during the colonial years. The strategic developments in the Himalayan region in the 1950s greatly disturbed Bhutan. China's occupation of Tibet in 1950 and her clinical suppression of the Tibetan revolt in 1959 compelled Bhutan to re-assess the viability of her longstanding policy of political isolation in the new era. She started efforts to forge economic and political ties with the outside world.²

Bhutan's recognition of Bangladesh in 1971 was an important milestone in Bhutan's drive towards self-assertion. Bhutan, however, did not have the absolute freedom to make such decisions. The treaty of 1949 with India ensured that she had to be guided by Indian advice in relation to her foreign policy. The challenge for Bhutan was to strike a delicate balance by forging international alliances without offending India.

INCEPTION OF THE RELATIONS

Bhutan's relations with Bangladesh in the 20th century can be studied in three broad phases; first, Bhutan's support to the Bangladeshi War of Independence; second, initial relations and compacts between Bhutan and a fledgling Bangladesh; third, expedited co-operation after setting up of diplomatic missions.

Recognition of Bangladesh was a part of Bhutan's foreign policy objectives, which were two fold: first, Bhutan wanted to develop friendly relations with her closest neighbours besides India. Second, being a land-locked country, Bhutan was interested in cultivating Bangladesh, which offered the nearest access to the sea after India. Adding to that, trading with Bangladesh had immense potential due to the excellent complementarities the two countries had. The same approach could be extended to other countries in future. Bangladesh provides Bhutan with an alternative easily accessible market and source of supply as well as another outlet to the rest of the world through her two major seaports, namely Chittagong and Chulana.³

Bangladesh acknowledged Bhutan's moral and economic support during her War of Independence. Bangladesh also deeply appreciated Bhutan's gesture of recognising her as a sovereign country soon after her independence was also deeply appreciated. Bangladesh always felt obliged by this gesture of Bhutan and even many years later displayed her gratitude by conferring the Bangladesh Liberation War Honour on the late His Majesty in a function organized in Dhaka on 28 March 2012.⁴ Besides the goodwill and gratitude, Bangladesh also saw logic in the economic viability

and political significance of having a friend like Bhutan in the South Asian region.

Bangladesh needed recognition from other sovereign nations after attaining independence. At the same time, Bhutan was relinquishing her policy of political isolation and was trying to establish political and economic relations with other countries. Geographical proximity, political exigency and similarity of political zeitgeist made the two countries naturally gravitate to each other. As early as in April 1972 both countries expressed desire to establish close relations. Immediately after the war, in April 1972, Bhutan's Foreign Minister paid an official visit to Bangladesh. During this visit, he primarily focused on two issues; first, to make an agreement on trade and commerce, and second to establish diplomatic relations at the embassy level, instead of merely having representatives.

The King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, went on a state visit to Bangladesh in 1974 and discussed with the leaders of that country the opportunity of extending trade and economic co-operation in various fields for mutual benefit. The opening of the diplomatic mission in Dhaka was, however, delayed largely due to the domestic developments in Bangladesh, beginning from August 1975 with the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the political instability and uncertainty which prevailed in the country for a few years thereafter. Bhutan opened a diplomatic mission in Dhaka in December 1979 and Dasho Dago Tsering was appointed as the first Ambassador of Bhutan to Bangladesh.⁵

This marked a watershed event in Bhutan-Bangladesh relations and declared their increasing significance as allies in each other's view. For Bhutan this step also marked an assertion of her sovereign status and an indication that she is sincere about developing relations with countries other than India. It can also be viewed as regional co-operation between two small nation-states with the aim to strengthen and support each other.

Two agreements of trade and transit were signed in September 1980. Bangladesh offered to sell urea fertilizers, newsprint, dried fish and cellophane to Bhutan. In return, Bangladesh was to import fresh fruit and dolomite from Bhutan. Bangladesh also offered 10 scholarships every year to the Bhutanese students to study medical, engineering and agricultural courses. In 1972, India and Bhutan had signed a trade and transit agreement, which was later modified and replaced with new agreements, to facilitate Thimphu's growing trade with third countries, such as Bangladesh.⁶ Since Bhutan depended on transit facilities within India in order to trade with Bangladesh and use the sea route through

this country, in 1979 India agreed to allow the use of land and river transit routes to Bangladesh. The trade agreement between Bhutan and Bangladesh remained ineffective for a rather long time before India provided overland transit facilities by signing two agreements, one with Bhutan in December 1983 and the other with Bangladesh in January 1984. The trade agreements remained ineffective until the late 1980s when India provided convenient transit route through her territory for Bangladesh-Bhutan trade. Trade between Bangladesh and Bhutan had been very slow and the problem of transit was not the lone hurdle. Though close neighbours, Bangladesh and Bhutan were unfamiliar with each other. However, they continued their efforts with a view to developing the trade relations. During the visit of King Jigme Singye Wangchuck to Bangladesh in February 1984, two accords were signed between the two countries. These are: (a) The Protocol on Expansion and Regulation of Trade; and (b) Agreement on Economic and Cultural Co-operation.⁷

BHUTAN-BANGLADESH CO-OPERATION

Policymakers of Bhutan and Bangladesh primarily focused on co-operation in the fields of water-resources, trade, power, education and tourism. Bhutan has tremendous potential for generation of hydro-electricity, while Bangladesh has excessive demand for power. This makes hydro-electricity a mutual beneficial field of co-operation. Upper-riparian Bhutan could help Bangladesh in her management of water-resources and containment of floods. Bhutan is rich in minerals and other natural resources, which Bangladesh needs for development of her infrastructure. In the field of education and technology, Bhutan can be greatly serviced with the help of Bangladesh. Apart from these opportunities, cultural exchange was deemed necessary in order to bring the two countries closer to each other and increase people-to-people contact.

Development of Water Resources and Joint Ventures in Industry

Bangladesh and Bhutan considered co-operation in the field of the development of water resources through joint ventures as an objective even in 1972. However, for a long time, they undertook no initiative in this direction. Only in October 1988, during the working visit of the incumbent President of Bangladesh, Hussein Muhammad Ershad, to Bhutan, an initiative aimed at co-operation in the field of water resources development, flood control in particular, was undertaken. Accordingly, a

Joint Team of Officials on Flood Control was constituted. The Joint Team met three times- in January 1989 (Dhaka), in August 1989 (Thimphu) and in December 1989 (again in Dhaka) - and finalized the report for submission to the Governments of the two countries. The Team recommended co-operation in flood forecasting and warning, in hydro-meteorology and setting up of an institutional framework for follow-up of the recommendations. Initially, there was no progress in the matter. More importantly, the vast potential for the joint management and development of water resources could not even be considered by the two sides. In this regard, Sabur sees India's long-standing policy of strict bilateralism as the most insurmountable obstacle in the way of the joint management and development of water resources.⁸

Technical and Educational Fields

Apart from water, both countries took initiatives to develop relations in technical and educational fields. Bangladesh has been keen to develop technical and cultural co-operation. In this regard, a commitment was made to Bhutan that Bangladesh would provide, within her limited resources, whatever assistance is needed by Bhutan in the field of education and technical training. Even without any formal agreement, a modest technical co-operation with Bhutan was initiated by Bangladesh during the early 1980s. Accordingly, some Bhutanese students came to study in Bangladesh on Bangladesh government's scholarship. In February 1984, during the visit of the King of Bhutan to Bangladesh, an agreement on Economic and Technical Co-operation was signed between the two countries. By 1998, a good number of students received education regularly in Bangladesh. In 1998, Bangladesh was offering the Bhutanese students an annual total of 34 seats in different institutions in a variety of fields.⁹ In 2006, 25 Bhutanese doctors were educated and trained in Bangladesh and there were about 38 Bhutanese medical students studying in Bangladesh.¹⁰

On 11 January 2011, Bhutan and Bangladesh signed a memorandum of understanding to recruit doctors from Bangladesh. The MoU was signed by Bhutan's foreign secretary Daw Penjo and Bangladesh's secretary for health and family welfare Md. Humayun Kabir. The parties expressed their wish to strengthen and formalize the existing relationship on mutual interests and benefits in the areas of recruitment of various categories of Specialists, Medical Officers and retired doctors (Specialists and GDMOs)

from Bangladesh to meet the human resource requirement of the Bhutanese health ministry till Bhutan was in a position to meet the human Resources gap in this respect. Moreover, every year Bangladesh offers one scholarship to Bhutanese Army for Staff Course in the Bangladesh Defence Services Command and Staff College.¹¹

Air Services

With the objective of facilitating the movement of people from one country to the other and promoting people to people contact, an Agreement on Air Services was signed between the two countries on 4 June 1986. The agreement provides for air services between and beyond the respective territories of the two countries. From October 1987, Druk Air, the flagship carrier of Bhutan started operations between Paro and Dhaka. This agreement granted permission to the Royal Bhutan Airlines to operate weekly air services in both directions between Dhaka and Thimphu. In 2001, Bangladesh agreed to Bhutan's request to increase the frequency of Druk Air flights between Dhaka and Paro from once a month to twice a week. The decision to increase the flights between the two countries followed a request by Bhutan to reduce the landing charges at the Zia International Airport in Dhaka. The air link between the two countries became more frequent when Bhutanese high level officials came to Dhaka in 2002. During that time, Dhaka made a decision to reduce landing fees for Druk Air at Zia International Airport. Dhaka also granted 50% concession on handling charges. With such initiatives, Druk Air introduced two flights a week instead of a monthly flight between Paro and Dhaka.¹²

Bangladesh and Bhutan signed an air operation agreement on 19 May 2011, allowing each other to use all their airports. As per an earlier agreement, Bhutan could use only Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka and Bangladesh could use Paro Airport, the only international airport of the land-locked country. Currently Bhutan's Druk Air is operating several flights a week between Dhaka and Bhutan via Bangkok but Bangladesh is not operating any flight. Under the new agreement both the countries are allowed to operate seven flights a week. Flights can also be operated to more overseas destinations from the two countries.¹³

Cultural Field

During the visit of former King Jigme Singye Wangchuck to Bangladesh

in 1984, it was reaffirmed that development of cultural relations would not be only mutually beneficial but also go a long way in fostering closer co-operation and understanding between the people of the two countries. In order to give concrete shape to this policy, an Agreement on Cultural Co-operation was signed in 1986. However, the level of cultural exchanges between the two countries remained much below expectation. Bhutanese Minister for Cultural Affairs visited Bangladesh at the invitation of his Bangladeshi counterpart in November 1993 during the Sixth Asian Biennial Art Exhibition.¹⁴ The bilateral cultural co-operation agreement provides the institutional framework for the cultural exchanges between the two countries. In October 2001 the incumbent Bangladesh's ambassador to Bhutan, Mr. Ahmed Rahim said that the two governments would renew agreement on cultural co-operation of 1986 and organize exchange visits by parliamentarians, educationists and cultural activists.¹⁵

In June 2004, a cultural team from Bangladesh Shishu Academy visited Bhutan and performed cultural shows in Thimphu, Punakha and Paro. Their performance brought the Bhutanese audience closer to the cultural heritage of Bangladesh. A four-member team from Kewkradong, a youth based organisation in Bangladesh, completed a cycling expedition from Thimphu to Trashigang. The theme of the expedition was "Friendship-Cross Country Bhutan on Bicycle." They reached the country on 15 September with the aim to establish people-to-people contact and cement the existing bilateral relationship between Bhutan and Bangladesh. The two countries also signed an MoU on 11 January 2011 to encourage and promote co-operation in the field of literature, music, visual and performing arts, crafts and other cultural activities, education and research, science and technology, media, tourism, sports and games.

To further strengthen the cultural relations, in a solemn ceremony, presided over by the president and the prime minister of Bangladesh, the Third Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, was awarded the Bangladesh Liberation War Honour in Dhaka on 28th March 2012, in recognition of Bhutan's contribution to Bangladesh's War of Independence in 1971. Late His Majesty was one of the eight recipients of the honour.¹⁶

During the 30 years of Bhutan-Bangladesh co-operation in the 20th century, the partnership continued but the relationship could not achieve its full potential. Both countries kept the dialogue open through exchange of various delegations. Many new areas of co-operation were identified and proposals presented but the implementation progressed at a slow pace. Of the various reasons, most important were the political instability

in Bangladesh and Bhutanese dependence on India's active participation. Since 1984, India assumed a much liberal interpretation of the Indo-Bhutanese treaty of 1949, providing Bhutan with enough latitude to conduct her foreign relations. The Indo-Bhutanese treaty of 2007 formally established Bhutan as an equal partner of India. Bangladesh also witnessed increasing political stability. As a result, in the 21st century, both countries are focusing on co-operation in the field of flood-control, hydro-power, education, health and tourism. Both countries are making efforts to increase people to people contact and bilateral trade through opening new trade routes and starting direct air and bus services between the two countries.

BHUTAN-BANGLADESH ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Bhutan's inclination to develop friendly relations with Bangladesh was not guided merely by the political perspective. It also had a sound economic basis. The excellent complementarities that Bhutan shared with Bangladesh ensured that the relationship would have a promising economic aspect. Bhutan is rich in natural resources like water, minerals, stone and wood and has ample production of fruits. Bangladesh on her part has human resources, sea-food, jute and textiles. Bangladesh and Bhutan can provide a good market for each other. Bangladesh can also provide Bhutan an alternate access point for sea-trade. Electricity, which has surplus production in Bhutan and excessive demand in Bangladesh is another important factor to make this relationship truly symbiotic. The leaders of both countries are fully aware of these opportunities and they took their first steps in the direction of economic co-operation immediately after Bangladesh achieved her independence. The fact that all trade has to be done through Indian territory is a hurdle in the path of direct economic co-operation. India's active participation is required in order to realise any trading activity between Bhutan and Bangladesh.¹⁷

The partnership between Bangladesh and Bhutan can be discerned not only in their pursuit of peace and security but also in their efforts for economic development of their countries. As early as in April 1972, the leaders of both countries expressed their desire to develop trade relations between their countries. The political turbulence and unrest which took place in Bangladesh in the wake of the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delayed the development of trade and economic interactions between the two countries. Bangladesh under the leadership of Ziaur

Rahman underwent a transition from a situation of crisis and instability to normalcy and stability. The BNP Government led by Zia chose different foreign policy objectives than his predecessors. He endeavoured to develop friendly relations with all neighbouring countries including Bhutan. Bangladesh and Bhutan opened diplomatic missions at ambassadorial level in each other's capitals in December 1979. This move paved the way for further co-operation between the two countries.¹⁸

An agreement on trade and commerce was one of the focal points of the Bhutanese Foreign Minister Lyonpo Dawa Tshering's official visit to Bangladesh in April 1972. In 1974, the King of Bhutan Jigme Singye Wangchuk visited Bangladesh immediately after his ascension to the throne and discussed the possibilities of co-operative trade relations in various fields.

In order to give a concrete shape to the diplomatic relations, Bhutan and Bangladesh signed a Trade and Transit Agreement in August 1980. Under the agreement on trade which Bangladesh and Bhutan signed in 1980, the two countries agreed to accord to each other the most favoured nation (MFN) status in respect of trade. With flexible terms and limited items, the agreement was initially valid for 10 years. Trade relations began but favourable results started to show only after the signing of an Indo-Bangladesh memorandum of understanding at the end of January 1984. The agreement provided that from April 1984 goods travelling between Bangladesh and Bhutan would move through Indian territory in accordance with Indian law through transit points already specified in the Indo-Bangladesh agreement. In February 1984, Bhutan and Bangladesh again signed a Protocol on Trade and an Agreement on Technical and Economic Co-operation. The two agreements signed between the two countries provided an institutional framework for continued expansion of trade relations and economic and technical co-operation leading to further consolidation of bilateral relations. The trade, however, got an up-lift when Bangladesh waived 50% of tariff on imports from Bhutan in 1986 and India permitted most convenient Phuntsholing (Bhutan)-Changrabandha (India)-Burimari (Bangladesh) route effectively in January 1988. These attempts provided a boost for trade relations although Bangladesh advanced on a sluggish pace.¹⁹

The two countries also undertook to provide means of transportation, warehousing and handling facilities in order to facilitate the movement of goods. They agreed that they would exchange goods in accordance with the Schedules A and B appended to the agreement. Bhutan could export

dolomite, gypsum, dust coal, slate, graphite, copper, timber products, cardamom, gum, resin, ginger, dried chilies, orange and apple mentioned in the Schedule 'A'. The Schedule 'B' listed the items which Bangladesh could export to Bhutan. It included items such as newsprint, jute products, leather and leather products, chemicals, detergents, betel leaves, tea, tobacco, pharmaceutical and medicine.²⁰

With the opening of the Burimari-Changrabandha route, Bangladesh-Bhutan trade increased manifold in just one year, but it resulted in trade deficit for Bangladesh. Bangladesh wanted to narrow down the gap in trade imbalance and requested the Bhutanese government to take corrective measures. The government of Bhutan acted positively to maintain the equitable trade balance by including more goods in the list of imports from Bangladesh. The trade imbalance, however, could not be completely erased.

In 1992 Bangladesh imposed duties on previously exempted imports from Bhutan. Bangladesh justified it saying that she had to maintain a uniform tariff regime for all the countries which were accorded MFN status by her. The Bhutanese side stated that they endeavoured to increase imports from Bangladesh in order to reduce trade imbalance between the two countries, but this increase could not be achieved owing to various causes like supply problems, natural calamities and organizational difficulties in Bangladesh. For instance, dried fish of Bangladesh have a good demand in Bhutan. The orders for dried fish placed by Bhutanese traders could not be fulfilled as Bangladeshi exporters were adversely affected by the cyclone in Bangladesh. Another significant reason for the stagnancy witnessed in Bangladeshi exports to Bhutan was that Bangladeshi goods by and large were not competitive in Bhutan in comparison with those from other countries. Thus the trade imbalance between Bangladesh and Bhutan emerged as a constraint on the partnership in trade.²¹ During his visit to Bangladesh in May 2000, Bhutan's Foreign Minister Mr. Jigme Thinley emphasized the need for diversification of trade and believed that Bangladeshi businessmen had not been able to explore the full potential of trade opportunities in Bhutan.²²

The first Trade Agreement signed between Bhutan and Bangladesh in 1980 had expired in September 2000. So, the Transit Agreement was renewed up to September 2003 and the Trade Agreement extended up to March 2003 with a pledge to increase the trade volume between the two countries. This extended agreement provided Bangladeshi exporters duty-free access to the Bhutanese market, but Bangladesh refused to grant

Bhutan the same concession, as the trade imbalance was in Bhutan's favour. The formal Bilateral Trade Agreement and the Protocol to the Agreement of Trade were reviewed and signed by the two Commerce Ministries in May 2003. The Agreements remained valid for five years. Both countries agreed to allow duty-free entry of goods to Bhutan and Bangladesh on reciprocal basis. As a result, trade volume between the two countries picked up on a fast pace.²³

In the fiscal year 2000-2001, Bhutan imported jute goods, melamine products, ceramics, milk, ready-made garments, soft drinks, snacks, pharmaceuticals and toiletries worth US \$ 1.18 million. Bangladesh imported Bhutanese fruit and fruit products, pickles, boulders, marbles, limestone and quartzite worth about US \$ 5.65 million. However, in 2001-2002, Bangladesh's import from Bhutan declined to US \$ 2.95 million because of additional taxes on food imports. The government of Bangladesh waived duty and value added tax (VAT) on the import of 18 products exported by Bhutan to the country in December 2002. The products were orange, apple, seed potato, mushroom, asparagus, cardamom, dried chili, ginger, fruit juice, gum resin, slate, boulders, dolomite, gypsum, limestone, coal, wood and timber products. Bangladesh was earlier levying a preferential duty of 50 percent of their tariff on some of Bhutan's exports. Bhutan, on the other hand, was offering duty free access to all Bangladesh imports. The two countries worked on a preferential trading agreement. Bangladesh's decision to waive duty and VAT on the 18 exportable items from Bhutan was a reflection of the excellent relations and goodwill existing between the two countries.²⁴

On an average, Bhutanese fruits and primary products exports to Bangladesh were worth US \$ 5 million annually in 2004. Bhutan's major imports from Bangladesh included food items, medicine, urea fertilizers, newsprint, dried fish, cellophane, household utensils, ready-made garment and automobile and machine parts. Bhutanese exports constituted fresh fruits and dolomite. In 2005, Bangladesh imported US \$ 7 million worth of goods from Bhutan, a chunk of which was made from sale of edible oil, while Bhutan imported about US \$ 4.8 million worth of goods from Bangladesh. There was a huge demand for stones, minerals and electricity in Bangladesh, which were found in abundance in Bhutan. Like Bhutan, Bangladesh also had a booming construction industry. The stones from Bhutan could be very useful to construct roads and bridges in Bangladesh. Bangladesh burnt coal, gas and imported petroleum for electricity, which

gave them only about 4,000 MW, while their demand was more than 7,000 MW in 2006.²⁵

The volume of total trade between the two countries in 2007 was about US \$ 14 million a year. While for Bhutan it was encouraging, for Bangladesh it was insignificant. Taking this point in consideration, Bhutan expressed her keen interest to import huge quantity of biodegradable packaging materials. She officially informed the Bangladesh mission in Bhutan, and asked for a list of the materials. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh mission urged the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) to take necessary steps in this regard. The EPB urged the local industrialists to export their products to Bhutan. Bhutan also showed keen interest in importing vehicle spare parts made in collaboration with Japan, excide car batteries, and pharmaceuticals, which are among the best in the South Asian region. Such positive signs from both sides portend good future for trade and economic relations.

On 7 November 2009, a landmark bilateral trade agreement was signed between the governments of Bhutan and Bangladesh. The basic thrust of the November 2009 Free Trade Agreement was on the export of hydro-power from Bhutan to Bangladesh. Bangladesh has been the second largest trading partner of Bhutan and imports apple, orange, minerals, etc. Her primary items of export to Bhutan are garments, tableware, melamine, car batteries, cooking oil, confectionaries, etc. As per the November 2009 agreement, Bangladesh agreed to provide duty free access to eighteen more commodities from Bhutan. Under the renewed trade agreement, Burmari Port, Tamabil and Naoka were considered as new entry points for Bhutan. The number of products was increased to 90 from the previous 74 for trading between Bangladesh and Bhutan. India's role in facilitating distribution lines through her territory is considered as crucial for co-operation on hydro-power by both countries.²⁶

In January 2011, Bhutan's Prime Minister Lyonchhen Jigme Y. Thinley went to Bangladesh. There he expressed his willingness to take the bilateral trade between two countries up to US \$ 100 million from US \$ 30 million. Agreement on cultural exchange and Memorandum of Understanding were also signed. In March 2011 and February 2013 the King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyal visited Bangladesh to further infuse dynamism in the bilateral relations. After King's visit both the countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 1 April 2013 on further enhancement of bilateral trade.

CHALLENGES

Both Bhutan and Bangladesh are small countries living in the shadow of a large neighbour. For such countries, the prime challenge lies in protecting and preserving their sovereignty and independent identity. China's occupation of Tibet in 1950 and her ruthless suppression of the resulting revolt in 1959 brought Bhutan face to face with the possibility of losing her identity. To compound the situation, Bhutan is also land-locked. No access to sea translates to her dependence on one of her large neighbours for any kind of contact with any third country. The Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of 1949 made Bhutan dependent on Indian advice in matters of her foreign policy. It was another big challenge for Bhutan to forge political and economic relations with other countries in the world while remaining under the ambit of the 1949 treaty. However, the Bhutanese leaders and their Indian counterparts agreed upon a much lenient interpretation of the treaty, providing Bhutan with enough latitude to start forging economic and political relations. With time, the Indian perspective about Bhutan changed and in the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of 2007, India recognised Bhutan as an equal partner and proposed a mutually beneficial co-operative relationship.

Being land-locked, Bhutan depends on India to provide her a gateway to the world. She used Kolkata sea-port for her trade with the outside world. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Bhutan signed bilateral trade agreement with Bangladesh, India's reluctance to provide a transit route led the agreements to remain effectively suspended. After years of effort, when in 1988 India provided the transit route, Bhutan's exports to Bangladesh registered a phenomenal increase in one year. Similarly the hydro-electricity agreements between Bhutan and Bangladesh cannot be completed without India allowing the use of her land.

Bhutan is a small country and has acute shortage of skilled manpower. She is largely dependent on foreign economic and technical assistance for any development work. The country has inadequate infrastructure. A mountainous terrain and dense forest cover makes infrastructure development difficult and costly. Bhutan also needs a lot of improvements in communications, education and transport.

Bangladesh gained independence in 1971 with the help of India. Her immediate challenge was to get recognition as a sovereign nation from other nations in the world. Bangladesh has access to the Indian Ocean. She is located in the deltas of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, two of

the largest river systems in Asia and has abundant fertile soil. Bangladesh is a developing country and her major challenge is an increasing population. Bangladesh is the 95th largest country in the world and is home to the 8th largest population in the world. Managing such a large population is a daunting task. Bangladesh also lacks basic infrastructure and has a large unfulfilled demand for power. The high population density worsens the situation.

A negative aspect of the river systems of Bangladesh is the annual incidence of floods. These floods cause immense loss of life and property. Bangladesh has always been keen on effective water management in the regional forum and it was a driving factor behind the idea of the SAARC. In recent years, Bangladesh has forged treaties with upper riparian Bhutan for research and effective management of water resources.

An important area where Bhutan has been more fortunate than Bangladesh is political stability. Bangladesh went into political turmoil after the August 1975 assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the political instability and uncertainty prevailed in the country for a few years. Due to this political uncertainty, Bhutan-Bangladesh co-operation effectively remained on hold for a few years. The ongoing political conflict between ruling and opposition party also affects Bangladesh's relation with other countries.

SUGGESTIONS

- For Bhutan, her biggest asset is the hydro-power capacity in the country, for which, there is huge demand for power in the neighbourhood. Bhutan has already signed agreements with India and Bangladesh. Hydro-power can be a mutually beneficial area of co-operation between Bhutan and her neighbours.
- Infrastructure development is another priority for Bhutan. Bhutan is rich in natural resources and minerals. In the absence of dependable infrastructure, this potential has largely remained untapped. Both Bangladesh and India can be large consumers of Bhutan's natural resources.
- Bhutan is already focusing on regional co-operation. Opening more and easier routes of trade will give her access to the markets for her perishable goods.
- Technical knowledge transfer is an important area for Bhutan to focus on. Establishing new industries in the countries with

knowledge transfer agreements and investment in education will be helpful in the long run.

- Bangladesh has immense potential which remains untapped due to shortage of power. Hydro-power agreements with Nepal and Bhutan will help Bangladesh meet her demand for power.
- Efforts in water resource management in the form of regional co-operation and agreements with upper riparian states will help Bangladesh curb the recurring loss of life and property.
- Bangladesh also needs investment in infrastructure for her industries to prosper. Bangladesh is already a large exporter of jute products and textile to the world. A better infrastructure will help her increase production and exports. Providing land-locked countries in the region like Nepal and Bhutan access to her ports will help forge better regional relationships and also bring in revenue.
- For both countries, regional multilateral co-operation will help consolidate the resources and lead to a better all around development of the region. They should also use India's status as a rising superpower to negotiate better economic and trade agreements for the region.

REFERENCES

1. Harun ur Rashid, *Foreign Relations of Bangladesh*. Varanasi, Rishi Publications, 2001.
2. Ahsan Syed Azizal and Bhumitra Chakma, "Bhutan's Foreign Policy Cautions Self Assertion? *Asian Survey*, Vol.33, No.11, 1993. pp-1043-54.
3. Rajesh S Kharat, *Foreign Policy of Bhutan*. New Delhi, Manak Publications, 2005.
4. "Award bestowed on 3rd Druk Gyalpo in Dhaka ceremony". *Kuensel*, 28 March 2012.
5. Bhabani Sen Gupta, *Bhutan: Towards a Grass-root Participatory Polity*. Delhi, Konark Publishers, 1999.
6. *Ibid.*
7. A K M Abdus Sabur, "Bangladesh- Bhutan Relations: An Overview". *Biiss Journal*, Vol.19, No.1, 1998. pp-55-67.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Samten Wangchuk, "Bhutan and Bangladesh could expand trade relations". *Kuensel*, 13 March 2006.
11. "Bhutan to recruit doctors from Bangladesh". *Kuensel*, 11 January 2011.
12. Mohammad Jasim ud Din, "Bangladesh- Bhutan Relations Challenges and Prospects". *Biiss Journal*. Vol.28, No.2, 2007. pp-120-139.
13. "Bhutanese Team Visits Two Airports". *Daily Star*, 20 May 2011.

14. A.K.M. Abdus Sabur, *op.cit.*
15. "Bangladesh ambassador presents credentials". *Kuensel*, 4 October 2002.
16. *Kuensel*, 28 March 2012.
17. Manorama Kohli, *From Dependency to Interdependence: A Study of Indo-Bhutan Relations*. New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1993.
18. Kapileshwar Labh, "Bangladesh-Bhutan Partnership in Peace and Economic Development: Commonalities and Constraints". In Arati Chakravarty (ed) *Foreign Policy of Bangladesh*. New Delhi, Har-Anand Publications, 1994.
19. Mohammad Jasim Uddin, *op.cit.*
20. A.K.M. Abdus Sabur, *op.cit.*
21. Kapileshwar Labh, *op.cit.*
22. Harun ur Rashid, *op.cit.*
23. Rajesh S. Kharat, *op.cit.*
24. Kencho Wangdi, "Bangladesh waives duty and tax on imports from Bhutan". *Kuensel*, 21 June 2003.
25. S. Wangchuk, *op.cit.*
26. Medha Bisht, "Bhutan in 2009: A Retrospective View". *IDSA Issue Brief*, New Delhi, IDSA, 2009.

HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES is a quarterly Journal published by the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation, which is a non-governmental, non-profit research, cultural and development facilitative organisation. The Journal is devoted to the study of various issues pertaining to the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region in South and Central Asia or parts thereof, connected with its environment, resources, history, art and culture, language and literature, demography, social structures, communication, tourism, regional development, governance, human rights, geopolitics etc.

While the principal concern of the Journal is on its focal area, i.e., from Afghanistan to Myanmar including the Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, China, Mongolia, Nepal, Bhutan and the Indian Himalayan States of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and North East states; papers with a broad sweep addressing environmental, social, cultural, economic, geopolitical and human rights issues are also welcomed.

The objective is to make a scientific appraisal of the issues confronting the Himalayan and adjoining region in South and Central Asia or parts thereof, and to make specific policy oriented studies and need based recommendations as the means to promote the human, educational and economic advancement of the peoples of the region besides preserving and enriching their ethno-cultural, literary and historical heritage. Promotion of human rights, social justice, peace, harmony and national integration are the other key areas in which the Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation has been active.

**CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PUBLICATION AND ANY ENQUIRIES
SHOULD BE ADDRESSED TO :**

Prof. K. WARIKOO

Editor and Secretary General

Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation

B-6/86, Safdarjung Enclave

New Delhi - 110029 (India)

Tel. : 0091-11-26742763, 0091-11-41651969

Fax : 0091-11-26742843

E-mail: kwarikoo@gmail.com

Website: www.himalayanresearch.org

Books for review should be sent to the same address.

Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers R.No. 67256/97

HRCF PUBLICATIONS

Afghanistan Factor in Central and South Asian Politics

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 1994. 73pp.)

Society and Culture in the Himalayas

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 1995. 316pp.)

Central Asia : Emerging New Order

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 1995. 352pp.)

Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh : Linguistic Predicament

Edited by P. N. Pushp and K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 1996. 224pp.)

Artisan of the Paradise : A Study of Art and Artisans of Kashmir

By D.N. Dhar (New Delhi, 1999. 230pp.)

Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir

Edited by K. Warikoo (Bhopal, 2001. 317pp.)

Bamiyan: Challenge to World Heritage

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 2002. xviii, 313pp. 61plates)

The Afghanistan Crisis : Issues and Perspectives

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 2002. xxvi, 523pp.)

Mongolia-India Relations

By O. Nyamdavaa (New Delhi, 2003. 228pp.)

Child Labour Rehabilitation in India

Edited by B. Zutshi and M. Dutta (New Delhi, 2003. 257pp.)

Mongolia-China Relations

By Sharad K. Soni (New Delhi, 2006. xix, 328pp.)

Afghanistan: The Challenge

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 2007, 377pp.)

Drugs Production and Trafficking in Afghanistan

By Deepali Gaur Singh (New Delhi, 2007, 380pp.)

Afghanistan: Challenges and Opportunities (Set of 3 vols.)

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 2007)

L. Berzenczey, Adventures in Central Asia: A Hungarian in the Great Game

Edited by P.J. Marczell (New Delhi, 2007)

Cultural Heritage of Jammu and Kashmir

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 2009, 338pp.)

Cultural Heritage of Kashmiri Pandits

Edited by S.S. Toshkhani and K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 2009, xxviii, 363pp.)

Mongolia in the 21st Century

Edited by K. Warikoo and S.K. Soni (New Delhi, 2010, ix, 374pp.)

Central Asia and South Asia: Energy Cooperation and Transport Linkages

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 2011, 293pp.)

Tajikistan in the 21st Century

Edited by K. Warikoo (New Delhi, 2015, 300pp.)



HIMALAYAN RESEARCH AND CULTURAL FOUNDATION

B-6/86, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-110029 (India)

Tele : 0091-11-26742763, 0091-11-41651969, Fax : 0091-11-26742843

E-mail: kwarikoo@gmail.com Website: www.himalayanresearch.org