SOUTH ASIA
J O U R N A L

Whither Bangladesh: Accomplishments, Opportunities, Challenges and the Future

Guest Editors
M. Adil Khan & Habib Zafarullah

PUBLICATION GUIDELINES

South Asia Journal (SAJ) is an independent non-partisan policy magazine focused on vital issues from the South Asian region. The print-publication of SAJ is quarterly. SAJ aims to highlight emerging trends from South Asia, especially issues which call for more emphasis among decision makers and policy framers.

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PREFACE

South Asia Journal (SAJ) is a quarterly published from New Jersey, USA. It is a semi-academic opinion-based journal that presents issues, thoughts, ideas and policy directions on issues relating to economic, social and political dynamics relevant mainly to the South Asian and also other regions.

SAJ's Editorial Board is made up of highly qualified experts, academics and practitioners. The Journal publishes both electronic as well as hard copy versions of its articles and has high readership especially among the policy makers.

Why a Special Issue on Bangladesh?

Bangladesh is the third largest country in South Asia and, more importantly, has a vibrant economy. However, the country also has its fair share of challenges and currently, is at an important juncture.

December 2018 ends ruling party, Awami League's 2 consecutive terms and the General Election is due. During these two terms, Awami League government has achieved remarkable economic growth and successfully tackled the scourge of terrorism. However, during its tenure the country has also experienced severe denting of democratic and good governance norms.

Bangladesh is thus at an important juncture and it is against this backdrop of contradictory scenario that SAJ has decided to dedicate a special issue on Bangladesh on the eve of the election, highlighting accomplishments, opportunities and the challenges including policy directions so that the incoming government can benefit from the findings and take on board policy suggestions.

I am grateful that two eminent scholars, Professor M. Adil Khan, a member of the Advisory Board of SAJ and Professor of Development Practice, University of Queensland, Australia who is also a former UN senior policy manager and Professor Habib Zafarullah, Adjunct Professor of Governance, University of New England, Australia accepted my invitation to perform the difficult task of Guest Editorship for the Special Issue and put together this important Special Issue - Whither Bangladesh: Accomplishments, Opportunities, Challenges and the Future with thought provoking papers from experts in the field. I am truly grateful to the authors for their contributions. I also acknowledge the important contributions made by the SAJ technical team in putting together and brining out this important Special Issue.

I join you all in hoping that the discussions and issues raised and policy options presented in the Special Issue would receive due attention of the post-2018 government and assist them to advancing Bangladesh economically, socially, and politically in the coming years.

I also hope for a free and fair 2018 election!

Ghulam Suhrawardi

Publisher

Section One: Editorial Overview

EDITORIAL OVERVIEW WHITHER BANGLADESH: ACCOMPLISHMENTS, OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE OPTIONS

M. Adil Khan and Habib Zafarullah

It has been 47 years since Bangladesh, former Eastern wing of Pakistan, won its independence. Emergence of Bangladesh on 26 March 1971 came through a violent civil war. The war was in response to years of neglect, exploitation, denial and often brutal suppression of legitimate political and economic rights and demands by essentially a military ruling class entirely originating from and established in what is today referred to as Pakistan.

Shiekh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh defined the separation a journey from 'injustices to justice' and from 'darkness to light'. Since 1971, Bangladesh has gone through many changes – some promising, some not so.

The elections scheduled in December will mark the end of two consecutive terms by Awami League. This is the first ever by a political party since the re-introduction of parliamentary democracy in 1991. The past eight years has brought remarkable economic growth and even the strongest critics cannot deny the record achievements in various sectors of the economy. While Awami League must be given credit for its pro-business policies, it has also contributed to inequities and imbalances. The country has also seen erosion of democratic rights cherished historically by Bangladeshis and acceleration of corruption and nepotism.

Therefore, the 2018 General Election that brings an end to an important phase of Bangladesh provides a unique opportunity to reflect, learn and move forward.

It is against this backdrop that the South Asia Journal (SAJ) has opted to dedicate a Special Issue on Bangladesh mainly to highlight accomplishments, project opportunities, and point at challenges and offer suggestions to assist the incoming government to exploit gains and overcome challenges and move forward.

The Special Issue is made up of invited papers from experts in their respective fields. From development to politics the Special Issue focused on are that are important but by no means, exhaustive.

A brief overview of the key findings of the papers contained in the Special Issue are presented below.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

At the level of socio-economic growth, Bangladesh's accomplishments—a country that only few decades ago was dubbed as an 'international basket case' by the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger—have indeed been astounding.

From the status of a Least Developing Country (LDC) the country has now grown to become a low middle-income country in less than four decades and is on way to becoming a middle-income country in the next couple of decades.

On economic development, M. Niaz Asadullah and Antonio Savoia in their paper observe that Bangladesh's development accomplishments are not confined to economic growth only, rather its progress has been comprehensive where "… it over-performs on multiple social development indicators, given its level of economic development" and that "Progress seems to have occurred evenly across all political regimes since 1970s, which indirectly highlights the important contributions of non-state organizations that helped sustain the country's remarkable development journey."

In addition to the NGO sector's contributions in social sector development and poverty alleviation, two most important sectors that have stimulated economic growth in Bangladesh are the solely private sector driven and these include the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector and government-facilitated and private sector organized manpower export and remittances.

In his paper Sharif As-Saber demonstrates the important role the RMG sector has played in boosting Bangladesh's economic growth and in generation of employment especially of rural women. In his paper AKM Ahsan Ullah highlights the key contributions of migration sector in the economy of Bangladesh.

However, both these authors also highlight several challenges that confront these two sectors. As-Saber points at what he calls 'Global/ Local Black Value Chain', a system that spreads from global to local

and vice versa that according to him promotes profiteering at one end and exploitation at the other and contribute to gross inequities. However, As-Saber also mentions that thanks to strong national and international NGO advocacies awareness to these negative aspects of the sector have since been raised and a number of remedial measures both within and outside the country have been put in place that have improved the conditions in the sector significantly though much more are needed to be done.

On worker migration issue, Ullah also mentions of a number of malpractices in the processes of migration governance that contribute to exploitation of migrants, human trafficking and high transaction costs that cause innumerable miseries to the aspiring migrants and low return on remittances of migrant workers. Ullah also highlights negative ramifications of export of female domestic workers to the Middle Eastern countries.

In his paper Shariful Islam draws the lessons of US/Bangladesh cooperation in socio-economic development of Bangladesh and points at the important role congenial foreign relations can play in development. Based on his findings of US/Bangladesh aid and trade in Bangladesh he argues that "trade and investment are two key economic interests for the US in Bangladesh".

On the issue of important role that infrastructure plays in stimulating economic growth, Taskin Saif highlights the key role of steady, reliable, affordable and sustainable energy supply. While acknowledging that Bangladesh government has done well to alleviate its energy needs in the short to medium term, Saif points out that more work is needed to address country's long-term energy needs especially within the contexts of sustainable, affordable and cost-effective generation and supply of energy. Referring to Bangladesh's future energy issues as 'trilemma challenges' – meaning, finding right mix of fossil fuel, solar and hydro for affordable and sustainable energy – Saif recommends immediate need of a comprehensive study to clearly outline on a long-term basis, multiple generation and supply options that are key to technology optimisation in a more cost-effective and sustainable manner. He also stresses that outcome of such a study would also ensure much-needed predictability in investment choices in the sector.

On the issue of energy, Mirza Sadaqat Huda stresses the importance of cross-border cooperation as an additional and complementary option in generation and supply of sustainable energy in Bangladesh and also in the South Asian sub-region.

In the realm of social development, Bangladesh's achievements have been phenomenal especially in the health, education and gender sectors.

For example, Faisal M Rahman in his paper acknowledges impressive accomplishments of Bangladesh in the health sector especially in preventive health. Rahman also observes that as Bangladesh is increasingly moving from public to private health care, the rising cost, poor accountability and sub-standard clinical health system gravely challenge the accessibility, affordability and accountability aspects of the system, especially in the hospital sector – both private and public. Rahman suggests greater quality control, strengthening of the nursing facilities and imposition of patient rights for better accountability, quality and cost-efficient treatment are a sin qua non.

Similarly, on the issues of gender development Bangladesh's accomplishments have indeed been remarkable. Khandakar Josia Nishat, Deborah Walsh and Heather Douglas in their paper acknowledge positive effects of several gender empowering laws and other administrative arrangements such as inclusion of women through quota system in local government councils on women also argue that due to corruption, ineffective administration and patriarchal customs and cultural norms etc. some these laws are not adequately implemented and thus fail to protect women from multiple forms of violence especially from the rising phenomenon of 'eve teasing' in Bangladesh..

CHALLENGES

In sum most authors have noted positive accomplishments in development, both economic as well as social. But they have also highlighted several challenges that threaten to retard or even regress progress and most authors flag falling governance standards that include but not limited to breakdown of rule of law, corruption, absence of accountability and transparency in public governance, erosion of freedom and rising authoritarianism as key impediments to sustaining and promoting further growth.

In his paper, Ali Riaz observes that standards of good governance have been fast backsliding and this has been particularly evident during the current AL rule. Ali argues that the current regime maintains itself through a set of 'hybrid' arrangements that combine populism with authoritarianism arguing that "institutional arrangements within hybrid regimes are not immutable but can move further away from their democratic pretence."

In his paper Nizam Ahmed points out how ruling party's over-whelming 'win' of the 2014 Election where mainstream opposition parties boycotting it, resulted in the government controlling the Parliament to such an extent that the highest lawmaking body (Jatiyo Sangsad) been reduced to, what he calls, a 'minimal' institution incapable of discharging its lawmaking and legislative oversight functions, neither inclusively nor accountably. Thus Ahmed surmises that another similar 'victory' by the AL, the ruling party - that Ali suspects as a likely scenario - at the forthcoming election would simply worsen an existing the situation.

Ahmed Shafiqul Huque and Pranab Pandey highlight the issue of lack of decentralization as another key governance lacunae that continues to stymie effective service delivery at the local government level. They argue that while "Progress has been achieved in enhancing citizen participation in various local institutions", the aspects concerning "improvement in balancing authority and power between the central government and local institutions and enhancing skill and capability among the officials" remain unfulfilled. On the issue of urban governance, Kazi Fattah points out that absence of inclusiveness in formulation of policies including structural inequities in urban planning and rampant corruption skew benefits of urban development and thus argues that prolong neglect of rights of citizens especially those of the poor and the disadvantaged risk accumulation of severe social dissent, culminating into serious social disorder.

Another of Bangladesh's major challenge is climate change and its looming effects that are often expressed through weather variations, ecological shifts and also rise in sea levels that risk lives and livelihoods of millions especially those that live in coastal areas. By outlining these looming threats that already challenge lives and livelihoods of millions of people that live in the Southern coastal districts of Bangladesh Amy MacMahon who undertake her research in these areas further argues that political economies of self-seeking politics and government's aggressive embrace of deregulated economic neoliberalism that prioritizes commerce over ecology are complicating further the climate change vulnerabilities as the latter worsen ecological and social consequences. According to MacMahon, lack of understanding and appreciation of local social and economic dynamics as well as donor apathy to climate change vulnerabilities are contributing to the gap in local/central synergy in formulation and implementation of suitable and community-friendly adaptation initiatives, making climate-change vulnerable communities of the coastal districts of Bangladesh even more vulnerable. MacMa-

hon suggests a bottom up community based and climate sensitive economic policies as key components of climate change adaptation policy in Bangladesh.

GENERAL ELECTION AND THE WAY FORWARD

SAJ Special Issue articles indicate that while Bangladesh has much to be proud of, these articles also reveal there are much to be worried about as well and more work needed to move Bangladesh forward. Indeed Bangladesh has successfully realized most of the targets of UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but most authors that have flagged governance backsliding – deteriorating rule of law, erosion of civil rights, corruption, lack of government accountability, propensities to authoritarianism etc. – a major challenge seem to position the country somewhat inadequately to achieve the social justice, equity, good governance, human rights and sustainability parameters of the 2015-2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This is what makes the 2018 Election an important milestone. Referring to the 2018/2019 election, Ali warns that the incumbent, the AL is likely to adopt means that are conducive to guaranteeing its 're-election.' Similarly, Imtiaz Hussain in his article highlights that both the mainstream parties – Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) - have had history of both positive accomplishments as well as malpractices and thus concludes that in the event that there is an election with both the mainstream political parties participating people would judge them especially their leaders "… not by what they accomplished or how they won, but by what they prevented" by way of slowing down Bangladesh's progress from evolving "…as a democratic and liberal middle-income country."

In his paper, William Millam, a former US Ambassador to Bangladesh, points out to another menacing trend in Bangladesh is the rise in political violence. He argues that "the violence appears to be coming from the government as much as from the society at large. Incidents of police violence against civilian groups which are demanding change are rising, e.g. the harsh treatment of students protesting changes in quotas for jobs, and against students demonstrating for safer streets, and probably more sinister, the killing of many alleged "drug dealers" by security forces" are taking place in worrying regularity. Millam thus fears that as election approaches, prospects of violence rising on all sides is almost a certainty.

So where do we go from here? How do we ensure that the gains that Bangladesh has made so far, continue and not whittled away?

How does Bangladesh address the emerging challenges of governance backslide that threaten to compromise if not regress the gains made so far? How Bangladesh should made a new beginning with the 2018 Election that would help it to grow into a vibrant liberal democracy that inclusive, participatory and accountable?

Commenting on how Bangladesh once took steps to reverse slides in democracy in the past, William Millam reflects: "I find myself reminiscing fondly about my time in Bangladesh in the early 1990s when we thought, as did much of the rest of the world, that the end of history was real democracy, and that seemed achievable in Bangladesh, even if it hadn't arrived yet. How could things go so wrong after such a good start only 25 years ago?"

SAJ therefore, asks: can Bangladesh do it again? Can they reverse the governance backsliding that threatens compromising its accomplishments and pushing the country ever deeper into the pit of moral, social, political and economic abyss?

Obviously the government has both the power and the moral responsibility to reverse the trend. But the opposition also has a responsibility. Regardless of whether they win or lose they must unite and forge a common movement to re-enact lost democratic norms. Otherwise, Millam observes that without the opposition unity and grit especially in a post-election situation, "….slide to authoritarianism" and human rights abuses and "the AL juggernaut is likely to continue to roll and the violence and instability to grow".

Reminiscing his person experience in Bangladesh in early nineties when the entire nation got together and turned the tide of another democratic backslide, Millam stresses that as they have done in the past "It is Bangladeshis that would have to slow it [democracy backslide] down or halt it themselves."

SAJ, its patrons and the people of Bangladesh at large look forward to a free and fair election in 2018, as a new beginning to advance the country to march to a more democratic, inclusive, dignified and prosperous society in the coming years!

Section Two: Development: Economic, Social

BANGLADESH'S DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS: HOW WELL IS IT POSITIONED TO ACHIEVE THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS?

M Niaz Asadullah and Antonio Savoia

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations, Bangladesh has fulfilled the criteria to graduate from a 'least developed country' to a 'developing country'.[1] Such graduation follows a period of recent high rate of economic growth, which popular discussions attribute also to the incumbent government presiding over 2009-2018.[2] Indeed, the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) has organized numerous roadshows and public rallies across the nation and overseas to publicise this achievement of growth with human development.[3][4][5] The incumbent government can make history by becoming the longest serving party and lead the country throughout the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) campaign, if it wins the next general election. Regardless of the electoral result, who will lead the country next will want to understand where recent progress comes from and learn lessons. Moreover, the progress achieved in economic and social development has equally significant implications beyond Bangladesh. The SDGs, also known as the Global Goals, comprise a much ambitious range of indicators, demanding a more inclusive approach to growth and development. So, if the Bangladeshi example is a useful one for development policy, it is important to assess whether it is sustainable or simply a short-lived case of development progress.

This commentary, therefore, critically assesses Bangladesh's social achievements and prospect of sustaining the current growth trends. We do so by reviewing the empirical evidence on Bangladesh's development progress since independence compared to middle income countries, like India and Pakistan, and considering progress in the first three years into the SDGs campaign. We argue that the signs of Bangladesh's 'paradoxical' social achievements emerged long before the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) campaign. By 2005, Bangladesh was already ahead of other South Asian countries in a wide range of social indicators. The country's recent growth achievements, therefore, are partly a legacy of favourable human development conditions achieved following the country's transition to democracy in 1990s. However, progress towards SDGs by 2030 will hinge on the quality of government, an ingredient that is widely believed to support economic and social development in the

long term (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012; Besley and Persson, 2011) and is now a global development goal in itself (i.e., SDG16).6

IS BANGLADESH'S PROGRESS EXCEPTIONAL?

Bangladesh has made significant development progress during the MDGs period. It has achieved the target of halving poverty well before 2015. In addition, the country has met several targets of the MDGs, such as attaining gender parity at primary and secondary education, under-five mortality rate reduction, detection and cure rate of tuberculosis under directly observed treatment short course and others. Other areas where significant progress has been made include reduction of the prevalence of underweight children, lowering the infant mortality rate and maternal mortality ratio and improving immunization coverage.

Is Bangladesh's path to development exceptional? When did the country reach the cross-point and overtake its South Asian neighbours in social indicators? Was the achievement triggered by the country's transition to democracy? Or did it primarily occur in recent years, during the tenure of the current government, led by BAL? We discuss these in the next section.

EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS, DESPITE UNFAVOURABLE INITIAL CONDITIONS

Our earlier research examines the time path of Bangladesh's development progress (see Asadullah et al, 2014). Based on a cross-country comparison of social indicators, we documented that Bangladesh did much better, compared to developing countries at the same level of per capita income, on several education, health, sanitation and fertility indicators.

Starting with fertility indicators, Bangladesh has, since the 1970s, managed to reverse its initially abnormally high record in terms of total birth per woman. And since the 1980s, it has outperformed countries with similar income. Between 1980 and 2010, Bangladesh's ranking in fertility data within the developing world improved rapidly, compared to modest improvement experienced by Pakistan and India. Such progress in fertility decline has progressively increased, also because paralleled by an exceptional increase in contraception prevalence (e.g., we estimate that over 2006-2010 Bangladeshi women were giving birth to two less children than other economies at the same level of income). Between 1980 and 2010, the percentage of women using contraception jumped from 10 to nearly 60, whilst the 2005 figures for Pakistan and India were 30 and 53, respectively.

In health indicators, Bangladesh was amongst the laggards in child mortality reduction in the 1970s and 1980s. But such record was reversed in the 1990s and 2000s. Excess mortality disappeared before the country achieved large-scale reduction in poverty. This helped achieve exceptionally low child mortality levels by the end of 1980s. The

immunisation rate in Bangladesh increased from 1 percent in the early 1980s to over 70 percent within ten years (e.g. we estimate that over 2006-2010 Bangladesh was immunizing against measles 17% more children than other economies at the same level of income). At the same way, the initial gender disadvantage in primary and secondary education disappeared by the mid-1990s when the trend reversed. Bangladesh has outperformed, since the late 1990s, countries at similar level of economic development in terms of female primary and secondary schooling, although is still a laggard at tertiary level (e.g., our estimates suggest that over 2006-2010 Bangladesh was enrolling over 7% more girls in primary education than other economies at the same level of income).

Overall, the empirical evidence shows a clear trend: that Bangladesh has steadily progressed over the last four decades, including years before the country's transition from military rule to democracy in 1991. Today, it over-performs on multiple social development indicators, given its level of economic development. In post 1991 period, the improvements in social indicators were sustained irrespective of the change in political leadership. Progress seems to have occurred evenly across all political regimes since 1970s, which indirectly highlights the important contributions of non-state organizations that helped sustain the country's remarkable development journey. The state-NGOs collaborations remain a key factor explaining how Bangladesh defied its unfavourable initial conditions (e.g., devastation caused by the 1971 war and the famine of 1974) and the challenges of poor public governance record.

As a result, for a broad range of dimensions, Bangladesh did achieve a human development surplus by 2005 (Figures 1-4). This facilitated transition to a virtuous cycle where early investment made during the previous political regimes sustained high growth rates of the economy in recent years. The absence of such early achievements in social indicators is perhaps an important explanation for Pakistan's less satisfactory record in economic growth. During the recent decade, Bangladesh also reaped the benefits of early improvement in human development, particularly during the 1990s.
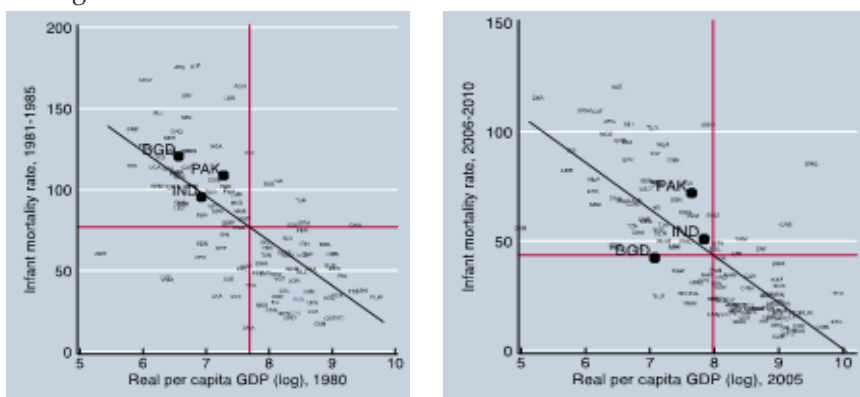
Figure 1: Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births)
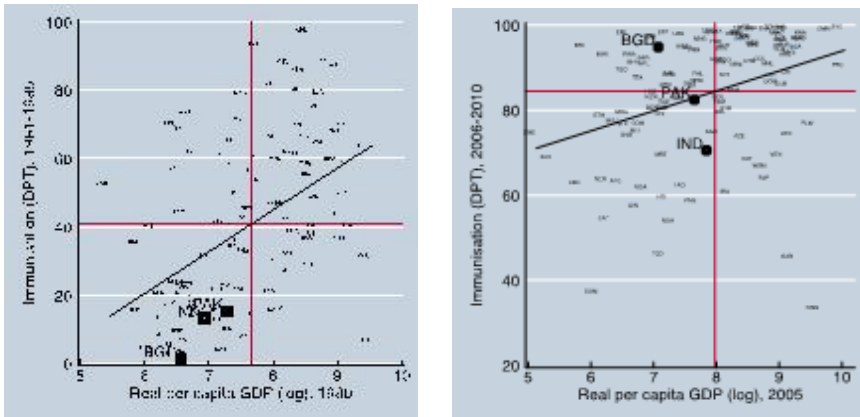
Figure 2: Immunisation, DPT (Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus)
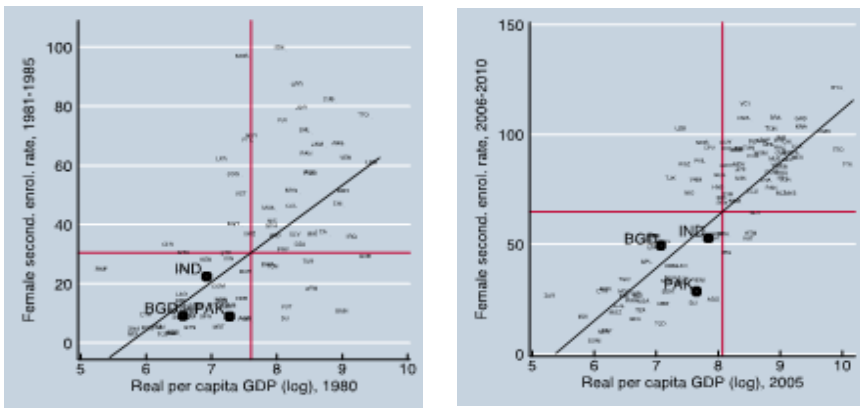
Figure 3: Female secondary enrolment rate
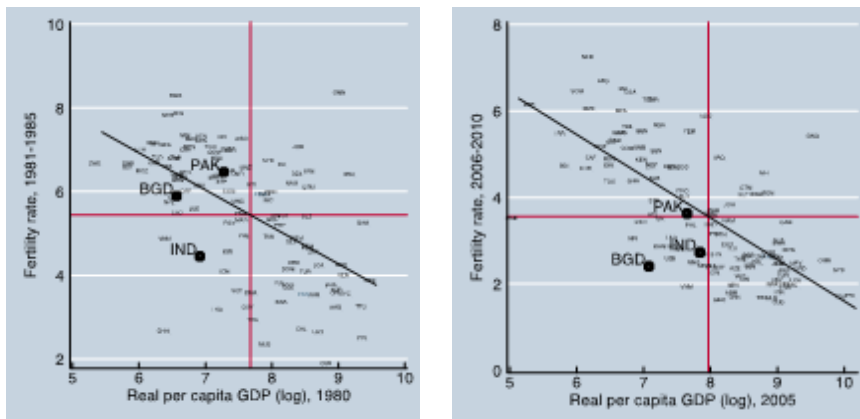
Figure 4: Fertility rate, total (births per woman); Source: Asadullah, Savoia and Mahmud (2014)

SDGS ARE SYNERGISTIC AND REQUIRE SOCIETAL COMMITMENT

The SDGs replace the MDGs, which started a global effort in 2000 to tackle the extreme poverty. The SDGs are a universal call to action to end multiple forms of deprivations and inequality in a sustainable manner. They comprise universally-agreed objectives for tackling poverty and hunger, protect the planet and ensure that everyone enjoy peace and prosperity through freedom from deadly diseases and access to quality education. These build on the successes of the MDGs, by including additional indicators to cover areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities.7

There are important conceptual and practical differences between SDGs and MDGs frameworks. First, the Global Goals 2030 agenda involves a wider set of the so-called "means of implementation": (a) resources (including development aid); (b) capacity; (c) data and information; and (d) governance (Jones 2017). Second, SDGs go beyond the economy and emphasize equity alongside sustainability and inclusion. Third, the effectiveness of the SDGs campaign will also depend on the underlying conditions at national level, resulting also from the legacy of the MDGs pursuit. At the same time, compared to MDGs, they are much more interconnected and work in synergy. Success on one will involve tackling challenges associated with another. Overcoming the trap of slow economic growth will therefore require avoiding pursuit of strategies that suppress citizen rights and fundamental freedoms. SDGs 4 (education quality) would be hard to achieve without SDGs 16 (Peace and Justice Strong Institutions).

Given the above differences, the progress towards SDGs requires using a development framework that allow a shift in the orientation of 'development', from the economy to the society, to building 'good societies' (Khan and Milne, Forthcoming). Our discussion in the following section will retain the focus on 'good societies', seen as the type of governance needed to include and sustain the broadest possible cross-section of the population. We will comment on Bangladesh's recent trends in the quality of government, as well as the opportunities and risks Bangladesh faces at the present time.

WHERE NEXT: DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT GO HAND IN HAND

Bangladesh has regressed towards authoritarian rule towards the end of the MDGs campaign (Montecinos, 2017). An established political tradition of organizing inclusive and peaceful elections under a non-partisan caretaker government was scrapped through constitutional amendments in 2011. The year 2014 marked a new inflection point in the country's history when the national election was boycotted by the largest opposition

party leaving more than half of parliamentary seats uncontested. During pre- and post-election months, the government security forces launched a brutal crackdown on the opposition whose members also responded with violence. According to Human Rights Watch, Bangladesh democracy was in the crossfire.8 The ruling Awami League government has since faced no challenge in the Bangladesh Parliament and consolidated its power further by indiscriminately jailing leads of parties outside the ruling 14-party coalition.9 Earlier this year, the court sentenced opposition leader and former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to five years' imprisonment. Table 1 shows recent quality of government ratings.

Corruption perception index (CPI)10 [Rating: 1.0 = very clean; 0.0 = highly corrupt]	Political freedom11 [Rating: 1.0 = best; 7.0 = worst]	Violation of human rights (VHR)12	Human and trade union rights (HTUR)13	Rule of law (RoL)14 [Rating: 1.0 = best; 0.00 = worst]	Freedom of the Press Index15 [Rating: 0 = best; 100 = worst]
0.24 in 2017	4.0 in 2017	No guarantee of rights	No guarantee of rights	0.41 in 2017	62: not free in 2017
0.40 in 2001	2.0 in 1998	-	-	0.42 in 2015	54: partly free in 2011

Table 1: Bangladesh's performance in selected quality of government indicators. Source: Adapted from Khan and Milne, 2018 (Forthcoming)

Whether Bangladesh's impressive development progress during the SDGs campaign is sustainable hinges on restoring political inclusion and improving the quality of government. There seems to be general agreement, amongst academics, that this is key to improving development outcomes in the long term (e.g., Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012; Besley and Persson, 2011). And it is indeed seen as a development goal in itself in the post 2015 development framework, set in stone in Goal 16. In other words, the quality of government is intrinsically valuable, as well as instrumental to development. The implications for Bangladesh are significant.

For start, SDG16 emphasises the importance of effective and accountable states (e.g., Targets 16.5, 16.6 and 16.7). How is Bangladesh equipped in this respect? The country seems to lag behind. Global surveys on public sector efficiency and quality of the legal infrastructure historically ranked Bangladesh as a state with weak capacity.16 Does it matter? Yes. For example, under greater state capacity, countries can reduce poverty at a faster rate. Recent research we did at the Effective States and Inclusive Development Centre suggests that countries with greater ability to administer their territories saw faster poverty reduction over the 1990-2013 period.17 In particular, countries with highest state capacity can

reduce income poverty at twice the speed than countries with weakest capacity and so were much more likely to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty.18 Yet, progress has been slow in improving state capability. According to one research study (Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock, 2017), Bangladesh's current state capability is 3.26 and its annual growth is 0.013, so it will take 244 years to reach strong capability. This, combined with the country's democratic backsliding, will become the biggest constraints on economic growth and transition to upper middle-income nation by 2040.

Lack of accountability and poor state capacity also puts at risk the country's potential to reap the demographic dividend and undermines progress towards SDG8. According to some commentators, the country's educational achievement has been a success story, with sharp rise in net primary school enrolment rate and school completion rate (Wazed, 2018). However, there are serious gaps in terms of inclusion and equality. While more girls are in school, gender balance in textbook content remains is lacking (Asadullah et al, 2018), potentially limiting the desired impact of education on SDG5 (i.e., gender equality). When it comes to progress in terms of what enrolled children do in school, the situation has changed little – according to Islam (2016), pass rate is national-level primary school completion examination is over 98 percent while primary students' performance in reading with comprehension and basic numeracy hovers around 30 percent. Exam papers are also leaked regularly, and grades inflated to boost pass rates in national examinations. Independent evaluation of student performance also confirmed a deep crisis in the education sector (Asadullah and Chaudhury 2015)19, 20. Expanding access, while overlooking quality (SDG4), meant that millions graduated without acquiring basic literacy and numeracy skills. The diploma boom combined with a slowdown in the pace of job creation in recent years to add to graduate unemployment (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014). The total employment grew by 3.1 percent per annum between 2003 and 2010 but fell to 1.8 percent per annum between 2011 and 2016.21 The mismatch between skills and employment opportunities also contributed to the youth uprising demanding the removal of quotas in civil service employment.22

The conflicting progress between opportunities and aspiration is also evident in political sphere. Every 4 out of 5 Bangladeshis today has a mobile phone.23 This is in tune with attaining the government's Digital Bangladesh vision by 2021.24 Increased connectivity has helped mobilize youths for numerous social causes. However, the government has also introduced the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act to curb social media activism. School and university-going students in Bangladesh never lived under Military dictators. But years of endemic corruption, embezzlement of public funds25 and politicization of public institutions have eroded trust in the government. This according to some is the key reason why hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi's youths

gathered in a spontaneous nationwide movement demanding road safety and merit-based allocation of public jobs (e.g., The Economist, 2018).

The Bangladeshi government's repression of recent peaceful protests by students and attacks on journalists and photographers covering the events are worrying for another reason too. This has coincided with a larger pattern of violent repression and the "disappearances" of political opponents.26 Such events are particularly worrying, as SDG16 ensures public access to information and protects fundamental freedoms (Target 16.10), and promotes the rule of law (Target 16.3). Free media and good government go hand in hand. The rule of law is a prerequisite for, as well as an outcome of, a successful media development agenda. A strong rule of law means that citizens have confidence in public processes. In this respect, Bangladesh's historical record on media freedom27 or rule of law28 is not one of significant achievements. Recent developments are also part of a longer-term trend where the government has not only suppressed dissenting voices, it has also undermined grassroots organizations like the Grameen Bank that championed public action and democratic governance (Asadullah and Wahhaj, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh has made impressive progress in many areas of the MDGs and surprised many by growing at 6-7 percent in the last 10 years. But the recent trends of democratic backsliding are not only deeply worrying, they leave the country in a disadvantageous position in achieving several SDGs targets. The imprisonment of students and journalists confirm the country's drift toward autocracy (Sengupta, 2018; Tripathi, 2018) and threatens the fundamentals of a good society. A key pathway through which democracy boosts GDP is by encouraging human capital accumulation, inducing economic reforms, and reducing social unrest (Besley and Kudamatsu, 2006; Rodrik, 2000; Gallego, 2010). The experience of East Asian countries is often interpreted as evidence that autocracy is superior to democracy in promoting economic development. However, recent cross-country evidence confirms that democracy has a significant and robust positive effect on GDP per capita in the long run (Acemoglu et al, 2018). The international development community would therefore look with interest at its progress, including their sustainability and inclusion. Clearly, to consolidate the gains made in social and human development so far and to make further improvements, the challenge for Bangladesh lies in reversing the democratic backsliding.

NOTES

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7. The specific goals are: (1) No Poverty; (2) Zero Hunger; (3) Good Health and Well-being; (4) Quality Education; (5) Gender Equality; (6) Clean Water and Sanitation; (7) Affordable and Clean Energy; (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth; (9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; (10) Reduced Inequality; (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities; (12) Responsible Consumption and Production; (13) Climate Action; (14) Life Below Water; (15) Life on Land; (16) Peace and Justice Strong Institutions; (17) Partnerships to achieve the Goal.

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THE 'GLOBAL/LOCAL BLACK VALUE CHAIN' IN THE READYMADE GARMENT INDUSTRY: AN ETHICS, LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE

Sharif As-Saber

INTRODUCTION

The vertically integrated RMG value chain and its global/local linkage , starting from the sourcing of raw materials to the manufacturing and final retailing of readymade garments, is marred with shadowy practices such as poor working condition, low wages, limited right to union, the use of child labour, unreliable building structures and inadequate occupational health and safety provisions (Chowdhury, et.al., 2014; Faroque, et. al., 2017; Hassan, 2016). From the supply side, the textile industry is equally criticised for producing fabric using unethically processed cotton or synthetic fibre. They are also condemned for maintaining an appalling working environment similar to RMG manufacturing facilities (Hancock, 2017). The RMG retailers including reputable fashion brands, on the other hand, are regularly blamed for their exploitative behaviour (As-Saber, 2014). They are reluctant to pay a fair price for the finished products they buy from the manufacturers while selling the same with a high margin to the market. Increasingly, major retailers are demanding better quality products at a lower price (Akter, 2017). Most of these retailers do not take the ethical sourcing issue seriously and reluctant to put any pressure on their suppliers as it could affect the ex-factory pricing of the RMG products. It often becomes difficult as well to know the actual trajectory of these products. These issues raise questions about the ethical standard of the various stakeholders within the value chain (ILO, 1999; Zohir, 2001; Krese and Franko, 2016; Prentice and De Neve, 2017). However, even though most of these activities are viewed as unethical, they are often not considered illegal as per existing international and country-specific laws or regulations and international business practices and protocols. The complex nature of the value chain also poses major governance challenges which are not easy to address.

Based on available evidence, both historical and current, this paper argue that a significant proportion of firms worldwide involved in the RMG value chain are engaged in shadowy activities which could be considered unethical or illegal or both. In explaining the

scenario using a critical thinking approach, the RMG value chain is a non-transparent chain of activities shrouded with darkness and doubts. Building on concepts of the 'black economy', 'black market' and recently introduced 'black international business' (As-Saber and Cairns, 2015) developed to describe illegal, unethical and shadowy activities, this paper proposes the concept and terminology of 'black value chain' while discussing the darker side of the RMG value creating activities. From an ethical-legal perspective, the paper provides a closer look at the RMG industry in Bangladesh. Existing ethical standards and legal and regulatory frameworks, both domestic and international are taken into consideration in assessing the complex structure and process of the value chain governance.

GLOBAL/LOCAL RMG VALUE CHAIN: AN OVERVIEW

Value creation through a chain of activities is typical of any production process. Although such process has been going on across industries around the world for many centuries, the concept of 'value chain' was first coined and popularised as an input-output relationship by Porter (1985) more than three decades ago. Value chain demonstrates the way raw materials are procured as inputs, transformed into end products and delivered to the consumers who are willing to pay a price for the value created by the process. The value chain requires disaggregating the value creation process of the firm into discrete activities which contributes to the firm's relative cost position and product differentiation (Porter 1985).

In an increasingly globalising world, such value creating activities are becoming more complex with various stages of the production process taking place across different locations around the world. Such location diversification of value enhancing activities is known as global value chain (GVC). Kaplinsky (2013, p.3) has defined global value chain as a "range of activities which are required to bring a product or service from conception, through the separate phases of production (involving a combination of physical transformation and the input of various producer services), delivery to final consumers, and final disposal after use".

According to OECD (2018), the international dispersion of value chain activities has emerged as a strong trend in recent decades through which firms endeavour to "optimise their production processes by locating the various stages across different sites". Although GVC is like Porter's industry level value chain (Porter, 1985), it considers the value creation of a product at a global level with added complexity in dealing with the various environmental constraints and their diversity across the various stages of the value chain system.

Gereffi, et al. (2005) consider three key theoretical underpinnings associated with the global value chain governance, viz., fragmentation, coordination, and networks. In this regard, the market fragmentation theory provides the diversity of markets in a globalising world (Arndt and Kierzkowski, 2001). The coordination and network become increasingly important as well because of the need for the so-called 'integration of trade' amidst a 'disintegrated production' (also known as 'globalisation of production') process across the value chain (Feenstra, 1998). The three factors of Dunning's eclectic paradigm, viz., organisation-specific advantage based on a firm's capabilities and resources, location-specific advantage based on the ease and opportunities available in operating within a specific location, and the internalisation (or minimisation) of transaction costs by operating in a foreign location may also provide some rationale for establishing a GVC (Dunning, 1977).

The apparel industry has long been using global value chain as a mechanism to produce and market RMG products. According to OECD, the business conducted through GVM includes "relationships with business partners, entities in its supply chain and any other non-State or State entity directly linked to its business operations, products or services. Business relationships may include any supplier or other business partner in an enterprise's supply chain" (OECD, 2018, p.13). However, the extent of, and reliance on the use of GVM vary depending on the level of vertical integration of the production process of the firm and the relationship it maintains within its input-output transaction mechanism.
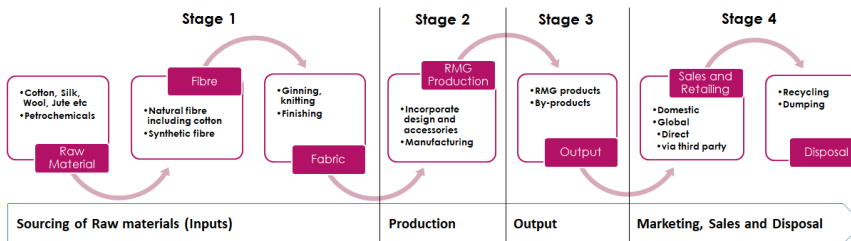
Figure 1: Global RMG Value Chain

As a labour-intensive value chain, it provides employments to millions of people worldwide. Although the RMG manufacturing itself provides employment to more than 30 million people globally, the combined employment of the textile and garment industries reached almost 58 million in 2014 (Fashion United, 2018). On the other hand, the cotton sector employs a staggering 300 million people when family labour, farm labour and workers in ancillary services are considered (Fairtrade Foundation, 2018). Total global export value of clothing in 2016 was US$1.29 trillion (Fashion United, 2018).

However, this lucrative value chain is marred with greed, profiteering, empire-building and the lack of transparency and morality (As-Saber, 2013). Given the primary objective of the global value chain operation is to maximise profits and minimise costs, wellbeing of the vast majority of the employees have often been ignored. It follows a pattern which is characterised by rich factory owners sourcing raw materials at the cheapest possible price only to supply the finished products to large corporations at the cheapest possible price as well (Krese and Franko 2016). As a result, farmers producing cotton and other fibres including jute, wool and silk do not get the fair price, and workers toiling hard to produce fabric and garments do not get reasonable wages. The situation becomes more depressing amidst poor, unhealthy and risky working conditions that are common across the chain (Ogugbue and Sawidis, 2011). In Bangladesh, all rivers have become polluted due to such spillage. In addition, the RMG and textile factories in Bangladesh use significant amount of fresh water. While the water table has been declining in Bangladesh every year because of the overharvesting of ground water, textile factories are using 250 litres of water on an average for washing, dyeing, and finishing of every kg of textile produced (Mohrmann, cited in As-Saber et al., 2016). The excessive use of gas and electricity is also having a negative impact on the environment, both in terms of using fossil fuel and emitting carbon. Disposal of garments is a problem worldwide as the use of RMG has been continuously on the rise. If the fabric used in garments ends up in the landfill, its synthetic elements including dye would not easily decompose, while the stale woollen segments would produce methane contributing to global warming (The Ethics Centre, 2018).

During the RMG production process, a large amount of fabric often remains as left over. These are known as deadstock. In addition, 15 percent of the fabric used during the course of RMG production are wasted due to the normal pattern cutting processes (Edwards, 2016). These remnants or off-cuts are often considered as by-products of RMG value creation activity which, in turn, are used for producing other goods such as cushions, kids wear, boutique products and mattresses.

Ethical pricing is also a major issue. Most of the retailers do not take the ethical sourcing issue seriously. Despite increasing cost of RMG production, there is a reluctance among major retailers in raising the ex-factory price of RMG products (As-Saber, 2016). As most of them are not paying fair price while asking for the supply of better quality products in higher volumes, they are unable or reluctant to put any pressure on garment manufacturers to maintain ethical standards in terms of working condition, minimum wages and sustainable practices.

Ethics, Law and Regulations Governing the Global RMG Value Chain

According to Beauchamp & Bowie (2007), ethics is a set of general moral belief or standards that dictates what one ought to do when the well-being, right or duties to oneself, others or institutions are at stake. The code of ethical conduct for the apparel industry prepared by Clean Clothes Campaign (1998) is the most comprehensive one. Based on the suite of code of ethics espoused by International Labor Organization (ILO), it has come up with eight key criteria for the code of ethical conduct for the apparel sector which include: (i) employment is freely chosen, (ii) no discrimination in employment, (iii) child labour is not used, (iv) freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected, (v) living wages are paid, (vi)_ hours of work are not excessive, (vii) working conditions are decent, and (viii) the employment relationship is established.

In addition, key principles of Global Compact also provide important guidelines for ethical and moral corporate practices globally. These principles emphasise on corporate sustainability based on the value system of the company and its adoption of a principles-based approach of doing business while meeting fundamental responsibilities in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption (UN Global Compact, 2018).

Apart from these initiatives, major industrialised developed countries have also their own ethical-legal frameworks which are likely to promote responsible business practices both domestically and across borders. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s international policy framework includes the adoption of the Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions (OECD, 2008). In line with the UN Global Compact, this convention has put emphasis on upholding human rights of those affected by corporate activities locally and globally. In addition, the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises for ethical sourcing of textile and garments is a legal instrument of international law in which 46 OECD governments pledge their commitments to make their companies implementing responsible business conduct while operating within or beyond their domestic jurisdictions. The standard set by this guideline covers all areas of business ethics including human rights, labour, taxation, anti-corruption, consumer protection and environment (Gillard, cited in As-Saber, et al., 2016). It is important to note that most of the RMG products are imported by 46 OECD countries. There are other standards and guidelines for maintaining an ethical and acceptable RMG value chain which include International Standards Organisation ISO 26000, the International Finance Corporation's performance standards and the UN Guiding Principles on Business

and Human Rights (European Parliament, 2017).

In addition to above-mentioned ethical codes of conduct, international as well as domestic law and regulations play a key role in ensuring ethical and legal operation of a business locally and internationally. In the US, the Corrupt Practices Act has the capacity to prosecute any American company engaged in illegal or corrupt activities outside the US. Such extraterritorial reach of the legal system has now been adopted by many European Union (EU) countries including the UK and France.

In developing countries such as Bangladesh, there are loopholes in the legal and regulatory frameworks. Following the Rana Plaza incident in Bangladesh, the Labour Law was amended. However, it did not fully implement the ILO provisions with the result that "workers' rights still at serious risk" (Human Rights Watch, 2013). The government can still forbid or stop a strike while workers in many labour sectors are still unable to form unions. Nonetheless, Bangladesh made considerable improvement in the working condition and workers safety within the RMG industry since the Rana Plaza disaster in 2013. Thanks to the international community including labour unions, NGOs, the government of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and European as well as North American lobby groups for promoting better and safer working environment in the country. Following the Rana Plaza incident, the combined efforts helped creating two major bodies, Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh (ACCORD) and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety (ALLIANCE) in 2013, which contributed to the much-needed building and fire safety improvement and remediation process. Nonetheless, it is important to note that all factories had not been covered under these two initiatives. The results are mixed as well with significant improvement in some factories while many of them had little or no improvement. At the end of ACCORD tenure in June 2018, a second agreement, known as the '2018 Transition Accord' went into effect on the 1st of June 2018 with nearly 200 brand signatories extending the Accord's protections until the end of May 2021 (ACCORD, 2018). ALLIANCE is due to expire in the second half of 2018.

While the Bangladesh RMG sector has made some progress, it is important to know what has actually been happening across the global RMG value chain. The global RMG industry is supposed to abide by the various international codes of conduct as well as applicable laws and regulations, both domestic and international. The industry has long been criticised for maintaining unethical practices within its global value chain. Criticisms range from using unethically produced raw material such as cotton, fabric and accessories to the actual RMG

production while relying on cheap labour and inappropriate working environment. This is followed by its sales, promotion and disposal in a questionable manner. Unfortunately, many of its unethical activities are not considered illegal or illegitimate though. Many of the known illegal acts are also difficult to detect while law enforcing authorities often turn a blind eye on them. There are various reasons behind the failure in identifying illegitimate acts and prosecuting the individuals or organisations responsible for them. These may include the following:

(i) sometime the government has implicit support for the industry that generates large number of employment and significant export earnings and it does not want to annoy them;

(ii) too broad international governance framework which is often advisory only and not mandatory to follow;

(iii) loopholes in many of the existing laws and regulations and difficulties to enforce them;

(iv) the inadequacy of the number of inspectors checking out large number of factories and retail stores; and

(v) the inefficiency of the agency personnel because of their lack of necessary skills and training while being prone to be compromised through bribes.

Ethics, legitimacy and Black RMG Value Chain: The Case of Bangladesh

In the above context, the concept of 'black international business' (black IB) seems to be relevant to use as a tool in examining the current state of RMG value chain. For a long period of time, the international business literature has been ignoring the darker side of global business transactions. In 2001, Eden and Lenway (2001) presented the need for investigating the 'darker side' of globalisation to achieve a better understanding of international business activities. In doing so, they posited the multinational enterprise (MNE) as the 'key agent' and 'face' of globalisation and highlighted the relationship between MNEs and nation states as the central interface of its impact. Taking a 'dark side' standpoint, two international business scholars, As-Saber and Cairns (2015) argue that the human desire for power and authority, together with what some consider greed for money and resources, have been major drivers of global business activities over time (cf. Banfield, 1975; Boddewyn and Brewer, 1994). From slave trade and cultivation of corps using forced labour in the past to the modern-day labour exploitation using sweatshops and illegal or unethical production and distribution of goods and

services characterise the unethical albeit not often illegal features of international business value network. In this context and building on topics such as 'black economy' and 'black market', As-Saber and Cairns (2015) have developed the concept and terminology of 'black international business' ('black IB') and defined and discussed it from an ethical-legal perspective. They have also come up with a taxonomy of black IB outlining the complexities of ethical-legal interface in relation to MNC operation. Using ethics and legitimacy as two important dimensions, it provides typologies of international business activities. The framework for ethical consideration is grounded in Aristotle's (350BC/2004) intellectual virtue of phronēsis – or 'practical wisdom' representing moral deliberations on reasoned and capable action for the good or bad of 'man' (sic). The framework also draws upon Flyvbjerg's (2001) contemporary social science interpretation of phronēsis and his 'value-rational' questions for interrogating courses of action based on values, interests and power relations.

A closer look at the Black IB taxonomy from an RMG industry perspective could show how ethics and legitimacy interplay with each other across the RMG Value chain. The following figure (Figure 2) demonstrates how the various actors within the RMG sector in Bangladesh and its global linkages across the four key stages of RMG value chain are categorised according to their ethical and legal dispositions. Activities of some stakeholders are also brought into the discussion.

Type 1 companies represent the best players in the industry with high levels of ethical standard and legitimacy. Bangladesh has 67 LEED1 certified green factories. Thirteen of them are platinum rated of which seven rank among the top 10 green factories in the world (New Age, 2018). An article on the top 10 garment manufacturers in Bangladesh also shows that some of these manufacturers provide workers with free accommodation, pure drinking water, lighting and cooking facilities, transportation, meals at work, recreational facilities, and around-the-clock medical services (Bizvibe, 2018). These companies are careful about sustainable value chain in terms of ethical sourcing of raw materials, appropriate affluent management, and the use of biodegradable raw material where possible.

Type 2 companies are low in ethical standard. However, they somehow meet the legal/legitimacy requirements. Many of these factories were originally registered under ACCORD or ALLIANCE programs and have done some remediation and improvement. Accord covers about 1600 factories. According to ACCORD (2018), corrective action plan with respect to electrical, fire and structural safety has not entirely been completed with many factories failing to comply while some

are still 'work in progress'. The ALLIANCE covers 700 factories with focus on fire and building safety inspections, worker training, and worker empowerment. Most of the factories successfully completed the process while a significant number of factories are still in 'critical' condition with many others requiring 'intervention' (ALLIANCE, 2018).

No garment factory directly falls within the Type 3 category. In their article on black IB, As-Saber and Cairns (2015) have provided an example of the battle between MNE pharmaceutical companies and the South African government over patents for drugs used in the treatment of HIV and AIDS (cf. Silverman, 2014). While the government was challenged by the drug companies for sanctioning production of generic alternatives to their branded products, in alleged breach of legal protection of their patents, they faced with opposition based on the ethical argument in support of affordable access to medicines. As such, drug companies considered the alternative drug production as being a Type 3 activity, whilst the South African government saw it as Type 1. This example shows how categorisation according to both business legitimacy and ethical orientation are subject to and must be understood and discussed within and across contextual constraints – both geographic and historical. Another example in this regard is the role of Greenpeace boats and their crews in fighting the whaling ships in the high seas. Although it is illegal to intervene a ship while whaling, Greenpeace has high moral ground to stop whaling (The Guardian 2015).

Nonetheless, in terms of the ethical moral obligations, many NGOs, human rights organisations and trade union activists are somewhat breaking the law by organising protests and strikes to bring their demand home for better working condition, better wages and better occupational health and safety within the RMG sector. As there is little or no trust on the law enforcing agencies because of the presence of pervasive corruption in Bangladesh (Zafarullah and Siddiquee, 2001), many activists jump to the street and organise protests while demanding justice for any alleged worker abuses instead of going to the law enforcing agencies. Although most of these actions appear to be illegal, they seem to have high moral ground.

High Business Legitimacy

	Type 2	Type 1	
Low Ethical Orientation	**Inputs:** not biodegradable, not ethically sourced. **Production:** not environmentally friendly, minimum wages, poor working condition, poor medical and safety **Output:** poor quality output with synthetic components and dye, more waste due to inefficiency, not durable, good design **Marketing sales and disposal:** unrealistic marketing, exaggeration, disposal with negative environmental impact, unfair ex-factory pricing from retailers, retailers/buyers not taking any responsibilities.	**Inputs:** biodegradable, ethically sourced **Production:** environmentally friendly, living wages, excellent working condition with union rights **Output:** high quality with less synthetic content, durable, good design **Marketing sales and disposal:** fair ex-factory price from retailers, ethical marketing, sensible disposal with least ecological impact, retailers/buyers taking responsibilities	**High Ethical Orientation**
	Type 4	Type 3	
	Inputs: not biodegradable, use of toxic material and dye, not ethically sourced or sources unknown **Production:** environmentally damaging, less than minimum wages, unacceptable working condition, forced labour, no labour union, no medical, poor safety **Output:** poor quality output with synthetic components and dye, more waste due to inefficiency, not durable, illegal copying of design and the use of toxic material. **Marketing sales and disposal:** arbitrary and very low ex-factory pricing from retailers, unethical marketing, use lies, disposal with high toxic content and negative environmental impact, retailers/buyers not taking any responsibilities.	Organising protests/strikes for better wages Organising protests/strikes against unacceptable working conditions and alleged abuses Whistleblowing on illegal activities Robust and ongoing community engagement/mobilisation in support of better working condition, occupational health and safety, labour rights and privileges	

Low Business Legitimacy

Figure 2. Black international business taxonomy of legitimacy and ethics: A Black RMG Value Chain Perspective, Adapted from: As-Saber and Cairns (2015)

Type 4 represents companies which are low both in ethical orientation and legitimacy. It is important to note, from a pool of almost 4,500 factories, only 2,300 were included in the ACCORD and ALLIANCE safety program. Many of the factories registered under them have utterly failed to improve. A recent ACCORD update reveals "major, life-threatening concerns remain outstanding in too many factories

and need to be fixed urgently" (The Guardian, 2018). The situation looks grim as more than 1,500 factories, producing for markets such as Russia and Turkey, only receive limited oversight and inspections from the government agencies which are not so reliable. Most of these factories have outstanding safety issues which ILO considers as safety 'black hole' (The Guardian, 2018). Most of these companies are run as sub-contractors and operate from rented sites. These factories often supply their products to NON-US or non-EU retailers and do not bother complying with any occupational health and safety or human rights principles. They often use cheap, non-biodegradable and toxic material and dye which are not ethically sourced. They do not have any respect for the environment and deny the right to union and healthcare. As they deal with the low end of the market in countries where the regulatory regimes are not strong enough, these factories supply garments at a very low ex-factory price. Many of these companies also illegally copy design and labels from major brands and sell and export them as 'stock lot in some way' (Textile Today, 2017). These products are not tested for chemical hazards and toxic substances and could pose severe forms of health hazards including irritation, sensitization, and carcinogenicity (Textile Today, 2017).

The evidence and discussion surrounding the black IB taxonomy present the RMG value chain essentially as a largely non-transparent chain of activities shrouded with darkness and doubts while marred with unethical, illegitimate and shadowy activities. The vicious value chain of the readymade garment industry, therefore, could simply be termed as black RMG value chain within the realm of black IB.

CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Global/Local RMG value chain is a complex network of multi-stage activities. Despite the presence of a set of ethical codes of conduct and the existing domestic as well as international legal provisions, the RMG value chain is prone to unethical and illegal activities. In this regard, the case of the black value chain linked to the RMG industry in Bangladesh provides a depressing picture which is marred with greed, profiteering, empire-building and the lack of transparency on the one hand and deficits of democratic norms and weak public accountability on the other. Starting from the sourcing of raw material and throughout the production, distribution and disposal stages, the operation of the value chain primarily focuses on achieving its key objective of maximising profits and minimising costs. The wellbeing of the vast majority of the employees working along the different stages of the value chain do not often get proper wages and forced to work in appalling conditions.

It is an intricate scenario and not easy to address. However, a systematic, multi-level and multi-pronged governance approach is required to manage the complex quandaries surrounding the RMG sector.

With respect to the sourcing of raw material and accessories, RMG manufacturers need to take extra care and stop sourcing any such material from unethical sources where child or forced labour is used. They should not also use low quality material with toxic or harmful content. The government should show vigilance and if necessary, legislate and enforce law in restricting the sourcing and use of such raw material and accessories.

At the national level, key players including labour representatives, factory owners and the government need to reach a consensus about the way the industry should be run and governed. In Bangladesh, some progress has been made since Rana Plaza incident. However, several stumbling blocks still remain on the way which include the further reform of the labour law, absence of a comprehensive and credible safety and building inspection process for all factories including the ones who haven't signed up for the ACCORD or ALLIANCE.

At the buyer/retailer level, it is important for retailers to ensure ethical practice and auditing conforming to the 2011 UN human rights guiding principles to 'protect' people's life and livelihood, 'respect' their dignity and 'remedy' any departures from these two. In this regard, it is important to refer to Principle 2 of the UN Global Compact that clearly advises businesses to make sure that 'they are not complicit in human rights abuses'. Because of their extra-territorial jurisdiction, the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises, the EU guiding principles and the US anti-corruption law may also be used by respective importing countries to make retailers responsible for their actions.

According to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, all parent companies are expected to maintain an acceptable level of 'duty of care' for the employees working in their foreign subsidiaries and sub-contracting partner firms (United Nations, 2011). There are now call for holding parent companies criminally liable for human rights abuses for breaching this provision (Smith and Lepeuple, 2018).

Arguably, single most challenge in turning this vicious value chain into an ethical, and legitimate global operation is the lack of appropriate and effective governance mechanism. Although, there are various governance models available to control and coordinate

different tasks and responsibilities, it is difficult to apply those models from an ethical-legal perspective due to the reluctance of the parties involved in the value chain to fully accept or implement them. Question could be raised if a special governance model is needed for this complex value chain. The straight answer could be, 'no' as the existing governance models are good enough to tackle the governance issues. Of course, effective and efficient governance will depend on the sincerity, diligence and commitment of individual stakeholders in implementing the respective governance models across and beyond the value chain. There is no need to reinvent the wheel - it would rather be desirable to grease the existing wheel and turn it to the right direction to make a positive way forward. It is not the model of governance, it is the spirit of governance that matters the most and needs to be upheld, materialised and respected by all concerned always.

Nonetheless, as governance at the global level may still seem problematic (Khan and Milne, 2018), it could be resolved through regular interactions and exchange of ideas across stakeholders belonging to different governance regimes who are positioned at different stages in different locations throughout the value chain. The idea could be - let each stakeholder perform their own governance check before checking with those of others.

Accordingly, at the retailers' end, the home country governments, retailers and consumer group should form a partnership to ensure the observance of the relevant governance models and codes of conduct in factories located in their source-countries. Retailers should also be maintaining regular dialogues not only with their suppliers but with the trade unions or workers' representatives in their source countries while being ready to compensate factory owners for the additional costs of compliance and higher wages.

Currently, apart from a handful of exceptions, there is no direct involvement of governments of major retailing countries in making retailers and major brands follow ethically responsible global sourcing practices across the global value chain. Organisations such as the International Labour Organisation, the UN Human Rights Council, International Trade Union Confederation, International Court of Justice and International Standards Organisation should also be directly involved in making the process transparent and accountable.

Finally, it is time now to consolidate above-mentioned apparently dispersed activities including the sourcing and purchasing practices which need to be supported by an acceptable monitoring system participated by all key stakeholders. An establishment of a 'Garment

Industry Global Governing Council' could be useful to offer a platform to coordinate and oversee the multiple levels of governance regimes across the RMG value chain. A Secretariat with a Secretary General could be established, preferably in Bangladesh being in the centre of the recent developments surrounding the readymade garment sector. All key stakeholders including, retailers, consumers, workers, factory owners, raw material and accessory suppliers, governments, NGOs and international organisations should interact, coordinate and participate in this much-needed body and fund its activities. Concerted efforts coupled with sincere motivation and commitment from all concerned can only make the apparently black RMG value chain fairer and better.

NOTE

1. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certificate provided by the United States Green Building Council

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THE INTERSECTIONS OF MIGRATION AND GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH

AKM Ahsan Ullah

INTRODUCTION

The many social and economic benefits of migration will be squandered if it is not governed responsibly and cooperatively at a global level. With more than 4,300 migrants having already died this year, world leaders now meeting at the UN need to establish a coherent international framework to prevent further losses. (Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, 19 September 2016).

International migration and migration governance have reached a crossroads today. Migrant population leaves their countries of origin to pursue their limitless dreams. Due either to poor governance or weak protection framework, thousands succumb to migration related deaths. In Bangladesh alone, everyday dead bodies of migrant workers arrive at the Dhaka airport from a range of destination countries. We talk about migration governance at a time when numerous complaints of fraud against recruiting agencies involved in migration in Bangladesh go unpunished. Complaints of gross human rights violation against employers, recruiting agencies, brokers (dalal) are reported every day but the intention to bring them to book often remained undone.

Migration has appeared as one of the most significant drivers of human progress in recent times. The number of international migrants has grown faster than the world's population. As a result, the share of migrants in the global population reached 3.3 percent in 2015. An estimated of about 258 million people live in a country other than their country of birth — an increase of 49 percent since 2000 (IOM, 2017). Bangladesh today is the fifth largest country sending international migrants.

Evidence suggest that leveraged by the right and efficient policies, migrant communities can significantly contribute to development in both origin and destination countries, through trade, investment, creation of enterprises, and transfer of remittance and technology, skills and knowledge. About 20 per cent of GDP of about 30 countries in the world is constituted by migrants' remittances. Many resource-rich but population-deficient countries found migration as one of the best strategies to maintain a demographic balance.

Since the time population migration came under academic investigation, most bodies of literature tended to glorify migration, and hence policy agenda tended to demonstrate a positive correlation between migration and development. In reality, however, outmigration has never been a part of policy framework for the countries of origin until the time remittances became a visible and significant contributing factor to the economy.

Though formal migration from Bangladesh for employment kicked off only in 1976, it has been one of the significant contributing countries to the global supply of migrants. Bangladesh boasts 10 million migrants living and working overseas who send about US$12 billion per year. However, it maintains extremely poor and unreliable data bank. This is primarily because no mechanism has been developed to determine the net migration or to measure the volume of return migration. Given the size and the pattern of the mobility of this population and the volume of financial flows involved, the entire process of migration merits being managed by a well-planned governance framework.

OUTCOMES OF DEFICIENT GOVERNANCE

A wide range of actors such as individuals, governmental and non-governmental bodies, and private sectors organisations constitute migration governance (Betts, 2011). A range of norms, rules, principles, decision-making procedures exist to manage the population flow in an orderly fashion (Kunz, Lavenex & Panizzon, 2011) to ensure safe migration. This means the overall safety of this population is contingent upon a range of actors who are involved in translating rules and regulations into actions. Poor governance and irregular migration are correlated. In a governance-deficient system, risks of migration increase, irregular migration soars, migration management is taken over by corrupt recruiting agencies, and migrants get cheated as a result. Irregular migration involves exorbitant amount of money to finance their migration. As a result, migrants try to recoup the money spent on migration by extending their stay whether by irregular means or else. Hence, perhaps lately, policy attention shifted from political economy of migration to the legal system (Rahman & Ullah, 2011; Ullah 2017a).

Since Bangladesh is primarily an emigrant country, political framework (which exists today) has been created only for the management of out-migration. Therefore, Bangladesh's migration policies and its governmental institutions are meant to deal with only out-migrants and remittances.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) applies five indicators to measure the status of practice of migration governance (See Figure). I use here some of the indicators to map the status of current governance practices in Bangladesh (IOM, 2017).1

In terms of human rights, safety, cost effectiveness and its end result, Bangladeshi migrants are one of the most unprotected ones in the world. Between 2003 and 2009, about 10,569 dead bodies returned to Bangladesh. On average, nine dead bodies reach Bangladesh every day from overseas (Ullah, Mallik & Islam, 2015). The key reasons for these deaths are physical abuse, mental torture, denied medical attention by employers, and unsafe and unhealthy work environment. The number will be much higher than this if we are to include unrecorded ones. Many death cases (caused by occupational accidents) are not reported. Some employers do not report to the police to avoid legal 'hassle' and some others keep it secret to avoid paying transportation costs. Some dead bodies are buried in destination countries.

Figure 1 Migration governance components
Source: IOM, 2017
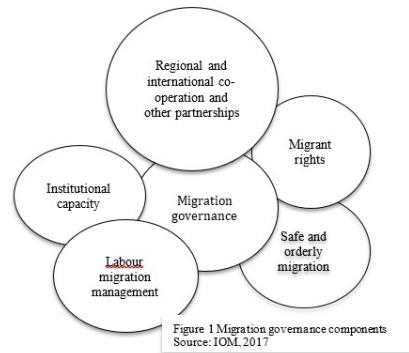
It is widely believed that migration management in Bangladesh is rested on fraudulent recruiting agencies. There are growing complaints against them of excessive fees, pushing potential migrants into unsafe and uncertain journeys, false guarantee of job and salary offer. Lack of effective actions taken against them loomed the level of migration related crimes in Bangladesh. Between 2005 and 2008 about one hundred Bangladeshis died in two separate heart wrenching incidents (known as Sahara tragedy and Mediterranean tragedy). In these events, some young Bangladeshi potential migrants boarded on small and shaky boats in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh to get to Italy. The perpetrators who were involved in such dangerous journeys were not punished.

A range of sources confirm that over the last couple of years (2008-14) more than 40,000 migrants fell victims of fatalities across land and sea. Today, unfortunately, Bangladesh has become known as the single highest country of origin for asylum seeking on boats as new routes to Europe emerges. Realizing the gravity of the problem, IOM calls on all the world's governments to address as the epidemic of crimes related to migration (IOM, 2017).

In recent years, an increasing number of Bangladeshi nationals have been rescued at sea in the Central Mediterranean and brought to safety in Italy. In 2017, by the end of February, Bangladeshis registered as the fourth highest nationality at landing points in Italy. In 2016, the number was 8131 and in the first quarter of 2017 it was 4645 (IOM, 2017). The increasing presence of Bangladeshi and Moroccan migrants,

who together make up over 7,000 of some 30,000 arrivals to Italy from North Africa (IOM, 2017) so far in 2017 signifies the state of migration governance. The president of the European Commission has recently suggested to 'limit visas' to Europe for travelers from Bangladesh if no action is taken by the Bangladesh government in combatting irregular migrants (Independent, 2017).

A new wave of 'invisible' migrants from Bangladesh emerged in the last ten years. Most of these migrants have been staying in neighboring South Asia and Southeast Asian countries to escape political repression. Repressive laws on freedom of association and speech and repressive action are the key driver of migration in the contemporary time in Bangladesh. Lack of political freedom is among the key factors that pushes people out of their country. This implies that these people left the country under duress therefore, no proper governance procedure was followed.

It is undeniable that due to gross flaws in migration governance, trafficking in human occurs. In terms of trafficking, Bangladesh was downgraded to the Tier 2 Watch List as the government failed to fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking (US State Department, 2017). The dominance of brokers and recruiting agencies is evident partly due to the unwillingness of receiving states to go into bilateral temporary-worker agreements with countries of origin. These brokers (dalals) could not be held accountable to anyone because they work as freelancers under certain recruiting agencies.

A recent trend in migration domain of Bangladesh appears to be worrisome. There has been unabated influx of migrants from neighbouring countries especially from India (high skilled and low skilled workers) and Myanmar (mostly Rohingya refugees) in to the Bangladeshi job market where adequate skills are available domestically. One of the reasons why migration in Bangladesh gained so much prominence is that it worked powerfully as a strategy to ease unemployment problems. This sudden and uncontrolled level of influx may place Bangladeshis who are looking for jobs in deep frustration. About a million Indians or so migrated to Bangladesh for work during the last few years (Husain, 2015). Bangladesh stands 5th among the top 15 nations sending remittances to India. Indians migrants working in Bangladesh send about US$4 billion per year to India and almost an equal amount, if not more, is sent through hundi and other illegal channels that are not documented (CPD, 2017; Prothom Alo, 2018).

Of late, Bangladesh government ventured into another initiative to export unskilled female domestic workers to the Middle Eastern countries. This decision came at a moment when some governments banned sending this category of migrants to the Middle East. Since the decision was made in 2014, a total of 91,858 female workers have gone abroad to take up

employment. Government did not pay heed to the activists, scholars and concerned people who criticized and protested this decision. Eventually, it stood out that the policy was a failed one and as a result this female cohort started to return empty handed, abused and raped. Some has been trapped and some are digesting the brutality of the employers. Only in four days, from 9 to 12 January 2018, 300 female migrants returned from the KSA (Manab Zamin, 2018). Before stepping into this initiative, an intensive brain storming was necessary, according to experts.

Migrant populations are considered one of the most vulnerable groups in the world. It is because in most cases, they are not protected by domestic laws. Part of the responsibilities of the foreign missions are to actively engage in the protection of the human and labor rights of migrant workers. However, in practice the assumed functions of foreign missions and their diplomatic staff are not always carried out. Some countries of origin do not even have mission posts in major destination hubs for their workers, while others are understaffed and lacking in expertise and human rights training.

In most cases, in many Bangladeshi missions and consular officers are political recruits not belonging to the civil service. This means the staff in embassies or missions are generally political leaders or their cronies or retired personnel from non-foreign service cadres. This implies that these missions suffer lack of required expertise to deal with migrants and the problems they face.

Migrant populations from Bangladesh living out of the country cannot exercise voting rights. No initiative has been taken so far. In my journey in migration research, I have come across innumerable Bangladeshis living outside who told me how much they are willing to take part in elections.

Bangladesh entered into a formal migration system in 1976. In the last four decades, the country has undergone several phases in migration. The ups and down in the political system, economic landscape, natural climatic conditions since the liberation war in 1971 created conditions that contributed directly or indirectly to the migration scenario that we have today. Of course, high skilled migration is always a self-initiated one, i.e. government interventions in such migration is low. Generally, unskilled, low or semi-skilled migration is something in which government intervention is necessary and expected. The Table 1 explains that the role of government becomes trivial in different time periods. Facilitators (in the table) are placed in order of the significance of the role played in different phases. Often brokers and government appear as competing agents.

Clearly, the migration sector in Bangladesh suffers from myriad of governance challenges ranging from legal, institutional and procedural

limitations, coupled with rampant corrupt malpractices by intermediaries (Transparency International, Bangladesh, 2017). Unauthorized transaction of money at every level of migration process adds extra financial burden to their expenditure. This has long term impact on the financial state leading them to borrow money from multiple sources on unfavorable conditions. High cost in labor migration instigates illegal overseas migration as they try to recoup the money they borrowed to finance their migration.

Year	Status	Facilitators / intermediaries	Major destinations	Major contributing factors
1971-73	Refugees IDPs	Self International organizations Networks	India Pakistan	Liberation war and post-war crisis
1974-76	IDPs Forced Migration Refugees Economic	Self Networks International Organizations Governments	India Middle East And other countries	Famine and post-famine crisis
1977-80	Economic Students	Government Self Agents	Middle East South East Asia	Economic Better future Studies
1981-90	Economic High skilled Temporary Students	Goverment Agents Networks Self	Middle EastSouth East Asia East Asia Europe, North America	Economic Studies Pigrimage
1991-2006	Economic Highly skilled Desperate Temporary Students	Brokers Agents Networks Self Government	Southeast Asia Middle East East Asia North America and Europe	Desperate Economic Political umrah/ pilgrimage Studies
2007-2015	Economic Highly skilled Political asylum Temporary Students Female/DH Business	Brokers Agents NetworksSelf Goverment	Middle EastSouth East Asia East Asia North America, Europe and Africa	Desperate Economic Political suppression umrah/ pilgrimage Choice Studies

Table 1. Government's Part in Bangladesh Migration, Source: Ullah (2017b)
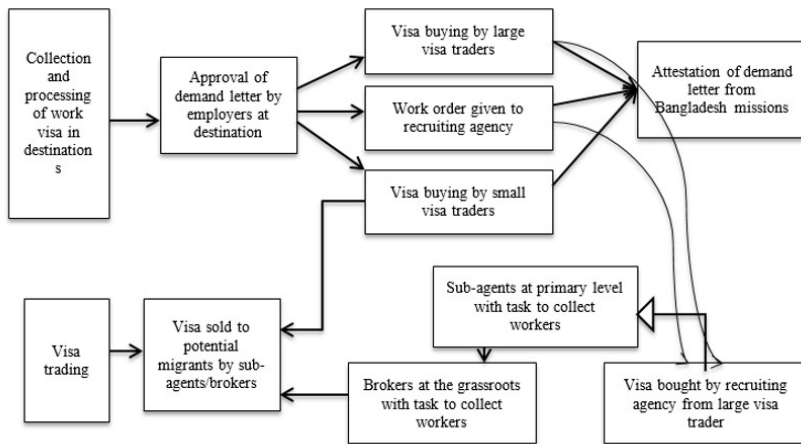
Figure 2. Stages of corruption, Source: Khoda and Akram 2017; Ullah, 2010

GOVERNANCE TOOLS AND STATE OF MIGRATION

Migration has become a defining issue of modern times. Most of the countries that are involved in migration have come up with a solid migration governance framework. Though there are visible improvements, given the significance and size of migration, Bangladesh lacks severe governance deficiency in managing migration. The lead stakeholder of migration is the Expatriate Welfare and Employment Ministry, which consists of five divisions formed in 2001 to ensure the welfare of migrant workers. The Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) is tasked for overall planning and implementation of manpower and reporting monthly on the number of workers who leave Bangladesh. The Overseas Employment and Migrants Act (2013) is the primary legal framework governing migration which replaced the Migration Ordinance (1982) and seeks to uphold migrants' rights, provide for the emergency return of migrants, and prevent fraudulent practices and enforce accountability among recruiting agencies and agents. The Foreign Employment Policy (2006) also seeks to ensure the rights of workers in overseas employment, aiming to regularize migration movements; protect the rights, dignity and security of workers; and ensure social protection of migrants' families. There are some other laws and institutions to regulate migration from Bangladesh.2

In 1998, Bangladesh signed the UN's International Convention on the "Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families", which is one of migrant-sending countries' most important political tools in negotiations with countries that rely on foreign labor and ratified it in 2011. In 2013, the government of Bangladesh passed the

"Overseas Employment and Migrants Act" under which migrant workers can lodge criminal cases for deception or fraud against recruiting, visa, and travel agencies as well as employers. Despite numerous reports on fraud by recruiters and employers, on extortion by smugglers, no cases have been filed under this law yet.

Outcome of irregular migrations may be detrimental to the migrants themselves. Bangladesh evidently has failed to combat irregular migration. As a result, Bangladesh is facing embargo in sending migrants to certain countries and stricter regulations than ever. Recent decision made by the Saudi government on March 22, 2015 to suspend Umrah visa to Bangladeshis is an example. Saudi government expressed serious concerns about the Bangladeshi recruiting agencies that deal with Umrah visa. The allegation has been that these travel agencies are involved in human smuggling in the name of Umrah (Ullah, 2017b). Migration and migration governance remain a serious challenge to domestic well as international politics.

NOTES

1. Migrants rights which include access to basic social services, family rights, the right to work, and long-term residency and paths to citizenship. Safe and orderly migration include countries' border control and enforcement mechanisms, measures to combat human trafficking and smuggling, and re-integration policies. Labour migration management includes policies for managing labour migration, skills and qualification recognition schemes, student migration regulation, bilateral labour agreements and remittance schemes. Regional and international co-operation and other partnerships are the regional and international dimension of migration through an analysis of international conventions, treaties and laws, regional consultative processes, and bilateral agreements.

2. 1976 Establishment of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET); 1990 Establishment of Welfare Fund for Migrant Workers; 1998 Signature of the UN's International Convention on Protection of Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; 2002 Government starts to grant licenses to agencies for recruiting overseas employment; 2003 Government relaxes restrictions on female labor migration; 2011 Establishment of Migrant Welfare Bank (Probashi Kallyan Bank); 2013 Enactment of the Overseas Employment and Migrants Act 2013

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BANGLADESH'S ENERGY 'TRILEMMA' CHALLENGES AND SEARCH FOR AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE AND SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Taskin Saif

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh faces acute challenges in ensuring that its healthy long term economic growth is not at risk from policy uncertainty amid changes underway in the global energy landscape. This paper argues that despite Bangladesh's significant constraints and challenges in addressing the long-term energy needs, delivering policy certainty will result in adequate and coordinated investments in the power sector – minimising the price impacts to households and maximising incentives for businesses to invest.

The paper proposes Bangladesh consider the adoption of an Emissions Intensity Scheme (EIS)—a form of a carbon pricing policy instrument that provides clear economic signals for the transition to a balanced portfolio of future power generation mix. More importantly, EIS delivers long term policy certainty to help mobilise both public and private financial investments in the power sector to achieve the overall economic growth within the parameters of affordability and environmental sustainability, an important goal of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that along with the rest of the world, Bangladesh has also committed itself to realization of these goals.

In the pursuit of the drive towards prosperity, Bangladesh faces an "energy trilemma" challenge of developing a power system that is secure, affordable and sustainable at the same time. The elements of the trilemma can vary depending on the national priorities. In this paper the concept is framed around the three most critical factors necessary to develop and transition Bangladesh's electricity system such that it complements sustainable long term economic growth of the country.

Energy security anchors the trilemma challenge for Bangladesh. The paper employs the International Energy Agency (IEA) definition of "the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price", where long-term energy security focuses on timely investments for adequate energy supply for sustainable economic development.

Based on this definition, the paper explores the issue of energy supply from the consumer affordability and businesses competitiveness and sustainability perspectives.

The reliability element of the trilemma is discussed in the context of IEA's description of the short-term energy security need which focuses on the ability of the energy system to react promptly to sudden changes within the supply-demand balance. For Bangladesh, the power sector reliability needs to address the existing challenges of the power quality and supply shortages, while building a system that is resilient to the disruptive socio-techno economic transformation impacting power systems globally.1 In addition, the trilemma framework defined here is underpinned by the knowledge that Bangladesh is recognised internationally as one of the most vulnerable countries to the impacts of climate change, and as such environmental sustainability must be integral to the overall energy policy framework.

Analysing the Bangladesh electricity landscape from the perspective of trilemma reveals that in the absence of an overarching and holistic framework, investment uncertainty and quick-fix solutions in the sector will continue and the system will lack the capacity to provide the services predictably both supply wise as well as price wise. In order to address these issues, the paper draws upon successful international experiences, including studies conducted in Australia, for the design of an Emission Intensity Scheme (EIS) that addresses energy security issues in the face of challenges emerging from modern renewables, and market innovation.

Exploratory discussions in this paper reach the conclusion that an emissions-based policy framework such as an EIS for the Bangladesh's power sector can deliver certainty for appropriate investments and operational decisions for both short-term and medium-term supply-demand balance issues and longer term economic development and most importantly, sustainable environmental considerations, to achieve the energy trilemma goals.

ENERGY TRILEMMA

POWER SECURITY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Bangladesh has been on a rapid economic growth trajectory since the emergence of the garment export industry in the 1990s. According to World Bank, the economy has been growing at approximately 6.5 percent since the 2000s and GDP growth project to be in the 6.5–7 percent range during FY18-20.2 Driven by this success of export-oriented industrialisation of ready-made garments and the inflow of remittances, the country is now considered as having low middle-income country status. Building upon this success, a 'Vision 2041'

policy has been established with the target of becoming a developed nation by 2041. The transition towards a developed nation also means a structural shift of the economy over time away from labour intensive agriculture sector to value-added industries with significant implications for the power sector.

From energy security perspective, it is expected that the robust growth in industries along with increasing urbanisation and social change in consumer preferences from growing affluences, will result in the demand for energy increasing significantly. Furthermore, a recent report by PwC, Transforming the Power Sector in Bangladesh, identified five global megatrends- technological breakthroughs; climate change and resource scarcity; demographic and social change; a shift in global economic power; and rapid urbanisation, with potential to have significant disrupting impact on Bangladesh power sector's ability to plan for the future.3

Long term electricity demand forecasting is fraught with risks owing to the uncertainty of the underlying variables. For Bangladesh, a key factor is the per capita consumption growth which was 310kwh per annum in 20144 to possibly rising to between 1,500KWh to 2,150KWh per annum by 20415 – a rise of 484 to 694 percent respectively. Accordingly, projections on electricity demand is also expected to rise to between 61,000-82,000 megawatts (MW) by 2041 from 12,874MW in 2018, depending on the success of the efficiency and conservation programme implementation.6

The trilemma challenge for the government therefore, how to establish relatively accurate demand prediction, particularly in the context of the global megatrends and disruptors that can significantly impact the planning and operation of the power grid. Demand over-estimation can result in over-investment in underutilised generation capacity and network assets, driving up the electricity prices, while demand underestimation may lead to under-investment resulting in unreliable and insecure electricity. Demand estimates are critical for a country like Bangladesh which has a prolonged history of inadequate and unreliable electricity supply with major impacts on economic activities. According to World Bank estimates, the economic loss is between two to three percent of country's GDP owing to power outages related issues.7

Despite these challenges, Bangladesh's power sector in recent years achieved impressive outcomes in terms of increased generation capacity, particularly from the private sector participation which now constitutes 41percent of the total generation capacity.8 However, generation capacity growth increasing from 4.9GW in 2009 to 12.9GW in 20179 has come at a considerable cost to consumers and the

economy. Power generated from diesel or furnace oil-run plant costs seven to nine times per unit of electricity compared to the domestic natural gas-run plant costs.10 Exacerbating the issue further is the construction currently underway of more than 20 oil-based small-scale power plants of 100MW capacity each with tenure between 5 to 15 years.11 Table 1 outlines power generation capability by respective sources in 2018.

Generation Capacity	De-rated Capacity (MW)	Total
Coal	170	1.32%
Domestic Natural Gas	7936	61.41%
Hydro	230	1.78%
Heavy Fuel Oil Diesel	2792	21.61%
High Speed Diesel	1134	8.78%
Imported Power	660	5.11%
Total	12,922	100%

Table 1: Source: Bangladesh Power Development Board

The paper suggests that as the policy focus in recent years has been on generation capacity expansion to address the immediate supply-demand mismatch, accordingly the private investments have flowed towards the rapid but highly expensive oil-based generation options constituting around 30 percent of the total generation capacity. Similarly, arguments can be made that Bangladesh's longer-term energy security is also being severely impacted from the lack of timely investments owing to clear policy direction.

In Bangladesh, the five-year Power System Master Plan (PSMP), funded and prepared by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) under the guidance of Bangladesh Power Division, provides the longer-term planning perspective for the power sector. The PSMP-2010 version of the plan was prepared with the planning scope to 2030 with a focus on the rapid depletion of natural gas resource, a primary fuel for power generation in Bangladesh. Recognising the challenge that Bangladesh faces, PSMP-2010 recommended a shift of the energy fuel mix by 2030 to 50 percent coal, 25 percent natural gas, and 25 percent from other sources including oil, nuclear and renewable sources. Based on this recommendation, the government subsequently launched initiatives for new large scale thermal plants, primarily powered by coal. In 2017, a new five-year plan was drafted (PSMP-2016), which now included the aspirational Vision 2041 policy and as such a more holistic approach was employed to identify the best fuel mix scenario with economic viability, environmental quality, and energy security matters taken

into account. In PSMP-2016, the high reliance on imported supply fossil fuel was a significant risk for Bangladesh's planned economic development and instead proposed in the short to medium-term (up to 2025) breaking away from the dependence on costly oil based rental power generation. For the medium to very long-term (up to 2041), the recommendation was for establishment of large-scale power sources that includes between 35 percent coal and 35 percent gas, with rest from renewables, imports and oil.

The proposed PSMP-2016 plan to allocate a minimum of 70 percent of generation to large-scale power plants can be viewed as a prudent approach for Bangladesh as typically these plants deliver baseload load power, which refers to supply from generation resources that generally run continuously throughout the year and operate at stable output levels. Historically, such power is delivered as a centralised model of large fossil fuel power plant generation that is transported via transmission and distribution systems. They operate reasonably well in delivering continuous operation of baseload power for relatively predictable electricity demand and play a critical role in delivering supply stability for commercial and industrial sector. However, a key underlying assumption in PSMP-2016 was the use of domestic coal of which sufficient reserves have been identified in Bangladesh, but progress on production has been limited owing to both the population's environmental concerns, and the capacity limitations for extractions. Nonetheless, as coal-based power plants offer a source of low cost electricity, the revised 35% target by 2041 for coal-based generation (domestic or imported) in the PSMP-2016 is a pragmatic option. Unfortunately, developments of new large thermal plants per PSMP plans has been limited and currently the government is pushing forward a total of 8 coal-fired power plants which would generate 9,700 MW power next 5-6 years.12

The unsatisfactory progress on the establishment of large scale power plants can be traced back to the mixed policy signals. Caught between addressing the immediate needs of supply-demand mismatch and long-term energy security developments, the power sector has lacked clear direction with mixed signals to investors. The uncertainty over the long-term energy mix is further reflected by the recent shift away from coal to LNG as the primary fuel for generation.13 This may be due to little or no progress to establish large-scale coal-fired power plants and imported LNG can meet the immediate needs of the natural gas shortage through regasification plants that pump into the gas grid. Moreover, LNG can also be a cheaper alternative to the current oil-based generation. Nonetheless, the cost associated with imported LNG and subsequent regasification into the gas grid makes it uncompetitive in comparison to coal in most cases, and importantly LNG gas-based generation is mostly used these days as peaking

power plant, i.e. to address peak demand requirements rather than baseload generation. The shift in thinking is further evidenced by the recent revision of PMSP-2016 which was also prepared by JICA based on the request from the government to address the recent double-digit growth in power demand.14

The revised PSMP-2016 increased the demand forecast from 61,000MW to 82,000MW with project power generation capacity of 94,000MW by 2041,15 an upward revision in the generation capacity from the 67,000MW in the original PSMP-2016. The investment requirement to serve the new demand has been estimated at USD $150 billion for increasing the power generation capacity and $25 billion for transmission capacity.16 The significance of this is magnified when one considers there are already pre-existing deficiencies in the management and operation of the existing grid that need to be addressed as a matter of priority. Further discussions on this last point in third element of the trilemma.

The other area where Bangladesh has a real opportunity for long term optimal energy mix is in leveraging the recent rapid technological developments on modern renewable energy sources. Despite some of the known challenges of suitable land availability for large scale solar farms or parks, opportunities exist to leverage private investments through innovative business models that can augment the supply capacity to the grid. This particular point was also picked in PSMP-2016 which noted that "with technological advancements and reduced costs in renewable technologies, an increase share of renewables displacing fossil fuels have to be realised, as part of the country's longer term environmental obligations". This bears significance with Bangladesh's ratification of 'Paris Agreement', an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, dealing with greenhouse-gas-emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance, starting in the year 2020. Bangladesh agreed to the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) emissions in the power, industry and transport sectors by 5 percent below 'business-as-usual' GHG emissions by 2030 using only domestic resources, or by 15 percent below 'business-as-usual' GHG emissions by 2030 if sufficient and appropriate support is received from developed countries.

The benefits of renewable energy generation are well established for emission reductions and is far more practical to achieve in the power sector than the industry, transport or agricultural sectors. In this context, it would be accurate to state that renewable energy opportunities have not been aggressively pursued in Bangladesh, particularly considering the costs of solar PV has significantly fallen in recent years. A recent report 'Renewable Power Generation Costs

in 2017' by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) found that renewable power generation costs continue to fall and are already very competitive in meeting needs for new capacity. Solar PV module costs have fallen by about four-fifths, making residential solar PV systems as much as two-thirds cheaper than in 2010. Onshore wind costs fell 18 percent in the same period, with projects routinely currently commissioned at USD 0.04/kWh. The chart below shows the utility-scale solar PV total installed cost trends in selected countries, 2010-2017.
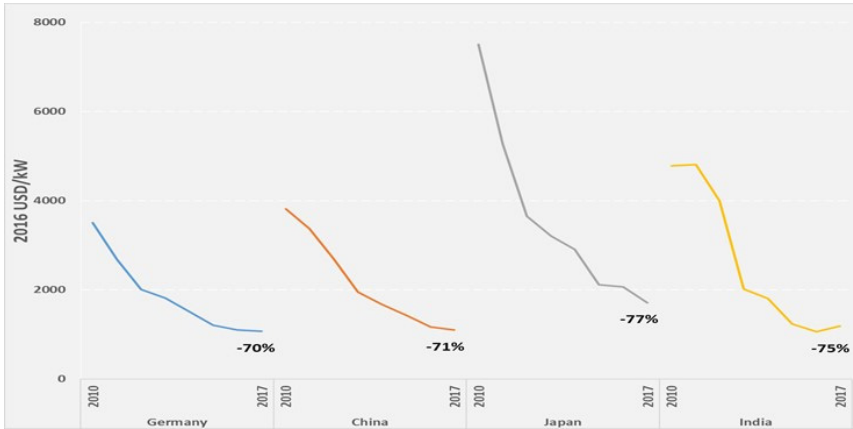
Chart 1: Utility-Scale Solar PV Trends in Selected Countries; Source: IRENA Renewable Cost Database

Bangladesh's current plans on renewable energy intend to meet 10% (3GW) of the total electricity generation from renewable sources by 2020 from the existing generation base of 233MW. However, the 3GW renewable target from solar and wind base has made little progress since its announcement more than 2.5 years back in November 2015. For comparison, India has set itself an ambitious target of achieving 100GW of solar power by 2022 set just two years ago, with the current capacity at about 24GW.17 Modelling performed by IEFA determined that for Bangladesh to pursue an ambitious target of 10GW of utility solar by 2025, it would require 0.15 percent of Bangladesh's total land.18 As per PSMP-2016, renewables need to be viewed as a vital part of Bangladesh's future energy security. Utility scale grid connected renewables remains a huge untapped opportunity, particularly as an alternative to the short-term oil-based generations, given the cost of government subsidies for the oil imports and the impact on foreign currency reserves.

Bangladesh's Solar Homes System (SHS) program is frequently cited as an example of the renewables success story. Undoubtedly, the massive take-up of the program, benefitting more than 18 million

people to date is a huge achievement for the nation in terms of enhancing access for consumers who are not on the grid. The roll out of the SHS program has made substantial social contribution by improving the comfort and living standards of rural dwellers and delivering potential environmental benefits through the displacement of black carbon (primarily from open burning for lighting and cook stoves). However, this does not tackle the supply side energy security issues and moreover with economic growth together with the growing affluence of SHS consumers who are currently less affluent, and future grid expansion, the grid-based demand-supply problem could potentially worsen unless a more sustainable and longer term solution is put in place.

Micro-mini grids are one area that has still has not been tapped into for a longer-term view of energy security. Micro-mini grids are a significant evolutionary step with a localised community-based focus towards diverse and decentralized electricity network. Micro-mini grids are not a new concept in Bangladesh, with at least seven such grids in operation serving more than 2,243 rural customers in early 2017, and potentially another 18 in operation by 2018.19 From a policy perspective, the micro-mini grids solution is focussed on enhancing access to electricity for off-grid consumers as approval for potential micro-mini grid locations are mainly targeted towards sites designated for the grid expansion beyond five years or where the grid is not planned for expansion owing to socio-techno-economic justifications.20 This is a rather limiting role for micro-mini grids solutions with increased investment risks for private sector participants. Furthermore, the current policy guidelines in many respects acts as investment barriers. For example, funding assistance is restricted to micro-mini grid developments in designated rural areas only. Another barrier is the imposition of technical standards on the micro-mini grid distribution network to make them compliant to future grid expansion. Consequently, micro-mini grids under the current framework are categorised as high-risk investments particularly if they are under the threat of future grid expansion in the near term.

Lessons from Australia show that micro-mini grids are a more cost-effective solution for rural settlements rather than prohibitively expensive construction, operation and maintenance of centralised grid solutions. Micro-mini grids have also shown to have the benefit of integrating other utility services such as water and wastewater treatment for a self-sustainable and resilient community against natural disaster events. For Bangladesh, micro-mini grids should be viewed as part of an integrated solution to the longer-term energy supply security issues rather than simply as an access to energy solution.

Imported power from modern renewable resources is another avenue for further consideration. PSMP-2016 also picked up on this point stating that, "Importing power from neighbouring countries using hydroelectric power generation has much greater possibility…". Whilst investigations and discussions at government level are already underway for such hydropower imports from the neighbouring countries, nonetheless the reality is that infrastructure investment and construction is a long-term process and are many years away from development. Solar and wind turbines are an excellent alternative - particularly to the current coal-based imports from India. However, while this may be a better option in the future, given the nature of geopolitics, regional cooperation that is key to developing this option has its challenges, at least in the short to medium term. Therefore, Bangladesh may have to look for options that are within its control.

POWER AFFORDABILITY

Electricity affordability has multiple dimensions: national, businesses, and households. From a national perspective, it is about ensuring an affordable long-term energy security solution that delivers economic competitiveness for the nation. This means investments must be prudent and efficient with a long-term view (e.g. making sure that the energy import bill is small compared to export earnings, or that publicly owned assets do not become stranded or underutilised). For the industry and commercial sector, it is about the availability of energy at costs for competitive advantage. For households it is whether the electricity bill is low relative to household incomes.

In Bangladesh, electricity affordability has become a major issue for households and businesses, with eighth retail price increase in the last eight years.21 The key factor behind the price increases is the increasing portion of oil based rental power plants. However, even with the price increases, the current electricity tariff rates are not sufficient to cover the actual cost of electricity supply. This is mainly because of the growing difference between the bulk prices that the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) procures from both private and publicly owned power plants and the regulated wholesale tariff rates BPDB charges to all the distribution utilities. Such policy interventions although designed to make power affordable are at best short-term measures as evidenced by the financial losses of BPDB, reported at cumulative US$4bn in the previous five years to 2016.22 On the longer term, a move towards cost reflective tariffs can readdress the revenue-cost balance. However, the measures need to be undertaken gradually to mitigate the negative impacts of drastic tariff increases on the economy and the community. More importantly what is required in the near term is controlling the cost increases primarily from the increasing share of short term rental generation.

The affordability issue is not limited to end-use consumers but from a national perspective the overall power system must be a financially sustainable one for the nation. For example, a large network of highly capital-intensive power-grid operating on imported fossil fuels will pose a huge financial burden for the nation. Two major challenges facing Bangladesh on this front. Firstly, as mentioned before, currently domestic natural gas constitutes more than 50 percent of the primary energy supply for electricity generation. However, the domestic natural gas is priced capped and held well below the international price level. With dwindling gas reserves, if the price of domestic gas is to rise to the international level, the current level of government support to keep price affordable for the consumers would be untenable. Secondly, in addition to price caps on domestic gas, sizeable subsidies exist on fossil fuel imports to lower the international price for domestic use. A power sector with increasing dependence on fossil fuel imports (Coal, LNG, diesel, oil) is indeed a cause for major concern on the potential long-term effects on Bangladesh's economic performance, as they are subject to the volatility of international markets. If the fuel import volumes ramp up, the size of the subsidy would increase significantly with adverse budgetary consequences for the country.

To manage the trilemma tensions between energy security and affordability, policy needs to evolve to help drive the correct mix of investment in electricity generation assets. One that delivers greater control over the supply and cost of energy from a balanced portfolio of energy mix comprising of both self-generation and imported fuel generation capacity. A balanced portfolio can help avoid economic risk associated with energy market volatility, ensure stable supply of energy and mitigate rising electricity costs, particularly to maintain the economic competitiveness of the nation.

POWER RELIABILITY AND RESILIENCE

A power grid is an interconnected network which essentially operates as a complex machine that is required to be kept in sync for the security of the power system. As such three key factors are crucial for grid stability: mitigating the supply risks around supply-demand mismatch, timely investments on infrastructure and operations for maintaining the grid reliability and power quality, and future-proofing the system for emerging trends that impact the resilience of the grid. The energy security section discussed in detail the supply side challenges facing Bangladesh. This section puts a spotlight on the topics of power quality and emerging challenges that may significantly impact grid reliability and resilience.

As demand for grid energy grows, it becomes increasingly important for a country to plan and invest in critical infrastructure for reliable power

ahead of demand and enhance existing infrastructure to strengthen energy security needed for economic development. This viewpoint was highlighted in PSMP-2016: "To meet the rapidly increasing demand for power and to realize its stable supply… system enhancement is essential in addition to the power supply developments… Bangladesh requires improvements in its infrastructure and the development and implementation of a system that provides high-quality power for electrical frequency stabilization, as well as the development of the power system."

As part of their study, PSMP-2016 reported severe deficiencies with both the power network infrastructure and the operations, contributing to the power quality and reliability of the network. These deficiencies included infrastructure related matters such as a lack of spinning reserve, frequency fluctuations and operational issues of inadequate coordination, as well as a lack of automation which therefore depended on telephone-based instructions.

These issues of reliability and power quality are of serious concern to the business sector as they have a direct impact on operations - from equipment damages to process interruptions. Consequently, the power reliability and power quality issues have forced industries to adopt their own measures by installing captive (i.e. self) generation capacity of 2.2GW based on natural gas. Having gas based self-generation capacity also has an added financial benefit for the industries as gas price is highly subsidised in comparison to the higher prices of grid-based supply. Irrespective of the captive generation capacity, a high-quality power network is essential for Bangladesh to pursue the desired economic growth. To achieve this, issues in relation to inefficient technology, poor operational practices, and inadequate maintenance must be addressed.

Customers, whether they be businesses or households have always wanted reliable, high-quality, and affordable power. The emergence of distributed energy resources (DER) is now enabling customer to have choice to insure against all three by making their own investments in DER. DER refers to smaller generation units located on the consumer's side of the meter such as roof top solar systems, battery storage, electric vehicles battery exporting back to grid and similar technologies. This technology led innovation is fundamentally changing the energy landscape around the world.

With the levelized cost of electricity from solar PV down to or even below fossil fuel levels, the average price of lithium-ion battery storage down to US$209/kilowatt-hour, and projected storage prices set to fall below US$100/kWh by 2025,23 the cost-effectiveness of DER will rise. The power sector is transitioning, whether Bangladesh has a

policy driven large scale renewables technologies deployment or not. Inevitably, market forces will result in high renewable penetration of DER, either through rooftop solar, battery storage, electric vehicles or community grids, and related technology led solutions. For Bangladesh power sector, there is a real emerging resilience risk from the rapid onset of DER deployments to a power grid that is already facing issues of power quality and reliability challenges.

From a system security perspective, the emergence of DER creates a new challenge for the power sector with the intermittent and variable nature of the generation and a changing demand profile. The power grid will face additional challenges, with power injected at local low voltage levels, especially in locations that were never designed to accommodate such reverse generation capacity. Large uptake of DER in aggregate, can have a material and unpredictable impact on the power system and its dynamics due to their cumulative size and changing characteristics. For example, the intermittent nature of generation from rooftop PV makes load forecasting more challenging, with an increased dependence on locational drivers which can in turn further increase the variability and ramping behaviour of DER. Furthermore, the lack of visibility of DER will affects the operational of power system conditions and may make parts of the grid more prone to failure.

Another DER disruption is in the form of Electric Vehicles (EVs). EVs, in essence, are large battery storages that require a significant amount of electricity power to re-charge. EV's are in the near horizon for Bangladesh with China and India leading the advancement of transition to an electrified transport system. Recent advancements in EV driving range means price and model availability are the two remaining barriers for mass EV adoption. However, more than 20 different EV models are expected to be launched by major global players by 2021 and the emergence of cheaper Chinese and Indian models will have flow-on effects on the Bangladesh market in the very near future. This is particularly so, when the energy consumption of the Bangladesh transport sector is expected to reach about 18-fold increase of the current level by 2041 - becoming the second largest energy consumption sector.24

Bangladesh can draw on existing international power system experiences with large penetrations of non-synchronous generation. Germany has more than 22 percent of fluctuating solar and wind generation and yet maintains security of supply at world-record levels. This result is achieved through a combination of high-quality grid infrastructure and strong interconnections with neighbouring countries, accompanied by strengthened power grid code for variable energy units. Whereas arguably in Australia the system had been

weakened by the rapid take-up of DER owing to the absence of a coordinated policy framework.

DERs are both an opportunity and a threat for the power sector in Bangladesh. With small capital investments and shorter payback periods, DER can meet some of the future demand through investments by customers. But at the same time, given the power grid is already in a fragile state with many power outages and in desperate need for upgrade and maintenance, the consequences of DER are dire through cascading effects on a system that was never designed for two-way energy flows. It is therefore critically important that planning across the whole power sector is done with the future state in mind, for the creation of a more robust, resilient, flexible and adaptable power grid.

THE WAY FORWARD

To address the power sectors' energy trilemma challenge Bangladesh requires careful balancing of multiple objectives: ensuring timely and appropriate investments, providing affordable electricity to households and a competitive base for the industry, while delivering reliable and high-quality power network that is resilient to future technology and consumer preferences. Underpinning the trilemma is environmental considerations for sustainable development, noting that power sector has the biggest potential to take decisive actions in reducing the future emissions.

The challenge for the government is to design the policy framework which leads to an optimal portfolio of energy mix comprising of fossil fuels and renewable energy to ensure supply guarantee and maintain price stability. The key step in the process is to develop the right mechanisms to send signals for investment certainty whether they be in fossil fuel power generation, renewable generation or in infrastructure investments, grid extension or otherwise.

This paper thus proposes a policy framework for the power sector which is underpinned by a market mechanism for emissions reduction goals over time. As the key objective is to end uncertainty, market mechanisms should have flexibility and scalability, to deliver technology neutral solutions (fossil fuels or renewables energy) and can respond to new variables such as the emerging impacts of DER. Table 1 below provides an overview of the most common market mechanism-based policy options.

Policy Otions	How it works
Cap and trade	Government sets an emissions limit (the cap). Generators surrender a permit for each tonne of emissions. Government may auction permits, allocate them free of charge, or use a combination of both. Trade in permits determines their price, creating an incentive to reduce emissions.
Emissions intensity scheme	Government sets an emissions intensity baseline (in emissions per unit of electricity generated). Generators below the baseline obtain permits to sell; generators above the baseline must buy permits for excess emissions. Trade in permits determines their price, creating an incentive to reduce emissions.
Carbon Tax	Government sets a price per unit of greenhouse gas emissions. Generators pay that price for their emissions; this creates an incentive to reduce emissions if the cost of doing so is lower than the emissions price.

Table 1: Common Market Mechanism-based Policy Options, Source: Climate Change Authority, Australian Government

The cap and trade Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) is the most well-known market mechanism as it is widely used internationally. In effect the scheme is designed to impose a charge on all emissions produced by having the government set an annual cap on emissions. There is flexibility in the scheme for the government to either allocate or auction the permits and use it for public expenditure. A Carbon Tax also has the potential to raise significant revenue by directly taxing the emissions. However, as the focus of this discussion is on policy certainty for investments in the power sector, a cap and trade ETS or Carbon Tax imposing a cost on carbon across the wider economy is not necessarily the preferred option. Emissions Intensity Scheme (EIS), a trading scheme that operates within the power generation sector is the most suitable option for Bangladesh. In this regard, Bangladesh may gain from successful models of EIS such as the one developed in Australia that mixes incentives and penalty to ensure sustainable generation and use of energy in the country.25

Bangladesh can calibrate the EIS scheme by limiting or declining free allocation of annual permits to rental providers after a given period, in order to give rental providers a clear signal for when to exit the market. Existing and new fossil fuel-based generators for baseload generation can be incentivised to move towards clean and efficient technologies by limiting the allocation of annual permits. Generators exceeding the baseline would have to purchase and surrender permits from generators below the sector baseline thus incentivising them

towards efficient and clean generation, while at the same time creating a market for new renewable generators.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Presently in Bangladesh, due to the multitude of complex issues, major challenges are being encountered by the traditional electricity supply models. While there are a number of impacts flowing from these developments, a key expected outcome is that Bangladesh's power grid will change in different, perhaps fundamental ways that requires careful assessment of the costs and opportunities of different technological and policy pathways.

This paper proposes that building on the PSMP-2016 and given the trilemma challenges that Bangladesh currently faces in energy supply an appropriately designed and calibrated EIS is the best way forward. To achieve this, the paper strongly envisages the need, on an urgent basis, of a comprehensive study that successfully outlines the mix of options to ensure that government's Vision 2041 is duly complemented by energy supply from a mix of sources that provide in an integrated manner secure, affordable and sustainable energy. Indeed, such a study is also expected to produce a policy framework that would guarantee predictability in investment choices in the energy sector of the country in a manner that is both coherent and cost-effective.

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REGIONAL ENERGY COOPERATION IN SOUTH ASIA: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR BANGLADESH

Mirza Sadaqat Huda

INTRODUCTION

Energy has universal importance to national security and economic development but bears particular importance to the developing world's efforts towards poverty alleviation, human development and economic growth. Since gaining independence in 1971, Bangladesh has made slow but steady progress in health, education and economic development, although significant challenges remain in the realms of gender parity, equitable growth and political stability. Energy, particularly the supply of electricity has played an important role in the economic and social transition of Bangladesh, which was once labelled a 'basket case' by Henry Kissinger and is now looking to graduate from the category of least developed countries by 2024. From the crucial garments industry to agriculture, health care, cottage industries and small businesses, electricity has been a critical input into the overall development of the country. As can be seen in Table 1, Bangladesh has made significant investments in the energy sector over the past eight years. However, as shown in table 2, crucial challenges remain in the realms of energy access as well as meeting current energy demand. In addition, certain policies implemented by the government, such as rental and quick rental power plants have been criticised for being financially unsustainable.

One of the most important documents related to national energy issues in Bangladesh is the 'Power System Master Plan 2016' drafted by the Power Division of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources (Power Division, 2016). According to this policy document, the nation's peak demand would be about 17,304 MW in 2020 and 33,708 MW in 2030. The Government of Bangladesh is planning to increase its power generation capacity beyond its projected demand to 40,000 MW by 2030. To meet this target, coal-fired power plants have been considered as the prime source of power generation, due to lower costs of coal compared to other sources of energy. The Government plans to set up 25 coal-fired power plants by 2022, to generate 23,692 MW. The share of coal-based power is set to increase from only 1.3 percent at present to 21 percent by 2020, and then to an incredible 50

percent by 2030.

Maurin and Vivoda (2016) have argued that national energy policies have three main objectives: availability, affordability and sustainability. Bangladesh's dwindling gas reserves combined with the high cost of imported petroleum or liquefied natural gas, the heavily subsidised electricity market and the imperative to increase energy access to poor households has resulted in the prioritisation of availability and affordability of energy over concerns related to sustainability. This, however, is not particular to Bangladesh as many developing countries, including the regional economic powerhouse India uses coal as the primary energy source to generate low cost electricity, which has a significant impact on the environment as well as the society. In this context, multilateral cooperation has been suggested by a number of studies as an economically feasible and environmentally sustainable solution to the energy needs of Bangladesh as well as the wider South Asian region. The overall scenario of regional energy cooperation in South Asia and Bangladesh's diplomatic overtures in this regard therefore require a brief exposition.

Description	2009	2017	8 year's addition
Power Plants (No)	27.0	111.0	84.0
Expired Plants	0.0	3.0	3.0
Grid Capacity (MW)	4,942.0	15,821 (Including Captive)	10,879.0
Highest Generation (MW)	3,268 (6 Jan 2009)	9,507 (18 Oct 2017)	6,239.0
Power Import (MW)	0.0	660.0	660.0
Total Consumers (million)	10.8	26.7	15.9
Transmission Line (Ckt Km)	8,000.0	10,436.0	2,436.0
Distribution Line (Km)	260,000.0	412,000.0	152,000.0
Grid sub-station capacity (MVA)	15,870.0	30,993.0	15,123.0
Access to Electricity (%)	47.0	80.0	33.0
Per Capita Generation (KWh)	220.0	433 (Inc. captive) (30 June 2017)	213.0
ADP allocation (BDT in bn)	26.8	225.8	199.0
System Loss (%)	16.9	12.2	-4.7

Table 1: Development in Bangladesh Power Sector 2009 - 2017; Source: EBL (online)

% of population with access to electricity	80%
Installed capacity	13,621 MW
De-rated Capacity	12,922 MW
Net Generation Capacity	11,092 MW
Maximum Generation (2017)	9,507MW
Energy Demand Forecast (2017)	12,644 MW

Table 2: Current Energy Scenario in Bangladesh; Source: BPDB (online)

REGIONAL ENERGY COOPERATION IN SOUTH ASIA

The last five years has seen significant progress in the realisation of a number of transnational energy projects in South Asia. While energy cooperation as well as the wider regional integration agenda has been held back for over three decades due to political conflicts and widespread mistrust, since 2014 the political will towards making energy cooperation a reality has been made apparent through the signing of a number of agreements, the formation of sub-regional groups, the completion of crucial projects and the joint development of regional energy infrastructure.

Since coming to power in 2014, the BJP government undertook a range of policies that were aimed to reverse India's resistance to multilateral cooperation, which had been in the past one of the biggest impediments to energy cooperation in South Asia. The signing of the SAARC Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation (Electricity) in October 2014 was an important milestone in energy integration. This agreement set out the various codes and standards of conduct under which energy cooperation will be undertaken in the near future. In addition, at the bilateral levels, crucial agreements on power and territorial issues were signed in 2014 and 2015 by India and Nepal and India and Bangladesh, respectively. In 2014 a power trade agreement as well as power development agreements for two hydroelectric projects, the Upper Karnali and Arun III were signed between India and Nepal. In 2015, the Land Boundary Agreement was signed between India and Bangladesh which resolved a territorial dispute that had hindered bilateral relations for more than four decades. These developments have created significant opportunities for Bangladesh to participate in regional energy projects, which are discussed below.

INDIA-BANGLADESH BILATERAL ENERGY PROJECTS

The very first India-Bangladesh power project was a 500 MW cross-border transmission line between Bheramara to Baharampur which

came online in 2013. In addition, several bilateral projects are under construction or being planned. Steps are being undertaken to increase the capacity of the Bheramara-Baharampur line from 500 MW to 1000 MW. In March 2016, a 100 MW power line that would transfer electricity from the Indian state of Tripura to Bangladesh was officially inaugurated. An India-Bangladesh friendship pipeline is being planned, which would allow up to one million metric tonnes of diesel import from India per year. The Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company (Pvt.), a 50-50 joint venture between Bangladesh Power Development Board and India's National Thermal Power Corporation, is building a 1,320 MW coal-fired power plant near the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest. Negotiations are also being undertaken on the construction of a 3000 MW transmission line between the Indian states of Assam and Bihar through Bangladesh. Dhaka has been offered a proportion of the electricity as transit fee. Other planned projects include a gas pipeline from Dattapulia in West Bengal to Khulna, and the joint development of an LNG power project in Meghnaghat and an LNG terminal at Kutubdia Island.

While India-Bangladesh cooperation in the energy sector has strengthened the bilateral relationship between the two countries, the controversial Rampal project has created a great deal of negative publicity in Bangladesh towards New Delhi. The 1,320 MW coal-fired power station at Rampal Upazila of Bagerhat District in Khulna, is a joint partnership between India's state owned National Thermal Power Corporation and Bangladesh Power Development Board. The proposed project, on an area of over 1834 acres of land, is situated 14 kilometres north of the world's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, which is a UNESCO world heritage site. The ecological importance of the Sundarbans as well as the belief that India is investing in such projects to 'dump' its poor quality local coal on Bangladesh as part of its agenda to move towards more sustainable energy sources, has created massive protests, political instability and international condemnation. While some of the rhetoric against the Rampal has been justified, political rhetoric against India has unfortunately drowned out any objective voices. Perhaps one of the most controversial aspects of the project has been the broad dismissal of the Environmental Impact Assessment as faulty and incomplete by academics and experts. To this effect, Bangladesh and India should either consider undertaking an independent Environmental Impact Assessment of the project or relocate the project to another area.

THE BBIN INITIATIVE

The Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative is a sub-regional architecture that has made substantial progress in recent times towards initiating regional energy cooperation. The joint

working groups (JWG) of the BBIN aim to collectively harness the hydroelectric potential of the GBM Basin, which is around 200,000 MW. So far, four meetings of the JWG have taken place between 2013 and 2018 and various issues related to hydropower and water resources have been discussed. In 2017, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Limited (NVVN) and Bangladesh Power Development Board for supply of power from Nepal. In the same year, it was reported that a memorandum of understanding between Dhaka, New Delhi and Thimphu on the construction of a 1,255MW hydropower dam in Bhutan is under consideration, but the exact location of the project and other details were not disclosed.

Despite noteworthy progress since 2013, the realisation of multilateral energy projects in this region has been held down by New Delhi's refusal to provide Bangladesh access to Nepal and Bhutan through Indian territory. Bangladesh has formally requested a 'power corridor' to access the Bhutanese and Nepalese markets several times, each of which has been turned down. This is despite the fact that Bangladesh agreed to allow India to transfer hydroelectricity from Assam to Bihar as well as access to the Northeast Indian states through Bangladeshi territory. For the BBIN initiatives to have any impact, allowing Bangladesh to access the hydroelectric markets in Nepal and Bhutan is crucial and this issue should be looked at with pragmatism and in light of the need to strengthen the relationship between the two friendly but often disputative neighbours. In addition, if India seeks to exploit the more than 5,8971MW of hydroelectric potential in its North-East region, Bangladesh would be a natural partner in transmission and trade, owing to its geographic position. Bilateral negotiations in this regard would be a lot smoother if reciprocity is shown by India regarding the provision of a power corridor for Bangladesh to access electricity from Nepal and Bhutan.

TAPI PIPELINE

The TAPI pipeline, which was officially inaugurated by the leaders of all four participating countries in December 2015, aims to transfer gas from Turkmenistan's Galkynysh field (with a capacity of 16 trillion cubic feet) through Afghanistan to Pakistan and then into India. The ADB has been TAPI's secretariat since 2002 and has spearheaded the legal, institutional and technical aspects of the project. In 2014, the state gas companies of the four countries created the TAPI Pipeline Company, which aims to build, finance, own and operate the pipeline. The official construction of the project started in December 2015 and is expected to be completed in 2020. In 2012, Bangladesh officially expressed interest in joining the TAPI project. In 2017, this request was again made by the State Minister for Power and Energy Nasrul

Hamid, who expressed Bangladesh's intention to join TAPI Pipeline at the ministerial session of 28th Conference of the International Energy Charter in Turkmenistan's capital Ashgabat.

The TAPI, however, does bear considerable political risk, notwithstanding the potential benefits in terms of regional interdependence and energy security. First is the possibility that the historical animosity between India and Pakistan, and Islamabad's acrimonious relationship with Kabul, could derail the implementation of the project. The detriments of inter-regional rivalry, however, pales in comparison to the threat posed to the pipeline by terrorist and insurgent groups. The TAPI will traverse some of the most restive regions in South Asia, including Herat and Kandahar in Afghanistan, as well as Quetta, the capital of the insurgency-affected southwestern province of Pakistan. The determining factor is the ability of the Afghan government to ensure sustained security of the transmission line in areas controlled by the Taliban. While the TAPI is not without political and economic risks, Bangladesh can gain considerable dividends in terms of energy security by participating in this project and also alleviate its international status by contributing to one of the largest energy integration projects undertaken in the region.

CASA -1000

The CASA-1000 project envisions the transfer of excess hydroelectricity from the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan in the summer months, when there are massive shortages of power in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The project is slowly taking shape, particularly through the creation of a critical framework called the Inter-Governmental Council. Various initiatives are being undertaken in the realms of procurement of infrastructure and technology. In addition to the commitment of the four countries, CASA-1000 has the support of the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and USAID.

The CASA 1000 is conceptualized under the Central Asia-South Asia Power Transmission Initiative and therefore, long-term objectives of such projects should be link them to India, which would increase the number of stakeholders in the project and provide greater opportunities for peace building between India and Pakistan. It may even provide a platform for perceiving common interests in Afghanistan by the two South Asian rivals. The countries involved in the CASA 1000 and should thus collectively approach India to join the project, keeping in mind that in the very long-term the SAARC Energy Grid may well be connected to the Central Asian electricity grid. If the CASA 1000 is extended to India, Bangladesh may also have a chance of being involved in the project.

BIMSTEC and SASEC

Bangladesh is also part of other subregional bodies that are facilitating regional energy integration, such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program. The BIMSTEC member states are Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, and Nepal, while SASEC comprises of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Both sub-regional groups are working towards the implementation of grid interconnections for trade in electricity with a view to promoting rational and optimal power transmission. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on grid interconnections for sharing energy infrastructure in the South Asian region was finalised by the seven member countries of BIMSTEC in January 2017. SASEC has contributed to building energy infrastructure in India, Nepal and Bangladesh and Bhutan facilitated the development of regional energy markets.

CONCLUSION

Bangladesh has made substantial progress in enhancing national energy security in the last 10 years. However, due to economic realities and resource constraints, the country's energy policy has focused more on ensuring affordable and accessible energy, rather than being concerned about sustainability issues. Regional cooperation on energy in South Asia provides an opportunity for Bangladesh to get access to energy that is affordable but also environmentally sustainable. Nonetheless, these regional energy projects also create various challenges in the realms of geopolitics, environmental impact and human security. To address these challenges, Bangladesh and the other countries of South Asia should collectively create acceptable standards of conduct, design dispute resolution mechanisms and build the capacity of regional institutions.

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BANGLADESH-US RELATIONS IN THE POST 9/11 ERA: ECONOMIC AND GEO-STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS

Md. Shariful Islam

INTRODUCTION

In the document, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976 South Asia Crisis, 1971, it is acknowledged that the United States (US) did not support Bangladesh during the liberation war in 1971 and the Nixon administration "tilted" toward Pakistan (Smith, 2005: 1). But over the years, the scenario gradually transformed to one of 'mutual understanding' reflecting an aphorism in International Relations –"there is no permanent friend or foe but permanent interest." Therefore, in calculating its national and regional interests in context of Cold War bi-polarity, the US did not waffle to acknowledge Bangladesh as a sovereign state (Sharma, 2001: 31). On the other hand, given the post-1971 war famine like situation in the country, friendship with US was inevitable for Bangladesh (USDS, 1974).

Consequently, a journey of rapport with mutual benefits was launched after Bangladesh's independence, not without initial challenges though (USDS, 2016). Over last four decades, Bangladesh-US ties increasingly strengthened with cooperation turning into partnership through the 'US-Bangladesh Partnership Dialogue Agreement' of 2012 (Sherman, 2013).

This paper investigates two questions: first, what are the emerging trends of Bangladesh-US relations in the post 9/11 era? Second, what are the major dimensions of bilateral relations? The paper proceeds as follows. The first section navigates through the post 9/11 period. The second section focuses on the economic and geo-strategic dimensions on bilateral relations. Finally, the paper makes some concluding observations.

RELATIONS IN THE POST 9/11 ERA

The events of 9/11 brought about a dramatic shift in the foreign policy directions of the United States and Bangladesh, which had previously been a periphery in US foreign policy prioritizations. It has become one of its regional priorities and "of deep strategic interest to America" (Mozena, 2013a). Given the US declared 'War against terrorism', corroboration from the Muslim countries became vital. Thus, Bangladesh, a moderate Muslim country, became significant in the strategic calculations of US. As Ambassador Mozena states, "Bangladesh, the world's seventh largest country and home to the world's fourth largest Muslim population, is a tolerant, moderate, secular, democratic alternative to violent extremism

in this troubled region of the world" (Ibid). In addition, South Asia emerged as pivotal region for the United States for countering terrorism (The Daily Star, 15 December 2003). Given such realities, Bangladesh emerged as a strong supporter of the global War on Terror which is reflected in its foreign policy priorities (CSIS, 2002). A number of examples substantiate the major developments in Bangladesh-US relations in the post 9/11 era. Notably, the largest joint exercise between US Marines and the Bangladesh Air force (BAF) was held in November 2007 (Ahmed, 2007). Besides, in March 2009, two American military generals visited Bangladesh to deepen bilateral security cooperation between US and Bangladesh as well as "to provide security force assistance to partner nations in combating terrorism" (The Daily Star, 7 March 2009). US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Richard A. Boucher visited Bangladesh on 7 March 2009 and offered US supports to Bangladesh to set up anti-terrorism South Asian task force to prevent militancy and terrorism in the region. Apart from terrorism, Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA)1 were on top of the agenda in meetings between the two sides (The Daily Star, 8 March 2009). Subsequently, the US government's intention to sign TIFA with Bangladesh or establish a US-Bangladesh Economic and Trade Cooperation Forum (UBETCF) to broaden US and Bangladesh economic partnership was also highlighted (The Daily Star, 19 February 2010).

Of particular importance was the visit of Hilary Clinton, the US Secretary of State, in May 2012 and the signing of 'Bangladesh-US Partnership Dialogue Agreement'. It was a milestone in the development of Bangladesh-US relations. In the words of Mozena, "We're cementing the Partnership Dialogue…We're defining that agenda to have a good, strong agenda, to keep giving direction, strategic direction to our partnership" (Mozena, 2013b).

Hence, the frequent visits of US high officials in Bangladesh demonstrate the importance that US attaches in deepening US-Bangladesh relations. Furthermore, in 2013, second US-Bangladesh partnership dialogue was imperative in fostering Bangladesh-US relations. Mainly, trade and investment, governance and development, and security and strategic matters were the top items on the agenda for discussion (The Independent, 28 May 2013). Labour issues in Bangladesh were also a major concern for the United States in the dialogue. Critiques point out that these frequent visits were in the purpose of promoting US interests in Bangladesh and in the region. Against this context, the next section intends to investigate the major dimensions in Bangladesh-US relations.

DIMENSIONS IN BANGLADESH-US RELATIONS

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Economic dimension is one of the major determinants in Bangladesh-US relations since the establishment of ties. According to Rashid (2015: 386), "in economic terms, the relationship with the US is, has long been, and will for the foreseeable future continue to be a very important one for

Bangladesh". Aziz (1982: 225), for instance, notes that "Till June 1979, Bangladesh received a total of US$5,175 million in foreign aid, of which 27.12 percent has been provided by the United States. Total United States aid to Bangladesh till May 1979 came to US$1,403 million". The US government, through USAID, has provided over US$5.8 billion in development assistance to Bangladesh since 1971. In 2011 alone, USAID provided more than US$180 million to improve the lives of people in Bangladesh, including US$17 million in environment and climate change funding (The Daily Star, 26 May 2012). A total of US$13 million US grant to the fund for four years was promised by Hillary Clinton during her visit to Bangladesh in 2012. Furthermore, the United States promised in early 2012 that it would offer Bangladesh close to US$1 billion in aid over the next five years (Reuters, 2012). If one looks at recent trends, in 2017, for instance, US assistance to Bangladesh was recorded at US$ 241 million whilst in 2016 it was US$ 239 million. In addition, 2014 was notable with regard to US assistance to Bangladesh which was amounted to US$ 253 million (Embassy of Bangladesh, Washington D.C. n.d.).

Another important aspect is trade with United States. Notably, the US is the largest export destination for Bangladesh as the trade volume between the two countries is on the rise. For instance, two-way trade has grown over 50 per cent in the past two years, from US$ 4 billion to more than US$ 6 billion (Rivkin, 2014). In 2017, US-Bangladesh total volume of trade in goods amounted to US$ 7161.4 million. The trade balance is always in favor of Bangladesh which in details is provided in the following Table 1. Thus, Bangladesh is economically benefitted from nurturing a sound relationship with US.

Year	Export	Import	Balance
2001	2,358.9	307.0	+2,051.9
2002	2,134.1	269.2	+1,864.9
2003	2,073.9	225.9	+1,848.0
2004	2,302.6	289.3	+2,013.3
2005	2,693.0	319.8	+2,373.3
2006	3,271.4	333.0	+2,938.4
2007	3,432.1	456.0	+2,976.1
2008	3,748.4	468.1	+3,280.4
2009	3,699.0	434.6	+3,264.4
2010	4,293.9	575.7	+3,718.2
2011	4,877.1	1144.1	+3,733.0
2012	4,915.6	508.2	+4,407.4
2013	5351.9	708.8	+4643.2
2014	5276.8	1113.2	+4163.5

2015	5,990.5	942.5	+5,047.9
2016	5,910.8	905.7	+5,005.1
2017	5,687.4	1,474.0	+4,213.5

Table 1: Bangladeshi Export and Import in goods with the United States, 2001-2014 (All figures are in millions of U.S. dollars on a nominal basis, not seasonally adjusted unless otherwise specified. Details may not equal totals due to rounding). Source: USCB (2018)

From the US perspective, economic interests stand out as the single dominant factor in its relations with Bangladesh which is evident from a listing of foreign policy objectives published by the State Department in 1976. Notably, on that list, four out of five foreign policy objectives of the United States in Bangladesh were either directly or indirectly related to the economic interests of the US (Aziz, 1982: 220). Although it was the 1976 US foreign policy objectives, till date it remains the same as the Congressional Report 2010 testified the same while pointing out that "American interests with Bangladesh include promoting development, trade, energy, democracy support, countering militant Islamists, and working together in peace operations" (Vaughn, 2010). President Obama had also "emphasized how economically important this [Bangladesh's] market is to the prosperity of the American people. US firms recognize the country's potential and are eager to do business" (Rivkin, 2014).

In this 21st century global market economy, US is searching new markets to 'unlock opportunities' for US companies, and workers. In this context, recognizing the economic importance of the western Pacific and the Indian Ocean, President Obama announced the shift towards Asia in January 2012 (The Economic Times, 1 June 2012) and hence trying to reach Trans-Pacific Agreement (TPP).2 Regarding the TPP, it is claimed that "When complete, TPP will unlock opportunities for American workers, families, businesses, farmers, and ranchers by providing increased access to some of the fastest growing markets in the world. TPP will provide new market access for Made-in-America goods and services…" (OUSTR, 2015).

Against this backdrop, it is argued that trade and investment are two key economic interests for the US in Bangladesh. Reportedly, the volume of US's exports of goods to Bangladesh is on the rise. For instance, in 2001 it was estimated US$ 307.0 million which rose to US$ 1474.0 million (USCB, 2018). Regarding US investments, as of 2002, about 200 US companies were engaged in business in Bangladesh (Xinhua, 2000). According to the Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington D.C., "USA is the second largest investing country in Bangladesh after UK, the total investment so far being about $1 billion. Another $ 1.5 billion is in the pipeline for power plants, coal, mine and fertilizer plants. US investment in Bangladesh in 2015 was the highest amounting to $550m, representing one-fourth of the total global FDI into Bangladesh." (Embassy of Bangladesh, Washington D.C. n.d.). US foreign direct investment from 2005 to 2017 is provided in the following Table 2. In fact, Bangladesh deserves attention as a bridge for a future economic corridor between South and Southeast Asia

(Evans, 2012: 65). Hence, it is assumed that US was interested in signing the Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework Agreement (TICFA) with Bangladesh to accelerate its economic benefits.

One has to acknowledge that oil, coal, natural gas have been focal points of US policy in Bangladesh since the initiation of US-Bangladesh relations which was clear from the conversation between Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger on 30 September 1974 when the latter pointedly asked: "Is there coal in Bangladesh? Have you found oil? When you have the oil, perhaps we will borrow from you" (USDS, 1974). In addition, Bruce Vaughn (2010) in the report titled Bangladesh: Political and Strategic Developments and U.S. Interests notes that "American trade and investment interests in Bangladesh include developing natural gas reserves thought to be found in the Bay of Bengal off Bangladesh's coast".

Year	Total FDI in Bangladesh	FDI from USA
2005	845.3	141 .8
2006	792.5	175 .7
2007	666.4	120 .4
2008	1,086.3	40 .9
2009	700.16	42.89
2010	913.32	56.95
2011	1136.38	117.24
2012	1292.56	43.80
2013	1599.16	75.95
2014	1526.70	33.67
2015	2223.00	574.00
2016	2332.00	450.00
2017	2681.00	200.00

Table 2: US FDI Flows to Bangladesh (US $million), 2005-2017; Source: Bangladesh Bank (2010: 52)

In addition, the contribution of the Bangladeshi diaspora in US economy and development is notable. According to a recently published (July 2014) report, approximately 270,000 Bangladeshi immigrants and their children live in the United States and 84 percent of them are of working age (MPI, 2014: 1). The report also claims that the Bangladeshi diaspora population is better educated than the general US population and has a higher household income level, a median income of $54,000.3 Besides the Bangladeshi diaspora also adds cultural diversity in the American society. This contribution is also well recognized at policy level. For instance, President Bill Clinton during his visit to Bangladesh in March

2000 pointed out that "we are grateful for the Bangladeshi Americans who are doing so much to enrich and to enliven both our nations" (Transcript, 2000). Therefore, needless to say, economic dimension remains as a strong factor in Bangladesh-US relations.

GEO-STRATEGIC DIMENSION

Bangladesh had problems in delimiting its maritime boundaries with India and Myanmar which have been resolved peacefully. Water sharing disputes with India remain as one of the major concerns for Bangladesh, though it is expected that it will be resolved peacefully in the days ahead. Regarding Myanmar as an external threat, it would be better to have good relations with US which might be imperative in future in case any conflict occurring with Myanmar regarding border disputes. In addition, considering the growing maritime insecurities, having a strong maritime cooperation with the US would be imperative for Bangladesh which, of course, merits further study.

From the US perspective, considering the geo-political shift from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific region and particularly South Asia, geo-strategic dimension works as a key focus of US policy in Bangladesh. In fact, according to Aziz (1982: 218), "Although it is often said that the United States does not consider Bangladesh to be an important strategic area which may be partially true but not wholly." After almost three decades of that assertion, it might be claimed that this is not at all true in the current geo-political scenario since Bangladesh matters a lot in the geo-strategic consideration of the United States. This has clearly been reflected in 2012 Fact Sheet of U.S. Relations with Bangladesh prepared for the US Department of State. It has also been claimed that, "Bangladesh is a key U.S. strategic partner in South Asia. The country's efforts at development, countering violent extremism, assisting international peacekeeping, and improving regional connectivity are vital to regional and global stability" (USDS, 2012). Mozena (2013b) observed that "Bangladesh is a country that matters a lot to America and to the world." In addition, in a letter to members of Congress in May 2013, Mozena warned that "good relations with Bangladesh are vital to regional security and United States strategic interests" (See Urbina, 2013).

The geo-strategic importance of Bangladesh was also reflected in a 2010 Congressional Research Service report, entitled Bangladesh: Political and Strategic Developments and US Interests. It argued that "Bangladesh is a nation of strategic importance not only to the South Asian sub-region but to the larger geopolitical dynamics of Asia as a whole. Bangladesh has played, and will likely continue to play, a role in the shifting regional balance of power between India and China" (Vaughn, 2010). Hence, Bangladesh is of interest to the United States for the role it plays in the larger geo-political dynamics of South Asia.

In the post 9/11 era, fighting terrorism has been one of the major geo-

strategic concerns for the US. According to US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, "the United States plans to bolster its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region through alliances instead of new permanent bases" (Bangkok Post, 1 June 2012). Besides, the rise of China and its growing influence in the Asia-Pacific region has been a major concern for the United States. It has been argued that the United States and India have entered into a strategic partnership to contain China's expanding influence in Southeast Asia and the Pacific (Islam, 2012). Therefore, the geopolitical location of Bangladesh makes it desirable from the security interests of the US-India axis to take Bangladesh on board. In fact, the emerging importance of Bangladesh in the geo-strategic radar of US can be seen as being a littoral state on the border of Bay of Bengal which provides an easy access to and from Myanmar and to China's south eastern belly. As Clinton pointed out, "Security partnership between our two countries is very important to us both." Therefore, Bangladesh has emerged as a geo-strategically important country for the United States in the changing geo-political scenario in contemporary International Relations.

CONCLUSION

Through the historical navigation of Bangladesh-US relations, the paper has pointed out the shifting paradigms, foreign policy priorities, geo-political facets, and increasingly uplifted trade relations between two countries. In this circumstance, it ventures to argue that US-Bangladesh ties in the post 9/11 era is a win-win situation rather win-lose. It is also worth mentioning that the use of US favour in sustaining a particular regime, as General Ershad's government sought to do in 1980s, will be counterproductive. In this age of globalization, countries are coming out from the 19th century notion of sovereignty to the 21st century notion of interdependence. Hence, there is no alternative to further deepening Bangladesh-US relations based on shared interests, mutual respect, reciprocity and trust. In this regard, the remarks of President Clinton during his visit in Dhaka in 2000 is worth recalling. He said, "tomorrow the sun will rise on a deeper friendship between America and Bangladesh". It would be worthwhile to see the role of the Bangladeshi diaspora in USA in uplifting Bangladesh-US relations. Also useful would be the role of universities, academics and think tanks to continue analyzing Bangladesh-US relations.

NOTES

1. It needs to be noted that at that time it was known as TIFA (Trade and Investment Framework Agreement). Later, TIFA modified to TICFA (Trade and Investment Framework Cooperation Agreement). Notably, TICFA signed in November 25, 2013 and came into force on January 30, 2014.

2. Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) describes Transpacific Partnership (TPP) as "The Trans-Pacific

Partnership (TPP) is an ambitious, 21st century trade agreement that the United States is negotiating with 11 other countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region (Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam)".

3. About the education level of Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States, the report (MPI, 2014: 1) reveals that "diaspora members are more likely to have bachelor's degrees than the U.S. population overall, and they are more than twice as likely to hold advanced degrees".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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HEALTHCARE IN BANGLADESH: A ROADMAP TO ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Faisal M. Rahman

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is beginning to emerge from the poverty trap into a self-sustaining economic power much in the likeness of South Korea and Taiwan of the 1990s. Its population growth rate has levelled off, a new entrepreneurial class is beginning to take control of the economy and potentially it could join the ranks of the relatively more affluent Asian success cases like Vietnam and Malaysia. As the basic needs of the population are being met, healthcare is one sector whose needs are coming into focus.

The current status of Bangladesh healthcare may at best be described as confusing, chaotic and corrupt. Patients are served by a wide network of government and private hospitals, physician offices, outpatient surgery and diagnostics centers. Majority of these entities are private, for-profit and unlicensed. According to a recent study by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), these private entities operate on the basis of "commission-based marketing mechanism" where patients are referred from one entity to another for necessary and unnecessary tests and procedures for commissions. The TIB study goes on to say that this process helps everyone in the chain (physicians, facility owners and middlemen) financially with little or no regard for patients.

PUBLIC HEALTHCARE

Bangladesh Government operates healthcare facilities all over the country. These are largely characterized by absentee doctors, endless wait and unsafe clinical conditions. Many such facilities are considered the last stop before the graveyard. If you are willing to pay money, the same absentee doctors are available at private clinics in the evenings. Patients often have to purchase medicine at artificially high prices and it is not unusual that some of the medicines are not genuine. Approximately 30% of the patients are treated at government facilities and the rest are seen at private entities which number around 20,000.

One shining aspect of Bangladesh healthcare is its achievements in the area of public health, particularly compared to its neighbors Pakistan, India and Nepal. Even though it spends less than $50 per person

annually, it has the lowest infant mortality rate (3 per 10,000 births), highest vaccination rate (87% for children under 2 years of age), most extensive family planning network with over 60% of women using some kind of contraceptives as well as the lowest maternal mortality rate (190 per 100,000 live births). The remarkable success in this area is the result of the work done by NGOs (non-government organization, mostly non-profit) including the world's largest one – BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee). According to a featured article in Asian Scientist, "BRAC and other NGOs organized village schools and community healthcare, promoted vaccinations, family planning, tuberculosis treatment, and mother and child health." Interestingly these organizations focused on the country's "most disadvantaged groups – women and children, the poor and underdeveloped rural areas." The government did facilitate and stepped back from its usual obstructionist role in this sphere of activities.

MEASURING THE QUALITY OF HEALTHCARE

The quality of a healthcare system can be measured around three pillars – Access, Affordability and Accountability. While Bangladesh will probably get a failing grade in all three areas at the current time, it is possible to turn this around with creativity, investment and good governance.

Bangladesh is a small compact area with one of the highest density of population in the world. Currently there is an extensive network of roadways, waterways and railways for most people to get anywhere. The roads are poor compared to neighboring countries, traffic jams in the urban areas are legendary and scores of people die in various kinds of accidents. Despite that most people can physically go to a medical facility at a relatively low cost.

Affordability is a different matter. Quality care (which are available in a limited number of urban clinics and hospitals) are beyond the economic reach of the average person. The very rich and the desperate (who sometimes sell everything they possess to save a family member) often seek out quality care in neighboring countries of Thailand, Singapore and India. According to some estimates Bangladeshis spend more than $2 billion dollars annually on healthcare abroad. Majority of foreigners seeking healthcare services in India and Thailand are from Bangladesh. Singapore is also a favored location. The ultra-rich with complicated problems go to Europe (mostly UK) and the USA.

Accountability is almost non-existent in the healthcare sector. Most government operated facilities or the people working in them cannot be sued for malpractice. The 70% of population which seek medical help from private clinics and other medical facilities can get little relief from the corrupt judiciary. Medical licensing authorities are corrupt and accrediting institutions are at a nascent stage of development.

Interestingly enough, all of these problems were rampant in today's medical tourist centers like Bangkok, Singapore and India not too long ago. They found creative solutions with an interesting mix of initiatives from both private and public sectors with extensive assistance from non-resident physicians and medical experts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Here is a mosaic of ideas, which with appropriate effort and funding can change the landscape of healthcare in Bangladesh.

1. Bangladesh needs to produce more clinical support staff and physician extenders like Nurse Practitioners and physician Assistants. They are necessary for providing low cost care for routine sicknesses and preserving expensive physician time for diagnosis and treatment plan for critical and complicated patients. Most illnesses are routine, predictable and non-emergency. They can be treated by physician extenders. Large countries like China and smaller countries like Cuba have successfully provided basic care down to the village level through such people.

2. Technology has made it possible to provide more and more complicated surgery at the outpatient level at much lower costs. Routine surgeries like cataract to highly complicated ones like total knee replacement or total joints can now be done at the outpatient level. Bangladesh needs to build its healthcare network around outpatient (less expensive) facilities rather than the old model of building large acute care highly expensive inpatient hospitals. Technology can also be an inexpensive tool for patient to doctor and doctor to doctor communication without either person needing to travel. Similarly, Bangladesh healthcare can easily be connected with advanced healthcare facilities abroad through the internet and diagnosis and treatment plan can be reviewed by physicians from internationally of known medical facilities. There are also hundreds of physicians from Bangladesh origin who are practicing in world renowned hospitals in USA, Australia and UK. They are an untapped resource for Bangladesh. Many excellent hospitals in India including Escort group of heart hospitals were set up with the help of expatriate Indians. Some of these hospitals are today contracted with National Health Service in UK. British patients have the options to come to India accompanied by a relative to get open heart surgery with no waiting period as opposed to sometimes waiting for six months.

3. Costs of medicine – particularly newer discoveries – are almost prohibitive for average Bangladesh patients. Because the costs are so high, there is also a huge market for "fake" medicines. A radical solution would be for the Government to become the sole purchaser of medicines. This will enormously increase the leverage and power of the Government to negotiate and purchase most medication at a discounted price. The Government then can sell the medicine to healthcare providers

and patients at affordable prices and even subsidize it for people in the low-income category. If such a step is taken, the underground market for "fake" medicine will also disappear.

4. On the critical issue of transparency and accountability, multiple initiatives need to be taken-

a. All clinical facilities should be required to gather outcome data, report it to government and put them up in their websites. Such data compared to acceptable standards of care statistics will be revealing and the public will be able to come to their own conclusions. It will be the job of licensing authorities to verify and validate the statistics reported and posted by healthcare facilities and providers.

b. Accreditation – first voluntary and eventually mandated – is a necessary step to ensure quality of care and accountability. Organization like Joint Commission accredits healthcare facilities throughout the world. Diverse countries from China to Qatar have facilities which are accredited by Joint Commission. Government should promote development of accreditation bodies within the country and use its enormous power to encourage the larger facilities to seek Joint Commission accreditation. With Joint Commission accreditation, Bangladesh healthcare facilities could attract medical tourists just like Bangkok and Singapore.

c. Patients' rights are ensured through "right to sue" in the USA. Alternately in socialist countries like China and Cuba negligence by healthcare provider or facility is treated as a criminal offense. Bangladesh may choose a middle path but complete transparency of qualifications and outcome data of physicians and facilities will go a long way towards accountability through public disclosure.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

The ideas put forward in this paper are not necessarily original or unique but tested paths which can be emulated by Bangladesh. Towards that end enough public pressure needs to be created for the political parties to embrace access, affordability and accountability as the pillars for healthcare policy in Bangladesh.

NOTE

The primary sources of data cited in the article are primarily from Wikipedia (Health in Bangladesh), Why Private Health Care Is Failing (a publication of keephealthcare.org – February,2018) and Asian Scientist –December 2013). In addition, a large number of professional journals and international healthcare organizations' publications were reviewed. When necessary, the author updated the numbers based on more recent publications and historical trends.

'EVE TEASING'- A SCENARIO FROM BANGLADESH

Khandakar Josia Nishat Deborah B. Walsh and Heather Douglas

Women and girls throughout the world experience different types of violence in both the private and public sphere. This violence ranges from psychological torture to physical harm and has been found to be the leading cause of death and disability for women around the world (Duvvury, Callan, Carney & Raghavendra, 2013).

The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (General Assembly Resolution 48/104 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993).

Recent studies suggest that Bangladesh is one of the countries that has the highest number of incidents of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in South Asia (Rodriguez, Shakil & Morel, 2018).

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG) AND 'EVE TEASING'

There are different types of VAWG including, but not limited to: dowry killing, rape, acid attacks, physical and mental abuse, sex trafficking, abduction, sexual harassment and eve teasing are prevalent in Bangladesh. The World Health Organization defines sexual violence as 'any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting' (World Health Organization [WHO], 2002, p. 149). Sexual violence is an all-encompassing, non-legal term that refers to crimes like sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, and sexual abuse.

This paper considers an insidious and frequently fatal form of public sexual harassment referred to as 'eve teasing' and its recent rise in Bangladesh.

DEFINING 'EVE TEASING'

'Eve teasing' is a unique form of public sexual harassment perpetrated by men and boys towards women and girls in many South Asian countries including Bangladesh. 'Eve teasing' cases often lead to more severe forms of VAWG such as child marriage, sexual assault, rape and, murder. It has severe negative impacts on victim's health and well-being. It also leads many victims to withdraw from public life such as going to school or work and from being out in public and can frequently lead to the victims committing suicide (Nasreen, Alam, & Edhborg, 2016). Furthermore, incidents of 'eve teasing' may obstruct women's rights to access necessary services and their freedom to enjoy cultural and recreational opportunities and visit places freely.

In addition to 'eve teasing' violence against women in the family is also ignored as is discrimination against women in all aspects of life. As a result, women are subjected to different types of social, economic, and health discrimination and violence within the household, and in public. Although women constitute half of the population, and the Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equal rights for men and women in all spheres of public life [Article 28 (2)], in reality, this is in conflict with the fact that VAWG continues unabated (Hashmi, 2000)

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES TO CURB VAWG

In order to curb VAWG and to protect women, successive governments in Bangladesh have signed several international human rights treaties and conventions including the Convention on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1984, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1998, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 2000, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNCTOC) in 2011 and many other related treaties and conventions. Being a signatory of these treaties and conventions, the government has taken a number of legislative and administrative measures that legally bind Bangladesh to put their provisions into practice and these include - the 'Penal Code, 1860'; the 'Anti-Dowry Prohibition Act, 1980'; the 'Suppression of Immoral Traffic Act, 1993'; the 'Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance, 1976'; the 'Acid Crime Prevention Act, 2000'; the 'Acid Control Act, 2000' and the 'Prevention of Repression against Women and Children Act, 2000 (amended in 2003)'.

'Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance, 1976' was the first Act to address public sexual harassment of women and girls that directly addressed the issue of 'eve teasing'. This law envisages 'eve teasing' as a punishable offence with imprisonment of up to one year or with

fine up to two thousand taka, or both. However this law is applicable for only in metropolitan cities, not in non-metropolitan cities and not in rural areas. Indeed, until 2000 there was no nationwide law against public sexual harassment in general and 'eve teasing' specifically.

'The Prevention of Repression against Women and Children Act, 2000' was the first Act to define rape a bit more broadly and this Act for the first time included sexual assault and sexual harassment as punishable offences. However, this Act did not include the provision of criminalising marital rape. Other omissions of the Act included different forms of sexual assault and sexual harassment including sexual harassment in the workplace and, street harassment, namely 'eve teasing'. Thus 'eve teasing' continued to remain a legally vaguely addressed crime.

VAWG, 'EVE TEASING' AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PREVENTIVE LAWS

In spite of having several women empowering laws, there is evidence that more than half of ever-married women aged 15-49 experienced some forms of physical and sexual violence by their husbands between 2000 and 2003 (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise & Watts, 2005). Furthermore a report (2012) by Odhikar, a human rights organization in Bangladesh, shows that in a period of five years from 2005 to 2010, 1,257 women were killed, 348 women were tortured, 243 women committed suicide for dowry related issues, 526 women were victims of acid-attacks, and 1,598 children and 1,876 women were raped. In addition, in 2004 2,981 dowry related violence cases including wife battering and killing were filed; increasing to 4,563 in 2012 (Imam, 2016). A study on women's safety found that 43.33% of women surveyed have identified 'eve teasing' as one of the major constraints against their mobility in the streets (Akhter, Dhali & Haque, 2013). A report (2016) by ActionAid Bangladesh also made similar findings. This report reveals that 84% of all women commuters surveyed were subjected to verbal and physical sexual harassment, 62% of them restricted their movement and limited going out in public unless accompanied by a male, with 81% of them reluctant to report to the law enforcement bodies as they found the law enforcement bodies to be uncooperative and rude to the affected women (ActionAid, 2016).

LAW, SOCIETY AND 'EVE TEASING'

As previously stated 'eve teasing' is a unique form of public and mostly street-based sexual harassment. Its effects are such that it often restricts movements of women and girls. Fear of 'eve teasing' often compels them to withdraw from education, work and other activities that require venturing out.

The eve-teasers range from teenage boys to adult men; rickshaw-pullers, bus drivers to office supervisors or colleagues; road side construction workers and many other men and boys in public places (Nahar, Reeuwijk & Reis, 2013). This type of public sexual harassment goes on in front of witnesses with little interference.

In the worst cases, the experiences of 'eve teasing' lead victims to commit suicide. In 2002, the death of Simi Banu that attracted media attention was a result of continuous threats and stalking by local boys. Simi is not alone. Many other girls and women suffer from immense mental pressure and trauma from 'eve teasing' which often leads them to commit suicide (Nahar et al., 2013).

The government of Bangladesh has begun to try to address the issue. In 2010, it empowered the mobile courts to prosecute perpetrators of 'eve teasing' and punish them instantaneously with one year of imprisonment or a fine of five thousand taka or both. In 2011, the High Court banned stalking of girls and women and directed the government to consider 'eve teasing' as a form of sexual harassment. The court also made a provision to appoint specialized doctors to address the mental trauma experienced by victims. In addition the court ordered the government to set up a separate unit at every police station across the country to monitor and deal with stalking cases.

However, in spite of these preventive measures that the government has initiated lately, it has been observed that in practice there is very little implementation of these laws and provisions (Citizens' Initiatives on CEDAW Bangladesh, 2016). Some suggest that one of the reasons of difficulty of implementation of these laws these laws are somewhat vague and thus difficult to implement. Indeed, in spite of best of intentions these flawed laws ultimately prove to be of little benefit to protect women and girls against violence generally and 'eve teasing' in particular. For instance, in 'The Prevention of Women and Children Repression Act, 2000', article 10 states that teasing women through vulgar gestures and comments is offensive and the punishment would be rigorous imprisonment of three to ten years and a fine of an indefinite amount. However the amendment of the same Act in 2003 stated that no one would be charged with sexual abuse unless it is physical, therefore it making it difficult for the victims to prove non-physical sexual harassments on the streets as VAWG offense.

Furthermore, attitude of the law enforcement agencies such as the police is also often not that helpful. For example, when women report 'eve teasing' to authorities such as police, it has been found that it is the police themselves that continue to violate the rights of the woman and subject them to further harassment. For example, in the case of Amina who reported 'eve teasing' of her to the police, they instead

of nabbing and querying the perpetrator/s the police started to blame Amina, the victim asking her inappropriate questions relating to the manner of her conducts in public place.

Amina's case is a typical example of disconnect between law and reality. As a result, civil society groups point out that in spite of signing international human rights treaties and conventions, enacting laws and initiating gender empowering administrative measures, the incidence of 'eve teasing' is increasing rather than decreasing in Bangladesh. Statistical reports (2014) and (2015) by 'Ain o Salish Kendra' show that 146 women were victims of sexual harassment in 2014 rising to 224 in 2015. A number of cases have now been documented and publicised demonstrating how the victims of 'eve teasing' such as those of young girls such as Nurina, Elora, Trisha, Tonni, Swapna, Tithi and Rumi ultimately have had no option but committing suicide to escape from the shame of 'eve teasing'. Recently, a school girl named Risha, was killed by a man who was stalking her for a long time on her way to school and Tonu, a 19 year old college girl, was raped and then killed by stalkers when she was coming home from college one evening. Another recent news story published in a leading newspaper in Bangladesh, described how a female teacher who refused to consent to sexual overtures by a student stalker beaten her in the classroom of a village school in Chittagong (Rahman, 2017).

'Eve teasing' rampant but only few cases are reported. For example, even though actual number ought to have been much larger in 2010 only 216 women reported sexual harassment to police highlighting the disconnect between what occurs and what is formally reported and in the same year 28 girls committed suicide to escape from the harassment of 'eve teasing' (Odhikar, 2012). In most of the cases, perpetrators are rarely punished (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

'EVE TEASING': PERSPECTIVES OF THE VICTIMS

In the context of the complex socio-cultural, religious and governance framework within which the society operates, an on-going study on 'eve teasing' which is currently being undertaken aims to explore the issue from victim's perspective. The study has also attempted enquire from key stakeholders why they think 'eve teasing' occurs and continues. Further, the study is exploring whether victims have equal access to law; and whether the extent of government's affirmative action on inclusion of women at local government and other governance processes have had a positive effect in the implementation of laws on 'eve teasing'. Some preliminary findings of the study are presented below.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH FINDINGS OF PERSPECTIVES OF

THE VICTIMS

Preliminary research into the issues of VAWG aimed firstly, to understand the concept of 'eve teasing' mainly from the perspectives of the victims and secondly, what recourses, if any the victims of 'eve teasing' resort to, to readdress both the occurrence as well as the outcomes of the scourge? The research has also attempted to understand, again from the perspectives of the victims, the attitude of the society to the scourge.

A VICTIM OF 'EVE TEASING' SHARED HER EXPERIENCE:

"A man used to follow me on my way to work and one day he tried to touch me inappropriately. I tried to protest but the man remained undeterred. On the contrary, he accused me for 'defaming' him and tried to prove that I am a bad girl as I shout on the road"

She also shared some of her other experiences of 'eve teasing' that she went through since her childhood.

In-depth and frank interviews with a number of victims revealed that incidents of 'eve teasing' has serious impact on a woman's life. It causes mental trauma, it restricts their mobility and also it is a major threat to women's safety in public. Despite all these negative effects, the society has accepted 'eve teasing' as a daily phenomenon and treats it as a petty crime until it leads to rape, suicide or murder, abduction, acid throwing, or enforced marriage.

At the stage when 'eve teasing' is confined within verbal or limited physical abuse and at a stage when victims feel helpless and are vulnerable and thus need support and seek support from their family members and/or the community, they not only receive very little support but at times even blamed for being a target of 'eve teasing'. One of the respondents reported how her father reacted to her when she became a victim of 'eve teasing':

"I was walking on the road with my father and a passer-by threw a very bad and disrespecting comment at me. I tried to protest but my father restrained me from doing so. The people standing around us noticed what happened but no one came to help us and some were even laughing at us. I was so upset but my father blamed me for walking on the road carelessly. After that I never share such experiences with any of my family members."

Blaming the victims is one of the worst consequences of 'eve teasing'. The research has found that most of the respondents feel intimidated and thus are reluctant to share their experiences because of victim blaming. On the other hand, most of the government initiatives to

protect women against and to protest about VAWG appear to be virtually ineffectual. Moreover, the law enforcing agencies often neglect implement the laws and deny support to the victims. One of the victims reported:

"The police box was near me and a police man in the box who was on duty noticed the crowd that threatened me. I was asking for help but he overlooked and did not come to help me. We cannot rely on the police for anything."

Some of the other respondents/victims also shared their unwanted experiences from the police and much worse, a victim and her family reported how they faced range of harassments while they filed their case with the police. In most of the cases they don't get appropriate support. Police however claim that their ambivalence is mainly because of vagueness associated with the difficulties of proving 'eve teasing'.

SHALISH

The research has found that the situation is much worse in the rural areas. The overall social and legal support especially the rural informal justice system is unfavourable to women. Because of physical distance and also because of costs involved in most of the rural cases women don't have and/or do not access the state justice system that are located in towns. They depend on the local and community justice system which is called 'shalish' in Bangladesh operated by the local elites and politically influential people who are also predominantly male. Most of the people who operate 'shalish' have no knowledge about law and precedents. Therefore this out of court arbitration system rarely brings justice to women. Moreover, in the worst cases, 'shalish' compels the victim to marry the perpetrator. A rural respondent shared her experience:

'It happens very frequently in our area, the shalish committee arranges a settlement between victim's family and perpetrator's family. If any serious crime such as rape or physical harassment happens to the victim, in most of the cases the perpetrator promises in front of the shalish to marry the victim, it is regarded as a kind of saving that victim or her family from the social disgrace."

On a positive note however, the younger generation in Bangladesh are much more aware of the ill effects of 'eve teasing' than the previous generations They have initiated several campaigns and conducted organised protests against such incidents through social media, organizing human chains on the streets and other measures that are pertinent to issues associated with lack of public safety. They also regularly, communicate to the authorities this dreadful form of VAWG and press them to take actions. Many women groups such as Shokti,

Women For Each Other (by WSIF) and few others are working actively in protesting against and protecting women from 'eve teasing', giving support to the victims and also spreading awareness among the society against 'eve teasing'. These initiatives explain in part, the reason why in comparison to previous years there has been an increase, in recent times, reporting of 'eve teasing' cases. This is a positive development.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IDEAS

Bangladesh has signed a number of international human rights treaties including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and done well to realize most of the goals especially the goal of gender development (male/female equity in school enrolment). Bangladesh has also committed itself to the 2015-2030 'Sustainable Development Goals' that include among other goals, the Goal 5 which is explicit about reduction of VAWG .

As has been evidenced through the field study that in spite of several legal and administrative measures taken by the government VAWG is very much prevalent in Bangladesh and 'eve teasing' and its dreadful effects continue to hurt and haunt women especially young girls, almost on a daily basis. From the field research it became evident that even though government has enacted several preventive VAWG laws and has put in place a number of women empowering administrative measures, corruption, deficits of rule of law and indeed, prevalent attitudes, norms and public apathy to the issue facts on the ground are anything but encouraging. These gendered initiatives have been encouraging but inadequate and/or lacklustre implementation of these laws and administrative measures have failed to give desired results. Furthermore, as has been stated earlier that some of the laws are vague and thus are difficult to implement. Another major weakness in addressing the issues of VAWG and 'eve teasing is that while there are several provisions to prevent the scourge, there is virtually no provision to protect and nurture the victims of VAWG/ 'eve teasing'.

Presently, except for some limited NGO initiatives there are no noteworthy provision for counselling and rehabilitation of victims of VAWG including 'eve teasing'. This an area that warrants much attention.

In addition, since most of VAWG including 'eve teasing' occur in rural areas, where a non-formal and male and village elite dominated unregulated Shalish system arbitrates outcomes are rarely just. Shalish judgements often are biased and favour the perpetrators and not the victims. Therefore, there indeed is an urgent need to reform the Shalish system including the need to impose stricter oversight to ensure proper dispensation of justice within the parameters of existing laws.

Finally, norms, values and attitudes of the society as a whole also play a key role the way VAWG including 'eve teasing' issues are addressed. In Bangladesh values and attitudes are biased and gender unfriendly. More gendered education and advocacy accompanied by enabling laws and administrative measures and post-VAWG 'eve teasing' counselling and rehabilitation of victims, the way forward.

In sum, multiple initiatives are needed to address the scourge of rising spectre of VAWG and 'eve teasing in Bangladesh– firstly, greater clarity and specificity in the laws; secondly, transparent and accountable implementation of the laws; thirdly, integrating rural Shalish system with formal justice system; fourthly, raising public awareness and finally, making provisions for addressing post-violence trauma and depression

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NEW ENVIRONMENTS/ENDURING POLITICS: CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION, GENDER, AND NEOLIBERALISM IN BANGLADESH

Amy MacMahon

INTRODUCTION

The threat of climate change is expected to impact the lives and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of people in Bangladesh, due to sea level rise, changes in rainfall patterns, cyclones, storm surges, and impacts on livelihoods. Those who live in coastal areas and are poor or disadvantaged, including poor women, are considered particularly vulnerable. However, climate change sits alongside a range of other social and environmental challenges. The vulnerability of people in the coastal Southwest lies at the intersection of global and local political economies - colonisation, globalisation, capitalism and neoliberalism - that have altered the environment and created enduring poverty. Within Bangladesh, the discourse regarding climate and environmental change acknowledges Bangladesh as being a victim of climate change. The country has not been a major producer of carbon emissions; yet it is now highly exposed to the consequences. The Government of Bangladesh has maintained that those countries responsible for climate change should be responsible for financing adaptation and support. Bangladesh is also noted as a world-leader in climate change adaptation. Non-government organisations (NGOs), government agencies, United Nations (UN) agencies and communities are pursuing a wide range of adaptation initiatives ranging from technocratic infrastructure responses, to community-based farming initiatives.

However, adaptation is not a politically neutral project. As Carr (2008) argues, adaptation initiatives can at times persist because they fit within established power structures.

Adaptation initiatives are influenced by, and often reproduce, existing patterns of power and resource distribution. Gender relations, neoliberalism, and fossil fuel-based capitalism have influenced the practice and outcomes of adaptation - or maladaptation - in Bangladesh. However, climate change provides "a distinct moment of challenge to established values and organizational forms that embody power relations" (Pelling, 2011: 95). Adaptation needs to address underlying social and political inequalities, triggering processes for in-depth social change. I draw here on my doctoral research in the

Southwest region of Bagerhat (MacMahon, 2017), as well as broader research from Bangladesh.

Vulnerability at the Intersection of Global and Local Political Economies

The environmental challenges facing coastal Bangladesh are not the benign or apolitical results of natural environmental variations. Rather, they are the outcome of global political economics, manifested through domestic and regional policies. Coastal communities are exposed not only because of their proximity to a coastline accustomed to storms and cyclones, but also because of agricultural policies and interventions that have crafted Southwest region as a site of export-driven agrarian change. The "commodification of subsistence" (Bernstein, 2010: 49) had drawn communities into export-driven modes of production, re-shaping livelihoods, landscapes and agrarian relationships. The political ecology of the region has been affected by the Green Revolution, with the introduction of high-yielding and modified crops requiring fertilisers and pesticides. Dams, polders and other coastal infrastructure designed to extend land for farming, have disrupted hydrology. The Farakka Barrage, a dam in India in the 1970s to maintain the Kolkata Port, has significantly altered the hydrology of river systems in the east of the country, and limited the flow of fresh water. The proliferation of salt-water shrimp propagation in the region has encouraged a build-up of salinity. Salinity of groundwater and soil now stretches up to 100 kilometres inland, further contributed to by storm surges which have pushed sea water upstream.

On top of these challenges are the impacts of climate change, with evidence of changing rainfall patterns, changing seasonality and increasing temperatures. These changes are exacerbating pre-existing social and environmental challenges, acting as a 'magnifying glass' for existing local issues, producing regional environmental challenges that cannot be addressed at the village level alone. However, there is a tendency among government agencies and NGOs to decontextualise, and 'depoliticise' (Paprocki, 2015) the environmental changes taking place in the Southwest by focusing on climate change as an external, global issue, without recognising the local interactions leading to vulnerability. In failing to take local environmental contexts into account, and broader social and structural issues, adaptation responses run the risk of becoming 'maladaptation'.

ADAPTATION REINFORCING NEOLIBERALISM

In my own fieldwork in the Southwest, I observed a range of community-based and farm-based adaptation initiatives being pursued, some autonomously by communities, and some with the support of NGOs. The predominant focus on small-scale, family-based initiatives revealed a trend towards the individualisation and

'neoliberalisation' of resilience, whereby the responsibility of the state is diminished, with a focus on creating resilient individuals at the expense of collective action (Tierney, 2015). This limits efforts to address the broader structural and political issues that have produced vulnerability.

The majority of the initiatives observed were focused on individual farms or homesteads, with a view to improve family income and farm productivity, including the use of adaptive crops, household livestock and poultry, alternative livelihoods and microcredit for shrimp farming. These individualised initiatives place responsibility on farmers to adapt to environments degraded by political forces beyond their control. These initiatives also do little to address the deeper structural mechanisms behind vulnerability, either socially or environmentally, making small scale adjustments to farming that are likely to be overwhelmed by the anticipated impacts of climate change. There are already examples of this – in areas affected by cyclone-induced storm surges, salinity levels have outstripped the capacity of salt-tolerant crops (Warner et al., 2012). This suggests that adaptation needs to go beyond reactive responses at the individual family or farm level.

An overwhelming focus on income further reflects the neoliberalisation of adaptation. Poverty is a key factor contributing to the vulnerability of affected communities. However, a focus on poverty and income alone is insufficient (Parvin & Johnson, 2015). Small-scale initiatives can help to make modest improvements to family income and food security, but often overlook underlying causes of poverty. In addition, the costs associated with adaptation initiatives including the use of adaptive seeds, can further limit the capacity for these initiatives to address poverty on any significant scale. Small improvements to family income, that put the responsibility for responding to environmental change with families, can only go so far within a constrained social, political and economic system.

There are also questions regarding the capacity of small-scale schemes to address significant and unknown future risks. The long-term implications of climate change require long term planning, consultation and implementation is rarely evident from NGOs or government agencies. Precarious economic conditions – such as families who rely on annual microcredit loans, or families recovering from past natural disasters – mean that families are unable to put aside resources for potential future challenges. While certainly not universal, a lack of knowledge on the ground regarding the global causes and implications of climate change, both among farmers and government officials, can mean that communities are unable to position themselves in a process of long term change and risk.

Adaptation requires going beyond individualised improvements to income and farming practices, toward creating equitable structural

environments within which affected communities are able to achieve their rights. This requires collective, rather than individual, responses. Revitalising underutilised Disaster Management Committees at the local level may open opportunities for information gathering, collective action and participatory democracy, making use of established government structures to link farmers and communities, and to link communities to higher levels of government.

ADAPTATION REINFORCING TOP-DOWN DEVELOPMENT

Alongside these small-scale initiatives, there is ongoing evidence of a commitment among governments and NGOs to pursue technocratic, top-down responses that overlook past environmental damage. This included continued NGO and government support for salt-based shrimp farming, hybrid and modified crops and large amounts of climate funding going towards embankments. These initiatives can be seen as examples of climate policy being used as justification to extend the commodification of the Southwest, drawing power and resources away from affected communities, and further degrading environments. Such initiatives also ignore the historical environmental damage caused by embankments and shrimp farming.

While certainly not universal, there is also some lack of knowledge and education regarding the causes and implications of climate change on the ground. In the villages that I visited between 2014 and 2016, only a handful of farmers could describe climate change, despite a number of NGOs conducting climate-related projects in these villages. This deficiency was contributing to views among government officials and academics that NGOs are using climate change as a tool to gather funding, without any meaningful discussions, consultation, community engagement or research happening on the ground.

The major policy document, the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP), largely overlooks local environmental changes, and included commitments to embankments, infrastructure and salt-based aquaculture. The Plan had not been written for the use and engagement of citizens and the civil society - many local government officials are not aware of the policy, nor many farmers, and the policy has not been translated into Bangla, rendering it useless on the ground.

Combatting top-down, centralised approaches requires recontextualising understandings environmental change. The in-depth knowledge that communities have around the historical and political roots of environmental change could be engaged in advocacy efforts around salinity, water and land rights at the local level. Translating the BCCSAP into Bangla, in order to help facilitate NGOs and other organisations to engage in meaningful conversations, is also urgently needed.

ADAPTATION REINFORCING GENDER INEQUALITY

The gendered impacts of environmental change are well-known, and women's experiences of environmental change are rooted in gender and class expectations around labour and access to resources. In the rural Southwest, women's roles and responsibilities around water, domestic and caring work are putting women in direct and regular contact with degraded environmental resources. With much groundwater in the Southwest affected by salinity, women are investing more time in collecting water, and making judgements around the quality and safety of water used for drinking, cooking and watering homestead gardens. Conversely, men's roles are affected by the availability of water used for crops and irrigation, which is the case for much aquaculture production, which requires salty water. Fluctuations in salinity are therefore having contradictory impacts on men and women. The introduction of short, fast-growing, hybrid rice varieties is putting pressure on women's homestead food production, limiting the availability of straw for livestock. There is also ongoing evidence of seasonal hunger, and women continuing to eat last, opening risks to women's own health in order to maintain that of their families. Without sufficient social safety nets, some families had been forced to pursue harmful coping mechanisms, undermining their resources or options for the future, such as single women arranging early marriages for their daughters or removing children from school.

As such, adaptation required tacking broader gendered inequalities. However, many small-scale initiatives are reproducing existing unequal gender relations in the home and in the fields, by relying upon established divisions of labour and power. The gender focus within microcredit administration, for example, with evidence of NGOs requiring women to gather the approval of their husbands before securing credit. This privileges men and men's work, perpetuating established perceptions around the limited capacity of women as productive members of the community. Without meaningful access to credit that women themselves can control, adaptation options for women are further limited. An NGO led sunflower project observed in Bagerhat had excluded women from training, despite women being responsible for daily watering and weeding of the sunflowers. Home-based handicrafts and poultry-rearing projects were perpetuating notions around acceptable work for women. In the case of one handicrafts project observed in Bagerhat, an NGO had withheld pay from women, and provided no training for them to access markets or supplies without the support of the NGO. As such, these small-scale, home-based initiatives had contributed little to alleviating poverty. Rather, these initiatives were resulting in the perpetuation of the unequal gender relations.

There is widespread evidence of women actively engaging in work typically considered the domain of men, with women engaging

both in on-farm and off-farm work when it was necessary for family livelihoods. However, despite widespread evidence of this 'feminisation', new roles are often not leading to wider changes in expectations around roles and relations, nor expanded access to land, credit, mobility or income. Expectations that women's employment will lead to increased agency is not being realised. New material realities are not enough to create radically new power structures – rather, adaptation initiatives are maintaining unequal material relations across families and communities.

Adaptation needs to actively address gender and social inequalities. Providing women with access to social safety nets would open opportunities for education and experimentation and would help families avoid harmful coping responses such as early marriage. This needs to be accompanied by reforms to local governance to overcome barriers to women's participation, to empower women as political actors and centre women's knowledge.

ADAPTATION ALONGSIDE COAL

The Rampal Power Plant, managed by the 'Bangladesh-India Friendship Company', will be a 1320 MW plant, situated just 15 kilometres away from the World Heritage Listed Sundarbans Mangrove Forest. The project has been opposed by environmental groups, particularly given the impact the plant will have on the Sundarbans. Communities living near the plant are already experiencing the impacts of climate change and are being encouraged by NGOs and the government to pursue small-scale adaptation. In addition, they will soon also be facing the immediate and long-term environmental impacts of a coal-fired power plant. This could be seen as a kind of 'climate doublethink', representing the propensity of governments, in the face of the serious existential risk of climate change, to continue to pursue technologies known to be harmful. Despite the ethical, moral and historical arguments around the urgent need for electrification, Bangladesh is a world-leader in rooftop solar.

The Rampal Power Plant is already curtailing the capacity of people to pursue farming livelihoods and adaptation. A number of nearby villages have been affected by the construction of an access road to the plant, with many families losing farming land. People in these villages have reported intimidation, corruption, a lack of consultation, and insufficient compensation for acquired land acquired. The plant will expose the region to pollution, and likely further industrial expansion into farming areas.

A pattern of recursive exploitation - whereby emerging middle-income countries create new patterns of exploitation, as they outsource to countries poorer than themselves - is now forming between India and Bangladesh, as well as China and Bangladesh. The exploitative

relationship between India and Bangladesh, particularly with regards to natural resources, can be seen with regards to water sharing and the Farakka Barrage; in the violent policing of the India/Bangladesh border and the construction of physical and electronic fences surrounding Bangladesh; and now in the Rampal Power Plant. As a further example, Chinese investment is behind at least half a dozen coal-fired plants in Bangladesh (Islam, 2018).

CONTEXTUALISING ADAPTATION FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

Climate change adaptation offers the opportunity for structural, transformative change - Klein (2014: 34) argues for the "revolutionary power of climate change", with the capacity for resources and efforts needed to address climate change simultaneously addressing poverty and inequality. However, effort needs to be invested in ensuring that adaptation initiatives aren't re-creating existing power structures, as documented here – gendered inequalities, neoliberalism and centralised decision making - which run the risk of maladaptation. There is also a need to embed climate change responses in both local and regional political contexts, acknowledging the interactions between economically-driven agrarian change, and the impacts of climate change. For the Southwest, there is an urgent need for re-negotiation regarding the Farakka Barrage transboundary water sharing agreement, to ensure water security in the region, through the creation of a binding treaty (Khan, 2012). Pursuing clean and renewable electrification, that doesn't compromise local environments and adaptation efforts, is also urgent. There is also the crucial question of loss and damage, with the risk that in some areas, we have reached the limits of adaptation. It may be the case that some areas are facing ecological collapse, and these environments may no longer be able to support agriculture or communities. In addition, there are worthy questions around compensation that Bangladesh is owned as a result of a history of colonisation and extractive globalisation (Paprocki, 2015).

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Section Three: Governance, Politics and the 2018 Election

BANGLADESH: MUTATION AND RESILIENCE OF A HYBRID REGIME

Ali Riaz

INTRODUCTION

Since the controversial non-inclusive 2014 Bangladesh General Election, many observers have been wondering whether democracy in Bangladesh was on backslide (Millam, 2014; see also, Riaz, 2014a). Almost four and a half years later with another impending election at the end of 2018 or early 2019 and given ruling party's fondness for exclusion and not inclusion as its governing principle one can respond with certainty that the worry has come to pass. Bangladesh's current state of governance is described as 'authoritarian', where the government is "hounding of the opposition' and 'a pervasive feeling that the ruling AL government has assiduously subverted democratic norms and institutions" (Chakravarty, 2018). Therefore, 2018 may be the most consequential about the future trajectory of democracy. The transformation of the governance of Bangladesh, from a hybrid to an authoritarian regime, is palpable as the incumbent has established its firm grip over the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The space for dissent has shrunk remarkably. Except for few individual dissenting voices civil society as a group has either been coopted or intimidated to play any meaningful role in governance. Media is either restrained through covert coercive means or have adopted a high degree of self-censorship.[1] The main opposition political party is almost decimated through judicial and extrajudicial measures.[2] The handmade parliamentary opposition, has distinguished itself as being both a partner in the cabinet and in the opposition at the same time, something that is unique in the parliamentary history around the world, making Bangladesh's 'democracy' and its 'opposition' objects of much ridicule (Dhaka Tribune, 27 February 2018).

The mutation of the governance in Bangladesh, particularly since 2008, is important both at the empirical and theoretical levels. At the practical level, the question is: where will the country go from here? At the theoretical level, it shows that institutional arrangements within hybrid regimes are not immutable but can move further away from their democratic pretense.

In the past years, Bangladesh had been an example of having both democratic and authoritarian elements of governance concurrently. Bangladesh was not an outlier but part of a global trend. The Janus-faced political system, i.e., concurrently having democratic and authoritarian elements of governance is not new,[3] but they used to be an aberration

rather than a norm. In the past decades, this kind of system has become pervasive4 and continued to grow. This system of governance - described as hybrid regime - has received considerable attention from political scientists since the 1990s. The question which received little attention, however, is how the hybrid regime sustains.

WHAT IS THE HYBRID REGIME?

The central thrust of Samuel Huntington's (1991) argument of a third wave of democracy was born out by a number of countries that had abandoned autocratic systems of governance and moved towards some form of electoral system between the mid-1970s and mid-2000s,5 but by then it also became evident that, in some instances, the transition process from an autocratic regime to a democratic regime was stalled before consolidation. In many instances, the stagnation was by choice.

Extant definitions of various forms of government were inadequate in capturing the nature of these new varieties of governance. This prompted describing the emerging forms with various adjectives; for example, 'semidemocracy', 'virtual democracy', 'electoral democracy', 'pseudodemocracy', 'illiberal democracy', 'semi-authoritarianism', 'soft authoritarianism', and 'electoral authoritarianism' (Levitsky and Way, 2002). Larry Diamond (2002) described them as 'hybrid regimes'. The essential characteristic of a hybrid regime is that it is a mixture of institutional features of democracy with features of an autocracy. This system of governance is described as a regime because it represents a "more permanent form of political organization"6 than a government and both formalized and informal government institutions and norms are important in understanding this new system of governance.7 Hybrid regime is neither a subtype of autocracy nor of democracy but a regime type on its own; these regimes are not to be confused with regimes in transition (Diamond, 2002). In the discussions of hybrid regimes, transition was presupposed as transition to democracy, thanks to the teleological bias of the democratization literature, ignoring the possibility that that it could rather be the reverse: descending into authoritarianism. There is no single archetypical institutional arrangement within hybrid regimes, instead they are often sui generis to each country (Robertson, 2010, pp. 4-6).

BANGLADESH: FROM ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY TO AUTHORITARIANISM

The system of governance that emerged in 1991 at the beginning of democratic transition after almost two decades of civilian and military authoritarianism in Bangladesh had all the hallmarks of electoral democracy.8 Drawing on an agreement reached during the pro-democracy movement (1982-1990) among political parties of all persuasions – from right-wing Islamists to left-wing Socialists and all parties in-between - a system of fair election was established ; a competitive multi-party system

with almost equal opportunities for all parties came into existence, and an independent judiciary was promised. The most significant step was reintroduction of the parliamentary system in 1991. It stripped the President of unrestrained power, but also created the opportunity for amassing power in the hands of the Prime Minister.

After the first inclusive election, the opposition party was unwilling to play by the rules, which unfortunately continued in the subsequent rounds of elections although the roles of two parties - the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)- reversed every five years (Schaffer, 2002). The trust deficiency among major political parties, especially BAL and the BNP, engendered acrimony, street agitation and violence, and the incessant wrangling among these two parties made the parliament dysfunctional. The incorporation of the caretaker government in the constitution in 1996 to ensure credible elections reflected the trust deficiency but allowed establishing a system of peaceful transition. Nevertheless, the formal democratic institutions began to lose its importance. Regular elections between 1991 and 2001, which allowed alteration of power between the BNP and the BAL, held under caretaker governments remained the only effective democratic institution (Riaz, 2014b).

Instead of consolidating of democracy, building democratic institutions, creating ways for vertical and horizontal accountability, and ensuring space for dissent, an all-powerful 'Prime Ministerial System' was created (Molla, 2000, p. 10), and incumbents practically institutionalized a neopatrimonial system of governance where corruption became endemic. Neopatrimonialism, a system where patrons use state resources to secure the loyalty of clients in the general population, became the defining feature (Islam, 2013). Major political parties, which remained undemocratic and mostly dynastic (Riaz, 2010; Amundsen, 2016), were the vehicle for accruing power and wealth. This vitiated the entire administrative and political structure and 'partyarchy', that is partisan control of all institutions, became the rule of the game (Hassan, 2013).

These tendencies of the political parties, which produced an intolerant political culture, resulted in a gradual tilt towards authoritarianism. In previous decades, along with a de facto two-party system, a vibrant civil society became a prominent actor in the socio-political arena. By the beginning of the fourth decade of independent Bangladesh, what became the defining features of governance were "rhetorical acceptance of liberal democracy, … (and some) political space for political parties and organizations of civil society to form, for an independent press to function to some extent, and for some political debate to take place", the key features of a semi-authoritarian regime, according to Marina Ottaway (2003). The competition of two parties with each about 40 percent of popular votes9 as their base, became more vicious and the use of state power to persecute opponents through judicial and extrajudicial manners became the norm. Due to the competitive nature of politics,

Bangladesh's semi-authoritarian system of governance took the shape of competitive authoritarianism. "In competitive authoritarian regimes, formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority. Incumbents violate those rules so often and to such an extent, however, that the regime fails to meet conventional minimum standards for democracy" (Levitsky and Way, 2002, p. 52). In these kinds of situations elections become a high-stakes event, because "the legitimacy of policies enacted by the ruling party solely comes from its victory in elections—whether the elections are fair or not" (Kilinc, 2017). The BNP's efforts to manipulate the caretaker government system to influence the election results in 2006 and the efforts of the BAL to stop it on the track testify to that.

It is against this background that the 2008 election was held after two years of military-backed caretaker government's rule. Armed with a two-thirds majority in the parliament the Awami League and its allies removed the caretaker proviso from the constitution in 2011 which means that elections will be held under the incumbent party. It turned the country into an electoral authoritarian regime: "Electoral authoritarian regimes play the game of multiparty elections by holding regular elections for the chief executive and a national legislative assembly. Yet they violate the liberal-democratic principles of freedom and fairness so profoundly and systematically as to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule rather than 'instruments of democracy'." (Schedler, 2006). As such, the 15th amendment of the Bangladeshi constitution was neither a response to the abuse of the caretaker system by the previous government or the Supreme Court's verdict as the ruling party claimed, but a way to make the elections ineffective. The controversial 2014 election did exactly that. The decision of the BNP and other parties to boycott the election was expected by the regime. The failed violent movement to halt the election by the BNP, and its alliance with the Islamist party Jaamat-i-Islami,10 played into the hands of the ruling party. But they should neither undermine the facts that the regime was already mutating and that structurally the election was designed to favor the incumbent. The 2014 election was the most consequential election in the history of the country in this regard (Riaz, 2015). Ironically it had the lowest voter turnout, and more than half of the members of the parliament were 'elected' unopposed.

Many argue that the ninety-one days of violent movement of the BNP in the wake of the first anniversary of the election is to blame for the plight of the opposition. The strategy and tactics of the BNP during the 2015 movement which cost at least 138 lives and an economic loss of $2.2 billion cannot be condoned, but it appears that the government's policy to use heavy-handed measures against the BNP was made well before the movement commenced; Zafar Sobhan predicted in a commentary on 1 January 2015, that "There can be only One." Sobhan wrote: "2014 marked the end of the compact of co-existence that was forged between the AL and BNP at the end of the 1980s, and that has provided the pattern for the past quarter century of political life. ... The gameplan for the ruling AL

is clear. … The AL plan for the coming year is therefore straightforward: Continue to squeeze the life out of the BNP" (Sobhan, 2015). By May 2016, the Strategic Forecast identified one of the two trends that will shape the future Bangladesh in "its descent toward single-party authoritarianism" (Strategic Forecast, 2016).

SUSTAINING HYBRID REGIME: THE BANGLADESH EXPERIENCE

Extant literature on the durability of hybrid regime have clearly established that while hybrid regimes are more prone to political instability compared to autocratic and established democracies (Epstein et al, 2006), they are neither inherently unstable nor are they less durable compared to other regimes. From 1972 to 2010, 66 hybrid regimes have lasted at least 10 years; and 22 endured more than 20 years (Gagné, 2012). The resiliency of these regimes has generated studies on the conditions for regime durability. In agreement with Letvitsky and Way, and Ekman, I argue that three arenas are crucial for the maintenance of hybrid regimes: the electoral arena, the executive and legislative arena, and the judicial arena (Ekman, 2009; Levitsky and Way, 2002, p. 52). I also argue that the state's mobilization capacity is crucial for the durability of hybrid regimes.

The electoral arena serves as the foundation for the other two arenas. Political scientists tend to consider two roles of elections in non-democratic countries: regime-sustaining and regime subverting (Grishin, 2015). But in the case of hybrid regime the election serves several purposes. They include gaining both domestic and international legitimacy, strengthening existing patronage networks and managing elite relations (Morgenbesser, 2014), displaying government's invincibility (Beatriz, 2006), and relieving popular discontent (Brumberg, 2002). These make the election a necessity for the incumbent, contra closed authoritarian regime, but the regime also wants to remove any uncertainty about the results. This is behind the temptation to manipulate the election. The level of manipulation depends on the strength of the opposition political parties and civil society. The records of hybrid regimes show that electoral manipulation has been both blatant and stealthy; constitutional measures have often been used by the regime. The BAL government's insistence on conducting the 2014 election as a constitutional necessity stems from these roles of the election. But the situation was blemished by the 15th amendment of the constitution in 2011 and appointment of a subservient election commission. The politicization of administration, although not new in Bangladesh, reached its zenith before the election was scheduled. The failure of the opposition parties to devise an effective strategy to stop this on track helped the incumbent.

As for executive–legislative relations, weak and ineffective parliaments serve the purpose of the regime. The Bangladesh parliament since 1991 had limited effectiveness, thanks to repeated boycotts by opposition members, constitutional provisions limiting the independence of the

members (Article 70), and the structure of various oversight committees; yet it did provide a semblance of check on the executive. But with the 10th parliament elected in 2014 which essentially had no opposition party, the thin line between the executive and legislature is completely blurred. The rampant use of coercive apparatuses and allowing the blatant abuse of various restrictive laws such as Article 57 of the Information and Communication Act (and the Digital Security Act approved by the cabinet) made the situation worse.

Subordination of the judicial arena is a prerequisite for the maintenance of the hybrid regime. Levitsky and Way (2002, p. 52) argue that this is often done by bribery and extortion, and, if possible, by appointing and dismissing judges and officials. According to Brown and Wise, institutions such as the supreme court or constitutional courts tend to function not only as arbiters of constitutionality and legal principles but also as advocates of the current regime (Brown and Wise, 2004). This is true for any hybrid regime; the removal of the Lord President (the highest judicial figure) of Malaysia by Mahathir in 1988, and curtailment of power of the Venezuelan Supreme Court under the Chavez government (1992-2012) (Urribarri, 2011) are cases in point. The 16th Amendment of the Bangladesh Constitution passed by the parliament in September 2014 which has empowered the parliament to impeach judges of the Supreme Court for incapability or misconduct falls within this kind of effort. The insalubrious rhetoric of the ruling party leaders after it was struck down by the High Court (May 2016) and the Supreme Court (July 2016) is indicative of the mindset to establish complete control over the higher courts. This is what led to the 'resignation' of Chief Justice S K Sinha, who also left the country. Similarly, retaining the power of appointment, administration and removal of lower court judges in the president's hands as opposed to the Supreme Court through the Bangladesh Judicial Service (Discipline) Rules 2017 contravenes the spirit of the separation of executive and judiciary.

While establishing control over these three arenas are essential, the ruling party's ability to mobilize its supporters is the key. As elites of hybrid regimes do not enjoy monopoly over the streets, "rulers in contemporary hybrids have to be creative in order to find ways to mobilize support." In case of post-communist Russia, 'shadier organizations' like Nashi, Molodata Gvardia were created by the regime to "dominate streets" and "seize political initiatives away" from anti-government social and political movements (Robertson, 2010, p. 31). In Bangladesh, in the past years, independent civil society organizations and movement have been decimated, and a concerted effort to demean intellectuals and members of the civil society is palpable. The obliteration of civil society organizations was made possible by decades of politicization and fragmentation of many organizations and labor unions by various political parties, particularly the BAL and the BNP. Additionally, the regime has 'creatively' coopted any grassroots movements: the Shahbag movement in 2013 is a case in point (see, for details, Zaman, 2016). A spontaneous movement

alleging leniency to the war criminals by a special tribunal appointed by the government was transformed into a pro-government movement. The ruling party showed aptness in coopting the conservative Islamist movement named the Hefazat-i-Islam. The selective use of religion, as predicted by the Strategic Forecast in 2016, has increased in the past years to boost support for the regime. The phrase 'spirit of liberation', meaning of which remains unclear and continually shifting at the will of the ruling party supporters, has been used as a tool for mobilization and differentiation. A false dichotomy has been created between democracy and development with a preference for the latter by regime supporters to justify the democracy deficit.

Ekman, in his study of three hybrid regimes - Tanzania, Russia, Venezuela - found "a weak or ineffective political opposition" and widespread disillusionment with politics as enabling forces (Ekman, 2009). The lack of unity among opposition parties, absence of a clear direction within the BNP and the growing apathy towards politics warrants mention as an example of these elements in Bangladesh case.

THE TRAJECTORY: MARCHING TOWARDS AN AUTHORITARIAN REGIME?

The question now is: where does the nation go from here? The events of past years reveal the incumbent's penchant for force as the principal means of governance; the state of politics and society indicates that the incumbent's goal is more than a simple status quo but establishing its unbridled control over the future course of politics for an indefinite period. As in other hybrid regimes, "[T]he opposition is [being] suffocated by the ruling party who accuse them of being traitors, disloyal, oligarchic etc… whereas the supporters are enlivened with social programs or lucrative business contracts." (Kilinc, 2017). These are the signposts on the road to authoritarianism. In this scenario, rulers in hybrid regimes expect that "Deprived of any kind of means and platforms to express itself, the opposition [will succumb] into vegetarian life, as if it is a body still alive yet dysfunctional" (Ibid).

But a principal dilemma for hybrid and authoritarian regimes alike is conducting an election. Contested elections provide legitimacy but also create political uncertainty that can threaten the incumbent's ability to stay in power (Petrov et al, 2014). Thus, the goal has been elsewhere and will be in Bangladesh in 2018 to have an election which provides no viable option to the electorate. This is why the nature of the 2018 election will have a lasting and determining effect on the trajectory. This is not to suggest that a fair, inclusive and acceptable election will be enough to reverse the course towards authoritarianism. Restoration of fundamental democratic rights such as freedom of expression and assembly, ending impunity to extrajudicial killings, establishing accountability, and strengthening institutions of checks and balance are key to halting the slide. However, the path to democracy goes only through a meaningful

participatory election.

NOTES

1. Mahfuz Anam, the editor of the largest circulated English daily The Daily Star, who is facing 84 legal cases, confided "I'm at a very high level of self-censorship" (Steven Butler, 'Bangladesh's press say they are losing the courage to report amid threats from all sides', CPJ Blog 13 February 2018. Justin Rowlatt ,'Attempt to crush independent media" in Bangladesh,' BBC News, 18 February 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35594968.

2. The Secretary General of the main opposition party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), claimed that between 2007 and January 2018 a total of 50,074 cases have been filed against BNP leaders and activists, and that 733 leaders and activists were killed during the period (Prothom Alo, 'Mamla Ponchash Hajar, Asami Baro Lakh: BNP', 25 January 2018. BNP chief Khaleda Zia is facing additionally 34 cases in addition to her sentencing of five years of imprisonment in graft case in February 2018.

3. Samuel Finer's typology of world's government in 1970 included façade democracy (Samuel E Finer, Comparative Government, London; Allen Lane 1970, pp. 442).

4. The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index show that in 2017, 39 out of 167 countries of the world fall within this category, up from 30 countries in 2006. About 16.7% of global population live under hybrid regime, up from 10.6% in 2006; whereas only 4.5% population enjoy full democracy, down from 13 percent in 2006. (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 'Democracy Index 2017: Free speech under attack', https://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=DemocracyIndex2017)

5. In 1973 slightly more than a quarter of countries could be categorized as democratic. In 1980 the share was about one third, in 1992 about half, and three fifths by 2000. The wave reached its peak in 2006 when about 64 per cent of all countries (123 out of 193) w ere described as democracies by the Freedom House (Freedom House, Freedom In The World 2013: Democratic Breakthroughs In The Balance, Washington D.C: Freedom House 2014, pp. 29)

6. According to Fishman (1990), "Rethinking State and Regime: Southern Europe's Transition to Democracy", World Politics, Vol. 42, No. 3, 1990. pp. 422-440. "A regime may be thought of as the formal and informal organization of the center of political power, and of its relations with the broader society. A regime determines who has access to political power, and how those who are in power deal with those who are not. Regimes are more permanent forms of political organization than specific governments, but they are typically less permanent than the

state. The state, by contrast, is a (normally) more permanent structure of domination and coordination including a coercive apparatus and the means to administer a society and extract resources from it".

7. For an extensive discussion on definition and characteristics of regime see, Skaaning (2006).

8. The defining characteristics of the electoral democracy, as described by the Freedom House, are following: "A competitive, multiparty political system; Universal adult suffrage for all citizens (with exceptions for restrictions that states may legitimately place on citizens as sanctions for criminal offenses); Regularly contested elections conducted in conditions of ballot secrecy, reasonable ballot security, and in the absence of massive voter fraud, and that yield results that are representative of the public will; Significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open political campaigning" (Freedom House, 'Methodology', Freedom in the World 2012, https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2012/methodology).

9. For election results between 1991 and 2001, see Ali Riaz, Bangladesh: A Political History. London: I B Tauris, 2016, Appendix 4, pp. 241.

10. The JI opposed the founding of Bangladesh during the war of independence in 1971. Some of its leaders have been convicted by the International Crimes Tribunal established by the BAL in 2010, and five leaders have been executed between 2013 and 2015. The party has been deregistered by the Election Commission in 2013.

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FROM MARGINAL TO MINIMAL LEGISLATURE: DEVELOPMENT OF PARLIAMENT IN BANGLADESH (1991 – 2018)

Nizam Ahmed

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh has a 350-member unicameral parliament called Jatiya Sangsad (JS). Of the total members, 300 are elected on the basis of adult franchise from an equal number of territorial constituencies for a maximum period of five years, while the remaining (50) seats are reserved for women which are allocated to different parliamentary parties on the basis of their numerical strength in the House. Notwithstanding differences in their mode of election, the two categories of Members of Parliament (MPs) enjoy almost similar privileges, with the exception that the reserved seat women members are not entitled to constituency development funds probably for the main reason that they do not represent any territorial constituency. The number of reserved seats has increased over the years from 15 in 1973 to 30 in 1979, to 45 in 2004 and to 50 in 2009. But the number of general seats has remained the same – 300 – although the number of population has increased from 75 million to nearly 170 million during the same period. The formal scope of power of the JS has not changed substantially over the years. But the way different JSs have exercised such powers has varied substantially, with those elected since the beginning of a new democratic 'era' in 1991 appear to be more assertive than their predecessors. Some of these parliaments have introduced several reforms that have the potential to improve the status of the JS from a legislature with no effect (minimal legislature) to one having the capacity to affect policy outcomes (marginal legislature).

According to Mezey, a marginal legislature enjoys modest policymaking power but is a less-supported institution; while a minimal legislature enjoys little or no policymaking power but is a more supported institution. Using the case example of Bangladesh, a marginal legislature may be redefined as one which possess a modest policymaking power and enjoys strong public support, while a minimal legislature lacks both – policymaking power and public support. A minimal legislature also lacks legitimacy up to a certain extent; its activities mostly remain unnoticed. A marginal legislature, on the other hand, scores better than the minimal one in terms of public perception of its role and also its ability to affect policy outcomes. In both respects, a marginal legislature outweighs its minimal counterpart. Besides, party competition is also an

important variable determining if a legislature can be called marginal and/or minimal. For a legislature to be categorized as marginal, a certain measure of party competition is to be recognized as a necessity. Without such competition, legislatures cannot expect to be able to influence policy outcomes and encourage public interest in elections and in the governing process. On the other hand, a lack of party competition not only causes decline of public support for a legislature; it also reduces the capacity of the legislature to influence policy outcome

The main objective of this article is to explore the development and decline of the Parliament of Bangladesh. The time period chosen (1991-2018) is significant for several reasons. For example, most of the parliaments elected during this period differ from their predecessors in several respects. Not only have they provided a means of transition from authoritarianism to democracy; they have also adopted several measures aimed at redefining relations between the executive and legislative branches of government. Theoretically, these were likely to upgrade the status of parliament. But before these measures were institutionalized, the parliament witnessed a major crisis, leading to its suspension for two years and in course of time emerging as 'minimal' institution now lacking power to affect any government action. What account for changes in the status of the JS from one spectrum to another will be the explored in this paper.

BACKGROUND

The JS in Bangladesh predates similar bodies in many countries of the world. However, notwithstanding its long existence, the JS has yet to emerge as a central institution capable of exerting strong policymaking influence both for its structural deficiencies as well lack of public support for it. None of the four parliaments elected in the first two decades of independence (1971-1990) could complete its full term. Nor did any one enjoy the legitimacy needed to become effective with the exception of the first JS which enjoyed legitimacy but remained mostly ineffective because of the lack of representation of the opposition in the House. It was essentially a 'one-party' parliament. On the other hand, most of the parliaments elected since the beginning of the 1990s have survived longer and have apparently better public support, measured in terms of electoral turnout, than their predecessors. These have enjoyed greater legitimacy than those elected before the 1990s; all except two of the [six] elections held during the period were considered to be free, fair and impartial. In contrast, all [four] elections held during the first two decades of independence were rigged. Table 1 provides a summary account of the basic statistics related to the election of parliament in Bangladesh.

As evident from Table 1, the fifth and seventh parliaments were more competitive than the others; this competition turned out to be beneficial

from several standpoints. Besides encouraging the evolution of a two-party system, with the Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) alternating in state power, and also making parliamentary proceedings lively and attractive, inter-party competition influenced the revision of rules of procedure of parliament, leading to the introduction of several measures on the basis of consensus with a view to bringing parliament within public domain and making it assertive and important. Such consensus was, however, short-lived. Break-down in agreements began to emerge since the beginning of the election of the eighth parliament and the scope for political reconciliation gradually decreased and reached its zenith during the elections to the tenth parliament (2014-) when the main opposition—BNP—boycotted the polls, thereby making the tenth parliament a one-party legislature. More importantly, the nature of public support to the parliament also declined; candidates in more than half of the constituencies were elected unopposed. The consequence is that much of what happens in parliament now does not attract any public attention. Although the (10th) parliament meets regularly and carries out its functions routinely, no one takes notice of what occurs on the floor of the House. The press and the 'informed' public do not accord the importance to it the way they did in the past. In contrast, activities of the fifth, seventh, eighth and ninth parliaments received special public and political attention.

Parlia-ment	Ten-ure (in months)	Turnout in elec-tions (%)	Party-wise distribution of MPs and votes (%) (N=300)				
			AL	BNP	JP	BJI	Others
Fifth (1991-1995)	56	55.4	29.3 (30.1)	46.7 (30.8)	11.7 (11.9)	6.0 (12.1)	6.3 (15.1)
Seventh (1996-2001)	60	74.9	48.7 (37.4)	38.7 (33.6)	10.6 (16.4)	1.0 (8.6)	1.0 (4.0)
Eighth (2001-2008)	60	74.8	48.7 (37.4)	20.8 (40.2)	4.7 (6.5)	5.7 (4.2)	4.7 (6.8)
Ninth (2009-2013)	60	86.3	76.6 (48.1)	10.0 (32.4)	9.0 (7.1)	0.6 (4.6)	3.8 (7.8)
Tenth (2014 –)	Current	NA*	78.0	Did not contest	11.33	Did not contest	10.67

Table 2: Party performance in different parliamentary elections (1991–2008); Source: Ahmed (2011); Bangladesh parliament (http://www.parliament.gov.bd).

Notes: Figures in parantheses indicate the percentage of votes polled by different parties. Figures without paranthses indicate percentage of seats secured.

*No reliable statistics on the rate of electoral turnout exists. More than half of the candidates were elected unopposed.

DEVELOPMENT OF PARLIAMENT

One of the important characteristics that separate the new parliaments (those elected in the 1990s) from their predecessor is that these could be labelled 'reforming' parliaments. These have introduced a series of substantive and procedural reforms, the most important of which was the restoration of the parliamentary system of government based on consensus in 1991, thereby resolving one of the major issues that separated the AL and BNP which together claim four out of five voters in the country. Another major contribution was the introduction of a new measure – the provision for non-party caretaker government (NPCG) - aimed at ensuring an orderly succession of government. Traditionally, elections held under party governments were alleged to have been rigged. The introduction of the NPCG system, which barred the caretakers or members of the NPCG from taking part in the elections and/or becoming members of any political party, was intended to ensure consensus on the process of regime change. Since caretakers did not have any stake in elections, these were likely to be free, fair and impartial. Both these reforms were likely to herald the beginning of a new democratic era. Attempts were made to make parliament the center of politics, if not policy. The parliament passed a law in 1994 providing for setting up an independent Parliament Secretariat; earlier, the national Secretariat controlled its activities. Measures were also taken to bring parliament within the public domain by making provisions for broadcasting/telecasting parliamentary proceedings live on national radio/TV. In fact, the Bangladesh Parliament now has its own dedicated television channel.

A number of measures were also introduced to reform parliamentary procedures with a view to keeping the members of parliament (MPs) busy and helping parliament redefine its relations with other branches of government, particularly making the executive accountable for its actions. The main reforms included the introduction of the provision for prime minister's question time (PMQT) once a week, the provision for brief unscheduled debates at the end of each sitting day and the reorganization of the committee system. Substantial changes were made in the composition, functions and powers of committees. Ministers were replaced as chairs of different standing committees on the ministries (SCMs) by backbenchers; while the SCMs were given the power to inquire into various lapses of ministries these shadowed. In addition, a new convention of referring bills to SCMS has also emerged. Now almost all bills are referred to committees for review after the first reading. Experience shows most committees prepare reports on the basis of consensus and what is important to note is that   different ministries/ministers very often accept recommendations made by the committees (Ahmed, 2016). These reforms and 'conventions' were worth-noting for two reasons: first, these are considered as indispensable for making the government liable for its actions; and second, these reforms survived changes in government, implying that there exist(ed) substantial political consensus on them. Many of these reforms have survived until today although their overall impact is much

less evident now as there is no effective opposition in the House. All MPs belonging to different parties contested the tenth elections as part of the AL-grand alliance (formed before elections) and were committed to similar politics and programs. The few 'independents' who were elected to the tenth parliament were essentially 'rebel' Awami Leaguers.

The beneficial effects of the various reforms are widely evident. In almost every respect the parliaments elected in the 1990s outweighed their predecessors. MPs elected in the 1990s had a different kind of experience than those elected in the past. They had the opportunity to have greater involvement in the legislative process. As almost all bills were referred to committees, members had an opportunity to investigate details of the laws. Members also routinely recommended amendments to different bills; only a few bills were returned to the House without any proposal for amendment. Ministers also were found routinely accepting recommendations incorporated in different committee reports. This change in attitude is quite significant. Rarely did any minister in the past agree to any proposal for amendment of bills on the floor of the House. Legislation was considered to be a monopoly of the government. Now the situation has changed. In particular, government backbenchers who were denied any scope to take part in the legislative process in the past can now express their opinion freely in committees. Committee members also now have the opportunity to grill ministers and bureaucrats as their mandate now extends to scrutinizing almost every aspect of a ministry's activity.

Evidence shows that the SCMs have met frequently and explored issues that have strong implications, especially from standpoint of making the government accountable. These committees have routinely formed subcommittees to inquire into allegations of corruption in different ministries and submitted reports to parliament on a regular basis. Committees have general competence power in this respect; they do not have to seek permission from government or others, a power that many parliamentary committees in the west, for example, Australia, lack. Even committees in India lack this power; they can deliberate on issues referred to them by the House or the Speaker. The Bangladesh parliament thus remained an exception in several respects. These reforms, which enthused the MPs as well as outsiders, had the potential of making the parliament at least a marginal, if not policy-influencing legislature – a legislature that can modify or reject measures brought forward by the executive but cannot formulate or substitute policies of its own (Norton, 1984). Through making the best use of their power to scrutinize legislation, policy and expenditure of different ministries, the SCMs could actually affect policy outcome, at least up to a certain extent. Pubic support to the legislature also was widely evident. Nearly four out of five voters voted in the elections. Such a widely public-supported institution plunged into crises in course of time and declined to a minimal institution.

DECLINE OF PARLIAMENT

Theoretically, the various measures initiated to reform the parliament have the potential to making it an effective body. In practice, much of this potential remains untapped mostly because of the refusal of the two main parties – AL and BNP – to abide by the rules of the game. The rules require that while the government be given the chance to govern, the opposition be allowed opportunities to oppose. The rules further require that some basic issues such as the system of

government and the mode of the succession of government remain outside party political fight. Evidence shows that agreements between the two in the initial years of the democratic rule could be seen as an exception. The two remain at loggerheads; one seeks to prosper at the expense of the other. The scope for partisan mutual adjustment is virtually non-existent. The abolition of the NPCG system following the Supreme Court verdict that it was unconstitutional actually closed any prospect of inter-party cooperation. In particular, the decision of the AL to ignore the Supreme Court observations that the NPCG system could survive ten more years should the main parties wanted it separated the two further and induced them to pursue different paths. Breakdown in consensus on the mode of succession of government lies at the heart of political conflict. BNP and its allies actually boycotted the tenth poll in response to the refusal of the AL to hold it under NCPG. There are several other reasons that account for a lack of cooperation between the two main parties. These have been explored elsewhere.

Suffice it to note here that although the parliaments elected since 1991 have survived longer, their outputs remain far from satisfactory. The parliament does not meet very frequently. The average number of sitting days per year (75) is exceedingly low; as also is the average length of each sitting day (3.32 hours). In both respects, the parliament of Bangladesh lags far behind other parliaments. The number of laws passed per year is very low. Nor do the various techniques used to exercise oversight over government operations appear to be very effective; these do not produce effective outcomes (Ahmed, 2014). Besides, partisanship reigns supreme over the behaviour of members. This particularly characterizes the Prime Minister's Question Time (PMQT). Those raising questions during PMQT often do it more to attack the opposition than to require the Prime Minister to account for her actions. Moreover, the latitude given to the Prime Minister to select questions is likely to make the PMQT a mere 'tamasha' (fun). More importantly, the Leader of the Opposition in successive parliaments in Bangladesh has never attended the House during PMQT. Members of the AL, the main opposition in the eighth Parliament, did not attend any sittings when the Prime Minister answered questions.

In fact, one of the important reasons accounting for the ineffectiveness of the JS is tendency of the opposition in successive parliaments to stage frequent walk outs and boycott parliament sittings, many of which were unnecessary. As Table 2 shows, walkouts and boycotts continued to increase with the election of each parliament. The duration of walkouts and boycotts ranged from few minutes to several months. In the context of the infrequent meetings and limited sitting time and the decision of the leadership to boycott the proceedings, the level of activism of the JS declined considerably. Rather than providing a check on wrong-doing by the government, the JS, in effect, rubber-stamps measures brought forward by the executive. It has, in effect, become an extended agency of the government. However, none of those boycotting the parliament ever surrendered the privileges and facilities to which they were entitled. When the opposition MPs including the leader of the opposition (in the seventh, eighth and ninth parliaments) risked losing membership of parliament for their unauthorised absence, they joined the House for a brief period to retain the title of the MP. Holding the title of MP is now considered to be an important asset that no lawmaker is ready to lose; every MP is thus keen to retain the title at any cost. This reveals the extent of importance the politicians attach to the institution of parliament, probably more for self-preservation than for its institutionalization.

Parlia-ment	Number of Walkouts by					Total Walk-outs	Opposition Boycott of Proceedings	
	AL	BNP	JP	JIB	Others		% of to-talsitting days	Boycott of sittings by Opposition Leader
Fifth	36	-	27	13	55	131	33.8	66.0
Sev-enth	-	60	2	17	-	79	42.7	93.0
Eighth	74	-	7	-	23	104	59.8	88.0
Ninth*	-	18	-	18	-	36	79.9	98.0

*Table 2.1: Statement of Boycotts and Walkouts; * Until March 2013; Source: Ahmed (2002, 2013).*

CONCLUSION

This paper has reviewed the process of development and decline of parliament in Bangladesh. Notwithstanding the introduction of several measures to improve its capacity to affect policy outcome, the JS in Bangladesh remains a minimal institution. Probably the main reason is the lack of agreement of the two main parties which have ruled Bangladesh in succession for the last quarter of a century on the basic rules of the game, especially rules that relate to the succession of government. Experience, however, shows that the parliament could not function properly even when consensus existed on the rules. The main problem thus lies in the behavioral orientation of the main parties which find each other not only as an adversary, but also as an 'enemy'. In fact, as long as this enemy discourse in Bangladesh politics survives, there will be little scope for the institutionalization of parliament and democratic consolidation in the country. It is anticipated that with a new parliament in place after the next elections, the legislative process will be strengthened making the deliberations of parliament more effective and meaningful.

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LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH: PROGRESS, PITFALLS AND POTENTIALS

Ahmed Shafiqul Huque and Pranab Kumar Panday

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh will complete fifty years of existence as an independent country in 2021, and there are several accomplishments to be celebrated. After experiencing intermittent phases of military, single-party and democratic rule, the country has settled into the mould of a parliamentary democratic polity with opportunities for regular and peaceful transfer of power. It is claimed that the economy of Bangladesh has registered unprecedented progress over a long stretch of time, the incidence of poverty reduced, and the net of social services extended to cover a large number of the population. Enrollment in schools increased, foreign direct investment is flowing in, and the country boasts a healthy currency reserve. A major event has been the elevation of Bangladesh from the ranks of 'low income' to the next level of 'lower middle income' countries.

At the same time, Bangladesh has been plagued by numerous political, social and economic problems. Political tension between the leading political parties has created a divide across the society and intransigence precluded the possibility of establishing a sustainable political framework for governing. Huge sums of money have been siphoned out of the banking system and had to be subsidized from the public exchequer. There is increasing tension over law and order, the justice system, and violation of human rights. Crime and corruption has escalated rapidly, and the social fabric has been stretched to the limit, creating concern over a potential breakdown.

While these paradoxical circumstances herald the potential for progress, they also raise alarms over governance in Bangladesh. Interestingly, governance is an overused rhetoric that features in the discourse by the government, donors, development agencies, civil society and even the citizens in general. Good governance emerges as the potential solution to all the problems as well as a tool for ensuring justice, fairness, equity and rule of law in Bangladesh. This article examines the role of local institutions in contributing toward good governance to assess the progress made since Bangladesh emerged as an independent country. This will help identify obstacles and pitfalls encountered in the process and highlight potentials for the future. The main objective is to identify problems and determining priorities as Bangladesh moves into the third decade of the twenty-first century following general elections in the year 2019.

LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNANCE

How can local institutions in Bangladesh contribute to governance? First, governance relates to "the process by which governments are selected,

monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them" (WGI 2015). Secondly, governance involves establishing rules for a community, making alternative decisions for the community as a whole, settling conflicts over the rules, and mediating in disputes between individuals and groups (Stoker 1998). Finally, governance is "the art of steering societies and organizations" (Schacter 2000, 3).

Bangladesh is a unitary state composed of divisions, districts and sub-districts, municipalities and city corporations, with unions at the lowest level. The country is governed through a unicameral legislature that guides public polices through a wide network of bureaucratic agencies. In this context, local institutions have practically no scope to establish a framework of governance and operate independently of the influence of the overwhelming national government. Moreover, governance cannot be explained or assessed in isolation from the performance of the key national institutions in the political system. Therefore, this discussion concentrates on the progress achieved and pitfalls faced by local government institutions as contributors to the state of governance in Bangladesh. In a unitary state, local institutions have limited scope to contribute to governance. They assist with scope for citizen participation, articulation of needs and demands of the local population and provision of a limited range of public services. Policies can be formulated and implemented to respond to the needs of citizens through effective local institutions that can contribute to quality of public services and promote local development (UNDP, 2009).

Local institutions have limited authority and jurisdiction that do not allow them to make substantial contribution toward governance. The success of governments in maintaining law and order and providing acceptable levels of public services "is critical for performance legitimacy and survival of regimes" (Huque 2016, 22). Besides, the dismal experience of the Structural Adjustment Programs promoted by the World Bank brought to the fore the issue of quality of institutions (Baimyrzaeva 2012, 52). Hope (2002) views good governance "as the existence of accountability, bureaucratic transparency, the exercise of legitimate power, freedom of association and participation, freedom of information and expressions, sound fiscal management and pubic financial accountability, respect for the rule of law, a predictable legal framework encompassing an independent and credible justice system, respect for human rights, an active legislature, enhanced opportunities for the development of pluralistic forces including civil society, and capacity development".

Local institutions in Bangladesh have limited authority over specific areas and have to function along with field offices of the central government. Obviously, most of the items in Hope's list are beyond the jurisdiction of local institutions. However, there are some avenues for ensuring accountability, transparency, scope for participation, freedom of information and expressions, and opportunities for developing pluralistic forces. The following section reviews the current state of local institutions to determine their role in attaining these objectives. Progress has been achieved in enhancing citizen participation in various local institutions and this was

aided by legislations as well as increased awareness among the public. There is much room for improvement in balancing authority and power between the central government and local institutions and enhancing skill and capability among the officials.

LOCAL INSTITUTIONS IN BANGLADESH: PROGRESS

The Constitution of Bangladesh emphasizes that citizens should directly participate in the formation and management of local institutions. There has been definite progress with electoral participation. Voter turnout has increased dramatically since Bangladesh came out of military rule in 1991. 83% and 81.9% voters cast their vote in the union council elections in 1997 and 2003 respectively (New Network, 2003). The Local Government (Union Parishad) (Second Amendment) Act, 1997 introduced direct elections to the seats reserved for women, and approximately 45,000 women competed for 14,000 seats in the inion councils (Panday, 2008, 494-497). A post of women Vice Chair in the sub-district council was established through the Upazila Parishad Act, 1998 (Amendment) Act, 2009, along with the continuation of reservation of seats for women as members. Additionally, one third of the seats were reserved for women in municipalities and city corporations (Panday, 2017, 181).

The establishment of community health clinics and incentives for enrolment in primary schools has helped improve the quality of service at the local level. Adoption of the Right to Information Act and establishment of information portals in unions and sub-districts brought facilities closer to the citizens. Citizens are able to access public services with less complexity, and increased participation helps, however limited, to make their input to ensuring accountability and transparency. Remarkable progress in communication technology and a robust economy helped integrate most of the citizens to the mainstream political and economic structure.

LOCAL INSTITUTIONS IN BANGLADESH: PITFALLS

The spirit of deconcentration and delegation remain as the main principles of administration in Bangladesh. The central government retains control over local institutions through various means, depriving them adequate power for making decisions even on local issues. In spite of delegation of power to act on certain matters, local institutions are restrained through procedures and requirements for approval that make them accountable to local field offices of the central government.

Local institutions in Bangladesh are entrusted with the responsibility of carrying out a number of development functions. Many of these functions such as education, public health and social welfare that are within the jurisdiction of local institutions are administered by units of the central government. This overlap affects the ability of local institutions in implementing of development projects. Furthermore, the relationship between elected representatives and field level officials of the central government are not clearly defined. Consequently, local institutions fail to exercise power over regulatory administration, and cannot function effectively (Panday, 2011, 218).

Bangladesh inherited and continued with a system in which the central government holds a dominating position. This authoritative relationship pattern created scope for government officials, including the Deputy Commissioner, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), and heads of district and sub-district administrative units to control the local institutions. In addition, the government uses legal provisions and frequently issues circulars to control their activities, conduct inquiries, and even suspend their operation. For example, the budget of the Union Parishad requires final approval from the UNO before implementation.

Local institutions in Bangladesh have always suffered from scarcity of financial resources. They are empowered by legislations to mobilise funds locally from a number of sources, such as tax, lease of market and water bodies, fees for license and trade, but most local institutions perform very poorly in mobilizing local resources (Huque 1992, 344-49). The union council receives 50 percent of the revenue earned from the lease of rural markets, the central government takes 25 percent, the sub-district 10 persent, and the market's share is only 15 percent to be used for maintenance. Elected representatives are reluctant to generate revenue by increasing taxes as this may affect their chances of being re-elected (Panday, 2011, 219-220).

Despite efforts by donors, non-governmental organizations and the government, the level of knowledge and skills of the officials of local institutions remain inadequate. They appear to have no understanding about the complicated tasks of planning, budgeting, and management of resources (Ahmed 2016, 45-46). Similarly, most vice-chairmen displayed a lack of understanding of the role and functions of the committees (Panday and Islam, 2016, 10-13). Therefore, lack of capacity of officials is a major obstacle to the effective functioning of local institutions.

There are several platforms, such as the Ward Shava (WS) and Open Budget Meeting (OBM), for facilitating citizen participation in the governing process of the union councils. However, the state of active participation by citizens is far from satisfactory. Most of the UPs hold WS and OBM for the sake of compliance only, and there is no spontaneous participation. Absence of citizens in the governing process has created the risk of neglecting the poor and marginalized sections of the society (Panday and Rabbani, 2011, 304-306).

PRIORITIES AND POTENTIALS FOR PROGRESS

Keeping in mind the constraints under which local institutions operate, it should be possible to identify areas of priority and find potentials that could strengthen local institutions for contributing to governance in Bangladesh. It may be noted that several legislations have been introduced for making local institutions inclusive, transparent and accountable. Several recommendations are presented to lead to this end.

Separate frameworks of laws for various local institutions result in an overly complex governing structure, functional overlap, unclear central-local and local-local interactions, and confrontational relationship with the local bureaucrats who seek to exercise domination over the elected

bodies (Rahman and Ahmed, 2015, 16). This makes the situation immensely complex in which local institution leaders are unable to comprehend their respective roles and responsibilities. The main problem is not the existence of different levels of government and non-existence of distinction between urban and rural government. The problem arises because there is no coherent legal framework for guiding the functional responsibilities of different local institutions for ensuring that each tier of government performs their own functions effectively (Ahmed, et al, 2015, 179-180).

Local institutions do not have an established method and strategy for making budgetary allocations. Although they receive development and revenue grants from the central government, the amount is barely adequate for meeting the expenditure for performing their tasks. There is a need to develop a consolidated grant system for channeling adequate financial resources to local institutions.

The performance of local institutions is affected by inadequate number of personnel available to them. Departments that have the authority to serve in the unions and sub-districts have adequate personnel to comply with the legal provisions of the act. The Upazila Parishad (Amendment) Act, 2011 and the Union Parishad Act, 2009 provided for transfer of 17 departments to the sub-district and 13 offices at the union level, but these changes have not yet been implemented (Panday and Islam, 2016, 10-11). The deficit in personnel affects performance. Legal reforms are required to provide more personnel to the local institutions. This would require at least two full time staff along with the secretary of union councils, and aa secretary and an assistant accounts officer for the sub-district (Rahman and Ahmed, 2015, 22).

In Bangladesh, lack of capacity of elected representatives and their associate staff in local institutions is a matter of concern (Panday, 2011, 220). Capacity development initiatives are undertaken in a piecemeal manner by the government, non-government organizations and donor agencies, and it remains as a major challenge for the effective operation of local institutions. Comprehensive capacity development initiatives should be arranged for leaders of local institutions immediately after their elections.

Several reform bodies have recommended an independent commission or committees to be entrusted with the task of making periodical reviews of local institutions and offer guidance. The first Local Government Commission was formed in 2008, but it did not continue beyond 2009 as the ordinance was not ratified by the newly elected government within thirty days of the first session of the Ninth Parliament (Rahman and Ahmed, 2015, 17). Strengthening local institutions entail the establishment of a permanent local government commission in the country.

THE WAY FORWARD

Local institutions in Bangladesh experienced periodical changes, although the drivers for the initiatives are difficult to determine. In spite of the need to establish the institutions as self-reliant entities, they turned out to be mere extensions of the central government. The failure to create adequate space for citizens to participate in the governing process is a major obstacle,

but it is changing slowly. Excessive control of the central government over the local institutions rendered them weak with low institutional and financial viability. The drivers for change were mainly political, and the central government used reforms as a mechanism to shape these bodies for strengthening the support base of the ruling elites at the local level (Huque, 1988, 173-176). With scarcity of skilled personnel as well as material and financial resources, governments were unwilling to take the risk of decentralization. Additionally, the central government found it "essential to retain effective control over the localities through local councils and their leaders" (Huque, 1986, 90-91).

Effective democratic consolidation requires local institutions that are accountable to the central government as well as citizens. The Constitution of Bangladesh specifies a clear separation of power between the central and local governments. In spite of this stipulation, regimes in Bangladesh did not uphold the real spirit of decentralization at the local level that is required to empower people for monitoring and controlling their constituencies.

Decades of reforms, experimentations and efforts to establish an effective framework of local institutions have not succeeded. However, the prospects are good as democratization is gradually consolidating and the forthcoming elections will provide an opportunity to rethink and strengthen the local institutions in order to allow them to perform and fulfill expectations of the citizens. An effective Parliament will be critical for deliberating and deciding on balancing power and responsibilities and building a network of national and local institutions that can promote good governance with optimum participation of citizens. Performance legitimacy will be ensured when local institutions partner with the central government to ensure the values of good governance with provision of acceptable level of public services to their constituents.

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TOWARDS INCLUSIVE CITIES IN BANGLADESH: ARE POLICIES SUFFICIENT TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVENESS?

Kazi Nazrul Fattah

INTRODUCTION

In 1961, less than three million people in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) lived in urban areas. By 2011 this number had increased to more than 43 million showing nearly 1,600 per cent growth in the country's urban population. Dhaka is now one of the megacities (i.e. city with a population of more than 10 million) flourishing in the global South. According to United Nations' projections Dhaka will become the sixth largest city in the world by 2030 with an estimated population of 27.4 million. Historically across the world urbanization has been associated with economic growth and poverty reduction, and enhanced living standards through greater access to healthcare, higher education, and social services. Similarly, in Bangladesh very rapid urbanization has been one of the key drivers of growth, especially in the past two decades. With urban areas accounting for nearly 60 per cent of the country's GDP, urbanization is well likely to be one of the most important factors in Bangladesh's expected shift from a lower middle-income country to a middle-income country in the coming decade (Rahman, 2012). Several reports indicate that the accelerated growth needed for Bangladesh to become a middle-income country by 2021 requires creation of globally competitive urban spaces that foster productivity and innovation, connectivity, and liveability (World Bank, 2010; Muzzini and Aparicio, 2013).

Despite its significant contribution to national GDP, urbanization in Bangladesh so far has been largely unregulated and accompanied by increasing poverty, inequality, and diminishing quality of urban life. All major cities in Bangladesh including Dhaka and Chittagong are characterised by high levels of urban poverty, over-crowding, poor quality of housing, inadequate service delivery, underdeveloped and inefficient transport infrastructure, environmental degradation, and increasing crime and violence. This scenario is not unique to Bangladesh though. Much like Bangladesh, many other countries in Asia and Africa that are urbanizing at a much faster rate than the rest of the world are faced with an enormous challenge of ensuring sustainable development in their growing cities. Addressing urban poverty and inequality and improving liveability of the cities have become keys to ensuring sustainable development in majority of these countries. This has been well recognised in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as well.

Goal 11 of the SDGs thus aims to 'make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'.

At present a number of policy and planning documents including the National Urban Policy 2014 (draft), the National Housing Policy 2016, and the Seventh Five-year Plan (2016-2020) are providing guidelines for addressing the challenges of urbanization and harnessing the potentials of urban growth in Bangladesh. The issue of making cities inclusive has been prioritised in all of these documents. Among these the National Urban Policy 2014 is particularly significant due to the increasing recognition of the importance of such policies by urban development experts. Based on evidence from countries across the world, the UN-Habitat now considers a national urban policy as the primary instrument for producing a unified vision and goal of achieving productive, inclusive and resilient urban development in a country.

This paper critically looks at the National Urban Policy 2014 and argues that the policy lacks a broad-based understanding of the concept of inclusive cities and is ill-equipped to ensure inclusive urbanization in Bangladesh. The following sections of the paper first attempts to define the concept of inclusive cities and uses that to draw attention to some of the key limitations of the National Urban Policy 2014. Based on the findings this paper also proposes several recommendations aimed at addressing the shortcomings identified.

CONCEPTUALIZING INCLUSIVE CITY

There is no universally accepted single definition of an inclusive city. However, most definitions agree that an inclusive city is one that ensures a safe, liveable environment for all its residents regardless of their economic condition, gender, ethnicity, religion or physical abilities with affordable and equitable access to urban services and infrastructure, livelihood opportunities, space for cultural and political participation as well as for participation in urban planning and decision making (Lindfield and Singru, 2017; UN Habitat, 2016). A framework developed by the World Bank for measuring urban inclusion (Shah et al, 2015; Serageldin, 2016) is particularly helpful in assessing inclusiveness of a city which looks at three broad dimensions of inclusion. These are:

a) Spatial inclusion: This involves ensuring access to essential infrastructure and public services which include, among others, housing, water and sanitation, and transportations facilities. Urban land management is key to ensuring spatial inclusion. This also involves ensuring environmental safety and sustainability.

b) Social Inclusion: This involves ensuring all residents' equal rights in accessing public services (such as health care, education and emergency services) and opportunities for cultural and political participation (including participation in city planning and decision-making processes). A prerequisite for ensuring social inclusion is removal from policies and urban management systems the attitudes, practices

and behaviour patterns that lead to prejudice and discrimination against and marginalization of certain segments of the urban population.

c) Economic Inclusion: This involves ensuring opportunities for dignified livelihood, access to skills development, education and training, and credit facilities. Ensuring conditions that enable migration and mobility is also important as it allows people to move in search of better livelihood opportunities.

The spatial, social, and economic dimensions of urban inclusion are mutually enforcing. Together they form a triangle where each dimension reinforces the other two towards making cities inclusive. A negative path that allows and/or promotes non-inclusive practices in any one of these dimensions could intensify urban poverty, inequality, and marginalization. This means that cities need to be inclusive both in their forms and functions as well as through the processes of urban management. This understanding of inclusive cities has been used in this paper to critically assess Bangladesh's National Urban Policy 2014 (draft).

URBAN POLICY INSTRUMENTS IN BANGLADESH

The present state of urbanization in Bangladesh did not take place as a result of any deliberate policy decisions by the government. Since the 1980s onwards from when urbanization started gaining momentum in Bangladesh, the role that consecutive governments often took was of coping with urbanization rather than planning and regulating it. Nevertheless, the importance of urban management and sustainable urban development has been gradually acknowledged by relevant ministries and government agencies as documented in the Sixth Five Year Plan and the Outline Perspective Plan. Urban management has been recognized as a development priority for Bangladesh in the Seventh Five Year Plan where emphasis has been given on inclusive growth and urban poverty reduction, inclusive urban planning, and sustainable management of urbanization. The Seventh Five Year Plan is heavily informed by the SDGs and hence, a focus on inclusive cities has been incorporated in it in line with SDG 11. The need for a comprehensive national policy for urban management and development, however, has long been emphasized by relevant experts, urban planners, and researchers. In 2006, a National Urban Sector Policy was drafted which however was never finalized. Then in 2011, a National Urban Policy was drafted and made accessible to public for getting feedback on the draft policy. This policy too was not finalized. Finally, in 2014 a new draft of the National Urban Policy was made available to public to collect feedback and opinions. The draft National Urban Policy 2014 (henceforth referred to as NUP) is now awaiting Cabinet approval. Inclusion is a major focus of the NUP where emphasis has been given on participatory urban management, economic development, housing, poverty reduction, service delivery and infrastructure development, transport management, and protection of rights of disadvantaged populations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE DRAFT NATIONAL URBAN POLICY (NUP)

Despite its intention to promote inclusive urban development in Bangladesh the draft National Urban Policy (NUP) 2014 contains major shortcomings that not only could lead to a failure in achieving its goals but instead could result in exclusionary urban management practices that exacerbate urban poverty and inequality. One of the major limitations of the NUP is its failure to provide an urban vision that encompasses all three dimensions of urban inclusion. As stated in the policy, its vision is 'planned urbanization that is liveable for all in order to achieve increasing economic growth through participation of local city residents along with various organizations, civil society, and communities that are lagging behind'. Clearly, the NUP does not envision creating liveable cities in Bangladesh as a goal in itself but instead as a means to achieve another goal i.e. greater economic growth which is shaped by the aspiration of achieving a middle-income country status. This prioritises the economic dimension over the spatial and social dimensions and significantly influences the policy focus of the NUP.

Accordingly, throughout the policy issues such as economic development, industrialization, financing and resource accumulation, and cost recovery have been emphasized. Under its goal and objectives, however, the policy mentions 'introducing inclusive concepts' as part of its very first goal which has been included in the policy priorities as well (Section 4: Priorities of the policy) though it comes last of all. The idea of 'introducing inclusive concepts' has been repeatedly mentioned throughout the document including a plan to create 'inclusive neighbourhoods'. Nevertheless, the NUP does not provide any definition of such 'inclusive concepts' or reference to any framework that was used to define them. Much like the rest of the document, the brief concluding section of the policy titled 'Introducing inclusive concepts' (Section 5.23) remains silent about defining inclusive cities. Instead it is merely mentioned that after reviewing inclusive concepts implemented in cities and towns of other countries an implementation guideline will be prepared to suit the urban local government institutions in Bangladesh. Evidently, such reluctance to define 'inclusive concepts' in the NUP makes it more of a rhetoric of inclusion rather than a sincere approach towards making cities inclusive.

Reducing urban poverty and inequality has been identified as one of the goals of the NUP. Poverty reduction has been included in the list of policy priorities as well though here it has been grouped with slum improvement. However, in the subsequent section where the implementation steps for poverty reduction has been described (Section 5.8: Poverty reduction and slum improvement) the discussion is largely focused on improving slum housing and developing low cost housing market. Apart from the proposal to create specialized zones for street vendors and make provisions for their access to credit, training, and information any discussion on poverty reduction is largely absent not

only in just this section but also in the policy as a whole. Clearly, urban poverty has been equated with slum housing and the policy assumes that merely improving slum housing will reduce urban poverty. Such assumptions are not only ignorant and ill-informed they could also result in severe implications on the life and livelihoods of the urban poor. Most urban experts now agree on the multi-dimensional nature of urban poverty and instead of measuring it by income or housing condition alone, they emphasize on understanding it in the broader context of deprivation of rights and entitlements, discrimination, inequality and social injustice. This is acknowledged and identified as a growing challenge in the Seventh Five Year Plan where emphasis has been given on designing appropriate interventions to address this. In contrast the NUP not only completely ignores this reality but instead proposes measures such as introducing legal provisions for cost recovery from the people in exchange for urban services (Section 5.9: Urban environment and disaster management) and imposing user fees for using urban infrastructure (Section 5.10: Urban infrastructure and service) that could very well hurt the poor. Like in many other developing countries, in Bangladesh too the urban poor mostly rely on using public infrastructure and services. Hence, introducing user fees will disproportionately and adversely affect the poor. This demonstrates that aiming to make cities inclusive through policy instruments without a proper understanding of it is likely to fall short in ensuring all three dimensions of urban inclusion.

Participation of all citizens, including women and the poor, in decision making and implementation processes of urban governance has been set as one of the goals of the NUP. The policy proposes formation of a range of new platforms as well as using existing platforms at the city corporation, municipality, and ward levels in order to ensure participation of representatives of civil society, non-government organizations, community-based organizations, and private organizations. However, evidence already shows that in many of the urban areas the large size of municipal and city corporation electorates has turned the urban poor into anonymous voting blocs (Banks et al, 2011). While the NUP proposes to use the existing platforms to promote participation in reality there is little space for participation of the poor in such platforms. Due to widespread lack of transparency and accountability in the urban local government institutions such platforms are usually occupied by ruling party affiliates and people loyal to the elected municipal officials. Despite strong emphasis in existing relevant laws and acts (including the Local Government (city corporation) Act 2009 and Local Government (municipality) Ordinance 2010) on ensuring citizen participation in the urban governance processes, there is no properly functioning mechanism for systematically engaging the urban poor in the planning, implementation and monitoring of urban management and governance. Instead of addressing the challenge of ensuring participation of disadvantaged groups, such as women and the poor, in the urban governance processes the NUP proposes to form additional platforms which are very much likely to prove as ineffective as the existing ones.

The notion of inclusive concepts and participatory governance as articulated in the NUP is also problematic in the way it perceives disadvantaged groups. The policy seeks to protect the rights of 'women, children, elderly, persons with disability, street children, vagabonds and all citizens'. This immediately raises the question whether the previous categories are included in the category of 'all citizens'. Grouping together different categories of disadvantaged population in this way is also problematic because it hides the particular forms of exclusion and discrimination experienced by each group in the cities. While there are many similarities among them nevertheless each of the disadvantaged groups face different types of difficulties. For example, according to a recent study in Bangladesh as many as 94 per cent women in the cities face sexual harassment in public transport (The Financial Express, 2018). This indicate the need for making public transportation system gender friendly. Similarly, the elderly, children, persons with disability and all other disadvantaged groups face particular challenges in the city which are well documented. However, the NUP shies away from providing any clear directions to addressing such challenges.

Another concern regarding the NUP's limitation in ensuring urban inclusion stems from its treatment of the issue of rural to urban migration. The NUP calls for prevention of migration towards the main cities of the country (Section 5.1: Ordering and process of urbanization) to ease pressure on existing infrastructure and service delivery mechanisms. Understandably, it is necessary to introduce appropriate measures for regulating rural to urban migration in order to ensure a balanced regional distribution of urban growth across the country. However, unless such measures are designed in an inclusive manner there is risk of creating further spatial segregation in a way similar to the controversial hukou1 (a household registration system) in China which practically barred migrants from access to urban services in the name of controlling mobility. Moreover, making cities inclusive requires strong commitment and close coordination among a wide range of organizations and actors involved in urban management and development. The Seventh Five Year Plan identified at least 18 main ministries and 42 government agencies and special purpose authorities involved in the process of urban development in Bangladesh. The lack of coordination and absence of interaction among these entities has long been pointed out, by practitioners and researchers alike, as a major challenge for ensuring effective and sustainable urban development in the country. While the NUP deals significantly on the issue of decentralization and devolution of power to urban local government institutions at regional and local levels, it completely overlooks the challenge of ensuring coordination among such large number of ministries and organizations. Without any mechanism to ensure inter-ministerial and inter-organization coordination the NUP is likely to accomplish little particularly in terms of ensuring for everyone inclusive access to all urban services and infrastructure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To comprehensively address the issue of inclusive urban development first and foremost it is necessary to define the characteristics of an inclusive city and also what inclusion means for every citizen regardless of their gender, age, religion, ethnicity, economic background or area of origin (within the country). Based on this it is critical to formulate an appropriate vision of inclusive cities in order to address urban management and development in Bangladesh. The importance of having such clearly defined vision is not limited to the NUP only; instead this is something that could be potentially adopted in future five-year plans and all other policies that deal with urban issues. Secondly, it has been pointed out that recent policy making initiatives in Bangladesh are increasingly characterised by inadequate policy research while at the same influenced by the narrow interests of different stakeholders engaged in the process of policy formulation (Islam and Ahmed 2015). Whether or not this was the case in the formulation of the NUP, the policy is ill-informed and lacks an integrated approach. In this regard, using a well-established tool such as the National Urban Policy diagnostic framework developed by the UN Habitat could be particularly helpful in revising and rectifying some of the shortcomings of the NUP. The National Urban Policy diagnostic framework encompasses an umbrella approach that allows stocktaking of relevant issues and gathering information to set priorities and formulate objectives, provide strategic directions, promote coordination and ensures optimized use of resources. Thirdly, the NUP needs to be informed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) particularly the SDG 11. The Seventh Five Year Plan has already set a good example of how the SDGs can be incorporated in national priorities and goals. Similar approach could be utilised for the NUP as well. Fourthly, the NUP needs to be informed by a broader understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of urban poverty otherwise it could run the risk of excluding certain segments of the urban poor. There is already a good number of existing and ongoing research on understanding urban poverty in the Bangladesh context which could be a useful resource for this purpose. Finally, many urban experts have noted that urban inclusion is easier to define than measure it. As a result, despite having inclusive policies it could become difficult to measure the level and extent of effectiveness of such policies. Hence, it is necessary to put adequate effort on developing appropriate measurement tools simultaneously with the revision of the NUP.

CONCLUSION

According to the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Bangladesh ranks 120 out of 157 countries in the SDG performance index. Bangladesh is performing worst particularly in two SDGs one of which is the SDG 11 - sustainable and inclusive cities and communities. This means Bangladesh needs to put a significant amount of effort towards ensuring sustainable and inclusive urbanization in the country which also necessitates a strong urban policy framework. As pointed out in this paper the draft National Urban Policy 2014 is inadequately equipped to serve this purpose. Hence it is imperative that the policy is revised in

an appropriate manner so that it is capable of providing guidance and strategic directions not only to achieve SDG 11 by 2030 but even beyond that - towards 2050 when Bangladesh will become a predominantly urban country with more than 50 per cent of its population living in cities and towns.

Note: The hukou is a household registration system introduced in China during the 1950's in order to control people's mobility by linking each individual's identity with their place of origin. This had severe impact on the rural to urban migrants as they were not considered to be urban residents no matter how long they have lived in the cities. As a result, migrants faced blocked access to many of the urban services.

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BANGLADESH'S 11TH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: CITIZEN EXPECTATIONS, EXTERNAL INTERESTS, AND EVOLVING DYNAMICS

Imtiaz Hussain

INTRODUCTION

When Bangladesh's military rule ended in 1991, few, if any, believed elections, democracy, and the country finding its own Kantian 'perpetual peace' would have to be anchored upon a caretaker government. After all, the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the country's two largest parties, joined hands to drive the military back to the barracks. BNP's Khaleda Zia, widow of Major General Ziaur Rahman, won in 1991, but a technocrat-constituted caretaker government intervened in the 1996 election, in what turned out to be a residual sine qua non role (Bhuiyan, 2003): it was the demand of Sheikh Hasina Wajed, the AL leader and Founding Father's elder daughter, and the Jamaat-i-Islam (JI) party; and democracy survived the 2001 and 2008 elections because of this institutional innovation. In spite of a frayed pre-2008 political atmosphere necessitating another military intervention (Haque, 2007), or may be because of it, Hasina's unprecedented absolute majority 2008 victory was so thumping, she could disband this very institution in 2011. Yet, the BNP-boycott of the 2014 election and the subsequent violence hang like a Damoclean dagger over the 2018-9 election.

As evident, caretaking arrangements served a necessary, though not sufficient condition of electoral peace and transition. Four interpretive prisms, of perhaps many, explain their 2018-9 relevance: external ripples, the country's independence, party ideologies, and individual roles. Treated in reverse order, they portray a growing gap, not as much along the dominant AL-BNP axis, nor in pitting Hasina and Khaleda against each other, but between an increasingly politically secular public and vested political interests.

INDIVIDUALS

Hasina and Khaled, of course, tower over any other post-1991 individuals, with their blatant hatred for each other as the driving force (Barry, 2014). How their rivalry trended suggests one plausible 2018-9 outcome: the electoral pendulum swinging from Hasina back to, if not Khaleda, than any BNP coalition, as it invariably did until 2008. If so, the causal factor would now have to differ.

Hasina's overwhelming 2008 victory was a game-changer, fatally crippling Khaleda's political chances. As Khaleda had done to Hasina during her own 2001-6 term, Hasina began her tenure by compiling cases against Khaleda, the first of which, on the Zia Orphanage, put Khaleda behind bars in February 2018. This capped a long and successful season in which Hasina expunged her war-trials obsession of punishing Pakistani collaborators, many linked to the BNP coalition, during the country's liberation war. Though discussed later, more than four decades down the road, liberation war memories may be inevitably curving: those with 1971 memories, still a sizable and noisy population proportion, largely follow her, though demographically a majority of, and eventually everyone in, the population will be post-1971 born. That said, irrespective of the Hasina-Khaleda differences, a vast majority of Bangladeshis unflinchingly stand behind Founding Father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, and will continue doing so since that is the very fulcrum of the country's existence. It follows, as the staunchest defender of the causes Mujib championed, Hasina carries a formidable advantage over Khaleda.

Hasina's multiple megaprojects could multiply her party's dividends if sufficiently completed before voting begins. Using largely public funds to take the country up the middle-income ranks by its 50th birth anniversary in 2021, Hasina's gestures contrast vividly with the privatizing of those funds in the last Khaleda term, and resonates with an upwardly-mobile post-liberation-born population segment less stooped in party politics, and certainly over the divisive 1971 war issues. With corruption/nepotism as a constant and formidable bipartisan feature, even if armed with megaprojects, Khaleda would have an uphill time to appeal to as many 1971ers (i.e., those with first-hand liberation experiences): a plurality has preferred the Founding Father's daughter than a liberation-war general's widow for interpretive purposes (that is, in how they have interpreted the war); but even pragmatically, over the public-private distribution of national resources, post-1971ers can associate more public projects to Hasina than Khaleda, while the 2008 voting results convey how widespread the private-benefit portion of that same equation stigmatizes Khaleda more than Hasina. Perhaps a moot issue, but those comparing how Bangladesh's global 'bottomless pit' trademark in the early 1970s with the remarkable progress it has made globally since that time would more likely credit Hasina than Khaleda, even if we discount concurrency biases of interpreting past developments against hindsight.

Khaleda, nevertheless, carries a trump-card of her own: the longer she stays in prison, given human frailties, the more sympathy she will elicit, not just from voters, but also a string of foreign leaders (all across West Europe, and capped by the U.N. Secretary General, whose spokesman, Stéphane Dujarric, called for her prison release even as we await multiple

other court rulings). Whether Hasina has taken this into her own election calculation is still conjecture, but when, in March 2018, the Commerce Minister, Tofail Ahmed, a 1971 veteran, motioned the United States to help make the 2018-9 election 'inclusive', any thawing of Hasina's/AL's zero-sum mindset nudges democracy much more than vested party interests (Dhaka Tribune, 2018).

Should Hasina move towards a caretaker government later in 2018, she might even swing some undecided voters to her side: to add to pushing the country into the middle-income category and up its ranks, Hasina would also spearhead institutionalized two-party democracy much more than any other politician, and particularly her bitter rival. That position could make losing a fair election a very unlikely AL proposition—unless other forces intervene.

PARTY IDEOLOGIES

One is the party ideological identity, where ideology encompasses not just democracy and neo-liberalism, but also religion. Bangladesh's move towards both democracy and neo-liberalism from 1991 occasioned a far more radical AL platform-revision than it was for the BNP coalition since one AL liberation-war pillar was socialism. Not only did the two major parties rally at various speed behind neo-liberalism from 1991 (since that was when the 'cookies' for a resource-starved society began accumulating, as the ready-made garment, or RMG, magic unfolded), but since its decisive 2008 victory, the Awami League has gone full throttle in that embrace, dismantling more barriers than a 'nationalistic' party, like BNP, legitimately could.

One particularly fuzzy context could still jeopardize the 2018 election: violence. Both parties have received their fair-share of the blame, one reason why democracy flounders even after a full generation of experimentation. How hartals, oborrodhs, and michils paralyzed the 2014-5 economy drove foreign investors away, out of fear. Without India's backing, Hasina's AL government might not have found global support, especially from liberal western countries. Domestic disruptions, particularly of the middle-of-the-road public, were even more crippling: alienation from politics and searches for space beyond the 'embattled begums' bloomed (The Economist, 2017).

Rangpur City's December 2017 election, in which 74% of the voters participated, exposed the changing moods. Jatiya Party's Mostafizur Rahman won in a landslide over second-placed Sharfuddin Ahmed Jantu of the Awami League and BNP's Kausar Zaman Baba. True, a municipal election differs contextually and temperamentally from a national election, especially for a Jatiya Party without any leader of stature to compete against the well-lubricated Hasina and Khalelda, let alone run the country: its octogenarian military leader was evicted by Hasina and

Khalelda in 1991, and struggles to even be recognized by voters today. Nonetheless, the party can swing crucial votes, barter concessions, even dilute any core AL/BNP agenda.

Beyond opening the public treasury and whetting the RMG-generation appetite, Hasina balanced Chinese and Indian business interests against each other much more than China-tilted and India-wary Khaleda could, even playing them off against multilateral agencies (like the World Bank, for example, over the Padma Bridge). She effectively pulled the economic rug from beneath Khaleda. Since the country has enjoyed impressive economic growth from 1991, what Wahiuddin Mahmud of the Economic Research Group observes as "the continued slump in the private sector," exposes the kind of a vulnerability that could be exploited (Chowdhury, 2018; Mahmud, 2010).

How Hasina can bring the above two forces to bear on the 2018 economy could become as crucial to her chances as any; and not resorting to violence to thwart any outright AL victory may became a BNP benefit if capturing undecided voters is the intention. Since neither leader has the luxury to blink in this eyeball-to-eyeball tussle for economic peace, it is unlikely economic factors, reflecting identical ideological preferences, will destabilize the political landscape like violence can.

This may become the unique 2018-9 feature: instead of that generation-long zero-sum combat between the two parties/leaders, not falling on the wrong side of the public (instead of forcing the public to believe the other side is the troublemaker), constitutes the new 'unknown' likely to push both sides to look beyond vested interests to win the moment. Both parties seek fair-play, but the outcome determinant may lie elsewhere. Two forces demand attention: religion (discussed here), and external forces (last section).

Hasina may have outlawed the Jamaati-i-Islam, but as the 2013 Shapla Square showdown suggested, the countryside remains fertile territory for Islamic dissidents to exploit. The biggest fear then was the Hefazat-e-Islam (HUI), which Hasina has carefully tamed, without taking its support for granted. Her 1996 JI courtship sprung from political and electoral issues primarily (and fairly successfully too), but the JI outfit's subsequent BNP alliance dallied, at least in Hasina's and AL views, against fundamental 1971 war elements. Through the war-trials, Hasina restored those elements, but even with those trials almost over and the JI eviction from the political playground fully completed (for 2018-9, at least), religious influences continue to haunt.For a knock-out election blow, Hasina and Khaleda must reckon with those forces, unwittingly opening a pay-back account that must, at some point, be fulfilled. Since Islamic groups have shown how they can even bypass the country's independence claims, how the two secular parties contain the Islamic firepower potential may shed light on whether they want the 2018-9 election to succeed or not. Evidence so far suggests both have sided with

peaceful participation: the BNP headquarters has launched a campaign to recruit 10 million new members, that is, to double its 2010 target, while the AL counterpart has instructed all its 77 organizational district units to do likewise. With religious fervor at its lowest ebb in this century following the 2016 Holey Artisan Bakery incident, only by making the wrong call can the play be derailed.

Some 2018 pronouncements further dampen ideological collusion. Hasina has reaffirmed the election will be held as per constitutional guidelines, that is, during the last 90 days of her term (from October 2018 to January 2019), while an Awami League 'election period government' proposal to replace a full-fledged Awami League government later in 2018 jives with the BNP proposal to revive a 'pro-election party' caretaker government. Ataur Rahman of the Political Science Association predicts an Awami League 'political concession' in which a Hasina-headed smaller multi-party cabinet oversees the election (Shumon, 2018).

Though rocking the 2018 electoral boat is not in either party's interest, spoilers in either party could do irreparable damage. New court rulings against Khaleda could become a catalyst, as too her exiled son, Tarique, the de facto BNP leader during her incarceration. Other unpredictable, uncontrollable forces capable of changing the landscape also remain: 700,000 Rohingya refugees being used as an instrument, not just by domestic opportunity seekers, but also transnational, especially Islamic, forces. Not, of course, all 700,000, but even a dozen would inflict unacceptable damages.

THE THIRD OF THE FOUR ANALYTICAL FACTORS SUGGESTS HOW.

INDEPENDENCE

With the 2018 election having the largest proportion of voters born after 1971, and therefore the least likely of them all to let war sentiments prevail beyond a respectful nod, other issues, such as the economy and employment in one of the most 'selfie'-driven materialistic ages, only steal the show. Though the war-crimes trials generated a lot of sound and heat, of which the dust is beginning to settle, aggressive AL celebrations might invite BNP/JI retaliation.

Associating this with the country's 50th birthday anniversary would be dangerous. Hasina is, rather naturally, out to make it a grand affair, depicting the country's unity more than division, particularly as a farewell gift for the handful of liberation war participants who remain. Stability is most needed for that on every front, particularly those relating to Khaleda's sentencing and keeping the economic wheels moving. Rahman's expectation of Hasina's possible 'political concession' to the BNP leadership for the 2018-9 election implies a desire to make

Bangladesh's 2021 celebration, not just an Awami League party but a comprehensive, country-side affair. It takes only a little to instill fear, but fear snowballs faster than hope. Keeping that freedom, at this point, needs eternal and meticulously imparted vigil.

EXTERNAL FORCES

Bangladesh, and particularly Hasina, may have no option but to move in that direction, all other forces and factors held constant, because of the international context. Both leaders cultivated this in their independent ways. Khaleda has become what foreign leaders and media recognize as the one person indispensable for Bangladeshi peace, especially during election, thus (a) favoring her prison-release, even if she is actually guilty of all the various crimes; and (b) letting Bangladesh avail of the last possible chance to become not only democratic, but also a showcase Muslim democratic country. Hasina's credentials lie in her (a) overcoming the 2014 election storm, particularly when her international acclaim reached its nadir, to eventually win back the lost/evaporating relationship with foreign leaders; and (b) genuinely acquiring international leadership of some sort, for example, over gender or environmental campaigning, that has received global notice and applause.

She owed plenty to India in 2014, and indeed, for as long as Pranab Mukherjee was India's president, in spite of growing bilateral divergences (Hussain, 2017). As examples, the Teesta deadlock, disagreement over the Rohingya influxes, and China's growing Bangladesh salience indicated the limits of Bangladesh-India relations, while simultaneously strengthening each country's own 'space' in that relationship. Hasina has tapped Chinese friendship knowing fully well India remains Bangladesh's most critical foreign partner; and Narendra Modi also realizes he cannot go as far as Mukherjee to shield and propel Bangladeshi causes if Bangladesh drifts in the Chinese direction. In other words, it is far more opportune now than ever before for India not to promote or safeguard only the Awami League platform, even though there are plenty of Indian civil society and business groups too well connected with their Bangladeshi counterparts which feel more comfortable within the AL context than within any BNP counterpart.

India managing relations with both parties, and the Awami League looking beyond India, would rebound positively on the domestic front in both countries: Indians, and most vehemently, Assamese, see Bangladeshis as a horde of illegal immigrants wiping out local cultures, while Bangladeshis cringe at anything Indian since that presence is so ubiquitous in white-collar jobs siphoning off hard-earned foreign currency, products, banking, and so forth (Hussain, 2018). Softening these attitudes rather than feeding them remains an imperative in both New Delhi and Dhaka. Linking both capitals has flourished the most under AL government; and, as Narendra Modi the election campaigner

found out by becoming prime minister, rattling that status quo is not in India's interest. No wonder how the warmth Bangladesh enjoyed with Manmohan Singh's Congress coalition beforehand continues under Modi's strident Janata Bharatiya Party.

India rebalancing Bangladesh relations echoes what is happening among the equally vigilant western observers. Whether they represent the European Union, Freedom House, or Transparency International (see Freedom House, annual; Raheed, 2018; TIB, 2013, for instance), they know they have unused leverage they can resort to if the one Islamic country they are counting upon to become democratic does not make it: they can impose trade restrictions on our RMG exports and dissuade investors from plunging our way, a stance likely to be adopted in other parts of the rest of the world, for example, in Australia and Japan; yet, want a different Bangladesh, capable of assuming responsible global roles. Expectations everywhere point to a peaceful 2018 election, not automatically or independently, but by the pragmatic preferences the critical players must make and the pathways they do not have the choice to not take. Both Hasina and Khaleda remain pivotal in those expectations, even if one has to pardon the other from jail-sentencing, and the other has to refrain from resorting to violence. To the western mind, that is what politics means: filled with trade-offs rather than a permanent vendetta and perennial vindictiveness.

Hasina's role may be the more central. She has come a long way to place her country where it is at, and the election is for her to win if she can manage the economy, rein in her over-enthusiastic party members, and look beyond the Awami League to form some caretaking arrangement that she, and she alone initiated. Were she to contest that election against a campaigning Khaleda, that would be the one feather in her cap that will ripple across a longer stretch of her country's future than her using her country's liberation war-credentials as an instrument.

Added to that, with democratic elections being seriously throttled world-wide by Atlantic area populism, Trump's victory, and Brexit, her most tangible contribution to her country might rank alongside her father's: he liberated it from Pakistan; she has the chance to liberate global democracy from the gathering current clouds. Epochal electoral expectations are historically rare. When they came, as with Lech Walesa in 1990, Barrack Obama in 2008, the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi's in 2012 Egypt, they quickly lost traction, even being upended. They have also come to Bangladesh: in 1970 and 2008, for example. If they come again in 2018-9, they will no doubt carry signs of greater permanence than before: they will blend with a dominant post-independence flavor, non-zero-sum compromises, and a plurality of the 'business is my business' mindset among voters. Hasina and Khaleda will then be judged, not by what they accomplished or how they won, but by what they prevented: Bangladesh's take-off as a democratic and liberal middle-income country.

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THE FAILURE OF POLITICS IN BANGLADESH

William Milam

Politics means many things to different people. Often the word has a negative connotation. Many people, especially in developing countries associate politics with corruption and deceit. Three highly respected political scientists of the previous century, none of whom are with us any longer to defend their ideas, have offered three definitions of politics that sum up the vast array of meanings that the word conveys to almost all who think about it, whether negatively or positively. David Easton (1953), a Canadian scholar who taught at the University of Chicago and is celebrated in the field for applying the theory of systems to political science, gave us probably the most academic definition of politics as the "authoritative allocation of values." Harold Lasswell (1936), another path-breaking political scientist, who studied at Chicago but taught at Yale, and combined communications theory with politics, defined politics more colloquially as "who gets what, when, and how." And finally, the most celebrated internationally of the three, Hans J. Morgenthau (1946) who taught also at Chicago as well as at City University of New York in New York, a founder of the realist school of political science, provided the realists' definition of politics as a "struggle for power."

But politics, whether viewed positively or negatively has a purpose. The refined and sophisticated explication of that purpose is that politics gives societies the ability to achieve collectively what cannot be achieved individually, the promotion of welfare and order. And the three definitions point, in my opinion, to the most important aspect of how that purpose is achieved—that is that politics determines, in one way or another, how the economic rents of governance are divided up to prevent violence and sustain stability. How these are divided is an important distinction between different sets of countries, and also an important predictor of their tendencies to violence and long-term stability.

Economic rents, confused as they often are as referring to corruption, are simply the extra amount earned by (or unearned income from) a resource beyond its cost, and in all countries' economic systems the elites are in competition for those scarce resources. In the early days of human civilization, that competition fomented much violence and dysfunction. As elites learned that minimizing violence and instability led to greater gains, this became the way of growth and progress. By

granting elites access to these resources, governments then can control violence, foster stability and general welfare. Except in totalitarian societies, countries generally turn to political parties, made up of course of various elites representing different interests, to work out who gets access to these economic rents. Political parties do not equal democracy; all the authoritarian regimes I know of have at least one political party, and those with several often claim to be democracies, although in most cases this is disingenuous. But the point is that when there is more than one party, those parties are intrinsic to the functioning of the state and if that state is democratic, they are the guardrails of democracy. There is no better example of the importance of political parties to how the state functions than that of the Republican party in the US, which has gone completely off the rails and in doing so has become a serious threat to the American democracy.

THE UPCOMING ELECTION, POLITICS, VIOLENCE AND PROSPECTS IN BANGLADESH

So, as Bangladesh approaches an election towards the end of this year, the stakes become clearer. In Bangladesh, politics are clearly failing, and the country is becoming more violent and, I think, more unstable as the election approaches. And the violence appears to be coming from the government as much as from the society at large. Incidents of police violence against civilian groups which are demanding change are rising, e.g. the harsh treatment of students protesting changes in quotas for jobs, and against students demonstrating for safer streets, and probably more sinister, the killing of a large number of alleged "drug dealers" by security forces. I expect the violence on both sides to escalate as the election nears.

Violence before and during elections is, regrettably, normal in Bangladesh (Mollah, 2018). But the context and the possible outcomes of such violence are much different this time. I fear the violence will ratchet up sharply after the election if the government wins reelection, as I suspect it will. I try to keep up with the news from Bangladesh, though it is scarier every day. The reports of political oppression of the opposition and the media, continue to flow in. I find myself reminiscing fondly about my time in Bangladesh in the early 1990s when we thought, as did much of the rest of the world, that the end of history was real democracy, and that seemed achievable in Bangladesh, even if it hadn't arrived yet. How could things go so wrong after such a good start only 25 years ago?

These thoughts ran through my mind as I sat the other day in a meeting listening to a leader of the main opposition political party in Bangladesh running through a list, which seemed endless, of human rights abuses by the government against its opposition, not just the political opposition but against dissenters anywhere in

society, including importantly the media. Someone who has not been following events in Bangladesh, who does not know the score, might have thought reasonably, that the speaker was using a typical political ploy, exaggeration, to elicit sympathy and help. But I knew from the research I and my research assistants have done for a book I hope to write that almost all of what he said was true. He did have some numbers I had not seen that are striking. For example, we know that one tactic of harassing the opposition is to file spurious cases against its leaders in various politicized courts throughout the country. (Of course, we know that the leader of the main opposition party is in jail and can't seem to get bailed out, and some others I know have spent time in jail and only are out by pledging to abjure politics). But cases are piling up, it seems against most of the officials of that party. This well-known tactic against newspaper editors and publishers, pressured to toe the line has by now become an effective way to immobilize party leaders too. The cases against BNP1 officials evidently are in the many thousands. I wouldn't have believed that a few years ago; I see no reason to doubt it now.

There are two crucial episodes in the past decade which have pushed politics into the toxic path they are now on. The first dates from June 2011, when the 'Caretaker Amendment,' which had been put into the constitution in 1996 at the insistence of the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL), more popularly known as the Awami League (AL), was removed at the insistence of the governing Awami League (AL) because it had the votes to do so in the Parliament after its decisive victory in the 2008 election. The AL had demanded the original amendment that installed the election time Care-taker Government system during the troubles of 1996, when it understood that winning an election in Bangladesh is even more difficult and expensive (in treasure and blood) when out of power and unable to control the election commission and official assignments and all that usually goes into a sitting government rigging an election. It probably saw the downside of the amendment in 2001 when despite being in power and having some of those advantages, it still lost the election because the caretaker government managed to make the election passably free and fair. This gets to one of the serious flaws in the mindset of both major parties: that the quality of governance while in power has little to do with getting elected, thus the assumed requirement that the polls must be rigged to win— assuming of course, there is an opponent. This gets us to the next crucial episode.

In the second crucial episode, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) tried another strategy when faced with a likely loss in the 2014 election, an election that they felt certain to lose without the caretaker amendment to limit the government's ability to rig it: the BNP boycotted that election. Most polls showed the BNP would probably

win a free and fair election. While the party leaders knew they almost certainly would not have anything close to as free and fair election, they must have also known that the party would win enough seats to be a constraint on the government. Not getting its turn at the economic rent trough made not winning unacceptable to the BNP.I believe its leaders gambled on the unlikely hope that a boycott that ended with the AL having no opposition would bring down on the AL the wrath of the outside world, especially the Western world, and that would impel the government to accede to its demand for an interim government and an impartial election commission. That didn't happen; instead the rest of the world decided it could live with the AL government, and some countries, such as India, applauded the result. In other words, the BNP made what may amount to the worst decision possible in South Asian politics on the flimsy hope that outside pressure could turn things around. It was an irresponsible decision for any political party, totally without understanding of how politics works and why it matters, and it set the table for all that has happened to the party since then.

A one-party government has ruled Bangladesh since that election, and its main preoccupation is clearly to establish the foundation for its continued rule. AL supporters will deny this, but the logical conclusion is that the eventual aim of its leader, Sheikh Hasina, is perpetual rule through a one-party state. The campaign to eliminate the BNP as a viable opposition party through any number of thuggish tactics is one important aspect of that. Repression of any dissenting voices in the media or civil society is another. Creating a climate of fear in the society which tries to choke off any opinion except that which conforms with the government is yet another and inventing a Bangladeshi-style identity politics which identifies supporters of the government as pro-Liberation War and opponents as traitors is an innovative if toxic way also of suppressing dissent.

Given the history of her Father's2 attempt at creating a one-party state, it is easy to dismiss this as hysteria, but the logic is compelling. After all, if she succeeds in eliminating the opposition yet does not try to form a big-tent party to bring most of the various elites inside, there would be a very large political space that some party surely will try to fill. To put it into the terms of institutional economics, that would leave a large segment of the elites and population outside the grouping that would have access to economic rents, and that would certainly lead ultimately to violence and serious instability. It was Shiekh Mujib's attempt to discipline the allocation of what were then very scarce economic rents, which left out a number of elites and their followers who were capable of creating violence, which brought him down in such a tragic way3.

At a recent debriefing meeting at the State Department the Secretary General of BNP, the main opposition party in Bangladesh pledged that there will be no boycott of the General Election this time, and that is despite the much-weakened position of the party. I hope that is true because to double down on such an error would be, I suspect, the death knell of the party. And, if anything, international support for a boycott would be far less likely than five years ago—and it was not likely then. Sad to say and this is also important to mention that the rest of the world is not much concerned about the AL's march to an authoritarian future and, possibly, a one-party state. It is Bangladeshis that would have to slow it down or halt it themselves.

They did it before without any outside involvement. As Ambassador from 1990 to 1993, I witnessed the 1991 overthrow of the military dictator, Ershad. As they did at the time, in order to stop the country marching towards authoritarianism, the opposition in Bangladesh needs to come together in the same way and with the same unity of purpose. This time it has to be a coming together of the many segments of the opposition against the AL government. That will not be as easy as it sounds.

Twenty-eight years ago, when the entire country got united against an oppressive military dictatorship the two major parties put aside their personal dislikes and their differing interests and came together and fought for democracy as a combined force. The major obstacle to that alliance of the two major parties was that the two leaders detested each other. Yet they had come to detest the Dictator Ershad even more, and for a few days at least put their personal feelings to the side. This time I am sure that there are plenty of dislikes, and some pretty strong ones, that will have to be put in abeyance.

The BNP leaders, at the meeting referred to above, said they were reaching out to parties which come from the core of civil society, smaller parties but with leaders widely respected by the general public, to form an alliance that would compete against the AL. The news reports in the last week have been full of stories of such an alliance in progress. Two weeks ago, I would have bet that such an alliance would not be feasible; that the controversial presence of Tareque Rahman as deputy leader of the BNP and its previous insistence on partnering with the Islamist Jamat-i-Islami (JI) party, would rule out an alliance of moderate centrist parties with the BNP. But the news reports have a positive enough spin that I am willing to concede that another opposition alliance, such as in 1990, seems likely, one in which such issues have not necessarily been put aside, but at least not prevented agreement on a broader goal—to save Democracy in Bangladesh. This election may very well be the last chance. But there remain questions about the coherence of such an alliance in an election struggle against

a government able to rig almost at will and willing to use all manner of dirty tricks to do it. Another question is that, given the great latitude the government has for rigging and the likelihood that the alliance would likely not win, can it stay together during a vicious election campaign, and more importantly, after an election that puts it in the minority? Will it have enough strength and unity to work together in a difficult, perhaps dangerous, post-election environment, in which its objective would be to stop the slide to authoritarianism and end the horrible human rights abuses? Without that kind of grit, the AL juggernaut is likely to continue to roll and the violence and instability to grow.

NOTES

1. In Bangladesh two mainstream political parties that have ruled the country alternately since are Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). BAL has been in power since 2009 and its election 'win' in 2014 election which majority opposition party especially BNP boycotted, is regarded by many as controversial.

2. This refers to Shiekh Mujubur Rahman, the Father of the nation of Bangladesh who is also the biological father of the current AL Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, transformed through parliamentary means a parliamentary democracy into a presidential one-party system where he himself retained most state power.

3. In August 1975 Shiekh Mujib and most of his family members were murdered in a military coup.

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Profiles: Guest Editors, Contributors

GUEST EDITORS

M. Adil Khan, PhD is an adjunct Professor of Development Practice at the University of Queensland, Australia and former Chief of Socio-Economic Governance and Management Branch of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York. He possesses more than 35 years of practical and academic experiences in international development, participatory governance and public policy. He is the recipient of the UN Plaque of Recognition for championing the work of participatory governance at UN. He has published extensively in areas of governance and development and has been the founding editor of the journal, Sustainable Development. He is also an Editorial Board member of South Asia Journal.

Habib Zafarullah, PhD is an adjunct professor of Sociology (Governance Studies) at the University of New England, Australia. He was chair of the Public Policy Program there and his areas of academic interest are: democratic governance, comparative bureaucracy, public policy and administration, and international development and has published extensively in these areas and some of his recent books include: Colonial Bureaucracies (2014), Managing Development in a Globalized World (2012) and International Development Governance (2006) (the latter two with A S Huque). He served as editor of Politics, Administration and Change, an international social science journal, for 25 years.

CONTRIBUTORS

Nizam Ahmed, PhD is Professor of Public Administration at the University of Chittagong, Bangladesh. He graduated with honors and obtained a master's in public administration from the University of Dhaka. He has a Ph.D. from the University of Melbourne, Australia. Dr. Ahmed's fields of interest are legislative behavior, local government and South Asian politics and administration. He has published numerous articles in major international journals on politics and administration and authored/edited several books published by reputed publishers such as Routledge, Palgrave Macmillan, Frank Cass, Ashgate, and University Press Limited. He is the Secretary of South Asian Network for Governance Studies, a regional organization engaged in researching governance problems in different countries of the region.

Niaz Asadullah PhD is Professor of Development Economics in the Faculty of Economics and Administration at Malaya University. He is also a visiting researcher at the University of Oxford, visiting Fellow at Reading University, visiting Professorial Fellow (Hon.) at the University of Manchester, Research Fellow at the IZA Institute of Labor Economics (IZA), Fellow at the Global Labor Organization (GLO), and RSA connector for Bangladesh. He is Associate Editor of the Journal of Human Development and Capabilities, and on the editorial advisory board of three academic journals–COMPARE (Journal of International and Comparative Education), Institution and Economies and Malaysian Economic Journal.

Heather Douglas, PhD is an ARC Future Fellow at the TC Beirne School of Law, University of Queensland, Australia. She researches in the areas of criminal justice and domestic violence. She has published widely on criminal justice issues and around legal responses to domestic violence and child protection. She was the lead researcher and project co-ordinator with the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration on the development of the National Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book, a project funded by the Australian Commonwealth Government. Between 2012-2015, she served as the lead chief investigator on the Australian Feminist Judgments Project funded by the Australian Research Council.

Kazi Fattah is a doctoral candidate in Sociology at the University of Queensland, Australia with a research focus on the circulations of power and modes of governance in urban informal settlements. His area of interest and expertise includes urban poverty, civic engagement, governance and public policy, community development, and gender. He has more than fifteen years of professional experience as a development practitioner, researcher, and communications expert. He obtained his MA from Dhaka University and MDS from BRAC University. Prior to commencing PhD at the University of Queensland he was head of urban development at BRAC in Bangladesh.

Mirza Sadaqat Huda, PhD is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the School of Social Sciences, Nanyang Technological University. His main research interest is on multilateral responses to non-traditional – such as energy - security issues, with a particular focus on South Asia. He previously held research and teaching appointments at the Sustainable Minerals Institute of the University of Queensland and the Griffith Asia Institute of Griffith University, Australia. He has undertaken extensive fieldwork in India, Bangladesh and Nepal. He holds a PhD from the University of Queensland, Australia and a master's degree from Macquarie University, Australia.

Ahmed Shafiqul Huque, PhD is Professor of Political Science at McMaster University, Canada. His research and teaching interests are in public administration and management, public policy, development, South Asian government and politics, governance and climate change. He has published 15 books and numerous research articles in leading international journals including Public Administration Review, Governance, Public Management Review, International Review of Administrative Sciences, International Journal of Public Administration, Journal of Comparative and Comparative Politics, Pacific Affairs and Asian Survey. He was the Editor-in-Chief of Public Administration and Policy for several years.

Imtiaz A. Hussain, PhD is a specialist in International Relations/Negotiations, and Conflict Studies and heads the Global Studies & Governance Program at Independent University, Bangladesh. He has authored over a dozen solo-authored books (the latest out in 2018), received at least as many international fellowships and almost as many teaching awards, while co-editing the Palgrave Macmillan Global Political Transition series. A 1989 doctorate of Political Science from the University of Pennsylvania, he is currently working on China's global leadership and transatlantic studies.

Md. Shariful Islam is an Assistant Professor of International Relations at the University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. He is currently pursuing PhD in International Relations at South Asian University, New Delhi. His works appeared in Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Journal of Bangladesh Studies, Journal of South Asian Studies, Asian Politics and Policy, and India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs. His interest areas are in Disciplinary history of IR, international relations theories, and foreign policy of Bangladesh. He has contributed three book chapters.

Amy MacMahon, PhD is a sociologist based in Brisbane, Australia. She obtained her doctorate from the University of Queensland and has been looking at gender and climate change in Southwest Bangladesh. She has worked from local and state governments, in the fields of renewable energy and community development. Amy is also an activist, involved in campaigns around housing, climate, refugees and grassroots democracy
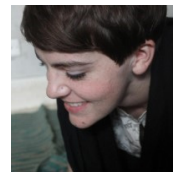
William B Milam is currently a Senior Scholar at the Wilson Center's Asia Program. He previously served as the U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan from 1998 until 2001 and as Ambassador to Bangladesh from 1990 to 1993, and in a number of other capacities at the Department of State. He was also Chief of Mission in Liberia (1995-98); Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Finance and Development (1985-90). His current projects include: Post-Musharraf Pakistan; and Back to Square One in Bangladesh.

Khandakar Josia Nishat is a PhD candidate at the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work at the University of Queensland, Australia. She completed her bachelor and master's degrees in Women and Gender Studies from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. She worked for the research and policy unit of the Transparency International, Bangladesh and was also actively involved with several national and international NGOs on issues of gender rights. Her main research interest is to promote policy ideas for advancement and empowerment of women for gender equality in the society. Nishat's PhD topic is, 'Eve Teasing in Bangladesh'.

Pranab Kumar Pandey, PhD is a Professor of Public Administration, University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh and was a Senior Fulbright Fellow at Cornell University, USA. His areas of research are: public policy, social movements, NGOs, public sector management, governance and gender studies. He has authored seven books, including Women Empowerment in South Asia: NGO Interventions and Agency Building in Bangladesh (2016), Reforming Urban Governance in Bangladesh: The City Corporation (2017), and Strengthening Local Governance in Bangladesh: Reforms, Participation and Accountability (2018) and has articles in several international peer-reviewed journals.

Faisal M. Rahman, PhD is the Founding Dean and Professor at The Graham School of Management of Saint Xavier University of Chicago, Illinois, USA. He is also the Co-founder and Chairman of the Board of APAC group of healthcare companies which provide outpatient services in the Midwest area of USA. APAC also provides healthcare consulting services to major healthcare networks. His academic work is focused on healthcare and strategic management. In the world of healthcare delivery, he is regularly featured as a keynote speaker. He also serves as a member of the Board of Directors in several companies as well as not-for-profit organizations.

Ali Riaz, PhD is a Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Illinois State University, USA. He was the chair of the Department of Politics and Government between 2007 and 2017. He previously taught at universities in Bangladesh, England, and South Carolina, USA, and worked as a Broadcast Journalist at the British Broadcasting Service (BBC) in London. In 2013, he served as a Public Policy Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at Washington D.C. Dr. Riaz's recent publications include Lived Islam and Islamism in Bangladesh (2017); Bangladesh: A Political History since Independence (2016). He is currently coediting a volume titled Political Violence in South Asia.

Sharif As Saber, PhD is Founding Director of Master of International Business Program at RMIT University and previously served as the Deputy Head (Research & Innovation) at the School of Management, RMIT University and Sub-Dean (International Business) at the University of Tasmania. He was the Founding Director, MPhil (Industry) Program at Monash University and led International Business Programs at Monash University and Massey University. He published six books and written extensively for refereed journals. His current research interests include governance, anti-corruption, 'black' (illegal) international business and geopolitics. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Administration & Governance.

Taskin Saif is a strategy and economics practitioner, with extensive experience in senior advisory roles with public sector agencies and private firms specializing in energy, infrastructure, telecommunication and technology. These roles include the development of policies and programs on industry and market reforms, regulation, mergers and acquisitions and strategic initiatives for implementation. Passionate about shaping positive societal outcomes, Taskin has recently founded Reliable, Affordable and Sustainable (RAS) Energy Institute, a not for profit organization with the primary aim of becoming an energy economic research institute to extensively support the transitioning to a smart, sustainable energy system in the developing economies around the world.

Antonio Savoia, PhD is a senior lecturer in development economics at the University of Manchester and researcher on the Effective States and Inclusive Development research centre. His research has looked at the determinants of governance and institutional performance and how they impinge on development outcomes and policies. Before joining the University of Manchester, he has worked at the University of Exeter, the University of Reading and the University of Bath (where he received his Ph.D.). He has published several articles in top journals.
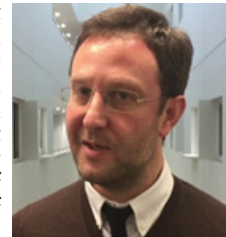
AKM Ahsan Ullah, PhD is Associate Professor in Geography Environment and Development at the University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD). Ullah's research portfolio includes stints at the Southeast Asian Research Centre (SEARC), Hong Kong; IPH, University of Ottawa, Canada, McMaster University; the American University in Cairo (AUC), Saint Mary's University, University of Ottawa, Dalhousie University, Canada; Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand. His research areas include population migration, human rights, development, environment and health policy. His works appeared in most prominent outlets (journals and publishers) in the areas of his interests.

Deborah B. Walsh PhD at the University of Queensland is a domestic and family violence specialist practitioner and researcher. She developed one of Australia's first risk assessment frameworks for use in family violence work and continues to provide training and consultancy to the health and welfare sector in Australia. Deborah conducted a landmark Australian study on the level, extent and nature of violence against women during pregnancy. Her continued interest in domestic and family violence research has expanded to include issues associated with companion animal welfare and the impact women's decision making.

PROFILE: PUBLISHER

Ghulam M. Suhrawardi, the Publisher of *South Asia Journal* was born in Dhaka Bangladesh in 1950. He did his early schoolings at a primary school in a village in Matlab, Chandpur, Bangladesh and at a boarding school in Murree Hills in Pakistan; then the Marine Academy in Chittagong, Bangladesh (1967-69) and joined a merchant vessel as a sea-cadet and later became a mate. In 1971 during the war of independence of Bangladesh, Ghulam jumped ship (defected from a Pakistani vessel) in Baltimore on May 1, 1971 and applied for political asylum in the United States which he duly received. Mr. Suhrawardi attended the State University of New York Maritime College, New York, USA where he obtained B.S. and M.S. in Marine Transportation Management (1971-75). He is married to Nasreen Ghani and has three daughters.

Ghulam's professional life includes various positions in the U.S. waterfronts as a Marine Surveyor, Terminal Manager, Port Captain and Operations Manager. Finally, in 1980, he started a business in Marine Surveying with his wife by his side. Based in New Jersey, he and his wife continue to work in the same business that they established several decades ago, developing it into a vibrant and internationally reputable business enterprise that covers ports in the United States and many foreign nations.

In addition to his Marine Surveying business, Mr. Suhrawardi is also engaged in several philanthropic activities and more importantly, in promotion of intellectual capital. He is the sponsor and publisher of one important journal, South Asia Journal and an opinion blog, *Bangladesh Chronicle.* Furthermore, as a show of his gratitude to his place of birth and his deep empathy for kids of his native village Mr. Suhrawardi has also funded and founded an English medium boarding school in Matlab, Chandpur, Bangladesh, his place of birth called, The Carter Academy (www.tca.edu.bd), named after the Nobel laureate President Jimmy Carter. He plans to add to this school campus, a university and a medical college in the coming years.