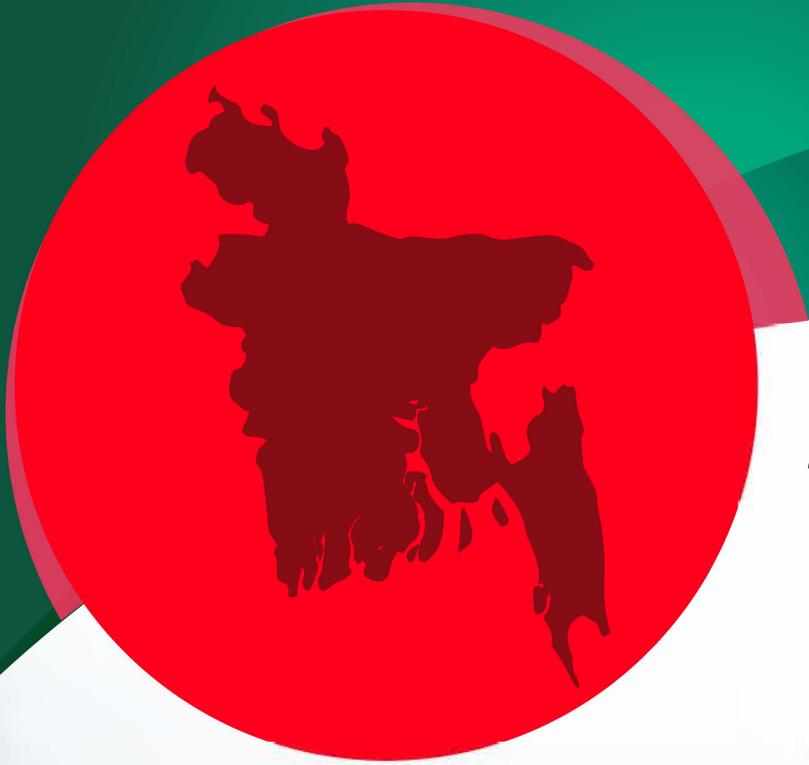


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FROM THE EDITOR

After twenty years as editor of the Journal of Bangladesh Studies (JBS), it is time for me to hand it over to new leadership to take the journal to new heights and accomplishments. Launching the journal in 1999 was risky and challenging. Conceived of as a platform to nurture Bangladeshi “scholars” to gain confidence in their publication efforts, and focusing mainly on policy matters, the initial years were indeed tough and demanding. All of us in the editorial board spent countless hours working to supply rocket fuel to lift JBS out of the gravitational field of being unknown and having no identity. With sustained effort we eventually broke out. During the journey, we initiated many changes as we kept learning what works and what doesn't. For example, the amateurish cover and the print within, during JBS's early years, will serve as a reminder of how far we have come without any one of us being affiliated with professional publishing. In phases, as we grew from a seedling to a plant to a little tree (I believe that's where we are at the moment), standing proudly on its own, it has been a wonderful experience, gathering much knowledge about the inner recesses of scholarly enterprise.

Being an editor was not just about scholarly work though; it had many dimensions – providing leadership, building relationships and networks, getting to know scholars and researchers of various leanings and blends, learning to be patient, being a helpful guide, taking editing (spelling, grammar, syntax, etc.) to a higher plane, being demanding at times (possibly to the point of upsetting some board members), pushing boundaries and much more!

A consistent challenge throughout my 20-year tenure was that of attracting quality papers. When JBS was launched, our focus on policy issues promised a rich crop of research papers addressing the challenges facing Bangladesh. While there was a good flow of submissions, the feedback from our reviewers began to tell a disconcerting story: the rejection rate of papers was almost 70-80%! I believe this did affect the subsequent flow of submissions somewhat, as authors felt rebuffed. As one example, when reviewer comments were provided, one author came back saying, “We are probably not suited for the kind of academic research you have in mind. Nor I suppose interested...I think its best we withdraw the paper.” Despite similar challenges and occasional feedback, we held on to our goal of ensuring a quality publication.

It became obvious, however, during the progression of our work that there was significant variation in the nature of the submissions; many submitted papers did not meet basic quality standards.

Let me substantiate this with another example. I received an email from a M. Phil. student in Dhaka working on service management for hospital patients. The email was as follows: “Sir, I am doing descriptive type of cross-sectional study and I am not testing any hypothesis. Other than mean and SD [standard deviation], I don't know what to do with this scale... my main problem is I don't know what else I can do with [the] SERVQUAL scale.” The content of the email is emblematic of many papers received by JBS. While there was good intention of the researchers submitting the papers, the gaps were often not easy to bridge.

I bring this matter to the attention of our readers and the new editorial board for the very reason that fundamental problems remain in academia in Bangladesh that must be addressed if they are to reach global research standards. I believe the problem lies in the many different folds/strata of the academic landscape.

1. There is a serious training deficit of large numbers of our teachers and researchers. Many continue to publish (elsewhere) because the bar is low and consumers of research are not very discerning. Many researchers cannot go beyond means and standard deviations, the mainstay of a great deal of research, because they have not been taught otherwise. The depth of training of graduate students, who go on to become teachers and researchers, have thus been limited, which perpetuates the cycle.
2. Books, workshops, seminars, and conferences are so far and in-between that nurture of research is virtually non-existent; many in academia may not even comprehend what is good research. Serious effort, especially teacher development, is thus a *sine qua non* for academic research to reach its potential.
3. Research opportunities are conspicuously lacking. Government and industry need research and ought to invest in it by engaging academia as seen in the western world; yet they hesitate to engage researchers from the universities and research centers because they are uncertain of what they'll get. This is the classic chicken and egg problem; it is also a serious lack of a symbiotic relationship between users and suppliers of research. It is time to break out of this mold.
4. Related to point No. 2 is the lack of “conscious” funding for research. The funds that are available are often an after-thought, not part of any research agenda. Thus, I had suggested the need to establish a National Research Council in the likes of the National Science Foundation or the National Institute of Health in the US, dedicated to nurturing good research in not well-understood areas and

- overseen by a solid brain pool of academics and knowledge managers.
5. A question that demands serious attention is that of teachers asking, “What benefit will I get from doing high quality research?” Even the administrators in academic institutions, many without any research background, are deficient in understanding the value of good research. Not only do they resist spending money on research; in the event they do so, they have no understanding of how to reward good researchers other than giving them a small salary increment! Where, then, is the incentive to pursue good, sustained, original research?
 6. Plagiarism continues to be an issue that should not be taken lightly by faculty members. I have received submissions that were clearly plagiarized. While the individuals have been barred from submitting to JBS, what is the stance of academic institutions to curtail this onerous practice? What does the record say about dealing with plagiarizing faculty? At one university, it was ordained that all publications of the institution must be placed on the web. The normative social influence of public scrutiny, it was felt, would check this practice on a wider scale as it would be easy to detect plagiarism with many prying eyes in the absence of a moral bar. But the question is this: How many universities would have the courage to make it mandatory for their faculty to put up all of their publications on the web? How many faculty members would support such a policy?
 7. It is a common refrain that senior teachers do not share research skills. It remains a moot question as to whether the senior faculty do not “want” to share or whether they “lack” the skills and do not want to expose themselves.
 8. The lack of demanding MA, MPhil and PhD programs developed with the right attitude and standards is a serious hindrance to producing work representing global standards. Among those pursuing the above degrees, do they know which program is truly beneficial and which one is a total waste of time? I had proposed that we begin by establishing a few research universities that focus on graduate programs only. Over time, universities may be classified as Tier-I, Tier-II or Tier-III depending on their research orientations and commitments

The point I am trying to make is that while journals like JBS provide a decent platform for researchers to publish their work, the academic centers, as well as policy makers ought to address the more fundamental issues I raise above to build a solid research infrastructure and ensure a steady stream of quality research work emanating from them. Perhaps JBS, with the help of NRBs, can play a role in improving the research environment in Bangladesh in creative ways.

As we transition to a new leadership in 2020, I would ask the JBS team to work fervently to maintain one thing that is central and fundamental to the survival, image and

sustainability of JBS: the quality of the articles that are published therein. Peer reviewing must remain strong and may be supplemented by an equally strong mentoring program. This may help strengthen the image of the journal, enabling it to engage more deeply in development discourse.

In this final issue under my editorship, I am pleased to present a number of excellent articles. Rounaq Jahan recaps and reinvigorates the vision of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that led to the establishment of Bangladesh – created for all who wanted to unshackle and emancipate themselves from exploitation, oppression, denigration, injustice and much more. Siddiqur R. Osmani reignites the debate on development versus democracy. Ali Riaz examines the role of walls and fences in defining “territoriality” and its impact on Bangladesh-India relationships. Zillur R. Khan explores how applying the fundamental human values of justice and fairness could alleviate growing inequalities, contain ideological extremism/terrorism, and assure peaceful co-existence. Bernard G. Gunter, M. Faizul Islam and Farah Tasneem examine how, with Bangladesh's rise to lower-middle income status and loss of concessional financing, it will affect the financing of future development.

Syed S. Andaleeb addresses how, using social influence theory, behavior changes may be brought about in Bangladesh's hospital environment to deliver better patient care. Rumana L. Anam suggests policy changes to include paternal leave when a child is born into a family to make child rearing equitably divided among both parents so that female employees are not disadvantaged in their careers. Abureza M. Muzareba's study shows how the poverty-afflicted can improve their lives through e-learning that can help develop awareness, skills and knowledge, associated with their lives and livelihoods. Finally, Sanzida Akhter deliberates on how women afflicted with obstetric fistula, with devastating impact, may be able to manage their suffering through a wider empathetic social network that can help them get the needed treatment. All the articles are good reading, all address serious policy prerogatives for Bangladesh.

I wish the new team great success in taking JBS further in its bid to influence policy and enable Bangladesh to pursue its growth trajectory as a middle-income country. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all members of the current editorial board for their support during my tenure. I have enjoyed working with you to sustain the work of JBS while learning much all along. I wish you good health and impactful scholarly engagement.

Syed Saad Andaleeb, PhD
Editor

Philosophy of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

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Abstract

This paper is essentially an examination of some salient aspects of the political thoughts and commitments that became associated with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's life and work. These become obvious through the positions and decisions that he had taken in the course of his life, and clearly suggested in the biographical narratives he has left behind. This paper draws on two of these accounts published recently, and using his own language and rhetorical constructions, it tries to derive the broad framework of the ideological or philosophical world-view that defined him. As a "man of the people" who had dedicated his life to the betterment of the masses, he eventually came to embrace the four principles of nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism which later served as the guiding "pillars" of state policy, and were enshrined in the constitution of Bangladesh. These did not come about suddenly or casually but through a long process of maturation and experience. This paper situates that evolution within a historical and textual context.

1 Creating History

For our generation who witnessed the birth of Bangladesh, it is a daunting task to express in words the unique role played by the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Shiekh Mujibur Rahman in the creation of the new state. It is even more challenging to analyse the political ideas underpinning his life's work. Whenever I think of Bangabandhu I first remember those exciting and memorable days of March 1971. After finishing my Ph.D at Harvard and post-doctoral work at Columbia University I had just started teaching political science at Dhaka University in December 1970. I was, thus, able to witness the last days of the campaign of the historic December 1970 elections when the Awami League (AL) under Bangabandhu's leadership won unprecedented electoral victories. The AL won 167 out of 169 seats from East Pakistan in the National Assembly and 288 out of 300 seats in the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly. The AL's election manifesto was based on the party's historic six-points demands launched in 1966 and the eleven points demands of the students adopted in 1969. The AL's election campaign extensively used Bengali nationalist slogans and symbols and was successful in unifying the whole nation behind the struggle for our independence.

After the massive electoral victory in December 1970 we were all living with high expectation and excitement having no doubt in our minds that Bangladesh was going to emerge soon as an independent country. The only question that still remained unclear was whether we could create this independent state through peaceful

negotiations with Pakistan or whether we would have to wage an armed struggle to gain that objective.

I remember when General Yahya Khan, Chief Martial Law Administrator of Pakistan, postponed the scheduled meeting of the National Assembly on March 1, 1971 and in response Bangabandhu called for a non-co-operation movement starting from March 3, 1971; people from all walks of life immediately and spontaneously joined the movement. Members of the civil administration, judiciary, law enforcement agencies, business community, and almost all state functionaries, pledged allegiance to Bangabandhu. I do not recollect any other precedence in history where the entire civil administration shifted its allegiance from a colonial administration to a nationalist movement prior to the latter's gaining the status of an independent sovereign state. This de-facto shift of government authority took place in the first two weeks of March, 1971. Bangabandhu started promulgating orders to maintain law and order in the country and keep the economy running. His residence on road 32, Dhanmondi became the de-facto seat of government.

After March 2, 1971, every day I used to walk in different neighbourhoods of Dhaka to talk to people and understand their mood. I could see thousands of people on the streets chanting slogans demanding independence. Though a massive number of people were marching on the streets they were all peaceful. They all seemed to have only one thought in their minds which Bangabandhu articulated in his famous March 7, 1971 speech in the Race Course *maidan* (the present Suhrawardy Uddan). He said, "the struggle this time is

for our liberation, the struggle this time is for independence.” (Bangabandhu: 1971, address, March 7). I was present in the meeting at Race Course *maidan* that day and witnessed the excitement of millions of people attending the meeting. We all shared the same hopes and aspirations about imminent political change.

I remember at that time I often used to think of one concept of political philosophy that always intrigued me which was propounded by Jean Jacques Rousseau in his book, *Social Contract*. Rousseau wrote about the “general will” of people. First as a student and later as a teacher I used to wonder what would a “general will” look like in practice? How would one recognize the presence or absence of a “general will?” After March 2, 1971 when I witnessed the spontaneous participation of thousands of people in the non-cooperation movement and heard them speak about independence, I realized the meaning of “general will.” I could see very clearly that a “general will” had been created in favour of our independence. The whole nation was now united behind the call for independence. This “general will”, this unified people’s voice, was being expressed in a spontaneous demonstration of public zeal, but it is also true that it had been created as a result of many years of Bangabandhu’s commitment, sacrifice and hard work.

I consider myself to be very lucky that I was able to witness the events of March 1971 and Bangabandhu’s role in creating history. Very few people are fortunate enough to see the making of history. I witnessed the transformation of our movement for autonomy into our struggle for independence. I witnessed how the main actor of this historic transformation, Bangabandhu Shiekh Mujibur Rahman, realized an impossible dream. As I noted before it is difficult to express in words the passion and the sense of purpose we felt in those days. Only those who shared that passion and sense of purpose can comprehend the depth of those emotions. There have been leaders in other countries who led their nations. But few could create history. Bangabandhu was one such rare grand actor of history.

It is unfortunate that even after 48 years of our independence and 43 years after his assassination there is no well-researched comprehensive biography of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I consider this void to be a matter of national shame. Fortunately, two recent books, based on his personal diaries, have been published which can serve as original sources that may help us to understand his ideals and political philosophy. The first book, *The Unfinished Memoirs*, published in 2012, throws light on his childhood, and early political life. Though the *Unfinished Memoirs* does not include events after the late 1950s it still illuminates his political thoughts very clearly.

The second book, *Karagarer Rojnamcha* (Prison Diaries) which was published in 2017 (translated in

2018), is based on his diaries when he was in prison after he launched the six points movement in 1966. From 1948 to 1971 Bangabandhu was imprisoned many times and this book reflects his detailed knowledge of the conditions of life of prisoners both political as well as others. Here again his political thoughts are made very clear. He discusses at length the different methods of suppression of people’s movements pursued by an autocratic state. He highlights the importance of fundamental civil and political rights, particularly the need for ensuring freedom of expressions for sustaining democracy.

In this article I have used these two books to explore Bangabandhu’s political philosophy. I have quoted extensively from his writings so that we can hear his own voice. To understand his political philosophy, we should always keep in mind that Bangabandhu spent most of his life as a political player outside state power. He struggled against colonial and undemocratic state power, first against the British and later against the Pakistan state to establish the economic, political and cultural rights of the Bengalees. He exercised state power only for a limited period of time - barely three and a half years-after independence. His political discourse, as illustrated in these two books, is that of a leader fighting authoritarian state power, not that of a leader who was using state power to govern a country.

One of the remarkable features of his political life was his transformation from an ordinary rank and file worker of a political party to an unparalleled leader of millions of people. Bangabandhu possessed outstanding organizational capacity; at the same time he was a great orator. Generally we do not find such a combination of qualities in one leader.

In his *Unfinished Memoirs* Bangabandhu notes that he was more interested in party organizational work than in discussing theoretical and ideological issues. When Abul Hashem, the general secretary of the Muslim League invited a political philosopher Maulana Azad Sobhani to take political classes for students, Bangabandhu was not all that interested in spending long hours in listening to philosophical discussions. He writes:

“My colleagues would attend his classes till late in the evening. But it was impossible for me to sit still for a long time. I would join in Maulana Sobhani’s classes for a while and then leave. I would tell my friends, ‘Go ahead and become pundits. I have too much work to do. Let me first work to attain Pakistan and then I will be able to sit down to discuss other issues’ And it was true that I had a lot of work to do for the sake of the party, especially amongst students.” (Rahman: 2012, p. 44)

Though he was not a political theoretician, Bangabandhu had a few specific political ideals and goals, and he worked consistently to achieve them. His

values are best captured in three sentences which Bangabandhu penned on May 3, 1973. He writes:

“As a man, what concerns mankind concerns me. As a Bengalee, I am deeply involved in all that concerns Bengalees. This abiding involvement is born of and nourished by love, enduring love, which gives meaning to my politics and to my very being.” (Rahman: 2012, p. i)

The above quote makes it clear that Bangabandhu identified himself both as a human being and as a Bengalee. This self-identification helps us explore the main features of his political philosophy, such as nationalism, secularism, socialism and people-orientation. It may be possible to identify many other features of his political philosophy, but in this article I shall focus only on these four.

2 Nationalism

Independence, Liberation and Democracy

From the beginning of his political life Bangabandhu was proud of his Bengali national identity. He was involved in the Pakistan movement but he believed that Pakistan should be established on the basis of the Lahore Resolution which envisaged two Muslim majority independent sovereign states. He points out that in his public speeches introducing Pakistan to his audiences he invariably invoked the Lahore Resolution. He writes:

“There would be two Pakistans as envisaged in the Lahore Resolution. One would comprise Bengal and Assam and would be called East Pakistan. It would be an independent and sovereign nation. The other Pakistan would consist of the Punjab, Baluchistan, the Frontier Provinces and Sind. This would be called West Pakistan and it too would be an independent and sovereign nation.” (Rahman: 2012, p. 23)

He perceived the nationalist movement not simply as a struggle to gain independence from the rule of an external colonial power but also as a struggle for the economic and political emancipation of the down-trodden masses from various forms of oppression. He joined the Pakistan movement in the hope that poor Muslim peasants will be liberated from the exploitation of the landlord classes. His idea of a nationalist movement was integrally associated with the struggle for the establishment of a democratic state and a just and equitable social order. He had always viewed the Bengali nationalist movement as a movement for the achievement of democracy as well as the liberation of the oppressed people. Thus, on 7th March 1971 he called upon people to launch simultaneously the struggle for independence and liberation.

Prior to the establishment of Pakistan, when as a student in Kolkata, Bangabandhu joined the Muslim League, he belonged to the Shaheed Suhrawardy and Abul Hashem faction of the party which was known as the progressive group. In his *Unfinished Memoirs* he writes:

“Under Mr. Suhrawardy’s leadership we wanted to make the Muslim League the party of the people and make it represent middle-class Bengali aspirations. Up until that time Muslim League had not become an organization that was rooted in the people. It used to serve the interests of landlords, moneyed men, and Nawabs and Khan Bahadurs.” (Rahman: 2012, p. 17)

He further writes:

“The Muslim League was previously a party belonging to landlords and people who had been given titles by the British because of their loyalty to the Raj. Their accomplices were money lenders and profiteers. Such peoples would have never created Pakistan. If Mr. Suhrawardy and Mr. Hashem hadn’t made the Muslim League popular among Muslim youths and students and if they hadn’t attracted Bengali Muslim intellectuals to the party, the movement for Pakistan would never have become popular among the people of Bengal who came mostly from the peasant class.” (Rahman: 2012, p. 37)

In 1946, a special convention of the Muslim League amended the Lahore Resolution and replaced the word independent “states” with independent “state” thus giving birth to the idea of one Pakistan. Bangabandhu was present in that convention and notes in his *Memoirs* that at that time many people felt that a convention of the party had no *locus standi* to change a resolution that was adopted in a council meeting of the Muslim League in 1940. This dissatisfaction with the change of the idea of Pakistan from two to one state indicates that from his student days Bangabandhu believed in a separate Bengali national identity. Later in 1947, when Suhrawardy joined Sharat Bose in a last-minute initiative to keep Bengal united with the prospects of forming a separate independent state, Bangabandhu supported them in that enterprise.

After the creation of Pakistan, Bangabandhu returned to Dhaka and became involved in various progressive movements and organizations which championed linguistic, cultural and economic rights of the Bengalees. In 1948 he was imprisoned for participating in the movement demanding recognition of Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan. He was also involved in other social and political protest movements, such as the movement of poor peasants against prohibiting inter-district trade in rice known as the ‘cordon’ system. He supported the movement of the fourth-class employees of Dhaka University and was again imprisoned in 1949.

Within a relatively short period after the establishment of Pakistan he became convinced about the need for establishing an opposition political party not only for championing the rights of the Bengalees but also to challenge the authoritarian rule of the Muslim League. He explained the rationale for the establishment of the Awami League in the following way:

“There is no point in pursuing the Muslim League any longer. This party has now become the establishment. They can no longer be called a party of the people. ... if we did not form an organization that could take on the role of the opposition the country would turn into a dictatorship.” (Rahman: 2012, p. 129)

In 1949, the Awami Muslim League (AML) was founded and Bangabandhu was elected the joint secretary of the party though he was still in prison. During 1949-1954, he was engaged in the challenging task of organizing the party in various districts. He was repeatedly imprisoned for being involved in different protest movements. In 1953 he became the general secretary of the party. In 1954, in the Provincial Assembly election the Muslim League was resoundingly defeated by the electoral alliance named Jukto Front (JF) where the AML was a major component party. Provincial autonomy and recognition of Bengali as a state language were two of the key points of JF's 21 points election manifesto. Bangabandhu was elected to the Provincial Assembly as a member of the JF alliance and became a member of the cabinet at a young age of 34, but the JF ministry was dismissed by the central government of Pakistan within 90 days.

The demand for self-rule gained increasing popular support in East Bengal from the mid-1950s. In 1955 Bangabandhu became a member of the Pakistan National Assembly (NA). In one of his speeches in the NA we already find a strong articulation of various demands of the Bengali nationalists and his strong sense of Bengali identity. He said: “They want to place the word “East Pakistan” instead of “East Bengal.” We have demanded so many times that you should use Bengal instead of Pakistan. The word Bengal has a history, has a tradition of its own. You can change it only after people have been consulted. If you want to change it then we have to go back to Bengal and ask them whether they accept it ... what about the state language Bengali? What about joint electorate? What about autonomy? ... I appeal to my friends on that side to allow the people to give their verdict in any way, in the form of referendum or in the form of plebiscite.” (Rahman: 2012, p. XIX).

In addition to championing Bengali linguistic and cultural rights, Bangabandhu also began to talk about economic exploitation of the Bengalees. Control over their own economic resources started to become a key

agenda of the Bengali nationalists. In his *Unfinished Memoirs* he writes: “A group of West Pakistani leaders who saw themselves as representing the country at the centre and some senior bureaucrats were conniving to snatch away resources of East Bengal and transfer them to the other wing of the country. ... when the Awami League began to demonstrate with facts and figures how East Pakistan was being exploited they became desperate and began to torture Awami League leaders and tried to suppress it by using force.” (Rahman: 2012, p. 243-244).

In the council session of the party in 1955 the Awami League (AL) dropped the word ‘Muslim’ from its name and Bangabandhu again became the general secretary of the party. In 1958 there was a military coup in Pakistan and in the next ten years Bangabandhu was repeatedly imprisoned for leading various movements against the rule of the military dictator Ayub Khan.

In February 1966 Bangabandhu presented his historic six points demands which put forward a very radical notion of provincial autonomy leaving only limited powers in the hands of the central government. In March of that year he became the president of the AL and began a country wide campaign to popularize six points which soon became the sole agenda of the party. Six points captured the aspirations of the nation and it was billed as the charter for the liberation of the Bengalees. Following the launch of the six points program Bangabandhu was again imprisoned and he was charged with treason by the Pakistan government in the Agartala conspiracy case.

The six points manifesto and the Agartala conspiracy case enhanced Bangabandhu's nationalist stature. In 1969, Ayub fell from power in the face of massive students' movement. Bangabandhu was released from prison and the students conferred on him the title of Bangabandhu (friend of Bengal). During the 1970 election campaign Bangabandhu started using nationalist slogans such as ‘Bangladesh’ and ‘Joy Bangla’. Thus, within a relatively short span of four years, between 1966 to 1970, Bangabandhu was able to unite the whole Bengalee nation behind his demand for liberation and independence. I do not think any other nationalist leader had been so successful in mobilizing such a huge number of people within such a short period of time.

It is noteworthy that throughout his life Bangabandhu was involved in movement politics and talked about people's emancipation from exploitation and oppression. But it was clear that he believed in peaceful non-violent political movements. From 1947 till 1970 the Bengali nationalist movement became stronger day by day under his leadership but he stayed within the bounds of democratic politics. Whenever Pakistani rulers gave opportunities for election he participated in them though

the elections were often not free and fair and attempts were made to foil the election results. In *Prison Diaries* he points out repeatedly that by limiting the democratic space an autocratic regime ultimately leads the country towards terrorist politics. He writes:

“The newspaper arrived, but I became upset after reading it. They were bent on closing the door to politics forever in this country... [According to new rules] anyone could be taken to court for saying anything. In addition there were the Defence of Pakistan Rule and the Security Act of Pakistan. And there was section 124 as well. I was being indicted for giving a speech under Act 124 section 7(3) ... In all they had framed five cases against me, [in addition to others already pending]... My fear is that these people are taking Pakistan down the road of the politics of terror. We don't believe in taking that path ... [But] those of us who intend to do good for the country by resorting to the path of democracy are finding our way blocked. It is frightening to contemplate the consequences of such policies for the nation”. (Rahman: 2018, pp. 49-50).

In his 7th March 1971 speech Bangabandhu weaved together the themes of nationalism, democracy and liberation in the following way: “To day ... the cry we hear from the Bengali people is a cry for freedom, a cry for survival, a cry for our rights ... you are the ones who brought about an Awami League victory so you could see a constitutional government restored. The hope was that the elected representatives of the people, sitting in the National Assembly, would formulate a constitution that would assure the people of their economic, political and cultural emancipation Each time we the numerically larger segment of Pakistan's population tried to assert our rights and control our destiny they [Pakistan government] conspired against us and pounced upon us Let me tell you that the prime ministership is not what I seek. What I want is justice, the rights of the people of this land.” (Bangabandhu: 1971, address, March 7).

3 Secularism

Non-communalism and Equal Rights for All Citizens

Though he was a Bengali nationalist Bangabandhu never tried to create division and hatred between different identity groups. Many nationalist politicians use provocative languages and symbols that encourage violence between different groups. These days we are witnessing the rise of such nationalist leaders even in Western democratic countries who are trying to instigate intolerance and violence towards minority groups. But Bangabandhu's nationalist politics was different. He

believed in co-existence and mutual tolerance of different identity groups and talked about equal rights of all citizens. He always stood against communal violence. As noted earlier he identified himself both as a Bengalee and as a human being and worked hard to ensure that no crimes against humanity are committed in the name of nationalist politics.

From the beginning of his political life Bangabandhu took a strong position against communal violence. Though he was involved in the Pakistan movement he believed that in India Muslims, and in Pakistan Hindus, should enjoy equal rights as citizens and live together in peace and harmony. He talked about equal rights of all groups to practice their respective religions.

He witnessed the communal riots in Kolkata on August 16, 1946. He points out that Suhrawardy asked his supporters to observe the day in a peaceful way so that no blame could fall on the Suhrawardy government. But unfortunately, communal riots did break out in Kolkata and later spread to Noakhali. Bangabandhu saved both Muslims and Hindus from acts of communal violence in Kolkata. Later when Suhrawardy joined Mahatma Gandhi in efforts to bring back communal harmony Bangabandhu joined them.

After the establishment of Pakistan when he was leaving Kolkata Suhrawardy advised him to work for Hindu-Muslim communal harmony so that Hindus would not leave East Bengal and migrate to West Bengal. Suhrawardy told him:

“When you go back to your country try to ensure communal harmony. If there is trouble in East Bengal it will be catastrophic. Try to ensure that Hindus don't flee Pakistan. If they are forced to come here they will stir up trouble and that will result in an exodus of Muslims to East Bengal. If all the Muslims of Bengal, Bihar and Assam leave for East Bengal ... you will not be able to accommodate so many people” (Rahman: 2012, p. 87-88)

After returning to Dhaka he joined *Gonatantrik Jubo League* and took up the cause of building communal harmony as his main mission. He was against all forms of communal violence, not simply between Hindus and Muslims but also between different Muslim sects and between Bengalees and non-Bengalees. In his *Unfinished Memoirs* he strongly condemns the anti-Kadiyani riots that took place in Lahore in 1953. He describes his belief in tolerance and non-violence in the following way:

“I know at least this much no one should be murdered because he holds views different from mine. That certainly was not what Islam taught and such an action was tantamount to a crime in the religion ... let alone Kadiyanis, Islam forbids punishing even non-believers ... Pakistan was

supposed to be a democracy. Here people of all faiths irrespective of race and religion were supposed to have equal rights.” (Rahman: 2012, p. 244).

In 1954, when riots broke out between Bengali and non-Bengali workers in Adamjee jute mills in Narayanganj he rushed to the area to calm the situation. In 1964 when Hindu-Muslim riots spread in India he started a civic campaign to prevent communal riots in East Bengal. Even in his March 7, 1971 speech he asked people to remain vigilant against threat of communal violence. He said:

“Be very careful, keep in mind that the enemy has infiltrated our ranks to engage in the work of provocateurs. Whether Bengalee or non-Bengalee, Hindu or Muslim, all are our brothers and it is our responsibility to ensure their safety.” (Bangabandhu: 1971, address March 7).

In his personal life he followed the preaching of Islam. But Bangabandhu was against the political use of religion. He condemned the Muslim League’s practice of using the slogan of Islam and not paying attention to the economic well-being of the people which he argued was the goal for which “the working class, the peasants and the labourers had made sacrifice during the movement for independence.”¹⁵ (Rahman: 2012, p. 244).

4 Socialism

Equality, Freedom from Exploitation and Oppression

In his *Unfinished Memoirs* Bangabandhu writes:

“I myself am no communist, but I believe in socialism and not in capitalism. I believe capital is a tool of the oppressor. As long as capitalism is the mainspring of the economic order, people all over the world will continue to be oppressed.” (Rahman: 2012, p. 237)

In both his books and in different speeches Bangabandhu talked about establishing an equal and just economic and social order. By socialism he meant a system that would free people from exploitation and oppression and remove inequality. He visited China in 1952 which left a deep imprint in his mind. He found great differences in the living conditions of people in Pakistan and China which he attributed to the differences in the two political systems. He writes:

“the big difference between us and them was that people in China knew and were made to feel, that the country and its resources were their own. On the other hand, our people had begun to comprehend that the resources of the nation were being enjoyed by a coterie while they themselves were getting no share

of it. As a consequence, the people of Pakistan were becoming increasingly disillusioned. The only difference they were now beginning to see was that white skinned rulers had been replaced by dark skinned ones” (Rahman: 2012, p. 236-237)

Bangabandhu believed that the government has a role to play in removing inequality and freeing people from exploitation. He admired the priorities set by the Chinese government in improving the socio-economic conditions of the people. He writes:

“Everywhere we could see new schools and colleges coming up. The government has taken charge of education” (Rahman: 2012, p. 235). He further writes:

“The communist government had confiscated the land owned by landlords and had distributed it among all farmers. Thus, landless peasants had become landowners. China now belonged to peasants and workers and the class that used to dominate and exploit had had their day.” (Rahman: 2012, p. 232).

In his *Prison Diaries* also Bangabandhu writes about the need for promoting economic and social equality. While he was in prison, he used to share his food with other prisoners and often cooked for them. He points out that in his own house the same food was shared by his family members, as well as his household staff. He lamented that in the households of many industrialists and business-people, two types of food are being served, one for the master class and another for the serving class. He notes that even in feudal households the same food was shared by all, but the practice of separating food was introduced by the capitalist class. He commented that ... “a new civilization based on industry and commerce is emerging out of the ruins of the feudal system, but the new dispensation was much worse in its attitudes than the feudal one” (Rahman: 2018, p. 197).

He did not want to see inequality grow in Bangladesh. In the council session of the AL held during April 7-8, 1972, he reiterated his commitment to promote an exploitation free socio-economic system and socialism was formally adopted as one of the ideals of the party. In the next council session of the party held in 1974 he, again, pledged to work for freeing the nation of exploitation and oppression.²¹ (Rashid: 2016, p. 145-162).

5 People Orientation

People’s issues, people’s politics

Often we find leaders who lead people towards great goals but they do not become emotionally involved with the people. Bangabandhu was an exception. When I compare the speeches of various leaders of the world

with those of Bangabandhu, one of his off-repeated expressions – “love for people” –stands out as unique. He often talked about his love for people and people’s love for him in return. This emotional bond connected him with the concerns of ordinary people. He talked about different ideological issues such as nationalism, socialism and secularism but he always prioritised the issues that are upper most in ordinary people’s lives. His politics was people’s politics. During the campaign for Pakistan when famine struck, he worked in feeding centres for the famine victims. He worked to rescue the victims of communal riots in Kolkata. He participated in street rallies demanding food security for the poor in East Bengal. His political philosophy was not centered only around the goal of getting state power: he developed his political ideas by being involved with the concerns of the ordinary masses.

This people’s orientation made him a pragmatist. In his diaries he constantly refers to issues that would affect ordinary people’s everyday life such as rise in essential commodity prices or tax increases or flood or famine. For example, in his *Prison Diaries* he refers to the floods in Sylhet, which made “more than a 150,000 people homeless. Ten are dead. We do not know the number of cattle swept away in the flood. How will the people in the country survive?” He decried the taxes on the people that were being increased supposedly because the economy had improved. He pointed out that the Finance Minister, who is a spokesman for the affluent classes and works on their behalf, has spared them from “the burden of taxes. Industrialists and big businesses ... are constantly showering thanks upon him. Meanwhile, ordinary people have been protesting loudly”. (Rahman: 2018, p. 79).

His empathy for people was legendary. In prison he developed friendship not only with other prisoners but also with the prison guards and other prisons officials. He always kept himself informed about the condition of political workers inside and outside the prison. Through his writings we get to know about the contributions of many of these known and unknown political workers.

He had particular empathy for those who were marginalized in society. In his *Prison Diaries* he describes in detail the life stories of various prisoners. He was especially kind to the mentally challenged prisoners and used to buy cigarettes for them which made them very happy.

At one level Bangabandhu was a man of the masses. He learnt about people’s aspirations from them. At another level he was the leader of the people. He carried forward ordinary people’s aspirations. He had faith in people. That is why he could call upon people on March 7, 1971 to join the liberation struggle with “whatever little they have.” (Bangabandhu: 1971, address March 7).

6 Bangabandhu’s Political Philosophy and Four Guiding Principles of State

We see the reflections of Bangabandhu’s political philosophy in the four guiding principles of state adopted by our constitution: nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism. He defended these four principles in various speeches delivered in the parliament or in the party forums or in addresses to the nation.

Bangabandhu used to articulate the goals of his life’s work in two simple words. He would either say he wants to build “*Sonar Bangla*” (Golden Bengal) again, or he would say he wants to bring a “smile on the faces of the poor and unhappy people.” Bangabandhu never talked about GDP growth or other theoretical issues. He knew very well how precious a smile is and his goal was to achieve that priceless objective.

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Is Democracy Appropriate for the Developing Nations?

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with the apprehension often expressed that democracy may not be the appropriate system of governance for the developing nations of the world. This apprehension has two related but distinct aspects. The first is a proposition that democracy will hinder development and that some form of authoritarianism will serve the cause of development better. The second aspect makes perhaps an even more damning point by suggesting that, no matter whether democracy is good or bad for development, the harsh reality is that it may not be feasible for poor countries to make a sustainable transition to democracy. If the first proposition is about the desirability of democracy at low levels of development, the second proposition is about its feasibility. The two propositions together imply that democracy is a luxury developing nations cannot afford to have; they must wait, if they want to have democracy at all, till they advance further on the path of economic development. The theoretical and empirical foundations of these propositions have been scrutinized in this paper. The scrutiny leads to the conclusion that there is no solid basis for the apprehension that democracy is not appropriate for the developing nations. Those who aspire for democracy have no cause for despair.

1 Introduction

When Winston Churchill quipped in the House of Commons (on 11 November 1947) that “No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time...”¹, he was expressing a sentiment in favour of democracy with which most of his fellow citizens in the West could easily sympathise. Over the years since Churchill made that famous remark, democracy has become even more entrenched in the Western world, and despite its many imperfections the relative superiority of the democratic form of government is seldom questioned there. Yet, no such consensus seems to prevail when it comes to recognising the importance of democracy in the poorer countries of the world.² Indeed, it is not uncommon to come across the view that democracy is a luxury poor people and poor countries can ill afford. This paper is concerned with scrutinising the theoretical and factual foundations of this sceptical attitude towards democracy in the context of economic development. To anticipate the conclusion, this scrutiny lends scant support to the sceptics.

In a powerful defence of democracy for developing countries, Amartya Sen (1999a) identified three distinct ways in which democracy can be important for development – viz., intrinsic, instrumental and constructive. The intrinsic importance relates to Sen’s conception of development as freedom. Building on the

capability approach pioneered by him, Sen has argued that the idea of development should be conceived broadly to mean expansion of all kinds of freedom – economic, civil and political. From that perspective, the civil and political rights sanctioned by democracy become an integral part of development itself; this is the intrinsic significance of democracy for development. The instrumental role consists in the democracy’s ability to create a conducive institutional environment in which other dimensions of development can be pursued. The constructive role becomes relevant when the society applies values and priorities in deciding how to allocate scarce resources to alternative ends in pursuit of development. Individuals in isolation may not always possess fully formed views on the relevant values and priorities, and even if they do, their potentially divergent views would need to be reconciled so as to arrive at some socially agreed allocation. Democratic deliberations can play a potentially constructive role in this regard by facilitating the process of formation and aggregation of values and priorities of different individuals.

Among the three, the intrinsic role of democracy is definitionally ingrained in the very concept of development, and as such its importance for development cannot be questioned, provided one accepts the broad concept of development as expansion of freedoms. The constructive role must also be accorded some importance so long as we agree that individual preferences and values should be allowed to influence the values and priorities of the society at large. The instrumental role can,

however, be a potential bone of contention. It has indeed proved to be a highly contentious issue in the academic literature, with different scholars marshalling divergent theoretical and empirical arguments to make a case either for or against democracy. We propose to examine in this paper this complex debate on what kind of political regime is likely to foster development better – democratic or authoritarian rule?

In attempting this exercise, we begin by acknowledging the importance of the intrinsic and constructive roles of democracy in the process of development. This acknowledgement has an important implication for the way we propose to evaluate the arguments on the instrumental role of democracy. Since democracy is already acknowledged to be desirable for development on intrinsic and constructive grounds, all we need to know, for the purpose of making an overall comparison between political regimes, is whether democracy is *at least as good as* non-democracies on instrumental grounds. If it is, then democracy would be declared the better political regime overall. In other words, for the overall judgement to go in favour of democracy, it doesn't have to be shown that democracy is unambiguously superior to non-democracies as an instrument of development; but if it is, that would be a welcome bonus. On the other hand, if democracy were found to be unambiguously inferior on instrumental grounds, then neither regime can be declared unconditionally superior overall. In that case, we would have to contemplate a trade-off between democracy and development – by weighing the instrumental role against the other two. The evaluation of this trade-off would decide which regime is better overall. The judgement then becomes conditional - it can go either way depending on the specific circumstances obtaining at a specific space and time.

Our methodological approach, therefore, is not look for an answer to a binary question such as: between democracy and non-democracy, which one performs better in promoting economic development? Instead, we ask an unabashedly one-sided question: does autocracy perform unambiguously better than democracy? If not, democracy 'wins' on overall count; if yes, we would have to confront a trade-off. From this methodological standpoint, we examine the theoretical arguments involving the instrumental role of democracy in section 2 and evaluate the empirical evidence in section 3.

There is an additional concern we also need to address in this context. The nature of this concern may be motivated by asking the following question: even if democracy is found to be desirable for development, is it a feasible option for the developing world? After all, not everything that is desirable may be feasible in practice. If democracy is not a feasible political option for developing countries, then the whole debate about

whether democracy is good or bad for development becomes rather redundant. There is indeed a long-standing view, embodied in the so-called 'modernization thesis', which raises doubt about the feasibility of democracy in under-developed societies. According to this thesis, democracy can only exist in a sustainable manner once a society has achieved a sufficiently high level of economic development. We investigate the theoretical and empirical bases of this thesis in section 4. Finally, some concluding remarks are offered in section 5.

2 Political Regime and Economic Performance: Theory

There can be little doubt that economic prosperity can be achieved under non-democratic regimes. Both history and theory attest to that. In fact, the evidence from history is pretty obvious. The practice of democracy, as a political institution, is after all only a relatively recent phenomenon, even though the existence of democratic values can be found in many ancient societies across the globe (Sen, 1999b, 2003). It was not until the nineteenth century that democracy as a political institution took firm roots in human society. Barring exceptions such as the ancient Athenian democracy, which was limited in both scope and time, for much of human history autocracies of various forms have ruled the world. And, as history testifies, a great deal of economic progress has been achieved during that period.

The evidence for this achievement lies not just in the plethora of impressive monuments and palaces that litter the ancient empires, but also in the statistical record of material progress made in the pre-democratic era. Angus Maddison's painstakingly made estimates of economic production over the last two millennia reveal that although per capita GDP did not rise much on the world scale in the first millennium AD, considerable progress was made in the second millennium, even before democracy began to emerge in Europe and America in the nineteenth century (Maddison, 2007, p.382). Thus, from around 1000 AD to 1820 AD, per capita GDP in the world economy increased by over 50 per cent. If one considers just Europe and America, the progress was even more impressive, as per capita GDP increased three-fold in this region during the same period. More recent performances of South Korea and Singapore in the 1960s and 1970s, and that of China since 1980, provide further evidence, if any was needed, that impressive economic progress can be made under autocratic regimes. Of course, there are many counter-examples, especially from Africa, where autocratic rulers have wrought nothing but economic and social disaster for their peoples. The point, however, remains

that under suitable conditions autocracy can deliver material progress.

2.1 The Autocrat as a Stationary Bandit

Mancur Olson's insightful analysis of democracy and dictatorship identifies precisely the conditions under which autocracy should in theory be able to ensure economic prosperity (Olson, 1993; McGuire and Olson, 1996). The critical question he addresses is one that cries out for an explanation: why wouldn't an autocrat use his undoubted power (without which he could not have established himself as an autocratic ruler in the first place) to exploit his domain viciously for personal aggrandisement of himself - so much so that the people of the domain lose both the capacity and the incentive to sustain the existing level of production, let alone improve it? To respond with the common-sense answer that the autocrat would not want to kill the goose that lays the golden egg is essentially correct, but incomplete without further justification. For, after all, history is replete with examples where the goose laying the golden egg has been ruthlessly killed, so to speak, by powerful plunderers for short-term gains. These 'roving bandits', as Olson calls them, have looted and plundered one domain after another, blazing a trail of destruction. Why wouldn't the autocratic ruler of a state, ancient or modern, do the same?

The answer in short is that an autocratic ruler may be like a bandit in many ways, but he is no 'roving' bandit. A 'roving bandit' has no long-term stake in any specific domain because he knows that a more powerful competitor may soon drive him away; so, he moves on and plunders some other domain that has yet to be exploited. The absence of a long-term stake ensures that his self-interest is best served by squeezing dry every domain he happens to plunder. In contrast, an autocratic ruler who has a settled (though not permanent) authority over a specific domain, and hence can be described as a 'stationary bandit', would try to balance his short-term gains against the future gains that he might be able to extract, through taxes and levies. He is aware that if he imposes too harsh a tax regime for the sake of immediate benefit, people will shirk work, withhold investment and refuse to produce beyond their subsistence needs, which will be detrimental to his long-term interest. In fact, keeping his future benefit in mind, the ruler may even sacrifice a part of his personal consumption and devote a part of the tax revenue to providing 'public goods' - such as infrastructure, education and healthcare - so that productivity of his people goes up. The more the people are able to produce, the more he would be able to extract and the greater the riches he would be able to enjoy in the future, even after moderating the tax rate and setting aside a part of the revenue for the provision of public goods. The interests of the 'stationary bandit' thus

become congruent with the demands of a growth-promoting policy regime.³ The reason lies in the existence of his stake in the prosperity of his domain. As Olson (1993, p.569) puts it: "Any individual who has autocratic control over a country will provide public goods to that country because he has an "encompassing interest" in it."

Olson's logic suggests that the extent to which an autocrat will be able and willing to ensure overall economic progress will depend upon a couple of factors. The first is the reach of his 'encompassing interest' i.e., the extent of the stake his rule encompasses. The larger his 'encompassing interest', the more willing he would be to moderate the tax rate and increase the provision of public goods so that his people have both the incentive and the ability to increase production. To that extent, economic prosperity of his domain will also be greater. The second factor is the time horizon over which the autocrat tries to achieve a balance between current and future benefits - in economic jargon, the time-period over which he attempts the delicate task of inter-temporal optimization. Obviously, if the time horizon is short - perhaps because he is not confident enough about the strength of his power base - he would care less for the future; and would thus be keen to impose a higher tax rate and provide less public goods, so that his immediate gains can be maximized. In the process, however, economic progress of his domain will suffer. In general, the longer the autocrat's time horizon, the greater will be the pace of economic progress, other things remaining the same.

There are thus plausible theoretical reasons to believe that under suitable conditions autocracies should be able to deliver economic progress. The relevant issue in the present context, however, is not whether autocracies are able to deliver progress in an absolute sense; the issue is a comparative one - i.e., how well autocracies can be expected to perform relative to democracies. Several arguments have been put forward on either side of the debate, and we shall examine a few of them.⁴

2.2 The Democratic Ruler versus the Stationary Bandit

It is conceivable that, inspired by 'democratic values', the ruling class in a democracy would want, for purely altruistic reasons, to ensure greater prosperity of the people than an autocrat ever would. But it is still necessary to ask: if the ruling class in democracy is just as selfish as an autocrat, is there any reason to suppose that democracy would perform any better than autocracy? To answer this question, we may begin by noting an argument in favour of democracy that Olson himself put forward by extending his analysis of the autocrat's incentive problem. His argument is not based

on the presumption that democratic rulers are more altruistic than autocrats (though in reality they may be). Rather the argument is that democracies would perform better even when the aims of the rulers in both regimes are identical - viz., to extract maximum possible surplus for themselves.

To understand the reason behind democracy's putative superiority in this context, we need to recall Olson's analysis of the ruler's incentive problem. As noted above, his analysis suggests that the ruler's incentive to promote growth depends positively upon two factors - namely, the reach of his 'encompassing interest' and the length of his time horizon. Olson argues that both these factors would be more favourable for growth in democracies compared to autocracies.

The 'encompassing interest' would be greater in democracies because the democratic ruler would have to carry with him the majority of his population - at least, of that part of the population which has been granted franchise at any given stage in history. Most members of that 'majority' may not be directly involved in the act of ruling; instead, they would be engaged in income-earning activities in the market place. As a result, the democratic ruler would have to pay attention to the amount of 'net income' these 'voters' are left with once he extracts surplus for the ruling class. Herein lies an important contrast with autocracy. For an autocrat, the 'net income' earned by his people (after paying taxes) is not a matter of concern; he is only concerned with enhancing their 'gross income' (pre-tax income) so that he can extract more surplus for himself. A democratic ruler, by contrast, would be interested not only in the amount of surplus he can extract for the ruling class, but also in the 'net income' of the majority (regardless of whether they are members of the ruling class or not), because without their support he cannot hold on to power. In other words, the 'encompassing interest' would be much wider in democracy, going beyond the direct interest of the ruling class. The additional concern with the 'net income' of the majority will ensure that in democracy the 'optimal' tax rate will be lower and the provision of public goods higher in comparison with autocracy, even when the urge to extract surplus for the ruling class is similar in both regimes. In consequence, economic progress will also be stronger in democracy.

The argument related to the second factor - viz., longer time horizon - may at the first sight appear to be counter-intuitive. In popular perception, the opposite is often believed to be true; democrats are believed to have a shorter time horizon compared to the autocrats, because democrats would normally have to subject themselves to the judgement of the public through periodic elections, while autocrats don't have to do so. The logic of periodic elections would seem to imply that democrats would tend to take short-sighted decisions,

keeping in mind the need to win the next election, even if such decisions conflict with the requirements of long-term growth.⁵ Autocrats, by contrast, are believed to be more capable of taking appropriate long-term decisions even if their consequences are not very pleasant in the short run because they don't have to test their popularity every few years. In consequence, it is argued, autocrats can repress demands for current consumption and mobilize resources for investment, thereby spurring economic growth to an extent that democrats cannot (Galenson, 1959; De Schweinitz, 1959; Huntington and Dominguez, 1975; Tavares and Wacziarg, 2001).

But the perception that democrats operate on a short time horizon misses an important point. While in power, democrats may not be sanguine about coming back to power in the next election, but they are aware that even if they lose the next election, that is not the end of the road for them. They might be able to come back in the following election, or the one following that, by proving their credibility in the eyes of the public; and even if individual democrats may never come back, their parties very well might. This intrinsic likelihood of returning to power, through popular support, is what makes it possible for democrats to take a long-term perspective. By contrast, an autocrat is forever worried that he may be toppled at any time by some other ambitious 'stationary bandit', who somehow manages to garner more muscle power; and once toppled he might be killed or banished to distant lands forever, thereby shutting the door to a possible comeback. The point is not that an autocrat can never stage a comeback; rather the point is that the likelihood of a comeback is smaller for an autocrat than for a democrat. This is the basis of the argument that democracies would tend to operate with a longer time horizon, compared to autocracy. And the longer time horizon would in turn ensure that democratic rulers would tend to squeeze the population less in the short run for their personal benefit, compared to autocrats, thereby giving greater incentive to the people to produce more. Hence the likelihood of greater economic progress in democracies.

Convincing as it is, this line of reasoning does not clinch the argument in favour of democracy. The reason is that even if one accepts the argument, it is necessary to consider many alternative pathways in which the nature of political regime can have an impact on the economy. While Olson has identified one pathway in which democracy is revealed in a superior light, there are other pathways in which autocracy might be argued to be more conducive to good economic performance.

2.3 Political Regimes and the Redistribution Bias

One such pathway has received special attention in recent decades, drawing inspiration from Tocqueville's

(1835) insightful analysis of American democracy in the nineteenth century. While applauding many aspects of American democracy, Tocqueville observed one particular aspect that he thought might constrain the country's ability to make the best use of its economic opportunities. He was worried about the pressure that democracy inevitably faces to redistribute income to the poorer segment of the community. While such redistribution might be valued for its own sake, Tocqueville suspected that it might dampen economic growth by calling for higher taxes and thus reducing the incentives of producers. In the recent literature on the relationship between political regime and economic growth, this insight has come to be known as the 'Tocqueville effect' and has been advanced as one of the arguments for the case that autocracy might be better able to promote growth, compared to democracy, because the pressure to redistribute will be lower and hence the tax regime will be less harsh under autocracy. This is of course the complete opposite of the 'Olson effect', which, as we have seen, makes the prediction that it is democracy that is likely to have a lower tax rate.

To see exactly how the 'Tocqueville effect' works, it is useful to note the way in which recent analysts have formalised Tocqueville's insight into a coherent economic model. This formalisation is based on the ideas of a branch of economics called 'public choice' theory - in particular, on one specific insight of that theory known as 'the median voter theorem' (Meltzer and Richard, 1981).

The essential idea of this theorem is quite simple.⁶ It is based on the premise that any ruler would want to placate the majority of those who constitute his power base. Consider a ruler who is trying to decide the 'optimal' tax rate to be imposed on the society. In making that decision, he will have to balance two considerations that pull in opposite directions. On the one hand, he would like to have a high enough tax rate so as to generate as much revenue as possible; on the other hand, he cannot allow the tax rate to be so high as to alienate the majority of his power base. It follows that the 'optimal' tax rate would be the one that maximises the amount of revenue subject to the constraint that the 'majority' are willing to pay taxes at that rate.

Next, several assumptions are made about the nature of the tax, the use of the tax revenue, and, following from them, the tax rates that people will be willing to pay. It is assumed that richer people will pay more tax in absolute amount⁷, but the tax revenue will be distributed equally to everyone (uniform distribution).⁸ This asymmetry between the distribution of tax burden and the distribution of tax revenue ensures that, at any given rate of tax, there will be a redistribution of income from the rich to the poor. The same asymmetry also has a bearing on the maximum rate of tax a person would be willing to

pay, provided everyone else pays the same rate. While pondering over whether a tax rate is acceptable or not, a person would consider the balance between the amount of tax he will have to pay and the amount of revenue he will receive through redistribution. For any person, the balance between the two amounts will be more favourable at lower rates of tax. The maximum acceptable rate would be the one that equates the two amounts; any higher rate would be unacceptable because tax payment will exceed revenue receipt.

A little reflection shows that the poorer a person is, the higher would be his maximum acceptable tax rate. Counter-intuitive though it may seem, this inference follows logically from the asymmetry between the distribution of tax burden and the distribution of tax revenue. Given this asymmetry, at any given rate of tax, the balance between tax payment and revenue receipt must be more favourable to a poorer person, because compared to a richer person he will receive the same amount of revenue but pay less by way of tax. Therefore, the rate at which the two amounts become equal must be higher for a poorer person.

When the ruler chooses his 'optimal' tax rate, he takes into cognizance this negative relationship between the level of income and the maximum rate of tax people would be willing to pay. He then realises that his 'optimal' tax rate is simply the one that is acceptable to the person in the middle of the income distribution - the so-called 'median voter'. Since this rate must be lower than the maximum rates acceptable to the bottom half of the population, who are poorer than the median voter, the ruler knows that he would be able to carry the majority of voters by choosing the rate acceptable to the median voter. Of course, by choosing an even lower rate, the ruler will receive the support of an even bigger majority, but this will come at the expense of reduced tax revenue. Therefore, in order to achieve the goal of maximising tax revenue, subject to the constraint that a majority supports the tax rate, the ruler will choose the rate that coincides with the maximum rate acceptable to the median voter; hence the moniker the 'median voter theorem'.

To see the implication of this theorem for the comparison of economic prospects between alternative political regimes, we may begin by noting that the relevant power base, whose majority a ruler would try to placate, is very different under different regimes. In democracy, the power base consists of a large swathe of the population - in modern times, this includes the whole of the adult population, rich or poor. In contrast, an autocrat would try to placate at best a small coterie of people, an oligarchy, whose support he needs in order to fend off rival aspirants to the levers of power. This oligarchy would typically be much richer than the general population. In particular, the median 'voter' (or

the decisive voter, as he is sometimes referred to) under autocracy would be richer than the median voter under democracy. Now recalling the negative relationship between the level of income and the amount of maximum tax rate a person would be willing to pay, it follows from the 'median voter theorem' that the ruler's 'optimal' tax rate would be lower under autocracy than under democracy. In consequence, the economy is expected to grow faster under autocracy. This is the essence of the 'Tocqueville effect'.

But the presumption of autocracy's superiority on the ground of the 'Tocqueville effect' has not gone unchallenged. One line of criticism maintains that the inference of lower tax rate under autocracy on Tocquevillian grounds is misleading because it is based on unrealistic assumptions about the nature of fiscal regimes one can expect to find under alternative political systems. For instance, it was assumed above that the same type of fiscal regime will prevail in both types of political regime. Specifically, the fiscal regime was assumed, in both regimes, to be characterised by either proportional or progressive tax on the one hand and uniform distribution of tax revenue on the other, resulting in a net redistribution of income from the rich to the poor. It was only under this assumption that the median voter theorem predicts that the optimal tax rate will be lower in autocracy.

However, as has been rightly noted by Lee (2003), while this assumption may be a valid approximation for most democracies, it is certainly not so for most autocracies. In the real world, fiscal policies in autocratic-cum-oligarchic regimes have typically been regressive in nature, resulting in a redistribution bias in favour of the ruling elite rather than towards the poor. Lee, therefore, argues for a modified application of the median voter theorem, which retains the essential insight of the theorem that the ruler will choose the maximum tax rate acceptable to the median voter, but allows the nature of the fiscal regime to vary under alternative political regimes - a progressive regime in democracy, and a regressive one in oligarchy. This leads to a two-dimensional characterisation of the political regime - one dimension relates to the income of the decisive voter and the other to the progressivity of the fiscal regime. Once both these dimensions are considered, the implication of the median voter theorem for the size of optimal tax rate is no longer unambiguous, because the two dimensions pull in opposite directions.

In the standard analysis of the Tocqueville effect presented above, only the first dimension was considered, by noting that the income of the decisive voter would be higher in oligarchy than in democracy. If this were the only difference between the two regimes, then the median voter theorem will lead inevitably to the prediction that tax rate will be higher in democracy - i.e.,

the Tocqueville effect will prevail. However, once the second dimension is considered, we find a conflicting prediction: in oligarchy, the decisive voter will favour a higher tax rate since he will receive a larger amount of redistribution from the exploited masses. Similarly, in a democratic society too, the optimal tax rate will be pulled in two opposite directions. In so far as the decisive voter is poorer in democracy, the tax rate will tend to be higher, in line with Tocqueville effect. However, since the decisive voter will now receive a lower amount of redistribution, thanks to the regressivity of the fiscal regime, he will favour a lower tax rate. Thus, theory no longer has an unambiguous prediction as to which regime is likely to have a lower tax rate. It all depends on which of the two dimensions of the political regime has a dominant effect on the decisive voter i.e., whether the income of the decisive voter dominates or the degree of progressivity of the fiscal regime dominates his choice of the tax rate. Lee, however, finds that under most plausible assumptions the dimension of progressivity of the fiscal regime is the dominant factor. This implication is that, on balance, the optimal tax rate is likely to be lower in democracy, compared to autocracy.

A second line of criticism questions the theoretical and empirical validity of an assumption underlying this whole debate on the tax rate - it is the assumption that a higher tax rate is necessarily more harmful for an economy than a lower one. It is, of course, accepted that because of the disincentive effect of taxes, a higher tax rate will have a stronger negative impact on the economy compared to a lower rate, other things remaining the same. However, the criticism maintains that what matters for the economy is not just the direct incentive effect of the tax, but also the indirect effect of how the tax revenue is spent. For instance, if the revenue is spent mostly on public investment - to expand the quality and quantity of physical and human capital - it might offset any negative effect on private investment stemming from distortion of incentives. As a result, total investment may in fact increase; at the very least, the net effect becomes ambiguous. This is indeed the general prediction of economic models that consider both the taxation and expenditure sides of the fiscal regime (Bénabou, 1996; Lee and Roemer, 1998, 1999; Saint-Paul and Verdier, 1996). Empirical evidence also points in the same direction. Cross-country evidence shows that the effect of taxes on economic growth is either positive or ambiguous and is seldom negative (Easterly and Rebelo, 1993; Perotti, 1996).

The upshot of all this is that while acknowledging that democracy is more likely to be associated with a redistribution bias in favour of the poor, theory makes no clear-cut predictions about its impact on economic performance, especially when one considers the fiscal regime in its totality, embracing both revenue and expenditure.

2.4 Political Regimes and the Goodness of Economic Policies

In any case, even the fiscal regime as a whole is not the only policy instrument that is relevant for economic performance. There are many other aspects of policy regime - e.g., trade policy, credit policy, industrial policy, pricing and subsidy policy, technology policy, social welfare policy and so on - that can have profound impact on economic growth. What matters, therefore, is the relationship between political regime and the whole gamut of the policy regime, not just fiscal policy.

From this perspective, an argument is often made in favour of autocracy by claiming that autocrats are more capable of adopting the 'right' kind policies, that is the kind of policies that are most beneficial for the economy. The context of this argument is the well-known fact that different interest groups in the society may favour different types of policies from their own narrowly selfish point of view, all of which may not be conducive to good economic performance from the point of view of the society at large. Whether or not the rulers can pursue the 'right' kind of economic policies from the social point of view, depends on how well the state can insulate itself from the pressure groups that pull in the 'wrong' directions. The argument is often made that autocrats would be better able to achieve this insulation because they don't need to please everyone, while democrats will get stymied by trying to please all or most of the groups for the sake of ensuring broad-based electoral popularity.

One of the most systematic elaborations of this argument can be found in Leftwich (2005). His analysis is based on a distinction made by Apter (1965) between two different types of institutional systems - namely, 'mobilization' systems and 'reconciliation' systems. The first type is designed to enable mobilization of the society at large for achieving certain common social goals - for example, rapid accumulation of capital by sacrificing current consumption for the sake of rapid economic growth. The second type, by contrast, is designed to reconcile the conflicting interests of different social groups by offering specific concessions to specific groups. Leftwich argues that institutional systems of the 'mobilization' type are more likely to be found in autocracies, whereas democracies are likely to be characterised more by 'reconciliation' systems. Furthermore, he suggests that the reconciliation systems are by their very nature inimical to radical structural changes that are often necessary in the early stages of development in order to kick start the process of economic growth. As he puts it: "For while development requires institutions that promote more or less radical accumulation, change and transformation, the institutions which are required to sustain and consolidate democracy are characteristically the ones that promote the politics of accommodation, compromise and the

centre. The political logic of democracy is generally, therefore, necessarily consensual, conservative and incremental in the change it brings about. For many, that is the virtue of democracy: for others, that is its vice." (Leftwich, 2005, p.699) The reference to 'vice' here relates to democracy's alleged inability to pursue the 'right' kind of growth-promoting policies because of its compulsion to try and reconcile the conflicting demands of diverse interest groups.⁹ Autocracy, in contrast, is supposed to do better by insulating state policies from the pressure groups whose interests do not coincide with the interests of the people as a whole.

Empirical support for this line of reasoning is often adduced by citing the contrasting performances of East Asia (e.g., South Korea and China) with that of India in the second half of the last century. The story of this contrast is well-known. In the 1950s and 1960s, both South Korea and India embarked upon the path of industrialization by providing infant industry protection to a range of industries, but thereafter their policies diverged. As every student of trade theory knows, the justification of infant industry protection lies in offering temporary protection against foreign competition - just long enough to enable industries to reach their potential through a process of 'learning by doing' behind a protective wall. Protection must be withdrawn, however, after a period, and the industries must be opened up to global competition, so that efficient industries can survive, and the inefficient ones are weeded out.

There is a good a deal of evidence that South Korea was much more successful than India in ending infant industry protection at the right time. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, South Korea gradually persuaded one industry after another to face global competition by withdrawing protection for them, while in India infant industries remained perennially infant as protection was extended far beyond what could be justified on the ground of learning-by-doing. In consequence, South Korea became a hotbed of dynamic industries, while India remained burdened with a litany of 'sick' industries. This contrast in industrial performance is often attributed to the difference in the political economy of the two countries. In democratic India, the argument goes, politicians found it difficult to resist the pressure from vested interests in the protected industries to continue protection, but autocratic South Korea had no difficulty in stifling such pressures and doing what was believed to be the right thing for the country.¹⁰

While this contrast between South Korea and India offers many important lessons on the political economy of policy-making, the question remains as to whether it provides strong enough empirical support to the general case that autocracies are better able than democracies to insulate policy-making from vested interests. There are after all any number of examples from the autocratic

regimes of other parts of Asia as well as from Africa and Latin America, where no such evidence of successful insulation is found. Marcos's Philippines, Idi Amin's Uganda, Mugabe's Zimbabwe, Duvalier's Haiti, Haile Selassie's Ethiopia are but some of the extreme examples, but there are many less extreme ones as well. There is in fact hardly any empirical basis for the claim that autocracies, in general, have superior ability to pursue good economic policies by insulating the state from pressure-group politics.

There are, on the other hand, good theoretical reasons why autocrats would in general be expected to fail to pursue good economic policies. As a prelude to explaining these reasons, it is first necessary to make an important distinction between two different types of question one may ask while comparing economic policies under alternative political regimes.¹¹ First, which regime is more likely to commit itself more strongly to the goal of long-term economic development? Second, if both regimes are equally committed, which regime would be better able to pursue the policies that are conducive to the goal? The whole debate around insulation from pressure groups belongs to the realm of the second question. The argument that autocrats will be better able to pursue good economic policies by insulating themselves better presumes that they are committed to pursuing good policies in the first place. But this presumption begs the question: why would they be so committed? This takes us to the first of the two questions we distinguished above: which regime is more likely to be more committed to pursuing good policies? This is a logically prior question that must be addressed before predicting anything about the relationship between political regimes and goodness of economic policies.

There are at least a couple of reasons to suspect that autocrats would, in general, be less committed to policies that promote long-term development. The first reason turns on Olson's point about time horizon discussed earlier.¹² In order to commit to the goal of long-term development, a ruler must have a long enough time horizon so that short-term considerations cannot undermine the discipline and sacrifices that would be needed to bring about long-term structural transformation. And, democracy has a clear advantage here since, for reasons already explained, democrats are likely to have a longer time horizon compared to autocrats. Therefore, it is under democracy rather than autocracy, that one would expect to find greater commitment to policies that are conducive to long-term development.

The second reason why an autocrat would find it hard to commit to good policies lies in an inherent contradiction between the institutional requirements of good policies and the autocrat's goal of sustainable

expropriation of economic surplus. Being a 'stationary bandit', the autocrat may very well want to pursue good economic policies, so that he may extract more surplus in the future. But the problem arises because the very institutional framework that is needed for implementing good policies may undermine his ability to extract surplus on a sustainable basis. In an insightful analysis of why rulers often choose bad policies, Robinson (1998) explains this contradiction as follows. For an economy to prosper, an institutional framework needs to be put in place involving well-defined and enforced property rights, an independent judiciary and a system of law enforcement, among others. But these very same institutions will also constrain the autocrat's ability to extract surplus from other agents in the society to the fullest. "Thus the institutional prerequisites to development are essentially antagonistic, indeed practically orthogonal, to the maintenance of the power of a dictator." (Robinson, 1998, p.23) Recognition of this inherent contradiction will dissuade the autocrat from pursuing 'good' economic policies, even if he knows what they are and how to implement them, by thwarting vested interest groups, if necessary.

In summary, theory provides no unambiguous prediction that autocracy would perform better than democracy in promoting economic prosperity. The judgement then must be made based on empirical evidence, to which we now turn.

3 Political Regimes and Economic Performance: The Evidence

Development is a multi-dimensional concept. It involves material progress as measured by income, but it also involves non-income dimensions such as health, nutrition, education, etc. that go under the name of human development. Therefore, while assessing the impact of political regimes on economic performance, it is useful to divide the available evidence into two categories - those that deal with the impact on the income dimension i.e., the level and growth of per capita income, and those that assess the impact on human development.

3.1 Political Regimes and Economic Growth

Quantitative studies on the impact of democracy on growth date back at least to the early 1970s. These studies are a subset of the branch of empirical economic literature that has come to be known as 'growth empirics', which is concerned with identifying the determinants of economic growth from cross-country regressions. As such, they share with the broader literature on 'growth empirics' a plethora of methodo-

logical and econometric problems that exist in identifying causal relationships from cross-country data.

The evidence accumulated up to 1990 is expertly reviewed by Sirowy and Inkeles (1990). They examine thirteen studies, which produced very diverse results. Out of them, nine studies found no statistically significant relationship between democracy and growth, three reported an unambiguously negative effect, and the remaining four found qualified or conditional results. Not surprisingly, the review concludes: "Hence, overall, these studies present a very mixed and confusing picture with regard to the effect of democracy on economic growth. The inconclusive results presented by these studies are further compounded by the fact that these studies are quite heterogeneous with respect to characteristics of measurement, coverage, design, and method of analysis." (p.137) Apart from the problem of heterogeneity mentioned in the quotation above, a major problem with these early studies was that they were methodologically too weak to distinguish causal relationship from mere statistical association. For instance, more than half of these studies did not include any control variables, i.e., variables other than democracy that could plausibly have a bearing on economic growth. This deficiency made these studies vulnerable to the so-called 'omitted variable bias', which essentially meant that the estimated effect of democracy on growth could not inspire much confidence because it could be mixed up (or 'confounded', in technical jargon) with the effects of omitted variables. An even bigger problem, shared also by those studies that did include control variables, was the failure to account for the possibility of reverse causation - i.e., the possibility that while democracy may affect growth, growth may in turn affect the emergence of democracy. Unless the effect of possible reverse causation is somehow separated out, it becomes impossible to say whether the observed relationship shows the effect of democracy on growth or the effect of growth on democracy.

These and other methodological problems were addressed more systematically by the second generation of studies which emerged from the 1990s onward, beginning with the path-breaking study of Robert Barro (1996), one of the pioneers of the broader literature on 'growth empirics'. These studies took great pains to collect data on a whole range of control variables so that the problem of 'omitted variable bias' could be minimised and used appropriate techniques (such as the instrumental variable method) to identify causal relationships from statistical association. Using a panel of nearly 100 countries for the period between 1960 and 1990, Barro himself found a weakly negative overall relationship between democracy and growth. However, he also observed a non-linearity in this relationship - with democracy having a favourable effect on growth at

low levels of democratic freedom but a negative effect at higher levels.

Barro's pioneering work sparked off an explosion of similar studies in the ensuing decade, covering different groups of countries, different time periods, and different sets of control and instrumental variables. The results, however, remained as diverse and as inconclusive as the ones reported by the early studies.¹³ This led to a near consensus in the mid-2000s that there existed no generalizable or systematic relationship between political regimes and economic growth. The core content of this consensus has been summarised by Adam Przeworski (2008, p.55) as follows: "The current state of knowledge about the relation between democracy and economic growth seems to be the following: (1) The two regimes generate more or less the same rates of economic growth; (2) The small net difference may be due to each regime having some positive and some negative effects on development..."

The consensus has subsequently been challenged, however. A major issue of contention here is the specification of the growth equations that have been estimated. These equations rightly include a range of control variables, so that the effects of growth-enhancing variables other than democracy can be separated out. The problem, however, is that many of these control variables may also be affected by democracy itself. As a result, if one is separating out the effects of control variables, without allowing for the effect of democracy on them, one is also throwing out the effect of democracy on growth that operates through those variables. For example, Barro's own specification included rule of law and human capital among the control variables. But it is arguable and has been argued convincingly by many on theoretical as well as empirical grounds that both rule of law and human capital are likely to flourish more under democracy than under non-democratic regimes. If these effects are left out, using control variables, the effect of democracy on growth would obviously be underestimated.

The general point here is that if political regime has any effect on economic growth at all, that effect cannot get transmitted through a vacuum. There must be some pathways through which this effect must be transmitted. Since the proximate factors that determine economic growth are the amount and productivity of factors of production (such as capital), political regime can affect growth only through these proximate determinants or through other variables (such as economic freedom) that may have a bearing on those determinants. These are the only possible pathways through which political regime can influence economic growth, if at all. If these same pathways are used as control variables, there remains no scope for the effect of political regime to reveal itself. It should, therefore, come hardly as a surprise that a

plethora of sophisticated econometric research finds no unambiguous effect of democracy on growth.

This line of argument implies that a proper methodological approach would involve assessing the impact of democracy on growth not by controlling for those pathways but through them. A small number of studies have attempted to do precisely that. In a meta-analysis of a large number of published studies on the quantitative relationship between democracy on growth, Doucouliagos and Ulubasoglu (2008, p.61) have found that “democracy has robust, significant, and positive indirect effects through higher human capital, lower inflation, lower political instability, and higher levels of economic freedom.” However, once these same pathways are used as control variables, democracy is found to have no effect on growth at all. Similar conclusions were reached by Fabro and Aixelá (2012) by following a different methodology. They estimated a system of simultaneous equations, representing pathways such as physical and human capital, and their productivity, and found significantly positive effect of democracy on growth operating through those pathways.

The conclusion one must reach, therefore, on the basis of current evidence, is that once an appropriate methodology is used one does find a robust positive effect of democracy on growth. It must be understood, however, that this result is in the nature of a statistical average. Not all democracies would perform well, and some autocracies may outshine some democracies, but on the whole democracy does seem to promote growth better than autocracy.

Another point worth noting is that the relationship between democracy and growth examined above is to be interpreted as a long run relationship. If one set of countries remain democratic and another set remains autocratic over a long enough time, then the evidence suggests that on the average the former set of countries would enjoy faster growth. But there are other aspects of the relationship between democracy and growth that are also worth examining.

One important question is what happens to economic performance when a country makes a ‘democratic transition’ - i.e., when the political regime of a country changes from some form of autocracy to some form of democracy. Does this transition hurt economic growth? This question assumes a special significance in modern times with the emergence of a ‘democratic project’ whereby a conscious attempt is being made to introduce democracy in the third world and in the post-socialist block. While the intrinsic merit of this project is generally not questioned, a lot of disquiet has been expressed, including by eminent scholars, about possible economic consequences of what many believe to be premature democratization.¹⁴

This issue has been addressed systematically by Rodrik and Wacziarg (2005). They began by noting that the all-too-common disquiet about possible harmful consequence of democratic transition is generally based on anecdotal evidence, drawn especially from Africa. But there are a couple of problems with relying on such anecdotal evidence. In the first place, those who cite anecdotes to support their disquiet fail to take cognizance of other anecdotes that point in the opposite direction. For instance, while there are indeed examples of some African countries plunging into economic crisis after democratic transition, there are also countries such as Mauritius and Botswana, which have prospered greatly after embracing democracy. Secondly, even for those countries that faced post-transition crisis, there remains the question of the counter-factual: who knows whether they wouldn’t have been mired in even bigger crisis if democratic transition had not occurred?

Rodrik and Wacziarg (2005), therefore, went beyond anecdotes and undertook a proper statistical analysis of the issue by looking at a large data set and employing the econometric techniques that have become common in the ‘growth empirics’ literature. Their analysis reveals that there is, in general, no cause for concern about economic performance following democratic transitions. If anything, major democratic transitions have had a positive effect on economic growth in the short run. As the authors put it: “Democratizations tend to follow periods of low growth rather than precede them.” (p.50) Significantly, contrary to the claims of the doomsayers, the positive effect is especially evident for the poorest countries of the world and those that are afflicted by sharp ethnic divisions.¹⁵

Persson and Tabellini (2006) undertook a similar exercise, with the innovation that expectation of democratic transition was included as an additional explanatory variable on top of actual transition.¹⁶ Their results confirm the Rodrik-Wacziarg finding that on the whole democratic transition helps accelerate the rate of growth; in addition, they also show that the expectation of transition makes the growth acceleration even faster. When the expectation variable is added, the authors find that “Actual democracy now induces a growth acceleration of over 1 percent... (and) a long run income rise of 35 percent. This growth effect is larger than the benchmark estimate... Thus, including expected regime changes brings out a more forceful effect of actual transitions on growth. The results in this section imply that stable and persistent democracy has a stronger effect on development than democracy per se.” (p. 323).

The final remark in the quotation above draws attention to yet another aspect of the relationship between democracy and growth that is often neglected - namely, the effect of the cumulative experience of democracy. The relevant issue here is the distinction

between stock and flow - i.e., not just whether a country is democratic today but for what length of time it has had experience with democracy. Persson and Tabellini's results were suggestive of the inference that 'persistent' democracy had a stronger effect on growth than democracy as such. Other researchers have recently investigated this issue more directly, by including the history of democratic experience as additional explanatory variable in growth regressions.

The study by Gerring, Bond, Barndt and Moreno (2005) confirms that the effect of regime type on growth is mediated by a country's historical experience of democracy and authoritarianism. As the authors explain: "Our somewhat surprising findings stem from a conceptual insight that regime effects materialize from a country's democratic stock rather than its contemporaneous regime type. Thus, while a country's level of democracy in a single year has no measurable impact on its growth rate in the subsequent year, its democratic experience over the course of the twentieth century is positively associated with growth in subsequent years. Long-term democracy leads to stronger economic performance."¹⁷ (p.356)

This is not surprising. Unlike autocracy, where a dictator can rule with an iron hand from day one if he has enough muscle power at his command, democracy just doesn't happen overnight. Democracy is a process, and both rulers and citizens have to learn - through trial and error - how to make the system work by effectively reconciling the conflicting demands that different segments of the society invariably bring to the table. The art of compromise, which is an essential feature of democracy, is much more complex than the exercise of coercion, on which autocracy depends. It inevitably takes time to acquire and sharpen this art. Proper functioning of democracy also requires broad-based adherence to 'democratic values', but these values do not emerge *sui generis* - they have to be inculcated through the practice of democracy. This too takes time. It is, therefore, entirely plausible that the length of experience with democratic practice would play a significant role in improving the economic performance of a democratic society.

3.2 Going Beyond Growth

There are other important aspects of the relationship between democracy and economic performance that go beyond the concern with the average rate of growth. One of them relates to stability of growth. This is a matter of some importance for several reasons. First, even when average growth remains the same, an unstable growth path would reduce the welfare of risk-averse citizens, which most people are. Second, there is some evidence that a high degree of growth instability may reduce the average growth rate itself (e.g., Ramey and Ramey,

1995; Mobarak, 2005). Finally, instability hurts the poorer segments of the population more, as they happen to be less equipped to protect themselves from shocks compared to the richer segment. It is, therefore, important to ask: does democracy reduce or exacerbate volatility of growth?

On this question, the research community has reached a near consensus. A large body of empirical research has reached the conclusion that democracies exhibit lower growth volatility compared to non-democratic regimes.¹⁸ Several hypotheses have been proposed to explain the existence of this relationship between democracy and stability. There is an agreement among researchers that stability of growth stems essentially from the stability of policies pursued in democracies; so the relevant question is what explains greater policy stability in democracy.

The proposed answers include innate risk aversion of the citizens which a democratic ruler is expected to take into account (Quinn and Woolley, 2001), constraints that democracy imposes on an executive's ability to change policy arbitrarily (Nooruddin, 2003), the need to reconcile conflicting demands of various pressure groups leading to a propensity to adhere to the status quo in democracies (Heckelman and Wilson, 2016), and the idea that in the face of uncertain policy outcomes decisions made collectively under democracy would tend to favour the adoption of policies with less risky outcomes compared to decisions made by an individual autocrat (Dutt and Mobarak, 2016).

An alternative explanatory framework is employed by Amartya Sen in his influential work on famine, one of the cruelest manifestations of economic instability (Sen, 1983, 1999a; Drèze and Sen, 1989). Following from his central thesis that modern famines occur not from the overall shortage of food but from a sharp decline of some people's 'entitlement' to the available food, he goes on to argue that famines can be prevented only by taking measures to prevent precipitous fall in entitlements. In this respect, democracies perform better because the correlates of democracy such as a free media, public debate, freedom of speech and electoral compulsion combine to make it impossible for democratic rulers to ignore the problem. In contrast, the absence of these features in autocracy leads to a situation where the rulers are either not fully informed of an impending disaster (as happened in Mao's China during 1958-61 famine) or remain callous about it, or even use it as a tool for subjugating those towards whom they feel antagonistic for one reason or the other (as has happened in parts of Asia and Africa). Democracy's superiority in this regard has been expressed most eloquently by Sen's famous dictum "No famine has ever taken place in the history of the world in a functioning democracy." (Sen 1999a, p.16)

The link between democracy and famine is a useful reminder that while assessing the relationship between democracy and economic performance, it is necessary to go beyond the traditional concern with economic growth. While growth is an essential tool for economic success, the goodness of economic performance must be judged ultimately by how well people are able to lead their lives, in ways that matter for them. From this perspective, it is necessary to investigate the relationship between democracy and what Amartya Sen calls capability - i.e., how free people are to pursue the kind of lives they have reason to value (Sen, 1985).

For practical application, researchers usually measure capability by the indicators of human development - in the spheres of health, nutrition and education, in particular. There is a strand in the vast literature on democracy and economic performance, which explores the relationship between democracy and these indicators of human development. And in this strand, as in the case of stability of growth, an overwhelming consensus has prevailed, at least until recently. A plethora of cross-country quantitative studies have reached the conclusion that democracy has an unambiguously positive impact on human development in all its dimensions.¹⁹ Some of the findings deserve special mention.

First, Saha and Zhang (2012) have found that while democracy enhances human development at any level of economic development, the effect is stronger when growth is relatively low in developing countries. This implies that when failure of growth threatens a shortfall in human development, democracy can come to the rescue to counter that shortfall.

Second, as in the case of democracy-growth relationship, some researchers have looked at the effect of democratization i.e., the short run effect of transition to democracy as distinct from the long-term effect of existence of democracy. In an especially interesting study on 28 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Kudamatsu (2012) has estimated that in the aftermath of democratization in the post-Cold War period infant mortality rate fell by 1.2 percentage points, which amounted to 12 per cent of the sample mean.

Third, again as in the case of democracy-growth relationship, several studies have made the stock-flow distinction and tried to measure the effect of cumulative experience with democracy as distinct from contemporaneous practice of democracy (e.g., Gerring *et al.*, 2012; Awad and Yussof, 2012). And, as in the case of growth, these studies have found that a long history of democracy has an additional positive effect on human development. That is, while democracy in general is beneficial for human development, older democracies do even better than new democracies in this regard, other things remaining the same.

These findings on the positive relationship between democracy and human development have not come as a surprise to most people because of the general acceptance of the hypothesis that democracy has an inherent 'redistribution bias'. In the specific context of human development, this hypothesis suggests that popular participation in democracy empowers ordinary citizens, including the very poor; as a result, governments are required to be more accountable to their interests and to ensure the basic necessities of life.

In summary, while evidence on the relationship between democracy and growth is not entirely unambiguous, the overwhelming weight of evidence is in support of the view that in the long run democracy fosters more rapid growth compared to autocracy. This result comes out especially strongly when proper care is taken to trace the effects of political regimes operating through various mediating variables. At least, the weight of evidence lends no support to the proposition that autocracy is a more growth-friendly political regime. At the same time, sufficiently clear evidence exists in support of democracy on several other important issues. First, not only the long run effect of democracy, the short run effect of democratic transition is also positive, contrary to the misgivings expressed by many that democratization in poor countries will bring economic chaos in its wake. Second, when allowance is made for the effect of cumulative experience with democracy, and not just contemporaneous experience with it, democracy is found to entail better growth performance than autocracy. Third, countries under democratic regimes experience more stable growth in comparison with those under autocratic rule. Fourth, there is a near universal agreement that democracy is superior to autocracy in promoting human development.

4 Are the Poor Countries Ready for Democracy?

Even if democracy proves to be more conducive, or at least not inimical, to development, there remains the further question of whether poor countries are ready for embracing the democratic form of governance. After all, western countries, where democracy as an institution struck root first, embraced this system only after the Industrial Revolution was well on its way - in the nineteenth century. Can the present-day agrarian countries in the Third World, with very little modern industrial base, hope to defy history by democratising successfully very early in their journey towards modernization? Wouldn't the very nature of underdevelopment undermine their ability to sustain democratic institutions, as it presumably did in the western world before the nineteenth century?

There is a very strong strand of opinion, in both common perception and academic tradition, which claims that sustainable democracy cannot be achieved at a very early stage of development. In this view, a country must get sufficiently modernised first before indulging in the complex art of democracy. In the political science literature, this view has come to be known as the 'modernization thesis' or the 'Lipset hypothesis' after the name of the political scientist who is credited with the first systematic articulation of this idea (Lipset, 1959, 1960).²⁰ If one accepts this hypothesis, then all this debate about whether democracy promotes development or not would turn out to be pretty much irrelevant. If a nation simply cannot have democracy, because it is too poor to have it, what does it matter whether it is good or bad for the economy? This question would be relevant only for the nations that are already well on the way to modernization. For the poorest of the nations, the advice would seem to be, just put up with your autocrats for a generation or two.

There is an additional argument, relevant especially to the countries in Asia, that democracy may not suit them at all, not even after a generation or two, because a thoroughly non-democratic culture of deference to authority is supposed to be ingrained in their collective psyche. Autocracy, rather than democracy, is claimed to be their natural habitat. In this perspective, democracy is seen as a western import, unsuited to the genius of the people of Asia. Known as the 'Asian values' hypothesis, this point of view has been associated most strongly with Singapore's ironman Lee Kuan Yew but it also strikes a sympathetic chord in communist China and some other parts of Asia.²¹ It is not surprising that autocrats would find this view to their liking, but careful study of history does not lend much support to it. For instance, in a series of papers Amartya Sen has demonstrated that democratic values sprouted in many parts of the ancient world - not just in the West but also in India, China and other eastern nations (Sen, 1997, 1999b, 2003).²² There is nothing quintessentially Western about democracy, nor is there any evidence of endemic or unquestioned acceptance of authoritarianism in Asian culture.²³ Increasingly, the 'Asian values' argument is losing its appeal, and is no longer taken seriously by most people, even in Asia, as a justification for abandonment or even deferment of democracy.²⁴

But the 'modernization thesis' is much more of a hardy perennial, claiming its pedigree as far back as Aristotle, and grounded on serious theoretical and empirical work. In one of the most influential pieces of work in political sociology in modern times, Seymour Lipset (1959) proclaimed that "Perhaps the most widespread generalization linking political systems to other aspects of society has been that democracy is related to the state of economic development. Concretely, this means that the more well-to-do a nation, the

greater the chances that it will sustain democracy." (p.75) This generalization was based both on the commonality of views widely held as well as historical evidence on when and under what circumstances countries around the world embraced democracy.²⁵

Lipset argued that the process of economic development unleashes a variety of structural changes in the society - industrialization, urbanization, education, communication, mobilization, political realignments, and so on - which together create a condition that is conducive to the emergence of democracy. Thus, "all the various aspects of economic development - industrialization, urbanization, wealth, and education - are so closely interrelated as to form one major factor which has the political correlate of democracy" (Lipset 1960, p.41).²⁶ An influential interpretation of this idea states that "if other countries become as rich as the economically advanced nations, it is highly probable that they will become political democracies." O'Donnell (1973, p.3).

One way of interpreting this view is that economically underdeveloped countries will find it hard to make the transition from autocratic regimes to democratic rule, and even if somehow they manage to make the transition, they will probably not be able to sustain it. Therefore, to be able to enjoy democratic freedoms, poor countries will have to wait patiently until they have become economically advanced. That is why, the Lipset hypothesis has been christened as the 'modernization thesis'.

We shall argue later that there are reasons to suspect that the modernization thesis, as stated above, does not quite capture the rich subtleties of Lipset's ideas; and as such the pessimism that the thesis generates about the prospects of poor countries' democratization is not quite warranted either. However, in view of the influence this thesis has held over many fields of social sciences ever since Lipset's original contribution, it is necessary to examine closely its conceptual and empirical foundations.

4.1 Foundations of the Modernization Thesis

It's worth clarifying at the outset that Lipset regarded the close association between economic development and democratic transition mainly as an empirical regularity - a correlation in search of a causal explanation. He himself did not offer a fully articulated causal story, though he did emphasize the role played by increased education and an enlarged middle class that accompany economic development.²⁷ His writings have, however, inspired several strands of more fully articulated causal theories in the ensuing decades.

In examining these theories, it is necessary to begin by noting an important conceptual distinction between the 'emergence' of democracy and the 'survival' of democracy. The first concept relates to 'transition' from authoritarian regimes to democratic rule and the second relates to the 'sustainability' of democracy once it has been achieved. When Lipset identifies social conditions that correlate with democracy, he has both the concepts in mind; i.e., his conditions are meant to be conducive for both 'transition' to and 'sustainability' of democracy.²⁸ This distinction has often been ignored in the literature, resulting in a good deal of confusion about the precise nature of the relationship between development and democracy. There is, however, no *a priori* reason why the conditions for transition and the conditions for sustainability must be the same. Indeed, as we shall see below, some recent writings have mounted a challenge to the 'modernisation thesis' by riding on this distinction.

Until recently, the focus was primarily on the 'transition' aspect of the relationship, and many alternative theories have been proposed by way of explaining it. These theories differ with each other in their emphasis on the mediating variable that is supposed to link development with democracy. One strand of these theories emphasizes aspirations for democracy as the chief mediating variable. Economic development can spread power, and thereby create democratic aspirations for participation in governance, among a variety of social groups (Dahl, 1989). Inglehart and Welzel (2005) conceptualize this as a two-way process between macro and micro levels of the society. The macro-level structural transformations that development brings in its wake tend to empower individuals at the micro level in various ways, fostering in them 'emancipative values' (Welzel, 2006) and 'individual modernity' (Inkeles, 1978). People then begin to aspire for human freedom in all dimensions. When a sufficiently large number of people begin to realize that overall human freedom cannot be achieved without civil and political rights, that's when the struggle for democracy begins, making transition to democracy possible.

Others have emphasized changes in the balance of power among economic and social classes as the crucial mediating factor. Drawing upon historical experience, many observers had identified the landowning class as the chief obstacle to democracy (e.g., Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992). Conceptually, this fact can be explained by a kind of 'asset specificity' argument. When democracy spreads power widely, the ones that are likely to lose out the most are those amongst the erstwhile powerful elite who possess the most immobile assets, because such assets cannot be shifted to alternative uses where the exercise of political power is not essential. And land is the most immobile asset of all, making landowners the staunchest opponents of democracy. The process of

economic development - specifically, capitalist development - breaks down the power of the landowning class and empowers a much larger segment of the society. As Huber *et al.* (1993, pp.83-84) put it: "Capitalist development transforms the class structure, enlarging the working and middle classes and facilitating their self-organization, thus making it more difficult for elites to exclude them politically. Simultaneously development weakens the landed upper class, democracy's most consistent opponent." It is this changing balance of power that is supposed to pave the way for democratic transition.

An alternative explanation identifies income distribution as the relevant mediating variable. This argument invokes the well-known Kuznets curve, and combines it with the insights of the median voter theorem, discussed earlier. The Kuznets curve proposes an empirical regularity in the relationship between per capita income and the distribution income - as per capita income rises, distribution first becomes more unequal but eventually becomes more equal.²⁹ Boix and Stokes (2003) focuses on the second part of this relationship i.e., the part where economic development brings about greater equality of income, and develops an argument to the effect that greater equality paves the way for the emergence of democracy.³⁰ "As countries develop, incomes become more equally distributed. Income equality means that the redistributive scheme that would win democratic support (the one supported by the median voter) would deprive the rich of less income than the one the median voter would support if income distribution were highly unequal. Hence the rich find a democratic tax structure to be less expensive for them as their country gets wealthier, and they are more willing to countenance democratization." (Boix and Stokes, 2003, p.540).

These theories all seem plausible enough in the light of historical experience, but questions still arise, first, as to the empirical robustness of the postulated positive relationship between development and democracy, and, secondly, on the interpretation that is to be put to the relationship. As for empirical robustness of the statistical relationship, there now exists a near consensus about its existence, but interpretation remains a matter of vigorous debate.

Lipset's own statistical analysis was quite rudimentary, but over the years many researchers from a variety of social science disciplines have repeatedly investigated the relationship, using a variety of statistical tools and multiple data sets covering different groups of countries and different time periods. Barring one or two dissenting voices, almost all such studies have concluded that a positive relationship exists.³¹ A neat summary of this consensus can be given in the words of Barro (1999, p.5160) summarising his own finding: "...increases in

various measures of the standard of living forecast a gradual rise in democracy. In contrast, democracies that arise without prior economic development—sometimes because they are imposed by former colonial powers or international organizations—tend not to last.”

4.2 Interpreting the Modernization Thesis

The positive association between development and democracy has traditionally been interpreted in the first sense of Lipset i.e., from the perspective of ‘transition’ to democracy. The inference has been drawn that transition to democracy is more likely to occur at higher levels of development. But this inference has been hotly contested in recent years. At least two alternative perspectives have emerged which accept the existence of a positive statistical relationship but do not agree that it warrants the interpretation that development facilitates transition to democracy. The first perspective has been advanced by the political scientist Adam Pzeworski and his colleagues, and the second by the economist Darren Acemoglu and his colleagues.

Adam Pzeworski and his colleagues construct their argument by accepting Lipset’s second interpretation but rejecting the first (Pzeworski and Limongi, 1997; Pzeworski *et al.*, (2000). They produce an impressive body of empirical evidence to establish a couple of propositions: (a) development makes democracy more sustainable (which supports Lipset’s second interpretation), but (b) transition to democracy occurs almost randomly with respect to the level of development as measured by per capita income i.e., development plays no causal role in the transition to democracy (which rejects Lipset’s first interpretation). Proposition (a) is based on estimated probability of survival of democracy once it has been established. This probability is found to rise systematically with income and become unity beyond a threshold level of income, which suggests that no democracy ever dies beyond that threshold.³² Proposition (b) is derived from the fact that the estimated probability of survival of autocracies has no systematic relationship with the level of income. This has led to the conclusion that autocracies die, and hence democracies emerge, randomly with respect to income.

The authors then argue that the two propositions together generate the observed positive relationship between development and democracy. If democracies arise randomly at different levels of development, but survive more only at higher levels, then at any point in time we would observe fewer democracies at lower levels of development and more at higher levels. Hence the positive relationship observed from cross-country data. But, on this reasoning, this relationship does not lend itself to the interpretation that ‘transition’ to democracy happens mainly at high levels of income.

Pzeworski thus rejects the ‘transition’ interpretation of the modernization thesis but accepts the ‘sustainability’ version. Indeed, his explanation of the observed positive relationship between development and democracy is based on that acceptance. As such, some theoretical justification is needed for the ‘sustainability’ argument i.e. we need an explanation as to why one would expect democracy to survive better at higher levels of income.

One such explanation is offered in Benhabib and Pzeworski (2006). The argument proceeds from the premise that in a democracy redistribution of income will inevitably take place according to the scheme chosen by the median voter. For democracy to be sustainable, the redistribution scheme must be such that both the poor and the rich find it acceptable; otherwise, either group could stage a revolution or a coup, thereby subverting democracy and ushering in an authoritarian rule. The problem, however, is that at low levels of wealth there may not exist any feasible redistribution scheme that simultaneously satisfies both the poor and the rich. The poor want a lot because they are desperately poor, but the rich want to hold on to whatever share of a small aggregate wealth they have garnered for themselves. It is only at high levels of income that redistribution schemes satisfying both groups become feasible. The rich no longer mind giving up a little bit more (because they already have a lot) and the poor do not mind having a little less by way of redistribution because they now earn more than before.³³ That’s when democracy becomes sustainable.

Another explanation of the same genre, involving distributional conflicts, can be found in Acemoglu and Robinson (2000, 2001). The starting point is a historical observation that in most cases democracy emerges only when conflicts over distribution become so severe as to threaten revolution by the subordinate groups. The elite then seeks to avert revolution by agreeing to redistribute income towards the poor. But since any such agreement can be revoked at the whims of the elite, the offer of redistribution must be made in a credible manner – one that involves a kind of commitment that cannot be easily violated. Democratic rule then emerges as precisely such a commitment device.³⁴ The problem, however, remains that even though democracy’s commitment to redistribute cannot be easily bypassed, there is no guarantee of an irrevocable commitment under all circumstances. Especially at times of severe economic crisis, the elite may no longer agree to redistribute, in which case democracy may be undermined and the society may revert to authoritarian rule. The gist of the argument so far is that it might be difficult to sustain democracy in societies that are more prone to economic instability. The next step is to argue that more prosperous societies should be better able to avoid

economic crises or at least to minimize their intensity. It then follows that democracy will survive better at higher levels of economic development.

There would thus appear to exist a credible basis for Pzeworski *et al.*'s partial acceptance of the modernization thesis, which involves rejection of the 'transition' interpretation but acceptance of the 'sustainability' interpretation. In contrast, Acemoglu, Johnson, Robinson and Yared (2009), make an even more radical departure by rejecting the modernization thesis *tout court* - in both its interpretations. They argue that the observed positive relationship between income and democracy does not represent any kind of causal connection at all, and then go on to offer an alternative explanation of this relationship.

Their rejection of the modernization thesis is based on an econometric exercise that was designed to identify possible existence of a causal connection between income and democracy. They use techniques such as fixed-effects and instrumental variable estimation that are meant to make such identification possible, provided a causal connection exists, but fail to find any evidence for it. They, therefore, reject the existence of a causal story underlying the modernization thesis.

But they still had to explain how the observed positive relationship between income and democracy comes about. Drawing lessons from the history of democracies' emergence in the West, they provide an alternative explanation, which they call the 'critical juncture hypothesis'. According to this hypothesis, democracy emerges at some critical juncture in the history of a nation in an unpredictable manner. These junctures have two major characteristics. First, they can appear at many different levels of income; there is no systematic relationship with income or other correlates of modernization. Secondly, transition to democracy is not actually guaranteed at the juncture; instead, at those critical moments, a nation can go in two entirely opposite directions - either a virtuous path in which democracy goes hand in hand with economic prosperity or a vicious path in which the nation endures both autocracy and impoverishment.³⁵ It is these divergent dynamics faced by different nations at their critical junctures that gives rise to the observed positive relationship between development and democracy. However, there is no causal relationship between the two - neither causes the other. Instead, both are caused by the institutional changes that occur at the critical junctures. A certain type of institutional changes brings about economic and political development simultaneously; a different type of institutional changes engenders both economic and political retrogression. Thus, the observed positive relationship exists only because they are both affected in the same direction, either positively or negatively, by a common force -

namely, institutional changes occurring at critical junctures.

The provocative arguments made by Pzeworski *et al.* and Acemoglu *et al.* have fundamentally altered the profession's understanding of the modernization thesis. Yet, their own analyses have not gone unchallenged. Boix and Stokes (2003), for example, argue that Pzeworski *et al.* were led to reject the 'transition' argument because of a faulty interpretation of their own statistical results. They re-estimated the respective probabilities of survival of both democracies and autocracies using the same data set that Pzeworski *et al.* had used and demonstrated that while democracy's probability of survival rises systematically with income, the opposite is true for autocracy. The first result is entirely in accord with Pzeworski *et al.* and confirms that democracy become more sustainable at higher income levels. However, the second result contradicts them since the demise of autocracy and hence the emergence of democracy is no longer found to be random as Pzeworski *et al.* had suggested. Instead, it is found to rise with the level of income, thus providing support to the 'transition' interpretation of the modernization thesis.

Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen and O'Halloran (2006) also take issue with Pzeworski's methodology by arguing that it's a mistake to dichotomise societies between democracy and autocracy. This is because democracy comes in many shades, with varying degrees of adherence to democratic norms and values. The partial democracies, or 'illiberal' democracies as Fareed Zakaria (2003) has described them, ought to be treated as a separate category according to Epstein *et al.*, because evidence shows that these societies operate very differently from liberal democracies and are often hard to distinguish from autocracies. Once the trichotomous classification is employed, Epstein *et al.* find that higher per capita income increases the likelihood of a movement away from autocracy as well as decreases the likelihood of a movement away from democracy. Thus, both interpretations of the modernisation thesis are validated.

Acemoglu *et al.*'s total rejection of a causal connection between income and development has also been questioned. Barro (2012) has argued that the problem lies in the use of fixed effects as a tool for identifying causal connection. His argument is quite technical in nature and this is not the place to delve into the statistical complexities of the argument involved. However, his main contention may be summarised briefly as follows. If the fixed effects technique is applied to data sets covering a relatively short period of time, it may not be possible to identify a causal connection, even if it exists; a data set covering a long period of time might be needed for proper identification.

Barro went on to extend Acemoglu's data set over a much longer period and found the existence of a causal connection by applying the fixed effect technique. As a result, he came down strongly in support of the modernization thesis.³⁶

In summary, Lipset's original insight about a positive relationship between democracy and development has been validated enough, through careful statistical studies, to claim the status of an incontrovertible empirical regularity. Much disagreement remains, however, on the interpretation of this relationship. Of the two interpretations suggested by Lipset himself, the one linking development to transition to democracy has come under especially severe strain because of the weight of empirical evidence. The other interpretation, linking development to the sustainability of democracy, has received much greater support from statistical enquiries, but has not gone entirely unchallenged.

5 Conclusion

This paper has been concerned with the apprehension often expressed that democracy may not be the appropriate system of governance for the developing nations of the world. This apprehension has two related but distinct aspects. The first is a proposition that democracy will hinder development and that some form of authoritarianism will serve the cause of development better. The second aspect makes perhaps an even more damning point by suggesting that, no matter whether democracy is good or bad for development, the harsh reality is that it may not be feasible for poor countries to make a sustainable transition to democracy. If the first proposition is about the desirability of democracy at low levels of development, the second proposition is about its feasibility. The two propositions together imply that democracy is a luxury developing nations cannot afford to have; they must wait, if they want to have democracy at all, till they advance further on the path of economic development. The theoretical and empirical foundations of these propositions have been scrutinized in this paper. The scrutiny leads to the conclusion that there is no solid basis for the apprehension that democracy is not appropriate for the developing nations. Those who aspire for democracy have no cause for despair.

While examining the proposition that democracy is not good for development, the paper takes as its point of departure Amartya Sen's insight that democracy may be relevant to development in three distinct ways: intrinsic, instrumental and constructive. Through its intrinsic and constructive roles, democracy can already claim superiority over authoritarianism - in developed and developing nations alike. The whole debate then turns on the instrumental role i.e., how effectively can democracy

foster development in comparison with autocracy. It is obvious that democracy will prove to be superior on an overall count if it is found to be at least as good as autocracy on instrumental grounds. Both theory and empirical evidence on the relationship between democracy and development were examined from this perspective.

Theory turns out to be inconclusive in the sense that plausible arguments can be made for both sides of the debate. But at least theory gives no general support to the idea that autocratic regimes are more likely to foster development than democracies. On the theoretical ground, therefore, democracy has to be accepted to be at least as good as autocracy. At the empirical level too, one finds many conflicting results. But, after a careful evaluation of the literature, we have concluded strongly in favour of democracy. The most careful empirical studies reveal that democracy is not just as good as autocracy, it is actually better than autocracy in many ways - in fostering faster growth in the long term, in ensuring a more stable growth path by reducing growth volatility, in improving growth performance in the short run in the wake of transition to democracy, and in promoting human development. Therefore, the apprehension that democracy will hinder development has no foundation at all.³⁷

Turning now to the second proposition, the paper first discussed an idea called the 'Asian values' that had gained some currency, especially in some parts of Asia, in the latter part of the twentieth century. Branding democracy as a quintessentially Western concept, some Asian leaders argued that democracy did not suit the developing nations of Asia, because it was antagonistic to the 'Asian values' which allegedly placed deference to authority above individual liberties. The hollowness of this argument has been thoroughly exposed by now, as it has become clear from careful historical analysis that democratic values have universal roots.

But there is another strand of argument buttressing the second proposition that demands much more serious consideration. Known as the 'modernization thesis' or the 'Lipset hypothesis', this argument contends that democracy is not a feasible system of governance for nations at low levels of development. In evaluating this argument, we began by noting a distinction between two senses in which this proposition has been interpreted. The first interpretation relates to transition to democracy and the second to sustainability of democracy. According to the first interpretation, the transition to democracy normally occurs at relatively high levels of development. And according to the second, even if a less developed nation somehow makes the transition to democracy it won't last, because conditions for sustainability of democracy are achieved only at high levels of development. We have analysed both

interpretations from theoretical as well as empirical perspectives. Our analysis shows that the weight of evidence goes heavily against the transition interpretation, but the sustainability interpretation remains a contentious issue, on which the verdict must be kept on hold.

In summary, taking the 'desirability' and the 'feasibility' perspectives together, our analysis does not offer support to the sceptical view of democracy in the context of development. Insofar as the sustainability of democracy at low levels of development remains a contentious issue, the sceptics might find some room for comfort in it. We shall argue, however, that even on this count those who aspire for democracy have no cause for despair, for several reasons.

First, it should be recognised that when researchers draw conclusions from empirical studies, they are essentially projecting lessons from the past into the future. Such projection is not without merit, but it demands caution in the way it is done. In some cases, the factors that might cause a phenomenon to occur in the future may not be the same that caused a similar phenomenon to happen in the past. In our specific context, this means that the conditions that created and sustained democracy in the past may not be needed (at least not in the same degree) to create and sustain democracy in the future. The reason for this may be understood by invoking an analogy with technological progress, which can happen through two routes - innovation and diffusion. In the past, much of technological progress happened through innovation, but in recent times in the age of globalization much more progress is being made through technological diffusion. Furthermore, the conditions that make for successful diffusion are not necessarily the same that make for successful innovation. It would, therefore, be a mistake to mechanically project from the past to predict where technological progress is most likely to be made in the future. The same argument applies to democracy. Where democracy will take root in the future cannot be predicted simply by looking at the conditions under which it took root in the past. The next argument offers one possible reason for this discordance between the past and the future.

Second, some of the most careful studies we have reviewed show that the level of development has only a limited explanatory power for both transition to and sustainability of democracy. For instance, Acemoglu *et al.* (2009) have pointed out that there is much more variability of democracy over time than can be explained by developmental factors alone. There would appear to exist some other forces operating at a world-wide level, which are creating a general trend towards democracy and affecting all nations regardless of their level of development. What those underlying forces are require

further enquiry, but one distinct possibility surely is the force of demonstration effect. Success at achieving democracy in one country may inspire people in other countries to try to achieve it; the spread of the 'Arab Spring' across many nations is but one such example from recent history.

Third, the preceding argument demonstrates that the role of human agency should never be ignored in explaining social phenomena. To claim that less developed countries will not be able to sustain democracy in the future because only more developed countries were able to do so in the past would be to adhere to a deterministic view of social development that ignores human agency altogether. It is conceivable that the quality of democracy might be poor when democratization happens at low levels of development. But to draw the conclusion therefore that 'pre-mature' democracy will not be sustained is to ignore the potentially powerful role of human agency. By applying their agency to democratic practice, people may be able to improve the quality and sustainability of democracy over time.³⁸ It is perhaps apt to conclude on this note by citing from none other than the progenitor of the modernization thesis himself: "Democracy is not achieved by acts of will alone; but men's wills, through action, can shape institutions and events in directions that reduce or increase the chance for the development and survival of democracy." (Lipset, 1959, p.103).

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Endnotes

1. Langworth (2004), p.574.
2. One manifestation of this attitude is the all-too-common tendency of some developing countries to prioritise economic rights over civil and political rights in the deliberations on human rights in national and international fora. This is blatantly evident when the delegate of China, perhaps the most influential country of the developing world, can declare in a UN forum that "The individuals must put the state's rights before their own." Quoted in Cooper (1994, p.69). See, Sen (1999a, p.149) for more on this.

3. It is because of this congruence that Olson takes issue with the common tendency to characterize autocracies as 'predatory state'. "Some writers use the metaphor of the "predatory state" but this is misleading, even for autocracies... The metaphor of predation obscures the great superiority of stationary banditry over anarchy and the advances of civilization that have resulted from it. No metaphor or model of even the autocratic state can therefore be correct unless it simultaneously takes account of the stationary bandit's incentive to provide public goods at the same time that he extracts the largest possible net surplus for himself." (Olson, 1993, p.569).
4. See Sirowy and Inkeles (1990), Pzeworski and Limongi (1997), Bardhan (1999), Pzeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, and Limongi (2000) for reviews of many of these arguments.
5. In macroeconomics, a whole new theory of economic instability, called political business cycles, has emerged based on this presumption.
6. We are going to spend a bit of time explaining the median voter theorem, as it is central to most economic arguments involving democracy, and as such it crops up repeatedly in our subsequent discussion.
7. This could be achieved through either proportional or progressive taxation.
8. The assumption of uniform distribution of tax revenue is a convenient simplification, but it is not essential to the argument. All that is needed is that the revenue be distributed in such a manner that, in combination with taxation, it leads to a redistribution of income from the rich to the poor.
9. Khan (2006, p.705) argues, however, that: "...factional conflicts and contests over resources do not necessarily have to lead to either economic stagnation or the breakdown of democracy. In some cases, democracy may be a viable mechanism of managing these conflicts, and factional conflicts can drive economic growth in some contexts. The economic outcomes of democratic management of factional conflicts are therefore not well-defined without a further examination of the specific patron-client networks and factions that are involved in particular countries."
10. For a wide-ranging discussion of these and related issues, see Bardhan (2016).
11. Bhagwati (2002) has draws attention to this important distinction.
12. This argument applies to economic policies generally, not just tax policy.
13. Some find an overall beneficial effect of democracy on growth (Scully, 1988; Hanke and Walters, 1997; Rodrik, 1997; Gwartney *et al.*, 1999; Rigobon and Rodrik, 2005; Varsakelis 2006). Others find no evidence for a robust or significant relationship (De Haan and Siermann, 1995, 1996; Alesina *et al.*, 1996; Barro 1996; Ali and Crain, 2002; Mulligan *et al.*, 2004); and a few studies report a slightly negative effect (Helliwell, 1994; Tavares and Wacziarg, 2001).
14. The following excerpt from Rodrik and Wacziarg (2005, p.50) sums up this disquiet nicely. "Several influential commentators have suggested recently that democratization in developing countries produces political instability, ethnic conflict, and poor economic outcomes. For instance, Robert D. Kaplan (2000 p. 62) states that "If a society is not in reasonable health, democracy can be not only risky but disastrous." Fareed Zakaria (2003 p. 98) points out that "although democracy has in many ways opened up African politics and brought people liberty, it has also produced a degree of chaos and instability that has actually made corruption and lawlessness worse in many countries." Amy Chua (2002 p. 124) argues that: "... in the numerous countries around the world with a market-dominant minority, ... [a]dding democracy to markets has been a recipe for instability, upheaval, and ethnic conflagration."
15. There is a related issue that also merits attention. When new nations are born through political turmoil, would they be better off by embracing democracy or by allowing autocracy to oversee the process of nation building? Sylwester (2015) investigated the issue and came up with the finding that "...democracy is more greatly associated with economic growth in newer countries. This suggests that democracy helps to mitigate governing challenges that can lower economic growth." (p.266)
16. There were other innovations such as breaking up the democracy variable in its component parts and examining whether the sequence of political and economic reforms makes any difference to economic performance; but we leave aside those issues here as they are not germane to the main focus of this paper.
17. In a subsequent study, Gerring, Thacker and Alfaro (2012) extended this analysis to the impact of democracy on human development and found similar results.
18. See, *inter alia*, Rodrik (1999, 2000); Quinn and Woolley (2001); Almeida and Ferreira (2002); Mobarak (2005); Kim (2007); Yang (2007); Jerzmanowski (2011); Nooruddin (2011).

19. See, among others, Muller (1988), Przeworski *et al.* (2000), Navia and Zweifel (2000, 2003), Boix (2001), Lake and Baum (2001), Brown and Hunter (2004), Franco, Álvarez-Dardet, and Ruiz (2004), Ghobarah, Huth and Russett (2004), Besley and Kudamatsu (2006), Vollmer and Zieglery (2009), Kudamatsu (2012) and Saha and Zhang (2012). A few studies have come up with opposite findings, however; e.g., Gauri and Khaleghian (2002), Shandra, Nobles, London and Williamson (2004), Ross (2006) and McGuire (2010).
20. See Lipset (1994) for a restatement and further extensions of his original analysis, especially in the light of recent transitions to democracy in the Third World - what Huntington (1991) has described as the 'Third Wave' of democratization.
21. For an articulation of Lee Kuan Yew's views in his own words, see Zakaria (1994).
22. For other critiques, see, *inter alia*, Engelhart (2000), Thomson (2001), Zakaria (2002) and Donnelly (2013).
23. The writings of Confucius have often been proclaimed as the philosophical fountainhead of 'Asian values'. But the following excerpt from Sen (1997, pp.17-18) amply demonstrates how untenable this claim is: "Confucius did not recommend blind allegiance to the state. When Zilu asks him "how to serve a prince," Confucius replies, "Tell him the truth even if it offends him." ... Confucius is not averse to practical caution and tact, but does not forgo the recommendation to oppose a bad government. "When the [good] way prevails in the state, speak boldly and act boldly. When the state has lost the way, act boldly and speak softly." "Sen, however, goes on to clarify that "It is not my contention that Confucius was a democrat, or a great champion of freedom and political dissent, but there is reason enough to question the monolithic authoritarian image of him that is presented by the contemporary advocates of Asian values." (p.18)
24. A revisionist view seems to be emerging, however, which contends that 'Asian values' is actually more of a forward-looking vision than navel-grazing about the past. "Like the Eastern Civilizations debate of a century earlier, Asian Values puts forward a substantive vision of Asia more to challenge received wisdom about the future than to make claims about some shared past." (Jenco, 2013, p.58).
25. As Lipset (1959, p.75) put it: "From Aristotle down to the present, men have argued that only in a wealthy society in which relatively few citizens lived in real poverty could a situation exist in which the mass of the population could intelligently participate in politics and could develop the self-restraint necessary to avoid succumbing to the appeals of irresponsible demagogues."
26. Lipset's account of democratization appears to have been strongly influenced by Lerner (1958), who had identified urbanization, education and communication as the core factors that facilitate increased level of political participation. Lipset's innovation was to note that the same factors were also the correlates of economic development, which gave rise to the positive relationship between democracy and development.
27. He also endorsed Tocqueville's (1835) insight that various private organizations and other institutions that emerge in the process of economic development play an important role by seeking to apply checks on centralized government power.
28. As the following citation demonstrates: "These suggestions that the peculiar concatenation of factors which *gave rise to* western democracy in the nineteenth century may be unique are not meant to be unduly pessimistic. Political democracy exists and has existed in a variety of circumstances, even if it is most commonly *sustained* by a limited cluster of conditions." (Lipset, 1959, p.103; emphasis added)
29. The empirical validity of the Kuznets curve is itself a highly contentious issue, but we are not entering that debate here as it is not central to the concerns of this paper.
30. In this story, causality runs from equality (as observed in the second half of the Kuznets curve) to democracy. For a completely different story, where causality runs the other way - from democracy to equality, giving rise to the second half of the Kuznets curve, see Acemoglu and Robinson (2002).
31. For a long, but still incomplete, list of such studies, see the references cited in Wucherpfennig and Deutsch (2009).
32. "The simple fact is that during the period under our scrutiny or ever before, no democracy ever fell, regardless of everything else, in a country with a per capita income higher than that of Argentina in 1975: \$6,055." (Przeworski and Limongi, 1997, p.)
33. This line of reasoning is underpinned by a couple of critical assumptions - namely, that the law of diminishing marginal utility of income holds and that everyone (the rich and the poor alike) have an innate aversion towards authoritarian rule which is independent of the level of income they earn. At low levels of national income, the marginal utility of

income is so high for everyone that the failure to achieve the preferred degree of redistribution trumps the aversion towards autocracy. In contrast, at high levels of national income, the marginal utility of income falls sufficiently for everyone to make them accept the redistribution scheme chosen by the median voter rather than suffer the disutility of authoritarian rule.

34. For instance, North and Weingast [1989] have argued that in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution in the seventeenth century, the English Parliament was introduced as an institutional device to make credible commitment to reduce taxes in the future. See Elster (1994) for a more general argument that to be credible and effective, pre-commitment requires democracy.
35. The critical juncture hypothesis appears to have drawn inspiration from Barrington Moore's (1996) classic analysis of social and political transformation in Europe. In his analysis, socio-economic development does not necessarily translate into democracy. He pointed to three distinct routes to the modern world: the liberal democratic, the fascist, and the communist, each of which emerges from the profound social upheavals that happen at the onset of industrialization, urbanization and other features of modernization.
36. It should be pointed out, however, that in addition to fixed effects, Acemoglu *et al.* had also used the instrumental variable method, to which Barro's objection does not apply, and found the same results that were yielded by fixed-effects, although it should be acknowledged that this method too has its own limitations.
37. This conclusion must be understood as a general tendency - a comparison between democracy and autocracy on the average. This average comparison is entirely consistent with the observation that some autocracies might have performed better than some democracies at some stage in history.
38. Drèze & Sen (2002) make a similar point in the specific context of Indian democracy. After noting that many of the deficiencies of India's democracy stem from its deep-rooted social inequalities, they go on to argue that the very practice of democracy would help offset some of the effects of those inequalities, thereby rendering democracy a self-reinforcing process.

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Making Walls, Fencing Borders and Living on the Margin: Understanding the India-Bangladesh Border

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‘Today, a nation ringed by walls would only imprison itself.’
- Barack Obama, Speech at the UNGA, September 20, 2016.

‘What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,’
- Robert Frost, ‘Mending Wall’.

Abstract

Emergence of nation states in the nineteenth century naturalized borders and boundaries as both inclusionary and exclusionary measures. Territorial integrity was viewed as the most tangible expression of the sovereignty of a nation-state, thus confirming a state’s monopolistic jurisdiction over a particular territorial unit. Since then a clearly defined and enforceable boundary has remained at the heart of the existence of the nation-state, the goal of which is to accentuate territorialist consciousness. In the past decades walls and fences have continued to be erected between nation states. Against this background, this paper examines broader questions such as: why do nation states feel the necessity to erect these walls and fences? How these walls and new modes of surveillance impact the lives of the people who live on the border regions? The paper examines these questions, specifically looking at the ongoing fencing of the India-Bangladesh border. The border fencing project of India had its origin in the violent protest and anti-Bengali pogrom in Assam in the 1980s, but the physical construction began in 1989. The project was initially opposed by Bangladesh, but in recent years Bangladesh government has embraced the idea. In this paper, the fencing is discussed within the broader question of border and how fencing has become the material and symbolic manifestations of state power. The examination of Indian official narrative of the Indian government shows that the issue has been securitized and blended with growing xenophobic discourse in Indian politics. The paper also explores the lived experience of those who lives in the border areas. For them borders become doubly exclusionary.

1 Introduction

With territorial integrity being viewed as the most tangible expression of the sovereignty of a nation-state, a clearly defined and enforceable boundary has remained at the heart of its existence. Thus, in the past decades more walls and fences have continued to be erected between nation states. In this context, this paper has three objectives: first, it underscores the significance of the border between India and Bangladesh, especially in the context of fencing the border by India; second, it critically examines the official Indian narratives for building the fences; and third, it explores the experience of people living on the borders. These questions are framed within the broader questions as to why nation-states feel the necessity to erect walls and fences? How do these walls and new modes of surveillance impact the lives of the people who live in the border regions?

This paper is presented in six sections. The introduction is followed by a brief background on recent global

developments regarding building walls and fences and its relationship with the foundational ideas of nation-states. The third section provides background information about the borders between Bangladesh and India, focusing on the Indian government’s ongoing project of fencing the border. The fourth section examines the rationale of such a project and its implications for the people living on the margin of the two nation-states. The fifth section discusses the lived experience of the residents of the borderlands. The final section offers some concluding remarks.

2 Walls and Fences: More than Ever Before

The fall of the Berlin Wall, globalization, and spectacular innovations in communication technologies in the twentieth century, promised a borderless world. We expected the emergence of a world where political

and geographical boundaries would have little significance and would not follow political boundaries. Yet, in the past decades more walls and fences have been constructed between nation-states. Elisabeth Vallet stated in 2004, 'At the end of the Cold War there were just 15 walls delimiting national borders; today, 70 of them are in existence around the world' (Vallet, 2004). By 2019, the number had reached seventy-seven (Hjelmgard, 2018). Although the meteoric rise of real-estate mogul Donald Trump as a political figure in the United States and his ascendancy to the presidency with a promise of building a wall with Mexico brought the issue to the fore, building walls and erecting fences are taking place in various parts of the world. Vallet is correct in saying that 'borders were seen as open, soft, and purposely porous. They have become more and more closed, hard, and seemingly impassable. The fact is that as the global economy and cyberspace rely on open borders, the securitization discourse has led to the tightening of border crossings and, in some cases, to the closure and fencing of some borders' (Vallet, 2017). The Bangladesh-India border is a case in point.

This new wave of constructing walls and fences, despite being a part of the growing tendency of securitization of borders, should also be viewed as intrinsic to the nature of state power and its desire to create exclusionary and inclusionary spaces. The flawed argument that the weakening of state sovereignty has led to building walls in the face of globalization (Brown, 2010) fails to account for the fact that bounded, territorially defined, sovereignty has been at the core of state making. Emergence of nation-states in the nineteenth century naturalized borders and boundaries as both inclusionary and exclusionary. Territorial integrity was viewed as the most tangible expression of the sovereignty of a nation-state, thus confirming the state's monopolistic jurisdiction over a particular territorial unit. Since then a clearly defined and enforceable boundary has remained at the heart of the existence of the nation-states, goal being to accentuate territorial consciousness. That being said, we must be cognizant that no borders are permanent; 'in the current era borders are historically constituted entities that are (re)imagined and (re)fashioned in light of the present conditions' (Hussain, 2013, p. 6).

The borders also reflect, what Sankaran Krishna described as, 'the cartographic anxiety' of a nation-state (Krishna, 1994). National borders, the physical demarcations, have enormous symbolic significance too: they create a dichotomous division—'us' and 'them'—and they contribute to the construction of the 'self' and of 'the other' (Jones 2009, p. 291). Jones has aptly pointed to this binary: 'the border is a key site for the state to establish the binaries of power that frame the world as citizen–alien, nation–foreign, here–there, and we–they' (2012: 691). The walls and fences are adding

to this binarization, as they also reflect the power asymmetry and unilaterality. While borders reflect an agreement between states, walls and fences are erected without the consent of each other. In agreement with Till, et al., (2013), we must recognize that walls are material and symbolic manifestations of state power. Therefore, understanding the growing number of walls and fences requires a blending of three aspects – the nature of the state, the binarization of power, and securitization.

3 Bangladesh-India Border

Except for a 170-mile border with Myanmar in the country's southeast and the opening to the sea through the Bay of Bengal in the south, Bangladesh is geographically surrounded by India. The fifth-longest land border of the world between Bangladesh and India is 2,582 miles (4,156 km)-long (by some estimations, the length of the border is 2,545 miles, 4,096 km). Among the five Indian states which share borders with six divisions of Bangladesh, West Bengal has the longest - 1,378 miles (2,217 km). Other states are: Assam (163 miles, 262 km), Tripura (532 miles, 856 km), Mizoram (110 miles, 180 km) and Meghalaya (275 miles, 443 km). The Bangladeshi divisions of Mymensingh, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Sylhet and Chittagong are located along these borders.

Although Bangladesh emerged as an independent state in 1971, seceding from Pakistan, the current border was demarcated by the Boundary Commission headed by Sir Cyril Radcliff appointed by the British colonial power in 1947. The borders were determined within the larger premise of maintaining 'contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims' but also with 'other considerations' including, but not limited to, 'natural boundaries.' The latter was not adhered to in all cases making the shape of borders between India and the then eastern part of Pakistan arbitrary.

Despite official demarcation and drawing the map in 1947, the marking of the border and enforcing the respective state's sovereignty in the border areas took quite some time. Seven years after the founding of Pakistan and India, a survey of the border between then East Pakistan and India was completed and actual markings began. The creation of the border guards in the 1960s was a key step towards the partition and enforcement of state sovereignty. This process has been described by Van Schendel (2005b) as a slow and uneven imposition of state sovereignty. Despite these developments, some land borders remained disputed and hundreds of enclaves within both countries stayed. A Land Border Agreement (LBA) to address these issues was signed in 1974 but wasn't implemented due to India's unwillingness until 2015 (Riaz, 2015).

Referring to these developments, Jones informs,

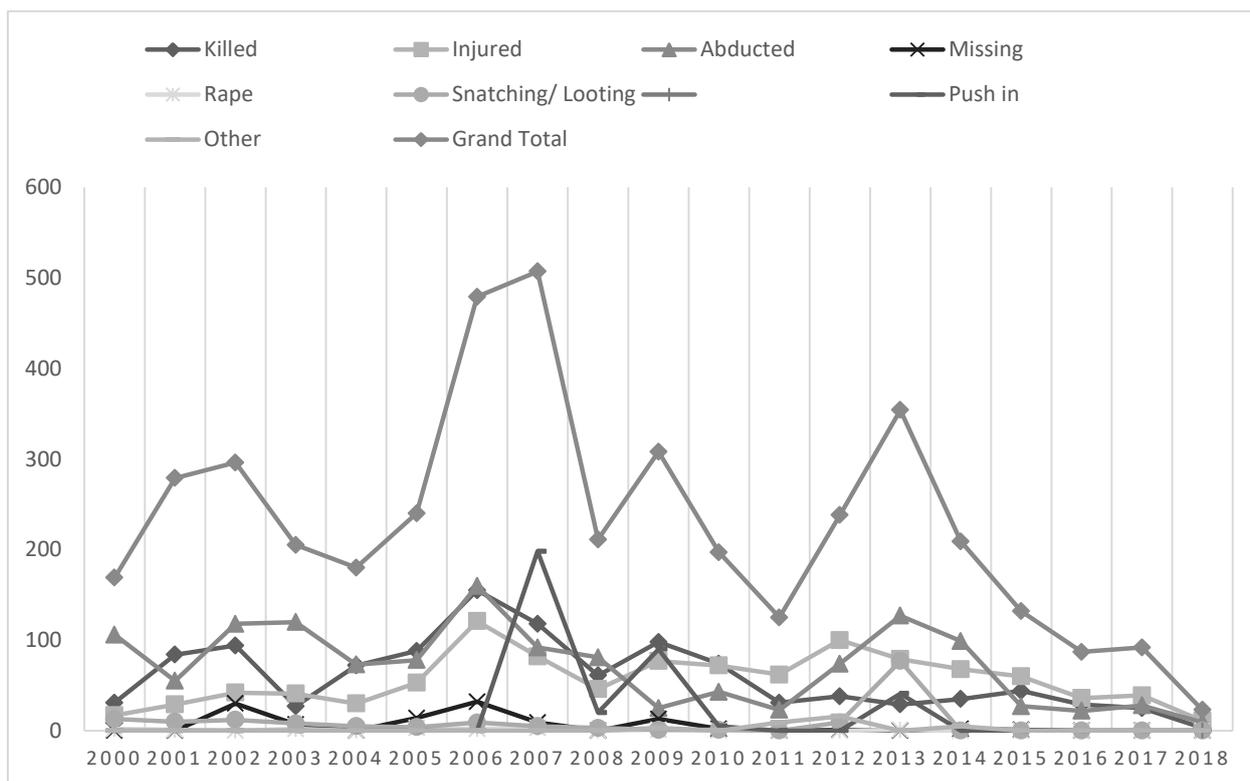
In practice, despite these attempts to bring the border into being, the borderlands functioned as they had before, with people crossing without consequence for many decades after partition. With extended families in both countries, many people made trips to visit relatives on the other side. People would also cross the border to go to work, attend festivals, participate in weddings, and even simply go to the market. The different regulatory and monetary systems on either side of the border also created new economic connections through smuggling networks that solidified business relationships (2012, p. 689).

The shared linguistic and cultural heritage among the people of both sides of the borders, particularly between West Bengal and East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), played a crucial role in this relationship. Such close and informal relationships between people of the borderlands were also possible because of the arbitrary nature of boundary-making, which in turn made the border porous. It is also worth noting that despite heightened tension and wars between India and Pakistan, the border between then East Pakistan and India were relatively calm and far less hostile than the border on the West.

The pivotal role of India in founding independent Bangladesh made the border less likely to be a place of hostility. However, domestic political changes in both Bangladesh and India not only transformed the overall relationship between these two countries, but also made the border contentious. Most importantly, it became the site of display of an assertive nationalism. This assertive nationalism was/is not exclusively a Bangladeshi phenomenon; rather, it became an essential identity of Indian politics and policymaking, beginning in the 1980s.

By the 2000s, the border between these two countries became one of the deadliest in the world (Walker, 2011). A report by the Human Rights Watch in 2010 documented excessive use of force by the Indian border guards, the Border Security Force (BSF), along the Bangladesh-West Bengal border and described the members of the BSF as ‘Trigger Happy’ (HRW, 2010). Incidents of killings remained unabated over the past decades, although Indian authorities repeatedly pledged to refrain from ‘shoot on sight policy’ and use of non-lethal weapons. According to a Bangladeshi Human Rights Group, Odhikar, between 2000 and 2018, 1136 Bangladeshis have been killed by the BSF, while 1065 persons have been injured and 1360 have been abducted (see Figure 1)

Figure 1: Atrocities by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) against Bangladeshi Citizens, Bangladesh-India Border, 2000-2018



Source: Odhikar, ‘Human Rights Violation by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) against Bangladeshi Citizens; 2000-2018’, http://odhikar.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Statistics_Border_2000-2018.pdf

As the border areas are densely populated and largely inhabited by poor people, the victims have been farmers, small traders and on many occasions, children. One such incident, the killing of 15-year old Felani Khatun, drew international media attention in January 2011 when her dead body was photographed hanging on the barbed wire fence. Despite media coverage and condemnation by various Human Rights groups, to date nobody has been held responsible by the Indian authorities. This is a clear indication of the absence of accountability mechanisms, as noted by the HRW, 'because of the near total absence of effective accountability mechanisms for abuses carried out by members of the BSF, even the most serious abuses by border guards go unpunished. This sends a clear message that the Indian government finds such abuses acceptable' (HRW, 2010).

These developments are connected to the nature of the state. As both Bangladesh and the Indian state have undergone transformations, the border became a site of demonstration of the unquestionability of the state's power. Perhaps in no other place is the state's control over life and death of the citizens so vivid and so much a daily matter.

4 Fencing the Border

Both domestic politics and relationships with Bangladesh in the 1980s engendered the idea of fencing the border between these two countries. The Bangladesh-India relationship became tense because of several contentious issues, such as the water sharing of common rivers and India's support for ethnic insurgency in the southeastern part of Bangladesh on the one hand and Bangladesh's support for northeast Indian insurgents on the other. A proposal for fencing the border was first floated by regional political leaders in Assam. The proposal had its origin in the violent protest and anti-Bengali pogrom in Assam in the 1980s, where local Assamese leaders alleged that there is a considerable number of illegal migrants from Bangladesh and that this 'illegal migration' is changing the demographic composition of the state, both in terms of ethnicity and religion. The Indo-Bangladesh Border Road and Fence project to prevent 'illegal migration from Bangladesh' was incorporated in the Assam Accord signed between the agitating Assamese student organizations and the Indian central government in August 1985, which included the provision that 'the international border shall be made secure against future infiltration by erection of physical barriers like walls with barbed wire fencing and other obstacles at appropriate places.' (see Assam Accord, Annexure 10). The West Bengal government opposed such moves and initially resisted any fencing of its border with Bangladesh. (The implications of the Assam Accord have not been limited to fencing the

borders but, by 2019, also turned into a test of citizenship, an issue I will return to later in the paper.) In 1998, a report on the 'illegal immigration into Assam' by the Governor of the state submitted to the President, specifically suggested fencing the border (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 1998).

The physical work of constructing the fences began in 1989, as phase I of the project. The project slowly progressed and by 1999, only 5% of the entire border, 854 km was fenced, mostly concerning West Bengal (Van Schendel, 2005; Shamsad, 2008; McDuie-Ra, 2014). 'In 2007, India decided to replace the entire 861 km. of fence constructed under Phase I in West Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya, as most of this fence had been damaged by adverse climatic conditions and repeated submergence' (Shamsad, 2008).

In the 2000s, especially after 2001, the fencing project progressed rapidly and all resistance to it began to dissipate. In January 2004 the Department of Border Management was created within the Ministry of Home Affairs. According to the official description, the department has been created 'to pay focused attention to the issues relating to management of international land and coastal borders, strengthening of border policing and guarding, creation of infrastructure like roads, fencing and flood lighting of borders and implementation of Border Area Development Programme (BADP)' (emphasis added). By November 2007, 2529 km of fencing was completed; and within the next two years the total fencing reached 2649 km. As of 2018, 95 percent of the border was fenced (The Economic Times, 2018). By 2019, 2803 km of the border have been fenced and completion is scheduled in December 2020 (Firstpost, 2019).

These fences are not constructed along the zero-point line but 150 yards from the zero-point line inside Indian territory. Land owned by farmers and local people are situated between the fenced border and the actual border between these two countries. Most of these lands are used for small-scale farming and serve as the principle source of the livelihood of small farmers. 'To accommodate these Indian farmers, hundreds of gates were constructed and are operated by the border guards.' Although there are supposed to be locally arranged schedules of opening and closing of the gates, field research and conversations with the local populations revealed that often it depends on the convenience of the border guards, causing enormous hardships to the local people. Besides, there have been disputes over demarcation and the 150-yard buffer zones (Jamwal, 2004). One of the less discussed dimensions of the fencing project is the plight of the people who have lost their livelihoods, as their land has fallen between the actual international border and the erected fence. Prakash and Menon's work identified 90,000 people on

the border in such a situation (Prakash & Menon, 2011). The fencing project displaced people from their ancestral lands and created enormous hardships. A field study conducted in 2014 on the Indian border where fence has been erected found, 'As a result many houses were fallen [sic] within the geographical location between the line of partition and the border fencing. In the Karimganj district of Assam, there are 10 villages which are partially or completely fenced out after the creation of the border fencing' (Datta 2018: 46).

The project which accelerated in the past years by the Indian government, and is almost completed, was objected to by the Bangladesh government when it was first proposed. The Bangladesh government in the 1980s opposed such a move as an effort to circumscribe the sovereignty of Bangladesh. On 20 April 1984, 'Indian and Bangladeshi troops exchanged gunfire ... in a dispute over India's construction of a fence along the border', reported the New York Times (1984). The report further informs, 'Bangladesh has described India's plan to build the barbed wire fence along its 1,000-mile border as an "unfriendly act."' As the project continued, many Bangladeshis had described it as an effort to 'cage' Bangladesh.

But the situation has dramatically changed in the past decades. The Bangladeshi government has accepted it as a *fait accompli* as no international law prevents India from building it. Since the AL government came into power in 2009 and relationships between the ruling Awami League and the BJP have become very warm since the latter came to power in 2014, Bangladesh has not only dropped its criticisms but embraced the idea. For example, a joint statement of Sheikh Hasina and Narendra Modi, Prime Ministers of Bangladesh and India, respectively, on 5 October 2019 says:

Both leaders emphasized the importance of effective border management for ensuring a tranquil, stable and crime free border. Towards this goal, the Leaders directed their respective border forces to complete border fencing at all pending sectors at the International Border between both the countries at the earliest. Both Leaders also agreed that the loss of civilian lives at the border is a matter of concern and directed the concerned border forces to enhance coordinated measures to work toward bringing such border incidents down to zero (Live Mint, 2019).

Fencing the borders has been accompanied by infrastructure development in the border region, especially construction of roads to help with the movement of border guards, increased the number of border outposts and the installation of floodlights. According to the Indian Home Ministry, by 2010, 3361 km roads were built. The number of border posts have been increased in recent years; in 2009, the government

approved 383 new border posts to add to the existing 802 posts. Almost 2840 km of floodlighting along the border was sanctioned by the government in 2008; at least 277 km was completed within a year. One can't disagree with the description of these floodlight lit borders by Reece Jones: 'The panopticon of the Indian state need not be imagined; it shines bright all night long for many of the Bangladeshi borderland residents.'

In April 2018, the Indian government under its comprehensive integrated border management system (CIBMS), installed a 'smart fence' pilot project on the Assam-Bangladesh border. Installed on a 55-km-riverine stretch, the modern technology will 'plug vulnerable gaps along India's borders', Indian authorities claimed. The authorities said at that time, technical surveillance and alarm gadgetry installed across the Brahmaputra river will be replicated in other places in the near future (NDTV, 2018b). The pilot project – named BOLD-QIT (Border Electronically Dominated QRT Interception Technique), under the Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS), was inaugurated in March 2019 (The Economic Times, 2019).

These developments, over the past decades, not only mark a geographical change in the border landscape but demonstrate the nation-state's notion of its reach and sense of sovereignty.

5 Indian Narratives for Building Fences

In the past decades, Indian politicians and policymakers have advanced three rationales for stricter border control with Bangladesh and securitization of the borders. Once celebrated cultural and historical ties between these two countries have now been replaced with fear and threats emanating from Bangladesh to India. The three rationales are: stopping infiltration, addressing security threats and reducing illicit trade.

These aspects and rationales reflect the mindset of the Indian policymakers and analysts, which needs to be contextualized within India's neighborhood policy. For a long time, India has adopted a regional policy akin to the Monroe Doctrine, which is occasionally referred to as the 'Indira Doctrine.' Indian regional security doctrine has been, according to Hagerty (1991), 'that India strongly opposes outside intervention in the domestic affairs of other South Asian nations, especially by external powers whose goals are perceived to be inimical to Indian interests'. Although India might not have been successful in implementing the Doctrine, 'it has been an article of faith for many in the Indian strategic community (Homes et al., 2009, p.45). Besides, Indian policies toward its neighbors have been shaped by

Kautilya's suggestion that immediate neighbors should be suspected at all times (that is, neighboring states are to be looked at as potential enemies, even if friendly relations prevail in the immediate present). Additionally, Indian perception about its neighbor was and still is - in the words of an Indian analyst - that it is "being surrounded on all sides by unstable democracies, conflict-ridden countries, militant activity, authoritarian leaders or weak government" (Gangopadhyay, 2012).

With such a security-centric and skewed perception, Indian policymakers and a significant section of the media have created a binary frame to understand Bangladesh: enemy / friend. In post 2009, with the return of the Awami League to power, the frame has become the mainstay of the Indian mindset: the incumbent AL is the friend, while any valid criticisms are viewed as a hostile act of 'an enemy'.

Although migration between Bangladesh and India has a long history, since the 1980s it has been described as 'infiltration'. There are no reliable data on the extent of Bangladeshi migrants into India, the number reported in the media have varied significantly. The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), a religio-political party with a highly exclusionary and divisive political agenda, since the late 1980s, began concerted propaganda against the alleged 'illegal Bangladeshi migrants'. The resolution passed by the BJP National Executive Committee in April 1992 marks the watershed moment in the discourse about 'illegal Bangladeshi migrants' and signaled the future strategy of the BJP. Claiming that over 15 million Bangladeshis had illegally entered India, without any evidence to support the claim, the resolution stated, 'the influx constitutes a serious strain on the national economy, a severe stress on the national society and withal a serious threat to the stability and security of the country' (Quoted in Shamsad, 2008). However, the first official statement by the Government of India regarding the extent of Bangladeshis' migration into the country came on 6 May 1997. Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta informed the Indian Parliament that there were nearly 10 million undocumented immigrants, largely from Bangladesh, residing in India (Shamsad, 2008).

In the subsequent years, the political discourse as well as the political landscape has changed – not only that BJP emerged as a major political force, but also anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment have become its main political ideology with tacit acquiescence from other parties. The victory of the BJP and ilk Shive Sena in 1999 institutionalized the 'hysterical narrative of infiltration of Bangladeshis' as reflected in the Group of Ministers Report in 2000 appointed by the Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani. The report estimated that 15 million Bangladeshis are residing in India illegally. Since then, all political parties irrespective of ideological orientations, joined the bandwagon. For example, in

1999, West Bengal's Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, a Communist Party leader, suggested the deportation of illegal immigrants, portraying illegal flows from Bangladesh as 'a major headache for many Indian cities.' Press reports quoted Basu saying that 'West Bengal is bearing the brunt of the infiltration and the state's economy is being adversely affected' (Rediff, 1999).

The xenophobic discourse was mainstreamed by the BJP since it came to power in 2014. Rhetoric and actions against Muslim communities throughout the country, but targeting those in the bordering states, particularly Assam, became the central plank of the BJP's campaign. In September 2018, BJP President Amit Shah described the alleged migrants from Bangladesh as 'illegal infiltrators' and 'termites' (Aljazeera, 2018). In April 2019, Shah not only reiterated his description, but also promised that 'his party will throw them out after coming to power at the Centre for a second term' (Reuters, 2019). The Chief of the Indian Army, General Bipin Rawat, commented that 'influx from Bangladesh is proxy war by Pakistan with the help of China' (NDTV, 2018a). The Bangladesh government did not react to these statements (Mahmud, 2018).

This is not to deny migration from Bangladesh, but the exaggerated number and portrayal as a menace have contributed to a xenophobic mindset in India. Even the official accounts of the number of alleged 'infiltrators' provides a picture that is inconsistent with the BJP and ilk's rhetoric. According to a press report, 'Between 2014 and 2019, the number of infiltrators apprehended in West Bengal came down to 379 from 2,260. In Assam, the numbers came down from 101 to 94, while in Meghalaya, it decreased from 64 to 11. In Mizoram, the number of infiltrators apprehended has been reduced to seven from eight and in Tripura, the numbers declined from 101 to 94' (Firstpost, 2019).

The religious dimension of the discourse cannot be ignored. The government's willingness to amend the citizenship law to allow Hindus to be treated differently is telling (The Times of India, 2016).

The national security rationale, initially appearing as a corollary to the 'infiltration', found a life of its own after three separate developments in 2001. The first was the Indian Supreme Court's observation in a public interest litigation case; the second was the terrorist attack in New York on 11 September and the so-called Global War on Terror (GWOT) of the Bush administration, and the third was the victory of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led coalition with Islamist parties as partners in Bangladesh. In February 2001, during a hearing of a Public Interest Petition filed by the All India Lawyers Forum for Civil Liberties (AILFCL), the Chief Justice and two other Justices of the Supreme Court

expressed concern that undocumented migrants from Bangladesh might pose a threat both to the economy and security of the country. They said that the 'Bangladeshi migrants were eating into the economy of the country and had to a large extent become a security threat' (The Times of India, 2001)

Immediately after the attacks in New York on 9/11, the Indian government led by the BJP not only extended unqualified support to the so-called GWOT launched by the USA but also portrayed the battle as its own too. The attack on Indian parliament in December only fueled this line of argument. Rupal Oza pointed out that the geopolitical boundary narratives of the global war on terror, which represent the world as a binary of good and evil, were mapped onto historical communal conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in South Asia (Oza, 2007). Referring to Oza, Reece Jones noted in 2009 that communalism has been reframed as terrorism by India and that even after change in leadership in the Indian state, the situation has not changed (Jones, 2009). With the return of BJP to power in 2014, the binary has now become the permanent frame of reference for understanding the India-Bangladesh relationship.

The victory of the BNP with its Islamist allies in the October 2001 election, irked the Indian establishment. Indian political and security establishments always had an uncomfortable relationship with the BNP (Riaz, 2019). There are several underlying factors for such relationships but the BNP's foreign policy orientation and its support for the northeastern Indian insurgent groups played key roles in this strained relationship. Due to the Islamist partners of the BNP-led alliance, a section of the Indian media and analysts began portraying Bangladesh as the hotbed of Islamist extremism immediately after the election. By 2005, Bangladesh experienced a small but growing threat of violent Islamist extremist threat, but the growing menace was limited to Bangladesh and ostensibly these groups did not have any regional or global agenda. Yet, India used this as a security threat and insisted that fencing the border is necessary to prevent them from entering its own territory.

The formal trade relationship between Bangladesh and India is lopsided in favor of India. It has been so for decades, but the trade deficit has increased substantially in the past decade with the Bangladesh Awami League in power since 2009. Of the current \$9.85 billion formal trade between these two countries, the deficit stands at \$7.35 billion (Rahman, 2019). The trend over the past decade shows an increase in deficit rather than a decline (DCCI, 2019). In addition to formal trade, informal trade along the borders have been very common. These trades are often described as illicit or as smuggling. Researchers have identified the difficulties in understanding and explaining these 'illicit flows' from

the dominant state-centric framework (Van Schendel, 2005a). The Indian state insists that the fence will control the flow, particularly of illicit goods, and increase revenue from legal trade. Interestingly, as of now, estimates show that informal trade is benefiting India more than Bangladesh. One estimate of 2017 suggests, 'there is \$3.2 billion of informal trade or Indian smuggled goods coming to Bangladesh while goods amounting to \$300 to \$400 million go to India from Bangladesh' (Nour, 2017). Fencing, establishing state approved official crossing points and heightened surveillance, has not stopped illicit trade; instead informal arrangements between the traders/smugglers and the border guards have continued.

While the Indian establishment continues to argue along these three lines, the question of border and 'illegal migration' has assumed a different dimension and has become an important element of national discourse. This is obvious in the National Registry of Citizenship (NRC) exercise in Assam. Although apparently the 1985 agreement between the Indian Central Government, the State of Assam, and the agitators was an effort to address issues of regional economic development and bring an end to the seven-year agitation by the All Assam Students Union, it unleashed a process which has the power not only to determine who has 'crossed the border illegally', but what Indian citizenship means. The agreement stipulated March 25, 1971, the date of Bangladesh's creation, as the point of departure; that is, a person who has entered Assam before then was deemed to be an Indian while those who came after that 'cutoff' date were foreigners (i.e., Bangladeshi) and therefore, to be identified and 'sent back.' The movement of the AASU, initially billed as against the "outsider", was transformed into a movement against "foreigners". The invisible border, through this agreement, became an integral part of the notion of citizenship. With the interjection of the Supreme Court beginning 2013, various institutional actors, such as the bureaucracy, became entangled in the politics of identity in a highly polarized society where religion has been pushed by Sangh Parivar as the principal marker, and the issue of migration, of crossing the border, brought to the forefront of politics. The final list of NRC, published on 31 August 2019, concluded a four-year long process which 'excluded' 1.9 million people of Assam (Regan & Suri, 2019) and practically made them stateless. This is described by analysts as 'the Great Indian Disenfranchisement' (Agrawal & Salam, 2019). While those who are excluded will have the opportunity to go through a quasi-judicial process called Foreigners Tribunal (FT) to establish their citizenship but considering the incompetency and inefficiency of the NRC process (for example, the draft list excluded 4 million people), there is little hope for those who are excluded. But the entire NRC is not only about who is or

who is not a citizen in the legal term, but what constitutes citizenship in contemporary India, who determines citizenship and how the discourse of citizenship is framed, propagated and consumed.

6 Living on the Margin

The questions as to how the people living on the borders experience their lives and perceive their relationship with the states have been issues of significant discussions in the past decades and addressed by a host of researchers within the Borderland Studies. There is growing recognition that a state-centric approach to understanding the socio-political dynamics is inadequate, but it is also recognized that borders and borderlands are products of the territorial aspects of statehood.

Among the issues the Borderland Studies have tried to answer is how the inhabitants negotiate between different identities they face due to their physical location on the margins. Unlike many other borders where physical borders between states also marks differences in culture, language and practice, the Bangladesh-India border brings together people who have similar cultures and languages and, in many instances, have long familial ties. It is now well recognized that borders shouldn't be considered only as physical space but also as social space. The lived experience of those who inhabit the borders are distinctly different from other citizens. As Van Schendel has pointed out in his seminal work on the Bengal Borderland, after more than 70 years of creating the boundaries, the border has remained an emotive issue and some are yet to accept its legitimacy (Van Schendel, 2005, p. 2).

Regarding the lived experience of the inhabitants of the borderlands, extant studies have largely provided two conflicting perspectives. One has argued that inhabitants of the borderlands engage in practices that challenge state sovereignty by refusing the existence of both countries, while the other has argued that instead of refusal of the states, their practices indicate a convergence. The former perspective highlights the practices which bear the mark of resistance, the latter, on the other hand, show how the residents have negotiated with the states' violent presence in their daily lives. Hussain's ethnographic study of a border community on the Bangladesh-India border (Hussain, 2013) is an excellent example of the latter. Jones (2012) has argued for the former, describing the Indo-Bangladesh border as a 'space of refusal'.

The presence of the state in the borderlands in the form of the fences and of the border guards have other

implications too. We regularly experience humiliation and occasionally physical assault, said several inhabitants on the border of West Bengal and Bangladesh when I visited the border in 1999. Such allegations were echoed on the other side of the border, from Jessore to Rajshahi. Years later, my trips to some of these places didn't gather entirely different responses. Instead the inhabitants have insisted that fencing has not only increased surveillance but also contributed to increased violence.

Those who live on the borders feel that their loyalty to their respective states are suspect and they are subjected to suspicions by state agencies, particularly border security forces. The state agencies impose stricter rules along the border which in many ways restricts movement, and influences social, political, economic and civic life. These are contrary to the fundamental rights accorded to the citizens. As such, a border which is supposed to create a line to exclude others, creates 'others' within its own boundaries by taking away the rights of the citizens it claims to protect. This is how borders become doubly exclusionary.

7 Conclusion

This paper underscores the importance of studying the border between Bangladesh and India, especially in the context of erecting fences and increased surveillance. Although the fences along the Indo-Bangladesh border were proposed in the 1980s, based on domestic considerations, external considerations have accentuated the process of building them in recent decades. Portrayal of Bangladesh as a hotbed of Islamist militancy, where groups are ready to export the menace to India and growing anti-Muslim sentiment within the country, engendered by Hindutva political forces, have created a narrative supporting the fencing project. Equally important to note is the role of the post 9/11 so-called Global on Terror (GWOT) narrative; the geopolitics of border control and framing relationship within the binary of 'good' and 'evil'. As such, the discussion on the Bangladesh-India border is deeply connected to global geopolitics. It will be erroneous to ignore this aspect and examine the fencing project in isolation.

As in many borders, the physical space remains contentious and increased violence by the Indian border guards shows that the Indian state is inclined to project its sovereignty with force. The Indian narrative of erecting fences, as an inevitable development to ensure its security, does not bear out because it hasn't faced any security threat from the Bangladesh side of the border. Besides, experiences of other borders inform that: 'The security benefits yielded by fortifying and strengthening borders tend to evaporate over time. First no border is

impermeable (with the exception of the DMZ in the Korean Peninsula, perhaps). Therefore, any fortification will induce a logic of transgression, with circumvention strategies such as the drilling of tunnels, the ingenuity of basic smuggling stratagems (scales, scissors to cut through) or on the contrary sophisticated ones (submarines, drones, catapults) and the use of new migration routes. In the long term, therefore, the lack of cooperation across the border may trigger greater security concerns as mafias and organized crime take control of the border crossing process. Fortified and strengthened borders will actually generate new problems that cannot effectively be addressed separately from both borderlands: the border is no longer a line but a 'zone' (Valett, 2017). The lived-experiences of the residents are dictated by the presence of the state, its embodied representations as border guards, and the residents' continuous effort to subvert and accept the state's sovereignty and authority. There is no reason to believe that building walls and erecting fences will change this mode of their interactions with the states.

Endnotes

- 1 An earlier version of the paper was presented at the International Political Science Association (IPSA) World Congress 2018, Brisbane, Australia, 21-25 July 2018.
- 2 See Assam Accord, Clause 9 (1), https://web.archive.org/web/20180909102748/https://assam.gov.in/documents/1631171/0/Annexure_10.pdf?version=1.0

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Justice for All: Resolving Contradictions in Political Development

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Abstract

This article is designed to address such questions as how applying the most fundamental human values of justice and fairness could alleviate growing inequality in mostly developing nations that undermine sustainable development, thereby containing ideological extremism/terrorism, and assuring peaceful co-existence of societies. Could our serious efforts to resolve such conflicts create a new world, MAP: Mutually Assured Peace? Another question that will be addressed is whether women's empowerment, by allocating needed resources in education, skill-building and healthcare, could help make the conflicts between ideological extremism and peaceful coexistence possible. To illustrate the question of peaceful co-existence through a case study method, Bangladesh, the third largest Muslim majority country in the Islamic World (seventh in the world), has been chosen to elucidate.

1 Introduction

Given the winner-take-all approach to political and economic development in most Less Developed Countries (LDCs), the task of ensuring balanced political development has become vital for leaders. But this task cannot be accomplished without an equitable allocation of resources, which involves a deep commitment of leaders to justice and fairness. Lacking institutional support for this decision, political leaders tend to become captives of their narrow constituencies, leading to a situation in which any segment of the ambitious adventurists, particularly in the military, is tempted to take over the government. Ambitious military officers in such a situation often succeed in taking over the government until a mass movement restores democracy. Another coup or coup-like event could reverse the political process, ending in another military take-over of government.

One of the leading political philosophers of the 20th and perhaps 21st Century, John Rawls, defines justice as basic fairness in multidimensional interactions involving humans and their institutions balancing democracy while striving for security. (John Rawls, 2003:3-102.). The fairness principle contributes to societal stability and helps to create a context in which political communities bring about a common ground of understanding and cooperation to resolve conflicts.

Without a deep commitment of the leadership to justice as the basic principle of fairness in both policymaking and policy implementing, i.e., governance, the potential for advancement would remain static. Ensuring human rights and the due process of law—two most important dimensions of justice—could transform a

static state into a dynamic state of just policies and good governance, reducing gross inequality and ensuring security, particularly in post-colonial countries.

But in the name of security most states have infringed the core values of democracy encompassing freedom of speech, press, assembly and religion enshrined in most constitutions. Using this framework this article explores a cross-cultural dimension of strategies and options for needed reforms of political, economic and social systems in Bangladesh and how democratization without a deep commitment of the leadership to justice tends to break down at the altar of narrow national and group interests.

2 Ideological Extremism and Terrorism

A questionable double standard of western democracies, eager to do business with dictatorships of different varieties, has impeded what otherwise could be a steady growth of ideas conducive to the pursuit of justice for democracy. As Kagan put it, "Advanced communications and computing technologies once thought to be forces for cooperation and freedom, have been turned into weapons of illiberalism. Nationalism and Tribalism are re-emerging. Territorial aggression and obsessions with borders have returned" (Kagan, 2018).

Ms. Benazir Bhutto, the assassinated former Prime Minister of Pakistan, the second largest Muslim majority nation, stated in her book on the vital issue of reconciliation between the West and Muslim world that reformist ideas always appealed to Muslim intelligentsia.

Even unlettered Muslims paid attention to Islamic reformers stressing the need for improving the fortunes and influence of Muslims through mass education, democracy and economic progress (Bhutto, 2008: 276-ff.).

Ms. Bhutto reiterated the need for modernist reform of the Muslim world by citing Mohammad Iqbal (1877-1938), the poet philosopher considered to be the spiritual father of Pakistan, questioning the “failure to reinterpret the principles of faith, unmodified since the twelfth century.” He (Iqbal) called for “looking beyond the traditional Islamic schools of jurisprudence and reviving *Ijtihad*, meaning *reason*” (Ibid.). The stifling of debates under dictators, she asserted, undermined the pluralist environment necessary for an Islamic reformation needed for sustainable democratization of Muslim nations.

Far from engaging in constructive debate based on *Ijtihad*, extremist ideologues like Ayman Mohammad al-Zawahiri, late terrorist leader Bin Laden’s second in command, had tried to distort a basic concept of Islam, namely *Jihad*.

Jihad is an Arabic term, which means, literally, “to strive or exert effort.” It has the same root as *Ijtihad*, an intellectual effort to develop an informed opinion on a new issue or problem. Extremists view *Jihad* as a holy war, which can be directed against noncombatants and innocent civilians for the sole purpose of putting fear in the hearts of enemies in order to promote their militant agenda.

But *Jihad* does not mean holy war; it means “struggle to be more human” by reforming the hearts and societies of Muslims for enduring peace (Armstrong, 2006: 125). Only through democratic governance based on checks and balances and freedom of press can the extremist ideologues be contained and the true spirit of *Jihad* restored.

3 Dictatorship and Democracy

Let us examine the case of Bangladesh, which had won its independence when the Pakistani military regime refused to accept the results of a free and fair election held under the military rule in 1970. The Pakistani military crackdown on the freedom movement of the people of East Pakistan was bloody, causing shooting deaths of many protesters including this author's students and colleagues of Dacca University in East Pakistan. Archer K. Blood, the then American Consul General in East Pakistan sent a diplomatic cable to the US State Department highlighting the bloody Pakistani military crackdown on the autonomy movement of Bengalis in East Pakistan as “Selective Genocide” (Blood, 2002:

215-117). The ruthlessness of Pakistan's military became the catalyst for the liberation struggle of the Bengalis in East Pakistan, resulting in the creation of a new nation of Bangladesh out of East Pakistan.

But like many developing nations with weak institutions—a legacy of colonial rule—bureaucracy, both civil and military, gained in strength due to the inexperience of political leaders with governance. Trying to make up for weak governance with strong political power led to unchecked corruption of power and mismanagement of scarce resources, to the dismay of a newly liberated people with great expectations. The first military takeover of an aspiring underdeveloped democracy happened in that environment on August 15, 1975, claiming the life of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founder of the nation, and most of his immediate family.

Military dictatorship in different guises continued for the next fifteen years during which period General Ziaur Rahman and General Hussain Mohammad Ershad came to power. Both Zia and Ershad sought to legitimize their military based regimes by floating two new political parties-- Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jatio Party (JP), and holding orchestrated elections based on their party platforms.

Interestingly, Awami League, the political party of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which had challenged the Pakistani military regime in 1971 and which was largely responsible for mobilizing the Bengali people in East Pakistan to their struggle for independence, found it expedient to collaborate with the second assassinated President of Bangladesh General Ziaur Rahman’s military created party Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in 1990 for the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh. General Ershad’s Jatio Party (JP) government failed to suppress the restoration of democracy movement by force. A series of mass demonstrations in 1990 against a dictatorship under the guise of democracy led to the collapse of General Hussain Mohammad Ershad and his government.

Among many casualties, one young popular physician Dr. Milton’s death by shooting by the military police became the catalyst that galvanized a mass movement for restoration of democracy. It accelerated the existing mass movement, triggering the downfall of General Ershad and his subsequent imprisonment. In 1991 BNP won a five-year tenure through a free and fair election monitored by international observers under a caretaker government headed by the Chief Justice of the country’s Supreme Court.

Upon completion of its tenure in 1996 a questionable election was held in February which was boycotted by the Awami League (AL) which had served as the main opposition party until March 1996. The resulting protest movement compelled the BNP government to amend the

constitution by enacting the 13th Amendment to the Bangladesh Constitution. It provided for a non-partisan caretaker government headed by the most recently retired Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to hold the election within three months upon the completion of the five-year tenure of every elected government.

Indeed, within three months of the forced resignation of the BNP government, the new Caretaker Government under the 13th Amendment held a free and fair election in June 1996. The Awami League party led by Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won the election narrowly and formed a coalition government. The viability of a Caretaker Government to conduct a free election was demonstrated five years later in the general election when BNP returned to power in 2001.

Unfortunately, five years later in 2006 a politicized Caretaker Government failed to hold a free and fair election, leading to another mass movement and rapid deterioration of law and order during 2006-7. Repeating history once again, it created another political vacuum for the military to intervene.

But unlike their Pakistani counterpart, the Bangladeshi military chose a cautious path to form a civilian caretaker government under its wing. What set the military backed government apart was keeping their commitment to transfer power to the elected government within two years. It happened largely due to pressure from the civil society of Bangladesh, together with a number of democratic nations such as U.S.A., U.K. Canada and EU, among others, that continued their support for restoration of a democratic government.

Particularly, the UN made it very clear that without reinstating Democracy through a free and fair election Bangladesh's UN Peace Keeping Force could be discontinued, resulting in unmanageable politico-fiscal pressure on the government of Bangladesh. And also the UN and other nations made it clear that, like before, their election monitors would likely be unavailable during the vote counting phase if the elections were to take place in a questionable environment. The Bangladesh case demonstrated that at times international pressure could help restore democracy in developing nations. At the time it did help the consensus building process in Bangladesh to hold a free and fair election in December, 2008, under a military propped-up civilian caretaker government.

The largest democracy of the world, *i.e.* India, has from time to time confronted such a problem, most of the time resolving it by virtue of swift actions by a strong and apolitical Election Commission, headed by such strong-willed civil servants as T. N. Seshan and M. S. Gill.

But Seshan (1995) argued in favor of trying out the Presidential model for India because of electoral shortcomings of the Parliamentary system in which elections could be more easily manipulated by corruption of political power and material resources (Seshan, 1995: 6-17). Interestingly, Seshan felt that Bangladesh's electoral innovation of Caretaker Government could be applied to elections in India's twenty-eight states (now twenty-nine) on an experimental basis and see to what extent it prevents electoral fraud. Indeed, actual and alleged incidents of electoral fraud have often led to bloody uprisings in Asian, African and Middle Eastern countries, triggering mass movements for change in the late 20th and early 21st century.

4 Justice for Sustainable Political Development via Women's Empowerment

To ensure justice in the evolving global order, powerful countries must be genuinely committed to helping the disadvantaged countries to help themselves through sharing of knowledge and technology. Ultimately the nation states in their global interests must provide additional resources and strategic support to nurture civil societies through non-state organizations, focusing on women's empowerment at the grassroots level through fiscal support of literacy-healthcare-skill-building training. Such an integrated approach could create the needed environment in the 21st century in which terrorism of different forms would be contained without curtailing human rights.

In all developed and newly developed countries, the empowerment of women has proved to be a crucial factor for the advancement of their civil societies. Exploited, under-compensated and under-represented, the women of Bangladesh have been pushing for a greater voice at different levels of government. This author conducted a survey which showed a considerable support (58%) for such empowerment in Bangladesh. Forty percent of the respondents felt strongly for applying the local government formula of women representation to the country's unicameral legislature. Interestingly, the lower house of the neighboring India's West Bengal Legislature, one of its twenty-nine state legislatures, has recently restricted male representation to a maximum of two-thirds. Perhaps a future bicameral legislature in Bangladesh could significantly alleviate the felt problem of representation for women in the highest policy making body.

Besides aiming for a world free of nuclear weaponry, leaders must make concerted and determined efforts at alleviating endemic poverty with dehumanizing effects

on people in three-fourth of the world through women's empowerment, increasing access to life saving and life enriching systems. This would require coordinated actions by the industrialized, resource rich and developing countries to invest in human development--socially, economically and politically. Here again Rawls' "background justice" should be the basis for creation, allocation and distribution of resources, ensuring the basic fairness of the process. In specially convened sessions of the world body, followed by regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, leaders at different levels could come up with acceptable action plans and needed resources to implement them.

Interestingly, the entire volume of the Journal of International Political Science Review (IPSR) has been devoted to *Women, security and peace in regional and international stability and development* (George and Shepherd, 2016).

5 Effective Confidence Building Measures (CBM)

Based on elements of CBMs contained in the Tashkent Agreement, the Simla Agreement, and prior notification of missile tests, the two South Asian nuclear rivals—India and Pakistan—could take further steps for building mutual confidence and trust. For example, they could agree to prior notification of military exercises involving over 25,000 personnel along the common border three weeks in advance, construction of forward air bases or runways within an agreed distance of the border, major naval exercises, and an agreement for mutual inspection of each other's nuclear installations.

Perhaps the most sensitive conventional step toward building mutual confidence and trust that the three largest nations of South Asia—India, Pakistan and Bangladesh—may consider is to try out a joint intelligence commission to monitor intelligence reports that often are exaggerated beyond reality. As suggested in the Shanghai initiative, such an instrumentality through inter-government officials and citizens could mitigate the "stranglehold of vested interests" in the Indo-Pak-Bangladesh decision-making elite, especially the malignant role therein of their intelligence services. Of them noted a columnist of *The New York Times* that in a crisis situation both RAW and ISI were eager to provide incendiary intelligence without being sure of its reliability (Harsch, 1996).

Unfortunately, their tendentious reports and prejudiced assessments of a crisis situation could easily turn into self-fulfilling prophecies as happened in 1998. Under pressure from U.S.A. whatever chance there was that Pakistan's the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif

would decide not to test nuclear devices in response to India's nuclear tests became nullified by a false, manipulated intelligence report of an imminent preventive or preemptive military strike by India and Israel. Observers strongly suspect that the dangerous misinformation was deliberately circulated by Pakistani military intelligence officers in order to force the government to opt for nuclear testing, raising significantly the level of politico-military tension in perhaps the most nuclear volatile region of the world (Dunn, Levoy and Sagan, 2000; Khan, 2003).

Manipulation of misinformation has been as dangerous as being criminally negligent in locating destructive trouble spots as recently demonstrated by unexplainable failure of all intelligence agencies—military, paramilitary and civil—to give any advance warning of the uprising of the BDR (Bangladesh Rifles), a border security force called East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) before Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan on December 16, 1971. It claimed the lives of more than fifty military officers assigned to BDR in 2009.

Given the long history of enmity between the two regional nuclear rivals, a few unconventional CBMs might be worth trying. Great emphasis needs to be placed on intra- and inter-state communication and training of civilian and military leaders. Along with the training of civilian leaders—political, bureaucratic and cultural—military leaders such as commissioned officers, junior- and non-commissioned officers should be educated to learn and appreciate the appropriate functions of the military institution in a democracy. Late Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had inculcated such a lesson in the Indian army with the help of his defense minister Krishna Menon following the Indian debacle in the Sino-Indian border war of 1962.

In fact, General Ziaur Rahman, a former commando of the Pakistan army, who created a new political party, Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and rose to the presidency of Bangladesh, sought to follow in Nehru's footsteps in reorganizing the Bangladesh army in order to prevent army takeovers of civilian government. Showing some promise at the outset it has so far failed in Bangladesh as in Pakistan, despite sporadic efforts of political leaders in those countries. The time has come for political and military leaders of the most dangerous subcontinent of the world to work together through either the existing regional association named SAARC (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation) or by some other arrangement to come to grips with conflicts threatening one-fifth of mankind (Khan and Guhathakurta, 2012: 15-30).

With active participation of selected military personnel, the excellent facilities in military bases could be utilized more efficiently for training of selected

members of civilian, professional and occupational groups from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh comprising ninety-six percent of the total population of South Asia. The main purpose would be to reinforce the values of cooperation, discipline, honesty, and of time, resource strategies to fight common problems of the region: poverty, corruption, failing governance and related ills of the civil societies of the eight countries of South Asia, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Besides maximizing available facilities, and supplementing civilian training venues, cantonments (military bases) in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh could serve an important purpose of exposing civilian and military trainees to various planning and implementing strategies of mutual confidence and security building for optimization of physical environment, utilizing available resources and creating new ones. Attractive incentives could also be offered to those trainees, including selected members of the armed forces, who opt to receive additional training to become trainers themselves in order to work at the grass roots, particularly at the village level. For cost cutting and quality control, a high-powered team of experts from public and private sectors of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and interested IGOs (Inter-governmental Organizations) and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) from other South Asian countries could devise a mutual monitoring and evaluation system under the direct supervision of a joint commission.

As a part of CBM, joint military exercises could be conducted periodically in coordination with America, Russia and China. The success of such a cooperative endeavor could significantly raise the level of mass consciousness about their common security problems that are solvable. Having participants from think tanks of regional countries with largest contingents drawn from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh could raise public awareness of opportunities for advancements through literacy, skill building, and healthcare drives. And implementing civil service reforms would accelerate the process of resolving nagging problems between the two competing nuclear countries of South Asia.

In the above scenario, the military expenditures could be reduced as a result of NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty), and CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty). Raising a regional security force drawn from countries in proportions to their populations could also reduce military and security related expenditures. And a 9-12% GDP growth, comparable to China's until 2008, needed over a ten-year period for poverty alleviation would no more be an optimist's unattainable dream. Even a partial realization of that dream would help reduce the gap between national sovereignty and public interests in the consensus building challenges being faced by India,

Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, Bangladesh for peaceful resolution of their outstanding disputes.

In that scenario, military institutions, particularly Pakistan's, would have no justification in taking over elected governments. Could it end the vicious cycle of a swing state restoring democratic form on a more permanent basis? Another question that remains is whether a military regime has the inherent capability to accept responsibilities for making mistakes and making corrections needed for enduring restoration of a representative democracy?

6 Effective Social Contract: Ensuring Justice for All

Values connected to bureaucratic power and electoral authority need to be reassessed and reprioritized. Here civil societies must play a crucial role. Different segments of different civil societies must develop their own expectations and the ways in which they can be met to become more humane, responsive and accountable for their decisions and actions. These values must be reflected in the recruiting, selecting and promoting guidelines of the Public Service Commissions and departmental committees dealing with career evaluation and advancement.

To this end, interactive, inter-sectoral decision making and implementing institutions could be formed for different purposes. For example, the charge of one such institutions could be to publicize dangerously counterproductive delays of policy implementation in specific cases and the degree of duplication, inefficiency and corruption involved. Such mobilization of support from the civil society could help increase responsiveness, cut red tape and remove unexplainable bureaucratic barriers against policy implementation for good governance. In this context, Bangladesh's constitutional provision of "Ombudsman" could be implemented, at least on an experimental basis. It could significantly "empower the citizens in registering their grievances against the bureaucracy—both career and political, which still carries the vestiges of colonialism—with minimal risk of retaliation" (Khan and Andaleeb, 2011).

Concerted effort by public and private sectors are needed to renewing the spirit of Social Contract. Such a renewal would contribute to a vital socio-economic-political balance by mixing human rights with accountability at every societal level. It would call upon institutional reformers to become transforming change agents, striving to be leaders and teachers at the same time, raising the consciousness of their followers to a higher level at which spontaneous mobilization of human and material resources could happen.

The value of the great leap “from status to contract” must be inculcated through a reformed, progressive education system. A deep political commitment to changing the mindset of leaders at every level in every field from the self-centered transactional relationship to public interest based transformational one would bridge the gaps between leaders at every level and their constituents.

7 Justice as Peace Offensive ensuring Cooperation at Different Levels

SAARC and sub-regional inter-state cooperative entities could also learn from inter-regional conflicts in Asia and make attempts to find acceptable resolutions. During the fifties a power struggle featured India and China over the fate of Tibet. Beijing reasserted its historical claim by forcibly incorporating it in China as a “national autonomous region” in 1951, nominally under the traditional authority of the Dalai Lama. Although lodging a formal protest against China’s “aggression,” India’s Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru realized that India could do little to overturn Chinese control of Tibet. Interestingly, Nehru later gave the Dalai Lama refuge to live in North-East India.

With a strategic shift from adversarial to cooperative mode, both Nehru and Chou En Lai engaged one another in a peace offensive, culminating in the Sino-Indian Treaty in 1954. The preamble of the treaty contained five principles or *panch sheel*: respect for each other’s sovereignty; territorial integrity; non-aggression and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.

It became the template for peaceful cooperation celebrated at the 1955 Bandung Conference, which led to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The spirit of *panch sheel* once helped provide a middle ground in the bi-polar struggle in a “Cold War” environment with stabilizing effects. Despite periodic lapses in 1959, 1962, 1965, 1971, 1998, 2002, the spirit of *panch sheel* has survived.

Particularly for the emerging ex-colonial nations in a tense international environment it seemed to start a positive trend of mutual cooperation and respect—a reinforcement of the ideology of regional cooperation (Khan, 1991). To what purpose and extent the spirit of *panch sheel* applies to the environment of a fledgling Democracy like Bangladesh? Applied to domestic power relations *panch sheel* could have a stabilizing effect by creating a middle ground on which rational cooperation and compromises could replace traditional all or nothing approach to politics.

This could be achieved through a series of cooperative endeavors involving representatives from the government, professional-occupational groups, minorities, women associations and the civil society at large. Hopefully within a new institutional framework any interested segment of any cooperatives could lawfully participate in a policy making and/or policy implementing process in domestic and foreign affairs as non-voting members with the power of persuasion. This would prevent the screening of negative feedback from those adversely affected by a given policy and/or the way it is being implemented, reasserting autonomy of individuals and groups—an important dimension of justice as the principle of fairness.

Nowhere is the failure of conflicting groups and states to find common ground for negotiations more devastating than ethnic cleansing and widespread communal violence that have driven millions from their homes seeking shelter in other countries. World history is replete with heart rending cases of mass exodus, which often lead to new violence among the refugees.

And that is much easier to talk about than act upon. Whether involving opposing views being expressed by different individuals, groups, political parties and states, there has to be a basic willingness to listen to others in order to search for a common ground for engaging in formal and informal dialogues. An agreement to even disagree on selected issues could go a long way in building a step by step process of mutual confidence and trust.

On a formal level of such interactions, tested strategies of CBM could be applied to reach certain understandings on complex issues. It could at times be more fruitful, engaging one’s adversary in informal dialogues as happened on a few occasions when regional and global leaders succeeded in diffusing inter-party or inter-state or inter-regional tensions, which otherwise could have taken a dangerous turn causing havoc on millions.

8 Conclusion

In a volatile setting, leaders of eight South Asian countries representing a fifth of the world population, are faced with a big challenge to move towards a creative trend of reinforcing regional cooperation for social, economic and political development of all members of the association, thus assuring regional peace and having a positive impact on global peace and stability. They must never lose sight of the fact that a mixed-scanning approach combining rational with incremental planning is vital to ensure sustainable development for reducing inequality and assuring *sustainable peace*. Myopic mindsets and shortsighted

politico-economic analysis are serious obstacles to mutually beneficial regional cooperation for national development.

Worse still is the threat being posed by a nagging lack of applying effectively CBMs to find a common ground to resolve different conflicts at different levels. In this context a strong non-government SAARC organization, open to all shades of public opinion in the region, can be a driving force towards confidence building measures.

If European countries could come together, forming a viable union after centuries of internecine warfare, there is no reason why South Asian countries with less traumatic experiences will not be able to close ranks and form a peaceful cooperative political entity. In that scenario Bangladesh could play a primordial role as Belgium did in the European Union. After all, Bangladesh did start the regional movement for cooperation among South Asian countries.

It is vital for leaders to work hard to develop the ability to anticipate the future in order to shape the present for ensuring justice for all. It is also vital for all kinds of leaders to know that the most effective way to prevent unjust exploitation of both human and natural resources increasing socio-economic inequality could happen through constitutional checks and balances, preventing addiction to power. Uncontrolled use of power leads to unjust exploitation of both human and natural resources increasing socio-economic inequality. By humanely managing security, stability and peace, nationally, regionally and globally, leaders of different kinds at different levels of existence would serve the greater interests of humanity, ensuring sustainable *Justice for All*.

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Concessional Financing for Development in Bangladesh

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Abstract

On July 1, 2015, the World Bank re-classified Bangladesh as a lower-middle income country. Hence, Bangladesh is expected to graduate from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) in the next few years and will then lose access to concessional financing from IDA and subsequently from other donors as well. This article examines the impact of this loss to concessional financing on Bangladesh to finance development, especially related to poverty reduction and social sector development. Following a brief review of the aid literature, it reviews the evolution of concessional aid to Bangladesh. The analysis moves then to a forward-looking impact assessment of losing access to concessional aid. The article also examines how well Bangladesh is prepared to replace foreign aid with domestic financing. The findings provide recommendations to donors and the Government of Bangladesh.

1 Introduction

A key milestone that impacts a country's ability to finance equitable development via official development assistance (ODA)¹ is the graduation from low-income country status to lower-middle income country status. This graduation leads to the gradual loss of access to highly concessional financing, especially from the International Development Association (IDA), the concessional lending arm of the World Bank. Due to substantial increases in Bangladesh's gross national income (GNI) per capita, the World Bank re-classified Bangladesh on July 1, 2015 as a lower-middle income country, which were at that point of time countries with a GNI per capita between US\$1,046 and US\$4,125.

With regards to the IDA's graduation process, Bangladesh became a so-called Gap country on July 1, 2018, as its GNI per capita has been above the operational cut-off for more than two consecutive years.² It will become a Blend country as soon as the World Bank considers Bangladesh to be creditworthy for non-concessional financing. Based on current guidelines and current GNI growth rates, Bangladesh is likely to graduate from IDA around June 30, 2023. However, the question is if Bangladesh will be ready to graduate or if it will join the list of countries that graduated prematurely from IDA.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows. The next section provides a review of the aid literature. Section 3 examines Bangladesh's external development finance portfolio from 1971 to 2016. Section 4 reviews where most of the aid has been spent in Bangladesh during the last ten years to deduct which sectors may be hurt most by losing access to concessional financing. It also focuses specifically on the impact of losing concessional financing from IDA. Section 5 examines how well Bangladesh is prepared to replace concessional financing with domestic government revenues. The last section provides some conclusions and recommendations.

2 Review of the Aid Literature

The impact of foreign aid is a highly disputed topic, at the international level as well as in the case of Bangladesh. While most of the academic literature was critical of the effectiveness of foreign aid during the last century, the seminal studies by Burnside and Dollar (2000) and Collier and Dollar (2002) found that foreign aid is effective if the recipient country has a strong and sound policy environment. However, subsequent studies, including especially by Rajan and Subramanian (2008) have challenged those results. Despite the continuing controversy within the global aid literature, there has

been a shift recently towards explanations under what circumstances aid is effective or ineffective. A forthcoming dissertation by Ramon (2019) shows that aid is effective after controlling for conflicts, debt overhangs, disasters and epidemics. Our own regressions across 64 developing countries came to the result that net ODA³ contributed to GDP growth (with a significance level of at least 95 percent in two regression specifications) after controlling for the volatility in the terms of trade. Our results of Granger causality tests showed that the direction of causality is unidirectional from ODA to per capita income.⁴

With regards to the aid literature focusing on Bangladesh, the first seminal assessment of the impact of aid in Bangladesh has been provided by Rehman Sobhan (1982). He concludes that the impact of aid in Bangladesh had been negative. On the other hand, a comprehensive review by Rahman (1984) came to the conclusion that aid had an overall positive impact on growth and development in Bangladesh.⁵ The subsequent aid literature has not only become more focused in terms of assessing specific impacts of aid in Bangladesh, the conclusions have overall become more nuanced.

2.1 Impact on Economic Growth

The largest number of aid studies focus on the impact of aid on macroeconomic effects, especially economic growth, which is critical because the impact of Bangladesh's graduating from aid on GDP growth is a major concern. However, these studies are overall inconclusive.

Quazi (2000) concluded that aid induces indirect positive effects on GDP growth through increased consumption demand, which offset much of the direct adverse effects of aid. Five years later, Quazi (2005) concluded that aid has marginal effects on GDP growth, but when aid is disaggregated into loans and grants, it is found that loans significantly raise GDP growth, while grants do not. Hossain (2014) finds that foreign aid has a positive effect on Bangladesh's economic growth, but that aid generates decreasing returns because of capacity constraint of Bangladeshi institutions to utilize the foreign aid effectively.

On the other hand, Obaydullah (2007) indicates that there is little evidence that foreign aid alone has contributed to economic growth in Bangladesh, mainly due to the poor policy environment and institutional constraints. Khatun (2018) concluded that aid provided to Bangladesh had no significant impact on economic growth. Dristy (2016) examines the impact of foreign aid on Bangladesh's economic growth before and after the signing of the Paris Declaration in 2005 and concludes that there is almost no change in the aid-

growth relationship before and after adopting the Paris Declaration.

2.2 Impact on Poverty Reduction, Health and Education

Despite the overall inconclusive aid and growth literature, there is some indication that aid has been critical to reducing poverty and promoting social development, specifically in the health and education sector. Khatun (2018) concluded that health sector projects have benefitted from ODA support. Similarly, Obaydullah (2007) finds that the sectoral allocation of foreign aid to Bangladesh has been broadly consistent with a strategy to effectively reduce poverty and increase human well-being, which is also consistent with the vast project evaluation literature. Examining the degree of Bangladesh's dependency on foreign aid, Hasan (2011) concludes that even though the flow of aid has declined as percentage of GDP or investment, the contribution of ODA is still very significant in different development projects, especially in health, education and physical infrastructure, and hence, the influence of donors in policy matters has paradoxically increased significantly.

3 Bangladesh's External Development Finance Portfolio

There are a variety of different external sources that might finance development. For analytical purposes, we divide external development finance into public and private resources. External public resources are provided to the Government of Bangladesh, independent on if they come from another government, an international organization, or external private sources (like foreign commercial banks loans). Within the category of public external resources, we differentiate between concessional and non-concessional resources.⁶ We first focus the analysis of this section on the flows of public external resources, especially concessional resources (that is, ODA), before examining the flows of some private external resources.

3.1 Recent Trends in Public External Development Finance

Recent Trends in Public External Development Finance from Official Creditors

Given that IDA has been the largest multilateral development bank providing development finance to Bangladesh, we start with the examination of development finance provided by IDA. Figure 1 shows the flows of concessional funds (in terms of gross

disbursements) from IDA from 1971 to 2016. As the left panel of Figure 1 shows, despite some considerable volatility in aid disbursements from IDA, there is a clearly upward trend since 2009. In 2016, IDA disbursed US\$1.05 billion to Bangladesh. The right-hand panel of Figure 1 shows IDA’s disbursements as a percent of

GNI. Despite the relatively high volatility, it shows a clearly declining trend since 1986, which is due to Bangladesh considerable growth. In 1986, IDA disbursements reached 1.5 percent of GNI. During 2013-2016, IDA disbursements were between 0.42 and 0.45 percent of GNI.

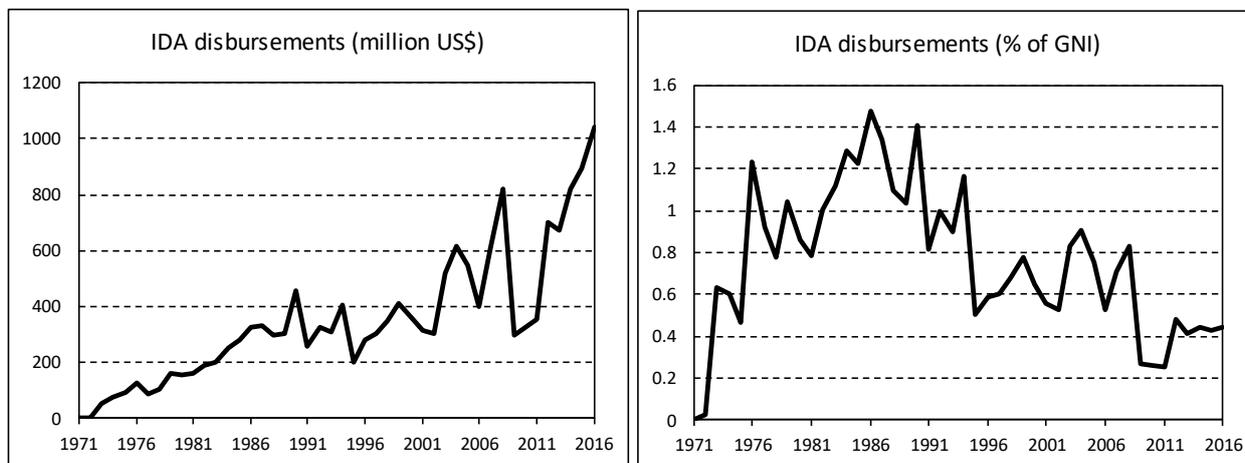


Figure 1: Disbursements of ODA from IDA

Source: Authors’ estimates based on World Bank (2018a) database.

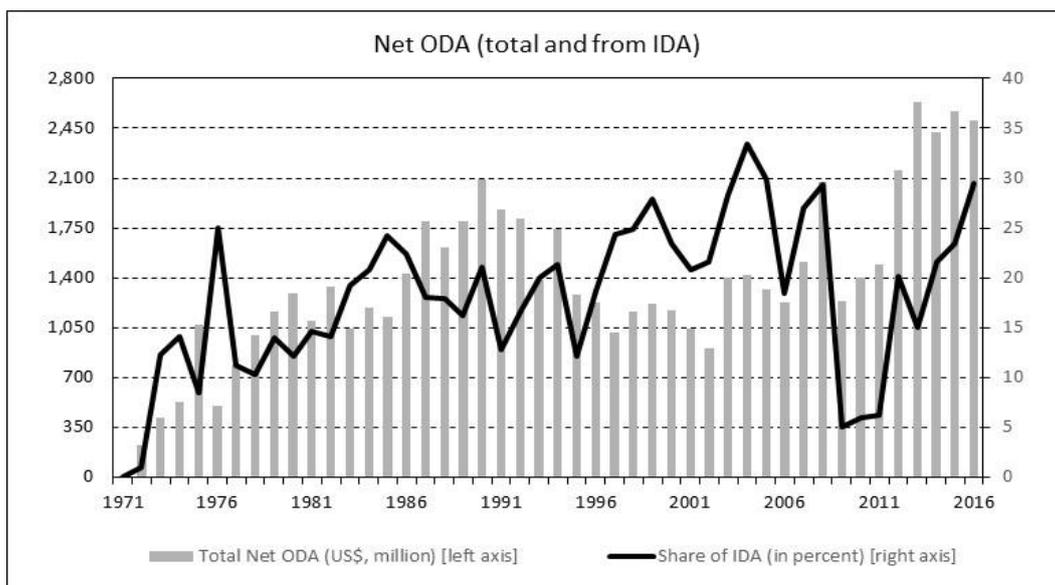


Figure 2: Total Net ODA and IDA’s Share in Total Net ODA

Source: Authors’ estimates based on World Bank (2018a) database.

Using the left vertical axis of Figure 2, the grey bars show total net ODA in million US\$ from 1971 to 2016. Despite some volatility, total net ODA shows an increasing trend from 1971-1990; then a decreasing trend from 1990-2002, after which it shows another

increasing trend from 2002-2008. It then plummeted in 2009, after which total net ODA shows once again an overall increasing trend until reaching an all-time high in 2013, and a gradual decline since 2013.

The black line of Figure 2 shows that IDA's share in net ODA has been highly volatile throughout the 1971 to 2016 period, reaching a maximum of 33.5 percent in 2004 and a minimum of 5.1 percent in 2009. IDA's share in total net ODA increased over time, until it decreased sharply in 2010, but increased subsequently,

reaching 29.5 percent in 2016. The key point of Figure 2 is that ODA has been high within the last few years (in nominal terms), including from IDA, and that a forthcoming graduation from IDA would constitute a considerable shock.

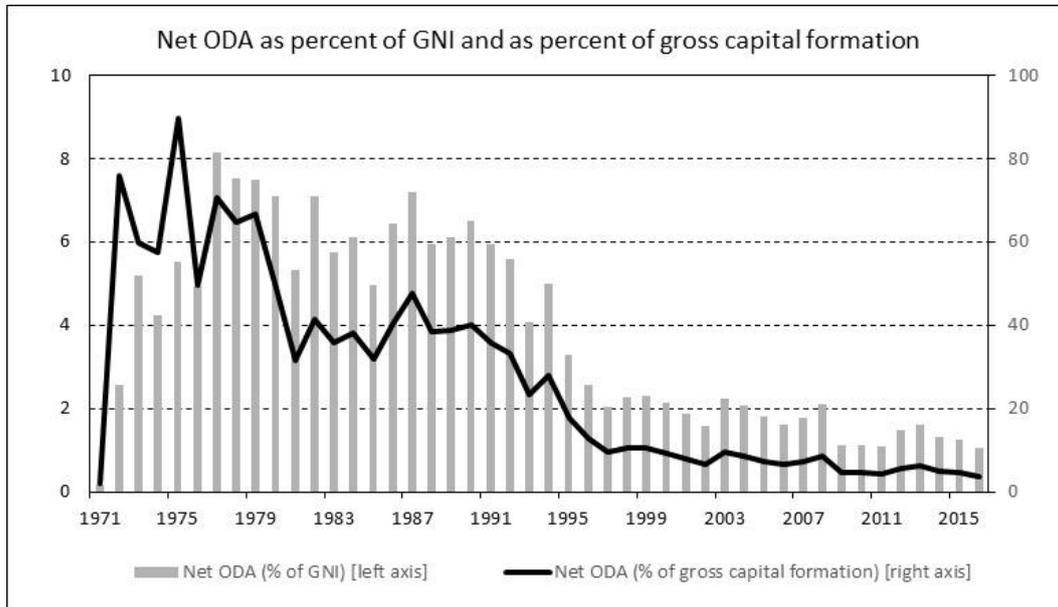


Figure 3: Net ODA as percent of GNI and as percent of Gross Capital Formation

Source: Authors' estimates based on World Bank (2018a) database.

Figure 3 shows net ODA as a percent of GNI (the grey bars) and as a percent of gross capital formation (the black line). As a percent of GNI, net ODA reached a maximum of 8.2 percent in 1977, after which it mostly decreased, reaching a minimum of 1.1 percent in 2016. As a percent of gross capital formation, net ODA reached a maximum of 89.6 percent in 1975, after which it mostly decreased, reaching a minimum of 3.8 percent in 2016. However, consistent with the assessment by Hasan (2011), it should be stressed that despite the fact that aid has declined as percentage of GNI or as a percent of gross capital formation, ODA is still very significant in different development projects, especially in health and education, as will be examined in more details in Section 4.

Comparing the data provided in Figures 2 and 3, it is clear that while net ODA is currently at about its maximum level in nominal terms, it is currently at its lowest level in percentage terms of GNI and gross capital formation. This seemingly contradiction is due to Bangladesh's high economic growth rate, which has

reduced the relative importance of aid in Bangladesh since the late 1970s.

Recent Trends in Public External Development Finance from Private Creditors

Public and publicly guaranteed (PPG) debt from private creditors did – due to high interest rates and short maturity periods – not contribute to financing development in Bangladesh. The cumulative net transfer from PPG debt from private creditors amounted to negative US\$173.1 million from 1971 to 2016. In addition to having been overall negative, Figure 4 shows that net transfers from private creditors have been small, ranging from a minimum of negative US\$37.8 million in 1989 to a maximum of US\$ 45.7 million in 1986. In comparison, net transfers on PPG debt from multilateral creditors ranged from a minimum of zero US\$ in 1971 to a maximum of US\$ 1.23 billion in 2016. Figure 4 also shows that net transfers on bilateral debt have been substantial from 1971 to 1990, but then turned either negative or insignificant, until turning again significantly positive since 2012.

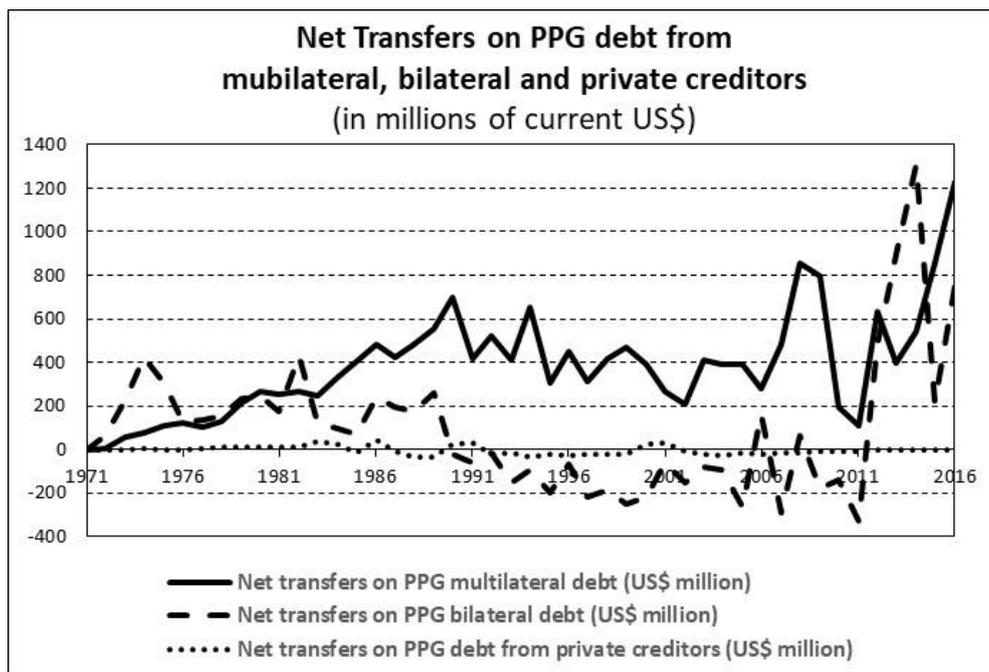


Figure 4: Net Transfers on PPG Debt from Multilateral, Bilateral and Private Creditors

Source: Authors' estimates based on World Bank (2018a) database.

It should be stressed that non-concessional debt financing is not an alternative to concessional resources as non-concessional loans have a negative impact on public debt sustainability. Tashfique (2019) provides some details on how major development partners have started to readjust their terms and conditions by either increasing the interest rate or by shortening the maturity and grace period in view of Bangladesh's recent elevation to lower-middle income country status. Although Bangladesh has gradually transformed itself from an aid-dependent to a trade-dependent economy, the transformation may well reverse if policymakers undermine the downsides of foreign aid with stringent conditionality and higher costs. Tashfique (2019) warns that foreign aid with an unmanageable loan component will not only fail to serve its development purpose but also worsen the debt situation. We are therefore not examining the replacement of aid with non-concessional debt further.

3.2 Recent Trends in Private External Development Finance

External private resources are provided to Bangladeshi individuals (like remittances or donations) and/or to the Bangladeshi private sector (like loans from foreign commercial banks, private bonds raised in foreign

currency, foreign direct investment (FDI) and portfolio investment). With the exception of remittances and private donations, private external resources are typically never concessional. While all private external resources may support the Bangladeshi economy, private sector loans, FDI and portfolio investment are typically not considered to be development finance as they are not provided to the Bangladeshi government.

Figure 5 shows the evolution of private external flows that might finance development in Bangladesh, including transfers on private non-guaranteed (PNG) external debt, net foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows, net portfolio equity investments, and remittances, though we also provide the data for net ODA received to get an idea on the relative size of public and private external development finance.

- The first year the World Bank (2018a) has data on private non-guaranteed (PNG) external loans is 2007, when net transfers on PNG debt amounted to 0.14 percent of GDP. Though such flows increased in subsequent years, the maximum was reached in 2014, when net transfers on PNG debt amounted to 0.52 percent of GDP. These flows then decreased in 2015 and even turned for the first time negative in 2016.
- Despite going back to 1972, net FDI inflows to Bangladesh have remained insignificant until the

- late 1990s, when they reached 0.4 percent on GDP. They then increased to 0.7 percent of GDP during 2000-2009, and finally to 1.3 percent of GDP during 2010-2016.
- Data for net portfolio equity investments exist since 1983, but the amounts have been insignificant for most of the years, reaching an all-time high of 0.31 percent of GDP in 1994.
 - As Figure 5 clearly shows, the only significant private external flows to Bangladesh have been private remittances, which have increased from 0.19 percent of GDP in 1996 to an all-time high of 10.6 percent in 2012. Though the flow of remittances has continued to increase in nominal terms until 2015, they have decreased as percentages of GDP, reaching 6.1 percent of GDP in 2016.

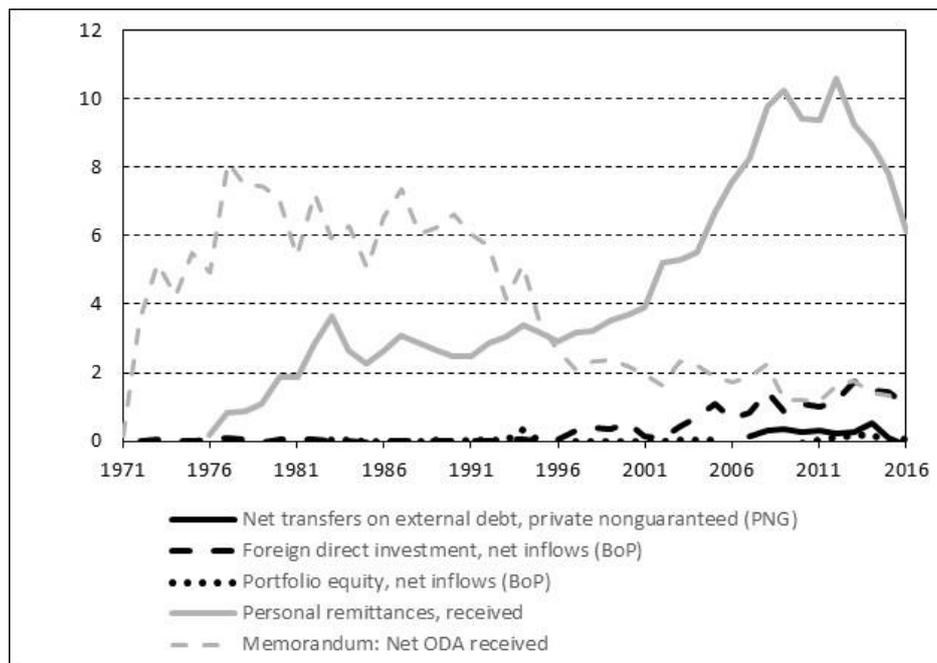


Figure 5: Net Transfers on Private Non-guaranteed (PNG) External Debt, FDI, Portfolio Equity Investment, and Remittances (percent of GDP)

Source: Authors' estimates based on World Bank (2018a) database.

Finally, even though some of the resources from so-called public-private partnerships come from domestic enterprises, the majority of Bangladesh's public-private partnerships have involved foreign investors. According to the World Bank's Private Participation in Infrastructure Database,⁷ there have been 65 such projects totaling to US\$5.5 billion from January 1, 1990 to June 30, 2018. The large majority of these public-private partnerships have been in the electricity sector, which accounts for 88 percent of total investment via public-private partnerships. Within the last five years (June 30, 2013 to June 30, 2018), there were 11 public-private partnerships projects, totaling to investments of US\$2.0 billion, which is equivalent to about 0.14 percent of GDP. It should be stressed that not all of these funds for public-private partnerships are external and that some are provided as publicly guaranteed loans, some as FDI, and in some cases even as ODA. As detailed in Romero

(2015), public-private partnerships have been controversial given that they were many times non-transparent, anti-poor, and ultimately a liability for the public sector. While public-private partnerships should be pursued, they have to be scrutinized thoroughly on their impact on poverty and inequality as well as their potential financial liability for the public sector.

4 Forward-looking Impact Assessment

This section examines some of the key consequences the reduced access to aid may have. It first reviews the sectoral allocation of ODA over time. It then examines the impact of losing concessional financing specifically from IDA on the education and health sectors.

4.1 Recent Trends in the Sectoral Allocation of ODA

Figure 6 shows the disbursements of total ODA and total sector allocable ODA, respectively as black and grey bars.⁸ It shows that disbursements of total ODA have decreased marginally from 2008 to 2009, then increased from 2009 to 2013, after which it decreased again until it spiked in 2017. The percentage of sector allocable ODA⁹

in total ODA (shown by a black line) jumped from 77.1 percent in 2007 to 87.1 percent in 2008, after which the percentage increased more moderately, reaching a maximum of 96.3 percent in 2013. It then declined in the subsequent years, reaching 86.2 percent in 2017. Despite the recent decline, it is clear that most ODA to Bangladesh has been disbursed either to a specific sector or multi-sector and cross-cutting, averaging at 89.9 percent during 2008-2017.

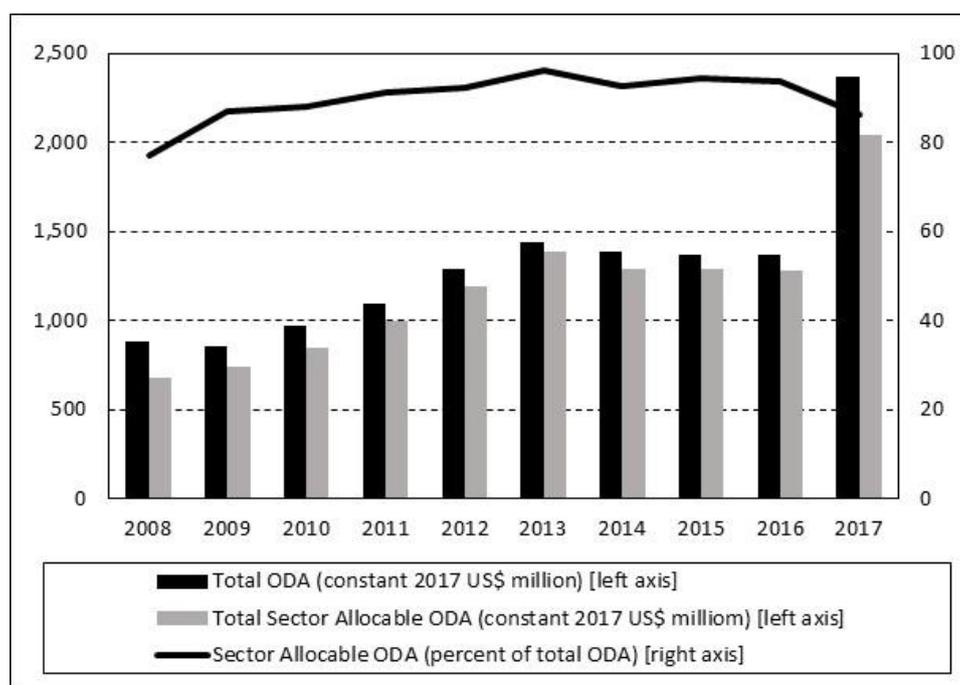


Figure 6: Disbursements of Total ODA and Sector Allocable ODA

Source: Authors' estimates based on OECDStat.org, extracted on July 24, 2019.

Following the sector classification of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Figure 7 shows the disbursements of ODA to three specific sectors: a) social sector, b) economic infrastructure and services, and c) production sectors, as well as ODA disbursed to more than one sector (multi-sectors or across sectors). It shows that excluding the 2017 spike to economic infrastructure and services, which is also the source for the 2017 spike in overall ODA disbursements, the sectoral allocation of ODA to Bangladesh has been relatively stable during the last 10 years. Traditionally, most of ODA provided to Bangladesh has been to social sectors (further details below), which averages to US\$550 million per year during 2008 to 2017, or 49.6 percent of all sector allocable ODA. And keeping in mind that 89.9 percent of all ODA has been allocable to sectors, this implies that 44.6 percent of all ODA provided to Bangladesh

during 2008-2019 has been to social sectors.

The second largest amount of ODA has been disbursed for economic infrastructure and services. During 2008 to 2017, this averaged to US\$356.8 million per year or 26.8 percent of all allocable ODA (or 24.0 percent of all ODA). On the other hand, during 2008 to 2017, ODA disbursed to production sectors averaged to only 6.7 percent of all allocable ODA, while the average percentage for multi-sectors or across sectors amounted to 16.9 percent. Clearly, with nearly 50 percent of all allocable ODA going to social sectors, the social sectors are likely to suffer the most due to the forthcoming reduction in ODA. The private sector may pick up some of the decline of ODA to infrastructure projects, however there is typically little appetite by the private sector to invest in education and health services for the poor.

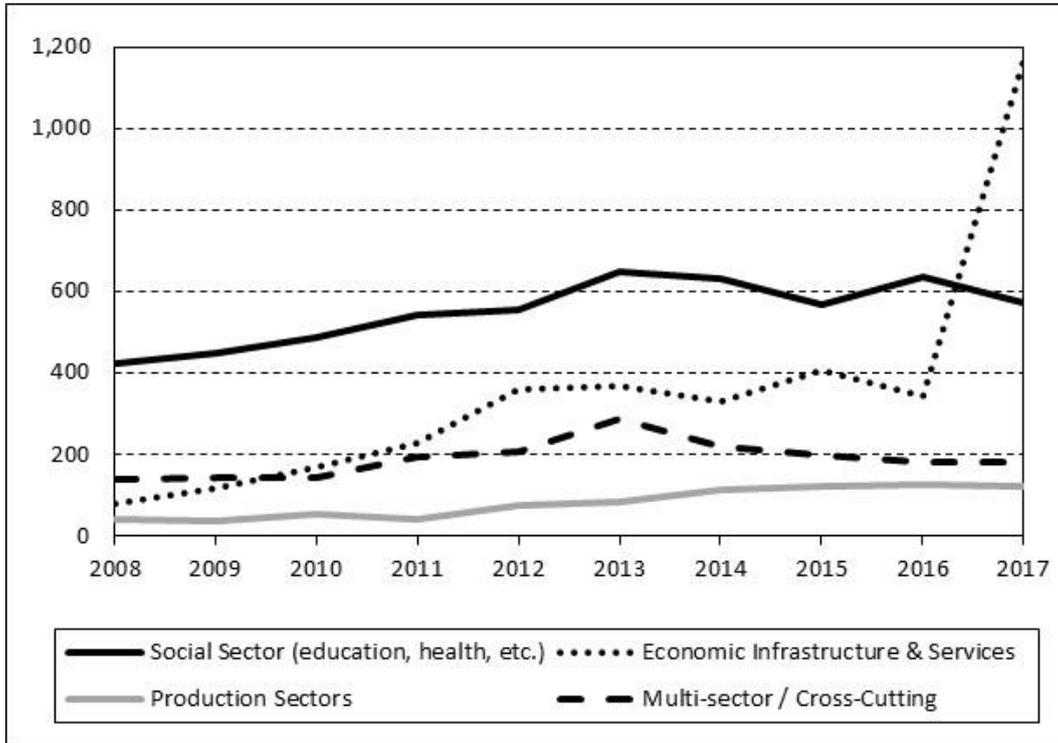


Figure 7: Sectoral Allocation of ODA (in constant 2017 US\$ million)

Source: Authors' estimates based on OECDStat.org, extracted on July 24, 2019.

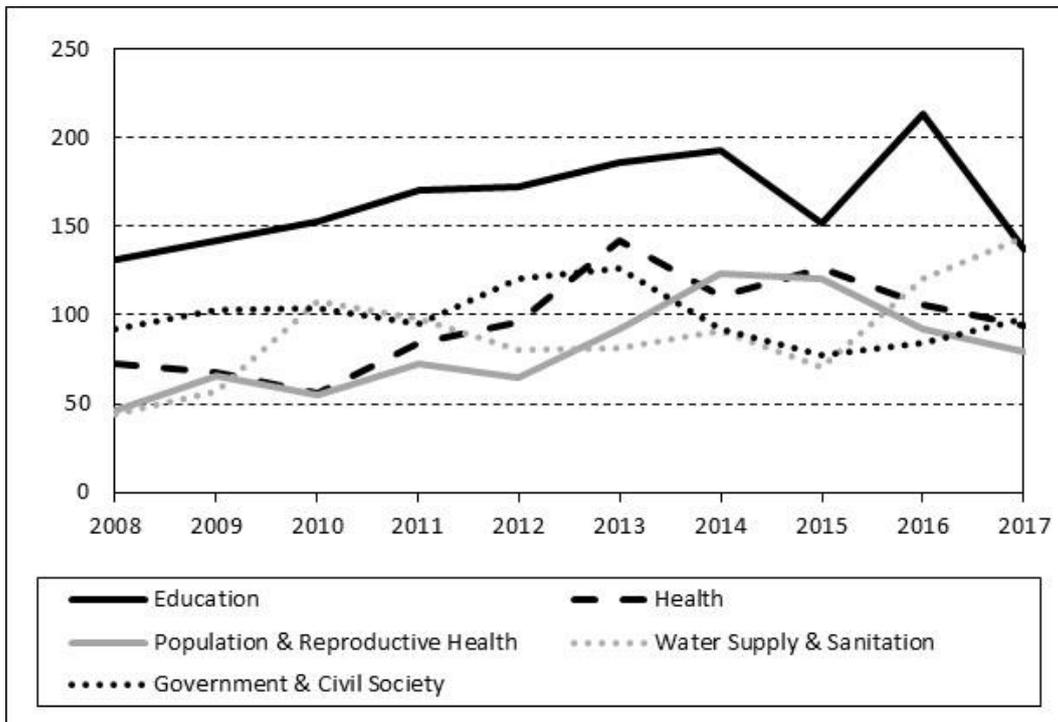


Figure 8: ODA Disbursements within the Social Sector (in constant 2017 US\$ million)

Source: Authors' estimates based on OECDStat.org, extracted on July 24, 2019.

Furthermore, as is detailed in Figure 8, the education sector has consistently been the social sector to which most of the ODA has been disbursed, averaging to US\$164.9 million per year during 2008 to 2017, or 30.0 percent of all ODA disbursed to social sectors.¹⁰ The next three social sectors are relatively close to each other in terms of ODA disbursements: the government and civil society sector received an average of US\$99.2 million per year (or 18.0 percent of all social sectors), the health sector received an average of US\$95.5 million (or 17.4 percent), and the water supply and sanitation sector received an average of US\$89.3 million (or 16.2 percent). The fifth most important sector (in terms of ODA disbursements) during 2008 to 2017 has been population policies/programs & reproductive health, for which an average of US\$81.1 million (or 14.7 percent of all social sector ODA) has been disbursed.

4.2 How Important Has IDA been in Key Social Sectors?

While most of the bilateral aid provided to Bangladesh is spent in the economic infrastructure sector, most of IDA's aid to Bangladesh has been allocated more evenly between social and economic sectors.¹¹ As columns 2 and 3 of Table 1 show, IDA has been the largest provider of aid to Bangladesh's education sector, totaling US\$108 million (based on 2016 commitments),

which is equivalent to 32 percent of all donor commitments in the education sector. The United Kingdom had committed US\$97 million (28 percent), while South Korea had committed US\$77 million (23 percent). But given that Bangladesh is now a middle-income country, most of these donors will sooner or later reallocate their aid to poorer countries.

While IDA has been significant to fund education programs in Bangladesh, columns 4 and 5 of Table 1 shows that IDA has been even more significant in Bangladesh's health sector, contributing US\$150 million (based on 2016 commitments), which is equivalent to more than half (52 percent) of all donor commitments in the health sector in 2016. The United States has been the second largest donor to Bangladesh's health sector, with a commitment of US\$90 million or 31 percent of all donor commitments.

In conclusion, with IDA being the far largest donor in the education and health sectors, the loss of concessional financing from IDA may affect these sectors negatively if no compensating transition plans are made to fund these programs in the future. While some of the projects financed in the past by IDA may be financed via loans from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), IBRD financing is not concessional, and there is therefore less interest by the Bangladeshi government to continue these projects.

Table 1: Donor Contributions in the Education and Health Sector (based on 2016 commitments)

	Donor Contributions in the Education and Health Sectors			
	Education		Health	
	USD million	Donor's share (in percent)	USD million	Donor's share (in percent)
IDA	108	32	150	52
United Kingdom	97	28	0	0
United States	2	1	90	31
Korea	77	23	2	1
Germany	21	6	0	0
Japan	7	2	1	0
France	2	1	0	0
Canada	0	0	11	4
European Union	0	0	7	2
WHO	0	0	7	2
Other donors	27	8	17	6
Total	341	101	285	98

Source: OECD DAC (2018) Table 4.3.8 and Table 4.3.12

According to the World Bank (2018c), decades of IDA financing has contributed to the achievement of significant results across a range of sectors, including (among many others, the following items are some illustrations):

- an increase in net enrollment rate at the primary school level from 80 percent in 2000 to above 90 percent in 2015;
- a 40 percent reduction in maternal mortality from 194 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2010 to 320 deaths in 2000;
- a reduction in fertility from around 3.3 children per woman during the 1990s to 2.3 children per woman in 2014;
- 13,006 functioning community clinics in 2014, with 64 percent of pregnant women receiving Ante Natal Care (ANC) from a medically trained provider in 2014, up from 53 percent in 2007;
- 800 km of new roads paved, 4,500 km rural roads in 26 districts maintained, and 47 km of rural waterways dredged; and
- 1.1 million people gaining access to clean water in rural areas.

However, as was already detailed in the review of the aid literature above, how much of these results can

indeed be attributed to ODA remains controversial.

5 Replacing Concessional Financing with Domestic Financing

There is a broad agreement that it is critical to replace concessional external financing not with non-concessional external or domestic debt, but via increasing domestic revenues. This section will shed some light on how well Bangladesh is prepared to replace concessional financing with government revenues by reviewing government revenues, especially taxes.

One of the earliest comprehensive reviews of Bangladesh's tax system was a three-volume World Bank (1989) report, which laid out a medium-to-long term agenda for reforming Bangladesh's tax system into an elastic, efficient and equitable instrument of domestic resource mobilization. However, little if not nothing of this agenda seems to have been implemented. During 2007-2016, Bangladesh's government revenues amounted to an average of 10.2 percent of GDP, which is the lowest in the world the average government revenue for the 38 low-income countries with similar data is 17.6 percent.¹²

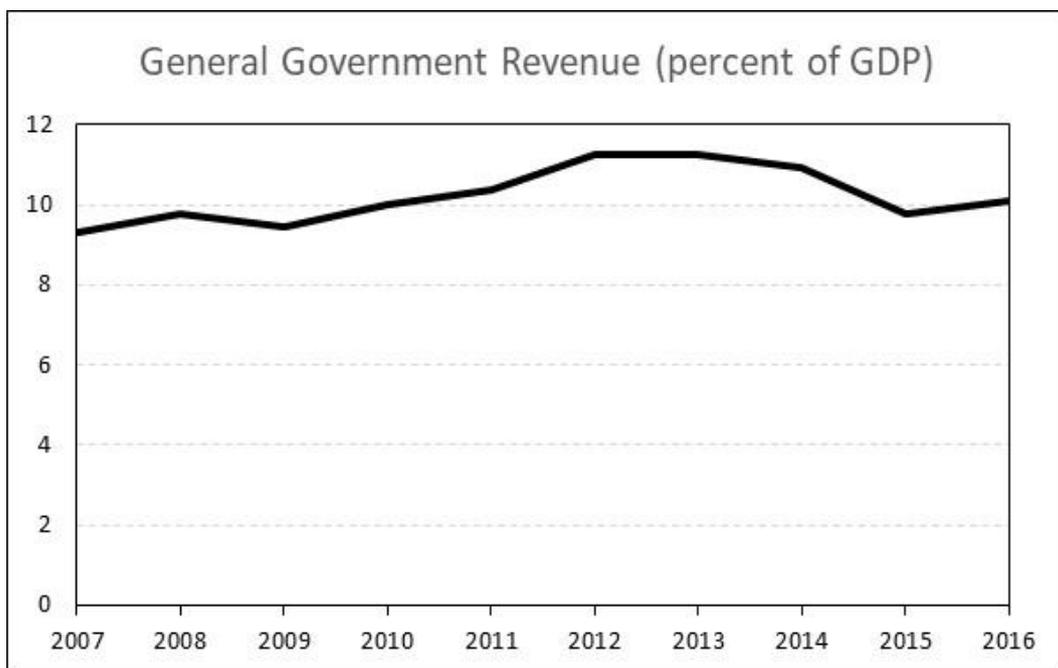


Figure 9: Evolution of General Government Revenue (percent of GDP) in Bangladesh, 2007-2016

Source: Authors' estimates based on combining data provided in IMF (2016) and IMF (2018).

As Figure 9 shows, though there has been some progress in increasing the government revenue-to-GDP ratio from 2009 to 2012, the ratio has been declining from 2012 to 2015, and it then increased only marginally from 9.8 percent in 2015 to 10.1 percent in 2016. Sushasoner Jonny Procharavizan (SUPRO) and Oxfam Bangladesh (2015) conclude that the narrow tax base, widespread exemptions, and administrative inefficiencies are the main factors behind the low tax to GDP ratio in Bangladesh. Furthermore, they stress that these factors also explain why tax reforms over the last decades have not brought about significant changes in Bangladesh's tax efficiency and productivity. The overall weakness of the policy framework, which is characterized by an enormous range of exemptions, incentives and special regimes. This directly lowers tax revenues, complicates tax administration, undermines equity in the system and introduces significant scope for officials to exercise discretion.¹³

Rahman and Yasmin (2008) estimate the revenue losses derived from different categories of taxpayers who use Bangladesh's Self-assessment System. They find that the revenue loss due to these taxpayers' noncompliance with income laws is a growing problem and that Private Ltd Companies and Public Ltd Companies contributed significantly to accelerating the problem during 2000-2004. They conclude that the tax evasion issue is critical in Bangladesh.

Besides income tax evasion, one of the main reasons for Bangladesh's low government revenue-to-GDP ratio is that Bangladesh has not yet been able to adopt a broad-based value-added tax (VAT). Saleheen and Siddiquee (2013) examine and analyze the nature of deviations and distortions in Bangladesh's VAT system. They argue that Bangladesh's VAT, which was introduced in 1991 to maximize tax revenues, has deviated significantly from standard and international best practices. Furthermore, they argue that most of the deviations have their roots in the excise system of taxation that the VAT has replaced and, while some of them produce ad hoc benefits in terms of generating revenue and easing compliance, most of them defeat the core principle of the VAT. Overall, the objective of the VAT to evolve as an efficient tool for maximizing tax revenues remained elusive.

While a new law for a broader VAT had been passed in the VAT Act of 2012, its implementation has been postponed more than once, mostly due to political resistance from the business sector and some civil society organizations that had criticized it as being a regressive tax that will hurt the poor. Hossain (1994) examines the distributional implications of different value-added tax (VAT) schemes in Bangladesh. He concludes that a uniform VAT is regressive in its impact on the income of different households. He therefore

suggests an alternative policy package, consisting of a basic rate of VAT with exemptions for certain commodity groups, which would have superior welfare consequences than the uniform VAT.

Finance Minister Muhith had proposed a uniform 15 percent VAT rate in the budget for 2017-18 fiscal year, but Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina suspended it for two more years. At the IMF Annual Meeting of 2017, Finance Minister Muhith revealed the plan to implement the new VAT law with two thresholds: one from 7 to 10 percent and the other 15 percent (instead of the uniform rate of 15 percent), to be implemented in 2020.¹⁴

In FY2018 and FY2019, VAT tax revenues averaged to 40.0 percent of total tax revenues, while import tariffs averaged to 32.9 percent and income taxes to 27.1 percent.¹⁵ Furthermore, due to lowering the source tax on export proceeds from businesses (excluding jute) from 1.0 percent to 0.65 percent in September 2018, and new VAT waivers to sectors such as liquified natural gas, shipping and stock brokers, the July-November 2018 tax revenue were 21.6 percent below the target.¹⁶

Khan (2018) examines the potential of the personal income tax in Bangladesh. One of the many findings of the study is that only about half of the about 3.4 million individuals that had a Tax Identification Number as of May 2018 have submitted income tax returns. Another key finding is that about 90 percent of the returns submitted in recent years have been self-assessed. Hence, there seems to be a considerable potential to increase revenues from the personal income tax if either more Bangladeshis come forward voluntarily to pay their due taxes or the government enforces existing personal income tax codes.

Akhand (2015) points out that several tax compliance approaches have been designed to improve the tax compliance of large corporate taxpayers. For example, in many tax administrations, specific taxpayer units have been set up to closely monitor the assessment and collection of revenues from large corporations. Using original survey data, Akhand finds that finance sector corporations achieve the highest compliance in return filing, manufacturing sector corporations achieve the highest compliance in payment, while service sector corporations achieve the highest compliance in reporting. These differences across sectors show that there are options to increase tax revenues by bringing all sectors to the same level of compliance.¹⁷

Even if Bangladesh will be able to increase government revenues, the question is then if these increased revenues will be focused on poverty reduction. As stated in Khatun, Khan and Nabi (2012, p. 32): "While effectively crafted fiscal policy and/or government budget certainly could reduce poverty, regrettably Bangladesh's fiscal policies emphasize more

on fiscal stability than on empowering the poor. (...) Nevertheless, the recent effort of collecting incremental tax revenue in the form of direct tax (income tax) at an accelerated rate compared to indirect tax can be considered as a positive trend.”

On July 7, 2019, eminent Bangladeshi economists warned that failure in meeting the revenue targets could put Bangladesh into a debt trap. One of these economists, Dr. Ahsan H. Mansur, said that the government is implementing most of the mega projects through borrowing from external sources. For example, the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project is estimated to cost around US\$13 billion, which will be borrowed from outside. This project alone would increase the foreign debt-GDP ratio by around 50 percent.¹⁸

Given that the VAT tax is indeed regressive (i.e., hurting the poor the most), the Bangladesh government may think of alternative progressive options, including a tax on real estate property. Given the massive increase in real estate values in recent years in Bangladesh, a real estate property tax could raise significant resources. Furthermore, instead of having a nonconvertible Taka, which pushes Taka to dollar transactions to a booming black market, an appropriately set low tax rate would eliminate most illegal currency transactions, reduce currency speculations, and still raise urgently needed tax revenues.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Bangladesh’s IDA graduation is positive news since it reflects decades of significant GDP growth. Indeed, Bangladesh has experienced rapid economic growth in the last 16 years (averaging 5.87 percent from 2000-2016), characterized by rising average incomes and a steady and significant fall in the number of people living in poverty. From 2000 to 2010 (which is the last year such data is available in World Bank (2018a)), more than 4.8 million people have been lifted out of extreme poverty in Bangladesh, defined as living below \$1.90 a day, adjusted for differences in purchasing power parity of 2011 (2011 PPP).

Bangladesh’s Human Development Index increased from 0.47 in 2000 to 0.58 in 2015. Bangladesh has also achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals. However, despite all this progress, and assuming the same rate of poverty reduction as from 2005 to 2010, by the time Bangladesh may graduate from IDA, nearly 10 percent of the population will still live in extreme poverty (below PPP\$1.90-a-day) and nearly 50 percent of the population will still live in poverty (below PPP\$3.20-a-day).¹⁹

Our review of the sectoral allocation of ODA has shown that during 2008-2017, nearly 90 percent of ODA to Bangladesh has been disbursed either to a specific sector or multi-sector and cross-cutting. Among this sector allocable ODA, 49.6 percent has been disbursed to social sectors. Among social sector ODA, 30.0 percent went to the education sector, 18.0 percent to the government and civil society sector, 17.4 percent to the health sector, and 16.2 percent to water supply and sanitation. This seems to indicate that the forthcoming decrease in ODA will likely hurt the social sectors most. Further supporting this argument is the fact that IDA has been the largest donor to Bangladesh’s education and health sector. Hence, the loss of access to concessional financing from IDA may cause considerable challenges and risks to these sectors in the near future.

There is an urgent need to rethink criteria for graduation from IDA due to the challenges Bangladesh will face with losing access to concessional development finance relatively abruptly and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The IDA graduation process should not only be much longer, the reduction in concessional financing should be more gradual. Donors like the World Bank are promoting various adjustments, including boosting domestic resource mobilization for public development projects. However, as our analysis of the recent tax revenues has shown, Bangladesh is not yet prepared to compensate the loss in donor-funding by domestic public resources.

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Endnotes

1. Official development assistance (ODA) consists of disbursements of loans made on concessional terms and grants by official agencies of the members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), by multilateral institutions, and by non-DAC countries to promote economic development and welfare in countries and territories in the DAC list of ODA recipients. It includes loans with a grant element of at least 25 percent (calculated at a rate of discount of 10 percent); see World Bank (2018a).
2. See World Bank (2018b).

3. Net ODA is total ODA (see footnote 2) minus repayments of principal on loans that were provided on concessional terms.
4. The details of these regressions and Granger causality tests are available upon request.
5. Further details on these and other early contributions can be found in Gunter, Rahman and Rahman (2010).
6. Concessional resources are provided either via grants or via loans with an interest rate below the market interest rate. As detailed in footnote 2, concessional resources qualify as ODA if they are provided either as a grant or as a loan with a grant element of at least 25 percent (using the rules as they have been in place the last few decades). On the other hand, non-concessional public resources are non-concessional loans (from either foreign governments, international organizations, or foreign commercial banks) or any sovereign bonds issued by the Bangladeshi government. While there have been discussions of Bangladesh issuing such bonds, no external sovereign bond has so far been issued by the government of Bangladesh.
7. <https://ppi.worldbank.org/data>; accessed on December 27, 2018.
8. Given that this data is only available in either gross disbursements or based on donor commitment, we examine gross disbursements of ODA, which is closer to the previous analysis. This section excludes the exceptional debt relief Bangladesh received in 2008 (amounting to US\$678 million in constant 2017 dollars) in order to not distort the sectoral analysis.
9. Allocable ODA includes ODA allocated to specific sectors as well as ODA allocated to more than one sector (multi-sector) or to all sectors (cross-cutting). Non-allocable ODA includes ODA provided as commodity aid, general program assistance, and humanitarian aid (like disaster relief).
10. In order to keep Figure 8 legible, it does not display the relatively marginal ODA disbursed to the sixth social sector category, which the OECD refers to as “other social infrastructure and services”. However, we have included this category in the percentage calculations.
11. See OECD – Development Assistance Committee (DAC) (2018).
12. Calculations by authors based on IMF (2016) and IMF (2018).
13. Similarly, Hassan and Prichard (2016) explain that Bangladesh’s current tax system is characterized by

low revenue collection and extensive informality. They conclude that Bangladesh’s tax system is unusually informal, discretionary, and corrupt, but remains resistant to change because it delivers low and predictable tax rates to businesses, extensive opportunities for corruption to the tax administration, and an important vehicle for fundraising by political leaders and rent distribution to their elite supporters.

14. See <https://bdnews24.com/business/2017/10/13/bangladesh-plans-to-introduce-two-slab-vat-rates-from-2020-muhith-says>.
15. Based on July–November data for both fiscal years, as published by National Board of Revenue (NBR) in January 2019.
16. As reported in the *Daily Star* on January 4, 2019, *Star Business*, p. 1.
17. Alam and Shil (2009) focus on the performance of non-tax revenues in Bangladesh.
18. See *Financial Express* (2019) for further details.
19. Estimates by authors based on World Bank (2018a).

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Improving Hospital Care in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Viewed as preventive versus curative, Bangladesh's health services show a clear dichotomy. Long term indicators of the preventive type suggest significant gains in the health status of the general population including improvements in maternal and child mortality rates, as well as longevity. The curative side, unfortunately, provides a different picture; those who need hospital care often receive poor quality of treatment, including failures in patient-provider communication, empathy, assurance, and overall poor management – all representing patients' expectations from the service providers. This paper is based on action research, assessing the experiences of patients and their attendants in several hospitals/clinics via in-depth interviews. The findings suggest the need for behavior modification among service providers (doctors, nurses, technical hands, office administration, and managerial personnel) and calls for establishing educational programs in health care administration immediately, to develop a cadre of managers versed in better managing health care service delivery.

1 Introduction

Bangladesh's healthcare scenario poses an interesting dichotomy. On the one hand, macro indicators suggest that the country has made significant strides in the health sector, particularly in reducing maternal mortality rate (1.73 per 1000 in 2016 compared to 3.2 in 2001) and infant/child mortality rates (17.1 per 1000 live births in 2016 compared to 66 in 2000) and increasing life expectancy (at 71 for males and 74 for females in 2016 compared to 61 and 60 in 2000). These indicators were far more onerous at the time when Bangladesh came into being in 1971 with total fertility rates at around 6.3 in the 1970s to above 3 in the early 2000s and 2.1 in 2016 – a remarkable achievement.

On the other hand, research since the 1990s (Andaleeb 2001; Andaleeb, Siddiqui, and Khandakar 2007; Mamun and Andaleeb 2013) indicates that health services provided to those who need hospital care are of poor quality, compromising patients' expectations from the service providers. Using 'patient satisfaction' as a metric for service delivery since 2001, the above studies found that the satisfaction rating did not improve over the past two decades and remained near the average score with substantial variation in the data; i.e., the delivery of hospital (curative) care is average and uneven. In contrast, hospitals in the region (India, Bangkok, Singapore) measured on the same metric performed "significantly" better. The macro data are based on preventive care, generally delivered by non-medical personnel working as field extension agents, while the hospital data represent "perceptual" curative care delivered by trained physicians and nurses.

2 Literature Review

Studies have shown how important it is to deliver quality services and effective medical treatment by focusing on the patient's point of view (Christo and Clapton, 2014). As one of the fastest growing industries in the service sector, the health care industry will have to contend with competitive pressures, alternate health care delivery mechanisms, changing cost structures, greater accountability, increased information availability, and a markedly better-informed clientele (Andaleeb 1998). In this milieu, delivering customer satisfaction will become a crucial determinant of long-term viability and success. In fact, Donabedian (1988) suggested three decades ago that "patient satisfaction may be considered to be one of the desired outcomes of care...information about patient satisfaction should be as indispensable to assessments of quality as to the design and management of health care systems."

Studies in the developed countries have shown that the public is inclined to pay more for quality care from health care institutions which are better disposed to satisfy customers' needs (Boscarino 1992; Hays 1987). Its value as a competitive tool also derives from the fact that hospitals that are customer focused have been able to increase capacity utilization and market share (Boscarino 1992; Gregory 1986).

Attention to customer satisfaction is also imperative because today's buyers of health care services are better informed, a condition that is being driven by the abundance of information available to them from public and private sources. Today's patients are, therefore,

more discerning and are relying less on doctors to choose the “right” hospital.

Research on service quality has grown since the conceptual model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985). According to this model, consumers’ service quality perceptions are influenced by a number of gaps, reflected in the difference between performance expectations and perceptions. Hence, service quality depends on the size and direction of the gap between expected and perceived service. Service quality perceptions will be favorable if the service performance exceeds the customer’s expectations or unfavorable if service expectations are not met.

Although the SERVQUAL model has made significant contributions to the service quality literature, scholars continue to debate its five dimensions and their measures: either as *perceptions* which more closely match customer evaluations of the services provided (Cronin and Taylor, 1992) or as *disconfirmation*—the difference between perceptions and expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1994).

Support for the five dimensions has been mixed and the differences in dimensionality have been attributed to the different industries in which the studies were conducted (Asuboteng et al. 1996; Kettinger and Lee 1999). Thus, Babakus and Mangold (1992) found only one dimension, while Dean (2004) found four stable dimensions. Researchers argued that up to nine dimensions of service quality may exist depending on the type of service sector under investigation. Dotchin and Oakland (1994) argued that the four service providers researched (retail banking, credit cards, brokerage, and repair & maintenance) for the SERVQUAL study were not high in consumer intervention, contact and adaptation; hence the five dimensions were not written in stone.

An alternative model to SERVQUAL was developed by Teas (1993), proposing a measure called Evaluated Performance (EP) which focuses on the gap between perceived performance and the *ideal point* on a feature instead of customers’ expectations. Similarly, Spreng, Mackenzie and Olshavsky (1996) examined gaps between performance and desire.

Given the varied points of view, O’Reilly (2007) suggested the need to look at more context-specific approaches to understanding how consumers evaluate service quality. Since the participation of service users has become an increasingly important focus in quality improvement programs, the importance of active participation of the consumer was stressed in defining and evaluating service quality. Embracing the P-C-P (pivotal-core-peripheral) model proposed by Philip and Hazlett (2001), O’Reilly suggested that the service provider ought to develop the service evaluation tool.

This study, therefore, takes a qualitative stance to get close to the patient and her/his attendants to identify those variables that are close to the patient satisfaction experience in the clinics and hospitals in Bangladesh.

3 Focus of this Study

The focus of this study is on *medical/hospital care*, a major concern about which is quality. While medical care quality has been studied carefully by academics and practitioners in developed countries over a few decades now, in Bangladesh such study has not been systematic. Rather, research in this area is at best sporadic, rudimentary, undeveloped, and does not reflect a consistent pattern. What is disconcerting is that the dearth of research on and evaluation of medical/hospital services obscures from public scrutiny a vitally important service that could be substantially improved.

While the cost of medical care has increased significantly over the years, overall service quality has not made commensurate improvements, taking its toll on patients and their families. Consequently, those who are able to afford it seek even basic health services outside the country. The economic implications of this exodus should be obvious. One might note how practitioners and hospitals (Apollo Hospitals, Mount Elizabeth Hospital, etc.) from neighboring countries have begun to bring desired services to Bangladesh’s doorsteps.

The findings of this study ought to provide insights to medical care professionals and support staff to improve levels of service, and hence, deliver greater patient satisfaction. The findings should also provide the impetus to establish service standards and adopt strategic long-term measures to improve the quality of medical/hospital care services in Bangladesh.

4 Methodology

This study relies on action research, “a philosophy and methodology of research generally applied in the social sciences. It seeks transformative change through the simultaneous process of taking action and doing research, which are linked together by critical reflection,” (Wikipedia) to get a comprehensive picture of the medical care environment and the quality of service it delivers. In-depth interviews and observation were used to gather data from patients and their attendants.

5 Findings

The insights gathered in this segment are based on seeing from close quarters the service problems

encountered by several patients suffering from kidney and heart problems and one having undergone hysterectomy in the country.

5.1 Experiences of a Kidney Patient

- Dialysis patient acquired Hepatitis-B. Why did this happen? Who is to be held accountable? What purpose will it serve in the absence of strong laws?
- Multi-stop services increased patient suffering by being offered at different locations (X-ray; blood-tests, various other diagnostics) of the city.
- Fee-based system of care must be replaced by need-based care. Doctors come when called by the clinic, not when they should be there. This is a two-way problem: The doctor does not want patients to feel s/he is driving revenue; but how will patients know when the doctor should be consulted, especially regarding complex problems of the kidney?
- Professional caregivers operate within a very narrow technical band; attendants from home are really the ones who provide care on a sustained basis. But mistake-prone care provided by attendants at home can be detrimental or downright disastrous (administering blood pressure medication on day of dialysis, applying the wrong dose or missing a dose).
- Attendants are with the dialysis patients for 5 hours or more each time. There is no decent toilet facility for them, no drinking water, no place to rest (many caregivers from the family are older persons) and no place to get a bite if they are hungry. These clinics were certainly not seeing beyond the patient and their pocketbook.
- At the clinic, while the patient needs exercise, massage, feeding, bed pans, cleaning, and administration of drugs, who is doing all of this? The family attendants!
- Home caregivers get no instructions to follow (e.g., food charts, when to go for follow-up tests, adjustment of doses, etc.).
- For emergency needs at home, who is to be contacted? Even well-heeled patients go ashen-faced not knowing where to go in the event of an emergency. Rarely can doctors be contacted over the phone.
- Patient must adjust to clinic timings and doctors' availability instead of the reverse. (e.g., a pre-scheduled morning dialysis was shifted to the afternoon for convenience of the doctor, regardless of its effects on caregivers or patients).
- A stream of people kept going in and out of the dialysis room. There seemed to be a picnic aura, with visitors bringing in and consuming various food items from the streets. The chance of infection is very high. And the camaraderie and merriment were often loud, causing extreme discomfort to other patients.
- Flies and mosquitoes, noise, lack of clean sheets and pillows, poor temperature control, and uncertain quality of the tubes and intrusive instruments caused constant worry.
- Young internee doctors, "acting big", were mostly in the frontline for procedures and patient care. No senior doctors even sit at the clinics and are only available on being called from their private chambers. Given the traffic conditions, there is no guarantee when they'll arrive.
- Wrong procedures by the interneers and junior doctors cause tremendous suffering to the patients; yet, they act as if nothing happened or that a mistake or two is to be expected.
- There are no elevators for a patient to go to the upper floors. Patients are put on a stretcher and lifted by two or three people who do not even look clean and should not be handling the patients. When the "lifters" are not readily available, the patient has to wait ... indefinitely.
- The pharmacy at the clinic was not well stocked. If a medicine was not available, it had to be obtained by the patient's attendants from outside. Where it would be available was not known, especially if time was critical.
- State of cleanliness was a constant concern. Waste was not removed promptly. There was no organized hospital waste disposal system. Much of this waste was dumped in the waste water system (toilet flush) or in the municipal garbage dump where humans are known to forage for anything salvageable. There is also a worry about where the needles and tubes from a dialysis patient end up (perhaps for recycle) and where the ascites fluid (from the peritoneal cavity, causing abdominal swelling) or the blood extracted from a patient was disposed.
- Who decides when certain tests (creatinine) are needed? Usually it is someone from the patient's family who steps in for the "experts" on matters for which they are not trained (changing sleeping pill dosage; ordering suction to clear lungs, deciding what food to give, stopping certain medications because they are expensive or because they seem to be causing discomfort).
- Who decides how many dialyses are needed per week? Based on cost considerations and patient inconvenience, it is the *family* which decides on the number, without even consulting the doctor. Is this appropriate? The doctors do not want to intervene because the "decision lies with the family!"

- When a senior doctor comes in, (s)he hardly advises the patient or the family caregivers who do most of the work. From the younger staff who are advised, it is difficult to be clear on procedures. Is this because they feel bothered or is it because they have NOT understood the instructions themselves? Tremendous risks are involved if it is the second case.
- Not much instruction is ever given in writing when advising patients or their care givers. Sometimes several instructions are given verbally. There are two problems here: i) What if all the instructions are not well understood by the patient/attendant (and if you question the doctor, you could get a queer look as if saying ‘how stupid can you be’? ii) Can so many instructions be remembered?
- Some doctors do not like questions. If s/he says the patient is okay, you have to accept it; you cannot even ask for a blood pressure or pulse rate reading; you could get a condescending look saying “Hey, who is the doctor here?”
- When a doctor comes into a patient’s room, he has this “imperial” air and expects everyone (including the senior people in the room) to remain standing in his/her presence while s/he examines the patient; otherwise, s/he could look you up and down. When speaking to her/him, it is expected that it must be done with awe and reverence! Whatever happened to the patients’ side? “We are paying for services, they are not doing us a favor” says an attendant.
- The ambulance service, if it can be called so, is a joke. It is run by a driver and a helper who clears the traffic. There are no paramedics in the vehicle. It is not air-conditioned, although a tiny fan is attached to the seat behind the driver and ill-directed. There is also an oxygen cylinder in the vehicle, but it looks so beat up that one wonders if it works to save lives. Assuming it works, it is quite apparent that the two vehicle operators have no clue as to how to operate it.
- The stretcher on which the patient is carried is narrow (not apt for heavier patients), dirty (is it ever cleaned), and has no straps. The attendants have to hold the patient, one near the mid-section and another near the head to stop the patient from rolling off (more like flying off). There is much swerving to endure since no vehicle stops for the ambulance to pass ... even when the siren is wailing continuously; in fact, vehicles with diplomatic plates have been seen to overtake the ambulance and block its path to get ahead.
- If the patient experiences any problem or discomfort, especially during late hours in the clinic,

some attending doctors expressed irritation at being called.

5.2 Experiences of a Heart Patient

- The patient felt that you can only get a good doctor if you know someone. Without connections, you don’t know what you are getting. The waiting line to see a reputed doctor is also long.
- In a group practice, patients are often made to see different practitioners in the name of expertise: Each time, the patient has to pay separately; to many, this is seen as a rip off. But the patients are at their mercy.
- This heart patient cited another patient’s case who wanted a particular doctor to perform a procedure on her. The doctor, however, refused to do so because he felt the case was complicated and if he “lost” her, his reputation would be tarnished!
- During a consultation, the doctor’s mind seemed to be elsewhere and his attention lacking. If questions were asked, the doctor became irritated.
- Some specialists liked to see several patients together in this single and rather small room. There is absolutely no respect for privacy.
- The diagnostics part of medical care is truly frustrating. The patient consulted three specialists independently. With one angiogram, she received three types of advice: one said everything is fine and the discomfort experienced is due to age (no costs here), another doctor changed her medication and asked her to do a few more tests (some costs here), while the third doctor was convinced she needed to have stents inserted to give her relief (at, obviously a huge cost. Incidentally, there were several varieties of stents available, from a Toyota to a Mercedes!). Whose advice is to be relied upon?
- A visit for consultation often meant the waste of an entire day. For one thing every patient is given the same appointment time (say 4:00 PM); but the doctor does not show up until 2-3 hours after the time of the appointment. Seeking to be seen first, the patient came an hour early, only to be baffled at the wait of 2-3 hours in a small waiting room that was crowded, and not well ventilated. There too some patients had “priority.” If one considers the time value of money for waiting, many patients could easily ask for a large compensation for time lost.
- A second or third opinion is patently discouraged. Subtle threats to discontinue such consultation are not unusual. In one case, a senior doctor at a recognized hospital refused to see the heart patient who had gone for another opinion and

underwent a procedure (at much less cost). The patient remarked, “It’s my money and my health; I should be able to consult whosoever I please.”

- On one occasion, the patient experienced nose bleeding after taking a certain medicine. When the patient tried to call the doctor, she was asked to “see” the doctor where she was charged again—full price—just to be seen for about a minute and an assurance that there was nothing to be alarmed about.

5.3 Experiences of a Hysterectomy Patient

- When there was only an hour to go, the patient was suddenly informed that a certain medication was required and that it had to be brought within the hour for her surgery to take place. Not only did this cause a good deal of stress on the patient, the attendants were also uncertain as to where to obtain the medicine. Why shouldn’t a fairly large private hospital be stocked with the medication that patients need? One doctor answered: patients are asked to provide medicine and supplies because, apparently, sometimes patients slip away from the hospital without paying their bills!
- The day after the operation, the patient experienced considerable pain. Approaching the nurse’s bay, her attendant found only one nurse and she was on the telephone. The conversation was animated and long – apparently a personal call. Until the call was completed, the attendant was reluctant to break into the conversation, fearing reprisals from the nurse that could contribute to further patient discomfort or worse.
- Patient care has to be provided by personal attendants, whether they are family members or hired help, while the patients are in the hospital. On one occasion, the patient was under sedation and the attendant had stepped out for a couple of hours. The patient came to her senses before the attendant returned and needed assistance. But there was no device near her to call someone, nor was there any regular checking by the hospital staff. Why this complacency? Do the hospitals expect someone to be with the patient 24 hours?
- The hospital seemed to have no rules about patient visitations: anyone could drop by any time. Such visits caused distress. The hospitals need to establish and enforce visitation hours.
- The cleaning staff (aya) was very helpful when they were given baksheesh but seemed to disappear when not given such extras. It also seemed like the hospital was understaffed at the lower levels, forcing much of the grunt work on the patient’s attendants. This was similar to the case of the kidney patient.

6 Discussion

The delivery of medical/hospital care in Bangladesh must improve substantially. The findings of the study suggest the need to bring about behavioral changes among the doctors, nurses, and support staff to deliver quality services. But focusing only on doctors, nurses, and support staff, and changing their behaviors will not be enough. There are deeper organizational issues and a need for greater commitment of the higher authorities of the health ministry, as well as the development partners who must jointly demonstrate a spirit of service to alleviate Bangladesh’s curative health concerns and challenges. Better yet if there is also community participation in the matter of service delivery. Without these elements, medical/hospital care providers will not be able to bring about perceptible changes and provide more comprehensive solutions to make medical/hospital services work better.

6.1 Behavior Change Models

Among the behavior change theories, *social influence theory* can play a large role to change service providers’ behaviors. According to Kalkhoff and Barnum (2000 p.95), “Social influence has interested social psychologists for many years. From the classic studies of conformity and obedience to explorations of persuasion, status, and in-group bias, researchers have provided us with fascinating, non-obvious findings on how human actors lead one another to modify their actions and beliefs.”

Theoretical developments in this area suggest several reasons why social influence works. Myers (1993) and Solomon (1996) summarize earlier work in the field and suggest that people conform to influence for two reasons: *Normative influence* gains conformity based on a person’s desire to fulfill others’ expectations, often to gain acceptance. In other words, people tend “to avoid rejection, to stay in people’s good graces, or to gain their approval” (Solomon, p. 246). *Informational influence* on the other hand suggests that people conform by accepting evidence about reality provided by other people, especially when that reality is ambiguous. According to Myers, “concern for social image produces normative influence. The desire to be correct produces informational influence.”

Schiffman and Kanuk (1994) add a third source of influence: *utilitarian influence*. This is where people conform with the wishes of others in order to obtain a reward (acceptance) or avoid punishment (rejection). Under this category, we note *operant conditioning theory* where emphasis is placed upon consequences which follow behaviors – rewards for desirable and punishment for undesirable behavior. Thus, behavior change occurs or is anticipated when certain conse-

quences are “contingent” upon certain “target behaviors.” In applying this theory, various strategies such as positive reinforcements, negative reinforcements, punishment, and extinction can be applied judiciously to bring about desired behavioral changes.

The above sources of influence can serve as powerful bases for attempting to bring about needed changes at the service delivery level. These approaches may be grouped under a powerful source of conformity: *evaluation as social influence*. In fact, evaluation as social influence is a branch of social influence theory that addresses the notion of “evaluation apprehension” which focuses on individual apprehensions about how others are evaluating us (Cottrell et. al. 1968; Worringham and Messick 1983; Bagozzi and Lee, 2002). Evaluation may hence be seen as accountability: A good evaluation accrues to desirable behavior or performance, a negative evaluation to undesirable behavior or performance.

Evaluation spans normative influence in that service providers would want to meet evaluation criteria and fulfill expectations of the system to gain acceptance. Evaluation also serves as informational influence by providing evidence about reality (deviations from performance standards) to which people adjust and conform. It is important, however, to distinguish between evaluation as a process and evaluation as an outcome. Evaluation as a process involves setting standards or goals and setting up a measurement system to account for whether the goals or standards are being met. It involves who will measure what and when. Evaluation as an outcome is the end-result of the process based on which consequences follow.

6.2 Need for Standards

An important element in conducting effective evaluation is having “standards” or “goals.” These standards would have to be developed, communicated, adopted, and adhered to by all members of the group, thereby institutionalizing them. The standards become benchmarks (which can evolve) against which both positive and negative deviations can be observed. When performance is evaluated, the information will help the service providers conform to the standards, especially if there is significant departure. For utilitarian influence to come into play, appropriate rewards and punishments could be designed for nonconformance, conformance, or exceeding expectations.

Unfortunately, the patient-care system does not seem to have any predefined or agreed upon standards or goals. It is imperative, then, for a lead agency to formulate some basic standards for the hospitals against which performance of health care providers can be assessed periodically.

In fact, standards need to be established not just for the service providers but also for other levels of the system (e.g., Directorate General of Health Services) to make the curative part of healthcare delivery system become more effective. The use of evaluations is not necessarily meant to be punitive; the information should actually be used for development of the entire sector.

6.3 Evaluation and Accountability

Seeking behavior change at the service delivery level will only be successful if system-wide standards are in place – not only for healthcare providers and the facility they run, but also the management at all levels of the hierarchy (both public and private), and the lead ministry, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, responsible for setting healthcare strategy at the national level. The standards for any level must be simple and easy to measure. At the same time, those responsible for conducting the evaluations must, to the extent possible, be external to the level or unit of the system being evaluated although self-evaluations are also not inappropriate to use. However, their use in allocating rewards ought to be carefully scrutinized.

A certification program may be developed and administered by professionals from the health care area. Those responsible for conducting technical evaluations must only develop, maintain, and upgrade the program with strict oversight responsibilities. To gain public trust, use of external expertise or some combination of external and local expertise may be needed to set up and administer the certification process.

It is also important for the certification process to be understood by the general public. Thus, it must have components (e.g., five-star ratings of hotels) that they can comprehend. In addition, certification information must be widely available to the public through mandated hospital and related information centers to serve as quality indicators and to help the public make informed choices.

6.4 Evaluating Healthcare Service Facilities (Clinic, Diagnostic Centers, etc.)

Patient’s Perspective: Patients should not only rate the interactive skills of the service providers; they may also rate the facility in terms of cleanliness, signage, clarity of pricing of the different services, information availability on various services, availability of waiting areas, comfort in waiting, toilet facilities and so on. These ratings could be provided to regulatory agencies on a regular basis. It goes without saying that it would be important to determine, specify, and strongly enforce sanctions for tampering with patient evaluations.

Polling by Watchdog Organization: Various types of health facilities should also be evaluated by organizations unconnected with any health service delivery. These could be universities, NGOs, research centers, etc. to obtain an independent evaluation of the various service facilities. If a ranking mechanism can be established, the watchdog organizations could actually make the rankings public so that people are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the various facilities to help in choosing the right facility. For the facilities, the social stigma of being rated low should also serve to foster a competitive environment for better ratings.

A continuous stream of such studies could influence complacent health care providers to respond to established standards and public expectations. If the pride and professionalism of these organizations, and the people representing them, can be provoked through continuous evaluations, the long-neglected health care customer is likely to get a better deal.

6.5 Enabling Health Personnel

Any evaluation system is bound to fail if the feedback received is not “utilized” to maintain the system in shape. A major requirement here is to “enable” the personnel to do what they are supposed to do. If drugs are not available where and when needed, there is a system failure; if technical equipment needed to diagnose medical conditions is not operational, there is a failure; if patient demand is high during an epidemic, not making the full staff available and responsive is a system failure. These examples show when the system is not properly enabled, it underperforms, leading to many dissatisfactions.

Research also suggests that the size of the workforce, especially for public delivery of healthcare is grossly inadequate. For example, in 2000, there was 1/4512 physician per population, 1/10,714 nurse per population and 1/3,261 hospital beds per population. In 2016 these numbers were 1/2119 for doctors and 1/3745 for nurses (including midwives). These overwhelming numbers suggests that the internal systems must be restructured and revitalized. For example, front-line personnel—doctors and the support staff—are among the most vital resources contributing to the success of health care delivery. If they remain overwhelmed and their job satisfaction is low, service will suffer.

In fact, “service research” suggests that employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction feed off each other: satisfied employees reinforce customer satisfaction, which in turn reinforces employee satisfaction. It has also been suggested that unless organizations are able to generate internal harmony and satisfaction among the employees through the establishment of a “cycle of capability,” the employees may not be

predisposed to deliver what is required of them. This means that significant effort must be devoted to hiring the right personnel, developing them, providing them with needed support, compensating them, and devising ways of retaining the best among them. This calls for enabling them by training employees in both technical and interactive skills, empowering them, developing internal processes and supporting technology, and treating employees like “internal” customers to be equipped for the job they perform.

7 Conclusions

A stronger managerial orientation should be introduced in various tiers of the health system to help deliver quality services and patient satisfaction. Unfortunately, modern managerial practices seem to be lacking in most hospitals. This situation may be attributed partly to the fact that the control of hospital management remains in the hands of physicians who are trained mainly to heal the afflicted, not to manage and administer hospital operations. Thus, they must be assigned to health care facilities to heal patients, not to administer the functioning of the facility in areas such as purchasing, recruiting, promotions, conflict resolution, etc.

It is urgent, therefore, to introduce educational programs in health care administration to develop a cadre of managers versed in the management of health care. Their job would be to ensure the right level of staffing, staff development, compensation, reward systems, purchasing, public relations, conflict resolution, and other managerial functions. While these professionals may also need some training in health care, they do not need a medical degree. This would help bring about a better managerial orientation in the health care sector, freeing up doctors to attend to the needs of the ailing. It is time to be proactive to bring about behavioral and structural changes to the delivery of health care and make patient satisfaction central to this vital service.

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Maternal and Paternal Leave Policies in Bangladesh: Scope for Improvement

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Abstract

In a highly populated, developing country like Bangladesh, more women are entering the workplace each year. However, they are often disadvantaged due to lack of adequate maternity leave provisions that leaves them having to shoulder most of the child rearing responsibilities, especially as the fathers don't stay home and also because of lack of paid paternity or parental leaves. Social norms and expectations in a patriarchal society leads women to shoulder the main responsibilities of parenting, at least in terms of time given to the child. This review paper, based on secondary research and literature review of academic writings, aims to discover the prospects of improvement (if any) on this subject. It finds that though length of maternity leave has increased by a month to a total of four months since 2008 (and for up to 6 months for female government servants), it only applies to certain categories of female employees and does not others (e.g. female private sector managerial employees). It also finds that there is no paternal or parental leave and looks into its implications while suggesting areas for future research.

1 Introduction

Bangladesh is now on its way to becoming officially recognised as a developing country by the UN. Much of this development has been spurred on by women in the workforce. According to the Bangladesh Labour Force Survey 2010, labour force participation for women is 36 percent, compared to 82.5 percent for men. (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2010). Bangladesh is ahead of India, where women account for 27% of the total labour force, and Pakistan, where the female labour participation rate is 25% (Byron & Rahman, 2015).

Though women are making their way into the workforce in growing numbers, their career advancement in organizations is often held back when they become mothers as they are not given adequate time off from work. If new mothers don't have enough time off, they often don't have any choice but to leave their workplaces, in order to be able to look after the newborn. Those who stay on are often prevented from giving the same amount of time to work as a man (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007). This can be inferred to mean that it affects their career advancement. For those who resign, not only is there a break in their careers; it is also extremely difficult for them to get back to the workforce as most employers worldwide are not keen about hiring mothers (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007).

1.1 Research Questions

This paper will aim to find answers to the following questions:

- What kind of improvements have there been (if any) in the status of the women of Bangladesh with regard to maternity leave and benefits over the last decade or so (2008-2019)? How adequate are they?
- What kind of provisions are there for paternity leave and parental leave of both men and women, and is there any benefit to new mothers and their careers by providing paternity leave?
- What are further areas for improvement with regard to all types of leave – maternity, paternity and parental – that is suggested by research to date?

1.2 Methodology

This is a review paper written on the basis of secondary information from academic journals, published government laws, research papers, periodicals and the Internet.

2 Literature Review

Before beginning the literature review, some definitions are offered to have a clear understanding of the concepts that will be introduced in the paper:

- Maternity leave is a term that is applicable for biological mothers only. It may be taken while pregnant and after the baby is born.

- Paternity leave is a term that is applicable for biological fathers only. It is taken after the baby is born.
- Parental leave can apply to both parents, whether they are biological or adoptive. This time off is granted for settling the new child into the family. Both parents can take parental leave, at the same time or at different times, even if they have the same employer, often after the maternity/paternity leave.)

While doing the literature review, it was noted that there has been limited research in this area in Bangladesh, especially when it comes to paternity or parental leave. Thus, the scenario in advanced countries like the USA, where much research has already been conducted on such types of leave and their impact, has also been looked into. By looking at this research it will be possible to understand what further changes are possible in this area in Bangladesh.

A report by HSBC Global Research has suggested that Bangladesh will become the 26th largest economy in the world by 2030 (HSBC Global Research, 2018). According to these researchers, Bangladesh will grow to a \$700 billion economy by 2030. The report based its projections on six economic indicators such as human capital which consists of education and healthcare.

In the Global Human Development Index (HDI) Bangladesh moved three notches up to the 136th place among 189 countries in 2017, according to the Human Development Report (HDR) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2018). Bangladesh had also moved up three spots since 2015 due to the remarkable progress it has made in many socio-economic areas, including life expectancy and per capita income (UNDP, 2018).

Women have had a crucial role to play in the development of Bangladesh and will continue to do so in future as they are one of the main reasons that per capita income has increased. Sadly, when it comes to individual women, they are often held back in their progress up the organisational ladder when comparing them to similarly qualified men. As soon as they have children, things go against them, arguably due to policy inadequacy.

A comparative study of maternity leave policies in Bangladesh against other countries of the world was done where it was noted that as of 2008, maternity leave amounted to only 12 weeks (3 months) of paid leave for factory workers but as for management level workers, no maternity leave laws existed (Anam, 2008).

The laws that did exist at the time (mainly applicable for private sector workers), were covered in the

Bangladesh Labour Act of 2006. Here it is specifically mentioned that the law on maternity benefit does not cover workers of a “managerial” nature. Chapter 1 section 65 of the Labour Code 2006 defines the term “worker” as “any person including an apprentice employed in any establishment or industry, either directly or through a contractor, [by whatever name he is called,] to do any skilled, unskilled, manual, technical, trade promotional or clerical work for hire or reward, whether the terms of employment are expressed or implied, but *does not include a person employed mainly in a managerial, administrative or supervisory capacity.*”

Separate “Rules” govern government employees. In 2011, the Government made changes to the Bangladesh Service Rules (Part 1), through a gazette notification applicable to female employees which would enable them to enjoy leave of up to six months.

In 2013, The Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 was amended (Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, Amendment, Chapter IV, 2013). The amendment included a change in the number of months of leave which was increased by a month to a total of 16 weeks, or 4 months, (8 weeks prior and 8 weeks post-delivery). So, there has been an improvement in duration of leave by a month for some categories of private sector female employees (as the Act is not applicable for all: certain categories of workers are not within the purview of this Act); unfortunately this amendment also does not apply to managerial level female workers. The definition of “worker” also does not include (among others) those working in charitable organisations, like hospitals, educational institutions, shops, small farms, etc. (Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006, Amendment, Chapter IV, 2013).

Currently many women do receive maternity leave and benefits when engaged in the private sector; however, this is entirely at the discretion of the policies of the organisation to which they belong. Those employees that are covered under the Bangladesh Labour Act should benefit from this improvement. As research has shown, new parents need to have access to paid leave otherwise the poorest of female employees simply won’t take adequate time off from work (Joesch, 1997). If they don’t take adequate time off from work, it is likely to negatively affect their children, not to mention their own physical and mental well-being.

A look at sector-wise employment of women in Bangladesh may be helpful here.

Table 1 indicates that when compared to other sectors such as agricultural or craft (which includes garments), a relatively small proportion of women are engaged in more “higher end” managerial or professional employment or even in service or sales

jobs. Majority of the women are engaged in agricultural work which is among the lowest paid activities in a country's economy. Generally, with development, the trend is to move towards manufacturing and then service oriented work.

Raihan and Bidisha (2018), discuss the stagnation of female employment in Bangladesh in a research report. They point out that Bangladeshi women are found mostly in low-paid and low-productivity activities, and "over time there has not been much progress in their relative position on the occupational ladder". They opine that traditional gender norms and values can and continue to restrict women's upward mobility and lead to constraining their activities in the labour market, resulting in much lower participation and concentration in low-paid activities for women compared to their male counterparts. Table 2 reflects this situation.

A study conducted in 2011 looked into paternity leave of men in Bangladesh. It noted that no paternity or parental leave is guaranteed by law for Bangladeshi fathers. According to Jesmin and Seward (2011), most men take only one or two days leave upon becoming fathers. Some take only a few hours of leave. In most cases when men take leave after becoming fathers, they use their "casual leave" or "sick leave". They do not take longer leaves as they do not want to exhaust all leave from these categories in one go. Of those taking these leaves in lieu of paternal or parental leave, a much higher portion of fathers were from dual earner households (24%) compared to single earner households (4%). Also, 23% of fathers from both types of households did not take any leave and Jesmin and Seward opined that this is because of the absence of support for the concept of paternity leave in Bangladesh and the fact that this type of leave is not paid.

Table 1: Occupation wise distribution (%) of employed men and women in 2016/17

Occupation	Male	Female
Managers	2.11	0.57
Professionals	4.50	5.55
Technicians and associate professionals	2.30	0.92
Clerical support workers	1.80	0.82
Service and sales workers	21.55	4.92
Skilled agriculture, forestry and fisheries	23.79	51.73
Craft and related trades	16.88	17.45
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	8.89	2.22
Elementary occupations	17.88	15.82
Other occupations	0.30	0.00
Total	100.00	100.00

Source: BBS, 2017

Table 2: Distribution of employment in broad economic sectors (%)

	1999/00	2005/06	2010	2013	2015/16	2016/17
Agriculture	51.3	48.0	47.5	45.1	42.7	40.6
Male	52.2	41.8	40.1	41.7	34.0	32.2
Female	47.6	68.1	64.8	53.5	63.1	59.7
Industry	13.1	14.5	17.7	20.8	20.5	20.4
Male	11.3	15.1	19.6	19.6	22.3	22.0
Female	20.0	12.5	13.3	23.7	16.1	16.8
Manufacturing	9.5	11.0	12.4	16.4	14.4	14.4
Male	7.4	10.8	12.7	13.9	14.2	14.0
Female	17.9	11.5	11.7	22.5	14.9	15.4
Service	35.6	37.4	35.3	34.1	36.9	39.0
Male	36.4	43	41.1	38.7	43.7	45.8
Female	32.2	19.3	21.8	22.8	20.8	23.5

Source: BBS, 2017 as cited in Raihan & Bidisha, 2018

It can be argued that lack of provisions for fathers in conjunction with childbirth supports the view that in Bangladesh (as is the case in many other countries of the world) child care is considered women's responsibility, definitely from the social viewpoint and even from the perspective of law, as no laws are there allowing men to be present to physically take care of their children.

It may be argued that women are better off if men support their efforts by also taking leave so that there is gender balance in the responsibilities of parents towards their children (which helps women return to work after their pregnancies). Most industrial nations have scope for this type of leave. In fact, India is also considering a "Paternity Benefit Bill" which will allow up to 3 months of paid paternity leave (India Today, 2018). An article in Forbes entitled "Men should Take Parental Leave - Here's Why" (Zalis, 2018) referred to past research that have shown that fathers who take at least two weeks of paternity leave or more are likely to continue being involved in child caring activities, such as feeding and diapering. Thus, it can be inferred that if the role of child care gets more equally shared from the moment the child is born there is a higher chance of this continuing on to the future, thus creating a greater likelihood of women returning to work.

In Bangladesh men take only some time from their casual leave (up to 15 days) after the birth of their child (if at all) (Seward & Jesmin, 2011). This is basically because there are no provisions of paternity or parental leave available at all in existing laws and the concept is entirely alien to most organisations at present.

However, interestingly, even where paternity leave is available, a similar scenario plays out there too. A research study in the USA found that while half of fathers think men should take paternity leave, only 36% actually take all their permitted leave (Petts, 2018). Why they don't take all the leave permitted to them needs further research.

Seward & Jesmin (2011), also opined that the prevalence of extended families in Bangladesh influence men's perception regarding the need for taking leave from employment. In an extended family, a mother figure (mother in law, or the woman's mother) or other adult relatives, who may be supported by the parental couple, are often available to provide infant and child care. Even fathers with higher egalitarian attitude might not see the need to be present during childbirth or get involved in child care as more experienced relatives are available to help. All the families surveyed had servants or hired help, which helps explain why fathers' behaviour did not always reflect their attitudes. However, with increasing modernization, it needs to be seen whether the extended family is still as prevalent as it was before and whether reliable child care, through

nannies, etc., are available as easily as before, as usually these services decline with increases in economic welfare of a nation. This can be the subject of future research.

However, since extended families and household help are not available in countries like the US, it could be other factors that are influencing the lack of full use of paternity leave facilities, as pointed out by Petts (2018).

What is of significance though, is that when fathers do take leave, women can return to work sooner — this has been found time and again through studies throughout the world. When women return to work sooner, their pay and chances for promotion are not likely to suffer.

There is also research that shows that companies with longer maternity leaves have lower rates of new mothers who don't return to work – the rates drop by as much as 50%, and these new mothers work longer hours, on average, one to three years later. This helps to keep women in the "leadership pipeline" (Rau & Williams, 2017).

Numerous studies have been conducted on the "motherhood penalty" (the lower perceptions and rewards of mothers by employers compared to those who are not mothers). A study conducted in the US found that mothers were 6 times less likely than childless women and 3.35 times less likely than childless men to be recommended for hire and that childless women received double the amount of call backs as mothers (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007). Thus, it can be inferred that it is imperative to remove the perceptions that it is only the mothers' job to look after the children to stop the "motherhood penalty" which occurs because of employers' negative judgement of mothers (who have to shoulder two jobs, their professional ones and the second job back at home of being the main person responsible for their children).

3 Scope for Further Research

Maternity leave has improved by law with respect to certain types of female employees in Bangladesh (such as non-managerial employees and government servants), but what of the applications of these leave rules? More needs to be researched in this area, especially as Bangladesh is placed under international pressure from buyers in the west who are routinely informed through news media of conditions in Bangladeshi factories in RMG sector selling their apparel abroad. In general, Bangladeshi factories are reportedly more compliant than earlier. However, there is scope for solid academic

research into this area to see how conditions have changed since these improved laws.

No research has been conducted on parental leave in Bangladesh to date. There is scope for looking into whether it is at all practised and social and organisational acceptability of it. Also, there is scope of research with regard to paternity leave in Bangladesh. Both parental leave and paternity leave are almost unheard of in Bangladesh, a traditional, patriarchal society, where awareness building is also needed. Thus, what proportion of fathers would take paternity leave if it was paid, is a question that needs to be explored further.

The relationship between mothers' employment and fathers' involvement with children (which would be possible through paternal and parental leave) has received little attention till now and has much scope of being carefully studied. Historically, as women have borne the role of child care provider, these leaves are not provided by law, and the primary research that should be done is to check for existence of these in private firms (if at all) and both male and female employees' reactions to the concept if offered.

As was already mentioned, with globalisation and modern attitudes it needs to be researched whether the extended family is still as prevalent as it was before (especially in cities, with expensive housing) and whether reliable child care, through nannies staying at home with the child, are available as easily as before, as usually these go down with increases in economic welfare of a nation.

Foreign NGOs and other multinational organisations operating in Bangladesh where these types of leaves (paternity/ parental) may already be offered (by following international policies) can also be studied to see how Bangladeshis in general act when it is offered by such organisations. Are the Bangladeshi men working in such organisations offering paternity leave taking all the leave permitted to them? If not, the reasons need to be studied through further research.

With increasing dual income-earning families in Bangladesh, more research is needed in this area and awareness created; otherwise, more women risk being stunted in their professional growth and this will also affect others in the society and the economy.

4 Conclusion

This study found that there has been improvement in maternity leave provisions to various types of women workers since 2008. The duration of maternity leave is now one month longer in Bangladesh (4 months) than it used to be a decade ago in 2008 and has also increased

to six months for female government employees. However, as to adequacy, it is unfortunate that at present there are still no laws on maternity leave guaranteed to Bangladeshi women working in a host of different areas such as private sector managerial jobs, in charitable organisations like hospitals, educational institutions, shops, etc.

At present there are no laws on paternity leave for biological fathers or for parental leave (applicable to both parents, biological or adoptive). It was found that guaranteeing these provisions would help begin the process of improving the work-life balance and career prospects for women in the labour force.

All three forms of leave offer advantages: extended maternity leave increases the chances of enabling women to arrange for alternative child care before returning to work; paternity leave and parental leave (applicable to both) allow for men to take on some of the responsibilities and don't leave women alone to wear the mantle of a child's primary care giver.

Thus, there is scope for improvement in:

1. Making sure that the maternity leave that is currently available to female factory workers in Bangladesh and government sector employees, is more widely applicable, especially to those women working in "managerial administrative or supervisory" capacity who are currently outside the purview of such laws.
2. Making policy provisions for paternity leave upon the birth of a child and for parental leave when the need arises.

Allowing for all of the above is likely to improve work-life balance for women, help them stay on in their careers and have less chances of suffering the "motherhood penalty", as well as allow women to further contribute towards the development of Bangladesh.

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E-Learning as the New Tool for Development in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This paper is based on a qualitative case study research, in an attempt to find a new perspective around e-learning, associating it with developmental gains and with ground realities where informal learning is a deep-rooted social practice in rural Bangladesh. The study shows that e-learning can provide enhanced opportunities for learning, and the development of awareness, skills and knowledge, associated with the lives and livelihoods of those living in situations of poverty. These enhanced opportunities imply increased capability of rural people and the resulting freedom to learn, despite individual limitations and challenging context. The research suggests that a trust based assisted e-learning platform can offer freedom of learning for rural people when the e-learning system is configured in a way that reflects context-specific rural realities.

Keywords: e-learning, development, Bangladesh

1 E-learning and Development Nexus

In Bangladesh, e-learning is considered as a technology-based learning tool predominantly for the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) literates. However, e-learning as a concept is contested and lacks a coherent theoretical stance to fully explain it in different contexts (Andrews 2011). In an attempt to provide a detailed account of e-learning, Haythornthwaite and Andrews (2011) argues that e-learning is a transformative movement in learning and should not be considered as bounded by institutional structures of courses, programs or degrees, but instead as embracing the way learning flows across physical, geographical and disciplinary borders. Their perspectives implicate that e-learning also includes informal means of learning and does not confine to a particular ICT option. Although a single definition of e-learning is yet to be established (Selinger & Veen 1999; Sloman 2001; Rosenberg 2001), it can be conceived as a learning experience utilizing electronic means such as the Internet, a mobile phone or telephone, television, radio, and all of which can electronically or virtually connect an individual to information for knowledge development (Collis 1996; Guri-Rosenblit & Gros 2011; Salmon 2000, 2004; Selinger & Veen 1999).

Most of the existing models of e-learning are based only on formal education (Collis & Moonen 2001; Salmon 2000, 2004; Meredith & Newton 2003). In most cases, e-learning is conceptualized around computers and the Internet, and for institutional/organizational or professional purposes or for formal education (Vargas &

Tian 2013; Liaw 2006; Ravenscroft 2001; Brown & Charlier 2013). As a result, prevailing models of e-learning can be argued to be less appropriate for informal ways of learning in developing countries where low-tech ICT options such as mobile phones, television and radio are found socially embedded, in comparison to high-tech ICT options, such as computers and the Internet (Heeks 2008).

Rural people in Bangladesh usually learn about lives and livelihoods through informal learning opportunities in action or through observations, with the help of local people (Ahmed 2004; Khan 1997; Paris *et al.* 2005). This approach towards learning through informal means is underpinned by the collectivist rural realities in Bangladesh (Deci & Ryan 2008; Devine *et al.* 2008; Diener & Diener 1995; Diener *et al.* 1995). It is argued that innovative technological means can effectively support learning by doing, using, and interacting, particularly with the help of ICT (Arrow 1962; Bof 2004; Jensen *et al.* 2007; Lundvall & Johnson 1994; Rao 2011). Therefore, it can be similarly argued to be valid for e-learning. However, in Bangladesh, e-learning has mostly been adopted to foster formal learning and usually for the educated people (Grönlund & Islam 2010; Islam & Selim 2006; Karim, Mina & Samdani 2011; Khalid & Nyvang 2013; Mridha *et al.* 2013, September; Walsh 2011, July; Walsh *et al.* 2013). This limited utilization of e-learning is deeply-rooted in the urban experience as it usually involves high-tech ICT options, such as computers and the Internet (Fors & Moreno 2002), and uptake of these options are comparatively low in rural areas (BBS 2015). As a result, current approach towards conceptualizing e-learning as a means of formal learning for educated

people might eventually make high-tech ICT based e-learning irrelevant for rural people.

The meaning of development varies with respect to time, place and the person or institution attempts to define it (Chambers 2004). Hence, developing a universally accepted concept of development is a contested endeavor (Avgerou 2010). Development, in a general sense, is about making a better world for those living in poverty (Chambers 2004). UNDP develops Human Development Index to measure development and frames it as “an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives” (UNDP 1990, p9). Some emphasize the role of economy and consider development to be about utilizing productive resources to improve living conditions of those living in poverty (Peet & Hartwick 1999). However, Sen (1999) emphasizes that notions of inequalities should be considered beyond the domains of economy to address development. Sen conceptualizes development from a broader perspective, arguing that development is “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen 1999, p3). He defines development as “enhancement of human living and the freedom to live the kind of life that we have reason to value” (Sen 2006, p35). He considers freedom as central to the process of development (Sen, 1999). He argues that freedom is not only the end result of development, but also one of the principal means of achieving development.

In a broader sense, which I adopt for this research, development is seen in terms of the freedom an individual can have in availing a state of being or doing s/he values to pursue in a given society (Sen 1999). I use Sen’s (1985) capability approach framework to interweave these theoretical underpinnings around the related concepts of development while conceptualizing e-learning as a means of achieving developmental outcomes. According to Sen (1985, 1992, 1999), capabilities are the substantive freedom a person enjoys in choosing how she/he wants to live a lifestyle that she/he values. Sen (1992) emphasizes freedom, instead of the means to achieve that freedom. Sen’s concept of capability is further taken forward by Nussbaum (2011) who identifies a number of specific capabilities and suggests inclusion of migration, Internet and global warming in the capability list. In this era of pervasive digital technology, this is also reflected by the ‘Digital Bangladesh by 2021’ campaign of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) (GoB & UNDP 2010). Therefore, electronic means to aid achievement of freedom of learning can thus be associated with development for those in need for development supports.

Development scholars argue in favor of informal means of learning despite blurred boundaries between formal and informal learning (Coombs & Ahmed 1974, Hager & Holliday 2009). Learning is a fundamental step

in the development of knowledge required for developmental outcomes (UNDESA 2015). Informal ways of learning help to acquire and develop knowledge, skills, attitude and insights from day-to-day experiences and from exposure to different environments (Coombs & Ahmed 1974). These informal approaches include agricultural extension and farmer training programs, adult literacy programs, and various community programs in the areas of health, nutrition, family planning and cooperatives (Coombs & Ahmed 1974). It is asserted that learning can promote good health practices, improved agricultural productivity, off-farm employment opportunities, gender equality and poverty reduction, all of which have implications for developmental gains (Waage *et al.* 2010). In the sustainable development goals, learning, along with education, is emphasized as a means of development, particularly in the form of lifelong learning, to offer people with opportunities to develop knowledge and skills (UN 2015). Although formal education is prioritized by the UN (2015) to ensure empowerment and human capital at individual level, it has also been criticized for failing to address the issues around development in an effective manner (Cohen 2006; Waage *et al.* 2010).

In rural Bangladesh, access to formal learning opportunities through educational institutions, government institutions, and different project-based initiatives are challenged by barriers such as rural people’s labor-intensive lifestyle, poor economic status, and persisting patriarchy or male dominance (Cain *et al.* 1979; Chowdhury 2009; Kabeer *et al.* 2011; Mitter & Ng 2005; Muzareba 2017; Walby 1990). This reality implicates an unmet need for convenient informal learning opportunity for rural people which they can access on demand basis and irrespective of their economic condition and gender. Given the coexistence of pervasive digital technology in Bangladesh and patronization of movement for digitization from the GoB, this research is an attempt to address this unmet need of rural people in Bangladesh and devises a means to offer freedom of learning that can enable them to uplift their quality of life.

2 Objective

The specific objective of this paper is to extend the predominant conceptualization of e-learning. It aims at demonstrating the ways e-learning could be reconceptualized as a means of gaining developmental outcomes for the rural poor in Bangladesh. It also aims at scoping out avenue to challenge the predominant conceptualization around suitability of e-learning for formal education and its appropriateness for educated people (Brown & Charlier 2013; Collis & Moonen 2001;

Liaw 2006; Meredith & Newton 2003; Ravenscroft 2001; Salmon 2000, 2004; Vargas & Tian 2013).

3 Methodology

I took a bottom-up approach in conceptualizing the developmental aspects of e-learning to develop my proposition on the ground realities. I adopted an interpretivist approach as I examined meanings those living in poverty in Bangladesh attach to e-learning with regard to their sense of quality of life. To understand how the practical framework of e-learning in ICT4D initiatives operated in different contexts, I used a qualitative case study approach and selected three cases for study. All the three underlying projects of the three cases are well-known to the global ICT4D communities. The case locations include Kushtia and poverty affected northern regions of Gaibandha and Rangpur. While there exist similar structural opportunities for learning, offered by GoB and NGOs through academic institutions and agricultural extension programs in these three locations, rural people have limited scopes for informal learning and access to those are constrained by socioeconomic realities. Only a few inhabitants can have access to agricultural extension officers when they need to develop new knowledge in agriculture, and thus the majority are left confined to local knowledge and learning with the help of neighbors. Existing health learning programs in these three locations are also inadequate, and time poor labor-intensive lifestyles limit rural people's access to those. In the absence of structured informal learning provisions from GoB, rural people can only enjoy passive learning as most of the government and NGO initiatives are designed to offer services not means of learning to develop knowledge. In less agrarian Kushtia, educated youth are deprived of opportunities to learn computing skills of high commercial value, because even tertiary level technical education is not enough to make them employable in global technology market.

The underlying ICT4D initiatives of the cases focus on health, agriculture, and crowdsourcing (getting online communities contribute to collective intelligence (Brabham 2013)). Although interview was main approach to data collection, I also used focus group discussion (FGD) and observation during six months of field work. These three approaches offered a rich qualitative understanding of the underlying phenomenon (Bryman 2016; Yin 1994). I conducted 18 in-depth interviews with project participants and 44 semi-structured interviews with government officials, local opinion leaders, project officials, and members of knowledge communities including academicians, experts and professionals in the areas of development, agriculture, health, ICT, gender, microfinance, and

policy. I conducted 12 FGD sessions with project participants and observed project participants' direct and indirect interactions with ICT and with their contexts. I adopted an interpretivist approach, and hence I developed an effective relationship with my respondents particularly the project participants. My command over respective local languages assisted me to sense situated realities. These ethnographic senses helped me to understand and interpret rural people's meaning-making. I adopted a thematic data analysis technique to identify patterns and issues to sense underlying potentials of e-learning to become a tool for development.

4 The Cases

The following section presents the three cases - the Bicycle-Women case, the Computer-Shop case, and the Internet-Freelancing case. I anonymized all the respondents and institutions involved in implementing the underlying projects to ensure privacy and minimize any resulting consequence.

4.1 The Bicycle-Women

The case promotes e-learning for rural women, and it does so by engaging local rural women as facilitators. It promotes e-learning mainly in the areas of health, agriculture and advocacy supports related to rights and entitlements. The central focus for this case is a few local educated women who were selected and then trained by Tech-Net (implementing organization of the underlying project of this case). I name these women bicycle-women. They offer different kinds of services to their group members as well as other villagers. Paid for their services, they offer basic health check-ups, such as measuring blood pressure, blood sugar and body mass, and pregnancy testing. They also offer ICT-based support, such as video calling over the Internet, Internet browsing, online job searching, online job applications, and mobile phone-based money transfers. Their services for the group members also include demonstrations of digital content. The content shares knowledge in the areas of health, agriculture, rights and entitlements. The bicycle-women offer this knowledge sharing service only to group members but free of charge. They use bicycles to reach their service users at their homes. This in itself is unusual because cycling is not a part of the cultural practice among women in rural areas. This distinctive approach is why I name these women as bicycle-women.

4.2 The Computer-Shop

In this case e-learning is promoted in the areas of agriculture, particularly for rural male farmers. This case is about the Net-farming project of Agro-Tech, a

national level consulting firm. Net-farming has been operating in different regions since July 2012. It was co-funded by: Market-Aid, a collaborative international funding initiative which promotes market oriented solutions to development issues; Phone-Com, a multinational telecommunication operator; and Agro-BD, a local conglomerate which produces agricultural commercial products including seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides and insecticides. Agro-Tech involved ten computer-shops from ten different regions to implement Net-farming. These computer-shops are the central focus of this case. I selected three computer-shops at three different locations where Net-farming was operating. Among these three, two (Com-Rang, PC-Rang) were located in Rangpur and one (Gai-CShop) in Gaibandha.

These computer-shops have been facilitating access to an online repository (collection of information in text and image formats stored on Internet) of agricultural knowledge managed by Agro-Tech. To link local farmers with this online knowledge repository, Agro-Tech employed male facilitators for the computer-shops except in the Com-Rang, where the technopreneur (entrepreneur who deals in internet based business) needed to play the role of both computer operator and the facilitator. Technopreneurs of Gai-CShop and PC-Rang worked as respective computer operators. Facilitators were employed to contact local farmers to enquire about their agricultural problems and offer free consultation services. The technopreneurs used to access the online knowledge repository to share agricultural knowledge with respective facilitators. However, since when the facilitator support was withdrawn after funding from Market-Aid ended in mid-2013, all three technopreneurs had started playing the roles of both computer operator and the facilitator.

4.3 The Internet-Freelancing

In this third case, use of e-learning is promoted in developing skills in the areas of web programming. It does so, in order to encourage the ICT enthusiasts taking up the Internet freelancing opportunities on the online market places to earn money. This case includes personal initiatives of a computer enthusiast named Raisul. His life experiences and his initiatives illustrate how e-learning, as a means of learning and developing knowledge, can minimize institutional dependencies and can support socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals to become Internet freelancers and graduate from their poverty situations.

Raisul, who is known as an expert Internet freelancer, provides Internet freelancing enthusiasts with required skills support, particularly in the areas of web programming. He promotes these skills development

through e-learning by providing text and real-life video contents on web programming in native Bengali language. Majority of the activities around his initiatives are managed by Raisul himself, except the on demand technical knowledge support around web programming, in response to learners' queries, which is mostly provided by expert Internet freelancers who use his content. These expert freelancers are virtually connected and offer voluntary supports to complement the e-learning experience of users of Raisul's content. Both male and female, irrespective of their location, could develop web programming-based Internet freelancing skills and gain considerable economic returns.

5 Study Findings

A brief discussion of my study findings is presented below.

- Rural people rarely used e-learning in its existing forms but were keen to adopt e-learning, if their expectations were incorporated in its design.
- Through facilitator supported e-learning, only a few could learn effectively which were attributed to the use of animated content that they did not prefer for learning, project defined topics which made the contents less contextually meaningful, involvements of facilitators they did not trust for knowledge development.
- Existing e-learning framework worked as a source of information for rural people rather than enabler of knowledge development. They did not consider problem solving based services as learning opportunities.
- ICT skilled educated people could learn and develop skills in web programming effectively and many of them started earning foreign currency afterwards. Gender, time and economic poverty, and location could not constrain their learning.
- Institutional e-learning framework promoted mostly paid services rather than on-demand learning opportunities which rural people wanted. Beneficiaries expressed a lack of trust in existing facilitators and the contents, demanding teachers to facilitate.
- Managing e-learning is cost-effective when crowdsourcing is incorporated in a philanthropic manner. Providing on-demand technical support also becomes manageable.
- Withdrawal of funding support considerably affected operations of e-learning interventions.

The existing framework of e-learning pursued by ICT4D implementing institutions is presented below.

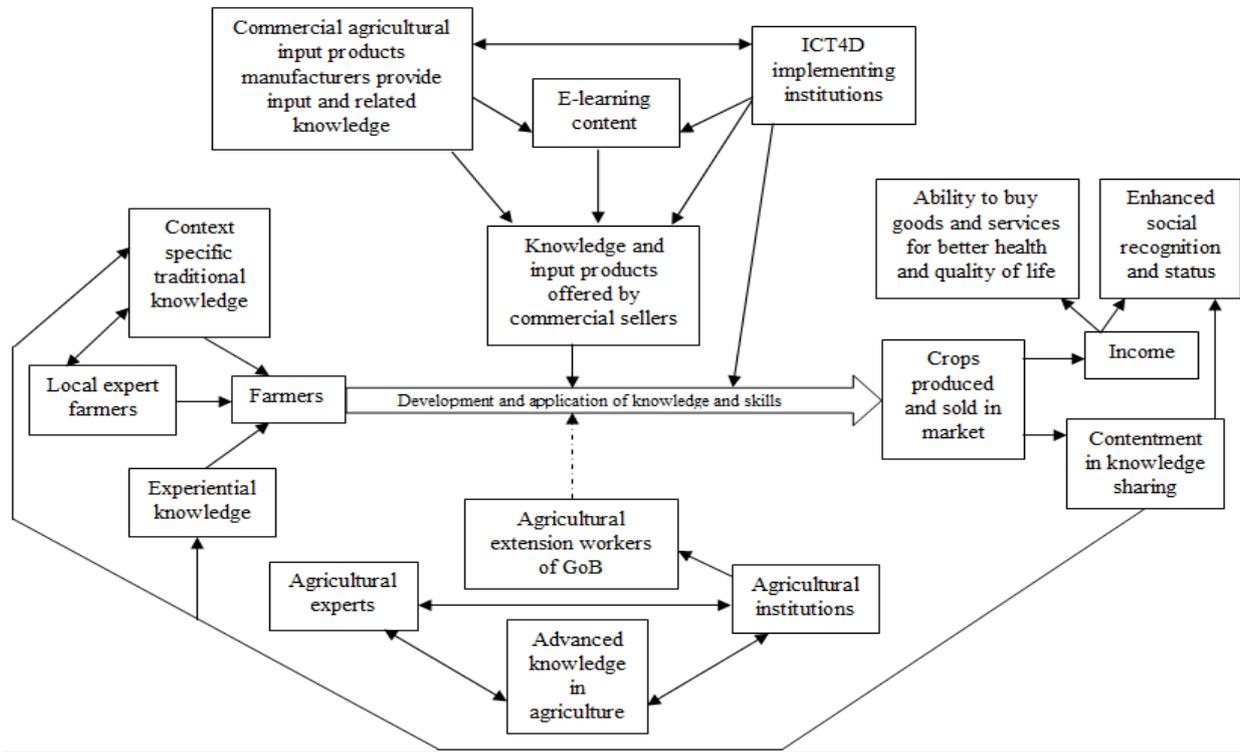


Figure 1: Current Practical Framework of e-Learning

Source: Author's Construct

6 Interpretive Analysis

Assisted or facilitator supported e-learning thus can work as a way of fostering rural people's quality of life through offering them with freedom of learning. It can help improve their quality of life, by helping them to face and deal with labor intensive lifestyles, poor economic status, gender inequalities, and limited institutional provisions for informal as well as formal means of learning. However, improving their quality of life through learning and developing awareness, skills and knowledge by means of e-learning depend on the following factors.

- Trust relationships among learners, contents, and facilitators are essential. Trusted facilitators are expected to support, when e-learning is conducted through shared access to computer and Internet.
- Adequate contextually meaningful video content that use real-life demonstrations instead of animation have substantial influence on effectiveness.

- Use of crowdsourcing, as a source of expert knowledge support and to make e-learning effective, is pivotal because ensuring on-demand expert knowledge support and developing context specific content are complex and expensive tasks.
- Effectiveness and sustainability of e-learning initiatives critically depend on consistent funding support.

In order to understand how e-learning should be socially embedded as a freedom enhancing new means for learning, it is important to consider how rural people traditionally learn to uplift their quality of life. The predominant influence in learning and developing knowledge remains active in two mainstreams – context specific traditional social learning practices and commercial supply channel linked information sharing. Agricultural extension workers of the GoB assist farmers' knowledge development process, but they are poor in number and their work hours are limited. Context specific and local knowledge exist only in practice other than in any other form to preserve for next

generations. As a result, these are in risks of getting lost due to pervasive knowledge digitization practice. Although traditional learning framework could enhance quality of life in rural realities through income, enhanced social recognition and contentment, but these achievements take place in limited extent. In addition to that, in the process of knowledge development and sharing there exists high and direct influence of commercial manufacturers (those that manufacture medicines, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and insecticides) and respective local sellers. Existing practical framework of e-learning appears as an attempt to take first mover advantages in promoting digitization of knowledge development. It is not different from prevailing traditional learning framework where commercial manufacturers play contested roles in knowledge development, other than using ICT in developing e-learning contents (Figure 1). The scenario of knowledge communities being left out of the knowledge development process of the rural people remains the same even in the e-learning embedded approach in above Figure 1. However, this should not implicate inefficacy of e-learning in promoting freedom of learning, rather it implicates the questionable consequences of the particular way of knowledge development and the way e-learning is configured and embedded in the respective learning practices. Therefore, it is imperative to reconfigure e-learning in a way to reflect ground realities and to associate possible avenues to develop it as a tool offering freedom of learning.

7 E-Learning as a Development Tool

In development discourses, common tools for development remain cash transfer, kind support, and loan support (Barrientos 2013, Develtere & Huybrechts 2005, Fisher & Sriram 2002, Garcia & Moore 2012, Hulme, Hanlon & Barrientos 2012, Khondkar & Hulme 2000, Osmani & Chowdhury 1983, Stone 2012). While these tools offer economic empowerment and enable the poor to meet some of their necessities, these can hardly be argued to have been directly supporting skills or knowledge development to create capacity in them to enable them encounter situations of underdevelopment. The from-within capacity of knowledge and skills development can be considered as a sustainable means to encounter poverty and minimize consequences of poverty dynamics. Relating this sense with the above discussions, e-learning can be argued to play the roles of a development tool when, as per Sen (1985 & 1999), development is conceptualized as the degree of a person’s freedom to do whatever s/he values to be or do, to live a life s/he values to live. Efficacy of e-learning, in providing freedom of learning with convenience and on demand access to it, transforms e-learning into a tool for development, given it is reconfigured in the way rural people demand. The following Figure 2 demonstrates rural people’s expected configuration of e-learning for their developmental gains.

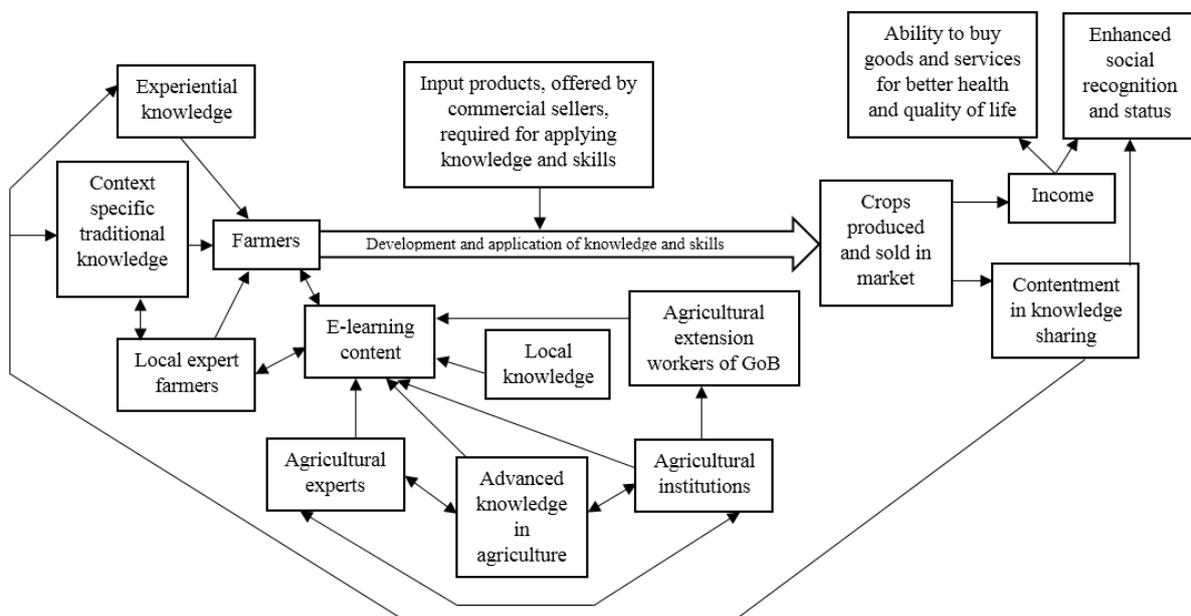


Figure 2: Proposed Model of e-Learning as a Freedom Enhancing Development Tool

Source: Author’s Construct

Figure 2 implicates that e-learning can offer several options/choices to knowledge development by integrating several sources of knowledge with e-learning content. It also can incorporate local/indigenous knowledge into learning ecosystem and save from extinction. The proposed framework ensures stronger connectivity between knowledge communities and rural people through content. The enhanced options to learn from recognized knowledge sources can be considered as enhanced capability as per Sen's (1999) capability approach framework where enhanced options are considered as capability enhancement. Therefore, as per the particular configuration presented in Figure 2, e-learning can be argued to work as the new development tool in rural Bangladesh.

While e-learning can work as a development tool, it cannot achieve developmental outcomes alone because it is merely a tool not the end. Empirical data from my research suggest that trust based facilitator-supported/assisted e-learning can work as a tool for development but when required resources can be ensured, which include ICT devices, power supply, contextual contents, infrastructure, access to ICT, ICT skills, literacy and basic education, ICT skilled trusted local experts, consistent local technical support, crowdsourcing, and trust. E-learning needs to be grounded in trust relationships as it is found in common learning scenarios (Dodgson 1993). Among these, crowdsourcing is a comparatively new element, but it could be considered critical to a sustainable solution for developing adequate context specific contents in local language. Institutional capacity building in developing context specific content in local language can be argued to take long time and is expensive when compared to inclusion of crowdsourcing to serve the same purposes. In the Bicycle-Women and Computer-Shop cases, implementing institutions had to buy contents from corporate and NGO sources, which sometimes lacked adapting to specific needs. However, in the Internet-Freelancing case, expert crowd offered their hands in a philanthropic manner and contributed to developing a rich pool of content in local language, free of cost. A proper quality assurance mechanism could effectively integrate crowd and allow us to utilize its collective knowledge, intelligence and philanthropic spirits, and facilitate transforming e-learning into a development tool.

Rural people want trusted local facilitators so that they can trust in the facilitators' assisted access to e-learning, and the facilitators' knowledge and wisdom in interpreting e-learning content in local language. They prefer assisted access over developing ICT skills because they need to remain engaged in many activities in their labor-intensive time poor lifestyle and spending time and efforts to develop ICT skills is not at all their

priority. They are also keen to see involvements of GoB as a trust anchor. Although they prefer assisted access to e-learning, language of the content is another factor that influence their trust in e-learning. They prefer local language over standard Bengali language to associate the content to their lived realities. However, learners' characteristics such as literacy status and profession have considerable influence over their comprehension of the content. From macroeconomic perspective, infrastructural factors such as internet coverage and speed have strategic influence over successful transformation of e-learning into a development tool. Given that GoB do not have any development focused e-learning initiative, funding support is another key factor to establish e-learning as a development tool.

8 Conclusions

Findings of this research indicate that e-learning can foster rural people's developmental gains by offering them freedom of learning about lives and livelihoods. In the process of learning and developing awareness, skills, and knowledge, e-learning can help them overcome a range of challenges they face. These include their hectic and labor-intensive lifestyles, economic poverty, gender inequalities, and limited institutional provisions for formal and informal means of learning. However, certain vital factors such as access to ICT, trust, local support, content, and funding, need to coexist for e-learning to work effectively and to be accepted as a means of learning by rural people. In prevailing rural sociocultural context, e-learning could be effective as a development tool when a trusted local facilitator is involved to offer assisted e-learning opportunity. The trusted local facilitator can assist rural people with access to e-learning, making sense of the content, and with trusted access to new knowledge, to enable them to make informed approach towards accepting e-learning as an integral part of their learning practices. However, it needs to develop local level capacity building in ICT and to integrate existing ICT experts, perhaps through crowdsourcing, to develop a sustainable setup for e-learning to work effectively. Government and development partners should take necessary steps and promote interdisciplinary research initiatives to effectively transform e-learning into a new development tool which can address broader inequality through digital inclusion.

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Obstetric Fistula: The Search for a Remedy through Social Network

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Abstract

Obstetric fistula, one of the worst forms of maternal illness has a devastating impact on a woman's life. Based on interviews with women who came to receive treatment to treat their fistula at the Ad-din Women's and Children's Hospital in Dhaka and Jessore, Bangladesh, the author developed a framework to describe a pathway of how the women suffering from the disease managed to get treated after overcoming a myriad of challenges and sufferings. The author concludes that in a context of devastating multidimensional suffering caused by fistula, and limited access to information, institutional support and treatment facilities, only a wider empathetic social network can help the women get treated.

1 Introduction

Obstetric fistula, one of the worst forms of maternal illness, has a devastating impact on any woman's life. Caused mostly by obstructed labour, with no or delayed emergency obstetric care (Roush 2009, p. e21), obstetric fistula is a hole or tear in the tissue wall between the vagina and the bladder or rectum, or both. The constant wetness and smell caused by continuous leakage of urine not only results in physical discomfort, but also subjects the affected woman to isolation, stigma and poverty (Bangser 2006, p. 535). The continued prevalence of fistula in this modern day and its insufficient treatment facilities are markers of overall maternal health conditions of a region (Roush et al. 2012, p. 788) and violation of human right (Cook et al. 2004, p. 76). Although the socio-economic and cultural context of each country with a high prevalence of fistula is unique, sharing of knowledge between different countries and between different contexts would help plan and act more efficiently to eradicate obstetric fistula. This study unfolds the particular socio-economic structural and cultural setting in Bangladesh in which a medical condition like obstetric fistula can occur and may be treated.

This paper has two objectives: (i) to portray the socio-economic and structural contexts in the development of obstetric fistula and (ii) to explain the challenges and opportunities experienced by fistula affected women in their journey towards treatment. It is argued in this paper that in a context of devastating multidimensional suffering caused by fistula, and very limited access to information, institutional support and treatment facilities, only a wider empathetic social network can help the women seek treatment and progress towards recovery.

2 Method

To explore the suffering and challenges of the fistula affected women, it is important to gain direct access to their voices and how they articulate their experience and turn the challenges into opportunities to treat their condition. Stacey (1994) points out that people themselves can best explain their experience because they are the ones who live it. Their accounts do not only provide information of their experience but also render it meaningful as they relate their experience to their social and cultural context. For this purpose, in-depth interviews with women who came to receive surgical treatment at the Fistula Ward of Ad-din Women's and Children's Hospital in Dhaka and Jessore has been conducted.

2.1 Study Context, Recruitment and Research Participants

For this study, the Ad-din Hospital was purposely chosen because it is one of the 11 health facilities in Bangladesh equipped with qualified surgeons and technology to surgically repair obstetric fistula; this hospital provides such surgery free of cost. Eleven women were interviewed in this research. They were admitted in the fistula ward of Ad-din Hospital during the time of interview for the treatment of their fistula. While it is acknowledged that this number may be too small, even for a qualitative study, it provides an important insight into the contexts, causes and consequences of obstetric fistula. Such an insight may be very useful for programs to prevent and/or treat this disease and its unfortunate consequences for the women suffering from it.

An ethics approval for this research was obtained from The Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Approval number 5535) to

ensure anonymity of the participants and confidentiality of the information they provided at the interviews. Permission to interview these women was also obtained from Ad-din hospital.

2.2 Analysis

Being a native of Bangladesh and fluent in both English and Bengali languages, the author herself conducted the interviews in Bangla, the language spoken by the women, so as not miss even the minutest expressions of feeling and despair expressed by the women; the interview transcripts were translated into English and processed with the help of NVivo 10 computer software for analysing qualitative data. Data were coded based on themes that appeared important in understanding the problem being researched (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 82). This process involves careful reading and re-reading of the transcripts (Rice & Ezzy, 1999, p.258) and a step-by-step approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006 pp.87-93) which allowed the most significant themes to emerge.

3 Results

3.1 Women Affected by Fistula at Ad-din Hospital

Almost all the women interviewed were suffering from fistula for five years or more, and in some cases for

decades. Most of them got this condition due to prolonged obstructed labour. Table 1 suggests that most of the women experienced fistula at a very early age and suffered from the condition for the major part of their adulthood. Eight of the 11 women interviewed only had their first surgery and hoped the hole would be repaired without the need for any more surgery, but the remaining three women were at the hospital to have a second surgical attempt to repair their fistula.

4 Causes of Obstetric Fistula and the Extent of Women's Suffering

It has been mentioned before that the causes of fistula are mostly prolonged obstetric labour, no treatment, or untimely treatment. Obstetric fistula usually originates in a background of early childbearing, prolonged obstructed labour and delays in seeking healthcare. Wall (2005) identified poverty as the 'breeding point' of obstetric fistula, because usually in a poorly resourced social setting, girls remain undernourished, get married early and give birth to children early. Figure 1 presents a pathway describing the chain of events leading the women to the risks of developing obstetric fistula. This figure is developed based on interviews with women who had fistula.

Table 1: Demographic background of the participants and information about the occurrence and treatment of obstetric fistula

Name and age	Age at marriage of the women	Age and order of birth when fistula developed	Duration of fistula (years)	Cause of fistula	Time elapsed between the onset of pregnancy complication and the occurrence of fistula	Health facility where the fistula occurred ¹	Number of attempts for fistula repair
Shefali (30)	15	25 (4 th birth)	5	Obstructed labour	4 days	Local Clinic	1
Beli (40)	12	30 (5 th birth)	10	Obstructed labour	2 days	District Hospital	1
Rosy (40)	11	20 (2 nd birth)	20	Obstructed labour	4 days	Home	1
Jobeda (25)	11	15 (1 st birth)	10	Obstructed labour	1 day	Home	1
Shapla (22)	14	16 (1 st birth)	6	Obstructed labour	5 days	District Hospital	2
Kolmi (23)	14	18 (1 st birth)	5	Eclampsia	4 days	District Hospital	2
Papiya (35)	10	23 (3 rd birth)	12	Obstructed labour	3 days	Home	1
Jahanara (35)	13	15 (1 st birth)	20	Eclampsia	1 day	District hospital	2
Sultana (45)	13	14 (1 st birth)	31	Obstructed labour	3 days	Home	1
Akbari Begum (23)	13	22 (2 nd birth)	1	Surgical fault	1 day	Local Clinic	1
Shahanara (25)	12	14 (1 st birth)	11	Obstructed labour	4 days	Home	3

Source: Akhter 2015, p. 179

¹As reported by the interviewed mothers

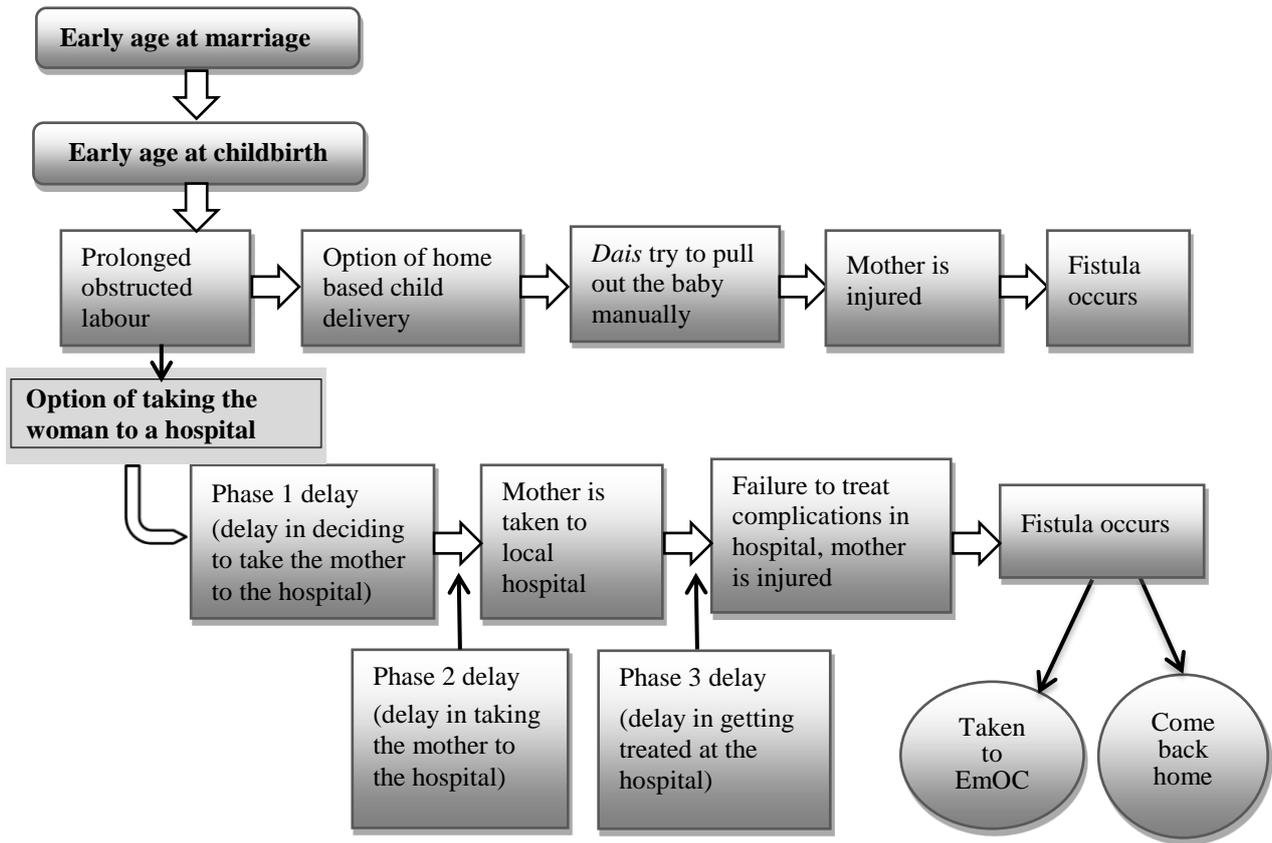


Figure 1: Pathway to the occurrence of obstetric fistula

Source: Drawn by the author based on interviews of women suffering from obstetric fistula

Table 1 shows that all but one of the women had their first pregnancy at the age of 15 or 16 and most of them got obstetric fistula during the birth of their first child.

It is shown that prolonged labour and birth injury were at the centre of the occurrence of the disease, but there were differences in the circumstances between one woman and another. In one group of women, prolonged labour, accompanied by the indecision to go to a hospital led to birth injury when an untrained traditional midwife (*dai*) tried to deliver the baby manually. In the other group, prolonged labour, accompanied by a delay in sending the woman to a hospital, delay in reaching the hospital and getting treatment at the hospital caused the occurrence of fistula.

The first type of scenario in which obstetric fistula happens is portrayed in Jobeda’s childbirth experience.

Jobeda: I conceived in the first year of my marriage. The baby died in my womb. I was in serious pain. The pain stayed for a day and a night. My parents-in-law did not let me go to my parents’ house. My parents also did not insist on taking me home. Ladies from the neighbourhood were

around me during my labour. They (husband and parents-in-law) did not take me to a hospital, because they did not have money. There was no hospital nearby. There was one in Hobigonj. The transport cost from our home to Hobigonj is BDT125 (USD 1.5)

Researcher: Did they not have this 125 Taka?

Jobeda: Yes they had. But that’s not enough. You have to spend money for every service at the hospital. A Caesarean section will cost lots of money.

Researcher: But CS is free in a government hospital?

Jobeda: My husband and parents-in-law did not know all this. That’s why they did not take me anywhere. They kept me home. The baby was stuck inside me. Then the dai pulled it out using her hands, after that, my pain stopped but I started leaking urine. I was unconscious then. Seeing this urine leaking, the dai could not say anything” (Jobeda, aged 25 years, married at age 15 and pregnant at the same age).

As a part of the traditional childbirth behaviour, Jobeda stayed at home attended by the *dai*, who waited and tried to deliver the baby manually. There may be some other contexts in which a birthing woman's health can get the lowest priority and not considered worth spending money on. The experience of Kolmi reveals this kind of situation:

My pain started in the morning. I stayed at home for the whole day and night. The following day at the time of *Magrib* (sunset) I was taken to the district hospital. When I was home, my husband shouted at my mother and sister-in-law and said, "why are you not taking her to the hospital? She will die, can't you see? Are you human beings?" I also said, "please take me to a doctor". But my brother-in-law (husband's elder brother) and sister-in-law did not want to spend money for me. My brother-in-law said, "why go to a hospital? She will deliver the baby here (at home)". But my husband did not agree. He shouted at them. Then my brother-in-law gave the money. I was taken to the hospital by ambulance. But once at the hospital I was left unattended outside a ward for the whole night. They did not even give me a bed. Then my brother-in-law gave BDT 1,000 (USD 12.5) to a staff in the hospital, who managed a bed for me. I was then taken to OT (Operation Theatre). The baby had already died. After taking me out from OT, they put me in the bed again. They cut the pipe (catheter) after four days of operation (Caesarean section). My whole bed was getting wet. The doctors said, we cannot do anything. Take her to Dhaka (Kolmi, aged 23 years).

The childbirth experiences of Jobeda and Kolmi highlight how the voices of birthing women are not heard in making decisions for seeking healthcare. This disempowerment of women in relation to childbirth (whether medicalized or natural) has been identified as a contributory cause for obstetric fistula (Roush et al. (2012, p. 788). Oakley (1984, p. 22) argues that even in natural birth practice, the birthing woman is not considered to be at the centre of her own childbirth experience.

In the second group (Figure 1) women were taken to the hospital. The irony is that by the time she was taken to a hospital, it was too late and the baby could not be saved and the woman had already suffered a lot and had irreparable damage leading to fistula. Thus, in this situation, bringing the woman to a hospital did not help her from developing the condition.

Molzan et al. (2007, p. 68) has shown that women in Eritrea reached the health facility after 24 hours to five days of obstructed labour and after damage leading to fistula had already occurred. A similar situation occurred in Bangladesh, with Jahanara, who had eclampsia (locally known as *Gorbho tonka*). Ladies from the

neighbourhood who were present at Jahanara's childbirth mistook her convulsion to be labour pain. While the convulsion brought the baby down towards the cervix, the *dai* tried to pull the baby out manually, tearing the area and creating a hole in her uterine wall. Jahanara states,

I went to my parents' house for delivery. I had *Gorbho tonka* (convulsion). The convulsion was so severe that the baby's head could be seen at the opening of my cervix. Then the *dais*, who were present there thought the baby should be born right there and then and they tried to pull out the baby using their hands. But the baby did not come out. It died inside. I stayed conscious for the following three days. Then my family took me to the district hospital. They brought the baby out by cutting a bit in the cervix. I think my *peshaber tholi* (bladder) somehow got cut at that time. Soon I realised that my urine was coming out without any control. When I tried to stand up, faeces came out too. (She took a deep sigh expressing her deep sadness).

A late intervention in receiving emergency obstetric care (EmOC) represents Phase 1 delay identified by Thaddeus and Maine (1994). In the cases of Jobeda and Jahanara (and other women in this study), the delay in transferring these women to a hospital can be explained by their poverty, inability to understand the severity and possible outcome of the long-obstructed labour, and the women's status within the family.

Once a decision is taken to take the pregnant woman to a hospital (sometimes very late) her family may experience delays, identified as Phase 2 delay by Thaddeus and Maine (1994, p. 1092) due to the time taken in managing the transport and in travelling the distance to the health facility.

The story of Shapla who has been suffering from fistula for five years, outlines the situation of how such delays further complicate an already bad obstetric condition. In particular, it portrays the second pathway of how obstetric fistula may occur in a hospital (as shown in Figure 1). It is acknowledged that there may be other situations such as surgical errors that may also result in fistula (as happened with Akbari Begum, age 25). According to Shapla:

When my labour pain started, it was not yet time to deliver. I stayed home one day and one night. The *dai* was around me. Then the *dai* said, she could not do anything and suggested to take me to the doctor. There is a small government medical centre close to our house. I was taken there. But my labour was still not sufficient to deliver the baby. There I waited for a day. Then I was taken to Sodor (district hospital). There I was given saline. My labour was still not induced. Sodor was three miles away from our house.

I went there by a reserved *tempu* (a three-wheeled vehicle). My mother, my uncle and my husband went with me. They gave me saline, and pushed an injection. But still there was no labour induced. Then they tried to pull the baby out by cutting that place (cervix). Then they said, “It will not be possible by us. Take her to Sylhet if you want to save her”. We came back home instead of going to Sylhet. We did not have enough money to go to Sylhet. Moreover, in Sodor, my uncle came to know a *dai*. That *dai* told my mother that she will be able to bring the baby out in an hour. She has connections with hospital doctors. So we came back home. I was bleeding heavily from that cut place. Then I stayed home for a day. The *dai* could not do anything. Then, I was taken to a clinic. People call him *Doctor Babu* (doctor Sir). That *Doctor Babu* told us that he will be able to bring the baby out. He tried to pull the baby with forceps. But he failed to pull it completely. Then again sent the baby back inside. And then he said to my uncle, take her to Sylhet as soon as possible, if you want to save her life. Then at 1.30 a.m I was

brought to Sylhet in a rented car. It was 2.30 (am) when we arrived in Sylhet. Then they saw the baby with a pipe and told us that the baby was dead already. Then they did not clear the baby. Instead, they put a saline. Next day I had labour pain and the baby came out. The *ayas* took me upstairs. I could not tell anything after that, I needed two bags of blood and a few stitches. The baby was a boy, quite big. He died (at this stage Shapla sighed with deep grief and silent cry). After that I stayed in hospital for 19 days. Both urine and faeces were leaking. I was very sick, weak. I could not even move. (Shapla, aged 20 years)

All the women in this study were first taken to the local or nearby hospital to treat obstetric complications, after the *dai* could not deliver the baby at home. Some women experienced obstetric fistula at a local health centre during the time when the health provider was trying to pull out the baby or in some cases after the woman in labour was taken to an EmOC with an already damaged pelvic area.

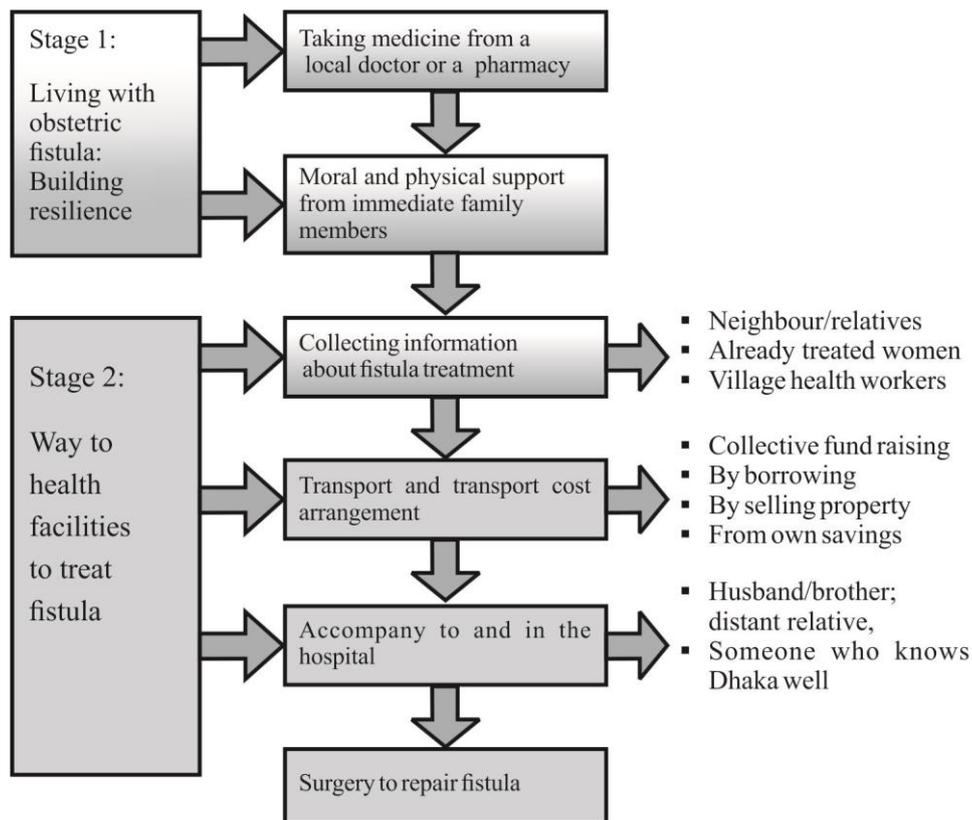


Figure 2: Health care seeking journey of women for treating obstetric fistula.

Source: Inspired by the illness response approach (MacKian 2003) and drawn from the interview data of the women suffering from fistula (Akhter 2015)

Gender inequality, low social status and disempowerment have a major impact on women's maternal health and access to maternal health care services. Ahmed et al. (2000) has shown that the probability of seeking any type of health care is almost twice as high among men as among women. This underlines the subjugated position of women in families, where women find it difficult to go to health facilities in an emergency. Thus, the occurrence of a maternal morbidity such as obstetric fistula cannot be fully explained by any particular cause or event, rather it occurs in a complex socio-economic and cultural context. This needs to be well understood to prevent obstetric fistula.

5 Health Care Seeking Behaviour for Obstetric Fistula: a Challenging Journey towards a Surgical Solution

Borrowing the idea from the 'illness response approach,' Figure 2 presents how a woman suffering from obstetric fistula copes with everyday life and how she seeks treatment. The illness response approach is based on the assumption that "behaviour is best understood in terms of an individual's perception of their social environment" (MacKian 2003, p. 8).

The left side of the diagram represents the two stages of health care through which the women suffering from obstetric fistula must pass in order to receive treatment.

In Stage 1, women live with fistula and build resilience to the condition with medicine and support from their family. In Stage 2, women find their way to a health facility for treatment. The various steps these women go through, first to build resilience and then to find their way to treatment, are shown on the right side of the diagram.

5.1 Living with Obstetric Fistula: Building Resilience

The lives of some fistula patients are impacted by a lack of resources necessary to care for their condition, such as time to wash their bodies throughout the day and soap to wash their clothes and beds frequently. Many women experience painful blisters on their inner thighs due to continuous leakage. In this condition, it is important that those women build resilience to continue life with the extra burden of maintaining their cleanliness. Bangser (2006, p. 535) noted such resilience among fistula suffering women in Africa as they continued to do their household work, care for their family members and keep themselves clean. The same is reflected in Akbari Begum's words,

"I think my husband still loves me. Because, I try to keep him happy (*mon rekhe choli*). I always keep myself clean, so that when he comes to me, he does not get any bad smell". (Akbari Begum, a fistula patient interviewed in this research).

Table 2: Major source of moral and financial support for treatment of obstetric fistula

Name of respondents	Types of support received			
	Source of financial support	Source of information about fistula treatment	Source of moral support	Person(s) who accompanied the woman to the hospital and waited with her
Shefali	Brothers	Woman from neighbouring village who has been already treated	Brothers	Brothers
Beli	By selling a cow	Another lady (Jobeda) coming here for treatment	Husband and son	Daughter-in-law
Rosy	Son	Son	Brother and son	Son
Jobeda	Brother	Distant relative and neighbour, who works in Dhaka	Brother	Alone (she knew this place as it was her second visit)
Shapla	Community donation	Doctor from the local clinic	Mother	Mother and husband
Kolmi	Husband and in laws	Sister-in-law, who works in Dhaka	Husband	Sister-in-law
Papiya	Borrowing from families and neighbour	Distant relative, (cousin's husband)	Husband	Husband
Jahanara	Savings	Cousin and Ad- din health worker from the neighbouring village	Cousins and sister	Alone
Sultana	Sons	Son	Husband	Daughter-in-law
Akbari Begum	Husband	Local clinic	Mother	Husband and husband's uncle
Shahanara	Brothers	Neighbour	No one	Alone

Source: Reference will be inserted after peer review

In spite of being isolated, stigmatized and poor, it is resilience that keeps these women going with high hopes of leading a normal life. It is their resilience and strength, according to Bangser (2006, p. 535), that encourages them to spend years looking for the money to get a surgical repair. The women in this study try to cope with their sufferings in two ways (Figure 2): First, through mental and moral support from their friends and family and second, which is more of a response to physical discomfort, is to go to a local healer or clinic to recover from the physical weakness or to get rid of the blisters between the inner thighs. For the women in this study, they were supported by at least one person

The support which may be in various forms, e.g., social, moral, motivational, financial, providing information etc. has come to the women in this study from a range of sources namely, parental family, husband, husband's family, distant relatives, neighbours, health workers (Table 2). The type of support received and the person providing that support is a major factor in defining the health care seeking behaviour of this group of women.

Jahanara, abandoned by her husband six months after having an obstetric fistula, has to work hard to earn her living. She also has to look after her ailing mother. Jahanara has received advice, information, financial help and clothes from her distant relatives and neighbours, and provided assistance. This extent of support is identified as community strength for the fistula affected women.

6 Receiving Comfort and Treatment from Local Healers

While waiting to receive surgical treatment for obstetric fistula, it is also very important for these women to address their other health and non-health problems that tend to reduce their working capacity. To do this, the women sought temporary treatment from local doctors or traditional healers. This not only reduced the incidence of health-related impacts of obstetric fistula but also helped the women to cope with their life. Jahanara stated her efforts to seek temporary comfort as follows:

"I have a life of severe suffering. I always have to use *taana* (old soft clothes used as pad). Whenever, any scar or sore appears, I get medicine from the doctor. The husband of one of my cousins is a doctor. He runs his practice from a pharmacy close to our house. He gives me medicine almost free of cost. He has a lot of *maya* (sympathy) for me".

7 Looking for Treatment: Seeking Health Facilities

The length of time elapsed between the onset of obstetric fistula and seeking treatment (as shown in Table 1) indicates that treating fistula is not an easy task by any means -- for the suffering women, as well as their families.

The second part of the framework in Figure 2 illustrates the phases and challenges which the women have to go through to seek treatment. It suggests that they have to overcome four challenges in seeking treatment, namely collecting information, arranging transport and its cost, finding someone to accompany the woman to the hospital and waiting there.

8 Collecting Information about Fistula Treatment

"I did not know *Apa* (sister) where to go for treatment- (said with a blank eye and with frustration in her voice). In the meantime, I saw some *Fakirs* (traditional healer). But this is not that type of disease that a *Fakir* can heal. This is a disease for a doctor. When the urinary tract gets sore or has scars, then a *Fakir's* medicine can give some comfort. But *Fakir* cannot heal *peshaber tholir futa* (hole in urinary bladder). Everyone advised us to go to Dhaka for operation, but no one told us where to go when in Dhaka. Moreover, everyone said it would need lots of money. How would we manage money? Now, my husband's sister lives in Dhaka. She works in the garment industry. She brought me here". (Jobeda, aged 25 years)

"I and that girl (showing Azida lying on the bed next to hers) came here together. That girl is also from my village. Her sister-in-law (husband's sister) works here in Dhaka as a garment factory worker. Her sister-in-law told her about this place and brought her here. She told me, '*chachi* (aunty) let's go together'. Then we came here together. We don't need money here" (Beli, aged 44 years).

The above two statements reveal that getting information about the appropriate place for the treatment was the first and biggest challenge for them. There were hardly any official sources of information about fistula repair. Only one woman received proper information from any health facility about the places, the costs and surgical procedures involved in treating or repairing fistula. For most of the other women, the major source of information was distant relatives, neighbours or village health workers.

Wegner et al. (2007, p. S110) have discussed the importance of community networks that provide information about resources and support for women who have obstetric fistula or process of reintegration into the community after treatment. However, support and information that the women received from their social network does not in any way substitute for the importance of access to, and supply of information about obstetric fistula and its treatment in all institutionalized health care centres.

9 Transport Costs and Arrangements

The second challenge to repair fistula is arranging transport costs. Although the treatment for fistula is provided free of cost, the women at the Ad din Hospital had to raise money to meet their transport costs and other unanticipated costs.

Figure 2 suggests that the women were able to arrange transport costs from different sources, such as borrowing money, selling property, donations from the community or own savings.

“Everyone in my village donated a little amount of money to meet my transport costs. Everyone had sympathy for me. They saw how I have suffered for such a long time. So, when they came to know that I was going to Dhaka for treatment, everyone helped me. When I started from home, all my neighbours came to my courtyard to see me off. They all said we will pray for you” (Beli, aged 40 years).

The money collection experiences of the women signify a great empathetic community support in Bangladesh, where informal social networks hold much importance in treating fistula. Wegner et al. (2007, p. 109) emphasize this importance of community network, including friends, family, husbands and neighbours in different steps of the treatment. They argue that as most fistula affected women live outside the mainstream of their societies, they are even less likely than other women to know that most fistulae can be repaired, let alone where to go to for treatment. Thus, social networks serve a pivotal role in the treatment seeking behaviour for fistula.

10 The Need for an Escort

Travelling to a health centre alone is a challenge for the fistula affected women. Thus, the third challenge in their path to repairing fistula is to get a person who can escort them to a fistula repair centre like Ad-din Fistula ward and do the initial formalities for admission. Women received support from family members and the wider

community to find an escort to the hospital. Most of the women reported that they were accompanied by someone who knew Dhaka well, be they distant relatives or friends. Again, this highlights the significance of a social network in dealing with fistula.

11 Treatment of Fistula: Physical, Social and Mental Healing

The women reported that they felt relieved and hopeful that they would get better as soon as they arrived at the hospital. Coming to the hospital gave the women not only hope for physical healing, but gave them reassurance about themselves by being associated with other women in a similar condition. They also felt happy with the level of care at the hospital which they had never received before. Success in fistula repair is usually defined by medical professionals in terms of its clinical outcome. Beyond this definition of surgical repair, it is important to also understand how women perceive the intervention, even when it does not repair the condition completely (Molzan et al 2007). The present study also found that being able to receive health care for fistula repair after years of suffering is a great stress reliever for the suffering women. Karimunnessa, lying in a bed with a catheter attached, told me with great happiness:

I am feeling very good after coming here. I am staying in dry clothes. It seems to me that I have found a new life in this world of Allah. You can't think of how much suffering I had! In this winter time, I had to wake up at midnight, wash my clothes. I shivered in the cold. I used to make fire at midnight, dry my clothes and warm myself and then go to bed again. Now, I have to do nothing like that. I am feeling very good”.

Thus, while repairing fistula is the ultimate goal of the treatment, even attempt to receive treatment has an impact on the affected women, not only in physical healing of their ailment but also in healing the mental sores.

12 Discussion

The findings suggest that the major underlying factor that played a pivotal role in making it possible for the women to treat fistula was their social network. The women were supported by their social network consisting of intimate family members, near and distant relatives, neighbours, friends and village health workers. They received support at every challenge they experienced towards receiving fistula repair.

The ‘Social network’ theory developed during the 1950s by a number of British anthropologists established

its links with health outcomes (Berkman et al. 2000, p. 845). Network analysis focuses on the structure and composition of the network, and the contents or specific resources which flow through those networks (Berkman et al 2000, p. 845). The proponents of this theory argue that one of the ways through which the structure of the network influences health is through the provision of social support, which may take the form of emotional, appraisal and instrumental support. The sources of such support can be varied, for example, intimate family, distant relatives, neighbourhood, voluntary or religious organisations etc.

However, while the theoretical discussion of the 'social network' focuses mainly on the structured network ties in different phases (Grootaert and Bastelaer 2002; Berkman et al. 2000), the social network from which the women in the present study received support is informal and loosely structured, and mostly built on community empathy towards the women. As social networks seemed to play a crucial role in shaping the health care seeking behaviour of these women, a more structured network within the community in which the women live could provide a stronger source of support for them. Such a network could provide not only information, moral, physical and social support but it could also give them a platform to empower and educate themselves in terms of maternal health. Story (2012, p. 83) identifying the importance of such networks, argues:

Promoting diverse, heterogeneous networks that include individuals with decision making power, may give communities better access to resources and information, as well as to voice their claims and negotiated support.

13 Conclusion

Based on the interviews of 11 fistula affected women receiving treatment at the Ad-din Hospital, this paper addressed first, the situation of the sufferings of fistula affected women and the context and the causes of their contracting fistula, and second, their journey towards surgical repair of fistula, the challenges they encountered in this journey and how they met these challenges.

The context and causes of fistula are remarkably similar for all the women interviewed. They were married very young (on average three years below the stipulated minimum legal age at marriage in Bangladesh), they conceived soon after marriage when they were physically not mature enough (much smaller pelvic sizes), went through prolonged obstructed labour (and sometimes, eclampsia) and could not obtain emergency obstetric care (EmOC). Underlying all these physical conditions was their poverty and malnutrition.

While campaigns for raising the age at marriage backed up by law are in progress, the husbands of these young brides should be given education and information about the need to postpone the (first) child birth at least until the wife is 20 years old, and motivated to use contraception for this purpose.

Regarding these women's journey to treat fistula and the challenges they faced and overcame in their journey, it was found that social and neighbourhood networks were at the centre of this journey.

The women were found to be very keen in treating their illness. Their major challenges in seeking care for fistula was gathering information about where to go for appropriate treatment. The other challenges consisted of arranging the cost and transport. The major support for these women to overcome these challenges and seek treatment came from their network of family, neighbourhood or the community. The importance of building a more structured social network has been mentioned before for providing women with treatment for fistula. However, information about the treatment of fistula should also be within easy reach of these women. While it may not be practicable or possible to equip the local health service centres or hospitals with sophisticated surgical procedures for repairing fistula or treating other morbidities, they should be equipped at least with a strong and effective support mechanism and referral capability. Earlier treatment (within three months of the onset of the problem) for obstetric fistula repairs the hole more effectively (Wall 2006, p. 1,204). That is why the support mechanism in local health centres and within the community, and communication between both, might help the fistula affected women in Bangladesh to quickly find treatment care options for this severe condition.

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