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Democracy in Bangladesh: From Crisis to Sustainability

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the problems of democratization in Bangladesh in light of the crises of governance in that country in the 21st century. The theoretical framework is a somewhat novel theory of deep democracy from a political and social economy perspective. However, the major emphasis is on understanding the problems of democratization in Bangladesh concretely in light of the theory. The theory of deep democracy makes a distinction between formal aspects of democracy and the deeper structural aspects. In order for democracy to be deep, democratic practices have to become institutionalized in such a way that they become part of normal life in a democratic society. Cluster conditions for deep democracy include both cultural-political and socio-economic conditions.

Clearly, even formal democracy has at best been fragile in Bangladesh and political crises have endangered even this modest prospect in the 21st century. However, social and political resources do exist within Bangladesh to make a viable attempt at restoring formal democracy and to take further steps to strengthen and deepen democracy there. Without underestimating the difficulties, the paper outlines a strategic agenda for the future.

Introduction

In times of crisis, there is an almost irresistible temptation to make pessimistic prognoses. Such pessimism is associated with an attitude that is supposed to reveal a hard headed realist's approach to the messy world of politics and economics. However, much of the hand wringing and dire predictions do not rely on anything beyond a generally dark and pessimistic outlook. Tragically, if there is enough darkness of outlook among large numbers of people, the dire predictions can become self-fulfilling. To avoid such tragedy, a sober, analytical approach that makes the best humanly possible attempt to take into account all sides of a complex crisis is necessary. It is also useful to look at the present in light of reasonable social scientific theories and an adequate historical perspective.

This short essay cannot offer the depth or breadth that will be necessary to deal with the crisis of democracy in Bangladesh in all its various details. However, it will make a serious and sincere attempt to alert the readers to the above two requirements of a realistic analysis of the problems by offering enough details to suggest solutions that will be viable. The great American philosopher John Dewey reminded his audience many years ago that the problems of democracy demand more, not less democracy. Dewey was writing at a time of deepening crisis in post WWI Western world when fascism was threatening democracy in an ominously aggressive and militant manner. Like Dewey, I will argue in this time of grave crisis in Bangladesh that what we need and can work towards is a deeper form of democracy in Bangladesh. Since others have already written informatively about the current situation, I will not spend much time on these details. Rather, I will ask the question: what are the deepest roots of the current crisis? Based on at least a partially adequate answer to the question we can move forward towards at least a partially adequate solution. But before engaging in such an analysis it is important to remind ourselves of some of the underlying strengths of Bangladeshi society, even as people despair, or perhaps especially as they despair.

The main purpose of this paper then, is to offer an analysis of the deepening crisis of democracy in Bangladesh that can contribute towards building a movement for sustainable democracy in the future. I try to do this by drawing upon and applying a somewhat novel theory of *deep democracy* from a political and social economy perspective. The theory of deep democracy presented here makes a distinction between formal aspects of democracy and the deeper structural aspects. In order for democracy to be deep, democratic practices have to become institutionalized in such a way that they become part of normal life in a democratic society. Cluster conditions for deep democracy include both cultural-political and socio-economic conditions. The interest in this paper is on applying the theory to find concrete conditions for the viability and sustainability of democracy in Bangladesh beyond the crisis solving mode of behavior.[1]

The paper is structured as follows. After offering a brief description of the background to the current crisis in the next section, I discuss some of the strengths of Bangladesh. Then follows outlines of some of the present and persistent difficulties. Thus a realistic if still incomplete assessment of the problems and prospects for democracy in Bangladesh becomes possible. I then offer a set of questions that outline the minimal conditions for revitalizing democratic politics. Going further, I discuss the meaning of the political and social economy approach to *deep democracy* as I use this term.[2] The deepening of democracy in Bangladesh, it is argued, is the only way of preserving and sustaining democracy there in the long run.[3]

A Brief Background

Bangladesh's political system remains highly fragile. In its 2007 democracy index, the Economist Intelligence Unit characterized Bangladesh as one of 54 "flawed democracies" worldwide on the basis of several indicators, including electoral politics, functioning of government, and civil liberties. In Bangladesh, elections tend to create immense civil unrest. Leaders of the two main political parties, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the Awami League (AL), invoke countrywide *hartals* (general strikes), which paralyze Bangladesh's already delicate economy for days or weeks at a time. Bangladesh's elections produce considerable violence. During the 2001 election cycle, nearly 400 people were reported killed and over 17,000 injured, mainly in street clashes between supporters of rival parties. In 2007 also many election-related deaths and hundreds of injuries had already been recorded before the present situation developed.

The basic premise for holding free and fair elections in Bangladesh has been that impartial individuals will manage a "non-party" caretaker government and oversee polling during an interim period between elected regimes. However, in practice, Bangladeshi politics became dominated by the rivalry between the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Awami League. The current crisis began when the BNP-led four-party coalition and the AL-led opposition fourteen-party alliance could not agree on the neutrality of the proposed Chief Advisor, CEC, and several members of the Election Commission. It could be said that President Iajuddin Ahmed fueled the crisis further by ignoring constitutional directives and naming himself Chief Advisor, an act unacceptable to the AL because he had been a political appointee of the BNP. It could

be said that the persistence of corruption, authoritarianism and what at times seems almost like a blood feud between the leaders of BNP and AL underlay the complex reality that has now been temporarily resolved through means that are nondemocratic. But given the depth of popular disgust at the travesty of democracy by the political elite, the anti-corruption drive of the current regime in particular is understandably supported by a wide spectrum. The problem that will not go away, however, is that of the transition to genuine democracy in Bangladesh. Before addressing the complex issues raised by this problem, a few remarks on the rise of Islamist extremism are called for, since this is often used as a key reason--particularly by some in the donor community--for even undemocratic rule that can suppress successfully the tendency of Islamist extremism. Since Bangladesh is still highly dependent on foreign aid (which is largely misused) this is an important issue.

It cannot be denied that since the secularist days of the liberation in 1971 and the mass movements before that, Bangladesh's wayward politics has given way to rising Islamic fundamentalism. The BNP included two Islamist parties in its four-party coalition for the 2001 elections. The support for those parties was statistically significant: together they won 20 of the 300 seats in parliament. Both have platforms expressly calling for the eventual dissolution of the country's democracy in favor of a government based on *sharia* (Islamic law).

Increasingly, the activities of Islamist extremists have become a cause for concern. A Bangladeshi was one of five signatories to Osama bin Laden's *fatwa(religious declaration)* in 1998 calling for *jihad* on America and its allies. Within Bangladesh, attacks against secularist politicians (including an assassination attempt on Sheikh Hasina Wajed, the AL leader), journalists, and progressive citizens has occurred. On August 17, 2005, over 450 bombs exploded nearly simultaneously in 63 of Bangladesh's 64 governing districts. Leaflets were found in many of the bombing sites, calling for the abrogation of Bangladesh's constitution and installation of a *sharia*-based government. The groups that claimed responsibility--Jamaat ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB)-- are Islamist extremists.

Although Islamist extremists are attempting to reverse the long struggle for democracy and secularism in Bangladesh, I will argue in the next

section that there are resources within Bangladesh for a renewal of democracy which, with appropriate support from democratic forces abroad, can defeat the Islamist extremists. There is no reason for us to throw away the baby of democracy with the bathwater of Islamist extremism. We may be going through a strange baptism for our democratic future. The conflict can be resolved in democratic terms by strengthening the forces of democracy as I argue below.

Internal Historical Strengths and Prospects for the Deepening of Democracy in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is not yet an unqualified failure. It has a free press. The press is not only formally free but is strong and established with many dedicated journalists who are building an important part of our civil society. In spite of serious mismanagement, the annual economic growth has generally been (in GDP) of 5% or higher during the last decade. During my tenure at the Asian Development Bank, I wrote several reports on the economic prospects of Bangladesh. On the basis of these close empirically-based studies, it is possible to argue with some confidence that the development prospects of Bangladesh are favorable once the obstacles that I will soon discuss are removed gradually. The 2006 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Bangladesh's Muhammad Yunus for his innovative microcredit programs to help the poor establish small business ventures. Along with other efforts such as a successful population planning policy, initiatives like Yunus's Grameen Bank have enabled the country to outperform other developing countries in poverty reduction. Bangladesh is also making progress towards meeting at least some of the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

I will briefly outline these and some other strengths of Bangladesh before moving on to a discussion of the more serious problems that have impeded its political, economic and social development so far.

Strengths of Bangladesh

1. Relatively homogeneous population—with some important minorities whose rights need better protection.

2. Largely secular and tolerant of others historically with some problems that are of largely post-1975 origin.

3. A generally growing and diversifying economy with natural gas deposits (which must be used properly).

4. Good progress in communications and gradually- improving physical infrastructure.

5. Success of micro-finance and other poverty-reduction policies, relatively speaking.

6. Success of population-control policy.

7. An increasing number of semi-skilled workers inside Bangladesh and large number of skilled- and semi-skilled workers abroad

8. Accumulated knowledge and experience domestically, human resources in national and international NGOs, in various academic and other professional fields.

9. From a historical perspective, the popular culture, consciousness and social practices have on the whole been and largely remain even today free from dogmatism, rigidity and intolerance. For Bangalees, these negative traits have characterized to this day only a minority. Unfortunately, such a minority with power and means of destruction can be quite oppressive. However, it is only fair to say the majority of Bangalees do not support such destructive oppression. This statement is supported by the evidence of recent overwhelming support for effective anti-corruption policies.

10. A history of struggle against superior but unjust state power both during the British Raj and the Pakistani regime. The fact that these struggles were successful suggests that Bangladesh has the resources for political renewal within the polity and society. However, we must ask seriously what the preconditions for such renewal are.

Some Strategic Problems of Development of Democracy in Bangladesh

I will first list five problems that I consider to be of greatest concern. I then discuss one issue regarding the existing political culture that is of strategic importance as well as in moving beyond crisis-driven solutions. Finally, I raise ten questions which suggest some strategic areas of focus for our progressive civil society and political forces.

My list of key problems is as follows:

1. Problem of parliamentary constitutional politics --representative democracy and its limits;

2. Problem of economic justice, class, gender, ethnic and religious minorities;

3. Problem of social stratification and differentiation including the divide among the newly rich and those who are being left behind;

4. Problem of creating a vigorous Civil Society;

5. Problem of linking with the democratic forces internationally and delinking with the antidemocratic forces.

All these problems have remained unsolved or very partially addressed at best in the last few decades for many complex historical reasons that are subjects of intense debate. Without engaging in this exercise (which is valuable, but not central to my purpose), I want to draw attention to the problem of creating the right "political and civic culture" without which democracy cannot function anywhere in the world. I do this not because I believe that culture is fixed as our genes are, but in the knowledge that however difficult it may be to create it, culture is a human creation. Therefore, though difficult, the existing culture can be changed for the better. Furthermore, there are indigenous resources including--as Amartya Sen and others have emphasized--a tradition of public reason and arguments. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the process of creating a democratic culture will be a long and protracted process.

Probably, the best characterization of this problem at a visceral level comes from Ahrar Ahmad. As he puts it:

"The "problem" of Bangladesh is not one about which party governs, but what political class most of our leaders come from, and the behavioral/attitudinal patterns they represent. We live in an environment of conspicuous consumption by the elite, a culture of arrogance, cynicism, and bullying where the ability to circumvent the laws is claimed as a hallmark of status and power, an atmosphere that has led to the criminalization of politics and the politicization of crime. Our leaders impugn the patriotism of anybody who disagrees with them, use the word "conspiracy" as a weapon in their demagogic repertoire, and hound the opposition (whoever it may be) with sneering

impatience and petty vengefulness."

There is often a contradiction between the rhetorical flourishes they employ and the personal examples they set. For instance, they will speak about the need to preserve the Bangla language and culture with seeming passion, but will send their children to English medium schools; they will cry themselves hoarse warning us about environmental crisis, but build high-rise buildings without any concern about their impact on urban blight; they will be eloquent about the need for moral clarity, but will have no problems winking their way through the ethical thicket of institutionalized graft and bribery; they will decry the politics of agitation, confrontation and brinkmanship, but engage in it themselves at the first opportunity; they will glorify the democratic process, but then undermine the parliament; they will loudly proclaim that religion is a private matter and there must be a wall of separation between mosque and state, but will make sure that their visit to Saudi Arabia and their participation in religious functions are widely publicized; they will forever express their solidarity with the people, but not care about the suffering their public policies or political strategies impose on them; they will be eloquent in defense of freedom of the press, but attack journalists and file cases against them if their investigations cut close to home; they will encourage political constancy and ideological commitment in others, but themselves function in a system of shabby bickering and horse trading, fluid alliances and fungible loyalties, and be chameleon-like in their ability to change color and direction depending on immediate advantage and opportunity. The political elite dismisses concerns about intellectual honesty or charges of hypocrisy as the work of, what else, "conspirators". They seek power, and are not bothered that they do not have moral authority. There are, of course, striking and outstanding individual exceptions …However, generally, they have collectively helped to institute a system to "crony capitalism" through the formation of a "klepto-patrimonial", rent-seeking predatory state, which has not "failed" but has probably been "struggling" for some time. In the hands of the same leadership class, it is destined to continue in the same direction. If we leave the foxes to guard the hen house, does it matter what party comes to power, that administrative changes are instituted, and what procedures are put in place?[4]

We need to find credible means to change the political culture within which we function. Most importantly, we need to take the first steps today to

change the attitudes, values and practices of our political elite. Unless this can be done, the long term viability of democracy in Bangladesh will remain doubtful. With this in mind, I now pose ten strategic questions that we need to answer to make the prospects for sustainable democracy credible.

Some Important Questions for the Development of Democracy in Bangladesh

1. How to offer security of life, liberty, personal property of citizens and property of corporate bodies in the civil society and the state?

2. How to ensure that justice is done and that the situation does not deteriorate into cycles of political retribution and revenge?

3. How to establish and preserve the integrity of the electoral process?

4. How to make the parliamentary process effective?

5. How to ensure optimal social investment for infrastructure, industrial and overall human development?

6. How to make the bureaucracy, the armed forces and police accountable?

7. How to empower people and make local government more effective in delivering services?

8. How to control corruption and greed systematically by strengthening an independent judiciary and enforcement?

9. How to reform the educational system so that productive and politically aware citizenship is the end result?

10. How to reduce poverty through overall human and sustainable development so that the poor can participate meaningfully in the overall development process?

Strategic Steps for Checking Crony Capitalism and Building an Environment for Democracy

Undoubtedly, some of the steps that are being taken currently--- particularly, the anti-corruption drive--- are correct both tactically and strategically. However,

the longer term danger for democracy is precisely that without a continuous and valid consent of the governed and viable institutions of democracy, such practices will become paternalistic at best. In the worst case, degeneration into a dictatorial stance can not be ruled out. What exists now is a window of opportunity for beginning serious reforms with the ultimate goal of building a strong civil society and democratic political culture. Five areas seem particularly important.

1. Deepening civil liberties while carefully defining hate speeches and clerical and other forms of fascism and punishing the advocates of these tendencies. The issues here are indeed very subtle and care must be taken to protect fundamental rights;[5]
2. Building alliances with the poor and middle peasants, workers, students and professionals with a platform of a justly regulated and limited market-based economy which will promote the social capabilities of all with equity;
3. Protecting our national resources and infrastructure by dealing with outside influences and sources on the basis of popular national sovereignty;
4. Instituting good governance practices from below and corporate governance to make businesses and financial firms accountable.
5. An overhaul of the major political parties by retiring the corrupt politicians and bringing to the fore other honest patriotic forces.

In order to do this, a clear declaration of intent by a government for national unity which will relinquish its power to the democratic forces after a limited time is urgently required. Much concrete discussion needs to be focused on this particular issue. At the minimum level, a genuine commitment to secularism and democratization can be the starting point for a meaningful dialogue.

The remainder of this essay discusses some methodological and theoretical issues raised by the above discussion before concluding that the deepening of democracy is the only way to preserve democracy in Bangladesh in the long run. Although such a discussion may seem "merely theoretical" at this point, without a reasonable theory of democracy to guide the practice, the tragic history of the last few decades since our historic victory in the liberation war is likely to be repeated. In order not to squander once again a genuine opportunity to democratize, we

must ask some deep questions about the political and social economy of democracy in Bangladesh.

The Meaning of Political and Social Economy Approach and Conditions for Deep Democracy

By the political economy we mean the classical state ,and civil society and their interactions. By social economy we mean the underlying social basis of the political economy including the family structure.

Khan (1994, 1998, 2007) presents deep democracy as a structure in addition to formal democratic apparatus such that the practice of such democratic life can be reproduced with the basic values intact. Change is not precluded. But all such changes should deepen democracy, not weaken it. Deep democracy in this sense is intimately connected with economic and social justice. Ultimately, it calls for a transition to a culture of creativity, diversity and tolerance.

In order to make such a concept of democracy with full economic and social justice tenable, however, at least a cluster of conditions connected with deepening democracy must be realized (Khan 1994, 1998). The following is a list of such cluster conditions. It can be seen from a broad perspective that these can be divided into three categories: economic, political and social-cultural. As discussed below these are somewhat overlapping categories and some conditions indeed belong to more than just one of these categories. However, complex categories meant to capture as much of a complex reality as possible are often of this nature.[6]

Cluster Conditions for Deep Democracy[7]

1. Ending of economic and other status inequalities;

2. Public emphasis on furthering democratic autonomy, internationalism, and individuality;

3. Adequate incomes for all socially recognized work, as well as for children, the handicapped, the aged, and others not able to work in order to promote equality of capability;

4. Respect for and articulation of differences in public life and within parties;

5. Downward democratic congruence of and within ordinary social institutions, including work place democracy;

6. Debate over the history and future of the movement- the nature of deep democracy – in neighborhood assemblies and schools

7. Cultivation of respect for civil disobedience, strikes, and other acts of protest on major public issues;

8. Integration of local and national leaders into features of ordinary economic and political life and creation of arenas for criticism;

9. Curtailment of all direct political intervention in the arts, religion, and personal life;

10 Establishments of independent judicial, policy, communication and electoral review bodies;

11. Diversity of perspective in communications and education;

12. Use of differential, serial referenda on central issues;

13. Public funding of issue-oriented committees as well as parties;

14. Takeover of some security and civil judicial functions by neighborhood or regional democratic associations; abolition of centralized, especially secret police powers and units;

15. Universal public service, military or community; restructuring of armed forces in a defensive, civilian-oriented direction; removal of authoritarianism of rank and status, and institution of democratic unit organization, allowing serious discussion of policy;

16. Proportional representation of parties;

17. Abolition of patriarchy;

18. Adoption of democratic child-rearing practices;

19. Full freedom of social intercourse of diverse groups;

20. Full freedom of diverse cultural expression;

21. Encouragement of the arts and varying modes of expression so that every individual can experience and struggle with the challenge of non-dominating discourse;

22. Practice of radical forms of individual and group subjectivity leading to what Guattari has termed the molecular revolution[8]

23. Adoption of technology and innovation systems which will reinforce the conditions above, rather than undercutting them.

As mentioned before, the list of cluster conditions above contains overlapping categories which can be broadly classified as economic, political and social-cultural. For example, ending of economic and other status inequalities is a largely economic but also a political and social-cultural project that will have to be sustained over a long period. By way of contrast, item number 3--adequate incomes for all socially recognized work, and for the handicapped, the aged, and others not able to work in order to promote equality of capability is a broadly economic project as Sen and others have characterized it. Item number 10--establishment of independent judicial, policy, communication and electoral review bodies--is largely a political project whereas item numbers 20 and 21 are clearly social-cultural in nature. Deepening democracy is thus an integrated process where all the dimensions of social life are implicated. These diverse processes must work together and reinforce one another.

It may also be useful to clarify and elaborate upon the idea of social capabilities which are also intimately related to rights (see footnote 9 below) in condition 3 above. We can summarize following Nussbaum and Sen and give a social interpretation of all the capabilities as in Khan (1998):

Summary of Social Capabilities[9]

1. Being able to live to the end of a complete human life, as far as possible.

2. Being able to be courageous.

3. Being able to have opportunities for sexual satisfaction.

4. Being able to move from place to place.

5. Being able to avoid unnecessary and non-useful pain and to have pleasurable experiences.

6. Being able to use the five senses.

7. Being able to imagine.

8. Being able to think and reason.

9. Being acceptably well-informed.

10. Being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves.

11. Being able to love, grieve, to feel longing and gratitude.

12. Being able to form a conception of the good.

13. Capability to choose; ability to form goals, commitments, values.

14. Being able to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life.

15. Being able to live for and to others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of familial and social interaction.

16. Being capable of friendship.

17. Being able to visit and entertain friends.

18. Being able to participate in the community.

19. Being able to participate politically and being capable of justice.

20. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature.

21. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

22. Being able to live one's own life and nobody else's.

23. Being able to live in one's very own surroundings and context.

24. Capability to have self-respect.

25. Capability to appear in public without shame.

26. Capability to live a rich and fully human life, up to the limit permitted by natural possibilities.

27. Ability to achieve valuable functionings.

As Crocker (1995) correctly points out, we can facilitate this ordering by requiring that "… it might be better for practical rationality and affiliation to 'infuse' but not 'organize' the other virtues." Crocker contrasts Nussbaum's approach with that of Sen. Sen and Nussbaum's lists differ at a few points. For Sen, the bodily capabilities and functionings are intrinsically good and not, as they are in some dualistic theories of the good life, merely instrumental means to other (higher) goods. In interpreting Aristotle, Nussbaum distinguishes between bodily functionings that are chosen and intentional, for instance, "chosen self-nutritive and reproductive activities that form part of a reason-guided life" and those that are non-intentional, such as digestion and other "functioning of the bodily system in sleep."

Furthermore, Nussbaum has included items such as "being able to have attachments to things and persons outside ourselves" and "being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature," for which Sen has no counterparts. These items are welcome features. Item twenty (being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants and the world of nature), "ecological virtue," is an especially important addition to Nussbaum's outlook. In a period when many are exploring ways of effecting a convergence between environmental ethics and development ethics, it is important that an essentially anthropocentric ethic "make room" for respect for other species and for ecological systems. Worth considering is whether Nussbaum's "ecological virtue" is strong enough. Perhaps it should be formulated to read: "Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and nature as intrinsically valuable." Item twenty one injects some appealing playfulness in a list otherwise marked by the "spirit of seriousness." What explains the presence of these items on Nussbaum's list, their absence on Sen's list, and, more generally, the more concrete texture often displayed in Nussbaum's descriptions? One hypothesis is that the differences are due to Nussbaum's greater attention to the limits, vulnerabilities, and needs of human existence. Further, it may be that Nussbaum's richer conception of human beings derives from "making use of the story-telling imagination far more than the scientific intellect." On the other hand, Sen helpfully includes the good of self-respect, a virtue that enables him to find common ground with Rawls and to establish links with the Kantian ethical tradition, in which moral agents have the obligation to respect all persons, including themselves, as ends-in-themselves.

Both Sen and Nussbaum agree, however, that these capabilities are distinct and of central importance. One cannot easily trade off one dimension of capability against another. At most, one can do so in a very limited way. They cannot be reduced to a common measure such as utility.

As Crocker (1991a, b) points out, "capability ethic" has implications for freedom, rights and justice going far beyond simple distribution of income considerations. If one accepts the capability approach as a serious foundation for human development, then it follows that going beyond distributive justice is necessary for a complete evaluation of the impact of economic policies.

In evaluating any policy regime – for instance international financial regimes and national economic policies under globalization in Bangladesh – from this perspective, not only do we wish to pose the question of efficiency but also the whole set of questions regarding human freedom, in particular, the positive human freedom to be or to do certain things. Thus, creation of markets and efficient production by itself would mean very little if it led to a lopsided distribution of benefits. Worse yet, if markets and other institutions led to phenomena such as reduced life expectancy, increased unemployment, reduced consumption levels for many and deprivation for certain groups such as women and minorities, then they would not even be weakly equitable global economic structures. On the contrary, under such circumstances, the global markets and other financial institutions would be strongly inequitable from the capability perspective, and violate some basic human rights in particular.

The premise from which we must begin then is that the aim of any sane, progressive socio-economic system in Bangladesh must go beyond the blind accumulation of capital or industrial and financial development at all costs. The goal of a just political and social economy is to guarantee each individual's freedom or ability to live the kind of life they have reasons to choose. The 'social capabilities' mentioned above can be construed as the general powers of human body and mind that can be acquired, maintained, nurtured and developed.[10] Capabilities are economic, but they are also political, social, psychological/spiritual, and mental. Further, no one capability can be simply substituted for

another; one cannot substitute the capability of political freedom, or the capability to engage in meaningful work, with the capability to maintain a certain standard of consumption.   A deeply democratic society must take into account all forms of capabilities without the sacrifice of some over others.

The point here is not to emphasize one form of political, economic or social institution above all others, but to draw attention to the variety of alternative institutions that could help to positively develop the social capabilities of members in a deeply democratic society which can also draw from the concrete cultural strengths of each particular society. Against the pessimists we must pose concretely the possibilities of building institutions for enhancing the social capabilities in Bangladesh, beginning with the indigenous strengths of *Bangalee* society which were mentioned earlier.

Summary and Conclusions

We have summarized our approach to deep democracy from the political and social economy perspective above. It is now clear that in Bangladesh, the crucial problem of deepening democracy as a set of practices over time must be given priority. Our hope is that the above considerations can guide the practical agenda in Bangladesh in the future.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to offer a strategic view of the current crisis and problems of democracy in Bangladesh. Needless to say, such an attempt can only be a preliminary and tentative one, given the complexity and historical roots of the problem of democracy in Bangladesh. To summarize, without being exhaustive, a set of five-point strategic principles was presented. These are:

1. Deepening civil liberties while carefully defining and punishing hate speeches and clerical and other forms of fascism;

2. Building alliances with the peasants, workers, students and professionals with a platform of a justly regulated and limited market-based economy which will promote the social capabilities of all with equity;

3. Protecting our national resources and infrastructure by dealing with outside influences and sources on the basis of popular national sovereignty;

4. Instituting good governance practices from below and corporate governance to make businesses and financial firms accountable.

5. An overhaul of the major political parties by retiring the corrupt politicians and bringing to the fore other honest patriotic forces.

These considerations point towards the building of a movement for the gradual deepening of democracy in Bangladesh. Our approach here makes a distinction between formal aspects of democracy and the deeper structural aspects. In order for democracy in Bangladesh or anywhere for that matter, to be deep, democratic practices have to become institutionalized in such a way that they become part of normal life in a democratic society. This essay has also argued that despite serious problems and setbacks, there are resources within Bangladesh that can combine the historical and cultural tendencies towards democracy and social and political forces fighting for democracy with allies everywhere to build the kind of strategic alliances that can move us toward democracy in practice. Deep Democracy and economic justice for Bangladesh, therefore, can be presented as a coherent set of positive and realistic requirements. These are integral to the need for the ordinary citizens' rational autonomy in every sphere of their lives.   The cluster conditions we give together with the social capabilities perspective offer a way of defending and advancing the justification for deepening democracy in Bangladesh beyond the crisis-driven solutions currently on offer.

Endnotes

1. The interested reader is referred to Khan (1992; 1993 a, b; 1994; 1998, 2003 and 2007). In Frame and Khan (2007) the authors develop the idea of moving towards deep democracy in the context of important failures of both capitalism and socialism in the last century.

2. For an elaboration of the specific arguments for deep democracy and its theoretical structure, please see Khan (1992, 1994, 1998, 2003, and 2007) and Frame (2007) and Khan and Frame (2007) where we discuss in greater detail the economic and political dimensions of deep democracy. Khan (1998) looks critically at the technological dimensions of modern democracy

including the ambiguities of teledemocracy and e-governance.

3. Thus, readers who are pressed for time or are less theoretically inclined can skim this part.

4. Ahmad (2006), pp.32-33.

5. I am grateful to a referee for pointing out the need for emphasizing the problems of drawing the necessary distinctions. My recommendation is to follow a case by case approach to judge when there is real and present danger to some individuals or groups(e.g., minorities, women) posed by intolerant and violent practices of certain forces and then to use constitutional means to prevent the violation of rights of individuals or groups by intolerant and violent political groups.

6. Late Wittgenstein (for example in his *Philosophical Investigations* as opposed to his earlier "Vienna Circle" logical positivist writings) famously drew our attention to the overlapping aspects of ordinary language categories. Formally, fuzzy set theory captures this view in part. I have discussed this in the context of mathematical modeling via a neuro-fuzzy approach that combines both neural networks and fuzzy set theoretical approaches to cognitive modeling, in my book on complex financial systems. See Khan (2004), ch.7 in particular.

7. Khan (1998) p. 101

8. As one referee pointed out, this term requires further clarification. The term molec-ular(introduced by Guattari and used by him and Deleuze among others for their critique of orthodox psychoanalysis) here refers to the micro-transformations that are necessary at the individual level. In particular, the formation of psychological processes and personality types open to nonauthoritarian and democratic ways of behavior must take place at the individual level. But these processes themselves can be realized only if appropriate social institutions are functioning over a significant period. For other related psychological perspectives, please see Cohen (1994), Deleuze and Guattari (1977; 1986; 1987), Derrida (1996; 1981), Guattari (1984), Gilbert (1990), Hegel (1952; 1991), Khan (1992; 1994; 1998; 2006; 2007a and b),

Kristeva (1974), Lacan (1975), Lear (1990), Norris (1990), Nietszhe (1969), Hasan (1982; 1987), Sherman (undated), Wallwork (1991) among others. Gilbert (1990) refers to Kohut's theory of individuality. Khan (1998) introduced both a critical poststructuralist approach and also the perspectives of child and developmental psychologists. Frame (2007) and Frame and Khan (2007a) refer to, among others, Victor Frankl's work on logotherapy. Frankl bases much of his theory on clinical observations, but the original impetus came from his experience in a Nazi concentration camp where he was a prisoner and observed both the tormentors and the tormented. While the camp offered indeed a life or death situational experiment, it can be argued less starkly that 'living well' requires a will to meaning and the fulfilment of this will to some degree.

9. Sen and Nussbaum, as cited by Khan (1998) p. 95. These capabilities can be connected to rights as well. I have tried to do so in my essay, "Women's rights as human rights" which takes a social capabilities approach to rights.

10. As interpreted by Khan (1998). *Technology, Development and Democracy.* Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, UK. p. 95. Here, Khan emphasizes the irreducibly social nature of certain capabilities.

11. Barber (2003), p. 307

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Appendix

Strong Democratic Program for the Revitalization of Citizenship[11]

1. A national system of neighborhood assemblies of from one to five thousand citizens; these would initially have only deliberative functions but would eventually have local legislative competence as well.

2. A national civic communications cooperative to regulate and oversee the civic use of new telecommunications technology and to supervise debate and discussion of referendum issues.

3. A civic videotext service and a civic education postal act to equalize access to information and promote the full civic education of all citizens.

4. Experiments in decriminalization and informal lay justice by an engaged citizenry.

5. A national initiative and referendum process permitting popular initiatives and referenda on congressional legislation, with a multi-choice format and two stage voting plan.

6. Experimental electronic balloting, initially for education and polling purposes only, under the supervision of the Civic Communications Cooperative.

7. Selective local elections to local office by lottery, with pay incentives.

8. Experiments with an internal voucher system for selected schools, public housing projects, and transportation systems.

9. A program of universal citizen service, including military option for all citizens.

10. Public sponsorship of local volunteer programs in 'common work' and 'common action.'

11. Public support of experiments in workplace democracy, with public institutions as models for economic alternatives.

12. A new architecture of civic and public space.