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**CLIMATE CHANGE AND STATE FRAGILITY:
A STUDY OF BANGLADESH**

Md. Rafiqul Islam*
Kamrunnahar Lipi**

Abstract

State fragility is broadly related to the capability of a state to exercise its sovereignty and integrity within national and international contexts. Long-term civil war, internal chaos, famine, and conflict generally cause state fragility. Nowadays, climate change induced events such as floods, droughts, sea-level rise and cyclones have been issues of state fragility. Such issues trigger risk and vulnerabilities to the people in the affected areas. People living in underdeveloped and poor countries are more exposed to the vulnerabilities due to the poverty and lack of resources. Bangladesh, as one of the most climate hit countries, is exposed to vulnerabilities associated with climate changes. Climatic events adversely affect agriculture, complicate water sources, and paralyse other life supporting systems that lead the country to compromise the development initiatives and human security. This article argues that climatic events may have strong implications to cause state fragility in Bangladesh if appropriate adaptation and mitigation policies are not taken. Providing a theoretical idea of state fragility and climate change, it evaluates the conditions, such as geographical location and major climatic events which have strong implications for causing the situation of state fragility in Bangladesh. Climatic events have also the implications on diminishing resource base and generate resource scarcity which eventually may cause mass displacement and migration of poor people. And migration sometimes causes a source of instability, civil unrest and conflict in the migrant destination place. This article, thus, proposes to adopt appropriate mitigation and adaptation measures to tackle the adverse effects of the climate change and ensure the human security of millions of people.

1. Introduction

‘State fragility’ is a relatively new but an established phenomenon in academic and development field. Development partners e.g. Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) proposed this concept to examine the capability of the underdeveloped countries in the case of implementing the policy and utilizing the aid received from the donors. However, this term is widely used in the context of conflict, violence and human rights violation within individual states. Based on the intensity of conflict and human right situation, the Fund for Peace (FFP) publishes the index of the fragile state every year to sensitize the issues that

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generate state fragility. Currently, scholars and policy analysts claim that climate change impacts complicate the capability of a state and generate fragility through destroying agriculture, diminishing livelihood, and displacing mass people from their place of origin.¹ Given this background, this paper aims to take Bangladesh as a case and investigates whether climatic events, such as floods, cyclones, sea-level rise and coastal erosion lead to the state fragility or not. As a climate hotspot, Bangladesh is already faced by frequent floods, cyclone and sea-level rise. Socio-economic and political issues such as overpopulation, poverty, lack of resources, political upheaval, mass corruption and terrorist activities also affect the progress and human development of the country. In association with the socio-economic and political problems, climatic events are imposing new and additional threats to the existing issues of insecurities and concerns such as excessive rain, frequent cyclones, and drought. This paper, thus, explores the question, “is climate change pushing Bangladesh as a fragile state?” For analysing this question, this paper depends on theories and models of the fragile state as well as empirical evidences.

Indeed, the measurement of state fragility is an arduous task as there is no specific variable to label a country a fragile state. A composite set of variables such as frequent occurrence of war, conflict, and civil strife lead to the inability of a state to utilise the resources and attain development goals that determine whether a country is strong or fragile. Different sources and documents are available to measure state fragility². This article, thus, depends on secondary sources of information and published reports by the donor organisations and scholars for exploring the connection between climatic events and state fragility. Information are taken from the reliable web sources such as google scholar and scopus index journals. Based on theories and evidence, this paper has developed a framework of fragile state for analyzing the situation of Bangladesh. The framework comprises social, economic and political indicators to examine the situation of Bangladesh. Based on the contextual issues in Bangladesh such as demographic, socio-economic and climate changes, this paper evaluates condition of the state fragility in the face of increasing climate changes. Finally, this paper argues that climate changes have profound impacts on generating state fragility complicating the socio-economic and environmental issues.

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- 1 M. Hamza and C. Cosmin, *Climate change and fragile states*. UNU-EHS, 2012; L. Rüttinger, D. Smith, G. Stang, D. Tänzler, J. Vivekananda, and O. Brown, *A new climate for peace: taking action on climate and fragility risks*. Berlin/London/Washington/Paris: Adelphi, 2015
 - 2 M. Balianoune-Lutz and M. McGillivray, State fragility: Concept and measurement. In *Fragile states: causes, costs, and responses*, 2011, pp. 33-42; O. Eghosa E. Fragile states. *Development in Practice*, Vol. 17, No. 4-5, 2007, pp. 691-699

2. The concept of a fragile state: development

The notion of the 'fragility' is a newly coined term in the international arena due to increasing numbers of internal conflict, factional politics and grave human rights violations by the state agencies, particularly by the state-run security forces.³ Before 'state fragility', the concept of the 'failed state' came into being in the literature of Political Science and International Relations. The failed state refers to the inability of the government or sometimes unwillingness to provide basic needs and satisfy the expectations to its citizens.⁴ In fact, the failed state concept has been coined in the 1990s from the humanitarian intervention debate when many countries in Africa were unable to protect themselves from the war and famine. As a second phase, it refers to the inability of the state to provide some political goods such as security, health, education, good governance, ensuring law and order situation and build up the infrastructure of the country.⁵ In this context, the failed state is defined as a state which cannot or will not safeguard minimal civil conditions, i.e. domestic peace, order, and security. More than two decades ago Robert Kaplan disused the term 'failed state' in the report of 'Coming Anarchy' published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1994 where he presented the gloomy character of a 'failed state' based on the case study of Africa.⁶ Indeed, Kaplan's analysis highlighted that overpopulation, demographic changes, massive environmental degradation, and militarization weaken the state capacity as well as perpetuate state fragility.

With the failed state concept, the 'fragile state' appeared in the lexicon of the Social Sciences by different names such as 'weak', 'failed, or 'collapsed state'.⁷ The fragile state was defined as a country having poor economic performance, political instability, conflict, and inability to ensure basic human rights to the citizens. Chronic poverty, diseases, and conflict are also the features of a fragile

3 D. Carment, Assessing State Failure: Implications for Theory and Policy. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3 2003, pp. 407-27; D. Carment, P. Stewart, and S. Yiagadeesen, *Security, development and the fragile state: Bridging the gap between theory and policy*, Routledge, 2009

4 A. Hehir, The myth of the failed state and the war on terror: A challenge to the conventional wisdom. *Journal of intervention and state-building*, Vol.1, No. 3, 2007, pp. 307-332

5 D. W. Potter, *State responsibility, sovereignty, and failed states*. Paper presented at the University of Adelaide, Australasian Political Studies Association Conference. Adelaide, 2004

6 R. Kaplan, *The coming anarchy. Globalization and the Challenges of a New Century: A Reader*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000, pp. 34-60

7 C. T. Call, The Fallacy of the 'Failed State'. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 8 (2008), pp. 1491-150

state. Countries such as Somalia, Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Bosnia were labeled as a fragile state.⁸ In Asia and the Middle East, countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen are considered as a fragile state. Indeed, internal conflict, civil war, economic backwardness, political unrest, social instability and poor human rights situation are the characteristics of a fragile state.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) emphasizes on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to evaluate the capacity of the state. As per UNDP, countries failing to reach the milestones of MDGs are fragile states. The parameters set by the MDGs are poverty line, mortality rate, per capita income, water and sanitation, enrollment in the primary school, and women empowerment situation in the state system.⁹ The OECD has defined the fragile state as:

When state structures lack the political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations.¹⁰

In order to measure the state fragility, the development organizations, such as UNDP focuses on the stability and performance of the state because such organisations put emphasis on the state performance for investing the money. Development organizations are more interested in implementing the organizational goals and strategies instead of paying attention to the interests of the country. The World Bank (WB) emphasizes the “appropriateness of the countries’ economic policies and performance of its public institutions”.¹¹ It defines some countries as fragile if it,

(a) is eligible for assistance (i.e. grant) from the International Development Association (IDA), (b) has had a UN peacekeeping mission in the last three years, and (c) has received a ‘governance’ score of less than 3.2, where 3.2 is the threshold.¹²

8 *Ibid*, p. 409

9 UNDP, 2016. UNDP Offer on SDG Implementation in Fragile States, 2016, Online Available online:
https://www1.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/SDGs/English/SDG_Implementation_in_Fragile_States.pdf

10 OECD, 2007. Principles for good international engagement in fragile states and situations, Paris: OECD, 2007, Available online: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/states-of-fragility-report-series.htm>

11 M. Balianoune-Lutz and M. McGillivray, State fragility: Concept and measurement. In N. Wim, A. U. Santos-Paulino, and M. McGillivray, (eds.), *Fragile states: Causes, costs, and responses*, Oxford University Press, 2011. pp. 33-42

12 M. Woolcock, Engaging with fragile and conflict-affected states. Faculty Research Working Paper Series, Harvard Kennedy School, WIDER Working Paper 2014/097. UNU-WIDER, 2014. Available online: <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/wp2014-097.pdf>

It is also termed as the donor-prescribed fragile state. Fragile states fail to utilize the aid provided by donors for economic and human development. In this perspective, one-sixth of the developing countries belong to the category of fragile states. Some indicators are also used to label a state as a fragile. For example, “28-35 percent of the population living in absolute poverty, 32-46 percent children being out of primary education, 41-51 percent of children dying before observing 15 years of their birthdays, and 34-44 percent living with HIV/AIDS, and 27-35 percent not having the opportunity to get safe drinking water and sanitation”.¹³

A ‘fragile state’ has some political and conflict connotations. Countries experienced with violence, conflicts, death tolls, and human rights violations are defined as fragile states.¹⁴ Conflict situation also acts as the ‘*vicious circle*’ of generating poverty as well as being a source of violence and instability.¹⁵ As a result, conflict and civil war impose dual impacts on generating state fragility. Jones and et.al (2008) have rightly noted that:

Fragility thus arises from substantial disequilibrium in state-society relations. It has multiple underlying causes, both chronic and acute, and it can produce multiple consequences, most worryingly vulnerability to internal conflict, inability to cope with humanitarian disaster and high risk of state collapse. Some extreme events or shocks might produce fragility in even apparently resilient states; our greater concern is with chronic fragility, which renders states less resilient to shocks.¹⁶

Recently scholars are interested to depict the relationship between climate change and state fragility. Beside the indicators of conflict, war, economic slowdown, climatic events constitute new forms of state fragility through increasing the risks and vulnerabilities to the poor countries. The risks and vulnerabilities are generated due to the decreasing agriculture productivity, deteriorating fertility of the land, coastal erosion and saline water intrusion. These changes are both sudden and gradual that diminish state capability by destroying infrastructure and economic

13 D. Carment *et al.*, 2009, *Op. cit.*, p. 2

14 P. Collier and A. Hoeffler, Greed and Grievance in Civil war, Policy Research Working Paper No-2355. The World Bank, Development Research Group, 2007; R. I. Rotberg, *When states fail: causes and consequences*, Princeton University Press, 2010

15 M. François, and I. Sud, Promoting stability and development in fragile and failed states, *Development Policy Review*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2006, pp.141-160

16 B. Jones, C. Chandran, E. Cousens, J. Slotin, and J. Sherman, Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations: from fragility to resilience, *Journal on Development*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2008, pp. 61-148

activities.¹⁷ In some instances, climatic events lead to conflicts and violence.¹⁸ For example, the Syrian conflict has been linked with the prolonged drought and slow-down of the economic activities, and the government's inability to meet the basic needs of the people.¹⁹ It means that there is a connection between the increasing climate change impacts and state fragility.

Thus, state fragility is now discussed in different perspectives including climate change issues. It encompasses absence of the political will of the government to ensure the basic needs of the people. It is also connected to the inability of the government to ensure the expectations of the people. It overlaps with the condition of insecurity, instabilities, civil unrest and conflict situation of the state that cause human rights violation and deaths. At the same time, the fragile state is associated with the vulnerabilities and human crisis caused by the natural hazards and climate changes.

3. Characteristics of a fragile state

The mainstream analysis of state fragility has identified five major areas of state fragility, such as violence, justice, economic foundations, resilience, and institutions.²⁰ The Fund for Peace' counts some indicators for calculating state fragilities, such as frequency of wars and internal conflicts, environmental calamities, political upheavals, and social movement.²¹ As a whole, there are five characteristics of state fragility: (a) the condition of peace and conflict situation of a country—it means whether the country is passing through a peaceful way or under a conflict situation, (b) people access to the justice, or how the country is capable of ensuring the rule of law to its citizens without any distinction, (c) institutional effectiveness and accountability, (d) inclusive economic foundations, (e) state capacity to adapt to social, economic, and environmental shocks and disasters. The indicators of measuring state fragility can be presented as follows:

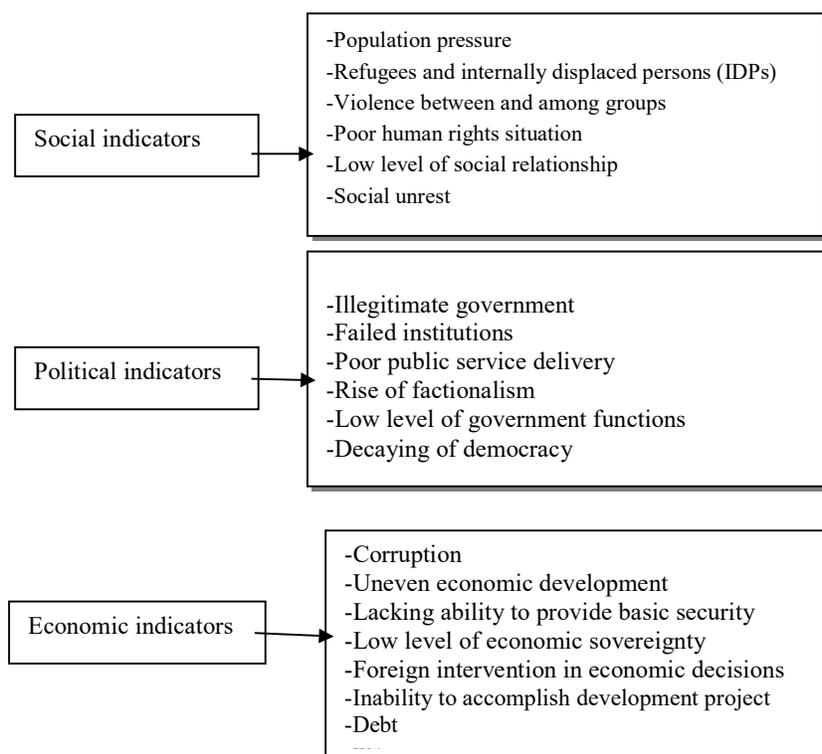
17 O. Brown and R. McLeman, A recurring anarchy? The emergence of climate change as a threat to international peace and security: *Analysis, Conflict, security & development*, Vol. 9, No. 3, (2009), pp. 289-305

18 R. Reuveny, Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict, *Political geography*, Vol. 26, No. 6, 2007, pp.656-673.

19 P. H. Gleick, Water, drought, climate change, and conflict in Syria, *Weather, Climate and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2014, pp. 331-340

20 OECD, States of Fragility 2015: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2015. Online available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264227699-en>.

21 Fund for Peace, 2018. Fragile State Index 2018-Annual Report, Online available: <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/2018/04/24/fragile-states-index-2018-annual-report/>

Figure: Indicators of measuring state fragility.

Source: Developed by the authors based on literature review.

4. The relationship between climate change and state fragility

‘Do climate changes generate state fragility? The Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change’s (IPCC) report in 2007 indicated that the adverse effects of climate change would generate vulnerabilities to the developing countries as they depend on the agriculture for their food and economic sustenance. The developing countries are also under the threat of the population increase and weak institutions.²² The European Union (EU) policy paper in 2008 stated that climate change is: “a threat multiplier which exacerbates existing trends, tensions and

²² M. Hamza and C. Corendea, *Climate change and fragile states*, UNU-EHS, 2012

instability” that could “overburden states and regions which are already economically fragile and conflict-prone,” posing “political and security risks that directly affect European interests”.²³ Thus, climatic events have the influence to generate state fragility in the locations and countries where climatic events such as floods, sea-level rise and droughts are more frequent. Frequent climatic events, for example floods and cyclones affect the livelihood, economy and state stability.²⁴ International Institute of Sustainable Development (IISD) (2011) argued that “climate change is deeply interconnected with development, resource use, health, livelihoods, and economies. In addition, it can act as a ‘threat multiplier’ and affect state capacities, communities and existing conflict dynamics”.²⁵

Climate change has implications for causing conflict and escalating existing conflict.²⁶ It has a security implication, particularly it adversely affects the security issues of poor people in underdeveloped countries. Security experts tend to include the ‘freedom from hazards and vulnerabilities’ as one of the main components of the definition of “human security” due to increasing nature of climatic events.²⁷ Environmental and climate change issues, such as environmental degradation (slow-onset disasters) and extreme events (rapid-onset disasters) profoundly impact on health and human rights of millions of people across the world.²⁸ As a result, individual states become fragile due to the decaying of resource base and diminishing of the capabilities to balance between the resources and increasing populations. The UNDP thus argued that,

...[C]limate change may pose a threat to food security through erratic rainfall patterns and decreasing crop yields, contributing to increased hunger. Furthermore, adverse

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- 23 G. D. Dabelko, An uncommon peace: environment, development and the global security agenda, *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, Vol. 50, No.3, 2008, pp. 32-45
- 24 F. Faria, *Rethinking policy responses on fragile states*, Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, 2011
- 25 K. Houghton, Climate Change in Fragile States: Adaptation as Reinforcement of the Fabric of the State, In: M Hamza and C. Corendea, “*Climate Change and Fragile States: Rethinking Adaptation*”, Publication Series of UNU-EHS No. 16/2012. 18–22 July 2011, Hohenkammer, Germany.
- 26 R. Reuveny, Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict, *Political geography*, Vol. 26, No. 6, 2007, pp. 656-673; J. Barnett and W. N. Adger, Climate change, human security and violent conflict, *Political Geography*, Vol. 26 No. 6, 2007, pp. 639-655
- 27 H. G. Brauch and J. Scheffran, Introduction: climate change, human security, and violent conflict in the Anthropocene Climate Change, In *Human Security and Violent Conflict*, Springer, 2012, pp. 3-40
- 28 J. Barnett and W N. Adger, *op. cit.*, 2007, pp.639-655

climate change impacts on natural systems and resources, infrastructure, and labour productivity may lead to reduced economic growth, exacerbating poverty.²⁹

The core issues of human survival, such as agriculture, environment, human health and wellbeing of people are highly influenced by the increasing climatic events. Climatic events destroy the life supporting system of people and threaten the livelihood of people and weaken the state structure. The sudden flood and cyclone lead to economic slowdown, increase resource scarcity, and generate competition among the group for resource sharing. Competition for resources on the other hand generates civil strife and violence that eventually reduce the political legitimacy of the government.³⁰ The sudden and gradual climate change effects threaten the livelihood and force millions of people out of a job.³¹ It also adds additional cost to the governance structure to address the increasing cost of adaptation and mitigation in many developing and under-developing countries. The sudden and gradual changes pose detrimental impacts on population displacement and migration. Millions of people have been displaced and more people would move due to climate change events in the coming decades.³² The displacement and migration of poor people within and between countries are already a source of conflict and violence between groups as well as between countries. The migration of people with different backgrounds has already generated and escalated conflict and violence in many regions of the world.³³

A report published by G7 members titled “A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risk” has elaborated how climate change generates state fragility.³⁴ Climatic events perpetuate state fragility in association of some pressure emanated from the social, economic, and environmental sources such as

29 B. Wisner *et. al.*, Climate change and human security, *Peace Research and European Security Studies*, 2007.

30 T. F. Homer-Dixon, *Environment, scarcity, and violence*, Princeton University Press, 1999

31 W. K. Dumenu and E. A. Obeng, Climate change and rural communities in Ghana: Social vulnerability, impacts, adaptations and policy implications. *Environmental Science and Policy*, Vol. 55, 2016, pp. 208-217

32 F. Gemenne, Climate-induced population displacements in a 4 C+ world. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences*, 369 (1934), 2011, pp. 182-195

33 J. Barnett, Security and climate change, *Global Environmental Change*, Vol.13, No. 1, 2003, pp.7-17. H. Buhaug, N. P. Gleditsch, and O. M. Theisen, Implications of climate change for armed conflict. Social dimensions of climate change’ In *Equity and vulnerability in a warming world*, 2008, pp. 75-102

34 R. Lukas, D. Smith, G. Stang, D. Tänzler, J. Vivekananda, and O. Brown, A new climate for peace: taking action on climate and fragility risks, Berlin/London/Washington/Paris: Adelphi, 2015

rapid urbanization, inequality, economic shocks, and environmental degradation. In a climate hit country, existing inequality, political marginalization, and unresponsive governments intensify these stresses that lead to instability and conflict. The detrimental impacts of climatic events challenge most fundamental issues of human being such as water, food, and land which eventually multiply these pressures and hinder the affected country to ensure the needs of their citizens. The report published by G7 members has mentioned few processes to generate state fragility such as competition and pressure on resources, paralysing the food production and livelihood options, pushing millions of people to be displaced and migrated, accelerate the vulnerability and grievances, increase already increasing prices and market volatility, and affect availability and quality of the water in the trans-boundary rivers.³⁵ In fact, the process of connecting climate change and state fragility is not direct and easy, rather it is complex and interconnected with different issues and factors. The rising temperature and sea-level will be main causes of generating vulnerability and shocks in the coastal areas. People in such locations will frequently face food shortages, social disruption, displacement, and migration. Moreover, the population pressure is also pushing many people to live closer to the coastal regions due to the shortage of land and livelihood options.

In summary, this section concludes that climate change induced events such as floods, cyclones and sea-level rise slowly affect the life and livelihood of the people. Climatic events also destroy agriculture, infrastructure and slow down the development initiatives which ultimately decay state capacity to meet the basic needs of the people and carry out the development activities. In such a condition, states also lack the ability to establish a constructive relationship with society. The nexus of increasing climate change effects and loss of livelihood eventually generate the state fragility. This connection between the climate change and state fragility is sometimes slow and sometimes abrupt, but this is already visible in many parts of the world.

5. Climate change and fragility in Bangladesh

The theoretical discussion of climate change and state fragility stated above can best be used in the question of whether climate change induced events may cause state fragility in Bangladesh or not. To explore the answer to the question, this paper discusses environment, demographics and climate change events that Bangladesh embraces now. Afterwards, the paper explains how climate change induced events may generate state fragility in Bangladesh.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

5.1. Geographical location and demographic issue

Geographically, the country is placed at the dichotomous position of much water in the rainy season and less water in the dry season. Being situated in the downstream position and floodplain nature, every year's floods carry alluvial soil that helps to produce agricultural products. It is argued that the deltaic nature of the country has been a blessing for Bangladesh as it helps to increase the fertility of land and agricultural production.³⁶ However, this is not the real perspective of Bangladesh. The geographical position and deltaic nature have placed the country in a most adverse position. The upstream water diversion from the major rivers in the dry season and releasing of water in the monsoon season by the upstream country has made Bangladesh dependent on nature. Every year, a vast area of landmass with crops is either submerged by the flood water or become dry due to the scarcity of water.³⁷ The frequent incidents of the natural disasters, such as cyclones, droughts, floods and river bank erosion are also the results of the adverse geographical position of the country and are by-products of the fault line of the global atmospheric changes.³⁸ Along with the geographical location, the population is also a problem for the country as there are too many mouths with too little land. Thus, a question comes, how many people a country can feed and nourish? This is a difficult question indeed. A country can bear the burden of a vast number of people; on the other hand, less population is a curse for some countries. Bangladesh, in this regard, is in an awkward position for her high population within a limited land boundary and natural resources. According to the 2011 population census, the country has 150 million people, but the current population is 161 million within 55,598 square miles of landscape. The population density is the highest in the world comprising of 1015 people living per square kilometer.³⁹ About the population density, Bangladesh ranks as seventh in the world. One of the most interesting issues regarding the population density is that 19 out of the 64 districts are situated in the coastal zones where 35 million people, 28 percent of the country's total population are living.⁴⁰ In the coastal area, people construct their

36 M. M. M. Qader and Q. K. Ahmad, (eds.), *Climate change and water resources in South Asia*, CRC Press, 2005; A. Suhrke, *Environmental degradation and population flows*, *Journal of International Affairs*, 1994, pp. 473-496

37 M. M. M. Qader, *Climate change, flooding in South Asia and implications*, *Regional environmental change*, Vol.11, 2011, pp. 95-107

38 M. F. Karim and N. Mimura, *Impacts of climate change and sea-level rise on cyclonic storm surge floods in Bangladesh*, *Global Environmental Change*, Vol. 18, No.3, 2008, pp. 490-500

39 World Bank, 2017. *Bangladesh World Bank Open Data*. Available online: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/bangladesh>

40 M. Shamsuddoha and R. K. Chowdhury, *Climate change impact and disaster vulnerabilities in the coastal areas of Bangladesh*. COAST Trust, Dhaka, 2007

houses in the traditional method using the available instruments that most likely make them vulnerable to climate change-induced sudden disasters and cyclones.⁴¹

5.2. Climate change issues

Climatic events, particularly floods and cyclones have devastating impacts on Bangladesh's overall eco-system and development activities. Floods, drought, sea-level rise and other slow on-set processes force the country to be vulnerable to the hazards and uncertainties that cause resource scarcity and damage the natural resources. The damage and shrinking of resources directly affect the livelihood of the millions of people.⁴² The following climate change events are major issues that cause risks and vulnerabilities to the millions of people.

5.2.1. Floods

Bangladesh is known as the country of the flood. Every year 30-70 percent of the country is inundated by the flood water. In extreme cases, 70 percent of the country is submerged by the flood waters.⁴³ In the last two decades, seven devastating floods (e.g. floods in 1987, 88, 95, 1998, 2004 and 2017) hit the country which has displaced 30-45 million people, killed few hundred thousands individuals and destabilized the economic options of millions of the people.⁴⁴ The micro study suggests that floods have devastating impacts on the house and infrastructure as around 35 percent people live in the coastal areas and 32 percent people live in slums. Bangladesh National Adaptation Programme of Actions (NAPA) has, thus, recognized floods as a single challenging disaster for its devastating impacts on 80 percent land mass and massive economic loss in Bangladesh.⁴⁵

5.2.2. Sea-level rise

Sea-level rise due to global warming and climate change is the biggest threat to the countries situated to the parallel and close to the seas. Bangladesh is a low-lying

41 M. R. Alam *et al.*, Vulnerability assessment and construction recommendations of local houses in the cyclone prone coastal areas of Bangladesh, *International journal of disaster risk reduction* Vol. 21, 2017, pp.118-130

42 G. M. Alam *et al.*, (2017), *Op. cit.*; N. Huq *et al.*, Climate change impacts in agricultural communities in rural areas of coastal Bangladesh: A tale of many stories, *Sustainability*, Vol. 7, No. 7, 2015, pp. 8437-8460

43 G. A. Parvin, *et al.*, Flood in a changing climate: The impact on livelihood and how the rural poor cope in Bangladesh, *Climate*, Vol. 4, No.4, 2016, p. 60

44 C. Gray and V. Mueller, Natural disasters and population mobility in Bangladesh, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2012, 201115944.

45 T. H. Dewan, Societal impacts and vulnerability to floods in Bangladesh and Nepal, *Weather and Climate Extremes*, Vol. 7, 2015, pp. 36-42

deltaic country as well as near to the Bay of Bengal. The entire coastal region adjacent to the sea is unprotected and vulnerable to coastal floods and saline water intrusion. A study shows that half of the country lies five meters above the sea-level and one-third being less than three meters above.⁴⁶ Located in the hotspot amid rising sea-levels rise is not a problem for countries (e.g. Netherlands) who have technological innovation and adaptive capacities. However, sea-level rise has already caused environmental, economic and health impacts on the people living in the coastal areas. It is also predicted that if the sea-level rises by one meter, then around twenty percent of the landmass of the country would be submerged, and that would displace 17 million of the people.⁴⁷ The combined effects of the increasing population and coastal lands being damaged by the sea-level rise have had devastating effects on the livelihood, land, and stability of the coastal region.⁴⁸

5.2.3. Drought

Although floods and cyclones are the most ‘every year’ phenomena, the process of desertification has also started in the northern parts of Bangladesh. The desertification process is the result of a decrease in precipitation in the dry season and an upstream water diversion from the major international rivers by the neighbouring states. The IPCC report projected that Bangladesh would be 0.5c to 2.0c warmer than today by the year 2030.⁴⁹ This prediction has already been foreseen, and the county has so far experienced 19 drought events. Another study shows that for at least 4-5 months the country goes under drought and hot weather.⁵⁰ The drought has detrimental impacts on food security, health, environment and overall development of the country. Most importantly, drought severely affects the agricultural production and livelihood options of the poor people. This consequently increases starvation, population displacement and conflicts in some parts of the country.

5.2.4. Cyclones and Storm Surges

Bangladesh faces frequent storm surges and cyclones every year. Being proximate to the Bay of Bengal, cyclones and storms hit the country and destroy life, property,

46 K. M. Elahi, A. H. M. R. Sharif and A. K. M. Kalam, Bangladesh, geography, environment, and development, *Bangladesh National Geographical Association*, 1992

47 S. Huq, S. I. Ali and A. A. Rahman, Sea-level rise and Bangladesh: a preliminary analysis, *Journal of Coastal Research*, 1995, pp. 44-53

48 H. Brammer, Bangladesh’s dynamic coastal regions and sea-level rise, *Climate Risk Management*, Vol. 1, 2014, pp. 51-62

49 Q. K. Ahmad *et al.*, The implications of climate change for Bangladesh: a synthesis, *The Implications of Climate and Sea-Level Change for Bangladesh*. Springer, Dordrecht, 1996, pp. 1-34

50 M. A. Miyan, Droughts in Asian least developed countries: vulnerability and sustainability, *Weather and Climate Extremes*, Vol. 7, 2015, pp. 8-23.

trees, forest, and livelihood of the people.⁵¹ From 1970 to 1998 Bangladesh has experienced 170 large-scale disasters and cyclones which have killed millions of people. Two major cyclones in 1970 and 1991 killed 500,000 and 140,000 people respectively.⁵² Besides the human cost, economic cost of the cyclones and storm surges are extremely devastating for a country like Bangladesh. Every year, Bangladesh is to pay the hard-core finance in order to mitigate the damages and havoc of the climate change events.

5.2.5. Coastal erosion

Coastal erosion is related to the sea-level rise and coastal floods. Every year, a major portion of the coastal area is subject to erosion by sea water, floods and cyclones. Coastal erosion has already eroded some areas in the major islands adjacent to the sea. For example, Bhola Island in the last 40 years has been squeezed to 3400 km from 6400 sq. km; about 40 percent of the Sandwip Islands in the West have been eroded by climate change effects, and a significant erosion has occurred in the north of Hatia, north-east of Bhola and south-east of Ramgati Islands.⁵³ Some islands, such as Kutubdia and Moheshkhali situated on the coastline of the Bay of Bengal have been quickly eroded due to strong tidal action, cyclonic action, and storm surges. The study shows that around 65 percent of the landmass of these islands has been eroded within the last 100 years.⁵⁴ People living in the coastal regions are poor and depend on fishing and sea resources. Thus, any changes in the coastal area directly affect their houses and livelihoods which consequently force them to either migrate to other places or to remain and starve.

6. Relationship between climate change and state fragility in Bangladesh

Although there are debate and discussion about the ongoing changes, there is no denying the fact that global atmospheric changes have been causing detrimental impacts on population and environment in Bangladesh. The ongoing changes have already impacted on agriculture, livelihood, environment, water levels, health and overall development indicators in the country. The government has undertaken massive plans and actions for the mitigation and adaptation of climate change with

51 M. F. Karim and N. Mimura, 2008, *Op. cit.*

52 E. C. Penning-Rowsell, P. Sultana and P. M. Thompson, The 'last resort'? Population movement in response to climate-related hazards in Bangladesh, *Environmental science and policy*, Vol. 27, 2013, pp. S44-S59

53 Brammer Huge, *Op. cit.*, 2014, p.53

54 M. Shamsuddoha and R. K. Chowdhury, Climate change impact and disaster vulnerabilities in the coastal areas of Bangladesh', COAST Trust, Dhaka, 2007.

local knowledge and international support.⁵⁵ However, this paper argues that climatic changes may complicate the security and viability of the state through generating state fragility in the future. This section analyses how climate change events may lead to state fragility in Bangladesh.

The following tables have presented the extent of climate change induced costs and damages.

Table 1: List of climate change events, locations, and major costs⁵⁶

Year	Name of incidents	Location	Cost and damages
2017	Torrential rains, landslide	Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), mostly in Rangamati district	Heavy losses of houses, trees, crops and killing at least 133 people and injuring many more.
2017	Cyclone [MORA]	Severely hit the Chittagong and coastal districts	An estimated 3.3 million people have been affected by Tropical Cyclone MORA, which made landfall in Chittagong Division on 30 May. Six people were reportedly killed, 136 people injured and 200,000 people displaced by the disaster.
2017	Floods	Haors and low-lying areas of the Northeast region of Bangladesh	This was caused by heavy rainfall and upstream water release from the Meghalaya hills. This flood had destroyed the crops, fish and everything in the said region.
2016	Floods	16 districts out of 64 have been affected	The floods cost the life of 14 people, affected 3.2 million people and displaced 250,000 houses.
2016	Cyclone	15 district out of 64 have been affected	The cyclone affected 1.3 million people and resulted in 27 deaths, while also displacing 200,000 people.
2015	Cyclone (Komen)	Hit cost of the South-eastern Bangladesh, Hatiya and Sandwip Islands	Displaced 320,000 people from their homes and cyclone centres. Heavy rainfall caused floods and landslides that caused serious damages to houses and crops.
2015	Floods and landslides	Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Bandarban, Jessore, and Feni districts	Over 20, 0000 people have been affected and Twelve people were reported to die for the flood.

55 MoEF, Bangladesh Climate Change and Action Plan. Ministry of Environment and Forests Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. 2008. Archived from the original (PDF) on 7, 2009

56 *The Daily Star* and *Prothom Alo*, and the website of the Asian Disaster Reduction Centre ADRC, available at http://www.adrc.asia/latest_disaster.php?NationCode=50&Lang=en&Mode=country

2015	Floods and heavy rain	Nine districts of the Northwest part of Bangladesh	10,000 households have been destroyed and at least 23 people died.
2015	Severe storm	The Northern part of Bangladesh, Bogra district is severely affected	At least 24 people have been killed and many people were injured. It damaged many houses in rural areas.
2014	Floods	Six districts of the northern part of Bangladesh	The floods affected 3 million people across 20 districts in Bangladesh. Around 340,000 people were forced to leave their houses. The floods completely destroyed 34,000 houses.
2013	Cyclone (Mahasen)	Coastal districts, Patuakhali, Barisal, Barguna and partly Khulna	The cyclone cost at least 17 people's lives and destroyed 23,000 houses completely.
2012	Cold wave	Across the country	This is the lowest temperature in the history of Bangladesh that cost the deaths of at least 80 people.
2012	Tropical storm	Southern coastal islands	The storm cost at least 36 people's lives and 72 people were missing. It affected more than 103,836 people across the coastal regions.
2012	Floods and landslide	Chittagong, Sylhet, Bandarban and Sunamgong districts	It caused huge damages to property and life. At least 125 people have been killed and more than 200,000 people were left homeless.
2011	Floods	Southeastern part, Cox's Bazar and Teknaf districts	More than 1,853,000 people were affected, it also caused the destruction of 41,594 houses.

Source: Developed by the authors based on secondary sources.

6.1. Resource shrinking and resource competition

The theoretical model presented above outlines that climate change and its adverse impacts will generate the shrinking of the resources and serious resource competition among the people, which acts as the major precondition for state fragility. Bangladesh as a developing and densely populated country has a serious resource scarcity and competition among the group and communities for controlling resources. The competition for and capturing of the resources have already generated conflict, violence and human rights violations on different occasions, for example, the Phulbari anti-open pit mining movement, the Banshkhali coal power project, and Chittagong and tourism projects in the CHT region.⁵⁷ Regarding the

⁵⁷ R. Islam and S. Alam, The development paradox: Mega project, resource scarcity and conflict nexus in Bangladesh, *Social Science Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2, December 2018, pp. 23-42

climate change, resource scarcity and state fragility, the G7 report outlines that climate change constrains access to natural resources and increase competition which produce new tensions, fragility, and escalate into conflict.⁵⁸ This condition is highly visible in countries like Bangladesh where institutions for resource management are weak. Marginal people such as ethnic and religious minority people are exposed to dual crisis of climate change and resource deprivation. The influential people most likely deprive the ethnic minority people through capturing and controlling resources on which the ethnic minority people depend for their livelihood and shelter. The ethnic people in the CHT region in Bangladesh are highly vulnerable to climate change and resource plundering in their land.⁵⁹ This complex situation of resource scarcity, competition, and plundering lead the state structure to being weak and ineffective to distribute resources in a fair manner.

6.2. Livelihood, displacement and migration

The first potential impacts of climate change events; such as floods, river bank erosion, sea-level rise and droughts impose is the population displacement and migration. Displacement and migration is now one of the major issues for generating state insecurity and fragility across the world. Bangladesh is not exceptional in this regard. As a climate hot spot, the country is hit by sudden and gradual climate change events that displace people forcefully and gradually.⁶⁰ The geographical location and living of around 28 percent of the total population in the coastal region are contributing to being exposed to climate change-induced displacement. This is to note that a vast area of Bangladesh, 19 districts out of the 64 are characterized as part of the coastal region which is exposed to the climate change events such as floods, cycle, and sea-level rise.⁶¹ A report published by Climate Central has reported that 12 million people would be displaced from the Dhaka and Khulna due to the rising of the global warming by 2°C, and 48 million people would be displaced if it rises by 4°C.⁶² The immediate impact of climatic events is the de-establishing livelihood of the people. The livelihood failure generates internal and cross-border migration. Different studies claim that displacement and cross-border migration from Bangladesh to India has been a

58 L. Rüttinger, D. Smith, G. Stang, D. Tänzler, J. Vivekananda, and O. Brown. *Op. cit.*, 2015

59 G. Bernhard and A. Rahman, How Vulnerable are Bangladesh's Indigenous People to Climate Change? *EIBECO: Environmental Economics* (Sub-Topic), 2008. DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.1126441

60 C. L. Gray and V. Mueller, *Op. cit.*, 2012

61 *Displacement Solutions, Climate displacement in Bangladesh. The Need for Urgent Housing, Land and Property (HLP)*, 2012.

62 B. H. Strauss, K. Scott and A. Levermann, Mapping choices: carbon, climate, and rising seas, our global legacy. Princeton, NJ: Climate Central, 2015

major issue of concern between two countries. Particularly, Indian scholars vehemently claimed that more than 20 million climate-displaced people from the low-lying areas of Bangladesh have migrated to India.⁶³ Although this is a disputed issue, it has already created conflicting situations between two countries. The future climate change induced vulnerabilities and shocks may displace more people from their places of origin which will also be the source of insecurities for the country.

6.3. Climatic events, sudden shocks and death tolls

The sudden-onset of climate change events has severe impacts on human lives in Bangladesh. The country struggles to provide with good housing facilities and technology due to the poor economy and the underdevelopment. As a result, people become highly vulnerable to every disaster and cyclone. A report shows that “the tropical cyclone in 1970 and 1991 have cost the lives of 500,000 and 140,000 people respectively.⁶⁴ Since 1971 the country has been faced by devastating disasters and cyclones. For example, in the 1991 cyclone more than 100 thousand people were washed away with uncountable costs of infrastructure and livestock.⁶⁵ Such devastating climatic events have immediate and long term impacts on population, economy and infrastructure of the country which lead the country to face the fragility. The G7 report on climate change and security outline that climate change undermines the economic activities through diminishing livelihood, jobs and access to the credit.⁶⁶ The cyclone and sudden disaster also paralyse saving and alternate income sources. The rural poor people are highly exposed to the loss of credits, income and livelihood options. Thus, many people are not able to survive from chronic diseases and sudden physical damages. In the rural areas of Bangladesh sudden disasters and climatic events indirectly lead to the pervasiveness of illegal arms, illegal business, and drugs. Poor people in many rural and coastal areas get involved in such activities when they do not find alternative livelihood options. Evidence shows that sudden disasters disrupting the formal economy and trigger the existing grievance of the people who could adopt unlawful activities for their existence. This situation is more pervasive in the

63 A. Swain, Displacing the conflict: environmental destruction in Bangladesh and ethnic conflict in India. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 189-204

64 Ministry of Environment (2009), ‘Bangladesh Climate Change Strategic Action Plan, 2009’, Ministry of the Environment, Bangladesh, available at: <http://www.bcct.gov.bd/images/law/Bangladesh%20Climate%20Change%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%202009.pdf>, 2009, p. 11

65 E. C. Penning-Rowsell, P. Sultana, & P.M. Thompson, The ‘last resort’? Population movement in response to climate-related hazards in Bangladesh, *Environmental Science and Policy*, Vol. 27, 2013, pp. S44-S59

66 L. Rüttinger, D. Smith, G. Stang, D. Tänzler, J. Vivekananda, and O. Brown. *Op. cit.*, 2015

conflict affected region where unemployed people tend to join armed groups or commit crime.⁶⁷

6.4. Shrinking of water sources and water conflict

Water scarcity and trans-boundary water conflict between and among countries would get a new shape due to the increasing climate change. A report denotes that 80 percent of people across the world suffer from water scarcity and the increasing climate change will aggravate the situation in the future.⁶⁸ Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to water scarcity due to it being a climate hit country and being deprived of having an adequate share of water from the trans-boundary rivers. The country has already heavily lifted up ground water for agriculture and drinking purposes. The increasing drying up of rivers for climate change and water shortages from the sources have been posing serious threats to the vitality and security of the state. The rural people in the coastal and dry areas are being deprived of access to the fresh water for their drinking, sanitation and bathing. The agriculture of those areas have also been affected as farmers are depending on the ground water which is costly and is pushing many farmers to abandon farming. The food security is endangered in many parts of Bangladesh. This is a complex relationship. As Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC), 2014 report outlines that “water supplies in particular will be affected by changing rainfall patterns, changing flows in glacier-fed rivers, the salinization of coastal aquifers, and shifting seasons. The effects will be felt most strongly in areas where demand is also increasing due to growing populations and rapid economic development”.⁶⁹ The conflict among the local people for sharing water resources are increasing in many areas. The people in the coastal areas are highly vulnerable to the fresh water insecurity. Moreover, the relationship with the neighbouring countries for sharing water in the common rivers has been a contentious issue. In future, this issue will weaken the state structure and generate state fragility. The increasing nature of the local use and unsustainable use of water has put tremendous pressure over the government to manage the water resources with the demand of the people. In the dry season, people in many of the rural and urban areas are deprived of getting minimum water for their bath and

67 K. Harris, D. Keen and T. Mitchell, When disasters and conflict collide: improving links between disaster resilience and conflict prevention. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 2013

68 L. Rüttinger, D. Smith, G. Stang, D. Tänzler, J. Vivekananda, and O. Brown, *Op. cit.*, 2015

69 R.K. Pachauri, R. A. Myles, R. B. Vicente, J. Broome, W. Cramer, R. Christ, and J. A. Church et al. Climate change 2014: synthesis report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the fifth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, 2014

sanitation. In many instances they come to the streets to protest for getting the water. In the near future, the water stress would aggravate the condition and people will fight for water rights if the government fails to take appropriate policies.

6.5. Conflict and violence issues

The conflict potential of climate change is highly debatable. There is no consensus among the scholars on whether climate change-induced disasters perpetuate conflict and violence or not.⁷⁰ However, human displacement and migration triggered by climate change events and the resource scarcity have potential impacts on conflict formation in many climate hit countries including Bangladesh. Poor and landless people often being affected by floods, cyclones, an river bank erosion leave their original places and move to the urban cities for shelter and livelihood. These newcomers in the cities put tremendous pressure on the existing resources and services. The city dwellers are already faced by the resource scarcity and necessities, e.g. water, electricity and natural gas facilities. The further pressure by climate change-induced migrants to the cities has the potential impacts to increase the occurrence of violence and conflicts. This is worth mentioning that the successive government in the 1980s settled around 400,000-500,000 people to the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh.⁷¹ With this settlement of Bengali population, more people have been migrated to the CHT by the social networks and family connections. Nowadays, the CHT region is experiencing violence and conflict between the indigenous population and the migrant Bengali population. Evidence shows that conflict may complicate if more climate change induced people are displaced and migrated to the CHT.

6.6. Civil strife and erosion of the legitimacy of the government

Climate change-induced disasters have a serious political implication, such as originating the civil strife and decaying the legitimacy of the government. Climate change induced disasters in some instances worked to dismantle the government and even threaten the state sovereignty.⁷² Researchers argue that many African countries have fallen into civil conflict and violence due to the prolonged droughts and rainfall shortages.⁷³ Bangladesh as the most climate hit country has the

70 R. Nordås and N. P. Gleditsch, Climate change and conflict, *Political geography*, Vol. 26, No. 6, 2007, pp. 627-638

71 R. Reuveny, Climate change-induced migration and violent conflict, *Political geography*, Vol. 26, No. 6, pp. 656-673

72 Z. A. Choudhury, *Politics of natural disaster: how governments maintain legitimacy in the wake of major disasters, 1990-2010*, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Iowa, (2013), available at: ir.uiowa.edu.

73 C. S. Hendrix and I. Salehyan, Climate change, rainfall, and social conflict in Africa, *Journal of peace research* 49.1, 2012, pp. 35-50

possibility to fall into civil strife, violence, and conflict. In fact, there is no systematic study to explore this linkage between climate change and civil conflict in Bangladesh. Broke (2012) argued that Bangladesh may have been faced by the social tensions, instability and political unrest due to climate change induced degradation. According to the author, climate change may work as the threat multiplier and translate any small-scale problem into anti-government movement.⁷⁴ Messer (2010) has mentioned that Bangladesh as an overpopulated and highly climate affected country is under threat of conflict and violence. As an example, he has put the reference of the Chittagong Hill tracts where the infiltration of the climate change induced Bengali population has generated conflict with the local ethnic groups.⁷⁵ In fact, not enough study has yet been done to explore the impacts of climate change on the ongoing civil unrest, violence and terrorist attacks in Bangladesh. Further research may be instrumental to address this human concerning issue in the future.

7. Conclusion

The theoretical part of this paper has described the definition of fragile state with its principal characteristics. The concept of state fragility is mainly judged by the performance of the governance to implement the economic policies as well as civil and political condition of state mechanisms. Political stability, economic progress, social security and ensuring human rights constitute important elements in theorising a fragile state. When a country is not able to attain these basic characteristics, the state is then regarded as a fragile state. However, some issues such as environmental destruction and climate change events are complicating these essential characteristics; and for this reason, climate change events are now regarded as the source of state fragility.

The paper also shows Bangladesh as a case and explains how the country is adversely affected by climate change events. The discussion on the effects of climate change events in Bangladesh has outlined that the country is highly vulnerable to sudden and slow onset weather events. The agriculture, economy, environment and population have been seriously affected by floods, cyclones, droughts, river bank erosion and sea-level rise. Although the country has attained

74 B. Hannah, Climate change: Drivers of insecurity and the global South, *Oxford Research Group, building bridge for global security*, 2012, available at: <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/sites/default/files/Climate%20Change%20and%20Insecurity%20in%20the%20Global%20South.pdf>.

75 E. Messer, Climate change and violent conflict: A critical literature review, *Oxfam America: Research Backgrounders*, 2010, available at: <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/static/media/files/climate-change-and-violent-conflict.pdf>

considerable economic progress and social development in different sectors, climate change events such as floods, river bank erosion, and extreme weather conditions have imposed great costs to human life and economy. Every year, climate change events not only caused the lives but have also damaged infrastructure, roads, buildings, and crops. Thus, the livelihood and resources are damaged and consequently this has caused resource scarcity in the country. The concern has come to the policy level to think about the implications of climate change issues in economy, social and political contexts.

There are some important arguments on whether climate changes have implications in turning the country fragile. The first argument is that climate change events laid down the weak institutions and governance. Bangladesh as an adversely affected country is struggling to tackle the risks and vulnerabilities. Although the government is sincere to mitigate climate change events, different bodies and institutions do not provide the necessary support for the lack of technology, finance, and corruption. Moreover, the sudden floods and cyclones damage agriculture, infrastructures and cause economic loss that an existing government and local government might not be able to overcome shortly. In such a situation, people lose faith in the government and institutions. Sudden climate change events are the direct result of the increasing food prices. In Bangladesh, this example has been seen on many occasions. In some instances, local traders and businessman increase food price for two reasons, one is the scarcity of the food grains, and the second is the corruption of the traders and businessman for making a profit. In 2017 Bangladesh has experienced a series of floods, cyclones, and landslides in many districts. At the same time, the country has experienced a hike in food prices.

Besides the economic cost of climate change, rise of extremism, criminals and illicit activities have been serious concerns for the stability and security of Bangladesh. A big number of climate change-induced displaced people come to the urban areas for their livelihood and shelter. However, the opportunities and services in cities are already scarce. As a result, the further influx of the migration to cities has a strong possibility to increase outlaw activities. Needless to say, these people may be targeted by terrorist groups to have them involved in terrorism and conduct anti-state activities. In the case of political procession and *hartal* called by the political parties, people living in the slum are recruited for money to attend the processions and damage the public properties. The displaced people due to climate change events are ultra-poor and live under vulnerabilities.

Therefore, appropriate policies are urgently needed to mitigate climate change events and address the state fragility. Bangladesh has already undertaken the

“Bangladesh Climate Change Strategic Action Plan, 2009” in order to reduce the cost of climate change and empower affected people to overcome the vulnerabilities. There are six major principles that have been enshrined in the strategic plan-2009: “(a) food security, social protection, health, (b) comprehensive disaster management, (c) infrastructures, (d) research and knowledge management, (e) mitigation and low carbon development, and (f) capacity building and institutional strengthening”.⁷⁶ This action plan is a comprehensive policy guideline to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities imposed by the sudden and slow climate change events.

However, the action plan does not cover all aspects that address every dimension of state fragility. The most important weakness of this strategic plan is to overlook the conflict issues caused by climate change induced migration. Considering the overarching and interconnected issues of the climate change, this paper stresses on the proposals given by Dabelko in light of the conflict-sensitive programmes in fragile state contexts. To Dabelko,

The country context should be taken as the starting point; climate policies, programs, and resource transfers should seek to ‘do no harm’; conflict prevention and resiliency should be prioritized; the links between political, security and development objectives should be recognized; and programming should align with local priorities. Furthermore, programming should aim to strengthen local, social and institutional capacity to understand and manage climate and conflict risks, including support for effective adaptive capacities and conflict management mechanisms.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Ministry of Environment, *Op. cit.*, 2009.

⁷⁷ G. D. Dabelko, ‘An uncommon peace: environment, development and the global security agenda’. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, Vol. 50, N. 3, 2008, pp. 32-45

MAKING OF ISLAM IN MEDIEVAL BENGAL: IN LIGHT OF IUSUF-JOLEKHA AND RASUL BIJAY

Tanima Dey*

Abstract

The paper examines the formation of the Bengali Muslim community through the process of vernacularisation of Perso-Islamic texts in eastern Bengal, present-day Bangladesh, during the pre-modern (from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries) period. The point of scrutiny is two poems: Rasul Bijoy by Jayenuddin, and Iusuf Jolekha by Shah Muhammad Saghir. Rasul Bijay was part of the popular Islamic literary tradition centring on the most loved figure in the history of Islam, Prophet Muhammad. Iusuf Jolekha was essentially a tale of love found in both the Quranic and the Biblical parables. The paper observes how the articulation of Islam in Bengal took place through the incorporation of regional Bengali literary idioms and socio-cultural elements.

Introduction

The two texts selected to observe in the present paper occupy an important place in the history of Bengali literature composed by Muslim poets. Iusuf Jolekha¹ by Shah Mohammad Sagir was the earliest of the Persian narrative poems (mathnavi) translated into Bengali.² Rasul Bijay is a narrative poem written in Panchali or lyrical form describing the battle between the Prophet Muhammad and king Jaykum of Iraq. Rasul Bijay is the oldest of the victory poems (bijay kabya) in the Bengali language on Prophet Muhammad. Interestingly, these two are the only compositions of Sagir and Joyenuddin respectively found to date. They have been crucial for understanding the process of vernacularisation of Perso-Islamic ideas in the literary idiom of Bengal.³ Though Sagir relied mostly on the work of the

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1 Both the title of the poem and the name of the poet have different spellings. While Sagir in the poem has used Jolikha, Enamul Haq has used Jolekha. For our discussion, we would stick to the spelling used in the title of the edited work by Haq. Enamul Haq (ed.), *Iusuf Jolekha* (Dhaka: Maola Brothers, 2015), p. 116.

2 Momtazur Rahman Tarafdar, *Bangla Romanika Kavyera Aoyadhi-Hindi Patabhumi* (Dhaka Visvavidyalaya, 1971).

3 Richard M. Eaton's study (*The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013) in this regard have been influential since its first publication in 1994. Since then, it has been the staple and most important book to understand how Islam unfolded in Bengal in the premodern period. This paper is

Persian Sufi poet Abd al-Rahman Jami's Yusuf Zulekhiha, his work is considered to be independent composition,⁴ because his thematic and linguistic departures reflected Sagir's literary and intellectual orientation in the Bengali socio-cultural and moral values.

In the absence of any specific date or period being mentioned in the manuscripts, there has been a long-standing debate on the "pastness" of these texts. For initial observers, Iusuf Jolekha was the oldest Bengali text tracing its origin in the fifteenth century, even older than the Mangal Kavyas, eulogistic texts of deities of rural Bengal.⁵ This conjecture was based on the observation of the language of Iusuf Jolekha which was considered to be the missing link between Srikrishna Kirtan and Srikrishna Bijay, i.e. between the fourteenth and the late fifteenth century.⁶ Other scholars were reluctant to keep the date earlier than 1600 CE.⁷ In a more recent study on the influence of Jami's work in South Asian literary culture, scholars have been able to find stark similarities between Jami's work and Sagir's composition. But Sagir's work was concluded to be the first and the oldest of the Bengali translation of Jami's Persian text.⁸ Similarly, Rasul Bijay was thought to be composed around the same time as Maladhar Basu's Srikrishna Bijay, i.e., between 1473-1480 CE. The foremost intention to put these works way back in the past was to underline the contribution of Muslim poets in the timeline of Bengali literature. Enamul Haq's pronounced lamentation on the absence of Muslim poets' works in the University of Calcutta curriculum in the 1930s had led to his lifelong research on collating the works by Muslim poets in medieval Bengal following the lead established by his teacher Abdul Karim Sahitya Visarad. But another aim was to address the association of the Bengali language with Hinduism. Dinesh Chandra

thematically an addition to that understanding through two such literary works by Bengali Muslim poets.

- 4 Ayesha Irani, "Love's New Pavilions. Śāhā Mohāmmad Chagīr's Retelling of Yūsuf va Zulaykhā in Early Modern Bengal," in *Handbook of Oriental Studies*, Handbuch der Orientalistik, section one, The Near and Middle East Edited by Maribel Fierro, M. Şukru Hanioglu, Renata Holod, Florian Schwarz, Volume 128, Thibaut d'Hubert and Alexandre Papas eds. *Jāmī in Regional Contexts. The Reception of 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmī's Works in the Islamicate World, ca. 9th/15th–14th/20th Century* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2018), p. 692.
- 5 Haq, *Iusuf Jolekha*, pp. 10-19
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay, *Madhyajuger Bangla Sahityer Tathya O Kalakram*, 1978 San, p.175, 172-75. Cited in Haq, *Iusuf Jolekha*, p.25. Haq also mentioned Suniti Kumar Chatterjee and Muhammad Shahidullah who were not convinced of putting the work of Sagir in the fifteenth century.
- 8 Thibaut d'Hubert, 'Foundational Maḥabbat-nāmas: Jāmī's Yūsuf u Zulaykhā in Bengal (ca. 16th–19th AD) in d'Hubert and Papas, *Jāmī in Regional Contexts*, p. 668.

Sen's 1891 publication of *Bangla Bhasha and Sahitya* (Bengali Language and Literature) was an invaluable contribution to putting together the Bengali literary works of both present-day West Bengal and Bangladesh by Hindu and Muslim poets of pre-modern Bengal. But the implicit peril in the effort of Sen was his endeavour to trace back the nature of Bengali language in its purest form in the medieval centuries, free from any influence of Arabic or Persian.⁹

Identification of Bengali language with Hinduism had its effect on the reformist movement initiated by the British and the Urban Bengali literati, in the early nineteenth century, in their endeavour to make a distinction between the "obscene" and the "genteel" part of their "civilizing drive."¹⁰ The problematic term of *Musalmani Bangla* on the other hand came to be used to comprehend the works of Muslim poets who were thought to be infusing the sense of being a Muslim in Bengal. The pursuit of translation of Perso-Islamic literature into Bengali was defined in terms of "the anxiety to illumine the masses of Bengali Muslims ignorant of their religion and its tradition."¹¹ Pre-modern societies, unlike modern-day nation-states, did not function in definite socio-cultural, religious and linguistic definitions. The identities were fluid and ambiguous and still in a developing stage.

This paper argues that where it is undeniable that these translated Persian or Islamic tales in Bengali local vocabulary made the Muslims in Bengal familiar with the stories and culture of Islam, which they could not read in either Persian or Arabic, the process of familiarisation of Islamic cosmological, literary and religious ideas happened through mutual borrowing of idioms and ideologies. The process led to the broadening of concepts in both the communities, namely Hinduism and Islam. This was a significant historical moment in which Islam blended with the Bangla/Bengali language and other unique socio-cultural, the literary and religious milieu of Bengali.

Notes on translation: All translations in this paper Bengali to English are of the author unless otherwise mentioned. Translations are not literal but thematic.

Iusuf-Jolekha (IJ)

Shah Muhammad Sagir, author of *Iusuf Jolekha (IJ)*, did not mention Abd al-Rahman Jami as the source of his poem but the underlying essence of Jami's work

9 Dipesh Chakraborty, "Romantic Archives: Literature and the Politics of Identity in Bengal", *Critical Enquiry*, Vol. 30, No. 3, (Spring 2004), pp. 654-683.

10 Anindita Ghosh, "An Uncertain Coming of the Book: Early Print Cultures in Colonial India", *Book History*, Vol. 6, 2003, pp. 27-29.

11 Asim Roy, "Social Factors in the Making of Bengali Islam", *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Series 1, Vol. 3, Issue 1, (1973), p. 26.

received explicit echoes in the work of Sagir in most parts. Jami had borrowed the theme of mystical thought from Ibn Arabi, the thirteenth century Muslim Philosopher. IJ essentially portrayed a story of love which was a popular theme of narrative poem in the fifteenth century.¹² The story of Yusuf and Zuleikha is one of the most popular tales which had inspired mystic and erotic tales in Persian, Arabic and Turkish.¹³ In Islamic culture, it is the most popular story which continued to be part of the Indo-Persian literary milieu in Bengal till the late eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century as part of the curricula in the Makhtabs and Madrasas used to include the story of Yusuf and Zuleikha.¹⁴ But apart from being the most read and circulated mystical love story of the Quran, the story of Yusuf and Zuleikha occupied a significant position in the Islamic literary corpus as the first story which depicted female sexuality and its social implications in the Islamic world. Though Sagir mostly followed Jami's model of Sufi mystic love throughout his composition, in the end, he chose to adopt the didactic part of the tale as part of the Quran, the justification for which is discussed later in the paper.

The date of composition of Sagir's work could not be concluded with any amount of certainty. He did mention a king, his benevolence and care for justice and moral sense. His reference to a particular "gyach" could be identified with four potential kings of the sixteenth century, the Husayn Shahi Sultan Ghiyas al-Din Mahmud Shah (1532–38 CE) of independent Bengal, Ghiyas al-Din Bahadur Shah (1556–60 CE), Ghiyas al-Din II (1560–63 CE), or Ghiyas al-Din III (1563–64 CE). His borrowing of literary metres and themes from Bengal Vaishnavism in the sixteenth century and their similarity with Jami's work posits his work somewhere in the middle of the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century but never later than that. Because Abdul Hakim and Saiyad Sultan who wrote in the seventeenth century, and even Alaol's work in Arakan royal court (modern-day Myanmar) in the seventeenth century showed similarities with Sagir's thematic and stylistic patterns.

Sagir's adoption of female love and longing for his beloved was reminiscent of the North Indian Bhakti tradition.¹⁵ Awadhi Sufi romances of narrative poems of love were already developed in Indo-Afghan North India following the literary styles of

12 d'Hubert, "Foundational Mahabbat-Nāmas", pp. 649-662.

13 Gayane Karen Merguerian and Afsaneh Najmabadi, 'Zulaykha and Yusuf: Whose "Best Story"?' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (November 1997), p. 485.

14 d'Hubert, "Foundational Mahabbat-nāmas", p. 665.

15 Max Stille, "Die Josephsgeschichte Muhammad Sagirs" (master's thesis, University of Heidelberg, 2011), pp. 24-27. Cited in Irani, "Love's New Pavilions", p. 693.

Persian Mathnavis.¹⁶ Sagir mentioned at the start of his poem that it was a story of love or prem and that his audience should listen to this tale with the emotion of bhakti or devotion in their hearts:

...bachan ratan mañi jatane puriyā/prem rose dharma bānī kahimu bhariyā
 ...kahimu kitāb chāhi sudhārash puri/sunaha bhakata jan-śruti -ghat bhari
 dash khem gun dhara rasik sujan/mohāammad chagir bhane premak bachan¹⁷

[I will narrate the gem of all stories with the utmost care, I will a story imbued with love ...I will tell the story with love in my heart, devotees, listen to me with devotion in your heart. You can point out my mistakes and virtues and can tease me, forgive me for my mistakes, Mohammad Chagir will tell you the story of love.]

This form of mystical poetry was called asrar which was formulated by the disciple of Jami, Husayn Vait Kashif.¹⁸ The format of asrar provided the perfect ground to interpret the Persian texts in the vernacular in Bengal. Sagir's style of composition was imitated by later poets who composed renditions of the tale. Abdul Hakim was one of them who wrote during 1600-1670 CE. Saghir's IJ was followed by more such romantic tales – for example, Layla Majnun, Saiful Mulk Badiuzzamal, Hanifa O Kayra Pori etc¹⁹ – all focussed upon the celebration of worldly concepts of love, specifically carnal. Saghir's IJ was an explicit depiction of female love. This love is particularly extra-marital, as Jolekha desired communion with Iusuf, despite being married to Azeez. Jolekha's portrayal in the story resembled that of Radha in the Radha-Krishna union, a popular theme in the sixteenth century Vaishnav Padabali literature of Bengal. This concept of extra-marital love is known as "parakiyabad" in Vaishnavism and is the most popular subject in medieval Vaishnav poetry. The tropes of the dream sequence (where Jolekha saw her beloved Iusuf) and the concept of purbarag or infatuation with the beloved were part of Bengali Vaishnav literature of Bengal, incorporated by Sagir in his poem:

śajyajata śarīr ālasya mati bhor/jīban ātama mātra jāgae prachur
 alakshite aila puruṣ abatār/Chandra dibākar jinni jyotirūp sār
 tajamay sarbanga Swarup rūpabān/trijagat jinni rup aśakya bakhān
 śudha Sudhakar rūp lābaṇya sundar/ati adbhut rūp jinni purandar²⁰

[Lazily lying on the bed early in the morning but the soul is still awake. Suddenly, God incarnate appears who possess all the light emanating from the sun and the moon. He is beautiful and radiance reflected through his body. His beauty transcends all three worlds, and it cannot be narrated. His beauty is so strange that it resembles that of Indra (purandar)]

16 d'Hubert, "Foundational Maḥabbat-nāmas", p.663.

17 Haq, *Iusuf Jolekha*, p.116.

18 d'Hubert, "Foundational Maḥabbat-nāmas", p.661.

19 Haq, *Iusuf Jolekha*, p.23.

20 Haq, *Iusuf Jolekha*, p.121. As argued by Eaton, *The rise of Islam*, p. 277. Purandar is described as God Indra in Mohammad Abdul Kaiyyum and Razia Sultana eds. *Prachin O Madhayajuger Bangla Bhashar Obhidhan*, second part (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2009), p.96.

In the above excerpt from Sagir's poem, he narrated a dream of Jolekha where Jolekha saw Iusuf for the first time and was completely enamoured by his beauty and called him the God incarnate (avatar). Following the footsteps of Jayadeva and Vidyapati who imported concepts of literary theory from Sanskrit text Alankarsastra, Sagir adopted the rasa theory of Sringara or sensuous love which was part of themes in Bengali literature from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries.²¹ The palpable influence of the Vaishnav Padabali literature of Bengali on the composition of Sagir was Jolekha's eccentric behaviour and loveliness resembling that of Radha and the setting of the licentious scene of flirtatious love depicted in Vrindaban. Another striking similarity with the Bengal Vaishnav literary tradition was the Baramasi²² or lament songs, which were tales of the bereaved heart narrated in the background of the portraiture of nature throughout the twelve months of the year. The Baramasi by Saghir established the essential component of separation and longing of Jolekha similar to Radha's yearning for Krishna:

iti dwaś mās/māgh haila parakāś: kanan kusum hās/subha chiri pañchami prakāś
moulita puṣpaban: madana mohana ghana/ta dekhīā mor mamodas
...phagune chougūn rīt: nānā puṣpa bikaśita.²³

[Twelve months will end, now the month of Magh (the tenth month of the Bengali calendar and denotes winter) will come and the forest will be full of flowers. The auspicious 5th day will also appear. Witnessing the beautiful blooming flowers my mind wanders. In Fagun (eleventh month) the flowers have bloomed]

...chaitra haila sulalita: nānā puṣpa bikaśita/champak chāmelī jūthī jāī
...baiśakh samaya deś: rabir kiraṇ beṣ/nidāgh dahe nirantare
ām jāī suphalita: tarusab sulalita/dulita lambita palabhare
...dakṣin malayā bāt: hṛdaya anaṅga ghāt/tā heri dhābae man dūr
...jaiṣṭha āila bala: cūta supakkita phal/dāle sab haila suśobhita
...tarusab sucharita: jībbanta haraṣita/birahiṇī heri kām bhor²⁴

[Chaitra ushered in, the champak, chameli and juthi flowers bloomed. During the month of Baishak, the first month of the Bangla calendar, the sun is strong and feels like

21 Irani, "Love's New Pavilions", pp.700-701.

22 The definition offered by Dusan Zbavitel, the Czech Indologist of Baramasi, is that 'the Baramasi originated in Folk poetry, that owing to its intrinsic attractiveness and its great popularity in Bengal, it found a place again and again in the classical literature, being of course always reshaped and remodelled by various poets according to their poetic aims, imagination and creative ability; at the same time however it followed its course of development in the folk poetry itself, being influenced in its turn by those forms and types creative in the field of art literature especially in Vaishnava poetry.' in 'The Development of Baromasi in the Bengali Literature', *Archiv Orientani* 29, 1961, pp. 582-619. Cited in Ashutosh Bhattacharya, *Banglar Lakasahitya*, Third Part, (Calcutta: Calcutta Book House, 1958), p.545.

23 Haq, *Iusuf Jolekha*, p.156.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

burning all the time. The trees are full of mangoes and berries, the branches are hanging due to their weight. The breeze from the south blows, the love of God knocked on me, seeing this I am rushing towards him. Then came Jaishtha (second month), the ripe fruits fell, more adorned the trees. The trees have fresh leaves, they look lively and full of life, the sad heroine's eyes are full of desire]

āila kārtik mās: chaturdik parakāś/...tā heri udāsī piyā: birahe bidare hiyā/manapakṣī uḍite uchchhaāe.²⁵

[Then came the month of Kartik (seventh) with full strength...the lover became distracted, her heart is full of sadness, she desires to fly away with her thoughts]

The above excerpts from IJ narrated the different stages of emotions Jolekha went through when she could not meet her beloved Iusuf. Imitating the “lyrical lament”²⁶ of Bengal Vaishnavism, Sagir narrated how Jolekha explained that she would be ruined if Iusuf would not accept her:

muñi kulavatī satī: tomhāra caraṇa gati:
karapuṭe tomhāta minati/tumhi vine nāhi āra: kata saimu dukṣabhāra:
śuna mora prāṇa pati /kāmānale dahimu nā kati
ḍubilū aghora dadhi: uddhāraha guṇa nidhi: śuna mora prāṇapati/kara mora manuratha siddhi.²⁷

[I am a noble/chaste woman, at your feet lies my fate, I present my pleas for your ears/ I have none except you (in my life), how much pain will I endure, listen to me my lord/ how long will I burn in the fire of passion. Oh, the virtuous one, please help me from drowning in the dangerous ocean]

Sagir had predominantly used a devotional vocabulary borrowed from the Bhakti literary genre – such as bhava-bhakti, piriti sadhana, premarasa, pujana, seva kara, and bhajana – all traceable in Bengali Vaishnavism.²⁸ In Bengali Vaishnava devotionalism, the liberation of the soul is understood to be attained through love and mere religious goal in this aspect is discredited.²⁹

Most of the manuscripts of Iusuf Jolekha were found from the Chittagong region of Bangladesh, implying that Chittagong is Sagir’s place of origin. The influence of Vaishnavism in this area during the medieval period is attested by both literary and archaeological sources. Stone images of Radha and Krishna that were found in Paharpur district of modern-day Bangladesh from the Pala period are reflective of

25 Haq, Iusuf Jolekha, p.158.

26 Irani, “Love’s New Pavilions”, p.724.

27 Haq, Iusuf Jolekha, p.204. I have followed the translation by Ayesha Irani with a little bit of variation for this excerpt. Irani, “love’s new pavilions,” p.725.

28 Ibid, p.720.

29 June McDaniel, 'Emotion in Bengali Religious Thought: Substance and Metaphor'. Joel Marks and Roger T. Ames (eds.) *Emotions in Asian Thought: A Dialogue in Comparative Philosophy* (New Delhi, 1995), p.48.

the prevalence of the Radha-Krishna cult.³⁰ Vaishnav inscriptions were also found more in the Eastern part of Bengal than in others.³¹ Chaitanya also had disciples from Chittagong and Sylhet. Chaitanya movement in Nabadwip (in western Bengal) was highly influenced by the socio-cultural environment of Chittagong and Sylhet.³² That Vaishnavism was quite popular in Chittagong is testified by numerous inscriptions found in this district. The Radha-Krishna concept of indulging in amorous love, with stress on physical beauty, is evident in Chittagong, Mymensingh, Sylhet, and Comilla districts of Eastern Bengal. The concept is closer to the more folk kind of Vaishnavism, in contrast to the sophisticated Gaudiya Vaishnavism.³³ The song and dance festival of “Dhamali” (desire for mating, debauchery, and lechery) was popular in the villages of Sylhet, Cachar and Tripura in the north-eastern part of Bengal.³⁴ These song and dance performances used to be so vulgar that they were not performed inside the boundary of the village.³⁵ However, they were popular performative aspects of rural Bengal.

Edward Dimock stressed the conceptual exchanges between the Muslims and the Vaishnav devotees. This is based on the similarity between the metaphorical representation of Radha and Krishna, to represent the love between the soul and God and its conceptual counterpart in mystical Islam, namely, Sufism.³⁶ Poets who had already existed in Bengal and wrote Vaishnav poetry in the Bengali language might have been familiar with the mystical notion of Islam, especially with the advent of mystics in Bengal from the early period of Muslim rule.³⁷ The first Sufi making his way into Bengal was Baba Adam Shahid, who came to Rampal in Decca, Bangladesh.³⁸ His advent was followed by Makhdam Shah Dawlah Shahid who came to Pabna. Later Sheikh Shah Jalal went to Sylhet. Sagir's own heritage in the pir tradition has also been hinted at by the use of ‘Shah’ in his name which was carrying the legacy of his teacher or Murshid in the Sagiri tradition.³⁹

30 Ibid., p.10

31 Ramakanta Chakravarti, *Vaishnavism in Bengal 1486-1900*, (Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1985), p.1.

32 Ibid., p.278.

33 Ibid., p.281.

34 Sumanta Banerjee, “Appropriation of Folk-Heroine: Radha in medieval Bengali Vaishnavite culture”, Occasional paper (Indian Institute of Advanced Study); 3., (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1993).p.11.

35 Ibid.

36 Edward C. Dimock, “Muslim Vaisnava Poets of Bengal” in David Kopf (ed.) *Bengal Regional Identity*(East Lansing, Asian Studies Center, Michigan State University, 1969), p.25.

37 Abdul Karim, *Social History of the Muslims, down to A.D. 1538* (Dhaka: Jatiya Grantha Prakashan, 2001), pp. 84-123.

38 Ibid., p.86.

39 Haq, *Iusuf Jolekha*, p.23.

Asim Roy called the Muslim Bengali poets “cultural mediators” – who through their translation works in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – sought to bridge the gap between the ashrafs (high-born Muslims) and the atraps or ajlaf (local non-elite Muslims).⁴⁰ But Sagir’s poetic composition did not fit into this ideation of Muslim poets being connecting agents between high and low-class Muslims. Apart from using the more popular literary style and tropes, Sagir also borrowed the Sanskrit style of poetry and rhetoric for elite consumption.⁴¹ Another noteworthy feature of Sagir’s composition was the shift from a Sufi mystical love story to a more moralistic and judgemental tale. The gender perspective also changed from Jolekha to Iusuf, with Jolekha’s relegation from the centre of the story. In the initial part of his poem, Sagir explicitly punished Jolekha for her licentious behaviour and for expressing her desire. Eventually, the poet settled Jolekha as a benign wife responsible for household chores, bearing children. This was in contrast to Jami’s tormenting ending where both Yusuf and Zuleikha’s unfulfilled love led to the death of Yusuf and Zuleikha. Sagir established the character of Iusuf as someone who consistently condemned the behaviour of Jolekha and only accepted her after the mediation through God’s messenger. This was a literary trope Jami also resorted to. Jolekha’s passion-driven pursuits and Iusuf’s strict adherence to the ideals of the heterosexual normative and gendered portrayal of an ideal echoed the socio-cultural and religious order of Medieval Bengali culture.⁴² Sagir’s choice of fate for the two titular characters was to cater the aesthetics and morals of the urban Muslim elite – elite for whom the bold and blatant pronunciation of Jolekha’s love and passion for Iusuf was unacceptable on Quranic grounds.⁴³ His reliance on the rasa theory, which was also premised upon a moral code of conduct, contributes further to his intention to be cautious in his storytelling so as not to offend the elite Muslim sensibilities.⁴⁴

But Sagir’s biggest contribution through his only composition was the ability to infuse Persian literary culture with the north Indian and Bengali Bhakti idioms with very distinct Bengali socio-cultural elements and making it a product of the region of Bengal. Saghir had incorporated many Bengali local words and cultural scenes into his poem. For example, the merchant who bought Iusuf was called “Maniru”,

40 Asim Roy, “Being and Becoming a Muslim: A Historiographic Perspective on the Search for Muslim Identity in Bengal” in Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (ed.), *Bengal: Rethinking History: Essays In Historiography* (New Delhi 2001), p.189.

41 Irani, “Loves’ new Pavilions”, p.703.

42 Ibid., p.740.

43 Ibid., pp.698, 723-726.

44 Sheldon Pollock, “The Social Aesthetic and Sanskrit Literary Theory”, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 29 (2001), 212. Cited in Irani, “Love’s new Pavilions”, p.727.

a name of Bengali origin.⁴⁵ Sagir's incorporation of rituals like putting sindur or vermilion and the concept of bibaha basar (decorated wedding room) as part of the marriage ritual of Jolekha are intrinsic to Bengali or Indian tradition. Along with the above-mentioned cultural materials, Sagir's use of local verb forms like – karimu, khaimu, and na dimu – are elements that aided in the process of his attempt to situate the poem in the socio-cultural milieu of Bengal.

Even if it is difficult to prove whether these Muslim poets writing in Bengali acted as cultural mediators between the high and low strata of Muslims, Sagir introduced Quranic teachings and Islamic ideas in the familiar moulds of Bengal Vaishnavism and Bhakti ideology. Through their works of translation, Sagir and other Muslim poets interpreted Perso-Islamic ideas of God, society, sexuality, gender, and love in the local Bengali idioms. It finally led to the formation of a distinct Bengali literary culture which created a “regional identity of the Bengalis.”⁴⁶ This identity formation of the Bengalis was necessary for giving Islam a regional character.

Rasul Bijoy (RB)

Rasul Bijoy, herein RB, is the only work contributed by Jayenuddin known till now; and it is the only manuscript of the poem that has been discovered. The Manuscript was found in a mutilated condition, with the first eight pages being missing.⁴⁷ The poem narrated the battle between Prophet Muhammad and Jaykum, the king of Iraq. The scribe has been identified as Kalidas by his familiar handwriting.⁴⁸ There are eleven bhanitas (autobiographical part) of the poet found in the poem. Nine bhanitas mentions the name of Jayenuddin but in different spellings. However, the name of the poem, Rasul Bijay, was consistent throughout the text.

As regards the reference to the name of the poem, the following excerpt is pertinent:

śrijuta icchup khan jnana guṇabanta/rasul bijay bāṇī koutuke sunanata⁴⁹
[honourable icchup khan is learned and virtuous/hears the story of rasul bijay with delight.]

45 Haq, *Iusuf Jolekha*, p.173; Haq, *Muslim Bengali Literature* (Karachi: Pakistan Publications, 1957), p.55.

46 Edward C. Dimock, *The Place of Hidden Moon: Erotic Mysticism in the Vaishnava Sahajiya Cult of Bengal* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p.415.

47 Ahmed Sharif (ed.), *Rasul Bijay, Jaynuddin Birachita*, Sahitya Patrika, year 7, number 2 (Dhaka, 1964), p. 1. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Professor David Curley for sharing the text of Rasul Bijay with me when I almost gave up on my intention to study it. Without his help, I could not have finished my MPhil of which a study of this poem was an integral part.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., p.2.

rasul bijay bānī: oti anandite śuni/mane prīti bhasila sabhan⁵⁰
 [everyone hears the story of rasul bijay with joy and it fills their heart with happiness]
 rasul bijay bānī sudhāras dhār/śuni guṇīgaṇ man ananda opār.⁵¹
 [the story of rasul bijay is full of sweetness/ all learned people become happy listening
 to this]

As regards the reference to the name of the poet, the following excerpt is noteworthy:

hīna jaenuddine: kahe pacñalir chanda/śuni guṇīgaṇ mane jhare makaranda
 [inferior jaenuddin tells in panchali metre/hearing which their heart fills with the
 sweetness of honey]⁵²
 ...hīna januddine kahe pacñali raciya
 [inferior januddin is narrating in panchali metre]⁵³
 śīśu jaenuladdine kahe pacñali payar
 [in the panchali payar metre/form it was narrated to baby jaenuluddin]⁵⁴

In almost all of these bhanitas, Jayenuddin mentioned his pir (guide), Shah Muhammad, through whom he had come to know the story of RB:

śāhā mohāmmad pīr rūpe pacñabān/ananta ki kahiba anta tahār bākhān
 kamala charaṇa reṇu śireta kariya/hīna januddine kahe pacñali raciya.⁵⁵

[Shaha Mohammad pir possesses five elements of beauty what I can say his eulogy is
 endless. I take his lotus like feet upon my forehead/ and he narrates in panchali form]⁵⁶

Shah Mohammad could not be traced in the history of pir or Sufi masters but the appearance of his name in Jayenuddin's poem established Jayenuddin's orientation in the Sufi tradition. Indeed, Jayenuddin was one of the forerunners in bringing Islam to the Bengali countryside.

RB was an epic or long narrative poem which was an important part of Muslim Bengali literature in medieval Bengal. The story of RB, i.e., the military exploits of Prophet Muhammad could be termed as a separate genre because of its composition by several poets throughout the medieval period. We find another version of RB from the sixteenth century written by Shah Barid Khan and Shaikh Chand with the same theme.⁵⁷ Nabibangsha by Saiyad Sultan, which was the first biography (sirat)

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., p.3.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 The poet mentioned Panchaban or five elements of beauty that allures one towards madana or the god of love in Hindu Purana literature. Kaiyyum and Sultana eds. *Prachin O Madhayajuger*, p.81

56 Shariff, *Rasul Bijay*, p.3.

57 Wakil Ahmad, Shah Barid Khan, *Banglapedia, the National Encyclopedia of Bangladesh*, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.

of Muhammad written in Bengali, had a part in the story of RB. The oldest traditional biography of Prophet Muhammad was written by Ibn Ishaq in 768 CE, al-Waqidi (d.822), and Ibn Hisham (d.834).⁵⁸ The genre related to Muhammad's lives is divided into six categories: i) Sirat: biographies of Prophet Muhammad; ii) Maulid Sharif: poems written in honour of the Prophet's birth; iii) Natiyya: poems in praise of Muhammad; iv) Mirajnama or the mysterious night journey of Muhammad into heaven; v) Maghazi: battles undertaken by Muhammad; and vi) Wafat-i-Rasul or Wafat Nama or literature on the demise of the prophet.⁵⁹ RB can be identified as belonging to the Maghazi literature. It was a popular literary genre called Ayyam al-Arab in Arabia since the Pre-Islamic days.⁶⁰ These stories of Muhammad's exploits could not be testified in light of history. These are, therefore, imaginary and fantastical stories of the Prophet's achievements in subduing the kafirs (infidels), interspersed with Angelic interventions and otherworldly experiences, which could also be found in Saiyad Sultan's version of the story of RB.⁶¹

The date of composition of RB by Jayenuddin could not be identified. But based on its verb and noun forms, it is assumed that the text was composed around the middle of the fifteenth century. The pronoun forms like Amhi, tumhi, tomhar, tumhini, and amhar; and the verb forms like puchanta, bolenta, chalilenta, and dilenta used in the text led to this assumption.⁶² Jayenuddin had mentioned one "ichup khan" as his patron king, several times in his poem. One of them is given below:

śrijuta ichup khan: rajeswar guṇabān/surucir subudhi sutham⁶³

[respected ichup khan is best of all the kings and most virtuous/he has a refined taste, intelligent and well-built]

Multiple theories were put forward to locate "Ichup Khan" in the history of pre-modern Bengal. It is thought to be Yusuf Khan or Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah (1474-1482 CE) of the later Ilyas Shahi dynasty. Sukumar Sen was keener on denoting the word "Ichup" to a local powerful zamindar in Bengal who had attained titles – such as shah, sultan, and khan – by their court poets.⁶⁴ But this argument pushes the date in the eighteenth century.⁶⁵ Ilyas Shahi kings were known as patrons of art and

58 John L. Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of The Modern Islamic World*, Vol. 3, Oxford, 1995, p.162. Cited in Amit Dey, *The Image of Prophet in Bengali Muslim Piety, 1850-1947* (Kolkata: Reader's Service, 2006), p.12

59 Ibid., p.11.

60 Dey, *The Image of*, p.46

61 Ibid., p.48.

62 Haq, *Iusuf Jolekha*, p.20

63 Sharif, *Rasul Bijay*, p.4

64 Sharif, *Rasul Bijay*, p.9

65 Ibid., p.11

literature. Barbak Shah patronised both Hindu and Muslim Bengali poets in his court. Sharfnamah, a lexicon, was written in Persian by Ibrahim Qawwam Faruqi. He claimed to have graced the Shah's court.⁶⁶ Maladhar Basu (Srikrishna Bijay) and Krittibash Ojha (Ramayana) also composed Hindu epics in Bengali in Barbak's Shah's court. Not much is known about the reign of his son Yusuf Khan or Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah though twelve inscriptions in Bengal is found to have been attributed to Sultan Yusuf Khan, on the walls of the mosques. Three of them have been located in Sultanganj in Rajshahi district, Mirpur in Dhaka and Hathazari in Chittagong district.⁶⁷ Based on Yusuf Khan's Mosque building projects and his inclination to Islamic jurisprudence,⁶⁸ Jayenuddin's 'Ichup' was concluded to be Yusuf Khan.⁶⁹

This association of Jayenuddin's text with Yusuf Khan's period has to be understood in the context of how RB's socio-religious contribution had been understood. The biographies of Prophet Muhammad had been considered to be significant texts for Islam's inroad in Bengal. His biographies implied his or Islam's superior position vis-à-vis Hinduism.⁷⁰ The genre of RB – i.e. the theme of Muhammad's heroic fight and triumph over the non-Muslim, with its translation in Bengali – is identified as a tool for establishing Islam as a superior religious entity.⁷¹ Like in Nabibangsha by Saiyad Sultan, Muhammad was established in an exalted position compared to Hindu Gods like Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Rama and Krishna, because the latter were misguided by Iblis or Satan.⁷² Eighteenth-century Sirat poet Shaikh Chand's Shab-i-Miraj repeated this trope where he made the Hindu gods and goddesses – such as Indra, Yama, Krishna, Lakshmi, and Saraswati – express their loyalty to Muhammad and their intention to embrace Islam.⁷³ We also find reference to Hindu religious figures and kings in Jayenuddin's work:

66 Abdul Karim, Sharfnamah, Banglapedia, National Encyclopaedia of Bangladesh.

67 Abdul Karim, *Corpus of the Arabic and Persian Inscriptions of Bengal*, (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh: Distributor, Academic Publishers, 1992), pp.180-196

68 Muhammad Kasim Firishta, *Tarikh-i-Firishta or Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi*, vol.2, Lucknow, p.135. Cited in Abdul Karim, *Banglar Itihas. Sultani Amal* (Dhaka: Jatiya Sahitya Prakash, 2007), p.276

69 Sukhamay Bandyopadhyay, *Banglar Itihaser Dusho Bochor (1338-1538)*, p.121. Cited in Sharif, Rasul Bijay, p.10

70 Dey, *The image of*.

71 Asim Roy, *Islamic Syncretistic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p.92. Cited in Dey, *the image of*, p.47

72 Ahmad Sharif, *Saiyid Sultan- Tar Granthabali O Tar Jug, Parichiti Khanda* (Dhaka, 1972), pp.80-86, 219.

73 Khandker Muzammil Haq, *Bangla Rasul Charit Dharay Kabi Shaikh Chand* (Dhaka, 1993), p.98. Cited in Dey, *the Image of*, p.42.

dāne dharme hariscandra: manyaguru sama indra (about his patron ichup).⁷⁴
 [He is as magnanimous as Haris Chandra (Hindu king of the Puranas) and learned as
 Indra (Hindu god)]

dāne karṇa mane kuru...dhyānata śaṅkar sama jana... (about his pir shah
 Mohammad).⁷⁵
 [He is as genius as Karna and respectable as kuru (Mahabharata prince and king),
 meditates like shiva]

ki rām juddha kibā paṇḍaber raṅ/hena mallajudha nā dekhici kadacan (about the battle
 of Muhammad).⁷⁶
 [This hand fight is not even comparable to what Ram or Pandavas had fought]

But one has to be cautious at this very juncture because Jayenuddin mentioned Hindu Gods and popular epical figures essentially as metaphors for his readers. He intended to make his readers realise the strength and power of his hero, the Prophet, by comparing him with figures already existing in the Hindu-Bengali literary landscape. In another place Jayenuddin used the word Niranjan – i.e. the Hindu concept of the supreme God – while eulogising his pir, Shah Mohammad:

dhara giyā se caraṅ: jay diba niranjan⁷⁷

[go and touch his feet, I will sing the praise of the Niranjan]

The genre of medieval Bengali literature composed by the Muslims had been defined in terms of two kinds of social implications. One was to situate these texts in the context of the Bengali Muslim community's emotional vacuum. The local Muslim population were deprived of their own cultural and literary heritage in Bengal, being geographically far from the land of Islam's origin. Moreover, these Bengali Muslims were born in Bengal and did not know Persian or Arabic. These Bengali renditions of the Persian texts are thought to have created a nationalistic feeling among the Bengali speaking Muslims.⁷⁸ Another way in which these translations were understood was the syncretistic implication of the texts. Syncretism made Islam a part of the Bengali socio-religious fabric through a blending of the Sanskrit-Hindu and the Perso-Islamic ideas. As part of this, both Hinduism and Islam went through a transformation in the ideological and cosmological realms.⁷⁹ For example, Sanskrit words like Niranjan and Avatar were used to denote Allah and Nabi (Prophet Muhammad) respectively; the "hybrid cult"

74 Sharif, *Rasul Bijay*, p.3.

75 Ibid., p.4.

76 Ibid., p.20

77 Sharif, *Rasul Bijay*, p.3

78 Azhar Islam, *Modhyo Juger Bangla Sahitye Muslim Kobi*, (Dhaka 1992), p.24.

79 For a detailed analysis of the stages and characteristics of these changes in which cultural exchange of divine and superhuman entities between Hinduism and Islam in Bengal took place, see Eaton, *the rise of Islam*, pp.269-286.

of Satya Pir was an amalgamation of the Arabic word pir and the Sanskrit word satya; and this hybrid cult was worshipped by both the Hindus and the Muslims.⁸⁰

Another significant point to be noted here is that Muhammad in Islam is never considered more than a prophet. Whenever he was challenged by the Meccans to perform miracles, he used to say that the only miracle was the revelation of the Quran for which he was chosen as the messenger to spread the word of Allah.⁸¹ But gradually in Islamic piety, Muhammad acquired a very special character. He assumed the position of the perfect man, whose life story and actions became a precedent for the Muslim community. He was called the ‘uswa hasana’ or the “beautiful model.”⁸² In this context it is significant to point out Jayenuddin’s comparison of the sanctity of the Kalma or Islamic prayers in the Quran with the Vedas and Sastras, as he sought to establish the Prophet’s spiritual effect upon his followers. He wrote:

kṛipār sāgar nabī asiche nikaṭ/jhāṭe kari bheṭ asi tāhār nikaṭ
tāhān kalimā kahae mantra japae/koti janmer pāp seikṣne kṣae
kiba cāri bed madhye śastra sab jāna/kalimā bākhān jāna ache tār sthān
bilamba karaha kene kāfirer gaṇ/abilambe toṣ jāi nabīr caraṇ.⁸³

[Nabi is the kindest and (you should) come fast to meet him. Chanting the name and reading the kalima will absolve all sins of all births. The praising (God) words in kalima occupy the same place as that of the Vedas and sastras. Why are you delaying kafirs (nonbelievers), quickly bow down at the feet of the Nabi.]

This particular element of associating a story with its intrinsic power to alter someone’s life and fortune was also echoed in the Mangal Kavyas where the word Mangal or auspicious carries that implication. The Bijay or victory poems and the Mangal Kavyas are often compared with the essence of RB’s story. Maladhar Basu’s Sri Krishna Bijay, Churamani Das’s Gauranga Bijay, Mukunda’s Jagannath Bijay, Mir Fayzullah’s Goraksha Bijay and Satyapir Vijay, Bipradas Pipilai’s Manasa Vijay are some of the victory poems written in Bengali from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. According to Sukumar Sen, these victory poems were not dissimilar to the Mangal Kavyas, as mangal (auspicious) and Bijay (victory) are used interchangeably.⁸⁴ The point of convergence between the Mangal and the

80 Dines Chandra Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature*. A series of lectures delivered as Reader to the Calcutta University (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1911), p.677. Cited in Eaton, *The rise of*, p.280

81 Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is his Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*, (Chapel Hill, 1985), p.23

82 Ibid., p.24

83 Ibid., p.22.

84 Sukumar Sen, *Bangla Sahityer Itihas*, p. 103. Cited in Sharif, *Rasul Bijay*, p.11.

Vijay Kavyas was the core subject matter in both genres. In both cases, a deity, a spiritual Guru or a God incarnate (avatar) was portrayed as a warrior, fighting an evil king, a demon, fierce animals and a rival who posed a threat to her/his power and authority. While the Mangal Kavyas intended to initiate a cult of the deity, the Bijay Kavyas established their heroes as a supremely powerful entity – just like Gorakshanath, Lord Krishna, and in our case, Prophet Muhammad. These points of similarity across genres are to be seen in the context of convergence rather than a contest between Hinduism and Islam. No matter who had written the first text on Muhammad's war exploits, whether Jayenuddin, Shabirid Khan or Sheikh Chand, the genre was a significant literary context. The process of translation needs to be understood in “terms of equivalence” rather than the two entities of Hinduism and Islam in a space of religious and ideological competition. The Muslim poets consistently looked for the closest terms in the local Bengali idiom for the articulation of Perso-Islamic literary and religious ideas; and they intended to make those palatable to the readers in Bengal, particularly to the Muslims who were not acquainted with Arabic or Persian.⁸⁵

Yusuf Khan's alleged inclination towards Islamic injunctions as the sole reason for extending patronage to Muslim poets in propagating Islam can be scrutinised in the light of the temple architecture during Yusuf's time. The parapet on both sides of the central arch-opening has fluted minars in the mosque in Chittagong resembling that of a Bengali hut.⁸⁶ This Bengali regional trait in Islamic architecture was a widespread phenomenon since the fifteenth century and became a permanent feature by the seventeenth century.⁸⁷ But for those, who want to situate the story of RB or any other biography of the Prophet in the background of the establishment of Islam in Bengal, would choose the following excerpt from the RB of Jayenuddin:

ei katha śuni nabī kahite lagilā/anal barañ hai garjiya uthilā
 koṭlā tuṛiyā alī kariba bādśai/andarete jāi ali jab kariba gai
 andarete jāi ali jab kariba garu/sei śer thon dimu tomar rājar jaru
 kalima padaiyā sab bhajaimu jigir...⁸⁸

[hearing this the Nabi turned red like fire and roared in anger. (exclaimed) that he will demolish the fort and make Ali the ruler. Ali will enter and sacrifice a cow and offer it to the raja's wife. Will make them read the kalima amidst triumphant slogans]

85 Tony K. Stewart, “In Search of Equivalence: Conceiving Muslim-Hindu Encounter through Translation theory”, *History of Religions* 40 (3), pp. 262-263.

86 Hiteshranjan Sanyal, “Religious Architecture in Bengal (15th- 17th century): A Study of the Major Trends”, *Indian History Congress Proceedings*, 32rd session, (1970), pp. 413-415

87 Ibid.

88 Sharif, *Rasul Bijay*, p.21.

In a recent study of the text of Nabibangsha or the biography of the Prophet Muhammad by Saiyad Sultan, the author pointed out how a text written in medieval times had been appropriated by the Bengali Muslim community in the present-day nation-state of Bangladesh to support their identity politics.⁸⁹ Nabibangsha – which was until recently resided only in the distant memory of the readers and scholars in Bengal – became a symbol of regional identity and cultural symbol. But the most consequential effect of Sultan's text reminds us how he attempted to introduce "...Islamic doctrine and praxis to the people of Bengal."⁹⁰ Similarly, Jayenuddin's contribution to the corpus of medieval Bengali literature has to be understood within the broader canvas of Islam's interaction with Bengal's socio-cultural milieu. In this process of vernacularisation, the language of Bengali provided the medium of articulation of Islam, chosen unanimously by the Bengali Muslim poets, despite occasional hesitation and religious caveats. Jayenuddin's work has not received much attention from the scholarly circle despite its existence in print for a long time. But for a comparative study of Maghazi literature produced in the Bengali language, the text needed to be taken into consideration.

Conclusion

Due to a prolonged interaction between Islam and Hinduism since the thirteenth century, people – who were initially worshipping deities like Manasa, Krishna or Dakshin Ray or tiger God in rural Bengal – embraced the new superhuman powers and fantastical figures of the pirs and Sufi saints to cope with the regular strains of life.⁹¹ This phenomenon can only be understood if we avoid putting both the categories of Hinduism and Islam in watertight compartments. The Observation of pre-modern societies through the nineteenth and twentieth-century categories of national identity and linguistic community had led to dangerous ramifications in the periods to come. It was realised in a more palpable way when British colonial infused the consciousness of separate political entities among the Hindus and the Muslims to bolster their communal agenda.⁹² Even in the modern-day socio-religious context, any definitive definition of identity clashes with the real word experience. In the course of the long period of cultural interaction with Islam,

89 Ayesha A. Irani, "Sacred Biography, Translation, and Conversion; The Nabīvaṃśa of Saiyad Sultān and the making of Bengali Islam, 1600-Present, Doctoral Dissertation Submitted to South Asia Regional Studies, Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania (2011). Publicly Accessible Penn Dissertations. 467. <http://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/467>

90 Ibid., p.409.

91 Eaton, *the rise of*, pp.274-275.

92 Eaton, *the rise of*, p.280.

Allah and other superhuman figures associated with Him, gradually became part of local cosmology.⁹³ If we analyse the experience of Islam in Bengal in the pre-modern times, the concept of a Hindu Bengal transforming into a Muslim Bengal needs to be reconsidered. Instead of a more doctrinal transformation, “the encounter” happened among different individuals or communities like the Sufis, Shias, Sunnis, Vaishnavs, Saiva, and Saktas.⁹⁴ Monolithic constructs of both Hinduism and Islam were much later ideations; and the participant in the encounter – i.e., the Bengali community – was not even concerned about the “conflict” that we keep reading about.⁹⁵ The Identity of being a Muslim in Bengal was closely associated with the region of Bengal. A Muslim born and brought up in Bengal identified her/him with the language as any other Hindu or other local people would do. The process of dissemination of Islamic ideas into the Bengali language was never unilateral. The large number of Persian and Arabic words in Bengali vocabulary – which are used by the speaker of this language without always conscious of its etymology – is testimony to this fact.

93 Ibid., p.278.

94 Stewart, “In Search of”, pp.262-263.

95 Eaton, *the rise of*, p.278.

CONSOLIDATING ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF BANGLADESH¹

Razaul Karim Faquire*

Abstract

This study aims to advocate for a comprehensive medium of instruction (MOI) scheme in consolidating the English as a medium of instruction (EMI) into the education system in consideration with an envisaged language policy of Bangladesh. In order to fulfill the aim of this paper, an investigation has been made into the present situation of prevalent EMI practices and their impact on society. The EMI was introduced by drawing on the national education policy (NEP) in the year 1992, and given further emphasis in the subsequent revision of the NEP in the year 2000 and 2010. By this time, the EMI has been institutionalized and now exists as a countrywide unregulated system. It as a system was embraced by the affluent socioeconomic classes but is now found to bring forth various backlashes affecting the society and culture of Bangladesh. In order to consolidate this EMI into the education system of Bangladesh, a MI scheme has been proposed in compliance with the language planning grounded on an envisaged nationalistic language policy, so that the national language Bangla, as a symbol of Bangalee nationalism and as a means of assimilation, enjoys greater prominence over English

Key words: Education Policy, Language Policy, Acquisition Planning, Medium of Instruction, English Literacy

1. Introduction

This study aims to advocate for a comprehensive MOI scheme in consolidating English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) into the education system of Bangladesh in compliance with the status planning and acquisition planning grounded in an envisaged Language Policy (LP) in order to cope with the potential risk of backlashes yielded from the crosscurrent practice of EMI in the education system of Bangladesh.

Though the education system of Bangladesh has acquired EMI as a part of its National Education Policy (NEP 2000² and NEP 2010³), a provision for EMI being an issue of Acquisition planning requires endorsement of the Language-in-

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2 National Education Policy. (Ministry of Education Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2000).

3 Ibid.

Education Policy in compliance with the language policy (LP). The education system of Bangladesh has gained an EMI, which has been introduced with a maneuver of the National Education Policy, though a provision for an EMI being an issue of Acquisition planning requires the endorsement of a Language-in-Education Policy underpinned with and Language Policy (LP). However, Bangladesh does not even have an LP, let alone the language-in-education policy. In the absence of an LP, the English educationists have introduced EMI as an alternative MOI in the Language education system following the recommendations of the NEP.

Given the above backdrop with regard to the EMI, I will attempt to create a pedagogical basis for consolidating the EMI into the education system of Bangladesh in compliance with the status planning as well as acquisition planning grounded in an envisaged LP.

2. Foregrounding the Framework of Study

The study on consolidating the EMI in the education system of Bangladesh is qualitative in nature, for which it requires a foregrounding of the conceptual framework. The EMI being an issue of acquisition planning which, in actuality, requires an underpinning of an LP. However, it was introduced without the backing of an LP, rather with some recommendations of the NEP. Since then, it has been running for the last two decades. Since it has been introduced without proper acquisition planning, it owes a post-implementation review, so that the impact of it can be demonstrated. In a similar vein, it calls for an underpinning of the LP. That being the case with regard to the EMI practice, the main aim of this study would be to formulate an MOI scheme grounded on a nationalistic LP, so that the EMI can be consolidated in it. Therefore, the major issues to be foregrounded are as follows.

- i) Major Shift in English-in-Education Policy and Diffusion of EMI in the Education System of Bangladesh,
- ii) The extent of Backlashes Exerted from the EMI and its Impact on the society and culture of Bangladesh,
- iii) Articulation of MOI Scheme with Language Policy, and
- iv) Formulating an MOI scheme and consolidating the EMI in the education system of Bangladesh.

3. Major Shift in English-in-Education Policy and Diffusion of EMI in the Education System of Bangladesh

Beginning from 1992 until 2010, through subsequent revisions of the EMI, Bangladesh has acquired an English Language Education (ELE) system comprising compulsory provision for the *Literacy English* up to the higher secondary level of education and an optional provision for the Education in EMI at all phases of

education. Chowdhury and Kabir (2014)⁴ have made a qualitative analysis of a range of policy documents (1971-2014) formulated by the different governments in order to show the chronological development of the language-in-education policy. The policy documents include a number of national education policies as well as commission reports, including the Bangladesh Education Commission Report-1974, the English Teaching Taskforce Commission-1976, the Bangladesh National Education Commission Report - 1988, the National Curriculum Committee - 1991, the National Education Policy - 2000, the Bari Commission Report - 2002, the Miah Commission Report - 2004, and the National Education Policy - 2010. The following table (Table-1) shows a brief chronology of the shifts in emphasis on English and English education as enacted within the various aforementioned education policies and commission reports since independence.

Table 1: English-in-Education policy: A chronological summary

Education Policies	Status of English in the Pedagogical Situation
National Curriculum Committee (1991)	#English education introduced in Class 3 #English introduced as a compulsory subject in Class 1 (1992)
National Education Policy (2000)	#English set as a medium of instruction for kindergartens #Introduction of English as an extra subject from Class 1 and 2 and as a compulsory subject from Class 3 #Along with Bengali, English could be a medium of instruction from the secondary level (Class 7) #Emphasis on English as the medium of instruction at the tertiary level
National Education Commission Report (2003)	#Reemphasis on English learning from the primary level #One objective of primary education to acquaint learners to English language skills as a foreign language #Emphasis on rebuilding overall English curriculum #Emphasis on introducing a six-month English language course at the tertiary level
National Education Policy (2010)	#English recognised as an essential tool for building a knowledge-based society #Emphasis on English writing and speaking from the very beginning of primary education #English to be set as compulsory subject adopted in all streams from the secondary level #English as a medium of instruction could be introduced from the secondary level #English to be a compulsory subject in all colleges and universities #English (along with Bengali) to be the mediums of instruction at the tertiary level

[Adopted from Table-1 in Raqib Chowdhury & Ariful Haq Kabir (2014)]

4 Raqib Chowdhury & Ariful Haq Kabir, "Language wars: English education policy and practice in Bangladesh", *Multilingual Education*. Vol. 4, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13616-014-0021-2>

The policymakers made provision for the EMI as they considered English to be an essential tool in i) building a knowledge-based society and ii) achieving economic development. Since the introduction, the EMI received prominence over the BMI by the middle and higher socioeconomic classes (Chowdhury and Kabir 2014)⁵. The move in favour of English had first come when English was made a compulsory subject in the NEP in 1992. Then the government approved to establish the universities in the private sector by promulgating the Private University Act in 1992. Historically, this marks a milestone in Bangladesh's English education at the tertiary level. Since then, all private universities have been using the EMI from the very beginning of their establishment. Subsequently, the EMI gained further emphasis on the revision of the NEP formulated by the *Shamsul Haque Education Commission* (1997) in the year 2000.

Although the EMI was introduced as an alternative MOI along with BMI for the tertiary level of education, the prevalent ELE system, in practice, clearly, put emphasis on English over Bangla. Hence, the prevalent EMI had taken the present form, as it received a maneuver of the National Education Policy (NEP 2000 and 2010). Unterhalter, Ross, and Alam (2003) found it to gain now an extraordinary favour by the affluent socio-economic classes.⁶ They being the beneficiary of EMI now put the following arguments in support of it including i) books written in English are abundant and available, ii) academic practices are mainly done in English, iii) the academicians usually publish their works in English, and iv) English language is considered to be useful for studying abroad (Hamid and Erling, 2016).⁷ These arguments by them in favour of the EMI, however, presumably derives from their class interest, since they consider it to be a means of gaining power, status, and social mobility. Though the education in EMI has been a desirable means to them, it has been out of reach of the lower socioeconomic classes, because of its dearness. Consequently, the recommendations of the NEP, as

5 Raqib Chowdhury & Ariful Haq Kabir. "Language wars: English education policy and practice in Bangladesh", *Multilingual Education*. Vol. 4. 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13616-014-0021-2>

6 Elaine Unterhalter, Jake Ross, and Mahmudul Alam (2003): A fragile dialogue? Research and primary education policy formation in Bangladesh, 1971–2001. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 2003, 33(1):87–98. doi:10.1080/03057920302604 doi:10.1080/03057920302604

7 Hamid M.O., Erling E.J. (2016) English-in-Education Policy and Planning in Bangladesh: A Critical Examination. In: Kirkpatrick R. (eds) *English Language Education Policy in Asia*. *Language Policy*, Vol 11. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22464-0_2

well as the support from the affluent classes in favour of the EMI, together led to make a deceptive language policy for the establishment of an unregulated English medium education system. Consequently, it has given birth to a faulty system of English Medium Education (EME) due to the diffusion of EMI throughout the education system.

4. Prevalent EMI Practices in the Pedagogical Situation of Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, there now exists an unregulated tripartite system of education allocating three languages namely Bangla, English, and Arabic as a MOI. It has inherited the EMI as a British colonial legacy, while Bangla has been made an MOI when the standardization of Bangla was done at the height of Bengal Renaissance in the 20th century. At the Independence of Bangladesh in 1971, BMI gained prominence over English, Urdu, and Arabic. After the independence, the EMI and the AMI (Arabic as the medium of instruction) were in back-foot and remained an unregulated system for decades. However, the EMI and the AMI later made a comeback with rapid socioeconomic changes.

The EMI now exists in four different combinations: i) EMI at all level of education along with the *Literacy English* with a nominal or without a provision for Bangla literacy education, ii) EMI at all level of education along with the provision for both the Literacy English and Literacy Bangla comprising two subjects namely 1st paper and 2nd paper up to the university 1st year, and iii) BMI at all level of education along with a provision for Literacy English comprising two subjects up to the university 1st year. In addition to these existing combinations of EMI and BMI, one more MOI has come into focus and that is Arabic as a medium of instruction (AMI). Arabic already exists as an MOI in the *Qaumi Madarasa* for last decades. It in combination with Bangla is used as an MOI in the *Qaumi Madrasa*. It recently (in the year 2018) came into focus as the Government of Bangladesh recognized the *Qaumi Madrasa* as a legit system of education.

The EMI as a pedagogical practice, however, is not going well due to some flaws associated with the communication skills and evaluation of language proficiency (Chowdhury and Kabir, 2014).⁸ The first flaw lies with the misconception on the issue of fluency— a concept being associated with acquisition planning. In Language-in-Education planning, a distinction with regard to the communication

8 Raqib Chowdhury & Ariful Haq Kabir. "Language wars: English education policy and practice in Bangladesh", *Multilingual Education*. Vol. 4. 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13616-014-0021-2>

skill among Language Fluency, Language Proficiency, and Language Competency is of utmost concern.⁹ The terms i) Language Fluency, ii) Language Proficiency and iii) Language Competency respectively refer to i) automaticity in language use, ii) control over the four skills: reading, writing and listening and speaking of the foreign speakers of a language, and iii) capability of doing something with a language efficiently. In actuality, many of the speakers including both native and foreign speakers of English survive with a kind of fluency and proficiency capable of doing everyday works, while having no required level of competency in taking part in the academic or administrative activities. Therefore, an ideal education system requires a provision for an evaluation system helpful in distinguishing between fluency, proficiency, and competency. However, there is no provision for an evaluation system helpful in distinguishing the level of language skills in the prevalent EMI practices, for which the English education system now happen to stand on the paradox of fluency. The second flaw lies with the English competency. Though a certain level of English competency is required for both the teachers and the students in running an education system, there is no provision for giving a test of competency in English to the teachers and students at the entry to the education system and promotion from one phase to another. The teachers who are involved in teaching with a little or without competency in English are found to be incompetent in delivering a lecture, making discussion, guiding assignment and imparting knowledge as a whole. Consequently, students are not properly exposed to the realm of knowledge by undergoing education conducted by those incompetent teaching staff. Hence, the existing EMI is being run without the consideration of distinction between fluency, proficiency and competency and provision for evaluation system at the entry and through the education system—the practice that now leads to bringing forth several backlashes.

5. The extent of Backlashes Exerted from the EMI and its Impact on the Society and Culture

In the pedagogical situation of Bangladesh, the prominence is given on the EMI over the BMI, the practice of which has come out of a null LP that gave the education department of Bangladesh a spacious freedom in making a provision for the EMI leading to the surrender of the status and function of the national

⁹ Difference Between Language Fluency and Proficiency, 'The Lingo World'. <https://www.thelingoworld.com/general/differences-fluency-proficiency> accessed on December 15.

language Bangla in favour of English¹⁰ This move has, in effect, continued to exert various backlashes against the language, culture, and economy of Bangladesh as outlined below.

5.1. Backlash with regard to Submission to Linguistic Imperialism

The Anglophone countries have achieved supremacy over other countries since the era of colonial expansion. Now, these countries have been the foci of attraction for the people of non-affluent countries, since a) they have grown up as a big economies, b) they accumulated knowledge of the world in English, c) they control economy of the World, d) they provide English as a common means for the access to the internet and e) they provide option for alternative destination to the international students for education and the immigrants for settlement. Therefore, the people of Bangladesh, seeking benefits from the globalization, submit to the English linguistic imperialism.

5.2. Linguistic backlash

The unregulated EMI practice has given birth to a social class of English or Banglish (Bangla+English= Banglish) speaking young generation as well as a language contact situation disadvantageous to Bangla language.

Thus, the new Banglish speaking generation has created a situation of language contact favorable to the borrowing and calquing of linguistic elements from English into Bangla. Consequently, they are contributing to creating a language variety, which can be characterized as mixed language showing the phenomenon of code-mixing and code-switching. Many of these borrowings from English are causing to replace the words and expressions, e.g. *thanks* and *congratulations*, etc. of Bangla. Because of these unusual borrowing and calquing, domain-specific linguistic elements of many academic domains remain unused in the languages of Bangla. This unusual process of disuse of domain-specific languages has continued to yield deficiency in Bangla, which, in effect, has been causing to rupture the capacity of Bangla in containing the growing disciplines of knowledge. This process can be regarded as the invasion of English into Bangla causing to occupy the new to newer domain specific language of Bangla.

This linguistic backlash can also be observed in the linguistic landscapes of Bangladesh. Therefore, widespread messy changes occurred due to the unusual use of English in the visual landscape which can be noticed on the signboards/ billboards as well as the labels of commodities all over the country.

10 Razaul Karim Faquire, "Reconsidering the English Language Education System in Bangladesh". *Mother Language: The Journal of International Mother Language Institute*, Vol. I, 2017, pp. 101-148.

5.3. Social backlash

The unregulated EMI has continued to produce a kind of social disparity. In Bangladesh, as in any other countries in South Asia, English has been a symbol of power, prestige and economic affluence. Accordingly, it has been a means of social mobility in that it serves as a means for jumping to the higher socio-economic strata from the lower socio-economic strata. Consequently, it has appeared as a barrier to the lower socio-economic class due to their economic disposition. Thus, it has been contributing to shaping the society that can be characterized as a social disparity.

5.4. Cross-cultural backlash

The EMI practices have been shaping the thinking process of the English learning people of Bangladesh, who have been contributing to the creation of Banglish subculture within the Bangalee culture, which is different from its parent culture, by importing the culture of the Anglophone countries. The reproduction of this homegrown Banglish subculture has been steadily occurring with the participation of Banglish speaking people coming out of the English medium schools and universities. Hence, it has now been evident that the EMI practices have appeared as a means to reproduce the extraneous Banglish subculture at the expense of own resources of Bangladesh.

5.5. Administrative backlash

The consequences of prevalent EMI practices have manifested in such a way that the government and private institutions, and the corporate organizations have continued to turn into English medium institution, for which the main cities of Bangladesh have now appeared to have become the cities of English-speaking countries. The trend of such conversion of Bangla medium private institutions and corporate organizations into English medium institutions and organizations can be characterized as the administrative backlash.

5.6. Economic backlash

The EMI that is already in operation contributes in most cases to the acquisition of communication skills that remain unused and which are misused as a means of creating Banglish culture. It is true that EMI is practiced in the education system of some postcolonial Anglophone countries like Kenya and Papua New Guinea as English is the primary means of communication there. It is used as a means of assimilation and socialization in those postcolonial countries, but, it is misused to create social disintegration in Bangladesh. Hence, the expenses of the EMI, which is fueled with the national budget, resulting in the wastage and, therefore, can be characterized as an economic backlash.

6. Articulation of MOI Scheme with Language Policy

The foregoing discussion shows that the EMI has continued to bring forth various backlashes causing harm to the language and society of Bangladesh, for which we require formulating an MOI scheme, so that the EMI can be consolidated in that comprehensive MOI scheme.

Making a provision for a language as an MOI is a matter of acquisition planning, which is usually undertaken as a part of a national LP. In the foregoing discussion, we shown how the EMI has been introduced as a part of ELE system by considering it to be a means for i) building a knowledge-based society and ii) achieving national economic development out of the interest of the affluent socioeconomic class. However, English being a language is not just a means of communication or a tool for achieving something. If a language is considered to be just a means or tool for achieving something, many things associated with it will remain out of consideration. If we consider the function of a language through the prism of LP, a language is more than a means for gaining economic development and achieving an education. This is because, the LP perspective assumes that any provision of language education underlies some political agenda diverged into nationalistic agenda and imperialist agenda. The nationalistic agenda assumes a language to be i) means of socialization and nationalization, ii) symbol of nationalism, iii) vehicle for civilization, iv) parameter of social wealth, and cultural wealth. Whereas an imperialist agenda assumes a language can be a means of i) assertion of imperialism, ii) transmission of imperialist culture as well as iii) putting control on the culture, education, media, and politics of the subjugated nation. Therefore, making a provision for a language as an MOI involves acquisition planning circumscribed by the LP. Hence, the term LP, here, requires qualification.

For Shohamy (2005), the LP, language planning being the aide of it, is a mechanism through which polity of a society implements a language education system.¹¹ Accordingly, she has created a model of language policy incorporating ideology, mechanism, and practices. Her model can be redesigned into a five-step process from ideological underpinning to provision for a language education system: i) creation of an ideological basis, ii) formulation of a language policy underpinned with the linguistic ideologies, iii) interpretation of that policy into planning, iv) establishment of an education administration and v) implementation

11 Elana Shohamy, *Language Policy: Hidden Agendas and New Approaches*. (London: Routledge, 2006).

of the planning through education administration as a language education system by following which I will attempt to project an ELE system in the upcoming sections.

An LP is what a government does either officially through legislation, court decisions or policy to determine how languages are used, cultivate language skills needed to meet national priorities or to establish the rights of individuals or groups to use and maintain languages¹². It is formulated with a goal to build a sound nation and protect it from a risk potential of disintegration. Accordingly, an LP is usually formulated with an aim to contribute to the development of a nation covering the national integration as well as social and cultural development. Gnamba (2000) observes that the development of all peoples goes hand in hand with the development of their languages.¹³ Ouedraogo (2000) contends that the most developed nations are those, whose languages have developed the capacity to deal with the dynamism needed for the development. He found a correlation between ideology, culture, education, global development, and language.¹⁴ Hence, a nationalistic LP of Bangladesh will give prominence to Bangla over English in order to secure the national interest and fight against the linguistic imperialism.

The importance of an LP in making a provision for the EMI can be shown in comparison with the government practice of making a plan of construction of a dam under a national economic policy. A dam is constructed with an aim to provide the facility of irrigation for bringing out the good harvest contributory to the economic development. A development policy on the construction of a dam, however, will cover not only the positive effect that is expected to bring out but also its unexpected side-effects like flooding and environmental disaster. Therefore, an all-encompassing plan of making a dam will cover the consideration of the amount of harvest as well as its all contingent side effects. Analogously, an all-encompassing LP will cover not only the issue of development of knowledge-based society and economic development but also the development of other aspects of a nation as well as the possible incursive side-effects that it may bring out.

12 Definitions for language policy. The Web's Largest Resource for Definitions & Translations <https://www.definitions.net/definition/language+policy>

13 Berton Mel Gnamba, 'Strategic Relative A La Promotion Des Langues Africaines'. Rakissouilgri Mathieu Ouedraogo (ed). *Introduction: Language Planning and Language Policies in Some Selected West African Countries*. (International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa. July 2000), pp. 1

14 Rakissouilgri Mathieu Ouedraogo, '*Language Planning and Language Policies in Some Selected West African Countries*'. (Burkina Faso: UNESCO, 2000).

6.1. EMI and the Status and Function Planning

The EMI as a part of acquisition planning entails other planning including status and function planning. Language status is a concept distinct from, though intertwined with, language prestige and language function.¹⁵ Cobarrubius (1983) points out that *status planning* deals with the allocation or reallocation of a language to functional domains within a society, thus affecting the status of a language, for which status planning is taken into consideration in making and implementing an acquisition planning.¹⁶ Acquisition planning involves the dissemination of a language and its impact on society. Therefore, it functions as a means to affect the whole society and nation.

A status planning is undertaken with an aim to uplift the status and function of a language spoken within the nation and also to fight against the incursion of linguistic imperialism. It is to be mentioned that '*it (a language) often appears not only as of the cement that guarantees national unity but also as the mold that forms the people into one nation. At the same time, language is one of the engines that drives the whole nation toward progress and development*'.¹⁷ In status planning, the language policymaker considers giving a higher status to a language having the potentiality to cement the national unity and national integration and, giving a lower status which likely to harm the culture, society, economy of the country. In status and function planning, the policy makers of Bangladesh would require considering several contingent issues with regard to the BMI. These contingent issues can be divided into favorable issues and detrimental issues. The policymakers would need to consider the complementary issues with regard to the EMI that i) Bangla is a Symbol of Nationalism: Bangla being a symbol of nationalism serves a function to transmit the cultural and social values as well as the ideologies of a nation from generation to generation; ii) Bangla is a means of Socialization: Bangla being a means of socialization serves to socialize the growing children through social interaction and basic education system, and iii) Bangla is a means of Assimilation: Bangla being a means of assimilation helps to assimilate and integrate the people into the national society, thus it contributes in cementing the Bangalee nation. Therefore, the policymakers would also need to consider the

15 John Edwards, 'Language, prestige and stigma'. H. Goebel (ed), *Kontaktlinguistik (Contact Linguistics)*, (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 1996), pp. 703-708.

16 Juan Cobarrubias, 'Ethical Issues in Status Planning'. Juan Cobarrubias and Joshua Fishman (ed), *Progress in Language Planning: International Perspectives*, (Mouton Publishers, 1983), pp. 41-86. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110820584.41>

17 Rakissouilgri Mathieu Ouedraogo, '*Language Planning and Language Policies in Some Selected West African Countries*'. (Burkina Faso: UNESCO, 2000).

detrimental issues with regard to the EMI that i) English is a means of dominance to exert Englishism, ii) English is a tool of cultural conversion, iii) English is a tool of exploitation of the intellects through the brain-drain.

If all the above-mentioned issues are taken into consideration in assigning the status and function to a language, Bangla is to receive preeminence over other foreign languages including Arabic, English and Hindi or any other language. Therefore, it is ridiculous to assign higher status to English over the national language, i.e. Bangla being rich enough to function as a vehicle of knowledge, religion and cross-cultural communication. Hence, the higher status (and function) which is often given to English rather than to Bangla in official works has resulted in the submission of the status of Bangla language to the English linguistic Imperialism.

6.2. EMI and the Acquisition Planning

The EMI being an issue of acquisition planning involves a type of language planning in which a national, state or local government aims to influence the aspects of language, such as language status, distribution and literacy through education.¹⁸ It is a kind of integrated process, in which a language of higher status introduced to society on a national or local level through education systems, ranging from primary schools to universities.

In an acquisition planning, the policymakers take the apparent impact, which the EMI practice would bring on the society and culture into consideration because a language as an MOI bears the potentiality to form social norms and values as well as influence the custom and culture causing to catalyze the social change of a nation. Therefore, a nationalistic acquisition planning would be of such a kind that will contribute to building the national values and norms as well as the national custom and culture. Therefore, it backs an education system which would aim to elevate the status and function of Bangla and promote Bangla over any other domestic and foreign languages through the education system of Bangladesh.

7. Envisaging a Sustainable MOI Scheme

As far as a nationalistic LP is concerned, an acquisition planning will focus on the relative advantage of BMI over EMI, so that it brings benefit conducive to the desirable development of the Bangalee nation. Accordingly, it will lend support to a

18 Anthony J. Liddicoat, 'Language Planning in Local Contexts: Agents, Contexts and Interactions'. Anthony J. Liddicoat and Robert B. Baldauf (ed), *Language Planning in Local Contexts*. (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd, 2008), pp. 3-17.

kind of MOI strategy effective for fighting against the social disparity, national disintegration, and the possible incursion of the linguistic imperialism. Accordingly, it would back an MOI scheme that will not produce any backlashes and contribute to building a nation of all-encompassing development covering the social, political and economic development. However, an acquisition planning in the existing ELE system does not back a considerate MOI planning. Therefore, fresh language planning is to be made, as if it requires to assigning all functions including official, administrative and everyday communication to the national language of Bangla. Furthermore, it requires undertaking the language situation in Bangladesh. In this vein, planning underpinned with the nationalistic LP will give prominence to Bangla over other foreign languages, e.g. Arabic and English. Consequently, it will uphold Bangla as a symbol of nationalism and make use of it as a means of assimilation of the people in the society. In this vein, a coherent MOI scheme would derive from the intended acquisition planning, if the following issues are taken into consideration: a) Relative advantage, salience and opportunity of the BMI over the EMI, b) MOI in relation to different phases of education, and c) Provision for the evaluation of language competency of both who will educate as well as who will be educated with a standardized test.

7.1. MOI Scheme in consideration of Language as Means of Assimilation and Socialization

The MOI scheme in the premise of acquisition planning involves the analysis of various metalinguistic issues. A language is considered to be a means of assimilation and socialization from the nationalistic perspective, at the same time it is a means of acculturation from the perspective of the linguistic imperialist. Therefore, the nationalistic acquisition planning will back a provision for the compulsory BMI. However, other perspectives, e.g. economic perspective backed by the ideology of globalization lend support in favor of the provision of EMI. Hence, an acquisition planning of holistic perspective lends support to formulate an MOI scheme, which will incorporate both the BMI and the EMI in a way that every individual of the nation is uniformly assimilated into the Bangalee society, and no one remains unassimilated in the national society due to receive education in EMI. Therefore, the intended MOI scheme will back a provision for the compulsory BMI beginning from the primary phase of education up to tertiary phase of education along with an optional EMI from a phase of education, e.g. class XIII, when the assimilation of a growing individual in the Bangalee society is completed through the education to be given in the BMI.

7.2. MOI Scheme in consideration of Language as Means of Literacy Development

The intended MOI scheme complying with the acquisition planning entails an issue as to the development of literacy. In order to undergo an education process, an individual requires a certain level of literacy in a language. Accordingly, a school student of young age requires control on a language as an MOI in order to undergo an education process, for which he/she requires to be literate in that language beforehand. Therefore, the intended MOI scheme would require the students a certain level of literacy in both Bangla and English to receive an education. The literacy in Bangla and English are now developed with the conventional courses known as first Paper and second Paper. The courses named the 1st and 2nd papers actually contain the contents helpful in developing literacy among the students. Hence, the education system requires a provision for the literacy course (comprising the course titled 1st Paper and 2nd Paper) both in Bangla and in any of the foreign languages, i.e. English (Arabic or some other foreign language in some other cases). Our intended acquisition planning, however, will emphasize on Bangla literacy, so that an individual can attain the literacy in Bangla much more before he/she will grow to be literate in a foreign language. It is usual that a grown-up student can be literate in English by attending the English literacy courses (i.e. 1st and 2nd paper) within the 5 years of timeframe, e.g. class IV-VIII. Therefore, the prevalent system of English literacy education of 13 years beginning from class I to university 1st year appears to be excessive. This undue provision for 13 year-long literacy English has given birth to a huge number of English literate people which can be labeled as the outcome of the unregulated ELE system run with the money fueled by the national budget. The competency in English of this huge number of English literates comes out of the present ELE system, the language competency of them remain to be anonymous having no defined level of competency in English.

Therefore, the intended optional provision for the literacy English should not be such a long period of 13 years, rather there could be an alternative provision for ELE with the combination of literacy English and schooling with the EMI from a certain phase of education. Because schooling with the EMI can supplement the English literacy after a certain phase of education, e.g. class IX. Given the idea of combination of literacy English and schooling with EMI, the provision for English literacy courses (1st paper and 2nd paper) can be of 5 years spanning from Class III to Class VIII and after junior secondary phase of education, e.g. from Class IX, there could be a provision for schooling with EMI with an emphasis on the academic English which would compensate the education of literacy English after class IX.

7.3. MOI Scheme in Consolidating the Function of EMI with BMI

The MOI scheme in compliance with the acquisition planning involves a third issue involving consolidation of different types of MOI. In the education system of Bangladesh, the MOI covers the BMI and the medium of instruction in other foreign languages including EMI and AMI. Hence, the EMI requires to be included in a comprehensive MOI scheme, so that the BMI receives preeminence over the EMI. In this proposed comprehensive MOI scheme, the BMI would be a compulsory MOI, while the EMI will remain as an optional MOI. To give priority on the BMI over the EMI, two-thirds of the academic subjects require to be taught in the BMI and the remaining one-third of the academic subjects can be taught in the EMI. Accordingly, the optional provision for EMI will allow the opting students to receive education of the one-third subjects with the EMI given that the students have the required level of English literacy beforehand. This comprehensive MOI scheme will accommodate both the EMI and the BMI in the education system, in a way that it would safeguard against the incursion of the English linguistic imperialism.

If a provision for the EMI is made in the education system, there will be no need for a provision for a literacy English (and literacy Bangla) after class IX, because an EMI as an ELE practice will work to compensate the paucity of literacy English in the absence of literacy English course from the class IX. Hence, this consolidated MOI scheme will save the extraordinary expenses fueled for teaching the communicative English with a large sum of the national budget.

7.4. MOI Scheme with Regard to the Provision for a Testing System

The existing optional provision for education in EMI obliges the Bangladeshi students to have the English literacy and English competency. However, the present evaluation process of language proficiency that is in operation is not a standardized test, for which it is not reliable and valid enough in evaluating the English language competency. Therefore, we must have a provision for the standardized testing system under the board of examination. This provision of testing will allow the education administration to confirm the required level of literacy and competency in English of the students at the entry to higher education. Again, this will oblige the students to pass the competency tests, which is to be administered in two phases (after JSC and HSC examination) respectively before the entry to the secondary level and undergraduate level of education.

8. Consolidating EMI in the MOI Scheme

As far as a nationalistic LP is concerned, the fore-mentioned acquisition planning does not support an ELE system with EMI with the exclusion of the BMI. It rather backs a provision for a sound education system, which will allow EMI as a part of a comprehensive MOI scheme with a prominence on the BMI. In this line of discussion, we can view a comprehensive scheme of MOI as the combination of provision of both BMI and EMI where more than half of the subjects are to be taught with the BMI and less than of that, e.g. one-third of the subjects to be taught in the EMI. Accordingly, the comprehensive MOI scheme appropriated for the education system of Bangladesh can be presented in a Table as follows.

Table 2: Depicting a Consolidated MOI Scheme in the Education System of Bangladesh

Phases of Education	Range	Bangla Literacy Course	English Literacy Course	Compulsory Provision for BMI	Optional Provision for EMI
I	Class 0~III	OK	NO	All subjects to be taught through BMI	NO
II	Class IV~VIII	OK	OK		
III	Class IX~XII	NO		At least two-thirds of the academic subjects to be taught through BMI	Not more than one-third of the academic Subjects to be taught through EMI to the students having required competency in English
IV	Undergraduate				
V	Postgraduate				

9. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion leads to the conclusion that a nationalistic LP provides a logical basis in consolidating the EMI in a comprehensive MOI scheme, but not at the expense of the status and function of Bangla language. Accordingly, it puts prominence on Bangla over English, Arabic and other foreign languages. Hence, the acquisition planning grounded on an LP backs a compulsory BMI at all levels of education and an optional EMI from class IX for the one-third of subjects only to those students, who would attain a sufficient level of proficiency in English to be proved by a standardized test administered at the time of JSC and the HSC examination. It backs a provision for the education of literacy Bangla beginning from Class I and literacy English beginning from Class III. It does not back a provision for the literacy courses (i.e. courses on 4 Skills) in any of the languages irrespective of national language Bangla or other foreign languages, e.g. English or

Arabic after Class VIII. In this line, it provides a basis to put a ban on the full-fledged English medium education system and analogously a full-fledged Arabic medium education system. Thus, it stands against the English medium institutions like English medium school and English medium university.

This proposed comprehensive MOI scheme is assumed to supplement the development of intangible national treasure covering social and cultural wealth and safeguard the incursion of linguistic imperialism asserted through the EMI by the English linguistic imperial superpowers. Thus, the envisaged MOI scheme will contribute to building a uniform nation conducive to the formation of Bangalee civilization.

UNFOLDING GENTRIFICATION IN DHAKA CITY

Tamanna Rashid*

Abstract

Gentrification is a widely experienced phenomenon in the realm of urban development in all global cities. This has led many academics to scrutinise how gentrification is contextualised with distinctive socio-economic changes in cities beyond the geography of Europe and North America. This paper investigates the general gentrification process in Dhaka from the theoretical stance of Smith, Ley, Zukin, Hackworth and Davidson. Based on a qualitative research method, this study investigates two areas of Dhaka city as case studies. The study reveals mounting evidence of the recent development of run-down areas as an indication of new-build gentrification. Whereas, in the global context, the process of gentrification in developed cities is significantly influenced by the state policies in tandem with the private impetuous; in Dhaka, the overall role of the government in orchestrating the system seems to be bleaker. Similar to the experience of many global cities, gentrification in Dhaka with some distinctive localised features is also linked to the displacement of lower-income people from their original places; and this fact need to be taken into account in order to develop a more inclusive approach to city development.

Introduction

Gentrification has become a buzzword in recent years in the discourse of city development as well as in the spheres of government bodies, policymakers, civil society, and academia.¹ Over the past five decades, urban researchers and planners have vigorously studied the backdrop context of the gentrification process and produced a large body of empirically subtle and theoretically nuanced findings worldwide.² Initial researchers identified gentrification as intertwining with urban regeneration processes after a phase of urban decline in most of the North American and Western European central cities. In the mountain of literature, experts have studied gentrification's role in restructuring the physical, economic, as

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1 G. Ertelt *et al.*, 'The State-Made Rental Gap: Gentrification in Subsidized Rental Housing', in I. Helbrecht (ed.), *Gentrification and Resistance: Researching Displacement Processes and Adaption Strategies*, Springer Vs, Germany, 2018, p. 91.

2 I. Helbrecht, 'Gentrification and Displacement', in I. Helbrecht (ed.), *Gentrification and Resistance: Researching Displacement Process and Adaptation Strategies*, Springer VS, Germany, 2018, p.1.

well as social characteristics of the central city areas.³ Gentrification research, however, has experienced variegated shifts of concern. Contemporary thinkers are eager to investigate how gentrification communicates with other urban processes instead of simply locating specific forms of gentrification.⁴

Studies in the global North have stretched far away from its preliminary concerns. In Asia, however, only a handful of researchers are engaged in the field, with their focuses still largely being confined to identifying the forms of gentrification with special reference to experiences of urban development.⁵ Nevertheless, this vivid global trend of urban regeneration has echoed elsewhere and is hardly unique to Dhaka, one of the fastest-growing megacities in the world.⁶ Dhaka city has also experienced numerous initiatives and comprehensive planning for effective urban growth since the second half of the twentieth century.⁷ Although several plans for a planned urban growth have always been formulated, none of them has gained any glimmer of hope. Moreover, despite being a centre for administrative and commercial activities of the region for about four hundred and ten years, the city entirely lacked any successful planning effort throughout its transformation period of the morphological structure, from purely rural to a megacity.⁸

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- 3 G. Visser and N. Kotze, 'The State and New-Build Gentrification in Central Cape Town, South Africa', *Urban Studies*, Vol. 45, No.12, 2008, p. 2566, Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228337715_The_State_and_New-build_Gentrification_in_Central_Cape_Town_South_Africa, (Accessed on 26 April 2021).
 - 4 H. B. Shin, L. Lees, and E. Lopez-Morales, 'Introduction: Locating Gentrification in the Global East', *Urban Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 2016, pp. 455-470, Available at <http://repositorio.uchile.cl/bitstream/handle/2250/139406/Introduction-Locating-gentrification-in-the-Global-East%201.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>, (Accessed on 18 March 2021).
 - 5 R. Moore, 'Understanding Gentrification in Southeast and East Asia', *Interdisciplinary Studies Journal*, vol. 13 2013, pp. 116-130, Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346831776_Understanding_'Gentrification'_in_Southeast_and_East_Asia, (Accessed on 25 April 2021).
 - 6 L. Lata, P. Walters, and S. Roitman, 'A marriage of convenience: Street vendor's everyday accommodation of power in Dhaka, Bangladesh', *Cities*, vol. 84, 2018, p.2, Available at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0264275117314439?via%3Dihub>.
 - 7 A. Kabir and B. Parolin, Planning and Development of Dhaka- A Story of 400 Years, *Proceedings of the 15th International Planning History Society Conference*, Brazil, July 2012, p.11, Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324746990_PLANNING_AND_DEVELOPMENT_OF_DHAKA-A_STORY_OF_400_YEARS, (Accessed on 25 April 2021).
 - 8 N. Islam, *Dhaka from City to Megacity: Perspectives on People, Places, Planning and Development Issues*. Dhaka: Urban Studies Programme, Dept. of Geography, University of Dhaka, 1996, p.255.

The absence of any effective urban planning, however, could not restrain the path of urban growth of the city. Rather, the city is now experiencing an unprecedented growth of urbanisation than ever before. In a study, it is found that Dhaka is over 90 per cent urban.⁹ The landscape of Dhaka expanded northward to create a ‘new Dhaka’ mainly for higher class residents.¹⁰ Initially, all the highlands were occupied by an increased population; and gradually all the low-laying areas were elevated and brought into development schemes by private initiatives. After that, in all of the planning and projections for urban development, government bodies and urban planners never used the term ‘gentrification’ to describe the process of city development.¹¹ Instead, in the Asian context, and more specifically in the context of Dhaka, conversion of old buildings into new ones or using urban spaces, either for commercial or residential purposes, were pushed by concerned bodies under the rhetoric of ‘beautification’ or ‘urban renewal process.’¹² This is because using such expressions implies a more positive and value-neutral outlook ignoring its other sides.¹³ Gentrification has been a crucial reason for people’s displacement, attracting academic attention to the issue; yet there is paucity of knowledge that needs to be addressed. Even studies on ‘classical’ interpretation of gentrification have been largely absent until recently.

Against this backdrop, and drawing inspiration from the urge of recent thinkers to investigate gentrification from the political-economic context,¹⁴ this study seeks to

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- 9 N. Islam, ‘Bangladesh’, in B.H. Roberts and T. Kanaley (ed.), *Urbanization and Sustainability in Asia: Case Studies of Good Practice*, Asian Development Bank, (May 2006), pp. 43-68, Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273693983_Urbanization_and_Sustainability_in_Asia_Good_Practice_Approaches_in_Urban_Region_Development, (Accessed on 12 November 2020); A. Kabir and B. Parolin, Planning and Development of Dhaka- A Story of 400 Years, *Proceedings of the International Planning History Conference Brazil*, July 2012, p.11.
- 10 A. Kabir and B. Parolin, op. cit., p.11
- 11 S. Huq and M. Alam, ‘Flood Management and Vulnerability of Dhaka’, in A. Kreimer, M. Arnold, and A. Carlin (ed.) *In Building Safer Cities: The Future of Disaster Risk, Washington*: The World Bank, 2003, pp. 121-136 Available at https://www.preventionweb.net/files/638_8681.pdf, (Accessed on 15 March 2021); Cited from A. Kabir and B. Parolin, op. cit., p.12.
- 12 S. He, ‘New-Build gentrification in central Shanghai: Demographic changes and socio-economic implications’, *Population, Space and Place*, vol. 16, no. 5, 2010, pp. 345-361; R. Moore, ‘Understanding Gentrification in Southeast and East Asia’, *Interdisciplinary Studies Journal*, vol.13, 2013, p.121.
- 13 L. Lees, T. Slater, and E. Wyly, ‘Gentrification Routledge’, *New York*, 2008; H. B. Shin, L. Lees, and E. Lopez-Morales, ‘Introduction: Locating Gentrification in the Global East’, *Urban Studies*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2016, p.6.
- 14 H. B. Shin, L. Lees, and E. Lopez-Morales, op. cit., pp. 1-16.

assess the pace of Dhaka's gentrification in comparison with the current trends in the gentrification process in the contemporary global North. It unfolds that Dhaka does not exhibit mimic Anglo-American gentrification processes. Instead, in most instances, it resembles the new-build gentrification experienced by many East Asian cities. This argument is supported by empirical data collected from field visits in two areas of Dhaka city: the Mohammadpur area, and the Mirpur area. The paper has three sections. Since this is an empirical research, the first section discusses the methodology of the study. The second section presents theoretical issues of gentrification; and in doing so, it draws on the experiences of gentrification in the cities of the global North. The third section analyses the findings of the empirical study, that is, gentrification in Dhaka city.¹⁵

Methodology

As stated earlier, this study unfolds the process of gentrification in Dhaka. The research was empirically conducted in two selected areas – Mirpur and Mohammadpur in Dhaka city – between 2016 and 2017. Both areas were selected based on their rapid spatial changes and infrastructural development for the last few decades. A large number of shopping malls, restaurants, boutique houses, parlours, gymnasiums, and other structural amenities have immensely changed the city landscapes. Besides, both areas have been turned into housing enclaves for emerging middle-class residents with the intervention of private and public developers. Therefore, the researcher selected these two areas as case studies for investigating the gentrification process. The study is based on the qualitative methodology in social research. It has collected data through, including in-depth interviews, key informant interviews (KIIS), and field observation. Following a theoretical sampling procedure, the researchers carried out qualitative interviews using a basic interview guide to the local people involved in various occupations like government officials, private officials, small and medium businessmen, shop owners, and house owners. All the respondents were residing or involved in the areas either for living or working purposes for about 15 to 40 years. To explore necessary changes related to the gentrification process, residents who were living in those areas for a long period were prioritised and selected purposively. In total, 14 formal and 5 informal interviews were conducted. Furthermore, observations over six months (from April 2016 to October 2016) and taking field notes were firm techniques for collecting data to capture the whole picture of using urban spaces for

15 J. Hackworth, *Third Wave Gentrification*, PhD dissertation, Department of Geography, Rutgers University, 2000, p.22.

multiple purposes in the selected areas. All the interviews were either digitally recorded or written by the researcher on her own and then analyzed thematically according to the trends of the gentrification process with relevance to the global cities. Besides, the researcher attained enormous help from many secondary sources of data such as journal articles and books, as well as grey literature on the previous and the contemporary changes of the areas. These data were also arranged thematically, under the themes of neighbourhood type in the past, contemporary changes in the neighbourhood, reasons behind the changes, the role of the real estate sector, and displacement and eviction. The article now explores the gentrification process in Dhaka city.

Contextualising Gentrification from Theoretical Perspectives

Gentrification describes a process of transition of lower-class residential places or any vacant places into a new land of middle-class people for their residential and commercial uses.¹⁶ Similarly, Smith defines it as a way in which some intact or commercially unused urban neighbourhoods undergo a change of reinvestment in the built environment and rejuvenate for a group of new well-off middle and upper-middle-class people.¹⁷ This process of physical and socio-cultural transformation of downtown neighborhoods into an enclave of urban middle-class people displaces lower class people and small entrepreneurs.¹⁸ Hence the process implies an increase in property value which is essentially economic by nature.¹⁹ As gentrification has become a controversial issue in this era of the neoliberal economy, scholarly works have addressed it from multiple dimensions. In addressing the ongoing changing urban structure in the second half of the twentieth century, two approaches received prominence. One is the production side explanation. It emphasises the role of class, capital, and changes in the material production of economic space in the city. The second one, the consumption approach, stresses culture, lifestyles, and patterns of consumption associated with the process.²⁰

16 L. Lees, *et al.*, op. cit.

17 N. Smith, 'Gentrification', in W. V. Vliet (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Housing*, Sage, London: Thousand Oales CA. 1998, pp.198-199.

18 R. Glass, 'London: Aspects of Change', in L. Lees, T. Slater, and E. Wyly (ed.), *The Gentrification Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 2020, pp. 7-8.

19 J. Hwang, 'The Social Construction of a Gentrifying Neighbourhood: Reifying and Redefining Identity and Boundaries in Inequality', *Urban Affairs Review*, vol.52, no.1, 2015, pp.98-128.

20 A. Cocola-Gant, 'Gentrification and displacement: urban inequality in cities of late capitalism', in T. Schwanen, and V. K. R. (Eds.), *Handbook of Urban Geography*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham and Northampton, 2019, pp.4-6.

According to Ley, gentrification is a result of changing income and occupational structures of advanced capitalist society.²¹ Cities have shifted away from their previous role of manufacturing centres to a new hub of business and consumption services. The shift in question has produced a centre of diverse new professionals that emerged from a process of displacement of industrial working-class people from central city areas.²² Based on the consumption approach, Zukin similarly relates gentrification to the growth of the consumer-oriented service economy, resulting from the decline of the industrial production economy in developed cities.²³ Conversely, according to the production side explanation²⁴, gentrification needs to be understood within the context of the late twentieth century's political economy. Here the mobility of capital and investment, and the production and reproduction of urban spaces are more crucial than that of the production of tastes and demands of the middle-class people. By analysing the suburbanisation process of America, Smith reveals that the renewal of American inner cities is associated with a movement of investment of economic capital in inner cities.²⁵

Given the contradictory positions of the consumption and the production side theories in explaining gentrification,²⁶ recent thinkers believe that neither of the theories can adequately describe the gentrification process.²⁷ Therefore, a more intensive explanation of gentrification requires variegated historical and contextual analysis rather than examining it from the classical perspective or any particular geographical contingencies.²⁸ In particular, in the context of non-Western countries, and more specifically in the Global East, gentrification needs to be understood through the lens of the political economy approach to urban development.²⁹

Socio-structural processes of gentrification

The first phase of gentrification was marked by the post-war period and found in some cities like London and New York, initiated by some small-scale 'gentrifiers'

21 D. Ley. *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996.

22 Ibid.

23 S. Zukin, *Landscape of Power: From Detroit to Disney World*, University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1991.

24 N. Smith. Toward a Theory of Gentrification: A Back to the City Movement by Capital, not People. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, vol. 45, no. 4, 1979, pp. 538-548.

25 A. Cocola-Gant, op. cit. p. 5.

26 F. Tonkiss, *Space, the city and social theory: social relations and urban forms*, Polity Press, Oxford, 2005.

27 E. Clark, 'The Order and Simplicity of Gentrification- a Political Challenge', in L. Lees, T. Slater, and E. Wily, *The Gentrification Reader*, Routledge, London, and New York, 2005, pp. 256-264.

28 H. B. Shin, L. Lees, and E. Lopez-Morales, op. cit, pp. 1-16.

29 Ibid.

who organised to resettle downtown neighbourhood areas for their personal use.³⁰ These groups of people were attracted to disinvested inner-city neighbourhoods. The main reason for this was affordable housing.³¹ While these were the initial instances of the localized nature of gentrification, public funding significantly induced the process.³² Although state intervention was appreciated with the narratives of renovating deteriorated urban physical structure, it eventually brought dreadful consequences, specifically for the urban working class.³³

The second wave' gentrification started after the economic recession of 1973. During this period development firms and real estate played a powerful role in turning new neighbourhoods into gentrified neighbourhoods. Cities adopted new strategies in order to appeal to such kind of investment.³⁴ Unlike the first wave, the state's role here was to spur on expanding the private market rather than directly coordinating the system.³⁵ This wave too witnessed counteractive incidences against gentrification in many cities. This is because gentrification came out to be an obvious reason for homelessness, displacement, and increased vulnerabilities of the urban poor inhabitants.³⁶ Furthermore, many thinkers outlined 'deindustrialisation' as an underlying socio-economic factor that fostered the process of gentrification in the second half of the twentieth century.³⁷

Deindustrialisation worsened the physical and social conditions in downtown neighbourhoods, resulting in increased unemployment, marginalisation, and deterioration of buildings. To address these post-industrial social and material problems, successive governments undertook many restoration programs such as

30 A. Cocola-Gant, op. cit.

31 N. Smith, and P. Williams, 'Alternative to Orthodoxy: Invitation to a Debate' in N. Smith and P. Williams (ed.), *Gentrification of the City*, Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986.

32 C. Hamnett, 'Improvement Grants as an Indicator of Gentrification in Inner London', *Area*, vol. 5, 1973, pp. 252-261; See more: P. Williams, 'The Role of Institutions in the Inner-London Housing market: the Case of Islington', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 3, 1976, pp. 23-34; N. Smith, 'Gentrification and Capital: Theory, Practice, and Ideology in Society Hill', *Antipode*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1979, pp. 24-35; J. Hackworth, and N. Smith, 'The Changing State of Gentrification', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, vol. 92, 2001, pp. 464-467.

33 N. Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*, New York: Routledge, 1996, pp.49-89, Available at http://rohcamaintenant.free.fr/USB%20KEY%20Fahriye/k%C4%B1tap%20Neil%20Smith_The_New_Urban_Frontier_Gentrification_and_Revanchist_City.pdf, (Accessed on 13 October 2020); Cited from Ibid. Hackworth and Smith, 2001.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 N. Smith, 'Tompkins Square: Riots, Rents, and Redskins', *Portable Lower East Side*, vol. 6, 1989, pp. 1-36.

37 S. Zukin, op. cit.

the 'back to the city' movement ('neighbourhood revitalisation) which eventually brought new life to the downtown neighbourhoods after a long period of disinvestment and decay.³⁸ Zukin argued that as a result of the process of deindustrialization and decline in property value, the entire political economy of the central city was changing.³⁹ He outlines the remarkable process of the replacement of traditional industries by middle-class residents: by 1980, in Manhattan about half of the total old buildings were converted into new ones while another 11 per cent of loft spaces were brought to residential uses. The recycling process of old buildings into new uses started with the moving out or closing down of manufacturing industries, particularly, garment industries. The remaining places were taken over by a new class of artists at a cheap price. They transferred large basic shells into small, luxury flats.

The city administration and local government adopted many urban renewal programs, such as back to the city movement and gentrification as a recovery of urban decay during the 1970s. However, the global triumph of neoliberalism since the 1980s, particularly during the third wave of gentrification, the state directly intervened in intensifying the process.⁴⁰ During the economic crisis of USA in the late 1980s, the market of inner-city residential lands collapsed acutely, along with other economic sectors. This context led some critics to claim that the 1990s would experience 'de-gentrification'.⁴¹

The recession, however, acted reversely more as a transition period to the next phase of gentrification than bringing a halt in inner-city reinvestment; and in many instances, it orchestrated new economic conditions and processes that made investors more attracted to reinvest in disinvested urban areas.⁴² According to Hackworth and Smith, gentrification that has sprouted after the 1990s on the global stage is more contended because of its unprecedented nature of expansion in both inner-city neighbourhoods and to more distant neighbourhoods.⁴³ Moreover, while globalisation and new economic restructuring in the real estate industry have opened up new grounds for larger developers to invest in gentrification, the state

38 L. Lees et al., op. cit.

39 N. Falk, 'Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change by Sharon Zukin', *The Town Planning Review*, vol. 59, no. 3, 1988, pp. 337-339, www.jstor.org/stable/40111707, (Accessed on 26 April 2021).

40 M. Lauria, and L. Knopp, 'Toward an analysis of the role of gay communities in the urban renaissance', *Urban Geography*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1985, pp. 152-169.

41 C. Bagli, 'De-gentrification' Can Hit When Boom Goes Bust', *The New York Observer*, (5 August 1991), p.12, Cited on J. Hackworth and N. Smith, op. cit.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

has played a more direct role in arranging and patronising the whole process. Post-recession gentrification continues displacing poor urban residents from the inner-city. As a result, all kinds of stumbling blocks against the process tend to completely disappear. It is the new-build gentrification that attained more prominence than others during the third wave of gentrification.⁴⁴

Gentrifications and erosion of the authenticity of neighbourhoods

According to Zukin, the most striking impact of gentrification in the 21st century in a big city like New York is that it has ‘lost its soul’ through the process of gentrification.⁴⁵ She elaborates how community authenticity erodes in gentrified areas. The authenticity of places means real places for real people who need them. The low-income people in New York City are always encountered with the problem of displacement induced by the process of gentrification, as they have no permanent ground to live. Initially, with the rising demands for lands by the outsider, the landlords start to increase rents in the neighbourhoods. Then, newcomers and new businesses enter the neighbourhoods, forcing original residents and local smaller shops to move and establish elsewhere. Later, real estate developers, with the help of the political groups, introduce new retail and residential projects, leading to a further increase in rent and costs. This process intensifies commercial and residential gentrification. Furthermore, it is related to the process of displacement. The process not only displaces old inhabitants from their original places but also replaces old buildings and architectures by new ones, and transfers small shops and business centres into giant shopping malls. Thus, through this process of socio-structural transformation, the neighbourhoods lose their original socio-cultural characters as well as authenticity.

Class and diversity in gentrified neighbourhoods

The historical context that led Ruth Glass to coin the term ‘gentrification’ was a turmoil situation in London. The situation was characterised by rising resentment among people over housing and class conflicts. There were other causes well such as increasing property prices resulting from the subsequent displacement of the lower-income people, rehabilitation of old houses, and changes in the patterns of

44 M. Davidson, and L. Lees, ‘New-Build Gentrification: Its Histories, Trajectories, and Critical Geographies’, *Population, Space and Place*, Vol. 16, 2009, pp. 395-411, Available at <https://wordpress.clarku.edu/mdavidson/files/2012/02/Davidson-Lees-2010-New-Build-Gentrification.pdf>, (Accessed on 25 February 2021).

45 S. Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*, Oxford University Press, New York, Xviii, 2010, pp.294.

46 T. Slater, ‘Gentrification of the City’, in E. B. Watson (ed.), *Bridge: The New Blackwell Companion to the City*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2011, pp.571-584.

possession g in the second half of the twentieth century.⁴⁶ It was under these circumstances; Ruth Glass used the term ‘gentrification’ to capture the class inequalities and conflicts created by the capitalist market policies. Of note, market policies caused eviction, homelessness, and displacement of the lower-income people from the central city by a class of financially fittest survivors.⁴⁷ Since the 1960s, many cities in developed countries like London, Melbourne, or Toronto have experienced an influx of these new middle-class residents into their centres.⁴⁸

Ley provides an empirical analysis regarding why these newcomers tended to locate in central city areas. He explains a transformation period through which these cities had gone.⁴⁹ First, these cities have shifted from their previous role of manufacturers to new roles of centres of businesses and consumption services. This has eventually produced a large group of qualified new professionals whose consumption patterns and demands for urban living stimulated the gentrification process. Secondly, as the hub of business and consumption services, these central city areas offer various accesses to work leisure and cultural activities. They create the opportunities to reside in areas close to environmental and structural amenities like waterfronts, historical and architectural places, neighbourhood stores, supermarkets, schools and others alike. Thirdly, the inner city rehabilitation was also related to changing domestic arrangements: e.g., increasing dual-income households; childless, same-sex, and single-parent households; a new class of women having high education and better employment; and gender equality concerning access to urban consumption patterns etc.⁵⁰ These features of central city areas were different from those of suburban patriarchal households; hence, these areas were viewed as a place for tolerance, diversity, and freedom.⁵¹

Therefore, one of the overall effects of the gentrification process was renovated housing. Another effect was the generation of new spaces of consumption that attracted more middle-class residents to come and settle down. All these two effects contributed to the subsequent increase in property value that had largely displaced the lower class people from the city centres.⁵² In this context, this paper unfolds the gentrification process in Dhaka city through the lens of the aforementioned socio-structural perspective of gentrification.

47 R. Glass, *op. cit.*

48 N. Smith and P. Williams, *op. cit.*

49 D. Ley, *op. cit.*

50 F. Tonkiss, *op. cit.*

51 D. Ley, *op. cit.*

52 F. Tonkiss, *op. cit.*

Gentrification in Dhaka City

This section presents empirical findings of gentrification in Dhaka city. It has three subsections. The first subsection offers a brief account of Dhaka before gentrification. This is followed by an analysis of the main findings relating to gentrification in Dhaka city. Thirdly and finally, this section discusses Dhaka city's gentrification in comparison with that of the cities in the global North and also developed cities in Southeast/East Asia.

Dhaka city before gentrification

Being the hub of administrative and financial activities, Dhaka city is divided into two major regions: the Dhaka North City Corporation, and the Dhaka South City Corporation. Mirpur and Mohammadpur areas belong to the Dhaka North City Corporation. In this research, Dhaka's gentrification process is keenly observed by taking Mirpur and Mohammadpur areas as case studies. The East Pakistan government established the Mirpur Model Thana in 1962, and the Mohammadpur Model Thana was formed by the newly independent government of Bangladesh in 1976. Indeed, after independence in 1971, the government allocated these areas mainly for the lower-income people constituting both local inhabitants and people coming from different parts of the city. A survey by the Migratory Movement Research Institute in 1993 documented that 59 per cent of the lower-class people of Dhaka were the residents of the Mirpur area.⁵³ Moreover, a considerable number of people were refugees in these areas. The East Pakistan Government allotted these areas to rehabilitate the non-Bengali refugees coming from Bihar (a state in eastern India) after the partition of India in 1947. Since the Independence of the country in 1971, particularly throughout the 1980s, the number of these people decreased significantly. These people were literate, Urdu speaking, and occupied with some sorts of professions and businesses. Though a significant number of these people had managed to migrate to Pakistan after Independence, it is estimated that about 400,000 Biharis are still living across the country. Among them, about 100,000 Biharis are hosted in different settlements of Dhaka,⁵⁴ while Mohammadpur alone hosting about 80,000 of these people in the Geneva Camp.⁵⁵

53 F. K. Sharna, 'Gentrification-An Important Reason for the Loss of Affordable Housing in Mirpur Thana', *Proceedings of the Bangladesh Planning Research Conference 5-6 February 2016*, Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh, p. 2, Available at <http://www.bip.org.bd/ SharingFiles/ 201609161348081.pdf>. (Accessed on 14 January 2020).

54 R. Rafe, 'The neglected 'Bihari' community in Bangladesh', Deutsche Welle, 14 October 2019, p.3, Available at <https://www.dw.com/en/the-neglected-bihari-community-in-bangladesh/a-50824994>, (Accessed on 17 September 2020).

55 'How are the Biharis of Mirpur? Voting rights, NIDs did little to change their fortunes', United News of Bangladesh, 22 September 2019, p.1, Available at <https://unb.com.bd/category/Special/how-are-the-biharis-of-mirpur/28657>, (Accessed: 22 September 2020).

Field investigation reveals that residents in these areas were illiterate and small in number, engaged either in small-scale agricultural activities or involved in small businesses. Alamgir Hossain, a professor of Mirpur University College, describes their common patterns of occupations as follows:

When I first came to Mirpur during 1980s, I saw the majority of people were floating people engaged in small and medium scale businesses such as grocery shops, tea stalls, and small battle leaf outlets. Many people worked as rickshaw pullers, day labourers, and vendors. Many of the local people had their own houses; and by renting them to new residents, they used to attain their livelihood. Some were also small farmers but large scale agricultural activities were never found in these areas.⁵⁶

People, particularly those who had migrated to these areas from other regions of the country, were associated with factory-based activities in and outside areas of the city. Furthermore, few people were involved in government and non-government professions. The main reason people migrated here lies in the cheap house-rent and low land-value compared to the then central Dhaka city areas (now Old Dhaka). Housing types were mainly *kancha*, semi *pucca*, and tin-shaded. Some brick buildings also existed but they were not similar to the present-day apartment buildings. Buildings that are now regarded as old were considered to be the most attractive and fashionable at that time. The communication system was also very poor. There were no such kind of *pucca* or developed roads and streets like today. Vehicles were mainly bullock-carts, horse carriages, rickshaws, and hand-barrows. Furthermore, the number of schools and colleges were only a few but increased sharply after the 1990s. During the 1980s, the majority of the places were agricultural lands, marshlands as well as wetlands. Meanwhile, many housing projects were initiated privately. Under those housing projects, many low-lying areas and water bodies were used profitably. For example, many areas at Mirpur were completely swampland and covered with bushes before the launch of the Rupnagar Housing Project and Janata Housing project. Likewise, the Mohammadia Housing and the Japan Garden City in Dhaka's Mohammadpur were built over the slough areas.

Changes in urban spaces and buildings

It is revealing from data that central Dhaka city has undergone an immense physical expansion. The majority of its newly extended parts such as Gulshan, Banani, Dhanmondi, Mirpur, and Mohammadpur were brought under planned development projects during the 1950s and 1960s in order to accommodate middle-class people. Both governmental and real estate corporations, albeit rarely in a well-

56 Alamgir Hossain, interview with author, Dhaka, 11 June 2016.

organised and consistent way, are found to play role in improving the structural amenities of the Mirpur and the Mohammadpur regions. But real estate and developers acted as vanguards of developing run-down areas. The Eastern Housing Limited, the first private company in the real estate business, has been contributing to facilitating urban housing needs in Dhaka since the 1960s. One of its initial projects is the Pallabi housing in Mirpur. The Rupnagar Residential Project, however, was implemented by the National Housing Authority (NHA) at Mirpur in 1982, aimed at purveying the housing needs of the middle-class people. Similar results can be traced to the case of Mohammadpur. The Mohammadia Housing started its journey as a private housing corporation during the 1980s. The Japan Garden City, one of the largest housings in the area, set forth as a public-private partnership project after the 2000s to provide affordable housing to middle-class people. Moreover, the researcher finds a plethora of housing corporations running their projects in both areas while the majority of them are initiated by developers. Miraj Shikdar, a house owner of Mohammadpur, tells the author:

Almost all the buildings in this area were constructed by private initiatives with the help of developers. People who could not afford to build buildings on their lands were later able to be house owners with the help of developers. However, our efforts were also appreciating. People who bought plots in housing areas voluntarily left some lands so that we could make streets inside the housing project area for our convenience and we also funded those projects.⁵⁷

After the 1990s, people coming from various parts of the city occupied almost all the vacant places including low lands, water bodies, bushes, as well as agricultural fields, and transformed them into residentially and commercially used areas. Since then, the number of apartment buildings has increased but remarkably increased in recent years. There is the growth of a large number of offices, businesses and corporations, banks, and other financial institutions. The construction of new roads and streets is remarkable. The field visit manifests that significant changes have taken place over the years in the structural and architectural designs of buildings. The flat culture has become immensely fashionable to many housing corporations in recent times and even it has now become a matter of public demand. New multi-storied apartment buildings have replaced old buildings, as apartment buildings appropriate urban spaces more profitably. It is also revealing from this study that most of the buildings are constructed between 15 to 20 years and are provided with modern structural equipment. The increasing population accelerated volume of development projects, and price hike of land – all have run at par. Zahangir Alom, a house owner of the Mohammadia housing, illustrates the scenario:

⁵⁷ Miraj Shikdar, interview with author, Dhaka, May 14, 2016.

When the Mohammadia housing started to sell plot during the 1980s, land price was relatively lower than other regions of Dhaka city. People like us [who migrated to the city for job purposes and belong to the middle or lower-middle class] found these areas convenient and affordable for their future generations. Per '*katha*' was sold at the price of Taka 30 to 50 thousand only; but after the 2000s, that price increased tremendously. Even now this area has gone far away from the capacity of the middle-class people. Many of the house owners do not reside in these areas. Rather, they renting their houses here and reside in some other high profile areas like Gulshan and Banani.⁵⁸

Moreover, House rent has increased notably in these areas over the years. It is revealing from data that during the 2000s, the monthly rent of a medium size flat (on average two bedrooms, one dining room, kitchen, two bathrooms, and balcony), accompanied with all types of utilities, was taka 4 to 5 thousand. Today, the same size flat costs about taka 15 to 20 thousand. It is also found that house rent varies depending on locations. For instance, house rent is two or three times higher in central Mirpur and Mohammadpur areas than in their adjacent run-down areas like Duaripara and Rupnagar tin shed areas. Similarly, Baunia, Beribadh, Jahanabad, Rupnagar tin-shed are among low house rent areas due to the existence of slum and squatter settlements for lower-class people. In the last two decades, because of this ever-increasing rate of house rent, lower-income people were compelled to move to nearby cheap house rent areas.

Along with the process of infrastructural development, both areas have experienced a transition in economic activities. Several structural types of equipment are arranged to cater for the demand of a new growing population. Moreover, a plethora of offices, business and corporations, banks and other financial centres, and educational institutions have experienced growth in the areas. Side by side, services in restaurants, cafes, parlours, boutique houses and tailoring, gymnasiums, stationeries and confectionaries, super shops, and giant shopping malls have flourished in these areas, creating new job opportunities. It is estimated that approximately 45 per cent and 35 per cent of the total income of the people of the Mirpur and the Mohammadpur areas respectively are generated from service sectors. As Zahidul Islam, a shopkeeper in Mirpur, tells the author:

Several years ago, only a few restaurants were serving very specific items of food like rice, paratha, and tea. But now thousands of hotels and restaurants have emerged in these areas. Amongst them, specialised tea shops, coffee shops, Chinese restaurants, Indian restaurants, Italian restaurants, biriyani houses, grill houses, burger houses, pizza houses and so on are noticeable.⁵⁹

58 Zahangir Alam, interview with author, Dhaka, June 9, 2016.

59 Zahidul Islam, interview with author, Dhaka, June 12, 2016.

The present study also reveals that almost all the urban spaces in these areas are used for commercial purposes. From the field visit, the researcher gained a mountain of evidence of using public spaces for commercial intentions. Traditional places for spontaneous public interactions – such as parks, neighbourhood fields and centres, open grounds and streets – have now become either landscape of giant shopping malls or being appropriated by vendors and informal workers illegally for their subsistence. The researcher has not found any places left unused. Even residential buildings are using their ground floors for establishing English medium schools and coaching centres, art institutes, beauty parlours, as well as grocery shops. Besides, children are seen to use public streets as playgrounds inside the residential areas, as the city fails to provide spaces for public use. This vivid nature of using urban spaces for capital accumulation portrays the postmodern philosophy of market-oriented architectural and urban designs.

Changes in class position in the neighbourhoods

As Mirpur and Mohammadpur are extended parts of central Dhaka, these areas have been renewed by the people mainly coming from different parts of the country as well as the city. Several studies have revealed that the majority of the people are intra-city movers who lived previously in central Dhaka and moved to Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani, Uttara, and some other extended parts of the city after the 1980s.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, more people settled in these areas during the 1990s and afterwards, as they tended to locate in facilitated neighbourhoods. These people were young, usually first-generation ‘gentrifiers’, involved in various businesses and professions. As expenses and unavailability of vacant lands and new houses increased in the central city, previous demand for housing near schools, supermarkets, neighbourhood stores decreased, particularly among families without children, students, bachelors, and working women. Therefore, the demand for relatively low expensive lands and building stocks distant from central city areas increased particularly among these groups of people. These new middle-class residents tended to be located in facilitated neighbourhoods, not far away from the central city. This, meanwhile, increased property value and new residential projects were needed to accommodate these newly emerging middle-class residents in Dhaka’s outskirt areas.

Here it is pertinent to draw on Khatun’s study. Khatun identifies the characteristics of the intra-city movers who have migrated from the central city to its extended

60 H. Khatun, ‘Dhakaiyas and Gentrification in Old Dhaka’, *Jahanara Majid and Mahbub Alam Trust Fund Lecture 2016*, Dhaka, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, (17 January 2017), pp. 1-13, Available at <http://geoenv.du.ac.bd/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Dhakaiyas-Gentrification.pdf>, (Accessed on 13 February 2020).

parts. She finds that the majority of intra-city movers were young, aged between 25 to 40; they have nuclear families with or without children, while other 20 per cent had extended families with them.⁶¹ The present study also depicts that majority of the residents belong to the middle class in terms of their occupational categories, lifestyles, and consumption patterns. The dominant occupational categories are lawyers, doctors, engineers, academics, politicians, home and landowners, businesses men and corporate officials as well as government and non-government officials. A similar study also claims that in the Mirpur Thana, the middle-class people constituted about 47 per cent of the total population.⁶² Hedayet Miah, one of the respondents from Mohammadpur, tells the author: “Middle-class people, whose monthly income starts from nearly Taka 50,000, constitute the majority of the total population of the area, while the rich and the poor constitute the rest.”⁶³

The phenomenon of displacement

Although the regeneration of these outskirts has occurred with the influx of these middle-class people, this revitalisation process is also linked to the displacement of the local and lower-income people from these areas. This study holds evidence that due to the increasing prices of lands and the expense of living, lower-income local people have found it difficult to adapt to a thriving lavish lifestyle implanted by the process of gentrification. Eventually, they have chosen to move to nearby low-expensive areas like Beribadh and Basila. Therefore, this process of neighbourhood regeneration is also associated with the emergence of slum dwellings and squatter settlements for the poor. As Debashis, a retired government official and house owner at Mohammadpur says, ‘With the progress of development activities, slums have shifted away; and the increase of costs of living have displaced lower-class people from their original places.’⁶⁴

In a similar vein, another study claims that gentrification in the areas under the Mirpur Thana is related to the loss of affordable housing for lower-class people.⁶⁵ Based on Smith’s rent gap theory, the study informs that the increasing rate of house rent, land price and the rising cost of living – all resulting from some developmental projects – have compelled local people to be displaced and find their resettlement to some nearby affordable areas. In the case of Dhaka, however, despite having evidence for displacing lower-income people due to the neighbourhood’s regeneration process, the researchers find a peculiar picture. The residential areas for middle-class people also contain some places for lower-class

61 Ibid.

62 F. K. Sharna, op. cit., p.5.

63 Hedayet Miah, interview with author, Dhaka, May 20, 2016.

64 Debashis, interview with author, Dhaka, July 03, 2016.

65 Ibid.

people. For example, in the case of Mirpur, the researcher finds the juxtaposition of the Rupnagar residential area for the middle-class and the Rupnagar tin shed residential area for lower-income people. The coexistence of the power of the powerful classes and the everyday resistance of the lower-class people have become a regular phenomenon in Dhaka, like in all other global cities.⁶⁶ Moreover, the displacement process is a little bit ambiguous there. While many people have to leave the place as they fail to compete with the nascent cost of living, the incidence of evicting slums permanently is rare. Emdadul Haque, a resident of Mirpur, elaborates this:

There are still many big slums in areas such as Jhilpar and Baganbari. Fire outbreaks are regular incidents there. Nobody knows who sets the fire on. After each fire outbreak, slum people have to live on open grounds, as they do not have other places to go. Sometimes police also destroy many houses so that these people leave the place but they do not. After some days or months, they rebuild their house perhaps with the help of local political groups by paying them money.⁶⁷

Another salient factor is that the displacement of lower-class people, due to de-industrialisation or closing down/shifting industries, has not happened so strikingly in Dhaka unlike in other western global cities. Rather, a large number of low-income people are still residing in these areas to provide labour-power to many existing small and medium industries like garment industries, backward linkage industries, toys companies, shoe manufacturing, and hat companies. Nevertheless, this study holds evidence about the displacement of low-income people induced by the process of gentrification. As Zakir Hossain, a house owner in the Mirpur area and a retired government officer says:

Some garment and textile industries have been shifted from the Mirpur area to the Savar and the Gazipur regions. The workers involved in those industries would not more than 20 to 25 per cent of the total low-income people of the area. However, all of them have not been displaced with their promising working industries. Yet, a large number of them are still here and have got new jobs, as many manufacturing industries are also available here.⁶⁸

Discussion

Dhaka city has experienced an immense physical extension from its city centre to the northern part since the country emerged as an independent nation in 1971. Mohammadpur and Mirpur are among its extended northern parts which initially

66 S. Zukin, 'The postmodern invasion', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1992, pp. 485-495.

67 Emdadul Haque, interview with author, Dhaka, June 18, 2016.

68 Zakir Hossain, interview with author, Dhaka, July 05, 2016.

served to host a large number of refugee people. People gradually started to come and settle down in these areas because of the comparatively lower value of the property than in the central city areas. This period, however, can be illustrated with an increased property value of the study areas with several knock-on effects. In the case of Dhaka, unlike the global Northern cities, there is a dearth of evidence of 'sweat equity' gentrification. Here, 'sweat equity' gentrification refers to individual household effort to renovate run-down neighbourhoods. Instead, at the very beginning, developments of run-down neighbourhoods resembled more suburbanisation than gentrification, as references of direct displacement of people and community were also lacking in those instances. This is because being the outskirts of the city centres, these areas were experiencing the first phase of development with population migration, thereby spurring property value than displacing people.

The neighbourhood revitalisation can be traced back more specifically to the 1980s and the 1990s. The timing is also circumscribed as the second wave of the proliferation of gentrification on the stage of global North which is also identified with congealing private market intervention in the process. In Dhaka, the majority of the run-down neighbourhoods were brought into the developmental scheme during this period and onwards mainly through real estate initiatives. Regenerating old architectures by attracting middle-class people as a way of economic revival was the predominant drive in the cities of the north-eastern USA and Western Europe. In contrast to these cities, the distinctive fact about Dhaka is that all the residential and commercial projects were built on either vacant places or wetlands. Henceforth, incidents of direct displacement of local and poor people lack ample evidence during this time, albeit indirect displacement was frequent as a result of 'price shadowing'.⁶⁹

However, remarkable changes in the neighbourhoods relating to residential and commercial developments are noticeable after the 2000s. Interestingly, many key features of the second-wave gentrification, as outlined by Hackworth and Smith, can be linked to the development of Dhaka city during the 2000s when the timing is correlated to the third wave in other global cities. The distinction of the two phases – the second and the third waves – has been seemed to be blurred in Dhaka, as some instances suggest. In the second wave of gentrification, large scale displacement of lower-class people and their counter resentment was a regular phenomenon in many western cities but the subsequent phase was characterised by the disappearance of any effective resistance from the victims because of their

69 M. Davidson, and L. Lees, *op. cit.*, p.398.

gradual marginalisation.⁷⁰ In Dhaka, eviction of slums and squatter settlements in the name of beautification or sometimes through rampant fire outbreaks are frequent phenomena. The nature of such displacement, however, was rather volatile and temporary. In the majority of such cases, the displaced people resettle in previous grounds or nearby areas within a very short time. Reclaiming urban spaces by evictees through different negotiation strategies with local power bodies also holds relevance in many other places in Dhaka.⁷¹ In this area, further research is urged to understand intensively the localised nature of displacement induced by gentrification. Gentrification, induced by neoliberal agenda, in the cities of both the western and the developed East Asian countries is another remarkable issue. The increasing role of the state in tandem with the corporate developers is obvious in many cities of East Asian countries such as China, South Korea, Japan, Bangkok, and Cambodia.⁷² Likewise, in Dhaka city, the government's role in coordinating real estate and corporate developers through different market incentives are appreciable.⁷³ But the state's direct and strenuous involvement to orchestrate the whole system is yet to be reflected. While real estate as a housing sector is fairly getting the nod, it has experienced many vicissitudes since its beginning. Concerned actors are still facing a severe crisis due to the lack of sufficient financing, such that they look for the state's support to boost this sector.⁷⁴ This analysis alone, however, is not adequate to address the nexus across the role of the state, real estate, and gentrification under neoliberal economic reform in Dhaka city. Further research is necessary to address the issue.

The type of gentrification experienced in Dhaka corresponds more precisely to new-built gentrification which is seen as a special type of gentrification arising during the third wave in cities of the global North. As regards land use in new-built gentrification, the usage of existing urban buildings goes beyond the purpose of rehabilitation. The primary form of land use here is of two kinds: demolition/reconstruction, and constructing new buildings on vacant lands.⁷⁵ Unlike cities in the global North, gentrification in Dhaka does not imply the rehabilitation of old

70 J. Hackworth and N. Smith, op. cit., pp.466-468.

71 S. Arefin, and T. Rashid, 'The Urban Poor in Dhaka: Perspectives on the Right to the City', *Journal of Urban and Regional Analysis*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2021, p.154, Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/347848740_THE_URBAN_POOR_in_DHAKA_PERSPECTIVES_ON_THE_RIGHT_TO_THE_CITY, (Accessed on 23 April 2021).

72 R. Moore, op.cit., p.126

73 S. Barua, A.H.A.M. Mridha, and R.H. Khan, 'Housing Real Estate Sector in Bangladesh: Present Status and Policies Implications', *ASA University Review*, vol. 4, no. 1, (January- June 2010), p.250.

74 Ibid.

75 M. Davidson and L. Lees, op.cit. p. 398.

houses for residential use. This is because Dhaka, just like many other cities in South East and East Asian countries, has not experienced the process of deindustrialisation. It has been claimed that East Asian countries have not gone through the deindustrialisation and urban decline similar to western countries⁷⁶; they have always concentrated more on improving poor infrastructure and housing⁷⁷. Dhaka city, however, exhibits neither a fully manufactured nor a completely service-oriented economy. Therefore, gentrification as a by-product of the economic transition of the manufacturing sector to the service sector is not relevant to Dhaka. Gentrification in each form has been linked to the commercial utilisation of urban land. Investing capital in urban structures – e.g., built environments or Brownfield sites – vividly describes a new form of capital accumulation that has emerged as a by-product of neoliberal economic reform. This process of market-oriented use of urban spaces subsequently excludes those people who have the right to consume these places or are the ‘authentic users’ of the places.⁷⁸ The urban places for spontaneous public interaction like parks, neighbourhood fields and centres, and even vacant lands have now become an instrument of capital accumulation. Therefore, gentrification in Dhaka unfolds opportunities for the middle class and upper class but it rejects the poor and throws them into a new landscape of homelessness.

Conclusion

Gentrification has been echoed everywhere as the most widely used urban regeneration strategy. Dhaka, however, lacks any vibrant urban regeneration. Using two areas of Dhaka as case studies, this paper has unfolded the gentrification process in Dhaka city. It is revealing that gentrification in Dhaka resonates with new-built gentrification where the neoliberal market performs the predominant role. The real estate and developers are more vibrant in renovating disinvested urban lands and transferring them into new enclaves of middle-class urban residents in Dhaka city. However, the government’s effort to orchestrate the whole system, identical to other developed cities in East Asia as well as Western Europe, is not still sufficiently relevant. Instead, the real estate sector acts as a precursor in investing and reinvesting in all run-down areas which, in turn, fosters economic

76 H.B. Shin, L. Lees, and E. Lopez- Morales, op.cit.

77 S. Kyung, and Kwang-Joong Kim, ‘State-facilitated gentrification’ in Seoul, South Korea: for whom, by whom and what result?’ Paper presented at the *International RC21 conference by 2011* session: 2. Social Consequences of Gentrification, Amsterdam, (7-9 July 2011), pp. 1-26, Available at <http://www.rc21.org/conferences/amsterdam2011/edocs/Session%202/2-1-Kyung.pdf>; Cited from R. Moore, op. cit., p.125.

78 S. Zukin, op. cit.

flow and property value. Further research would consider this by addressing different actors involved in this process.

This geographical refurbishment creates many other socio-structural changes in the neighbourhoods, incorporating residential and commercial values of urban spaces with some trickle-down effects. The most controversial effect is the displacement of lower-class people against nascent urban development. Similar to the gentrification in the western cities, gentrification in Dhaka is also coupled with the consequence of the displacement of lower-income people from their authentic place, creating the city as the geography of a distinctive group of people. This is the point that needs immediate concern from policymakers because ensuring everyone's place in the city is a prerequisite for sustainable development as well as creating an inclusive approach to city development. Gentrification in Dhaka proceeds with urban development, displacing the authentic users/local people. Side by side, it corrodes the intrinsic nature of the neighbourhoods and creates a new cultural identity for the newcomer, requiring the attention of future researchers. In many instances, however, gentrification has appeared with some localised features of resettling evicted neighbourhoods through distinctive mechanisms with local authorities. This feature in particular has opened a new question to the understanding of the local political context of gentrification through ethnographic research.

TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COOPERATION AND WATER SECURITY IN THE GANGES RIVER BASIN: AN ASSESSMENT FROM BANGLADESH PERSPECTIVE

Sajid Karim*

Abstract

Transboundary water cooperation in the Ganges River basin is crucial for Bangladesh, as the life and livelihoods of millions of people of the country depend on this river. Despite having an official bilateral treaty signed in 1996, transboundary cooperation in the Ganges basin still heavily depends on the physical sharing of water between Bangladesh and India, dominated by unilateral actions of the latter, often limiting the scope of cooperation. The study identifies the factors responsible for limited transboundary water cooperation between Bangladesh and India in the Ganges River basin and examines how limited cooperation affects the water security of the people in the Ganges region. The study employs Multi-track Water Diplomacy Framework systematically to present the key factors responsible for limited water cooperation. Analysis of the factors reveals sub-optimal water cooperation between the riparians. The findings also suggest that the water security of the basin is affected by limited cooperation. The availability of and accessibility to sufficient and clean water are hindered due to fluctuation of water flow at the Farakka point, upstream diversion of water and severe water pollution. The sustainability of the human and ecosystem in the Ganges basin is also in danger due to the absence of any protection mechanism, especially in the Ganges water-sharing treaty and lack of joint initiatives. Besides, the vulnerability to water-borne hazards is on the rise due to limited sharing of hydrological data, unplanned construction of infrastructure along the river basin and lack of collaborative actions, which will get worse in the future due to the adverse impact of climate change.

Introduction

“There is still enough water for all of us - but only so long as we keep it clean, use it more wisely, and share it fairly” - Ban Ki-moon¹

Transboundary water cooperation is crucial for Bangladesh, as the country is located downstream of the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) basin. Nearly ninety-two per cent of the country’s renewable freshwater resources originate outside of its territory.² Bangladesh has 57 transboundary rivers, among which 54

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1 UN News, *At World Economic Forum, Ban Ki-moon Pledges Action on Water Resources*, 2008, available at <https://news.un.org/en/story/2008/01/246802-world-economic-forum-ban-ki-moon-pledges-action-water-resources>, Accessed on 14 October 2020.

2 AQUASTAT, “Bangladesh”, available at <http://www.fao.org/aquastat/statistics/query/results.html>, accessed on 14 July 2021.

enter from India, making the country highly dependent on its upstream neighbour for the sustainable development and management of its water resources. The socio-ecological sustainability of these rivers and their natural integrity are of paramount importance for Bangladesh, as they support the life and livelihood of millions of people, provide numerous ecosystems and environmental services, and play a crucial role in the country's water-energy-food security. Besides, they have a tremendous contribution to the country's GDP growth and employment.³ Hence, to maximize the overall benefits from those shared rivers and minimize any negative externalities emanated from their upstream water use, there is no alternative for Bangladesh but to collaborate with its upstream neighbour heeding the country's geophysical and hydrological reality.

Among the 54 common rivers, the Ganges is the most prominent one. It is the only river that is subject to a bilateral treaty between Bangladesh and India.⁴ It is the most populous river basin on the earth, sustaining nearly 655 million people. The river is vital for the socio-economic development of both Bangladesh and India and offers numerous opportunities for development and mutual cooperation in the region. Both Bangladesh and India have signed several agreements on sharing the Ganges water since 1977, and the last one that is currently in effect is the signing of the 1996 Ganges water-sharing Treaty. The 1996 treaty was lauded as a significant achievement in mitigating the water-related conflicts between the two countries.

However, sharing the Ganges water is still a challenging issue having a far-reaching impact on the bilateral relationship. Both Bangladesh and India are already experiencing different challenges due to their burgeoning population and high economic growth, putting tremendous pressure on the Ganges water resources. Besides, the availability of fresh water in the basin is also declining, putting a further strain on its sustainable utilisation. The Ganges cooperation initiatives between these two neighbours are heavily confined to the physical sharing of water, undermining the river's ability to produce multiple benefits. The asymmetric power relations between these two riparians and the complex hydro-political realities influenced by political realism pose a severe challenge, hampering the effectiveness of existing cooperation mechanism and limiting the scope of future collaborations, raising serious concern for availability and accessibility of the freshwater resources

3 Strategic Foresight Group, *The Himalayan Challenge: Water Security in Emerging Asia*, (Mumbai: Strategic Foresight Group 2010).

4 Last year, Bangladesh and India signed an MoU on the Feni river on 05 October 2019 to allow India to withdraw 1.82 cusecs of water from the Feni river. For more information, please see O. Marathe, "Explained: The Significance of the Feni River MoU Between India, Bangladesh", *The Indian Express*, 2019, available at <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-significance-of-the-feni-river-moubetween-India-and-Bangladesh-6108389>, accessed on 20 July 2020.

and the sustainability of Gange's biodiversity and ecosystem, especially in downstream Bangladesh.⁵

Against this backdrop, the study aims to identify the factors responsible for limited transboundary water cooperation between Bangladesh and India in the Ganges River basin and examines the impact of the limited cooperation on the water security of the people living in the Ganges region. The study answers the following research questions:

- What factors are responsible for limited transboundary water cooperation between Bangladesh and India in the Ganges River basin?
- How does the current state of limited water cooperation impact upon the water security in the Ganges region?

There have been a good number of scholarships available on the Ganges issues. However, most previous studies⁶ have focused on the socio-political and historical context of water sharing between Bangladesh and India and its challenges. Rahman et al⁷ have quantified the present status of cooperation by providing a statistical and quantitative analysis of the performance of the Ganges water-sharing treaty. Other studies⁸ have examined the changing climate pattern in the Ganges basin and its

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- 5 C. Jain, and S. Singh, "Impact of Climate Change on the Hydrological Dynamics of River Ganga, India", *Journal of Water and Climate Change*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2020, pp. 274-290; A. B. M. Enamol Hassan, "Indian Hegemony on Water Flow of the Ganges: Sustainability Challenges in the Southwest part of Bangladesh", *Sustainable Futures*, Vol. 1, 2019; M. Rahman and M. M. Rahaman, "Impacts of Farakka Barrage on Hydrological Flow of Ganges River and Environment in Bangladesh", *Sustainable Water Resource Management*, Vol. 4, 2018, pp. 767-780.
- 6 S. Islam, "Bangladesh-India Water Sharing Disputes: Possible Policy Responses", *Journal of Bangladesh Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2012, pp. 38-49; A. Nishat and M. Faisal, "An Assessment of the Institutional Mechanisms for Water Negotiations in the Ganges-Brahmaputra- Meghna system", *International Negotiation*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2000, pp. 289-310; P. Pandey, "Bangladesh, India, and Fifteen Years of Peace: Future Directions of the Ganges Treaty", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 54, No. 4, 2014, pp. 651-673; A. Swain, "The Ganges River Water Sharing Agreement Between Bangladesh And India: In Search of New Mechanisms to Meet New Challenges", In L. Susskind, E. Choudhury and S. Islam (eds.), *Complexity of Transboundary Water Conflicts: Enabling Conditions for Negotiating Contingent Resolutions*, (London, UK; New York, NY, USA: Anthem Press 2018), pp. 129-144.
- 7 K. S. Rahman, Z. Islam, U. K. Navera and F. Ludwig, "A Critical Review of the Ganges Water Sharing Agreement", *Water Policy*, Vol. 21, 2019, pp. 259-276.
- 8 C. Jain, and S. Singh, op. cit.; E. Moors, A. Groot, H. Biemans, C. van Scheltinga, C. Siderius, M. Stoffel, C. Huggel, A. Wiltshire, C. Mathison, J. Ridley, D. Jacob, P. Kumar, S. Bhadwal, A. Gosain and D. Collins, "Adaptation to Changing Water Resources in the Ganges Basin, Northern India", *Environmental Science & Policy*, Vol. 14, No. 7, 2011, pp. 758-769; H. R. Hosterman, P. G. McCornick, E. J. Kistin, B. Sharma and L. Bharat, "Freshwater, Climate Change and Adaptation in the Ganges Basin", *Water Policy*, Vol. 14, 2012, pp. 67-79.

impact. Some authors⁹ have highlighted the effects of physical alteration, especially the Farakka barrage, on the Ganges's hydrological regime. However, little effort has been made to examine how limited water cooperation affects the water security of people living in the Ganges basin. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to filling in this research gap.

It should be noted that the Ganges River basin also includes two other riparian states, i.e., Nepal and China. But this study limits its scope within Bangladesh and India. Regarding the setting of the conceptual boundary of the study, it should be mentioned that water security is a vast concept and can be interpreted from different points of view. The study specifically focuses on three core aspects of water security, i.e., availability and quality of water; sustainability of human and ecosystem; and vulnerability to water-borne hazards. The operational definition of the concept is developed from UNESCO-IHP that reads like -

Water security means the capacity of a population to safeguard access to adequate quantities of water of acceptable quality for sustaining human and ecosystem health and ensuring efficient protection of life, property and biodiversity against water-related hazards, which would be managed in an integrated way on a watershed basis¹⁰.

The structure of the paper is organised as follows. The first section is the introduction that includes the background, methodology and analytical framework. Section two identifies the factors responsible for limited water cooperation between Bangladesh and India. Section three articulates how the limited cooperation affects the water security in the Ganges basin, followed by the discussion in section four. The conclusion is drawn in section five.

Methodology

Since the study is descriptive and intends to answer “what” and “how” questions, it follows a qualitative research method based on secondary data analysis.¹¹ A comprehensive literature review has been conducted to collect data that includes

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- 9 R. Afroz, and M. Rahman, “Transboundary River Water for Ganges and Teesta Rivers in Bangladesh: An Assessment”, *Global Science and Technology Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2013, pp. 100-111; A. Gain and C. Giupponi, “Impact of the Farakka Dam on Thresholds of the Hydrologic Flow Regime in the Lower Ganges River Basin (Bangladesh)”, *Water*, Vol. 6, No. 8, 2014, pp. 2501-2518; M. Rahman and M. Rahaman, “Impacts of Farakka Barrage on Hydrological Flow of Ganges River and Environment in Bangladesh”, *Sustainable Water Resources Management*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2017, pp. 767-780.
 - 10 UNESCO-IHP, *International Hydrological Programme (IHP) Eighth Phase: Water Security: Responses to Local, Regional and Global Challenges, Strategic Plan, IHP-VIII (2014-2021)*, 2012, available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000218061>, accessed 12 October 2020.
 - 11 M. P. Johnston, “Secondary Data Analysis: A Method of Which the Time Has Come”, *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries*, Vol. 3, 2014, pp. 619-626.

government documents, academic journals, books, policy papers, newspaper reports, and online publications. The rationale to use a comprehensive literature review is that it helps to build the research work on a robust scholarly foundation. It gives credibility to the data collected for the research work due to its comprehensive structure and provides a direction to other researchers and the audience about how the results are obtained.¹² The data collected has been systematically analysed using qualitative content analysis to answer the research questions.

Three separate literature searches have been conducted for this study in two different online platforms, i.e., Uppsala University (UU) library search engine¹³ and JSTOR digital library¹⁴ with the keywords: “water security”, “transboundary water cooperation in Ganges River” and “multi-track water diplomacy”. The UU library search engine does not limit the scope of the literature search to certain publishing houses; instead includes journals and books from a wide range of academic publishers. Likewise, JSTOR digital library is one of the most comprehensive digital library platforms offering a wide range of scholarly contents. The literature searches generate a large number of search results, going beyond the capacity of analysis. A careful skim and scan of the titles, keywords, and abstract have been done to narrow down the search result and select relevant literature for the study.

Analytical Framework

The study uses Multi-track Water Diplomacy Framework developed by Huntjens et al¹⁵ to systematically identify and analyse the factors responsible for limited cooperation in the Ganges basin. The framework works as an analytical tool, containing several components: action situation, basin-wide and situation-specific context, formal and customary institutions, and actors and agency, to systematically present how riparians cooperate in a shared basin.¹⁶ Key factors identified in different components of the framework help to answer the first research question. Consequently, the factors have been analysed to examine the impact of limited cooperation on water security, thus help to answer the second research question.

12 J. Williams, “A Comprehensive Review of Seven Steps to A Comprehensive Literature Review”, *The Qualitative Report*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2018, pp. 345-349.

13 <https://www.uu.se/?languageId=1>

14 <https://www.jstor.org/>

15 P. Huntjens, Y. Yasuda, A. Swain, R. De Man, B. Magsig, S. Islam, *The Multi-track Water Diplomacy Framework: A Legal and Political Economy Analysis for Advancing Cooperation over Shared Waters*, First edition, (The Hague: The Hague Institute for Global Justice 2016).

16 Y. Yasuda, D. Hill, D. Aich, P. Huntjens and A. Swain, “Multi-track Water Diplomacy: Current and Potential Future Cooperation Over the Brahmaputra River Basin”, *Water International*, Vol. 43, No. 5, 2018, pp. 642-664.

The first component of the framework is the “basin-wide context” that provides an overview of the river basin; its biophysical, socio-economic, and political context, together with their interrelations.¹⁷ It is related to the second component: “situation-specific context”, which helps pinpoint the focus on specific situations, directly influencing the “action situation” of the framework. Situation-specific context can be any instance of alteration in the river, the building of physical infrastructure, political tensions, and others alike. “Action situation” is placed at the core of the framework, described as the “social place” by scholars, in which participants — like institutions, actors, and agency — interact with each other and jointly produce outputs and outcomes. Action situations can take different forms. The action situation gives a highlight of the dynamics and status of cooperation between the riparians.

The concepts of “institutions” and “actors” are drawn from the structure-agency debate in social science. According to Huntjens et al, institutions can absorb any influence and can maintain the status quo or might be transformed by the action of actors and agency in an action situation. Institutions can be formal, legal or customary, and include diverse areas of social activity, from the family to basic aspects of political life.¹⁸ Various actors, ranging from governmental to non-governmental, are also engaged in water cooperation whose relationships, especially the power relation, play a crucial part in shaping cooperation. Contrastingly, “agency” indicates a person or group’s ability to exert influence and the capacity to transform the existing state of affairs.¹⁹ In any water cooperation, actors may include the governments, important ministries, NGOs, local bodies, while the agency can be the existing power relationship among the actors and leadership.

Lastly, all action situations produce some “outcomes”, “outputs”, and “impacts”, embodied in the final part of the framework. Outputs can be any decision or agreement produced as the direct result of the action situation, like any treaty or agreement. Conversely, the outcome is the transformation or change resulting from the output vis-à-vis cooperation. Examples of the outcome can be an innovative

17 Huntjens et al., 2016, op. cit.

18 Huntjens et al., 2016, op. cit.; C. Calhoun, *Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, (Oxford University Press 2002), available at <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/dictionary-of-the-social-sciences-9780195123715?cc=se&lang=en&>, accessed on 13 October 2020.

19 D. Harvey, “Agency and Community: A Critical Realist Paradigm”, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2002, pp. 163-194; L. Newman, and A. Dale, 2005, “The Role of Agency in Sustainable Local Community Development”, *Local Environment*, Vol. 10, No. 5, pp. 477-486.

solution or behavioural change for any agreement or treaty. This outcome will have either a positive impact or a negative impact. For this study, the impact will be analysed concerning water security. The framework is a dynamic process, and the outcomes, outputs and impacts would influence the actors and agency and ultimately feedback into the system. Figure 1 is a brief presentation of the Multi-track Water Diplomacy Framework.

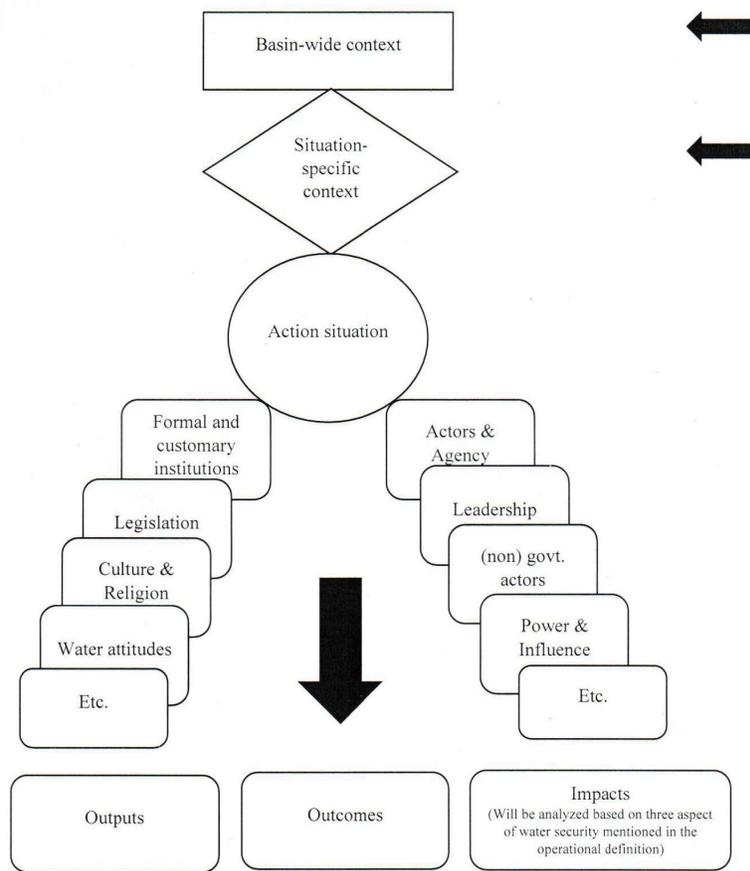


Figure 1: Multi-track Water Diplomacy Framework²⁰

²⁰ Huntjens *et al.*, 2016, op. cit.

Why Transboundary Water Cooperation is Limited between Bangladesh and India in the Ganges River Basin

The first research question of the study deals with the factors responsible for limited water cooperation between Bangladesh and India. Key factors affecting the cooperation have been identified in different components of the Multi-track Water Diplomacy Framework and presented in sections 2.1 to 2.4. The second research question examines the impact of limited water cooperation on water security, which is the final component of the framework. The result of the second research question is presented in section three.

Basin-wide context

The basin-wide context highlights the physical geography of the river along with its socio-economic significance. The Ganges River has originated at Gangotri, the Indian town located in the southern part of the Himalayas Mountain range. The river rolls through the northern part of India before reaching Bangladesh, where it enters through the north-western part of the country and takes the name of Padma. About 50 km upstream of the border of Bangladesh, one of the Ganges distributaries take off, named Bhagirathi-Hooghly, where the Indian port city Kolkata is situated. Its basin area is spread across four countries—Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and China—among which India shares 79 per cent of the basin area while only 4 per cent lies within Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the latter has to drain the lion share of river water through its surface area into the sea. Many of the Ganges' tributaries come from Nepal, which contribute more than 45 per cent of its total flow and nearly 70 per cent of the dry season flow. The climate of the Ganges region is governed by wet monsoon and high temperature that has significant season variability. The basin receives heavy rainfall from June to October, and experiences seasonal flooding, usually followed by a prolonged dry period from November to May when it faces water scarcity.²¹

The Ganges basin is one of the most densely populated regions on the earth.²² The life and livelihood of around 445 million people are directly or indirectly dependent on the basin.²³ One-third of India's surface water comes from the Ganges River, among which 90 per cent is used for agricultural activities and food production.

21 P. Pandey, 2014, op. cit.; Rahman and Rahaman, 2017, op. cit.; Rahman et al., 2019, op. cit.; A. Sood and B. Mathukumalli, "Managing International River Basins: Reviewing India–Bangladesh Transboundary Water Issues", *International Journal of River Basin Management*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 2011, pp. 43-52.

22 M. Akter, op. cit.

23 C. Jain and S. Singh, 2020, op. cit.

The Ganges is crucial for its distributaries like the Hooghly-Bhagirathi, with the latter being the lifeline for the Kolkata port. The river also contributes to India's energy sector by providing 2000 MW (installed capacity) of hydropower.²⁴ In addition to its vast socio-economic importance, the river has deep cultural and religious significance. It is regarded as one of the sacred places for the Hindus. In Bangladesh, the life and livelihoods of 40 million people directly depends on the Ganges River basin.²⁵ The basin's fertile soil contributes significantly to the agriculture and food production of Bangladesh. It supports river-fed irrigation, let alone recharge of groundwater. The river is also a crucial transport route and an integral part of the socio-cultural system of the country. In a nutshell, the Ganges plays a vital role in both India and Bangladesh by providing water, supporting food production, river-based commerce, and economic activities. Thus, it significantly contributes to the water-food-energy need of approximately two-thirds of the Bangladeshi and one-third of the Indian population.²⁶

One of the key issues affecting the basin-wide context is the massive imbalance between the water demand and seasonal availability, causing severe water scarcity in the dry season and flooding during the monsoon. The Ganges receives more than 80 per cent of its rainfall during the four months of the monsoon. The remaining eight months stay pretty dry, causing widespread water scarcity, affecting irrigation, food production, navigation and the surrounding ecosystem.²⁷ Synchronising seasonal water availability with the year-round demand is a big challenge, forcing the riparian states to secure their access over available water resources of the river, causing tension and discontent between each other.

Both Bangladesh and India have a huge demand for water. The demand is constantly growing with population growth.²⁸ India is currently a water-stressed country with 1427 cubic metres (in 2017) per capita water availability a year, well

24 U. Amarasinghe, L. Muthuwatta, L. Surinaidu, S. Anand, and S. Jain, "Reviving the Ganges Water Machine: Potential", *Hydrology and Earth System Sciences*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 2016, pp.1085-1101.

25 Ibid.

26 D. Kumar, "River Ganges – Historical, Cultural and Socioeconomic Attributes", *Aquatic Ecosystem Health & Management*, Vol. 20, No. 1-2, 2017, pp. 8-20; J. Treadwell and S. Ali, *Contributing Factors in the Ongoing Water Conflict Between Bangladesh and India*. Tufts University Aquapedia, 2009, available at <https://wikis.uit.tufts.edu/confluence/display/aquapedia/Contributing+Factors+in+the+Ongoing+Water+Conflict+Between+Bangladesh+and+India>, accessed on 21 October 2020.

27 Khan et al., 2014, op. cit.

28 Islam et al., op. cit.

below the international threshold of 1700 cubic metres a year.²⁹ There is a prediction that India will become a water-scarce country by 2050.³⁰ On the other hand, per capita water availability in Bangladesh was 7451 cubic metres a year in 2017.³¹ Though Bangladesh is currently not in a water-stressed situation, the country receives its bulk share of water during the four months of monsoon. This extreme season variability, coupled with growing water demand and water scarcity, forms a critical basis of Bangladesh-India contention on sharing the Ganges water.

Situation-specific context

Situation-specific context focuses on the issues that have a direct impact on the action situation of the framework. For the Ganges River, maintaining a steady flow is crucial to ensure water availability and sustain its surrounding biodiversity.³² But alternation to river flow due to the building of unplanned physical infrastructure at the upstream and the change in hydrological regime in the river are severely affecting the availability of water resources in the river. India's construction of the Farakka barrage is one of many such instances of short-sighted unilateral action that severely affected not only the hydrology of the river but also the scope of collaborative actions. Since the barrage came into operation, the water level in the Ganges dropped significantly at the Farakka point, leading to severe tension between Bangladesh and India concerning the sharing of water of the river, especially during the dry season.³³

Key factors affecting the flow of the Ganges River are the building of physical infrastructure and the upstream water diversion. The dry season discharge of the Ganges has already declined at the Farakka point.³⁴ Analysis of the historical

29 FAO, *AQUASTAT Database*, available at <http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/data/query/results.html>, accessed on 23 October 2020.

30 M. Lovelle, *India, Bangladesh and the Farakka Barrage*, Future Directions International, 2016, available at <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/india-bangladesh-farakka-barrage/>, accessed on 28 October 2020.

31 FAO, op. cit.

32 Gain and Giupponi, op. cit.

33 Gain and Giupponi, op. cit; M. Mirza, Diversion of the Ganges Water at Farakka and its Effects on Salinity in Bangladesh, *Environmental Management*, Vol. 22, No. 5, 1998, pp. 711-722; Sood and Mathukumalli, op. cit; S. Tanzeema and M. Faisal, "Sharing the Ganges: A Critical Analysis of the Water Sharing Treaties", *Water Policy*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2001, pp. 13-28.

34 P. Hanasz, *Sharing Waters Vs. Sharing Rivers: The 1996 Ganges Treaty*, 2014, Global Water Forum, available at <http://www.globalwaterforum.org/2014/07/28/sharing-waters-vs-sharing-rivers-the-1996-ganges-treaty/>, accessed on 21 October 2020; Lovelle, op. cit.

seasonal flows at Farakka point by a study³⁵ reveals a consistent decline of average dry-season flow during the post-Farakka period (1975-1996) compared to the pre-Farakka period.

Besides, the soaring energy demand has forced the South Asian countries to go for all available resources to produce electricity, and hydropower is one of the viable options for them. India has already built several dams on the Ganges, affecting the flow of water, especially during the dry season.³⁶ At present, there are 24 dam/barrage projects across the Ganges, but a series of new hydroelectric dams have already been proposed.³⁷ With the completion of the dams, the Ganges basin would be the largest one in terms of the dam density in the Himalayan river system.³⁸ These infrastructural projects will have a detrimental impact not only on the hydrological regime of the river but also on the aquatic life and its surrounding biodiversity, causing a severe concern for Bangladesh.³⁹ Though United Nations (UN) water convention⁴⁰ emphasises sharing information and mutual consultation regarding the possible impact of planned measures on transboundary watercourses, this has not been a common practice for the riparian states of the Ganges, especially for India. Bangladesh has never been consulted with any of the water development projects located upstream.

India's unilateral actions in the Ganges upstream have been perceived by the people in Bangladesh as a "big brother" and hegemonic attitude of its neighbour, adversely affecting a much required trust-building concerning cooperation on water sharing. According to a survey⁴¹ eighty-two per cent of Bangladeshis have a negative perception about India regarding transboundary water cooperation.

Action situation and output

The study has selected Bangladesh-India water cooperation as an action situation. The cooperation spanned from track-I, state to state cooperation, to track-III, which

35 Rahman *et al.*, op. cit.

36 Pandey, 2014, op. cit.

37 Government of India, *Dams on River Ganga*, 2016, available at <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=148503>, accessed on 23 October 2020.

38 M. Pandit and R. Grumbine, "Potential Effects of Ongoing and Proposed Hydropower Development on Terrestrial Biological Diversity in the Indian Himalaya", *Conservation Biology*, Vol. 26, No.6, 2012, pp. 1061-1071; Strategic Foresight Group. op. cit.

39 Pandit and Grumbine, op. cit.

40 United Nations, *Convention on the Law of the Non navigational Uses of International Watercourses*, (United Nations 1997).

41 G. Price, R. Alam, S. Hasan, F. Humayun, M. H. Kabir, C. S. Karki, S. Mitra, T. Saad, M. Saleem, S. Saran, P. R. Shakya, C. Snow, S. Tuladhar, *Attitudes to Water in South Asia*. (London: Chatham House the Royal Institute of International Affairs 2014).

is more informal and involves NGOs, civil society organisations, research and think tanks. Cooperation regarding water between Bangladesh and India can be traced back to March 1972, four months after Bangladesh's independence, when the Joint River Commission (JRC) was formed with the mandate to increase collaboration on common rivers and shared water resources. The formal agreement, known as the Statute of the Indo Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission,⁴² was signed on 24 November 1972. Though initially, the Ganges issue was not within the scope of the JRC, it was incorporated afterwards.⁴³ Apart from organising regular meetings between India and Bangladesh to facilitate cooperation, JRC also has the mandate to work on mitigating flood risk along with other water-borne natural hazards. The commission has played an instrumental role in the bilateral water relation between Bangladesh and India by maintaining a regular interaction between the two countries since its inception. One of the significant achievements of the JRC was the signing of the 1996 Ganges treaty.⁴⁴

The outputs of the water cooperation between Bangladesh and India are the signing of various agreements. The first agreement dated back to 1977, which was signed for a five-year period. After that, two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) were signed between 1982 and 1988 for the length of two years each. When the second MoU expired, there were no formal water-sharing agreements between Bangladesh and India until the signing of the thirty-year Ganges water sharing treaty in 1996.

Apart from state-level track-I cooperation, some non-governmental actors and agencies are also involved in promoting cooperation through track-II and track-III channels. Global Water Partnership (GWP) is working in both Bangladesh and India with a mission to promote water security and climate resilience. Besides, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is also active in both countries, working to building a platform to share knowledge on integrated ecosystem management for shared water resources and foster dialogue between the two riparians on joint water management.⁴⁵

42 *Statute of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission 1972*, available at <https://www.internationalwaterlaw.org/documents/regionaldocs/indo-bangladesh.html>, accessed on 22 October 2020.

43 Ibid.

44 [Banglapedia.org](http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Joint_Rivers_Commission), *Joint Rivers Commission*, 2015, available at http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Joint_Rivers_Commission, accessed on 22 October 2020; Sood and Mathukumalli, *op. cit.*

45 A. Parven and M. Hasan, "Trans-boundary Water Conflicts Between Bangladesh and India: Water Governance Practice for Conflict Resolution", *International Journal of Agricultural Research, Innovation and Technology*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2018, pp.79-84.

Key Factors Affecting the Action Situation

One of the key factors in Bangladesh and India water cooperation is the 1996 Ganges treaty. Nevertheless, there are many weaknesses in the treaty, limiting the scope of cooperation between the two countries.⁴⁶ The allocation of water in the treaty was calculated on the average flow during 1949-1988. However, due to upstream water diversion and the building of physical infrastructures, the water flow of the Ganges during the dry season at Farakka has already declined.⁴⁷ Besides, the treaty undermines the impact of climate change on the river's hydrological regime.⁴⁸ It solely focuses on the physical sharing of water based on a fixed allocation mechanism, without considering other critical hydrological aspects like floods and droughts or ecological and environmental concerns. Especially, it entitles India to extract a maximum of 40,000 cusecs, even in case of a high precipitation period. This implies that India has to drain the excess amount of water during the heavy monsoon period, causing floods downstream. The treaty also ignores the impact of rigorous water sharing on the river's physical health and ecological sustainability.⁴⁹ It does not incorporate any guarantee clause for Bangladesh to ensure a minimum supply of water in case of a rapid decline of river flow, which is still an issue of contention between the two countries. What is more, Nepal is a key riparian state of the Ganges basin. But the country is not included within the scope of the treaty, undermining the principles of the basin-wide approach of river management.

Institutions and actors

As mentioned in the previous section, the first formal institution established to govern the bilateral water cooperation between Bangladesh and India was the JRC. The 1972 Statute of the JRC still provides the institutional basis for taking joint efforts to maximise benefits from shared water resources between the two countries.⁵⁰ Added to the JRC, both Bangladesh and India have national policies and legislation where transboundary water management provisions are incorporated. India's National Water Policy⁵¹ emphasises international agreement with neighbouring countries regarding the management of its transboundary rivers (article 13.1). However, there is also a provision (article 13.2) that negotiation and

46 Gain and Giupponi, op. cit.; Hanasz, op. cit.; Lovelle, op. cit.; Rahman et al., op. cit.

47 Hanasz, op. cit.

48 Lovelle, op. cit.

49 Rahman et al., op. cit.

50 *Statute of the Indo-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission 1972*, op. cit.

51 Ministry of Water Resources, Government of India, *National Water Policy 2012*, available at http://mowr.gov.in/sites/default/files/NWP2012Eng6495132651_1.pdf, accessed on 20 October 2020.

sharing of water on transnational rivers need to be done only on a bilateral basis. On the other hand, Article 7 of the Bangladesh Water Act⁵² provides direction to the National Water Council, the apex decision-making body of water management, in order to give the government necessary advices regarding international cooperation with other countries on shared water resources.

In addition to formal institutions, customary institutions also have a profound impact on transboundary water cooperation. Mutual trust is an important customary institution and a crucial issue for any transboundary water management. Amicable bilateral relation is a prerequisite for the sustainability of any water-sharing agreements that will produce a fruitful outcome for both parties. Previously, the lack of trust between the political leaders of India and Bangladesh had severely hampered the collaborative initiatives between the two countries, with such lack of trust still continuing today. In the case of the Ganges water sharing, it took almost 25 years for Bangladesh and India to reach a long-term agreement.

Regarding the crucial actors in water cooperation between Bangladesh and India, the national governments of both countries and their relevant ministries have their roles to play. Most important ministries from India include the Ministry of Jal Shakti (Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation) and the Ministry of External Affairs. From the Bangladeshi side, the Ministry of Water Resources and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs play a key role in water-related negotiations and consultation. Members of the JRC also play a crucial role by holding regular meetings on the sharing of water resources. State governments of India — especially the governments of West Bengal, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand — are also regarded as key actors, as they influence the Indian central government's position in any negotiation with Bangladesh on sharing the Ganges water. A new form of engagement between the two countries is also developing under the sub-regional framework of the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative. Under the auspices of the BBIN Initiative, the Water Resource Management Joint Working Group is facilitating Bangladesh-India cooperation by holding regular consultation on flood mitigation and water resource management.

Key factors affecting the institutions and actors

India's rigid bilateral negotiation policy on transboundary water issues is a key factor affecting the institution of water cooperation between the two countries and

52 Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, *Bangladesh Water Act 2013*, available at https://warpo.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/warpo.portal.gov.bd/page/03c17704_0b00_4678_8cb3_fb913676911f/WaterActEnglish.pdf, accessed on 20 October 2020.

limiting its scope. Besides, transboundary water sharing has a profound socio-political connotation in both Bangladesh and India, in which the domestic political complexities and compulsions dictate transboundary water negotiations. Water management in India is too complicated due to a complex relation between the central and the state governments. Here the state governments hold power to make their own decisions regarding the sharing of water resources and can negotiate with one another.⁵³ As per the Indian constitution, the responsibility of river development is given to the state government.⁵⁴ Therefore, their consent is needed by the central government before entering into a treaty with other countries. This sometimes creates a bottleneck and adversely affects the entire cooperation atmosphere in a shared water basin. The Ganges treaty is such an example that was wholeheartedly supported by West Bengal but heavily criticised by other riparian Indian states, like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Another instance of India's internal political complexity is the failure to sign the Teesta River water-sharing deal. Due to the opposition from the West Bengal government, the central government failed to ink the deal with Bangladesh in 2011, which is still waiting to be signed.⁵⁵ What is more, the Chief Minister of the West Bengal government, Mamata Banerjee, protested to the Indian central government against the release of Teesta water to Bangladesh, stating that it is hampering the internal water supply to West Bengal.⁵⁶ These issues reveal the complex dynamics of the Indian domestic political system where the provincial states have autonomy and power to influence transnational issues.⁵⁷ Nowadays, the Indian central government has to negotiate with provincial states first before taking the negotiation on transboundary water issues beyond its border.

Lack of mutual trust is another key factor responsible for limited cooperation. The main reason behind this is the securitisation of water-related data and inadequate information sharing, for which people, especially those living in downstream Bangladesh, have a common perception that bilateral cooperation is only benefitting upstream India⁵⁸ and due to the limited verified data, people tend to speculate about the operation of different upstream water intervention projects and

53 Yasuda et al., 2017, op cit.

54 R. Shah, "Inter-state River Water Disputes: A Historical Review", *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1994, pp. 175-189.

55 Strategic Foresight Group, *Rivers of Peace: Restructuring India Bangladesh Relations*, (Mumbai: Strategic Foresight Group 2013).

56 "Water Row Brews, This Time Over Farakka", *The Times of India*, 2012, available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Water-row-brews-this-time-over-Farakka/articleshow/11905977.cms>, accessed on 23 October 2020.

57 Yasuda et al., 2017, op. cit.

58 Ibid.

their possible impact, which ultimately hurts the overall cooperation between the two countries. What is more, both countries are still struggling to ink a deal on water sharing in the Teesta River, highlighting the caveats that exist in the bilateral water relation between these two countries, limiting the scope of cooperation.

Finally, the asymmetric power relation between Bangladesh and India is a vital issue affecting the current state of cooperation. Being the largest country in South Asia with strong economic and military power, India has been influencing all the negotiation processes and has been accused of being a hydro-hegemon in the Ganges basin.⁵⁹ Bangladesh is militarily and economically weaker than India and has less material and ideational power.⁶⁰ In such a situation, Bangladesh has less control and limited bargaining capability as compared with India over the sharing of waters of common rivers. Thus, in most cases, Bangladesh is deprived of its fair share of water and other facilities. Indeed, asymmetric power relation between India and Bangladesh adversely affects Bangladesh-India collaboration on water sharing.

Impacts of Limited Transboundary Water Cooperation on Water Security

Water security in a shared river basin largely depends on the transboundary cooperation between the riparian states, as the lower riparian country has to rely on water from upstream for its water management. The previous section has detailed the factors affecting the transboundary cooperation that resulted in limited cooperation. This section explores how limited transboundary cooperation in the Ganges basin affects the water security of the people living in the Ganges region, especially in downstream Bangladesh. As mentioned earlier, the operational definition of water security focuses on three specific aspects of water security. Therefore, the impacts are discussed drawing on those three core aspects.

Availability and accessibility to sufficient and clean water

The fluctuation of the Ganges water flow, especially at the Farakka point, is a severe problem, affecting water availability in downstream Bangladesh. The North-

59 Yasuda et al. 2018, op. cit.; S. Ho, “‘Big Brother, little brothers’: comparing China’s and India’s transboundary river policies”, *Water Policy*, Vol. 18, 2016, pp. 32-49; S. Vij, J. Warner, A. Barua, “Power in Water Diplomacy”, *Water International*, Vol. 45, No. 4, 2020, pp. 249-253.

60 A. Parven and M. S. Hasan, “Transboundary Water Conflict between Bangladesh and India: Water Governance Practice for Conflict Resolution”, *International Journal of Agricultural Research, Innovation and Technology*, Vol. 8, No.1 (June), 2018, pp. 79-84; Sood and Mathukumalli, op. cit.; S. Vij, J. Warner, R. Biesbroek and A. Groot, “Non-decisions are also Decisions: Power Interplay between Bangladesh and India over the Brahmaputra River”, *Water International*, Vol. 45, No. 4, pp. 254-274.

eastern part of the country is heavily impacted by water scarcity every year, often heading into a drought situation. Several studies⁶¹ have shown that the water diversion from the Ganges with the Farakka barrage is one of the underlying causes of the drought and water scarcity in that region. Water diversion has also caused a reduction of flow in the Ganges distributaries, namely, the Balashar and the Gorai located in the Southwestern part of Bangladesh, adversely affecting the region's water security. Besides, water pollution is another major issue of the Ganges basin, hurting the river water quality.⁶² Moreover, those efforts had been severely criticised on the ground that they were not enough to save the river from pollution.⁶³ Interestingly, the issue of pollution has not been reflected in the Ganges treaty. As a result, there exists no joint initiative or effective monitoring mechanism between the two countries to keep the Ganges water clean and ensure its availability for the people living in the basin.

Sustainability of the human and ecosystem

As discussed earlier, within the bilateral cooperation initiatives between Bangladesh and India in the Ganges basin, the 1996 Ganges treaty plays the most important role. However, the agreement focuses exclusively on the volumetric allocation of water between the two riparians. There is neither any provision for sustainable use of the Ganges water resources nor any safety mechanism to protect the river's bio-physical and hydrological conditions or its surrounding ecosystem. As a result, the ecosystem and biodiversity of the Ganges basin are degenerating due to the overexploitation and misuse of resources, affecting the sustainability of the region's human and ecosystem. Besides, the unilateral upstream water intervention projects and hydrological alterations are also affecting the sustainability of its surroundings by impacting its flow regime, sediment transportation and erosion. The Sundarbans, the largest single block mangrove forest and a world heritage site located downstream of the Ganges basin, is also in great danger due to discrepancy in the natural flow of the Ganges and its distributaries, which will degenerate even further due to various adverse impacts emanating from climate change.

61 Rahman and Rahaman, op. cit.; R. Shaw and P. Tran, *Environment Disaster Linkages*, (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing Limited 2012); Swain, op. cit.

62 D. Milledge and J. Bunce, "Ganges: Sewers Could Be Making Water Quality of India's Great River Worse", *The Conversation*, 2019, available at <http://theconversation.com/ganges-sewers-could-be-making-water-quality-of-indias-great-river-worse-108146>, accessed on 24 October 2020.

63 S. Scarr, W. Cai, V. Kumar and A. Pal, "The Race to Save the River Ganges", *Reuters*, 2019, available at <https://graphics.reuters.com/INDIA-RIVER/010081TW39P/index.html>, accessed on 24 October 2020.

Vulnerability to Water-borne hazards

Sharing of hydrological data is crucial for mitigating the risk of any hydrological disaster. However, at present, data sharing between Bangladesh and India is limited, making it extremely difficult for downstream Bangladesh to issue an early warning for disasters like floods with adequate lead time. Lack of data is also hampering the research activities and limiting the applicability of hydrological modelling of disaster prediction. Besides, the extensive and uncoordinated construction of physical infrastructure on the Ganges basin has already caused disasters like floods and droughts in the basin area.⁶⁴ It is not only Bangladesh that has been adversely affected by the constructions, but also some of India's provincial states are facing its negative consequences.⁶⁵ For instance, the deposition of silt in the Farakka barrage was blamed for the record-breaking flood in Bihar in 2016.⁶⁶ Furthermore, climate change's influence on the severity and intensity of hydrological disasters is also visible in the Ganges region.⁶⁷ What is more, the balance of salinity in the Bangladeshi rivers located in the southwestern part largely relies on the regular flow of the Ganges and its distributaries, which maintains the complex interaction between saline water and freshwater by keeping the brackish water within its territory. But the reduction of the regular flow of Ganges has increased the intrusion of saline water into the rivers and agricultural land, which has reduced the water quality and severely affected the agricultural yield and food production in Bangladesh.⁶⁸ Besides, an increase in salinity also means a loss of biodiversity in the region.

Figure 2 sums up the whole discussion of sections two and three by presenting the key factors, identified in different components of the multitrack water diplomacy framework, affecting the transboundary water cooperation between Bangladesh and India. In the final part of the figure, the impact of transboundary water cooperation on water security is also presented.

Discussion and Way Forward

Section two has presented the key factors responsible for limited transboundary water cooperation between Bangladesh and India in the Ganges River basin.

64 Gain and Giupponi, op. cit.; Lovelle, op. cit.

65 S. Rahman, "Farakka Now Boomerangs on India", *The Business Standard*, 2019, available at <https://tbsnews.net/environment/farakka-now-boomerangs-india>, accessed on 02 November 2020.

66 N. Khadka, "Indian Ganges Floods Break Records" *BBC News*, 2019, available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-37217679>, accessed on 24 October 2020.

67 Jain and Singh, op. cit.; Strategic Foresight Group, op. cit.

68 Gain and Giupponi, op. cit; Lovelle, op. cit; Sood and Mathukumalli, op. cit.

Section three has examined the impact of limited cooperation on water security in the Ganges region. Analysis of the factors has revealed different key aspects of the current state of cooperation, which help identify possible intervention areas for improving the situation. The study has exposed two critical issues, i.e., absence of a benefit-sharing mechanism in the basin and lack of nexus synergies among different sectors in two of the Ganges riparians, hindering the optimum utilization of the Ganges resources and maximizing the benefits, which adversely affect the water security of the Ganges region.

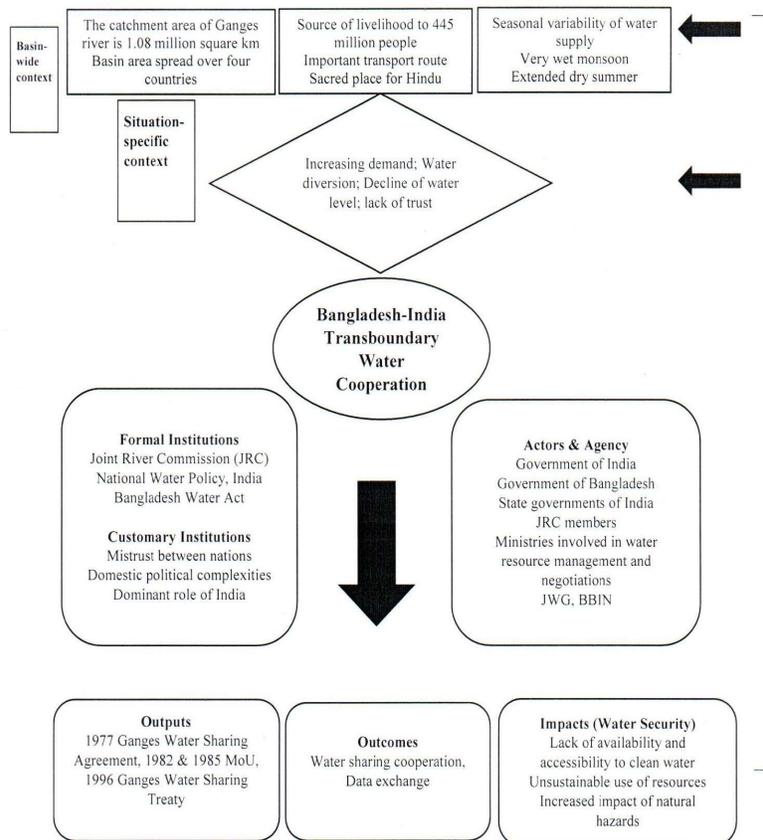


Figure 2: Key Factors in Transboundary Water Cooperation between Bangladesh and India in the Ganges basin⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Author's initiative.

Benefit-sharing in the Ganges River Basin

Analysis of the action situation shows that cooperation between Bangladesh and India in the Ganges basin is currently limited to certain activities, like water sharing at Farakka, technical data exchange, and occasional consultation among experts and government officials. The formal mode of cooperation still hovers around the Ganges treaty, which was signed in 1996 and left out many crucial aspects like ecological sustainability, protection of human and ecosystem, pollution control, etc.; thus, has minimal ability to meet the present-day demands of sustainability of water resources and ensure water security in the region. Besides, cooperation only based on sharing of water is problematic and often produce a zero-sum outcome. It is worth mentioning that a river provides not only water but also numerous environmental and ecosystem services and multiple benefits that often go beyond the river basin.⁷⁰ Therefore, nowadays, the concept of benefit-sharing is getting traction in a shared basin. The basic idea behind the concept of benefit-sharing is the multifaceted use (and non-use) of water for socio-economic, political and environmental benefit, rather than the water itself at the transboundary level, allowing the stakeholders involved to maximise and enhance benefits and minimize negative externalities among different sectors.⁷¹ Multiple benefits allow the riparian states to make concessions while negotiating on joint management of water resources. Cooperation in the Mekong River basin is a good example of benefit-sharing where the relationships between riparian states have evolved to optimise the benefits in the political, social, economic, and energy spheres from the Mekong river.⁷² Thus, the absence of benefit-sharing, which is very important to foster meaningful and substantial cooperation in a shared river basin, is a major drawback in the Ganges basin. This drawback has been affecting transboundary water cooperation. It is impeding not only the water security of the people but

70 C. Sadoff, and D. Grey, "Beyond the River: The Benefits of Cooperation on International Rivers", *Water Policy*, Vol. 4, No.5, 2002, pp. 389-403; C. Sadoff and D. Grey, *Cooperation on International Rivers: A Continuum for Securing and Sharing Benefits*. *Water International*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 2005, pp. 420-427.

71 S. Lee, "Benefit Sharing in the Mekong River Basin", *Water International*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2015, pp. 139-152; H. Qaddumi, "Practical Approaches to Transboundary Water Benefit Sharing", Overseas Development Institute, 2008, available at <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/2576.pdf> accessed 11 December 2020; V. Sinha, R. Glémet and G. Mustafa, IUCN BRIDGE GBM, *Benefit Sharing Opportunities in the Meghna Basin: Profile and Preliminary Scoping Study*, 2018, Bangladesh and India. Bangkok, Thailand: IUCN.

72 Lee, op. cit.

also limiting the scope for achieving sustainable water resource development in the region.

Cross-sectoral cooperation versus sector-specific optima

The study has identified the massive imbalance between water demand and seasonal availability as one of the most challenging issues in the Ganges basin. The precipitation pattern and river's run-off are part of the hydrological regime of a river basin and a natural process, in which both countries could have minimal influence; but, the exploitation of river's water resources is totally an anthropogenic factor, where the sectoral focus is producing negative trade-offs among different sectors and causing unintended consequences on a transboundary level. The riparian countries are exploiting the water resources without considering their long-term consequences; and currently, there is no coordinated initiative between the countries to protect and restore their water-related ecosystem and services.

It is important to note that the Ganges basin incorporates a complex web of stakeholders from two different countries with diversified demands and need. It not only supplies water to millions of people but also contributes to food production and energy sector by supporting agriculture, aquaculture, hydropower generation etc. In such situation, transboundary challenges occur due to the upstream exploitation of the water resources, mainly for food and energy production, creates negative externalities to the downstream country. The total irrigated agricultural land area in the Ganges Basin in India, which is 361,100 sq km, constitutes nearly 57 per cent of India's total net irrigated agricultural land area, making the basin one of the most widely and heavily irrigated agricultural lands in the globe.⁷³ Besides, in order to meet the soaring energy demand, the Indian government plans to exploit the Ganges hydropower potential. This is evident from the construction of dams and physical infrastructure in the upstream of the river basin. All those sector-specific human interventions undermine the potential for cross-sectoral synergies that could exploit the ripple effects through a coordinated water-energy-food nexus system.⁷⁴ The cross-sectoral approach in the river basin opens up spaces for sharing benefits among different sectors rather than increasing tensions. Therefore, it is now a present-day need in the Ganges basin to devise water cooperation in such a

73 "Agricultural Characteristics of the Ganges Basin", available at <http://agropedia.iitk.ac.in/content/agricultural-characteristics-ganga-basin#:~:text=The%20net%20irrigated%20area%20in,lies%20in%20Uttar%20Pradesh%20alone.>, accessed on 02 October 2020; "Agricultural Characteristics of the Ganges Basin", op. cit.

74 A. Smajgl, J. Ward and L. Pluschke, "The Water-food-energy Nexus- Realising a New Paradigm", *Journal of Hydrology*, Vol. 533, 2016, pp. 533-540.

way that resource utilization in the upstream could benefit the country located downstream by considering the synergies of the water-energy-food sector.

One area of water security in the Ganges basin that is badly affected by the inadequate cooperation and lack of cross-sectoral synergies is disaster management, for which integrated water resource management with ecological consideration on a transboundary level is a prerequisite. The entire Ganges basin is highly susceptible to different water-borne natural hazards, posing a severe threat to the water security of the people living in the basin. Effective cooperation on a basin level can mitigate the disaster vulnerability through developing a sustainable disaster management system without harming the biodiversity or ecosystem. Cross-sectoral cooperation, especially between the energy and water sector by exploiting the dams built for energy production to store excess floodwater, can come in handy to mitigate flood damage and drought problems in the region.

Finally, the issue of climate change is another area of concern, highlighting the importance of an integrated approach and cross-sectoral coordination. Climate change is one of the most imminent threats that would alter the quantity and run-off of the Ganges River and impact all three core areas of water security. It is already making things worse by changing the rainfall pattern, annual temperature, surface water run-off and natural water storage capacity.⁷⁵ Efficient use of energy, water, land and various critical supplies and their optimum coordination are required to adapt to this changing climate in order to optimise the sectoral trade-offs and maximise synergies.⁷⁶ Therefore, it is of paramount importance for both Bangladesh and India to embrace the nexus approach within the framework of the transboundary water cooperation in order to facilitate effective climate change adaptation and achieve greater energy, water and food security in the Ganges region.

Conclusion

Transboundary water cooperation in the Ganges River is very important for both Bangladesh and India considering the Ganges's deep socio-economic, political, cultural and ecological significance. The study has focused on the factors responsible for limited transboundary water cooperation in the Ganges basin and how limited cooperation impacts upon the water security of the people living in the Ganges region. The study has used the multitrack water diplomacy framework as an analytical tool for systematically analysing one action situation, i.e.,

⁷⁵ Swain, op. cit.

⁷⁶ G. Rasul and B. Sharma, "The Nexus Approach to Water-energy-food Security: An Option for Adaptation to Climate Change", *Climate Policy*, Vol. 16, No. 6, 2015, pp. 682-702.

Bangladesh-India water cooperation, and investigates different components of the framework, namely the basin-wide and situation-specific context of the Ganges river basin, different formal and customary institutions, diverse actors and agency, and how they interact with each other at the different level in order to identify the key factors affecting the cooperation. Some of the key factors identified in the study are: the massive imbalance between water demand and seasonal availability, soaring demand of water and energy in the region, unilateral diversion of water in the upstream, building of physical infrastructure in the river basin, adverse impact of climate change, weakness in the current Ganges water-sharing treaty, India's rigid bilateral water negotiation policy, internal political complexity in both countries, lack of mutual trust and existing power asymmetry between Bangladesh and India. Analysis of the factors has revealed the underlying causes responsible for sub-optimal water cooperation between the two riparians. The study has also examined the impact of transboundary water cooperation on water security, based on the three aspects of water security. The analysis has revealed that the availability and accessibility to sufficient and clean water are hampered due to the fluctuation of water flow, especially at the Farakka point, upstream diversion of water and severe water pollution. The sustainability of the human and ecosystem in the Ganges basin is also in deep peril due to the lack of any protection mechanism in the Ganges water-sharing treaty. Finally, the vulnerability to water-borne hazards is also on the rise due to limited sharing of hydrological data, unplanned construction of infrastructure in the river basin and lack of joint action in mitigating the adverse impact of climate change.

It is evident from the study that limited transboundary cooperation between Bangladesh and India in the Ganges basin is hurting the water security of the people in the region, especially those living downstream. Therefore, both countries need to understand the cost of non-cooperation identifying the missed opportunities in order to manage water in the common river basins effectively. In order to ensure a sufficient amount of clean water available and accessible for people living in the Ganges basin, secure the sustainability of humans and the ecosystem, and mitigate the damages from the natural hazard, both Bangladesh and India need to take actions in a holistic manner involving important institutions and actors. It is crucial to recognise the interdependencies among water, energy and food sectors in the basin so as to optimise their synergies and minimise negative trade-offs. It can help achieving water security as well as food and energy security in the Ganges region.

Review Article

MAO'S REVOLUTION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Andrew G. Walder, *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA. and London, England, 2015), pp. 413

Ruksana Kibria*

Given the fact that so much has already been written on the subject, are there any new grounds to be covered about Mao Zedong more than four decades after his death? The answer is an emphatic yes. It may seem counter-intuitive, but despite the enormous amount of research that has been dedicated to studying Mao and his revolution, there is yet much that remains unclear about both. The French Writer Henri Barbusse's 1935 comment about Stalin being the "the most famous and yet almost the least known man in the world"¹ could also be applicable in the case of the Chinese leader, who for the better part of the last one century has been the subject of intellectual scrutiny. According to Timothy Cheek, "The first person people think of when modern China is mentioned is Chairman Mao."² Admittedly, it would not be meaningful to study modern China without acknowledging the centrality of his role, and in the terse declaration of Stuart Schram, an authority on Mao's life and thought, "Chinese politics is all about Mao..."³

The Maoist project involved achieving a unified, modern and prosperous state by discarding what the Great Helmsman regarded to be the ossified traditional cultural legacy of Confucianism, and dismantling its feudal socio-economic structure. The pivotal question is not whether a revolution had occurred in China after 1949 (since it clearly did), but whether it was a socialist one.

A lucid, neat and scholarly work, Andrew G. Walder's *China Under Mao: A Revolution Derailed* is another addition to the study of the pivotal Chinese revolution of 1949, which sets forth to give a new interpretation of its predicaments

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1 John Thornhill, "Stalin: the definitive biography of a tyrant, foibles and all," *Financial Times*, October 27, 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/cdc56364-b80d-11e7-9bfb-4a9c83ffa852>

2 Timothy Cheek, "The 'Genius' Mao: A Treasure Trove of 23 Newly Available Volumes of Post- 1949 Mao Zedong Texts," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, January-July, 1988, No.19/20, p. 311

3 Roderick MacFarquhar, "Stuart Reynolds Schram, 1924–2012," *The China Quarterly*, No. 212, December 2012, p. 1107

in a tradition-bound country like China, which can be appreciated by an expert, a student or even a casual reader having an interest in the country and its iconic leader. A sociologist by training, the author, a Stanford Sinologist, focuses firstly on Mao as a committed ideologue, and secondly on his treatment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as a highly regimented military organization, having diligently taken his cue from the Stalinist model of the 1930s. It discusses the origins, course and the conclusion of the communist revolution in 1949, the challenges of consolidating the revolutionary gains, and the implementation of its agenda, primarily that of land reform, post-revolutionary nation-building, and the evolving role of the CCP from a revolutionary to a ruling party. The rest deals with Mao's two signature campaigns, the Great Leap Forward and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. According to the author, the fact that the late Chairman's initiatives back-fired resulting in outcomes that undermined the socialist design "were often unintended, unanticipated, and unwanted, not only by the broad population and the party leadership, but by Mao himself." (p.6). Therein lies the rub. It also states that, "Mao's destructive impulses left a China in disarray, essentially forcing his successors to start over again. Over the next three decades, they would take China in surprising new directions." (p. 5). Rather than indicting the Party Chairman, he maintains that the nature of the structural changes occurring in post-1949 China's political, economic and social system actually thwarted Maoist socialist programme (p. xii). Therein lies the rub. It also states that, "Mao's destructive impulses left a China in disarray, essentially forcing his successors to start over again. Over the next three decades, they would take China in surprising new directions." (p. 5). This review basically seeks to study the validity of these two propositions.

Disillusioned with the passive Confucian culture in the face of defeat and humiliation in its 19th century encounter with Western imperialism, a quest for wealth and power, thus modernization, became China's new nationalist aspiration in the early 20th century, the revolutionary impetus of which was ultimately to take a radical turn under the tutelage of the CCP.⁴ While the revolution of 1911 overthrew the monarchy and the May Fourth Movement (1919) inflicted a serious blow to the value system embodied by Confucianism, the traditional Chinese culture continued to thrive. The crux of the matter involved the nature of the modernisation project, which perforce involved Western methods, with capitalism

4 Maurice Meisner, "The Place of Communism in Chinese History: Reflections on the Past and Future of the People's Republic of China," *Macalester International*, Vol. 18, Article 8, 2007, p. 5

as its defining feature. From the Western perspective, the lack of dynamism in the traditional Chinese gentry as a stratum inclined it toward investing its wealth in the profitable agrarian sector, rather in the risky business enterprises which was also conducive to accumulation of capital, and as such it was an impediment in the modernisation and industrialisation of the country.⁵

The desideratum in China thus remained a social revolution, which, due to the scale of the challenge, the Nationalist party (KMT) under Chiang Kai-shek was unable to achieve, since its main source of support came from the gentry itself. It was the CCP that stepped into the breach, whose target upon attaining state power was the dominant gentry class that traditionally controlled the main social, economic, political and intellectual functions of the Chinese society.⁶

After its establishment in 1921 under the aegis of the Moscow-controlled Communist International (Comintern), the CCP largely sought to emulate the ideology introduced by V.I. Lenin to accommodate the general tenets of Marxism to the specific condition of Russia. Leninism referred to socialism and communism as two different stages where in the socialist one there would be the existence of state and commodity production, and consumer goods would be allocated according to work. Only in the (much) later communist phase would state finally “wither away” and workers remunerated “according to need,” a conceptual framework which was subsequently manipulated to promote Stalinism.⁷ This precisely was also the model of socialism that Mao implemented in China, with the state performing as a collective capitalist to extract surplus from exploited workers and peasants for the purpose of capital accumulation and investment into industrialization.⁸ In Adam B. Ulam's apt words, it was “Capitalism without capitalists,”⁹ and in the absence of a bourgeoisie, the CCP leadership essentially performing the “mission” that, according to Marx, was within the remit of the former.¹⁰

In explaining the success of the communist forces, Walder highlights the organizational power and harsh discipline of the CCP for its revolutionary success,

5 Meisner, *op. cit.*, p. 9

6 *Ibid.*, p.10

7 Nick Rogers, “Lenin's Misreading of Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme,” *Journal of Global Faultlines*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (December 2017-February 2018), p. 95

8 Meisner, *op. cit.*, p.13

9 Adam B. Ulam, *The Unfinished Revolution: An Essay on the Sources of Influence of Marxism and Communism*, (New York, N.Y.: Vintage, 1964), p.45

10 Tobias ten Brink, *China's Capitalism: A Paradoxical Route to Economic Prosperity*, (Philadelphia, PA.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), p.75

vis-à-vis the ineptitude of the Nationalist forces under Chiang Kai-shek. Reality however, is much more complicated. Mao was bent on the use of violence not only for achieving revolutionary goals, but also for creating a personality cult.¹¹ In the author's analysis, the "fateful" second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45),¹² called the War of Resistance against Japanese aggression in Chinese parlance was another contributing factor in undermining the strength, discipline and morale, and the ultimate defeat of the Nationalist forces, without which, it is debated, whether the Chinese communist revolution could have succeeded. The Second Sino-Japanese War conflict, is itself an enigma, with no consensus among historians about how this war was expected to promote Japanese interests.¹³

The key role of Stalin in shaping the CCP victory remains largely un-acknowledged in the book though, excepting for the fact that Mao was inspired by the translated version of the Soviet leader's 1938 compilation called *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks): Short Course*, in executing the brutal Rectification Campaign of 1942-44, also known as Stalinisation of the CCP (p.25). But the Soviet leader's contribution was much more significant and profound than this suggests. According to Peter S. H. Tang, Mao followed Stalin's call for an anti-imperialist, anti-feudal movement, spawning not a proletariat but a bourgeois new democratic revolution, the key features of which were i)the Communist Party leading the proletariat, ii)with the peasants as allies, iii) armed insurrection, iv)united front stratagem, and v) a supposedly transitional arrangement progressing toward socialism.¹⁴ In a speech delivered on the occasion of Stalin's 60th birthday in December 1939, Mao asked the audience, "If we did not have a Stalin, who would give the orders?" which not only attested to what extent he was beholden to Stalin, but also presaged his own future role in the CCP.¹⁵

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- 11 Francis P. Sempa, Book Review of "China at War: Triumph and Tragedy in the Emergence of the New China" by Hans van de Ven," *Asian Review of Books*, July 30, 2018, <http://asianreviewofbooks.com/content/china-at-war-triumph-and-tragedy-in-the-emergence-of-the-new-china-by-hans-van-de-ven/>
- 12 Till 1941 the US sold more raw materials, ornaments and other vital necessities to Japan than the rest of the world combined. Chief Meng, "Some Economic aspects of the 'Sino-Japanese Conflict'", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 199, September 1938, p. 241
- 13 See David M. Gordon, "Historiographical Essay: The China-Japan War, 1931-45," *The Journal of Military History*, Vol.70, No.1, January 2006
- 14 Peter S. H. Tang, "Stalin's Role in the Communist Victory in China," *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol.13, No.3, October 1954, pp. 377,378. It's interesting to note that Stuart Schram once opined that, "Most of Mao's philosophic writings are largely plagiarized from a Soviet encyclopaedia!" MacFarquhar, *op. cit.*, p.1110
- 15 Stuart R. Schram, "The Party in Chinese Communism," *The China Quarterly*, April - June, 1969, No. 38, p.3

Teleologically speaking, the victory of the CCP in 1949 was not inevitable, which owed its success to a number of contingent factors. That it managed to survive annihilation in its earlier years was due to a confluence of “structural interstices, situational improvisation, and strategic learning.”¹⁶ Evolving from representing the urban proletariat (after the setback of the Shanghai massacre of the communists by the Nationalists in April 1927), the CCP championed the cause of modernization from the rural areas. The war with Japan provided it with an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist image, not to speak of an-capitalist one.¹⁷ Even as late as 1938 its future was uncertain, and it was only in November 1946 that Mao became confident of prevailing over the militarily much more robust KMT in the asymmetric conflict, referring to it for the first time as “the people’s war of liberation,”¹⁸ though the source of this new-found optimism is unclear, which presumably was something other than his “radical ideology.”¹⁹ Apart from the military dimension, there was the Western, particularly US media coverage that was a game-changer, with Edgar Snow²⁰ and Theodore H. White of *Time* magazine providing “a very favourable and sympathetic press” for Mao in the United States in particular, and the outside world in general.²¹

The key ingredient for Mao’s revolutionary triumph, however, was his astute strategy of divide and rule during the anti-Japanese war, when a disparate array of social issues were defined as class struggles that called for CCP’s intervention and leadership, an approach described as “controlled polarization.”²² This also was the strategy Mao would later use to centralise his Party-state rule.²³

The ultimate victory in October 1949 though, was achieved not through any proletarian revolt or protracted guerrilla warfare, but conventional military operations. While its most remarkable achievement was national unification, the

16 Xiaohong Xu, “The Origins and Growth of the Chinese Communist Movement,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, March 2018, P.2, <https://oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.001.0001/acrefore-9780190277727-e-131>

17 Brink, *op. cit.*, p.76

18 Andrew Bingham Kennedy, “Can the Weak Defeat the Strong? Mao’s Evolving Approach to Asymmetric Warfare in Yan’an,” *The China Quarterly*, No.196, December 2008, p. 895

19 *Ibid.*, p. 887

20 Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*, (London: Victor Gollancz, 1937)

21 See Theodore H White and Annalee Jacoby, *Thunder Out of China*, (New York, NY.: Sloane, 1946); also see John Heidenry, “*Time’s Man in China*,” *The New York Times*, April 2, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/04/02/books/times-man-in-china.html>

22 Chen Yung-fa, *Making Revolution: The Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p.11. Quoted in Elizabeth Perry, “Studying Chinese politics: Farewell to revolution?” *China Journal*, Vo. 57, 2007, p.10

23 Perry, *ibid.*, p.11

CCP, rather than establishing a democratic polity, turned into a “development dictatorship” in an underdeveloped agrarian country.²⁴

After achieving victory in 1949 Mao continued his pre-revolutionary Stalinist New Democracy programme, which was more expedient than sincere.²⁵ Meant to resolve the contradictions of a socialist revolution occurring in a predominantly peasant society, it was to be a moderate transitional period during which various classes would form a coalition to develop the productive forces until China was ready for socialism,²⁶ which in essence was a reiteration of Sun Yat-Sen’s bourgeois nationalist platform from the 1920s.²⁷ During this innovative hybrid phase, Mao stated that, “the working class will be able to build up the strength to lead China in the direction of socialism, *though capitalism will still be enabled to grow to an appropriate extent for a fairly long period* [emphasis added].”²⁸ A politically seductive rhetoric, this was not sustainable in practice, since socialist and capitalist economic systems, being antithetical and incompatible in nature, were incapable of being synthesized. This ideological pollution, deliberate or not, would result in systemic instability, crisis and ultimate “*transformation into the opposite*.”²⁹ Tension was thus inbuilt into the New Democracy programme *ab initio*, where instead of doing away with the operation of the law of value, it was upheld by the state, and as such, was condemned by orthodox Marxists according to whom, while fostering the impression that China was transitioning toward socialism, it was instead moving in the capitalist direction, by pursuing an economic programme based on prices, wages and profits.³⁰ As early as 1957 Amadeo Bordiga, one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party, had prophesied that, the future would show that what was being nurtured in China was “pure capitalism.”³¹ One perceptive Russian scholar even tagged Mao’s New Democracy as “Fascist,”

24 Brink, *op. cit.*, p.76

25 Xiaohong Xu, “The Origins and Growth of the Chinese Communist Movement,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, March 2018, p. 11

26 Alexander Day, “History, Capitalism and the Making of Post-Socialist Peasant Society,” in Arif Dirlik, Roxann Prazniak and Alexander Woodside, edited, *Global Capitalism and the Future of Agrarian Society*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p.79

27 Loren Goldner, “Notes Towards a Critique of Maoism,” *Journal of Communist Theory and Practice*, October 15, 2012, <http://insurgentnotes.com/tag/liu-shaoqi/>

28 *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, Vol. III, p.247, quoted in “Socialism Cannot be Built in Alliance With the Bourgeoisie,” <https://revolutionarydemocracy.org/archive/ChinaAlbania.pdf>

29 Tomas J.F. Riha, “The Role of the Law of Value in the Rise and Fall of Socialism in the USSR,” *International Journal of Social Economics*, Vol. 21, Nos., 2,3,4, March 1994, p.118

30 Amadeo Bordiga, “Mao’s China, Certified Copy of the Bourgeois Capitalist Society,” *Material Necessity: An Archive of the Communist Left*, September 5, 2019, <http://materialnecessity.org/2019/09/05/maos-china-certified-copy-of-the-bourgeois-capitalist-society-1957/>

31 *Ibid.*

although, interestingly enough, its actual provenance was Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP).³² It may be mentioned that, despite Mao's revolutionary image, initially in 1921 he did not have any clear idea regarding the *nature* of the revolution to be conducted, nor its ideological basis, which only evolved, by his own admission, "gradually in the course of practice."³³

The most consequential achievement of the Chinese Communist revolution, it could be said, was the *en masse* uprooting of the traditional gentry ruling class, and as such the first social revolution in two millennia of Chinese history to jolt its social foundation to the core.³⁴ What Mao in effect did was, liberate capitalism from the fetters of feudalism,³⁵ though it's debatable whether the socio-economic system prevailing in pre-1949 China could be appropriately called that, since an agrarian land tenure arrangement with freely negotiated property rights can in no way be regarded as feudal.³⁶ Some intellectuals have referred to Chinese traditional agrarian system as feudal largely in order accommodate it in the Marxist schema of feudalism preceding capitalism as a stage of historical progression.³⁷ One of the many bewildering instances of Chinese communist ideological equivocation is the depiction of pre-1949 China as being simultaneously "semi-feudal and semi-colonial" and "much the same as capitalism"!³⁸

Since the gentry was deeply embedded in the traditional Chinese land tenure system, and as such was an impediment in the path of modernization, it wasn't surprising that upon coming to power, the priority for Mao was to be land-reform (1949-52), a process which had already got violently underway prior to victory,³⁹ in accordance with Stalin's doctrine for conducting revolution in a semi-colonial country like China.⁴⁰ Walder correctly points out that CCP's mandatory form of "staged class struggle" was a means of extending state power to the village level

32 Arif Dirlik, "Socialism Without Revolution: the Case of Contemporary China," *Pacific Affairs*, Winter, 1981-1982, Vol. 54, No. 4, p. 649

33 Michel Oksenberg, "Mao's Policy Commitments," *Problems of Communism*, November-December 1976, Volume XXV, p.3

34 *Ibid.*

35 See Ellen Meiskins Wood, *The Origins of Capitalism: the Longer View*, (New York, N.Y., and London, England: Verso, 2002; Also see P.K. O'Brien, "Agriculture and the Industrial Revolution," *The Economic History Review*, Feb. 1977, New Series, Vol. 30, No. 1

36 YueChim Richard "Barrington Moore on Why Communism Triumphed in China," *Y C Richard Wong on the Political Economy of HK and China*, June 19, 2013, <http://wangyujian.hku.hk/?p=2335&lang=en>

37 *Ibid.*

38 Mao and other members of the Cultural Revolutionary Group forming the Shanghai School, in their 1976 paper on the "Political Economy of Socialism." Quoted in Peer Moller Christensen & Jorgen Delman, "A theory of transitional society Mao Zedong and the Shanghai School," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Volume 13, No.2, 1981, p.15

39 See C.M. Chang, "Mao's Stratagem of Land Reform," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1951, Vol.29, No.4

40 *Ibid.*, p.552

(p.40), where traditionally its reach was absent, thus creating a new linkage between the village and the central government.⁴¹ The quest for land-reform in China was nothing new, since it was attempted by Chinese rulers in the past, though not successfully. In fact it was the third plank of Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary programme called the Principle of People's Livelihood, which at one point was denounced by the Comintern as a petty-bourgeois Socialist creed, with the term "people" overshadowing the idea of "class."⁴²

Following the rural land reform drive, Mao turned his attention to the urban areas, where from 1949 till 1956 the CCP established its rule through three basic methods, among which were the three Anti and five Anti campaigns to combat corruption and tax evasion. (p.62) In the process of such movements, the Party's political control was established over the people through the bureaucratic mechanism, (p.63) while retaining most of the former Nationalists personnel after "reeducation classes."

In 1956, at the Eighth National Congress of the CCP, Mao declared that socialism had been achieved in China, and as such, there were no longer contradictions between the workers and the bourgeoisie, which had now become contradictions between the desire of the people for rapid economic and cultural development and the country's inability to fully satisfy them due to its inadequate economic and cultural development. Therefore, it was imperative to boost the productive forces of China.⁴³ In 1955, the cooperative, voluntary and gradual transition to socialism, projected to be completed over a fifteen-year period, was suddenly cancelled when Mao, going in an unprecedented manner against the Central Committee's collective decision, insisted on rural collectivization.⁴⁴ He pressed for collectivization before mechanization, which meant going not only against Liu Shao-chi's position as presented in 1950, it was also a contradiction of the Leninist and Stalinist views.⁴⁵ Around the same time, the *hukou*, the house-hold registration system was

41 YueChim Richard, *loc. cit.*

42 C.M. Chang, *op. cit.*, p.552

43 "Resolution on certain questions in the history of our party since the founding of the People's Republic of China," (Adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on June 27, 1981), <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/history/01.htm>

44 Mark Selden, "Mao Zedong and the Political Economy of Chinese Development," in *Marxism and the Chinese Experience: Issues in Contemporary Chinese Socialism*, edited by Arif Dirlik and Maurice J. Meisner, (New York, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1989), p.52

45 Stuart R. Schram, "The Party in Chinese Communism," *The China Quarterly*, April - June, 1969, No. 38, p. 12

introduced, designed to keep the rural population confined to their particular area,⁴⁶ a sort of Soviet-era internal passport, which resulted in creating the greatest source of poor, expendable and vulnerable workforce in Chinese history.⁴⁷ Compounding the situation was Mao's resort to the Confucian practice of thought reform to inculcate Mao Zedong Thought among the workers, and transform them completely into his docile, malleable and subservient tool.⁴⁸

The much-touted *danwei*, work unit, also performed a similar function of keeping the workers tied to their place of employment for life, a phenomenon described as "factory despotism,"⁴⁹ and "organized dependency,"⁵⁰ though it can be called a modern version of bureaucratic control, with long roots in Chinese imperial past.⁵¹ Such institutions served to keep social groups segregated and render them totally subjected to the state,⁵² which was also instrumental in compelling them to work hard, produce more,⁵³ and reduce production costs—in accordance with the *capitalist* imperative to which Mao was reportedly devoted.⁵⁴ In the words of Mark Selden,

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- 46 See Z. Liu, "Institution and inequality: the *hukou* system in China," *Journal of Comparative Economics*, 33(1), 2005, pp. 133–157, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147596704000952>
- 47 Shih-Yu Chou and Feng-Liang Lin, "Review of Zhun Xu, *From Commune to Capitalism: How China's Peasants Lost Collective Farming and Gained Urban Poverty*," *Journal of Communist Theory and Practice*, February 2018, <http://insurgentnotes.com/2019/02/review-zhun-xu-from-commune-to-capitalism-how-chinas-peasants-lost-collective-farming-and-gained-urban-poverty-2018/>
- 48 E. Leung, "The Making of a Docile Working Class in Pre-reform China," in Bowden B., Muldoon J., Gould A.M., McMurray A.J. (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Management History*, (Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020), p.1358
- 49 Alessandro Russo, "Class Struggle," in Christian Sorace, Ivan Franceschini, and Nicholas Loubere edited, *Afterlives of Chinese Communism: Political Concepts from Mao to Xi*, (Acton Australia: Australian National Press and Verso Books, 2019), p.33. See also Kevin Lin, "Work Unit," *Ibid.*
- 50 Yu Xie, Qing Lai, and Xiaogang Wu, "Danwei and Social Inequality in Contemporary Urban China," *Res Sociol Work*, Jan. 1, 2009; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2828673/> See also Andrew G. Walder, *Communist Neo-Traditionalism: Work and Authority in Chinese Industry*, (University of California Press, 1986)
- 51 The industrial *danwei* came under attack during the Cultural Revolution. See Russo, "Mummifying the Working Class: The Cultural Revolution and the Fates of the Political Parties of the 20th Century," *The China Quarterly*, No.227, September 2016, p.663
- 52 Perry, *op. cit.*, p.11
- 53 Jonathan Unger, "Turmoil at the Grassroots in China's Cultural Revolution: A Half-Century Perspective," *Chinoiresie*, November 9, 2016, <https://www.chinoiresie.info/grassroots-turmoil-in-chinas-cultural-revolution-a-half-century-perspective/>
- 54 "Class Struggle in China," *Revolutionary Perspectives*, Series 4, No.14, Summer/Autumn 2019, p.13, <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2019-08-28/class-struggle-in-china#fn12>

In the name of socialism, collectives and communes sapped popular initiative and enforced high accumulation and low consumption on rural producers. ...[They] also provided a convenient vehicle for transferring a significant portion of the rural surplus to China's costly heavy industry program.⁵⁵

Soon after that in 1958, in the backdrop of general dissatisfaction with the performance of the Stalinist First Five Year Plan, Mao undertook his ambitious Great Leap Forward (GLF) project which was expected to accelerate China's journey toward communism by a herculean mobilization of human labour and ideological exhortation which ultimately proved to be a phenomenal disaster. He apparently wanted to best the Soviet model of economic development by taking an independent but unsustainable shortcut to communism. Goaded by his zeal, in May 1958 the second session of the Eighth Congress of the CCP adopted the general policy of "going all out, aiming high, and building socialism with greater, faster, better, and more economical results."⁵⁶ Mao's stated goal was to increase agricultural productivity by creating communes, the very name of which implied a communist organization where fundamental communist class process functioned, when it was not the case, since such a process involved direct producers collectively acquiring and distributing the surplus product generated within the unit. Their surplus appropriated by the state, the agricultural producers were made to toil in the communes, thus making the GLF a modern version of state-feudalism that was marketed as collectivization or the communes⁵⁷ which, in the eyes of the rural workers, made the Maoist regime seem even worse than the gentry.⁵⁸ In this regard Bordiga presciently observed that the CCP rightist position was less of a deviation from Marxism than the leftist one espoused by Mao was. He surmised that the call for precipitate imposition of Socialism in an underdeveloped country like China, where the bourgeoisie was still irreplaceable, was "a statement of utopian extremism,"⁵⁹ the assured failure of which, in Karl Marx's caustic

55 Mark Selden, "Mao Zedong and the Political Economy of Chinese Development," in Arif Dirlik and Maurice Meisner (edited), *Marxism and the Chinese Experience: Issues in Contemporary Chinese Socialism*, (Armonk, N.Y., and London, England: M.E. Sharp, Inc., 1989), p. 53

56 Rui Li, "The Great Leap Forward and the People's Communes—Socialist Ideals and Practice," *Chinese Law & Government*, Volume 29, Number 4, 1996, p. 47

57 Satya J. Gabriel, "The Chinese Economy from the 1949 Revolution to the Great Leap Forward," *China Essay Series*, September 1998, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/courses/sgabriel/economics/china-essays/3.html>

58 Robert K. Schaeffer, *Red Inc.: Dictatorship and Development of Capitalism in China, 1949 to the Present*, (Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), p. 35

59 Bordiga, *op. cit.*

comment, would lead to “generalized scarcity,” resulting in state tyranny, Stalinism being a classic case.⁶⁰

The failure of the GLF resulted in criticism of Mao and his marginalization within the CCP. In January 1962, at a Party meeting of 7,000 cadres, then the head of the state, Liu Shaoqi stated that a “man-made disaster” had occurred in the country, which reinforced Mao’s perception of him as another Khrushchev in the making, who could eventually ruin his revolutionary credentials.⁶¹ Therefore, as far as Mao was concerned, Liu *delenda est*,⁶² that is, with his fate sealed, he was subsequently to become a casualty of the impending Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. From the abandonment of the GLF in the early 1962 till 1966 Mao concentrated his attention on the ideologically motivated Socialist Education Movement (i.e., political indoctrination of the masses) in the countryside, a precursor to the Cultural Revolution that was to radically transform China’s political landscape. Launched in 1966 by Mao ostensibly to eliminate the so-called capitalist roaders in the Party and to stem its bureaucratisation (though he failed to articulate clearly the meaning of socialism, capitalism and revisionism, and their differences),⁶³ the impact of the Cultural Revolution was much more profound, a conundrum which even after more than half a century remains shrouded in mystery, what with the official CCP policy of “thoroughly negating” it.⁶⁴

While covering the GLF in one chapter, Walder devotes the bulk of it (almost one-third of the book), to the most controversial, perplexing and murky segment of the Maoist era, the Cultural Revolution, which ravaged its political system, mainly

60 Terry Eagleton, “The Revolutionary: Is Marx still relevant?” Book review of *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life*, by Jonathan Sperber (W.W. Norton, 2013), *Harper’s Magazine*, April 2013, <https://harpers.org/archive/2013/04/the-revolutionary/>

61 Pankaj Mishra, “Staying Power: Mao and the Maoists,” Books, December 20&27 2010 issue, *The New Yorker*, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/12/20/staying-power-3>

62 A paraphrase of Cato the Elder’s oratorical pronouncement in the context of the Third Punic War (149–146 BC), *Carthāgō dēlenda est* (“Carthage must be destroyed”), Liu *delenda est* means Liu must be destroyed.

63 Li Rui, “The Road to the Cultural Revolution,” *Chinese Law & Government*, 29:4, 1996, p.67

64 See “Resolution on certain questions in the history of our party since the founding of the People’s Republic of China,” (*Adopted by the Sixth Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on June 27, 1981*), *Chinese Communism Subject Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/cpc/history/01.htm>. Reuters, “Excerpts From Resolution on History of Mao’s Contributions and Mistakes,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1981, <https://www.nytimes.com/1981/07/01/world/excerpts-from-resolution-on-history-of-mao-s-contributions-and-mistakes.html>

during 1966-69. However, it is in navigating this particularly refractory chapter of Chinese history where his narrative falters. While giving a detailed account of its political dynamics and the intra-factional conflict, he refrains from providing a compelling explanation of the ideological class struggle that was central to that campaign. Given his stature as an accomplished China scholar, it is indeed baffling why he left its true political and historic import unaddressed.

In the summer of 1966 the Red Guards,⁶⁵ the Chinese youths ideologically indoctrinated in class hatred for the previous four years,⁶⁶ were unleashed by Mao's famous call, "Bombard the Headquarters!" to wreak havoc on the CCP organisational machine. Based on his arbitrary and incoherent definition of class and class struggle, it was more than an intra-party political conflict, whose political targets were personalized to include opponents to Mao's authority in the Party, but did not focus on the "*system of bureaucratic domination*."⁶⁷ In his view, *only* those who were loyal to Chairman Mao could be considered as *true* proletarian revolutionaries,⁶⁸ who were idiosyncratically defined by Mao "above all by a state of mind, which anyone can acquire through study, or simply in a flash of illumination, and thus change his objective class essence."⁶⁹ As yet another instance of "controlled polarization," in Maoist formulation, class labeling was sought to be primarily determined on the dual, flexible and analytically inconsistent basis of lineage and political allegiance, which was a source of extensive unrest and ubiquitous violence during the Cultural Revolution.⁷⁰

Mao's ambivalent role as both the "chief cadre" of the Party bureaucracy as well as its "leading rebel," in the Cultural Revolution⁷¹ greatly undermined its true revolutionary potentials, and left the basic difference between the rulers and the

65 For a good analysis of the Red Guard phenomenon, see Jonathan Unger, "Turmoil at the Grassroots in China's Cultural Revolution: A Half-Century Perspective," *Chinoiresie*, November 9, 2016, <https://www.chinoiresie.info/grassroots-turmoil-in-chinas-cultural-revolution-a-half-century-perspective/>

66 Frank Dikotter, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRsXWUfzuuM>

67 Yiching Wu, "Rethinking 'Capitalist Restoration' in China," *Monthly Review*, November 1, 2005. <https://monthlyreview.org/2005/11/01/rethinking-capitalist-restoration-in-china/#en32>

68 Schram, "The Party in Chinese Ideology," p. 21

69 *Ibid.*, p. 22

70 Seio Nakajima, "The Paradox of Class Labeling in the Mao Era: Bio-Power, Racism, and the Question of Violence," *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies*, Volume 4, Number 1, January 2015, pp. 6-10

71 Richard Kraus, *Class Conflict in Chinese Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p.190. Quoted in Yiching Wu, "Rethinking 'Capitalist Restoration' in China," *Monthly Review*, November 1, 2005, <https://monthlyreview.org/2005/11/01/rethinking-capitalist-restoration-in-china/#en32>

ruled unaffected, since it could neither achieve a radical shift in the relationship between the political elite and the working classes.⁷² nor clearly articulate the campaign's main purpose and targets.⁷³ To borrow a quip made in the context of the May 1968 political convulsions in France, the Cultural Revolution could similarly be called an "interpretation" in quest of an "event," being utterly devoid of any "conceptual coherence,"⁷⁴ and characterised with remarkable precision by Charles Neuhauser as the political version of *commedia dell'arte*.⁷⁵ While professing to purge the ideological degeneration in the Party bureaucracy and establish democratic social relations, Mao actually sought to retain control of the reins of the party-state. In 1967 he resolved the heart of the matter in an Augustinian manner: ⁷⁶ "Don't you want to abolish state power?" Yes we do, but not right now',⁷⁷ thus making him a riddle who simultaneously sought an "acephalous, egalitarian, and fully politicized" system with himself operating as its "head."⁷⁸ Besides, the Cultural Revolutionaries failed to establish any institutional means for eliminating economic inequality, the main socialist goal.⁷⁹

Completely eclipsed in the popular discourse by the hype of Red Guard violence, the Shanghai Workers' Revolutionary Rebels' declaration in January 1967 of a workers' association *independent* of the CCP and the formation of the "Shanghai People's Commune" was a threat to the Maoist political dispensation.⁸⁰ Alarmed at the prospect of such a commune challenging the Party, the dispensability of which being inconceivable to Mao, he asked, "If everything was changed into a commune, then what about the Party? ... There must be a party somehow!"⁸¹ It would soon be

72 Wu, "Rethinking Capitalist Restoration in China".

73 Wu Yiching, "How state enumeration spoiled Mao's last revolution," *Journal of Modern China*, volume 7, No. 2, 2013, p.216

74 Richard Wolin, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s*, (Princeton University Press, 2010), p.5

75 It was an early popular professional theatre based on improvised performances, originating in Italy, but was popular throughout Europe from the 16th to the 18th century. Charles Neuhauser, "The Chinese Communist Party in the 1960s: Prelude to the Cultural Revolution," *The China Quarterly*, October - December, 1967, No. 32, p.3

76 This refers to St. Augustine's (354-430 A.D.), famous plea, "Oh Lord, give me chastity and continence, but not yet."

77 Mao Zedong, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), p.20.

78 Christian Sorace, "Saint Mao," *Chinoiserie*, December 23, 2016, <https://www.chinoiserie.info/saint-mao/>

79 Dirlík, "Socialism without revolution," *op. cit.*, p.657

80 Anita Chan, "Revolution or Corporatism? Workers and Trade Unions in Post-Mao China," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, January, 1993, No.29, p.33

81 Stuart Schram, ed., *Chairman Mao Talks to the People*, (New York, N.Y.: Pantheon, 1974), p.278. Quoted in Elizabeth J. Perry, "From Paris to the Paris of the East and Back: Workers as

opposed by him, in due course dismantled, and replaced by the revolutionary committees composed of a tripartite alliance of the people, the Party and the People's Liberation Army (PLA), where the latter was dominant. The vexing issue of the relationship between the proletariat and the communist party having been brought to the forefront, it was ultimately left unresolved, and the political role of the workers proven to be a fiction.⁸²

The chaos of factional infighting of the Cultural Revolution in practical terms provided a scope for the (re)emergence of the Party-state as a stabilising entity by performing a very convenient legitimising role, and in the process de-politicise the political arena by suppressing any kind of debate, positive or otherwise by disingenuously posing the question: "So, do you want to return to the days of the Cultural Revolution?" Failing to successfully challenge the supremacy of the Party and the PLA, or to offer an acceptable alternative to Party rule, the leaders of the Cultural Revolution expediently turned the CCP itself into an arena of struggle—resulting in not limiting its power, but in putting it on an authoritarian path,⁸³ and in the process discrediting socialism.⁸⁴ In the post-Mao Chinese leadership's re-evaluation, the late Chairman was held responsible for the erroneous decision to directly reach socialism while skipping the capitalist stage, which they would now redress by following the "authentic" Marxist tenet of establishing capitalism before socialism, and even more significantly, achieve the latter *without* revolution.⁸⁵

Walder's cursory treatment of Marshal Lin Biao, the Defence Minister of China, and Vice Chairman of the CCP, and his mysterious death is puzzling, since this called for more in-depth analysis. He merely states that "[Lin Biao]'s death created shock waves that decisively altered the course of Chinese politics... The man who symbolized Mao's political line was now unmasked as a traitor." (p.287) But, why Mao's anointed successor, who played such a powerful role during the Cultural Revolution in militarily suppressing chaos and popularizing the Mao Zedong Thought through the famous Red Book, and was instrumental in Mao's apotheosis, was suddenly regarded to be a "traitor," presumably by Mao himself, needed to be

Citizens in Modern Shanghai," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41, No. 2, April 1999, p. 362

82 Alessandro Russo, "Mummifying the Working Class: The Cultural Revolution and the Fates of the Political Parties of the 20th Century," *The China Quarterly*, No. 227, 2016, p.657

83 Dirlik, "Socialism Without Revolution: the Case of Contemporary China," p. 657

84 Arif Dirlik and Maurice Meisner, "Politics, Scholarship, and Chinese Socialism," in *Marxism and the Chinese Experience: Issues in Contemporary Chinese Socialism*, edited by Arif Dirlik and Maurice J. Meisner, (New York, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1989), p.9

85 See, Dirlik, "Socialism Without Revolution,"

clarified. Especially the question, in what way Lin's death "decisively" changed Chinese politics should have been addressed, that he was thought to have been plotting against Mao being a rather unpersuasive explanation. Lin's anti-American animus and strong opposition to the idea of *rapprochement* with the United States that was underway at the time of his controversial denouement, is left unmentioned by the author. Scholars have argued that the epochal Sino-US diplomatic breakthrough in the 1970s was only possible *after* Lin Biao had been overthrown as a powerful factor in intra-elite Chinese politics.⁸⁶ His elimination, along with the removal of other PLA officers of his so-called "Military" faction⁸⁷ from the political stage, actually cleared the path toward the China-U.S. normalization process, a fraught undertaking that would take the rest of the decade to achieve full diplomatic relations.⁸⁸

Instigated and led by Mao himself, he nonetheless opportunistically accused the late Lin of being the root cause of the "erroneous ultra Left" ideological line, though he had no problem with extolling the virtue of the result of that very Left deviant approach—the Cultural Revolution itself, the mass dictatorship of which he consistently upheld to be correct. It's noteworthy that the agenda, script and the protagonists of the Cultural Revolution shifted dramatically after Lin's mysterious demise,⁸⁹ leading to the rehabilitation of the former Party leaders and military personnel who were defenestrated as capitalist roaders in its earlier stages.

Having philosophically facilitated the path for the currently regnant global capitalism,⁹⁰ the Cultural Revolution, and the way its inherent contradictions were manipulated in the mid-1970s, also affected the fate of international labour. In Alessandro Russo's incisive observation, the post-Mao leadership's political subjugation of its workers and the relegation of their bargaining function to just

86 Robert R. Ross, "From Lin Biao to Deng Xiao-ping: Elite Instability and China's US Policy," *The China Quarterly*, June, 1989, No. 118, p.265. Also see, John Garver, *China's Decision for Rapprochement with the United States, 1968-1971*, (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1982), pp. 134-37;

87 John Garver, "Chinese Foreign Policy in 1970: The Tilt towards the Soviet Union," *The China Quarterly*, No. 82, June, 1980, p.217

88 See Chenghong Li, "Re-examining Lin Biao's Role in Sino-U.S. Initial Rapprochement," *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2, October 2010

89 Book review of Yang Jisheng, *The World Turned Upside Down; A Chinese View on the Cultural Revolution*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2021), *Kerry Brown Reviews*, (blog), April 9, 2021, <https://bkerrychina.com/2021/04/09/the-world-turned-upside-down-a-chinese-view-on-the-cultural-revolution/>

90 See Slavoj Zizek, "Revolutionary terror from Robespierre to Mao," *Positions*, 19(3), 2011, p. 671-706

sellers of their labour power, conveyed a powerful message globally, heralding the dawning of the age of non-negotiable capital.⁹¹

On page 5 Walder states that, “Mao’s destructive impulses left a China in disarray, essentially forcing his successors to start over again. Over the next three decades, they would take China in surprising new directions.” On page 319 he asserts that, “During both the [GLF] and the Cultural Revolution, the destructive aspects of Mao’s initiatives far outweighed any outcomes that could be construed as positive.” It would be worthwhile to examine what their close reading may yield, since despite apparently being an unmitigated disaster, there was in reality a method in their surface “madness.” Contrary to the general perception of the Cultural Revolution being an era of upheaval, violence and economic dislocation, economic performance basically remained unaffected,⁹² and according to a World Bank report, China’s average growth rate from 1960 to 1980 was between and 5 and 6%,⁹³ which also covered the Cultural Revolution period.

The post-Mao socialist market economy of Deng Xiao-ping and its linkage to the global economy could only be achieved because the late Chairman had paved the road to the technocratic Party-state regime by razing the previous political edifice during the Cultural Revolution.⁹⁴ From this perspective it would be incorrect to say that post-Mao era was a total break with the past, when it was basically its continuation. In hindsight, the Maoist period was a sort of “expedient transitional phase” that unified China and laid the foundation for its subsequent (non-socialist) growth trajectory.⁹⁵ According to Eric Li, a Shanghai-based venture capitalist, China owes its phenomenal rise to the foundation laid by Mao.⁹⁶

It is curious to note that the Cultural Revolution also coincided with the exhaustion of the utility of the Maoist social formation,⁹⁷ as well as emergent neoliberalism gaining ideological traction in the mainstream Western discourse. Tomas J.F. Riha

91 Russo, *op. cit.*, p. 670

92 Barry Naughton, *The Chinese Economy: Transitions and Growth*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: the MIT Press, 2007), p.75

93 Xi Ling, “Socialist Foundations of Market Reforms: Assessing Chinese Past,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 4-10, 1999, Vol. 34, No. 49, p.3460

94 Pankaj Mishra, “What Are the Cultural Revolution’s Lessons for Our Current Moment?” (Books) February 1, 2021 Issue, *The New Yorker*, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/02/01/what-are-the-cultural-revolutions-lessons-for-our-current-moment?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=onsite-share&utm_brand=the-new-yorker&utm_social-type=earned&fbclid=IwAR22ErcXK-HHHe1aPzPm-

95 Tobias ten Brink, *China’s Capitalism: A Paradoxical Route to Economic Prosperity*, (Philadelphia, PA.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), p.73

96 Eric Li, “China’s Meteoric Rise Impossible Without Achievements of Mao Era,” Going Underground on RT, June 14, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9bVOq0JXf8>

97 *Ibid.*

opines that, "In retrospect, socialism thus appears not as the lower phase of development towards Communist society (as Marxists had assumed) but, for some countries, *a way of transition to a regulated capitalism*[emphasis added]."⁹⁸

In fact, the Maoist system seamlessly segued into the post-Mao market socialism inaugurated by Deng, being two points of the same continuum, with the post-1978 reforms having its roots in the pre-1978 regime.⁹⁹ It's interesting to note that Deng's Four Modernizations were actually a part of the second stage (1981-2000) of a Mao era long-term plan (1965-2000), the goal of which was to achieve "the comprehensive modernization of agriculture, industry, national defence and science and technology." Adopted in 1965 with Mao's approval, it was not discussed in public until Zhou En-lai did so in his report to the Fourth National People's Congress in January 1975.¹⁰⁰ It is indeed bizarre that shortly before Mao's death in 1976, an unpublished tract on the theory of transitional society indicated that, "the ideological form of a "capitalist restoration" in China might well be like the "theory of productive forces" and "the four modernizations, ..."¹⁰¹

Elizabeth Perry argues that, "... it was during the height of Chinese authoritarianism—the Maoist era—that the foundations of contemporary growth were laid."¹⁰² The roots of the township village enterprises (TVEs), the much heralded icons of the reform era, can actually be traced to the Cultural Revolution and the GLF, since these are said to be the direct progeny of Mao's mass mobilisation and economic decentralisation campaign for encouraging rural industrialisation and transformation of the countryside into industrialised units along with the main urban industrialised areas, having evolved from the brigades and communes.¹⁰³ Mao actually facilitated the decentralisation of production and local self-reliance, ("bringing local initiative into full play"), which was clearly a deviation from the principle of socialism,¹⁰⁴ and led to the creation of an economic

98 Riha, *op. cit.*, p.119

99 Loren Goldner, "Notes Towards a Critique of Maoism," *Journal of Communist Theory and Practice*, October 15, 2012, <http://insurgentnotes.com/2012/10/notes-towards-a-critique-of-maoism/>

100 John Gittings, "New Light on China's Political Economy," *IDS Bulletin*, Vol.7, Issue No.2, August 1975, p.32

101 Christensen and Delman, "A theory of transitional society Mao Zedong and the Shanghai School," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, Volume 13, No. 2, 1981, p.14

102 Elizabeth Perry, "Studying Chinese politics: Farewell to revolution?" *China Journal*, Vo. 57, 2007, p.4

103 Xing Li, "The Chinese cultural Revolution Revisited," *The China Review*, Volume 1, No.1, Fall 2001, p.156

104 See Dennis Strawn, "Capitalism: the Inevitable Product of Mao Tse-Tung's 'Decentralized Socialism'," *Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line*, <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/nem-7/rpo-china.htm>. (First published in *Workers Herald*, Vol. 1, No. 2, September 1980).

system composed of incongruous elements forming “plan anarchy” or “quasi market.”¹⁰⁵ No matter how it was justified, “Decentralization favored bourgeois, not proletarian, power because it was a potent, spontaneous impetus towards capitalist methods.”¹⁰⁶

The initiative to link agriculture with industry and the up to the Mountains and down to the Country-side movement during the Cultural Revolution were not just simple cases of rustivating millions of young people to the rural areas, notwithstanding Mao’s 1968 directive that “educated youth should go to the rural areas and be re-educated by peasants. It is necessary!”¹⁰⁷ It also had far-reaching implications for the economic transformation of China *away* from its socialist moorings, since sending a large number of people with technical expertise to the rural areas played a key role in boosting communal village and technical entrepreneurship.¹⁰⁸ What was the little-understood down to the countryside movement then all about if not planting the seeds of market economy in remote, inaccessible parts of the country, and establishing a firm infrastructural base from which the future reform period reaped benefits?¹⁰⁹

John K. Fairbank, the renowned doyen of Sinology squarely puts the credit at Mao’s feet: “This rural industrialization bears the stamp of Chairman Mao ... Tarnished or not, his monument is in the countryside.”¹¹⁰ In Frank Dikotter’s view, by the time of Mao’s death in 1976, large areas of rural China had “gone capitalist.”¹¹¹ On the whole, there is little regret about the ambiguous legacy of the Cultural Revolution among China experts. The late M.I.T. Sinologist, Lucien W. Pye stated that, without the catalytic role of the Cultural Revolution, “the most

105 Brink, *op. cit.*, p.76

106 Straw, *op. cit.*

107 Yang You, “Send Urban Youth to Rural Areas: A Tale of Education, Employment and Social Values,” (draft paper) Harvard University, May 2015 https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/yangyou/files/china_poli_migration20180521.pdf

108 Xing Li, *loc.cit.*, p.157. See also, Emily Honig and Xiaojian Zhao, “Sent-down Youth and Rural Economic Development in Maoist China,” *The China Quarterly*, No.222, 2015,

109 The view of a Chinese specialist in party history and rural issues referred to in Elizabeth J. Perry, “From Mass Campaigns to Managed Campaigns: “Constructing a New Socialist Countryside,”” in Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth J. Perry, edited, *Mao’s Invisible Hand The Political Foundations of Adaptive Governance in China*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2011), p.35

110 Quoted in Perry, “Studying Chinese politics: Farewell to revolution?” p.5

111 Frank Dikotter, “The Silent Revolution: Decollectivization from Below during the Cultural Revolution,” *Red Shadows: Memories and Legacies of the Chinese Cultural Revolution*, edited by Patricia M. Thornton, Peidong Sun and Chris Berry, *The China Quarterly Special Issues*, New Series No.12, 2016, p.212

likely alternative to Mao's revolutionary utopianism would have been little more than the dreary prospect of an orderly, bureaucratic form of communism."¹¹²

Ironing out the rough edges, Walder provides a smooth chronological account of the Maoist era, but largely eschews a focus on its complex political-theoretical dimension, particularly the theory of transitional society and the ideological issues concerning the role of the dictatorship of the proletariat in a socialist state that lay at the core of the dispute that ensued between Mao and Deng Xiao-ping during 1975-76 biennium, whose outcome was to radically alter China.¹¹³

From this brief survey of the Maoist era one can gather that the socialist project was indeed wrecked in China, but then the important question is, was it meant to remain on track? Historical records tend to indicate otherwise. Or more importantly, was its goal truly socialism rather than bourgeois nationalism? Mao himself was skeptical of socialism's prospects; in 1967 he said that, "Most probably revisionism will win out, and we will be defeated. Through probable defeat, we will arouse everyone's attention."¹¹⁴ In 1965, while discussing the future of Chinese and Soviet socialism, he remarked to Andre Malraux about the quest for victory being an illusion.¹¹⁵ A decade earlier in 1957, he had frankly admitted that the outcome of the conflict between socialism and capitalism "has not been really solved yet."¹¹⁶ This is indeed astonishing since, according to the Marxist theory, socialism is destined to triumph! In one of his final instructions of 1975-1976, Mao reckoned that apart from the "form of ownership" socialism and capitalism "[are] not *so* different" from each other.¹¹⁷ Mao and his radical supporters never defined capitalism clearly and consistently, and while outlining how restoration of "capitalism" was to be prevented in China, it was left unclear as to who would perform the task. They implied the CCP would be "assigned" it, a contradictory position to take since it was identified as the "hotbed" of capitalist roaders.¹¹⁸

112 Lucien W. Pye, "Reassessing the Cultural Revolution," *The China Quarterly*, December, 1986, No. 108, p. 610

113 See Peer Moller Christensen & Jorgen Delman, "A theory of transitional society Mao Zedong and the Shanghai School," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 13:2, 1981; Alessandro Russo, "How Did the Cultural Revolution End? The Last Dispute between Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, 1975," *Modern China*, May 2013, Vol. 39, No. 3

114 Alessandro Russo, "The Probable Defeat: Preliminary Notes on the Chinese Cultural Revolution," *Positions*, Vol.6, No.1, Spring 1998, p.187

115 *Ibid.*

116 *Ibid.*, p.188

117 *Ibid.*

118 Christensen and Delman, *op. cit.*, p.15

The CCP may have claimed to be constructing a socialist state, but that did not necessarily mean it espoused *anti*-capitalism, just as Marx himself may have been critical of capitalism, but was in no way scornful of it,¹¹⁹ as he was of pre-capitalist societies.¹²⁰ In 1949 Mao famously announced that, “China doesn’t suffer from too much capitalism; it suffers from too little.”¹²¹ Tobias ten Brink argues that the Maoist modernizing paradigm had more affinity with proto-capitalist developmental model than anything else. He interprets,

China’s development trajectory as a path to modernity that was influenced by (global) capitalism from the outset. Like other underdeveloped countries classified as “capitalist,” the PRC was faced with the challenge of national advancement in the context of a globalizing capitalism.¹²²

In other words, even if a truly independent *socialist* China was indeed the goal, it would have been impeded in its aspiration by the globalized capitalist system into which it was embedded. Especially, in the post-Second World War era, with capitalism as the dominant global economic mode, establishing a planned socialist economy in isolation from the rest of the global realities could not have been structurally sustainable, a fact of which Mao was fully cognizant. What happened in China from 1949-1976 was the consolidation of state-capitalism “with Chinese characteristics,” which is generally presumed to be socialism. Although this also raises the pertinent question of the practical actualization of the essentially utopian, theoretical and historically contingent, even politically mythical¹²³ Marxist concept of Socialism to usher in radical social transformation, it would nonetheless continue

119 Terry Eagleton, “The Revolutionary: Is Marx still relevant?” Book review of *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life*, by Jonathan Sperber (W.W. Norton, 2013), *Harper’s Magazine*, April 2013, <https://harpers.org/archive/2013/04/the-revolutionary/>; Also see Mitchell Abulafia, “Eight Marxist Claims That May Surprise You,” *Jacobin*, December 1, 2019, <https://jacobinmag.com/2019/01/karl-marx-engels-capitalism-political-economy>. It may be interesting to note that Marx’s revolutionary zeal was attenuated in his mature years. See Central Intelligence Staff Study, *Mao Tse-tung and Historical Materialism: iv, the “Transition to Socialism,”* October 9, 1961, Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency (released on January 11, 2011).

120 In *Communist Manifesto* Marx referred to them as “philistine,” “slothful indolence,” “barbarian,” “rural idiocy,” and “national one-sidedness,” from which they were “rescued” by “dynamic” capitalism. Rolando Munck, “Marxism and development: a search for relevance,” in Matthew Johnson, ed., *The Legacy of Marxism Contemporary Challenges, Conflicts and Developments*, (London and New York: Continuum, 2012), P.99. In fact, the famous thinker from Trier was said to have been “extravagant” in his admiration for the class that gave birth to capitalism. Terry Eagleton, “In Praise of Marx,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 10, 2011, <https://harpers.org/archive/2013/04/the-revolutionary>

121 Matt Schiavenza, “The American Who Gave His Life to Chairman Mao,” *The Atlantic*, December 26, 2013

122 Tobias ten Brink, *Op. cit.*, p. 72

123 Dirlik, “Socialism without revolution,” p.661

to endure as a tantalizing vision as long as the central issue of human emancipation remains unresolved.

Walder writes that, "Other than the destruction of the national bureaucracy and the purge of alleged revisionists, it is hard to decide whether the outcome of the Cultural Revolution was what Mao had in mind. In fact, it is very hard to say what Mao did have in mind." (p.200). Now that Mao has been dead for almost 45 years, it's moot what he would actually have thought of the Dengist restoration of capitalism, though couched in the anodyne terminology of socialism with Chinese characteristics. However, Sidney Rittenberg, a left-wing American associate of Mao, believed that, "[h]e would be very proud to see the strength of the economy and the change in the world position of China. He'd be thrilled at that."¹²⁴ With China on the cusp of a paradigmatic transformation, and his role having become redundant, perhaps even inconvenient, a sphinx-like figure, Mao "went to meet Marx" at an opportune moment.

This review could not unequivocally endorse, as claimed by the author, Mao's ideological commitment, since it was marked by incoherence, improvisation, and a protean approach, verging on opportunism. Walder's proposition, that the late Chairman's initiatives back-fired resulting in outcomes that undermined the socialist design, "were often unintended, unanticipated, and unwanted, not only by the broad population and the party leadership, but by Mao himself" (p. 6), too has disturbing implications. Before it started unraveling from 1956 onwards, culminating in the launching of Mao's two maverick campaigns - the GLF and Cultural Revolution, substantial benefits from the socialist economic system were beginning to accrue, which was acclaimed by Roderick MacFarquhar to be "the fastest, most extensive, and least damaging socialist revolution carried out in any communist state."¹²⁵ And if he truly could not foresee their disastrous consequences, then his leadership becomes open to question, giving the impression that the socialist revolution in China had occurred "in a fit of absent-mindedness".¹²⁶ In Michel Oksenberg's analysis, if the Chairman of the CCP Party, a leader-centric, top-down, hierarchical organization,¹²⁷ did not indeed intentionally wreck the socialist project, nor anticipate or want such an outcome, then either he was incompetent since he did not know how to run the system that was supposed to be his "creation," or negligent in managing it, or erred in taking stock of the

124 Schiavenza, *op.cit.*

125 Pankaj Mishra, " Staying Power: Mao and the Maoists," *The New Yorker*, December 12, 2010, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/12/20/staying-power-3>

126 "We seem, as it were, to have conquered half the world in a fit of absence of mind."

127 Xiaohong Xu, "The Origins and Growth of the Chinese Communist Movement," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, April 2018, p.1

situation when he knew that excesses would occur, but thought that he could manoeuvre things in such a way that the blame could be put on others –“in which case he miscalculated, since he was not totally able to absolve himself of responsibility.”¹²⁸

Despite certain shortcomings that have been identified in the review, the book does have redeeming qualities. Apart from being well written and eminently readable, it inspires one to learn more about Mao and Maoist China in order to get a coherent picture of that vital but complex era, as well as better comprehend China’s role in the present-day world. It is to be expected that more research would be conducted to shed light on that controversial era, especially when access to archives and documents are gradually becoming less restricted, if not absolutely open.

After perusing *China Under Mao*, one cannot but sense Walder’s satisfaction that the revolution in China *was* indeed derailed, with Mao “reduced [not only] to a benign cultural icon,” (p.343) but also depoliticized, and profitably commodified—in tune with the ironically counter-revolutionary ethos of consumerism that his legacy helped foster.

128 Michel Oksenberg, “Mao’s policy Commitments, 1921-1976,” *Problems of Communism*, November-December 1976, Volume XXV, p.18