

Towards a Long Term Development Vision for Bangladesh: Some Socioeconomic and Legal Aspects

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Abstract

Following modernization paradigm and some local dynamics conducive to development, some Asian countries emerged as economic tigers in the world. Conversely, other Asian countries including Bangladesh failed to taste economic development despite having monetary and technological aids from some developed nations. Drawing on some social and historical trajectories of the divergent contours of Asian development/ underdevelopment, the paper examines the state of development in Bangladesh. The study has found that Japan is the first country in Asia to achieve modernization, and it was followed by other Asian tigers such as Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and currently China and India. We found that all these Asian tigers exert a developmental model which is characterized by 'endogenous' modernity and economic nationalism largely driven by, among other things, long-term economic vision and strong political leadership. While the history of Bangladesh has witnessed various cultural nationalisms, the nation has failed to generate any unified economic nationalism since its independence in 1971. We suggest that Bangladesh needs a long-term development vision—a key thrust for economic nationalism—focusing more on some socioeconomic and legal aspects that have historically become major impediments for development.

Keywords: Development, Modernity, Bangladesh, Development vision, Economic nationalism, Political culture

1. Introduction

During the twentieth century, Sir Aurthur Lewis's two-sector (traditional vs. industrial) model vividly identifies the capitalist or industrial sector as the engine of growth and development for the developing world (Islam, 2009). Earlier social scientists also postulated a move from traditional stage to modernity, albeit in different conceptual fashions. This shift has been expressed through different theoretical and intellectual trajectories, such as August Comte's "positive stage" as opposed to theological and metaphysical stages, Durkheim's "organic solidarity" as opposed to mechanical solidarity, Smelser's "modern society" as opposed to "traditional society", Max Weber's "formal rationality" as opposed to substantial rationality, and Walt Rostow's "six stages of economic growth" from traditional stage to precondition for takeoff to takeoff stage to drive to maturity to mass consumption to finally beyond consumption. While all these scholars differ substantially in their conceptual underpinnings, a central consensus is to generate a paradigm shift from tradition to modernity (Collins et al., 2005; Henslin et al., 2007; Ritzer and Goodman, 2004; Rostow, 2005; Islam, 2009).

Modernization and industrialization have their roots in different historical events and revolutions, such as, European Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, French Revolution, and Puritan Revolution, to name a few (Moore, 1996). At the beginning of the twentieth century, several other revolutions occurred, such as the Bolshevik Revolution and the Chinese Revolution that exerted influence on, and provided choices about different routes to, development of the so called Third World countries. Many African countries tried to copy and emulate development model of Russia, though the local conditions of African countries were tremendously different and

totally immature to embrace any kind of socialist revolutions. After the World War II, the popular choice for the newly independent countries was mostly to embrace either socialism or capitalism.

Fernando Fajnzylber (1990) nicely delineates the patterns of development/ industrialization in Japan and United States and asks whether they can be replicable in other parts of the world, especially Latin America and East Asia. He found that the industrialization of Japan and the United States served as a “model” for South Korea and Latin American newly industrialized countries (NICs) respectively. The pattern of development in two regions, according to Fajnzylber (1990: 324-325), is:

East Asian countries have generally emphasized strategic industrialisation, international competitiveness, and the ‘conquest’ of major markets including that of United States. Latin American countries, on the other hand, have sought primarily to reproduce, among elite strata, the ‘American way of life’... and their development pattern is urban-biased and local-market oriented.

As Japan and the United States are emulated by East Asia and Latin America respectively, Fajnzylber (1990: 325) further dissects the patterns of development in these two model countries:

Patterns of Development: Japan Vs. The United States

Patterns	Japan	The United States
Term-orientation	A strategic, long-term orientation towards economic affairs.	A tactical, short-term orientation toward economic affairs.
Saving vs. Consumption	A clear tendency towards high level of savings.	A clear tendency towards high level of consumption.
Natural resources	The lack of natural resources virtually requires industrial development.	The abundance of natural resources and the “continental economy” permit intersectional neutrality.
Firm-orientation	Firms are oriented towards the “conquest” of international markets.	Firms are concentrated towards the secure of large domestic markets.
Education system	Given the dearth of natural resources, the educational system is considered a national priority.	The educational system is considered an investment in human resources, subject to cost benefit evaluation.
Career-orientation	A relative predominance of careers related to technology (e.g., 66% Engineers).	A prevalence of careers related to legal and financial organizations (66%).
Social integration/order	Social integration is essential for political legitimacy of the ruling class.	The social order is structured largely via the operation of market forces.

The above chart reveals two patterns of development, one that embodies strategic, industrial-centered, competitive, and socially integrated orientation (Japan), and the other pattern that reflects a preoccupation with short-term planning, high consumption, domestic markets, and relatively low level of social integration (United States). The experience of the United States has provided a model for Latin American elite, which has been translated and assimilated in different countries of the region. Despite their considerable diversity, all major Latin American countries exhibit high levels of consumption, along with a concomitant orientation toward production for the domestic market. In the absence of clearly articulated national strategies, the development process in Latin America has frequently failed to protect the interests of the politically and economically excluded populations. Fajnzylber (1990) terms this pattern of development “showcase modernity.”

Meanwhile East Asian countries, especially South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore have characteristics similar to those of Japan: high dynamism, relatively equal income distribution, high competitiveness, and austere consumption. Like Japan, South Korea and later on Malaysia have adapted to the American example in ways that both maximize domestic economic potentialities and fulfill internally defined societal objectives. It has implemented a self-conscious strategy of garnering impressive shares of international markets. South Korea has harnessed the forces of economic development to generate “endogenous modernity” (Fajnzylber, 1990).

Fajnzylber (1990) demonstrates the fact that East Asian countries have achieved higher levels of economic growth and distributive equity than their Latin American counterparts. One important lesson that can be derived is that successful development strategies must simultaneously address issues related to both domestic, social and economic articulation and the mode of national insertion into the international economic order (Islam, 2009).

According to the analysis of Donnelly (1984), South Korean dramatic success, as opposed to many countries in Latin America, is due to some agrarian policies, such as radical land reform for equitable rural development, labor-intensive export oriented industrialization, and investment in education. Other key elements in the development of East and Southeast Asian countries include the emergence of economic nationalism (McMichael, 2008) characterized by a clear-cut economic and social vision and strong political leadership.

All these factors tell us why some countries in Asia emerged as “Asian Economic Tigers” while others including Bangladesh are still lagging behind. What are the local social dynamics prevalent in Bangladesh that explain its underdevelopment? Is underdevelopment in Bangladesh due to an absence of ‘economic nationalism’, or weak political leadership, or a lack of an economic vision, or other socio-cultural factors, or a combination of all? The article will address and examine all these fundamental questions. Following this introduction, the next section will delineate the state of development in Bangladesh focusing on current social and economic conditions. The third section examines some major impediments and factors that retard economic and social development in Bangladesh. Drawing on previous sections, the final section of this article generates a discussion on and suggests a long term economic and social vision for Bangladesh.

2. State of Development in Bangladesh

Before undertaking a salient long term development vision for an underdeveloped country, Bangladesh, it is vital to gauge its present economic and social conditions, the challenges ahead to achieve the development status, and future prospects for development. Current economic and social condition in Bangladesh is not satisfactory. Despite having some progress in some sectors, phenomena like poverty, underdevelopment, unemployment and social chaos are a common picture in Bangladesh, and they are largely attributable to, among other things, lack of qualified and patriotic political leaders (Khan, 2007). The state of development in Bangladesh highlighting on poverty, education and healthcare is briefly elucidated below. Though there are many other indicators of development, the three major indicators discussed below will provide a lens to see the overall state of development in Bangladesh.

2.1 GDP Growth and Poverty Level

From an economic perspective, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of a country is the most important factor to determine its present economic and social condition and to forecast its future development possibility. In 1998 the GDP growth rate in Bangladesh was 4 per cent and per capita purchasing power parity was US\$ 1,380. In 1997, GDP composition by sectors was: agriculture 30 per cent, industry 17 percent and services 53 percent (Bangla 2000). Some economists however forecast a better economic growth in Bangladesh. According to Masato Miyazakai, IMF’s Asia-Pacific adviser, for example, GDP growth in Bangladesh will be 5% to 5.5% in 2009 and 2010. He said, garment sector in Bangladesh accounts for 75% of export earnings (IMF Report, 2009).

The GDP growth rate between 2002 and 2006 was quite satisfactory in Bangladesh though not remarkable. At that time, the GDP growth rate was 5% and the growth rate in industry sector was 9%. According to Philip Bowring (2005), the Gross National Product (GNP) of Bangladesh persistently maintains a growth rate of 5 percent, well above average for developing countries. Its foreign dependence has fallen from 6 percent to 1.8 percent of Gross Domestic Product.

In light of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG), the Bangladesh government in 2004 strongly emphasized on industrialization in the country with an objective to reduce poverty level quickly. The government had fixed 10 percent growth rate in the industry sector for the financial year 2005/2006. The main objective of massive industrialization was to reduce unemployment rate by increasing employment opportunities and alleviate poverty. The Executive Chairman of Bangladesh Investment Board at that time said, “The 9 percent growth rate in industry sector in the financial year 2004/2005 has broken the past record. This is the largest growth rate in the last 10 years” (Daily Sangram, 2 May, 2005).

The World Bank has classified its 185 member countries into low-income, middle-income and high-income groups on the basis of 2006 per capital GNI figures. As per the classification, countries which have US\$905 or less per capita GNI are low-income countries, from US\$906 – US\$3,595 are lower middle-income, from US\$3,596 – US\$ 11,115 are upper middle-income and US\$ 11,116 or more are high-income countries. Though Bangladesh remains in the category of low-income countries, it could possibly be a middle income country (MIC) by 2016 if the GDP growth continues to be sustained at the rate of 7.5 per cent. The average income of Bangladesh today is more than 75 per cent higher than in 1990. The rate of poverty has also declined from 58 per cent in 1992 to below 40 per cent recently (Rashid, 2009).

Despite the above picture of development and growth, currently however about 45 per cent population in Bangladesh are below poverty level while around 20 per cent are hardcore poor. The population is predominantly rural, with about 85 per cent of its 150 million people living in rural areas (Siddiki, 2009). The BRAC-backed survey on 2010 households in 62 villages show that rural poverty level perked at 55% in 2008 compared to about 49% in 2004. So, the survey statistics indicates that within the last four years (between 2008 and 2004), poverty level has increased by 1.5% in Bangladesh. At a disaggregated level, extreme poverty rose from 15% to 20% and moderate poverty from 34% to 35%. Therefore, we can see that among the poor, the share of extreme poor has increased at a faster rate than that of the moderate poor (Bayes, 2008). The survey also confirms that the poverty level in Bangladesh is not static; it is going up and down in different years due to some political, natural and global reasons. Bangladesh can achieve developed nation status if it can ensure 7- 8% GDP growth every year till 2040, and if the growth is tricked down among the rural masses.

2.2 Literacy Rate and the State of Education

Endogenous modernity in Asia shows that high level of education is a fundamental pre-condition for a national development. Bangladesh is unfortunately lagging behind in this crucial sector. Adult literacy rate in Bangladesh was 41.5% in 2005. Among the literate people, 47% were male and 36.7% were female. The adult literacy rate in rural areas was 36.7% and in urban areas 55.7%. This survey entitled “Assessment of Literacy Status in Bangladesh 2005” was conducted by Dhaka Ahsania Mission (The Daily Star, 20 November, 2006). This study considered age over 11 years as adult and found 45.3% of the adult population had reading skill. According to Education Watch Report (2008), the literacy rate and the enrolment rate in primary schools in Bangladesh have declined, although infrastructure facilities for education and teachers’ training have increased over the years. It is noted that Bangladesh government has made it compulsory for children aged 6-10 to have primary education. Primary education has been made free for children and free textbooks are given to the students in government run primary schools. The literacy rate of the population aged seven and above came down to 48.5 percent in 2008 from 49.7 percent in 2005, while the literacy rate of the population aged 15 and above declined to 52.1 percent from 52.6 percent. However, the figures were 37 percent and 41.4 percent respectively in 2000.

The Education Watch Report (2008) also states that the net enrolment rate in primary schools came down to 86.4 percent in 2008 from 86.8 percent in 2005, showing a stagnation of the enrolment over the last few years after a rapid increase from 1998 when the rate was 77 percent. The Report entitled “State of primary education in Bangladesh: Progress made, challenges remained” was prepared on the basis of surveys on 7,093 students from 440 educational institutions and 24,007 households of 1003 villages across the country in 2008. The report also revealed that the rates of dropouts and failure in final exams in various classes in primary schools also went up in the last decade. Education Watch Working Group Member, Samir Ranjan Nath, while presenting the report said that the dropout and repetition rates in each class were 5.6 percent and 8 percent respectively in 1998, which went up to 11.5 percent and 10.9 percent in 2008.

On an average, 77.4 percent of students who enrolled in class one could reach up to class three, 58.4 percent up to class five and only 50.1 percent complete the primary education (Education Watch Report 2008). This report is very dissatisfactory as the government’s target is to make children aged 6 to 10 years 100% educated with primary education. It means, children of this age group must complete compulsory primary education. According to the Education Watch Report (2008), in 1998, only 44.5 percent of government schools and 47.9 percent of private primary schools had brick-built structures, which went up to 67.6 percent and 90 percent respectively in 2008. Water and sanitation status has also been upgraded. This is indeed a bit of progress on primary education in Bangladesh; however, the government has more to do in providing conducive environment for primary school students across the nation.

Education Watch Report (2008) also reveals that on an average 85 percent of teachers in the government, private and non-formal schools have received training in the years up to 2008, while the figure was only 25.9 percent in 1998. However, less than 11 percent of *madrassa* (religious school) teachers received such training. This report is reasonable in regard to state run traditional school teachers, but the report shows government has neglected to train religious school (*madrassa*) teachers. The report shows that the rate of teachers’ absence in schools ranged between 12 and 13 percent in the last one decade. On the day of survey, 42.5 percent of teachers came to school half an hour late on an average.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) study revealed on 6 January 2009 that nearly half of the nation’s 140 million adult citizens are proficient enough to read street flyers or calculate the amount of money spent in cell phone conversations. The BBS survey titled “Literacy Assessment Survey (LAS) 2008” presented an encouraging statistical portrait of the nation’s literacy with the current rate at 49.7 percent compared to 41.5

percent in 2005. This survey was conducted nationwide and it revealed that female literacy rate (50.2%) surpassed male literacy rate (49.4%) for the first time. The study also showed a notable discrepancy in the literacy level among the urban (67.8%) and rural population (52.6%). The bureau in association with UNESCO randomly tested 12,096 individuals above 11 years in a representative sampling throughout the country with questions involving familiar and practical matters that people face every day (BBS Survey Report, 2009).

The present government of Bangladesh issued its election pledge prior to the last national election (2008) that it would achieve 100% literacy rate in the country by 2014, but the government faces a great challenge in realizing this pledge because of the heavy dropout of children from primary schools and acute shortage of teachers. Academicians and researchers think that to reach this target, the government will have to recruit 700,000 new teachers -- preferably trained and build 30,000 new schools and 60,000 new classrooms in existing schools within the next two years. At present the government allocates only less than two percent of GDP for raising literacy rate in primary schools. Experts suggest that the government needs to allocate at least four per cent of the GDP towards primary education to achieve 100% literacy rate in primary education in Bangladesh (Deabnath and Sabuktagin, 2009).

About three million children in the country still do not go to schools, and 50 per cent of the total students who get admitted to primary class dropout before completing five years of primary education. The reason of such high rate dropout is mainly poverty; other reason is lack of concerted effort of teachers and parents to encourage children to go to school. Achievement in primary education in Bangladesh remains tremendously low as the literacy rate in primary education is only 63 per cent. About 73 per cent of all teachers in primary schools have not been trained and there are about 19,043 villages which have no schools at all (Deabnath and Sabuktagin, 2009).

This report contradicts with the Education Watch Report 2008 (discussed above) which mentioned that about 85 percent of primary schools teachers have received teaching training but in religious schools only 11 percent of teachers received such training. Anyhow, the government has to keep in mind that among other things providing teaching training to the primary teachers is very important to achieve 100 percent literacy rate by next 10 years and to ensure high standard education in primary schools. Experiences from Asian Economic Tigers show that a high level of technical education (such as Engineers, Doctors, Economists etc.) is of paramount need to generate and sustain economic growth. Bangladesh is still struggling to provide even the basic reading and writing skills to its citizens, let alone paying attention to the high level of technical education. A huge population in Bangladesh therefore largely remains as a burden rather than a resource for economic development.

2.3 Healthcare Service and Nutrition

Healthcare is another important indicator for development. However, the record of this indicator is tremendously low though a significant progress has been made in the last few years. According to UNICEF report published in 2008, the mortality rate of children under five years in Bangladesh has dropped to 69 per thousand in 2006 from 149 in 1990. This statistics shows 4.8% average annual decline which outstrips the government's final target of achieving the reduction rate of two-thirds by 2015. The report titled "The State of the World's Children 2008" further states that the infant mortality rate in Bangladesh has fallen from 100 to 52 per thousand live births while the neonatal mortality rate stands at 36 per thousand live births. However, the report points out that 22% of babies are born underweight while around 8 million under-five children (48%) are underweight (Mahreen et al., 2009). In Bangladesh most children and mothers suffer from serious malnutrition. Dr. Tahmeed Ahmed, head of nutrition program of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) revealed that country's more than 40% children who are under five years of old and one-third of mothers suffer from malnutrition (BSS, 2009).

The healthcare services for pregnant women are far from satisfactory in rural areas in Bangladesh. Recently however various private health care centers have taken initiative to provide good healthcare service to rural pregnant women in Bangladesh. Notable amongst them are: Grameen Healthcare, and GE Healthcare Systems (a unit of General Electric). Omar Ishrak, President and Chief Executive Officer of GE Healthcare in a recent interview with the Daily Star (Bangladesh) said, "Our first pilot project will centre on diagnosing pregnant women with ultrasound technology. Although we desire to help the rural community by all means possible, we realize some constraints. We cannot build hospitals, as it is not financially feasible for us." Under the joint healthcare agreement, GE Healthcare will provide necessary equipment and Grameen clinics will provide the services to the rural pregnant women (Hasan, 2009).

Currently, the maternal mortality rate for Bangladesh stands at 320 per thousand women. This is a very high mortality rate among the rural pregnant women. This rate must be reduced significantly by the government of

Bangladesh by adopting effective planning and healthcare service in rural areas. Ultrasound imaging to test pregnant women can significantly reduce maternal mortality. Potential complications with pregnancy can be successfully treated, if detected at the early stage (Hasan, 2009).

3. Major Impediments to Development in Bangladesh

There are some major impediments to the economic and social development of Bangladesh. The impediments include corruption, strike (*hartal*), weak legal infrastructure, hostile political culture, and lack of unified economic nationalism etc. For a lofty development vision, the government of Bangladesh, the civil society, and the private sectors need to improve certain social and political conditions in the country which are conducive to development. The government may enact necessary new laws or reform the existing laws to meet the needs of the development vision. The objective of making such laws is to impose reasonable restrictions on certain devastating phenomena that historically impede the much-needed progress and development of the country (Jalil, 2 December 2007). Some major impediments to development are discussed below.

3.1 Corruption

As corruption is widespread in the public sector, the government officers normally work for their own interest neglecting the interest of the country. Corruption in private sectors similarly causes sufferings to the people. This attitude seriously hampers development. The corrupt practices seriously affect the fiscal policy of the government. Corruption by the tax officers who are involved in collecting various taxes from the people and companies may exempt tax or collect very less amount of tax than the due amount and may receive high amount of bribe in return. Thus the national revenue is reduced and ultimately the government becomes unable to fund necessary development projects.

Corruption is widespread and deeply rooted in every government offices in Bangladesh. Without bribe, it is really difficult for a work to be done. Simply most of the government officers do not work unless the offer of bribe is made. Sometimes the files are missing and works are not done in due course. But when clients offer bribe and pay it, the files are immediately found and work is done in a faster manner. Most government ministers and members of parliament (MPs) are also corrupted. In the name of development, they steal millions of dollars every year. The chain of corruption is so profound in Bangladesh that after feeding all individuals starting from the Ministers to the local political thugs, sometimes less than 5 percent money actually goes to the target groups and projects. Bangladesh was ranked the most corrupt nation in the world for many times in the annual reports of Transparency International (Transparency International, 2006; China Daily, 2003).

Development in Bangladesh calls for immediate and effective mechanisms to combat and completely uproot both political and bureaucratic corruptions. Bangladesh government has formed Anti-corruption Commission to investigate corruptions in government departments including law enforcement agencies such as the department of police. However, there are widespread corruptions within the Anti-corruption Commission, and this department is largely used by the ruling government to harass and weaken its political opponents. Usually the government intervenes in the investigation work of Anti-corruption Commission. As a result, the Commission cannot work with full freedom, independence, and credibility. While corruption can be found everywhere in the world including developed nations, the normalization of corruption deeply rooted in the social and political fabrics of Bangladesh remain a stumbling block for any development in Bangladesh. It discourages not only foreign investments but also local entrepreneurs to invest locally.

3.2 Strike (*Hartal*)

Historically strike (*hartal*) has been used as a last resort or tool by the oppressed and exploited workers/labors to meet their decent demands. However, the use of strike has taken a different shape in Bangladesh. Opposition parties usually call for strike in the whole or a part of the country to meet their lawful and sometimes unlawful demands. While strike is one of the political rights of all political parties, the practice of it is usually very violent and destructive. Such strike and blockades cause very serious damage to the national economy. During strike and blockade, industries are closed down, business operations are shattered, government offices are locked up, and consequently human sufferings mount up. On the day of strike, opposition party members become militant and usually force shopping centers to be closed down. Consequently, supply of daily necessary things all over the nation is seriously jeopardized. Thus, people's fundamental rights guaranteed under the constitution are seriously violated and undermined (Jalil, 2 December 2007).

On the one hand, people and business seriously suffer from the horrible consequences of strike; it discourages foreign investments, on the other hand. Thus, strike slows down the economic growth and causes sufferings to the people. Bangladesh is an example where the opposition parties resort to frequent nationwide strikes,

blockades, vandalisms, and other violent political agendas. As a result, the nation suffers from the loss of billions of dollars every year. Bangladesh is a very small and poor country which cannot afford such a high amount of loss in every year due to strikes, blockades, vandalisms, and arsons etc. Highway gathering, rally, procession, demonstration etc. of thousands of political party members in Bangladesh causes unbearable traffic jams and as a result general people suffer beyond narration as they cannot move from one place to another. Most strikes in Bangladesh result in violent confrontations and claim both human lives and properties. So, the dire consequences of strike for trifle reasons go against the fundamental rights of citizens guaranteed in the constitution Bangladesh.

It's not however always the fault of the opposition parties to call for and observe strikes, the ruling regime is also largely responsible. Bangladesh has a long history of hostile political culture marked by political vendetta and obduracy. The ruling party almost always adopts the policy of extermination, suppression, and containment of its political opponents. Sometimes it totally disregards the lawful demands of the opposition parties and act unilaterally and sometimes violently. The opposition parties then do not have any other options than to call for strike as a last resort for survival in the political landscape. While the cycle of violence is quite common feature in every strike and people in Bangladesh have somehow adapted to it, the culture of strike has a debilitating impact on the nation's economic and social development.

Being severely affected for long decades, the principal organization of businessmen and industry owners in Bangladesh known as FBCCI organized a conference in Dhaka on 15 November 2008, and demanded that the politicians in Bangladesh must put in their election manifesto a promise to stop 'strike' in the country by passing law at the Parliament (The Daily Nayadiganto, 15 November 2008). While such a demand is very significant for Bangladesh as it will help enhance economic performance of the country, the current regime has yet to take any actions despite having an absolute majority in the Parliament.

3.3 Weak and Bias Legal Infrastructure

For the development of a country, it is very pertinent to have a strong legal system free from any bias and corruption. The legal system should be updated from time to time to meet the needs of the latest socio-economic development. Bangladesh has a legal system which is based on English common law and rules of equity and statutes of general application for over a hundred years old. There are a lot of lacking and loopholes in these old laws. Therefore, the existing laws in Bangladesh should be overhauled with an intention to find out its defects and finally the defects should be cured through modification. If needed, some new legislations should be enacted repealing the old ones to ensure national security, national unity and above all smooth economic development in the country.

The legal system in Bangladesh is often accused of having an authority which is often biased and unfair in implementing justice. Most officials there are corrupt and cause injustice to the parties in different cases by taking bribes. As the implementation of the laws equally and without discrimination on all citizens is very essential to ensure justice, peace, order and economic development in the country, the current legal loopholes and other weak legal infrastructures pose serious hindrance to national development.

The common practice in Bangladesh is not to take any legal action against the criminals of ruling party or alliance, while often harsh legal actions are taken against the opposition leaders and activists though sometimes there might have no evidence of corruption against them. The legal apparatus in Bangladesh therefore largely serves the interest of the ruling elites, and provides a powerful tool for them to abate and crush the political opponents. For an equitable development and progress in Bangladesh, the legal system in Bangladesh needs to be updated and applied impartially on all citizens without taking into consideration of their political identity. Above all, the legal infrastructure must be conducive for the national unity and national development.

3.4 Hostile Political Culture

Since independence in 1971, there developed some unique political cultures in Bangladesh that historically impede both democratization and economic development in Bangladesh. The cultures include extreme political vendetta, political obduracy, extreme political intolerance, retrogressive politics, and politics of division rather than social cohesion (Islam, 2008).

3.4.1 Structural Opposition

One of the broader traits of political cultures in Bangladesh can be termed as "structural opposition." Prominent British Anthropologist Evans Pritchard found this culture in Africa. There were hostilities between Nuer and Dinka tribes, but their hostilities turned into unity when they face a concerted challenge/opposition from Egyptian government (Othman, 1988; Islam, 2000). What is important in "structural opposition" is that the unity

of a group or groups is contingent upon, and maintained by, an opposition to others. The more opposition the group faces, the more unified they become. While there are internal tensions and feuds within most political parties in Bangladesh; those feuds, however, turn into unity when they face or manage to create opposition to other political parties. Historically, the unity and solidarity of a particular political party in Bangladesh has been maintained through its opposition to others. A leader in Awami League, for example, becomes prominent only if he/she can oppose and attack his/her rival political parties, and vice-versa. The more bitterly he/she can manage to oppose or attack his/her political rivals, the better political career he/she makes. Though opposition remains an apparent picture in most democratic societies, the kind of opposition and bitter rivalry developed in Bangladesh politics is absolutely unhygienic (Islam, 2008).

There are some obvious consequences of this “structural opposition culture” in Bangladesh. First, it subverts peaceful coexistence and cooperation within political parties as “opposition” remains the main political agenda. Secondly, as opposition to rival political parties gets the highest market currency, the political leaders remain obsessed with finding new and newer clues and issues as well as novel methods to attack their political rivals. It brings to politics the practices of falsehood, concoction, weirdness, active denial, fabrication and discursively construction of new realities. During speeches in political gathering, as political leaders spend more time on attacking political rivals rather than on bringing pragmatic agendas for the nation’s development, practices of lying and concoction not only become normalized, but new and more sophisticated methods of concocting or fabricating facts and realities to attack political rivals are always welcomed and applauded in the realm of politics. Political rivalry and bitterness sometimes reach to an extreme verge. Third, it generates fanaticism within politics. Since leaders are engrossed with attacking political rivals as a paramount route to become more popular, they not only suffer from ‘human deficit’ such as a dramatic decline in appreciating good deeds and contributions of political rivals but also lose their far-sighting vision needed for country’s development. Consequently, no culture develops based on future vision as leaders are over-obsessed with attacking others. Country’s development and progress then not only become secondary, but political realm also does not allow spaces for visionary and honest leaders. It then creates “demo-crisis” in which the country is deprived of not only pragmatic and visionary leaders but also conscious citizens and a vibrant civil society. Finally, “the structural opposition” culture generates hatred, division, mistrust, unrest and continuous political tension. Sometimes political tension turns into violence and “corpse politics” (*Lash Rajniti*) emerges. If any political activist is killed out of any political violence, it is not generally regarded as a political loss, but the “corpse” becomes a political capital to generate a new issue in political rivalry.

Because of the “structural opposition” culture in Bangladesh for decades, a healthy political atmosphere with viable democratic practices did not develop, and the country remains retrogressive in a deeper manner. It paves a smooth way for foreign powers to intervene into the internal affairs of the country. Eliminating some corrupted political leaders may shake but will not root out the long-established foundation of structural opposition culture.

3.4.2 Student Politics

Student politics in Bangladesh is very prominent and popular yet seriously hampering the standard of and a sound atmosphere for education in the country. Different political parties have their student wings. They frequently stage strikes in educational institutions and stop classes. Most student wings have factions, conflicts, and tensions from within and with their political opponents. Political vendettas as well as self interest sometimes take a very wild and ugly shape and they start fighting against the opponents with firearms and other traditional weapons. They observe strike in college and university campuses. Tensions often mount and end up with seriously beating, injuring and sometimes killing opponent party members; blocking, breaking and burning transports in nearby roads and highways; and damaging and burning valuable public and private properties. This has been happening since the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971. Every year this inter-party clashes in educational institutions result in brutal killings of dozens of students and injuring hundreds of others (Jalil, 11 September 2007).

3.4.3 Political Violence and a Need for a Paradigm Shift

Similarly the major political parties in Bangladesh very often involve in political clashes culminating in killing and injuring hundreds of political activists and sometimes ordinary people. Development in Bangladesh will remain a mere dream unless this hostile political culture is changed. All political parties need to make a paradigm shift from political vendetta and conflict to a culture of tolerance that allows and welcomes constructive criticism and cooperation. The opposition and criticism against the government should be in constructive and friendly manner for the sole interest of the national development and integration and not for creating hostility among political parties or for ousting the government from power by force. The party in power

must seek co-operation from, rather than finding avenues to destroy, the opposition parties. The opposition parties too must be ready to co-operate with the government in development and addressing the national issues of concern (Jalil, 11 November 2007; Razak, 2006).

As economic development follows and demands a conducive political and social environment, rules of political conduct are of immense need for Bangladesh. Such rules of political conduct can ensure amicable co-existence of different political parties and can encourage them to work together for the development of the country. An absence of the rules of political conduct in Bangladesh has generated 'go alone policy', and the ripple effect of it includes hostilities and tensions among different political parties and halting development goals and visions.

To stop hostile political culture and ensure continuous economic growth, Bangladesh needs, among other things, strong honest and visionary political leadership. Strong political leadership is of paramount importance for a country to achieve a long term economic development vision and to fight against poverty and other social odds.

3.5 Lack of Unified Economic Nationalism

Economic nationalism means pursuing economic development at the national level using whatever resources the country has, and integrating all people around that development goal. Malaysia's Vision 2020, for example, was largely driven by a unified economic nationalism with common national slogan "Malaysia Boleh" (Malaysia is really able to do). It creates a sense of patriotism among the people across the nation, and thus accelerates economic development. Economic nationalism may include doctrines such as protectionism, import substitution, mercantilism and planned economy. Economic nationalism is also used to describe policies which are guided by the idea of protecting domestic consumption, labor and capital formation, even if this requires the imposition of tariffs and other restrictions on the movement of labor, goods and capital (Helleiner and Pickel, 2005).

Economic nationalism has emerged as a powerful and attractive policy to press for national interests, achieve economic aims, and preserve the autonomy of individual nation-states in an increasingly internationalized world (Szakonyi, 2007). Forms of economic nationalism have been the key in Japan's development in the 19th and 20th centuries, and in the more recent development of the four Asian tigers such as Hong Kong, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore and most recently China (McMichael, 2008; Burnell, 1996). The dynamics of Asian development reveal that the key thrust of Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs) in Asia was economic nationalism. While the nature of economic nationalism differs substantially from one nation to another, all Asian economic nationalisms contained powerful economic vision, strong political leadership, and reshaping of national philosophy and landscapes accordingly.

Bangladesh achieved its independence from Pakistan in 1971 after a bloody struggle. The struggle for independence was largely a political and cultural, and not an economic one. Though economic disparity between East Pakistan (currently Bangladesh) and West Pakistan (currently Pakistan) has been cited by many as a cause for the independence movement, there was no unified economic nationalism behind it. The rift between two Pakistans (East and West) was deeply rooted in various cultural nationalisms (such as language movement in 1952) that culminated in and were expressed through separatist political nationalism in 1971. The political landscapes of the last four decades in Bangladesh witnessed neither any unified economic nationalism nor a unified economic vision. The political and cultural divide in Bangladesh remains as a major impediment for any unified economic nationalism to grow. The national politics in Bangladesh still revolves around, among other things, the claims for ownership of independence, glorification of national heroes who fought for independence, punishing individuals and parties who sided with Pakistan and opposed the idea of a separate independent Bangladesh, and institutionalizing Shaikh Mujibur Rahman as the father of the nation. Over the last few decades, a retrogressive inner-inflicting cultural nationalism has taken a powerful shape that is often expressed through different forms of violence not vis-à-vis other rival nations, but people from within the nation. The nationalism is retrogressive as it revolves not around future vision of the nation, but around the history of independence in 1971. The nationalism is not for national unity, but for national disunity as it creates a clear-cut segregation of the nation into pro and anti-liberation forces. It is therefore inner-inflicting that divides Bangladesh into deeper manner and poses a great hindrance for development and progress.

3.6 Absence of Impartial and Responsible Press

Independence and freedom of the press is very important for development. While the press in Bangladesh is enjoying ample freedom, most of the daily newspapers and other media machineries are politically motivated and not impartial in reporting news. BTV (Bangladesh Television) has always been used as a propaganda machine for the ruling party. The daily newspapers sometimes misuse irresponsibly the freedom given to them by publishing false and hostile news against opponent parties. The malicious and false news published in the newspapers mislead political parties and instigate inter-party violence and killing. As freedom of press in

Bangladesh is largely bereft of responsibility, media machineries have failed to contribute to economic development. Therefore, a reasonable restriction on the press solely to enhance accountability and responsibility is desirable to put it on the correct path.

4. Conclusion: Towards a Long Term Vision for Bangladesh

Despite having so many odds and troubles in the path of development in Bangladesh, the nation still has a prospect. What Bangladesh needs is to undertake a robust long term development vision, for example, Vision 2040. Twenty years time span might be enough to develop the country. However, all the political cultures and other traditional elements that historically pose as major impediments for development must be pin-pointed and effectively addressed in the vision. The vision has to have a major paradigm shift from tradition to modernity (Collins et al, 2005) by saying good bye to the retrogressive political elements prevalent in Bangladesh. Taking insights from other Asian economic tigers, Bangladesh needs to adopt and nurture a unified economic nationalism and a strong patriotic political leadership.

It is important to set a long term vision for the nation for all round development in Bangladesh by the year 2040 following economic and technological policies of other newly industrialized countries (NIC) such as Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Malaysia. It is very important that all political parties should approve and respect such a lofty economic development vision and must agree to work hard together to fulfill the requirements of Vision 2040 regardless of who comes to power. To implement this great vision, many obstacles and challenges will appear before the nation. These obstacles must be removed by enacting appropriate laws and regulations. During the implementation of the vision 2040, Bangladesh government will face obstacles from student politics, strikes and blockages by political parties and trade unions, distortion of government policy and image improperly, highway procession, terrorism, vandalism, arson etc. To remove these obstacles, Bangladesh government has to enact necessary laws or the existing laws should be updated to remove those obstacles and strictly implement these laws.

Nurturing and inculcating the economic and social vision in the minds of people is of paramount and primary need before the vision is actually implemented. National development is only possible when all classes of people take part willingly in the development process. The people have to do a lot to achieve the objectives of the vision. To widely publicize such a great vision to the people, government can announce the vision through national radio, television, newspapers, and all other media. Another important way to publicize the vision is to erect large attractive signboards/billboards in the highways and conspicuous places in the major cities of the country. Government can also compose very attractive development anthem based on the objectives of development vision 2040 which will be played through radio and television everyday along with the national anthem (Jalil, 16 January, 2008). The objectives of this lofty vision might be *inter alia*:

- (a) To fully develop Bangladesh in all aspects by the year 2040 with special emphasis on moral and ethical development among the people;
- (b) To ensure hundred percent literacy rate by the year 2040;
- (c) To eradicate poverty in the villages by organizing regular training programs on entrepreneurship development and by providing adequate micro-credit facilities to the village people;
- (d) To ensure continuous 7- 8% GDP growth to fully develop Bangladesh economically by the year 2040.

The Oregon state in the USA has undertaken an economic development vision (the Economic Vision for Oregon). The objective of this vision is to develop Oregon economically in the 21st century by innovation in technology, business, and marketing etc. Bangladesh can take insights from this lofty vision, which says:

We live in a global economy. To compete and succeed in the world market, Oregon must focus on its strengths and cultivate its competitive advantages. The Pacific Northwest is recognized as a leader in fostering creativity—from competitive business practices to quality education and sustainable growth. In order to succeed in the 21st century, Oregon must become a world leader for innovation: it must encourage innovative technology, innovative culture, innovative business, innovative marketing, innovative governance and innovative approaches to economic growth and development for all Oregonians. In short, Oregon must be known as “The Innovation State.” (<http://governor.oregon.gov/Gov/ecodevo/intro.shtml>)

Countries like India, Jamaica, Tanzania, Malaysia and many others have developed various development vision and they are moving accordingly, albeit in different capacities (Kalam, 2002; Mohammad, 2003). The government of Tanzania, for example, has adopted a far-reaching development vision known as “The Tanzania

Development Vision 2025.” The objective of this Development Vision is to awaken, co-ordinate and direct the people’s efforts, minds and their national resources towards the core sectors that will enable the country to attain development goals and withstand against the expected intensive economic competition ahead. In the foreword of this vision, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania states his vision statement as follows:

We are standing at the threshold of the 21st century, a century that will be characterized by competition. It is clear, therefore, that it will be a century dominated by those with advanced technological capacity, high productivity, modern and efficient transport and communication infrastructure and above all highly skilled manpower imbued with initiative. If we are to be active participants in the global developments of the twenty-first century we must, as a nation, find ways of improving and strengthening ourselves in all these areas. In coming to terms with this challenge the people of Tanzania, led by their government, recognized the need to prepare a New National Development Vision which will guide economic and social development efforts up to the year 2025. (<http://www.tanzania.go.tz/vision.htm>)

Malaysia has achieved substantial economic and social development by adopting “Development Vision 2020” in 1990. According to the present Prime Minister of Malaysia Mohd Najib Abdul Razak,

The concept of developed nation is “Made in Malaysia,” as we are moulding our society and economy to reflect our own needs and that of our communities. We would like to create and build a nation that is comprehensively developed, not merely in economic terms, but also to reflect a balanced society -- a society that is not only caring but also knowledgeable. While we have set our target for this to be achieved by the year 2020, and as the journey is both long and challenging, we must make adjustments and sacrifices as we tread our way forward (Razak, 2006).

The Bangladesh government needs to work both abruptly and gradually to fulfill the objectives of the proposed development vision. The Government has to select certain priority sectors to start working on them on a priority basis. It may select the following sectors to give priority for development. After identifying the priority sectors, the government can find out experts in the related sectors to write detailed survey reports focusing on the current position, challenges and prospects, and what ought to do in each sector for development. The priority sectors may include world class education; law and order development; agricultural development; human resource development; modern communication infrastructure and transportation; alleviation of poverty in the villages through micro-credit financing; industrialization; developing Dhaka (capital city) as a model city; science and technology development including ICT; promoting excellent healthcare service in the government as well as private hospitals and clinics; tourism development; well planned urbanization; infrastructure development; achieving hundred percent literacy rate; adequate electricity for all; excellent performance in sports; and creating responsible media.

The Bangladesh government may think to form an ‘advisory committee’ who will advise the government for the implementation of the objectives of the vision. The members of the advisory committee will consist of experts in different fields. Some of the committee members might be Bangladeshi experts who are working in other developed and developing countries. The committee will perform basically two key functions such as advising the government for the implementation of the objectives of vision 2040, and to review the government’s development activity and submit a report based on the review.

The current regime came to power with a great development vision, the slogans of which include “Digital Bangladesh” and “*Din Bodo!*” (the Change) that captured the imagination of the young voters. Our assessment of the performance in the first year shows that the regime has not only failed to actualize its development vision, it has entered into a great quagmire of underdevelopment. The simple reason we found is that the ruling regime’s vision is undoubtedly progressive; however, most agendas and actions accordingly remain largely retrogressive. Political vendetta has now taken a very wild shape and the state machineries along with legal and media apparatuses are now being used to crush and obliterate opposition parties and their political symbols. For any development vision to succeed, the government may formulate and eventually lead the vision but must involve multi-stakeholders including the opposition political parties, the civil society, and the private sector. The formulation and implementation of any development vision—whose key objective should be social and economic justice—requires some fundamental characteristics: inclusive, participatory, transparent, and multi-stakeholders.

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