

Organised Violence In Bangladesh

Haritha S Narayanan

Post Graduate student in M.A. Politics and International Relations, Pondicherry University, Puducherry (India)
(Corresponding Author: harithanarayanan18[at]gmail.com)

1. Introduction

Organised violence is a purposeful act created to challenge the existing political structure, institutions and system. This violence brings in injury, destruction, damage which affects the physical and mental state of individuals and also the social and economic working of the state. This violence is determined by social organisations when they developed military and state organisation. This strengthens the criminal organisations and the will to use violence for their own favours. Ideology is one of the major technique used to create violence. The societal instincts react to such differences which ultimately lead to new forms of movements such as revolution, terrorism, civil war etc.

2. Political Violence

Political violence is the violence motivated by the state or the people to achieve a political goal. It can be violence against a state by another state or the non-state actors. It can be internal or external agents, it is collective violence which includes strikes, riots civil war, guerrilla warfare and revolution. State, economy and the social system are the main aspects because of which the violence occurs. The effect of political and religious ideas motivates and engages individuals rationally or psychologically. Such violence's takes place when the expectation of the public with the government doesn't meet. Also competing for the power in the international system to reform, sometimes the small or the weaker countries tend to revolt to the larger dominating countries.

If we look back to the history there have been both outcomes and effect because of Political violence which has left powerful legacies that still continues to shape the political structure. The struggle and the memories of the past may lead to present time formation of violence also. This violence is both strategical and consequential, which is a part of modern politics. Political violence occurs through disagreement, disaggregation, dissatisfaction with social relations that can struggle for power, rights, border regional issues, political subjectivities etc. This violence leads to loss of cultural identity and unity of the country. Political violence can be inter-state, intra- social, or community-on –a community which ultimately lead to violence, an attack against the minorities, the explosion of bombs on public setting or other political institutions or bodies. Strategically the violence takes place against the politically weaker section and the citizens. It can be based on communal issues such as Hindu-Muslim conflict which leads to riots, political enmity, violence against militant extremists and other anti-state conflicts.

State and the non-state actors both influences the political violence, this collective aims show that both works in the same

frame and shapes the relevant political environment. Such violence's are sometimes unplanned riots over injustice, grievances or anger. This purposeful act is most of the time irreversible and aggregative. Political violence transforms the circumstances and adapts the changing scenario. This violence reframes the society and the consequences, it is a dynamic act which expresses the voices for the transformation of the surrounding through debates, strikes, riots & revolt etc.

3. Factors leading to political violence

1. Armed Conflict: In the contemporary world armed conflict approaches is one of the fixed international agents of violence that brings in territorial disputes. Political instability, globalisation, natural resources are of the reasons behind such conflicts. All those who oppose the state by opposing the status quo are recognised as the major actors in such conflict.

2. Globalisation and Economy: Economic greed is considered to be the primary motive of violent conflicts. Globalisation has brought a change in the structure of the state and the economy. It made legal or illegal passage of resources and trades easier. It brought down the state authority which made the society more vulnerable and convenient to enter into the conflict. Globalised era brings in different perspectives among individuals which results in violence between rich and poor, developed and the developing etc. In South East Asian countries conflict usually occurs because of 'communal', 'ethnic', ideological', 'resources' or separatist movements. The fear of losing one's own culture and hegemony is strongly associated with this greed. It brings in tension and instability externally and internally.

3. Stability of the political system and the society: It is studied that states with the fully democratic system have fewer chances of entering into violence rather the states which are partially democratic or any other system such as authoritarian are at the highest risk. Social inequalities, weak state, low level of human rights give rise to political violence and thus it turns into civil war, strikes or riots. The difference in the political system brings a difference in the political and economic structure.

Some of the countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal faces issues such as discrimination, minority rights, separatism etc. This collective struggle is for their acceptance by the political structure and their stability in society. These deprived groups initiate conflict when they feel they are economically backward, unaccepted, the fear of losing their cultural identity and their positions.

4. Human Rights and its Violation In South Asia

South Asia is known to be very rich in civilization since ages. South Asia comprises of eight countries: India,

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. All these countries except Sri Lanka and Maldives share common boundaries with each and also most of these countries have a common history because of which they have many things in similar such as culture, society, religion, politics etc. After the partition of India and Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh, we could see a changing structure in these regions. However, this commonality brings in conflict among each other as this region is closely connected and thus it makes it more complex. The constant fear and mutual distrust among these south Asian countries lead to the violation.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation was established for mutual cooperation among these countries and a balance of power among these countries. South Asian region has huge mixed ethnic cultures, languages, the geographical structure reflects the social division in South Asia. Nationalism is a determining factor of South Asian countries, for example, the ethnic Bengalis of West Bengal, India who are Hindus in dominance and Bangladeshis who are Muslims in the majority, there is a constant conflict among them due to internally displaced people and territorial division. Another factor is refugees, people cross the national boundaries due to which there is mix up of culture and new identities come up such as Lankan Tamils, Bangla Pakistanis etc. Other than migration human trafficking is in steep in this area. United Nations General Assembly adopted Convention to the status of Refugees in 1951 to take up the seriousness of this issue but neither of South Asian countries tried to implement those or nor it was approached in SAARC. Human Rights is concerned about the individual in a social and political aspect. Discrimination of women in society is a major drawback in this area. Forced marriages, daughters used as an object to settle family disputes and quarrels. Failure of democracy, unstable political system, struggles of the past such as partition, refugee crisis, regional disputes all these results in political and human right violations in which Women, children, minorities are mostly affected.

5. Case Study Of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is the only country in South Asia which struggled for independence based on the ethnolinguistic identity. Political violence in Bangladesh revolves around the religious extremism and militancy. The long rule of the military has been a major problem of political intolerance and religious disputes. Lack of governance, organised and unorganised sections of the society, all this leads to political violence. The cause of political violence is deep-rooted intolerance, enmity and arrogance. These conflicts emerge due to religious and ideological indifferences, political instability, conflict within the party, among the parties, non-cooperation etc. which results in distrust and violence. Since 1991 parliamentary democracy was introduced in Bangladesh but then also there was no growth in the society, competition, political confrontations, monopoly of the state authorities weakened the governance of the state. The difference in views based on institutional structure and ideology leads to street agitations, assassinations, attack on civilians, bombs which spread fear in the country at the same time they expect to bring a drastic change in the political system.

The rise of religious powers in violence has been increasing in Bangladesh since the 1990s. Religious extremist groups such as Harkatul-Jihad Al Islami and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh questioned the secular government and opposed democracy. They wanted a complete violent transformation of the country into Islamic state. Religion is the main cause of such violent atmosphere in South Asia. The tension of losing and maintaining own culture, tradition, language is some of the challenges to the state. Also in South Asia, such countries face identity crisis and border issues after the period of partition which is debated and ends up into regional or territorial disputes.

6. Human Rights Violation

Organised crimes and political violence are the main components of human rights violation. The ruling party of Bangladesh uses violence against political opponents and criminals. Household violence is very much prevailing in Bangladesh. Family members are arrested, inhumanely treated and tortured. This violence leaves people into trauma and other mental and physical injuries. Most of the household victimisation happens because of political incorporation, conflict among or within families, household income etc. As the population increases this violence also widens as an individual, community or any other societal factor is interconnected and this fluctuates the level of violence and human rights violence high.

6.1 Gender Based Violence

Violence against women has been a serious problem in all the aspects be it cultural, social, or economic in Bangladesh. This violence is inflicted at different level such as family, community or the state. Women are the most affected during such crimes and violences such as war, political and military repression of ethnic or national groups, movements etc. Women are used as an object of oppression and prosecution by the state itself. Rapes, domestic violence and prostitution are largely happening in that country and barely the government tries to intervene and sort out such issues. Also Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country, women are confined to live and follow the norms followed by them. Women and children are trafficked to other parts of the world for commercial sexual exploitation. They are the daily victims of discrimination and exploitation. Gender based violence and household violence is torture and a traumatic experience for women.

6.2 Poor Democracy

Bangladesh initially aimed for a democratic country through movement by trying to achieve autonomy for the rights of individual from Pakistan. Bangladesh has always been one of the politically and economically weak countries in South Asia. Poverty, starvation, illiteracy, malnutrition is some of the challenges faced by the state and the government is also not able to take up such issues and draw a conclusion as eight percent of the population is affected because of this. The intervention of of the military rule and forming their own democracy increased the crisis within the country. They have to face many threats for the development of democracy. There is no voice to the public, everything is being decided by the

few. Some of the major cause of poor democracy in Bangladesh are:

1. Absence of democratic political culture
2. Absence of rule of law
3. Lack of political morality
4. Corruption and terrorism
5. Lack of tolerance
6. Lack of strong leadership

The independent Bangladesh is still to enjoy democracy though the citizens are expecting a political development. The government is making many policies and schemes and for this socio-political organisations and institutions should become active.

7. Conclusion

Bangladesh has always been facing border issues. It has questioned and challenged the movement of people and goods within and outside the country. Multiculturalism, religious majority or minority, territorial disputes are the major cause for the internal disputes. Lack of good governance and unstable political rule makes it difficult for the state to interfere and conclude the issues. Injecting the spirit of nationalism into the public will instigate conflict among the people which make its worse. Bangladesh is a young country and it has time to renew the structure and the system. Political extremism and structural conditions should be achieved which could bring down the increasing violence through negotiations.