Students, movements, and the threat to authoritarianism in Bangladesh

David Jackman, University of Oxford

Accepted journal article at *Contemporary South Asia*

Abstract

Decades of violent yet competitive party politics in Bangladesh have been usurped by authoritarian consolidation under the ruling Awami League. Both mainstream 'civil society' and political opposition have been largely suppressed, left unable to wage the protests typical of the county's politics. It is then striking that recent years have nonetheless seen significant urban unrest in the form of student led movements, coalescing around issues of injustice. Such social movements are neglected in the study of authoritarian durability, yet appear in practice to pose a serious threat to the ruling party. To understand this threat, this article examines two cases from 2018: the movements for reform to civil service quotas, and improved road safety. It argues such movements must be read in light of Bangladesh's history, where students have played a major role in confronting authoritarian rule. In particular, they pose two threats: first, they have the potential to undermine the ruling party's legitimacy and create a moment of crisis on which the opposition could capitalise; second, they can exacerbate tensions between interest groups on whom the ruling party rely to maintain power. Responding to such threats is thus crucial for the ruling party to maintain their grip on power.

Word count: 11345 (including abstract and bibliography)

Keywords: student movements, urban, political parties, Bangladesh, violence

1. Introduction

Following the return to parliamentary democracy in the early 1990s, Bangladesh saw two decades of intense party-political competition between the Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). By 'Western' Liberal standards, this competition was highly dysfunctional, often relying on violence meted out on the streets through an array of armed 'cadre', not least among whom were the student wings of both parties, the Bangladesh Chhatra League (henceforth 'Chhatra League') and Bangladesh Jatiobadi Chhatra Dal (henceforth 'Chhatra Dal'), respectively (Andersen 2013, 2019; Ruud 2010, 2014; Suykens 2018; Kuttig 2019). Student politics in this period became dominated by these wings, often controlling university campuses as if fiefdoms, and holding influence far beyond them. Since the Awami League returned to power in 2009 however, the country's politics has seen dramatic change, characterised by authoritarian consolidation under the ruling party. This has had a deep and broad impact on political life in the country, characteristics of which include the (alleged) widespread detention and repression of opposition leaders and activists on dubious grounds, intense politicization of key apparatus of the state, most crucially the security agencies, the repeal of legislation to ensure general elections are administered under caretaker governments, and hence two highly controversial general elections in 2014 and 2018.

In the face of this, 'civil society' (*shushil samaj*) as it is conventionally perceived within the country (often meaning elite NGOs, intellectuals and media figures) has been largely cowed, and mainstream political opposition unable to take to the streets. The important election year of 2018 was particularly devastating for the BNP, beginning with the imprisonment of their leader Khaleda Zia on corruption charges, and ending with the landslide victory for the ruling Awami League (AL) in the general election. It is then striking that 2018 nonetheless saw significant urban protest, particularly in the capital Dhaka. Unlike previous decades, this unrest

by and large stemmed not from the *hartal* (general strikes) often waged by political opposition, nor was it the bombings that had been seen around the 2014 election. Instead, it came from two student-led *andalon* (movements), campaigning on issues of injustice, relating to quotas for employment in the civil service, and road safety. This resulted in marches, blockades of key streets and intersections, acts of vandalism, clashes between protestors, the police and political activists of the ruling Awami League, arrests, and eventually concessions from the government.

In light of the authoritarian consolidation of power under the present ruling party, and the seeming weakness of conventional 'civil society' and political opposition, it is then crucial to understand potential sources of disruption to the present rule, and the responses of the government. This article examines the two social movements referenced above to understand their threat to contemporary authoritarianism. To begin to understand the significance of these we need to recognise that student led movements are a systemic response to authoritarian rule in Bangladesh, such that the country's political history – from Liberation 1971 to the return to parliamentary democracy – is bound up with these struggles. Crucially, these movements have often emerged from among urban students and the wider middle class, but been fomented through their interaction with political parties.

While motivated by very different issues, having origins in separate groups of urban students, and protesting in very different ways, there is then a commonality to the threat these specific movements posed in 2018, and the response from the government, which can be discerned by analysing the movements in tandem. Two key threats are crucial: first, they have the potential to create a national crisis that undermines the legitimacy of the government, galvanises wider support on the street, and therefore presents an opportunity for the depleted opposition to bring pressure to bear. With the opposition's ranks significantly weakened, such a moment offers

important and rare political opportunity. Second, these movements create and exacerbate competing interests in society and within the base of the Awami League, requiring careful management to ensure stability. With the Awami League seemingly set on remaining in power, a key challenge will be mitigating the grievances which motivate such unrest, and responding to the unpredictability of these movements in a manner which does not undermine their moral authority and risk escalating discontent into a broader move against the party.

This article draws primarily on key informant interviews and a systematic review of newspaper articles over the relevant period for its analysis. Between April 2018 and July 2019, I conducted thirty interviews with a wide range of key actors relevant to both movements. This consisted of twelve interviews with (then) current and former leaders of the Chhatra League, including two nationally senior figures, four hall level leaders at Dhaka University, four activists with lower hall level posts, and two former senior leaders from the organisation. In addition, I conducted interviews with five students who had been at the frontline of the quota reform movement (although without any recognised leadership position). Eight interviews were conducted with journalists, primarily politics or crime reporters and Dhaka University correspondents. The remaining interviews were conducted with leaders in the transport sector, including prominent leaders in associations for the owners and workers of trucks and covered vans. Secondly, I conducted content analysis on relevant articles from leading English language newspapers (The Daily Star, Dhaka Tribune and New Age) that I had systematically collated on a daily basis from early 2018 to early 2019. Finally, I also conducted participant observation of the quota reform movement at Dhaka University in early April 2018 in the days prior to and following the crackdown. During this I observed the protest, and engaged Chhatra League leaders, protestors, activists from left wing student organisations, and members of the police in conversations about events. One notable limitation to the methodology was that field work was

not conducted with protestors in the road safety movement, although a number of the interviews with journalists and leaders in the transport sector were conducted in 2019 reflecting on this movement. In terms of structure, the article begins with an analysis of authoritarianism and social movements in Bangladesh, outlining the key roles played by students and the recent resurgence of student movements. The following section examines the two cases together, plotting the evolution of both movements, the threat they posed to the state, and the mixture of repression and concessions they were met with, while the final section concludes.

2. Authoritarianism and student movements in Bangladesh

There is a pervasive sense that authoritarianism in its many guises is on the rise globally[1]. South Asia is a striking example of this, with Modi's Hindu nationalism in India, fears about the return of the Rajapaksas in Sri Lanka, and the entrenchment of the Awami League in Bangladesh. A central task in the study of authoritarianism is to discern factors influencing the durability of such regimes, and possible processes for institutional change. Despite the intuitive association between regime change and what has been broadly termed 'contentious politics' (Tilly and Tarrow 2015), much recent and prominent work on authoritarian durability draws attention away from the forms such politics takes, and instead towards intra-regime dynamics. Levitsky and Way (2010: 348) for example argue that the fate of authoritarian regimes depends less on 'opposition protest' and more on the incumbent's 'organisational power'. Drawing on global data of protests from 1990-2008, they argue that anti-regime mobilization has had very little chance of bringing change when the 'organizational power' of a regime was either medium or high. The ever-burgeoning literature in this field has then drawn attention towards

[1] The term authoritarianism is used in an intentionally broad way here, and it is recognised a vast academic vocabulary has been developed to interrogate the forms this takes. This includes notions of illiberal democracies, hybrid regimes, competitive authoritarianism, electoral authoritarianism, dominant party regimes and democratic authoritarianism.

different intra-regime factors to understand regime durability. These include how elite cohesion is built during period of intense ideological and violent conflict (Levitsky and Way 2012), the centrality of patronage to address sources of contention lying both within and outside of the regime (Svolik 2012), the role of dominant parties in enabling rulers to bargain with elites and mobilize the masses (Magaloni and Kricheli 2010), and the importance of coercive institutions in shaping the capacity of regimes to hinder opposition and sources of unrest (Policzer 2009; Greitens 2016).

Implicit to such work is that it is less the character of contentious politics that is crucial to understanding the fate of political regimes, and more the susceptibility of regimes to such politics[2]. As with literature on authoritarianism, so too with broader work on political transitions, which has 'generally paid little attention to popular protest and direct action' (Celestino and Gleditsch 2013: 386). Social movements and broader forms of protest for example, been 'traditionally assigned a limited role' in studies of democratization (Della Porta and Rossi 2013: 1). Empirically however the past decade has born witness to a remarkable surge in contentious politics in authoritarian contexts and beyond, such that one think tank recently wrote of us living in an 'age of mass protests' (Brannen et al 2020). Much protest has deeply marked authoritarian contexts, most notably in the so-called 'Arab Spring', highlighting the obvious lacuna that we need to better understand whether and how the precise character of contentious politics also shapes the durability of authoritarian regimes (Ulfelder 2005; Celestino and Gleditsch 2013).

[2] Slater (2010) is a partial exception in this regard, examining how a crucial factor explaining durability lies in contentious politics and the threat it poses to elite interests. The more severe a threat, the greater the likelihood elites will form a 'protection pact' to build a strong authoritarian state to protect their interests.

The form of contentious politics focused on here is that of social movements. Building broadly from the 'political process approach' associated with scholars of contentious politics, social movements are seen here not as an aberration from, but as being inherent to, 'normal' institutionalised politics (Goldstone 2003; Tarrow 2015; Tilly 2004). Social movements, in other words, may differ widely in character and scale, but are often closely linked to elections, political parties, revolutions and war, both historically and today (Goldstone 2003; McAdam and Tarrow 2010; Tarrow 2015; Hutter et al 2018). For example, the ideology and organisation of political parties is often rooted in such movements, and as such these struggles have long-term implications for the character and dynamics of party politics (Desai 2003). Movements furthermore often serve to bring particular issues to the fore that can be acted upon during elections and, more dramatically, can also morph into revolutions, and be a catalyst for war (Tarrow 2015). How then does a focus on social movements through this lens help understand the threat of recent student movements in Bangladesh, and what are the implications of this for understanding authoritarian durability?

2.1. A brief history of movements and students in Bangladesh

Diverse forms of contentious politics are commonly seen on the streets of Bangladesh, including *hartal* (general strikes), blockades, rallies, marches, human chains, sit-ins, hunger strikes, vigils, sieges, charges, street fights, killings and bombings. Diverse actors routinely use many of these to advance their interests, notably political parties, the groups and factions within them, but also religious groups, students, garments workers, and other labour groups, all of which in practice often closely intersect with political parties. Distinct among these is the notion of a 'movement' (*andalon*), which incorporates many of the above into a sustained protest and political agenda. Such movements take different forms, including for

environmental issues, such as the Phulbari coalmine (Faruque 2018) and Rampal power plant, but also much larger issues of injustice and politics. Indeed, socio-political movements have been at the heart of major political transitions in Bangladesh, closely linked throughout the country's history to elections, and significant changes to the political system (Jahan 1987). This can be seen most crucially through the Liberation struggle itself in 1971, the move to parliamentary democracy in the early 1990s, and key transitions in power between political parties and caretaker regimes over recent decades. These movements have historically incorporated both political parties and wider interest groups in society, such as students. It is also from these struggles that political parties have grown in strength, providing an organisational backbone, leadership, skills in mobilization, and ideological narratives that have served the parties in their quests to dominate rivals. It is not then an exaggeration to say that *andalon* are at the heart of Bangladesh's political history[3].

The urban middle class, students and Dhaka University have played a central role in fomenting such movements. Closely following partition in 1947, students at Dhaka University began agitating for greater freedom when the government of Pakistan asserted that the official language of East Bengal (named 'East Pakistan' from 1955) would be Urdu, not the native Bangla. This grievance evolved into the 'language movement' (*basha andalon*) originating at the university, and incorporating the wider urban middle class. At a time when the vast majority of the population lived in rural areas, this marked a watershed in the geography of the politics of the region, although arguably it drew strength from the tradition of peasant radicalism (Alam 1991). Students killed in 1952 at the university as part of the struggle became martyrs, memorialised in the monument, Shaheed Minar. In the early 1960s, the student movement was

[3] It should be noted that highlighting the role of such movements in Bangladesh's political history does not negate the significance of other factors underlying these transitions, such as the importance of clientelist networks and shifting political coalitions (Khan 2010).

galvanised by changes in education policy, which were also a vehicle for the wider movement for democracy, resulting in marches, sit-ins and *hartal* (Umar 2006). By the late 1960s, other urban groups, such as 'industrial labor, urban slum dwellers, and petty service holders', often in smaller towns, were incorporated into these movements (Jahan 1987: 172). In the Liberation struggle, Dhaka University students served as key mobilisers, linking the movement geographically and between classes, partly because the majority of students themselves came from rural areas, with closer links to the peasantry (Alam 1991). As a result, during the Liberation War, the Pakistani army targeted and brutally supressed the university as a hotbed of resistance in their 'operation searchlight', leading to massacres and hastily dug mass graves. Students elsewhere were also crucial to the guerrilla groups which mobilised against the Pakistani army, such as 'Kader bahini', consisting primarily of school and college students (Maniruzzaman 1980).

From these events has come a deep association between Dhaka University and the country's struggle for liberation, as well as a high regard for student politicians (Van Schendel 2009). Leadership in student politics is a key route to a national political career (Andersen 2013, 2019; Ruud 2010, 2014; Suykens 2018; Kuttig 2019), and events that mark Dhaka University campus can quickly reverberate around the nation, spreading to other universities and colleges. As the Chhatra League president of one hall put it to me: 'If there is any movement or problem here at Dhaka university, the whole of Bangladesh is shaken and becomes unstable. To create instability at Dhaka University means creating instability everywhere'. This has been demonstrated in key subsequent political transitions. In the 1980s, for example, students were some of the first to mobilise in rallies against the military rule of President Ershad, and pivotal to the wider movement for democracy's success, when they united key political parties and the alliances they commanded together through the 'All Party Student Union' (APSU), leading to

the formation of all party committees in district towns, agreement of a joint declaration against the regime (Maniruzzaman 1992), and significant protests at Dhaka University (Uddin 2006). Ershad's efforts to contain the opposition movement led to a significant number of protestor deaths and injuries, which galvanised further support following the killing of a doctor by the government at Dhaka University (Maniruzzaman 1992), culminating on 4 December 1990, when hundreds of thousands of people openly protested his rule on the streets of Dhaka, leading to his resignation. This was only a few months after he had reportedly commented that 'a sit-in of a few thousand people in a city of 7 million people cannot change the government' (Kamaluddin 1990: 21).

Key to such movements bringing political change in Bangladesh has not been student politics per se, but the interaction between students and other actors – most crucially political parties – and their collective impact on the regime in power. It is also in part through these movements that the country's main political parties have gained the prominence they have today. In the case of the Awami League, for example, the language movement prior to partition was a core issue around which they organised as a party, from which AL politicians emerged, and through which they gained popularity (Jahan 2018). This continued as the Six Points Programme in the 1960s and in Liberation, the AL successfully managed to appeal to the entire nation (Ibid). Similarly, subsequent struggles – such as the BNP's sustained pressure against Ershad's military regime during the 1980s, and AL's mobilisation against the BNP during the mid-1990s and military-backed caretaker regime of 2006-2008 – each time bolstered their organisational strength, demonstrating their capacity to bring change in the nation.

A key change to the character of student politics since the 1990s, however, has been the degree to which the student organisations of the ruling party have controlled the agenda and potential

for student mobilisation. When in power, the auxiliary organisations of each party, such as the Chhatra League, Chhatra Dal, and Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir (Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh's [JIB] student wing) have monopolised life on campuses, often violently suppressing the voices that oppose their interests. Nationally, these student bodies have provided crucial muscle for their respective parties to mobilise in the far wider repertoire of contentious politics in which they engage, most centrally *hartal* (Andersen 2013; Suykens and Islam 2013, 2015; Ruud 2010, 2014). This mirrors a transition seen more widely across Bangladesh, where political life has become steadily more polarised between two main political camps. Contentious politics on the streets – around the universities or elsewhere – has then been largely the purview of these political parties, to the exclusion of mobilisation of a more 'civic' nature. In practice, street politics has been concerned less with ideology and more with the strength of particular leaders and factions at a local level, and at a national level with unseating the rival coalition. While movements through Bangladesh's history have involved an interplay between students and political parties, subsequent to 1991, movements have been led and dominated by the political parties, with less participation of the wider public.

2.2. A recent resurgence

It is then within this context that we must read the movements that have struck Dhaka city and the wider country during the Awami League's last two terms in office, beginning with the Shahbag movement in 2013 and, more recently, being felt through the quota reform and road safety movements in 2018[4]. Unlike the dominant forms of contemporary politics in

[4] Despite the party politicization of student politics in Bangladesh alluded to above, it should be recognised that the 1990s and 2000s continued to see smaller scale movements flare up at Dhaka University and elsewhere. More recently these have included the 'anti-VAT' movement against VAT on private university fees in 2015, and protests against increasing student fees, which, it has been argued, stem in particular from the increasingly 'neoliberal' policy driving higher education in Bangladesh (Kabir and Greenwood 2017).

Bangladesh, these have not been organised (at least initially) within conventional political boundaries, originate with the urban middle-class youth, have been on a significant scale, and have brought sustained pressure to bear on the government.

This began in 2013 with the Shahbag movement, a spontaneous protest started by a small group of online activists at a prominent junction north of Dhaka University. The movement was sparked by a court verdict that Abdul Quader Mollah, a senior leader of Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, would receive only a life sentence for crimes committed during Bangladesh's Liberation. After the conviction, Mollah showed the 'V' (victory) sign to supporters, prompting widespread anger and a sense of injustice (De 2015). In response, thousands – and later hundreds of thousands – of people congregated, held candle vigils, and called for the government to reconsider the verdict, demanding the death penalty, and that JIB be banned. The movement had some parallels to wider political events in the 'Arab Spring', which had recently been felt in many Muslim majority countries. The movement was young, with many protestors not supporters of a mainstream political party (Roy 2018), predominantly middle class, drawn from the sizeable student body, it was popular (some celebrities supported the movement), spread around the country, and it was mobilised partially through social media, such as Facebook. While often labelled as the 'Shahbag movement', it was referred to in context as *Gono Jagoron Moncho* ('mass awakening platform').

In only a matter of days, the government responded to the movement, passing an amendment to legislation enabling an appeal against the conviction of Mollah, months later returning a death sentence verdict, which by the end of the year had been implemented. With the movement attracting large numbers, there are widespread claims also that the movement's leadership was co-opted by the ruling party. Loud and public demands for Jamaat-e-Islami, and religious

parties more generally, to be banned from politics found resistance from a rival movement, which caricatured the protestors as atheists calling for the banning not of Jamaat, but of Islam itself. The rival movement was led by the Islamist group, Hefazat-e-Islam, and emerged on the streets of Dhaka a few months later, with a 13-point list of demands promoting Islam in public life. Bringing tens of thousands of followers (many of whom were madrassa students), they blockaded entrances to the city, and marched in central Dhaka in early May, resulting in confrontations with ruling party activists and eventually the security forces in 'Operation Flush Out', resulting in a number of deaths. The estimated number of casualties differs widely, from the movement leaders' claim that it was in the thousands, to the government claiming it was less than a dozen.

What was important about these movements was not only their scale and timing, being in the run-up to a general election, but also the sense of unpredictability, with new political forces emerging and claiming to speak for the public on issues of justice and identity. This came at a time during and after which there has been sustained and systematic curtailing of political expression and mobilisation, with the opposition BNP left almost decimated as a political force, and mainstream civil society, such as prominent newspapers and NGOs, limited in their ability to voice concerns about the increasing consolidation of power under the ruling party. The backdrop against which more recent movements emerged in 2018 was then one where there had been precedent for large-scale and to some degree successful movements outside of the main political parties in recent years, whilst even less space to mobilise through formal political processes, and heightened sensitivity to instability in the run-up to the general election.

3. The quota reform and road safety movements of 2018

The two movements that struck Dhaka city in the crucial election year of 2018 share much in common. Both originated with urban students, were sparked by issues of injustice, were

catalysed by unwise comments from ministers, mobilised through Facebook, were seen as an opportunity by opposition forces to create a national crisis, were suppressed violently by the police and Awami League activists, and yet achieved significant, albeit qualified, concessions. In light of the role that movements have played through Bangladesh's history, and the contemporary political context outlined above, this section examines the quota reform and road safety movements, to illuminate the threat they posed, and the politics of the ruling party's response.

3.1. Injustice, insult and protest

On April 8th 2018, Dhaka University – along with university campuses across the country – was alive with protest. Thousands of students congregated en masse at Shahbag junction at the university, speeches were delivered through loudspeakers, slogans for government reform were chanted by the crowd, and by the evening small fires and tyres could be seen burning on the street. Together this created the largest protest movement Dhaka had seen for five years, since the Shahbag movement of 2013. Rather than seeking justice for historical wrongs, this movement's demands felt distinctly modern: reform of the quotas that dominate access to employment in the public service. Student agitation for quota reform was not, however, new. A smaller movement had surfaced in 2013 at the university, when students who had failed the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) exam took their grievances to the street, and the call for reform has also been made at senior levels of government, particularly by technocrats who ruled under the caretaker regime of 2006-2008, as well as bodies such as the 'Public Service Commission' (the body responsible for civil service recruitment).

In 2018, however, the cause took on a scale and significance not seen before. Earlier in February a small group of students – most of whom were not aligned to any political party – formed under the banner of the 'Bangladesh Shadharan Chhatra Odhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad' (Bangladesh General Students' Rights Protection Forum) and began protesting at Dhaka University (DU). The movement grew on the back of simmering discontent around work opportunities for the educated, urban middle class, for whom employment opportunities commensurate to education are perceived to be difficult to find. Meanwhile the cost of living in Dhaka is increasing, and a striking 56 percent of jobs in the public sector are currently allocated on the basis of quotas, jobs that have become more attractive since salary increases introduced by the current government. Of these, 10 percent are allocated to women, 10 percent to people from 'backwards districts', 5 percent to ethnic minorities, and 1 percent to people with disabilities. Over half of the quotas (30 percent of all opportunities) are targeted towards the children and now grandchildren of 'freedom fighters' of Bangladesh's 1971 war of Liberation against West Pakistan. For a young generation without living memory of the war, these are the most controversial. As one protester put it to me: "My father was 11 during the Liberation War, so he was too young to fight, and because of that I am not eligible. How is this a fair system?" The sense of injustice is exacerbated further by the widespread dealings in fake freedom fighter certificates – which is a longstanding problem (Maniruzzaman 1979: 48) – recent reforms that have further increased the claimants by reducing the lower age limit for freedom fighters from 13 to 12.5 years, and the fact that positions allocated on the basis of quotas often go unfilled.

In the face of these perceived injustices, the movement outlined five demands, which were widely publicised in the national press and shouted for on the streets. These were: i), the reduction of quotas from 56 to 10 percent; ii), merit-based recruitment of vacancies where

quota candidates were unavailable; iii), stopping special recruitment tests for quota-based jobs; iv), standardising the age limit for job seekers; and v), stopping quota applicants from applying more than once. Before turning into a mass blockade of the streets, the movement had taken a variety of actions over preceding months, each escalating in size: from a human chain, to a cycle movement, followed by a march and, finally, by a mass blockade accompanied by the call for an indefinite strike at public universities until their demands for quota reform were met. Movements that start at DU spread quickly, and university- and college-level committees were established across the country, accompanied by protests and blockades through major towns and cities. Inflammatory comments in parliament by a government minister further motivated the movement, with the then agriculture minister labelling the protestors 'children of razakar' (war criminals, collaborators in Bangladesh's War of Liberation).

Only a few months later, another movement sprang up in Dhaka, originating with college and school students, rather than DU. On July 29th, 2018, three private buses were racing each other along the busy Airport Road, a primary avenue connecting the airport and north of Dhaka city to the centre. Although such races are a daily occurrence in the city, in this instance one bus lost control and hit a group of students, injuring many, while killing 17-year-old Diya Khanam Mim and 18-year-old Abdul Karim Rajib from Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment College. As often happens in road accidents, onlookers and those affected took immediate justice, and here a group of students vandalised nearby vehicles and set fire to buses, before being joined by hundreds of other students and blockading the road. Anger was, however, magnified by the reaction of the then shipping minister, Shajahan Khan, who is also the executive president of the Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, which represents over 235 transport unions and incorporates around 6 million workers (Daily Star 2019). When asked about the

incident, he reportedly referenced a recent crash in India with a higher number of casualties, before asking “But do they talk about it in the way we do?” and smiling.

As well as having his support base in the transport sector, the minister had also been publicly criticised for his interventions in the sector, including in 2011, when he issued 28,000 driving licences without the appropriate test. Nationally there are estimated to be around 1 million vehicles driven in Bangladesh by drivers without licences, while there are only 176 registered driving instructors (Daily Star 2018a). It was later found that none of the bus drivers involved had a licence, and one did not have the appropriate route permit. With the sense of injustice magnified, the next day students – many of whom were dressed in their uniforms and carrying school bags and ID cards – blockaded the avenue on which the incident occurred for much of the day, issuing a nine-point demand, notably demanding there should be capital punishment for such offences and an apology from the minister, along with a string of measures designed to improve road safety and the terms on which students access it. Over the following days, the movement escalated across Dhaka and wider Bangladesh, with students from schools, colleges and universities blocking key junctions and avenues, including, once again, Shahbag. A recurring chant heard throughout the movement, was in English – “We want justice!” – with other chants and slogans aimed against the government, police and shipping minister.

Students, however, not only protested, but also began enacting the change they wished to see, enforcing new traffic rules. Videos rapidly circulated on Facebook of students surrounding vehicles armed with mobile phones, checking licences and documentation, and passing those who failed their checks to the police. These acts – some bordering on ‘rude accountability’ (Hossain 2010) - were striking, with police, politicians and senior civil servants not exempt from their reach. Students, for example, stopped a deputy inspector general of one police

branch on a central avenue in the city, plastering the windows of his SUV with posters, and forcing him to leave the vehicle and greet the crowd. Protestors found that the vehicle had no registration certificate available, nor could the driver show a licence. Police officers were regularly stopped by protestors, and a senior minister was prevented from driving the wrong way down a road. Students even created new orderly (and very slow-moving) traffic lanes, with a special lane for emergency vehicles. Celebrities joined the movement to show support for the students' efforts. The movement spread around the country, with similar – but smaller scale – protests, processions and human chains seen in major urban centres, such as nearby Gazipur and Narayanganj, and further away Sylhet, Chittagong and Rajshahi, many shouting the familiar chant: "We want justice". Meanwhile the Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation suspended all their services, alleging harassment by the protestors.

3.2. Concessions and caution

Once these movements had reached a significant scale, the government immediately offered concessions, and appeared cautious not to inflame tensions. In the case of quota reform, before the movement had escalated into a blockade, the protestors' demands had been flatly rejected by the government, with a common sentiment being that the sheer suggestion was 'anti-Liberation', an insult to freedom fighters and their families who had made sacrifices for the nation. As the movement gathered in strength – and, critically, as it took to the streets and blockaded roads – the general secretary of the Awami League, Obaidul Quader, was sent to negotiate and there appeared to be a concession that the government would consider plans to reform the quota system, on the condition that the movement left the streets. At one point, some leaders in the movement accepted this; however, the agreement was almost immediately

rejected by the majority of the protestors, leading to a split in the movement, new movement 'convenors' emerging and street protests continuing.

From the beginning of the quota movement, the response of the Chhatra League was different to previous episodes. Rather than attack the movement head on, violently repressing it, as they had done in 2013, when a similar but smaller-scale movement had emerged at the university, the leaders appeared to equivocate. One reason for this was that in fact many Chhatra League activists, and even some mid-ranking leaders themselves, actively joined the protest. More broadly, the quota movement found support from across the student body, and although the vast majority of protestors did not have an explicit political affiliation, activists of all political groups could be seen protesting. As a senior Chhatra League leader described it:

> 'There were some from Chhatra League in the leadership of the movement against the quota system in BCS. The spokesperson of the organisation leading the movement was a vice president of 'X' Hall wing of Chhatra League. The movement could be dismantled in the beginning, but we didn't receive any instruction from the party. Because it was not difficult for Chhatra League to foil the movement. In the past, when Chhatra League was asked for action, we immediately did it. The protesters couldn't stand in front of us.'

Some leaders in the Chhatra League described to me not being able to openly attend the protests, even though they knew the system was unfair and supported the quota cause. There was a particular need during this period to not appear to step out of line, because leaders were awaiting the appointment of the Chhatra League's central committee. An alternative explanation however for why the movement managed to gain the momentum it did was voiced

to me by a former senior Chhatra League leader. In fact, he claimed, the Chhatra League leadership had strategically allowed the movement to gain the momentum it did as a source of leverage over the central Awami League party leadership to manoeuvre for the reappointment to the central committee to be delayed. As he put it: 'the leaders are trying to create chaos. If the movement delays the formation of the new [Chhatra Leauge] committee to after Ramadan and Eid, it will be difficult to form it before the next [general] election, so the leaders will have even more time to continue getting rich'.

A further possible reason for the initially muted response, however, was that the protestors had learnt from the 2013 experience and carefully crafted their political discourse accordingly. Knowing that in the public imagination quota reform was often labelled as 'anti-Liberation', the movement strategically positioned themselves as pro-Bangabandhu, pro-Awami League protestors. A Chhatra League hall leader at DU described this:

> 'During the 2013 quota movement, the students chanted anti-government slogans, and because of this they were put down by the police. But this time they were very mature, very intelligent, they used the same slogans that we do, they were shouting the same thing, showing photos of Bangabandu and Sheikh Hassina, so of course we could not attack them.'

The party was similarly cautious – at least initially – in dealing with the road safety movement. As it rapidly took on a significant scale, seemingly from nowhere, the movement had an air of unpredictability, which was unwelcome politically in the run up to the general election. In response to the movement's demands, the government gave immediate concessions, notably rekindling the 'Road Transport Act', which had reportedly been stalled for over a year, due to

opposition from the transport sector (Daily Star 2018b). Amongst other measures, the Act stipulates that the maximum term of imprisonment for causing death through reckless driving is five years. The drivers responsible for the accident were also quickly caught and arrested by the Rapid Action Batallion, and the registration of the company responsible – 'Jabal-e-Noor Paribahan' – was cancelled. Associations responsible for the sector in Dhaka announced reform to labour relations designed to reduce competition between buses, and the government also immediately announced the start of a 'traffic week', in which the police became suddenly vigilant against road traffic violations, and began issuing a huge number of fines and reprimands. Senior politicians called for students to return to class, and families of both victims were also personally given 20 lakh taka in savings certificates by the prime minister in a ceremony.

3.3. Infiltrators, fake news and moral crises

Such concessions however failed to make any significant mark on momentum of these movements, and events quickly turned violent, with clashes between protestors, police and ruling party activists, and widespread arrests. Important in shaping these outcomes were claims that the BNP were attempting to intensify such protests to create a moment of crisis on which they could capitalise. The context of an election year and the inability of the BNP to mobilise significantly on the streets in recent years are thus crucial to understanding the threat posed by such movements.

With the quota movement morphing into a blockade, and tens and thousands of angry and vocal students on the streets of Dhaka, it conjured up images of Shahbag. Claims – and some evidence – began to emerge that the BNP were attempting to influence the course of the

movement. It should be made clear that the government have a very clear interest in characterising movements in this way as a means of legitimising the coercion they use to control them. Indeed, senior Chhatra League leaders allege that the quota movement was even directly funded by the BNP, as one put it to me: 'The convenor of the movement has received funds from the BNP. From Tarique Rahman in London. We think it is 1.20 crore taka. This money was to spread the movement throughout the country.' Where else did they get the money for the placards, for the transport, for the medical treatment, went the argument. While the claim formed part of the ruling party's campaign to discredit the movement, a leaked phone call available on YouTube showed that Tarique Rahman had contacted a BNP-affiliated professor at the university and was attempting to influence events. The party as a whole also openly supported the movement, proclaiming that they would abolish certain quotas if they were to come to power. Protestors interviewed themselves acknowledged that the BNP were attempting to influence events, portraying this as inevitable, but emphasising that very few of the actual protestors were from the BNP's ranks.

The primary threat to the government was not that they would be overpowered by the students. They could of course use the might of the police and political muscle to confront them. Rather, the fear was that events could take a turn that would undermine their moral authority and legitimacy. A real possibility was that a protestor would die at the hands of the police or party, leading to moral outrage and a risk that the wider public would take to the streets in solidarity. One reading of events on 8 and 9 April was that such an event was almost engineered. On 8 April, the movement was at its strongest, and the police were facing down the crowd with baton charges, water cannons, rubber bullets and tear gas. At this time a post appeared on Facebook and began to circulate widely, claiming falsely that a protestor had been killed. As a result, key Chhatra League leaders moved to Shahbag – under instruction from the prime minister, as they

described it – to reassure the convenors of the movement and calm the situation. At this point, a small group of unknown actors raided the house of the university's vice chancellor (VC), destroying furniture, burning cars, while also taking the hard drives of nearby CCTV cameras. The claim made by both Chhatra Leaguers and some protestors interviewed was that the attack on the VC's house was orchestrated by outside political forces, in an attempt to further escalate events. Chhatra Leaguers, journalists and protestors, all described to me being at the house when a group wearing motorbike helmets and carrying guns and metal rods arrived and stormed through the gate to the VC's house. A senior Chhatra League leader described it:

> 'They spread the news on Facebook that one protester had died. They have over a hundred thousand members on their group, and so when this happened we were all up at Shahbag negotiating with the convenor of the movement. This is when they decided to invade the house of the VC. Look at this photo of the burnt cars. Normal students can't do that. This was shibir, BNP people. The news on Facebook was to divert us.'

A counter narrative heard also from some protestors however is that the raid was in fact orchestrated by the Chhatra League themselves, as a means of delegitimizing the movement and justifying their repressive measures to control it. In any case, immediately after the raid on the VC's house, the Chhatra League took decisive steps. Armed, as protestors described it, with guns, sticks and metal rods, student political leaders and activists began to beat protestors to disperse the movement. This led to a number of charges and counter-charges by the protestors through the early morning of the 9th, ironically all happening near a statue commemorating a student who had died because of student political violence in the 1990s. As one protestor described it:

> ‘After the VCs bungalow, the Chhatra League charged at us around the statue, the women were on the inside, and the men on the outside, and the Chhatra League came at us with rods and guns. We then charged at them, and they were counter-charging… They paid Chhatra League members from all over Dhaka to come and organise against the movement. When they were too many, we ran. I have never jumped over a wall in my life, but I jumped over that one in 3 seconds!’

Fake news continued to be spread on Facebook, with a claim a few days later that a female Awami League student leader had cut the tendons on the foot of a protestor, provoking further protest.

A similar dynamic can be read in the road safety movement, with widespread claims from the ruling party that ‘infiltrators’ were attempting to escalate confrontation. From the outset, the movement was far more violent than that for quota reform, with students often only of school or college age, vandalising buses and vehicles. Only a few days into the movement, it was clear the concessions offered would not persuade students to cease, and the call for students to return to school changed to schools and colleges being closed. Both police and Awami League activists (notably from the Chhatra League and Jubo League) began to confront the protestors violently on the streets. The police were armed with tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons, while Awami League activists wielded sticks, iron rods, machetes and even pistols, many concealing their identity by wearing motorcycle helmets (such activists are often colloquially termed cadre when associated with violence). Unlike in the quota movement, protests and rallies sprung up across Dhaka city, often at key junctions, avenues and near educational institutions. As a result, skirmishes ensued, with police and the Awami League charging protestors and, in some cases, protestors throwing bricks and stones, and charging back at the

Awami League activists. Many photographers attempting to document incidents were beaten by ruling party activists, and a huge number of students were attacked, suffering injuries and in some cases hospitalised. In perhaps the most widely known incident in the protest, the photographer Shahidul Alam was arrested after giving an interview on Al-Jazeera, later leading to widespread condemnation and international campaigns for his release. During the protest, international actors, such as EU envoys, Western embassies and rights organisations, called for the government to end the violence.

Amidst such clashes, there are claims that the BNP and Islami Chhatra Shibir activists were attempting to escalate the violence, both digitally through fake news, and physically on the streets. The BNP publicly supported the movement, condemned the state violence waged against students, and flatly denied any accusation that they had orchestrated any of the more extreme acts occurring during the movement. The movement highlighted the government's failure to manage the sector, they argued, and suggested the government should stand down, with a delegation from the BNP also meeting the families of the victims. The Awami League's general secretary claimed that the BNP were attempting to capitalise on the movement, saying: 'They [BNP] have no options left. So they will now depend on the quota reform movement and student movement. They don't have the strength, courage and ability to do something on their own' (Daily Star 2018c). In one incident, for example, images and claims began to circulate on Facebook that student protestors had been killed in Dhanmondi area of Dhaka, and female student protestors had been raped in a nearby Awami League office. Chhatra League activists eventually invited a small group of students into their offices to demonstrate that no such events had occurred, leading to a press conference to dispel the rumours. In response, mobile internet speeds were temporarily lowered to 2G, meaning photos and 'Facebook live' could not be broadcast. The Awami League's general secretary claimed that 'infiltrators' from

BNP and Jamaat, using ‘fake ID card and wearing school uniform’ (New Age 2018), had used the cover of the movement to attack an Awami League office in the upmarket Dhanmondi district, leading to injuries and hospital treatment for a number of their activists. In another incident, an alleged phone conversation between a senior BNP leader and activist was leaked, suggesting that BNP activists were being encouraged to join the movement.

3.4. The politics of concessions

Both movements ended amidst a mix of concessions and repression. The road safety movement fizzled out after nine days of intense protest, and with 53 cases lodged against protestors and 102 arrests by 20 August (Daily Star, 2018d). The movement had won a commitment to significant reform; however, traffic quickly returned to its chaotic norm. The blockade of the quota reform movement ended with the decision by the prime minister that quotas would be scrapped in their entirety. The movement flared up sporadically and on a limited scale over the subsequent months, though with the blockade removed, the movement’s leaders lost much of their leverage, and allegedly faced sustained harassment from the Chhatra League (movement leaders were reportedly threatened with death, beaten, and, in the case of one protestor, allegedly shot), and arrest by the police. Across both movements, the basis for the cases and arrests differed, but often included vandalism, arson and section 57 of the ICT Act, relating to the promotion of fake news and use of ‘Facebook live’. A significant component to such arrests was the monitoring of social media (for example through the Social Media Monitoring and Cyber Security Department, under Dhaka Metropolitan Police), which identified the IDs of individuals spreading fake news.

In practice, the implementation of the concessions achieved by both movements has been qualified and hindered, exposing tensions within the ruling party's base. In the case of quota reform, the prime minister did not simply agree to the demands of the movement (a reform of the quotas), but took them a step further by abolishing quotas altogether, although acknowledging that special measures would be taken for ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. In parliament she explained that were the system to be reformed, other movements would simply appear demanding further reform. In response, the movement's convenors gave Sheikh Hasina the honorific title of 'Mother of Education'. The risk with the move, however, is that it undermines a key source of support for people directly linked to the Liberation struggle. This is detrimental to the Awami League because of the significance that Liberation has for the party's identity and ideology, and any action seen to devalue the struggle could threaten their popularity. In practice, the outcome may be qualified. In early October 2018, for example, the cabinet approved a recommendation from the committee established to examine the issue, that for tier I and II jobs within the civil service, appointments will be made solely on the basis of merit, while quotas will be kept for jobs within tiers III and IV.

Nonetheless, in response to the reform, pro-freedom fighter quota protests emerged on a far smaller scale at Shahbag and elsewhere, attempting to counter the decision, with the prime minister reportedly stating that if the movement gathers in strength then it is possible the government would listen. Protests were also organised by ethnic minorities and students with disabilities. Shajahan Khan, the then shipping minister, became involved in the pro-quota movement, in a move perceived to be a means of galvanising further personal political support. In providing support to the movement, his actions seemed to have the result of splitting it, changing the movement's name, and installing people close to him as the convenors, meaning he was in the unusual position of being a minister while also supporting a social movement

opposed to the government's new position. Some leaders within the original quota reform movement also organised further protests calling again for their original proposal.

The case of road safety reform reveals even more starkly the politics of implementing such concessions. The movement was a direct threat to the interests of the powerful and well organised transport sector, represented in government by Shajahan Khan, the then shipping minister. Road transport workers are regularly involved in political mobilisation, and the sector as a whole is the source of much informal income for political leaders through, for example, various tolls and extortion/protection rackets (*chanda*) at the street level. The incident which sparked the movement was caused by buses racing for customers, a level of competition which is a result of two key factors: first, a highly deregulated sector, in which an estimated 200 bus companies operate in Dhaka alone, meaning many ply the same routes; and, second, labour relations between bus drivers and owners. Most drivers have worked their way up the labour hierarchy, previously working as bus 'helper' and then 'conductor'. Rather than receive a salary, they work on a contract basis, whereby they pay the bus owner a fixed fee or rent for the day they work, and only when they pay this off during a day's work are they be able to earn. Drivers are then incentivised to compete intensely, and hence speed, drive recklessly, stop at inappropriate places, and some regularly work 16-, 17- and 18-hour shifts. Bus drivers meanwhile live with the knowledge that if they do injure or kill a pedestrian, they may well be lynched by the public on the spot, and hence if they are in an accident, they immediately run and hide. A key announcement made during the protest was then the abolition of such contract relations, bringing drivers under a salary system, as pronounced by the Dhaka Road Transport Owners' Association; however, in practice this has only been partially implemented.

More contentious to reforming the sector has been the Road Transport Act. In the years preceding the movement, the draft bill of the Act had been met with much resistance. The legislation proposed to increase the severity of punishments and terms of access within the sector; for example, that death by reckless driving could lead to five years in prison, and that drivers are required to be educated up to at least grade 8. In interviews with leaders from the Bangladesh Truck and Covered Vans Owners Association in 2017 and mid-2019, they described the legislation as highly hostile to their interests, the government's attempts at including them in dialogue as 'eye wash' (meaning for appearances only), and they stated that the laws would be ineffective without wider changes. For example, they claimed that there are 1 million drivers with fake licences, and the laws would punish those holding them, without touching those who created them. If the government failed to listen to them, they could call a strike that would be felt across the whole country, with the price of rice rising in only six hours. Indeed, in response to the legislation, a wider body – the Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation, led by the then Shipping Minister – implemented a two-day strike in late October 2018. Workers blocked public bus depots, and stopped traffic on key routes. The protest was violently enforced, with even private drivers humiliated and attacked, some being hit or having oil smeared over their faces. Demands included making all offences bailable, opposing measures such as the five lakh taka fine for involvement in a road crash, and police harassment. The move was perceived as a show of strength by the minister. As of early 2019, the law has not yet taken effect and, in a controversial move, Shajahan Khan was appointed to lead a 15-member committee to reform the transport sector. Meanwhile, limited efforts have been made to improve the enforcement of traffic regulations, including the inauguration of a new regular 'traffic discipline programme', in which students are to be incorporated as volunteers at new checkpoints managed under the Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

4. Conclusion

While social movements have often been neglected in the study of authoritarianism, or argued to play little role in major political transitions, Bangladesh arguably represents a case where such *andalon* are central to the country's political history, galvanising key groups across society around issues of injustice and reform to confront regimes and bring significant political transformation. Throughout Bangladesh's history, students have been at the heart of such movements, offering a well organised, large and enthusiastic pool of labour, ready to be called to and lead political events and movements. Key to how political change has been achieved is through alliances across groups, often with students being at the heart, but crucially involving the organisational strength of political parties. These movements have proven particularly vital to the country's direction during times of authoritarian rule, and where there has otherwise been a lack of political competition. This case therefore confronts the assessment that social movements play little role in determining authoritarian durability. A key implication of this analysis is that one factor which may shape the stability of authoritarian rule is whether the forms of contentious politics deployed by opposition have been 'institutionalised' within that context, such that they form a widely recognised route by which a regime can be disrupted. Put simply: if there are tried and tested modes of protest that have destabilized and overturned previous political regimes, then activities which follow or even evoke these, can continue to pose a threat for future regimes.

Within the context of Bangladesh the meanings of *andalon* are then historically embedded, interpreted through the political struggles of previous generations, and it is thus in this light that we should read the threat that a resurgence of student-led social movements pose to the ruling party. While the issues they raise are significant, and addressing them creates tensions

within the base of the ruling party, the primary threat that they pose is in evoking the past, and serving as the basis for a wider and more far-reaching movement to disrupt the ruling party. A crucial aspect to this is the potential for violence to undermine the moral authority of the regime. Although violence is an everyday aspect of political competition at almost all levels in Bangladesh, *andalon* offer moments in which the moral character of this is laid bare in the public eye. After a decade characterised by state coercion limiting political opposition, the risk to those in power is that heavy handed repression magnifies a sense of injustice, is perceived as emblematic of their character, consolidates wider grievances held against them, and thus gives momentum to a political opposition desperately seeking any opportunity to destabilise the status quo. As such, *andalon* take a particular significance in election years, where opposition forces are seeking routes to increase pressure on the government, and there is a climate of anticipation and uncertainty.

The art of state repression in such events is therefore more nuanced than publicised images of baton and tear gas wielding police suggest. In part this involves questioning the moral integrity of such movements, for example through the discourse of opposition party 'infiltrators' or moments such as the ransacking of the VC's residence at Dhaka University. Equally it includes a reliance on the coercive capacity of those who do not wear uniform, and whose activities can therefore be more easily denied, in this case activists of the Chhatra League. It has been through combining this with concessions, however distant or qualified these are in practice, that greater crises have be averted and the potential for these events to crystallize a broader set of grievances diffused.

A challenge for state repression however is that while institutionally this form of contentious politics is a familiar one in Bangladesh, the contemporary manifestations it takes are not. As

in much of the world, social media and mobile phones have become centre stage in the ways in which movements and protests are organised and spread. The advantages of such platforms are clear, in providing a highly accessible and rapid mode of communication. Facebook groups and live streaming magnify the injustice, through provocative postings, photos, charismatic speeches, acts of 'rude accountability' (Hossain 2010), and by highlighting acts of 'self-sacrifice' for the cause (Suykens 2018). As seen through Bangladesh's history, individual incidents of injustice can easily spark wider protests and escalate events out of control. Hence the ease with which fake news can spread through Facebook poses a significant threat to the ruling party, and an opportunity for forces that oppose them. The readiness with which the government has prevented telecommunications in moments of crisis (through lowering the bandwidth, for example), along with the raft of new measures and bodies within the security agencies to regulate and monitor social media, demonstrate that this is a new terrain on which politics is being played out.

This then raises significant questions for Bangladesh's political future. In light of the decline of the BNP and limitation to 'civil society', such movements may represent one of the few ways in which people can collectively mobilize outside of party-political boundaries to make their voices heard. In the absence of meaningful electoral competition, the identity and legitimacy of the ruling party is also increasingly dependent on delivering development outcomes. This then suggests that the capacity of the political regime to respond to such grievances will continue to be crucial in coming years, particularly in and around elections. In practice, addressing such grievances requires confronting interest groups on which the ruling party depends, and then translating this into material change on the ground. Both are significant challenges, and it remains to be seen whether either can be achieved, if indeed there is the political will to do so. It is also unlikely that the demands of the middle-class urban youth can

be easily satisfied. Existing issues of road safety and employment may flare up again and, despite Bangladesh's significant development successes, the possible list of other motivations is sizeable. If they do translate onto the streets, finding a balance between concessions and status quo, public legitimacy and internal political stability, will continue to be crucial to the ruling party in Bangladesh.

Bibliography

Alam, Shamsul. 1991. "Language as political articulation: East Bengal in 1952". *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 21(4): 469-487.

Andersen, Morten Koch. 2013. "The politics of politics: Youth Mobilization, aspirations and the threat of violence at Dhaka University". PhD thesis, Roskilde University, Denmark.

Andersen, Morten Koch. 2019. 'Everyday Routines and the Making of Youth Politics in Bangladesh'. *Contemporary South Asia*. Volume 27, Issue 3, Pp. 342-357.

Brannen, Samuel J. Haig, Christian S. and Katherine Schmidt. 2020. The age of mass protests: understanding an escalating global trend. Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), March 2020 Report

Celestino, Mauricio Rivera and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2013. 'Fresh carnations or all thorn, no rose? Nonviolent campaigns and transitions in autocracies'. *Journal of Peace Research*, 50(3): 385-400

Daily Star. 2018a. "Total disorder: Unlicensed, unskilled drivers and unregistered, unfit vehicles rule transport system putting lives of passengers, pedestrians at risk". 4 August. Available online at: https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/total-disorder-1615744 (accessed 25 July 2019).

Daily Star. 2018b. "Causing death by rash driving: maximum 5 years' jail: Cabinet okays draft law; activists term punishment insufficient". 7 August. Available online at: https://www.thedailystar.net/country/government-okays-new-road-transport-act-2018-maximum-five-years-jail-1616659 (accessed 25 July 2019).

Daily Star. 2018c. "3 ministers slam BNP over protest: Rab DG asks parents, teachers to take children back home". 3 August. Available at: https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/3-ministers-slam-bnp-over-protest-1615270 (accessed 25 July 2019).

Daily Star. 2018d. "Victims of arbitrary arrests, say students: 13 more students walk out of jail". 20 August. Available at: https://www.thedailystar.net/news/country/movment-for-safe-roads-demand-9-more-universiry-students-walk-out-of-jail-1623394 (accessed 25 July 2019).

Daily Star. 2019a. “Controversial leaders given road safety job”. 18 February. Available at: https://www.thedailystar.net/country/shajahan-khan-lead-committee-formed-prevent-road-accident-in-bangladesh-1703365 (accessed 25 July 2019).

De, Sanchari. 2015. “Context, image and the case of the Shahbag movement”, *Contemporary Social Science*, 10(4): 364-374.

Della Porta, Donatella and Federico M Rossi. 2013. Democratization and democratic transition. In: David A. Snow, Donatella della Porta, Bert Klandermans, and Doug McAdam (Eds) *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*.

Desai, Manali. 2003. “From movement to party to government: Why social policies in Kerala and West Bengal are so different”. In *States, Parties, and Social Movements*, edited by Jack A. Goldstone, 170-196. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Faruque, M. Omar. 2018. “Contested resource extraction, anti-corporate protests and the politics of movement alliance in Bangladesh”. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 49(3): 410-433.

Goldstone, Jack, A, ed. 2003. *States, Parties, and Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goldstone, Jack, A, and Daniel P. Ritter. 2018. “Revolution and social movements.” In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by David A. Snow, Sarah A Soule, Hanspeter Kriesi, Holly J McCammon, D, 682-681. Second Edition. Wiley

Greitens, Sheena Chestnut. 2016. *Dictators and their Secret Police: Coercive Institutions and State Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Hossain, Naomi. 2010. "Rude accountability: Informal pressures on frontline bureaucrats in Bangladesh". *Development and Change*, 41(5): 907-928.

Hutter, Swen. Kriesi, Hanspeter and Jasmine Lorenzini. 2018. "Social Movements in Interaction with Political Parties." In *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, edited by David A. Snow, Sarah A Soule, Hanspeter Kriesi, Holly J McCammon, D, 322-337. Second Edition. Wiley

Jahan, Rounaq. 2018. "Political parties, movements, elections and democracy in Bangladesh". Gyantapas Abdur Razzaq Distinguished Lecture, Dhaka University, 27 January

Jahan, Rounaq. 1987. *Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues*. Dhaka: University Press Limited.

Kabir, Arif Haq, and Janinka Greenwood. 2017. "Neoliberalism, violence and student resistance in the higher education sector in Bangladesh". *Society and Culture in South Asia*, 3(1): 68-91.

Kamaluddin, Syed. 1990. "Politics of disarray". The Far Eastern Economic Review, 25 October.

Khan, Mushtaq. 2010. Political Settlements and the Governance of Growth-Enhancing Institutions. SOAS Working Paper

Kuttig, J. 2019. 'Urban political machines and student politics in "middle" Bangladesh: violent party labor in Rajshahi city'. *Critical Asian Studies*, 51(3): 403-418

Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A Way. 2010. *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War*. Cambridge University Press

Levitsky, Steven and Lucan A Way. 2012. Beyond Patronage: Violent Struggle, Ruling Party Cohesion, and Authoritarian Durability. *Perspectives on Politics*, 10(4): 869-889

Magaloni, Beatriz and Ruth Kricheli. 2010. Political Order and One-Party Rule. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13: 123-143

Maniruzzaman, Talukder. 1979. "Administrative reforms and politics within the bureaucracy in Bangladesh*". Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 17(1): 47-59.

Maniruzzaman, Talukder. 1980. *The Bangladesh Revolution and Its Aftermath*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Books International Limited.

Maniruzzaman, Talukder. 1992. 'The fall of the military dictator: 1991 elections and the prospect of civilian rule in Bangladesh'. *Pacific Affairs*, 65(2): 203-224.

McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow. 2010. “Ballots and barricades: On the reciprocal relationship between elections and social movements”. *Perspectives in Politics*, 8(2): 529-542.

New Age. 2018. “BNP, Jamaat infiltrators attack AL Dhanmandi office: Quader”. 5 August. Available online at: http://www.newagebd.net/article/47634/bnp-jamaat-infiltrators-attack-al-dhanmandi-office-quader (accessed 25 July 2019).

Ozen, Hayriye, Burak Dogu. 2020. ‘Mobilizing in a hybrid political system: the Artvin case in Turkey’. *Democratization*

Policzer, Pablo. 2009. *The Rise and Fall of Repression in Chile*. Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press

Roy, Anupam Debashis. 2018. “Shahbag stolen? Third force dynamics and electoral politics in Bangladesh”. *South Asia Research*, 38(3S): 1S-24S.

Ruud, Arild Engelsen. 2010. “To Create a Crowd: Student Leaders in Dhaka.” In Power and Influence in India: Bosses, Lords and Captains. P. Price and A. E. Ruud, (eds). Delhi, India: Routledge.

Ruud, Arild Engelsen. 2014. “The political bully in Bangladesh”. In Patronage as Politics in South Asia, edited by Anastasia Piliavsky, 303-325. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sika, Nandine. 2017. *Youth activism and contentious politics in Egypt: dynamics of continuity and change*. Cambridge University Press

Suykens, Bert. 2018. ""A hundred per cent good man cannot do politics": Violent self-sacrifice, student authority, and party-state integration in Bangladesh". *Modern Asian Studies*, 52(3): 883-916.

Suykens, Bert and Md. Aynul Islam. 2015. The Distribution of Political Violence in Bangladesh (2002-2013). Conflict Research Group.

Suykens, Bert and Md. Aynul Islam. 2013. "Hartal as a Complex Political Performance: General Strikes and the Organisation of (Local) Power in Bangladesh." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 47 (1): 61–83.

Svolik, M. W. 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tarrow, Sidney. 2015. *War, States and Contention: A Comparative Historical Study*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Tilly, Charles. 2004. *Social Movements, 1768-2004*. Boulder, CO, and London: Paradigm Publishers.

Tilly, Charles and Sidney Tarrow. 2015. Contentious Politics. Oxford University Press

Uddin, A. K. M. Jamal. 2006. "The movement for the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh 1982-1990". PhD Thesis, University of Leeds.

Ulfelder, Jay. 2005. Contentious Collective Action and the Breakdown of Authoritarian Regimes. *International Political Science Review*, 26(3): 311-334

Umar, Badruddin. 2006. *The Emergence of Bangladesh: Volume 2: Rise of Bengal Nationalism (1958-1971)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Van Schendel, Willem. 2009. *A History of Bangladesh*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zaman, Fahmida. 2018. "Agencies of social movements: Experiences of Bangladesh's Shahbag Movement and Hefazat-e-Islam". *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 53(3): 339-349.