



The Party-Police Nexus in Bangladesh

David Jackman & Mathilde Maitrot

To cite this article: David Jackman & Mathilde Maitrot (2022) The Party-Police Nexus in Bangladesh, The Journal of Development Studies, 58:8, 1516-1530, DOI: [10.1080/00220388.2022.2055463](https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2022.2055463)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2022.2055463>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 05 Apr 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1917



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

The Party-Police Nexus in Bangladesh

DAVID JACKMAN*  & MATHILDE MAITROT** 

*Oxford Department of International Development (ODID), University of Oxford, Oxford, UK; **Department of Social & Policy Sciences, University of Bath, Bath, UK

(Original version submitted May 2020; final version accepted March 2022)

ABSTRACT *The use of coercion to pursue dominance over rivals is often seen as a defining feature of more ‘authoritarian’ and ‘hybrid’ political systems. In many contexts however, it is also a routine part of democracy. The difference between these arrangements then lies not so much in the presence of violence and coercion per se, but in how precisely they are organised institutionally and deployed. This is examined here through the case of Bangladesh, where, despite decades of intense and violent political competition, the ruling Awami League has solidified control through three consecutive landslide victories in general elections. Central to how this has been achieved is the empowerment of domestic security agencies, which can be seen as existing in a ‘nexus’ with the party, configured at both the national and local levels. The police in particular have been prioritised, politicised, and directed against the opposition under cover of maintaining law and order. It is then the depth of these inter-dependencies which marks Bangladesh’s recent politics. This has intensified the political entrepreneurialism of the police, and raises questions concerning the balance of power within this nexus.*

KEYWORDS: Governance; security agencies; coercion; police; political parties; Bangladesh

1. Introduction

We don’t call them the police, we call them the ‘police league’
Senior elected politician of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), Sept 2018

Notions of authoritarianism and political ‘hybridity’ are deeply associated with violence, coercion and the general repression of political opposition. Yet the ability to use violence and coercion to compete and dominate politically is also a constitutive feature of democracy as it is practiced in much of the world. Rather than being contrary to the means by which politicians gain power, compete with rivals, and seek the support of voters, these can in fact be core skills on which they depend to pursue their careers (Goldstein & Arias, 2010; Jackman, 2018a, 2018b; Michelutti et al., 2018). These dynamics can be so pervasive that at a larger scale the strength of political parties and the governments they form derives in part from their ability to mobilize in muscular ways. This, for example, has been the case in much of South Asia, where politicians routinely deploy party activists to intimidate, and a sizeable proportion of elected politicians have lists of criminal charges and accusations longer than those of seasoned criminals (Vaishnav, 2017). This then represents a puzzle. If societies labelled as democratic, hybrid or

Correspondence Address: David Jackman, Oxford Department of International Development (ODID), University of Oxford, Oxford, UK. Email: David.jackman@qeh.ox.ac.uk

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

authoritarian can all be associated with the entrepreneurial use of violence to pursue political ends, how, if at all, do they differ in this regard?

This article examines this question in the context of Bangladesh, a country where for the first time a political party, the Awami League, has remained in power for a decade, having won three consecutive general elections, each with a landslide. Despite years of intense competition, the main opposition, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), are today in tatters, having been effectively cornered and undermined, with a weakened party infrastructure, their leader until recently in prison, and little scope to mobilise on the streets. At a formal institutional level our understanding of how Bangladesh has arrived in its current political state is relatively clear and well documented. After the country returned to a system of parliamentary democracy in 1991, general elections were administered in a broadly neutral manner through a system of 'caretaker government'¹. The country's two primary parties, the Awami League and BNP, alternated in power until the ruling Awami League were re-elected in 2009, and repealed the caretaker government system through a constitutional amendment in 2011 (Hassan & Nazneen, 2017; Khan, 2015). This has enabled the party to directly administer subsequent elections (in 2014 and 2018) under what are widely perceived as dubious circumstances. What is less clear however, is how the ruling party has made the constitutional amendment and then withstood the ensuing resistance and protest. Over preceding decades when the now opposition party directly administered an election, or attempted to bias the caretaker government system, pressure from the Awami League, civil society, and ultimately the military was brought to bear, and general strikes (*hartal*) shut down cities. By contrast, attempts by the BNP and other political opposition to confront the government on the streets over the past decade have all failed— the opposition can barely hold public gatherings let alone *hartal*, and have had little traction in attempting to galvanize a wider movement against the ruling party.

The argument developed here is that in Bangladesh a key distinction between democracy and other political arrangements concerns not so much the presence and entrepreneurial use of violence politically, but the more subtle ways it is organised institutionally. This can be seen most fundamentally in who the ruling party relies upon to sustain dominance over rivals. During the 1990s and 2000s whoever was in power politicized the bureaucracy and security agencies to their advantage, yet their real strength lay in their party organisations and the wider array of non-state actors they could command (Jackman, 2018b). The military meanwhile acted as a (relatively) neutral arbitrator, and domestic security agencies were comparatively weak (until the early 2000s). Since 2009, by contrast, the ruling party's coercive strength has resided increasingly, and now firmly, with the security agencies. With the military now seemingly loyal, it is the mandate, strength and political function of the police that has prominence in domestic politics. This is reflected in higher budgets, new prestige, and politicization of both leadership, and rank and file. At both the national and local level, there is an intense nexus between the ruling party and security agencies. This has undermined the BNP in multiple ways, crucially by legitimising arrests and intimidation of leaders and activists under the guise of maintaining law and order.² As such, our analysis draws attention to the subtle and complex inter-dependencies between ruling party and state security agencies in shaping political life.

This article is based on research conducted through 2018 in three research sites: the capital Dhaka, and two prominent cities, anonymised here as Pariganj and Dalipur. These latter two sites were chosen as being traditionally BNP strongholds, enabling us to better discern and analyse the state of the opposition party, and examine changes in political power locally. With the exception of the landslide electoral victory for the Awami League in 1973 (prior to the founding of the BNP), Pariganj city's primary constituency (Pariganj-2) was only won by the party in the contentious 2014 election, and Dalipur city by the Awami League in 2008. Across these sites, we conducted over a hundred interviews with political leaders and activists, journalists and civil servants. Respondents included current, candidate and former MPs and city mayors, former ministers, city ward level leaders,

district and city level party leaders, party activists, police officers, national and regional journalists. Direct quotations from respondents have been anonymised, and where necessary the precise location of dynamics analysed have been left unsaid.

2. Managing coercion

Despite the now substantial body of literature examining various forms of ‘authoritarian’ and ‘hybrid’ political regimes, the role of coercion and violence in such contexts is a neglected field of study³. Understanding of this topic has been described as ‘thin’ (Art, 2012) and the subject seen as ‘strikingly under-examined’ (Greitens, 2016, p. 7). Conceptually, authoritarian and hybrid regimes are often defined in contrast to democracy. While a vast array of terminology is in use, a common feature they share is an association with the use of violence and coercion to limit political competition, often at the hands of state security agencies (Greitens, 2016; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Policzer, 2009; Svulik, 2012). This is, implicitly or otherwise, contrasted against a scenario in which such qualities do not largely factor in elections, nor the careers of politicians and success of parties more generally.

A challenge with this distinction however is that in many contexts, violence is a key and widespread skill deployed by politicians to compete democratically⁴ (Goldstein & Arias, 2010; Jackman, 2018a; Michelutti et al., 2018; Vaishnav, 2017). The extent to which such skills are central to the authority of politicians and the groups they mobilize, means that they can often be considered a form of ‘violent entrepreneur’, a term more commonly associated with organised crime groups, such as the mafia in Sicily (Blok, 1974), and Russia (Volkov, 2002). In India, the world’s largest democracy for example, a common characteristic of politicians is their capacity to mobilize thuggish and threatening activists to intimidate rivals and mobilize voters (Michelutti et al., 2018; Vaishnav, 2017). As with India, so to in neighbouring Bangladesh, where the 1990s and 2000s were widely seen as being a period of promising if flawed ‘electoral democracy’ (Riaz, 2019b), yet parties routinely mobilised an array of violent entrepreneurs (Jackman, 2018b). The presence of violence in political competition is hence an insufficient marker of authoritarianism in South Asia.

A further challenge with the distinction is that the politicization of security agencies and their deployment against opposition is hardly unique to contexts labelled authoritarian. In South Asia, and indeed many other regions, it has long been recognised that the police collude with political leaders, and extrajudicial practices more often associated with authoritarianism have been common during the tenure of democratically elected governments. Brass (2003, p. 168), for example highlights the ‘nexus’ between politicians, police and *goonda* (thugs) in the orchestration of communal violence in India. Others note the wider institutional politicisation of police bodies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in that context (Vaishnav, 2017, p. 264), and how such politicisation has led to the regular transfer of police officers in the interests of politicians (Wilkinson, 2004, p. 82).

What this then suggests is that the distinction between societies labelled as authoritarian and democratic lies not in clear cut and categorical differences in how a capacity for violence is organised or used politically. A more subtle difference that can however be read from existing literature is *the degree* of politicization, empowerment and dependency that a ruling party has on state actors. Research hence highlights how the management of state security agencies is a delicate task, one which brings numerous risks, which have ‘received little scholarly attention’ (Policzer, 2009, p. 4). To the extent possible, coercion must for example be used in a manner that does not undermine the moral legitimacy and popularity of a government. A greater reliance on coercive actors can also shift power relations within the state, empowering certain interest groups to make greater demands (Svulik, 2012). Without sufficient monitoring and control, these can threaten the government itself (as is common, *Ibid*), and there is thus a need to ‘calibrate their need for a powerful coercive apparatus against their interest in self-preservation

and maintaining control' (Policzer, 2009, p. 4). All decisions bring 'organizational tradeoff' (Greitens, 2016), which in the longer term can limit the potential to deal with other threats that emerge. This hence calls for a greater examination of the subtle changes in interdependencies and relationships between ruling parties and security agencies. To understand contemporary political change in Bangladesh the next section briefly contextualises such relationships in the country's political history.

3. The political role of state security agencies in Bangladesh

Throughout Bangladesh's history since 1971, the authority of all political regimes has relied – in different ways – on the use of coercion. Despite a regularity of elections, these have rarely been 'free and fair' by international standards, and even when deemed so, the capacity to intimidate and use violence has still often been a key skill on which the success of candidates has rested (Ruud, 2018). All regimes have routinely deployed the apparatus of the state and party to dominate rivals using extra-legal practices, ranging from breaking up demonstrations, to arbitrary arrest and extrajudicial killings; and political opposition have attempted to disrupt the incumbent through violent forms of street mobilization, centring on *hartal*. The ability to use violence and coercion within this context is not then marginal to the country's political life, but central; and indeed all regimes have ultimately fallen in part due to their inability to manage their coercive organisations to control rivals.

The way in which the capacity to use coercion has been organised within political regimes has however differed markedly. The role of the military has been central, and it is hence tempting to draw a distinction between periods of democratic or 'civilian' rule, and authoritarian or 'military' rule, measured by the extent to which the military has imposed itself on public life. This reading would highlight that shortly after independence in 1971 and the election of the Awami League under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh saw a fifteen-year period in which two former military chiefs came to power under martial law, became Presidents, formed political parties and semi civilianized their regimes (President Zia (1975–1981) founded the BNP, and President Ershad (1982–1990) the Jatiya Party). In the face of mass political movement against Ershad's rule, the military then withdrew support, leading to a return to parliamentary democracy from 1990, after which we have seen the military took a step back from public life, giving support to the system of 'caretaker government' which for two decades administered elections in a relatively neutral manner until the present period. This reading can be further strengthened by the fact that from 1975 to 1990 military officers played a significant role in domestic governance. Hence under Zia we see military officers take senior roles in public corporations, work as police superintendents, and find homes in Zia's Council of Ministers, and later most superintendents under Ershad similarly having military backgrounds.

Such a categorisation however risks missing important points of continuity across these periods, as well as notable differences outside of them. Suykens (2017, p. 187) for example has argued that underlying these periods of Bangladesh's political history, sits a consistent 'form of rule': the 'party-state'. This takes various forms but in basic is where the ruling party politicises the apparatus of the state to their advantage. Similarly, Basu, Devine, and Wood (2018, p. 10) highlighted how 'deep structures', which can 'be understood as large factional agglomerations of patron-client favours and loyalties which extend from top to bottom of their organisations', have persisted through different political regimes in the country's history. For Khan (2017) the country's politics since 1971 can be seen as based on a 'clientelist political settlement', consisting of horizontally and vertically organised factions.

At the same time, all these authors argue that Bangladeshi politics has markedly changed since the Awami League returned to power in 2009. The 1990s and 2000s were characterised by intense violent yet 'democratic' competition between the BNP and Awami League. Both parties were in practice seen as being similarly organised, led by dynastic figures, supported by strong

auxiliary organisations that mirrored each other and were organised down to the grassroots.⁵ Whoever was in office politicised the bureaucracy to their advantage, in a system characterised as a ‘partyarchy’ (Hassan & Nazneen, 2017). Yet each general election administered under a system of caretaker government returned the other to power. Since the repeal of the caretaker government system and two highly contentious general elections (2014 and 2018) however, the nation’s politics is now characterised differently. For some it is a ‘democratic authoritarian party-state’ (Suykens, 2017), a ‘hybrid regime’ (Riaz, 2019b), an example of ‘one-party dominance’ (Khan, 2017) or ‘competitive authoritarianism’ (Mostofa & Subedi, 2020).

Our intention here is not to add to or adjudicate between such categorisations but attempt to discern some of the institutional shifts which have marked this present period and contextualise them within Bangladesh’s political history.⁶ While the current regime claims to be civilian in character, it is widely believed that the military is in fact central to how they sustain dominance over rivals. Examining the Awami League-military relationship in depth is beyond the scope of this article, yet it is important to note that unlike the late 1970s and 1980s, senior most political leaders do not have a direct background in the military. At the same time, it is also important to highlight that two weeks prior to the appointment of a recent Chief of Army Staff in mid 2018, his younger brother Joseph (a notorious gangster who was imprisoned in the late 1990s) had received a rare Presidential pardon. Shortly before the controversial December 2018 election, the Chief of Army staff described the electoral atmosphere as the best in the country’s history.

What can easily be overlooked when focusing on the role of the military however is the significance of domestic security agencies. Although little studied, such agencies have radically changed the character of governance and politics for elected and ostensibly civilian regimes in Bangladesh’s history. Our core empirical argument here is that once again the ruling party’s politicization, empowerment and intense dependency on domestic security agencies is radically shaping the country’s politics. To contextualise current day events, it is instructive to briefly visit two episodes in the country’s history. The first is the aftermath of Liberation and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s landslide electoral victory in 1973. The perhaps most pressing political concern during this period was maintaining a basic level of order. The regime faced many threats, including a powerful leftist contingent, military discontent, and a plethora of militia (*bahini*) who had grown in the struggle against Pakistan, however after independence, ‘became marauders and ravaged the countryside’ (Khan, 1981, p. 553). In response, the regime formed powerful new party wings, and quasi state security agencies drawn from the ranks of the *bahini*, most notable of which was the ‘Jatio Rakkhi Bahini’ (National Security Force) (JRB). The JRB was a quasi-state paramilitary group directly loyal to Mujib, to whom they took an oath, and grew to around 25,000 members. Described as ‘the AL’s armed branch’ (Codron, 2007, p. 32), they served as a counterweight to the military. Their relative success in providing order was matched with their notoriety as the henchmen of the regime, involved in corruption and extrajudicial killings. The JRB exacerbated mistrust and resentment of the regime within the military, party organizations fractured, and in the face of poor discipline Mujib introduced a one-party state under the ‘Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League’ (Bangladesh Peasants and Workers’ League, BAKSAL), in an attempt to reassert control, before being assassinated by military officers.

The second episode in Bangladesh’s ‘civilian’ history relevant to our analysis is the BNP’s term in office between 2001–2006. From 1990, the intense AL-BNP rivalry saw each party patronise an array of violent entrepreneurs outside or only loosely within party structures, and often in popular discourse identified as terrorists (*santrashi*), thugs (*mastan*), and collectively as ‘top terror’ (Jackman, 2018a). The influence these figures had over local governance and politics brought high levels of public violence and crime, which the BNP committed to addressing once back in power in the early 2000s. They achieved this primarily through radically increasing the domestic coercive capacity of the state in the form of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB).

RAB was formed under the Ministry of Home Affairs, drawing personnel from police and military, and quickly became popular through controlling the ‘top terror’ who had previously been beyond the grasp of state security agencies. The methods deployed allegedly included extrajudicial killings and were reminiscent of those used by the JRB, although with a reasonable degree of public support, given their effectiveness. The strength of RAB gave the BNP a powerful tool to dominate rivals, and the then opposition Awami League, reportedly feared that they would serve this purpose (Human Rights Watch, 2006, p. 19).⁷ The BNP furthermore attempted to manipulate the caretaker government system (manoeuvring for the appointment of a Chief Justice to lead the caretaker government who was felt to be BNP leaning), resulting in intense pressure from the Awami League. This led to the return of the military to public life, backing the formation of a caretaker government popularly known as the ‘1/11’ government (taking power on the 11th January 2007), which lasted an unprecedented two years between 2007 and 2009, after which the Awami League returned and remained in power. It is here that we pick up our own empirical analysis.

4. The police-party nexus in Bangladesh

A defining feature of the past decade of Bangladesh’s politics has been the empowerment and dependency on domestic state security agencies. From a primary reliance on the vast networks and groups constituting the Awami League and their affiliates to dominate rivals, the regime now primarily depends on the apparatus of the state, most notably the police, to limit the opposition’s potential for mobilization. In the following sections we build this case, arguing first that the empowerment and politicization of state security agencies at a national level can be seen in modes of recruitment and resource allocation; second, that it manifests through the intense dependencies between local politicians and police officers; and third, that this has successfully undermined the opposition under the guise of law and order.

4.1. The ‘Police League’?

Since the Awami League returned to power in a landslide electoral victory conducted under a military-backed caretaker government in 2009, the character of their political authority has shifted. From the perspective of critics this is expressed in a common sentiment that the distinction between party and state has been entirely eroded, or as a senior *Chhatra dal* leader in Dhaka put it: ‘there is no state now, it is all Awami League machinery’. A senior BNP leader on the party’s executive committee (the ‘standing committee’) portrayed this change:

If you want to keep citizens out of the electoral process, the government’s character changes immediately. It does not remain a democratic government, the dependency goes from people to the law and order authorities, RAB, civil servants, and basically, state sponsored favours and terrorism... This democratic deficit means that parliament is non-functioning, the executive wings politicised, with the law and order authorities politicised, and the judiciary politicised and under control. So the government’s dependence has gone from the people to the organs of the state, which they need to control because they are the ones basically in control [of the country].

While such rhetoric is undeniably partisan, across our sites, political leaders in both the AL and BNP described the role and power of the security agencies, and in particular the police, as expanding significantly in recent years. In Pariganj and Dalipur, some opposition leaders portrayed the police as not counting for much locally prior to 2014, while now the AL were ‘surviving on the basis of the police’, as it was often framed. A number of opposition members described the police as having just become ‘government batons’ (*lathi*).

The roots of this shift are traced differently by our informants. Most common is to see it as originating in the experience around the 2014 general election, when the BNP were mobilising

in force against the government through *hartal* and petrol bombings, and the government relied heavily on the security forces to control them. During this period were also the ‘International War Crimes Tribunal’, conflict with and banning of Jamaat-e-Islami, protests by the Islamist group Hefazat-e-Islam, and terrorist attacks on intellectuals and foreigners. One interpretation is that it is through the police’s response to all of these events that they became visibly more important to the regime. For others however, it can be traced back to the 1/11 government, where the experience of military backed state repression of party leaders influenced the party to set a new course by solidifying its political grip on the police and other security agencies. A further factor identified, is how tarnished the image of RAB has been over the past decade, with certain units of the force convicted of orchestrating politically motivated murders at the requests of local leaders, and therefore a greater role for them in public life was more likely to cast a shadow on the legitimacy of the ruling party.

For the opposition this dependency indicates a crisis of legitimacy for the ruling party, and a breakdown in the chain of command, signalling that the police are ‘out of control’, with traditional political authority over the police reversing. A senior locally elected BNP politician in one site described this: ‘police have become absolutely powerful, now they are controlling everything, we call them the ‘police league’. The government have only been able to push us into the corner using the police, RAB and other forces’. Combining ‘police’ with the term ‘League’ associates them with other Awami League affiliate organisations (Jackman, 2019). It should be clear that such rhetoric serves the BNP’s purpose, portraying their political rivals as illegitimate and weak. The allegation levelled is that this newfound power has given the police liberty to enmesh themselves in illegal activities to a far greater extent, seen for example in the widespread (alleged) extortion of BNP members by the police force. In Pariganj, it is alleged that this increased role has empowered the police to seek illicit sources of income, a prominent one being the extortion of drug dealers, and wealthy people who buy drugs (the police are ‘running around freely extorting people’ as a senior local BNP leader there described).

Institutionally our informants suggest that the politicisation of the police force can be seen in the background to police members, with officers increasingly recruited, it is alleged, from the Chhatra League, the student affiliate to the Awami League⁸. There are of course many BNP leaning police officers in the force, but police sources describe them as having been given obscure postings, unimportant roles, or become ‘officers on special duty’ (OSDs), meaning that they are paid but have no day-to-day role, which is a relatively common fate for members of the bureaucracy not aligned to the ruling party. The BNP aligned police members still serving were described as more often coming from the lower ranks, the constables without considerable power to help the party. A second feature to this politicisation is the appointment of police officers to key roles who are not only aligned to the Awami League but come from the Prime Minister’s home district of Gopalganj. It is alleged that this is widespread in Dhaka (Jackman, 2019), and this also extends to one of our further research sites, situated close to that district. A senior BNP leader in the city described the situation:

Many of the OCs [Officers in Charge] in different police stations in Pariganj are from Gopalganj, and many also held important posts in their student life in the Chhatra League. There was never before so many with these backgrounds posted in important positions. In Pariganj, the OCs, DC, judges in CMM [Chief Metropolitan Magistrate] court are all from Gopalganj⁹.

The increasing power of appointees directly from Gopalganj has permeated political discourse through jokes, such as: ‘There is a story of the Chhatra League leader who is riding in a CNG, and he gets stopped by a police officer’. He says ‘how dare you stop me, I am a Chhatra League leader’. And the police officer replies ‘and I am from Gopalganj’. ‘The leader is silent’. The implication being that the home district background of a police officer usurps the traditional informal authority of political leaders over lower-level echelons of the security agencies.

Formally it is clear that the police have also received increasing privileges and resources from the ruling party in recent years. In budgetary terms, the police and other domestic security agencies, have seen significant benefits. A World Bank public expenditure review report from 2015 estimated that over the preceding 10 years, the share of the budget allocated to ‘public order and security’ had remained largely stable (World Bank, 2015, p. 18). More recent data suggests that this budget has however significantly increased. Analyses from the Centre for Policy Dialogue indicate that the share of budget allocated towards ‘public order and security’ have significantly increased since around 2014, with the actual share of budget typically being significantly greater than that predicted. Between 2013–2016 for example, the share of budget increased from 5.1 to 6.5 per cent, where it remained for 2016–2018. In the 2017 financial year for example the allocation for public order and security/safety increased by 54.5 per cent from the previous year (Centre for Policy Dialogue, 2019), representing 6.2 per cent of the total (although the actual spending was 6.5 per cent). Of this increase, 45.1 per cent was allocated towards the police, with the intention – as indicated in the budget speech – of recruiting 50,000 new positions. While the share of budget allocated in 2018 decreased to 5.7 per cent, actual spending remained stable at 6.5 per cent, while increasing in actual size due to overall expenditure increases.

Such budget increases have led to improved salaries and visibly better equipment such as high-end police cars. One Officer in charge (OC) of a local police station (*thana*) describes these changes:

In the last 10 years Sheikh Hasina has done a lot for the police. She has done a lot for everyone, but most for the police. She’s increased our salaries, increased our status. They have given many advantages to the police: our salary is now 50K, there are first class officers, we have better rations.

More subtly, this growth in police power is portrayed as how ‘honour’ and ‘respect’ are given, and who listens to who¹⁰. Prior to the 2018 general election there were reports that police were lobbying for greater resources and status in a proposal to the Home Ministry, labelled a ‘polls treat’ in one newspaper. The police were requesting additional positions at a number of senior levels (The Daily Star, 2018a). The report also notes that months prior to the election four additional Inspector Generals were promoted to ‘Grade I’ status, and the Inspector General of police hold the rank of Senior Secretary, while the bureaucrat formally above him in the Home Ministry (the Public Security Division Secretary) holds a lower rank of Secretary. Only a month after the 2018 general election, there was a mass distribution of medals to the police and RAB, with 349 ‘Bangladesh Police Medals’ (BPM) or ‘President Police Medals’ (PPM) awarded to police chiefs in all major cities, including all district chiefs and reportedly also those involved in election monitoring. This represents a steady increase in the distribution of prestige over the past five years, with for example 105 medals distributed in 2014, 182 in 2018, and 349 in early 2019 (The Daily Star, 2019a). Furthermore, over 500 policemen were awarded the IGP (Inspector General of Police) Exemplary Good Services badge for services in 2018.

4.2. Police-MP dependencies

Local political influence on the police can be felt most clearly through the relationships between MPs and district and *thana* police officers, particularly at the level of OC. MPs and OCs have been argued to operate as a ‘nexus’ (Ruud, 2018), interdependent, and with each advancing economic and political interests through the relationship. Across our sites it is claimed that OCs form an integral and crucial tool wielded by local politicians to assert authority and dominate local rivals. While such interdependencies may always have existed, it is again their intensity, and the extent of the political role that police play, which is felt to be distinct. There are widespread claims for example that it is now police who are directly involved in engineering

elections, as was allegedly the case in the two district cities studied in the last general election. In both locations, local ruling party activists described ‘not having to do much’ to win the election, given how influential the police had become. To begin to understand this relationship, it is first important to recognise that MPs and more senior party leaders have considerable power to alter the careers of individual police officers. A senior district level Awami League politician in one research site described this relationship:

The police officials of this district, like the SP [District Superintendent] and OC, have good relations with the MP. The MP has power over whoever comes as OC and SP here... If a new MP comes, the existing police officials will be withdrawn. The OC, SP moves according to the wishes of the MP. If the MP thinks these officials would serve his purpose and do unethical works for him, he will bring them here. The MP will arrange with the minister to make the transfer of his chosen police officers to the city. The MP convinces IGP [Inspector General of Police] to post certain police officials in this area. As the MP bring the police officers here, they remain bound to obey him.

One mechanism for such transfers is to give a ‘Demand Order’ (DO), with an application by the MP to transfer a certain OC to a police station in their constituency. Prior to major elections it is allegedly common for such manoeuvrings to take place, with loyal police officers stationed locally to support the campaign of the incumbent MP, moving on those felt to be disloyal or reluctant to play such a role. In one city studied for example of the 24 OC (full OC and OC-investigation, the second in command) across the 12 *thana* in the city, three OC were reportedly moved on prior to the 2014 election, partly because they were perceived as being unwilling to sufficiently support the AL. Ministers similarly arrange the transfer of OCs to constituencies to distribute patronage¹¹.

A further crucial and connected factor shaping these relationships is the alleged widespread need for police officers to make sizeable payments to receive a transfer or promotion to a position of greater authority, or in a desirable location. Despite its prevalence, this dynamic is only rarely and briefly recognised in analyses of state bureaucracy in Bangladesh. Kashem (2004) for example highlights the practice of payments to selection committees and senior management for positions within the police. Serving police officers described this as routine and ubiquitous, with one describing not only having paid a significant sum for his current position, but also having paid considerable sums to avoid being transferred to undesirable locations. A senior police officer described how one OC under his command had paid six million taka¹² to a senior police official, three million taka to an MP and a further five hundred thousand taka to the men around the MP to get his position. Some journalists claim that the figures are even higher, with up to thirty million taka paid for becoming the OC in certain constituencies. One claim heard was that the incoming Police Superintendent in a district studied had paid one hundred million taka (approximately one million pounds) to receive the posting, which would have to be recouped when in power. Such a large figure is very likely an exaggeration, but the scale of such payments should not be underestimated. The fee paid is not uniform because not all postings are equally lucrative. Transferring to a border city is for example particularly rewarding as there is significant illicit trade, which the police, it is alleged, can play a hand in regulating and extract black money from. Once in office, OCs can then be bound by loyalty to the MPs who have arranged their positions, knowing also that were a new MP to come to power, they may be moved on, and lose access to the resources they can appropriate locally.

One effect of these dynamics is a political entrepreneurialism within the police, where officers are seeking status through the political machinery, beyond formal bureaucratic constraints. One OC-Investigation described his strategies to gain the senior OC position in his *thana* in terms of his relationship to the local MP who he would be helping in the upcoming general election, while also claiming to be known personally to the Prime Minister. It can be strategic for police officers to play into intra party factionalism in order to pursue their own personal ambitions, serving and benefitting from local network of patronage (Jackman & Maitrot, 2021).

This OC-investigation also portrayed the personal strains of the work, describing how – despite being good intentioned - he can in practice ‘only be good three days a week’, such are the strains and incentives he faces. In addition to political loyalty, he described needing to pay seven million taka for the position, and that others were ‘bidding’ for the position. The same officer described the businesses he had built locally since being in that position – brick fields, a car rental business – which he reported was common among police officers. He even claimed that many of the senior officers in the force had used the money they amass to buy homes abroad, in countries such as Malaysia and Canada. Indeed, the fact that politicians and officials launder money abroad has now been acknowledged by the Foreign Minister, and is dubbed ‘Begum para’ in reference to a popular Bangladeshi neighbourhood in Toronto (The Daily Star, 2020).

This political entrepreneurialism within the police can also be seen in how officers portray themselves on social media such as Facebook, with regular updates of their photos with local politicians, the hauls of weapons or drugs they have seized. While only one case, in the home of an OC visited, the lounge wall was plastered with photos of him and ruling party leaders, up to the very highest level. Institutionally and individually police are then entrepreneurs, seeking to ingratiate themselves with political leaders, to receive positive media coverage and be filmed maintaining law and order. Journalists even allege locally that the police pay more unscrupulous journalists to publish favourable news stories about themselves, published with the hope of attracting senior political attention (see also Ruud, 2019). At the national level there are claims that police officers are now seen doing the jobs of the Awami League politicians, retelling the story of Bangabandhu, praising the Prime Minister, and explicitly advocating for the Awami League. Just prior to the 2018 general election an OC in Satkhira district for example, was withdrawn after he publicly called for people to vote for the Awami League, and a video of this went viral. One effect of these relationships, as described by a senior officer, is that OCs can in instances have greater political authority than the police officers senior to them, having built up relationships with local politicians and Ministers, thereby enabling them to usurp the bureaucratic hierarchy.

4.3. Illegal or weak: the opposition's catch 22

The shift in character of coercive organisations outlined above has brought sustained and intense pressure on the organizational capacities of the opposition party, which has eroded the strength of its networks, and challenged the morale and resolve of activists. Over the course of the Awami League's past terms in office, the state of the BNP has then dramatically declined, creating a palpable dismay among members, with blame being cast on different factors and leaders, and almost disbelief that the party's condition has deteriorated to such a degree. A prominent leader in one research site, who has been a member of the party since its founding, lamented this:

I can say the current government is illegal, it came to power without a real election. But the fact is that the government has successfully spent these years in office, and BNP couldn't do anything. One minister recently said we never took permission for holding a program, and now we hear BNP complaining we sought permission and were denied. I'll tell you one thing. The people were supposed to support BNP for all the wrongs the AL is doing now, but they don't have confidence in BNP. The BNP neither have people's support, nor organizational strength. People feel they are deprived and oppressed by the regime, but how can they rely on a party that can't even protect itself?

When the apparatus of the state remain broadly neutral in party political competition, as seen under at least some of the caretaker government elections (1990 and 2008 in particular), it is primarily the strength of political networks which is brought to bear. Each uses their respective muscle, finances, ideology and policy agenda to outdo their rival. With the apparatus of the state politicised to the degree they appear to be, the opposition simply cannot match the

combined strength of the regime. One senior and elected BNP politician described it like this: 'We have no lack of activists. But the BNP is vulnerable to the administration'. 'We can't take arms against the police or against RAB or against BGB [Bangladesh Border Guards]. This is where the BNP is weak'. The BNP loudly allege that the ruling party has used the police and security apparatus to repress their leaders and activists, and across all our research sites, opposition party members described a raft of police cases levelled against them. A city and district committee BNP member in one site describes his experience:

I never had a single GD [general diary] against me in the police station, but today I am accused in seven cases. I am number 4 in the list of 175 terrorists that the local police have prepared, despite never even having a GD before. The cases are under explosive act, police act, and public safety act. For conviction in any of these cases, I may have to serve 20 years in jail. I am a junior worker, and this is my situation. Now think of those members who play important and brave roles. They have 25–30 cases. All of these are false cases. Now after the Eid, the government will launch crackdown on the terrorist, it means we have to flee, some of us will be arrested and heavily beaten up. You will be tortured. If you are lucky to have some reference like I have a brother who is a [newspaper] editor, who can go and testify that I am good man and ask why they were harassing me, then I will be put into jail in order to save me

That there are 'fake' cases placed against opposition party activists cannot be seriously questioned, particularly when newspaper expose reveal disabled, elderly, and even dead party activists with police cases of arson and other crimes against them. One explanation for what drives this, is that police are motivated by a strict system of targets, for how many BNP members they arrest in each area. The opposition claim that in each and every union and ward the police are under instructions to capture a certain number of their activists (one figure cited was 50). For many members this represents a significant burden and risk, it associates them with ordinary criminals, can cause a loss of social standing, and be a significant hardship. In a climate of extrajudicial killing and disappearances, this has created what one senior party leader described as a 'fear psychosis', where the limits of the possible have been pushed to the extreme, and sense of risk for ordinary opposition members expanded dramatically, making political mobilization a significant risk.

At the same time, it is similarly unrealistic to claim that the government are making entirely unfounded accusations against the opposition. During the 2014 election period the BNP's ability to wage *hartal* and close down major cities was reduced, and the party appeared to use their networks to orchestrate extreme acts of violence resembling acts of terror, such as widespread petrol bombings of buses and other vehicles (Jackman, 2018a). Cases made during this period continue to be pursued now. These events have contributed to a loss in moral authority of the opposition, and fuelled the Awami League's capacity to characterise the BNP as a party of violence, corruption and misrule. Since this period the BNP have continued to mobilise violently to demonstrate their strength on the streets, and it seems only turned to an explicit strategy of non-violence through much of 2018 out of desperation, a need to conserve resources before the general election, and perhaps an attempt to claw back some moral authority.

One government strategy then – and a major advantage in using the security agencies to quell opposition – is the ability to claim that such cases reflect their efforts to maintain law and order. What this of course obscures is that a core skill in Bangladeshi politics is the ability to compete violently. The political game to discredit the opposition is then to simultaneously appeal to contrasting principles. When the BNP have launched processions, *hartal* and other forms of street protests, the government has appealed to the law, and been able to accuse them of subversion and illegal violent mobilisation for protesting without police authorization, for bearing arms, for causing public damage. This has been used to justify the government responding with massive force: 'we announce a small programme and the government announce war' as a senior *Chhatra dal* leader described. At the same time, when the BNP fail to mobilise in

this way, senior AL politicians ridicule them as weak for their inability to play the political game, and they fail to convince the wider electorate that they can be a reliable and serious contender for political power¹³. As a different senior *Chhatra dal* leader put in: ‘when we don’t bring out a procession, they say we are weak; when we do, they say we are subversive’.

5. Conclusion

As in many contexts across the world Bangladesh is now routinely labelled by commentators as politically ‘hybrid’ or ‘authoritarian’, characterised by state repression of opposition and dissent. Yet violence and coercion have long been a means of competing politically in Bangladesh, begging the question of how politics really differs in this regard. Our response to this question draws attention to what we and others have termed a ‘nexus’ between party and security agencies, where the success and careers of both set of actors are interdependent and intertwined. This nexus has existed in some form throughout Bangladesh’s history, but changed in key regards over the past decade. Most crucially, we argue that the ruling party has become increasingly dependent on the coercive strength of the police and other agencies to quell opposition. Police are accorded far more respect, are fuelled with greater resources, yet are also dependent on political favour, networks and individuals to pursue their careers. What differs institutionally then is in key regards subtle and opaque, and at a higher level we can only speculate that there are implicit or explicit understandings between party and state officials. More broadly what distinguishes the present period in Bangladesh’s politics is the unique combination of coercive actors at the disposal of the regime. In our estimation, never before has any Bangladeshi government had a strong party base, empowered domestic security agencies, *and* a seemingly loyal military. When elected non-military governments have empowered domestic security agencies in the past, and these have figured as part of a broader strategy to ensure dominance, it has ended relatively swiftly with military intervention.

Existing literature focuses by and large on the challenges faced by political elites in calibrating the power of state security agencies (for example re-designing them institutionally and retaining their loyalty) (Greitens, 2016; Policzer, 2009; Svolik, 2012). The case of Bangladesh however demonstrates that further attention needs to be oriented towards the multifarious interactions through which such relationships are constituted. Crucially, our analysis suggests that these are substantially configured at the local level, where individual politicians and police officials seek to craft relationships with one another to accrue resources, manipulate elections, and hinder opposition. On the one hand then the advantages to relying on state security agencies are clear. Political parties in Bangladesh are a complex mesh of different actors wherein the ability to repress opposition is diffuse, decentralised, and the subject of regular and intense competition. Relying on such networks to control opposition then poses a huge number of problems, not least that locally, cross-party ties are a useful tool in intra-party competition, which can create organisational tensions and inconsistencies (Jackman & Maitrot, 2021). The type of coercion a party is capable of is furthermore at the more blunt end of the spectrum. By contrast, state security agencies, if they can be sufficiently persuaded and influenced, offer a more centralised and professional organisation, with a richer array of coercive tools at their disposal. The use of state agencies offers the further potential advantage that their activities can be framed as maintaining law and order, and therefore appeal to ideal notions of governance. At the same time, our analysis suggests that the precise character of policing at the local level is subject to the particularistic negotiations and relationships between politicians and local senior officers. In the cities studied it was clearly the politicians who had the upper hand in such relationships, yet were broader political circumstances to be destabilised, this balance could shift.

The nexus of party and police has far-reaching implications for the state, citizens and development in Bangladesh. These dynamics are complex. In solidifying the authority of politicians, it greatly limits recourse to justice for both opposition and intra-party rivals, while also

sustaining exploitative modes of resource accumulation. At the same time, overt incidents of widespread violence and associated disruption are lower, which is greatly valued by the public. The legitimacy of the party and police are intertwined, such that there are strong political incentives to moderate state corruption that impinges on the everyday lives of citizens. Politically, this relationship is also a potential source of tension and instability. For example through 2018 and 2019, state security agencies have been crucial in delivering on the Prime Minister's 'wars' on drugs and corruption, designed to clean up both party and state. This raises the possibility of tension within and between the state and party, and may also expose weaknesses in the capacity of party elites in their attempts to bring such change. There have been widespread reports – heard also during this fieldwork – that the war on drugs for example has in practice served locally as a means of factional conflict, with political leaders manipulating lists of suspects, leading to the persecution of political rivals, with potentially deadly consequences. A better resourced police are a great asset, but potentially also a threat. The opposition portray this as a dependency that will need to be sustained, as negotiations over resources around the 2018 general election seem to suggest. A more extreme perspective from one BNP activist is then this: 'the Awami League are feeding a crocodile and hoping it doesn't bite them'.

Notes

1. In this 'caretaker government' arrangement a non-partisan government was appointed to administer elections, headed by a neutral figure (most often a Chief Justice), thereby preventing the incumbent from utilising the tools of the state to skew electoral results, and cyclically moderating the politicization of state institutions by each party when in office.
2. In building this argument we have deliberately omitted many other important facets to how the Awami League has solidified their control. More broadly, we should note how the middle classes have been arguably placated through strong economic growth and wider development, along with military co-optation, repression and co-optation of the Islamist group Hefazat-e-Islam, the banning of Jamaat-e-Islam and the International War Crimes Tribunal, the alleged forcing out of a Chief Justice, the emergence and repression of new student movements, the complex legacies in coercive organizations (Jackman, 2019), and a sense of emerging economic challenges connected to the transition including the banking crisis and loan defaults (Riaz, 2019a).
3. It is recognised that violence and coercion are complex concepts, and can take many different forms. The purpose of this paper is not to offer granular interrogation of these concepts, but instead explore broader questions concerning their organisation, and how this changes.
4. Democracy can of course be understood in a myriad of different ways. For the purpose of this paper, by democratic we mean contexts where elections are regularly held in which opposition leaders and parties are not impeded from competing to such extent that they have little chance of gaining office.
5. In popular discourse this rivalry has been referred to as the 'Battling Begums' on account of the intense distrust between Sheikh Hasina, current Prime Minister and leader of the Awami League, and Khaleda Zia, former Prime Minister and leader of the BNP.
6. We hence recognise the analytical limitations to the labels 'democratic' and 'authoritarian', yet also acknowledge they are widely used in popular discourse and hence hard to avoid. Our interest is then to better discern institutional changes that underlie political change.
7. In fact BNP politicians today argue that RAB killed many more figures aligned to their own party than the Awami League, and that this has contributed to their weakness today, particularly in Dhaka (Jackman, 2019).
8. It is useful here to make comparisons with a more extreme case of political dominance. In China for example, it has been argued that the durability of Chinese Communist Party has rested on the way in which state coercion has been managed. Central to this has been an increase in the 'cohesion' and 'scope' of the police, seen in the significant and privileges place that police chiefs play in the bureaucracy, and increased reach police have throughout society (Wang, 2014, p. 14).
9. Of the 24 OC in Pariganj (there are twelve thana, 24 OC (OC and OC-Investigation), 8 of which are from Gopalganj (although note that there is a gopalganj population given their proximity)
10. There is also a perception that the social and educational background of the police has improved, with people of relatively high social standing now working there by contrast to previous decades.
11. Whether such relationships form also depends on the character of politics conducted by local politicians, and it is important to recognise variation here. In Pariganj for example the AL mayor was described as not interfering to a great extent with the police, not for example requesting transfers of OCs. One reason for this was that his strength derived from doing 'populist' politics and not the 'muscle' politics associated with the then MP and his political rival.

12. Taka is the Bangladeshi currency. One taka is around 0.09 GBP.
13. The BNP's weakness should not of course be entirely ascribed to the effects in a shift in coercive apparatus described here. The party's own strategies have also contributed to their weakness. The BNP's decision to boycott the 2014 general election and subsequent landslide AL victory, left the BNP having suffered a significant loss of face in the 2009 elections, and without a single MP following 2014. Had they run in the 2014 election, they may not have won, but it is plausible they would have gained a significant number of seats, enabling them to sustain organizational strength, hold some leverage over the administration, and appropriate some resources for their political infrastructure.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank two anonymous reviewers and the editors at Journal of Development Studies for their guidance and insight.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

David Jackman  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7246-1138>

Mathilde Maitrot  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9365-6380>

Data availability statement

The data on which this article is based is available on request.

Funding

This work was supported by the Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre (ESID), University of Manchester, funded by the FCDO. For the first author this work was also supported by the Economic and Social Research Council under Grant ES/S011617/1.

References

- Art, D. (2012). What do we know about authoritarianism after ten years? *Comparative Politics*, 44: 351–373.
- Basu, I., Devine, J., & Wood, G. (Eds) (2018). *Politics and governance in Bangladesh: Uncertain landscapes*. Oxford, UK: Routledge.
- Blok, A. (1974). *The mafia of a Sicilian Village*. Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Brass, P. (2003). *The production of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India*. Washington, US: University of Washington Press.
- Centre for Policy Dialogue. (2019). *National budget analyses*. Retrieved from <https://cpd.org.bd/category/national-budget-analysis/> (accessed 5 December 2019).
- Codron, J. (2007). Putting factions “back in” the civil–military relations equation: Genesis, maturation and distortion of the Bangladeshi army. *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, 1–106. doi:10.4000/samaj.230
- Goldstein, D., & Arias, E. D. (Eds.) (2010). *Violence democracies in Latin America*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Greitens, S. C. (2016). *Dictators and their secret police: Coercive institutions and state violence*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hassan, M., & Nazneen, S. (2017). Violence and the breakdown of the political settlement: An uncertain future for Bangladesh? *Conflict, Security and Development*, 17(3): 205–223.
- Human Rights Watch. (2006). Judge, jury and executioner: Torture and extrajudicial killings by Bangladesh's elite security force. *Human Rights Watch*, 18(16): 1–80.
- Jackman, D. (2018a). Violent intermediaries and political order in Bangladesh. *European Journal of Development Research*, 31(4): 705–723.

- Jackman, D. (2018b). The decline of gangsters and politicization of violence in urban Bangladesh. *Development and Change*, 50(5): 1214–1238.
- Jackman, D. (2019). *Dominating Dhaka* (ESID Working Paper 127). Manchester: Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre, The University of Manchester.
- Jackman, D., & Maitrot, M. (2021). Allies among enemies: Political authority and party (dis)loyalty in Bangladesh. *Modern Asian Studies*, 55(6): 2088–2112.
- Kashem, M. B. (2004). The social organization of police corruption: The case of Bangladesh. In Sarre, R., Das, D. K., & Albrecht, H. J. (Eds.), *Policing corruption: International perspectives*. Oxford: Lexington Books
- Khan, A. A. (2015). *Electoral institutions in Bangladesh: A study of conflicts between the formal and informal* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, London, UK.
- Khan, M. H. (2017). *Anti-corruption in Bangladesh: A political settlements analysis anti-corruption evidence (ACE)* (Working Paper 003). SOAS, London.
- Khan, Z. R. (1981). Politicization of the Bangladesh military: A response to perceive shortcomings of civilian government. *Asian Survey*, 21(5): 551–564.
- Levitsky, S., & Way, L. A. (2010). *Competitive authoritarianism: Hybrid regimes after the cold war*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Michelutti, L. Hoque, A. Martin, N. Picherit, D. Rollier, P. Ruud, A.E. Still, C. 2018. *Mafia Raj: The rule of bosses in South Asia*. Stanford, US: Stanford University Press.
- Mostofa, S.M. and Subedi, D.B. (2020). Rise of competitive authoritarianism in Bangladesh. *Politics and Religion*. Retrieved from doi:10.1017/S1755048320000401
- Policzer, P. (2009). *The rise and fall of repression in Chile*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Riaz, A. (2019a). Looking beyond the good economic news in Bangladesh. *East Asia Forum*, 24 April. Retrieved from <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/04/24/looking-beyond-the-goodeconomic-news-in-bangladesh/> (accessed 5 December 2019).
- Riaz, A. (2019b). *Voting in a hybrid regime: Explaining the 2018 Bangladeshi election*. Singapore: Palgrave Pivot.
- Ruud, A. E. (2018). The Osman dynasty: The making and unmaking of a political family. *Studies in Indian Politics*, 6(2): 209–224.
- Ruud, A. E. (2019). ‘The politics of contracting in provincial Bangladesh’. In B. Harris-White, & L. Michelutti (Eds.), *The wild East: Criminal political economies in South Asia*. London: UCL Press.
- Suykens, B. (2017). The Bangladesh party-state: A diachronic comparative analysis of party-political regimes. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 55(2), 187–213
- Svolik, M. W. (2012). *The politics of authoritarian rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- The Daily Star. (2018). *Police wants “polls treat”*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/police-want-polls-treat-1639873> (accessed 5 December 2019).
- The Daily Star. (2019a). *Medal galore for police personnel*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/349-police-get-police-medal-award-2018-1694515> (accessed 5 December 2019).
- The Daily Star. (2020). *‘Begum Para’: Mostly govt officials have bought houses in Canada, says foreign minister*. Retrieved from: <https://www.thedailystar.net/country/news/begum-para-canada-mostly-govt-officials-have-bought-houses-canada-says-foreign-minister-1998341> (accessed 13 April 2020).
- Vaishnav, M. 2017. *When crime pays: Money and muscle in Indian politics*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Volkov, V. (2002) *Violent entrepreneurs: The use of force in the making of Russian capitalism*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Wang, Y. (2014). Coercive capacity and the durability of the Chinese communist state. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 47, 13–25.
- Wilkinson, S. I. (2004). *Votes and violence: Electoral competition and ethnic riots in India*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- World Bank. (2015). *Bangladesh public expenditure review update*. The World Bank, South Asia Region. Retrieved from <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/22673?locale-attribute=en>.