



Nation state and Bangladesh: An analysis

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: 09 August 2022

Accepted: 05 September 2022

Keywords

Evolution of Nation state,
Feature and Challenges,
Padma Bridge

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ABSTRACT

The nation state is a type of state that believes it has political legitimacy because it represents a nation's sovereignty. The state is a political or geographical entity because it is a sovereign territorial unit, whereas the nation is a cultural or ethnic group. The phrase "Nation state" suggests that the two are geographically adjacent. Although nation states have emerged as the most common type of state organization, they were formed at various points in history and in various parts of the world. It is a political entity made up of an independent state that is mostly populated by a group of individuals who have a similar history, culture, and language. Nation state is an independent state inhabited by all the people of one nation. Bangladesh is an ideal nation state which was created in 1971. Bangladesh has common culture, history, language and religion. Though it has also an independent territory, sovereignty and elected government, however, has some problems of national integration which appears as challenge for Bangladesh. In this paper we have discussed the meaning and definition of nation state, evolution and characteristics of nation state; and analyze Bangladesh as a nation state.

INTRODUCTION

The term "State", "Nation", and "Nation state" are very often used loosely, vaguely and carelessly not only by common people but by great political thinkers also. The term "state" is confused with the term "Nation". All these three terms have acquired various meanings which create confusion and misunderstanding. But etymologically they have meanings which are quite different from those which these three terms have acquired in common usage. A nation state is a population held together by certain ties, as for example, language and literature, ideas, customs, and traditions, in such a way as to feel itself a coherent unity distinct from other populations held together by like ties of their own. A state is a legally distinct area with defined borders that is overseen by a single government with the power to enact, amend, and enforce laws, rules, and judgments within its borders. A further legal entity recognized by international law as the primary unit of the global legal order is the state. Usually, the state is made up of four elements. These four elements are: population, specific

territory, government and sovereignty. At the same time, the state is a legal concept. The state has sovereign power. Aristotle defined the state as "a union of families and villages having for its end a perfect and self-sufficing life by which we mean a happy and honorable life" (Drammeh et al., 2019). Professor Laski defined state as "a territorial society divided into government and subjects claiming within its allotted physical area, a supremacy over all other institutions" (Onyishi and Okou, 2017). Robert A dahl says, "The political system made up of the residents of the territorial area is a state" (Dahl, 1984).

Nation is an ideological concept. The English word Nation originates from the Latin word Natus. The Latin word means birth. The word *Jati* is used in Bangali as a synonym for the English word Nation. A nation, as defined by a contract, need not be both geographically and legally defined. People who consider them to be connected to one another on some level form a nation. As much as anything else, a nation is therefore a psychological fixation. Nation is a country considered as a group

of people with the same language, culture and history, who live in a particular area under one government” (OLD, 2022). A nation is any group of people who speak the same language, value the same historical traditions, and share the same way of thinking (Eller, 1997). They make up a unique cultural community in which, among other things, politics and religion may have played significant but perhaps not enduring roles (Agarwal, 2004). As said by Lord Bryce, Nation is a nationality which has organized itself into a political body independent or denying being independent (Political Science, 2020). Ramsay Muir says, “A Nation is a body of people who feel themselves to be naturally linked together by certain affinities which are so strong and real for them that they can live happily together, are dissatisfied and cannot tolerate subjection to peoples who do not share their ties” (Dash, 1958).

There are conceptual differences between both the nation and the state; they complement each other. The political endeavor of a nation is the basis of an independent state. On the other hand, the nation attains perfection within the state. The term "nation state", therefore means a state where inhabitants consider themselves to be a nation. It is historically more recent that either state or nation and reflects the growing convergence in recent years between the two older terms. According to Oxford English Dictionary, "Nation state is a group of people with some culture, language, and history etc. who have formed an independent country." John Stuart Mill says, "A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a nation state if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between them and any others which make them co-operative with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government and desire that it should be a government by themselves as a portion of them exclusively" (Tyndal, 2013).

The birth of Bangladesh was not a result of a single phenomenon, nor was it a fruit of a sudden impulse. The need of a sovereign nation-state called Bangladesh existed long before in the history, and the birth as a nation-state was just a matter of time, as socio-politically, culturally, and anthropologically this region always had its uniqueness, and this uniqueness was realized by

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and his fellow patriots, and as a result, victory followed in 1971. This paper aims to explain and analyze Bangladesh as the nation state according to the definition and characteristics.

Characteristics of Nation State

Nation states have unique traits that set them apart from pre-national states. To begin with, they treat their area differently than the monarchies of the lineage do. The model of the nation state implies that its population constitutes a nation united by a common descent, a common language and many forms of shared culture. The establishment of a unified national culture by state policy is the most obvious feature of a nation state. Nation states typically have a policy to create and maintain a national transportation infrastructure, facilitating trade and travel.

The vast majority of the population of Albania is ethnically Albanian at about 98.6%, with the remainder consisting of a few small ethnic minorities (Singh 2021). The vast majority ethnic groups of Bangladesh are the Bengali people consisting of mostly "Bihari" migrant and indigenous tribal groups. Japan is also traditionally seen as an example of a nation state and also the largest of the nation states (UKEssays, 2018).

History and Origins of Nation State

In ancient times the state was city centric. The city state was the state system at that time. In the Middle Ages, the state system was religion centered. The domination of palaces and churches was the politics of the Middle Ages. Nation State is a modern idea. However, there is disagreement when the idea of a nation state came into being actually. In his book *Imagined Communities*, historian Benedict Anderson suggested that print media, such as newspapers, played a crucial role in the emergence of nation states because they allowed individuals to communicate with one another in novel ways between the years 1500 and 1600 (Mull Over Think, 2019).

However, other scholars have also noted that the early nation states coincided with new map making technologies from age of exploration and

discovery in the 1500s, when European merchants began sailing around the world for the first time. So, the origin and early history of nation states are disputed. A major theoretical issue is "which came first, the Nation or the Nation state?" For nationalists, the answer is that the nation existed first.

Most theories see the nation state as an 1800s European phenomenon facilitated by developments such as mass literacy and the early mass media (Courses, 2022).

The "State driver" theories of the origin of nation states tend to emphasize a few specific states, such as England and its rival France. These states expanded from core regions, and developed a national consciousness and sense of national identity. The Westphalia system of states was a European system which eventually expanded to include all corners of the globe (Parrott, 2003). Even before the state system became firstly establish in Europe, however, European powers had begun to expand their empires outside of Europe. Table1 demonstrates the evaluation of a nation state and in Table 2 shows the number of nation states.

Table1: Evolution of Nation state

Year	Evolution of the modern nation state
1648	Treaty of Westphalia establishes modern state system.
16 th , 17 th and 18 th Centuries	A European state establishes colonial empires.
1775-1870	U.S A and French Revolutions challenge the rule of the kings.
1815-1870	The concert of Europe protects the legitimacy of the state and royal rule
1914-1918	World War I shake the world system of states
1870-1930	The number of nation states in Europe expands from about 15 to over 35. This is the first proliferation of nation state.
1939-1945	World War II
1945 - Today	The second proliferation of states taken place as old colonial empires fall, number of states increases from about 54 in 1945 to about 170 in 1986. Today the number of independent nation states is 195.

Table 2: Number of Independent Nation States

Year	Number of nation states
1945	64
1950	75
1955	84
1960	105
1965	125
1975	155
1985	170
2022	195

Factors of Nation States

Community of Race or Racial Unity

The first and for most important elements of nation state is racial unity of a nation. It keeps different from one nation to another. But at present there has been so much intermingling of clans or clans that no race can claim pure descent. In terms of genetics, the English and German races have much in common, but they are two monotheistic nations. On the other hand, despite the multi-ethnic population in America, they have become one nation.

Geographical Unity or Common Residence

Geographical unity is another important element of nationality. It is generally assumed that the formation of a nation state population has to live together in a certain land. Living together for a long time within a same geographical boundary creates a strong sense of unity among the people.

Community of Religion

Unity of religion sometimes plays a role in the creation of nationality. Among a religious group of people, a sense of unity is easily awakened. The Jews formed the state of Israel inspired by nationalism under the influence of religion. The Muslims of undivided India were also inspired by nationalism in the name of religion and founded Pakistan.

In the conception of neither religious orthodoxy nor the liberal intelligentsia of Bangladesh is there an exact correspondence between state and

national boundaries. However, there is an expectation that the state and nation should be congruous.

Unity of language and literature

Unity of language helps a lot in creating a sense of nationalism. People speaking a common language and readers of the same literature generally feel a strong sense of unity. A good example is the creation of the Bengali nation and nationality.

Common Political and Economic Aspirations

Similar political aspirations, same governance, same political system help to motivate any population towards nationalism.

Unity of custom, history and tradition

One of the most important elements of nationality is the unity of custom, history and tradition. The same tradition, the same history, the glory and the glory of team victory and defeat, the same customs and methods unite the masses. The memory of being simultaneously oppressed and subjugated, the memory of participating in a historical event, the pride of owning a tradition are important elements of nationhood.

Psychological unity

Many believe that the role of psychological unity is important in creating a sense of nation state. According to many modern psychologists, the key element of nationalism is a sense of solidarity and an infinite joy of belonging. According to the French scholar Ernest Renan, nationalism is a mental entity, a kind of living mentality. It cannot be found in the limits of land, origin, religion, language, or even in history and tradition. But each of these elements indirectly helps to form a sense of nationhood by preparing the mind for assimilation.

Emergence of Bangladesh as a Nation State

Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation state in 1971. The Bengali nation is a combination of different ethnic groups. It has a history of exploitation; and deprivation. Sometimes it was ruled by the Sen Dynasty, sometimes by the Afghans, and the Mughals. Bengalis have always been the destiny of history; they have never been able to become creators. After almost two hundred years of colonial rule, the Bengali nation should find the foundation of a nation-state. After the partition of the country in 1947, the Pakistani ruling class dealt the first blow to the Bengali language. That blow was the first step in the rise of the Bengali nation. For a long time, the song of awakening exploited Bengalis. That united movement of the people of East Bengal in demanding the state language of Bengal was an unprecedented event. Language-based Bengali nationalism later created an independent Bengali nation-state. The basis of this structure of the Bengali nation-state was not only political. It was also a social, cultural and political movement. For this reason, just as the death hunger strike is important for the language movement of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, so is the important medieval poet Abdul Hakim, linguist Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, Rabindra-Nazrul-Jibanananda etc. The distance between East Pakistan and West Pakistan was more than a thousand miles.

The language movement in 1952 is the foundation of the rise of the independent sovereign state of Bangladesh in 1971. In the language of political science, it is Bengali nationalism, the backbone of the Bengali nation-state. The movement, which took place between 1952 and 1971, has its roots in 1952. The non-communal and ethnic consciousness from which Bengali nationalism developed was fulfilled in the great liberation war of 1971 (Table 3). The slogan of the liberation war was, 'Who are you? Who am I? Bengali Bengali.' 'Hindus of Bengal, Buddhists of Bengal, Christians of Bengal, Muslims of Bengal, we are all Bengalis'. So, the creation of the state of Bangladesh from the non-communal and non-discriminatory consciousness has come from ethnic harmony. Language and cultural unity have united the Bengalis. The single and united Bengali nation is the creator of the Bangladesh nation state.

Table 3: Bangladesh: A chronological time out

1857	SANTAL REBELLION
1859-62	Blue Rebellion
1905	Division of Bangla by Lord Carzon on the basis of nationalism theory.
1930	Chittagong Arsenal looted
1939	Two Nations Theory of Zinnah.
1940	Lahore proposal of A.K. FazlulHaque.
1947	Partisan of Indian subcontinent and emergence of India and Pakistan.
1948	Bangla's demand was rejected in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly.
1950	Convention demanding full autonomy in Dhaka.
1952	Language Movement in East Pakistan and emergence of Bengali Nationalism.
1954	Victory of United Front.
1966	Historical six points demands of Bangabandhu Sheikh MujiburRahman
1969	Mass upsurge
1971	Historic Liberation war and birth of Bangladesh

Source: (Rahman 2016)

Challenges of Bangladesh as a Nation State

Bangladesh contains the main common characteristics of nation state. In spite of having basic common features of nation states Bangladesh sometimes faces some challenges these are given below.

1. **Problem of Nationality:** The historical reality and the spirit of the war of liberation is the basis of Bengali nationalism (Islam and Islam, 2018). But in Bangladesh, Bengali nationalism is opposed politically. The Bangladesh nationalist party and some religions political parties have been opposing Bengali nationalism, which is contrary to the concept of nation-state.
2. **Religious Extremism:** In recent times, the creation of communalism in the name of religion has increased in Bangladesh (Barkat, 2007). It is in conflict with the traditional culture of Bangladesh. The extremist religious group has shown audacity to attack the sculpture of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This extremism is now taking a terrible form in creating ethnic divisions.
3. **Ethnic Conflict:** Bangladesh is a homogenous country. 98% of total populations are Bengali. There are some indigenous people in Bangladesh

especially in Chittagong Hill Tract. In Chittagong Hill Tract there is a conflict between Bengali and indigenous people (Rahman, 2021).

4. **Political Intolerance:** Even in the golden jubilee of independence, the problem that is still evident in Bangladesh today is political intolerance. Behind this are five decades of coups, counter coups, killings, disappearances, mistrust, military intervention, lack of democracy within the party and so on. The division between the pros and cons of the liberation war is a huge obstacle for ethnic unity (Bose and Jalal, 2017).
5. **Ideological Conflict:** Different means of education, cultural decay, collusion of the state with extremist religious groups have created ideological conflicts in the society (DeVotta, 2007). Boundless inequality between rich and poor is not conducive to a nation. The emphasis is on propaganda rather than implementation of the ideology of the liberation war. Today the nation is far from the ideological foundation on which freedom came through the language movement.
6. **Lack of Strong Leadership:** In the independence of Bangladesh, we got Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as a charismatic leader. But in the tragedy of 1975, we lost our great leader. After 1975 to till date, we do not find any strong leader though the power of Bangladesh changes in different times. However, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been trying for the last one decade. She has taken the country for ahead economically. But the Place of satisfaction in creating ethnic unity has not yet come.
7. **Class Inequality:** Class inequality is a great problem in the all over history of the world. This problem is more acute in Bangladesh which hinders to make Bangladesh as a nation state.

Evaluation of Bangladesh as a Nation State

This is an interesting account how the word 'Bangla' came into the historical discourse. In the advent of European socio-political changes and shifts of different forms of democracy and nationhood, from 8th BC to 5th BC, in this region that is the present-day Bangladesh, and in parts of the present-day India, a similar kind of ethnic groups of people used to live in different small autonomous regions. Later in 1352 during the reign of Sultan Shamsuddin Iliyas Shah, all these autonomous regions were brought together as a single entity and named 'Bangala'. The Portuguese started calling it 'Bengala', which afterwards during the British colonial period was called the

'Bengal' in English. In 1493 to 1519, during the reign of Sultan Hussain Shah, Bangla language was established as the language of the ruling government. With the agricultural expansion and prosperity, so much so that the Mughal emperor Akbar introduced Bangla calendar which was followed to collect taxes. However, it is during the Mughal period, when the region started to lose its autonomy, and was identified as provinces (Rahman, 2016).

Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign state in 16 December 1971, on the basis of Bengali Nationalism. Though these are some problems of nation building in Bangladesh but these are not so acute. Here there are some basic characteristics of Bangladesh as a Nation state, i. Bangla the main and common language, ii. Islam the religion of the major population, here 91% of total population is Muslim, iii. An independent state, iv. Homogenous society, v. Common culture; food habit and clothing, vi. Common race. However, there are still opportunities to work strengthen unity.

Geopolitically Bangladesh is in a very advantageous position. It is located at the center of South Asia with its surrounding countries like India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, China, which have put it into a unique situation to steer up a process of economic advancement that would bring a large economic market within its hold and capacity. This potential can be properly and evenly developed for their respective economic and cultural growth by forming "regional" and "sub-regional economic zone". This zone will be the sole linkage between India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, and China.

Padma Bridge: The Symbol of the Bengali Nation State

Padma Bridge resolves an incompleteness of a nation state. A large section of the country, on either side of the river Padma, has been directly linked with the national capital for the very first time. State integration became complete with the Padma Bridge. The moment Ganges travels east and takes on the name of Padma, it is there that Bengal, which is, Bangladesh, emerges. Politics can change, but the bridge will remain theirs.

However, there is no doubt that this achievement will play a far-reaching role in strengthening the structure of the nation-state.

CONCLUSION

Nationalism is a concept of modern era. Nowadays, the concept of nationalism is taking the form of religious nationalism. Today, the rise of radical nationalism is visible everywhere from developed Western countries to Asia-Africa region. At present, the developed democratic country of the word United States to the largest democratic country in the world India is divided on the basis of religion and caste. Bangladesh is doing relatively well. Communal harmony and tolerance are symbols of ethnic unity. Yet sometimes there is a dirty game of communalism. Greater political commitment and its practice will help in increasing the ethnic unity of Bangladesh. That is why it is necessary to strengthen the society rather than the state. The country is small in size, but it is one of the largest countries in the world in terms of population. Many people live in a small space. Everyone knows each other. As a result, the elements of nationalism are very strongly embedded in the society. Yet, the free spread of information technology and urbanization worldwide is making people lonely, alienated from families, society and isolated. Identity politics is simultaneously creating an identity crisis. For that reason, even after fifty years of independence, these debates whether Bengalis identity is first than Muslims or Muslims identity is first then Bengalis remain in the society.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank to Institute of Bangabandhu War of Liberation Bangladesh Studies (IBLBS), National University, Bangladesh for their help during the research and for methodological support.

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